

## ACCOUNTABILITY IN EU DECISION-MAKING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL: LOST IN THE MULTI-LEVEL SETTING?

**Abstract.** *This article considers accountability in decision-making on EU affairs at the Slovenian national level from the constitutional and democratic perspectives. Its scope is limited to the coordination of EU affairs and the formation of national positions on selected legislative proposals of the European Commission, with an emphasis on scrutiny over the executive by National Assembly and civil society organisations (CSOs). It further argues that, in the case of Slovenia, we can determine established accountability arrangements which are accompanied by a dysfunctional accumulation of a range of accountability mechanisms: a bias in favour of the executive power; exclusion of CSOs from the process of EU decision-making at the national level; and passiveness on the part of the National Assembly and CSOs.*

**Keywords:** *democratic accountability, constitutional accountability, EU governance, national executive, national legislative, civil society organisations*

### Introduction

In recent years, we have seen numerous debates about governance and changing modes of governance, which have become significant in the context of research into EU decision-making processes (Héritier, 2002; Eberlein and Kerwer, 2002; Papadopoulos, 2007; see also Fink Hafner, this issue). Without contesting relative and variable 'success', most observers still consider the EU political system to be plagued by serious performance problems concerning both the effectiveness of decision making and democratic legitimacy (Héritier, 1999; Eberlein and Krewer, 2002: 2; Kohler-Koch, 2009: 48; Mahoney and Beckstrand, 2011: 1343). The debates about the need for effectiveness and legitimacy began in the 1990s (Hix, 2005), in particular after the introduction of the co-decision procedure in EU policymaking. The call for democratic legitimacy and accountability arose largely from the EU's development into a political union with policies stretching far beyond

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the original aims of eliminating barriers to cross-border economic activities (Benz et al., 2007: 442). These debates at the same time gave rise to the need to reform EU governance. In this context, so-called 'new modes of governance' began to offer various solutions to the challenges faced by EU governance. The most prominent differences have been seen as procedural, heterarchical and flexible 'new' governance instead of regulatory, top-down and uniform 'old' governance (Eberlein and Krewer, 2002: 1). European Commission initiatives concerning new modes of governance, which resulted in the White Paper on European Governance (European Commission, 2001), have attracted considerable scholarly attention. But at the same time, many academics have warned that there is a lack of empirical evidence as to how good governance works in practice *within* EU member states (e.g. Zeitlin, 2005).

Each system of representative democracy needs to be accountable to its citizens through regular elections and the free flow of information. All EU member-states are democracies in which governments are accountable to their national parliaments and in this manner also to their citizens. But in the context of recent globalisation and Europeanisation processes, there is often more than one source of authority. The most obvious example of the intertwined relationship between the national and supranational perspectives of policymaking occurs in the context of the EU. The effects of EU governance<sup>1</sup> on democracy have long been neglected, as the literature originally stressed that more 'horizontal' forms of policymaking are more responsive to the concerns of the policy takers, because in governance the latter are integrated into the policymaking process and thus appear as 'co-producers' of the collectively binding decisions that affect them (Papadopoulos, 2007: 473). This statement is supported by a survey by Kohler-Koch (2006) of some 1,600 projects included in a Connex database on EU Governance (GOVDATA), which shows that not more than 17 per cent of projects addressed questions of democracy and legitimacy.

Taking into account the presumption that the EU's multilevel setting generates novel forms of accountability which undermine its democratic dimension (Papadopoulos, 2007), and the presumption that national executives have been gaining power in relation to the legislative particularly in post-communist EU member-states (Fink-Hafner, 2013), our main focus in this article *is on the level of parliamentary and public scrutiny over executives in the EU affairs*. To elaborate this issue, we will observe constitutional and democratic perspectives of accountability (Bovens, 2007) in

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<sup>1</sup> *In the context of the EU, some authors prefer the term multilevel governance and others the term network governance to describe complex decision-making processes. In this article, we will use the term EU governance, taking into account characteristics of both multilevel and network governance.*

the decision-making on EU affairs at the Slovenian national level. Slovenia makes an interesting case study being small and one of the youngest EU member-states with a socialist past and a neo-corporatist system. As such it represents a good explanatory model applicable to other post-socialist Central and Eastern European EU member-states or candidate-states in the territory of former Yugoslavia. We will limit ourselves to the coordination of EU affairs at the national level and the formation of national positions on selected European Commission's legislative proposals with the emphasis on the scrutiny of parliamentary and civil society organisations (CSOs) over the executive.

