

# Socjalizacja a podejmowanie decyzji w Radzie Unii Europejskiej

## Streszczenie

Złożony system podejmowania decyzji w Radzie Unii Europejskiej ma wiele specyficznych cech, które wymagają wyjaśnienia. W artykule tym przyjęto konstruktywistyczne podejście do tego zagadnienia i skupiono się na znaczeniu socjalizacji. W pierwszej części wyjaśniono, dlaczego prowadzenie dociekań na temat decydowania w Radzie z perspektywy konstruktywistycznej jest uzasadnione, a następnie zaproponowano zastosowanie metody śledzenia procesy, która umożliwia śledzenie mechanizmów przyczynowych, łączących skutki socjalizacji z cechami podejmowania decyzji w Radzie. W kolejnej części omówiono typologię mechanizmów i efektów socjalizacji. Trzecią część artykułu stanowi próba zastosowania indukcyjnego wariantu metody *process-tracing* do wyjaśnienia niektórych właściwości podejmowania decyzji w Radzie. Na koniec przedstawiono skupiony na teorii wariant śledzenia procesu, który mógłby stanowić dalszy ciąg badań zaprezentowanych wcześniej. Zwrócono również uwagę na konieczność uwzględnienia stanowiących aspektów procesu socjalizacji w ramach przyczynowego ujęcia, które narzuca metoda *process-tracing*.

**Słowa kluczowe:** skutki socjalizacji, podejmowanie decyzji przez urzędników, kultura konsensusu, tryby negocjacji, odwrócona reprezentacja, śledzenie procesu, mechanizmy przyczynowe

## Abstract

The complex system of decision-making in the Council of the European Union has many specific features which require explanation. This article presents a constructivist approach to this problem and focuses on the influence of socialisation. First, it explains why inquiry into the decision-making in the Council from the constructivist perspective is justified and then proposes the use of process-tracing, a method that allows to trace causal mechanisms linking the effects of socialisation and the characteristics of decision-making in the Council. Second, a typology of socialisation mechanisms and effects is presented. The third section is an attempt to use the inductive variety of process-tracing in order to explain certain qualities of decision-making in the Council. The final section outlines the theory-oriented approach to process-tracing, which could follow from the presented conceptualisation and explains the need to include the constitutive aspects of socialisation within the causal framework of process-tracing research.

**Key words:** effects of socialisation, bureaucratic decision-making, culture of consensus, modes of negotiation, reversed representation, process-tracing, causal mechanisms

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## **Socialisation and decision-making in the Council of the European Union<sup>1</sup>**

Decision-making in the European Union (EU) is a complex process. Its output is affecting, both directly and indirectly, various aspects of life within the member states of the EU, as well as outside the Union's borders. As such, it receives considerable attention in EU studies. Researchers often focus on the ways decisions are made within particular institutions. The Council of the EU could arguably be considered the most important among them.

The Council is usually portrayed as an intergovernmental arena of bargaining, but there is considerable literature showing inadequacies of this picture. Constructivist researchers point towards the fact that the Council, with its multi-layered structure of working parties and committees, is a normatively dense social environment in which people get socialised and are not necessarily limited to the role of representatives of their governments' will. It is not clear, however, how exactly the process of socialisation affects the course and outcomes of decision-making.

The present article, which is also rooted in constructivism, attempts to conceptualise a possible explanation of several specific features of decision-making in the Council by reference to the effects of socialisation. It is aggregating several pieces of previous research and utilises the inductive variety of process-tracing (Beach, Pedersen 2013) to provide causal mechanisms linking effects of socialisation and features of decision-making in the Council. The study also briefly presents a way of utilising different varieties of process-tracing in a sequential manner, with theory testing (or deductive) type meant to

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verify the accuracy of explanations developed with other kinds of process-tracing. These explanations could also be reconceptualised and operationalised as more precise, lower level mechanisms, so that their presence could be tested with more validity.

The main research question is how to capture and explain the influence of the effects of socialisation on the way decision are made in the Council. It focuses on conceptual and methodological issues. The paper is divided into four parts. The first section briefly explains why an inquiry into the decision-making in the Council of the EU from the constructivist perspective is justified and presents a method that allows to trace causal mechanisms which bind the effects of socialisation and the distinctive qualities of the Council decision-making – process-tracing. Next, processes of socialisation in institutional settings are introduced: their mechanisms are described and their effects differentiated according to their depth (or persistence). The third section summarises the results of an attempt at inductive variety of process-tracing. The fourth section outlines the most important issues related to further research into the subject utilising “theory-testing” process-tracing. It also stresses the importance of including constitutive relations between structure and agents within the causal framework of process-tracing research.

