

Tracing the employment title in the Amsterdam treaty: uncovering transnational coalitions

Karl Magnus Johansson

ABSTRACT This article traces the employment title in the Amsterdam treaty, with the aim of uncovering the role of transnational coalitions. The perspectives of transnational coalition-building and policy-making, in the European Union, are combined to shed light on transnational strategies of influence. Such strategies were employed by political parties and trade unions. They are treated as linkage actors in a transmission system, or belt, linking the domestic and supranational levels to one another. Institutions in the European Union are conceived of as both carriers of their own strategies and access points. By identifying support and initiatives on the part of governments, an attempt is also made to assess the relative importance of intergovernmental and transnational channels. A temporal dimension is thus injected. In conclusion, it can be shown that the employment title was to a large extent a result of a transnational policy contribution.

KEY WORDS Coalition-building; employment title; intergovernmental; Party of European Socialists; policy-making; transnational.

INTRODUCTION

Employment became one of the priorities of the 1996/7 Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) of the European Union (EU) and an employment title was inserted into the Amsterdam treaty. The title states that employment is ‘a matter of common concern’ and calls for the member states and the EU to ‘work towards developing a co-ordinating strategy for employment’. Even before the treaty itself came into effect, the employment committee was in operation. Moreover, the Commission was designated to play a more active role with regard to employment.

Following the Amsterdam summit of June 1997, which concluded the IGC, political leaders, such as the Swedish representatives, invoked the habit of claiming national victory, particularly in reference to the employment title. However, the title originates from a number of sources and driving forces. A leading research question is to what extent we are dealing with a transnational policy contribution. The overall aim of this article is to uncover the role of transnational coalitions.

The article discusses the ways and means of transnational coalition-building. Ultimately, the theoretical and empirical concerns are to problematize and assess the relative importance of transnational and intergovernmental channels in EU

policy-making. In the process of carrying out this assessment, a temporal dimension will be injected.

To undertake this analysis, I use the research method known as 'process-tracing'. Accordingly, I assemble 'bits and pieces of evidence into a pattern', thereby explaining the processes at work by taking account of 'a stream of behavior' (cf. George and McKeown 1985: 35–6). In short, the emphasis is on process rather than substance.

In addition to direct observation and informal conversations, I have conducted thirteen elite interviews. Even though flexibility characterized the interviews, they all shared a common concern with coalition-building and strategies for influence. Furthermore, the interviews do not stand on their own but are cross-checked with other sources. The primary material also consists of documents and party publications. Archival research was undertaken at the secretariat of the Party of European Socialists (PES). A complementary source of information consists of newspaper articles.

The article is organized along the following lines. The next section establishes a conceptual framework. Drawing on the concepts introduced there, the analysis will trace the various sources, and driving forces, of the employment title. Attention will be paid, in this order, to political parties, trade unions, EU institutions and governments. Finally, I assess the relative importance of transnational and intergovernmental channels and draw out the implications of this case study for EU policy-making.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As will be shown in the article, channels other than the purely governmental are activated in EU policy-making. The intergovernmental channels are complemented, or perhaps even bypassed, by transnational channels of communication, which link political decision-makers and their advisers to counterparts in other states. The theoretical challenge here is to connect the perspectives of transnational coalition-building and policy-making, in the EU, to one another.

Transnational coalition-building

In recent years, the literature on transnationalism has been reintroduced in international relations (see, for example, Risse-Kappen 1994, 1995a, 1995b). Likewise, scholarship within the subfield of foreign policy analysis has uncovered the 'missing links' by drawing attention to linkage actors and their strategies (Mingst 1995). Such actors bridge different levels of analysis. They thus employ a strategy of transnational coalition-building. Examples of linkage actors operating on a transnational basis are private individuals, trade unions and political parties.

When linkage actors exercise transnational strategies of influence, they may do so either by building coalitions with societal movements or by targeting actors directly at state level in other countries, or in international organizations for that matter (cf. Kaiser 1969). The relative effectiveness of those strategies is likely to depend on the nature of the political system to be penetrated (cf. Rosenau 1980). A more centralized political system invites transnational strategies targeting the state

directly, whereas a more decentralized political system invites a coalition strategy which seeks to influence the state through societal actors (cf. Risse-Kappen 1994).

