IMPLEMENTING UNITY

Economic and Social Cohesion in France and Britain:
Two Case Studies

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ABSTRACT

Territorial implementation of EU policies is a crucial stage of EU policy process. Its examination uncovers two main dimensions of the integration cycle which make the new EU governance: Europeanisation and convergence. Each dimension offers clues as to the nature and limit of integration. This paper presents two case studies in which the above approach is tested. It examines the impact of EU structural policy on two training networks in France and the UK. It evaluates the impact of ESF on politico-administrative structures and defines domestic factors preventing policy harmonisation. The conclusion outlines bottom-up dynamics, third major dimension of integration, and argues for a development of a more integrated EU approach to training.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the dynamics of EU integration through an investigation of EU structural policy implementation in two regions. The analysis is based on empirical evidence collected between 1996 and 1998 in France and Britain. However, this paper also aims at contributing to the debate on Europeanisation and convergence of domestic policies. The theoretical hypothesis suggests that networks of political and economic actors are affected by EU policies. The EU impact must be considered vertically (Europeanisation) but also horizontally (convergence/harmonisation). This model has been tested in two regions of the EU in the field of ESF funded training. Firstly, we will introduce the theoretical framework used, and secondly, the results of the empirical findings will be summarised and analysed. We then draw some conclusions on the nature of integration and alter the original model to take into account some interesting empirical results.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Integration, Europeanisation and Convergence

In the early years of the European Economic Community (EEC), only a small number of prominent, and mainly American academics influenced the debate on EU integration by focusing on national élites playing either an intergovernmental game or shifting their loyalties to a new centre of power[1]. From the mid 1980s, the EU

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[1] See for instance E. Haas, The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces, 1950-1957 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958); L. Lindberg, The Political Dynamics of European Integration (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); L. Lindberg and S. Schweingold, Europe's Would Be Polity (New Jersey: prentice Hall, 1970); L. Lindberg and S. Schweingold, eds., Regional Integration: Theory and Research (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 1971); P. Taylor, The Limits of European Integration (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983); A.

started to develop democratic values[2] and governmental powers more similar to nation-states than to functional international organisations. The academic interest started to reflect the fact that specialised territorial or sectoral interest groups became more able to influence EU decisions in "low politics" areas. However, fundamental differences between a nation-state and the EU seemed to limit the validity of theories of the state to explain EU governance. In particular, sovereignty, public administration and budgetary powers of the EU are limited. In addition, the notion of European statehood and identity is very vague outside the geographical link uniting all the member states. New theoretical approaches such as multi-level governance and innovative tools such as policy networks have started to address the sui generis nature of the EU[3].

Milward, The European Rescue of the Nation-State (London: Routledge, 1992); S. Hoffmann, The European Sisyphus - Essays on Europe, 1964-1994 (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995. Also, for a comprehensive classification of the various international relations approaches to European integration, compared to comparative politics models, see S. Hix, "The Study of the European Community: The Challenge to Comparative Politics" West European Politics 17 (1) 1994, 1-30. The article gave rise to a debate on the merits of the various approaches in following issues of West European Politics. Also, on the same subject, see for instance T. Risse-Kappen, "Exploring the Nature of the Beast: International Relations Theory and Comparative Policy Analysis Meet the European Union" Journal of Common Market Studies 34 (1) 1996, 53-80.

[2] See for instance A. Hurrell and A. Menon, "Politics Like Any Other ? Comparative Politics, International Relations and the Study of the EU" West European Politics 19 (2) 1996, 386-402. Democratic values include political participation, individual freedoms and human rights and beyond, the introduction of universal welfare provisions or structured social policy.

[3] See for instance C. Ansell, C. Parsons and K. Darden, "Dual Networks in European Regional Development Policy" Journal of Common Market Studies 35 (3) 1997, 347-375; I. Bache, S. George and R. Rhodes, "The European Union, Cohesion Policy, and Subnational Authorities in the United Kingdom" in L. Hooghe, ed., Cohesion Policy and European Integration - Building Multi-Level Governance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 294-319; R. Balme, and B. Jouve, "Building the Regional State: Europe and Territorial Organization in France" in L. Hooghe, ed., Cohesion Policy and European Integration - Building Multi-Level Governance, 219-255; T. Börzel, "What's So Special About Policy Networks ? An Exploration of the Concept and its Usefulness in Studying European Governance" European Integration online Papers 1 (16) http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/1997-16a.htm, 1997; A. Cole and P. John, "Local Policy Networks in France and Britain: Policy Co-ordination in Fragmented Political Sub-Systems" West European Politics 18 (4) 1995, 89-109; G. Falkner, "Corporatist Governance and Europeanisation: No Future in the Multi-Level Game? EIoP 1 (11) http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/1997-011a.htm, 1997; P. John, "Europeanisation in a Centralising State: Multi-Level Governance in the UK" Regional and Federal Studies 6 (2) 1996, 131-44; H. Kassim, "Policy Networks, Networks and European Union Policy Making: A Sceptical view" West European Politics 17 (4) 1994, 15-27; G. Marks, F. Nielsen, L. Ray and J. Salk, "Competencies, Cracks and Conflicts: Regional Mobilization in the European Union" in G. Marks, F. Scharpf, P. Schmitter, and W. Streeck, eds., Governance in the European Union (London: Sage, 1996), 40-63; Peterson, J., "Policy Networks and European Union policy Making: A Reply to Kassim" West European Politics 18

Economic and social cohesion policy has been a testing ground for the multi-level governance approach[4]. The major assumption of that theory is that policy-making is shared between state executives, non central states actors including sub-national governments and supranational actors. It recognises that research aimed at explaining integration is best carried out at sectoral level, but also *across the distinct phases of policy-making, and across territory.* Only such a detailed analysis can enable the emergence of patterns of governance, which would remain unnoticed by state-centric approaches[5]. Although focused on low politics areas, multi-level governance is interested in EU policies which, at implementation stage, concern more than half of the whole EU population[6].

