Representing the Compromise: How Institutions Serve Government Support Coalitions in European Union Policy-Making

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Abstract: We present an original model of policy-making by multiparty coalitions at the international level. Specifically, we analyse how domestic institutions serve parties in enforcing policy compromises onto national ministers negotiating legislation in the European Union (EU). In contrast to existing research on coalition politics, the model accounts for the benefits of not only legislative but also executive institutions and incorporates opposition parties as pivotal actors under minority governments. Ministers propose policy positions at the EU level that represent domestic coalition compromises when cabinet participation, executive coordination, and parliamentary oversight of EU affairs make it cheap for coalition partners to challenge the minister's position and when ideological divisiveness increases the incentive to do so. Statistical analyses of 1,694 policy positions taken by ministers from 22 member states in the Council of the EU provide strong empirical evidence for the model. The results support the claim of executive dominance in EU policy-making but also highlight that, where institutions are strong, ministers represent domestic coalition compromises rather than their own positions.

Coalition government is the norm in most political systems in the European Union (EU). Often coalitions of government parties command a majority in parliament, but some have to rely on opposition parties to take decisions. Coalition policy-making can, however, be messy and obfuscating, undermining accountability and hampering the ability of voters to identify who is responsible for the policies and actions being enacted. Moreover, wherever coalition partners have conflicting policy positions, their interactions have considerable consequences for the policies that are adopted, and therefore for the lives of citizens. Understanding how the support coalition of the government – the set of cabinet and, possibly, opposition parties supporting the executive – solves conflicts therefore has important implications for democratic representation.

Several existing models aim to capture policy-making by coalitions (Austen-Smith & Banks, 1988, 1990; Baron, 1991; Baron & Diermeier, 2001; Dewan & Hortala-Vallve, 2011; Laver & Shepsle, 1990, 1996, Martin & Vanberg, 2004, 2005, 2011; Morelli, 1999; Schofield & Laver, 1990; Straffin Jr & Grofman, 1984). While these approaches were developed for policy-making in domestic politics, governments in Europe increasingly do not only make policy at the domestic but also at the European level in the EU institutions. Here, we present and test an original model of how government support coalitions formulate policy positions at the international level, specifically in the Council of the EU, the union's main legislative body (henceforth, 'the Council').

Our study builds on but differs from existing research in important respects. First, the model is a synthesis of the 'compromise' (e.g. Martin & Vanberg, 2011) and the 'ministerial autonomy' (e.g. Laver & Shepsle, 1996) models. Effectively, it subsumes and generalises these models by accounting for a) the variety of legislative and executive institutional set-

tings under which governments operate across the EU and b) the influence of opposition vis-à-vis cabinet parties under minority governments. Second, we also account for features of EU policy-making, such as agenda-setting by the European Commission, which rules out inaction as a strategy for ministers. As a result, our focus is on the degree to which ministers are either policy dictators *or* representatives of a coalition compromise when they attend Council meetings.

Third, since we focus on policy-making in EU affairs, we are able to test our theoretical expectations across an unprecedented number of countries and cabinets compared to all existing work on coalition policy-making. Additionally, we do not observe mere correlates of policy, such as legislative amendments (Martin & Vanberg, 2005, 2011, 2014: 995), process duration (Martin & Vanberg, 2004, 2011), or parliamentary involvement (Franchino & Høyland, 2009). Instead, we employ a novel empirical strategy based on data of the actual ideological location of compromise positions as well as policies proposed by governments in the Council as the key game-theoretic parameters that underpin strategies and payoffs. This relaxes strong assumptions about inference through correlates. Fourth, our study eliminates differences in policy-making agendas across countries as a potential confounder. As we compare coalition behaviour on the *same* pieces of EU legislation and *not* on national legislation, we rule out the possibility that cross-national effects of institutions on coalition policy-making are erroneously driven by varying national political agendas.

In our empirical analyses, we compare 1,694 policy positions advocated by national ministers from 22 EU member states in EU-level legislative negotiations between 1996 and 2008. Our findings demonstrate that governments' policy positions at the EU level best reflect compromises of the supporting parties if national executive institutions for the coordination

of EU policy-making are strong (e.g. Kassim, 2013). In contrast, parliamentary oversight of EU affairs (e.g. Winzen, 2012, 2013) only significantly facilitates compromises for minority but not majority governments. In line with expectations, we also find that compromises are more likely when parties in the support coalition are ideologically divided as well as for majority governments. These results contrast with Martin and Vanberg's (2011) seminal findings that parties mainly use legislative institutions to organize compromises. Our study suggests that – at least in EU affairs – to enforce compromise positions onto ministers, government parties substitute parliamentary oversight by drawing on executive institutions at the cabinet and inter-ministerial levels. In turn, the legislature is a pivotal institutional venue primarily for supporting opposition parties under minority governments.

Our results mostly support the common claim of executive dominance in EU affairs (Andersen & Burns, 1996; Raunio, 1999). But they also highlight that this dominance must not lead to ministerial autonomy if executive institutions are strong. Moreover, the results suggest that legislatures can be influential under minority governments. While executive dominance may *not* lead to policy drift away from the supporting parties' compromise position (cf. Føllesdal & Hix, 2006), governments' tendency to organize compromises at the cabinet table instead of parliamentary venues remains a challenge for the democratic norm of inclusion.