The degree of institutionalization of transnational coalitions varies from loosely structured networks to joint transnational organizations, to which some actor capacity may have been assigned. There is thus potential to shape the attitudes of the different subunits in one way or another. On the basis of consensual knowledge, a persuasive strategy may be employed both inside and outside the transnational coalition. Providing communications networks, such policy coalitions bring the role of ideas to light. Moreover, it might be argued that private individuals could be of fundamental importance in such coalitions. They may act as policy entrepreneurs. In this perspective, a transnational coalition can be seen as an 'advocacy coalition', by which is meant 'people from various organizations who share a set of normative and causal beliefs and who often act in concert' (Sabatier 1988: 133; see also Sabatier 1998).

A typology should be developed between different kinds of linkage actors as well as transnational strategies of influence. One categorization is between grassroots mobilization and élite mobilization (cf. Mingst 1995). In this analysis, attention is overwhelmingly paid to political élites. However, comparative studies of the nature of transnational coalitions would surely be welcome. Such studies should enter into questions of what the strategies are and how they are employed by different kinds of actor.

EU policy-making

The perspective of transnational coalition-building can be synthesized with that of policy-making in the EU. Although little effort has been made to construct such a synthesis, scholarship on European integration actually called attention to transnational relations at an early stage (see, for example, Webb 1977). However, the striking similarities between transnationalist and neofunctionalist reasoning have often been ignored.

EU policy-making refers to the processes at this level and to those linking the supranational level to that of the member state. This situation provides room for linkage actors and makes complexity a characteristic of the policy-making process. In the words of Nugent (1994: 297): 'There can hardly be said to be a "standard" or a "typical" EU policy-making or decision-making process. A multiplicity of actors interact with one another via a myriad of channels.' At least in part, such interactions take place through transnational coalitions. Such coalitions are at times connected to the set of inter-institutional linkages within the EU, enabling policy-makers to forge alliances around different policy proposals.

One of the stages in a policy-making process, including that in the EU, concerns initiation, or agenda-setting (cf. Cram 1997; Kronsell 1997; Peters 1996). It is likely that the impact of transnational coalitions is greater in the early stages of the policy process, especially in the agenda-setting phase, than in the final stages. The earlier in the process, the greater the room for ideas and persuasive strategies by policy entrepreneurs.

The incentives for different groups and social movements to build transnational coalitions with a view to EU policy-making are affected by the changing structures of political opportunity (cf. Marks and McAdam 1996). In turn, such opportunity structures are affected by institutional changes. On the basis of ideas and consensual knowledge, units inside a transnational coalition also combine to defend interests. It is in this connection that 'advocacy coalitions' may emerge (cf. Sabatier 1988, 1998). Individuals in the coalitions may therefore act as policy entrepreneurs, or 'advocates', exploiting the number of access points in the EU system. And EU institutions could themselves play the role of policy entrepreneur, advocating their own strategies (cf. Laffan 1997).

As foreseen in early neofunctionalist writings on European integration, interest groups and political parties do provide transnational channels (see, for example, Haas 1958; Lindberg 1963). In my view, transnational exchanges weaken the intergovernmentalist stance. As a result of their involvement in the processes of informal integration, transnational actors and movements could be ahead of governments (cf. Wallace 1990). Through such processes, actors could eventually also compensate for their exclusion from processes of formal integration, including those through institutions in accordance with the official practices.

A transnational coalition in the EU could also be seen as a transmission system, or belt, providing links between the domestic and the supranational level. As pointed out by Helen Wallace (1996:30–1), the 'formulation and implementation of policy depend on the transmission systems through which policy demands are articulated, interpreted, and find practical responses.' As she also notes, the character of the transmission systems varies between different policy sectors. Parliamentarians and party politicians are part of such systems, which could be in the form of coalitions. An example of such a coalition is that of the European socialists, or the social democrats, to which attention will be paid below.

TRACING THE EMPLOYMENT TITLE

When tracing the origins of the employment title, both governmental and non-governmental actors must be taken into account. Although IGCs are formally between governments, processes are set in motion which involve other types of actor and preparations are made well in advance. Before the official opening of the IGC, in Turin on 29 March 1996, efforts had been made to set the agenda both through formal and informal channels. Such channels will be examined below.

Political parties

The main partisan sources that promoted an employment title in the new treaty included individual social democrat, or socialist, political parties and the PES, alongside the PES Group in the European Parliament (EP).¹ By providing links between the supranational and the national levels, political parties serve as linkage actors on a transnational basis. In short, they are transnational coalition-builders.