Our own model compares the territorial implementation of a EU policy in different countries, therefore enabling us to investigate issues which are situated at the core of the integration process because they relate directly to EU citizens. We assume that the process by which integration has progressed has two major components: a vertical component or Europeanisation of policies and a horizontal component or convergence of policies as outlined by figure 1.. Europeanisation occurs whenever EU institutions implement decisions affecting each of the 15 member states and European citizens. As the 15 domestic politico-administrative systems across the EU are affected in different ways by EU policies, integration can only really progress if Europeanisation has produced harmonised results across the EU and comparison must be made between member states.

(2) 1995, 389-407. R. Rhodes, I. Bache and S. George, "Policy Networks and Policy-Making in the European Union: A Critical Appraisal" in L. Hooghe, ed. Cohesion Policy and European Integration - Building Multi-Level Governance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 367-387.
[4] G. Marks, "Structural Policy and Multi-Level Governance in the EC" in A. Carfruny and G. Rosenthal, eds., The State of the European Community. Vol 2: The Maastricht Debate and Beyond (London: Lynne Rienner, 1993), 391-410; and also Smith, A., "Studying Multi-Level Governance. Examples from French Translations of the Structural Funds" Public Administration 75 (4) 1997, 711-729.
[5] G. Marks, "Exploring and Explaining Variation in EU Cohesion Policy" in Liesbet Hooghe, ed., Cohesion Policy and European Integration (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 389-390.
[6] Structural aid targeted 50.6% of the EU population in objectives 1,2, 5b and 6 regions over the 1994-99 funding period. However, the European Commission, in Agenda 2000, decided to concentrate structural funds to about 35% of the population for the 2000-20006 funding period. At the time of writing the exact figure is not known.
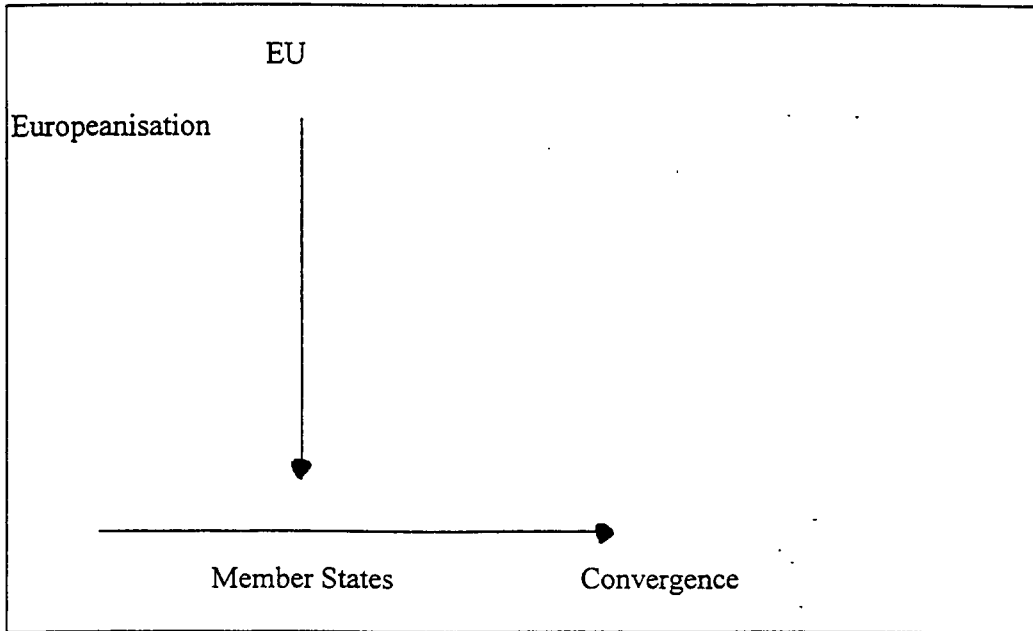
Figure 1.: Two Dimensions of EU Integration

This paper focuses on empirical evidence, the above assumptions will not be developed here, but the author welcomes comments on them.

Methodology

Policy Sector

The policy sector chosen in our case studies is the training element of structural policy. Internationalisation of trade and Single European Market (SEM) have affected vocational education[7], an important sector to examine, as it plays a crucial role in the promotion of *economic welfare through work related and work place learning* at EU level[8]. Beyond, training is an essential instrument of economic and social cohesion in the EU. An examination of that policy allows us to focus on the sub-national dimension of training, in particular its territorial implementation, as the European Commission considers that the best mode of delivery for structural policy is to mobilise local potential[9]. In practice, the impact of structural policy on French and British territorial authorities is significant and has even led to subnational mobilisation[10]. Marks described this evolution in the political process as the

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[7] Vocational education includes vocational training.

[8] P. Funnel and D. Muller, eds., Vocational Education and the Challenge of Europe (London: Kogan Page, 1991).

[9] See evidence given by Commissioner Monika Wulf-Mathies to the House of Lords, Select Committee on the European Community (HL Papers 64-I, 132).

[10] The expression is used by Hooghe in L. Hooghe, "Subnational Mobilisation in the European Union" West European Politics, 18 (3) 1995, 175-198, where she refers to the rise of sub-national actors of integration in general to introduce a multi-level

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institutionalisation of contested spheres of influence across several tiers of government to replace the *unambiguous allocation of decision making responsibility between national and supranational governments*[11].

