

# EUROPEAN UNION DECISION MAKING AS A MATTER OF TIME

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## **ABSTRACT**

*While several studies have examined decision-making in the European Union (EU) with a view to determining where the position of control is, most studies have focused on structured decision-making rules to theorize the workings of the EU. This assertion is somewhat troublesome considering that informal consensus standards are the dominant mode of decision-making (81 percent of decisions are made by consensus). This research work discusses the EU Consensus Institution. It suggests that the informal principle of consensus makes the basic premise of reasoned institutional literature, additionally discussing more about the state of its arguments. The initial discussions starts with consensus norm and it is linked to the methodological issue of how the consensus standard has major implications in governing votes. The journey drives through time reference voting and co-integrating relationship between two forms of conflictual voting. Elaborated thoughts and discussions are carried by calculating an Error-Correction Model (ECM) which could lead to several learning and findings, helping elevate the socio-political data driven decision making in the foreseeable future.*

## **KEYWORDS**

*European Union, Time Series, Unit Root, Cointegration Testing*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Decision-making in the European Union (EU) is complex: not only does the constitutional mechanism appear to vary with each reform of the treaties, but the proposals are subject to very different conditions depending on the region of question. Moreover, the mechanism has traditionally been shrouded in secrecy, and chosen figures have only been visible since recent years. It is difficult for all but the most dedicated observers in the EU to completely appreciate the systematic mechanism by which the EU takes decisions. This arcane method and the numerous improvements in the process have been the focus of academic study for more than 20 years. Moreover, because so much of the analytical evidence on the mechanism was inaccessible, the rationalist approach was highly influential in the study of the legislative process, drawing conclusions about the strategic actions of the agent based on the structured rules of the game.

The first section of this research discusses the voting data of the Council from 1995 to 2019. Analyzing which countries become more likely to abstain or vote against a good legislative initiative and how the decision is driven, it is of immense interest to observe if the tendency to vote against or to abstain is associated with size rather than income, net donor status or years in the EU. Informal consensus standards are then examined and its consequences for EU academic models. The implementation of informal decision-making rules or agreement rather than formal rules has implications for the legitimacy of studies that take the formal decision-making process as a central principle of these models. For example, logical institutionalist have disagreed about the relationship between the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council on the basis

of formal Council decision-making guidelines. Some of these derived statements (which are referred to as 'counter-intuitive') may have been the target of informal decision-making mechanisms that alter the spatial dynamics on which these models depend. Similarly, the analysis of influence within the Council, depending on the importance of a Member State in a variety of coalitions, is often influenced by consensus. Thus, the second section of the paper reflects on the consequences of the consensus decision-making mechanism for the rational/formal models of the institutional dynamics of the EU.

## **2. PROLOGUE**

The voting activity on the Council has been of great interest to scholars for some time now. Many studies have been conducted that look at different Council voting times. For all studies, the common finding is that the consensus level is remarkably high and stable over time (Mattila 2014). Similar work has significantly improved the expertise of the council. Based on the findings of this research, the argument is made that a consensus rule defines how voting activity is organized within the Council. Simply put, the consensus hypothesis argues that the Council's institutional environment fosters a high degree of confidence among the member states representatives. In addition, this helps member states to participate in diffuse reciprocity while managing (Lewis 2010) decisions. This is a very powerful tool for promoting long-term collaboration, and is said to explain the Council's high degree of consensus voting. But this has not been properly validated against any data. Time is a very important factor for the consensus hypothesis, because participating countries need to have long stand understanding and confidence for diffuse reciprocity to work. All of the studies to date have treated voting as time-independent and have simply examined how the levels of consensual and conflictual voting change over different periods of time, and how aggregate voting behavior can be used to examine the dimensionality of voting on the Council.

Nevertheless, if the consensus theory is right, voting activity in previous periods would in the current period have a significant effect on voting behavior. This means that the Council has a long institutional memory that influences voting behaviour. This can be described as a long-memory sequence (Chin and Leung 2005), for voting norms in the Council. Norms (Epstein, Segal and Spaeth 2001) are extremely difficult to test empirically. The effect of long institutional memory is to hold contradictory voting actions locked in at low levels, if those levels are decided by a common rule they should be connected together by an unobserved cause underlying them. In the aforementioned research paper this underlying cause will be referred to as the standard of consensus, and whether this cause is present or not, it will be checked using recent advances in time series analysis.

