The Powers of the Union
devels and tests a new theory of central-
ization and bureaucratization in the European Union. Using original
data spanning five decades and a multi-method approach, Franchino
argues that most EU laws rely extensively on national administrations
for policy implementation and provide for ample national discretionary
authority, while limiting tightly the involvement of the European Com-
mission. However, when Council ministers do not share the same
policy objectives, some have the incentive to limit national executive
discretion and to rely more on the Commission. Majority voting facil-
itates this outcome, but the limited policy expertise of supranational
bureaucrats and their biased views impede extensive supranational del-
egation. Finally, the European Parliament systematically attempts to
limit national discretion, especially when its views differ from ministe-
rial opinions, and tries to increase the Commission’s policy autonomy.
The book contributes to understanding political–bureaucratic relations
and evaluates the implications for EU democracy and subsidiarity.

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The Powers of the Union

Delegation in the EU

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To Eliana for making this book possible
and
to Mathias and Thomas for making it (almost) impossible
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A formal model of delegation in the European Union</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Data and longitudinal analysis</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Decision rules, preferences and policy complexity</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Delegation in the European Union: quantitative analysis</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Delegation in the European Union: case studies</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 The delegation preferences of the European Parliament</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Conclusion</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures

2.1 Moves of the games.  page 29
2.2 Delegation preferences of governments.  35
2.3 Delegation preferences of government M in the case of a new law.  39
2.4 Delegation equilibria with unanimity and a new law.  45
2.5 Equilibrium national discretion with unanimity and a new law.  47
2.6 Delegation equilibria with majority voting and a new law.  48
2.7 Equilibrium national discretion, a new law and supranational Commission.  50
2.8 Equilibrium discretion of the Commission, a new law, Council conflict and majority voting.  52
2.9 An example of equilibrium national and Commission discretion.  54
3.1 Major laws per issue area, 1958–93.  82
3.2 Major laws per year, 1958–97.  83
3.3 Histograms of delegation ratios.  89
3.4 Histograms of constraint ratios.  91
3.5 Scatter plot and box plots: national administrations.  99
3.6 Scatter plot and box plots: European Commission.  100
3.7 Histograms of discretion ratios.  104
3.8 Average yearly number of major provisions.  105
3.9 Trends in national delegation, constraint and discretion ratios.  106
3.10 Trends in Commission delegation, constraint and discretion ratios.  108
4.1 Integration and left–right range.  131
4.2 Composition of the college of commissioners, 1958–99.  137
4.3 Council and Commission integration preferences, 1958–93.  141
5.1 Discretion of the European Commission by conflict within the Council along the policy dimension.  181
List of figures

6.1 By-catch, discards and overfishing. 220
7.1 The fate of 414 codecision proposals for directives or regulations after an EP vote, mid 2003. 247
7.2 Discretion of national administrations and Parliament–Council policy conflict. 266
Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The hypotheses.</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics: delegation and constraint measures.</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics: summary for national administrations.</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics: summary for the Commission.</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Acts and delegation.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Factor analysis and Pearson correlation coefficients.</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Acts and discretion.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Policy categories from the Manifestos Research Group and EU policy categories.</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Differences between the integration preferences of the Council pivot and the Commission.</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Programmes and committees in the sampled laws.</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Independent variables: description and summary statistics.</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.A1</td>
<td>Policy categories from the Manifestos Research Group and EU policy categories – alternative matching 2.</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.A2</td>
<td>Variables: description and summary statistics of the alternative policy matchings.</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Robust logistic regression of the effect of decision rules on delegation to national administrations.</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Average discretion of national administrations.</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>The effect of decision rules and information intensity on the discretion of national administrations: robust OLS regressions.</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>The effect of conflict in the Council on the discretion of national administrations: robust OLS regressions. Qualified majority laws.</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>The effect of conflict in the Council on the discretion of national administrations: robust OLS regressions. Qualified majority laws, smaller data set.</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of tables