Turning accountability in an academically useful concept requires a clearer definition of the constituent aspects of this notion. In the article, we understand accountability as *the relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pose judgement, and the actor may face consequences*. (Bovens, 2007: 447) In addition, dynamic accountability depends not only on actors who are willing to question and demand explanations from each other, but also on the degree of transparency in the process (Kröger, 2007: 576–579). Discussion of the accountability thus includes the relationship between the actor and the forum and usually consists of at least three elements. *Firstly*, it is crucial that the actor is obliged to inform the forum about his or her conduct by providing various sorts of data about the performance of tasks, about outcomes or about procedures. *Secondly*, it is possible for the forum to interrogate the actor and to question the adequacy of the information or the legitimacy of the conduct. *Thirdly*, the forum may pass judgement on the conduct of the actor. It may approve an annual account, denounce a policy, or publicly condemn the behaviour of an official or an agency (Bovens, 2007: 451). According to Bovens (2007: 450), the *actor* can either be an individual, such as an official or civil servant, or an organisation, such as a public institution or an agency, while the *accountability forum* can be a specific person, such as a superior, a minister or a journalist, or it can be an agency, such as a national parliament, a court or the audit office. In this article, the *actor* represents the national executive, while the *accountability forum* represents the national parliament and organised CSOs.

The article is structured as follows. In the second section, we first present the main characteristics of the EU governance, and then discuss accountability and its physiognomies within EU decision-making. Based on certain theoretical presumptions, in the third section we offer a research model for analysing accountability in the decision-making on EU affairs at the national level; in this section we also present the methodology and the data. In the fourth section, we analyse two perspectives of accountability in the

decision-making on EU affairs at the Slovenian national level. Finally, in the fifth section we summarise our main findings.

### What kind of accountability in the EU governance?

Having roots in Putnam's (1988) two-level game in the processes of collective choice, the EU is characterised by its horizontal and vertical polycentric structure, so the outcomes of most EU public policies depend on compromises between many actors, including political and administrative institutions at sub-national and supranational levels of decision-making, trans-national interest groups, civil society organisations, and social and economic partners. This polycentric structure is most frequently described using the term *governance*, which describes a change in the nature of the state and as such also takes into account a change in the constellation of actors, both during the formulation and the implementation of public policies and in the method of political steering (Treib et al., 2007). In the literature, the concept of governance is used in at least two different ways: one broad, the other more restricted. In the broad sense, it implies every mode of political steering involving public and private actors, including the traditional modes of government and different types of steering from hierarchical imposition to sheer information measures. In the restricted sense, it only comprises types of political steering in which non-hierarchical modes of guidance, such as persuasion and negotiation, are employed, and public and private actors are engaged in policy formulation (Héritier, 2002: 2). Governance thus involves interaction between actors in complex networks of policy bargaining, policymaking and policy implementation (Kohler-Koch, 2003). According to Rhodes (2003: 7), networks indeed have an important functional role in EU governance: they bring together the interests of a variety of different actors in a highly-differentiated polity marked by the fragmentation of policies and politics. In this respect, the EU is more functionally dependent than any other political system on a well-developed system of communication as both an instrument for gathering and processing information and as a tool for forming a consensus and spreading common views (Kohler-Koch, 2002). Moreover, the aspect of network is frequently mentioned also in the European Commission's White Paper (European Commission, 2001). In order to formulate public policies effectively, the European Commission must therefore regularly consult a varied range of actors to obtain the information and expertise it requires.

However, this shift to less 'dirigist' forms of policymaking, which at first glance appeared promising and in all likelihood necessary, can generate problems with respect to the quality of democracy in the EU (Papadopoulos, 2007: 470). Such problems are mostly caused by a deficit of democratic

accountability of EU governance structure (ibid). As one of five principles to form the basis of good governance in the EU, the European Commission has recognised the need for accountability:

*Roles in the legislative and executive processes need to be clearer. Each of the EU Institutions must explain and take responsibility for what it does in Europe. But there is also a need for greater clarity and responsibility from Member States and all those involved in developing and implementing EU policy at whatever level. (European Commission, 2001: 11)*

Here, the European Commission in its White Paper places considerable emphasis on participation<sup>2</sup> in terms of its input and also its expected output legitimacy (de la Porte, 2007). According to the European Commission, it is the responsibility of the national executives to include as many actors as possible in devising and implementing public policies derived from the EU level. Broad participation can be assured through the involvement of actors at the horizontal (national parliaments, civil society) as well as vertical (regional, local) levels.

