

House of the Dutch Provinces - Brussels

The Co-operation of the Dutch Provinces on European Issues of
Common Interest

Zana Abdallah

Student number: 0161780

University of Twente (UT), Enschede - the Netherlands

**Under supervision of: Prof. Dr. N.S. Groenendijk (UT) - Centre for EU Studies
Dr. P.W.A Scholten**

**In charge of: House of the Dutch Provinces
East-Netherlands Region**

**Under supervision of: Drs. R.P.J.M. van Eijkeren, co-ordinator of the House of
the Dutch Provinces - Brussels**

Duration: March – September 2008

“We have more in common than that we are each other’s competitors”

Motto of the Dutch provinces in the European arena

Table of Contents

Preface

1	Introduction.....	5
1.1	Background, research question and sub-questions.....	6
1.2	Research design and method.....	8
1.3	Structure of the paper.....	10
2	Theoretical Context.....	11
2.1	Introduction.....	11
2.2	Pluralism vs Neo-corporatism.....	11
2.3	Multi-Level Governance.....	13
3	Dutch Provinces in the EU: Management of the European affairs.....	15
3.1	Introduction.....	15
3.2	History of Dutch provinces (and regions) in the EU.....	17
3.3	Management of EU affairs.....	18
3.4	Conclusion.....	22
4	Provincial Interests in the EU arena: A Convergence of Priorities.....	23
4.1	Introduction.....	23
4.2	Policy Convergence Theory.....	25
4.2	Conclusion.....	29
5	Common Agenda as a Steering Instrument for Collective Action.....	30
5.1	Introduction.....	30
5.2	The different forms an agenda can take.....	31
5.3	Preconditions.....	31
5.4	Issue-specific characteristics.....	33
5.5	Case: Common agenda of the Dutch provinces in the EU.....	34
5.6	Conclusion.....	41
6	Conclusions and Recommendations.....	42
	References.....	45
	Annex.....	62

Preface

The report lying in front of you is the result of the research I have executed during my internship for the province of Overijssel at the House of the Dutch Provinces in Brussels. The research is done to finish my Master in European Studies at the Twente University.

Reviewing five month of intensive work on this project, I realise how lucky I have been by doing the research in Brussels. Apart from whether one likes the city or not, it is “the place to be” for those who are interested in the European Union. My stage at the House has put more value to that. By being with the provincial representatives who work inside the House, I could constantly observe how “lobby” really works.

Moreover, by attending the weekly meetings in the House, I was allowed to be aware of their day-to-day activities and substances of the priority issues they were dealing with. I am grateful to them for providing me with that opportunity.

Different people have helped by the realisation of my thesis whom I want to thank.

First of all, a special word of thank to my supervisor Rob van Eijkeren. Without him, this project would have been a very hard job as he greatly helped me with facilitating the conduct of different steps of my research. Besides, his clear vision about intra-provincial co-operation of the Dutch provinces in the EU allowed me to keep the focus on the story from an objective angle.

A special word of thank to my first supervisor from the University, Prof. Dr. Nico Groenendijk. His advices and recommendations have been very helpful in keeping the research on the right track. I would like to thank my second supervisor Dr. Peter Scholten for his contribution to this research.

I want to thank Mrs. Najafi and others from the Overijssel province for accepting my proposal and allowing me to do this research. It should be said, through support of this research, the Overijssel province showed how provinces can contribute to inter-provincial co-operation in different ways.

I thank the provincial representatives in the House. I am grateful for their openness and that they have shared their views with me. The formal interviews but also the informal conversations with them have been extremely important for this research.

Last but not least, I thank the EU Co-ordinators inside the provinces and the IPO co-ordinator (EU secretary) for their contribution and their willingness to participate in this research.

Brussels, 10-08-2008

1 Introduction

This research has been commissioned by the House of the Dutch Provinces in Brussels. The House is the representation office of the Dutch provinces to the European Union. Representatives of the twelve Dutch provinces and the Association of Provincial Authorities to the European Institutions 'IPO' are settled in one office and form together the organization of the House. Other decentralised bodies' representatives such as network cities are also present in the same office building. However, they are not part of the House in its organizational form.