5.6 Summary regression: the impact of decision rules, policy complexity and conflict in the Council on the discretion of national administrations. 172
5.7 Robust logistic regression of the effect of decision rules on delegation to the European Commission. 174
5.8 Average discretion of the European Commission. 176
5.9 The effect of policy complexity, decision rules and conflict on the discretion of the European Commission. 177
5.10 The effect of conflict within the Council on the discretion of the European Commission in laws adopted by qualified majority voting. 180
5.11 The impact of decision rules on relative discretion. 185
5.12 The impact of conflict within the Council on relative discretion in laws adopted by qualified majority voting. 186
5.13 The models for the J-tests. 191
5.14 J-tests for the Commitment and Decision rule models. 191
5.15 The impact of decision rules, policy complexity and conflict in the Council on the discretion of national administrations. Alternative measures of policy preferences. 196
5.16 The effect of conflict within the Council on the discretion of the European Commission in qualified majority voting laws. Alternative measures of policy preferences. 197
5.17 The impact of conflict within the Council on relative discretion in qualified majority voting laws. Alternative measures of policy preferences. 198
6.1 Case studies and hypotheses. 201
7.1 Amendments in equal treatment legislation. 249
7.2 Amendments in internal market legislation. 252
7.3 Amendments in environmental legislation. 254
7.4 Descriptive statistics on second reading amendments. 256
7.5 Description and summary statistics of the variables. 262
7.6 Council–Parliament conflict and second reading amendments: robust OLS regressions. 263
7.7 The impact of European Parliament second reading amendments across policy areas: robust OLS regressions. 269
7.8 Components for the content analysis. 273
7.9 Content analysis: two-sample Z-tests on the equality of proportions. 277
7.A1 Keywords and sentences used for the content analysis. 287
I care about the European Union (EU) and I care to understand it, possibly without too many preconceptions. The desire to comprehend, explain or, at least, minimally grasp its complexities is what motivates this work and probably also, as a European, my innate eagerness to be part of it.

Most of my adult life, first as a student and then as an academic, has been inexorably shaped by EU policies. I had the chance to study, work and travel abroad, opportunities that my parents would have not even dreamt of. As a result, my horizons broadened and my desire for critical understanding deepened.

This book is therefore the result of a long journey of research. It would have not seen the light of day without the support and encouragement of many institutions, colleagues and friends. Early on, in 1994, the Brighton Business School provided me with much needed financial backing, and its staff with much appreciated encouragement, even before I commenced my academic career. They were my springboard and I thank them dearly. The foundations of this work were laid down between 1995 and 2000 during my Ph.D. at the London School of Economics where I encountered a challenging and stimulating research environment. I am profoundly indebted to Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey, a tough – and thus excellent – supervisor, and to Simon Hix, a friend and an inspiring colleague with contagious enthusiasm about Europe and our discipline. When I was lecturing at the LSE, Alessandro Volcic provided invaluable research assistance to my project.

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I am writing these last few comments peering through my office window that overlooks Tavistock Square. It is hard to avoid thinking of the suicide attack that took place two weeks ago on the street opposite the department. This message of death, hatred and intolerance is at the opposite pole of what, if anything, the European project stands for: peace, integration and tolerance. The sadness and, perhaps, disillusionment that we feel in these circumstances should not overshadow our successes. Even in the face of setbacks, past achievements should comfort us into realizing that integration and tolerance permeate most of today's societies and, when challenged, these values have prevailed over time.
Preface

The final, and most important, acknowledgment goes to the love and support of my family. The encouragement and assistance I have received from my parents, Paolina Lazzarini and Sergio Franchino, are of inestimable proportions. My sons, Mathias and Thomas, have made the journey full of joy and laughter, while my wife, Eliana Colla, deserves an equal share of any credit that this work may receive, for her strength, tenacity and tolerance of the idiosyncrasies of academic life. I dedicate this book to them.

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