This research study begins with a debate on the consensus norm as a balance induced by the Council's social environment. This discussion is then linked to methodological issues of how the consensus standard has significant implications for the level of the Council's conflict in votes. A existence of a consensus standard is shown to be a co-integrating relationship between two forms of conflictual voting. As it has been argued that the eastern enlargement, adding of new eastern states to the EU, would have had a significant effect on voting conduct in the Council; more conflicting voting behavior can be expected, the influence of enlargement is being investigated on the overall rate of conflict vote. A model of conflictual voting error-correction is calculated, and the consequences are discussed in exhaustive details.

### 3. BACKGROUND

Lets get into details of some of the primitive steps and factors that can or have caused certain behavioral traits.

#### 3.1. Pattern Influenced Behavior

Pattern influenced behavior is often defined in a loose context of mutual assumptions about appropriate behaviour. This idea was developed by (Bicchieri and McNally 2015). According to Bicchieri and McNally, one can describe behavioral regularity R in population P as a pattern or norm if:

1. Almost every member of P prefers to conform to R on the condition (and only on the condition) that almost everyone else conforms too.
2. Almost every member of P believes that almost every other member of P conforms to R.

The conditions under which one would expect to observe actions based on other actors beliefs and expectations are a social environment with a small number of actors who communicate with each other repeatedly (Bicchieri and Ganegonda 2016). Those are the situations that have been constantly emphasized in the literature on expectations as the preconditions for normative behaviour. It is also argued that Coreper's isolation combined with a high frequency of meetings, with a seldom changing collection of participants, are the perfect preconditions for the growth of normative actions (Trzaskowski 2018).

These preconditions are argued to build an environment of confidence amongst the participants and a long history of institutional memory. If the same group of people work together in a highly institutionalised environment over an extended period of time, the shadow of the future is very relevant. It is probable that diffuse reciprocity will emerge in such a environment. The fact that an commitment does not need to be automatically reciprocated has enormous consequences on how relationships can be organized. It allows for a sequential exchange that reaches a long way into the future, which subsequently allows actors to accumulate 'debts' and 'credits'. That promotes very successful long-term cooperation (Colgan and Keohane). Therefore, diffuse reciprocity is the main mechanism which allows a stable standard of consensus to exist. It is also the sequencing of exchange that makes diffuse reciprocity efficient in consensus-building.

Through this sense, a consensus standard may also be the thought of as a social body that offers information about how member-state members will behave while negotiating a dossier. There is a natural affinity between this idea of the consensus norm and the equilibrium concept used in game theory. The consensus norm reflects an equilibrium reached in a highly institutionalized and concentrated environment between the member states. Any actor can do better by acting on his own (Smith and Zorn 2017) against the norm, given current facts and his current position. When the consensus rule actually represents a national body in the Council, then member states must know when to voice their dissent, either by negative votes or abstentions.

Norms are not permanent, however, and they can and do shift over time, they can fail or break down (Bicchieri Dimant 2019) entirely in certain circumstances. Changing the external factors that contribute to the existing norm's growth will have an effect on how well the social institution is relevant in the new setting. For the European Union (EU) Eastern Enlargement Council of Ministers reflects such a shift in the climate. The entrance into the Council of a large number of new Member States constitutes an external shock to the consensus norm, but if the norm is a true equilibrium, it can be assumed that a consensus norm should be re-balanced.

### **3.2. The Balance Theory**

The enlargement to the east was seen as a critical development for the EU. This was widely expected, with the introduction of ten new member states, that the legislative process would have to change dramatically to be able to operate efficiently. The reforms implemented in the Nice Treaty were seen as not enough to achieve this, and it was widely expected that (Nyhuis and König 2018) would emerge as a legislative gridlock.

Eastern enlargement is a famous candidate that happened in 2004 in terms of a potential disturbance of an equilibrium. Ten new Member States with heterogeneous preferences could spell the end of a normative equilibrium from countries with very different customs and economic conditions. This points to potential short and long-term consequences of the enlargement to the east. When conduct in the Council is focused on a clear moral equilibrium created by the social climate, then potential short-term effects of enlargement can be expected, which will then vanish as the Council re-balances. It is consistent with the adaptation hypothesis suggested by (Toshkov 2017), in which the new Member States are supposed to act out of control for a brief period of time, but the theory assumes a return to the old equilibrium when they begin to follow the ways of doing business in Council.