The history of Dutch regions in the EU dates back to the early 1990s. Some provinces were earlier in Brussels than others. However, with the establishment of the House in 2000, finally all Dutch provinces were present in Brussels. Within the House, provinces are divided into four regions. *Randstad Region*, which comprises of the provinces North-Holland, South-Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland. *East-Netherlands Region* comprising of the provinces Overijssel and Gelderland. '*Samenwerking Noord Nederland*' (*North-Netherlands Region*) comprising of the three northern provinces of [Friesland](#), Drenthe and Groningen and finally the *South-Netherlands Region*, which comprises of the provinces Limburg, North-Brabant and Zeeland.

Apart from financial and logistic reasons, the main purpose behind the foundation of the House was fostering inter-provincial co-operation on the European Union level.

The creation of such a multi-regional office would make it easier to combine forces and co-ordinate actions through division of tasks and exchange of information. To this purpose, provinces developed a common agenda in which issues of common interests and (desired) actions are outlined. As a result, the common agenda have become a focal instrument in the representation of provincial interests in the European Union.

The aim of this research is to assess the level of co-operation between the provinces in the European Union arena. As mentioned, the common agenda lies at the heart of this inter-provincial partnership. This research, therefore, deals with the common agenda. It concerns an in-depth analysis of various elements of the agenda such as the priority dossiers, the roles and positions of various actors involved in the co-operation process and the different forms of actions and activities that the agenda instigates.

Any judgment about the common agenda of Dutch provinces in the European Union would, however, remain abstract and incomplete so long there is no underlying analysis of a set of question relating to the desire, and perhaps the need, for regions of being represented in the European Union. These questions spark many issues regarding the (growing) importance of the European Union as a political entity and the impact of its policies on national, but also on regional authorities. Furthermore, the (evolving) nature of the system in terms of governance structure and the role of regions in that context, could be seen as the other side of the story. Dealing with these issues is of particular importance in explaining the existence of interest groups and assessing the organization of interest representation in the European arena.

1.1 Background of the Research, Research Question and Sub-questions

The Inter-Provincial Authority (Inter-provinciaal Overleg- IPO) is the Assembly of the twelve Dutch provinces. Within the organization and framework of IPO, provinces co-operate to ‘optimize the conditions under which they have responsibilities’ (IPO statute)¹. Moreover, the substance of the common agenda of the provinces is determined and agreed on by all provinces within the IPO framework. In essence, an agenda is problem orientated. It consists of elements such as actions and measures to tackle things that are somehow identified as a “problem”.

However, though, agendas can take different forms as different policy actors are involved with its formation (politicians, administrators, etc.) or the origin of the problem differs (public pressure, political interest, etc.) Van de Graaf and Hoppe developed the following classification of an agenda.²

Policy agenda: a policy agenda consists of subjects in which the policy actor not only takes an interest, but for which he is also taking measures.

Political agenda: list of subjects that enjoy the attention of both politicians and administrators. It will be put on the agenda when both acknowledge this as a “problem” or “challenge”.

Public agenda: list of subjects that emerge on the agenda as result of public pressure.

It is worthwhile to note that an agenda can overlap between the mentioned categories as it can be result of public pressure and policy actors at the same time. However, the typology is useful in assessing the nature of the examined agenda.

The common agenda of the provinces is based on the annual work plan of the European Commission and consists of several European dossiers which are of importance to *all* Dutch provinces. These could be new dossiers in specific policy areas that emerge as result of a Commission’s proposal but they also could be ‘running’ dossiers or ‘sleeping’ dossiers, which come to surface again after months or even years of disappearance in the decision-making process³.