Territories

To narrow down the scope of the empirical research, we chose only one objective 2/5b region in both France and Britain. Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur (PACA) in France and the North East (NE) of England were chosen in view of their geographical and economic similarities[12]. Their striking differences were also a factor of choice. In particular, different national approaches to public policy and role of sub-national authorities have shaped the two regional networks observed.

In France, Europeanisation must be tempered by two major domestic changes in policy process and the involvement of a greater number of actors since the end of the 1960s. French *dirigisme*, i.e. state involvement in all aspects of economic policy, has had impact on the making of a strong regulatory training policy. Societal changes at the end of the 1960s, and demands for a lesser state interventionism led to the development of corporatist decision-making in continuing training. While central authorities remained main regulatory actors of that policy, employers' associations and trade unions started to play an important role in the shaping of the policy. The regionalisation legislation of 1982 was also a major politico-administrative reform, which affected training policy. The need to modernise French administrative system was timely and after several failed attempts by previous governments, the first socialist government of the Fifth Republic introduced directly elected regional councils through a major reform of regional government[13]. Regions acquired powers to determine their own regional training policy[14]. However, the current French training policy still reflects a dirigist approach to public policy as the state has maintained an involvement in that field. As for the implementation of training, the structure and methods also reflect the central imposition of harmonised territorial bodies across the territory, whether training is considered as a policy or a tool of regional development. Regions have been transferred powers, they negotiate State-Region Contracting Plans (*contrats de plan Etat-Régions*) with central government in which training features prominently. Deconcentrated authorities represent regional

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governance model for EU integration, in opposition with state centric and supranational models developed by intergovernmentalists and neofunctionalists.

[11] G. Marks, "Structural policy and Multilevel Governance in the EC" in A. Cafruny and G. Rosenthal, eds., The State of the EC - Vol. 2: The Maastricht Debates and Beyond (Harlow: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 391-410, in particular 402.

[12] Both regions are situated near a sea. Their traditional industries were shipbuilding and coalmining but both regions have carried out a restructuring of their economy. PACA and the NE have also both isolated rural communities and inner city problems which need to be addressed.

[13] The reform was referred to la grande affaire du septennat, i.e. the main important reform of the incoming President François Mitterrand.

[14] For an overview of the French traditional politico-administrative system and the major reforms of the governmental system, see P. Hall, J. Hayward and H. Machin, eds., Developments in French Politics (London: Macmillan, 1994).

interests and, although accountable to central government, manage training as well as employment or regional policies in each region. A network of public service training providers *groupements d'établissements de l'éducation nationale pour la formation professionnelle continue* (GRETA)[15], assisted by various other public agencies such as *délégations académiques à la formation continue* (DAFCO)[16] and *centres académiques de la formation continue* (CAFOC)[17] are divided into administrative regions or *académies*.

In contrast, British training policy has developed in a completely different setting, the state taking a liberal attitude and leaving it up to employers to determine their own training needs. Britain led Europe into the industrial revolution where decisions were left to market forces in control of the reins of rising capitalism. In this context, the state had no place to intervene in a system that had proved to be successful. As British industrial competitiveness started to lose steam in the 1950s, the British government attempted to introduce elements of corporatism in training policy. However, as Margaret Thatcher imposed a new economic model in the 1980s, there was a return to an employers led voluntarist training policy[18]. The current UK training policy process and structures are very much the reflection of a liberal approach to training with little involvement from the state, but also lack of a structured regional approach to territorial development. Consequently, at implementation stage, structures and methods in the field of training could not be more different than in France. The two only harmonised structures across the UK territory are Government Offices or GOs (the new Regional Development Agencies had not yet been set up at the time of writing) and Training and Entreprise Councils (TECs). However as training remains an employers-led policy and regional development dealt with by central government, these two structures have never had to develop long term regional training strategies.

The development of a supranational solution to skill shortages in the EU affects the above mentioned politico-administrative structures differently. In particular, the EU involvement in the field of training, instrument of cohesion policy, has transformed the relationship between central and sub-national authorities in the 1990s. EU role in vocational training policy has, in the past, been mostly based on the need to complete the Common Market and limited to the promotion of intergovernmental co-operation. In practice, human resources investment was not a priority for European economic integration in the 1950s[19]. However, the threat to social and economic cohesion across the territory led the European Commission to develop a training strand in its redistributive structural policy. Limited amounts of funding

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[15] Grouping of state sector educational establishements for continuing vocational education.
[16] Academic department for continuing training.
[17] Academic centres for continuing training.
[18] For an overview of the British politico-administrative system and the major reforms of the governmental system, see P. Dunleavy, A. Gamble, I. Holliday and G. Peele, eds., Developments in British Politics (London: Macmillan, 1993).
[19] C. Church and D. Phinnemore, European Union and European Community: A Handbook and Commentary on the Post-Maastricht Treaties (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 190-2.

were attributed to the ESF until the late 1980s[20] and the lack of a real integrated employment or human resources policy did not allow it to be an efficient policy instrument. In 1988, The Council of the EU agreed to rationalise the functioning of the ESF, the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund - Guidance Section (EAGGF-Guidance), and to double their amount by 1993. Structural policy became the second major policy of the EU after the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The objective was to build a coherent approach to regional policy in the wake of the SEM. Eligibility criteria were set and regions or countries acquired objective 1 to 5 status[21]. Four operational principles were also introduced: concentration, programming, partnership and additionality. The Delors II package then set the financial perspective for EU spending policies for 1993-1997. Training was considered as a tool of economic and social cohesion in the EU. Delors suggested, not only to target poorer regions and disadvantaged sections of the population (long-term job-seekers, young people, women), but also to offer training and retraining to workers still in employment, in order to facilitate their adaptation to industrial changes[22]. The Heads of States and Governments in Edinburgh agreed to increase the funding of structural actions between 1993 and 1999 by 40%. The "Growth Initiative" followed the Edinburgh European Council endorsed the increase in structural activities by 1999. The document reaffirmed the need for governments to extend and reinforce access to training[23].