## **Decision-making in the Council, constructivism and process-tracing**

Decisions are made at multiple levels in the EU, with input from various actors and according to several different procedures. This complex system has been established to balance diverse interests and ensure that the decisions ultimately taken are beneficial to the EU as a whole and acceptable to main European political actors – especially the EU member states.

Studying the decision-making process in the EU is one of the core subjects of EU studies. It can be pursued at the general level or it can focus on the manner in which decisions are made in particular EU institutions. In the latter case, explaining the decision-making process in the Council of the European Union (sometimes called the Council of Ministers) is arguably the most important matter, because of the position this institution occupies in the EU system: the Council’s assent is necessary in almost every decision taken within the EU (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace 2006; Ławniczak 2014).

The Council of the European Union is one of the main elements of the network of institutions that make decisions within the EU. The Council, together with the European Parliament and the European Commission, constitute the “institutional triangle”,

the centre of the “community method” and the engine behind the everyday functioning of European integration. The Council has legislative, budgetary, executive and supervisory powers. It is an arena of intergovernmental negotiations, but also a crucial actor of interinstitutional dialogue within the EU. The multi-layered Council does most of its workload in numerous preparatory bodies of the “bureaucratic tier”: working parties and committees (Häge 2008). Each of them is devoted to particular, rather narrowly defined sectors of EU policies. Their work is coordinated by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper, fr. *Comité des représentants permanents*) and relayed to the highest layer of the Council, “the political tier”, where the ministers meet in ten different configurations to take final decisions (Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace 2006). The following analysis focuses on the bureaucratic tier of the Council.

### **A constructivist approach to decision-making in the Council**

Negotiations which take place within the Council’s complex structure are simultaneously political, bureaucratic and technocratic. The continuity of the Council’s work increases the importance of the legacy of previous decisions, the role of institutionalised practice and the established rules of proper behaviour (Lempp, Altenschmidt 2008; Lewis 2010; Naurin 2009; Niemann 2010). Negotiations are usually highly consensual, even if seeking the common ground requires their participants to expend more of their time and effort (Aus 2010; Heisenberg 2005).

Several studies show the importance of personal qualities of the member states’ representatives and their informal networks of communication. Even though the country a person represents is important for determining their negotiation success, this variable by itself cannot explain the variation in influence each representative has on final decisions (Naurin, Lindahl 2010; Beyers, Dierickx 1998). This observation is well illustrated by the fact that the representatives of smaller states often have significant influence (Thomson 2010). Efficient navigation through networks of informal communication, which are established in the Council, requires exceptional social and intellectual skills, but most importantly much experience (Lewis 2007). Some inquiries also attempt to capture the influence of ideological preferences or party allegiance of negotiators on decision-making (Miklin 2009; Hagemann, Høyland 2008).

The complexity of decision-making in the Council necessitates a focused research approach, which only investigates some of its features. Scholars working within the

rational choice framework usually adopt a materialist ontological standpoint and consider ideational factors to be, at most, epiphenomenal. The opposite approach, idealism, is embraced by constructivists, who seek to understand the role of ideas, norms and identities, and explain their role in the decision-making processes. Constructivism is “based on social ontology which insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meanings” (Risse 2009: p. 145) Ideas contained in norms and identities are socially constructed and diffused. They can influence behaviour of human agents, but they also constitute them, by supplying them with the understandings necessary to relate themselves to the world and express who they are. Constructivists do not claim material factors to be irrelevant, but deny them meaning independent of ideas. Only through ideas the material factors can be interpreted and thus influence the way social processes unfold (Jackson, Sørensen 2013).

The constructivist approach directs the explanation of the decision-making process in the Council towards individual representatives of the member states and their socialisation – “a process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community” (Checkel 2005: p. 804). Socialisation within the Council takes place among the representatives of member states working in preparatory bodies in various layers of its complex structure. Literature on the subject suggests the process of socialisation is observable in the Council (e.g. Lewis 2010), but there is disagreement regarding the extent to which it influences the functioning of the institution. The more specific question raised here remains open: what are the mechanisms through which the effects of socialisation might influence the course and outcomes of decision-making in the Council? In other words, how does these effects shape the features of decision-making in the Council?

