An exploration of some social mechanism affecting domestic political actors' Europeanisation: the Belgian case¹

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The principal idea of this paper is that the European socialisation of domestic political actors as a result of their growing involvement in European policy-making settings is not as self-evident as early and current neofunctionalists often assume. Rather we suggest that the European socialisation of national actors is mediated by factors that relate to the actors' domestic embeddedness. It seems that the socialisation power of the European institutions is inferior to the mechanism or scope conditions that are situated at the domestic level. Therefore we believe that future studies on European socialisation should control more explicitly for pre-existing dispositions as key determinants of potential attitude change. Related to this, we argue that socialisation studies should focus more extensively on (domestic) recruitment processes that may affect pre-socialisation and international socialisation.

Introduction

In this paper we conceive Europeanisation as a particular socialisation process within the context of European political integration.² It is the process 'reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that the EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organisational logic of national politics and policy-making' (Ladrech 1994). Thus 'Europe' should cause a redefinition of domestic political ideas and practices or Europe should become 'internalised'. More in general, Europeanisation, here seen as particular form of socialisation, refers to the adaptive learning processes of organisations, and the individuals representing these, to a changing or changed environment.³ Internalisation implies that actors 'by taking the attitude of the other' (cfr. Mead), learn to anticipate on other's views and practices. Although this paper is meant to be empirical, it begins with a brief discussion on some different theoretical views regarding socialisation. The first

¹ Courtesy to Ambassador Frans Van Daele and Ex-Ambassador Philippe de Shouteete de Tervarent who allowed us long interviews on some aspects dealt within this paper. We also have to express our gratitude towards the ISPO-team of the K.U.-Leuven for their help in doing the fieldwork and to Jan De Bock and Vincent Mertens de Wilmars for the crucial information they provided us with.

² This conception of Europeanisation is maximalist since it encompasses the notion that actors endogenise 'Europe' in their ideas and practices. Other conceptions of Europeanisation are more minimalist since they are restricted to the 'process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making' (Börzel 1999: 574) or confine themselves to 'the pronounced increase in the range and frequency of contacts between the national and the supranational levels' (Harmsen 1999: 81). A minimalist conception does not entail priory assumption concerning the potential impact of Europeanisation (i.e. increased contacts), the second more maximalist conceptions includes implicitly the notion that 'Europe' has consequences for actors ideas and practices. Here we take the maximalist conception as a starting-point, not as an assumption, but as something that needs to be tested and demonstrated empirically.

³ Socialisation defined as a process whereby people internalise the attitudes, values and practices appropriate to individuals as member of a particular culture.

section also outlines some methodological puzzles that constrain most - including our own research. Although our own work on this matter is maybe somewhat explorative, it suggests some pathways for future research. Also we believe that more methodological rigour and sophisticated data-collection methods are needed in order to advance research in this field. In this paper we attempt to do this by combining or triangulating different pieces of qualitative and quantitative evidence.

The main body of the paper will be of an empirical nature and brings together data collected in different research projects. It is important to note beforehand that the initial aims of these projects were not similar and that they not necessarily had 'socialisation' as major inroad. The paper's empirical corpus will be presented in the form of three different illustrations. The first illustration concerns the recruitment of officials who participate - as part-timer or full-timers - in the working groups of the Council. We will start with a qualitative description of current recruitment processes and a biography of Belgian top-negotiators. Quantitative data will confirm the view that the negotiators' recruitment and selection is not something that takes place randomly, but that it stresses European experiences and it partially evolves out of a domestic process which resonates the fact that (Belgian) domestic administrative politics is strongly affected by party-politics. The ensuing section studies the dispositions Belgian officials hold vis-à-vis European policy-making. Its primary objective is to control the potential effect of contact for other scope conditions and more in particular domestic factors and experiences. This part of the study shows that what (administrative) actors think and believe regarding Europe cannot easily be disconnected from their views on domestic politics. Finally, we describe an ongoing domestic reform process in the agricultural sector. This is an example of what Goetz calls linkage-adaptation, i.e. as national executives become more and more implicated in European policy-making, they are pressed to adapt domestic policy-making modes (Goetz 2000). In studying this particular case we explore how domestic actors argue on solutions and routines in order to cope with Europe and a highly Europeanised policy-field as agriculture. Although federal countries as Belgium face strong adaptation pressures (especially in the field of agriculture), we will see that some domestic institutional cultures and processes substantially inhibit the taking into account of Euro-level pressures (Börzel 1999).

In short, this paper questions the fusion or the homogenisation thesis which is apparent in some contemporary writings (Wessels 1996). Our conclusion does not imply that Europeanisation has no consequences for national politics; it basically suggests that domestic actors are not empty vessels when they enter the European realm and that European socialisation is substantially mediated by domestic institutional cultures. However, for two reasons we remain also cautious regarding these claims. First of all, it is unrealistic to generalise these country-specific findings to other countries or international organisations.

⁴ Projects have been made possible by grants from the Fund for Scientific Research-Flanders. The first project was carried out, under promotorship of Guido Dierickx, while the first authors was research assistant at the University of Antwerp. This project, on which has been reported elsewhere, concentrated on the domestic political input into Council decision-making and the evidence collected from this project enables us to explore the socialisation theme (Beyers 1998a; Beyers and Dierickx 1997; Beyers and Dierickx 1998; Dierickx and Beyers 1999). The second project was carried out, under promotorship of Bart Kerremans and Frank Delmartino, at the University of Leuven and resulted in the first authors' PhD-dissertation. Socialisation was only of a secondary importance for the second, more recent, project that primarily focused on how private interests network and mobilise at the European level. Although we believe that parts of the data suggest the persistence of domestic pre-socialisation, we will not use it for the analyses here. Initially a very first draft of this paper contained a fourth illustration on how domestic private actors seek access to the European level. It demonstrates that the actors' domestic network embeddedness substantially explains their inclination to seek access to the European level.