COALITIONS AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN EU POLICY-MAKING

Four main models of coalition policy-making can be distinguished. The first one puts emphasis on *compromises* among coalition parties: governments are likely to adopt policies that are somewhere midway between the positions of these parties (Austen-Smith & Banks,

1988; Baron & Diermeier, 2001; Martin & Vanberg, 2004, 2005, 2011; Straffin Jr & Grofman, 1984). The second model pays attention to *ministerial autonomy*: individual ministers act as policy dictators, realizing their preferred policy in their area of responsibility (Austen-Smith & Banks, 1990; Laver & Shepsle, 1990, 1996). The third approach focuses on legislative bargaining: policy-making is shaped by the *median legislative party* or a centrally-located party (Baron, 1991; Morelli, 1999; Schofield & Laver, 1990). The last model instead pays attention to executive bargaining: policies are strongly shaped by the *prime ministerial party* (Dewan & Hortala-Vallve, 2011).[1]

Below we model coalition policy-making as a game in which parties in the government support coalition determine the policy position they aim to realise in the negotiations over a legislative proposal at the EU level. That is, we focus on how coalitions arrive at the positions they 'sincerely' prefer for the final EU policy output, rather than the positions they may strategically take because deemed instrumentally helpful for realising their sincere positions. An established scholarly tradition has shown that the formulation of the policies ministers attempt to achieve at the negotiation table in Brussels is strongly shaped by the domestic political arena (e.g. Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003; Finke & Herbel, 2015; Kassim et al., 2000; Moravcsik, 1998; Thomson, 2011).

Our model merges the compromise and ministerial autonomy approaches by considering how political institutions limit ministerial autonomy in policy-making. First, *legislative insti-*

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[1] We set aside the median legislative and the prime ministerial party models, since we do not find empirical support for them (see section 8 in the Online Appendix). Likewise, Martin and Vanberg (2014) do not find support for the former approach.

tutions, most importantly the powers of parliamentary committees and the allocation of committee chairs, serve coalition partners to 'police the bargain' (Carroll & Cox, 2012; Fortunato et al., 2017; Kim & Loewenberg, 2005; Martin & Vanberg, 2004, 2005, 2011, 2014; Zubek, 2015). Second, *executive institutions* such as cabinet hierarchies and dispute resolution mechanisms (e.g. coalition or cabinet committees) also solve intra-coalition conflicts over policy-making (Bowler et al., 2016; Falcó-Gimeno, 2014; Greene & Jensen, 2016; Indridason & Kristinsson, 2013; Lipsmeyer & Pierce, 2011; Martin & Vanberg, 2011; Thies, 2001).

Here, we are concerned with identifying and comparing the effects of each of these types of institution on the policy-making of coalitions in EU affairs. To do so, we do not only focus on the coalition of parties represented in the cabinet but on *government support coalitions*, which we define as the set of all parties on which the government relies to pass and implement policy. Hence, support coalitions encompass all cabinet parties, but also include opposition parties under minority governments.

Our sequence of play starts with the minister, under whose portfolio an EU legislative proposal falls, who proposes a policy position; then, the other parties in the support coalition have the opportunity to challenge the proposal. Without a credible threat of a challenge, the minister proposes her own preferred, ideal policy position. This is the case of full ministerial autonomy. In contrast, if she expects a challenge, she proposes a policy compromise that is located within the ideological range spanned by the domestic support coalition, with its exact location determined by several factors. Mounting a challenge to a ministerial proposal is costly for coalition partners, as it requires searching, assessing and drafting alternatives, coordinating meetings and negotiating compromises. We assume that parties can, in principle, use several legislative and executive institutional venues to prepare and mount

such a challenge. The strength of the respective executive and legislative institutions reduces the costs of challenging and thereby makes compromises more likely. But not all institutions are beneficial to the same degree to all parties.

With regard to executive institutions, we assume that the costs of a challenge are always lower for cabinet parties than for opposition parties, since cabinet participation confers additional decision rights and resources upon parties and provides information about governments' EU-level activities in regular cabinet meetings. Furthermore, we posit that the costs of a challenge will vary across different political systems depending on the strength of national institutions of *executive* (inter-ministerial) *coordination* in EU policy-making (Kassim, 2003, 2013; Kassim et al., 2000). Strong executive coordination is characterised by regular inter-ministerial meetings or committees on EU affairs as well as a central 'troubleshooter' (often the prime minister's office) that adjudicates between ministries and facilitates cross-departmental information exchange (Kassim 2003). This contrasts with a weak, 'decentralized, even ministerial, approach' (Kassim 2013, p. 286) to coordination, in which the responsible ministry leads and executive coordination 'tends to be minimal' (Kassim 2003, p. 95). While such institutions may change in the long run, they have been described and analysed as sticky structures characterizing national executives (Gärtner, Hörner, and Obholzer 2011; Kassim 2013; Kassim, Peters, and Wright 2000; Laffan 2006).

With regard to legislative institutions, we assume that *parliamentary oversight* reduces the costs of a challenge for *all* parliamentary parties, including opposition parties that support the government, by providing information about the consequences of ministerial proposals and potentially conferring decision rights to parliament (e.g. Kim & Loewenberg, 2005; Martin & Vanberg, 2011). With regard to EU affairs, such institutions encompass access to

documents, the existence of specialised committees, the involvement of sectoral committees in EU affairs, or binding negotiating mandates (Winzen, 2012). A large body of literature has investigated legislative institutions and discovered substantial variation between different parliamentary systems (e.g. Martin & Vanberg, 2011; Strøm et al., 2010; Winzen, 2012).

In the following, we present our model of coalition policy-making on EU affairs based on these considerations and derive various hypotheses from it about the relevance of coalition compromises under different scenarios and institutional settings.