### **How to trace the influence of socialisation?**

Process-tracing “examines the deductive observable implications” of mechanisms it aims to trace in a given case “to test whether these might in fact explain the case” (Bennett, Checkel 2012: p. 7). The method attempts to “identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (George, Bennett 2005: p. 206). It is concerned with micro-foundations of observed processes and relations and enables to look inside the “black box” of causality (Beach, Pedersen 2013).

Process-tracing is useful not only to test theories (deductively), but to develop them as well (inductively), using “evidence from within a case to develop hypotheses that might explain the case” (Bennett, Checkel 2012: p. 7). Beach and Pedersen (2013) distinguish three varieties of process-tracing:

- a. theory-testing process-tracing,
- b. theory-building process-tracing,
- c. explaining-outcome process-tracing.

The first two are theory-centric and are often described in the literature as the deductive and inductive variants of process-tracing. It is however the third, case-centric approach that is in fact the most commonly used in actual empirical research. The theory-centric process-tracing has generalising ambitions and aims at fairly parsimonious explanation of social phenomenon based on causal mechanisms which are not case-specific. The case-centric variant is more contextual and attempts to find sufficient explanation of specific phenomenon, which might entail more complex array of causal mechanism, some of which might be relevant only to the case in question.

I decided to adopt the third variant, assuming that the whole decision-making process in the Council of the European Union could be treated as a case of institutional decision-making whose distinctive features need to be explained. In fact, the approach was slightly modified because preference was given to socialisation-based explanations. It is, however, typical to introduce such deductive elements into this mostly inductive framework of case study research. As will be explained in section four, this way the explanation developed here can be used as a basis for further studies focused on theory-testing. Before describing the inquiry and its results it is necessary to introduce the concept of socialisation and its effects in more detail.

### **Socialisation: mechanisms and effects**

To develop coherent conceptualisations and operationalisation of the causal mechanisms linking the effects of socialisation to the features of decision-making in the Council it is important to distinguish different kinds of socialisation – both in regard to the way the process occurs and the effects it brings about. Michael Zürn and Jeffrey T. Checkel (2005) differentiate four first-order socialisation mechanisms by combining two distinctions: first, whether the mechanism affects preferences or constraints, and second, whether it operates through actors or through structures. The actor-induced socialisation mechanism

affecting constraints is strategic adaptation, which is manifested by (mostly integrative or “soft”) bargaining. If the change originates in the structure, the mechanism is called social influence. Mechanisms affecting preferences are, respectively, normative persuasion through arguing and (structure-induced) role playing (more detailed discussion of these mechanisms can be found in: Zürn, Checkel 2005).

This fourfold typology might be transformed into a typology of socialisation effects. There are however two important differences. Firstly, the distinction of constraints and preferences, which is relevant to the question of how socialisation occurs, should be substituted by the distinction of adaptation (to constraints) and internalisation (of preferences and norms). Secondly, the question will not be whether actors or structures initiate socialisation, but how is its effect perpetuated. I believe that in this case the classification needs to be changed: while actors engage in arguing to socialise others, the lasting effect or normative suasion is sustained structurally, and although roles are induced by structure, the continuous role playing requires individual agency. It can also be argued, however, that both effects are the result of a complex interaction of structure and agency that defies the proposed distinction.

**Figure 1: Effects of socialisation**

| <b>what is the effect of socialisation? →<br/>who is perpetuating it? ↓</b> | <b>adaptation</b>    | <b>internalisation</b> |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>agents</b>   | strategic adaptation | role playing           |
| <b>structure</b>  | social influence     | normative suasion      |

Source: own elaboration, compare: Zürn, Checkel 2005.

Strategic adaptation as an effect of socialisation<sup>2</sup> is based on individual utility-maximising calculation. As such, it is highly unstable: dependent on norm defiance bringing less utility, i.e. worse egoistically assessed results, than norm compliance. It might

<sup>2</sup> One could argue that the use of the term „socialisation” here is inappropriate. However, even if adapting to norms and rules into which an agent is inducted follows from their interest-based calculation, it remains a behavioural change brought about by introduction into a new community and can be considered a minimal form of socialisation.

be, however, the first step towards more engaging socialisation. Such deeper changes can be introduced by secondary socialisation mechanisms, when the strategic actor becomes trapped in their own normative claims, e.g. through cognitive dissonance.