Second, we have chosen to focus this paper on Europeanisation of one member-state, namely Belgium. Although the choice for the Belgian case is related to the authors' origin and their previous research, there are convincing arguments to consider Belgium as a critical or a counterfactual case study (Kurzer 1997). For a number of reasons, the Belgian polity can be considered as a fertile ground for a possible successful Europeanisation, i.e. the adoption and internalisation of Europeanised ideas and practices. Its political elites share an, although to a varying degree, consensual pro-federalist Europeanist ideology (Beyers 1998b). The notion of national sovereignty is not deeply rooted and most public discourses on this concept are negative. Furthermore, the multilevel Belgian political system resembles the some of the federal features the European Union has. Consequently, the circumstances Belgian actors are confronted with at the European level match their domestic experiences (Egeberg 2000; Trondal 2001: 16). They are used to multinational and multi-linguistic settings within their domestic realm and Euro-level processes are - geographically - located close to decision-making at the domestic level (Egeberg and Saetren 1999). Moreover, as one of the founding members of the European Union the Belgian political-administrative system has had longstanding experiences with Euro-level policy-making.

Thus, at first sight, it seems that Belgium is a case where some particular domestic circumstances and European experiences provide a fertile ground for Europeanisation. If for instance this 'critical case' would show that Europeanisation takes place only to a lesser extent than expected, there are plausible reasons to expect that elsewhere the Europeanisation of domestic politics is also not necessarily a steady linear growth model.

Some theoretical and methodological issues

Political socialisation is conceived as a process wherein actors internalise views and practices as a result of their involvement in existing, new, changing or transforming environments. It cannot be ignored that socialisation is an important theme in many early and contemporary writings on European integration and European policy-making. It is central in the transactionalist approach à la Deutsch ('partial identification in terms of self-images and interest'), functionalism à la Mitrany ('functional loyalties from the experience of co-operation itself') and neo-functionalism à la Haas ('a shift of loyalties, expectations, and political activities towards a new centre'). Although highly divergent in many respects, two general and common observations regarding this older literature are relevant here.

First, it is interesting to see that, as some constructivists today, many of these older writings related their ideas on socialisation to early social-psychological studies on attitude change (Pollack 1998). In general, these early social-psychological studies hypothesised that social interactions criss-crossing national borders lead to more sophisticated cognitive views and more favourable dispositions towards other nations and international institutions. One could therefore suppose that domestic political actors officials involved in EU-matters will gradually socialise into the shared norms and practices of the EU, a process that will lead to a diffusion of those norms and practices within various national administrative systems (i.e. political spill-over). So actors' views and practices are not fixed; they are contingent, they change and they transform... as a result of changing contextual or structural factors. Second, this socialisation hypothesis has been strongly fused with a rational optimisation logic in early neo-functionalist (but also in functionalist and transactionalist) writings (Harmsen 1999: 84). The idea is that European integration causes new policy problems and, related to these problems, adaptation pressure. The actors involved face similar incentives for adaptation and therefore gradual convergence around the most efficient

solutions will emerge (i.e. functional spill-over). Moreover, many functionalist inspired approaches assume implicitly that European policies have welfare enhancing properties and, therefore, a shift of loyalties is not only caused by a pro-European ideology, but also by instrumental calculations.

Recent institutionalist accounts on socialisation, and especially the empirical research that emerged from it, recognises that, although views and practices are affected by actors' institutional embeddedness, changes in views and practices might be constrained by particular institutional factors as well. Institutionalism is basically 'an argument that the organisation of political life matters', but as such it does not propose a substantive theory on which institutions matters, when and how (March and Olsen 1984: 84). In this paper, we will argue that the domestic presocialisation experiences, for instance, might inhibit or enable the internalisation of new views and practices. Domestic pre-socialisation experiences may match very well and are consistent with the requirements and context of the European level, so that an actor learns faster. Or, actors can have bad experiences with the domestic realm (e.g. corruption, favouritism, inter-organisational conflicts, and mismanagement...) so that they try to escape and 'go native'. Essential for these probes is that actors bring with them a cultural baggage and expectations formed as a result of presocialisation, i.e. socialisation processes encompassing the learning that takes place prior to the focussed moment, here involvement in European affairs.

That contact does not necessarily result in the homogenisation of domestic actors' views and practices has recently been illustrated by Harmsen's comparative neo-institutionalist approach (Harmsen 1999; see also Börzel 1999). Theoretically, he sets out three institutional arguments for why Europeanisation is expected to be constrained. Path dependency implicates that the 'stickiness' of domestic institutions makes them resistant for change and this 'stickiness' does not fade away because of Europe. From this perspective, domestic adaptation will be mediated through institutional, political and cultural factors varying among the member-states. Moreover, domestic institutions resonate existing power balances and modes of policy-making, which will tend to reproduce themselves in the face of new challenges, i.e. Europe. Or, appropriate ways of policy-making and variable patterns of inclusion/exclusion will prevail instead of a fundamental transformation of politics. And finally, when actors become involved in new settings, they search for familiarity, i.e. they rely on already existing routines and practices. Thus, domestic actors will 'domesticate' the European integration process by employing a familiar repertoire of institutional rules.

While the foregoing argument has a 'bottom up' character, many other studies adopt a 'top down' approach, i.e. institutional features situated at the European level constrain or enable the Europeanisation of domestic political actors. Intergovernmental 'top down' accounts point often at the constraints. They argue that contacts criss-crossing borders sustain territorial allegiances and that several Euro-level institutional factors reinforce this (Hoffmann 1966; Hoffmann 1982). The Council, which is the body par excellence via which national politics interacts with the EU-level, imposes a nationality label upon domestic actors participating in it. If we accept that formal rules affect the shaping of views and practices, it is plausible to assume that officials are delegated negotiators, agents, representing national views and practices. Among intergovernmentalists it is

⁵ In this regard, institutionalist notion of path dependency, i.e. conditions at time point a have unexpected and unintended consequences for actor opportunities and practices at point b, may be a useful heuristic (Pierson 1996; Pierson 2000).

⁶ Likewise, bad experiences with the European level can inhibit Europeanisation Increased familiarity can lead to more knowledge and inside information, cognitive sophistication, which does is not necessarily equate with more positive affective dispositions (Egeberg 1999: 460; Pollack 1998)

often argued that Europeanisation increases the importance of domestic co-ordination processes and leads to the strengthening of the role of the Foreign Office (Moravcsik 1993).⁷ Therefore, intergovernmentalists expect that actors' views and practices will be more affected by nationality and member-state characteristics (e.g. small versus big countries) than by organisational allegiances (e.g. whether an officials is working for the Council of the Commission). Likewise, it is expected that contact (e.g. participation in Council working groups) will have no or little impact on actors' dispositions and practices. Views and practices are established domestically; the national realm functions as the main socialisation site.

