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Dimensions of Government Decision-Making Structures in OECD Countries: Results from an Expert Judgment

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Abstract

The paper analyzes dimensions of government decision-making structures in all OECD countries. With reference to established theories of government decision-making structures in systematic macro-quantitative studies this article develops a new concept. Instead of confirming the dichotomies of established studies, such as majoritarian and consensus or efficiency versus integration, four dimensions of government decision-making structures were revealed in the analysis: Executive concentration, a government's capacity for strategic planning, legislature's influence on the political process, and the integration of extra-parliamentary actors in the decision-making process. While the latter two elements are well accounted for in established theories, the former are novel to the analysis of government decision-making structures. This finding may change our way of thinking about governments decision making structures because it shows that there is not a trade-off between efficiency and integration. Instead these two dimensions are independent from each other and some political systems can have both. The empirical analysis of this study utilizes a new and unique comprehensive data set and relies on expert judgments from more than 100 political scientists from around the world. It shows that the new democracies of Central Eastern Europe fit well into different patterns of government structures.

Keywords: government decision-making structures, OECD

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1 Introduction

In democratic states, government decision-making structures are of the utmost importance. They determine whether the political structure is efficient enough to solve societal problems and whether it includes or marginalizes the most relevant actors in society. However, there are very few attempts to tackle this issue made in systematic macro-comparative analysis. In sharp contrast, there is a rich literature on this topic in case study research. However, when it comes to studies beyond case analysis, there are much fewer books and articles which are explicitly comparative and conceptual (Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1997; 2001; Rhodes and Dunleavy 1995; Peters et al. 2000). If we are interested in systematic macro-comparative analysis we have to use other categories of government decision-making structures as proxies. These proxies are often highly abstract and aggregated which renders causal analysis difficult which is a basic problem of macro-quantitative social science research (Kittel 2006). While the distinction between presidential and parliamentary systems has long been the canonical classification in order to grasp various structures of governmental decision-making in large-n studies, current political science debate revolves around efficiency and consensus (Lijphart, 1999; Powell, 2000). Thereby, emphasis is put either on efficient decision-making structures or on the degree to which decisions enjoy broad support. Both these areas of emphasis are at the core of most modern theories about government decision-making structures. Three approaches are of particular relevance, as they are applicable to a large number of democratic states and may therefore allow us to reach to valid and reliable conclusions: First, Arend Lijphart's seminal study "Patterns of Democracy" (1999); secondly, George Tsebelis' (2002) veto player approach; and lastly, Herbert Döring's (1995) agenda control approach.¹ These approaches have evolved over time and offer a theoretically informed starting point for macro-comparative analysis of political processes in macro-comparative research.

Lijphart's, Tsebelis' and Döring's approaches represent elaborations on previous analyses. However, they still remain only preliminary steps towards the adequate modeling of political processes. A more sophisticated macro-comparative analysis needs to take into consideration the priorities of political actors (for the most suitable elaboration see: McDonald & Budge, 2005) as well as the specific institutional settings. This paper will elaborate on institutional analysis by focusing on these three approaches. Admittedly, possibly the most pressing problem with these approaches is that they include only Western democracies. Lijphart somewhat mitigates this issue by including democracies such as India, Botswana, and Jamaica.

¹ Other indices (e. g. World Bank, Heritage Foundation, World Economic Forum) also measure a country's competitiveness or government effectiveness (in particular the World Bank's Government Effectiveness Index (Kaufmann et al., 2005; 2007a, b)). Wagschal and Jäckle (2009) compare these indices with the Bertelsmann Foundation's Management Index.

Nevertheless, even his analysis doesn't incorporate the young democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, which we will do in this analysis.²

The following analysis includes all 30 OECD countries and thereby investigates the political structures of the world's most developed economies. In addition to the established OECD countries, which are often included in macro-comparative analysis, this study also includes four countries of Central Eastern Europe (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), South Korea, Mexico and Turkey.

The paper proceeds in three steps. First, we introduce the basic aspects of the three established institutional approaches for macro-comparative political process analysis and subsequently discuss their respective weaknesses. Second, we devise a new concept in relation to the three canonical approaches. As a third step, we conduct an empirical analysis in order to test the coherence of our new concept and to compare it to the established models of government decision making.

The analysis draws on a comprehensive research project based on qualitative and quantitative expert judgments. More than 50 questions were asked regarding the organization and structure of government decisions.³

2 Classifying Governmental Decision-Making Structures in Modern Societies: The State-of-the-Art

Arend Lijphart conceptualizes the most comprehensive approach to institutional structures. He focuses on all established democracies and identifies two patterns of democracy: majoritarian democracies and consensus democracies. In this context he identifies two dimensions: the executives-parties dimension (EPD) and the federal-unitary dimension (FUD). For our purpose the executives-parties dimension is important because it deals with government decision-making structures. Lijphart analyzes five variables that load together in a factor analysis of ten variables. These variables address the features of governments, parliaments, party systems, election systems, and interest groups in the countries under investigation. The data for these variables are collected for the periods from 1945 to 1996 and from 1971 to 1996. In the following, the data from the latter period are used.

The *government variable* measures to what extent power is concentrated in the hands of the government or whether executive power is shared with the opposition or with more actors than are necessary for a majority. Sharing power with the opposition usually occurs in the case of minority governments. Another way of including more actors than are necessary for a majority normally takes place in the event of oversized coalitions. Lijphart classifies governments as strong when they are one-party majority governments or minimal winning cabinets. The more one-party and minimal winning cabinets exist in a country's post-war period, the more it approaches the majoritarian pattern of democracy. According to some scholars, the

² Jahn and Müller-Rommel (2010) developed a three dimensional framework of the political process in ten Central Eastern European countries. However, this concept is specific to Central Eastern Europe and therefore comparison with Western democracies is not possible.

³ Scores and details can be accessed through <http://www.sgi-network.org>; see also Bertelsmann 2009.

executive versus legislative dominance variable is seen as the key variable for agenda control (Tsebelis, 2009). Therefore, we will use Lijphart's executive versus legislative dominance variable along with his EPD in the following analysis. Although the other variables for the EPD are less relevant for our study they will be briefly presented here since they enter into Lijphart's EPD index.

The *parliament variable* assesses the strength of the executive in relation to the legislative and is measured by means of average cabinet life. This concept has been criticized for the lack of a logical connection between a government's strength and its term of office (Tsebelis, 2009).

The *party system variable* and the *election system variable* are highly correlated. Majority voting systems, which often lead to two party systems, are characteristics of majoritarian democracies. These two dimensions are measured by the number of effective parties (Taagepera) and Gallagher's Disproportionality Index.

The last indicator Lijphart uses for his executives-parties dimension is the *system of interest intermediation*. While pluralist and competitive interest group systems are associated with majoritarian democracy, corporatism is linked with consensus democracy.

In order to analyze the executives-parties dimension Lijphart uses this dimension's factor scores, which he obtained by conducting a factor analysis of the five executives-parties variables and the five variables of the federal-unitary dimension (federalisms, bicameralism, constitutional rigidity, judicial review, and central bank independency).

The underlying logic of Lijphart's approach is that there are distinct patterns of democracy (majoritarian and consensual) and that these patterns have – in one way or the other – an impact on policies and policy outcomes. While majoritarian democracies generally perform better with regard to economic policy (even though Lijphart himself contests this conclusion) consensus democracies tend to result in more egalitarian and socially and environmentally benign societies. Therefore, Lijphart calls consensus democracies "kinder and gentler democracies."