### **3.3. Time Reference and Votes**

Backed by a series of case studies that all consistently show that there is a large willingness to compromise in the Council, this has led some authors to argue that a norm of consensus is at work in the Council (Gruisen, Vangerven and Crombez 2019). This reading seems to be confirmed by the fact that many researchers only find a very weak dimensionality in the Council. (Lawniczak 2018) found that there are traces of left-right positioning and redistributive politics in the Council. But none of the findings are particularly strong. Thus it appears that in the absence of strong ideological or redistributive conflicts in the Council a norm of consensus appears to dominate everyday decision making. However a recent critique has resurfaced with regards to what can be learned from voting behavior. (Boranbay-Akan, König, and Moritz Osnabrugge 2017) authors argue that from the inspection of voting records alone it is difficult to make any inferences about a norm of consensus. It might be that the Commission only introduces dossiers that it knows will find a majority among the member states.

There are two basic forms that overt conflict in the Council can take, namely abstentions and no-votes. If a member state disagrees to a great extent with final version of a dossier it can vote no. The reasons for a no vote can be diverse and represent a host of different motivations. First, it is possible that important constituencies in a member state are adamantly opposed to the measures proposed in a dossier, and thus a no vote is motivated by signaling a government's commitment to represent their interests. Second, a no vote can represent an ideologically motivated opposition by a member state government. Third, a no vote can be a part of a larger coalitional exercise in logrolling, where a no vote is provided in exchange for a no/yes vote on another dossier which is of more importance to a member state. Even though there are different motivations for voting no they all represent a breakdown of a norm of consensus.

It is not controversial to claim that a no vote carries more weight when signaling to national constituencies. Therefore whenever signaling to national constituencies are the motivation for engaging in conflictual behavior, it can be expected that a member state will vote no. Thus abstentions are difficult to reconcile with a signaling to home constituencies. However abstentions are a possible signal to other member states of the Council that a given country has issues with a dossier but it does not want to obstruct the negotiations. This is plausible in the light

that often in the Council only one or two member states vote no or abstains from voting, thus almost never a blocking minority is reached. Under these circumstances the signaling value of an abstention can be directed at other member states in the Council, without jeopardizing the negotiations of a dossier. Thus an abstention in the council can represent minor ideological differences, disagreements over details in the dossier and so forth. From this one can conclude that abstentions do represent a type of conflict in Council, however whereas no votes can be directed either at the other member states in the Council or key constituencies in the member state, abstentions can be seen as almost exclusively directed at other member states. In essence an abstention signals a small disagreement which is not larger enough to jeopardize the negotiations. However the disagreement is large enough for the member state to signal that the disagreement is not trivial. In sum both no votes and abstentions represent modes of conflict in the Council, it is, though, still an open question whether the occurrence of abstentions and/or no votes is the result of similar forces or constitute evidence of a behavioral norm.

### 3.4. Cointegrating Relationships

In this paper the consensus norm which has often been claimed to play a large role in decision making in the Council, is examined by treating abstentions and no votes as time series data on conflictual behavior in the Council. Abstention and no vote can be shown in below Equations 1 and 2:

$$N_t = C_t + n_t \quad (1)$$

$$A_t = N C_t + a_t \quad (2)$$

where  $A_t$  and  $N_t$  are the number of no-votes and abstentions observed at time  $t$ ,  $C_t$  is the unobserved effect of the consensus norm at time  $t$ .  $N$  is a multiplier for the effect of norms on abstentions such that the effect of norms on no-votes is normalized to 1. The terms  $n_t$  and  $a_t$  are stationary stochastic terms, with a zero mean, which represents other influences than the consensus norm on no-votes and abstentions. If this representation of how the consensus norm effects the level of conflict in the Council is accurate, and as suggested above that the two time series contain unit root, then one can characterize the two series as cointegrated. This allows one to determine whether the two series share a common component, in the underlying case with regards to voting behavior in the Council this is a direct test of whether a norm of consensus is present or not. If one doesn't find a cointegrating relationship between the two series then it can be concluded that they are driven by different logic and there is not one underlying process which determine the levels of conflict in the Council. Thus if one finds a cointegrating relationship between abstentions and no-votes it is not a conclusive proof of the presence of a consensus norm, but it is very strong circumstantial evidence; and if one doesn't find a relationship it is strong proof against the presence of a consensus norm (Zorn and Smith 2017).

## 4. DATASET

The biggest challenge for this form of analysis is the concept of the correct data set. The only hard, reliable and coherent proof that one has is the real record of the final vote in the Council. While these documents do not provide a great source of final inference that contributed to a judgment on the part of the Member States, they give an insightful glimpse into the pattern that guides these decisions. The EU open data portal is used for data. The results were split into quarterly counts of no votes and abstentions to decide if the duration of a high or low level of no votes/abstentions had an effect on the remainder of the collection. In Figure 1 one can visualize the countries that participated in no votes or abstentions in the time period of 2005 to 2019.

