



Article

# Analysing European Union decision-making during the Eurozone crisis with new data

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## Abstract

The collection of articles in this special issue provides a comprehensive analysis of European Union decision-making during the Eurozone crisis. We investigate national preference formation and interstate bargaining related to major reforms of the Economic and Monetary Union. The analyses rely on the new ‘EMU Positions’ dataset. This dataset includes information about the preferences and saliences of all 28 EU member states and key EU institutions, regarding 47 contested issues negotiated between 2010 and 2015. In this introductory article, we first articulate the motivation behind this special issue and outline its collective contribution. We then briefly

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summarise each article within this collection; the articles analyse agenda setting, preference formation, coalition building, bargaining dynamics, and bargaining success. Finally, we present and discuss the ‘EMU Positions’ dataset.

### **Keywords**

Economic and Monetary Union, EU decision-making, Eurozone

## **Introduction**

The Euro is still there. Eight years after the outbreak of the Eurozone crisis, ‘Europe’s economy is finally bouncing back’, as Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker declared in his 2017 ‘State of the Union Address’. Yet many questions, regarding the stability and the sustainability of the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), remain.

This special issue provides a comprehensive analysis of the politics and policies of EMU reform during the Eurozone crisis. It emerged from intensive collaboration within the context of the Horizon 2020-funded research consortium ‘EMU Choices’. All contributions are grounded in a rational-institutionalist theoretical framework, and they rely on a combination of liberal international relations theory and comparative politics approaches. Following the liberal intergovernmentalist ‘baseline model’ of European integration (Moravcsik, 1993, 2018), the articles in this special issue systematically cover and link the processes of national preference formation and interstate bargaining to resulting policy outcomes. This entails a systematic application of three analytical key concepts related to political decision-making, namely preferences, saliences, and contested policy issues.

Empirically, the articles in this special issue cover the most important decisions taken (or not) during the Eurozone crisis. Our work comprehensively covers a large sample of policy choices related to EMU, and thereby goes beyond the single-case studies predominant in the field. Methodological pluralism – we combine statistical analyses with tests of formal decision-making models and qualitative research – allows us to harvest encompassing insights on the politics of the Eurozone crisis from a high-quality dataset which yields, to the best of our knowledge, the most comprehensive data source to date.

In this introductory article, we first explain the motivation of the special issue and outline its collective contribution to the literature on EMU reforms and on European Union (EU) decision-making more generally. We then briefly summarise the five individual articles within this collection, which analyse agenda setting, preference formation, coalition building, bargaining dynamics, and bargaining success during the Eurozone crisis. Finally, we present and discuss the new ‘EMU Positions’ dataset, providing background information on central concepts and the data collection approach.

## Why this special issue?

The Eurozone crisis unfolded in early 2010 and lasted, at least, until 2015. After the outbreak of the Greek sovereign debt crisis in late December 2009, other EU member states, notably Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Italy, faced interest rate hikes from January 2010 onwards (Lane, 2012). These contagion effects threatened to undermine the stability of the Eurozone and, ultimately, the EU as a whole. Despite all efforts by EU member states and EU institutions to assuage market fears and regain control over the situation, it was not until 2013 that interest rates for the crisis-ridden countries actually started to decrease significantly. The two major interventions aimed at addressing the crisis were: the extraordinarily accommodative monetary policy conducted by the European Central Bank (ECB), and the EU's fiscal and economic policy reforms adopted by the member states. During 2014, Ireland and Portugal managed to exit their respective fiscal support programmes, while Cyprus and Greece partially regained access to the financial markets. Although the Greek crisis continued, the acute phase of the crisis ended in 2015, as the risk of contagion in the Eurozone was contained.

The case of the Eurozone crisis offers a unique opportunity to study all aspects of EU decision-making during a period in modern European integration when stakes were at their highest. The gravity of the situation – articulated by German Chancellor Angela Merkel's dictum that 'if the Euro fails, Europe fails' – has stimulated enormous scholarly interest in the Eurozone crisis. Between 2010 and 2017, the Social Science Citation Index accumulated more than 300 publications with titles including the term 'Euro Crisis' or 'Eurozone Crisis'. Hundreds more investigate the Eurozone crisis without making explicitly titular reference to it – this includes at least 15 monographs, special issues, or edited volumes from major EU journals or leading publishers, all of which analyse the causes, consequences, and implications of the crisis from various theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. Some apply mainstream and 'dissident' regional integration theories (Ioannou et al., 2015; Manners and Whitman, 2016); others are based on theories of comparative and international political economy (Copelovitch et al., 2016). Some scholars investigate the political legitimacy and democratic quality of EMU reforms (Cramme and Hobolt, 2014), while yet another group analyses the EU's response to the crisis from a comparative politics or governance perspective, applied to different institutionalist foci (e.g. Caporaso and Rhodes, 2016).

Given the already-abundant literature on the Eurozone crisis, how can this special issue make a novel contribution? In our view, it can do so by moving beyond the extant literature on EU decision-making, particularly in fiscal and economic policy, in three ways. The first contribution is theoretical; this special issue offers innovative analyses of pertinent questions about EMU politics from a rational-institutionalist perspective. The broader structure of the special issue mirrors the 'baseline model' of European integration, which dissects the EU policy-making process into a first step of national preference formation and a second step of interstate bargaining (Moravcsik, 1993, 1998). Against the backdrop of this

basic model, the articles draw on advances in the general study of EU decision-making to develop and assess novel theoretical conjectures about agenda setting, preference formation, coalition building, bargaining dynamics, and bargaining success. While acknowledging that economic factors and the EU's institutional constraints figure heavily into the causes and consequences of the Eurozone crisis, the special issue focuses on the political conflicts during the Eurozone crisis and the resulting outcomes, which led to some of the most important reforms in the history of the EMU.