A MODEL OF COALITION POLICY-MAKING IN EU AFFAIRS

Consider a government composed of two parties (A and B) and an opposition party C. Parties have single-peaked preferences over EU-level policies represented by ideal points x_i where i denotes parties a, b, and c, in a unidimensional policy space. Unidimensionality captures the departmentalization along policy jurisdictions that is typical within executives as well as the Council of the EU (Hayes-Renshaw, 2002; Laver & Shepsle, 1996). We assume that the ideal policy of party A is located at zero and that the government coalition is connected, that is, $x_c > x_b > x_a = 0$.

Ministerial portfolios are distributed between government parties and the cabinet minister of party A, who is in charge of the portfolio for this issue, is responsible for proposing an initial policy position $\widehat{p_a}$ the government should take at the EU level. The requirement to propose a position captures the formal control of the agenda by the European Commission and the idea that parties supporting the government prefer taking any position which falls

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within the range of the support coalition over taking no position in these negotiations.[2] Party A pays a penalty $k > 0$ if its proposal is challenged. This captures the opportunity costs (and potentially audience costs) of drafting a proposal which is ultimately overturned. The quadratic utility function of party A is therefore $U_a = -\dot{p}^2 - k$, where $\dot{p}$ is the government's final policy position.

Parties B and C can challenge a policy position at a cost w_i where $i = b, c$. This parameter captures the resources that must be invested to mount a challenge. It varies for the two parties as a function of different institutional settings, which have both informational and decisional implications. First, cabinet participation allows party B to rely on the administrative machinery of the executive, lowering the search cost of finding alternatives and, therefore, the opportunity cost of challenging any proposal, hence $w_c > w_b > 0$. Second, executive co-ordination in EU policy-making facilitates a common government position, as the minister in charge and her officials must justify and inform about their policy position before other departments and the prime minister in particular. Coordination lowers the cost w_b incurred by party B when challenging a proposal and, as we will show, facilitates common decision-making. A less coordinated executive instead increases w_b and, as a result, the government may operate under ministerial autonomy (Laver & Shepsle, 1996).

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[2] The domestic status quo ante cannot be the reversion point if a government is unable to take a position, since the issue is under negotiation in the Council. Having no position is the worst strategy, since the government's view would be entirely ignored.

Similarly, strong parliamentary oversight of EU affairs lowers the cost w_c of mounting a challenge by parliamentary parties, as it provides information about the consequences of ministerial proposals to all parties represented in parliament. Note that, since $w_c > w_b > 0$, legislative institutions set a ceiling to the cost of making proposals.[3] The quadratic utility function of parties B and C is $U_i = -(x_i - \dot{p})^2 - w_i$, for $i = b, c$, where $w_i > 0$ in case they challenge the minister's proposal.

Once the initial proposal from party A is on the table, the other parties can challenge and amend the proposal – first party B, then party C. If there are challenges, there will be a bargaining process among the parties and we expect that they will eventually agree on what we call a 'full compromise', which is located in the Pareto set $[0, x_i]$ for $i = b, c$. Although it is certainly relevant for determining the government's final policy position, we are not directly concerned with this bargaining process here. Our interest lies in the institutions that systematically influence policy formulation. Hence, we exogenously set the full compromise at the mean of the positions of party A and of the parties that have proposed amendments. In other words, the full compromise is $\bar{p} = \frac{\sum_i x_i}{m+1}$, where $i = b, c$ denotes the parties proposing amendments and m is the number of such parties.

This implies that parties are equally powerful in determining the full compromise. We could have alternatively assumed that parties' seat or portfolio shares or other measures of

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[3] This setup strikes an acceptable balance between verisimilitude and tractability. The uncertainty and costs facing receiving parties as well as the benefits of institutions could be operationalised more realistically but at the cost of impairing tractability. A model, available from the authors, where policy uncertainty facing receiving parties is operationalised with homogeneous random shocks over policy outcomes yields the same results.

bargaining power affect the final policy position. This would have required the inclusion of an additional parameter (see e.g. Martin and Vanberg, 2005) without modifying the results substantially (see the Online Appendix, p. 3-4). In the empirical application of the model, we actually weight parties' positions by legislative seats but also demonstrate in the Online Appendix (see Table A6) that taking the simple average of positions yields almost identical results. We also assume that parties have the same expectations about the location of each other's and the compromise positions. As we will see, the full compromise is an equilibrium outcome only under special conditions, while positions between zero (i.e., the proposing party's ideal policy) and the full compromise – which we call 'partial compromises' – make up for the bulk of equilibriums. The locations of the full and partial compromises are illustrated with an example in Figure 1.

If no party proposes amendments, the initial proposal $\widehat{p_a}$ is represented by the minister in Council negotiations. In the case of majority governments, the opposition party C has no decision-making authority and no effect on the coalition compromise. Coalition governments are frequently based on explicit agreements, and, if issues have not been agreed ex ante, negotiations within coalition partners are given primacy, since concessions to opposition parties would undermine the coalition agreement. On the other hand, in the case of minority governments the opposition party supporting the government can alter the minister's proposal or the proposal as amended by party B. This ability captures the fact that government survival ultimately also depends on this party. To sum up, the sequence of play is:

1. The minister from party A proposes an initial position $\widehat{p_a}$.

2. Government party B accepts this proposal or expends resources, at cost w_b, to reach a full compromise.

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3. Similarly, opposition party C accepts the outcome of stage 2 or expends resources, at cost w_c, to reach an alternative full compromise, when feasible.

[Figure 1: Illustration of full and partial compromise positions: HERE]

The final government policy position to be defended in the Council, $\dot{p}$, depends on government party B's reaction to A's proposal as well as the opposition party C's reaction to the other parties' actions. Note that below we only provide the main intuitions behind the results. Full formal derivations are in the Online Appendix (see section 1). We solve the model by backward induction for the cases of majority and minority governments.