The emerging European parties have been undergoing an organizational

transformation in recent years. They clearly play a political role in so far as they 'can have a direct input into the policy debate and agenda' (Lécureuil 1996: 195; cf. Hix and Lord 1997; Johansson 1997b; Ladrech 1997a, 1997b). Traditionally, the transnational party federations have mainly been treated as entities, or arenas, to be acted upon or through, but seldom as independent actors in their own right. In the following analysis, however, I will look upon one of them, the PES, both as an actor and an arena.

Party of European Socialists

Through a variety of activities the PES contributed to putting the employment title on the IGC agenda and driving it along to the concluding Amsterdam summit.² The group of Sherpas, which is made up of personal representatives of party leaders in government and the chairman of the PES Group, met to co-ordinate approaches in view of the European Council summits and to influence the direction of the IGC. Also, there was a PES working group on the IGC.³ At another level, there was the party leaders' conference, which brings together party leaders and heads of government along with a couple of commissioners, the chairman of the PES Group as well as the PES president and secretary-general.

As Ladrech (1997b: 17) points out, when referring to the pre-IGC stage, 'the Socialist network sought to influence the multiple points at which the IGC was being developed.' The same could be said of the entire period, that is, up to the Amsterdam summit in June 1997. Before the summit, a party leaders' conference had been called and all nine socialist or social democrat prime ministers had also been present at the third ordinary PES congress in Malmö, Sweden, on 5–7 June 1997, along with a series of ministers, leaders of opposition parties and leading figures of EU institutions.⁴

Going back to the December 1995 Madrid European Council, the PES leaders, in and out of government, had adopted a declaration on the forthcoming IGC, pointing out that '[f]irst and foremost the EU should be fully mobilized in the fight against unemployment' (PES 1995). Although the declaration maintained that the primary responsibilities should lie with the member states, it was stated that national policies can be made more effective through 'European co-ordination' (PES 1995).

Before the December 1994 Essen European Council, the PES leaders had jointly adopted a declaration. It pointed out that 'Europe lacks an effective employment policy' and referred to the PES document, or action plan, 'Put Europe to Work' (PES 1994a). This document was the result of a PES working group set up in 1993, namely the European Employment Initiative (EEI). In tracing the employment title, close attention must be paid to this working group.

European Employment Initiative

The EEI was composed of the personal representatives of the party leaders. There were a number of reasons why this working group was set up. The Copenhagen

European Council of June 1993, presided over by a social democrat prime minister, had delivered the message that employment had top priority. The Commission was asked to draft a report, which would become the Delors' White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment. Against this background, the PES and its member parties concerned themselves with strategies to combat unemployment. Preparations were also under way for the June 1994 European elections and for the coming IGC.

The EEI is said to have been one of the most active working groups ever set up within the PES. It was launched at a meeting in Portugal in early September 1993 in the presence of Commission president Delors and party leaders, including some heads of government (*Agence Europe*, 4 and 6/7 September 1993; see also Brown-Pappamikail 1995: 4). Following a request from Felipe González, Ingvar Carlsson, the then leader of the Swedish social democrat party, nominated a chairman, Allan Larsson. Larsson had been finance minister in the Swedish government in 1990–1 and before that director-general of the Swedish Labour Market Board.

Carlsson himself came to the meeting 'pretty well prepared'. He recalled that there was a positive attitude, notably from González and Franz Vranitzky. Carlsson argued that the PES should be strengthened and he considered employment a good issue to focus on. More generally, he pointed out that experience had shown, not least from France in the early 1980s but also from Sweden in the early 1990s, that 'the nation state is no longer enough' and, therefore, that 'means across national borders had to be found' (cf. Gustavsson 1998: ch. 8). Since Sweden was not yet a member of the EU, and therefore not part of 'the formal co-operation', Carlsson considered it natural to develop contacts with the emerging European party.

The working party prepared a report on employment in view of the European Council in December 1993. The policy document would be referred to as the Larsson Report. The significance of the contents of this document is its analysis of Europe as an economic entity. However, it may be that the most important outcome of this report was the personal contacts created during the process of drafting it, and the resulting impact on parallel activities within both the PES and the EU. As Ladrech (1997a: 180) points out, the Larsson Report was 'a truly transnational policy contribution by the Socialists' and it 'was the product of intensive consultation at the highest levels of party and government'.