The second contribution is empirical; the special issue introduces and analyses the new 'EMU Positions' dataset, which includes information on the *observed preferences* of all 28 EU member state governments and six key EU institutions on 47 contested issues related to the most important EMU reform proposals during the Eurozone crisis, as well as the *saliences* the actors attached to these issues. The dataset includes the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), the Fiscal Compact, the Six-Pack, the Two-Pack, and the Banking Union. Moreover, it covers additional reform proposals on the introduction of Eurobonds, the Financial Transaction Tax or those mentioned in the so-called 'Five Presidents' Report'. So far, these policies have yet to find the necessary support among EU member states for enactment.

With few exceptions (e.g. Armingeon and Cranmer, 2018), most analyses of decision-making during the Eurozone crisis use qualitative methods, which make stringent comparisons across policy proposals and countries difficult. Moreover, the existing analyses place a strong emphasis on the preferences and bargaining power of selected, highly visible member states (especially Germany, Greece, France, Italy, or Spain). By contrast, our dataset offers the first truly comprehensive overview of national preferences on the most important EMU reform proposals discussed during the Eurozone crisis; this allows the articles in this special issue to go beyond an analytical focus on individual reforms and/or individual countries. Moreover, it allows us to examine the less visible actors as well. Our findings, for instance on the national preferences and saliencies of Eastern European countries or those of the Euro outsiders, provide novel insights to the existing literature.

Our third contribution is methodological; we build on and extend a research programme that has been highly influential in EU studies. Specifically, to generate the 'EMU Positions' dataset, we build upon the systematic approach to data collection first executed in the projects on decision-making in the EU (DEU I and II), with a particular emphasis on EMU-related issues (Thomson et al., 2012; Thomson and Stokman, 2006). By focusing on one issue area, we are able to increase the number of cases linked to one broader topic, and thereby we gain new and better insights into the dynamics of political decision-making in the EU. In particular, we elaborate a better understanding of preference and salience formation at the national level, and a clearer picture of interstate bargaining. A major innovation introduced by our approach is the combination of extensive document analyses and expert interviews, to define contested issues, policy spaces, and

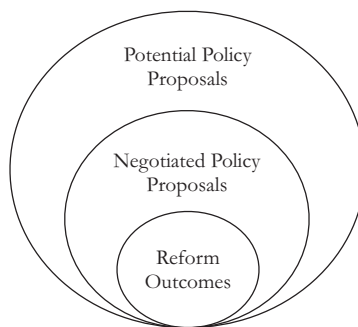
individual member states' preferences and saliences in an efficient *and* reliable way. We provide in this introductory article and the Online appendix detailed documentation of the collection and structure of the data.

In short, the articles of the special issue rigorously analyse preference formation and interstate bargaining outcomes during the Eurozone crisis. Explaining how and why EU policy-makers achieved reforms, but failed to adopt more far-reaching solutions, is a task of significant academic and policy importance. The findings enrich our understanding of EMU politics, EU policy-making, and European integration in general. With this special issue, we also introduce the 'EMU Positions' dataset with extensive documentation, allowing replicability and extensions of our analyses. We hope that many of our colleagues will find the data useful also for the study of other topics. Our data can, for instance, be used to pursue the research agendas concerning the dimensionality of EU politics, the influence of specific actors on EU decision-making, or the relative strength of theoretical models of legislative bargaining (Bueno de Mesquita and Stokman, 1994; Schneider et al., 2010; Thomson, 2011).

## Summary of the special issue

This special issue is designed and structured to systematically link the individual contributions to various overarching research questions, such as which reform options were considered as EU policy-makers sought to avoid a collapse of the Eurozone and chart a path towards a more resilient EMU? Why were some reform options selected over others? Figure 1 illustrates the broad universe of potential policy alternatives (i.e. the outer circle), the subset of policy proposals that were officially negotiated in the specific decision-making arenas (which vary across different EMU-related reforms), and finally, the set of reform outcomes that resulted from these negotiations.

For instance, some scholars and pundits argue that there has not been enough emphasis on debt restructuring. While the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) enacted limited haircuts on Greek and Cypriot debt bonds in 2012



**Figure 1.** Reform outcomes and negotiated options as subsets of all potential proposals.

and 2013, most policy tools to stabilise public finances in debtor countries worked indirectly. Frieden and Walter (2017: 380) are prominent critics of this approach, arguing that EU decision-makers have, compared to other debt crises, ‘shield away from what is the most common sort of response to a debt crisis, debt restructuring’. According to their analysis, the corresponding proposals had a hard time entering the orbit of formal negotiations. Instead, the EU negotiated other policy tools like the ESM, which found more support and were finally implemented. Analytically, this corresponds to a shift in Figure 1, from the set of ‘potential policy proposals’ to ‘negotiated policy proposals’ and eventually to ‘reform outcomes’.

Most contributions to this special issue focus on the two inner circles of Figure 1; however, individual papers also discuss the narrowing of the potential policy space (Degner and Leuffen, 2019). In addition to the above questions, the special issue investigates the variation among member state preferences on the negotiated proposals by analysing the political conflict structure and bargaining success.

