

May 13, 2007

## **Recalcitrance, Inefficiency, and Support for European Integration: Why Member States Do (not) Comply with European Law**

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### *Abstract*

This paper seeks to explain inter-state variation in non-compliance with European law. While non-compliance has not significantly increased over time, some member states violate European law more frequently than others. In order to account for the variance observed, we draw on three prominent approaches in the compliance literature – enforcement, management, and legitimacy. In the first place, we develop a set of hypotheses for each of the three theories. We then discuss how they can be combined in theoretically consistent ways and develop three integrated models. Finally, we empirically test these models drawing on a unique and comprehensive dataset, which comprises more than 6,300 instances of member state non-compliance with European law between 1978 and 1999. The empirical findings show that the combined model of the enforcement and the management approach turns out to have the highest explanatory power. Politically powerful member states are most likely to violate European law while the best compliers are small countries with highly efficient bureaucracies. Yet, administrative capacity also matters for powerful member states. The UK and Germany are much more compliant than France and Italy, which command similar political power but whose administrations are ridden by bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption.

<http://www.fu-berlin.de/europa>

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

One of the major questions in the research on international institutions has been “why governments, seeking to promote their own interests, ever comply with the rules of international regimes when they view these rules as in conflict with [...] their myopic self-interest”.<sup>2</sup> While realists argue that states simply do not comply if the costs of a rule are too high, rational institutionalists point to the role of international regimes and organizations, which entail monitoring, sanctioning, and adjudication mechanisms increasing the costs of non-compliance. Management theories, by contrast, focus on capacity-building and rule specification. Social constructivists, finally, stress legitimacy, socialization, and norm internalization through processes of social learning and persuasion. Thus, different International Relations approaches provide different explanations for why states comply. They have paid less attention to the question of why some states comply better than others.

This paper seeks to find out why some states are more inclined to comply with international norms and rules than others. The European Union (EU) is an ideal case to explore this question. As ‘masters of the treaties’, the member states still have a significant say on the norms and rules they have to comply with. At the same time, EU institutions entail highly legalized monitoring, adjudication, and sanctioning mechanisms. They do not only aim at changing the instrumental calculations of states by increasing the costs of non-compliance, but also allow for rule specification and capacity-building and promote processes of social learning and persuasion. Thus, all approaches should expect a rather high level of compliance. Many students of European politics would agree that the EU, compared to many international regimes, does not suffer from serious compliance problems.<sup>3</sup> Yet, the member states vary significantly in their compliance with European law. Why is it, for example, that EU-skeptic Great Britain, Sweden, and Denmark belong to the compliance leaders while more EU-friendly Italy, France, or Portugal join the group of the laggards? Or why do

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<sup>1</sup> We thank Andrea Liese, Katarina Linos, Thomas Risse, Beth Simmons, Paul Schure, Cornelia Ulbert, Karen Alter, Robert Falkner, the participants of the Weatherhead Center of International Affairs seminar on International Law and International Relations at Harvard, and the participants of the Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance Faculty Colloquium in International Relations at Princeton for detailed comments. Needless to say, we are solely responsible for any conceptual, methodological, or empirical errors that may remain.

<sup>2</sup> Keohane 1984: 99.

<sup>3</sup> Zürn and Joerges 2005.

centralized countries like France and Greece have equally bad compliance records as federal Belgium and regionalized Italy?

In order to explain the varying degree of state compliance with European law, this paper draws on a unique and comprehensive data set. For the very first time, researchers have been granted direct access to the infringement database of the European Commission, which is in charge of monitoring compliance with European law. The Commission provided us with a complete set of all the cases it opened against the member states for violating European law between 1978 and 1999. Unlike the data published in the Commission's Official Reports, our database contains information regarding the nature of non-compliance, the type of law infringed on, the policy sector to which the law pertains, the violating member state, and the measures taken by EU institutions in response to non-compliance for each of the more than 6,300 infringement cases.<sup>4</sup> The data confirm that there is significant variance in the level of compliance among the member states that lacks explanation.

In a nutshell, we argue that member state compliance is a function of both power and capacity. Politically powerful member states are most likely to violate European law while the best compliers are small countries with highly efficient bureaucracies. Yet, administrative capacity also matters for powerful member states. The UK and Germany are much more compliant than France and Italy, which yield similar political power, but whose administrations are ridden by bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption. In fact, we find an interaction between capacity and power, where capacity conditions the relation between power and compliance. With increasing bureaucratic efficiency, the non-compliance promoting effects of power are gradually reduced.

The paper proceeds as follows. After outlining our empirical puzzle, we review three prominent compliance approaches in the International Relations literature. Enforcement approaches assume that states violate international norms and rules voluntarily because they are not willing to bear the costs of compliance. By increasing external constraints, international institutions can alter strategic cost-benefit calculations of states and lead to a change of their preferences over strategies eventually resulting in compliance. By contrast, management approaches argue that non-compliance is involuntary, i.e. is not the result of strategic choices. States are willing to comply but lack the

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<sup>4</sup> The database will be made publicly accessible at <http://www.fu-berlin.de/europa>.

necessary resources. The third approach – legitimacy – argues similar to enforcement theories that non-compliance is intentional. But, unlike management and enforcement approaches, legitimacy draws on socialization, persuasion, and learning mechanisms. Compliance is not a matter of sufficient material resources or a question of costs and benefits of rule confirming behavior, but depends on whether a rule is internalized and accepted as a standard for appropriate behavior.

For each of the three approaches, we develop a set of hypotheses. While the literature often treats them as competing or at least alternative explanations, there are good reasons, both theoretical and empirical, to combine them.<sup>5</sup> We discuss three ways to integrate the power, capacity, and legitimacy approaches in a theoretically consistent and meaningful way and derive an additional set of hypotheses for our integrated models.

Next, we test our different models using quantitative methods. The empirical findings show that the combined model of the enforcement and the management approach has the highest explanatory power. The best compliers are member states that have ample administrative capacity and lack the power to resist compliance. Conversely, the countries with the worst compliance records are those with limited capacity, but enough power to resist the Commission's enforcement efforts. Member states with weak capacity and limited power are not very good compliers either, but they still fare better than their powerful counterparts. Finally, powerful member states with strong capacity comply better than powerful member states with weak capacity. In short, while power has a negative impact on compliance it is reduced by the interaction with capacity.

In the concluding section, we place the EU in a comparative perspective and discuss the extent to which our findings can be applied to international regimes and organization, which possess a lower degree of institutionalization and legalization. Our research shows that even highly legalized international institutions do not completely mitigate power differences between states. Moreover, while capacity-building by international institutions is an effective way to improve compliance, it should combine resource transfer with measures that foster bureaucratic efficiency.

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<sup>5</sup> Checkel 2001; Tallberg 2002.

## 2. Non-Compliance in the European Union

### 2.1. Infringement Proceedings as a Measure of Non-compliance

Studies on compliance with international norms and rules face a serious methodological challenge of measuring their dependent variable.<sup>6</sup> Many have developed their own assessment criteria and collected the empirical information in laborious case studies.<sup>7</sup> Others have drawn on statistical data provided by the monitoring bodies of international regimes and organizations, like the European Commission has done for the EU since 1984.<sup>8</sup> Its Annual Reports on Monitoring the Application of Community Law<sup>9</sup> contain information on the legal action the Commission brought against the member states since 1978. Article 226 ECT (ex-Article 169) entitles the Commission to open infringement proceedings against member states suspected in violation of European law. These infringement proceedings consist of several stages. The first two, suspected infringements (complaints, petitions, etc.) and Formal Letters, are considered informal and treated largely as confidential. The official infringement procedure (Article 226 ECT) starts when the European Commission issues a Reasoned Opinion and ends with a ruling of the European Court of Justice. If the member states still refuse to comply, the Commission can open new proceedings (Article 228 ECT, ex-Article 171), which may result in financial penalties. Article 228 ECT proceedings consist of the same stages as Article 226 ECT proceedings, but the ECJ has the possibility to impose a financial penalty.<sup>10</sup>

The dependent variable of our study uses the Reasoned Opinions as a measurement for non-compliance for two reasons. First, for the previous two stages, the Commission only provides aggregate data on the total number of cases brought against individual member states – information on individual cases are considered confidential. Second, Reasoned Opinions concern the more serious cases of non-compliance as they refer to issues that could not be solved through informal negotiations at the previous, unofficial stages. Note that two-thirds of all the cases, in which the

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<sup>6</sup> Simmons 1998; Raustiala and Slaughter 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Duina 1997; Mitchell 2003; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.

<sup>8</sup> For instance Reinhardt 2001, Steinberg 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/community\\_law/eulaw/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/community_law/eulaw/index_en.htm), last accessed on February 15, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Snyder 1993; Tallberg 2002.

Commission had issued a Formal Letter between 1978 and 1999, were settled before a Reasoned Opinion had to be sent.