In addition to the personal representatives of the party leaders, the working group comprised representatives of the Commission president, the PES Group and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Some of the participants would later become ministers and involved at the EU Council level and in the IGC negotiations on treaty reform.⁵ Therefore, 'important personal investments, personal contacts' were made, as Larsson put it.

One of the items on the agenda of these meetings was a report by the chairman on his recent bilateral meetings. Among those he met were: party leaders, prime ministers, leading representatives of the Commission and the ETUC, as well as PES president Willy Claes, who at the time was also foreign minister in the Belgian government holding the presidency of the European Community (EC)/EU.

Larsson visited practically every member state during the autumn of 1993 and met all the party leaders (cf. Larsson 1994: 8; *Svenska Dagbladet*, 10 December 1993).⁶ One such occasion was the evening of 5 November 1993, before the extraordinary PES congress in Brussels. At this congress a manifesto was adopted for the 1994 European elections (PES 1993; see also *Agence Europe*, 4, 8/9 and 10 November 1993).⁷

Different proposals to fight unemployment were again discussed by the party leaders at their conference in Brussels on 9 December 1993, before the European Council (see *Agence Europe*, 4 and 11 December 1993). At the meeting, the document 'Put Europe to Work', or the Larsson Report, was adopted. The conference also approved Delors' White Paper (see the *Guardian*, 9 and 10 December 1993). There was also an exchange of ideas and information between the EEI and the Commission, notably with Delors' cabinet (Larsson 1994; see also Hix 1995: 547; Ladrech 1996: 16).

A final version of the Larsson Report was adopted by the PES at its meeting in Corfu on 23 June, before the European Council there (PES 1994b; cf. *Agence Europe*, 24 June 1994). At their meeting in December, the party leaders had already invited the working group chaired by Larsson to elaborate its proposals in view of the June 1994 European elections (Larsson 1994: 8). The new text was finalized and presented during the spring. It contained only minor adjustments to the previous version. Having given his name to the document, Larsson built consensual knowledge and support for various policy proposals. Again, transnational coalitions were used for strategies of influence and access.

SAMAK

Transnational coalitions also exist between Nordic social democrat parties and trade unions (cf. Johansson 1997a). A long-standing forum is SAMAK, to which the fundamental points of the Larsson Report, and the EEI itself, can be traced. Indeed, the very title of 'Put Europe to Work' was a translation from a report in Swedish – 'Sätt Europa i arbete' – drafted by a SAMAK working group which had also been chaired by Allan Larsson. This working group was set up in response to the contact that Larsson and Svend Auken, then leader of the Danish social democrats, had had with the Socialist Group in the EP in early 1992.⁸ It seems, therefore, that it was not by chance that the EEI was launched or that Larsson was nominated as its chairman. As Ingvar Carlsson said, 'preparations' had been made in SAMAK, where party leaders get together every year. In short, the ideas behind 'Put Europe to Work' were transmitted to the EC/EU through SAMAK and the Socialist Group (cf. Jerneck 1997: 158).

Larsson remained active in SAMAK, primarily in its group on economic policy. According to him the very concept of an 'employment union' was coined within SAMAK in early 1995. There was also a working group dealing with the IGC. In this group, Nordic social democrats discussed the agenda for the IGC, including employment.

Through SAMAK and other channels, such as the reference group of the

Swedish social democrats, Larsson had close contact with social democrats in different positions. One of these was his former state secretary in the finance ministry, Gunnar Lund, who was now state secretary in the foreign ministry. Lund occasionally took part in SAMAK meetings, such as the ones held by its IGC group, and pointed out that this 'network' was taken advantage of in the background. Significantly, he said that, for the development of the employment issue in the IGC, the Nordic and European 'party work' was 'the most important' and had already taken place 'in an early phase'. As was initially assumed, transnational coalitions seem to be of greatest importance in the early phases of the policy processes. Their impact is primarily that of transmission systems and transnational sources of agenda formation.

Trade unions

The idea of an employment title was endorsed, however, with different degrees of enthusiasm by trade unions at the national level and by the ETUC. As one component of the social partners, trade unions have established contacts with political parties, EU institutions and governments. The social partners have the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) as their formal institution in the EU. However, its political relevance is questionable and it seems that there are more useful channels, or transmission systems, through which trade unions can exercise influence. A forum for continual contact in the EU is the social dialogue, which Delors was always keen on and which reflected his Christian socialist background (cf. Grant 1994).