Hence, problems with respect to democracy in the EU are caused by a deficit of democratic accountability of governance structures, whereas this deficit mainly stems from four characteristics of EU governance: the weak presence of citizen representatives in networks; the lack of democratic oversight; the multilevel aspect; and the prevalence of 'peer' forms of accountability (Papadopoulos, 2007: 470). The EU multilevel setting and network governance forms give rise to a number of accountability concerns, since the relationships between actors involved in networks are weakly exposed to public scrutiny, or to the scrutiny of legitimate, democratic and representative bodies (ibid: 483). From the perspective of EU decision-making, it is important to assess the adequacy of a particular accountability arrangement to which a particular agency or sector is subject.

## Theoretical-methodological framework

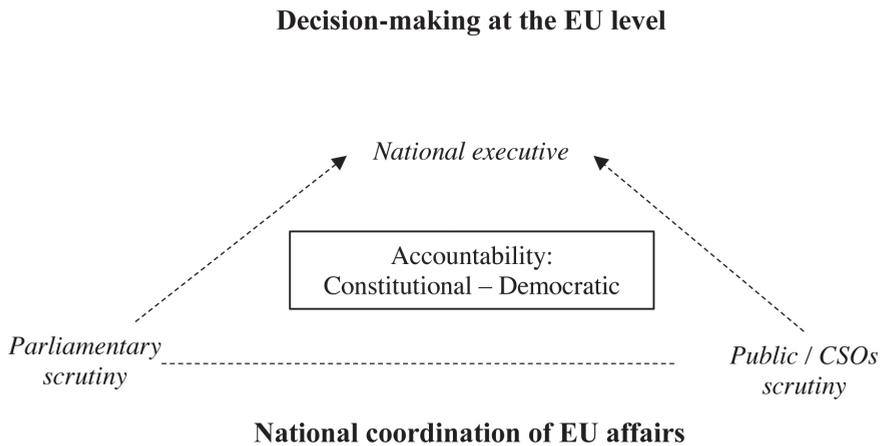
A frequently unanswered question concerns the assessment of the actual effects of accountability and how to judge these effects. The question of the level of parliamentary and public scrutiny over executives in EU affairs can

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<sup>2</sup> *The quality, relevance and effectiveness of EU policies depend on ensuring wide participation throughout the policy chain – from conception to implementation. Improved participation is likely to create more confidence in the end result and in the institutions which deliver policies. Participation crucially depends on central governments following an inclusive approach when developing and implementing EU policies (European Commission, 2001: 11).*

be couched either in the context of a deficit of accountability or an excess of accountability – i.e. a dysfunctional accumulation of a range of accountability mechanisms (see Bovens, 2007). To consider our main research focus, we will apply two perspectives of accountability according to Bovens’ conceptual framework: the constitutional and the democratic. From a constitutional perspective, accountability is essential in order to withstand the ever-present tendency toward power concentration and the abuse of powers in the executive. Here, the central evaluation criteria include the extent to which an accountability arrangement curtails the abuse of executive power and privilege (Bovens et al., 2008: 231). From a democratic perspective, linking government actions to the ‘democratic chain of delegation’ legitimises and makes it more accountable. From this perspective, the central evaluation criterion is the degree to which an accountability arrangement or regime enables democratically legitimised bodies to monitor and evaluate executive behaviour and to induce executive actors to modify their behaviour in accordance with their preferences (ibid).

Picture 1: RESEARCH MODEL



Source: the author.

In the empirical part of the article we will limit our focus to (a) the coordination of EU affairs at the national level and (b) the formation of national positions on selected legislative proposals of the European Commission with the emphasis on parliamentary and CSO scrutiny over the executive. We thus focus on the policy formulation stage, which is the crucial stage that reveals the key power relations between the actors involved in policymaking. This stage not only involves placing issues on the agenda, but is also closely linked to the search for alternative policy solutions (see Hogwood

and Gunn, 1984; Parsons, 1995). At the same time, it presents a window of opportunity for the involvement of non-governmental actors; in the case of EU decision-making in particular national parliaments and CSOs. In the article, we cover the normative framework of coordination of EU affairs at the national level, which reveals the extent to which an accountability arrangement curtails the abuse of executive power and privilege. In addition, we also take into consideration the twenty most salient EU legislative proposals which were on the EU's agenda during the period from 2008 to 2010. We expect this to demonstrate parliamentary and CSO scrutiny over the executive in practice.<sup>3</sup> We selected the most salient EU legislative proposals according to their prominence in the mass media. Although our study focuses on the case of Slovenia, the measure of saliency was not based on the Slovenian national media sources because EU topics, in particular issues relating to EU legislative proposals, are not covered sufficiently in Slovenian national sources. For this reason, we selected the proposals that were covered in at least one European source (Agence Europe or European Voice), and in at least two national sources (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Le Monde or the Financial Times).