Ironically, it is through its role as a tool for economic and social cohesion that training became an important item on the EU agenda. Indeed, training incorporated essential characteristics that attracted EU policy makers' attention at the end of the 1980s: economic, social and territorial. It therefore made it a perfect instrument for EU regional and structural development. While the decision-making remains very much a matter for intergovernmental negotiations, implementation principles require government departments, the main implementation authorities of EU structural policy, to prepare operational programmes in partnership with sub-national authorities. An interesting fact to note is that the President of the European Commission between 1985 and 1995, Jacques Delors, was himself instrumental in promoting training as part of the French industrial relations legislation in the 1970s.

Alongside national programmes negotiated between the European Commission and member states' governments, the Commission also created "Community Initiative on Employment and Development of Human Resources" funded by ESF, assisting women (EMPLOYMENT-NOW), disabled people (EMPLOYMENT-HORIZON),

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[20]George, Politics and Policy in the European Community, 210; Church and Phinnemore, European Union and European Community: A Handbook and Commentary on the Post-Maastricht Treaties, 221.

[21] For a brief account of the development of EU regional and structural policies, see Carmichael, L. (1998) Regional and Structural Policies (http:/eurotext.ulst.ac.uk).

[22]A. Scott, "Financing the Community: the Delors II Package" in J. Lodge, ed., The European Community and the Challenge of the Future 2nd edition (London: Pinter, 1993), 75.

[23]Commission of the EC, London Office, Background Report: Promoting Economic Recovery in Europe-the Edinburgh Growth Initiative (London: London Office of the EC Commission, 1993).

young people (EMPLOYMENT-START) and workers facing unemployment (ADAPT). The European Commission also funds training programmes under education and training policy or Community Action Programmes (PACs). Outside economic and social cohesion policy, EU training policy has been promoted through various other policies. In 1989, the Council of the EU agreed to fund a number of European education and training programmes[24]. The Protocol on Social Policy[25] of the TEU also refers to the promotion of human resources. Since the Treaty of Amsterdam the Council of the EU must consult the Committee of the Regions, in the field of training. EU industrial policy has also referred to the need for better training[26].

INTEGRATION AND HARMONISATION THROUGH POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

There is little evidence of the impact of EU training policy stricto sensu on domestic policies themselves. However, if we look at EU structural policy and despite the small amount of EU budget allocated to ESF, the impact of its implementation on domestic training structures and objectives has been major.

EU and Domestic Training Policies: Different Traditions, Different Decisions

So far, in the field of vocational training, the main achievements at EU level, have been the recognition of qualifications, the European Commission's promotion of exchanges between training providers across Europe as well as the rise of comparative studies through CEDEFOP. The main objective of the Treaty of Rome in the field of training was to promote of free movement of labour and contribute to the development of national economies (art. 128 EU). However, other EU policies have indirectly influenced training: competition, social, regional and structural policies. At the same time, France and Britain have developed very different training policies as we saw above, reflecting mainly the role of government in public policy rather than external influences.

Does it suggest that little Europeanisation of French and UK training policies has occurred? Seen from a intergovernmental perspective, French and UK training policies remain untouched by EU training policy: a supranational training policy would generate major debates at EU level.

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[24]D. Wood and B. Yesilada, The Emerging European Union (London: Longman, 1996), 175-176.

[25]Agreement on social policy concluded between the Member States of the European Community with the exception of the UK. Since 1997, the UK has ratified the social protocol. Since the Treaty of Amsterdam, it is now part of the main Treaty provisions.

[26] See for instance Martin Bangemann's "Industrial Policy in an Open and Competitive Environment - Guidelines for a Community Approach", COM (90) 556 final, Brussels, and also Delors' White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, COM (93) 700, Brussels.

Firstly, it would require consensus and harmonisation on employment policy and rights of workers. Secondly, in order to be funded, a EU training policy would need, if we follow the French example, to increase the tax burden of employers in order to offer accessible training opportunities to the majority of the labour forces. At least, national or EU budgets would need to subsidise training infrastructures and courses. If, however, the British example was followed, then a purely voluntary training policy could put training standards down across the EU and damage the competitive edge of EU workers. In any case, such a move would be resisted by countries which have either strong employees' representation in industrial relations decision-making process or high standards in training policy. So both regulatory and distributive elements of a training policy could create major clashes within the Council of the EU.

What matters for the EU, so far, is the prosperity of the EU territory through the establishment of a large internal market, the respect of free movement of goods, services, Territorial cohesion has gained a more important status in the EU agenda recently and indirectly affects issues surrounding national sovereignty: share of EU budget allocated to structural and regional policy, national contributions to EU budget, continuing funding of current poor EU regions versus transfer to Eastern European economies.

The tables below summarise the source of EU influence on France and the UK.

EUROPEANISATION OF NATIONAL TRAINING POLICY: SOURCES

1. Decision-Making Stage

UK Vocational Training Policy	EU Vocational Training Policy	French Vocational Training Policy
Main Features: **Part of governmental responsibilities in the field of:** • Initial Training and Education • Employment Policy • Promotion of competitive entreprises • Economic regeneration	**Main Features:** **Linked to EU Competences in the areas of:** • Competition Policy • Structural and Regional Policies • Industrial Policy • SEMs • Education and Training • Social Policy • Employment Policy	**Main Features:** **Part of governmental responsibilities in the field of:** • Education and Training • Labour and Employment Policies • Industrial Policy • Social Policy • Regional Policy
Structure: • Minimal Government involvement in continuing training • Employers define training needs	**Structure:** • European Commission develops policies • CEDEFOP researches • Council decides	**Structure:** • Employers/employees negotiate conventions • Government drafts legislation and budget allocations • Parliament passes legislation
Course in regions funded through: • EU • Private funds • Public funds (bids)	**Courses in regions funded through** • EU budget (mainly structural allocation)	**Courses in regions funded through** • Public and private funding • Public transfer to regions • EU
Aims: • Free market	**Aims:** • Free movement of labour • Economic and social cohesion • Competitiveness of EU entreprises • Mutual understanding	**Aims:** • Workers' rights • Personal development • Workforce competitiveness territorial planning and cohesion

