

The Politics of the European Union

Third Edition

The European Union is a key player in determining policies and politics in Europe, and yet understanding how it works remains a challenge. *The Politics of the European Union* introduces students to its functioning by showing the similarities and differences between the EU and national political systems. Fully revised and updated in its third edition, this introductory textbook uses the tools of comparative politics to explore the history, theories, institutions, key actors, politics and policy-making of the EU. This comparative approach enables students to apply their knowledge of domestic politics and broader debates in political science to better understand the EU. Numerous real-world examples guide students through the textbook, and chapter briefings, fact files and controversy boxes highlight the important and controversial issues in EU politics. A companion website features free 'Navigating the EU' exercises to guide students in their analysis of EU policy-making.

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Third Edition

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Preface

Why yet another textbook on EU politics? And why in a series on comparative politics? For us, the answers to these two questions are closely linked. Having taught EU politics for several years, both of us grew increasingly dissatisfied with the introductory texts on EU politics available on the market. Our dissatisfaction stemmed from two facts. First, existing textbooks on EU politics tend to be too descriptive for our liking. Vast parts of those texts are devoted to discussing the details of the EU's institutional set-up or the intricacies of EU decision-making procedures. By contrast, we are more interested in the political processes that take place within the EU. Knowledge of the EU's institutions and procedures is necessary in order to study those processes fruitfully, but our objective in teaching EU politics is to give students an understanding of how politics in the EU works, not of the EU's institutions and procedures per se. Second, most textbooks still look at the EU as a 'one-of-a-kind' system or, as it is commonly put in the EU studies literature, as an organization 'sui generis'. The focus on the EU's uniqueness makes it difficult for students to relate their understanding of EU politics to what they know about other political systems. We believe that, increasingly, the EU can best be studied from a comparative politics perspective, and that this should form the leading premise of a textbook on EU politics. What we were looking for was a book that we could use for undergraduate students new to the subject and that would draw upon a wide range of theoretical approaches. Hence this book.

■ Why Comparative Politics?

For us, the core assumption underlying a comparative politics approach to the EU is that most of the questions that can be asked of domestic political systems can also be asked of the EU – even if the answers to those questions are not always the same. The latter addition is crucial because we do not mean to imply that the EU is 'essentially' (whatever that may mean) or even just for practical purposes a 'state' or 'like a state'. What we do claim is that the kind of questions that we normally ask of domestic political systems can (and should) also be asked of the EU. These include questions such as: How are relations between the 'executive' and the 'legislative' organized? In what ways do citizen opinions play a role in political decision-making? What role do political parties play in politics? How much influence do interest groups have over policymaking? How do issues reach the political agenda? How are policies implemented once they have been adopted? It is not self-evident that these questions can be asked of any political institution. For instance, we

Preface

doubt whether it would yield useful insights to ask about the role of political parties in the World Trade Organization or executive–legislative relationships in the United Nations Organization. In order for these questions to make sense, the actors that we commonly look at when studying domestic politics at least need to be present in the political system we are interested in. In the case of the EU, so we argue, this is indeed the case.

Having said that, the answers that we give to those questions in the EU will often be different from those we give in domestic political systems. Although it makes sense to study political parties in the EU, their organization and the role they play in EU politics are quite different from the way they operate in most EU member states. Likewise, we can study executive–parliamentary relations in the EU, but in doing so we will have to acknowledge that ‘the executive’ is much less clearly defined in the EU than it is in domestic politics. This, however, is exactly the point of looking at the EU from a comparative politics perspective: by asking the same questions, we can see more clearly both where EU politics is similar to domestic politics and where it is different. This is not unlike the benefit of applying a comparative politics perspective to domestic political systems – after all, no two countries are identical and in studying them comparatively we will see both commonalities and points at which specific countries are unique.

■ **How This Book Is Organized**

In taking a comparative politics perspective, we have made a number of choices about the organization of the book. Since our focus is on gaining an understanding of how EU politics works, our treatment of the history, institutions and policies of the EU has been structured in such a way that it invites comparisons with other political systems and concentrates on the political dynamics of the EU.

This book consists of three parts plus a concluding chapter. The first part (Chapters 1–4) lays the foundation for studying EU politics by developing a working knowledge of the historical development of the EU (Chapter 1), theoretical approaches to studying EU politics (Chapter 2) and the institutions and procedures of the EU (Chapters 3 and 4). We do not see this knowledge as an end in itself. Although we acknowledge that an understanding of history, institutions and procedures is important for understanding political systems and political processes, we also believe that – in a political science textbook – discussions of history, institutions and procedures should be instrumental to discussions of political processes. Hence, we seek to place the EU’s history, institutions and procedures within the framework of the EU’s political system as a whole and we elucidate the logic behind the EU’s institutional and procedural framework.

The second part (Chapters 5–7) moves on to discuss the role of three key actors in politics: citizens (Chapter 5), interest groups (Chapter 6) and political parties (Chapter 7). In these three chapters, we show what role they play in EU politics and how this compares with the roles of citizens, interest groups and political parties in domestic political systems. In this way, a better insight can be obtained into how the EU works and what it is that makes EU politics ‘tick’.

The third part (Chapters 8–11) focuses on policies. Policies are arguably a key ‘output’ of any political system. It is in making policies that politics has its greatest impact on society. Therefore, much of what political actors do is linked, one way or another, to

influencing policies. In discussing EU policy-making, we take a thematic approach. After an overview of policy-making and the main policy fields in Chapter 8, we take a closer look at three important aspects of policy-making processes: agenda-setting (Chapter 9), decision-making (Chapter 10) and implementation (Chapter 11). By reading these chapters, students will be equipped with the conceptual and theoretical tools that they can subsequently use to study and analyse specific policies and policy areas.