In order to control for the growing number of legal acts that can be potentially infringed on, we use the relative number of Reasoned Opinions sent per legal act rather than the absolute number per member state in a given year. Between 1978 and 1999, the Commission opened almost 17,000 infringement proceedings (Formal Letters). Over the same time, the number of legal acts in force has more than doubled from less than 5,000 to almost 10,000. By taking the number of Reasoned Opinions sent to a member states in a given year as percentage of the legal act in force at the time of violation in addition to using time dummies in our analyses, we avoid problems of time trends (ever-growing number of legal acts) and structural breaks caused by political events, such as the completion of the Internal Market, which frequently haunt panel and time series analyzes.<sup>11</sup>

The database, on which this paper draws, is based on a unique and comprehensive dataset including all the infringement proceedings in which the European Commission sent a Reasoned Opinion to the member states between 1978 and 1999.<sup>12</sup> It contains more than 6,300 individual infringement cases, which are classified by infringement number, member state, policy sector, legal basis (CELEX number), legal act, type of infringement, and stage reached in the proceedings. The Commission gave us access to its own database. We were allowed to download all the data available for the years 1978 to 1999 (excluding the Formal Letters). This is the very first time that researchers have received such data.

Using infringements as a measurement for non-compliance with European law is not without problems. There are good reasons to question whether infringement proceedings qualify as valid and reliable indicators of compliance failure, that is, whether they constitute a random sample of all the non-compliance cases that occur. First, for reasons of limited resources, the Commission is not capable of detecting and legally pursuing all instances of non-compliance with European law. Infringement proceedings present only a fraction of all instances of non-compliance, and we have no means to estimate their real number. Moreover, the infringement sample could be seriously biased

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Banerjee et al. 1993; Enders 2004.

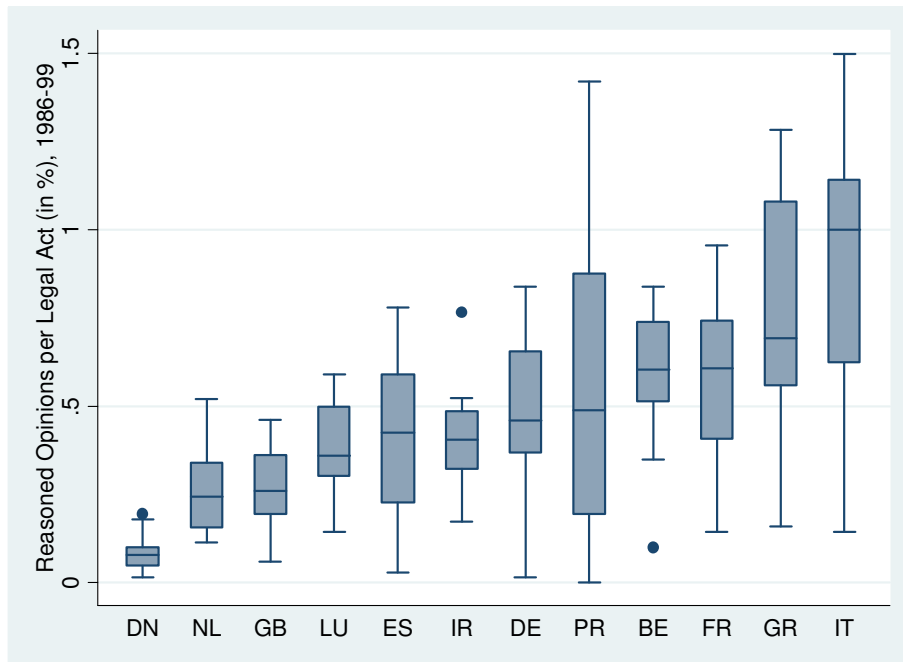
<sup>12</sup> 1978 is the first year, for which the Commission comprehensively published infringement data. 1999 is the last year, for which the Commission was willing to give us access to its database.

since the Commission depends heavily on the member states reporting back on their implementation activities, on costly and time-consuming consultancy reports, and on information from citizens, interest groups, and companies. But whereas the monitoring capacity of member states and their domestic actors varies, there is no indication that the limited detection of non-compliance systematically biases infringement data towards certain member states. We have been conducting an expert survey, which asks 164 policy makers, civil servants, companies, interest groups, and scientific experts in the EU member states, which form part of our study, to assess the level of non-compliance in their country in general and with respect to core norms and rules in different policy areas. The response rate was more than 48 percent and the results correspond with the relative distribution of infringement proceedings, which strengthens our confidence that our data do not contain a systematic bias.

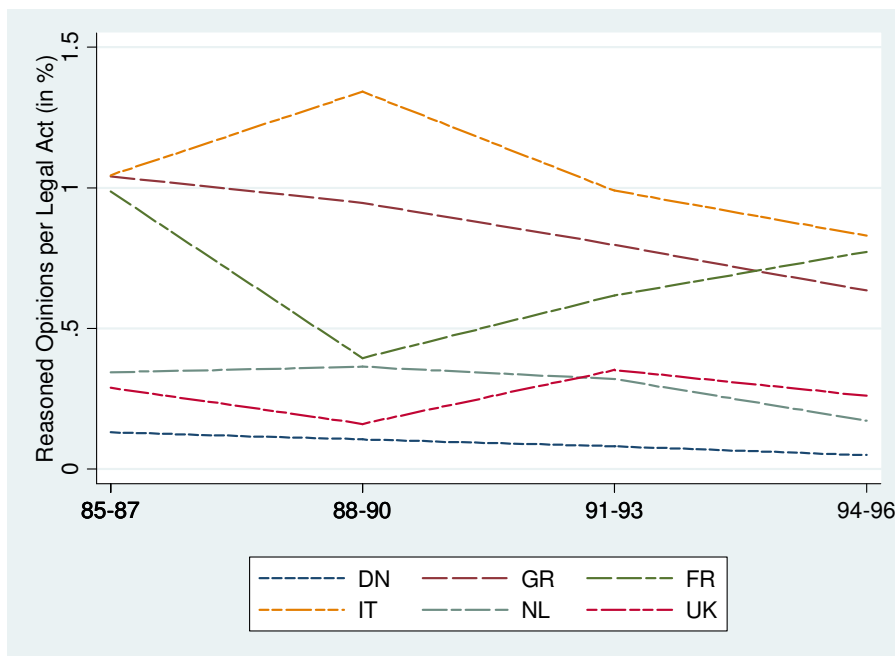
## **2.2 Mapping Member State Non-compliance with European Law**

Our data on non-compliance with European law show significant variation among the member states (graph 1). Member states can be divided into three groups: leaders, laggards, and the middle-field. The three Scandinavian member states, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands are good compliers and rarely violate European law. By contrast, the Southern European countries (including France) – with the exception of Spain – and Belgium seriously lag behind. The rest of the member states range in between forming the middle-field. Analyzing this pattern more closely, we also find that it is virtually constant over time (graph 2). Leaders stay leaders, while Italy, France, and Greece always belong to the group of member states with the worst compliance record. Graph 1 does not only present the ranking of the member states from exemplary Denmark on the left to notorious Italy on the right by their average non-compliance records. The box plots also shows, for example, that Italy receives a median of one Reasoned Opinion from the Commission per 100 legal acts in force each year, whereas Denmark, as well as the other Scandinavian countries not depicted in the graph, infringe on only one out of 1,000 legal acts on the median.

Graph 1: Annual Reasoned Opinions per Legal Act (in %) by EU 12 Member States, 1986-99



Graph 2: Reasoned Opinions per Legal Act (in %) by EU 12 Member States Over Time, 1985-96



The distribution of non-compliance between member states is puzzling because, at first sight, none of the prominent compliance approaches seems to provide an explanation that systematically



accounts for the variance observed. Realists should ask themselves why France and Italy yield similar economic and political power in the EU as Germany and the UK, but are much less compliant. This becomes even more puzzling for management theories since France and Italy comply as badly as or even worse than Greece and Portugal, which are the two poorest countries in the EU 15. Constructivists should have a hard time in understanding why EU-skeptical countries like the UK, Denmark, Sweden, or Finland comply much better with European law than states, which are highly supportive of European integration, such as France, Italy, or Belgium. Institutionalists have in general difficulties in accounting for country variation since the level of legalization is the same for states within an international institution. Likewise, monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms should affect the cost-benefit calculations of states in an equal way. Variance is much more expected between international institutions, if they differ in their degree of obligation, delegation, and precision.<sup>13</sup> Of course, the costs of (non-) compliance may vary across countries. But then we need an explanation for why some states face higher costs than others, something which institutionalist theories usually do not provide. As we will see below, combining institutionalist reasoning with a power-based enforcement approach is one way to solve this problem.

### **3. Three Compliance Approaches**

To explain why there is significant variation between member states with regard to their level of (non-) compliance with European law, we have to find country-based explanations. International Relations theories, such as enforcement, management, and legitimacy approaches, primarily focus on institutional design (monitoring and sanctioning, capacity-building and adjudication, and socialization). Consequently, they have largely been used to account for variation in compliance across international institutions.<sup>14</sup> However, all three approaches can be easily reformulated to account for country-based explanatory factors, such as power (enforcement), the capacity (management) of member states and the acceptance of international rules and institutions (legitimacy).