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2. Territorial Implementation

UK Vocational Training Policy	EU Vocational Training Policy	French Vocational Training Policy
Main Features: • Training Policy • Entreprise Policy • Regeneration Policy **Structure:** • GO to manage national programmes • TECs to deliver courses • Other training organisations • Local authorities to bid for funding (national/EU) • No regional training plan • SPD for EU allocation	**Main Features:** 1. Exchanges Links between economic actors Community initiatives 2. Structural Allocation/Regional Policy **Structure:** • Total reliance on support from national authorities to allocate funding • Complex partnerships of regional actors • Complex local allocation based on bids • Regional medium term plans (SPD)	**Main Features:** Training Policy/Regional Policy **Structure:** • Delivery of training Courses by public service networks and private providers • Annual regional training plan drawn by regional councils • Medium term Contracting Plan region/state • SPD for EU allocation • Regional Prefects • Regional Councils

Territorial Impact of ESF Implementation

The influence of ESF on training networks can be explained by the fact that the EU is totally reliant on national authorities to implement structural funding aimed at regions. With the rise, across the EU, of regional demands either for regional democracy or for increased regional funding since the 1970s, it was inevitable that the current management of structural funds would create clashes between implementation authorities (government departments) and beneficiaries of EU structural policy (public territorial authorities). Representatives of territorial authorities interviewed felt that they should be more directly involved in the implementation of regional and structural policies to avoid EU funds being hijacked by national authorities to fund their own national programmes or to avoid what is seen as unnecessary layers of bureaucracy.

This new awareness is the result of conditions applying to structural policy implementation. While the implementation process is very complex and has been heavily criticised, the fact is that EU regional policy, and through it EU training

policy for regions, has a straightforward rationale and working principles, easy to understand by institutions not usually used to be active policy-makers. For instance, its objectives are narrowly constrained within the context of territorial cohesion. In addition, it only carries a very limited funding, less than 0.5% of EU GDP which, furthermore, comes from one funding source: structural funds. As far as training is concerned, it is a tool for economic regeneration and, in the end, an instrument of EU competitiveness. It does not carry a political burden or reflect a political ideology. We saw earlier that in France training has, in the 1970s, evolved to become one of workers' rights and social partners were involved in decision-making. In the UK, the economic liberalism, promoted by the Conservatives and aimed at limiting the burden on employers, has shaped training policy. Both approaches have led to very different training networks. Also beyond national boundaries, there are debates on the meaning of training: economic necessity, social right, right to personal development? The simplicity of EU economic and social cohesion policy, allied to the promise of benefiting from structural funds, and the knowledge that governments infringing additionality and partnership would be reprimanded by the European Commission, have therefore politically empowered sub-national authorities in regions recipients of structural aid.

So, how has ESF empowered training actors? Both case studies focused on a regional training network. Europeanisation was flagrant as the same working principles apply to both regions which had to set up similar structures such as Programme Monitoring Committees (PMCs) to administer structural funds at regional level, and had to set up regional partnerships to draft medium term regional development plans or Single Programming Documents (SPDs). The vocabulary used in both regions was similar as well. It is too early to examine the long-term effect and determine whether the imposition of supranational methods will create new EU values within all recipient regions. However, an examination of the evolution of training policy in both France and the UK suggested that they could not be further remote from each other as they reflected very different governing traditions. Yet, within a few years, since the introduction of SPDs and an economic and social cohesion Chapter in the Single European Act (SEA), new methods as well as new channels of communications have emerged in both regions examined. It was indeed interesting to compare with the situation in PACA and the NE in the mid 1980s when the EU dimension was not a major influence on regional actors[27].

Beyond the administrative aspects of EU influence, the EU dimension has raised major issues on the role of regions in EU integration, demonstrated by the empirical findings focusing, ironically, on regional networks involved mainly in the implementation stage of the policy. Such issues could not have emerged in policy areas or policy stages where member states' governments retained their sovereignty. Has implementation of cohesion policy opened some kind of worm? Table 1. summarises the importance of policy implementation for uncovering a web of new issues.

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[27] See the two CEDEFOP reports: CEDEFOP, Formation professionnelle et développement régional: une étude sur le nord de l'Angleterre (Berlin: CEDEFOP, 1987); CEDEFOP, Regional Development and Vocational Training: Analysis and Promotion of Co-ordination between Development and Vocational Training - Regional Monographs: Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (Berlin: CEDEFOP, 1987).

1. EU Decision-Making
Intergovernmental Method

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ESF in Economic and Social Cohesion	Vocational Training

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• ESF funded by EU budget • Council adopts implementing decisions	• EU Vocational Training Policy (VTP) supports national VTP • No EU regulations • Only national content and organisation of VT

2. Implementation

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• European Commission manages ESF • Obligation of member states to respect working principles to receive funding	• No obligation on member states • EU undertakes comparative studies • EU encourages information exchange • EU stimulates cooperation • EU helps members states to facilitate access to VT

Impact on Member States

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• Impact on the aims of national VT • Awareness of EU dimension • New structures created • Reorganisation of existing structures • New implementation methods • Tensions between national/sub-national training actors	National authorities control: • Content of programmes • Delivery structure /network • Quality of training providers

Spin off - Issues

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• Sub-national feed-back to European Commission ⇨ reform of structural policy
• Issues raised:
  • Suitability of national approaches to regional/cohesion/training policies
  • Role of regional representation in EU decision-making
  • Budgetary share of structural policy
  • Functional role of regions in EU economic and social cohesion policy
	• Better understanding of foreign practices
	• Development of transnational networks

Table 1.: Issues Raised by ESF Implementation

By imposing management structures and principles for the territorial distribution of ESF, the European Commission has both encouraged EU integration in each region receiving structural assistance and, beyond, convergence of methods. So, is the European Commission on its way to create shared administrative values and create, across the EU, a new breed of bureaucrats?