Lijphart's approach is abstract and relatively time-invariant. Although he presents his data for two periods of time (1945-1996 and 1971-1996) the logic behind the concept is that patterns of democracy are stable over time. Only by way of exception do countries change from majoritarian to consensus democracy or vice versa. Yet Lijphart works with gradual classifications meaning that countries fit into their respective pattern of democracy to varying degrees. One point of criticism is to what extent each of the variables has a possible impact on policies and policy outcomes. Since Lijphart's concept is highly aggregated, it is difficult to identify causal mechanisms or to link the concept to a micro-foundation that might make speculation on causality possible. In recent years the inability of macro-quantitative studies to identify causal mechanisms has been heavily criticized (Kittel, 2006; see also Shalev, 2007). It is therefore necessary to ground the structural variables with behavioral analysis. Finally, Lijphart has been criticized for mixing structural and behavioral variables, which in turn obscures causal mechanisms (Boogarts, 2000; Ganghof, 2005; Müller-Rommel 2008a). It is therefore necessary to obtain a measure of gov-

ernment decision making that is more concrete and applicable to governments. Recently, one such concept has been introduced by Tsebelis (2002).

George Tsebelis' (2002) veto player approach concentrates more closely on concrete decision-making in political systems. He designs his theory on veto players in political systems on the basis of rational choice analysis. His analytical elements are the number of veto players as well as their preferences and their coherence. The relevant veto players' range of preferences in a political system constitutes the core variable in his concept.

In comparison to Lijphart's approach – which is problematic with regard to the comparability of presidential and parliamentary systems – Tsebelis' approach can be applied to all kinds of political systems. Moreover his approach is more parsimonious in that he uses only one variable (range) for further analysis. In principle his approach is also time-variant. However, in order to be time-variant data on institutional settings and changes as well as on preferences is required (Jahn, 2010). For macro-quantitative studies (Tsebelis, 2002: chapters 7 and 8; Tsebelis and Chang, 2004) he uses the range of parties in coalitions as well as the range to the second chamber in Germany and the President in Portugal.⁴

Tsebelis' approach has been criticized with regard to whether it includes all relevant veto players. For instance Wagschal (2005; 2009) points out that federalism, judges, corporatism, central banks and the European Union all have considerable impact on policies. However, analyses that include a larger number of veto players usually fail to analyze them in sufficient detail and oftentimes result in a simple count variable that merely captures the number of veto players in a given political system. Also, most of these studies presume political systems to be stable over time, conduct only cross-sectional analyses and thereby fail to take changes in institutional settings into account.

A more substantial problem with the veto player approach is that certain elements receive very little attention in macro-comparative analysis: First, the coherence of political actors and second, the operationalization of the status quo. The key aspects of political actor coherence have thus far not been accounted for in macro-quantitative analysis (see: Powell, 2000, pp. 58-67 for a review of the literature and his own index). Only recently there are attempts to construct indices for ideological party coherence in this area of research (Jahn and Oberst 2011). Regarding the status quo, Tsebelis often chooses former policies or expenditures as a proxy. However, this disregards changes in the status quo resulting from exogenous conditions (e.g. economic situations, demographic development), which often occur in everyday politics.

Nevertheless, the veto player approach has been used relatively often in macro-comparative analysis. Tsebelis' elaborated concept has been applied in several studies rather successfully (Franzese, 2002; Bräuninger, 2004). A veto player approach that counts national veto players – or rather veto points – has been used by Schmidt (1996), Birchfield and Crepez (1998) and Wagschal (2005).

⁴ The exclusion of the USA and Greece, as well as the estimates for data on Switzerland based on Finnish data, are problematic.

The veto player approach is helpful for detecting what obstructs decision-making processes. However, Tsebelis' veto player approach cannot assert anything regarding the direction of policy changes. "It is not clear whether many veto players will lead to higher or lower growth, because they will "lock" a country to whatever policies they inherited, and it depends whether such policies induce or inhibit growth." (Tsebelis, 2002, p. 204) The change of the status quo serves as dependent variable, but we do not know in which direction the status quo can be changed. This is certainly problematic if we want to make predictions about the direction of policy change. Furthermore, the veto player approach does not focus on a government's decision making structures but rather focuses only on the ideological distances of political actors (e.g. coalitions and presidents) or institutions (second chambers).

Herbert Döring's (1995) approach focuses on the control of the plenary agenda, by which he measures the executives' agenda control. This approach is more directly connected to a government's decisions making structures than the other two approaches reviewed so far in this article. His concept consists of seven variables:

1. *Authority to Determine the Parliament's Plenary Agenda.* This variable analyzes who has authority to determine the plenary agenda of the parliament and who fixes the parliamentary timetable and can thereby prioritize certain bills. The values can be placed on a continuum between the endpoint that government can determine the plenary agenda alone (e. g. United Kingdom) and the endpoint that parliament has exclusive control (e. g. Netherlands).
2. *Money Bills as Government Prerogative.* In all countries governments have the prerogative to introduce money bills (bills requiring expenditures). However, in some countries individual members of parliament are not permitted to propose money bills (e.g. United Kingdom; France, Spain, and Portugal) or at least face considerable restrictions (e.g. Greece). This gives governments a strong position vis-à-vis the legislative branch.
3. *Is the Committee Stage Restricted by a Preceding Plenary Decision?* In some countries the floor refers bills to committees after having established the general guidelines (e.g. Ireland, Spain, and United Kingdom). Such a restriction may increase a governments' influence on the outcome of the committees' work.
4. *Authority of Committees to Rewrite Government Bills.* If committees are only allowed to comment on government bills, governments have a strong influence on the outcome (e.g. Denmark, France, Netherlands, and United Kingdom). In other countries (e.g. Belgium, Germany) committees can amend government bills and even submit their own proposals to the floor.
5. *Timetable Control in Legislative Committees.* This variable analyzes the degree to which the majority of the parliament is authorized to set committee timetables and reallocate a bill to another committee. In some countries (e.g. Finland, Ireland, United Kingdom) governments have the authority to decide on the timetable and fate of bills, while in others (e.g. Denmark, Sweden) committees enjoy considerable autonomy.

6. *Curtailling Debate before the Final Vote on a Bill in the Plenary.* In some countries (e.g. France, United Kingdom) governments have high control over the length of the debate before the final vote on a bill takes place.
7. *Maximum Life Span of a Bill Pending Approval after which it Lapses if not Adopted.* Government influence is strongest when bills have a short life span. There is a huge variation in the life spans of bills among Western democracies. In some countries a bill's life span is six months to a year (e.g. Denmark, Iceland, and United Kingdom). In other countries (e.g. Sweden, Luxembourg) a bill never expires.

Döring's approach has rarely been used outside the context of the research project from which it was generated. One reason for this might be that Döring does not provide an aggregated index for further analysis. Another is that the individual items are measured on an ordinal scale, which have different ranges and cannot be used easily as independent variables in a regression analysis. Döring measures these dimensions by means of expert judgments. The range of the ordinary scale of each item varies from between 1-3 up to 1-6. Thus, in order to make the indices comparable, Tsebelis (2009, p. 16) suggests using the weighted factor scores of the first factor as an agenda control index.

Analytically, Döring's index considers to what extent governments have control over the agenda. He focuses on the relationship between the powers of the government vis-à-vis the legislature. In this respect Döring's approach constitutes a detailed analysis of what Lijphart called the "executive-legislative power dimension." While Lijphart analyzes this dimension by use of empirical data about governments' life spans, Döring considers to which degree there are institutional barriers affecting the executive's ability to determine the political agenda. Given this, Döring's analysis comes close – at least analytically – to Tsebelis' veto player approach.

Döring's conclusions are based on judgments obtained in the context of his project (i. e. the domains of labor market and social policy) during the period of 1981 to 1991. Consequently, his conclusions are limited to these two policy areas. Additionally, his inclusion of only Western European countries limits the study's ability to be a truly comprehensive macro-comparative analysis.