Our analysis is based on multi-method research. We examine the constitutional and democratic perspectives of accountability on the basis of our analysis of relevant national legislation: the Act on Cooperation between the National Assembly and the Government in EU Affairs; the Rules of Procedure of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia; the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly; and on the basis of data from the INTEREURO survey: 35 face-to-face interviews conducted with national officials responsible for the proposal of selected directives. Our empirical analysis is accompanied by a survey of the key actors preparing national positions on EU legislation within the framework of the project *Improving Consultation Practices in Decision-Making on EU Affairs at the National Level*, conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Directorate for European Affairs and Bilateral Relations in 2015.

## Results

In the previous sections, we demonstrated that in the institutional fragmentation of the EU's multilevel setting, national parliaments and CSOs can add political credibility and legitimacy to national executives. National parliaments and CSOs may lend themselves to avenues to press for

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<sup>3</sup> *The empirical part of the analysis is partly based on research in the framework of the international project INTEREURO (N5-0014; [www.intereuro.eu](http://www.intereuro.eu); see also Beyers et al., 2014; Hafner-Fink et al., 2016), conducted under the auspices of the European Science Foundation and in cooperation with nine universities throughout Europe and the US.*

accountability from below and help to improve 'good governance' in the EU decision-making processes (de la Porte et al., 2001; Kohler-Koch, 2010: 1117). But in practice, the role of national parliaments and CSOs in the EU decision-making processes remains unclear. This role is unclear in particular when considering that there is an enormous diversity in democratic traditions among the EU member-states, both institutionally and in terms of underlying values; this diversity has only increased in recent years following the accession of new member-states (Benz et al., 2007: 445). This certainly makes for significant variations in the extent to which national parliaments and CSOs are included in policy formulation and the implementation of EU public policies within the EU. In this section, our intention is to assess the level of constitutional and democratic accountability in EU decision-making at the national level in Slovenia.

### *Constitutional perspective: accountability and equilibrium of power*

The constitutional perspective on EU decision-making at the national level is best observed through the normative definition of the system of coordination of EU affairs in Slovenia. The system of coordination of EU affairs at the Slovenian national level is formally composed of the following actors: (a) the government; (b) a central coordination unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; (c) Slovenia's Permanent Representation in Brussels; (d) working groups that prepare national positions during the adoption of EU legislative proposals; (e) working groups for EU affairs; and (f) the National Assembly. This constellation of actors at the normative level might suggest a bias in favour of the executive power *per se*, because the central coordination unit has been taken over by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Specifically, the Directorate for EU Affairs is in charge of the procedurally correct preparation and submission of national cross-sectoral alignment positions on EU proposals later decided at the Council of the EU in the framework of working groups, committees and ministerial meetings (*Rules of Procedure of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2014*). While preparing national positions on the European Commission's legislative proposals, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs first assigns responsibility for the preparation of the first draft of the national position on a particular piece of EU legislation to a competent ministry or governmental office. At the same time, for the purpose of cross-sectoral coordination, it also identifies other relevant ministries and designates competent working groups. The preparation and endorsement of the national position takes place in the governmental information system, the so-called EU-portal. The functioning of the EU portal is ensured by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Article 49.d, *Rules of Procedure of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2014*). Cross-sectoral alignment positions

are reached by cross-sectoral meetings, meetings of working groups for preparation of the position, regular meetings of the Working Group for EU Affairs, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and meetings of the Group for EU Affairs (Article 49.g). The ministry or government agency prepares Slovenia's draft position which is then considered and adopted by the government. Positions on legislative proposals that due to their content and in line with the constitution and national legislation fall within the competency of the National Assembly are also submitted to the National Assembly by the Secretary General of the Government through the EU portal. The position is then discussed and considered by the Committee for EU Affairs and the responsible working committee (Article 49.h).

