

Research Grant Proposal for Summer 2003

Submitted by:

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I. Project Summary

My project entails researching the implementation of the European Regional Development Fund from 2000-2003 in order to complete my manuscript, *Lackey or Leader: The Role of the European Commission in European Integration*. Through a review of primary documents and interviews, I hope to uncover recent developments in regional policy that I can include in the final chapter of my manuscript.

The manuscript examines the development of regional policy in the European Union across the six regional policy reforms (1975, 1979, 1985, 1989, 1993, and 1999) in order to test two leading theories of the process of European integration: intergovernmentalism and multi-level governance. The manuscript makes two important contributions to the literature on European integration: first it includes a comprehensive test of the two major theories across multiple cases; and second, it includes a specification of Commission tactics.

II. Narrative

1. Current Situation

Scholars have used various theories to understand the process of European integration from the beginning of the European Coal and Steel Community in the 1950s. Intergovernmentalism and multi-level governance are two contemporary models of European integration that make very different claims concerning the process of European integration. Intergovernmentalism maintains that states control integration: national leaders aggregate domestic interests to form national preferences and then bargain with other national leaders to secure them. Multi-level governance maintains that national leaders vie with supranational and subnational actors to influence integration. The major point of contention between intergovernmentalism and multi-level governance concerns the role of supranational actors, in particular the role of the Commission. Intergovernmentalists view the Commission as the servant of the member states charged with doing the bidding of the most powerful states. Multi-level governance scholars see the Commission as an independent actor.

Multi-level governance and intergovernmentalism are like the blind men examining the elephant in that each approach mistakes a different part for the whole, and as a result, the two approaches are unable to engage each other; instead they “talk past one another” (Puchala 1972; Pollack 1996, 430). Intergovernmentalism focuses on member state preferences and on intergovernmental bargains that precipitate a given reform (Milward 1992; Hoffmann 1982; 1995; Moravcsik 1991; 1993; 1995; 1998). Multi-level governance scholars focus on Commission preferences and the role of the Commission

and subnational actors in implementing regional policy (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Marks 1992; 1993; 1996; Marks, Hooghe and Blank 1996; Hooghe 1996). As a result of this divergence of focus, two central questions remain unanswered. What determines the relative influence of the member states and the Commission on integration agreements; and under what conditions is the Commission able to influence the timing and content of integration agreements? An additional deficiency in the literature is the lack of attention to Commission resources and tactics over time. What affects the Commission's ability to deploy its tactics? Have Commission tactics increased in strength over time? What makes them effective? While recent works by multi-level governance theorists have begun to specify Commission tactics (most notably Hooghe and Marks 2001), there is more that must be done in this regard. Furthermore, it is essential to investigate the actual deployment of Commission tactics over time.

This study seeks to test whether intergovernmentalism or multi-level governance better explains European integration by examining member state and Commission preferences and tactics within and across the reforms of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in 1975; 1979; 1985; 1989; 1993 and 1999. The evolution of the ERDF, the primary mechanism of the European Union's (EU) regional policy, provides an excellent case for probing the Commission's role in European integration and shedding light on the intergovernmentalist and multi-level governance approaches to integration. Regional policy is a well-suited case to test the explanatory capabilities of intergovernmentalism and multi-level governance because it is a substantial and significant area of integration among members of the EU. Regional policy is a major policy of the European Union in terms of the funding that it receives. In 2000 the ERDF accounted for 15% of the EU budget, and the structural funds accounted for 35%, making regional policy second only to the Common Agricultural Policy in terms of EU expenditures (CEC 2000, 31). Moreover, regional policy is an extremely important and sensitive policy area because it is aimed at reducing intra-regional economic disparities and tackling one of the major challenges facing member state governments--unemployment. In 1997, the ten regions with the highest unemployment averaged rates of around 24.8%, while the ten regions with the lowest unemployment averaged rates of around 3.7% (Eurostat 1998, 6-9). Furthermore, regional policy promises to become more salient with the enlargement of the EU to include the Central and Eastern European countries which have a combined GDP per capita of 32% of the Community average and severe regional disparities (Bull. EC S/5-1997, 109-110). Because the stakes are so high, regional policy is contentious and often involves conflicts between and within states and between states and the Commission. As a result, regional policy is an excellent arena for investigating the coordination of interests and the convergence of preferences within and between states and between states and the Commission.