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<sup>13</sup> Abbott et al. 2000; Keohane, Moravcsik, and Slaughter 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Keohane 2000, Abbott 2000

### 3.1. Enforcement

Enforcement approaches assume that states choose to violate international norms and rules because they are not willing to bear the costs of compliance. Incentives for defection are particularly strong if international norms and rules are not compatible with national arrangements as a result of which compliance requires substantial changes at the domestic level.<sup>15</sup> From this rationalist perspective, non-compliance can only be prevented by increasing the costs of non-compliance.<sup>16</sup> Increasing external constraints by establishing institutionalized monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms can alter strategic cost-benefit calculations of states.<sup>17</sup> The likelihood of being detected and punished increases the anticipated costs of non-compliance, be they material (economic sanctions or financial penalties)<sup>18</sup> or immaterial (loss of reputation and credibility).<sup>19</sup> Such costs may finally lead to a change of strategic preferences towards compliance. However, states do not necessarily face the same compliance costs nor are they equally sensitive to sanctions.<sup>20</sup> Drawing on power-based theories of International Relations, we can distinguish three strands of the enforcement approach.

#### *The Power of Recalcitrance: Power Matters at the Stage of Enforcement*

Following the argument of Keohane and Nye on power and interdependence,<sup>21</sup> states can be regarded as being more sensitive to costs imposed by sanctions if they have less political or economic power than other states, the latter being more resistant to external pressures. With regard to our dependent variable, we would then expect that the less powerful EU member states are, the more sensitive they are to external enforcement constraints and the less likely they infringe EU legal acts,

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Cortell and Davis 1996; Checkel 2001; Risse and Ropp 1999; Underdal 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Martin 1992; Downs, Rocke, and Barsoom 1996; Downs 1998; Dorn and Fulton 1997.

<sup>17</sup> While institutional mechanisms decentralize the costs for monitoring and restoring compliance, realist approaches emphasize the role of hegemonic states, which use their power resources to deter weaker states from non-compliance. These centralized mechanisms are, however, a less prominent strategy for enforcing compliance. This is because they shift monitoring and sanctioning costs to a single state, while institutional mechanisms are beneficial to all members adhering to the institution in that they do not draw on the resources of a single member.

<sup>18</sup> Martin 1992; Fearon 1998.

<sup>19</sup> Checkel calls this “social sanctioning” Checkel 2001: 558; cf. Klotz 1995; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Gurowitz 1999; Satori 2002; Schoppa 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Abbott et al. 2000; Garrett, Kelemen, and Schulz 1998; Horne and Cutlip 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Keohane and Nye 1977.

hence, the smaller is their number of infringements compared to less cost-sensitive, i.e. more powerful, member states. Hence, the political and economic weight of a state allows it to be *recalcitrant* with respect to the effective implementation of European law. This variant of the enforcement approach emphasizes the extent to which power translates into indifference or resistance vis-à-vis external constraints imposed on states.<sup>22</sup> The mechanism of *recalcitrance* thereby predicts a positive relationship between the power of a state and its non-compliance record. The first enforcement hypothesis (H1a) expects that *more powerful states infringe on international and European laws more often than weaker states*.

#### *The Power of Assertiveness: Power Matters at the Stage of Decision-making*

Another variant of the enforcement approach focuses on states, but attributes more weight to the decision-making process. According to this line of argumentation, the power of a member state does not only deploy an impact in the implementation stage (resulting in *recalcitrance*), but also in the stage of decision-making. Moreover, high power results in a *better* record of compliance. The political and economic weight of a member state is closely related to its *assertiveness*, i.e. its ability to shape legal acts according to its preferences.<sup>23</sup> The extent to which a state has managed to impose its preferences during negotiating procedures determines the costs of compliance and thereby the state's willingness to comply with the decision *ex post*. Hence, if power is defined as *assertiveness* in the decision-making process, a second enforcement hypothesis (H1b) expects that *more powerful states infringe on international and European laws less often than weaker states*.

#### *The Power of Deterrence: Power Matters for the Enforcement Authority*

The assumption of a *positive* impact of state power on compliance has been taken up by other strands of the enforcement literature which emphasize, however, another causal mechanism. According to this line of argumentation, the political and economic weight of a state can translate into a *deterrence of the enforcement authority*, i.e. the institution, which monitors compliance and imposes sanctions against free-riders and norm-violators.<sup>24</sup> Like the hypothesis about the *recalcitrance* of powerful states, the *deterrence* hypothesis stresses the relationship between the non-compliant state and the enforcement

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<sup>22</sup> Martin 1992.

<sup>23</sup> Thomson et al. 2006; Giuliani 2003; Moravcsik 1997; Fearon 1998; Keohane and Nye 1977.

<sup>24</sup> Abbott et al. 2000; Garrett, Kelemen, and Schulz 1998; Horne and Cutlip 2002.

authority. But rather than conceptualizing the power of the non-compliant state as determining its reaction to actions of the enforcement authority, it explains the behavior of the enforcement authority in the first place. It assumes a principal-agent relation between the states (principals) and the enforcement authority (agent), in which the latter ultimately depends on the former since the states can always renounce the power of the enforcement authority.<sup>25</sup> This asymmetrical relationship may induce the enforcement authority to act strategically and be reluctant to impose sanctions on powerful states. This asymmetry is stronger for powerful member states since they have more political weight in international institutions, which they could use to punish the enforcement authority. Regarding the case of the European Union, the European Commission or the European Court of Justice (ECJ) might therefore be less willing to either open infringement proceedings or issue rulings against powerful member states, since they finally depend on the extent to which member states are willing to delegate this authority to them. Thus, similar to the assertiveness hypothesis, the deterrence hypothesis predicts a lower record of non-compliance cases for powerful states. In contrast to the assertiveness hypothesis, however, powerful member states might actually violate a rule, but are simply not being sanctioned for it. In this perspective, the deterrence hypothesis only allows for making predictions about the *probability with which violations are prosecuted and sanctioned*, not about the actual occurrence and prevalence of non-compliance.<sup>26</sup> The third enforcement hypothesis (H1c) expects that *the more powerful a state is, the less probably it will face infringement proceedings* since enforcement authorities are deterred.

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<sup>25</sup> Horne and Cutlip 2002: 301; cf. Garrett, 1998; Tallberg 2000.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Reiss 1984. A proper test of the deterrence hypotheses would require an approach which looks at the later stages of the infringement proceedings when the material costs of imposed sanctions become more imminent. We have done this in a separate study, which confirms our findings for the Reasoned Opinion stage (Authors).

*Table 1: Overview of the Enforcement Hypotheses*

Power of recalcitrance (H1a)	Power of assertiveness (H1b)	Power of deterrence (H1c)
Powerful states infringe on European law more often than weak states (since they are less sensitive to the costs imposed by sanctions).	Powerful states infringe on European law less often than weak states (since they have been able to decrease the costs of compliance by shaping European law according to their preferences).	Powerful states are less likely to be prosecuted and sanctioned for infringements against European law (since enforcement authorities are deterred by them).

*Operationalization of the Independent Variables*

In order to test for the influence of the power of recalcitrance on non-compliance, we incorporate two power indicators into our analyses. These indicators are widely used in the literature and account for different aspects of power – economic size and EU-specific political power. Gross domestic product (“GDP”) is a proxy for economic power.<sup>27</sup> It influences the sensitivity towards material costs of financial penalties or the withholding of EU subsidies. The data come from the World Development Indicators.<sup>28</sup> Direct EU specific political power is more relevant for reputational costs. Member states, such as Germany and France, which have significant voting power, cannot be ignored by others in EU decision-making, even if they may have lost credibility by not abiding with previously agreed upon rules. Thus, we use the proportion of times when a member state is pivotal (and can, thus, turn a losing into a winning coalition) under QMV (qualified majority voting) in the Council of Ministers (“SSI”) as an indicator of EU-specific political power.<sup>29</sup> This indicator also serves for the operationalization of the assertiveness and deterrence hypotheses. The power to shape EU rules and to deter the Commission, respectively, is strongly mitigated by the highly institutionalized context of EU decision-making and the need for coalition-building, as a result of which power resources, such as military capabilities, do not carry much weight. Population is relevant but captured by “SSI” since the number of votes a member state has is based on the size of its population.

<sup>27</sup> Keohane 1989; Martin 1992; Moravcsik 1998; Steinberg 2002.

<sup>28</sup> World Bank 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Shapley and Shubik 1954; Rodden 2002.