Tarlea et al. (2019) in this special issue study the first step of the baseline model of regional integration theory, namely national preference formation. More specifically, the authors analyse the observed preferences of EU member states on contested EMU issues; relating these issues to European integration as the dependent variable, and a set of domestic economic, political, and institutional factors as explanatory variables. The empirical results of the hierarchical models suggest that governments are more likely to support further integration in fiscal and economic policy when the exposure of their financial sector is substantial, and when the country is a member of the Eurozone. The results find less support for the influence of domestic politics, such as party ideology or public opinion vis-à-vis European integration – an important and somewhat astonishing finding, given the high salience and strong public contestation of these issues.

The subsequent four articles study interstate bargaining, the second stage of the baseline model, with a series of empirical analyses that investigate political conflict, bargaining success, agenda setting, and decision-making models in EMU negotiations.

Lehner and Wasserfallen (2019) use scaling methods to investigate the underlying dimensionality of political conflict that structures the EMU reform negotiations among member states. In contrast to most studies of EU politics, this analysis finds that the politics of EMU are not multi-dimensional (although they cover a broad range of fiscal, financial, and institutional reform proposals). Rather, they are dominated by a one-dimensional conflict structure – namely, the conflict between southern countries advocating for more fiscal transfers and northern countries prioritising fiscal discipline. On this one-dimensional scale, the article identifies and discusses three broader coalitions. The article further suggests that this conflict structure provides a setting conducive to the constant (re-)negotiation of compromises.

Lundgren et al. (2019) map out and explain the relative bargaining success of member states regarding EMU reforms during the Eurozone crisis. Using

statistical tools for spatial analysis, the authors calculate the distances between member states' positions and the final outcomes. The findings show that, contrary to the conventional narrative of German dominance, the formal negotiations produced no clear winners and losers. Moreover, whereas power resources were of limited importance, holding preferences that were centrist, or close to those of the European Commission, favoured bargaining success; this holds especially when the adoption of policy reform only required the support of a qualified majority, underlining the importance of formal rules. The general pattern of bargaining success illustrates dynamics of compromise and reciprocity, where gains and concessions appear to have been traded both within and across issues (this finding is consistent with the analysis of Lehner and Wasserfallen (2019)).

Degner and Leuffen (2019) investigate the role of Franco-German cooperation during the Eurozone crisis, conceiving of the 'Franco-German engine' as an inner negotiation core for the whole EU. The article starts with the observation that pundits disagree about the role of Franco-German cooperation for solving the Eurozone crisis. The authors introduce a number of mechanisms that highlight how France and Germany could jointly affect EMU decision-making. These mechanisms and the causal effect of Franco-German cooperation are tested with process-tracing covering almost all proposals contained in the 'EMU Positions' dataset as well as additional issues that never made it to the formal negotiation table. The article shows that France and Germany had the 'negative power' to eliminate certain proposals; this is to say that France and Germany reduced the set of potential policy proposals open for debate at the EU level. The logic of issue selection and elimination – in line with the logic of the 'second face of power' – can account for an apparently only limited impact of Germany and France identified for instance by Lundgren et al. (2019).

Finke and Bailer (2019) analyse EU decision-making during the Eurozone crisis by evaluating the predictive power of three bargaining models. The article investigates the impact of asymmetric market pressures, formal voting rules, and agenda setting powers for the decision-making of the policies coded in the 'EMU Positions' dataset. Moreover, the article investigates whether the dynamics of negotiations during the Eurozone crisis were similar to the dynamics of ordinary legislative negotiations, concluding that formal rules (i.e. agenda setting and veto rights) were no less relevant in times of crisis as they are in calmer times. The empirical findings also show that market pressure during the height of the Eurozone crisis was particularly relevant and that debtor countries were weakened by their difficulties to refinance their debt.

Finally, the forum article by Frieden and Walter (2019) concludes the special issue by critically evaluating its main findings, contributions, and limitations. In addition, it provides further insights on the analysis of European decision-making, especially in times of crisis, places the contributions of the special issue into the context of the broader literature, and discusses future avenues for research.

Taken together, the contributions to this special issue offer an analytically rigorous and empirically informative account of EU decision-making during the



Eurozone crisis, in particular on the dynamics and mechanisms of interstate bargaining. As to national preferences, the special issue informs us that, in a crisis that threatened EMU survival, macroeconomic reasoning was dominant as opposed to genuine political factors, such as public opinion or institutions. Linked to this, three further observations are noteworthy. First, the positioning of countries varied greatly, not only according to their embeddedness in different political economic models (cf. Hall, 2018) and the international exposure of their banks, but also according to whether a country is part of the Eurozone or not. Second, while member states' preferences substantively differed at the outset of the negotiations, and bargaining was tough (Schimmelfennig, 2015), all member states were ready to accept solutions which, at least in parts, were quite distant from their initial ideal points.

The articles relating to the outcomes of EMU crisis negotiations show that, despite the high salience of issues, even the most powerful EU member states, Germany and France, needed to, but also were willing to, agree on package deals or compromise solutions. Although a number of potential policy proposals were dropped from the start of the negotiations, not least because of the resistance of the powerful member states, overall compromise and compensation prevailed over the elimination logic sketched out by Tsebelis and Hahm (2014). Widespread public dissensus on either fiscal solidarity or fiscal austerity did not 'constrain' member state governments to significantly deepen the EMU. Third, the analyses of the 'EMU Positions' data empirically support the presence of strong and stable 'camps' of member states, more or less reflecting the geographical patterns of North versus South. The role of Eastern European member states is interesting. Our analyses suggest that many held moderate positions in the centre, while they were overall tilted towards the coalition supporting austerity-related measures.