The inter-provincial co-operation is therefore based on an agenda which consists a list of priority dossiers. So far, this mechanism of work has not been subject to scrutiny. As result of this, provinces acknowledge the need for an in-depth analysis of the agenda and all activities related to it. By this, they expect to have a clear and objective view on several aspects of their partnership. This analysis, therefore, takes the common agenda of the provinces as a case and looks at all related activities and actors involved with it.

Research Question

How does the existing common agenda shapes co-operation between the Dutch provinces on the European issues of common interest?

¹ in line with provincial responsibilities in line with Dutch constitution and secondary legislation.

² Source: Lem, M., 2003

³ Decisions go through different EU institutions like the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and even the CoR and Social Committee, under different mechanisms of co-decision, consultation and co-operation.

The research question is built on the assumption that the common agenda, which contains a list of common priority dossiers, has a central role in the Dutch inter-provincial partnership. Judging this partnership requires a set of questions regarding (the essence of) interest representation in general and that of regions in particular. In other words, the presence of regional representation offices might provide an answer to the openness of the European political system and the role and influence of interest groups in general within the EU political system. Furthermore, This might help us to understand better the evolving EU governance structure and the growing role of the regions in that context. These issues constitute the fundamentals for regional presence in the European arena. The next question should help us to draw the theoretical context of our analysis.

1 How can presence of regional representation offices in the EU be explained in the context of interest group versus state discussion?

Assuming that regions have a stake in the European public policy and that regional offices are settled to represent regional interests in the European arena provoke a set of questions. The first relevant question to ask concerns the kind of interests regions have in the European arena. In other words, what bring regions to the EU? What are the issues that regions perceive as their interest that somehow should be defended? The work of regional offices is interesting to see. However, the management of the European arena requires more than setting up an outpost in Brussels only. Therefore, regional representation or lobby is expected to be organized both in Brussels and at home. The next sub-question should lead us to proper answers to the above-mentioned questions within the context of the Dutch provinces.

2 Which interests do regions have in the EU political arena and in which way do they defend them?

The previous question might provide us sufficient knowledge as to what provincial interests are and how provinces manage the European arena. However, it might not provide us a satisfactory answer to the question of why Dutch provinces have embarked on co-operation at the European level. With other words, what factors have moved or perhaps forced regions to co-operate on several European issues which they regard as issues of common interest. Therefore, before making any judgment about the level of co-operation, which is the core of this research, it is important to analyze the process through which co-operation was realized. A convergence of interests or priorities regarding several European issues is expected to have instigated this inter-provincial co-operation process.

3 How have various EU policy issues become common priorities of the Dutch provinces?

Once the fundamentals upon which Dutch provincial co-operation in the European arena is established are clear, and it is also clear which policy areas are currently regarded as issues of common interest, there is sufficient knowledge to study the common agenda and several actors and activities related to it.

4 In which way does the common agenda bring about co-operation between the Dutch provinces on the selected issues of common interest?

1.2 Research design and method

This research concerns a case study of the common agenda of the Dutch provinces in the European Union. It is *explanatory* of nature and has a theoretical dimension. With other words, it seeks to use several theories to achieve explanation for several elements that relates to the common agenda of the provinces. Thus, here, theories are not used to be tested nor is this case an attempt to develop a theory. de Vaus qualify this type of case studies as '*clinical case studies*'.⁴

According to de Vaus the clinical case study is *case centred* which means, the goal is not to *test* or *develop* theories but to *use* existing theories to understand a case.⁵

1.2.2 Units of analysis

In this research, the unit of analysis that is the 'object' of the study is the common agenda of the Dutch provinces in the European Union. It is, however, important to distinguish between units of analysis as a whole and units that consist of a various levels or components. Yin uses the terms 'holistic' and 'embedded' designs to refer to this distinction^{6,7}.

This case is 'embedded' since the common agenda is consisting of different elements and has been dealt with at different levels by different actors. For this case it is of particular importance to draw the context of analysis and within that context collect information from different angles and at different levels. Only in this way a full image of the common agenda with all its complexity would be obtained.