When comparing the approaches of Lijphart, Tsebelis, and Döring great similarities become apparent. All analyze to what extent the executive can influence the political process. The differences lie in the scope and the perspectives of analysis. Lijphart's approach is the most comprehensive, as he investigates entire political systems. Apart from governmental and legislative aspects he also includes other social actors and their relationships, for instance corporatism and central banks. Tsebelis' approach is the most parsimonious, since he focuses only on actors that might obstruct the political process. Döring's approach falls in between Lijphart's and Tsebelis' concepts. He limits his analysis to the parliamentary process as the only institutional setting that might obstruct government activity. While Tsebelis includes second chambers and presidents, Döring restricts his analysis to first chambers.

All approaches focus on “veto players” in the broader sense of the term.⁵ This is most apparent in Tsebelis’ analysis. Yet also Döring’s approach includes institutional settings that obstruct government action. Lijphart’s analysis of consensus democracies implies that consensus is reached by including various actors and this means that executive power is limited. All in all, the three approaches focus on controlling the executive or, in other words, achieving consensus. Neither concentrates on government characteristics. In Tsebelis’ theory the variable “actors’ coherence” is analytically included but has not yet been applied in empirical analysis – at least not in time-variant macro-quantitative analysis.

In the following we will lay out a government decision-making approach that does not take only consensus building and the veto player dimension into account but which also incorporates executive coherence and the executives’ capability for policy planning. The consensus building dimension will be considered in two areas: First, consensus building with extra-parliamentary actors (as in the concept of corporatism) and second, parliamentary consensus building through integration of the legislature into the political process (which bears some analytical resemblance to the agenda control approach).

3 An Alternative Index of Government Decision-Making Structures

The approach developed in this paper tries to correct some of the shortcomings discussed above. While not all flaws can be removed – in particular changes over time - we will propose an alternative index of government decision-making structures that includes four Central and Eastern European countries in a sample of all 30 OECD countries in 2004/5 and includes the power of the executive as an additional variable.

Basically we apply the same analytical categories as the authors above. On the one hand, the focus is on effective government (or executive power). On the other, I consider the degree of consensus building is considered. We will argue that there is no trade-off between the two aspects. Thus it is possible that consensus behavior goes hand in hand with efficient government structures. In this analysis all of the structural features of the political system connected to behavioral aspects. This is important since Lijphart’s approach has been criticized for the merging of structural and behavioral elements.

3.1 Theory and Method

Most of the studies that examine the structure of decisions of governments focus on the relation between the government and other political institutions and actors. Especially important is the relation between the legislature and the government and the integration of extra-parliamentary actors in the political process. However, very little attention has been given to the structure of governments themselves. Cox and McCubbins (2005), in examining the US House of Representatives, place much emphasis on the agenda setting power and capacity of the majority party. Applying

⁵ Lijphart is an exception, as he measures the executive-legislative dimension by the life span of a government.

their rationale and conclusion to other political systems places the character of the government in the center of the analysis. Two aspects are important here: how coherent does the government act and to what degree is the government able to prepare government action in a rational way. The first aspect is present in most theories of government formation and efficiency. Benoit and Laver (2006: chapter 3) emphasize that political parties should not be considered as unitary actors and Tsebelis (2002) stresses the concept of coherence in his analysis of veto players. Interestingly enough, when it comes to empirical analysis the mentioned authors neglect this aspect.

Even though the above mentioned authors apply their concepts of coherence and capability to individual parties there is no attempt to analyze the coherence of governments. In fact, using governments instead of parties as the unit of analysis moves our investigation closer to the empirical world. The sum of the coherence of the government parties might not be a government's overall coherence. For instance, when in government only the party elite participate and some deviant party members are kept outside. Even two coherent parties that are in a coalition government can make for an incoherent government when their positions are very distant from one another. We will therefore consider executive power as a multifaceted concept capable of capturing government coherence, and the government's strategic planning capacity as capturing the concept of efficiency. In addition, we will keep the concepts of legislative power and consensus building in the analysis given that they were stressed as important aspects in the above reviewed literature.

The data for this investigation is based on extensive expert judgments. Three experts on each country of the 30 OECD countries examined were asked to give a quantitative judgment based on qualitative reasoning. In principle, the experts were always a mix of both political scientists and economists and one of the three was not a native of the country that was being assessed (consult the appendix I for a list of the country experts). On a scale from 1 to 10 the experts had to give their opinion on several aspects of the political system. In addition they had to justify their quantitative scores by giving a brief statement. The qualitative statements mention particularities that reach beyond the quantitative assessments. Both the quantitative and the qualitative assessments are open to the public and can be accessed at <http://www.sgi-network.org>. All the assessments refer to the years 2004/5. The work was synchronized by regional coordinators for North America, Northwestern Europe, Southern Europe, Asia and Oceania, Central Europe, East-Central Europe, and Scandinavia. The whole process was supervised by an international advisory board.⁶ In so far the scores are a result of a dialogue between the three experts, the

⁶ The regional coordinators were: Martin Thunert for North America, Kai-Uwe Schnapp for Northwestern Europe, Cesar Colino for Southern Europe, Aurel Croissant for Asia and Oceania, Martin Große Hüttmann for Central Europe, Frank Bönker for East-Central Europe, and Detlef Jahn for Scandinavia. The members of the international advisory board were: Martin Brusi (University of Munich), Aurel Croissant (University of Heidelberg), Stefan Empter (Bertelsmann Foundation), Thomas Fischer (Bertelsmann Foundation), Klaus Gretschmann (Council of the European Union), Martin Hüfner (HF Economics Ltd.), Oliver Heilwagen (Bertelsmann Foundation), András Inotai (Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), Detlef Jahn (University of Greifswald), Werner Jann (University of Potsdam), Josef Janning (Bertelsmann Foundation), Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Social Science Research Center Berlin), Rolf J. Langhammer (Kiel Institute for the World Economy), Johannes Meier (Bertelsmann Foundation), Wolfgang Merkel (Social Science Research Center Berlin), Leonard Novy (Bertelsmann Foundation), Hans-Jürgen Puhle (University of Frankfurt), Friedbert W. Rüb (University

regional coordinators and the international advisory board. Reliability is ensured through this transparent dialogue and has not been established through rigorous statistical procedures. In the following we describe the conceptualization and operationalization of the various aspects of government decision-making.

Efficient government structures concern several issues but most importantly government coherence. In the literature on political efficiency coherence is a crucial variable (Powell, 2000; Tsebelis, 2002; Cox & McCubbins, 2005; Benoit & Laver, 2006). However, identifying the determinants of coherent government is a difficult task. Most studies focus on ideological coherence or party discipline (Hazan 2003; Jahn and Oberst 2011). In contrast, we begin with the executive's steering capacity. That means that we focus on the concentration of the power of the head of government over cabinet. In this context it is important to determine to what extent the executive is able to substantively evaluate draft ministerial bills (M3.1; the number refers to the respective question from the expert judgment questionnaire in the appendix II). Furthermore, if the executive is not satisfied with the content of a draft bill based on policy considerations, one must ask if it is able to return the blueprint (M3.2). Considering this aspect from the line ministries' point of view, one can ask to what extent line ministers have to involve the prime minister or the president in the preparation of policy proposals (M3.3). If the chief of government has the capacity to evaluate draft bills and can return them upon disapproval, and if the line ministers have to involve the head of government in the preparation of policy proposals, then the executive has substantial steering capability, which may imply executive efficiency and concentration.

Government coherence involves additional aspects that may amplify a government's efficiency. One such aspect is the discipline within governments. In this context it is essential that ministers do not seek to realize their self-interest but rather have the incentive to implement the government's program (M9.2a). Another side of this aspect is the capability of the chief of government to efficiently monitor the ministries' activities (M9.2b). Again, if the chief of government is able to control and steer the activities of ministers then the government is considered to be concentrated.

Another important aspect for government coherence is the execution of an effective communication policy (M6.1). If governments closely align their communication with government strategy and avoid regular contradiction we may speak of coherent government communication.