## 3.2. Management

The management school assumes that non-compliance is involuntary. Even if states like to comply with a European rule, they are prevented from doing so if the very preconditions that enable states to comply are absent. There are three sources of involuntary non-compliance: lacking or insufficient state capacities, ambiguous definitions of norms, and inadequate timetables up to which compliance has to be achieved.<sup>30</sup> While management approaches attribute equal influence to capacities, precision of norms, and transposition timetables, the latter two factors relate to the character of individual rules and, hence, cannot account for inter-state variation. Therefore, we focus on state capacity within this paper.

The concept of state capacity is not used uniformly in the literature and its operationalization differs significantly. Resource-centered approaches define capacity as a state's ability to act, i.e. the sum of its legal authority and financial, military, and human resources.<sup>31</sup> Neo-institutionalist approaches, by contrast, argue that the domestic institutional structure influences the degree of a state's capacity to act and its autonomy to make decisions.<sup>32</sup> Thereby, domestic veto players come to the fore, which block the implementation of international rules because of the costs they have to (co-) bear.<sup>33</sup> A high number of veto players reduce the capacity of a state to make the necessary changes to the *status quo* for the implementation of costly rules.<sup>34</sup> In order to do justice to both lines of argumentation, we differentiate between the *government autonomy* and the *government capacity* of states. While government autonomy refers to institutional and partisan veto players (and is the higher, the lower the number of veto players is), government capacity is geared to the financial endowment of states and their human resources. Yet, even if a state has sufficient resources, its administration may still have difficulties in pooling and coordinating them, particularly if the required resources are dispersed among various public agencies (e.g. ministries) and levels of government.<sup>35</sup> We therefore distinguish between resource endowment and the efficiency of a state bureaucracy to mobilize and channel resources into

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<sup>30</sup> Chayes and Chayes 1993, 1995; Chayes, Chayes, and Mitchell 1998; Young 1992; Haas, Keohane, and Levy 1993; Jacobsen and Weiss Brown 1995; Haas 1998.

<sup>31</sup> Przeworski 1990; Haas 1998; Simmons 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Katzenstein 1978; Evans 1995; Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985.

<sup>33</sup> Putnam 1988; Duina 1997; Haverland 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Tsebelis 2002.

<sup>35</sup> Mbaye 2001; Larrue and Chabason 1998; Egeberg 1999.

the compliance process. Italy and France are two prominent examples of how the two types of government capacity may diverge. Both countries command more resources than most of the other member states. Yet, their bureaucracies are comparably inefficient and face serious problems of corruption.

In the implementation of European norms, both government autonomy and government capacity are necessary for the production as well as adaptation of preexisting national legal acts and their correct application. Based on these considerations, we derive the following hypothesis from the managerial approach: *The lower government autonomy and the lower government capacity, the more difficult it becomes for a member state to comply with European legal norms.* Hence, higher rates of infringements can be expected for states with low government autonomy and capacity.

*Table 2: Overview of the Management Hypotheses*

Government autonomy (H2a)	Government capacity (H2b)
States with a low level of government autonomy infringe on European law more often than more autonomous states (since veto players might block or delay decisions).	States with a low level of government capacity infringe on European law more often than states with a high level of capacity (since they do not have the material resources and/or efficient bureaucracies to comply).

#### *Operationalization of the Independent Variables*

To test for the influence of government capacity on the distribution of non-compliance, we include two indicators that are prominent in the literature. First of all, we incorporate the GDP per capita (“GDPpc”).<sup>36</sup> It is a general measure for the resources, on which a state can draw to ensure compliance. The data come from the World Development Indicators.<sup>37</sup> Whether a state has the capacity to mobilize these resources shall be captured by the second variable, bureaucratic efficiency (“efficiency”). In the operationalization, we use an index of bureaucratic efficiency and professionalism of the public service created by Auer and her colleagues.<sup>38</sup> This index consists of three components of bureaucratic efficiency: performance related pay for civil servants, lack of

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Brautigam 1996.

<sup>37</sup> World Bank 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Mbaye 2001; Auer, Demmke, and Polet 1996.

permanent tenure, and public advertising of open positions. Bureaucratic efficiency highly correlates with measures of corruption, e.g. the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International.<sup>39</sup> For issues with multicollinearity, we include only bureaucratic efficiency in our analyses. Other potential indicators of government capacity – such as bureaucratic quality from the International Country Risk Guide and the World Bank governance indicators<sup>40</sup> – are not used due to the fact that they cover only part of the time period analyzed in this paper and/or lack sufficient variance for comparative studies of the EU member states.

Government autonomy is a function of the number of veto players in the political system of a member state.<sup>41</sup> However, even if the number of the institutional and partisan veto players remains constant over time, the interests of these actors – for example regarding (non-) compliance – may change. Therefore, we use an alternative veto player index (“polcon”), which allows for the interests of veto players in such a way that interdependences between veto players and the respective political system are taken into consideration.<sup>42</sup> It is based on a simple spatial model of political interaction among government branches, measuring the number of independent branches with veto power and the distribution of political preferences across these branches. They can be interpreted as a measure of institutional constraints that either preclude arbitrary changes of existing policies or produce gridlock and so undermine the ability of the government to change policies when such change is needed. Two alternative indicators of government autonomy are discussed in the literature: the executive control of the parliamentary agenda measured by the extent to which the government can successfully initiate drafts and rely on stable majorities for in the legislative branch,<sup>43</sup> and the parliamentary oversight of government measured by the material (e.g. number of Committees) and ideational resources (e.g. information processing capacity) relevant for the oversight of the legislative on the government.<sup>44</sup> We had initially included both these variables, but dropped them because of multicollinearity concerns and their lack of significant (executive control) and robustness (parliamentary oversight).

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<sup>39</sup> Herzfeld and Weiss 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Tsebelis 2002; Immergut 1998.

<sup>42</sup> Hénisz 2002. Beck et al. 2001 have developed a similar index.

<sup>43</sup> Döring 1995; Tsebelis 2002.

<sup>44</sup> Harfst and Schnapp 2003.



### 3.3. Legitimacy

Constructivists draw on the social logic of appropriateness to explain compliance. States are socialized into the norms and rules of international institutions through processes of social learning and persuasion. They comply out of a normative belief that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed rather than because it suits their instrumental self-interests. This sense of moral obligation is a function of the legitimacy of the rules themselves or their sources.<sup>45</sup> There are several ways by which legitimacy can be generated. First, the rule is embedded in an underlying institution or a legal system, which is generally characterized by a high level of legitimacy (acceptance of the rule-setting institution).<sup>46</sup> Second, a critical number of states is already complying with an international rule. As a result, other states are “pulled” into compliance because they want to demonstrate that they conform to the group of states, to which they want to belong and whose esteem they care about (peer pressure).<sup>47</sup> Third, legitimacy can also result from certain procedures that include those actors in the rule-making that are potentially affected and who engage in processes of persuasion and mutual learning (procedural legitimacy).<sup>48</sup> Both, procedural legitimacy and peer pressure focus more on compliance with individual rules (exactly those which result from ‘fair’ decision-making processes or those with which other states already comply). The acceptance of the rule-setting institution hypothesis emphasizes that voluntary compliance is generated by diffuse support for and general acceptance of the rule-setting institutions and the constitutive principles of the law-making and standing. Since our unit of analysis are country years and we study infringements rather than individually violated legal acts, we focus in this paper on the acceptance of and support for the rule-setting institution.

The institutional legitimacy hypothesis can itself be disentangled into two different variants, which stress different institutional aspects: the rule of law and the rule-setting institution.

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<sup>45</sup> Hurd 1999; Franck 1990; Finnemore and Toope 2001; Checkel 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Hurd 1999; Kohler-Koch 2000.

<sup>47</sup> Franck 1990; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.

<sup>48</sup> Dworkin 1986; Hurrell 1995; Franck 1995.

### *Domestic Culture of Law-abidingness and Support for the Rule of Law*

Legal sociological studies refer to the relation between national legal cultures and their inclinations for compliance with national norms.<sup>49</sup> Legal cultures comprise three elements: (1) the characteristics of legal awareness, (2) general attitudes towards the supremacy of law, and (3) general attitudes towards the judicial system and its values.<sup>50</sup> In this perspective, the degree of compliance correlates with the extent to which rule addressees accept the legitimacy of the rule of law and consider compliance with legal norms as demanded by a domestic logic of appropriateness. The acceptance of a rule and the subsequent inclination to comply with it result from the diffuse support for law-making as a legitimate means to ensuring political order in a community.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, even costly rules will principally be complied with. While this argument was developed for compliance with domestic laws, it should also apply to international and European rules since they also constitute law. This is all the more true for the EU, where European law is the law of the land because of its supremacy and direct effect. The corresponding hypothesis (H3a) states that *the lower the public support for the principle of the rule of law in a member state, the more often European law is infringed on.*

### *Support for the EU as the Rule-setting Institution*

The explanation of rule-consistent behavior due to diffuse support can not only refer to the acceptance of the law as a means to the insurance of political order in a community. It can also refer to the institution responsible for rule-setting. Rules are not only complied with because laws ought to be obeyed, but because the rules are set by institutions, which enjoy a high degree of support.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the second legitimacy hypothesis (H3b) states that *member states with a high public supports for the EU as a rule-setting institution infringe European Law less often than member states with a EU-skeptical population.*

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<sup>49</sup> Gibson and Caldeira 1996; Jacob et al. 1996.