Comparing ESF Implementation in PACA and the NE

The empirical scope of our own research cannot allow us to give an answer to the above question. However, we can evaluate and compare the impact of ESF on training networks of both PACA and the NE. In both regions, all interviewees showed concern about the structural complexities of ESF management. Other concerns reflected domestic preoccupations and therefore different approaches to regional empowerment, regional training and regional development policy.

The comparison must take into account three main national variables: firstly, the French and UK territorial organisation and role of regions, secondly domestic training policies and training actors and thirdly, regional policies. The three are interrelated because no power is absolute and territorial communities have power in specific fields such as training or regional development. In addition, regional development policy contains a training element. By focusing on each variable, we will be able to emphasise some specific aspects of integration.

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CENTRAL/LOCAL RELATIONSHIP IN PACA	CENTRAL LOCAL RELATIONSHIP IN NE
Impact/issues raised: • Recentralisation tendencies	Impact/issues raised: • Functions of sub-national authorities • Democratic role of sub-national authorities • Awareness of the centre/periphery divide • Awareness that other EU regions are more autonomous
TRAINING POLICY IN PACA	TRAINING POLICY IN THE NE
• Europeanisation of training objectives • Development of communication channels between actors • Development of transnational exchanges • Need to employ expert staff • Development of contacts with European Commission • Concern for small training providers over payment delays • Debate over role of ESF in structural policy • Debate over links between EU cohesion policy, employment and regional policies • Need for better ESF efficiency • Development of new integrated database • Adaptation of domestic planning documents • Creation of RACINE • Introduction of competitive bidding • Mistrust in regional Prefect and field services	• Europeanisation of training objectives • Development of communication channels between actors • Development of transnational exchanges • Need to employ expert staff • Development of contacts with European Commission • Concern for small training providers over payment delays • Debate over role of ESF in structural policy • Debate over links between EU cohesion policy, employment and regional policies • Need for better ESF efficiency • Introduction of medium term planning • Introduction of regional economic assessment • Definition of NE skill shortages and other negative economic factors • Comparative data between UK regions • De facto network of actors • Role and funding of TECs and national training programmes • Mistrust in central government • Concern for voluntary sector

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN PACA	REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY I NE
• Brussels representation • Greater awareness of EU dimension • Introduction of comparative assessment between French regions • Debate over the economic impact of EU economic and social cohesion policy	• Brussels representation • Greater awareness of EU dimension • Introduction of comparative assessment between UK regions • Debate over the economic impact of EU economic and social cohesion policy • Introduction of medium term planning • Introduction of regional economic assessment • Debate sectoral vs regional policies • Debate over FDI and regional development • Debate over the merit of competitive biddin approach of UK regional policy • Debate over fairness of central government policy towards NE • Development of ad hoc networks • Role of NE Chamber of Commerce

Table 2.: Impact of ESF in PACA and NE

Firstly, let us compare the different impact of ESF on both regions examined, in view of different territorial administrative systems. In France, ESF has prevented the decentralisation of power in the field of training, started in the 1980s. In the UK, ESF has led to a new increased awareness of the importance of funding territories and promoting regional policies.

Napoleonic values of centralism and uniformity led to the creation of symmetrical territorial authorities, a very hierarchical administration and to the active involvement of central government in the formulating of national policies such as education and training. Centralisation has ensured the predominance of Paris as geographical centre of political power in France. Links between the centre and the provinces are strong as local and regional political élites see Paris as the culmination of their political career. The French administration reflects the political situation as the state is maintaining power over regions through regional Prefects and field services, despite the 1980s' regionalisation. In the area of ESF funding, the major actors of the training network include both regional Prefect and the *délégation régionale travail, emploi, formation professionnelle* (DRTEFP)[28], both also involved in implementing national policies at regional level. Their power derived from both formal and informal sources. Indeed, the regional Prefect is responsible for disseminating information in the region and managing structural funds. However, since 1986, regions have become more autonomous and able to define their own

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[28] Deconcentrated authority, Regional Department for Labour, Employment, and Vocational Training.

training needs. In parallel, regions are bound by a contracting plan with the state. Consequently, their freedom to change policy direction on training, economic development, employment and territorial planning are limited while a contracting plan is being implemented. EU programming and partnership principles should have helped regions regained some autonomy or at least, involve them more directly in training plans. Yet, the reliance of the European Commission on central administration to manage ESF and the complexities of the system has reinforced the power that central authorities and representatives of the state in regions had lost through the 1980s regionalisation. The expertise and knowledge of field services and their strong hierarchical links with Paris have found a new justification through ESF.

The impact of ESF occurred in a very different environment in the UK. The belief in parliamentary sovereignty and, in parallel, in the individuality of localities has led to the creation of a diversified landscape of sub-national authorities with a variety of functional powers. Today, the concept that solutions must be adapted to the specific requirement is present in the devolution programme. The debate might have moved from the functional to the democratic extent of sub-national authorities' role but it still reflects the same approach to policies. Such a model would be difficult to understand using French revolutionary values. The implementation of ESF, however, just as in the French case study, has an impact on the relationship between the various levels of government involved. It is more positive than in France as it has increased the awareness of NE authorities that their economic and political position is weaker than that of other EU regions.