1.2.3 Research Methodology

Different methods were used to collect required information for the conduct of this research. First, several secondary sources were used such as books and scientific articles. The analysis also relies on several documents related to the common agenda. Examples of those documents are position papers of provinces on several European issues, (strategic) European agendas of provinces and regions. Evaluation reports of the House, information brochures and websites.

As far as primary sources is concerned, interviews were conducted with different groups of people who are closely involved with the common agenda of the provinces. The first group is a group which consists of representatives of the provinces working in the House in Brussels. The reason behind interviewing this group is their intense involvement with the common agenda and common priorities in different stages from selection of priority areas to implementation. Furthermore, the provincial representatives function as a link between their own provinces and the House in Brussels and are therefore expected to have a clear image on the organization of lobby both in Brussels and at inside their provinces. Structured question were chosen as the best option to prevent asking different questions. These questions were divided into three main sections. The first section consists of questions related to the organization of EU inside the provinces and in Brussels and the used communication (channels). The aim of these question was to get an idea about the place of Europe inside the provinces and to see whether there are differences in this regard. With regard to the questions in the second section, these were related to the (level of) co-operation of the provinces in the House in Brussels and questions about the method of work in the House. The last section of

⁴ Vaus de, D. (2001), *Research Design in Social Research*, London: sage

⁵ Vaus de, D. (2001, p.224)

⁶ Vaus de, D. (2001, p. 220)

⁷ Yin, R.K. (1989) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Beverly Hills and London: sage: In de Vaus, D.

the interview contained question relating to different aspects of the selected common priority dossiers, such as selection procedure, methods of action and so on.

The second group of interviewed persons is the group comprised of the 'EU co-ordinators' of provinces who in most cases lead the European unit inside their provinces and are responsible for their own provincial European priority list and agenda. Interviewing this group is very important and interesting, since the co-ordinators are working inside their own province and lead the Europe 'unit' or 'department'. Because of their position, they are expected to have a more outspoken opinion about the way inter-provincial co-operation on common priority areas should look like and whether or not the province is content with the current agenda or method of work in Brussels. As far as the nature of the interview is concerned, again, structured interviews were used. However, the interview contained another set of question.

The third party of interviewed people are the two IPO (inter-Provincial) co-ordinators. One of them is present in the House and is called 'house co-ordinator' and the other one is present in the IPO office in The Hague. From this position, they are responsible for co-ordination of action between provinces. The choice for those groups is based on their level of involvement with the common agenda of the House and their positions in the organizations they are representing. Moreover, their position make them neutral persons from which more objective information was expected to be gained.

By interviewing different groups and individuals, information was gathered from different angles and from people on different levels dealing with different components of the common agenda. The importance of these groups became apparent after desk research was finished and relevant concepts of the analysis were specified.

The interviews were '*structured-interviews*'. That is to say, the individuals of a group got the same set of questions. However, different questions were developed for each group dependent on the desired information from a particular group.

As far as the first group is concerned, *informal conversational interviews* were used to gain first hand information.⁸

⁸ Patton, M., (1990) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Second Edition, New York: Sage

1.3 structure of the paper

In the introduction, which is the first part of this paper, the research problem is presented. Based on this, a research question and several other sub-questions are defined. The research methodology is also outlined in the introduction part.

The **second chapter** of this paper concerns an theoretical context of analysis. This chapter is devoted to the first sub-question of *How can presence of regional representation offices in the EU be explained in the context of interest group versus state discussion?* In answering this question, several theories and concepts regarding interest representation and the nature of EU system are presented and discussed. The aim is to shed a light on the nature of the work of regional representation offices and through that explaining the underlying role and powers of regions within the EU polity.

The **third chapter** deals with the second sub-question. *Which interests do regions have in the EU arena and in which way do they defend them?* By looking back to the history of regional representation offices and the reasons behind the choice to settle in Brussels, several interesting aspects of regional interests or at least what regions perceive as their interest in the EU, can be revealed. Furthermore, it is interesting to see how within the Dutch context, regions and provinces dealt with European affairs and how they have organized their lobby in terms of organization, manpower, other available instruments and so on.