<sup>50</sup> Gibson and Caldeira 1996.

<sup>51</sup> Easton 1965; Habermas 1992.

<sup>52</sup> Dworkin 1986; Hurrell 1995; Gibson and Caldeira 1995.

*Table 3: Overview of the Legitimacy Hypotheses*

Rule of law (H3a)	Support (H3b)
States with lower levels of support for the principle of the rule of law infringe on European law more often than states with higher levels (since they feel a lower sense of obligation to comply with law in general).	States with lower public support for the EU as a rule-setting institution infringe on European law more often than states with higher public support (since they feel a lower sense of obligation to comply with European law).

*Operationalization of the Independent Variables*

In principle, the operationalization of the rule of law hypothesis is unproblematic. The extent of the support for the rule of law can be quantified on the basis of opinion poll data (“rule of law”). Yet, good data are rare and the rule of law or ‘law and order tradition’, as it is better known from the International Country Risk Guide, indicator provided by the World Bank dose not cover the full time period of our analysis.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, we use James L. Gibson and Gregory A. Caldeira’s opinion poll survey data, even though they only provide data for the EU 12 member states.<sup>54</sup> The data measure the extent of support for the rule of law on the basis of agreement with the following statements: “it is not necessary to obey a law which I consider unfair”, “sometimes it is better to ignore a law and to directly solve problems instead of awaiting legal solution” as well as “if I do not agree with a rule, it is okay to violate it as long as I pay attention to not being discovered”.

Data on public support for the EU are available from Eurobarometer surveys. The acceptance of European institutions can be quantified by the question which refers to the support of the membership of one’s own country in the European Union (“EU support”).

So far, we have treated the three compliance approaches as competing or at least alternative explanation for member state compliance. The next section will discuss to what extent the three approaches can be combined. Why should power, capacity and legitimacy not have joint and conditionals effect on member states’ compliance, i.e. reinforcing or undermining their individual influence?

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<sup>53</sup> Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2006.

<sup>54</sup> Gibson and Caldeira 1996.

### 3.4. Towards an Integrated Approach

The compliance literature has been rather skeptical about combining different approaches because of their diverging assumptions regarding “how the international system works, the possibilities for governance with international law, and the policy tools that are available and should be used to handle implementation problems”.<sup>55</sup> Yet, empirical studies support explanations based on power, capacity, as well as legitimacy.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, the European Union and many international organizations use a combination of management, enforcement, and legitimacy mechanisms to induce member state compliance.<sup>57</sup> Combining explanatory factors of the different approaches makes not only empirically sense. Their theoretical assumptions are not always that incompatible either.

#### *Power and Capacity*

Enforcement theories conceptualize compliance as a strategic choice by actors who weigh the costs of compliance against the benefits. The management school, by contrast, emphasizes the importance of capacity to make and act upon (rational) choices in the first place. If actors lack the necessary resources, they have no other choice but to defect. This offers a fruitful opportunity to combine management and enforcement approaches: the effect of power on compliance is conditional on capacity. In binary terms, power only matters if states have the general capacity to comply. While countries with no capacity would be bad compliers irrespective of their power, high-capacity member states could still choose whether to comply *if* they had the power to resist or deter enforcement pressures by the Commission. H1a and H1c would then become conditional on sufficient capacity. Statistically, such a relation would suggest a significant interaction effect between power and capacity.

The effects of power and capacity could interact, reinforcing or undermining each other. Member states with both the capacity to comply and the power to shape EU rules according to their preferences should be better compliers than countries that lack both or have only high capacities to cope with the costs of compliance or the power of assertiveness. Conversely, member states with the

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<sup>55</sup> Raustiala and Victor 1998: 681; cf. Raustiala and Slaughter 2002: 543.

<sup>56</sup> Tallberg 2002; Mbaye 2001; Haas 1998; Mendrinou 1996; Steunenberg 2006; Mastenbroek 2003, 2005; Reinhardt 2001; Steinberg 2002; see also Zürn and Joerges 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Tallberg 2002; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Keohane, Haas, and Levy 1993; Mitchell 1996; Zürn and Joerges 2005.

power to deter or resist the enforcement pressures (i.e. power of deterrence and recalcitrance) might be less inclined to do so if they have the capacity to comply. Likewise, countries which have neither capacity nor power might have to make greater efforts to mobilize additional resources than their powerful counterparts, which can defy compliance pressures.

### *Capacity and Legitimacy*

The conditioning effect of capacity can also apply to the relation between legitimacy and (non-) compliance. The difference between legitimacy and enforcement approaches is that state choices are less guided by an instrumental logic of cost-benefit calculations, but by a normative logic of appropriateness. Actors who seek to do what is socially accepted need as much capacity as actors, who are driven by the strategic maximization of their self-interests. Like in the case of power, capacity can be a scope condition for H3a and H3b.

Member states, which have strong capacities and value the law and/or the EU as a law-making institution, should be better compliers than countries with similar capacities, but less support for the rule of law and/or the EU. Likewise, countries with lower capacities and higher support should make a greater effort to comply than their counterparts with equally weak capacities, but citizens that are less law-abiding and supportive of the EU. Beside this positive interaction effect of capacity and legitimacy with respect to compliance, we can also conceive of a direct and negative relation between the independent variables capacity and legitimacy themselves, which might bring about a negative, albeit spurious effect of EU support on compliance. The literature has found that support for the EU and the rule of law, respectively, is directly linked to a lack of state capacity. Citizens of states with weak capacities have low support for the rule of law since domestic legislation is only weakly enforced.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, they turn to the EU as an institution that may be more effective in providing public goods.<sup>59</sup> As a somehow counterintuitive consequence, those member states most supportive of the EU might be among the worst compliers since the EU may produce rules for the provision of public goods, but member states still lack the capacity to effectively implement them on the ground (cf. graph 3). This is corroborated by IR scholars, who argue that states have an incentive

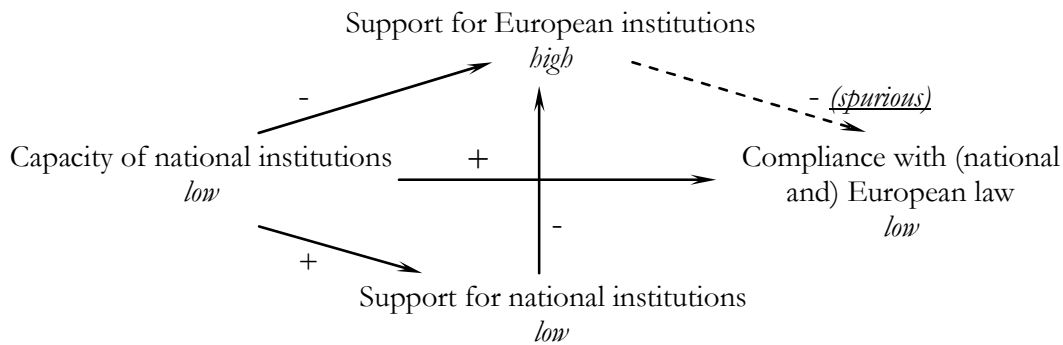
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<sup>58</sup> Putnam 1993; Levi 1998; Tyler 1998, Rothstein 2004

<sup>59</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca 2000.

to delegate authority to international institutions to achieve policy outcomes that cannot be realized at the domestic level due to powerful veto players or lacking resources.<sup>60</sup>

Graph 3: Capacity, Legitimacy, and Compliance



### Power and Legitimacy

The combination of enforcement and legitimacy approaches is more problematic since they are based on different theories of social action. Despite attempts to integrate rationalist and constructivist reasoning, synthetic explanations of (non-) compliance are still rare.<sup>61</sup> They tend to focus on the scope conditions for the two different logics of social action. In a similar vein, we would argue that states that have power can do as they please (conditional on capacity), but what pleases them may well be defined by a normative logic that makes compliance the socially expected and accepted behavior – if their population is supportive of the rule of law and the EU, respectively. Moreover, powerful states, whose citizens strongly support the rule of law and show little support for the EU, respectively, may be more inclined to use their power of assertiveness to shape EU rules according to the preferences of their constituencies.

<sup>60</sup> Simmons 2002; Simmons and Martin 1998: 747-748; Keohane 1984; Putnam 1988; Keohane and Nye 1977; Ruggie 1983.

<sup>61</sup> But see Checkel 2001; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999.