Another, 'top-down', argument stresses enabling factors and many of these arguments find their origin in early (neo-)functionalism and in contemporary liberal-institutionalist or so-called fusion claims. While intergovernmental 'top-down' views lead to 'convergence' in the sense of strengthening the national executives and the preponderance of national-level socialisation sites, this second group argues completely the opposite. Participation and involvement in a new setting leads to the development of new perspectives and definitions of the situation. For instance, regarding the Council several authors have written that national officials involved in Council working groups are exposed to a spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding, an *esprit de corps* (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997; Lewis 1998; Wessels 1991; Westlake 1995). Moreover, it is often claimed that, given the functional fragmented character of the Council, practices and views are not necessarily territorially bound, but that specialised expertise-based functional identities are more preponderant than intergovernmentalists assume. Furthermore, the growing importance of supranational institutions such as the European Commission and the European Parliament tends to diminish national coloured views and practices.

Although agreement on cause and effect does not exist, it is remarkable that these contentious claims within the field of European studies are still under-researched so that empirical plausibility is questionable. In our view, intergovernmental and neo-functional theorists often consider either the domestic institutional stickiness or the transformation of domestic politics as given or assumed. Instead of assuming the prevalence of one or another logic, our position has been one that prefers to move these issues from the list of priors to the list of potential hypotheses for empirical research. In this sense, our work comes close to research done at ARENA (cfr. Trondal, Egeberg), which suggests to unpack scope-conditions under which Europeanisation is constrained or enabled. Therefore, this paper does not intend to reject the presumed stickiness of domestic factors, nor will we claim a-priori that involvement in EU-matters causes domestic actors to 'turn native'. By considering these matters as empirical questions, we will observe that under some conditions national identities may be important and sticky, but that they can lead to dispositions transcending intergovernmentalism. Moreover, our research illustrates that domestic and European socialisation opportunities do not necessarily contradict each other, and that there are conditions wherein national socialisation processes may cause actors to adopt supranational allegiances. This viewpoint opens the possibility of multiple socialisation levels, levels which fit into the existence of what Trondal calls multiple institutional embeddedness (Trondal 2000). A central question is therefore whether Europeanised views and practices originate from concrete experiences with EU matters or whether domestic experiences are constitutive. All this implies that we will try to control for both the potential of Euro-level socialisation opportunities and domestic socialisation opportunities.

⁷ Various case studies, however, suggest that this claim regarding the effect of Europe on domestic politics is empirically incorrect. In some instances, it seems that Europeanisation goes together with a further functional fragmentation of the domestic realm (Kerremans 1999; Van den Bos 1991)

In terms of observational implications, socialisation does not just walk through the door. It is a process of change wherein actors internalise views and practices and so it is something that takes place during long and generally unspecified periods of time. This theoretical conception of socialisation implicates many methodological problems in terms of measurement and testing, problems that complicate empirical research.

Many, especially quantitative studies, are quasi-experimental which, in short, implicates that at minimum two groups in the real world, having different experiences (e.g. contact with the European Union or not) are different regarding a dependent variable (e.g. affective or cognitive disposition towards Europe). Researchers using 'contact' and 'institutional environment' as independent variables have employed this design most. The advantages are its applicability and the fact that some controlled methodological testing becomes feasibly. Duration of contact leads to internalisation of views and practices and this we can control for some organisational aspects as, for instance, the difference between part-timers and full-timers.

However, socialisation studies that rest on this quasi-experimental approach inevitably rest on, somewhat problematic, assumptions. First, duration of contact is assumed to be a proxy for involvement in processes that are presumed to socialise agents. Yet, contact as such says not very much about the quality of involvement and the nature of interaction. However, without dismissing the limits of the contact hypothesis, it is equally true that contact is a minimum scope condition before processes can start. Second, still contact (or other organisational factors) does not trace the interaction process between to (entering the organisation) and to+1 (worked for a while or leaving). A solution may be panel designs wherein the same analytical units are investigated at different time points, eventually chosen on the basis of some theoretical substantive grounds. In fact qualitative researchers who use process tracing are doing some sort of panel-research. Third, panel research has, however, some drawbacks because it is still quasi-experimental; it does not enable us to control whether the different groups (e.g. in terms of duration, views and practices) differ simple because of other unmeasured variables. Especially (domestic) self-selection, selective and self-recruitment are relevant in this context. So, if the effect of contact - or some particular interaction process - on the Europeanisation of actors would be result of self-selection (those who like it will join) then these contacts or interaction processes are something spurious.

Although many of these, briefly mentioned, problems are maybe insoluble within the framework of this paper, they nevertheless remind us to avoid research designs that lead to 'always-true-theories' until the next author arrives with another case rejecting the 'always-true-theory'. Our own study has to be situated within the group of scholars stressing the contact hypothesis and institutional environment, and gives less attention to the very concrete social interaction context wherein actors participate. Applying a perspective that would incorporate the strengths of both the interaction perspective, the contact thesis and the institutional environment is beyond the scope of what can be done and is intended here.

ILLUSTRATION 1: Recruitment of Council negotiators

Regarding the recruitment of officials participating in Council negotiations it is useful to make a distinction between so-called part-timers and full-timers. The former include officials from specialised ministries who participate in Council working-groups on a part-time basis, i.e. they are only occasionally in touch with Council working groups and they combine this with other, mainly domestic, tasks. The full-timers are involved in Council working groups on a permanent basis and include primarily diplomats at the Foreign Office or the Permanent Representation and officials of

sectoral ministries detached to the Permanent Representation. The latter group has been more exposed to the peculiarities of European policy-making than the former.

The Belgian Permanent Representation is a representation of both the Belgian federal and subnational ministries (Kerremans and Beyers forthcoming). For that reason, it is organised as a service composed of diplomats and specialists from different ministries. About half (18 of the 38) of its officials are professional diplomats whereas the other half represent different ministries, so-called 'attachés.' There is *inter alia* an environmental attaché, a social attaché, a financial attaché, an agricultural attaché, an attaché of the Flemish Community, an attaché of the Walloon Region, etc. The highest functions in the Permanent Representation are filled with professional diplomats. This is the case for the Permanent Representative (the ambassador), his deputy, the Antici representative, and the Mertens representative.