Policy Formulation in Majority Governments

Consider first the scenario of a majority government. The payoff for parties B and C is a negative function of the difference between their ideal policies and final policy position $\dot{p}$, and the costs of challenging party A's proposal if they choose to do so. Since a challenge from the opposition party C does not modify the outcome and the cost for mounting a challenge is positive, party C never challenges. In contrast, a challenge from government party B modifies the final position. This party challenges only if the utility from the full compromise, net of the cost w_b of mounting a challenge, exceeds the utility from party A's proposal. Formally, party B challenges if the proposal $\widehat{p_a}$ is below a threshold $x_b - \sqrt{w_b + \frac{x_b^2}{4}}$. In other words, for any given proposal, the likelihood of a challenge increases with the distance between the government parties (x_b), while it decreases with the cost of a challenge (w_b).

Consider now party A. Its utility is negatively related to the difference between its ideal policy and the equilibrium outcome, and to the opportunity cost k of overturning its pro-

posal, if it occurs. If the cost of a challenge for party B is high relative to the distance be-

tween the coalition partners (formally, if $w_b > \frac{3x_b^2}{4}$), party A can propose its ideal policy

without facing a challenge. This is the autonomous ministerial government of Laver and

Shepsle (1996). Otherwise, the proposal is challenged and party A proposes a partial com-

promise between its ideal policy and the full compromise $\frac{x_b}{2}$. Here, there is some ministerial

drift: party A moves the proposal in B's direction up only to the point where B is indifferent

between enforcing the full compromise at a cost and accepting A's proposal. Party A only

proposes the full compromise when challenging is costless.

In sum, we should expect compromise positions in case of more heterogeneous coalition

governments (as x_b increases), and when there are lower costs of challenging a proposal (as

w_b decreases), such as in the presence of executive coordination of EU policy-making.

Policy Formulation in Minority Governments

In the case of a minority government, the opposition party C has the opportunity to mod-

ify the proposal that comes out from the government decision-making process. This pro-

posal can either be party A's initial offer, which might be or not be a partial compromise, or

the full compromise $\frac{x_b}{2}$ in case party B has challenged. Party C challenges only if the utility

from the resulting full compromise, net of the cost w_c of mounting a challenge, exceeds the

utility from the government's proposal. Formally, if party B has not challenged, party C

challenges if the proposal $\widehat{p_a}$ is below the threshold $x_c - \sqrt{w_c + \frac{x_c^2}{4}}$. If party B has chal-

lenged, party C also challenges if the cost is low relative to its distance to the government

proposal. Intuitively, if an opposition party is further away from the government parties'

full compromise, it has a stronger incentive to challenge this compromise. Formally, C challenges if $w_c < (x_c - \frac{x_b}{2})^2 - (\frac{2x_c - x_b}{3})^2$. Since party C's ideal policy lies outside the government coalition's range of policies (i.e., $x_c > x_b > x_a$), we should expect compromises in case of more heterogeneous parliamentary support coalitions (as x_c increases), and lower costs of challenging a proposal (as w_c decreases), such as in the presence of strong parliamentary oversight of EU affairs.

When government party B considers whether to challenge, it must take into account party C's reactions. When government party A considers what to propose, it must take into account party B's and party C's replies. There are four scenarios to consider, depending on the level of ideological divisiveness and challenge costs. In the Online Appendix (p. 4-7), we present the formal conditions of these scenarios, the actions of party B and the proposals of party A. We limit our attention to the conditions which lead party A to propose a compromise position (i.e. $\widehat{p_a} > 0$), leaving aside whether a full or a partial compromise emerges.

The conditions for a compromise position boil down to two simple inequalities. First, if party C's challenge cost is low relative to the divisiveness of the parliamentary support coalition (formally, if $w_c < \frac{3x_c^2}{4}$), that is, if the opposition party is relatively distant from the government parties, party A proposes a compromise. Second, if party C's challenge cost is instead sufficiently high, compromises only occur if party B's challenge cost is low compared to its distance from its government coalition partner (i.e., if $w_b < \frac{3x_b^2}{4}$).

In sum, in case of a homogenous parliamentary support coalition (as x_c approaches x_b) or weak parliamentary oversight (as w_c increases), we should expect compromises under the same conditions as in majority governments. Otherwise, we should expect compromises in

case of more heterogeneous parliamentary support coalitions (as x_c increases) or when the costs of challenging a proposal are lower (as w_c decreases), such as in the presence of strong parliamentary oversight of EU affairs.

Considering both majority and minority governments, we can derive the following testable hypotheses:[4]

H1: Governments' EU-level policy positions will more strongly reflect the coalition compromise if executive coordination in EU affairs is strong.

H2: Governments' EU-level policy positions will more strongly reflect the coalition compromise when the ideological divisiveness of the coalition parties is higher.

H3: Governments' EU-level policy positions will more strongly reflect the coalition compromise under minority governments if parliamentary oversight in EU affairs is strong.

We can produce an additional expectation. Drop party B from the minority government situation and consider the following: a majority government between parties A and B, and a minority government of party A with the parliamentary support of party C. In the latter case, the outcome is a compromise if $w_c < \frac{3x_c^2}{4}$. Recall that the condition for compromise is $w_b < \frac{3x_b^2}{4}$ in a majority government. Assume also that parties B and C share policy positions, that is $x_c = x_b > x_a = 0$. Since $w_c > w_b$ (cabinet participation lowers the opportunity cost of challenging proposals), we can produce the following expectation:

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[4] In the Online Appendix (p. 7-10), we show that these expectations hold if we increase the number of government parties or change the proposing party.

H4: Governments' EU-level policy positions will more strongly reflect the coalition compromise under majority rather than minority governments.