In addition to coherence effective governments also have the capacity to prepare and pre-assess policies. In order to determine a government's planning capacity we focus on the planning units at the center of government as well as on personal advisory cabinets for ministers or prime ministers/presidents (M2.1). The frequency of meetings between strategic planning staff and the head of government serves as an indicator. Another aspect of planning is academic expert consultation (M2.3). Finally, we also focus on effective cabinet planning. Do senior ministry officials (leading

of Hamburg), Ulrich van Suntum (University of Münster), Uwe Wagschal (University of Heidelberg), Werner Weidenfeld (University of Munich), Helmut Wiesenthal (Humboldt University Berlin, Germany).

civil servants or political appointees including junior ministers below cabinet level) effectively filter out or settle issues so that the cabinet is able to focus on strategic debates (M3.5)? When there are planning units, extensive academic advisory services and cabinet meetings that are efficiently prepared, one can conclude that government behavior is highly structured and features a high degree of planning capacity.

Next, we consider *consensus building capacity*. Two aspects are of interest here: First, the degree to which the legislature has the right to control the government's work. Second, to what extent governments are willing and able to rely on extra-parliamentary support. The legislature's impact on government policy is crucial in political analysis. However, comparative concepts of the strength of legislatures in various countries in macro-comparative analysis are scarce although there is a wealth of case study research (Arter 2006). Some questions have been raised in the expert judgment which measure the right of the legislatures in a comparative manner. First, it is important that parliamentary committees can obtain desired documents from the government (M14.8). Only if they are informed are parliamentary committees able to judge policy situations. Second, the degree to which parliamentary committees are able to summon ministers for hearings is important (M14.9) because it shows to which degree the government can be controlled by parliament. Finally, the work of parliamentary committees is supported by the right and practice to summon experts for committee meetings (M14.10). If parliamentary committees have extensive rights to influence the policy process then they have a high legislative impact. Admittedly, these questions do not assess legislatures overall, but focuses on their committees and essentially asks about their ability to acquire information. Even if our indicator falls short to assess legislative performance (Arter 2006), it gives valuable insights into the influence of legislatures in the political process.

Extra-parliamentary consensus and cooperation is a crucial variable in Lijphart's analysis of consensus democracies. Lijphart uses Siaroff's (1999) degree of corporatism in order to determine the consensus relationship between governments and extra-parliamentary groups. In the analysis presented here this feature is specified by looking at three aspects of consensus building: First, the ability of governments to seek extra-parliamentary support (M5.1); second, capability of interest associations to propose policy concepts (M15.3a); and lastly, the extent to which governments consider proposals by interest associations to be relevant (M15.3b). Although these three aspects are interrelated each focuses on different facets of cooperation between governments and interest associations. In addition, these questions do not only cover relationships in the realm of industrial relations, as Siaroff does, but instead includes all types of interest groups. To be sure, such an indicator measures to what degree interest groups are effective political communicators. Such a perspective speaks to lobbying skills which are part of both pluralism and corporatism. In this way our indicator measures interest group embeddedness instead of corporatism. The successive investigation will reveal whether this analytical distinction is supported by the empirical data.

3.2 Empirical Analysis

We will first analyze whether the decision-making structure of highly industrialized societies reflects the predicted pattern. We claim that decision-making structures are determined by the concentration of the executive, the government's planning capacity, the influence of the legislature and consensus building with extra-parliamentary interest associations. In order to test this pattern we will conduct a factor analysis with all the variables mentioned above (consult appendix II for complete documentation).

Upon inclusion of the political process variables in a factor analysis we find that four factors explain more than three quarters of the variance. The four factors match the analytical classification in a very impressive way. The first factor combines all issues that are associated with the concentration of the executive; the second factor contains the items concerning consensus building with extra-parliamentary groups. The third factor assembles items that deal with strategic planning and the fourth factor encompasses items dealing with the power of the legislature. Thus the results confirm that four dimensions constitute the political process in highly industrialized societies:

- Executive Concentration
- Government's strategic planning capacity
- Legislative Influence
- Consensus Building with Extra-Parliamentary Actors

Table 1. Dimensions of the Political Decision-Making Structure in OECD Countries

	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>	<i>Factor 4</i>
<i>% of Variance</i>	40.87	17.50	10.49	7.58
<i>Government's strategic planning capacity</i>				
Strategic Planning (M2.1)			0.75	
Scientific Advice (M2.3)			0.83	
Preparation (M3.5)			0.58	
<i>Legislative Influence</i>				
Obtain Documents (M14.8)				0.89
Summoning Ministers (M14.9)				0.84
Summoning Experts (M14.10)				0.76
<i>Executive Concentration</i>				
PM Expertise (M3.1)	0.64			
PM Gatekeeper (M3.2)	0.79			
PM Involvement (M3.3)	0.84			
Ministerial Compliance (M9.2a)	0.82			
PM Monitoring Ministers (M9.2b)	0.79			
Coherent Communication (M6.1)	0.78			
<i>Consensus Building with Extra-Parliamentary Actors</i>				
Mobilizing Public Support (M5.1)		0.88		
Association Competence (M15.3a)		0.79		
Association Relevance (M15.3b)		0.92		

Notes: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 5 iterations. Coefficients smaller than .55 are suppressed. The numbers of the assessment items are set in brackets (see appendix II).

Concentrated executives are present in a whole range of countries. This group includes France, the United States, Canada, Iceland and Australia. Three of the four new democracies in Central Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland) have relatively weak executives, along with Italy, which scores the lowest in this respect. With regard to the planning capacity of government offices Slovakia, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway and Canada lead the field. Greece, Austria, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Poland have weak planning capacity and low executive power. However, these two dimensions do not correlate with each other, as France and Iceland (with high executive power and low strategic planning capacity) and Slovakia and Japan (with the reverse relationship) show.

Concerning the other two dimensions, the data show that Poland, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Sweden and Australia are particularly inclined to have legislatures with a strong influence on government's activities. This result the trend which John Carey et al. (1999) made out in the late 1990s. As for consensus building, the Scandinavian countries along with Ireland and Austria are leading. Table 2 shows the factor scores of all four dimensions for the 30 OECD countries.