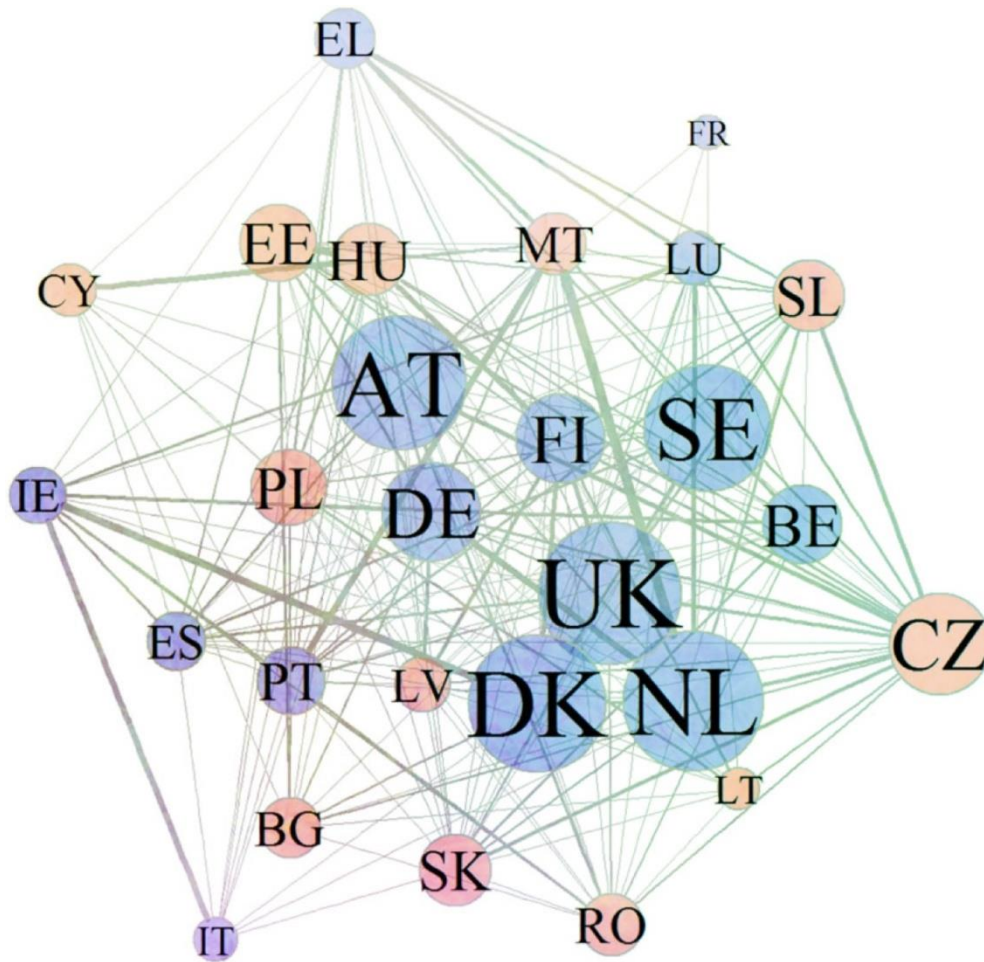


Figure 1: Network cluster visualization of countries - negative votes and abstentions

The time periods being considered are 1995 to 2004 and 2005 to 2019. The time series for abstentions saw a marked rise in mean and variance around 2004. The non-voting series could appear to follow a very similar trend with a sharp fall after 2004, but then a rise in the mean after that decrease. This offers preliminary proof of the existence of non-stationary time series. Since non-stationarity is a requirement for a long-memory sequence, this is a cursory proof of the existence of a consensus standard. In order to assess whether the two series are cointegrated, one must first establish that each series is integrated on its own, if no integration can be officially defined between both time series, there is no chance of the series being co-integrated. Thus, the co-integration test must begin checking both series if or not the root unit is present. If both series show a unit root, approximation of a co-integration regression for both series and test are done to check if the residuals from the co-integration regressions are stationary. If the residues are stationary, there is clear

Table 1: Unit roots and stationarity of the series - abstentions and no votes.

Tests Variations	Abstentions	No Votes	Critical Values
ADF - Augmented Dickey-Fuller Tests			
Without Trend	0.7314	-0.9327	-1.976
Along with Trend	-2.6491	-3.7759	-3.59
(lags)	(4)	(1)	-
Tests - Kwiatkowski			
Lags = 0	1.4095	0.489	0.492
Lags = 2	0.8727	0.3373	0.492
Lags = 4	0.6092	0.3487	0.492
Lags = 8	0.4118	0.279	0.492

evidence of a co-integration relationship between the two sequences. In order to assess the exogeneity of the sequence, it is advised to approximate the unregulated auto-regression of the vector to determine which variable is dependent and which is independent. Finally, an Error Correction Model (ECM) can be calculated to detect the influence of exogenous variable(s) on the endogenous variable.