As far as the professional diplomats are concerned, their recruitment formally depends on the Foreign Office. Belgian diplomats work at the Permanent Representation for a period of normally three, maximally four years. After three years at the same place (diplomatic post) a diplomat is entitled to a 'permutation' to another function (diplomatic post). After four years, this happens automatically. The higher one goes in the diplomatic hierarchy of the Permanent Representation, however, the more prominent experience with the EU and it member-states becomes. The current diplomats at the level of ambassador, deputy-ambassador, Antici-representative and Mertens representative all have previous, sometimes extensive, experience with the European Union and its member-states. The highest functions in the Permanent Representation to the EU are curious in another sense as well. Normally, the four-year rule doesn't apply to the Belgian ambassadors. They serve longer periods at their posts, normally six years. But for the Belgian Permanent Representatives to the EU practice learns that on average they stay even much longer. Since the Belgian Permanent Representation started to function, it only had only five different Permanent Representatives. The provided the provided started to function, it only had only five different Permanent Representatives.

The fact that an exception is made for the Belgian Permanent Representatives to the EU, in the sense that they stay in office for a longer time than their colleague-ambassadors do, is not a coincidence. It is a policy that starts from the assumption that experience and seniority are especially important in the European Union. Experience is important not just because of the jargon and the complexity of the EU, its institutions, its procedures, and its policies but also because the diplomatic network in Brussels is highly competitive. It is a network consisting of experienced diplomats and experts from the different member states and of experienced officials from institutions such as the Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament. It is equally a network where negotiating skills are tested, almost on a daily basis. In addition, it seems that experiences and affinities with other European member-states and domestic politics are important recruitment factors.

⁸ The function of the Mertens Representatives in the EU is analogous to that of the Antici Representatives but then for the deputy ambassadors level (Coreper I) instead of Coreper II.

⁹ In the Belgian diplomatic career, efforts are made to send diplomats for two successive periods abroad. After six to eight years they have to return to Belgium for one period (three, maximally four years) in order to allow them to 'stay in touch with the country' and to avoid that they would 'go native' abroad. The EU Permanent Representation, NATO Permanent Representation and the Foreign Office are the posts that employ these diplomats.

¹⁰ All of them (Jan Van der Meulen, Pierre Nôtre-Dame and Philippe de Schoutheete), except the first (Baron de Spinoy, 5 years) and the current one (Frans Van Daele, 5 years), served for at least ten years.

The importance of these factors can be illustrated by the career of current Permanent Representative, Frans Van Daele. 11 The current ambassador started his career in 1971. His training (internship) brought him under the wings of the then Belgian political director Etienne Davignon (who later became Commissioner). That happened at the moment that Davignon played an important role in the emergence of the European Political Cooperation (EPC). After his training, Frans Van Daele started his career as a professional diplomat at the Belgian Permanent Representation to the EU (1972-1977). In 1977 he moved to Athens where he worked at the Belgian embassy during the accession negotiations with Greece. In 1984 he returned to the Belgian Permanent Representation to the EU, this time as the Antici Representative. Between 1984 and 1986, he became spokesman for Leo Tindemans, the foreign minister at that moment. 12

In 1989, he was sent to New York where Belgium started its two-year term in the United Nations Security Council. 13 As Deputy-Ambassador to the United Nations during the Gulf War (1990-91) a lot of intensive negotiating was part of the job. In 1993, he returned to Belgium where he became Deputy Political Director being responsible for the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty and for Yugoslavia. In the first semester of this function, he was strongly involved in Belgium's presidency of the European Union. In 1994 he became Political Director at the Foreign Office and member of the Belgian negotiating team in the 1996-97 Intergovernmental Conference. When Ambassador de Schoutheete, after having been Belgium's Permanent Representative during the 1991 IGC and the 1996 IGC, retired in September 1997, Van Daele succeeded him.

Permanent Representatives and their deputies are top ranking diplomats with a large experience in negotiating. Having been a deputy Permanent Representative to the EU opens the door to other important diplomatic functions. Jan De Bock, the previous Deputy PR is currently secretary-general within Belgium's foreign ministry, which is the highest position in the Foreign Office and he will succeed Frans Van Daele as Belgium Permanent Representative in 2002. Clearly, working at the Belgian Permanent Representation as a professional diplomat is not just an ordinary thing; it seems that these functions are reserved for the best. Important also is that the resulting prestige of the job has political consequences however (which in Belgium is called 'the Belgian disease'). Party political considerations are unambiguously taken into account for the appointment (Dierickx and Beyers 1999: 200-203). It is not that somebody of a particular political colour has more chances to become Permanent Representative or his deputy. But in the act of balancing different important and prestigious diplomatic functions among the different political colours and, very importantly, between the two language groups, the Permanent Representation to the EU is considered to be one of the 'highfliers'. Consequently, the relation of these highfliers with domestic political parties is no secret at all.

¹¹ A similar narrative can be told about Philippe de Schoutheete de Tervarent, the former Ambassador, and other Ambassadors or high-fliers belonging to the group of full-timers. De Schoutheete, for instance, has been spokesmen for Minister Spaak and Harmel. As Van Daele he worked also at the cabinet of Tindemans (in 1975), where he was involved in the editing of the Tindemans-report, and he has also been Political Director at the Foreign Office (between 1985 and 1987). He was posted at P.11, the main domestic co-ordinating body at the Foreign Office, and between 1980 and 1985 he worked at the cabinet of Minister Swaelen [NAKIJKEN].

¹² The spokesman belongs always to the cabinet, the personal staff, of the minister. Ministers select these cabinet officials themselves, mainly out of ideologically affiliated associations, organisations or networks. These officials have to display genuine both expertise and partisan loyalty to the minister. They appear and disappear with their ministers (spool-system). In Belgian politics cabinets are generally seen as the most influential and powerfull political actors (Dierickx and Majersdorf 1994; Seutens and Walgrave 1999).