This study is both process- and result-oriented (Vahl 1997; Endo 1999). The process-oriented analysis entails evaluating intergovernmentalist and multi-level governance hypotheses concerning the roles of Commission and member states within and across three stages of each of the reforms: initiation, negotiation and implementation. The results-oriented analyses entail evaluating intergovernmentalist and multi-level governance hypotheses concerning: the relationship between Commission and member

state preferences and tactics (independent variables) and the integrative value of a reform (dependent variable): and their hypotheses concerning Commission influence.

2. The Project Plan

Presently I have completed documentary and interview research for the 6 case studies (1975-1999) and have drafts of chapters for each. To bring the manuscript to completion, I must investigate developments in regional policy from the beginning of the implementation of the 1999 reform in January 2000 through June of 2003. My research will focus on three aspects of regional policy. First, I am interested in discovering the Commission's record with respect to implementing the 1999 reform. I will examine whether or not the Commission has been able to enforce all of the provisions of the reform; whether or not member states have defected from or evaded provisions of the reform that they did not like; and whether or not the reform has had any unintended consequences. Additionally, I will investigate Commission and member state proposals for the upcoming reform of the funds in 2007; particularly those pertaining to the extension of regional fund assistance to the Central and Eastern European applicant states.

My research will consist of two phases: examining primary and secondary documents, and conducting phone and/or e-mail interviews. Documentary research will be carried out at the European Union depositories at Northwestern University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The depositories contain Commission documents and publications on regional policy, Commission correspondence, memoirs, biographies and speeches of Commission officials which will allow me to ascertain the Commission's record of implementing the 1999 reform, and the preferences of the Commission and member states for future regional policy reform. I will also contact (via e-mail when possible and phone when necessary) Commission and Parliament officials involved in the ERDF to corroborate information gathered through EU documents and shed light on the development of Commission and Parliament preferences.

Completing this phase of my research will allow me to conclude the final chapter of the manuscript and proceed with editing the entire manuscript for submission to publishers.

3. Faculty Expertise

I have published an article on the European Union and public opinion (see below) and have twice taught a course on the European Union. I have had extensive experience working in European Union depositories both in the United States and in Europe compiling data for this and other projects. I have interned at the European Parliament (1992), and spent June 2000 interviewing Commission officials in Brussels.

4. Plans for Evaluation and Dissemination

The project will be deemed successful if it leads to the acceptance of the manuscript for publication. I am currently formulating a prospectus and a list of possible presses (including Oxford University, St. Martin's, Rowman-Littlefield, Praeger and Ashgate) and intend to meet with publishers at the European Union Studies Association 2003 conference in Nashville, Tennessee (March 27-29) to discuss the manuscript.

I also hope to share my findings in research presentations to the Elmhurst College community.

III. Time line

I will visit the Northwestern and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign depositories throughout June of 2003 and contact Commission officials in June and July of 2003. I will complete Chapter 8 of the manuscript in July and conduct a final revision of the manuscript in August.

IV. Budget

Travel (2 overnight trips to University of Illinois Urbana-Champagne)	\$300.00
Photocopying (documents and manuscript)	\$200.00
Supplies (paper, printer cartridges)	\$100.00
<u>Salary</u>	<u>\$2900.00</u>
Total	\$3500.00

V. Current and Previous Grants

As a graduate student, I received a University Fellowship from Loyola University (1998-1999), but have not received subsequent research grants or awards.

VI. Publications and Presentations

"Economics and Public Support for the European Union: An Analysis at the National, Regional and Individual Levels" authored by Vincent A. Mahler, Bruce J. Taylor and Jennifer R. Wozniak. *Polity* (Spring 2000) 32(3): 429-453.

To Present "Determining Commission Influence in Integration: A Process- and Results-Oriented Model." European Union Studies Association, Nashville, Tennessee, March 27-29, 2003.

Presented "The Commission and the Member States: The Evolution of Regional Policy." European Community Studies Association, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 2-5, 1999.

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