Social influence is less changeable, because it is the structure (or more simply the group) that sustains the effect of socialisation. The group maintains norm compliance by offering rewards for appropriate behaviour and punishing inappropriate one (i.e. uses “carrots and sticks”). Still, because the effect is based on adaptation and does not involve any degree of normative internalisation, it can be reversed when the structure becomes less effective at sanctioning the proper behaviour, so that defying the norms becomes a viable course of action for strategic agents.

Both of the effects which are based on internalisation are more stable and are in fact a result of complex constitutive relationship between structure and individual agency. Role playing is considered here to be dependent on the decision of socialised actors to willingly perpetuate the social roles ascribed to them structurally. They can challenge them, but more importantly, they do not play the roles for calculated benefit, but because of their attitude towards the normative environment: they accept the way “things are done” in a given group, without either much reflective or strategic consideration. Because of that the internalisation entailed by role playing is not complete and is more about internalising the whole role-conception rather than individual norms that the role comprises.

Normative suasion, on the other hand, means that actors take structurally held norms and standards of appropriateness as their own. They believe that these norms define “the right thing to do” – in fact, the social conventions within the group become, to some extent, reified. The depth of normative suasion brings it as close to resocialisation as secondary socialisation could get (Berger, Luckmann 1966). The role player does not have to agree with every aspect of their role, but plays it anyway. A normatively persuaded actor can reflect on the way their beliefs changed and affirm that their current normative stance is not only appropriate in the context of the social group they belong to, but generally “right”. This could manifest when the actor is attempting to persuade others. Arguably, this effect of socialisation is the only one which conforms to the notion that socialisation in the EU institutions could foster some sort of European identity among Brussels-based bureaucrats.

What is crucial for any inquiry into socialisation in the multi-level institutions of the EU is the fact that none of its effects are strictly exclusive, i.e. they do not preclude other secondary socialisation processes (e.g. national) to remain in effect. As a result it is perfectly possible for an individual to become socialised at the supranational level



and remain faithful to the norms and practices acquired at the national level. This possibility is non-problematic in the case of adaptation-based depths of socialisation. It is also widely recognised that individuals can play different roles in different “theatres”, or even play several roles in the same situation (although role conflicts can occur and make the performance difficult or even impossible in some situations). When it comes to normative suasion, the problem is often resolved by reference to the “marble cake” conception of identity (Risse 2009). It is, however, important to stress the difference of this effect in this regard – because of the full internalisation it entails, individuals need to invest more effort into aligning the new norms with the ones internalised during previous social interactions.

### **Decision-making in the Council as a case of institutional decision-making**

Both theory-building and explaining-outcome variants of process-tracing need a sufficiently varied empirical material, which is then analysed and transformed into a body of evidence used in order to attempt a “reversed operationalisation” leading to the final result – the conceptualisation of causal mechanisms which might explain the studied case or a class of cases (if theory-building is attempted). Because decision-making in the Council is treated here as a single case, the broader the data, the more nuanced and convincing the explanation. The aim at this stage is to develop conceptualisations of causal mechanisms, not to test their relevance or establish when exactly the mechanisms manifest. Given the material and temporal constraints, I decided to use secondary sources. A survey of papers relevant to the subject revealed a number of texts which quoted individuals engaged in decision-making in the Council. The following analysis uses utterances quoted in: Aus 2010; Clark, Jones 2011; Lempp, Altenschmidt 2007; Lempp, Altenschmidt 2008; Lewis 2003; Lewis 2007; Lewis 2010; Niemann 2010; Trondal 2004.

To establish the outcomes which the inductive variety of process-tracing is meant to explain, I have identified four features of the decision-making process in the Council of the European Union that might be considered distinctive and seem to be, at least to some extent, the result of socialisation dynamics in this institution. These features are: the culture of consensus, taking decisions *de facto* at the bureaucratic level, group dynamics of negotiation, and mixing different modes of negotiation. They are detailed below and their explanation resulting from the analysis follows.

