

Network Capital and Cooperation Patterns In the Working Groups of the Council of the EU

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Abstract

This working paper presents findings from a study of network capital and cooperation patterns in the working groups of the Council of the European Union. Two successive rounds of telephone interviews with Council working group representatives from all member states were conducted in 2003 and 2006. It is demonstrated that some member states have a consistently higher stock of network capital (having close ties to a large number of powerful cooperation partners) than others, over time and across policy fields. Size explains a lot of this variation, but there is also room for actor-based factors. For small states in particular inter-personal trust seems to have a positive effect. The findings also indicate that cooperation patterns in the Council working groups follow geographical patterns. The dominant North-South dimension is consistent across policy fields. Rather than having one 'core' the EU15 Council revolved around a North (the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK) and a South (France, Italy, Spain) center, connected by Germany. The 2004 enlargement did not change this pattern, but only added new groups of countries to the periphery around the two main centers. There is evidence to suggest that the geographical cooperation patterns are mainly driven by cultural factors, rather than economic interests or political ideologies.

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Introduction

This working paper presents a new data collection on cooperation and communication patterns in the working groups of the Council of the European Union.² The project is a response to the poor data situation concerning coalition-building and negotiation processes in the Council. “There is surprisingly little clear evidence of coalition formation in the EU”, one scholar complained in 1998 (Winkler 1998). “Most of the suggestions made in the literature seem to be based on anecdotal evidence, rather than on structured documentation”, said another group of scholars some years later (Elgström et.al. 2001). More has been done in recent years to open up the EU:s most important legislative black box (see in particular Naurin & Wallace forthcoming, Thomson et.al. 2005). The present project is a further effort towards that goal. Two rounds of telephone interviews have been completed, the first in 2003 and the second in 2006. This paper gives a first preview into what these two data sets contain.

The main research questions of the project are two. First, what do the coalition-patterns within the Council look like and how can these patterns be explained? This question is closely connected to the bigger question of what kind of polity the EU is—nation-state diplomacy or politics as usual (i.e. as at the domestic level, cf. Marks & Steenbergen 2003)? There are different views on how far the process of “transforming territorial conflicts into partisan and cross-territorial conflicts” has gone in the EU (Bartolini 2006, p. 40, cf. Follesdal & Hix 2006). Ministers represent both member states and political parties, both national interests and party (left-right, pro- anti- European integration etc) ideologies. This project aims to increase or knowledge of to what extent the dominant conflict dimensions in the Council are structured by national and transnational factors, but also, along with the constructivist-rationalist debate, by interests, power resources, norms and identities.³

The second question concerns power and influence in the Council. It is often assumed that being a central part of the ‘core networks’ of Brussels is an important source of

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³ The project is also connected to a broader research effort to analyse the role of political parties in the EU legislative process, initiated by the European Legislative Politics (ELP) research group (see www.elprg.eu).

power in the EU (cf. Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006). Network centrality, which gives both access to information and a position to spread information, is important both in rationalist and constructivist approaches to negotiation processes. In any bargaining game, or deliberative process, information on facts and preferences is a valuable asset. A rational actor may use it to mobilise friends, threaten enemies and promote advantageous log-rolling deals. A communicative actor will use it to develop his/her own preferences as well as attempt to change the minds of others. We introduce the concept of network capital—indicating the quantity and quality (in terms of power) of cooperation partners of member states—and analyse the stock of this asset for individual and groups of member states.

The longer-term aim of the project is to continue with subsequent data collections in the future in order to achieve time-series data on cooperation patterns. The core questions on cooperation behaviour will be supplemented with one or two extra survey questions in order to be able to look into a special research question. In 2003 we included in the survey a question on the effects of flexible integration on cooperation patterns and network capital. In 2006 we had a package of questions concerning communication patterns, focusing in particular on the distinction between ‘arguing’ and ‘bargaining’ behaviour. While the later data remains to be analyzed further a short description of the findings with respect to flexible integration is given in the appendix (Appendix A1).

The data will be made available at www.councildata.cergu.gu.se, along with other data sets and links to empirical research on the Council of the EU. This website on Research and Data on the Council of the EU is set up by the Centre for European Research at Goteborg University (CERGU) with the purpose of facilitating cumulative research on the Council. Among the data sets which will be made available here is the voting data collected by Hayes-Renshaw, van Aken and Wallace (2006).⁴

Network capital and coalition patterns - hypotheses

⁴ For questions concerning the website Research and Data on the Council of the EU please contact the author.

What determines the choice of cooperation partners made by Council working group representatives? Is there any reason to expect that some member states will be more well-connected—have a larger number of more powerful cooperation partners—than others? Can we expect to find recurrent and stable alliances of countries, positioned along identifiable conflict dimensions?

The common textbook answer with respect to coalitions in the Council of the EU is that these are not pre-fixed but “shift from issue to issue” (Spence 1995. Cf Nugent, Peters & Wright 2001). One possible explanation for this state is that coalitions are formed by member states with similar interests on the particular issues at hand and that there is no dominant over-arching structure in the distribution of preferences which would give rise to stable coalitions. While two political parties positioned at different ends on a left-right scale will be in opposition to each other on a long range of issues, this may not be the case for member states in the Council. Two countries which are on the same side when it comes to olives, may just as well be on different sides when it comes to working time regulations.

Drawing from this common notion of the Council as an ‘unstructured’ political arena we can hypothesise that the cooperation network will have a flat character, with short distances between core and periphery. If preferences determine who is cooperating with whom—and if preferences are more or less randomly distributed with no clear clusters of countries with similar interests on most issues—coalitions will vary and few countries will be significantly less well connected than others. If, on the other hand, interests are distributed in a more systematic way we will see groups of countries cooperating more closely, which would mean that conventional wisdom is not entirely accurate here.

However, although preferences may be an important raw material going into the process, it is hardly the only factor determining coalition-patterns and the network capital of individual member states. Power is another factor. Assuming that network centrality is a valuable asset—giving access to information and a platform for log-rolling and manipulation and spread of information—member states have a reason to strive to position themselves as centrally as possible. Network capital—the quantity and quality of cooperation partners that one has—may therefore be not just a power resource in itself, but also a product of other power resources, as member states may choose to use their

elbows in order to acquire central network positions. Furthermore, even if the more powerful member states are passive themselves in coalition-building processes they will probably be approached by others who seek cooperation with them because of their power resources. Since power in the Council is formally connected to size through the voting procedure, and most likely also informally connected to size via economic and other powers, a reasonable hypothesis is that bigger states are likely to have more network capital than smaller states.

Preferences, power resources and formal institutions form the basis for rationalist explanations of cooperation patterns and the network capital of individual member states. Another factor which has proven to be important in explaining success in (economic) interactions between actors is inter-personal trust (Knack and Keefer 1997). High levels of trust increase the propensity of actors both to initiate and reciprocate mutually advantageous interactions, such as sharing information and striking deals (Bornhorst et al.). It seems a reasonable hypothesis to test, therefore, that representatives of member states characterised by high degrees of inter-personal trust will have a higher stock of network capital.

Introducing constructivist concepts, such as norms, identity and preference transformation, gives us even more alternatives. First, obviously, if preferences are open for change—due to deliberative processes in the encounter with other member states representatives, or as rational responses to changes in domestic factors (such as a shift of government)—coalitions based on preferences will change. The less fixed preferences are, the less stable coalition patterns based on preferences will be.

Furthermore, a constructivist approach would predict that culture, norms and identity are independent variables, beside power and preferences, affecting coalition-building. Norms-based coalitions would include member states who perceive themselves as adhering to certain norms, and exclude those that are seen as violating these norms. One example which is sometimes referred to in political debates is the norm of ‘European solidarity’, purportedly manifested by a willingness to engage in the process of creating an ever closer European Union. ‘Reluctant’ member states, the argument goes, who refuse to participate wholeheartedly in the ‘European project’ by turning down treaty changes or rejecting participation in certain policy areas, get a bad reputation among

more engaged integrationists (see, for example, Gidlund & Jerneck 1996 and Laursen 2003). The Council is assumed to be a norm sensitive environment and ‘defecting’ states become less attractive as cooperation partners. The hypothesis coming out of this argument is that coalitions are at least partly based on perceptions of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, for example as a result of flexible integration. Elsewhere we will look into this possibility in more detail with respect to the EMU-outsiders Denmark, Sweden and the UK (for a short summary, see appendix A1).

Identity may also enter the coalition building equation, independently of norms and preferences. Even in a highly professionalized and seemingly business-like environment like the bargaining processes of the Council of the EU, non-interest based factors such as culture, language, traditions and common historical legacies, producing in turn feelings of identity and kinship, may be in play. The causal mechanism driving coalition-building in that case may be a sense of ‘duty’ to consult one’s socially constructed fellows, or simply a feeling that it is easier to work with people who are more like oneself. The hypothesis here is that we will see cooperation patterns along cultural and historical lines (also on issues where there is no clear pre-fixed preference connection between the cooperating states). This situation too would produce a more structured coalition pattern than conventional wisdom would lead us to expect.

To summarise, the main hypotheses that will be tested in this paper are the following:

According to conventional text-book wisdom coalition-patterns in the Council working groups are fluid and shift from issue to issue. Preferences are not systematically distributed in such a way as to give rise to permanent alliances. Consequently,

H1. The network capital of member states will not vary much, i.e. there is little distance between centre and periphery.

H2. No particular conflict dimension will structure the policy space in a dominant way.

If, however, conventional wisdom is not entirely accurate and we do find some variation in the attribution of network capital to member states, and the policy arena is to

some extent structured by distinct conflict dimensions, the following explanations for such variation will be tried.

H3. Network capital is a valuable asset and is therefore positively correlated with power, and, therefore, with size.

H4. Network capital will be positively correlated to inter-personal trust, since the latter induces actors to initiate and reciprocate mutually advantageous interactions.