Finally, Chapter 12 brings together a number of threads woven throughout this book. It does so by reflecting on three important issues in debates on the EU. First, it takes a look at the way the EU functions in times of crisis. This merits specific attention because the EU has moved from one crisis to another in recent decades and because it highlights some of the characteristics of the EU as a political system. Second, it discusses whether and to what extent the EU resembles ‘states’ and ‘international organizations’ as we know them. Finally, having compared the EU with other (democratic) political systems, what can we say about the democratic credentials of the EU itself? In this context, we also reflect on the ‘rule of law crisis’ that has been an important issue for debate in the EU over the past decade.

■ Features to Help You Learn

Learning a subject is not just about substance, it is also about the appropriate ways of bringing the substance to life. Therefore, we have sought to aid students’ understanding of the EU by adding a number of learning tools that link abstract concepts and theories to concrete issues and debates:

- In briefings, important issues are highlighted and background information is given without distracting from the argument in the main text.
- Fact files provide concise overviews of key facts for easy reference. Small boxes in the margin of the text define and explain key concepts.
- Students are engaged in debating EU politics through controversy boxes that discuss topical debates in the EU and invite students to reflect on them.
- In addition, we have developed a number of ‘Navigating the EU’ exercises for each chapter. In these exercises, students are encouraged to further explore EU politics by making use of the vast amounts of information now available on the Internet. Because of the changeability of internet sources, these exercises are not included in the book itself but are available on the website www.navigatingthe.eu.

All in all, we have sought to write a book that will be attractive to students and instructors alike. It will be of interest to those studying or teaching courses in the fields of political science, government and European studies. For those readers, we hope to have written a book that is accessible, stimulating and clear – the kind of book we wanted to use in our own courses.

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We thank Jan van Deth and Kenneth Newton, who as series editors entrusted us with this project back in 2007. Their idea to produce a book on the EU in a comparative politics textbook series provided a perfect match with our longstanding desire to write such a book based upon our experience teaching the EU in this fashion. The editorial and production teams at Cambridge University Press smoothly managed the writing and production process. Deadlines were handled with just the appropriate amount of flexibility needed to combine our project with other commitments, while ensuring a steady progress on completing the manuscript.

In revising the text for this Third Edition, we were helped enormously by the comments and feedback we received from users over the past years. In addition, we would like to thank the lecturers who filled out the questionnaire on the Second Edition that was sent out by Cambridge University Press. Their observations and suggestions were invaluable for improving the text. We also thank Hanna Zelma Horányi for her help in updating many of the book's tables and figures and University College Roosevelt for funding this. Of course, any remaining errors in the text are ours.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEPP	Authority for European Political Parties
AFSJ	Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
AI	Artificial intelligence
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats of Europe
Benelux	Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg
BEUC	European Consumer Organization
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union (Germany)
CEECs	Central and Eastern European Countries
Cefic	European Chemical Industry Council
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CJ	Court of Justice of the European Union
COPA–COGECA	Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations–General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives
COPS	Political and Security Committee
CoR	Committee of the Regions
Coreper	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CPME	Standing Committee of European Doctors
CPVO	Community Plant Variety Office
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DG	Directorate–General
DG GROW	Directorate–General Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
DMA	Digital Markets Act
DSA	Digital Services Act
EASA	European Aviation Safety Agency
ECB	European Central Bank
ECI	European Citizens Initiative
ECOFIN	Economic and Financial Affairs
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists Group
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDA	European Defence Agency
EDC	European Defence Community
EDPB	European Data Protection Board

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EDRi	European Digital Rights
EEA	European Economic Area
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EES	European Employment Strategy
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EFSA	European Food and Safety Agency
EFSF	European Financial Stability Fund
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ELDR	European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party
EMA	European Medicines Agency
EMS	European Monetary System
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ENF	Europe of Nations and Freedom
EP	European Parliament
EPACA	European Public Affairs Consultancies' Association
EPC	European Political Community
EPP	Group of the European People's Party
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERNs	European Regulatory Networks
ESCB	European System of Central Banks
ESF	European Social Fund
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU	European Union
EUIPO	European Union Intellectual Property Office
EU-OSHA	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
Europol	European Police Office
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei (Germany)
France Chimie	French chemical industry umbrella organization
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross domestic product
GDPR	European General Data Protection Regulation
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GMOs	Genetically modified organisms
GNI	Gross national income
Greens/EFA	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
IAR	International Authority for the Ruhr
ID	Identity and Democracy Group
IGC	Intergovernmental Conference
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International relations
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
MAVESZ	Hungarian Chemical Industry Association

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

MEPs	Members of the European Parliament
MLG	Multi-level governance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NI	<i>Non-inscrits</i> , non-attached members in the EP
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEEC	Organization for European Economic Co-operation
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
Open VLD	Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (Belgium)
PES	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
PP	Partido Popular (Spain)
PS	Parti Socialiste (France)
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spain)
QMV	Qualified majority voting
Renew	Renew Europe Group
ROADPOL	European Roads Policing Network
S&D	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
SCA	Special Committee on Agriculture
SEA	Single European Act
SEAP	Society of European Affairs Professionals
SGP	Stability and Growth Pact
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (Austria)
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
The Left	The Left Group in the European Parliament
TOR	Traditional own resources
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	UK Independence Party
USA	United States of America
US	United States
VAT	Value added tax
WEU	Western European Union
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Country Abbreviations Used in Tables and Figures

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czechia
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
EU-27	All current member states