The first feature of Council decision-making which needs explanation is the culture of consensus. It is a set of informal norms that require the negotiating parties to try to achieve a compromise solution even if unanimity is not formally required. The culture of consensus protects the minority from being outvoted, but at the same time it demands a certain degree of flexibility from all actors – it is not unconditional and in fact makes it harder to oppose the majority view without convincing arguments and thus also affects the unanimous decision-taking. Available quantitative (Mattila 2010) and qualitative (Aus 2010) data as well as the failure of formal models to adequately predict the results of decision-making in the Council (König, Junge 2010) support the claim that the culture of consensus is present within the Council structure and constitutes an important and stable feature of its functioning (Heisenberg 2005).

This feature is an anomaly from the rational choice perspective. Even the authors who attempt to explain it with reference to strategic calculation have to include the role of social norms in their explanations and usually focus on circumstances when the culture of consensus does not apply rather than explain its persistence (Novak 2012; Pollock, Shaffer 2010; Høyland, Hansen 2010). Turning to constructivism and the effects of socialisation is therefore more promising if one wants to understand how the culture of consensus has become an integral part of decision-making in the Council, explain the determinants of its prevalence and analyse its consequences, including the way it encourages actors to express their dissenting opinions through means other than voting, e.g. with formal statements (Golub 2012; Tallberg 2010; Hagemann 2010).

Taking socialisation into account should also help explain why most decisions are made at the bureaucratic level of the Council (i.e. they are only formally accepted by ministers without their substantial engagement). This feature of decision-making extends to inter-institutional negotiations during the ordinary legislative procedure (“trilogues” with representatives of the Commission, the Parliament and the Council). While there are some rationalist attempts to explain the tendency to close negotiations in the lower layers (e.g. Häge 2011), pursuing the more socially-oriented explanation is viable, because of the tendency of the negotiators to mention their feelings of responsibility for a constructive outcome of negotiations and doubts regarding the ability of their political superiors to reach agreement on their own (Häge 2007; 2008; 2011; Reh et al. 2010).

The third feature of decision-making which I identified is the complexity and distinctiveness of group interaction and negotiation dynamics in the Council’s preparatory bodies. This subject has been extensively investigated by Jeffrey Lewis (2007) in

the case of Coreper. For example, Lewis observes that negotiators usually do not pursue their demands if their argumentation is not met with understanding within the group. They do not use the threat of vetoing proposals they do not agree with, yet often the reservations of individual representatives are taken into consideration and even defended by other members of the group when they contact their superiors (Lewis 2007).

What Lewis observes may be interpreted as a manifestation of certain collective standards of behaviour and validity of arguments, according to which some demands are deemed acceptable, while others are discredited and rejected. Representatives of the member states therefore consider some forms of negotiation behaviour as something that “is not done” in their group, even though they might be expected to do these things from the purely rationalist perspective. These social norms preclude some forms of dissent, but at the same time strengthen the mutual, empathic understanding among the group members. The norms exist independently of strategic calculation and are self-enforcing – no external coercive mechanisms are necessary to ensure group members’ compliance with norms. The self-restraint encouraged by these norms does not mean the pursuit of “national interest” has to be abandoned, but the definition of this interest must be embedded in a shared understanding and include justifications necessary to foster genuine support among group members. The latter is important not only to achieve agreement within the group, but also to ensure its members are able to persuasively present the agreement to their superiors (Lewis 2007; 2010; Aus 2010; Clark, Jones 2011).

Several modes of negotiation (e.g. bargaining, problem-solving, deliberation), based on different logics of action (of consequence, appropriateness or argumentation) are mixed in the Council. Their coexistence might be explained both from the rational choice and constructivist perspectives. Rational choice treats rule-bound and truth-seeking behaviour as special cases of calculative rationality (i.e. it assumes actors obey norms or deliberate because they expect their interests to be best served that way). Constructivism treats bargaining as a special case of norm-guided behaviour (i.e. it assumes actors engage in bargaining when they deem it appropriate to their role in a given situation; more on this distinction, see: Müller 2004). Both approaches need to explain the variation in the way negotiations are conducted within the Council, including such variables as openness, stage of negotiations or the kind of matters being discussed (Clark, Jones 2011; Aus 2010; Niemann 2006; 2010; Naurin 2009; Cross 2013; Pollack, Shaffer 2010).