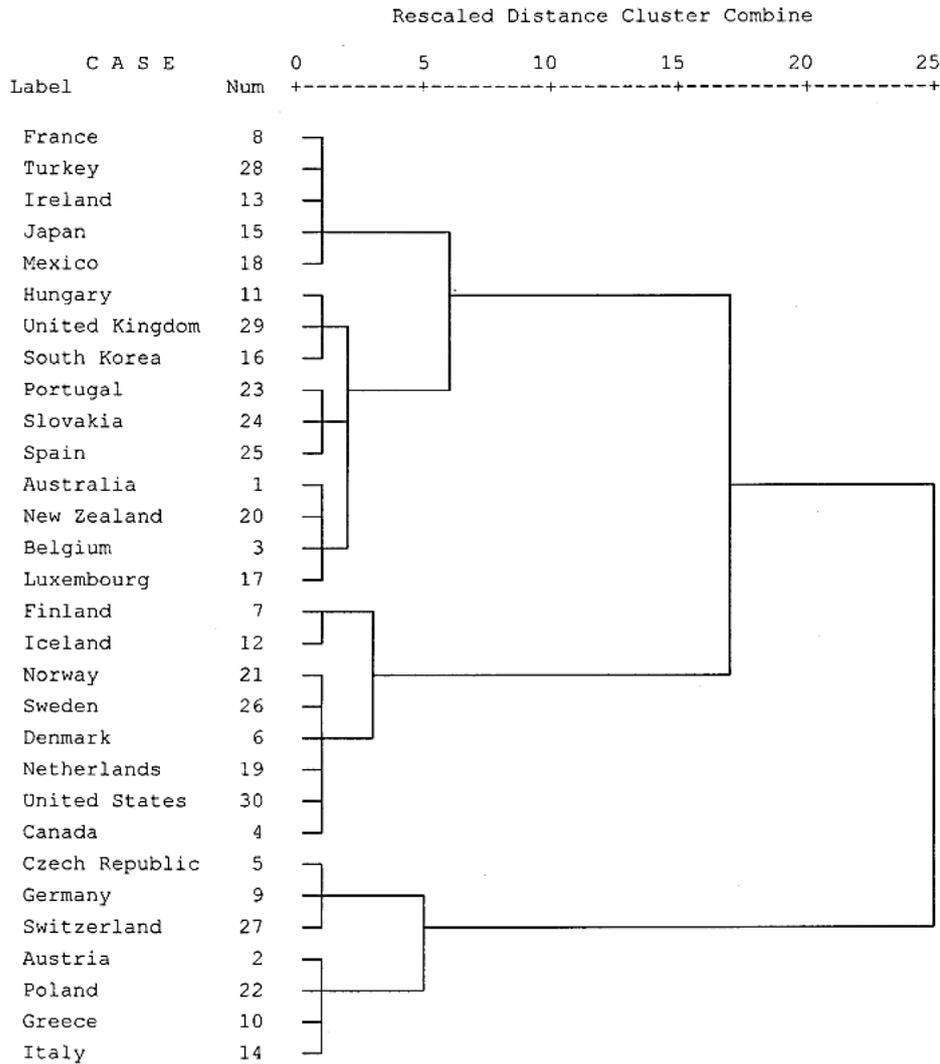
Table 2. Features of Government Decision-Making Structure in 30 OECD Countries

	<i>Executive Concentration</i>	<i>Strategic Planning</i>	<i>Legislative Influence</i>	<i>Consensus Building</i>			
France	1.35	Slovakia	1.61	Poland	1.26	Finland	1.52
United States	1.21	Sweden	1.42	Czech Republic	1.03	Switzerland	1.50
Canada	1.05	Netherlands	1.22	Switzerland	0.91	Iceland	1.43
Iceland	0.93	Norway	1.21	Sweden	0.86	Ireland	1.41
Australia	0.92	Canada	1.08	Australia	0.83	Norway	1.40
Mexico	0.86	Japan	1.01	Norway	0.81	Austria	1.17
Belgium	0.85	Hungary	0.86	Finland	0.78	Sweden	0.99
South Korea	0.81	Luxembourg	0.72	Hungary	0.76	Netherlands	0.73
UK	0.80	Italy	0.66	Canada	0.70	Germany	0.64
Denmark	0.56	South Korea	0.66	United States	0.69	Denmark	0.64
Hungary	0.49	UK	0.39	New Zealand	0.64	United States	0.44
Ireland	0.47	United States	0.36	Germany	0.63	Luxembourg	0.36
New Zealand	0.46	New Zealand	0.20	Belgium	0.61	Spain	0.33
Portugal	0.31	Finland	0.20	Denmark	0.52	Czech Republic	0.14
Norway	0.23	Denmark	0.13	South Korea	0.35	Belgium	-0.06
Turkey	0.22	Mexico	0.12	Iceland	0.20	Italy	-0.11
Finland	0.08	Turkey	-0.01	Netherlands	0.04	New Zealand	-0.17
Sweden	0.01	Ireland	-0.08	Greece	-0.05	Canada	-0.27
Luxembourg	-0.04	Portugal	-0.23	UK	-0.07	Slovakia	-0.46
Spain	-0.19	Spain	-0.28	Slovakia	-0.38	Australia	-0.46
Netherlands	-0.19	Australia	-0.33	Portugal	-0.49	Portugal	-0.57
Greece	-0.21	Germany	-0.40	Luxembourg	-0.54	UK	-0.71
Switzerland	-0.28	Belgium	-0.52	France	-0.62	Turkey	-0.74
Austria	-0.62	Czech Republic	-0.93	Italy	-0.79	Mexico	-0.97
Japan	-0.93	Poland	-1.01	Mexico	-0.82	South Korea	-1.06
Germany	-1.26	France	-1.18	Spain	-0.84	Greece	-1.13
Czech Republic	-1.66	Iceland	-1.38	Austria	-0.94	Japan	-1.17
Slovakia	-1.81	Switzerland	-1.39	Japan	-1.19	Poland	-1.50
Poland	-2.01	Austria	-1.56	Turkey	-1.36	France	-1.58
Italy	-2.41	Greece	-2.55	Ireland	-3.53	Hungary	-1.71

In the following we classify the 30 OECD countries and compare the new index we arrive at with the established ones. In order to keep the analysis comprehensive we summarize the executive power dimension and the strategic planning dimension together as the *dimension of government efficiency* and the legislative efficiency dimension and the consensus building dimension together as the *consensus dimension*. Conducting a cluster analysis with these two variables results in five distinct clusters that cluster on the two dimensions.

Figure 1. Cluster Analysis of 30 OECD Countries with Government Efficiency and Consensus

Dendrogram using Ward Method

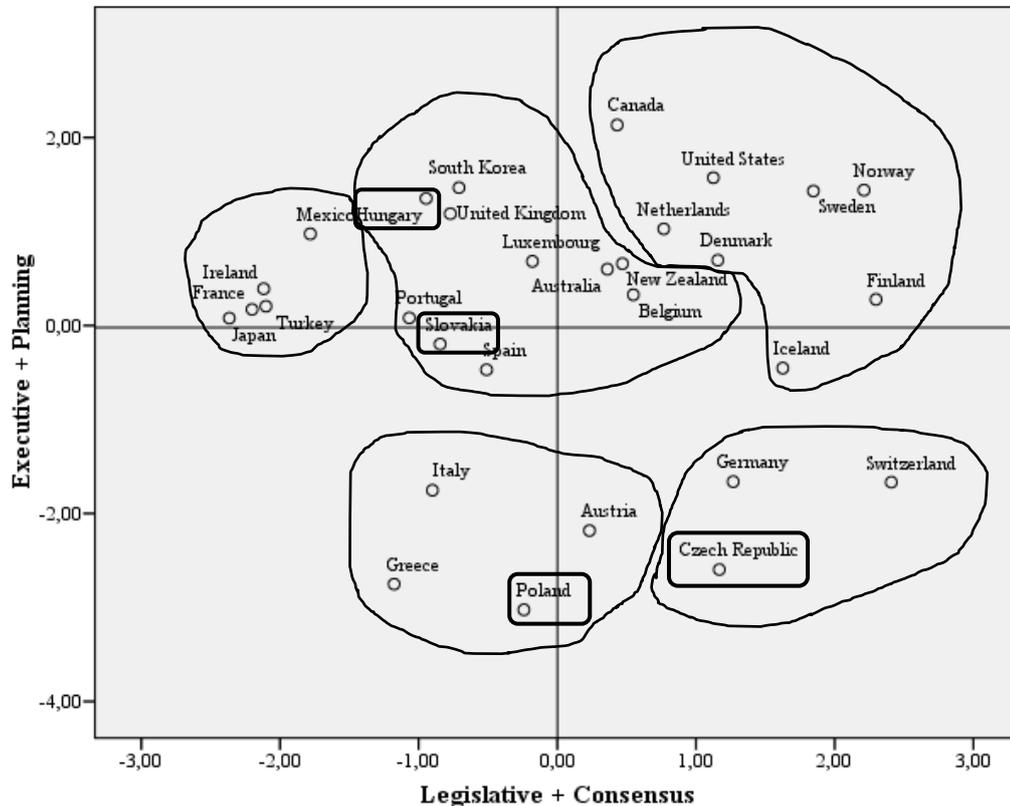


Note: Government Efficiency is composed of Executive Concentration + Strategic Planning, and Consensus of Legislative Influence + Consensus Building. The Cluster analysis has been conducted including these two aggregated indices.