Table 4: Overview of the Integrated Hypotheses

Power and Capacity	Capacity and Legitimacy	Power and Legitimacy
<p>H4a: With increasing capacity, the positive effect of the power of recalcitrance (H1a) and the negative effect of the power of deterrence (H1c) on the propensity of member states to infringe on European law are reduced.</p>	<p>H4c: With increasing capacity, the negative effects of the support for the rule of law (H3a) and the EU (H3b), respectively, on the propensity of member states to infringe on European law is reinforced.</p>	<p>H4e: With increasing support for the rule of law and the EU, the positive effect of the power of recalcitrance (H1a) and the negative effect of the power of deterrence (H1c) on the propensity of member states to infringe on European law are reduced.</p>
<p>H4b: With increasing capacity, the negative effect of the power of assertiveness (H1b) on the propensity of member states to infringe on European law is reinforced.</p>	<p>H4d: Capacity affects both legitimacy and compliance – lower capacity of a member state leads to higher public support for the EU, but still results in a high frequency of infringements.</p>	<p>H4f: With increasing support for the rule of law and decreasing support for the EU, the negative effect of the power of assertiveness (H1b) on the propensity of member states to infringe on European law is reinforced.</p>

## 4. Empirical Results

In this section, we report the results of our quantitative tests of the effects of power, capacity, and legitimacy on non-compliance.<sup>62</sup> We discuss the findings in turn, referring to the models 1-5 of table 5, which estimate the influence of each of the three theoretical approaches simultaneously controlling for the influences of at least one other approach at a time. The models comprise the most promising variables of each theoretical account, which were discussed in the respective sections on the operationalization of the independent variables. While model one consists of the basic model without interactions, models 2 to 4 respectively test the three different groups of integrated

<sup>62</sup> The regression results were generated using the statistics software package Intercooled Stata 9.2. We tested for first- and higher order autocorrelation. None was found. Problems of heteroscedasticity were counteracted by the use robust standard errors with clustering on member states. As to unobserved heterogeneity, we decided against the use of fixed effects (cf. Plümper, Manow and Tröger 2005).

hypotheses – power and capacity, capacity and legitimacy, and power and legitimacy. Model 5 brings these separate models together in one single integrated model, without adding any three-way interaction terms for power, capacity, and legitimacy.<sup>63</sup> In all models, we add time dummies<sup>64</sup> to control for unobserved temporal heterogeneity and period effects that go beyond the growing number of legal acts, discussed in section 2.1 above.

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<sup>63</sup> This model serves solely illustrative purposes as it does not lend itself to substantive interpretation due to being ridden by multicollinearity. In fact, while variation inflation factors above 10 are usually considered evidence of multicollinearity in a model, in model 5 they are in the hundreds. Please also compare the correlation matrix of the independent variables in the appendix

<sup>64</sup> The time dummies are a set of binary variables for T-1 years of our study.



Table 5: Capacity, Power, Legitimacy, and Infringements

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Power:</i>					
GDP	-0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0000 (0.0001)		-0.0001** (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)
Shapley Shubik Index	0.0336** (0.0122)	0.0264** (0.0090)		0.0517*** (0.0099)	0.0202 (0.0164)
<i>Capacity:</i>					
GDPpc	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)		-0.0000 (0.0000)
Efficiency	-0.2227** (0.0869)	-0.2469*** (0.0235)	-0.3008** (0.0988)		-0.2259** (0.0792)
Polcon	0.0176 (0.2788)	-0.1187 (0.3248)	-0.3921 (0.3987)		0.0385 (0.3847)
<i>Legitimacy:</i>					
Rule of law	-0.0020 (0.0089)		0.0050 (0.0089)	-0.0170*** (0.0037)	-0.0019 (0.0064)
EU support	0.0011 (0.0023)		-0.0030 (0.0024)	0.0052** (0.0018)	0.0028 (0.0021)
<i>Interaction Effects:</i>					
SSI * Efficiency		-0.0107** (0.0043)			-0.0167 (0.0129)
Rule of law * Efficiency			-0.0103 (0.0078)		0.0081 (0.0086)
EU support * Efficiency			-0.0047 (0.0034)		-0.0028 (0.0020)
SSI * Rule of law				0.0013 (0.0011)	0.0013 (0.0010)
SSI * EU support				0.0015** (0.0005)	0.0008 (0.0005)
Constant	0.1091 (0.0961)	0.1167 (0.0908)	0.1700* (0.0927)	0.1815* (0.0907)	0.0776 (0.0966)
Year dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	233	233	233	233	233
Adjusted R-squared	0.48	0.50	0.40	0.50	0.53

Dependent variable is reasoned opinions per legal act. OLS regressions with two-tailed t-tests. Robust (Hubert/White) standard errors (with clustering on member states) in parentheses. \*\*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.05$ , \* =  $p < 0.1$ .

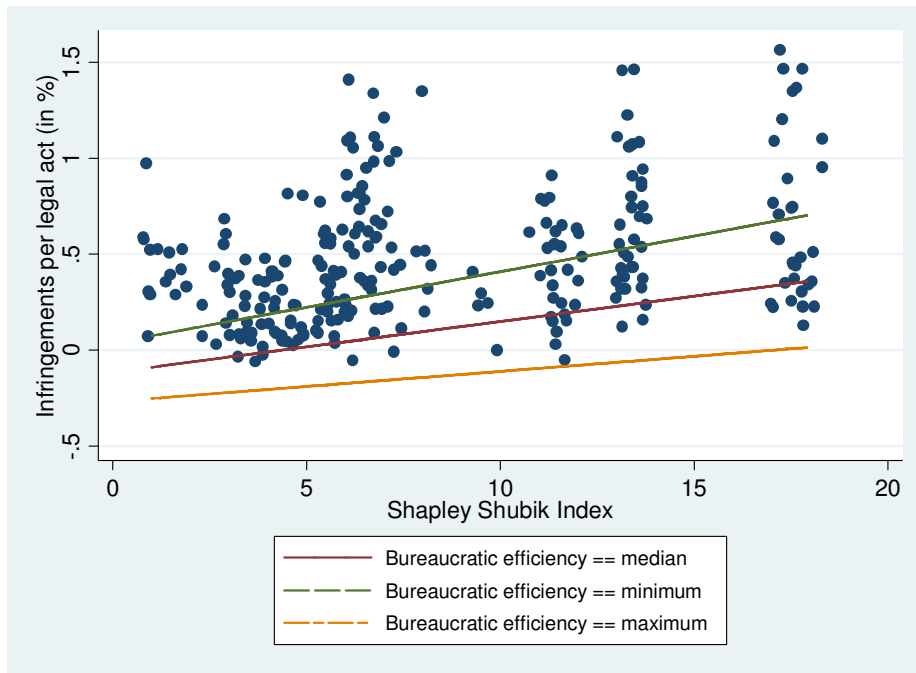
#### 4.1. Enforcement

The results give support to the recalcitrance hypothesis (H1a). The political weight in the Council of Ministers (“SSI”) has a significant effect on infringements per legal act. Member states like France, Italy, or Germany have more Council votes and violate European law more frequently than member

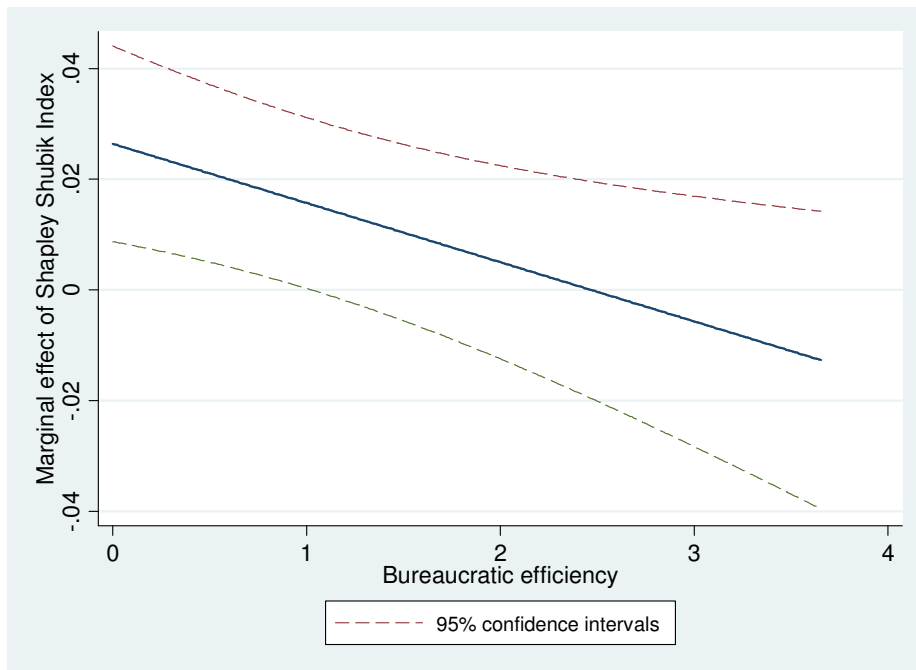
states with low voting power, such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden, or the Netherlands (cf. table 5, models 1, 2, and 4). Greater economic power, by contrast, does not substantially affect a country's compliance record. The size of the economy does not matter when it comes to infringements on European law. Note, however, that the recalcitrance hypothesis has difficulties in accounting for the compliance performance of the United Kingdom, on the one hand, and Greece, Belgium, and Portugal, on the other. While the former complies much better compared with other 'big countries', such as France and Italy, the latter three have considerably less voting power and still belong to the worst compliers.