For each of the above features, I attempted to conceptualise causal mechanisms that bring them about, starting from the specification of conditions that enable them to occur and then describing them in the dynamic manner (specifying agents and their actions,

see: Beach, Pedersen 2013). To do so, the empirical material mentioned above has been analysed in order to find statements which could substantiate these conceptualisations. It is important to note that as much as the features described above are interrelated, so are their explanations. The following conceptualisations focus on the distinguishing qualities of these features, but explanation of one features usually overlaps to some degree with explanations of other features. For the purpose of this paper I will offer a brief description of the developed mechanisms, followed by a table summarising the results and referencing the appropriate utterances.

The conditions for the occurrence of mechanisms explaining the culture of consensus are self-restraint and empathy, which are propagated through informal norms. These norms can comprise a role that is played or be fully internalised, but the representatives can also adapt to them strategically or as a result of social influence, and then find it difficult to withdraw from the agreement. The two mechanisms are, first, the representatives of the countries having majority negotiate according to the expectation of compromise held by the group, and, second, the representatives engage in reversed representation, i.e. they persuade their superiors to accept the negotiated agreement. One interviewee explained “it is impossible to present yourself as uncompromising in the Council, as someone who rigorously goes his own way. Sometimes you have to compromise; sometimes you have to do things a little bit against your preferences in order to get support from the others in areas that are more important to you. The Council is a much more flexible and dynamic body than other international organizations” (Lempp, Altenschmidt 2008: p. 520). Another quote, from one of the ambassadors, illustrates the second part of this explanation: “to get new instructions we have to show the national capital we have a black eye (...) We can ask Coreper for help; this is one of our standard practices” (Lewis 2010: p. 174).

The second feature (*de facto* bureaucratic decision-making) is explained by the representatives’ perception of themselves as competent and responsible for the results. This self-image enables the following causal mechanism: the representatives engage in problem solving with the belief that the result is their responsibility and any problem they do not solve will not be solved in the higher layers. According to one of the representatives “[officials from permanent representation] have a special feeling of responsibility for the EU. If we cannot find the solution, usually it is not possible for ministers in their limited time either” (Lempp, Altenschmidt 2007: p. 10)

The group dynamics of negotiation is brought about by the mechanism in which the representatives act with the feeling of belonging to the negotiation environment

constituted by their membership in the Council structure. The representatives “develop a certain loyalty to the committee” or the working group they are working in (Trondal 2004: p. 17). The cause of this mechanism is internalisation: either of the “group member” role or of the feeling of belonging to the group together with its normative consequences. A statement from Coreper meeting, quoted by Lewis (2010: p. 175), is quite demonstrative: “Mr Chairman, my instructions say to drop this if pressed, are you pressing me?”

The way in which different modes of negotiation coexist in the council could be the effect of strategic adaptation or social influence which sometimes dictate a more integrative or even deliberative approach. The explanation that relates to role playing and normative suasion is more convincing (Müller 2004) though: agents constituted as representatives of their countries within the European Union negotiate according to the context-specific norms. These norms are sometimes more accommodating to the traditional representation of state interests, but sometimes they require the representatives to engage in genuine debate and argumentation, even if it means “operating against [their] colleagues back home” (Clark, Jones 2011: p. 353). This is reflected in the way they talk about their contacts with superiors: “sometimes I call Stockholm and say, ‘maybe if we give up on that, we might gain here. Perhaps we should see the larger picture’” (Lempp, Altenschmidt 2008: p. 520).