Given the trend of eroding political influence for trade unions at the national level, it has been assumed that this situation 'may help develop supranationality among labour interests at the European level' (Greenwood 1997: 171). As was previously pointed out, there may be changing opportunity structures at the European level which subnational actors may exploit jointly with counterparts from other countries, thereby developing links across borders and becoming transnational actors. This also holds for trade unions. Against this background, 'it is surprising how little has been written about ETUC's mode of representation, the aspiration it holds and the structure of its policy-making procedures' (Abbott 1997: 465-6). It should be remembered that ETUC had been represented in the PES working group on employment.

European Trade Union Confederation

The ETUC has developed links with both the EP and the Commission. In the EP, there is an intergroup on trade unions, which is quite active and with which ETUC has regular meetings (Greenwood 1997: 166; see also Mazey and Richardson 1997a: 243). They share a common concern with employment.

Within the Commission, the ETUC's best relations 'are with DG [Directorate-General] V, where it enjoys insider status' (Greenwood 1997: 172-3; cf. Mazey and Richardson 1997b). This is the DG which deals with employment

and of which Allan Larsson has been director-general since May 1995. He himself established contacts with the ETUC in his capacity as EEI chairman.

The ETUC was represented in the EEI by Peter Coldrick. With regard to employment, the IGC agenda and more general matters, he pointed out that the ETUC is 'working closely' with the Commission and the EP and has 'a real dialogue with governments'. He also mentioned the importance of the intergroup in the EP on trade union contacts. Regarding the IGC, he said that the ETUC had its own working group and that it 'started early to target the reflection group'. The ETUC exercised 'an influence through' the representatives of the EP. The ETUC's secretary-general, Emilio Gabaglio, met individual members of the reflection group. The ETUC also acted through national affiliates, such as the Swedish Landsorganisationen (LO), which had contact with the Swedish representative in the IGC, Gunnar Lund. We kept in touch with the Swedish government, said Coldrick, adding that it first favoured a chapter on employment. He noted that there are prime ministers with a trade union background, including Wim Kok, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and Jean-Claude Juncker, who is a Christian democrat. Coldrick emphasized that 'personal contacts are often more important than people think', not least in terms of 'access' and 'useful networks'.

As far as the employment title is concerned, such personal contacts between representatives of the ETUC, including Gabaglio himself, and those of governments, provided channels through which the concerns of the trade union movement were communicated. As Greenwood (1997: 175) has written more generally: 'Labour interests now play an institutionalised role in the development of social Europe, and have demonstrated their ability to set issues on its agenda.' In this regard, the EU institutions provide access points for trade unions seeking to make an impact on EU policy-making.

EU institutions

EU institutions were instrumental in bringing the employment title forward, mainly through activists in the advocacy coalition favouring this cause. The EU institutions might be conceived of being both carriers of their own strategies and access points for other activists. Those advocating an employment title built support not only through the intergovernmental machinery, notably the Council and the European Council, but also through the Commission and the EP. It should be pointed out that both the Commission and the EP had been represented in the PES working group on employment, the EEI.

European Commission

In policy terms, it is noteworthy that the timing of the EEI coincided with the Commission's drafting of the White Paper. As mentioned above, Larsson, as EEI chairman, had access to Delors and his aides. Delors was himself present at the PES party leaders' conferences. The Commission president was therefore part of a transnational coalition which he, in turn, could take advantage of in formulating and

winning approval for different policy initiatives in the early phases of the policy-making process. It should be stressed that the Commission has the formal right of initiative in the EU and that it plays the role of policy entrepreneur.

In view of the IGC, the Commission was represented in the reflection group. The representative was commissioner Marcelino Oreja, a Spanish Christian democrat. Working within a coalition-like institution he was forced to take account of the views of those from the other side of the political spectrum. The Commission, taking office in January 1995, had no less than nine socialist, or social democrat, commissioners. And a social democrat, Allan Larsson, was appointed director-general of DG V, dealing with employment.

Beyond a doubt, Larsson had a strong impact on the Commission and on its position with the IGC. For example, he discussed employment with Jacques Santer, Delors' successor. It is also interesting that Patrick Venturini, who had worked in Delors' cabinet and been exposed to the updates on the EEI's progress back in 1993 when the cabinet was drafting the White Paper, became one of Larsson's senior advisers in DG V. In addition, DG V had close contacts with the Commission's IGC task force, as did the Commission's own Forward Studies Unit, whose head, Jérôme Vignon, had been active in the EEI.⁹

Behind the scenes, the Commission's DG V worked closely with individual presidencies, such as the Irish presidency during the second half of 1996. Through the transnational coalitions, there was also liaison between Irish politicians and political advisers and the party groups in the EP.