If we look now at regional training, ESF implementation had also a differentiated impact on PACA and the NE. Table 2. above summarises in bold similar developments in the two regions. The major impact, however, remains the introduction of some elements of regional planning, backed up by regional data in the NE. For the first time, the NE can, thanks to the compilation of information collected either by TECs, local authorities or consultants, assess its training situation and training needs and link it to a regional economic development strategy. SPDs clarify the link between skill shortages and other economic and social factors: transport infrastructure, housing, entrepreneurial spirit, foreign direct investments. They also define the economic sectors in serious trouble in the region. ESF has had, therefore, a major positive impact while adaptations in PACA were simply incremental.

In the area of regional policy as well, ESF implementation has had a more profound impact on regional structures by introducing the tools of regional policy: regional economic assessment and medium term planning. France's regional planning has existed ever since 1945 with the introduction of French modernisation plans under Jean Monnet's supervision. Budgetary transfer to elected Regional Councils since 1980s had also reinforced the territorial dimension of France's approach to regional development. Meanwhile, UK local authorities lost some of their funding for the benefit of a macro-economic approach to regional development, considered to be more efficient by the then Conservative government. Consequently, public actors in the NE have been able to compare the domestic macro approach to regional development and the territorial planning introduced by EU structural aid.

18

IMPACT ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF INTEGRATION

It is now time to draw some conclusions on the contribution of this research to the study of EU integration. While it was narrowly defined in geographical and sectoral terms, the exercise has reached several major objectives.

Understanding the Nature of EU Integration

Integration is a sophisticated process that can only be understood by a careful examination of the role of policy actors set in multi-dimensional environments: space, time, sector. The two case studies cover only parts of each dimension. Yet, the exercise has demonstrated the usefulness of various tools to understand two major aspects of integration: Europeanisation and convergence (see figure 1. above).

Convergence is a major aspect of integration as the degree of harmonisation attained for each policy area determined the presence, non existence or, if a study over time is undertaken, the development of shared EU values. Comparing the two case studies proved difficult, yet it was necessary. It has enriched the debate around territorial implementation of structural funds, sharing of responsibilities in planning and implementing programmes. Beyond we had to consider the critical issue of localisation of policy strategy and compatibility between sector-based and spatial policies.

The main limit of our approach to EU integration is that it seems to be able to answer the "how", but not the "why" of integration. In contrast, economic, political economic, intergovernmental, or federalist interpretations of integration have managed to explain the political rationale of integration by emphasising certain aspects such as need to protection of welfare systems, commercial advantages, relative bargaining of member states' governments, need to prevent a Franco-German war or to eradicate nationalism[29]. Because they offer an explanation on the origins of integration, they gained the title of theories. Yet, so far no theory has been able to predict the future of EU integration and it is unlikely that any theory will ever be able to do so.

The objective of our research framework is to ensure that efficiency is part of the search for a balance between integration and democracy[30]. Comparing efficiency of EU policy implementation at domestic level allows political scientists to assess the degree of integration reached. In addition, comparison between national politico-administrative practices and awareness of domestic barriers to integration allow

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[29] A. Moravcsik, The Choice for Europe - Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht (London: UCL Press, 1999), 18-85.
[30] Andrew Duff used the three concepts to develop a paradim of post national Europe. A. Duff, The Treaty of Amsterdam (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1997), xxxix.

practitioners of integration to adapt supranational policies and methods, for instance by increasing the degree of flexibility in their implementation.

However, the above empirical study has unveiled, beyond Europeanisation and convergence a maybe more fundamental dimension of integration, which will require more investigation in the future: the influence of domestic structures and administrative traditions on EU policies. Following the empirical findings, we need to alter figure 1. as follows to include this new dimension:
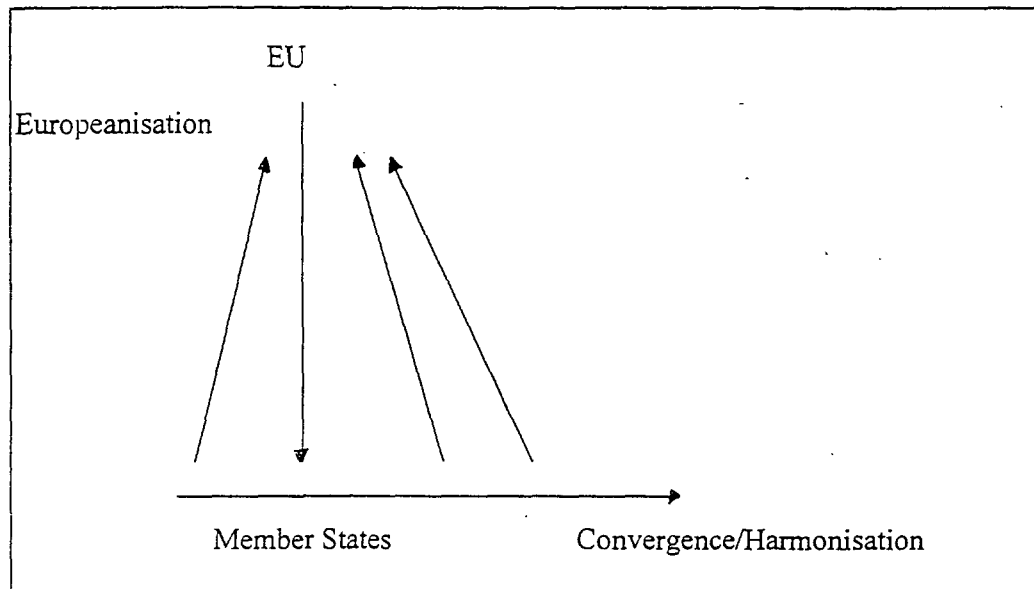