With respect to cooperation patterns we can distinguish between explanations focusing on territorial or non-territorial factors, on the one hand, and rationalist interest-based factors and constructivist culture-based factors, on the other hand.

H5. Cooperation-patterns will be driven mainly by territorial interest-based factors, such as net-contributions to the EU budget.

H6. Cooperation-patterns will be driven mainly by territorial culture-based factors, given for example by language, cultural proximity and historical legacy.

H7. Cooperation-patterns will be driven mainly by non-territorial partisan factors, such as governments' left-right ideology and/or support for European integration.

In addition to these theoretically derived hypotheses, on a more explorative basis, we will also analyse how the cooperation patterns were affected by the Big-Bang enlargement of ten new member states in 2004.

Previous empirical research

Up till now there have been three ways in which EU-scholars have approached the question of coalition-patterns and power in the Council of the EU.

First, a range of studies have calculated the theoretical power of different hypothetical coalitions, based on member states' voting weights (c.f. Hosli 1996, 1999, Sutter 2000, Aleskerov et.al. 2002, Hosli and van Deemen 2002). For example the Shapley-Shubik

index is a voting power index which is based on the number of times a particular actor is “pivotal” in a coalition, i.e. has a sufficient number of votes to turn a losing coalition into a winning one. The voting power indexes may be used to estimate the voting power of an exogenously specified coalition. For example, Hosli (1999) calculates the voting power of the Benelux countries and the Nordic countries acting as ‘blocs’ in the Council. But the indexes can not be used for identifying existing coalitions. In practice Hosli, in this case, is merely guessing that the Benelux and the Nordic countries are acting in blocs—which usually they are not as we will see.

Secondly, some scholars have looked at voting patterns (Mattila & Lane 2001, Mattila 2004, Hayes-Renshaw, Wallace & van Aken 2005, Aspinwall 2006). Data on the explicit votes given by member states in the Council are available from 1994 and can be used to analyse who tends to vote together with whom, against a qualified majority. There are many problems with this approach. One is that ministers only vote explicitly in about 20 percent of the cases, and in a large part of those cases there is only one member state opposing the decision, leaving most of the action in the Council outside the analysis. Another problem is that this data only captures ‘losers’ coalitions. Some scholars have noted the absence of big member state coalitions in the voting patterns (Hix 2006, p.17). But this is naturally explained by the fact that two big member states only need a few more votes to assemble a blocking minority, in which case the vote will not turn up in the records.

It is obviously difficult to draw general conclusions on coalition-patterns from the voting data. Still, there are some interesting findings coming out of these analyses. In particular, Mattila and Lane (2001) found a North-South dimension in the explicit voting during the years 1995 to 1998. Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK were at opposite ends with the Mediterranean states, in particular Spain and Italy. Notable also was that Finland was a little bit apart from the North group, and that there was no sign of any Benelux cooperation in the voting data. In a later article, on the other hand, using voting data from 1995 to 2000, Mattila claims to have found evidence of both a Left-Right and a Pro- Anti EU dimension affecting member states propensity to openly vote against the majority (right-wing EU-sceptic governments voting against the (left-wing) majority more often than left-wing EU supporters).

Hagemann assembled a dataset containing not only formal votes and abstentions but also formal statements to the Council minutes for the years 1999-2006. She found a left-right dimension structuring coalitions-patterns in the EU15 Council, before the 2004 enlargement. Several countries substituted left-wing governments for right-wing governments during this period, which subsequently led to these governments shifting place in the coalition-space. After the enlargement, however, this pattern was no longer discernable (Hagemann forthcoming).

A third way of capturing coalition patterns which has been tried is looking at the expressed positions of member states. One of the main critiques against the voting power indexes has been that they fail to consider the preferences of the actors, which condition which coalitions that are feasible in practise. Analysing how far and how close the member states position themselves in relation to each other makes it possible to detect potential conflict dimensions in the Council. An important effort at gathering such data has been made by the “Decision-Making in the EU” (DEU) project (see, for instance, the special issue of *European Union Politics* 2004, 5 (1), and Thomson et.al. 2006). Using expert interviews this research group was able to collect data on the initial positions of the member states on 70 Commission proposals (including 174 different issues) dealt with in the Council during 1999 and 2000, thereby opening up for analyses of position patterns.

The most visible dimension in the coalition-patterns coming from the DEU data set is, again, the North-South dimension (Thomson et.al. 2004, Zimmer et.al. 2005, Kaeding & Selck 2005). The North-group includes the same countries as in the voting data (Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and the UK), plus Germany (Finland being positioned in between the North and the Centre group). The Mediterranean states, including France, are at the other end of the scale. Thomson et. al. and Zimmer et. al., both groups of authors using the DEU data, make different interpretations of the fact that Mediterranean states position themselves closer to each other than to member states further North. According to Thomson et.al. this is mainly a question of Northern countries preferring market-based solutions to policy problems, while Southern states advocate regulatory approaches. Furthermore, they argue that even though the North-South dimension is the most important conflict dimension (compared to pro-anti EU

opinions, Left-Right position of governments or economic development) it is still not a very strong one, as it was only significantly correlated to the positioning of the member states in about one third of the 174 issues. Zimmer et.al., on the other hand, argue that Thomson et. al. underestimates somewhat the degree of structure in the DEU data and claim that the North-South division is mainly one of net-contributors (North) and receivers (South) to the EU budget.

The large distance between France and Germany in the DEU data set indicates something more substantially interesting than when looking at losers' votes. Now it means that Germany and France often take different initial positions on the issues on the agenda. One article concluded on the basis of this finding that "the historically important Franco-German axis, if it ever existed in the real world of EU policy making, seems to have lost momentum" (Kaeding & Selck 2005).

Empirical data on position patterns is certainly a big step forward. But position patterns, we believe, are not the same as coalition patterns. The fact that Ireland, Greece and Portugal take a similar position on an issue is not enough to conclude that they have acted as a coalition, as they may have formulated and promoted their positions independently. This objection raises the question of what a coalition is, what coalition-building means, and which dependent variable we are really after here.

We have used the term position patterns when describing the DEU data, even though the DEU researchers themselves prefer to think of their data as "preferences". It is a bit problematic to treat positions as preferences, however. Member states' initially expressed positions to Commission proposals are probably better understood as strategic bargaining offers than genuine expressions of wants. But even if we accept the theoretical notion of preference patterns, this seems to be an even more problematic approximation of coalitions than position patterns. A coalition then would simply be a group of countries who happen to want the same thing.

But if coalitions are just mirror images of the distribution of wants it is difficult to see what role they play for the actors in the process, and the substance of the verb *coalition-building*. In order to explain the activity of coalition-building we need to consider the motives of the actors. The Netherlands does not seek cooperation with the UK in order to increase decision-making effectiveness in the Council or reduce complexity at an

aggregated systems level, but because they find it is in their interest somehow or because they believe it is the right thing to do.

It is not difficult to imagine such motivations. From a rational choice perspective the activity of coalition-building involves communication and cooperation with other actors with the purpose of assembling a large enough majority to realize one's preferred objectives (or a large enough blocking minority to avoid decisions one does not favour). Even under the assumption that all actors have clear and pre-fixed preferences and are fully informed of each others preferences there may be important motivations for active coalition-building behaviour. 'Friendly lobbying' is one, i.e. mobilising like-minded actors who may not be fully aware and on their toes on the issue. Issue-linkages (or log-rolling) is another, which is often considered an important practice in the Council. The purpose then is to find advantageous deals for the parties involved by trading votes on different issues using variations in the degree of salience as the mediating currency (Cf. Heisenberg 2005).

Furthermore, assuming a less mechanistic world where preferences are changeable during policy processes, and norms and identities matter, there are even more reasons to engage in cooperative coalition-building activities. Actors with a deliberative gift would cooperate with other actors in order to develop their own preferences and try to convince others to change their minds when appropriate. Deliberative theorists sometimes assume that deliberation always aims towards consensus, but deliberative interactions between member states in the Council may just as well result in groups of 'convinced' states promoting certain positions. As discussed before coalition-behaviour may also be norm-bound, driven by path-dependency mechanisms, feelings of affinity and identity etc.

The point here is that there is reason to believe that coalition-building activities are going on in the Council which affect the final product—a political arena with certain characteristics, more or less structured by conflict dimensions such as left-right, pro- anti integration, economic development, historical or cultural bonds, etc—in a way which can not be predicted only by looking at one of the raw materials (revealed preferences, economic interests, power resources, socially constructed identities etc...). We believe that the operationalisation of coalition-patterns used in this project—cooperation patterns ("which member states do you most often cooperate with within your working group, in

order to develop a common position?")—is closer to the target than both preference patterns and positions patterns. This is so because cooperation patterns, in contrast to preference and positions patterns, encompasses both other relevant conditional factors such as power, norms and identity, and the strategies and actions of the member states.

The data

The Council preparatory machinery includes committees and working parties where representatives of the member States, the Council secretariat and, in most cases, the Commission meet to work on policy coordination and prepare legislation. Presently more than 150 preparatory bodies are active within the Council. Some of the Committees are established by the treaties, others by Council act or by intergovernmental decision.

The Council's senior preparatory body is *Comité des représentants permanents*. It is better known by its acronym Coreper. It was set up in the late 1950's. Its existence is based on Article 207 TEC which provides for a committee consisting of the permanent representatives of the member states which can assist the Council. Early in the 1960's it was divided into two bodies Coreper II (the permanent representatives) and Coreper I (the deputy permanent representatives). Coreper II prepares the General Affairs and External Relations Council, the Ecofin Council, the Justice and Home Affairs Council and is also in charge of the preparation of the European Council. Coreper is regarded as a very powerful organ, aided by a comprehensive system of working groups including representatives of the government administrations of the member states, the Council secretariat and the Commission. The permanent representatives of Coreper II as well as Coreper I are assisted by close personal advisors, who meet in the *Antici* (Coreper II) and the *Mertens* (Coreper I) group respectively. They normally meet on the eve of each Coreper meeting in order to prepare the agenda, but also to gather last minute information on the positions of other member states on issues which are up for debate.