13 In 1986 he was sent to Rome where he wasn't directly involved in any EU matters.

The recruitment of the specialised attachés and the part-timers happens in a somewhat different way. It strongly depends on the ministry that sends its attaché to the Permanent Representation. Also the appointment of official negotiating in the various Council working groups takes place in an ad hoc manner. Neither the Permanent Representative himself, nor the Foreign Office is systematically involved in this process. It is something that happens inside the different ministries as a result of the interplay between the highest officials, directors-general and secretary-general, the minister and his cabinet and co-ordination processes between various departments at both the federal and sub-national level. In all cases however, attachés are relatively high-ranking officials. As far as recruitment is concerned, experience with the European Union plays a role in addition to some negotiating skills. But there is no uniform formal system through which such recruitment takes place. The importance attached to these functions also differs from ministry to ministry.

In the first half of 1994 we had the occasion to interview a sample of officials who, at that time, represented Belgium in Council working groups. About 110 Belgian officials from sectoral ministries participated in the Council on a part-time basis. As full-time involved actors we counted 15 diplomats at the Foreign Office, and 21 diplomats and 13 civil servants that were part of the Permanent Representation. Of an estimated population of 159 Belgian actors, a sample of 65 part-timers and 30 full-timers was interviewed with the help of a standardised questionnaire. This data will be used for looking at recruitment and, in the next section, for exploring actors' dispositions. Within the same project 108 officials representing other member-states at the level of the Permanent Representations were interviewed as well.

What qualitative stories learn us, is confirmed by the quantitative data. Previous experiences with the European Union and its member-states, on the one hand, and domestic political experiences, on the other hand, largely affect who becomes in touch with the Council and to what extent. First, domestic political experiences are significantly associated with the distinction between part-timers and full-timers. Full-timers had longer professional experiences with ministerial cabinets (F=4.03, p= .0476) and they had, on average, substantially more affinities, as staff-member, with domestic political parties (F=7.41, p= .0077). Second, full-timers follow a professional trajectory that has a strong European character; it seems that they have spent more of their professional career in other EU-member states than in other IO's, an indication of extensive 'European' socialisation opportunities. That domestic political socialisation opportunities go hand in hand with European socialisation opportunities is confirmed by looking at some simple bivariate correlations. Officials who had, in terms of years, longer professional experiences at domestic ministerial cabinets served more years as a diplomat or as a specialised attaché at embassies in other European countries (r= .23, p= .0237). Having worked for a political party even has a stronger relation with the availability of European socialisation opportunities (r= .42, p= .0001).

Finally, it is important to add that the distinction between part-timers and full-timers is not significantly related to the duration - in years - of involvement in various Council working groups (F= .53, p= .4696). This observation implicates that the *duration* of contact is not necessarily related to the *intensity* of contact, the complexity of processes and interactions in which actors were

¹⁴ THIS PAPER IS ONLY A PRELIMINARY DRAFT! IN THE MARGIN OF THIS PROJECT ADDITIONAL DATA OF DOMESTIC CO-ORDINATORS HAS BEEN COLLECTED (N=40, C). THIS CO-ORDINATORS ARE NOT INVOLVED IN COUNCIL WORKING-GROUPS, BUT THEY ARE STRONGLY EMBEDDED IN DOMESTIC EU-COORDINATION PROCESSES. DUE TO VARIOUS TECHNICAL PROBLEMS THIS DATA HAS NOT YET BEEN MERGED WITH THE DATA PRESENTED HERE. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT WILL BE DONE FOR THE FINAL DRAFT, BUT PRELIMINARY ANALYSES DO NOT YIELD VERY DIFFERENT OUTCOMES.

involved. Duration of contact is also not related to other socialisation opportunities we refer to. The subsequent analyses will show, indeed, that actors who are involved on a more regular, intense or permanent basis, i.e. the so-called full-timers, socialise somewhat differently. But still, it is obvious that domestic political embeddedness cannot be disconnected from European socialisation opportunities (cfr. also illustration 3 and 4).

Table 1. Part-timers and full-timers' recruitment (averages)

	Part-timers (N=65)				Full-timers (N=30)			
	X	S	Skewness	Kurtosis	х.	S	Skewness	kurtosis
Years other EU member-state	-	-	-	-	1.58	2.26	4.15	18.80
Years other IO's	-	-	-	-	0.57	1.30	1.99	2.31
Years in Council working groups	10.90	8.46	.88	14	12.18	6.86	1.42	3.24
Years ministerial cabinet	.79	2.23	3.56	13.63	1.80	2.36	1.18	.17
Years domestic political party	.06	.36	6.08	37.75	1.27	3.55	2.94	8.31

ILLUSTRATION 2: Explaining dispositions

Maybe that ideological self-selection or recruitment - in terms of Europeanism - is something irrelevant for the Belgian case. Various studies have illustrated at great length the consensual profederalists attitude among the Belgian political and administrative elite. Therefore pre-socialisation or selective recruitment in terms of ideological - pro-Europeanist or other - dispositions does presumably not lead to big differences between Belgian officials negotiating in the Council. To put it differently, the chance that one meets an intergovernmentalist Belgian negotiator à la Margaret Tatcher is highly unlikely. However, still a minority of about 15 to 30% of our sample - varying from item to item - dissents from the pro-Europeanist mainstream. How can we explain the fact that some Belgian officials have a more negative disposition than the others, and why most Belgian officials are so positive about Europe? Is it because they did not yet have enough contact with the peculiarities of the EU, or is it something else? In this section we will explore this issue.

Table 2. Attitudes towards European integration (univariate statistics, percentages plus factor-loadings, N=95 Belgian officials)

<u> </u>	agree				dis	agree	loading
	1	2	3	4	5	6	·
L. In the working groups, the European Commission and the national cepresentatives should take an active part in drawing up guidelines for the policies of Member States.	48.4	22.1	14.7	5.3	6.3	3.2	. 63
E. In the working groups the representatives should develop a strong common policy and lay down clear directions for the national governments.	36.2	27.7	20.2	7.4	4.3	4.3	.60
I. In my opinion, in the working groups we should work towards a strongly united solicy which strengthens the executive role of the European Institutions.	30.9	18.1	27.7	11.7	8.5	3.1	.49
							1.00 33.3% variance

Dispositions towards Europe can be conceptualised in many different ways. The conceptualisation we propose here deviates somewhat from the useful and well-known cognitive-affective distinction many scholars make. Here, attitudes towards Europe concern the level of governance (international, European, national, regional, local) considered being the most appropriate for managing contemporary policy problems. Roughly speaking, we can distinguish two groups: those restraining extensive common policies - the intergovernmentalists - , and those - the supranationalists - stimulating this by strengthening the role of EU-level policy-making. We view supranationalism as an attitudinal disposition dealing with the question whether or not the European level should develop into an autonomous level of governance. Three items are used for measuring supranationalism (table 3). They deal with the proceedings within Council working groups and implicate the strengthening of European policies and the task or mission they should perform as national representatives. The stimuli appeal to the willingness and readiness to strengthen EU-level policy-making. Component scores of these three items will be used as a scale measuring actors' disposition towards Europe.