To better understand these 'outliers', we have to inspect model 2 more closely. The negative and significant interaction effect of voting power and bureaucratic efficiency indicates what can also be read of graphs 4 and 5. Whereas graph 4 depicts how the conditional slopes of voting power decrease with increasing levels of bureaucratic efficiency and the non-interacted independent variables held constant at their mean, graph 5 shows the marginal effect of the political weight in the Council of Ministers on non-compliance across the observed range of the modifying variable "efficiency" with 95 percent confidence intervals. Irrespective of their differences, both graphs give support to the integrated hypothesis H4a. Increases in capacity make the non-compliance promoting effects of power less pronounced. This explains why the United Kingdom outperforms its powerful counterparts when it comes to compliance with European legislation.

Graph 4: Power and Capacity – Conditional Slopes



Graph 5: Power and Capacity – Marginal Effect



The assertiveness hypothesis (H1b) states that more powerful states infringe European law less often than weaker states, since they have been able to decrease the costs of compliance by shaping the law according to their preferences. It is tested in exactly the same way as the recalcitrance hypothesis (H1a) above using the same indicators. The only difference is our expectation with respect to the signs of our independent power variables. This holds also true for the deterrence hypothesis (H1c). It predicts the same outcome as the assertiveness hypothesis, but draws on another causal mechanism, namely the likelihood that enforcement authorities shy away from enforcing compliance. Powerful member states have fewer infringements than weaker ones since the European Commission and the ECJ are deterred to a greater extent. As our findings in table 5 have already given support to the recalcitrance hypothesis, the assertiveness hypothesis and the deterrence hypothesis have to be rejected. One should note, however, that the rejection of the deterrence hypothesis does not suggest that the Commission might not decide strategically on which infringement cases to prosecute. However, our expert survey clearly indicates that if the Commission strategically enforced European Law, such behavior would not systematically disadvantage particular member states (see section 2.1.).<sup>65</sup>

The integrated hypotheses of power and legitimacy (H4e and H4f) scores just as bad as the assertiveness and deterrence hypotheses. While the interaction effect between the Shapley Shubik Index and support for the rule of law is not significantly different from zero, the interaction effect between political power and public support for the EU is positive. This implies that with increasing support, the positive effect of the power of recalcitrance on the propensity of member states to infringe on European law is not reduced, but increased. In other words, the effect of power on non-compliance is not conditional on the presence or absence of the rule of law and EU support seems to make recalcitrant member states even more recalcitrant.

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<sup>65</sup> To properly test the deterrence hypothesis, we would need the population of infringement cases and compare it to those infringements denounced by the Commission. However, we only have Commission data. Therefore, we cannot statistically test whether the Commission is systematically biased towards particular member states.

## 4.2. Management

Testing the effect of government autonomy and government capacity on non-compliance, we find a strong relation between the government capacity of a member state and its number of infringements (cf. table 5, models 1-3 and 5). While general capacity measured by GDP per capita has no significant effect on compliance, we can see that larger bureaucratic efficiency brings about fewer violations of European law. The coefficient for the efficiency of civil servants is negative and significantly different from zero. This is in line with other studies, which also find that the command of resources appear to be less an issue in the EU.<sup>66</sup> Compliance appears to depend much more on the capacity to mobilize existing resources. This explains why France and Italy, which belong to the wealthiest member states of the EU, are as bad compliers as relatively poor countries like Greece and Portugal.

Government autonomy, by contrast, seems to have no effect on the number of infringements. The “polcon” coefficients are not significant in any model. In fact, they even change their algebraic sign depending on the model specification. If anything, previous studies have revealed that countries with several veto players commit fewer violations of European law than countries with a small number of veto players.<sup>67</sup> Both, the literatures on consensual democracies and decision-making in the EU can offer tentative explanations for this counterintuitive finding. On the one hand, if domestic constraints prevent governments from concluding far-reaching agreements in Brussels,<sup>68</sup> there is no good reason for veto players to blockade the implementation of European rules. On the other hand, Arendt Lijphart has argued that high horizontal and vertical dispersion of policy competencies fosters the inclusion of diverse societal interests into political processes and outcomes.<sup>69</sup> It forces political actors to construct broad compromises and comply with them, even in cases in which their own interests are not fully included. In order to avoid deadlocks, consensual democracies develop political cultures with inclinations towards diffuse reciprocity. Yet, the group of compliance laggards, which includes unitary member states, such as Greece and France, as well as regionalized Italy and federal Belgium, indicates that government autonomy is a poor predictor for compliance.

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<sup>66</sup> Mbaye 2001; Hille and Knill 2006; Steunenberg 2006.

<sup>67</sup> Mbaye 2001; Börzel, Hofmann, and Sprungk 2003.

<sup>68</sup> Bailer and Schneider 2006.

<sup>69</sup> Lijphart 1999.

In a nutshell, the government autonomy hypothesis (H2a) has to be rejected, while government capacity defined as bureaucratic efficiency (H2b) has a strong negative effect on the number of infringements. In fact, and as has been discussed above, bureaucratic efficiency has an additional desirable property: It improves the propensity of powerful member states to comply with European law (cf. H4a).

### **4.3. Legitimacy**

The statistical analysis finds hardly any significant correlation between the support for the rule of law and the frequency of violations of European law (H3a). Only model 4 indicates that infringements of EU law are rarer in countries, in which the principle of the rule of law is supported. This is definitely not enough evidence to state that the rule of law hypothesis is confirmed. However, we need to keep in mind the data issues discussed above. We would need much better data for a more reliable statement about the influence of legal culture on the degree of compliance.

As to the question of support for the EU, we find mixed and contra-intuitive results. These results can be traced back to the issue addressed in graph 3 and our integrated 'hypothesis' H4d. Due to the close relationship between the right-hand side capacity and legitimacy variables, our models 1-3 and 5 suffer from multicollinearity, thereby increasing standard errors and negating any significant and meaningful findings with respect to EU support and non-compliance. If anything, we rather find a positive correlation between public support for the EU and infringements of European law than the negative effect we would anticipate in line with hypothesis H3b. Countries, in which the population is particularly supportive of European integration, infringe more frequently on legal acts than EU-skeptic countries like Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, which comply particularly well with European law.

In sum, the rule of law hypothesis (H3a) could probably be confirmed with better data. The support hypothesis (H3b), on the contrary, has to be rejected, since the results do not support the expected negative effect of EU support on non-compliance. However, these findings are less surprising if we evaluate them in light of our second integrated capacity and legitimacy hypothesis (H4d). This may also explain why our data do not support the interaction between capacity and legitimacy as hypothesized in hypothesis (H4c): Neither do we find negative effects of the support for the rule of

law and the EU on the propensity of member states to infringe on European law in model 3, nor are they reinforced by capacity.

## 5. Conclusion

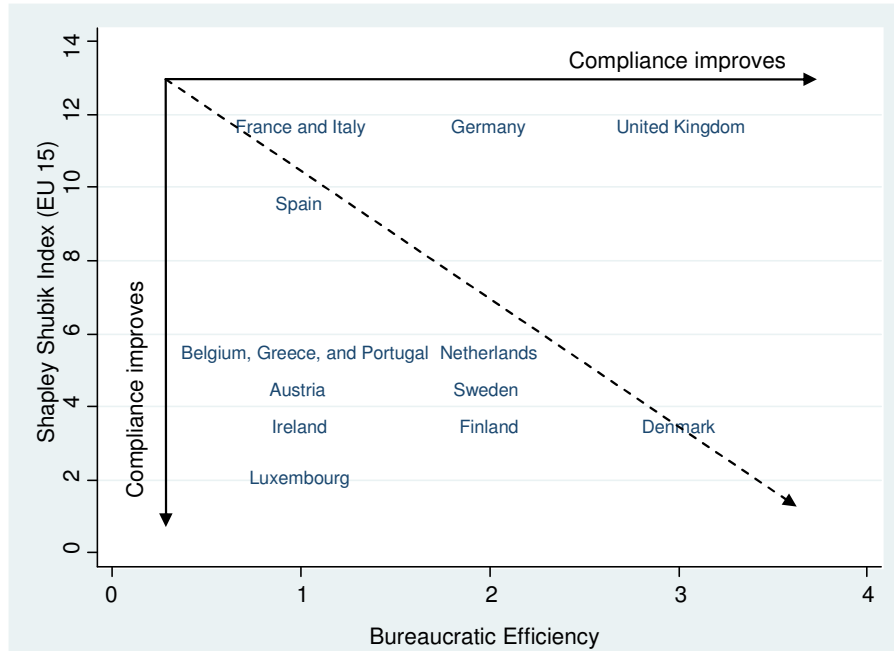
In this paper, we analyzed why some member states violate European legal acts more frequently than others. In a *first* step, we developed hypotheses based on three prominent theoretical approaches. The management school of thought argues that non-compliance is not a strategic choice, but occurs whenever states lack the necessary government capacity and government autonomy to properly and timely implement international rules. The enforcement approach provides three hypotheses on the importance of power for the distribution of non-compliance (recalcitrance, assertiveness, and deterrence). Researchers devoted to the study of legitimacy and non-compliance argue that neither power, nor lack of capacity determines non-compliance, but that acceptance of rules as standards for appropriate behavior is the relevant independent variable. While there are many ways in which legitimacy might affect (non-) compliance with rules, we focused in this paper on testing the extent to which the support for the principle of the rule of law as well as the acceptance of the rule-setting institution explain the level of (non-) compliance in the member states. Instead of merely treating the three approaches as alternative or even competing explanations, we discussed different possibilities in which their explanatory factors could be combined in a theoretically consistent and meaningful way.