At a very early stage proposals for additional preparatory bodies were put forward. The politically very sensitive agricultural sector was provided with a special preparatory body, *The Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA)*, which is the main forum for

negotiations concerning agricultural questions in preparation for Council meetings. Coreper officially has the overall responsibility for preparation of Council meetings. In practice the SCA works closely to the Ministers of Agriculture. In most cases the members of the SCA reside in the capitals.

With the introduction of the pillar system in the Treaty of European Union (TEU) the need for more preparatory capacity in the Council grew (Westlake & Galloway, p 201). As a result *The Economic and Financial Committee (EFC)* and *The Economic Policy Committee (EPC)*, whose members at a senior level represent the Treasury and the Central Bank, have a special advisory role in the preparation of Ecofin Council meetings. Members of these committees traditionally have their offices in the capitals.

Additional examples of committees with a special preparatory role within the Council institutional structure are to be found within the second and third pillar. *The Political and Security Committee (PSC)* was set up as a result of the TEU and has the responsibility for issuing opinions to the Council regarding international security developments. Its opinions are, however, channeled through Coreper. Members of the PSC are in most cases senior career diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, often residing in Brussels. Council preparatory bodies within the third pillar are influenced by the complexity which in many cases characterizes the preparation of Justice and Home Affairs questions in the Council. Among the most important committees are *The Article 36 Committee* and *The Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum*.

When the Council receives a proposal from the Commission the preparatory work is referred to one of the standing committees or working groups, or to a new (ad hoc) working group, for consideration. The member states' representatives in the working group can come either from the permanent representation in Brussels or from a Ministry or Government Agency in the capital. The representatives receive their instructions from the Government and can turn to it for consultations during the negotiations. When the working party has concluded its work on the proposal it reports to Coreper.

The work within the preparatory committees and working groups are of utmost importance for the EU. Normally the representatives have a background as technical expert or, although less frequent nowadays, as career diplomat stationed either in the permanent representation in Brussels or in a ministry or government agency in the

member state. In some cases experts can also be recruited from non-governmental institutions.

In our selection of committees and working parties for this study our ambition has been to include committees and working parties from different levels in the negotiating hierarchy working within a broad variety of policy areas. In order to facilitate comparisons over time we strived to keep the sample of working groups as similar as possible in 2003 and 2006. Nine of the eleven working groups were the same in both interview rounds. All member states' representatives in the eleven working groups were included in the sample. Our selection is presented in Figure 1.

Coreper II and *Coreper I* are included. In those cases where we were unable to receive an interview with a Coreper ambassador we asked to speak with the *Antici* or *Mertens* representative instead as a substitute. Among the high level committees with special advisory status we selected *The Economic Policy Committee*, *The Special Committee on Agriculture* and *The Political and Security Committee*. These were complemented in 2003 by *The Enlargement Committee* (which was later dissolved), and in 2006 *The Article 36 Committee*, which on its agenda has, among other things, questions concerning judicial cooperation in the field of criminal matters, police cooperation, organized crime and terrorism.

In 2003 and 2006 we interviewed members of the following four lower-level working groups: *Politico-Military Working Party*, *Working Party on Agricultural Questions*, *Working Party on the Environment* and *Working Party on Tax Questions*. In the 2003 study we also included *The Working Party on Mashrek-Magreb*, and in the 2006 study *The Working Party on Competition and Growth*.

Figure 1. Working groups included in the sample

Fel! Objekt kan inte skapas genom redigering av fältkoder.

The interviews were conducted in February-March 2003 and February-March 2006. These were short interviews, ten to fifteen minutes, and made over telephone. As a consequence only a few questions could be asked. The reason behind this methodological choice was that we preferred to assemble a relatively large number of interviews in order to be able to apply quantitative analyses. Given a limited research budget (as always), and the fact that the respondents are usually extremely busy, short telephone interviews was a reasonable solution.

The response rate was a success in both interview rounds – 81 percent in 2003 and 84 percent in 2006, making it 130 and 231 respondents respectively. The sample of respondents is also fairly evenly distributed between the member states. There is a small bias towards northern Europeans, but the controls we have made to see whether this affects the results concerning the distribution of network capital among the member states indicate that this is not the case other than marginally.⁵

The interviews were made by PhD and Masters students of political science. In 2003 all interviews were made from Göteborg, and the project was described as being conducted by the Centre for European Research at Göteborg University. In 2006, in order to test for potential interviewer effects on Sweden's position in the cooperation networks (Sweden was surprisingly highly ranked as an often mentioned cooperation partner in the 2003 survey) a third of the interviews were made from the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute in Florence. The remaining two thirds of the interviews were made from Göteborg. No interviewer effect giving rise to biased results was detected (Sweden actually came out slightly better as an often mentioned cooperation partner in the Florence interviews than in the Göteborg interviews, see appendix A4).

⁵ Appendix A2 and A3 compare the network capital ranking for the original sample and a hypothetical sample of all respondents, assuming that the missing respondents would give the same answers as their fellow countrymen did on average.

Names and contact details of the respondents were collected from websites and in contacts with permanent representations in Brussels. This was a rather daunting detective work, especially for the lower level working groups. The selected interview persons were first approached with a letter, explaining broadly the purpose of the project and the types of questions addressed by the project. Some questions were not entirely revealed in the letter since we were seeking spontaneous rather than prepared answers in those cases (in particular this applies to the central question on which member states the respondents cooperate most often with). For other questions, on the other hand, the opposite was the case. In particular, for the 2006 survey the introductory letter included more specific information on the extra questions concerning communication patterns, as these were more complicated and would benefit from some preparatory thought.

The respondents were subsequently contacted over telephone and asked if they were able to give an interview. Usually several phone calls were needed before the person would be able to set of some time. With a few exceptions the interviews were conducted in English.

In both surveys, 2003 and 2006, the following question was asked: *Which member states do you most often cooperate with within your working group, in order to develop a common position?* The respondents were only asked to mention the member states they cooperated most often with, not to give them points or rank them in anyway. It would have been much more difficult to obtain answers if we had asked for rankings and points, since this is rather sensitive information.

Depending on the order in which they spontaneously mentioned their most frequent cooperation partners, we transformed their answers into figures, by the following formula

1st mentioned = 10 points

2nd mentioned = 9 points

etc...

10 mentioned = 1 point

< 10th = 0 points

the idea being that the countries that you cooperate most often with are the ones which come first to your mind.⁶ From this single question we can analyse both cooperation patterns—who is cooperating with whom—and the stock of network capital of individual member states.

Findings—network capital

Unweighted network capital

From the question of which member states the respondents cooperate with most often, and the subsequent transformation of the answers into figures, we were able to calculate a ranking of most frequently mentioned cooperation partners. This ranking represents what we will call the unweighted network capital index, i.e. a measure of the quantity of cooperation partners that a member state has access to. It is unweighted because no consideration is taken to who the network partners are in this case. Cooperating closely with Malta weighs equally to cooperating closely with Germany. The results with respect to 2003 and 2006 are given in columns two and three in table 1.

⁶ We have also tested some alternative ways of calculating - giving weighted points to the six first countries, the three first, or giving just one point to all countries mentioned - the result, with respect to the ranking, being more or less the same, see Appendix A2 and A3.

Table 1. Unweighted Network Capital

EU12 1993 (Beyers & Dierickx)	EU15 2003 (present project)	EU25 2006 (present project)
1. UK (2,20)	1. UK 3,72	1. Germany 3,52
2. France (2,13)	2. France 3,59	2. UK 3,46
3. Germany (2,00)	3. Germany 3,55	3. France 3,30
	4. Sweden 3,15	4. Sweden 2,58
	5. Netherlands	5. Netherlands
4. Netherlands (1,77)	2,63	2,31
5. Denmark (1,61)	6. Denmark 1,79	6. Denmark 2,14
6. Spain (1,59)	7. Spain 1,69	7. Spain 1,79
	8. Finland 1,34	8. Italy 1,71
7. Italy (1,24)	9. Italy 1,21	9. Finland 1,60
		10. Poland 1,56
		11. Czek Rep. 1,46
		12. Estonia 1,33
		13. Hungary 1,17
		14. Lithuania 1,14
	10. Belgium 0,98	15. Greece 1,10
		16. Slovakia 1,10
	11. Austria 0,88	17. Latvia 1,04
8. Portugal (1,15)	12. Portugal 0,83	18. Portugal 1,00
9. Irland (1,10)	13. Irland 0,72	19. Belgium 0,94
10. Greece (1,08)	14. Greece 0,67	20. Austria 0,83
	15. Luxemburg	21. Irland 0,82
11. Luxemburg (0,71)	0,54	22. Luxemburg
		0,72
		23. Slovenia 0,56
		24. Cyprus 0,46
		25. Malta 0,44

Note: The unweighted network capital for 2003 and 2006 was calculated from the question ‘Which member state do you most often cooperate with within your working group, in order to develop a common position?’. The comparison with Beyers and Dierickx’s study refers only to the ranking, as the figures are based on different questions.

Looking first at the second column showing the results for the 2003 survey (the purpose of the gaps in the column is to facilitate comparisons with the EU15 countries positions in 2006), we see three big countries in the top: France, Germany and the UK (the differences between them are insignificantly small. As expected, size is an important

factor, bigger states being more often consulted as cooperation partners than smaller states. On the other hand, as can be seen by the positions of for example Sweden and the Netherlands, size is not all. In fact, there is more variation in the unweighted network capital index than expected by conventional wisdom. But before we address this variation between member states, we will examine the stability of the network capital indexes over time and across policy fields.