Contrast these expectations with the expectations and findings of Martin and Vanberg, who have arguably provided the most extensive work on coalition policy-making but have emphasised the role of legislative institutions and largely rejected the role of executive institutions. First, our choice of modelling the actions of the (supporting) opposition party and particularly hypothesis 3 run counter to Martin and Vanberg's finding that opposition parties have no influence on coalition policy-making, not even under minority governments with strong parliamentary oversight (Martin & Vanberg, 2011, p. 97-131).

Second, Martin and Vanberg (2011) argue and find that parliaments are ultimately the only effective institutional venue for compromising between coalition partners, which is in contrast to hypothesis 1. In countries with weak parliamentary oversight, these authors find no effect of ideological divisions on the number of amendments to ministerial proposals (Martin and Vanberg 2011, p. 97-155, p. 132), and conclude that parties entirely lack an 'effective institutional mechanism for scrutiny and change' (Martin and Vanberg 2011, p. 132) in such systems. Compromises are simply out of reach for them, no matter the incentive provided by ideological divisiveness. In contrast, we account for different degrees of executive and legislative institutional strength and hypothesis 2 emerges as an unconditioned version of Martin and Vanberg's expectation on divisiveness.

EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO TESTING THE EXPECTATIONS

To test our expectations, we use data on governments' policy positions on concrete pieces of EU legislation in the Council. Specifically, we want to ascertain the extent to which governments' policy positions reflect ideological compromises of their domestic supporting parties. By observing governments' positions on the common legislative agenda at the EU level, we circumvent varying domestic political agendas as a central problem in research on coalition policy-making. Most research considers coalition behaviour on domestic legislative proposals, and since legislative agendas differ across countries, any effects of cross-national variation in institutions could be potentially confounded with idiosyncratic agenda effects, increasing the risk of omitted variable bias. We eliminate varying agendas as a confounder by observing governments' positions on the very same 145 policy issues that were discussed in the Council. Our data covers 22 EU countries, for which the number of reported policy positions varies.[5] This comparatively large country sample also makes selection bias as a prime concern of empirical research into coalition politics less pressing.

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[5] Data sources and descriptive statistics are in the Online Appendix (section 3). We lack party position data for Malta and institutional data for Romania. Moreover, Greece, Spain, and the United Kingdom are excluded because they did not experience coalition governments during the observation period. While our observations are not equally distributed across countries, we have nine countries for which over 100 policy positions are available, and another seven with more than 40 policy positions (see Table A2 in the Online Appendix). Importantly, the main reasons for the unbalanced numbers of observations are varying phases of coalition versus single-party rule as well as the fact that some member states just joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. With 20% of observations from minority governments our sample is quite representative of the population.

Governmental policy positions

We measure the positions ministers take in international negotiations in the Council from a subset of the *Decision-making in the European Union* (DEU) dataset (Thomson et al., 2006, 2012). This dataset contains spatial information on actors' policy positions regarding 331 controversial issues on legislative proposals negotiated in the periods 1999 to 2000 as well as 2004 to 2008, which restricts the time span we can cover (Thomson et al., 2012, p. 607). DEU is based on 349 semi-structured interviews with experts from member states' permanent representations and EU institutions, who were asked to report controversial legislative issues and locate governments on corresponding spatial policy scales. It is the most widely used dataset on EU decision-making and has been employed in a diverse range of applications.

While the DEU experts were instructed to report actors' sincere ideal policy positions, one concern is that governments may strategically misrepresent their positions in order to gain in the EU legislative process. If experts were unable to separate strategic from sincere positions, DEU positions would no longer reflect the domestic bargain but partially EU-level considerations. However, the features of decision-making (open rule, supermajority and – when the European Parliament is involved – inter-institutional negotiations) in the Council make voting (veto) power more important than proposal power and weaken the incentives to misrepresent positions (for a fuller discussion, see p. 11-13 in the Online Appendix). Hence, we assume that the DEU data primarily reflects governments' sincere positions.

For our analysis, we focus on economic left-right policy issues as the major substantive dimension of party competition throughout the EU (Bakker, Jolly, and Polk 2012; Whitefield 2002) and identify all DEU policy issues relating to economic left-right conflicts with a cod-

ing scheme (see also Wratil, 2018).[6] The guiding principle was to construct categories reflecting a construct of 'left-right' that does not only fit with the DEU issues but can also be linked to standard measurements of left-right party ideology (in our case, the Comparative Manifesto Project, see below). The resulting scheme consists of six categories representing the economic left-right dimension; they cover conflicts ranging from economic regulation, protectionism, and equality, to consumer and environmental protection. The codebook with information on inter-coder reliability is available in the Online Appendix (p. 17-20). The coding of the DEU issues reveals that about half of all salient issues fall into one or multiple economic left-right categories, whilst the rest are either related to left-libertarian/right-authoritarian issues, pro-anti integration conflicts, or to non-ideological cleavages (e.g. geography). Wherever necessary we linearly rescaled the DEU issue scales with a predefined range of 0-100 so as to ensure that 100 represents the most 'right' and 0 the most 'left' option advocated by any national government in our estimation sample.[7]

Figure 2 illustrates the governments' policy positions – our dependent variable – on a legislative proposal concerning the inclusion of the aviation industry in the EU carbon emission trading system (COD/2006/304). In this case, the amount of emission allowances to be allocated to the industry was contested: some governments opted for a smaller and others for a larger amount, these representing economic left and right positions respectively.

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[6] We do not include left-libertarian/right-authoritarian issues in our analysis, since it is unresolved whether such issues are adequately reflected by the categories and the left-right scale of the Comparative Manifesto Project (Alonso & da Fonseca, 2011; Protsyk & Garaz, 2011).