## 5. EXPERIMENTATION

### 5.1. Time Series Unit Root

Table 1 records the outcomes of a number of unified root tests for no votes and abstentions. As the simple Dickey-Fuller test has low power in the presence of a self-regressive method, the findings of the Augmented Dickey-Fuller test (ADF) are recorded. The lags were chosen according to the knowledge criteria of Schwartz. The null hypothesis in the ADF test is the existence of the root unit and the alternate hypothesis is the lack of the root unit. Thus, the inability to dismiss the null hypothesis is proof of the root unit in the series. This will determine whether or not the sequence is stationary. The null hypothesis is that the series is stationary, while the alternative is that the series may have a root unit. Therefore the null hypothesis is dismissed in this situation.

Inspecting the table it is clear that the abstention sequence has the origin of the unit. One can reject the null hypothesis of stationarity for up to 8 lags but cannot reject the null hypothesis of the unit root in the ADF test. The image is darker when one looks at the series with no votes. In this case one cannot reject the null hypothesis of a unit root for a sequence with no trend, but if there is a trend in the test, null hypothesis will be rejected. As far as stationarity is concerned, one should reject the null hypothesis at the 1 level, and at this point it is very imminent to reject it at the .05 level for zero lags, but as soon as there is lag framework in the test one cannot reject the null hypothesis. This gives poor proof for the root unit in the sequence, but one cannot, with full certainty deny the existence of the root unit. If assignment of the series with no votes is done, it may be inferred that both series show the existence of the root unit. This means that both series possess a long memory and therefore function is in line with the prediction of the consensus standard hypothesis.

### 5.2. Cointegration Tests

If it is determined that the sequence is integrated in order 1, the next step is to test for co-integration. A alternate proposes a two-phase method for regressing each sequence on the other,

and then checking the residuals of each regression for stationarity as a second step. If the residuals are stationary, it is proved that a co-integration association between abstentions and non-voting exists. Table 2 displays the results of the regressions. For each time series, two forms of regression are predicted. One may not use exogenous variables in the first model. A dummy variable for eastward enlargement has been used in the second model to analyze whether the mechanism is affected by eastward enlargement. This helps one to judge if the two series are concocted within the reach of the eastern enlargement. It also gives a first glance at how eastern enlargement could have had an effect on the voting conduct of the Council.

Table 2: Cointegration Regressions for the two time series on each other and includes a dummy variable for eastern enlargement.

Before Enlargement	After Enlargement	
	Abstentions	No Votes
(Intercept)	2.82 (1.73)	12.16 (3.29)
No Votes	0.24 (0.0719)	- (0.0719)
Abstention	-	1.13 (0.35)
Eastern Enlargement	-	4.19 (1.97)
<i>N</i>	357	358
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.260	0.269
Durbin-Watson	1.505	1.276

The importance values of the models are relevant, and the point estimates are accurate, and because the entire voter population in the period from 1995 to 2004 is present, it is possible to make meaningful claims about this period based on the models. The effect of enlargement on voting behaviour was very profound. As a result of enlargement, the number of abstentions has increased, although the number of no votes has declined considerably. This suggests that the immediate consequence of enlargement has been to reduce the total degree of conflict, however small-scale conflicts have risen. This suggests that the Member States wished the eastern enlargement to be a success and so changed their actions accordingly, but the degree of disagreement within the Council did not decrease so there was a rise in the number of abstentions.

To test if the two series are cointegrated, the residues of the co-integration regressions are used and it is tested that whether they do not have a root unit and are stationary. Table 3 displays the findings of ADF and KPSS tests for unit root residues from co-integration regressions.

From inspecting Table 3, it is obvious that one can reject the null hypothesis of a unit root and that the null hypothesis of stationarity can't be rejected. Thus, it is assumed that the residues of the co-integration regressions are stationary with no unit roots. This is clear evidence of a co-integration relationship between abstention which non-voting, and supports the scientific belief that these two series are motivated by the same underlying rationale. This is a finding that is further confirmed by the fact that the study takes eastern enlargement into account in the regression of co-integration. Controlling this aspect still helps one to understand the co-integration of the two series into a similar



Table 3: Unit Roots in the residuals from the cointegration regressions.