More generally, the special issue highlights that our understanding of EU politics can be improved substantially by focusing on individual policy areas. For instance, past research on preference formation has always suffered either from a too-narrow approach on individual policies or a too-broad account that makes it difficult to explain preferences. Shifting attention to the meso-level of one policy area, with an enlarged number of cases, allows for a more rigorous and substantively promising assessment of different theories of preference formation. The same holds for analysing the mechanisms of interstate bargaining, given the natural links among the contested issues identified in our dataset and also that the decision-makers negotiating the reforms were in constant contact, allowing for reciprocity and compensation (Lehner and Wasserfallen, 2019; Lundgren et al., 2019).

The findings of the special issue emerge as a mixed picture when it comes to formulating predictions on the reform capacity and future development of the EMU. The analysis of decision-making during the Eurozone crisis leads us to be sceptical of the emergence of major EMU reforms in the next years. Member state governments are still mostly anchored in their domestic economic contexts, and we have little reason to expect significant progress with regard to macro-economic convergence in the Eurozone. At the same time, with the historical decision to bind



their fates in the EMU, the actors' choice set is restricted; the enormous pressure to preserve the Euro through commonly supported policy reforms will continue to persist.

## **The 'EMU Positions' dataset: Concepts, data collection, and summary of the data**

All five empirical contributions to this special issue use the 'EMU Positions' dataset. This dataset builds on a spatial model of politics and codes the positions and saliences of all 28 EU member states and key EU institutions with respect to the most important reform proposals negotiated during the Eurozone crisis. Before introducing the dataset and our data collection approach, we specify the central concepts. These include 'observed preferences', 'saliences', and 'contested issues'.

### *Observed preferences and saliencies*

The 'EMU Positions' dataset records data on preferences and saliencies of EU member states and EU institutions with regard to selected EMU issues. According to the definition of Frieden (1999: 42), 'an actor's preferences are the way it orders the possible outcomes of an interaction'. We refer to the concept of *observed preferences* (Frieden, 1999: 57) as the empirical ordering of a given choice set, whereas the ranking of the policy options reflects the 'true' preferences, or ideal points, of an actor (which are not directly observable).<sup>1</sup> This approach is standard in the study of EU politics. Alternative strategies rely either on *assuming* preferences, like the Downsian type of vote maximisation, or *deducing* them from theories of preference formation. Both of these methods derive preferences without empirical grounding (and can thus not be used for the empirical analysis of theoretical arguments).

Another strategy of preference measurement consists in deducing preferences from observed behaviour for instance through inspections of voting behaviour in legislative assemblies, such as the European Parliament or in the Council (cf. Mattila, 2009; Poole, 2005). In our case, this strategy would suffer from some important shortcomings. Given that most EMU reform proposals are decided by unanimity, we could detect no variance of positions and would confound the acceptance of a negotiation output with the initial preferences brought to the negotiation table. Most importantly, since we are interested in a quite limited number of well specified issues, we can afford to follow a higher resolution approach to preference measurement. Therefore, for our purpose, a comparative source-based strategy, commonly associated with the case-oriented approaches used by historians or journalists, assures the highest possible degree of validity and reliability. We provide more details on our measurement strategy below.<sup>2</sup>

The key assumption of the concept of *observed preferences* is that the ordered choice set reflects the 'true' underlying preferences. This is of importance because representatives of a country may advocate a ranking of positions that deviates

from their ‘true’ underlying preferences, when they send specific signals to domestic constituencies or seek to strategically influence the behaviour of other countries (Frieden, 1999; Putnam, 1988). Morrow (1999) analyses such strategic behaviour in international politics and shows that weakly institutionalised settings and high uncertainty about the ‘true’ preferences of negotiation counterparts are conducive to strategic position taking. He also argues that this kind of negotiation settings is prevalent in international security politics.

The politics of the EMU, however, stand in stark contrast to this negotiation environment. EMU negotiations are embedded in an exceptionally information-rich environment and a highly institutionalised structure of policy-making. All participants in EMU negotiations can rely on abundant and shared information on the discussed policy options and the positions of others (see also Moravcsik, 1998). Representatives of EU member states meet on a monthly basis to negotiate economic and fiscal policies. Moreover, the most recent rounds of EMU negotiations are extensions of discussions that have been debated since the EMU was established in 1991.

In this information-rich and highly institutionalised environment of frequently repeated negotiations on the same topics, member states can hardly achieve negotiation successes by misrepresenting their ‘true’ preferences. Based on this, the negotiations of EMU reforms allow for the empirical coding of rankings of positions as reasonable approximations of the ‘true’ underlying preferences of member states.<sup>3</sup> A note on the terminology may be useful at this point, as some scholars use ‘positions’ or other related concepts as synonyms for preferences (cf. Benoit and Laver, 2006: 16; Bueno de Mesquita, 2004: 130). This is also appropriate in our case because, following the above discussion on *observed* preferences, the preference data of the ‘EMU Positions’ dataset is equivalent to *sincere positions*.