The third column of table 1 gives the same unweighted network capital index for 2006, after the enlargement of ten new member states. Clearly, most striking are the similarities with the 2003 ranking. The correlation between the two indexes for the EU15 countries is 0,98! The only difference is that a new block of countries is introduced in the middle category, and some at the back. Enlargement does not seem to have affected the ranking of the EU15 countries at all. The nine first countries in the list are the same, and the order between them is almost exactly the same. Germany jumps to the top, but the differences between the big three are still insignificantly small. Italy and Finland shifts place. The same countries hover in the bottom half, with Greece and Portugal doing a little better now than before (mainly because of the points given to them by the two new Mediterranean countries Cyprus and Malta). The ranking that we found in 2003 thus seems to be stable over time with respect to the EU15 countries. Poland, the largest of the new member states, is best placed in the ranking among the newcomers. However, it is only on 10th place which is relatively low compared to its size and voting weight.

On the other hand, so far we only have three years to compare, maybe the apparent stability in the ranking is just a coincidence? Fortunately, we have the opportunity to compare our rankings with another data set, collected by Beyers and Diereckx (Beyers and Diereckx 1998). To our knowledge, this is the only previous attempt at compiling a similar network ranking. Their data is from the Belgian presidency of 1993. Beyers and Diereckx surveyed representatives of lower level Council working groups on how often they had consulted and exchanged information with the Commission, the General Secretariat, the presidency and the other member states' delegations. Their question was not explicitly about "cooperation", but clearly Beyers and Diereckx were looking at something very similar. They also compiled a ranking from their data and the first

column of table 1 shows what they found.⁷ Again, clearly most striking here are the similarities between the rankings. Compared with 2003 the 1993 ranking is exactly the same for the 11 countries included in both surveys!

The unweighted network capital index is stable over time. Is it also stable across policy areas, or are some member states more often mentioned as cooperation partners in some policy fields than in others? We have compared the rankings for the EU15 countries within three policy areas; Common Foreign and Security Policy, Agricultural policy and Economic policy (including internal market issues).⁸ In order to achieve larger numbers of respondents in the respective categories we have pooled the data from 2003 and 2006 into one data set in this analysis. Table two gives the results.

⁷ Belgium is excluded in Beyers and Diereckx ranking because the question was linked explicitly to their presidency, and Sweden, Finland and Austria had not yet become members.

⁸ CFSP includes the Political and Military group and the Political Security Committee (both included in the survey in 2003 and 2006) and the Mashrek-Maghreb and Enlargement groups (only 2003). Economic Policy includes the Economic Policy Committee, the Taxation group and Coreper I (both 2003 and 2006) and the Competition group (only 2006). Agriculture includes the Special Committee on Agriculture and the Agricultural attachés group (both 2003 and 2006).

Table 2. Comparing network capital across policy fields (EU15 2003+2006)

CFSP vs Economic		Economic vs Agriculture		CFSP vs Agriculture	
N=67	policy N= 82	N= 82	N=51	N=67	N=51
DE 3,58	UK 4,77	UK 4,77*	FR 5,39*	DE 3,58	FR 5,39*
UK 3,61	DE 4,02	DE 4,02	DE 4,03	UK 3,61	DE 4,02
FR 3,48	FR 3,20	FR 3,20*	ES 3,24	FR 3,48	ES 3,24
SE 3,27	NL 2,96	NL 2,96	UK 2,55*	SE 3,27	UK 2,55
NL 2,65	DK 2,57*	DK 2,57	NL 2,53	NL 2,65	NL 2,53
FI 1,72	SE 2,28	SE 2,28	IT 2,41	FI 1,72	IT 2,41*
BE 1,33	IT 1,57	IT 1,57	DK 1,95	BE 1,33	DK 1,95
DK 1,15*	ES 1,52	ES 1,52*	SE 1,90	DK 1,15	SE 1,90
ES 1,15	FI 1,38	FI 1,38	PT 1,76*	ES 1,15*	PT 1,76
IT 1,00	BE 1,02	BE 1,02	IE 1,35	IT 1,00*	IE 1,35
GR 0,99	LU 0,86	LU 0,86	GR 1,27	GR 0,99	GR 1,27
IE 0,55	IE 0,76	IE 0,76	AT 1,25	IE 0,55	AT 1,24
AT 0,46	GR 0,74	GR 0,74	FI 0,88	AT 0,46	FI 0,88
LU 0,43	AT 0,67	AT 0,67	BE 0,80	LU 0,43	BE 0,80
PT 0,40	PT 0,59	PT 0,59	LU 0,57	PT 0,40*	LU 0,57

Note: The data set includes the answers from 2003 and 2006 from the 15 EU member states being members before 2004. Analysis of variance has been carried out to detect significant (95% level) variations between the rankings. These are bolded and marked with a star in the table. Spearman's Rho is 0.9 for CFSP and Economic Policy, 0.65 for CFSP and Agriculture and 0.73 for Economic policy and Agriculture, all significant at the 0.01 level.

The policy areas are compared two by two. Marked in bold and with a star in the table are those countries whose network capital differ significantly between the policy areas compared. The first two columns compare the rankings within working groups in CFSP and economic policy. The rankings are highly correlated. Analysis of variance shows that only Denmark varies significantly, with a lower ranking within CFSP compared to economic policy. Comparing CFSP and economic policy with agricultural policy gives some more variation. In particular, a group of southern member states (France, Spain, Portugal and Italy) have significantly more network capital in agricultural policy, while the UK is less often mentioned as a cooperation partner when it comes to agriculture. Especially noteworthy is the weak position of Portugal in other policy areas than

agriculture. Still, the main picture is one of stability also across policy fields. For most of the member states their rankings are similar regardless of policy area.⁹

Some member states are consistently higher ranked than others, over time and across policy fields. The differences are also relatively large. To illustrate, in 2006 it was twice as likely that a randomly chosen respondent would say that he or she cooperated most often with Germany rather than with Spain, and 3,5 times as likely that he or she would mention Germany rather than Portugal. One conclusion, therefore, must be that there is more structure here than anticipated by ‘conventional wisdom’ (hypothesis 1 not supported).

Size explains a lot of the variation (hypothesis 3 supported). UK, France and Germany are unchallenged as possessors of most unweighted network capital. But size is not all. For instance, it was three times more likely that a randomly chosen working group representative cooperated with Sweden rather than with Austria both in 2003 and in 2006. These two countries both joined the EU in 1995 and have the same amount of votes. Similarly, it was 2,5 times as likely that the Netherlands was mentioned rather than its neighbour Belgium, and that Denmark was mentioned rather than Ireland (both Denmark and Ireland joined in 1973 and have the same amount of votes). And what about Italy? Equally many votes as the top three—why is Italy not in the top along with the other large states?

We hypothesised that inter-personal trust would be an important factor for determining network position. Table 3 demonstrates that this is indeed the case.

⁹ We have also run the same analysis using only the 2006 data to include the ten new member states. The only significant variations among the newcomers found is that the Czech Republic is higher ranked within CFSP, while Latvia and Malta are higher ranked within agricultural policy.

Table 3. Network Capital, Member State size and trust 2003 and 2006. OLS regression

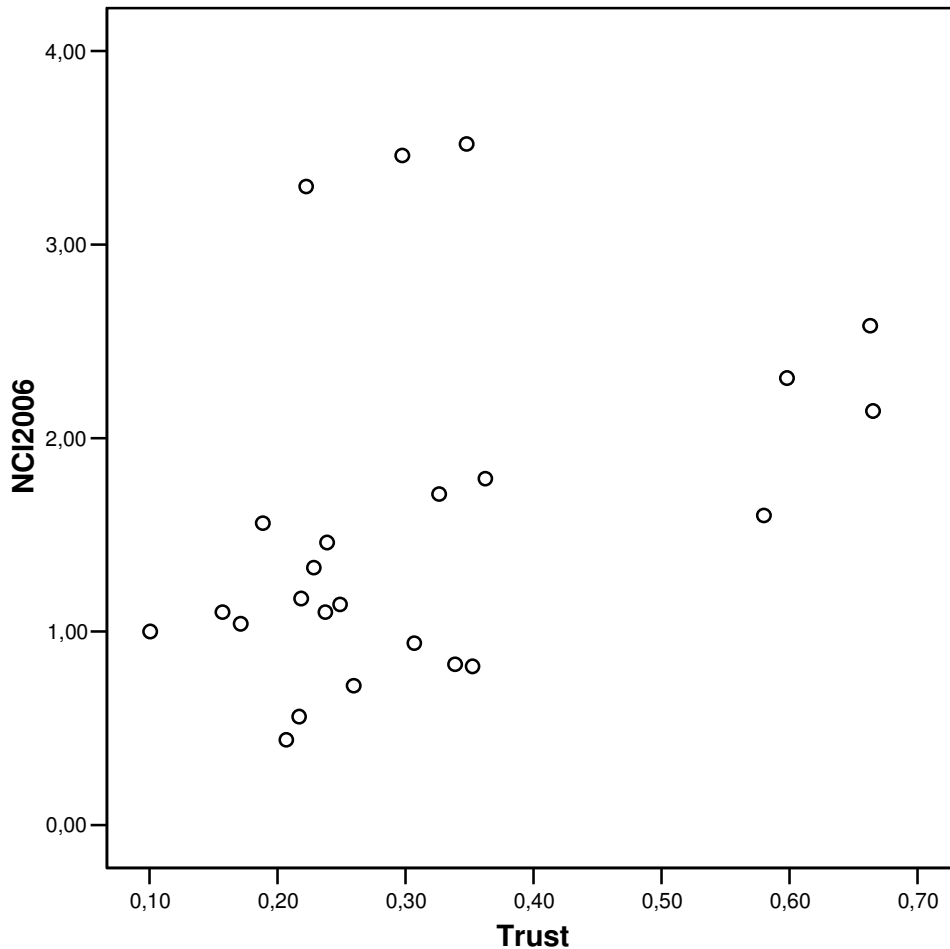
Independent variables	Unweighted Network Capital Index	
	2003	2006
Constant	1,77** (2,967)	1,81*** (5,697)
Trust	3,16** (2,196)	2,58*** (3,445)
Size	-1,71*** (-3,410)	-1,40*** (-5,231)
N	15	24
Adjusted R2	0,45	0,6

Note: *p < .10, **p < .05, ***p < .01, t Statistics in parentheses.