A detailed legislative definition of the relationships between the National Assembly and the government as regards decision-making on EU affairs in Slovenia is outlined in the Act on Cooperation between the National Assembly and the Government in EU Affairs. This arrangement defines the executive as the agent representing the Republic of Slovenia in the EU institutions, whereas the National Assembly cooperates in the formulation of Slovenia's standpoints on EU matters which would fall under its jurisdiction as a result of the Slovenian Constitution and the law. To control the government, the National Assembly needs to take a pro-active approach since it is not obliged to liaise in the preparation of national positions. In this sense, the National Assembly is primarily a 'controlling body' whose main task in the framework of EU decision-making is to control the government's performance. Empirical evidence based on a sample of twenty of the European Commission's legislative proposals also supports this.<sup>4</sup> Our sample reveals that while the competent National Assembly's working bodies discussed the government position, these discussions were short, questions were rarely asked, while the positions were in all cases adopted with only a few minor changes, if any. Thus, there has been a lack of critical assessment as well as a lack of any substantive contribution by the National Assembly. It is no surprise that national officials rank the line ministry as the authority with most influence in the functioning of the national system for the coordination of EU affairs, followed by the Permanent Representation Office in Brussels; the government and the Government Office for European Affairs (until 2012) come further down the ranking, and National Assembly ranks only fifth place (INTEREURO survey, 35 interviews among national officials). In the formation of national positions on EU legislation proposals, the National Assembly is frequently under strong time pressure (see also Fink-Hafner

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<sup>4</sup> *Reports of the National Assembly's Committee of European Affairs and other competent working committees on national positions on EU legislation proposals are published on the National Assembly's webpage (accessible at <https://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/zadeveEvropske-Unije>).*

and Lajh, 2006: 19); this represents another important obstacle in the constitutional perspective of accountability. It is perhaps to be expected that members of the National Assembly will pay attention to political issues that are salient for national politics, for their own constituency, or which are controversial. Although having high salience at the EU level, the legislative proposals under scrutiny perceptibly have not been controversial for Slovenian stakeholders.

***Democratic perspective: accountability and popular control***

According to the normative arrangement for the coordination of EU affairs, Slovenian CSOs are largely excluded from the process of deciding national positions on EU legislative proposals (Lajh and Novak, 2016). Although the *Rules of Procedure of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia* (2001) and the *Resolution on Legislative Regulation* (2009) preclude the 'inclusion of the public, civil society and experts in forming legislative acts and regulations', and the *National Assembly's Rules of Procedure* stipulates that the working committee of the National Assembly may *organise public hearings and invite experts and other persons who might provide useful information*, the role of the public and CSOs is not explicitly defined in the case of EU decision-making at the national level.<sup>5</sup> Popular control is therefore profoundly dependent on individual policy officials engaging with competent public authorities.

According to the central evaluation criterion (Bovens et al., 2008: 231), two important aspects of the democratic perspective of accountability are (i) a degree of transparency in the process, and (ii) consultations between the executive and CSOs. The EU-portal plays a crucial role in the submission of information and in ensuring the process is transparent. The EU portal, where the national position is prepared, has until recently been completely inaccessible to the public as well as to CSOs. Although the *Act on Cooperation between the National Assembly and the Government in EU Affairs* initially envisaged the EU-portal becoming open to the public following Slovenia's accession to the EU, only in the second half of 2016 were any changes made. Since June 2016, each ministry can decide to publicly publish the materials discussed at governmental meetings. In this way, to a limited extent, the EU-portal has become accessible to the public and CSOs, although it is important to note that published documents are mostly national positions already adopted during the governmental session and waiting for confirmation in the National Assembly. However, when it comes to informing the public

<sup>5</sup> The 'lobbying approach' of CSOs represents another means of influencing EU decision-making at the national level, but this is beyond the scope of this article.

of national positions on EU legislation, the role of the National Assembly should not be neglected, since all governmental and parliamentary documents relating to EU legislative proposals are publicly accessible on the National Assembly's official Website. This confirms the findings of empirical studies, which claim that CSOs find the National Assembly more accessible than the executive, while at the same time they attribute more power to the executive (e.g. Fink-Hafner et al., 2012; Fink-Hafner et al., 2015).