Salience is the second core concept of political analysis integrated into many theoretical decision-making models (Achen, 2006; Schneider et al., 2010). It features prominently in models of vote choice, public opinion research, interest group politics, and formal and informal models of legislative decision-making (Leuffen et al., 2014). We follow the DEU project’s articulation of the concept by using the term synonymously with ‘importance’ or ‘intensity’ (cf. Thomson et al., 2012: 612). More specifically, we build on the understanding of salience developed by Thomson and Stokman (2006: 41ff) as ‘the extent to which actors experience utility loss from the occurrence of decision outcomes that differ from the decision outcomes they most favour’.

### *Contested issues*

We coded policy proposals that made it to the formal negotiation stage during the Eurozone crisis (and also include a number of forward-looking proposals). For the coded policy proposals, we use the term ‘contested issues’ because all coded issues were politically controversial and offered a choice set for member states.

A unique feature of the ‘EMU Positions’ dataset is that it is both very detailed and comprehensive. First, the dataset codes all contested issues on EMU reforms from 2010 to 2015, with few non-issues blocked at the agenda setting stage, including proposals for secondary legislation and international agreements. Second, the dataset provides data on a distinct policy area, which makes preferences and saliences on the contested issues more comparable. Third, the whole range of contested issues includes a very broad set of proposals on fiscal measures, financial support, banking regulation, and institutional reform. Finally, the data covers high stakes negotiations (while the DEU dataset, for example, is limited to secondary legislation, covering a larger set of policy areas, but also proposals with relatively low stakes).

Like other projects on EU decision-making, we do not provide data on potential proposals that were supported by some actors but failed to attain the formal decision-taking stage (see Figure 1). The study of agenda setting, bureaucratic power, and gatekeeping has to rely on additional empirical material beyond our dataset. In this special issue, the analysis of the German–French tandem (Degner and Leuffen, 2019) builds on additional empirical material, precisely because an important power of France and Germany is their dominant role in defining the choice set.

### *Data collection in five steps*

Our approach to data collection follows established practices, first introduced in Bueno de Mesquita and Stokman (1994), and further developed by the DEU I and II datasets (Thomson et al., 2012). The DEU data collection had a major impact in the field of EU studies and ‘in many ways presents the best that scholarship on EU decision-making currently has to offer’ (Princen, 2012: 624). Based on our previous experience with this data collection, and with regard to the strong media coverage of the politics of EMU reform, we decided to include an additional step into our data collection by analysing about 5000 secondary and primary sources *before* conducting expert interviews. The document analysis provided our interviewers with a solid understanding of the contested policy issues, and contributed to improving the overall quality of our interviews. Moreover, extending the number and types of sources allowed us to more systematically triangulate our data and to gauge the uncertainty of our measures.

Our data collection process consisted of five steps (see the Online appendix for more details). First, we aimed to identify and select the most important policy proposals officially negotiated during the Eurozone crisis. Unlike the DEU project, which gathered secondary legislation proposals from diverse policy areas, we focused on the most contentious debates regarding the field of economic and fiscal policy between 2010 and 2015. To arrive at a comprehensive dataset, we also included proposals for primary law changes (treaty changes or new intergovernmental treaties discussed in the European Council) as well as strategic policy papers by EU institutions that outlined potential future reforms. On the basis of an

extensive analysis of official EU documents, quality news media articles issued, for instance, by *Euractiv*, as well as European Council conclusions and *EurLex* documentation, we identified and selected the following ten proposals: (a) the initial proposal to support Greece; (b) the EFSF; (c) the ESM; (d) the Six-Pack on fiscal and economic governance; (e) the Two-Pack on the coordination of national budgets; (f) the Fiscal Compact; (g) the Banking Union; (h) the Financial Transaction Tax; (i) Eurobonds; and (j) the 'Five Presidents' Report'.

Second, we aimed to identify and select the most contested policy issues within these 10 proposals. So far, three different approaches have been used in the literature for such purposes: some scholars select *all* issues from a (set of) proposal(s), e.g. by treating all clauses of a legislative proposal or an intergovernmental treaty draft as contested issues (see e.g. Thurner et al., 2002); others select *a limited number* of issues from a proposal by applying certain selection criteria to the full population of issues (see e.g. König and Hug, 2006); and still others confer the task of contested issue selection upon external experts, notably political decision-makers or administrative staff working at national ministries, member states' permanent representations, or EU institutions (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita and Stokman, 1994; Thomson et al., 2012).

We integrated the latter two mechanisms by, first, identifying and selecting a range of contested issues from the 10 proposals, qualitatively analysing a corpus of 831 *Euractiv* articles, and, subsequently, by validating and completing this selection through expert interviews with senior officials from EU and national institutions.<sup>4</sup> The finally selected 47 contested issues listed in Table 1 meet the following four criteria: (1) They cover policy conflicts related to one of the 10 selected reform proposals. (2) They are identifiable in the available primary and secondary sources. (3) They can be reduced to a one-dimensional policy space. (4) They were validated by experts who actually participated in the respective policy negotiations.

Importantly, the users of our dataset will ultimately decide upon whether they want to include all these issues in their analyses, or just a subset of issues or proposals. Case selection should vary for different research questions or depending on theoretical considerations; for example, Finke and Bailer (2019) expect the predictive quality of decision-making models to vary with respect to different decision-making rules. Lundgren et al. (2019) in turn investigate to what extent bargaining success depends on the application of the ordinary legislative procedure as compared to the special legislative procedure or intergovernmental procedures.