The **fourth chapter** is devoted to the third sub-question which deals with the convergence of European priorities with regard to several European policy fields and issues. The question: *How have different EU policy issues become common priorities of the Dutch provinces?* is formulated to analyze the process through which several European policy fields and issues become issues of common interest for the provinces. In this regard, policy convergence theory is used to make this more understandable. Among others, the equal position of the Dutch provinces in the national context in terms of their responsibilities in several policy areas together with the growing involvement of regions in the European context are described thoroughly in this chapter.

Chapter five concerns the analysis of the common agenda of the provinces in the European Union arena. This chapter starts with introduction of variables and indicators upon which the agenda is examined. It takes several elements of the common agenda and related actors and activities into account and tries in this way to provide a full image of the selection procedure of the common priority dossiers, the level of actor involvement, level of agreement on the selected issues and several other stages through which the agenda is come about. Furthermore the implementation of the agenda in terms of output instruments are analyzed. The ultimate aim is to assess the level of co-operation between the provinces of which the common agenda has a central role.

The collected information in the previous chapters of the paper are used to draw conclusions and make recommendations that are presented in **chapter six**. The chapter contains an answer to the research question:

How does the existing common agenda shapes co-operation between the Dutch provinces on the European issues of common interest?

Apart from conclusion remarks, this chapter contains several recommendations for improvement.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Context

How can presence of regional representation offices in the EU be explained in the context of interest group versus state discussion?

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to draw a theoretical context of the existence of regional offices in the European Union. The increasing presence of regions in Brussels indicates a substantial and growing power of region in the European context and requires theoretical explanation. The literature on regional representation in the EU political arena is extensive. However, different labels have been given to regional representation offices since the work and the mandates of these offices differs significantly. One thing that all would agree on is that an overwhelming majority of these offices, as the name indicates, are offices of regional authorities established in Brussels to *represent* the interest of their regions in the European Union arena. A significant part of their work which consists of monitoring and influencing EU public policy is what generally assumed to be the main function of any interest group and therefore justifies their qualification as an (type of) interest group. Yet, the whole presence of regions and their increasing power at the European Union level needs more theoretical explanation which goes beyond the traditional discussion of interest representation versus state.

First of all, we should define what *interest* is and what is meant by *interest representation*. Interest could be defined as emotional value or significance attached to an object or a cause. It emerges as individuals or groups are subject to different set of conditions which make them pursue different 'concerns'⁹ Based on this, Berry defines *interest group* as an organized body of individuals who share some goals and who try to influence public policy.¹⁰ When an interest group attempts to influence policy makers, it can be said to be engaging in *lobbying*.¹¹

Kirchner has been one of the first who analyzed interest group formation at the EU level by collecting data on the mobilization of trade unions in the EU arena.¹² Built on the work of Kirchner, others like Joke Wiercx developed a framework to explain the emergence of interest groups in the European Union. Wiercx mentions the *push* and *pull* factors. Whereas the push factors refer to the relevance of the EU as the deciding factor for groups to be present in the European arena, the pull factor relates to the limitations of the EU system itself that requires contribution of those groups in the policy making process.

Neo-Corporatism vs. Pluralism

For many decades, the discussion between *pluralism* and *neo-corporatism* shaped the theoretical context within which the existence of interest groups, their interaction with the state and their influence over each other.

⁹ Berry, J.M. (1984, P. 2)

¹⁰ Berry, J.M. (1984, P. 5)

¹¹ *idem*.