[7] We exclude some policy issues due to high missingness. Rescaling removes issues on which all national governments in the sample agreed (see p. 19-20 in the Online Appendix).

Coalition compromise, divisiveness, and institutions

To calculate the expected ideological compromise position of the government's support coalition, we rely on party positions from the Comparative Manifesto Project's (CMP) coding of election manifestos (Lehmann et al., 2015). While the CMP does not code specific electoral pledges but only the broad ideological position of parties, it is available for almost all EU countries for our study period. For our particular application, using the CMP instead of expert survey data on parties is imperative for at least three reasons: first, election manifestos record party positions temporally close to elections and cabinet formation.

[Figure 2: Illustration of the dependent variable: HERE]

Assuming that parties struck some binding agreements when entering a support coalition at the start of the legislative term, the CMP likely provides a better clue to the compromise positions than expert surveys conducted at arbitrary times during the term. At least, the CMP eliminates electoral cycle factors as a source of heteroskedastic measurement error across countries. Second, the CMP is more exogenous to parties' behaviour than expert data. The CMP merely captures statements, intentions, and promises, whereas experts may evaluate parties on the basis of their actual behaviour (Budge 2000; Volkens 2007). As we are aiming to explain the policy-making behaviour of parties, expert surveys could lead to circular analyses, and thus the CMP is more suitable for our specific purpose. Third and most importantly, the CMP better operationalizes coalition policy-making in terms of models of representation, specifically 'promissory representation' or mandate theory (Mansbridge, 2003; McDonald & Budge, 2005), which focus on links between electoral promises (e.g. from manifestos) and actual policy-making of parties during the term.

We use the CMP's standard left-right (RILE) scale to calculate the compromise position of the government's support coalition. Importantly, the 26 constitutive CMP categories of RILE map neatly onto our coding scheme for the DEU issues. In particular, our scheme reflects key contrasts of RILE, such as between the CMP codes 'Market Regulation' versus 'Free Enterprise', 'Protectionism: Negative/Positive', 'Controlled Economy' versus 'Economic Orthodoxy', or 'Labour Groups: Negative/Positive' (see p. 17-20 in the Online Appendix). As we have no reliable information on which national minister deals with a piece of EU legislation,[8] which would be necessary to calculate partial compromises, we instead operationalize the full compromise position, since its location does not depend on the proposing party.

Our calculations are as follows: a) In the case of majority governments, the full compromise is the seat-weighted RILE of all cabinet parties; b) In the case of minority governments, it is the midpoint between the seat-weighted RILE of the cabinet parties and the seat-weighted RILE of all opposition parties (in the case of changing support patterns), or alternatively of those opposition parties supporting the government (in the case of explicit, stable deals).[9] Seat-weighting, particularly for the calculation of the cabinet's compromise position,

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[8] Neither national nor EU institutions systematically report which minister deals with a legislative file, and available proxies (e.g. Council participant lists) are not reliable (see section 8 in the Online Appendix).

[9] For each minority government we use *The Political Data Yearbook*, a series of annual country reports published by the *European Journal of Political Research*, to ascertain whether the government was supported by one or more particular parties or whether it gathered support on an issue-by-issue basis. Only for about a quarter of our observations on minority governments could we identify a fixed supporting party. In the majority of cases governments relied on alternating parties from the opposition. Hence, our results for minority governments

is suggested by recent findings (e.g. Martin and Vanberg, 2014). Taking the midpoint between the cabinet and the opposition parties reflects the idea that minority governments are tolerated because supporting parties obtain disproportionate policy influence.[10]

In order to test the impact of ideological divisiveness on the relevance of the compromise position, we operationalise the absolute distance on the RILE scale between the most left-wing and the most right-wing party of the government support coalition, i.e. the ideological range. With regard to executive institutions, we use a dummy variable that is '1' for countries with strong executive coordination in EU policy-making and '0' for countries with little to no coordination. We take the classification of countries from Kassim (2013).[11] Finally, we operationalise parliamentary oversight, as the strength of the legislature's rights with respect to EU affairs, using a comprehensive database created by Winzen (2012, 2013). In our sample the measure runs from 0.28 (in Cyprus throughout as well as Ireland in the 1990s) to 1.75 (in Finland and Lithuania). As we expect the effect of parliamentary oversight to play out mostly under minority governments, we include a dummy variable for whether the cabinet parties held a minority of seats in the legislature.

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highlight the influence of opposition parties in general rather than a specific supporting party.

[10] This calculation of the compromise yields the clearest support in favour of our model. But our main results are largely robust to at least two alternative calculations of the full compromise position based on the CMP (see the Online Appendix).

[11] Countries with coordination (or, as Kassim calls it, 'centralized coordination') in our sample are the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden.

In addition, we control for several factors that are known to influence governments' position-taking in the Council and might at the same time correlate with the compromise position. First, we include a measure of public opinion as the average ideological left-right self-placement of respondents from the Eurobarometer survey series. This ensures that the effects of the compromise position are not conflated with governments' efforts to respond to public opinion (Hagemann et al., 2017; Wratil, 2018; as these authors we linearly interpolate and use a 6-month lag of opinion). Second, we account for a potentially relevant redistribution cleavage of rich versus poor countries with a measure of countries' annual net receipts from the EU budget (% of GDP) (Bailer et al., 2015; Zimmer et al., 2005). Third, we include national unemployment and inflation rates to ensure that the relationship between parties' and government's policy positions is more than a reflection of macroeconomic fluctuations. Fourth, we broadly capture the idea that member states may try to transfer their domestic policies to the European level (Börzel, 2002) with a measure of domestic economic freedom from the Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom of the World dataset (Gwartney et al., 2013; see also Thomson, 2011). Lastly, we also control for a country's population (in million inhabitants), as 'big' member states may differ in their preferences from 'small' (Schure & Verdun, 2008; Thomson, 2011).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

While we would ideally like to model the distance between governments' policy positions in the Council and the compromise position of their support coalition of domestic parties, the DEU and the CMP positions are measured on different scales and it is not clear how exactly the scales map to each other. Hence, instead of modelling distances directly, we rely

on linear regressions to test whether the compromise positions of supporting parties are stronger predictors of governments' policy positions in the Council in situations when we expect parties to strike compromises. In the Online Appendix (section 5) we provide results of Monte Carlo simulations demonstrating that higher implied coefficient estimates for the compromise position in a linear regression can indeed be interpreted as evidence of stronger compromising behaviour by parties.