Third, we coded the preferences of all 28 EU member states and six EU institutions<sup>5</sup> for all 47 issues, as well as the saliences the actors attached to these issues. Following the DEU-blueprint, we used scores between 0 and 100 to code the two most extreme positions within the one-dimensional policy space. Like Thomson (2011: 26), we were interested in controversies related to specific legislative proposals and did not aim at measuring more latent or abstract concepts, in contrast, for instance, to Benoit and Laver (2006). A substantive part of the issues turned out to be binary choices (see Table 2 in the next section). For all other issues,

**Table 1.** EMU reform proposals and contested issues of the 'EMU Positions' dataset.

Reform proposals		Contested issues		
1	Assistance to Greece	1	G1	Initial willingness to support Greece (Bailout I)
		2	G2	First Greek programme: ad hoc or systematic
		3	G3	IMF involvement in the First Greek programme
2	EFSF	4	G4	Debt relief in the Second Greek programme
		5	EFSF1	Preparedness to issue loan guarantees
		6	EFSF2	IMF involvement
		7	EFSF3	Enhancement of the EFSF's effective capacity
3	ESM	8	EFSF4	Allowing the EFSF to use additional instruments
		9	ESM1	Changing of EU treaties
		10	ESM2	Size of the ESM
		11	ESM3	Conditionality
		12	ESM4	Private sector involvement
		13	ESM5	Support instruments of the ESM/EFSF
		14	ESM6	Financing of the ESM
4	Six-Pack	15	ESM7	Role of supranational institutions in the ESM
		16	SP1	Suspension of Council voting rights for non-compliant states
		17	SP2	Withholding EU Funds to deficit countries
		18	SP3	Blocking of SGP sanctions by reversed qualified majority
		19	SP4	Six-Pack rules on 'good' and 'bad' debts
5	Two-Pack	20	SP5	Asymmetry of macroeconomic imbalances
		21	TP1	Redemption fund in Two-Pack
		22	TP2	Pre-approving of budgets by the Commission
6	Fiscal Compact	23	TP3	Independent macroeconomic forecasts
		24	FC1	Adoption of the Fiscal compact
		25	FC2	Adoption by Treaty change
		26	FC3	Legal form of the debt brake
		27	FC4	Role of the CJEU
		28	FC5	Role of the COM
		29	FC6	Participation of non-Eurozone members at Euro Summit
		30	FC7	Purpose of the Fiscal compact
		31	FC8	Tax policy coordination
7	Banking Union	32	FC9	Incorporation to EU Treaties
		33	BU1	EU cap on bank bonuses: legal or shareholder-approved
		34	BU2	Capital buffers: centralisation or flexibility
		35	BU3	Scope of the SSM: all banks or some banks
		36	BU4	Double majority for decisions of the European Banking Authority

(continued)

**Table 1.** Continued

Reform proposals		Contested issues		
		37	BU5	Institutional responsibility for SSM at ECB
		38	BU6	SSM deadlines: speed or quality
		39	BU7	SRM decision-making powers
		40	BU8	SRF build-up and mutualisation
		41	BU9	SRF fiscal backstop
8	FTT	42	FTT	Support for financial transaction tax
9	Eurobonds	43	EBI	Support for mutualisation of Eurozone debt (Eurobonds)
10	Five Presidents' Report	44	PR1	Short-term ambitions for a fiscal union
		45	PR2	Potential redistribution within a fiscal union
		46	PR3	Political accountability
		47	PR4	Social policy integration

Note: See the Online appendix for comprehensive definitions of the issues.

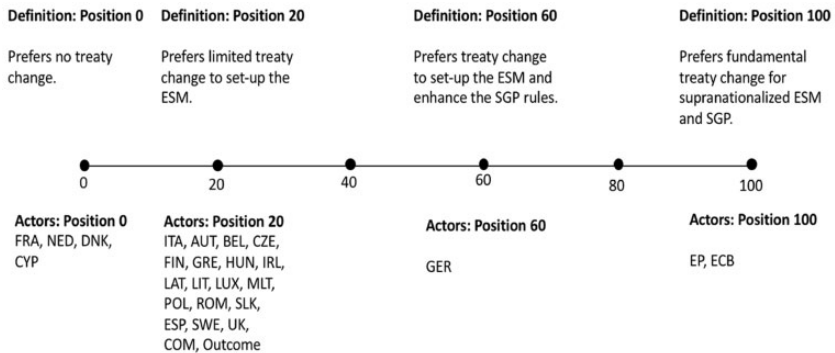
ECB: European Central Bank; COM: European Commission; CJEU: Court of Justice of the European Union; EFSF: European Financial Stability Facility; ESM: European Stability Mechanism; IMF: International Monetary Fund; SGP: Stability and Growth Pact; SRF: single resolution fund; SRM: single resolution mechanism; SSM: single supervisory mechanism.

we explicitly defined any in-between positions and assigned scores that broadly reflect the closeness to either extreme position (see Figure 2 for an example).

The policy space thus is defined by expert judgements, both inside our research consortium (we systematically compared the scoring of different researchers) and by our expert interview partners. Convergence on the understanding of the policy space was generally reached and we therefore believe that the distances between positions are meaningful. However, we would like to emphasise that the users of our dataset are free to use the data as measured at an interval or an ordinal level (or both as robustness checks). Also, the articles of this special issue apply a variety of empirical approaches, including ordinal and linear models.