A first set of hypotheses looks at the experiences actors had with the EU. The principal idea is that what actors view as appropriate is conditional upon their transgovernmental experiences, which impact supranationalism positively. Many things can be said about the potential impact of various sorts of transgovernmental experiences, but in the context of this paper we suppose that the unique experience of being involved in European affairs counts more than any other factor. As officials get in touch with the specificities of the EU, their conception of what the 'national interest' constitutes will transform and become more dependent on the interaction within the working groups than being solely dependent upon domestic interactions. We measured these experiences as the number of years a respondent was involved in various working groups, a measure that is rather independent from the distinction between full-timers and part-timers.¹⁵

These transgovernmental experiences will be confronted with the domestic experiences officials have. In contrast to the hypothesised positive effect of EU-experiences on supranationalism, we suppose that the longer someone served in his/her national administration, the less they support Euro-level solutions. Service in the national administration increases the likelihood that values inherent to the domestic political system are internalised (Hooghe 1999). In addition, we control for what elsewhere has been called the innovator/escapist hypothesis (Gabel and Palmer 1995). Some officials might be critical of their national system and therefore it is assumed that they, as an escape route, develop positive attitudes towards Europe. How actors view their own work environment has been operationalised with the scale operational self-esteem, an appendix gives the relevant items and factor-loadings. Without going into detail here, it should be mentioned that organisation self-esteem is - compared to other nations - very low among the Belgian negotiators and especially among the Belgian part-timers (Dierickx and Beyers 1999).

For comparative purposes we also present the bivariate results from analyses done with a multinational sample. It turns out that in both samples transgovernmental experiences seem not to be very constitutive for how actors believe that policies should be made in the Council. Negotiators dispositions are not necessarily shaped by the number of years they were in contact with Council working groups, nor by the intensity of the interactions, i.e. the distinction between part-timers and

¹⁵ ALSO WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS ABOUT THEIR INFORMAL CONTACTS (OUTSIDE FORMAL WORKING MEETINGS) WITH THEIR COUNTERPARTS FROM THE OTHER MEMBER-STATES, THE SECRETARIAT-GENERAL OF THE COUNCIL, AND FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION. THESE DATA ARE NOT YET INCLUDED HERE, BUT OUR ANALYSES SUGGEST THAT IT DOES NOT YIELD THE STRONG EFFECT AS IN JARLE'S PAPERS. SOMETHING THAT WILL BE ADDED!!!

full-timers. With respect to national experiences the data show a more significant association, although not always very strong. At least, they suggest that factors pointing at national socialisation merit our attention. A low organisational self-esteem stimulates supra-nationalism, an observation that is especially the case for the Belgian sample. Within the multinational sample we observe that the longer an official has been exposed to national settings, the more he favours supranationalism, a result that runs counter some of our expectations, an peculiar outcome that will not be analysed in detail here.

Table 3. Bivariate correlations of independent variables with supranationalism (correlations, p<0.05; ns = statistically not significant)

Independent variables	Multinational sample (N=120)	Belgian	sample	(N=95)
Transgovernmental experience				
Experience in the working groups (years)	Ns	غف	Ns	
Part-timer-full-timers	No variance	•	Ns	
National experience				٠. ٢
Low organisational self-esteem	-0.19		-0.29	
Work-experience in national settings	-0.22		ns	
* including 12 Belgian respondents				

Let's focus on the Belgian data. We should keep in mind that the variance with respect to supranationalism is substantially lower in the Belgian sample as in the multinational sample. The standard deviation equals 1.07 in the multi-national sample, while it is only .79 in the Belgian sample. All this points to the pro-European and homogeneous character of the Belgian sample and it suggests that the proportion of explained variance is not expected to be very high. Furthermore, we discovered that the average self-esteem is somewhat higher among Belgian full-timers (x=.12) than among Belgian part-timers (x=.26), but that statistically the differences between the two groups is not than big (F=3.01, p=0.0860).

Table 4. Average supra-nationalism by transgovernmental involvement and self-esteem (Belgian sample, z-scores)

	Organisational self-esteem				
	High (N=25)	Middle (N=37)	Low (N=33)		
Full-time involvement (N=30)	.21	.16	32		
Part-time involvement (N=65)	.28	.28	50		

In order to test whether the intensity of involvement in Council working groups moderates the impact self-esteem has on supranationalism we investigated whether averages changed significantly accordingly. A covariance analysis with one interaction term (part-timers versus full-timers*organisational self-esteem) revealed that a low domestic organisational self-esteem stimulates supranationalism (F= 4.03, p= .0210). It is not the involvement in the working groups as such (i.e. distinction part-timer or full-timers or duration) that explains supranationalism, but the relation between self-esteem and supranationalism changes as a consequence of involvement in working groups. As we see in table 4, among part-timers a low self-esteem goes together with supranationalism (a low or negative score). It seems that a national socialisation factor, in the form of organisational self-esteem, stimulates supranationalism especially among those who are less exposed to EU-affairs (the part-time officials). Thus a negative disposition towards the national

¹⁶ Not elaborated here, but in the multinational sample other 'national' factors turned out to be quite predictive (Beyers 1998a).

apparatus has a positive effect on supranationalism, and this effect is more apparent among those with less European experience.

That 'Europe' is maybe not very constitutive for Belgian officials' dispositions can be inferred from other sources as well. From 23 qualitative in-depth interviews that were done within the framework of this research we learnt that the constitutional reforms (defederalisation) within the country had the most pervasive impact on their work. In contrast, only one interviewee mentioned the increasing impact of the European Union; all interviewees made reference to various domestic institutional reforms and many of them had a negative view concerning these reforms. Especially within the federal administrations complaints about the increased complexity of the administrative and political system prevailed; the interplay between different agencies is inefficient and absent, the involvement of a large number of ministries 'increases the probability of bad instructions'. One respondent said that most Belgian negotiators most of the time work without detailed instructions, but that they have one big instruction: 'do what you think that is appropriate, but try to improve European decision-making, do not make enemies and ensure that you have a positive working relation with everyone'. All respondents stressed the fact that the appropriate way to deal with Europe - for Belgian negotiators - is 'to comply with the views of the Commission' or 'to follow the Commission's ideas, because these usually fit what is good for Belgium'.