European Parliament

Looking back, it is clear that the EP had already been targeted at the preparatory stages of the EEI through the PES Group, which was represented in that working group. This was also the case with regard to the PES working group on the IGC. Another example was the PES Group's nomination of a member of the EP (MEP), along with the Christian democrat-dominated EPP Group, to the reflection group. This meant that the EP, for the first time, was part of the formal structure preparing an IGC. The socialist in question was Elisabeth Guigou. Her adviser was Richard Corbett. In an interview, he pointed out that there was a convergence between the EP and the Swedish government on employment and an alliance between Guigou and Lund, the Swedish representative in the reflection group, who 'worked very closely' together and were even 'driving it along'.

Referring to Guigou, Lund said that when he first launched the idea of an employment chapter in the reflection group she gave her immediate support. Significantly, he noted that there was a 'party-political network' behind the support given by the socialist MEP, pointing out that the idea reached the PES Group, and the EP itself, through the PES (cf. Ladrech 1997b: 17). However, it was in 1995 that the idea of a separate chapter on employment was first embraced in official EP documents in view of the IGC.¹⁰

Following the 1995 EU enlargement, the new MEPs included Swedish social democrats, who actively campaigned for an employment title. Contact between

them and their party, now in government, was made. They thereby served as linkage actors.

Although there were MEPs who voiced scepticism over an employment title, emphasizing the need for instruments to make it operative, most members gave their overwhelming support. And many of them were actively campaigning for a more co-ordinated employment policy in the EU.

Whatever the formal competences of the EP – which has seen its powers increase considerably as a result of treaty reforms – it has a real influence on the policy process. To some extent the EP was even ahead of governments, and the Commission as well, and it definitely contributed to shaping the agenda. Since many of its policy proposals ended up in the treaty, the EP successfully performed ‘an agenda-setting role’ (Corbett 1998: 372). The EP is, therefore, more than ‘a potential agenda-setter’ (Wallace 1996: 31). Instead, there is a strong case for arguing that the EP is a real agenda-setter (cf. Earnshaw and Judge 1996; Johansson 1997c; Tsebelis 1994). The EP is part of the transmission systems and transnational coalitions providing links between institutions at the supranational and national levels. As a result, links are established with governments.

Governments

Contrary to the intergovernmentalist stance, we have seen that additional actors other than governments are important in the policy process. However, the intergovernmental channels still carry a heavy weight. Once the IGC was under way, governments became more actively involved in the process.

Although there were different degrees of enthusiasm within the socialist, or social democrat, party family, there was a clear party-political pattern behind the support given by governments to the employment title (cf. Ladrech 1997b: 17). Several of the PES member parties were in government, either on their own or in coalition with others. It must also be emphasized that the composition of governments changed from the time of the EEI in 1993 to the conclusion of the IGC in June 1997, when PES member parties were governing in Britain and France following their recent victories. This situation changed the balance of political power within the European Council, but was not necessarily decisive for the inclusion of an employment title in the new treaty.

The British Conservative government had been the main obstacle to an employment chapter, or title, on ideological grounds. There had also been scepticism, or outright opposition, from the previous French Gaullist-led government, and from the German government.

Arguably, however, neither the French nor the German government was likely to block the employment title. The German coalition government was not as opposed to the employment title as was generally believed and reported. Kohl himself said, in the context of the Dublin summit in December 1996, that he was ‘pragmatic’, and the German Christian democrat MEP in the reflection group, Elmar Brok, who had the ear of Kohl, supported the idea. In fact, Brok said that he had obtained ‘a green light from the chancellor himself for the employment

chapter'. Given the strong pressure from both within Germany, with one of the parliamentary chambers controlled by the social democrats, and the European Council for such a chapter, Kohl sensed that it was unstoppable. All in all, the German government's stance was more of a 'bargaining chip' than an outright rejection. Officially, it may have been against; unofficially, it was not.