Note: Trust refers to inter-personal trust as measured by WVS (“Generally speaking would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people”), average level 1999-2002. Source: The QOG-institute, www.qog.pol.gu.se.

However, the correlation between trust and network capital is significant only when controlling for member states’ size. In fact, the correlation only exists for small member states, not for the larger ones. For the small states, on the other hand, the correlation is very high ($r = 0,82$ in 2003 and $0,80$ in 2006). Figure 2 plots trust against the unweighted network capital index of 2006 (the picture is basically the same in 2003, although with fewer countries). As can be readily seen here there is a linear relationship only if we drop the three countries in the top left corner, which are Germany, France and the UK. It is also seen that the correlation is driven mainly by four countries with exceptionally high levels of trust: Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland.

Figure 2. Network Capital and trust 2006. Bivariate correlation.



Note: Unweighted network capital 2006. Trust refers to inter-personal trust as measured by WVS (“Generally speaking would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people”). Average level 1999-2002. Source: The QOG-institute, www.qog.pol.gu.se.

Hypothesis four is thus supported only for small states. It is not unreasonable that trust is a more important asset for smaller than for larger states. While large states may to some extent rely on their voting power and economic and military (in the CFSP) strength, small states are not automatically gravitated towards the centre. They need something extra in order to position themselves. Trust, which in other contexts has proven to increase the propensity to interact with others, is most likely an important factor behind

the success of the Netherlands and the Nordic states. However, the fact that Italy for a long time has been less well connected, considering its size, has yet to be explained as the level of inter-personal trust is actually higher in Italy than in France and the UK.

Weighted network capital

Assuming a correlation between being an attractive cooperation partner and being able to exercise influence in the negotiation processes in the Council these findings should be worrying for those countries which are underperforming relative to their size. However, network centrality is not just a question of having good contacts with many, but also to have it with the right ones. From a power point of view it is preferable, *ceteris paribus*, to have good contacts with bigger member states than with smaller ones. For this reason we have also calculated a weighted network capital index, taking into consideration the power resources of the cooperation partners. The average cooperation point given to country X by country Y, calculated from the question “which countries do you most often cooperate with...”, is multiplied with the amount of votes that country Y has in the Council. The index thus gives a measure of both quantity and quality (in terms of voting power) of the cooperation partners of the member states. Table 4 gives the results for 2003 and 2006.

**Table 4. Weighted Network Capital Index 2003 and 2006
(voting weights in parentheses)**

2003		2006	
1. FRANCE 349	(10)	1. FRANCE 1333	(29)
2. UK 276	(10)	2. GERMANY 1226	(29)
3. GERMANY 274	(10)	3. UK 1041	(29)
4. SWEDEN 195	(4)	4. SPAIN 837	(27)
5. NETHERLANDS 189	(5)	5. ITALY 772	(29)
6. SPAIN 179	(8)	6. NETHERLANDS 700	(13)
7. DENMARK 124	(3)	7. SWEDEN 664	(10)
8. ITALY 124	(10)	8. DENMARK 590	(7)
9. PORTUGAL 100	(5)	9. PORTUGAL 520	(12)
10. FINLAND 81	(3)	10. GREECE 456	(12)
		11. POLAND 418	(27)
		12. CZEK REP. 397	(12)
11. BELGIUM 74	(5)	13. FINLAND 387	(7)
		14. HUNGARY 338	(12)
		15. SLOVAKIA 337	(7)
12. GREECE 70	(5)	16. BELGIUM 309	(12)
13. AUSTRIA 68	(4)	17. IRELAND 270	(7)
		18. ESTONIA 268	(4)
14. IRELAND 54	(3)	19. LUXEMBURG 256	(4)
		20. LATVIA 254	(4)
		21. LITHUANIA 246	(7)
15. LUXEMBURG 48	(2)	22. AUSTRIA 189	(10)
		23. SLOVENIA 163	(4)
		24. MALTA 163	(3)
		25. CYPRUS 156	(4)

The most notable difference compared to the unweighted index is the advances made by the Mediterranean states (except Malta and Cyprus) in the ranking. France is now clearly in the top, while Spain and Italy pass the smaller northern European states for the 2006 ranking (although not in 2003).¹⁰ The difference between the weighted and the unweighted network capital indexes is less marked in 2003 than in 2006. This is at least

¹⁰ T-tests show that France's top position is statistically certain at the 95% level in 2006 (but not in 2003).

partly explained by the fact that the new voting weights introduced by the Nice treaty, which came into force in November 2004, strengthened the voting power of larger states, and in particular Spain.

The dominant position of the big member states is even clearer in the weighted network capital index. Big states not only have more votes, but also a stronger and more powerful network of cooperation partners. It should be noted that this index only includes the voting power of the cooperation partners, not the member states' own voting power, which further adds to the bigger states total power positions. Still, as before, some countries have a stronger network position than motivated by size and voting power (Sweden and Denmark in particular), while others are less well connected than they should be (Austria, Belgium and Poland for instance).

Findings—coalition patterns

So far we have analysed the possession of network capital of individual member states. The next question is who cooperates with whom—are there any identifiable cooperation patterns in the data? Hypothesis two stated that patterns would be fluid and structures weak. Hypotheses five to seven posited different explanations for any eventual structure appearing, focusing on territorial (H5 and H6) and non-territorial factors (H7), on the one hand, and rationalist interest-based factors (H5 and H7) and constructivist culture-based factors (H6), on the other hand.

The first step in the analysis of this question is to conduct a multidimensional scaling (MDS) of the data. MDS is a statistical technique which uses the pair-wise relationships between the units of analysis (the number of times, and in which order, the member state representatives mention each other as cooperation partners in this case) to derive different dimensions on which the units (member states) align. Usually the outcome is presented in a two dimensional space, since this is the easiest way to interpret the findings (although higher dimensional solutions tend to explain more of the variation). The closer the countries are to each other in this two dimensional space the more they claim to cooperate with each other. In order to moderate somewhat the effect of 'wishful

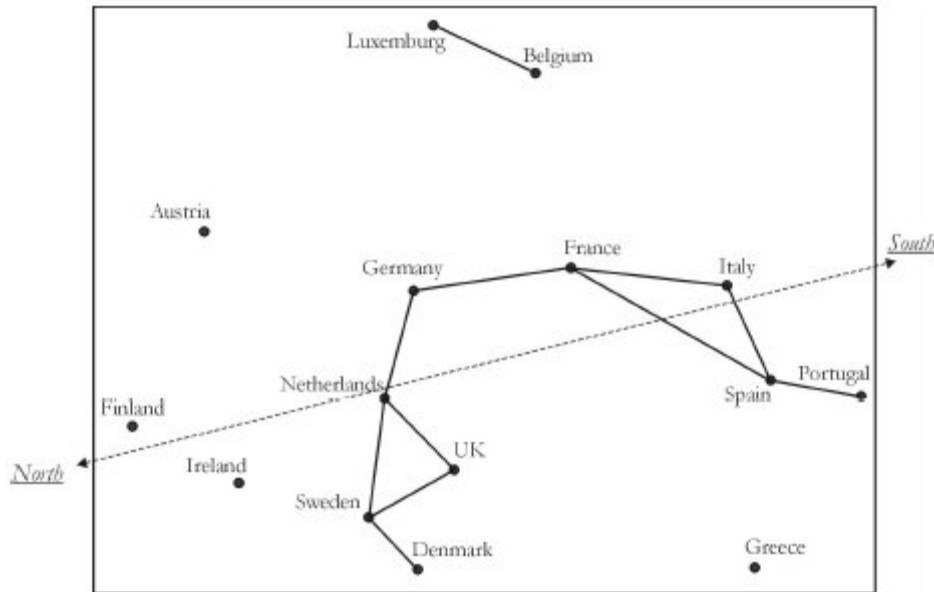
thinking’—the case where member state representatives from country X indicate that they have a close cooperation with country Y, while country Y’s representatives rank country X rather low—the reciprocal cooperation points are multiplied before the analysis. Furthermore, to facilitate the interpretation of the network we have in the figures aligned those member states which cooperate most closely with each other (defined as being on each others top-three list) with connecting lines.

The degree of accuracy of the MDS-solution is measured by the Stress-I value. The lower the Stress value the truer is the displayed picture’s description of the relationships between the objects. In our case the Stress values for the two dimensional solutions are 0.16 and 0.19 for 2003 and 2006 respectively. This is only just acceptable according to established rules of thumb, and far from excellent (Kruskal 1964. Cf. Kruskal and Wish 1978, p. 49ff).¹¹ It means that the two dimensional solutions give a general picture of the cooperation patterns in the Council, but outliers—individual respondents making a different choice of cooperation partners than predicted by the solutions—are fairly common. This may be interpreted as giving at least some support to hypothesis two. The patterns that we may discern in the data are not very dominating on the whole.

Figure 3 shows the MDS-plot for the 2003 data.

¹¹ Adding a third dimension did not substantially improve the fit, or the understanding, of the data.

Figure 3. The cooperation space of EU15 in 2003



Note: The multidimensional scaling is based on the ‘cooperation points’ given to each member state by respondents from the other member states (Stress-I 0,16). These were calculated from the question “Which member states do you most often cooperate with within your working group, in order to develop a common position?” The lines connecting some of the countries indicate that they have a particularly close relationship, defined as being top-three on each others rankings.

The connecting lines thus indicate which countries that have a particularly close cooperation. What does this picture say? First of all there is a clear geographical pattern in the picture. Drawing a line from Finland in the one end towards Italy at the other end of the picture indicates a North-South dimension. No other conflict dimension is immediately apparent here. In this respect the answer resembles the analyses made on voting and positions data. Whatever it stands for the North-South dimension clearly has been a central feature of the politics of the Council. It is the most striking dimension in all three empirical ways of capturing coalition-patterns—voting, positions and cooperation.