**Table 1: Constructivist explanation of selected features of decision-making in the Council of the European Union**

| Feature (explained outcome) | Explanation (cause and mechanisms)  | Relevant references   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| culture of consensus        | <p><i>Cause:</i> adaptation to or internalisation of informal norms which maintain self-restraint and empathy</p> <p><i>Causal mechanisms:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Representatives negotiate according to the standards of compromise shared within the group.</li> <li>2. Representatives persuade their superiors to accept the agreement.</li> </ol> | <p>Lewis 2003: p. 114, 117</p> <p>Lewis 2007: p. 159, 161–162, 164</p> <p>Lewis 2010: p. 170</p> <p>Clark, Jones 2011: p. 359</p> <p>Lempp, Altenschmidt 2008: p. 520</p> |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>bureaucratic level decision-making</p> | <p><i>Cause:</i> role playing or normative suasion which fosters the feeling of responsibility and professional attitude among representatives.<br/><i>Causal mechanism:</i> representatives in bureaucratic layers of the Council engage in problem-solving convinced their higher-layer colleagues would not be able to resolve the problematic issues.</p> | <p>Clark, Jones 2011: p. 349<br/>Lewis 2010: p. 167, 175<br/>Lempp, Altenschmidt 2007: p. 10</p>  |
| <p>group interactions and dynamics</p>    | <p><i>Cause:</i> internalisation of the “group member” role or an attachment to and membership in the group.<br/><i>Causal mechanism:</i> representatives operate within the social reality constructed by the institutionalised practice of participation within the structure.</p>  | <p>Trondal 2004: p. 17<br/>Lewis 2010: p. 175, 183<br/>Lempp, Altenschmidt 2007: p. 10–11<br/>Lempp, Altenschmidt 2008: p. 523<br/>Clark, Jones 2011: p. 348<br/>Aus 2010: p. 103</p> |
| <p>mixed modes of negotiation</p>         | <p><i>Cause:</i> role playing or normative suasion to norms of proper behaviour of a representative of a member state.<br/><i>Causal mechanism:</i> representatives negotiate according to the context-specific norms.</p>  | <p>Clark, Jones 2011: p. 353, 361<br/>Lewis 2003: p. 117<br/>Lempp, Altenschmidt 2008: p. 520<br/>Trondal 2004: p. 22<br/>Niemann 2010: p. 130<br/>Clark, Jones 2011: p. 358</p>      |

Source: own elaboration.

### Directions of further research

Having conceptualised a possible explanation of several features of decision-making in the Council, what can be done next is to operationalise them in order to empirically test their relevance. While these mechanism relate to decision-making in the Council in general, they could also be recast, changed into more precisely conceptualised

and operationalised causal mechanisms, meant to be traced in new empirical material, e.g. interviews with representatives of a selected member state. One such mechanism can be called “reversed representation”. Its conceptualisation might be as brief as that: the state representatives in the Council engage with their superiors in order to persuade them on behalf of their group or its particular members. As explained above, the mechanism is crucial for the culture of consensus. The example which openly shows the group dynamics behind the mechanism was quoted by Jeffrey Lewis: “we had a discussion of the type of arguments we could use back to our capitals to explain why this derogation was necessary” (Lewis 2007: p. 963). The operationalisation of this mechanism for the purpose of tracing it within data gathered in interviews, entails three kinds of evidence: descriptions of situations when the group prepared or discussed the position towards their superiors, either generally or in particularly difficult cases; description of representatives’ attempts at persuading their superiors; mentions of the feelings of understanding and empathy towards other members of the group or responsibility towards the EU as reasons of the above.

This mechanism could be included in a causal chain, with both causes and effects described in more detail. This way, the relevance of socialisation for decision-making would become more tangible and the empirical explanation testable. However, socialisation is a complex, fluid and reciprocal process. The interactions of structure and agents are not only causal, but also constitutive. In particular, the constitution of agents, including their identity, by the structure deserves attention. The constitutive aspects can be included in several ways. Firstly, in the conceptualisation of mechanism, the causes or circumstances enabling the causal mechanism to operate can contain mentions of actors being “constituted as” e.g. members of the group. Secondly, the description of mechanisms themselves may refer to the concept of constitution. Thirdly, to increase the relevance of operationalisations proposed for causal mechanisms in theory-testing process-tracing, it is necessary to include the constitutive dimension of socialisation influence.

## **Conclusion**

This article presented a constructivist explanation of several specific features of decision-making in the Council of the European Union by reference to the effects of socialisation. The opening section explained why an inquiry into the decision-making

in the Council from the constructivist perspective is justified and presented process-tracing, a method that allows to trace causal mechanisms linking the effects of socialisation and the characteristics of decision-making in the Council. In the second section processes of socialisation in international institutions were introduced, and a fourfold typology of socialisation effects was developed. The third section contained an attempt to use inductive variety of process-tracing with secondary sources in order to explain certain qualities of decision-making in the Council as being causally linked with effects of socialisation. The fourth section briefly sketched the theory-testing which could follow from the presented conceptualisation and stressed the need to include the constitutive aspects of socialisation within the causal framework of process-tracing research.

To conclude, it is important to mention how the research framework described above could relate to normative questions on democratic governance at the EU level. Enhancing the empirical credibility of constructivist understanding of socialisation mechanisms within the Council structure helps to explore their disruptive and enhancing influence on the indirect legitimacy of the European Union and questions the intergovernmentalist position on the sufficiency of this kind of legitimacy. This way, it provides feedback to the debate on the quality of democracy in the EU system.

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