

Journal of European Public Policy >

Volume 26, 2019 - [Issue 2](#)

1,194 Views | 23 CrossRef citations to date | 0 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>



Sample our
Politics & International
Relations Journals

>> [Sign in here](#) to start your access
to the latest two volumes for 14 days



-  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.

Absorption

Central and Eastern Europe

cohesion policy

enlargement

EU funds

Europeanization

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: politicization and European Cohesion Policy

Related research

People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by
23

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 © 2026 Informa UK Limited [Privacy policy](#)

[Cookies](#) [Terms & conditions](#) [Accessibility](#)

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



Taylor & Francis
by informa