Tests Variations	Residuals plus Abstentions Dependent	Residuals along-withNo-Votes Dependent	Critical Values(p < .05)
AUD - Augmented Dickey-Fuller Test			
Without Trend	-4.4979	-3.5979	-1.97
With Trend	-4.3495	-3.5149	-3.52
Tests - Kwiatkowski			
Lags = 0	0.1084	0.2096	0.474
Lags = 2	0.13	0.1745	0.474
Lags = 4	0.1087	0.15	0.474
Lags = 8	0.1597	0.1566	0.474

underlying factor. This is confirmation of the existence of a consensus rule (assuming that the no vote series really does have a unit root).

### 5.3. Error-Correction Model

Error Correction Models (ECMs) are a relatively recent addition to the arsenal of tools applicable to political scientists. In general, ECMs are applicable because there is a hypothesis that governs changes in the dependent variable that can be a result of long-term and short-term changes in the independent variables. The ECM modeling methodology assumes that there is an equilibrium state in which the levels of the two series are vis- a-vis each other. This balance can be disrupted by shocks, making the sequence further apart (or closer together) than usual for the state of equilibrium. This ‘error’ in the balance is corrected over time as the mechanism seeks a new level compatible with the balance condition. If the hypothesis is right, one can hope to find a compromise in which the majority rule causes an equilibrium and thereby closes the level of abstentions and no votes to a low level that is stable and resilient to exogenous shocks. ECM can be measured using two methods. The first step is the calculation of the cointegrating vector. This can be achieved by regressing the series over each other and analyzing the residues for the roots of the unit. If the residuals are stationary, that means it has a cointegrating vector. That’s what is done above to check if the two series are partitioned. The second step in the process is to build an ECM model. The basic specification of the ECM model is based on the Engle-Granger representation theorem and has the following general form as shown in Equation 3 and 4:

$$\Delta y = \beta_0 + \gamma_1 z^{\wedge}t-1 + \sum_{i=1}^K \beta_{1,i} \Delta x_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^L \beta_{2,i} \Delta y_{t-i} + \epsilon_{1,t} \quad (3)$$

$$\Delta x = \beta_0 + \gamma_1 z^{\wedge}t-1 + \sum_{i=1}^K \beta_{1,i} \Delta y_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^L \beta_{2,i} \Delta x_{t-i} + \epsilon_{2,t} \quad (4)$$

In the above equations,  $z^{\wedge}t$  is the error of the co-integration regressions, and  $\epsilon_{1,t}$  and  $\epsilon_{2,t}$  are the white noise processes. The equations essentially state that changes in the dependent variable are explained by their own background of lagged changes in the independent variables, and by the error of the co-integration regressions. The approximate cointegrating vector in the first step reflects the amount of error in the long-memory balance in the previous time frame. The value of the coefficient is the speed of re-balancing when the device has been the victim of a shock which should therefore be negative. If the value of the co-efficient calculated from the

residuals of the co-integration regression is positive, it means that there is no balance in the equation, which means that the system's shocks are never changed to a new balance. For these purposes, residuals from co-integration regressions are often referred to as the word for error correction. The drawback of the ECM models is that the independent variables incorporated in the co-integration regressions have felt their influence over a longer span of time. Thus, it can predict the long-term effect of a transition in the consensus norm, in the research study case, what will happen when a number of new Member States are added, by analyzing the  $\gamma$  coefficient. The ECM model can be written using Equation 5 and 6 as follows where delta for Abstentions and delta for No votes is respectively below:

$$\beta_0 + \gamma \hat{z}_{t-1} + \text{lags of } \Delta \text{NoV otes}, \Delta \text{Abstentions} \quad (5)$$

$$\beta_0 + \gamma \hat{z}_{t-1} + \text{lags of } \Delta \text{NoV otes}, \Delta \text{Abstentions} \quad (6)$$

In addition, the error correction word can be unpacked by using the results from the table Table 2 and rewrite it as a function of no votes, abstentions and eastern enlarge- ment. With abstentions as a dependent variable, it may be rewritten as the word error correction using Equation 7 and 8 as follows, here Abstents = Abstentions and Enlar = Enlargements:

$$\text{Abstents}_{t-1} - 0.28 * \text{NoV otes}_{t-1} - 4.17 * \text{Enlar}_{t-1} \quad (7)$$

With no votes as a dependent variable, the word error correction can be rewritten as:

$$\text{NoV otes}_{t-1} - 1.22 * \text{Abstents}_{t-1} + 10.00 * \text{Enlar}_{t-1} \quad (8)$$