Figure 3.: Three dimensions of EU Integration

In the area of training and regional development policy, this dimension has been exposed by the comparison between EU structural funds' implementation principles and French approache to regional development. In particular, the use, since the end of WW2 of national plans and the introduction of *contrats de plan* seem to have influenced the implementation of EU structural policy. In addition, there are indications that evolution of training at EU level from a simple economic instrument of a Common Market (see the original art. 128EU) to an instrument of regional cohesion, as well as industrial and social policies, has occurred through French and German influence, either at intergovernmental (for instance, the French and German Presidencies of the Council of the EU in the years preceding the Social Charter) or indeed supranational level. For instance, Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission sold vocational training as an instrument of economic policy to EU countries, although his intentions were to develop the social dimension of the EU. Commissioner Martin Bangeman also promoted the role of training as instrument of EU industrial policy. Britain did not seem to have such a political or administrative influence on the EU.

Towards the Development of EU Public Policy?

Sector versus Space

One question that the case studies have highlighted is the conflict between a sector-based or a space-based approaches to regional development. Such a conflict has been triggered by EU economic and social cohesion policy. Since it concerns the role of various tiers of governments across the EU to implement supranational policies, it has a direct effect on integration: different domestic arrangements will either prevent or facilitate the degree of Europeanisation attained, therefore affecting the degree of convergence.

Let us examine training policy. The question as to which authority should be responsible and which objectives should be sought is at the heart of the conflict between sector and space. Can both approaches be reconciled?

In France, at beginning of the 1980s, decentralisation and deconcentration was thought to be a solution to the desequilibrium between very powerful state and marginalised France and resulted in the increase of sub-national power and in the number of actors. However these various new actors have not developed common strategies yet and they still operate for their own interests or for corporatist interests, not for national interests. Can they understand the interdependence of different policies, especially economic and social policies ? Planning contracts between state and regions offer a solution to this dilemma. They base regional development on a national approach to regional economic problems. Yet, issues such as lack of regional resources (in the training field, main area transferred to regions in 1982, the state is still the main source of funding), lack of political legitimacy (regional élites are made of local and national élites), lack of expertise (for instance, the Regional Council uses the technical services of DRTEFP to assess training projects) still remain. In the UK, training policy has been mainly employers-led so we could say that there was, at domestic level, no conflict between a sectoral and a territorial approach to training, instrument of regional development.

With the rise of EU structural funding, the situation has changed. The emergence of a European political agenda and development of new EU policy processes[31] contribute to the complexity of training policy in terms of structures (at sub-national, national and supranational level) and priorities (publics targeted, measures, long term nature of investment in training, problem to foresee the future needs). A number of examples taken from the two case studies illustrate the real conflict between space and sector within the EU funding environment. For instance, regarding objective 5b in PACA, it was suggested in the Regional Council that it

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[31]See for instance P. Muller, Les politiques publiques (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 108; D. Marsh and R. Rhodes, Policy Networks in British Government (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); S. Andersen and T. Eliassen, eds., Making Policy in Europe: The Europeification of national Policy Making (London: Sage. 1993).

was a failure as the state wanted to make concessions to *departements* as well as regions, therefore leading to a spreading and weakening of responsibilities, an increase in the complexity of procedures meant to safeguard competent authorities' power and a loss of EU funding focus. Another problem concerning the ambivalence of the policy in PACA is the French ability to have several elected positions or *cumul des mandats*. Jean-Claude Gaudin was Mayor of Marseilles, President of the Regional Council and Minister of Territorial Planning. How can his various responsibilities not conflict when he had to take a decision? In the NE of England, the top-slicing of the regional allocation of ESF in favour of TECs and national training programmes by the government angered local authorities. It was one of the factors exacerbating the feeling that sub-national authorities should be more involved in decision-making to address regional development issues and that only a democratically accountable regional assembly could reverse the tendency of government to ignore regional problems.

The limits of ESF

Firstly. ESF and by and large structural funds are defined within the objective of economic and social cohesion. As ESF is the main source of EU influence on domestic training opportunities, we can conclude that there is still a long way to go before the EU has a real training policy aimed at addressing shortages of skills on a supranational scale. Training as a tool for regional development might be a true reflection of acute localised problems. However, it could have the effect of minimising the real importance of human resource enhancement. The current reform of structural funds ensures that training is an instrument of regional development in regions whose development is lagging behind the rest of the EU (new objective 1) and regions facing industrial decline, rural areas affected by depopulation, deprived urban areas, regions dependent on the fishing industry and those undergoing structural changes in the service sector (new objective 2). However, an horizontal objective (new objective 3) aims at tackling labour market policies to fight unemployment, and at promoting social inclusion, lifelong education and training, women's participation in the labour market in all areas not covered by objectives 1 or 2. EU funds and, indeed, their territorial impact, will only be available on the basis of bids, therefore only to scattered areas across the EU.

As EU territorial policies develop, academics and public administrators across Europe are more and more interested in addressing the question of EU public policies. Since public policies have evolved in different national contexts, the comparative dimension is crucial. Questions asked include the way to optimise the relations between national public policies and EU regional policy or changes that member states need to put into place in order to render EU cohesion policy more efficient[32]. Beyond, these issues are at the core of the integration debate as they lead

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[32] For instance the association EUROPA is a group of public administrators and academics interested in comparative public services. EUROPA's aim is to exchange and disseminate information amongst officials in charge of training and development and in the end, influence the European Commission, see EUROPA (http://www.unilim.fr/prospeur.htm, January 1999).

to the question of the creation or development of shared EU values to reach EU objectives and the role of the various tiers of governments through the implementation of subsidiarity.

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