In order to make interpretation easier we use a scatter plot of the two dimensions of government efficiency and consensus. Figure 2 shows the results. The horizontal axis of consensus and legislative power has some similarities to Lijphart's executives-parties dimension. The vertical axis is novel and distinguishes government decision making structures in terms of efficiency. In the horizontal dimension, all consensus democracies such as Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, Germany and the Netherlands are located to the right. The fact that the USA, Canada and New Zealand cluster in the right quadrant given that they are not typical examples of consensus democracies comes as a bit of a surprise. However, in these countries a greater degree of consultation with social actors occurs, as is commonly known. To illustrate, Lijphart uses corporatism as a variable, which only includes actors from industrial relations. In this study, however, we also consider collective actors in other areas and the general embeddedness of interest groups in the political process.

This is particularly important for the different scores we obtain for the USA, since interest groups there have a strong influence on governments. It is just that trade unions are weak in the US and therefore corporatism is not a good indicator for the integration of extra-parliamentary actors into the political process.⁷

Figure 2. Government Efficiency and Consensus Building



The vertical dimension estimates government efficiency. This dimension measures the power of the executive (Prime Minister in parliamentary systems and Presidents in presidential systems) and the government's planning capacity. Canada, the USA, South Korea and the UK are the most efficient countries. However, also consensus democracies feature efficient government structures, as seen in Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands. This shows that the dimensions are independent of each other. Governments can be efficient while also being consensus seeking. Germany's low score in this dimension is a bit surprising. Despite the strong position of the Chancellor and the strong party discipline, second chamber influence and federalism weaken Germany's government efficiency score.

When combining both dimensions one obtains the five clusters identified above by means of the cluster analysis. In the Northeastern section of figure 2 we have the group of consensus oriented countries with an efficient government structure. All

⁷ The expert judgments have been documented in detail and since we cannot describe each feature that led to a specific score here we refer the reader to the above mentioned project webpage. In the comments by the experts there are also some documented dissenting opinions about the judgments, which may help the reader to evaluate the scores in a qualitative manner.

Scandinavian countries fit into this category, as do Canada, the USA and the Netherlands. Consensus democracies with relatively weak executive power are in the Southeastern section of the figure. Germany, Switzerland and the Czech Republic belong into this cluster.

Countries without efficient government structures and with relatively low consensus orientation are in the Southwestern section of table 2, which contains Austria, Italy, Greece and Poland.

In the Western section of table 2 Ireland, France, Japan, Turkey and Mexico are located. These states are not consensus seeking and feature moderate executive efficiency. There is a huge group of countries located between this group and the consensus oriented countries with an efficient executive, including Slovakia and Hungary.

Considering the four countries of Central and Eastern Europe in a comparative perspective shows that they spread over various categories as do the other European countries. All but Hungary lean to the less efficient government type. According to our analytical dimensions Hungary comes close to the United Kingdom. Poland and the Czech Republic have the lowest government efficiency (together with Greece). However, the Czech Republic leans to the consensus side which brings it into the cluster with Germany and Switzerland. Poland, in contrast, stays on the less consensus group and shares this characteristic with Greece, Italy and Austria. Slovakia belongs to the large group of middle-of-the-road government types.

How do our two dimensions fit with the other indices in the literature? Lijphart's executive-legislative variable should come close to Döring's agenda control variable (Tsebelis, 2009). However, this variable should have a negative relationship with Lijphart's overall index of consensus democracy. Tsebelis' veto player index should have a negative correlation with the agenda control and the executive-legislative variable. It could also be argued that consensus building works by means of including many veto players in the decision-making process. Therefore, consensus and veto players should correlate positively. This means that all established concepts correlate with each other in a particular way and that they more or less measure the same phenomenon: consensus versus majoritarian decisions. If that is true, our consensus building variable should correlate positively with Lijphart's consensus democracy as well as Tsebelis' veto players and negatively with Döring's agenda control. However, the efficient government variable would be a new dimension of government decision-making structures, one which has so far not been considered in the literature. Table 3 shows the correlation between the indices and more or less confirms our hypotheses.

Table 3. Correlation between various Indices of Government Decision-Making Structures

	<i>Consensus Building</i>	<i>Executive-Legislative Dimension</i>	<i>Consensus Democracy (Lijphart)</i>	<i>Agenda Control (Döring)</i>	<i>Veto Player (Tsebelis)</i>
Efficiency	,000	-,020	-,155	-,035	-,261
	1,000	,930	,481	,891	,230
	30	23	23	18	23
Consensus Building		-,320	,455*	-,686**	,241
		,137	,029	,002	,267
		23	23	18	23
Executive - Legislative			-,610**	,403	-,599**
			,002	,098	,003
			23	18	23
Consensus Democracy				-,788**	,778**
				,000	,000
				18	23
Agenda Control					-,493*
					,038
					18

Note: Figures in table are: Pearsons' r; p values of significance: * correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), ** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); number of cases (countries).

Apart from a relatively low correlation between consensus building and the veto player index the above mentioned assumptions are confirmed. As speculated above, the effective government structure variable does not correlate with any other index and seems to be an alternative concept for estimating a government's decision-making structure in modern democracies. The relevance of this concept has already been shown in other studies that have analyzed the determinants of performance patterns (Jahn, 2011). Both executive power and consensus building were important variables in explaining differences in economic and social policy. However, executive power was strongest when it interacted with party positions on social policy. Strong left executives had significantly stronger social policies than strong right executives.

4 Conclusion

Building on the established approaches to government decision-making structures in macro-comparative analysis this paper developed a new approach that includes all 30 OECD countries. The first conclusion is that there is a consensus and a majoritarian dimension in these countries. With this finding, this study confirms that established findings in the field apply also to our sample of all OECD countries.

More striking is the finding that there is a second dimension to the political decision-making process that has so far been neglected in the macro-comparative literature although it has been gained much attention in comparative case study research (Blondel et al. 2007; Müller-Rommel 2008b). This dimension grasps a government's efficiency and encompasses the power of the executive and its strategic planning

capacity. It does not correlate with majoritarian decision-making structures, as the empirical findings clearly show that there are countries that are able to combine consensus seeking policy styles with efficient government structures. This finding contradicts the commonly held belief that majoritarian systems are more efficient than consensus democracies (Lijphart, 1999; Powell, 2000).

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe fit quite well into the diverse group of European countries. The Czech Republic belongs in a camp of consensus seeking democracies while Poland, Slovakia and Hungary are less consensus oriented. However, only Hungary has a efficient government structure. Slovakia is in the middle of the field and the Czech Republic and above all Poland have clearly little effective governments.

What do we need for future research in macro-comparative politics? In order to specify the political process we need an approach that is able to test causal mechanisms. To that effect, a broad structural approach such as Lijphart's patterns of democracy can only be a starting point. Further analysis is needed in order to specify why different patterns of democracy have different effects. In this respect, Tsebelis' veto player approach and Döring's agenda control approach, as well as the approach developed here, provide answers. However, the approach presented here has the advantage of combining elements of both the agenda control and the veto player approach. Furthermore, it includes data for more countries.

However, all the presented approaches are silent regarding changes of government decision-making structures, on the one hand, and the direction of change, on the other. Changes of government efficiency and consensus building might be more frequently as suggested by Lijphart. Such changes might also be the reason why some of our findings deviate from other studies in the field. However, there is very little research in macro-comparative analysis to address changes in government efficiency and consensus building. The other vibrant question concerns efficiency and consensus building for what reasons or goals? To resolve this shortcoming we have to elaborate upon the institutional analysis in various ways. First of all we have to combine institutional analysis with elaborated analyses on political actors' policy preferences in order to estimate the direction of policy change (e.g. McDonalds & Budge, 2005). First steps in this direction have already been taken by Laver and Shepsle (1996). However, after this path breaking study few macro-comparative studies have been conducted that combine the preferences of political actors and a sophisticated study of the institutional setting of governments (but see Jahn and Müller-Rommel 2010). Our current study could serve as a trigger for the continuation of this endeavor.