## 6. RESULTS

In summary, it is possible to express the effect of the error correction word as a function of enlargement, maintaining the degree of non-voting and abstention unchanged. The first step in checking whether there exists a fundamental moral balance that defines the degree of abstention and no vote is to approximate the ECM for the two sequences. If the sequence is cointegrated, at least one of the ECMs should have a large and negative coefficient. This is representative of the granger trigger. Thus, even though there is no short-term effect of enlargement, there can also be a long-term effect of enlargement that operates in the term of error correction. Table 4 displays the effects of the ECMs

As the findings of Table 4 clearly demonstrate that the terms of error correction are important, however constructive they might be. As a consequence, there is no underlying balance that determines how contradictory conduct in the Council is. In the opposite, the findings show that conflictual activity fluctuates with shocks in the level of abstentions and no votes. These shocks are intensified until a new shock is detected, which may go in the opposite direction. The main finding here is that contradictory conduct in the Council

Table 4: ECM: The table show the results from the four ECMs.

	$\Delta$ NoVotes	$\Delta$ Abstentions	$\Delta$ NoVotes	$\Delta$ Abstentions
(Intercept)	-0.77 (1.89)	-0.23 (1.06)	-0.31 (2.23)	-0.44 (1.41)
$\Delta$ Abstentions <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.278 (0.29)	-0.64 * (0.169)	-0.291 (0.279)	-0.628 * (0.178)
$\Delta$ NoVotes <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.48 * (0.15)	0.058 (0.08)	-0.44 * (0.14)	0.059 (0.08)
$\gamma \hat{z}_{t-1}$	0.85 * (0.211)		0.85 * (0.23)	
$\gamma \hat{z}_{t-1}$		0.92 * (0.23)		0.92 * (0.24)
Eastern Enlargement <sub>t-1</sub>			-1.45 (3.93)	0.66 (2.31)
$N R^2$	35 0.63	35 0.51	35 0.64	35 0.54
adj. $R^2$	0.59	0.49	0.59	0.47
Resid. sd	10.54	6.19	10.70	6.28

does not appear to be balanced. This confirms that the sequence of no votes does not have a root unit and therefore a long-memory series cannot be used.

## 7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The paper begins by theorizing the majority standard as a balance guided by the dense social climate affecting discussions in the Council. The great shadow of the future in such an environment makes it easier to indulge in diffuse reciprocity, which is a crucial mechanism for the consensus standard to work. One of the direct consequences of this is that voting conduct in the Council can be viewed as a long-term operation. When Member States participate in talks, they build up debts and loans, and one should expect opposing actions to settle at a low level. It's a very attractive theory. In order to test this theory, the paper gathered data on voting conduct in the Council from 1995 to 2019, split the data into quarters and counted the number of abstentions and no votes in each quarter.

The two time series were then checked for unit roots and used to approximate four ECMs to test if there was a normative balance that regulated the degree of tension in the Council. The findings are not beneficial to the prediction. The abstention time series has a single core and can be described as a long-memory series, but the non-voting series does not behave in the same manner. It was not necessary to either affirm or deny the existence of the root unit for the non-voting sequence by using regular checks for the root unit. However, the findings of the ECMs have shown that there is no inherent balance that controls the degree of non-voting and abstention, reinforcing the suspicion that the non-voting sequence is not a long-memory mechanism. This has many consequences for the consensus rule in the literature. What the findings mean is that there is no rule that determines how the degree of dispute in the Council fluctuates. These pieces of evidence corroborate the meritorious argument that the voting conduct is dictated by whatever arrangement a Member State might have entered into at the moment. This does not prove that there is no majority rule, but it does not organize the degree of disagreement in the Council if it occurs. However, if this is the case, it is very difficult to distinguish normative voting activity from overlapping biases and poor turnouts. From a normative point of view, this is

not an appealing interpretation of why one can see the patterns of confrontation that is evident from the results. From a logical point of view, there are two theories that are consistent with the research provided here.

First of all, it is a fact that there exists a high standard of unanimous vote in the Council. It is also possible that the apparently unpredictable trend of confrontation that one is witnessing is due to breakdowns in active negotiations. This will arise if Member States misconstrue the status and/or extent of salience that their partners assign to problems. In a highly socialized atmosphere such as the Council, one can not expect this to happen systematically, and thus the breakdowns one finds are spontaneous events that reflect a transient lapse in the conduct of discussions in the Member States. Second, it is probable that the trend one finds is related to the form of files requested by the Commission. It has also been claimed that the Commission submits dossiers in a strategic fashion with a view to maximizing the pace of acceptance (Lawniczak 2018). If this is the case, the trend may also be clarified by minor non-systematic errors of judgment by the Commission. On average, the Commission should have been very good in sending dossiers that are not problematic with most Member States. However, a random mistake on the part of the Commissions that causes it to apply a dossier that is troublesome for certain Member States could be made once in a while.