ILLUSTRATION 3: Domestic reform¹⁷

At the start of their new term in office in 1995, the Flemish government and parliament announced their intention to start discussions on a new round of state reforms. The following three years (1996-1999), a Flemish parliamentary committee elaborated key concepts, among which the defederalization of agriculture, i.e. transferring all agricultural competencies - including those related to foreign policy aspects - to the regions. After the federal parliamentary elections of June 1999, a Federal Conference on State reform (COSTA) was created to start the political debate on these matters. As the negotiations on agriculture did not develop smoothly, leading federal politicians decided to link - in the form of a package deal - these reforms with other, more political reforms such as financial and fiscal autonomy which resulted in the so called Lambermont-bis agreement of January 2000.

In this paper, the basic idea of Europeanisation is that 'Europe' stimulates a redefinition of domestic political ideas and practices. The ongoing domestic reform of agricultural policies is an interesting case in this respect. Agriculture as one of the most 'Europeanised' policy sectors should have a profound impact on what domestic actors do and believe and adaptation pressures on domestic policy-making are outspoken here. Like other member-state's officials, it is almost on a daily basis that Belgian officials have to present a Belgian position on a specific topic related to agriculture in one of the working groups set up by the Council of Ministers. Since the EU does not recognise sub-national units on an equal par with member-states (art. 203 TEU), we can expect a scaling up of decision-making powers within Belgium. However, from an institutionalist point of view we can also expect that the exogenous adaptation pressures by Europe will be mediated

¹⁷ Data for this case study has been collected from official documents (both at the Flemish and the Federal level) and press reviews (articles collected out of a Flemish (De Standaard) and a Francophone (Le Soir) newspaper. In a next stage, this material will be supplemented by interviews and (official) documents from the Walloon government and parliament.

parliament.

Since the early 1970's the Belgian state has been reformed through a dynamic process of successive state reforms (1970, 1980, 1988 and 1993) from a unitary to a federal state whereby competencies have increasingly been transferred to the regions and communities.

through various endogenous factors, i.e. different politico-administrative structures, sets of values and practices. In this sense, socialisation is - despite the strong involvement in or pressure by Eurolevel processes - strongly affected by scope conditions at the domestic level.

Regarding arguments pro and contra used during the debate on agriculture, a number of interesting observations can be made. First of all, both at the federal and the regional level, rather similar arguments were applied and included endogenous (domestic) and exogenous (European) elements.¹⁹ More importantly, the arguments varied very much among the involved actors: civil servants voiced other concerns than politicians and interest groups. Basically we observed a split between administrative actors voicing other concerns than politicians. Agricultural interests groups were somewhat in between; some favoured defederalisation, other opposed it.

Table 5. Arguments pro and contra domestic agriculture reform

		Pro		Contra '.
Endogenous	-	previous reforms were too fragmented and homogenisation of competences is needed the agricultural sector differs strongly between Flanders and Wallonia, policy diversification is needed	•	expertise creation of competition between regions
Exogenous	-	general principle of subsidiarity changes in EU agricultural policy: from price-support to income-support which goes together with a domestic regionalisation of agriculture	-	defence of interests: at the European level, Belgium has to speak with one voice instead of three voices

In general, politicians at all levels were pro defederalisation and although some of them used European pro-arguments, their discourse was primarily based on domestic arguments. The Green Flemish minister for the environment and agriculture, Vera Dua, stated that 'The regionalization of agriculture is logical. Agriculture is approached so differently by the two regions. Her Walloon counterpart, the socialists Jean-Marie Happart said in an interview: 'At the Walloon level, Agriculture depends on three ministries of which two have been regionalized, Economics and Environment. Then why not agriculture?' Contra arguments - especially related to 'Europe' - were almost non-existent in the domestic political discourse. Even the federal minister of agriculture, who is the most regular involved politician in these matters, did not mention European consequences explicitly.

It was only when the principle decision on regionalisation had been taken that the disagreement on Belgium's representation at the European level emerged. It is interesting to note that especially administrative actors, and not politicians, started to express their concern. Officials of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture started publicly to question the whole process on the basis of endogenous

The regions, especially the Flemish region, were responsible and active as initiators of the defederalisation debate, i.e. placing the item on the (federal) agenda. It is especially at the Federal level that the political conclusions were drawn.

²⁰ Although some disagreements rose between Flemish and Walloon politicians on social issues relating to agriculture and on representation based on the principle of equality at the European level.

²¹ De Standaard, 07/04/00

²² Le Soir, 23/07/99

contra arguments. For example the Secretary-General declared that: 'No, we were not informed... What has been decided goes very far. This is the maximal scenario which has been worked out rather quickly...If this is a good thing? I know that in the early nineties, Italy wanted to abolish it's federal ministry for agriculture, but had to abandon these plans...'²³ The largest agricultural peak organisation, the Boerenbond which is strongly embedded at both the domestic an European level (its president, Noel Devisch is also president of COPA), supports defederalistion, but questions it for European reasons. They fear that national agricultural interests will be less well defended if fully regionalised. Important is that their arguments are based on their European experiences. According to its president, the European argument contra is very important: '... because we have to speak with one voice at the European level. And Europe means more than just ministers meeting each other during conferences. Europe also stands for an administration and for various working groups. Speaking at all these levels with different voices from Flanders, German speaking Belgium and Wallonia simply does not work because the European treaty demands that one Belgian region speaks for all of the Belgian regions.'²⁴

In line with the general argument of this paper, it seems that the domestic reform on agriculture is more profoundly affected by domestic factors than by any European consideration. First, this limited Europeanised character of domestic politics can be related to the fact that politicians who decide on these domestic reform are not - or only sporadically - implicated in the day-to-day practice of European agriculture politics. Consequently, the arguments pro and contra used were differently distributed among the participants. Basically it seems that the argumentation fits into a pattern where officials refer to technical considerations, and politicians refer to general political ideas. In addition, the absence of communication between Belgian politics and the bureaucracy implicates the non-Europeanised character of domestic reform, although the substantive content of this reform is highly Europeanised (Beyers 1997).