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Appendix I: Experts for the respective countries

Asia and Oceania: Australia: Ian McAllister (Australian National University), Frank Stilwell (The University of Sydney), Roger Wilkins (The University of Melbourne); **Japan:** Tetsuo Fukawa (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research), Patrick Köllner (GI-GA German Institute of Global and Area Studies), Werner Pascha (University of Duisburg-Essen); **South Korea:** Thomas Kalinowski (Graduate School of International Studies, Ewha University), Won-Taek Kang (Soongsil University Seoul), Eun-Jeung Lee (University of Halle-Wittenberg); **New Zealand:** André Kaiser (University of Cologne), Claudia Scott (Victoria University of Wellington), Frank Stähler (University of Otago); **Central Europe: Austria:** Franz Fallend (University of Salzburg), Anton Pelinka (Institute of Conflict Research), Rudolf Winter-Ebmer (University of Linz); **France:** Isabelle Bourgeois (CIRAC Université de Cergy-Pontoise), Yves Mény (European University Institute Florence), Henrik Uterwedde (Institute for German and French Relations); **Germany:** Friedrich Heinemann (Centre for European Economic Research), Wade Anthony Jacoby (Brigham Young University), Friedbert W. Rüb (University of Hamburg); **Switzerland:** Klaus Armingeon (University of Bern), Gebhard Kirchgässner (University of St. Gallen), Wolf Linder (Institute for Political Science Unitobler); **East-Central Europe: Czech Republic:** Zdenka Mansfeldová (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic); Martin Myant (University of Paisley), Martin Potucek (Centre for Social and Economic Strategies (ChU)); **Hungary:** Attila Ágh (Corvinus University of Budapest), Jürgen Dieringer (Andrássy-Universität Budapest), András Inotai (Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences); **Poland:** Dieter Bingen (German Poland Institute), Maciej H. Grabowski (Instytut Badan nad Gospodarka Rynkowa Claudia Matthes (Berlin)); **Slovakia:** Marianne Kneuer (University of Erfurt), Darina Malova (Comenius University), Jan Marusinec (M.E.S.A.); **North America: Canada:** Donald Savoie (Université de Moncton), Rainer-Olaf Schultze (University of Augsburg), Andrew Sharpe (Centre for the Study of Living Standards); **Mexico:** Ulises Béltran (Centro de Investigacion y Docencias Economicas/ Col. Lomas de Santa Fe), Jörg Faust (German Development Institute), George Philip (London School of Economics); **United States:** Andreas Falke (University of Erlangen), Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich (Free University of Berlin), Paul J. Quirk (University of British Columbia); **Northwest Europe: Belgium:** Micael Castanheira (Universite Libre de Bruxelles), Claus Hecking (Financial Times Germany GmbH & Co. KG), Benoît Rihoux (Université Catholique de Louvain); **Ireland:** Michael Marsh (Trinity College Dublin), Paul Lawrence Mitchell (London School of Economics), Brendan M. Walsh (University College Dublin); **Luxembourg:** Fernand Fehlen (Université du Luxembourg), Mario Hirsch (Institut Pierre Werner), Philippe Poirier (Université du Luxembourg); **Netherlands:** Bernhard Kittel (University of Oldenburg), Robert van den Bosch (Former chief economist ABN Amro Bank (retired)), Wichard Woyke (University of Münster); **United Kingdom:** Iain Begg (London School of Economics), Andreas Busch (University of Oxford), Roland Sturm (University of Erlangen / Nürnberg); **Scandinavia: Denmark:** Torben M. Andersen (University of Aarhus), Finn Laursen (Dalhousie University), Wolfgang Zank (Aalborg University); **Iceland:** Gretar Thor Eythorsson (Bifröst University), Thorvaldur Gylfason (University of Iceland), Detlef Jahn (University of Greifswald); **Finland:** Dag Anckar (Abo Akademi University), Christoph Oberst/Kati Kuitto (University of Greifswald), Pekka Ylä-Anttila (ETLA - Research Institute of the Finnish Economy); **Norway:** Stein Ringen (University of Oxford), Ulf Sverdrup (ARENA, Oslo), Fabrizio Zilibotti (University of Zurich); **Sweden:** Carl Dahlstrom (Göteborg University), Detlef Jahn (University of Greifswald), Jon Pierre (Göteborg University); **Southern Europe: Italy:** Marco Annunziata (UniCredit Markets & Investment Banking, Bavarian Hypo- und Vereinsbank AG), Maurizio Cotta (Universita di Siena), Roman Maruhn (University of Munich); **Greece:** Kevin Featherstone (London School of Economics), Spiridon Paraskewopoulos (University of Leipzig), Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos (University of Athens); **Portugal:** Thomas C. Bruneau (Naval Postgraduate School), Carlos Jalali (University of Aveiro), Pedro Magalhães (Universidade de Lisboa); **Spain:** Oriol Homs we Ferret (Foundation CIREM), Wolfgang Merkel (Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB)), José Ramón Montero (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and Departamento de Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales); **Turkey:** Yilmaz Esmer (Bogazici University), Günter Seufert (Schonungen-Mainberg/Cighangir-Istanbul), Subidey Togan (Bilkent University).

Appendix II: Questions and Answers about the political decision making structure in OECD countries.

Further information and detailed results of all the questions are documented at: <http://www.sgi-network.org/>.

M 2.1 Strategic planning

How much influence does strategic planning have on government decision-making?

Organizational forms of strategic planning include planning units at the center of government and personal advisory cabinets for ministers or the president/prime minister or extra-governmental bodies.

An indicator of influence may be the frequency of meetings between strategic planning staff and the head of government. Please substantiate your assessment with empirical evidence.

Answer:

Dominant influence. 10-9

Considerable influence. 8-6

Modest influence. 5-3

No influence. 2-1

M 2.3 Scientific advice

How influential are non-governmental academic experts for government decision-making?

An indicator of influence may be the frequency of meetings between government and external academic experts. Please substantiate your assessment with empirical evidence.

Answer:

Dominant influence. 10-9

Considerable influence. 8-6

Modest influence. 5-3

No influence. 2-1

M 3.1 GO expertise

Does the government office / prime minister's office (GO / PMO) have the expertise to evaluate ministerial draft bills substantively?

This question examines whether the government office (referred to in some countries as the prime minister's office, chancellery, etc.) has capacities to evaluate the policy content of line ministry proposals.

Answer:

The GO / PMO has comprehensive sectoral policy expertise and provides regular, independent evaluations of draft bills for the cabinet / prime minister. These assessments are guided exclusively by the government's strategic and budgetary priorities. 10-9

The GO / PMO has sectoral policy expertise and evaluates important draft bills. 8-6

The GO / PMO can rely on some sectoral policy expertise, but does not evaluate draft bills. 5-3

The GO / PMO does not have any sectoral policy expertise. Its role is limited to collecting, registering and circulating documents submitted for cabinet meetings. 2-1

M 3.2 GO gatekeeping

Can the government office/prime minister's office return items envisaged for the cabinet meeting on the basis of policy considerations?

Please assess whether the GO/PMO is de facto, not only legally, able to return materials on the basis of policy considerations.

Answer:

The GO/PMO can return all/most items on policy grounds. 10-9

The GO/PMO can return some items on policy grounds. 8-6

The GO/PMO can return items on technical, formal grounds only. 5-3

The GO/PMO has no authority to return items. 2-1

M 3.3 Line ministries

To what extent do line ministries have to involve the government office/prime minister's office in the preparation of policy proposals?