In another respect, however, this picture is different—and more reasonable—compared to the previous analyses based on voting and positions data. It gives a fuller description of the coalition-patterns in the sense that it includes a centre-periphery perspective. This is especially visible after the connecting lines indicating special relationships have been added: In fact, there are two centres rather than one. Dominating the political arena of the

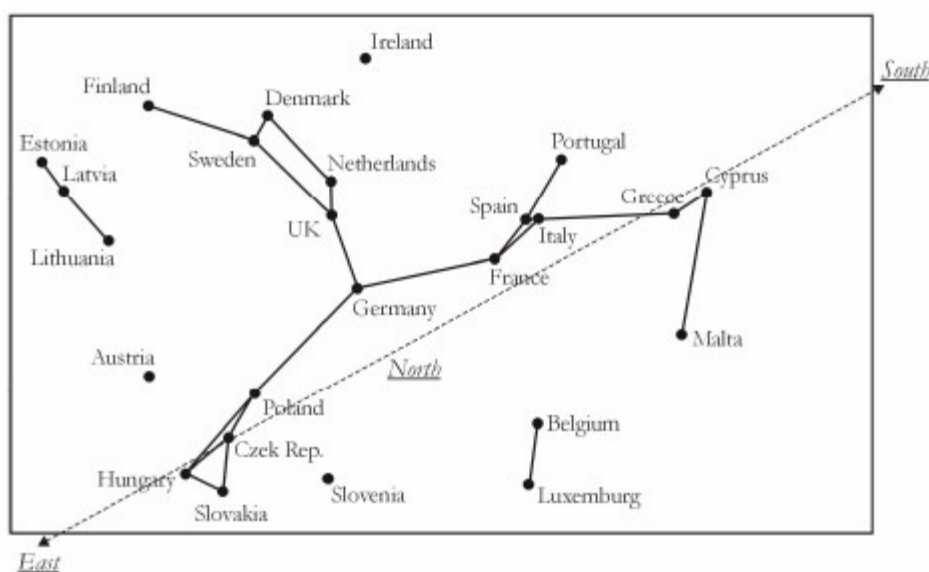
EU15 Council is a North-Core triangle, which includes the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden, and a South-Core triangle with France, Spain and Italy. Visibly holding the two triangles together, with one arm in both camps, is Germany. We know from the previous section that these are the member states with the highest network capital. Portugal and Denmark are connected to the two respective centres, while the remaining states belong to what can be called the periphery. The two centres have an similar amount of aggregated (weighted) network capital, 660 for the North and 652 for the South. Looking only at votes, however, the South-Centre, including three big states, is more powerful than the North-Centre.

The Franco-German axis, right at the centre of the picture, certainly does not seem to have lost momentum when looking at cooperation patterns. In fact Germany is number one on the French list of most frequently mentioned cooperation partners, and France is number one on the German list. Just like for the voting patterns and the position patterns there are no tight Benelux or Nordic coalitions. Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands are closer to each other and to the UK than to Finland and Belgium and Luxemburg respectively.

Before we analyse the content of the North-South dimension, and the eventual presence of other identifiable conflict dimensions, more systematically, we will take a look at the 2006 picture. What did the Big-Bang enlargement in 2004 do to the cooperation patterns? Did it bring a longitude (East-West) dimension to complement the latitude (North-South) dimension? Zimmer, Schneider & Dobbins argued before the enlargement that the new member states would rather line up with the South, giving a North vs SouthEast pattern. The new member states would be net-receivers from the budget and thus support the South with respect to agriculture and cohesion policy, they argued. They would also have a similar stand on environmental policy and on market regulations, Northern states being greener and more liberal (Zimmer, Schneider & Dobbins 2005).

These were intelligent speculations, now we have data. Figure 4 shows the MDS-plot for 2006.

Figure 4. The cooperation space of EU25 in 2006.



Note: The multidimensional scaling is based on the ‘cooperation points’ given to each member state by respondents from the other member states (Stress-I 0,19). These were calculated from the question “Which member states do you most often cooperate with within your working group, in order to develop a common position?” The lines connecting some of the countries indicate that they have a particularly close relationship, defined as being top-three on each others rankings.

Rather than leading to a major turmoil in the cooperation patterns in the Council the introduction of ten new member states in 2004 hardly seems to have affected the relationships between the EU15 countries at all. Figure 4 is actually very similar to the previous picture of the 2003 data, except that two new blocks of countries have appeared—the Baltic states and the Visegrad states—and that Cyprus and Malta have joined Greece in the Southern periphery. The geographical patterns are very clear; it is almost a map of Europe we see! The countries with the highest network capital are closer to the centre. Germany’s bridge-building role is even more striking now as Germany connects not only North and South but also East via its relatively close ties to Poland. Drawing a line from Hungary to Cyprus we see that the North-South dimension has become East-North-South. However, there is not one eastern bloc but two blocs, as there is a clear distance between the Baltic and the Visegrad states. The Nordic countries and the UK are higher on the Baltic states’ ranking list than Poland and the other Visegrad

countries. The former Yugoslavian republic Slovenia, on the other hand, has no strong connection to any of these groups.

The aggregated network capital varies a lot between the old and the new geographical groupings. While the North quadrant (including Denmark) has a (weighted) network capital score of 2995 (2405 if Denmark is excluded) and the South triangle has 2942, the Visegrad states and the Baltic states only assemble 1490 and 768 respectively.

There is definitely no North vs SouthEast conflict pattern, as Zimmer et al predicted. The new economically less developed eastern European member states have lined up closer to the supposedly market liberal, green and net-contributing North than to the market regulating, polluting, net-receivers of the South (to use Zimmer et. al.'s distinguishing characteristics). This is especially visible when looking at the rankings of most frequently mentioned cooperation partners for the East and the South groups respectively (table 5). The new Eastern European countries are at the bottom of the South groups' ranking and vice versa.

Table 5. Most frequently mentioned cooperation partners in the South and the East groups.

South (FR, ES, IT, PT, GR, CY, MT)	East (EE, LV, LT, PL, CZ, SK, HU, SI)
1. FRANCE 5,00	1. POLAND 3,49
2. ITALY 4,68	2. CZEK REP. 3,36
3. SPAIN 4,52	3. ESTONIA 2,92
4. GREECE 3,89	4. SLOVAKIA 2,61
5. UK 3,12	5. LITHUANIA 2,65
6. PORTUGAL 2,95	6. SWEDEN 2,56
7. GERMANY 2,85	7. HUNGARY 2,50
8. CYPRUS 1,66	8. GERMANY 2,47
9. MALTA 1,52	9. UK 2,24
10. BELGIUM 1,45	10. LATVIA 2,22
11. LUXEMBURG 0,96	11. FINLAND 1,82
12. DENMARK 0,71	12. DENMARK 1,69
13. IRELAND 0,69	13. AUSTRIA 1,33
14. SWEDEN 0,64	14. NETHERLANDS 1,11
15. NETHERLANDS 0,58	15. IRELAND 0,93
16. SLOVENIA 0,51	16. SLOVENIA 0,78
17. HUNGARY 0,22	17. FRANCE 0,64
18. SLOVAKIA 0,20	18. SPAIN 0,55
19. FINLAND 0,18	19. BELGIUM 0,22
20. LATVIA 0,15	20. ITALY 0,18
21. CZEK REP. 0,11	PORTUGAL 0,18
POLAND 0,11	22. MALTA 0,16
23. AUSTRIA 0	LUXEMBURG 0,16
ESTONIA 0	24. CYPRUS 0,11
LITHUANIA 0	25 GREECE 0,07

Note: Table four is based on the ‘cooperation points’ calculated from the question “Which member states do you most often cooperate with within your working group, in order to develop a common position?” The two columns show the average points given by the respondents from the South group and the East group respectively.

Statistical tests of dimensions

The clear geographical patterns in the data are somewhat disturbing for hypothesis seven, which stated that non-territorial partisan interests would structure the policy space of the Council. However, it is a bit dangerous to draw firm conclusions on dimensions only by looking at the MDS plot. In order to be at guard “against the human tendency to

find patterns whether or not they exist” (Kruskal & Wish 1978:36) we will also perform statistical tests of the MDS solution. The most common technique used to investigate whether a particular factor is systematically related to the items in a configuration is to perform a linear multiple regression using this factor as the dependent variable and the coordinates of the MDS solution as independent variables. By looking at the multiple correlation coefficient we get a measure of how well the coordinates of the configuration agrees with (“explains”) the factor that we are interested in testing (Ibid).

In accordance with hypotheses five, six and seven we will test three types of hypotheses: Territorial interest-based factors, (territorial) culture-based factors and non-territorial partisan factors. At the time of writing we have not been able to assemble all the data we need, but will demonstrate here our findings so far.

As an indicator of territorial interest-based factors we use member states net contributions to the EU budget (as a percentage of GNI). Non-territorial partisan factors include political ideologies of governments, for which we have measures of left/right and support for EU-integration. However, at this point we only have data for 2003 for the partisan factors and will therefore not be able to test these factors on the 2006 data. Cultural variables have been taken from two sources. First, we use Hofstede’s four cultural dimensions Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity and Uncertainty Avoidance. Secondly, we use data on Eurovision song contest voting, as a proxy for cultural taste. The data is described in more detail in appendix A5. Tables 6 and 7 give the results for the policy spaces of 2003 and 2006.