In a *second* step, we extensively tested the empirical implications of all hypotheses, derived from these three theoretical approaches and their combinations, with panel-econometrical methods. Our regression results show that capacity-centered, power-centered, and legitimacy-based models explain some of the variance of annual infringements per European legal act in force (cf. table 5). Combining the variables from all three approaches we explain more than 50% of the observed variance on the dependent variable. Even though one should not overstate the informative value of the adjusted R-squared statistic, it still highlights the substantial explanatory power of our model.

Especially the combination of the power of recalcitrance (H1a) and bureaucratic efficiency (H2b), as depicted in graph 6, yields promising results (cf. H4a). Our quantitative analyses reveal that powerful

states, like France and Italy, which have a great share of votes in the Council, are less sensitive to enforcement costs and, therefore, have a higher share of infringements than weaker member states. Countries with high capacities, such as Denmark, Finland, or the United Kingdom, have a better compliance record than states with lower capacities, such as Greece, Portugal, or Belgium. Yet, important outliers remain. Great Britain is as powerful as France and Italy, but complies much better. Conversely, Greece is one of the least powerful countries in the EU, but almost as bad a complier as powerful France and Italy. This can be explained by combining and interacting the managerial variable government capacity and the power of recalcitrance variable (“SSI”). States with high capacities and low political power infringe on European law less frequently than other member states. In other words, the combination of low government capacity and great political power brings together inability to comply and the necessary political weight to be recalcitrant in the face of looming sanctions. Hence, we expect and find states, such as Italy or France, which have a great share of votes in the Council, but are characterized by low government capacity, to have a comparatively high number of infringement proceedings opened.

Graph 6: Power, Capacity, and Compliance



These findings indicate some pathways for future research. *First* of all, our findings point to the importance of disentangling specific variants of each approach. Within the enforcement approach,



both the assertiveness and the deterrence variant had to be rejected, while the recalcitrance approach turned out to have explanatory power for the occurrence of non-compliance. The same holds true for the management approach, in which only the capacity of a government seems to be causally related to the number of infringements between member states. With regard to the legitimacy approach, only the support for the rule of law variant has potential to explain member states' non-compliance with European law. However, all variants are also closely related to each other and not necessarily mutually exclusive. This is particularly the case for the power-centered approaches, in which both the recalcitrance and the deterrence hypothesis refer to the relationship between the deviant and the enforcement authority. Thus, we could argue that the confirmation of the recalcitrance hypothesis does not only reveal insights about why member states do not comply, but that it could also be interpreted as the inclination of the enforcement authority to open infringement proceedings against powerful member states. However, this argument only holds true if we use infringement proceedings as a proxy for non-compliance. Further research has to focus on testing this argument by using different proxies.

*Second*, our findings suggest going a step further and combine specific parts of different theoretical approaches to explaining non-compliance with law beyond the nation-state. While a combination of variables from the enforcement and the management approach turned out to have the greatest explanatory power, we still have to find alternative ways for explaining the (non-) effect of legitimacy. Are there other ways of theorizing and testing the relationship between the support for EU institutions and compliance performance than by linking it to government capacity? In other words, does the legitimacy approach have explanatory power in its own right? This is particularly relevant a question because we have tested only two variants of the legitimacy argument neglecting factors, such as procedural fairness or peer pressure.

*Finally*, while the overall fit of our integrated model is quite good, a significant amount of variation still remains to be explained. Moreover, our integrated model has two 'outlying' member states whose compliance records cannot be adequately accounted for by the combination of power- and capacity-centered models: Germany and Spain. While the latter performs better than predicted by the integrated model and has an overall medium level of infringements, the former has a worse compliance record than expected given its capacity. Part of the reason why a considerable share of non-compliance remains unexplained may be that the compliance literature in International Relations

has largely neglected policy-related explanations as developed in the early implementation literature.<sup>70</sup> International Relations approaches focus on country variables, such as power, capacity, and legitimacy, but neglect that these variables can vary within states. A more fine-grained approach would argue that financial and administrative capacities are scarce resources and that their internal redistribution might vary between policy fields. States prioritize certain issues vis-à-vis others and are therefore likely to allocate more funding in their national budgets and invest more human resources in them. This line of reasoning also implies that states might adjust their spending priorities according to the preferences of their electorate, meaning that, for example, a green government could be willing to spend more money on environmental policy, compared to conservative, liberal, or social democratic governments. ‘Bringing policy back in’ could also be a fruitful way to account for variations within individual states and between policy fields or specific norms.

So, what does the European Union teach us about non-compliance in international politics? The EU is often regarded as a system *sui generis* whose unique supranational properties (e.g. supremacy and direct effect of European law)<sup>71</sup> preclude generalizations to other international institutions. However, if we adopt a fine grained perspective, ultimately, any political institution is one of its kind. To make fruitful comparisons, we need to climb up the ladder of abstraction.<sup>72</sup> Hence, the potential for generalizations depends on the properties that are looked at. While the EU is the most legalized system in the world,<sup>73</sup> its institutionalized compliance mechanisms can also be found elsewhere.<sup>74</sup> Our study has two important implications for compliance with law beyond the nation state. *First*, states with both, low capacities and high shares of power are compliance laggards and delimit the power of law beyond the nation state. They lack the capacity to easily comply with international law and, at the same time, are not willing to introduce major resource-redistributions and investments, but rather rely on their ability to resist enforcement pressure.

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<sup>70</sup> Pressmann and Wildawsky 1973; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1981.

<sup>71</sup> Alter 2001.

<sup>72</sup> Sartori 1991.

<sup>73</sup> Alter 2000: 490.

<sup>74</sup> Mitchell 1996: 17-20; Smith 2000: 139-140; Peters 2003.

*Second*, the twinning of management and enforcement instruments is, indeed, an effective way to restore compliance.<sup>75</sup> The combination of managerial dialogue, capacity building, and penalties addresses the two major sources of non-compliance identified by our study. However, two caveats are in order:

- (i) The managerial instrument of capacity-building is not sufficient in restoring compliance, if it merely entails the transfer of resources to non-compliant states. Rather, it is essential to foster bureaucratic efficiency, e.g. by promoting anti-corruption measures as part of ‘good governance’.<sup>76</sup>
- (ii) Even highly legalized institutions, such as the EU, the World Trade Organization, and Andean Community, where monitoring and sanctioning powers are delegated to third parties,<sup>77</sup> do not completely mitigate power differences between states.

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<sup>75</sup> Tallberg 2002: 632.

<sup>76</sup> Tivig, 2006: 64, Armin, 2006.

<sup>77</sup> Smith 2000.

## 6. Literature

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## 7. Appendix

	GDP	SSI	GDPpc	Efficiency	Polcon	Rule of law	EU support	SSI * Efficiency	Rule of law * Efficiency	SSI * Rule of law	EU support * Efficiency
GDP	1.00										
SSI	0.77	1.00									
GDPpc	0.11	-0.27	1.00								
Efficiency	0.20	0.14	0.25	1.00							
Polcon	-0.28	-0.31	0.37	-0.11	1.00						
Rule of law	0.32	0.44	0.01	0.77	-0.0653	1.00					
EU support	-0.19	-0.23	0.13	-0.49	0.2303	-0.35	1.00				
SSI * Efficiency	-0.35	-0.42	-0.04	-0.02	-0.1048	-0.32	-0.01	1.00			
Rule of law * Efficiency	-0.41	-0.38	0.10	0.35	-0.1472	-0.15	-0.36	0.61	1.00		
SSI * Rule of law	-0.09	0.10	-0.08	-0.11	-0.2278	-0.19	0.02	0.64	0.4964	1.00	
EU support * Efficiency	0.09	-0.01	-0.19	-0.41	-0.0119	-0.33	-0.03	-0.17	-0.3461	-0.39	1.00
SSI * EU support	-0.02	-0.07	-0.10	-0.13	0.2171	0.02	-0.03	-0.63	-0.4180	-0.66	0.32