



1,138 Views | 23 CrossRef citations to date | 19 Altmetric

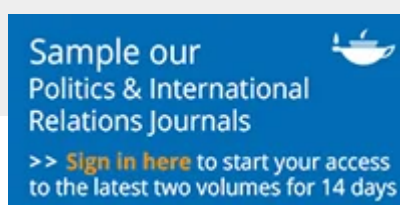
Articles

# How politics matters for EU funds' absorption problems – a fuzzy-set analysis

Christian Hagemann

Pages 188-206 | Published online: 23 Nov 2017

“ Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1398774>



Full Article

Figures & data

References

Supplemental

“ Citations

Metrics

Reprints & Permissions

Read this article

Share

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of politics for member states' absorption problems of European Union (EU) funds. Existing research relies solely on the influence of administrative capacities, but more recent evidence points at the additional relevance of politics as the party politicization of the implementation process. Drawing on this evidence, I argue that parties alternating in control of EU funds change implementation priorities and even management staff according to their preferences. These changes interrupt implementation, weaken capacities, and thereby also contribute to absorption problems. The argument is tested in a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis of 17 operational programmes building large infrastructure in the new member states of the EU. The results strongly support a role of frequent party alternation and low capacities leading in conjunction to absorption problems. Low capacities are found to be an important, but crucially not a sufficient condition for absorption problems.

KEYWORDS:

---

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Petra Stykow, Berthold Rittberger, Klaus H. Goetz, Ingo Rohlfing, Patrick Mello, Nina Guérin and the three anonymous referees for their comments on this and earlier versions of this article.

---

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

---

## Notes on contributor

Christian Hagemann is a post-doctoral research fellow and lecturer in policy analysis at the Bavarian School of Public Policy at the Technical University in Munich, Germany.

## Notes

1. The missing 2007 entrants Bulgaria and Romania had no prior implementation experience and are thus expected to have only ‘absent/rudimentary’ (D) capacities.
  2. INUS refers to a condition that is an 'insufficient but necessary part of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the result' (Mackie [1965](#): 245).
- 

### Related Research Data

[How politics matters for EU funds’ absorption problems – a fuzzy-set analysis](#)

Source: figshare

[The politics of EU conditionality: the norm of minority protection during and beyond EU accession](#)

Source: Journal of European Public Policy

Buying turnout or rewarding loyalists? Electoral mobilization and EU structural funding in the German Länder

Source: European Union Politics

Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences

Source: Unknown Repository

From Conditionality to Europeanization in Central and Eastern Europe: Administrative Performance and Capacity in Cohesion Policy

Source: European Planning Studies

Revisiting the role of domestic politics: politicisation and European Cohesion Policy performance in Central and Eastern Europe

Source: East European Politics

Can Administrative Capacity Explain Differences in Regional Performances? Evidence from Structural Funds Implementation in Southern Italy

Source: Regional Studies

Absorption of Regional Funds: A Comparative Analysis

Source: JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies

Building States and Markets after Communism

Source: Unknown Repository

Testing the 'Party Matters' Thesis: Explaining Progress Towards Kyoto Protocol Targets

Source: Political Studies

International Integration, Varieties of Capitalism and Resilience to Crisis in Transition Economies

Source: Europe Asia Studies

National Subversion of Supranational Goals: 'Pork-Barrel' Politics and EU Regional Aid

Source: Europe Asia Studies

Set Relations in Social Research: Evaluating Their Consistency and Coverage

Source: Political Analysis

Rebuilding Leviathan

Source: Unknown Repository

Cohesion in the European Union

Source: Unknown Repository

Does democracy produce quality of government?

Source: European Journal of Political Research

Is East-Central Europe Backsliding? EU Accession Is No "End of History"

Source: Journal of Democracy

Making sense of post-communist central administration: modernization, Europeanization or Latinization?

Source: Journal of European Public Policy

Die Umsetzung von EU-Richtlinien im Zeichen der Parteipolitik: Eine akteurszentrierte Antwort auf die Misfit-These

Source: Politische Vierteljahresschrift

User manual for the QCA(GUI) package in R

Source: Journal of Business Research

Administrative Reform and Regional Development Discourses in Hungary.

Europeanisation Going NUTS?

Source: Europe Asia Studies

Governmentalizing central executives in post-communist Europe: a four-country comparison

Source: Journal of European Public Policy

Money, Margins and the Motors of Politics: The EU and the Development of Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe

Source: JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies

Politicization of the Civil Service

Source: Unknown Repository

The Europeanisation of regional policy in Poland: did political parties make a difference?

Source: East European Politics

Redesigning Social Inquiry

Source: Unknown Repository

The EU Economy: Member States Outside the Euro Area in 2009

Source: JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies

Governing the post-communist state: government alternation and senior civil service politicisation in Central and Eastern Europe

Source: East European Politics

Distributive politics and intergovernmental transfers: The local allocation of European Union structural funds

Source: European Union Politics

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) as an Approach

Source: Unknown Repository

How Political Stability Shapes Administrative Performance: The Italian Case

Source: West European Politics

Runaway State-Building

Source: Unknown Repository

Job security regulations in Western democracies: A fuzzy set analysis

Source: European Journal of Political Research

The Regional and Urban Policy of the European Union

Source: Unknown Repository

# Building Better Causal Theories: A Fuzzy Set Approach to Typologies in Organization Research

Source: Academy of Management Journal

Linking provided by 

## Related research

People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by  
23

The quality of government and administrative performance: explaining Cohesion Policy compliance, absorption and achievements across EU regions >

Carlos Mendez et al.

Regional Studies

Published online: 2 Aug 2022



Administrative capacity or quality of political governance? EU Cohesion Policy in the new Europe, 2007-13 >

Neculai-Cristian Surubaru

Regional Studies

Published online: 12 Dec 2016

From Conditionality to Europeanization in Central and Eastern Europe: Administrative Performance and Capacity in Cohesion Policy >

John Bachtler et al.

European Planning Studies

Published online: 1 Mar 2013

[View more](#)

## Information for

[Authors](#)

[R&D professionals](#)

[Editors](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Societies](#)

## Opportunities

[Reprints and e-prints](#)

[Advertising solutions](#)

[Accelerated publication](#)

[Corporate access solutions](#)

## Open access

[Overview](#)

[Open journals](#)

[Open Select](#)

[Dove Medical Press](#)

[F1000Research](#)

## Help and information

[Help and contact](#)

[Newsroom](#)

[All journals](#)

[Books](#)

## Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email



Sign me up



Copyright © 2025 Informa UK Limited [Privacy policy](#) [Cookies](#) [Terms & conditions](#)

[Accessibility](#)



Taylor & Francis Group  
an informa business

Registered in England & Wales No. 01072954  
5 Howick Place | London | SW1P 1WG