Table 6. Conflict dimensions in the policy space of 2003

Possible conflict dimensions	MDS Dimension 1	MDS Dimension 2	Multiple Correlation Coefficient (R)
Geographic location			
North/South (Latitude)	-11,208*** (-5,166)	-3,481 (-1,206)	0,837*** (14,070)
East/West (Longitude)	-3,097 (-0,958)	-6,319 (-1,468)	0,452 (1,537)
Interests (territorial)			
Net contributions	0,921** (2,320)	-1,125* (-2,129)	0,673** (4,958)
Interests (partisan)			
Left/Right government	1,323 (0,900)	0,125 (0,064)	0,252 (0,407)
EU-support of government	0,675 (0,516)	0,825 (0,474)	0,198 (0,246)
Culture			
Power Distance Index (PDI)	24,573*** (4,686)	10,027 (1,437)	0,817*** (12,011)
Individualism (IDV)	-14,031* (-1,855)	2,929 (0,291)	0,477 (1,764)
Masculinity (MAS)	1,320 (0,119)	20,291 (1,379)	0,371 (0,958)
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)	32.933*** (3,603)	24,941* (2,050)	0,767*** (8,591)
Eurovision voting	0,676*** (3,740)	0,175 (0,729)	0,740*** (7,258)

Unstandardized coefficients. Significance levels: ***=0.01, **=0.05, *= 0.10, t-statistics in parentheses for the MDS dimensions, F-statistics in parenthesis for the Multiple correlation coefficient.

Table 7. Conflict dimensions in the policy space of 2006

Possible conflict dimensions	MDS Dimension 1	MDS Dimension 2	Multiple Correlation Coefficient (R)
Geographic location			
North/South (Latitude)	-10,688*** (-6,713)	5,147** (2,192)	0,833*** (24,936)
East West (Longitude) (Cyprus excluded)	-8,142*** (-3,147)	-0,419 (-0,117)	0,566** (4,953)
Interests (territorial)			
Net contributions	0,017 (0,053)	0,441 (0,916)	0,192 (0,421)
Culture			
Power Distance Index (PDI)	10,204 (1,664)	-22,377** (-2,348)	0,534** (4,179)
Individualism (IDV)	-6,399 (1,149)	-1,807 (-0,209)	0,247 (0,680)
Masculinity (MAS)	-2,131 (-3,501)	-39,053*** (-3,501)	0,608*** (6,164)
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UIA)	25,363*** (3,663)	-20,456* (-1,901)	0,671*** (8,586)
Eurovision voting	0,593*** (4,190)	-0,142 (-0,664)	0,682*** (9,107)

Unstandardized coefficients. Significance levels: ***=0.01, **=0.05, *= 0.10, t-statistics in parentheses for the MDS dimensions, F-statistics in parenthesis for the Multiple correlation coefficient.

The North-South dimension that we could see with our own eyes in the MDS plots, turn out highly significant also in the statistical tests. No other factor relates as much to the configurations as the latitude coordinates of the member states, both in 2003 and 2006. Furthermore, comparing table 6 and table 7 we can see that the 2004 enlargement has added a new East-West dimension to the policy space. This dimension is only visible, however, when Cyprus is excluded from the sample, which means it is driven by the new Central and Eastern Europe countries.

At the moment we have data on partisan interests only for 2003. As can be seen in table 6 neither Left-Right ideology nor EU-support seem to affect the cooperation patterns in

any substantial way. Thus, there is little support to hypothesis seven, which posited that non-territorial factors would supersede (or at least complement) the territorial factors.

What lies behind these geographical patterns? Judging from tables 6 and 7 culture seems to be a more important factor than interests (territorial and partisan). In 2003 three out of five tested cultural variables were significantly correlated to the configuration, while in 2006 four out of five were (individualism is the only cultural factor which clearly does not affect the cooperation patterns). The only interest-based factor which is at one point was correlated to the configuration is the net-contributions to the budget in 2003. However, the multiple correlation coefficient is smaller for net contributions than for the significant cultural variables in 2003, and, furthermore, in 2006 there is no correlation at all. On the whole the cultural factors seem to be the most important, and their importance has increased after the 2004 enlargement. More support therefore is given to hypothesis six rather than five.

Consistency across policy fields

We have also analysed to what extent the geographical pattern is consistent across policy areas and working group hierarchy levels. Do the Council working group representatives prefer to cooperate with their geographical neighbours regardless of rank and policy field? Again we use the pooled data on the EU15 countries for 2003 and 2006 to achieve higher numbers in the respective categories. The 15 member states were divided into three crude geographical groups—North (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, UK, Ireland), Central (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg, Germany, Austria) and South (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece). We compared the aggregated rankings of these groups within the three policy fields—CFSP, economic policy and agriculture—and within lower and higher level working groups.

The main picture, again, is one of stability, especially for the Northern and Central European countries. In the North and the Central groups' rankings only France varies significantly between the policy fields, being a less frequently mentioned cooperation partner in economic policy than in agriculture and CFSP.¹² The Mediterranean states'

¹² The rankings within the three policy fields are highly and significantly correlated for the North and the Central group, Spearman's Rho varying between 0.76 to 0.89.

rankings vary somewhat more. Again agriculture is the special case among the three policy fields compared, where Spain, Portugal and Ireland attain significantly higher rankings from the South group, while the UK is significantly lower ranked.¹³

Comparing hierarchy levels there is no variation at all in the North group while one country varies significantly in the Central (Finland) and the South (Sweden) groups' rankings. In sum, the geographical North-South dimension in EU15 is present in the cooperation patterns in all the policy fields analyzed here and on both lower and higher civil service level in the Council hierarchy. It is especially consistent in the North and Central European countries choices of cooperation partners, while some Southern European states tend to shift partners when it comes to agriculture (towards Spain, Portugal and Ireland in particular, and away from the UK).

Conclusions

The findings presented in this paper indicate that cooperation patterns in the Council working groups follow geographical patterns. Although we can not say on the basis of this data precisely how pervasive these patterns are (our question concerns 'most often' rather than 'how often') we can at least draw conclusions about what is the most common pattern. At present the geographical North-South, and after 2004 also East-West, dimensions provide the only 'obvious' interpretation of the data.

Geographical patterns in themselves may be compatible with either rationalist (focusing on preference distribution) or constructivist (emphasizing historical, normative and cultural identity factors) explanations or a combination of the two. However, the strikingly consistent geographical fit—across policy areas and over time—seems to present a larger challenge to rationalist explanations. In particular, provided that Zimmer et. al. is correct in that the preferences of East and South are fairly similar on many important issues, the fact that the new Eastern European countries have positioned themselves closer to the North than to the South is difficult immediately to explain from a

¹³ The CFSP and economic policy rankings are highly correlated also for the South group (Spearman's rho 0.88), but the agricultural ranking is less correlated to the other two (0.44 and 0.49 respectively, and only barely significant).

rationalist perspective. The dominating consistency in the choices of cooperation partners across policy fields also seems to give support to explanations focusing on culture, identity, historical legacy etc. It seems reasonable to assume that even between neighbors interests will seldom coincide perfectly within such diverse policy fields as economic policy, foreign and security policy and agricultural policy.

The findings with respect to the cooperation-patterns and the network capital index have also given a picture of what centre-periphery looks like in the Council working groups. Rather than having one core which is usually assumed in the public debate the EU15 Council revolved around a North (the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK) and a South (France, Italy, Spain) triangle, connected by Germany in the centre. The 2004 enlargement did not change this situation, but only added some new groups of countries to the periphery.

The network capital index is a power resource measure, focusing on the platform which individual member states have for accessing, manipulating and spreading information during the negotiation processes. This paper has shown that some member states have a consistently higher stock of network capital than others, again across policy areas and over time. Bigger member states are unsurprisingly better connected than smaller states, but it was also seen that size is not all. There seems to be room for actor-based factors—possibly organizational capacity, strategy, negotiating skills or some other actor characteristic—in explaining the network capital of individual member states.¹⁴ For smaller states inter-personal trust seems to be a key to networking success.

¹⁴ Adherence to the norm of 'European solidarity' does not seem to be one such characteristic, however, as the deliberate EMU-outsiders are highly placed in the ranking (see also Appendix A1).

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Appendix.

Appendix A1. Special feature 2003: Flexible integration

Does flexible integration affect cooperation patterns in the Council? A common argument in the pro-EMU camps in the three member states which have voluntarily chosen not to join the euro—Denmark, Sweden and the UK—has been that loss of influence would be an effect of standing outside. The loss of influence is not limited to economic policy issues, but affects all policy issues it is argued. The argument assumes that refusing to join the other states in the project of creating a common currency would be a violation of the norms of ‘European solidarity’. The euro-outsiders would be pictured as free-riders and therefore become less attractive cooperation-partners (see for instance Gidlund & Jerneck 1996 and Laursen 2003).

The evidence given in both the 2003 and the 2006 network capital indexes indicate that this potential free-rider effect is very weak or non-existing. There is no sign here that the three EMU-outsiders have been left out in the cold by the insiders. To the contrary, Denmark and Sweden are unexpectedly highly ranked compared to their size, and the UK is in the top along with France and Germany.

There was also a direct question on the effect of EMU-outsider status in the 2003 survey. An overwhelming majority of the respondents indicated that the fact that the UK, Denmark and Sweden were outside the Euro did not make any difference what so ever to the cooperation patterns in their working groups.

Table A1. Does euro-outsider status affect the cooperation patterns?

Answer	Freq.	Percent
Yes, it matters	9	7
Yes, but only on euro-related issues	8	6
Yes, but only on issues concerning economic policy	6	5
Yes, but only marginally	4	3
No, it makes no difference	102	79
N	129	
Sum percentage		100

Note: The question read: “Some member states – Sweden, Denmark and the UK – do not participate in the third phase of the Economic and Monetary Union. Do you think that fact in any way affects the cooperation patterns within your policy field?” This was an open question and we received three types of answers: “Yes, it matters”, “no, it does not matter” and “yes, but...”. Seventy-nine percent believed that EMU-outsider status makes no difference for the cooperation patterns in their policy field. Excluding those working groups which had economic policy issues on their agenda this figure raises to 91 percent.