Second, the domestic reform of an higly Europeanised competence as agriculture was strongly inspired by domestic arguments which relate to a particular domestic political culture. The decision-making structures were highly political and domestically oriented as decisions were made by leading federal politicians agents as part of a package deal involving the Flanders-Wallonia dividing line. According to the President of the Boerenbond, Noel Devisch: 'Why has the defederalisation of agriculture been requested? It is a principal position for some. Something has to emerge from the Costa and therefore everybody is focussed on Agriculture'25 Other politicians and political commentators related this domestic reform to a political dividing line between the christian-democrats and the other parties. For instance, Le Soir reported that 'A more comprehensive transfer of competences did not come not unexpected. It's only opponent were the Flemish Christian Democrats and 'its' Boerenbond.'26

Thus, Belgian political debates on domestic reform - of which the defederalization of agriculture is just one example - are mostly dominated by a domestic cognitive framework. This picture suggests that EU-membership does not entail strong effects on domestic adaptation, nor does it seem to change the way things are done fundamentally. Rather adjustment take place in an incremental way, one builds on existing traditions and arrangements that already exist (Hanf and Soetendorp 1998). Politically the Belgian political elite has internalised Europe to a great extent; the significance of the EU is widely recognised and welcomed. However, when it comes to administrative adaptation

²³ De Standaard, 07/04/00

²⁴ De Standaard, 20/03/00

²⁵ De Standaard, 12/04/00

²⁶ WAAR??

and related domestic reforms we cannot conclude that the Belgian political elites has internalised 'Europe' to a great extent. In some sense on may call this a paradox, while on the one hand being a fervent supporter of the European ideals, the views and practices of Belgian's political elites are substantially shaped by endogenous factors (see also Dierickx, Bursens and Helsen 2001).

Conclusion

Before summarising some findings, we will contextualise our research outcomes. First of all, it is important to remember that our evidence does not allow us making general claims about other member-states or other international organisations. The evidence is only related to the interaction of one member-state with the European Union. Second, by exploring scope-conditions affecting the socialisation of officials in Council working groups and by looking on how 'Europe' affects domestic reform we did not reject or confirm the possibility that EU-level settings may function as sites of socialisation. Other settings - committees under the realm of the Commission - or particular settings of the Council may function as socialisation sites for other member-state's officials. Third, by focusing on the Belgian case we may have underestimated the fact the Belgian administrative elite's socialisation has been completed a long time ago. Consequently, 'Europe' is not very new and Belgian actors are not pressed to adopt new roles; maybe they are already socialised.²⁷

Nevertheless we believe that cases like this are helpful for exploring scope conditions affecting or constraining the potential future socialisation of actors. Yet, by looking at a broad set of actors ranging from strongly involved full-timers (illustration 1 and 2) to weakly involved political actors (illustration 3), it is plausible to conclude that claims concerning the 'Europeanisation' of the nation-state - in terms of growing convergence or homogenisation - might be misleading and empirically incorrect. In general, the three illustrative studies suggest that for most domestic political actors - even those involved in European matters on a more or less regular basis - European socialisation processes function basically as secondary socialisation processes and not as primary socialisation process.

The first illustrative case study shows that the recruitment of officials participating in Council negotiations is driven by both previous experiences with the European Union and its member-states, on the one hand, and domestic political experiences, on the other hand. Especially full-timers had extensive domestic political experiences either as staff-member of a ministerial cabinet or as collaborator of domestic political parties. Furthermore, full-timers follow a professional trajectory with a strong European character; they spent quite some time of their career in other EU-member states. In general, the first illustration suggests that domestic political socialisation opportunities are difficult to separate from European socialisation opportunities. However, what precisely the impact of party political recruitment is on dispositions held by officials remained somewhat unexplored in this part of the paper.

In the second section we investigated in how far actors' dispositions towards Europe are affected by particular domestic or European experiences. Supranationalism was considered as an attitudinal disposition regarding whether or not the European level should develop into an autonomous level of governance. It turned out that transgovernmental experiences seem not to be very constitutive for how Belgian actors believe that policies should be made in the Council. Here, our results suggest

²⁷ In this sense our results cannot be interpreted as a falsification of Jarle Trondal's finding. In his sample we have a set of officials belonging to nation-states for which the EU is, in comparison to Belgium, relatively new.

that factors pointing at national socialisation seem to be formative for what they think about European policy-making.

The third illustration takes a another angle. While many socialisation studies are focused on officials (civil servants and diplomats), not many studies have taken a look on how political actors socialise (elected politicians and ministers). Usually the day-to-day exposure of politicians to European affairs is inferior (in terms of frequency and intensity) in comparison with the exposure of officials. We know that politically the Belgian political elite has internalised Europe to a great extent; its significance widely recognised and welcomed. By studying the defederalization of agriculture we discovered that domestic reforms are substantially dominated by a domestic cognitive framework. Thus EU-membership does not affect domestic administrative adaptation profoundly. This observation has something paradoxical. While on the one hand being a staunch supporter of European integration, the general views and practices of Belgian's political elites are substantially shaped by endogenous factors.

APPENDIX:

Measurement of Organisational Self-Esteem (all 5-point scales, factor-loadings)

	Belgians (N=95)	Multinational sample (N=120)
1. The internal co-ordination of the	0.68	0.76
viewpoints of the different ministries in		
our country is chaotic.		
2. In the administrations of my country there	0.59	0.48
is not sufficient training for officials		
who have to take part in negotiations at a		
European level.	,	المراقبة والمحادث
 It often happens that I am not quite 	0.68	0.71
certain what point of view I should put		
forward in the working groups.		•
4. For officials it is very important that	0.69	0.60
the preparation of a policy is easily		
surveyable. The structure of the	, .	45 6°.
administration in our country does not		
always add to this effect.		•
5. Most Member States prepare themselves more	0.52	0.56
thoroughly for the negotiations in		
Brussels than we do.		0.56
6. I only learnt how I had to deal with	0.49	0.56
complicated European dossiers as I went		
along.	0.59	0.61
 I always get very clear instructions from my ministry or my department as to what 	0.59	0.61
position I should take up.		
Eigenvalue	2.60	2.68
223000	2.00	2.00

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