As to the comparability of scales across different issues, we agree with Thomson et al. (2012: 615) that this again depends on the research interests of the dataset's users. It may be legitimate to consider the entire set of issues when interested in establishing general distances between EU or EMU member states. For other substantive interests, however, it might be recommendable to focus on just a subset of our data. Tarlea et al. (2019), for example, only analyse those issues that could be linked to an underlying integration dimension. In the Online appendix and the codebook, we provide detailed information on our data in order to enable researchers to take informed choices when designing their empirical research.

Figure 2 presents an example of a policy space with four substantive positions regarding the question of whether the EU treaties should be changed for the introduction of the ESM. Most member states held position 20 and thus preferred



**Figure 2.** Example of a policy space of a contested issue.

a limited treaty change through the introduction of Art. 136.3. This change only authorised the creation of the ESM, but neither enhanced the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) (Position 60), nor fundamentally transformed the governance of fiscal and economic policy in the EU by transferring additional competencies to the supranational institutions (Position 100). Although neither Germany, nor the ECB, nor France held this position, it emerged as the outcome of the interstate negotiations.

For saliences, we used a scale ranging from 0 to 10 with 0 reflecting no interest and 10 the highest possible interest in an issue. We have coded saliences as an interval scale, believing that average values can provide meaningful insights.

With regard to timing, we coded preferences and saliences after the specific proposal was put forward, but before the final consensus was reached in the Council or the European Council. If an outcome was reached by the end of 2015, it is also reported in our dataset. Our data collection procedure guarantees strong replicability standards, in accordance with the ‘data access and research transparency’ (DA-RT) initiative. In particular, each coded position contains a link to those document(s) and statement(s) that revealed the positions of the member state. Thus, we allow researchers to gauge the uncertainty of our measurements, mirroring the advances made in measuring party positions through expert surveys (cf. Benoit and Laver, 2006). In addition, we have set up an internal review process, whereby each research team critically reviewed the issue definitions, policy spaces, and position coding of other teams. This review process enabled us to streamline definitions and sharpen interpretations, and it ensured the consistency of coding across the dataset.

Fourth, our interviews validated the selection of contested issues and definitions of policy spaces and contributed to reaching a high level of completeness in our data collection. Since the document analysis provided a solid foundation for efficient interviews, we were able to validate positions quickly and increase their completeness from 54% to 73%.<sup>6</sup> In addition, we asked the interviewees for their assessment of the saliences that member states’ governments attached to



the contested issue, because such salience scores proved hard to code through document analysis. The final completeness of the salience scores dataset reached 60%. Overall, we conducted interviews with 29 senior officials from 10 EU member states; each official had been personally involved in the relevant decision-making processes. The document analysis and validation interviews complement each other in a Bayesian updating logic (Humphreys and Jacobs, 2015), while maintaining the best practices in the field of measuring preferences and saliences (Thomson, 2011; Warntjen, 2012).

Finally, we triangulated and aggregated the data following three different aggregation procedures (winner-takes-all, weighted-average, decision-tree method). These procedures utilised information on: (a) the credibility of sources; (b) the quality of the interview; and (c) the consistency scores for the coded preferences (see the codebook in the Online appendix for details). The simplest aggregation method is the winner-takes-all approach adopted by the DEU project (Thomson et al., 2012). Using our credibility, quality, and consistency indicators for each data point, we selected the highest-quality coding, following a winner-takes-all selection procedure. The downside of this method is that it does not use all available data.

The second aggregation relies on weighted means (cf. Leuffen et al., 2013), attained by using the rating of the interview quality to weight inconsistent position scores. While weighted means use all available data, the resulting scores demand further interpretation, as they are not necessarily specified in the definition of relevant policy space. Finally, the third method is based on the decision-tree procedure, which selects the majority view among position scores. In case of a tie, it prioritises the document analysis. The decision-tree procedure thus selects the most credible coding, and has the advantage of keeping aggregated positions in line with the positions defined within the policy space. When comparing the results of the different aggregation strategies, we find in 92% of the data points that these different methods did not lead to different positions; this highlights the strong agreement of our sources and our data's reliability. All papers in this special issue use the version of the 'EMU position' dataset, which relies on the decision-tree aggregation strategy.

### ***Summary of the 'EMU Positions' dataset***

Table 2 summarises a number of key aspects of the 'EMU Positions' dataset. It lists the number of positions in the policy space (29 contested issues are coded as binary, 17 include three pre-defined policy positions, and one includes four positions). In addition, the column on the coded positions reports the broad coverage of our dataset. For 28 contested issues, we have coded the positions of more than 20 member states, while the average coverage across all 47 issues is 20.5 member states. The use of multiple sources, combined with the triangulation strategy, maximised the completeness of the data. The coverage is lower for EU institutions, which do not regularly articulate a consolidated position. The average coverage is 3.3 (out of 6) EU institutions.