Specifically, we estimate linear regression models with the DEU positions as dependent and the RILE compromise positions as the main independent variable, the control variables, and fixed effects for the 145 policy issues in our sample. The fixed effects estimator is based on the within-transformation, i.e. we demean our data for each policy issue. This controls for policy-issue specific factors such as the European Commission's or the European Parliament's positions on a proposal or the status quo ante. Moreover, we employ the Huber-White sandwich estimator of variance to provide standard errors that are robust to clustering at the country level. We test our hypotheses by including interaction terms between the compromise position and the moderators (ideological divisiveness and institutions) (see Berry, Golder, and Milton, 2012). Thereby, we allow the effect of the compromise to vary according to the ideological divisiveness of the support coalition, executive coordination, the strength of parliamentary oversight, and the majority or minority status of the government. The main results are reported in Table 1.

[Table 1: Effect of coalition compromise on policy positions: HERE]

First, the positive and significant interaction term between coordinated executives and the compromise position demonstrates that the relevance of compromises is stronger in countries that employ inter-ministerial coordination in EU policy-making. This confirms

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hypothesis H1 and is in line with the expectation that coordination lowers the search costs for cabinet parties and thereby increases incentives to formulate alternative policy positions that challenge ministerial proposals. Second, the positive and significant interaction term between the compromise position and ideological divisiveness indicates that the compromise is a stronger predictor of governments' policy positions when supporting parties are more dispersed on the left-right spectrum. This is in line with hypothesis H2, and provides evidence for the idea that actors' incentives to invoke the compromise position increase with ideological divisions.

Third, the positive and significant three-way interaction between minority governments, parliamentary oversight, and the compromise position provides evidence that compromises have more influence on policy formulation under minority governments when the parliament can scrutinise the government in EU affairs. This is supportive of our hypothesis H3 and suggests that strong parliamentary oversight serves (supporting) opposition parties in policing the bargain.[12] Finally, we also find clear evidence for hypothesis H4, which expects compromises to be more relevant under majority rule. The interaction between the dummy variable for minority governments and the compromise position is negative and significant, indicating that compromises are generally less likely if at least one party of the support coalition does not participate in the executive.

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[12] We verified that the linear combination of the coefficients on the three-way interaction and the two-way interaction between parliamentary oversight and the compromise – this combination being the effect of oversight on the marginal effect of the compromise position under minority governments – is significant at the 5% level.

We illustrate our results in Figures 3 and 4, which plot the marginal effect of the compromise position under different conditions. Both figures also include histograms of the number of observations under these conditions. Figure 3 displays the impact of ideological divisiveness. It shows that the compromise position has little relationship to EU-level policy positions when the support coalition is ideologically compact. In turn, if supporting parties diverge by at least 25 points on the RILE left-right scale, the compromise position turns into a highly significant predictor of the position advocated by the national minister.

[Figure 3: Compromise position and ideological divisiveness: HERE]

Figure 4 illustrates the role of executive and legislative institutions and plots the marginal effect of the compromise position on policy positions in four scenarios depending on majority status of the government, executive coordination, and parliamentary oversight. The upper and lower left quadrants show that the compromise position has virtually no significant influence on governments' policy positions under uncoordinated executives. The confidence intervals for all observations in our sample always cross the *x*-axis. Hence, for uncoordinated executives the baseline case in our sample is either ministerial autonomy or significant ministerial drift. In contrast, the lower and upper right quadrants show that coordinated executives increase the relevance of the compromise.

[Figure 4: Compromise position and institutions: HERE]

Under majority governments the marginal effect of the coalition compromise is significant for 60-70% of the observations in our sample and only becomes insignificant at high levels of parliamentary oversight (in our sample, these observations stem from the Czech

Republic, Finland, Lithuania, and Latvia).[13] In contrast, under minority governments par-

liamentary oversight facilitates the compromise, turning its marginal effect significant wher-

ever oversight is stronger than 1.24 (these observations stem from the Czech Republic,

Denmark, Lithuania, and Latvia).

We can now consider how institutions influence the magnitude of the effects of the com-

promise position. If a majority government operates without executive coordination in EU

policy-making, our model estimates that shifts in the compromise do not change govern-

ments' policy positions in any substantive sense: DEU positions are moved by only 0.01

scale points (on the DEU scale running from 0 to 100) to the right for a unit change in the

compromise position on the RILE scale. However, if majority cabinets are strongly coordi-

nated, DEU positions shift by 0.55 points per RILE point on average. For instance, the re-

placement of a right-wing by a left-wing support coalition with a difference of 40 points in

the compromise positions on the RILE scale (e.g. -20 vs. 20) would lead the member state to

shift its position by 22 DEU scale points. Substantively, the meaning of this shift varies by

issue. As an example, for the issue of CO_2 emission rights of the aviation industry displayed

in Figure 2, this would be the difference between a position in favour of fixing the total

amount of emission allowances at 95% of the 2005-07 annual average emissions (22) or the

2004-06 annual average emissions (0).