Please assess whether line ministries involve the GO/PMO de facto, not only legally, in the preparation of policy proposals.

Answer:

There are interrelated capacities for coordination in the GO/PMO and line ministries. 10-9

The GO/PMO is regularly briefed on new developments affecting the preparation of policy proposals. 8-6

Consultation is rather formal and focuses on technical and drafting issues. 5-3

Consultation occurs only after proposals are fully drafted as laws. 2-1

M 3.5 Senior ministry officials

How effectively do senior ministry officials prepare cabinet meetings?

This question examines whether senior ministry officials (leading civil servants or political appointees including junior ministers below the cabinet level) effectively filter out or settle issues so that the cabinet can focus on strategic policy debates.

Please assess whether senior ministry officials are de facto, not only legally, able to prepare cabinet meetings.

Answer:

Most issues arrive in time to be reviewed and scheduled first by/for the senior ministry officials (i.e., more than 70 percent of cabinet agenda items are prepared). 10-9

Many of the issues are prepared by senior ministry officials (i.e., 50-70 percent of cabinet agenda items are prepared). 8-6

There is some preparation of cabinet meetings by senior ministry officials (i.e., less than 50 percent of cabinet agenda items are prepared). 5-3

There is no or hardly any preparation of cabinet meetings by senior ministry officials. 2-1

M 5.1 Mobilizing public support

To what extent does the government consult with trade unions, employers' associations, leading business associations, religious communities, and social and environmental interest groups to support its policy?

This question assesses how successfully the government consults with economic and social actors in preparing its policy. Successful consultation is conceived here as an exchange of views and information that increases the acceptance of government policies in society and induces economic and social actors to support them.

Answer:

The government successfully motivates economic and social actors to support its policy. 10-9

The government facilitates the acceptance of its policy among economic and social actors. 8-6

The government consults with economic and social actors. 5-3

The government hardly consults with any economic and social actors. 2-1

M 6.1 Coherent communication

To what extent does the government implement a coherent communication policy?

This question asks whether a government “speaks with one voice.”

Answer:

The government effectively coordinates the communication of ministries; ministries closely align their communication with government strategy. 10-9

The government seeks to coordinate the communication of ministries through consultation procedures.

Contradictory statements are rare, but do occur. 8-6

The ministries are responsible for informing the public within their own particular areas of competence; their statements occasionally contradict each other. 5-3

Strategic communication planning does not exist; individual ministry statements regularly contradict each other. 2-1

M 9.2a Ministerial compliance

To what extent does the organization of government ensure that ministers do not seek to realize their self-interest but face incentives to implement the government’s program?

Organizational devices providing incentives for ministers include prime ministerial powers over personnel, policies or structures, coalition committees, party summits, comprehensive government programs/coalition agreements and cabinet meetings.

Answer:

The organization of government successfully provides strong incentives for ministers to implement the government’s program. 10-9

The organization of government provides weak incentives for ministers to implement the government’s program. 8-6

The organization of government partly prevents ministers from realizing departmental self-interests. 5-3

The organization of government fails to prevent ministers from realizing departmental self-interests. 2-1

M 9.2b Monitoring line ministries

How effectively does the government office / prime minister’s office monitor line ministry activities?

This question assumes that effective delegation from the core executive to ministries is reflected in the monitoring of line ministry activities by the administration of the core executive. While such monitoring is not sufficient to prevent line ministries from prioritizing sectoral over government interests, the presence or absence of monitoring is taken here as a proxy of effective delegation policies.

Answer:

The GO / PMO effectively monitors the activities of line ministries. 10-9

The GO / PMO monitors the activities of most line ministries. 8-6

The GO / PMO shadows the activities of some line ministries. 5-3

The GO / PMO does not monitor the activities of line ministries. 2-1

M 9.2c Monitoring agencies

How effectively do ministries monitor the activities of executive agencies?

An effective implementation may be constrained by bureaucratic drift. To ensure that agencies act in accordance with government policies, this question assumes that ministries and their leading officials should monitor the activities of semiautonomous executive agencies in their task area.

In federal states with few executive agencies at the central level of government, the assessment should also consider regional-level decentralized agencies acting on behalf of the federal government.

Answer:

The ministries effectively monitor the activities of all executive agencies. 10-9

The ministries monitor the activities of most of the executive agencies only. 8-6

The ministries monitor the activities of some executive agencies. 5-3

The ministries do not monitor the activities of executive agencies. 2-1

M 14.8 Obtaining documents

Are parliamentary committees able to ask for government documents?

Please assess whether parliamentary committees are de facto, not only legally, able to obtain the documents they desire from government. Specify if you consider the rights of committees limited.

This question considers regular parliamentary committees only, not committees established ad hoc to investigate specific questions.

Answer:

Parliamentary committees may ask for most or all government documents; they are normally delivered in full and within an appropriate time frame. 10-9

The rights of parliamentary committees to ask for government documents are slightly limited; some important documents are not delivered or are delivered incomplete or arrive too late to enable the committee to react appropriately. 8-6

The rights of parliamentary committees to ask for government documents are considerably limited; most important documents are not delivered or delivered incomplete or arrive too late to enable the committee to react appropriately. 5-3

Parliamentary committees may not ask for government documents. 2-1

M 14.9 Summoning ministers

Are parliamentary committees able to summon ministers for hearings?

Please assess whether parliamentary committees are de facto, not only legally, able to summon ministers to committee meetings and to confront them with their questions. Please specify if you consider the rights of committees limited.

This question considers regular parliamentary committees only, not committees established ad hoc to investigate specific questions.

Answer:

Parliamentary committees may summon ministers. Ministers regularly follow invitations and are obliged to answer questions. 10-9

The rights of parliamentary committees to summon ministers are slightly limited; ministers occasionally refuse to follow invitations or to answer questions. 8-6

The rights of parliamentary committees to summon ministers are considerably limited; ministers frequently refuse to follow invitations or to answer questions. 5-3

Parliamentary committees may not summon ministers. 2-1

M 14.10 Summoning experts

Are parliamentary committees able to summon experts for committee meetings?

Please assess whether parliamentary committees are de facto, not only legally, able to invite experts to committee meetings. Please specify if you consider the rights of committees limited.

This question considers regular parliamentary committees only, not committees established ad hoc to investigate specific questions.

Answer:

Parliamentary committees may summon experts. 10-9

The rights of parliamentary committees to summon experts are slightly limited. 8-6

The rights of parliamentary committees to summon experts are considerably limited. 5-3

Parliamentary committees may not summon experts. 2-1

M 15.3a Association competence

To what extent do interest associations propose reasonable policies?

"Reasonable" policy proposals identify the causes of problems, rely on scholarly knowledge, are technically feasible, take into account long-term interests and anticipate policy effects. These criteria are more demanding than the criteria used to evaluate party programs as interest associations can be expected to represent a specialist, substantive policy know-how.

The assessment should focus on the following interest associations: employers' associations, trade unions, leading business associations, religious communities, environmental and social interest groups.

Answer:

Most interest associations propose reasonable policies. 10-9

Many interest associations propose reasonable policies. 8-6

Few interest associations propose reasonable policies. 5-3

Most interest associations do not propose reasonable policies. 2-1

M 15.3b Association relevance

To what extent are the proposals of interest associations considered relevant by the government?

The political impact of interest associations does not only depend on their size or power. It is assumed here that impact is also a function of the quality of public communication organized by an interest association.

The assessment should focus on the following interest associations: employers' associations, trade unions, leading business associations, religious communities, environmental and social interest groups.

Answer:

Most interest association proposals are considered highly relevant by the government. 10-9

Many interest association proposals are considered relevant by the government. 8-6

Few interest association proposals are considered relevant by the government. 5-3

Most interest association proposals are not taken seriously by the government. 2-1

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