**Table 2.** Summary of the ‘EMU positions’ dataset.

Contested issues		Positions in the policy space	Coded positions		Average positions			Average salience
			MS	EU institutions	MS	EU institutions	Outcome	MS
1	G1	2	27	4	70	100	100	5.1
2	G2	2	8	5	38	60	0	4.2
3	G3	3	23	6	57	25	100	5.8
4	G4	3	21	5	45	30	50	5.2
5	EFSF1	2	21	6	81	100	100	4.1
6	EFSF2	3	15	6	53	0	100	3.6
7	EFSF3	2	18	5	72	100	100	4.6
8	EFSF4	2	11	3	64	100	100	4
9	ESM1	4	28	4	19	60	20	6.1
10	ESM2	2	21	3	95	100	0	8.2
11	ESM3	2	7	3	100	100	100	na
12	ESM4	3	17	4	45	15	20	6.5
13	ESM5	3	17	3	47	100	20	6.9
14	ESM6	3	18	4	68	35	0	7.8
15	ESM7	4	19	3	31	100	40	6.2
16	SPA1	2	22	3	41	67	0	8
17	SPA2	2	27	3	44	33	0	8.3
18	SPA3	2	23	5	74	60	100	9.7
19	SPA4	2	23	3	35	100	100	5
20	SPA5	2	10	3	50	33	0	7.8
21	TPA1	2	20	5	55	60	0	7.8
22	TPA2	2	28	3	4	67	0	9.8
23	TPA3	2	28	3	4	67	0	8.3
24	FC1	3	28	0	88	na	50	7
25	FC2	3	21	4	86	75	0	8.8
26	FC3	3	26	3	35	83	50	9.5
27	FC4	2	28	2	4	50	0	9
28	FC5	2	19	2	47	50	0	9
29	FC6	3	11	2	68	25	50	9.2
30	FC7	3	12	3	33	50	0	6.1
31	FC8	2	22	1	59	100	0	7.7
32	FC9	2	8	3	100	100	100	9.3
33	BU1	2	17	4	94	100	100	5.3
34	BU2	3	21	3	14	67	50	5.4
35	BU3	3	23	3	77	100	70	5
36	BU4	2	23	1	9	0	0	5.5
37	BU5	2	12	2	33	100	100	3.2
38	BU6	3	18	3	56	67	50	4.9
39	BU7	3	26	5	42	80	70	8.8
40	BU8	3	24	4	53	90	80	5.2

(continued)

**Table 2.** Continued

Contested issues	Positions in the policy space	Coded positions		Average positions			Average salience	
		MS	EU institutions	MS	EU institutions	Outcome	MS	
41	BU9	2	18	4	56	50	0	8.4
42	FTT	2	28	6	39	0	na	na
43	EBI	3	22	2	55	100	na	6.9
44	PR1	3	27	1	50	100	na	na
45	PR2	3	25	1	46	100	na	na
46	PR3	3	26	1	52	100	na	na
47	PR4	2	27	1	44	100	na	na

MS: member states; EU: European Union.

Table 2 also lists the average position scores, showing a fairly even distribution among contested issues that have an average position in the middle, those that are tilted more in favour of one side as well as issues where nearly all member states shared the same position (resulting in average scores close to 0 or 100). The EU institutions more often converge on the same positions (usually coded as 100). In addition, Table 2 reports the outcome. The comparison of the distances between the final outcome and the average positions of EU member states and institutions, which we can calculate for 40 contested issues, shows that for 21 issues the average of member states' positions was closer to the final outcome, while in 17 cases the average positions of EU institutions were closer (in two issues the average was the same). This indicates that the reform of the EMU was a mixture of intergovernmental bargaining and decision-making with the involvement of EU institutions. Finally, the last column reports the average saliency score for member states. Interestingly, the average saliency is rather low for the contested issue of the Greek assistance programmes and the EFSF, while we found the highest saliency scores for the issues of the Two-Pack and the Fiscal Compact.

To sum up, the substantive articles of this special issue demonstrate that the 'EMU Positions' dataset provides systematic and comprehensive data for testing and developing theories of EU decision-making. It is more complete than existing datasets and also provides data on member states that joined the EU and Eurozone after 2004. In the data collection, we followed, by and large, the DEU approach (Thomson et al., 2012), implementing several improvements and with a focus on a set of fiscal and economic integration policies that mark the most profound deepening of European integration since Maastricht. The 'EMU Positions' dataset is based on a transparent and disciplined method of data collection, and the reported position scores refer to clearly defined points in the policy space, where higher scores indicate more pro-integrative proposals. Importantly, the interested user can trace them to their underlying sources. The codebook and Online appendix provide access to the data and further information on the data.

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## Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

## Notes

1. Frieden (1999: 57) uses ‘observed’ and ‘revealed’ preferences as synonyms.
2. For the empirical coding of preferences in EU studies, the most commonly used measurement tools are historical reviews of primary and secondary sources (e.g. Moravcsik, 1998; Wasserfallen, 2014), expert interviews and surveys (e.g. Armingeon and Cranmer, 2018; Benoit and Laver, 2006; Bueno de Mesquita and Stokman, 1994; Thomson et al., 2012; Thurner et al., 2002), hand-coded content analyses of European party manifestos (e.g. Budge et al., 2001), computerised quantitative text analyses, and analyses of voting behaviour (e.g. Mattila, 2009).
3. Please note that our analytical argument is not that negotiations positions are fully exogenous to the negotiation environment. Rather, for the validity of the concept of observed preferences, a more modest assumption is sufficient, namely that the rankings of the policy options are not distorted by systematic dishonest signals that are reflections of strategic considerations.
4. Euractiv generates consistent, in-depth text written in a standardised style and language (English), which makes the reporting across reforms comparable.
5. Besides the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Central Bank, the dataset also covers the European Council, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council, and the Eurogroup.
6. This validation approach created some risk of confirmation bias on the part of the interviewee. However, pilot studies indicated that experts were keen to point out various complexities of the negotiation process that could not be included in the simple definitions of the policy issues. Furthermore, to reduce the risk of a confirmation bias, we adopted a wording of the questionnaire emphasising that the data stem from media reporting (taking ourselves at a distant and neutral position).

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