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[13] This might indicate that opposition parties in strong parliaments may have some clout on

the negotiation position even though the cabinet parties control a majority of seats. Howev-

er, while the interaction term between parliamentary oversight and the compromise is nega-

tive, it is *not* statistically significant.

In contrast to executive coordination, parliamentary oversight does not lead to more compromising within majority governments, since the magnitude of the compromise effect is 0.82 DEU scale points with weak oversight (= 0.6) but 0.41 with strong oversight (= 1.25). Hence, majority governments are induced to strike compromises due to executive coordination rather than parliamentary oversight that might strengthen the opposition more than the coalition partners. In contrast, for minority governments, even with strong executive coordination, the effect of the compromise is virtually zero (0.01 points). Under minority rule, parliamentary oversight is needed in addition to executive coordination to make the compromise substantively relevant. If supporting parties can draw on strong parliamentary oversight (= 1.25) and cabinet parties on executive coordination, DEU positions shift by 0.65 points in response to changes in the compromise position. Only for minority governments with very strong oversight (=1.5), comparable magnitudes of the compromise effect (i.e., 0.8) are attainable without executive coordination. But such cases are not present in our data. Hence, in most cases, either executive coordination under majority rule or a combination of executive coordination and strong parliamentary oversight under minority rule result in a sizable magnitude of the effect of coalition compromises (0.4 to 0.8).

In summary, we find ample support for our model of coalition policy-making. Government support coalitions are more likely to coordinate on compromises in their EU-level policy positions when they are majority governments, when the ideological stakes are high, when executives coordinate internally, and when supporting parties can police the government from the opposition ranks in parliament. We corroborate these results with various robustness checks reported in the Online Appendix (section 6).

In contrast to Martin and Vanberg's (2011) work on coalition policy-making on domestic issues, we find no general effect of strong parliamentary oversight on the likelihood of compromises in EU affairs but only a conditional effect for minority governments (see section 7 in the Online Appendix for an extended analysis). In EU matters, cabinet participation and executive coordination appear to serve coalitions as substitutes for parliamentary oversight, at least in the case of majority governments.

CONCLUSIONS

Managing differences is at the centre of coalition politics. The preferences of parties diverge, but only one common policy can be adopted. Understanding which institutions structure intra-coalitional negotiations and influence whose preferences will be reflected in the settlement of conflicts is therefore a salient concern. Most research on coalition policy-making focuses on how partners set policy in domestic politics. In contrast, we have analysed which institutional arrangements enable parties to enforce the compromise onto national ministers when negotiating EU legislation at the international level. Our results are clear. Compromises on EU affairs are foremost agreed upon by majority governments at the cabinet table and in inter-ministerial committees, where parties share information at the early stages of policy preparation. In addition, support coalitions that are divided into cabinet and opposition parties can end up striking compromises in the legislature if procedures serve opposition parties in extracting information and influencing EU policy-making of their cabinet counterparts. Majority government coalitions are not in need of the legislature to organise compromises on EU issues but use executive institutions as substitutes.

Notable limitations of our work are that we do not test other distributions of bargaining power between coalition partners than seat-proportional or uniform distributions. If empirically tractable, it would, for instance, be interesting to measure the value coalition parties attach to the government in office as a factor determining their bargaining power. We also do not account for multi-dimensional policy spaces, in which side payments may occur. These are important frontiers for future work in the field.

Our results have nevertheless important implications for the debate on citizen representation in EU policy-making. Most importantly, they demonstrate that in certain institutional settings government parties broadly fulfil their electoral mandates at the EU level, and thereby act in line with key models of representation, such as the 'responsible party model', mandate models, or 'promissory representation' (Klingemann et al., 1994; Mansbridge, 2003; McDonald & Budge, 2005; Ranney, 1962). It is true that our analyses do not tap into the fulfilment of specific party pledges but only gauge correlations between central government ideology and policy positions. But a broad correspondence between policy positions and the ideology of the government support coalition of parties appears desirable in itself and is likely a prerequisite for any more specific form of mandate fulfilment. Hence, our results suggest that institutional innovations for managing EU affairs could be further diffused, as they effectively curtail ministerial discretion and enforce compromises as a more 'inclusive' form of representation.

This point can be put in a broader perspective. In any non-minimalist account of democracy, the quality of the negotiation process by which policies are agreed matters. As Mansbridge and Warren have noted, 'the question of justice in the process of negotiation is ultimately part of the question of the justice in democratic representation' (2013, p. 92). To the

extent that the institutions investigated here enforce joint decision-making over single-handed actions by ministers, they strengthen the democratic premise that 'those who have rightful *claims* to inclusion should also have the *means* for inclusion' (Mansbridge & Warren, 2013, p. 92). In fact, if ministerial autonomy is the alternative, executive and legislative institutions are effectively prerequisites for any inter-party negotiations at all. Nevertheless, from the perspective of deliberative political theory, the legislature as opposed to the cabinet or inter-ministerial venues is the preferable negotiation forum to reach fair compromises due to its greater inclusiveness.

In this view, while our results support yet another time the claim of executive dominance in EU politics, they also highlight that the main 'democratic deficit' emanating from this dominance is not necessarily policy drift by ministers away from their domestic mandates (Føllesdal and Hix 2006: 534). As we show, this drift can be limited through executive coordination. Rather, the key challenge for democratic representation by governments in EU policy-making is the inferior inclusiveness of executive compared to legislative venues, combined with parties' tendency, at least under the baseline of majority government, to primarily rely on such executive venues when organizing compromises on EU issues.

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