With respect to consultations, a 2015 survey conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate for EU Affairs reveals that representatives from almost all ministries believe that consultations with CSOs would be useful for formulating quality national positions. However, according to the same survey, in practice only one ministry (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food) regularly organises consultations with national CSOs on EU affairs. National officials have expressed concern that such consultations would increase their administrative burden in light of staff shortages at the ministries and time frames for preparing national positions, which are usually short and require officials to be flexible. Some national officials also recognise low levels of familiarity with EU legislation regarding the different forms of consultation and would like to receive training on consultation processes for EU affairs (INTEREURO survey, 35 interviews among national officials). Problems were identified on the part of CSOs, which may have insufficient knowledge of the decision-making procedures (in particular in the context of the EU multilevel setting), too high expectations of Slovenia's ability to influence EU negotiations, insufficient knowledge of EU legislative proposals, and a lack of professionalism as well as a cadre deficit. According to official statistics, 92 percent of CSOs<sup>6</sup> operate on an entirely voluntary basis. In 2009, there were in total only 5,616 employees in the civil society sector. The number is slowly growing and by 2015 had risen to 7,332 employees (CNVOS, 2016). A combination of all these factors regularly leads to the passivity of CSOs with regard to preparation of national positions on EU legislation.

## Conclusion

Accountability is inevitably important in any structure characterised by a division of labour in which actors pursue their interests or goals with the help of other actors. A division of labour occurs in various institutional settings, although it may exist for different reasons and operate inversely

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<sup>6</sup> This includes societies, associations, youth councils and religious organisations that have the status of humanitarian organisation, institutions and foundations. Trade unions, civil initiatives and religious communities are not included in this data.

in each (Benz et al., 2007: 443). EU policymaking takes place in multiple locations for addressing policy issues, from the local to the global and with both formal and informal processes (Wallace, 2010: 90). In its vertical and horizontal divisions of power, decision-making in the EU is affected by a combination of many access points and demanding rules (Princen, 2009: 40). As such, national political institutions are vital components in the EU institutional architecture, and national actors play important and influential roles at all stages of the EU policy process. However, actors that play roles in the EU policy process are slightly different from those they perform at 'home'. National ministers, for example, sit together in the Council of the EU and play an important role in adopting legislation, albeit one in which they represent their own interests as well as those of their constituents (Young, 2010: 50). On the other hand, national parliaments are often seen as latecomers and losers in the process of the European integration, or even 'victims' of the process (Fink-Hafner, 2011: 227). In such an institutional setting, it is important to address the question of accountability in the decision-making on EU affairs at the national level.

A normative definition of the system of coordination of EU affairs in Slovenia determines the basic accountability arrangement. However, the EU multilevel setting and network forms of governance entail a number of accountability problems, since the relationships between the actors involved in the networks are inadequately scrutinised by either the legislative body, the public or by CSOs. On the one hand, the constellation of actors coordinating EU affairs at the normative level would appear to demonstrate a bias in favour of the executive power. The National Assembly needs to be proactive in order to control the government, since the government is not obliged to liaise in the preparation of national positions. For this reason, the equilibrium of power in preparing national positions on EU issues in Slovenia is uncertain. Our study also reveals that the National Assembly's competent working bodies only briefly discussed the government positions, and questions were more the exception than the rule, while the positions were in all cases adopted without amendments. The characteristics of Slovenian parliamentary democracy, namely a 'majority coalition in government', can explain why the government's position is adopted without amendment. The National Assembly is thus mainly a 'controlling body' whose main task in the framework of EU decision-making is to control government performance.

On the other hand, neither the legislation covering relations between the executive and the legislative on EU affairs nor the internal governmental acts dealing with the coordination of EU affairs provide for the inclusion of either the public or CSOs in the process of EU decision-making at the national level in Slovenia. Popular control is thus profoundly dependent on

the individual engagement of policy officials within the competent public authorities. However, we should also note that CSOs frequently have insufficient knowledge of the decision-making procedures (in particular in the context of the EU multilevel setting) as well as insufficient knowledge of EU legislative proposals, especially due to the lack of professionalism and cadre deficit.

The case of Slovenia reveals established accountability arrangements which are accompanied by a dysfunctional accumulation of a range of accountability mechanisms. These include: a bias in favour of the executive power; exclusion of CSOs from the process of EU decision-making at the national level; and the passivity of the National Assembly and CSOs. These findings represent an explanatory model that might be applicable also to other post-socialist Central and Eastern European EU member-states, such as the Czech Republic (Mansfeldová et al., 2004; Mansfeldová, 2014) and Hungary (Cox and Gallai, 2014), or EU candidate countries from the territory of former Yugoslavia (Fink-Hafner, 2015). Our analysis, however, is only part of the picture, as it limits investigation into who is accountable for the formulation of the national positions. Further research should thus question whether national officials can be held accountable for what they do at the EU level?

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