The German position also reflected the fact that we were dealing with a coalition government, which included the more free-market oriented liberals. And whatever the doubts, they were mainly of an economic nature, in opposition to Keynesian spending. This was one of the main strands of remaining scepticism on the part of other governments. Another argument against a separate title on employment was that it was an intrusion into a matter that should be dealt with at the national level. Additionally, it was feared that the impression might be given that the EU has more instruments at its disposal to combat unemployment than it actually has. The effect might be that a failure to deliver, so to speak, could further undermine the EU's legitimacy. A further reason for scepticism, especially in the earlier stages of the process, was that an employment chapter, or even an employment union, could allegedly have negative implications for monetary union.¹¹ Socialist governments even made their support for an employment chapter conditional by insisting that the convergence criteria remain unchanged.¹²

In addition to the Swedish government, the governments most supportive of an employment title included, not necessarily in this order, the Austrian, the Belgian, the Dutch, the Irish and those of the other Nordic countries. However, the Dutch government had mixed feelings and the Danish government seemed more positive than the Finnish one, which was more cautious because of its fear that the EU would become overburdened. Although it came in the later stages of the IGC, French pressure for a strengthened legal basis for employment in the treaty must also be recognized. Despite its different concept of employment policy, compared to most other PES member parties, the British Labour government also gave its support.

The former Spanish socialist government also supported an employment title, whereas its conservative successor was more reluctant. Former prime minister González was among those who were originally behind the initiative of a PES working group on employment in 1993.

Likewise, the Belgians had been active in the PES over employment, and as a traditional Christian democrat, the Belgian prime minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene, belonged to the protagonists of an employment title. The Luxembourg Christian democrat-led government was also formed as a coalition with socialists. This partly explains why this government also accepted the title. Furthermore, it should be remembered that prime minister Juncker has a trade union background.

However, the issue of an employment title was one of the most difficult for the transnational Christian democrat coalition. Although the Belgian and Luxembourg prime ministers had no ideological objections, they had to take account of chancellor Kohl's more pragmatic reasoning.

A joint Benelux memorandum was presented, which contributed to putting employment on the agenda. The Belgian government also put forward documents on its own, as did the Austrian government.¹³ The Belgian representative in the

reflection group, Franklin Dehousse of the Wallonian socialist party, supported an employment title. As a result, he became one of the allies closest to the Swedish representative, Gunnar Lund, who launched a proposal to the reflection group in September 1995.¹⁴ The proposal called for a separate chapter on employment in the new treaty, including an employment committee and the statement that employment is a matter of common concern (cf. Miles 1997: 280–1). Subsequently, the idea of an employment chapter, or title, became ‘a fixed item in the on-going negotiations’ (Ladrech 1997b: 29).

Individual ‘party governments’ availed themselves of a strategy of transnational coalition-building. Such a strategy was successfully employed by the Irish government in the context of its presidency during the second half of 1996.¹⁵ As far as employment is concerned, the draft treaty text was not revised much after the December Dublin European Council. For governments and political parties favouring an employment title, it was therefore mostly a matter of driving it forward to the Amsterdam European Council. There, the heads of government agreed to insert a title on employment in the new treaty.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the employment title was presented as a victory for national governments and parties, it can be shown that this outcome was to a large extent a result of a transnational policy contribution. Having traced the employment title, by bringing together the ‘bits and pieces of evidence into a pattern’, the article has uncovered the existence of a transnational coalition. In the processes at work, the coalition included trade unions and political parties, which are linkage actors in the transmission systems linking the domestic and supranational levels to one another. Those favouring an employment title, and a strengthening of the co-ordination between member states with regard to employment policies, constituted an advocacy coalition. Governments and EU institutions, and individuals within them, were part of that coalition. Allan Larsson, the director-general dealing with employment in the Commission and former chairman of the PES working group on employment, the EEI, was an outstanding policy entrepreneur.

In assessing the relative importance of intergovernmental and transnational channels, a time dimension must be taken into account. Although a transnational coalition was mobilized for an employment title, its relative importance was apparently greater in the early stages of the policy process, especially in the agenda-setting phase. Room for new ideas and policy entrepreneurs is greatest in the early stages. In the later stages, governments apparently take a firmer grip on the policy process. Accordingly, the transnational dimension of EU policy-making and treaty reform must be seen as a complement to rather than a substitute for what was happening at the intergovernmental level.

At the same time, however, there were transnational exchanges throughout the process and thus also in the final stages. As we have seen, European Council summits are preceded by transnational party caucuses. It is an empirical question to what extent such caucuses, under the auspices of the emerging European parties,

play an independent political role, or are primarily used by 'party governments' for their own purposes.