In those groups that were dealing with economic policy issues some respondents said that EMU-membership did have an effect on euro-related issues. But even in those groups which had euro-related issues on their agenda a clear majority (65 percent) said it made no difference at all. In the other policy fields (agriculture, foreign and security policy, environment), which according to the free-rider argument should be affected by a normative spill-over effect, 91 percent said it made no difference for their choice of cooperation partner whether these countries had joined the euro or not.

Appendix A2. Controlling for sample bias and counting formula 2003.

2003 Points to ten first mentioned	2003 Points to six first mentioned	2003 One point to all mentioned (Total frequency in parenthesis)	2003 Controlling for sample bias
1. UK 3,72	1. UK 2,05	1. UK 0,42 (51)	1. France 3,57
2. France 3,59	2. France 2,00	2. France 0,40 (48)	2. UK 3,45
3. Germany 3,55	3. Germany 1,97	Germany 0,40 (48)	3. Germany 3,28
4. Sweden 3,15	4. Sweden 1,67	4. Sweden 0,37 (44)	4. Sweden 2,81
5. Netherl. 2,63	5. Netherl. 1,35	5. Netherl. 0,32 (39)	5. Netherl. 2,47
6. Denmark 1,79	6. Spain 0,91	6. Denmark 0,23 (28)	6. Spain 1,70
7. Spain 1,69	7. Denmark 0,86	7. Spain 0,20 (24)	7. Denmark 1,56
8. Finland 1,34	8. Italy 0,66	8. Finland 0,18 (21)	8. Finland 1,21
9. Italy 1,21	9. Finland 0,63	9. Italy 0,14 (17)	9. Italy 1,18
10. Belgium 0,98	10. Belgium 0,53	10. Belgium 0,11 (14)	10. Belgium 1,03
11. Austria 0,88	11. Austria 0,45	11. Austria 0,11 (13)	11. Portugal 0,88
12. Portugal 0,83	12. Portugal 0,44	12. Portugal 0,10 (12)	12. Austria 0,83
13. Irland 0,72	13. Irland 0,39	13. Greece 0,09 (11)	13. Greece 0,70
14. Greece 0,67	14. Greece 0,31	14. Irland 0,08 (10)	14. Irland 0,65
15. Luxem. 0,54	15. Luxem. 0,28	15. Luxem. 0,07 (8)	15. Luxem. 0,55

Note: The table shows the different rankings when controlling for sample bias and alternative counting formulas. The first column is based on the original sample, with points given to the ten first countries using the countdown formula. In the second column points are given to the six first countries (6 points to first mentioned, 5 points to second mentioned etc.), while the third column gives one point to all mentioned. In the fourth column the ranking is based on a hypothetical sample of all respondents, assuming that

the missing respondents would give the same answers as their fellow countrymen did on average.

Appendix A3. Controlling for sample bias and counting formula 2006.

2006 Original data. Points to ten first mentioned	2006 Controlling for sample bias	2006 Original data. Points to six first mentioned	2006 Original data. One point to all mentioned (Total frequency in parenthesis)
1. Germany 3,52	1. Germany 3,51	1. UK 1,77	1. Germany 0,46 (101)
2. UK 3,46	2. UK 3,40	2. France 1,76	2. UK 0,43 (94)
3. France 3,30	3. France 3,40	3. Germany 1,71	3. France 0,38 (85)
4. Sweden 2,58	4. Sweden 2,45	4. Sweden 1,26	4. Sweden 0,34 (73)
5. Netherl. 2,31	5. Netherl. 2,15	5. Netherl. 1,13	5. Netherl. 0,30 (66)
6. Denmark 2,14	6. Denmark 2,01	6. Denmark 1,01	6. Denmark 0,29 (62)
7. Spain 1,79	7. Italy 1,91	7. Spain 0,84	7. Spain 0,24 (53)
8. Italy 1,71	8. Spain 1,90	8. Italy 0,82	8. Italy 0,22 (49)
9. Finland 1,60	9. Finland 1,48	9. Finland 0,80	9. Poland 0,21 (46)
10. Poland 1,56	10. Poland 1,47	10. Poland 0,75	10. Finland 0,20 (44)
11. Czek R. 1,46	11. Czek R. 1,38	11. Czek R. 0,68	Czek R. 0,20 (44)
12. Estonia 1,33	12. Estonia 1,20	12. Estonia 0,65	12. Hungary 0,17 (38)
13. Hungary 1,17	13. Greece 1,19	13. Hungary 0,52	13. Estonia 0,17 (38)
14. Lithuan. 1,14	14. Portugal 1,16	14. Lithuania 0,51	14. Lithuan. 0,16 (35)

15. Greece 1,10	15. Hungary 1,11	15. Slovakia 0,54	15. Greece 0,15 (34)
16. Slovakia 1,10	16. Lithuania 1,07	16. Greece 0,50	16. Slovakia 0,15 (33)
17. Latvia 1,04	17. Slovakia 1,06	17. Latvia 0,48	17. Latvia 0,15 (32)
18. Portugal 0,10	18. Latvia 0,99	18. Portugal 0,45	18. Portugal 0,14 (30)
19. Belgium 0,94	19. Belgium 0,99	19. Belgium 0,44	19. Belgium 0,12 (27)
20. Austria 0,83	20. Austria 0,87	20. Austria 0,40	20. Ireland 0,12 (27)
21. Ireland 0,82	21. Ireland 0,80	21. Ireland 0,37	21. Austria 0,11 (24)
22. Luxem. 0,72	22. Luxem. 0,71	22. Luxem. 0,34	22. Luxem. 0,10 (22)
23. Slovenia 0,56	23. Malta 0,59	23. Slovenia 0,21	23. Slovenia 0,10 (22)
24. Cyprus 0,46	24. Slovenia 0,56	24. Cyprus 0,20	24. Malta 0,07 (15)
25. Malta 0,44	25. Cyprus 0,55	25. Malta 0,20	25 Cyprus 0,07 (15)

Note: The table shows the different rankings when controlling for sample bias and alternative counting formulas. The first column is based on the original sample, with points given to the ten first countries using the countdown formula. In the second column points are given to the six first countries (6 points to first mentioned, 5 points to second mentioned etc.), while the third column gives one point to all mentioned. In the fourth column the ranking is based on a hypothetical sample of all respondents, assuming that the missing respondents would give the same answers as their fellow countrymen did on average.

Appendix A.4 Test of interviewer effect.

Interviewer	Cooperation points to Sweden	Cooperation points to Italy
Sweden 1	3,01	2,23
Sweden 2	2,11	1,36
Italy	2,65	1,56
Total	2,58	1,71

Note: Two interviewers presented themselves as calling from the Centre for European Research at Goteborg University, Sweden, while the third interviewer was officially (and practically) affiliated with the Robert Schumann Centre of the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. Respondents from the different working groups and member states were divided between the interviewers so that there should be similar samples for the interviews made from Sweden and from Italy. As can be seen from the table there was no positive interviewer effect on Sweden's or Italy's cooperation points as a consequence of the respondents having been contacted from these countries. In fact, both countries receive slightly lower points when the interview is made from their own country.

Appendix A.5. Data Information

Variables:	Description	Sources
Dependent Variables:		
• (Unweighted) Network Capital	Number of times, and in which order, a Member State (MS) is mentioned as a cooperation partner by respondents from other MS. 10 points to first mentioned, 9 to second etc... 0 if 11th or not mentioned. Average point given to each MS per respondent from all other MSs.	Naurin & Lindahl original survey data 2003 and 2006
• Cooperation patterns	Distance matrix between all MS calculated from the Network Capital points which the MS give to each other. The points given by MS _x to MS _y is multiplied with the points given by MS _y to MS _x .	Naurin & Lindahl original survey data 2003 and 2006
Independent Variables:		
• Member State Size	Large states = DE, ES, FR IT, UK, PL Small states = the rest	
• Inter-personal trust	Question: "Generally speaking would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" Scale from 0 to 1.	World Values Study, average level 1999-2002 as given by the QoG Institute, www.qog.pol.gu.se
• Geographic location	Approximate geographic centre of the entity. Longitude and latitude coordinates.	CIA World Factbook 2007
• Net contributions	<i>Net contributions</i> to the EU budget relative to GNI.	European Commission, Budget, September 2006, http://ec.europa.eu/budget/documents/revenue_expenditure_en.htm . Average 2000-2002 used for the 2003 MDS solution, average 2004-2005 used for the 2006 MDS.
• Left/Right position of government	Expert ranking of governments' position (scale 0-20), weighted by number of ministerial posts by each party. Government as of February 1 2003.	Hagemann 2006, who in turn builds on the expert survey on parties by Bennoit and Laver 2005.
• Level of EU support of government	Expert ranking of governments' position (scale 0-20), weighted by number of ministerial posts by each party. Government as of February 1	Hagemann 2006, who in turn builds on the expert survey on parties by Bennoit and Laver 2005.

2003.

• Power Distance Index	The extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The index normally has a value between 0 and 100, but values below 0 and above 100 are technically possible.	Geert Hofstede, http://www.geert-hofstede.com/ Accessed 070228 (data for Lithuania taken from Mockaitis, Audra I., 2005, International Journal of Leadership Studies, Vol. 1, Issue 1. p. 46, data for Latvia obtained by taking the average of the values of Estonia and Lithuania.)
• Individualism	Individualism versus collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. Values normally between 0 and 100.	Ibid.
• Masculinity	Masculinity versus femininity, refers to the distribution of roles between the genders. Contains a dimension from very assertive and competitive on the one side, to modest and caring on the other. Values normally between 0 and 100.	Ibid.
• Uncertainty Avoidance Index	Deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Values normally between 0 and 100.	Ibid.
• Eurovision Song Contest Voting	Measures the bias in country X's voting for country Y (compared to the average of all other countries voting for Y). Average biases for the years 1975-2003. First dimension of 2-dimensional MDS solution of this data set is used as variable.	Spierdijk, L. and Vellekoop, M. "Geography, Culture, and Religion: Explaining the Bias in Eurovision Song Contest Voting", Unpublished Working Paper, May 18, 2006.