In brief, the review raised here poses some tough questions as to whether the agreements in the Council are driven by normative actors. No conclusive evidence against the consensus rule has been given, although there is clear circumstantial evidence that there is no norm to direct the extent of disagreement in the Council. If the rule of consensus only directs affirmative votes, so it must be established that, at least in certain situations, unanimity does not indicate success, overlap of priorities or low turnout. This is a rather challenging challenge, but it is important if the consensus rule theory is to stay applicable to the Council's studies.

## **8. FUTURE WORK**

Government reaction to popular sentiment is fundamental to political participation. It means that the elected officials listen to and act on the wishes and opinions of the representative (Wlezien and Soroka 2015). Various surveys have found that public agendas, government spending and parliamentary voting follow the shifting political interests of voters (Wlezien and Soroka 2015). Fear of electoral penalties is a key motivation for regimes to behave in a sensitive manner. It is not surprising, however, that in systems with low transparency and minimal knowledge, where it is difficult for electors to recognise policy changes, elected officials are also less sensitive to public expectations (Hagemann, Hobolt and Wratil 2017). On the one hand, one can assume that policymakers would be less worried with reacting to public expectations as they legislate in International Organizations (IOs) where clarity of accountability is obscured by multi-level systems and public attention is usually less pronounced. In the other side, increased accountability and oversight of decision-making in certain foreign organizations may give governments greater incentives to use this arena to signal that they are consistent with public opinion and preferences.

Responsiveness literature has mainly concentrated on how governments respond to public sentiment in the domestic sense, while government action literature in IOs pays less attention to the position of national public opinion. Generally, the latter suggests that governments behave in isolation from domestic political strains as they collaborate at the international level. However, this paper has demonstrated that policymakers are using the international stage to signal their responsiveness to domestic public sentiment, and that this is expressed in the domestic public

discourse as they do so. When domestic electors are adversely inclined against the EU, governments are more likely to reject measures aimed at further expanding the powers of the EU. By concentrating on legislation that passes jurisdiction to a supranational organization-delegating control to the EU one is able to illustrate the influence of public opinion, which has usually been ignored in analyzes that do not differentiate between policy areas or the essence and types of legislation.

It is important to remember that the focus of this research has not been the conventional type of policy responsiveness in which policymakers change policy in response to shifting public opinion. Instead, it is demonstrated that policymakers are using foreign institutions to indicate that they are listening to domestic public opinion. One can refer to this type of government responsiveness as 'signal responsiveness' and say that it is induced by the incentives of governments to communicate their policy decisions at EU level to domestic audiences. This distinction is important because, unlike policy responsiveness, signal responsiveness has no direct short-term effect on policy performance. Thus, while the existence of a signal of responsiveness suggests that the voices of people are recognized, it does not guarantee that they are reflected.

It is also demonstrated that the government's responsiveness is influenced by domestic party competitiveness. When domestic political parties clash on the issue of European integration, governments are more likely to voice their opposition to the Council in reaction to public sentiment. Moreover, such decisions are seen as influencing the public debate: the media attention review indicates that, while governments oppose the Council, there is also increased coverage in the mainstream media. While this section of the study is confined to a subset of EU Member States, the results are convincing and further studies could include a more detailed analysis of how domestic policy discourse and public sentiment react to government actions in the Council.

This study offers a significant starting point for understanding the relation between people and their governments in the EU by moving beyond the conventional wisdom that EU negotiations are being held behind closed doors. The findings point to the electoral connection between ministers of government and national public opinion in European affairs when it comes to decisions on the extent and scope of supranational competences. This could also be applicable to other international contexts. The hope was that if one were able to find signs of government attention to public opinion in every IO, it would be more apparent in the EU Council. The fact that one can see some convincing proof that governments use their actions in the Council to signal to domestic constituents opens the door to further studies into the interaction between governments and civilians in other foreign bodies. If incentives for international cooperation grow in many aspects of political life, and foreign institutions are encouraged to successfully handle such cross-border cooperation, domestic citizens are likely to develop more clear opinions and priorities about certain international commitments. This is followed by rising demand for responsible and open decision-making at the international level. Thus, when taken together, governments can gradually see an incentive to signal their responsiveness to domestic parties when behaving in the international arena.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.

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