In the present study, there was a clear party-political pattern behind the support given by individual governments. This pattern illuminates ideological divisions over the socio-economic dimension of politics. Such politicization along the lines of ideological dimensions could perhaps enhance the EU's legitimacy.

In conclusion, the employment title in the Amsterdam treaty proved to be a successful example of the impact of transnational coalition-building. However, to what extent this issue is a representative one must remain a matter for further, comparative, analysis. In any case, it seems that transnational coalitions of linkage actors are a promising place to start when searching for hidden, or informal, agendas in EU policy-making.

Address for correspondence: Karl Magnus Johansson, Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Box 1253, SE-111 82 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: + 46 8 23 40 60. Fax: + 46 8 20 10 49. email: km.johansson@ui.se

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NOTES

- 1 The PES held its constituent congress in The Hague in November 1992. The transformation of its forerunner, the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Community, founded in 1974, into a 'party' reflected institutional changes related to the Maastricht treaty, notably the extending of EP powers and the new article (138a) calling for 'parties at the European level' (see Brown-Pappamikail 1995; Ladrech 1993).
- 2 For a more detailed presentation of these activities, see PES (1997a, 1997b, 1997c).
- 3 The person representing the Swedish party leader, Ingvar Carlsson, was Allan Larsson. Another member was Robin Cook, then shadow foreign secretary and since British foreign secretary. According to Larsson, Cook fully supported the Swedish proposal for an employment chapter, as did the Irish representative, Tony Brown.
- 4 In their speeches, several of the party leaders, including Tony Blair (1997b; see also Blair 1997a), committed themselves to a separate chapter on employment in the new treaty.
- 5 Those participants who have since become ministers include Ad Melkert of the Dutch PvdA (social affairs), Andrew Smith of the British Labour Party (employment) and Vincenzo Visco of the Italian PDS (finance). The representative of the leader of the Spanish party was Joaquín Almunia.
- 6 Larsson made some important visits in the summer of 1993. In Brussels he established contact with the Commission and the ETUC, and in London he met with leading spokesmen for Labour on employment and finance, namely Andrew Smith and Gordon Brown, two would-be ministers (the first of whom was another member of the EEI).

- 7 To reduce unemployment, the manifesto stated that '[s]everal approaches are possible, including a working week of 35 hours or four days, leave for training and voluntary part-time work' (PES 1993). The highly controversial proposal of a reduction in working hours was strongly endorsed by Michel Rocard, but this was especially controversial for the British and Greek member parties.
- 8 In early 1993, Larsson attended another conference held by the Socialist Group in Brussels.
- 9 The other representative of Commission president Delors in the EEI was Chris Boyd.
- 10 The IGC report adopted in spring 1996 largely repeated what was stated in the Bourlanges-Martin report the year before. A paper on the priorities for the IGC was presented by the PES Group chairwoman, Pauline Green. She actively campaigned for an employment chapter, or title (see Green 1997a, 1997b). In its Malmö Message, the PES Group (1997) called for '[a] strengthening of the draft Employment Title in the Treaty of the European Union which encompasses the co-ordination of economic and employment policies'.
- 11 Although supportive in principle of an employment chapter, Wim Kok was always keen to emphasize that the existing criteria for economic and monetary union must remain unchanged (see, for example, Kok 1996).
- 12 This is why Swedish social democrats, such as Larsson (1995), came to talk of an employment union in parallel with economic and monetary union.
- 13 Apart from the official Austrian documents, a report was produced by Franz Vranitzky for the PES. According to the *Financial Times* (11 March 1996), this report suggested that a European employment union (EEU) should be set up, 'an idea that originates with Mr Allan Larsson, a Swedish social democrat'. The party leaders 'called for practical steps to create jobs to be written into the EU treaty when it was revised at this year's intergovernmental conference'.
- 14 In March 1996, Lund was host of a meeting in Stockholm on employment. Representatives of all governments were invited, with the exception of the non-socialist governments of Britain, France, Germany and Italy (see the *Financial Times*, 14 March 1996).
- 15 At the time, Gregory Sparks, adviser to the then foreign minister and Labour Party leader Dick Spring, chaired the meetings of the PES Sherpas, that is, the personal representatives of the party leaders sitting in government. Sparks had been a member of the PES working party on employment in 1993. In an interview, he said that the existence of the group of Sherpas implied that there was 'suddenly a political group outside the official group setting the agendas'.

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