¹² in Mazey and Richardson (2006, p.256), In: Richardson, J. (2006) *European Union, Power and Policy Making*, New York; Routledge

On the role of the state, neo-corporatism focuses on the *steering* and *output* aspects of modern political systems, while pluralist theories concentrate on the *input* side (Schubert, 1995)¹³. On the role of organized interests, neo-corporatist model depicts a system in which there are a small number of hierarchically structured interest groups that exhibit non-competitive relations, a functional division of labor and a monopoly over governmental relations. This is understood to be the opposite of the pluralist approach in which autonomous, competitive entities are bound to the specific interest of their voluntary members, where there is the potential for control and democratization of associative action.¹⁴ On the state-interest group relations, an important feature of neo-corporatism is the direct involvement of groups in decision-making processes leading to binding legal results. Pluralist participation is indirect and non-binding.

In recent years, some refinement of both theories have been taking place e.g. 'pressure pluralism', 'state corporatism', 'corporate pluralism' and so on. These refinements have been problematic, because very often similar labels describe different phenomena, or different labels refer to similar phenomena, which lead to confusion and misunderstanding of state-interest relations.¹⁵

In the European Union context, it can be argued that neo-corporatism and pluralism theories hold true on some aspects. However, both face challenges in explaining specific aspects of the relationship between interest groups and institutions in the EU governance system. This is partly because of the failure of both theories in taking into account the dispersed decision-making levels of the EU (Michalowitz, 2002)¹⁶. Hence, controversies emerge when attempts are made to characterize relations between the institutions of the EU and organized interest groups as either pluralist or neo-corporatist. A major problem in applying these concepts at all is that the construction of the EU is not comparable to national systems (Michalowitz, 2002)

Some authors have, therefore, suggested to abandon the pluralism-neo-corporatism dichotomy and developed new typology in which the network is a generic label embracing the different types of state-interest relations. One of them is policy network, which has proved to be applicable in the EU governance system. This could be defined as heterogeneous policy networks, in which the actors involved dispose of different interests and resources. This heterogeneity of interests and resources creates state of interdependence among the actors linking them together in a policy network where they mediate their interests and exchange their resources¹⁷

In general, two different 'schools' of policy networks can be identified. The more prominent '*interest intermediation school*' regards policy networks as a common term for different forms of relationships between interest groups and the State. The '*governance school*', however, considers policy networks a specific form of governance, as a mechanism to mobilize political resources in situations where these resources are widely dispersed between public and private actors.¹⁸

¹³ in Michalowitz p. 38

¹⁴ (Schmitter 1979; Czada 1994) in Michalowitz p. 38

¹⁵ Börzel, T. A. (1997), what is So Special about Policy Networks? – An Exploration of the Concept and its Usefulness in Studying European Governance', *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)*

¹⁶ Michalowitz, I. (2002) 'Beyond Corporatism and Pluralism: Towards a New Theoretical Framework'

¹⁷ idem.

¹⁸ Börzel, T. (1997, p.4)

While the former interpretation of policy network concept is based on the pluralism, neo-corporatism assumptions. The latter interpretation of policy network seems to have better explanation of the role of networks in a multi-level governance environment.

In this context, the network concept concentrates on the interaction of separate but interdependent organizations which co-ordinate their actions through interdependencies of resources and interests.¹⁹ Actors, who take an interest in policy-making, form linkages to exchange resources. The linkages, which differ in their degree of intensity, normalization, standardization and frequency of interaction, constitute the structures of a network.²⁰ These 'governance-structures' of a network determine in turn the exchange of resources between the actors and allow conclusions about actor's behavior.

Multi-Level Governance structure of the EU polity and the role of regions

In recent years, Multi-level governance has been getting more attention of EU students. This theory emerged in the second half of the 1990s (Nielsen & Salk, 1998; Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Marks et al., 2002) and has gained popularity because of its strong assumptions in describing the nature of the EU governance system and its impact on the way competences are allocated between different institutions at different levels.

Before going into the assumptions of the MLG concept, we discuss emergence of 'governance' often presented as change in the functioning of the state.

In this context, Theo Jans conceptualize 'governance' by referring to four interrelated processes that have contributed to spread and intensification of 'state authority'.^{21,22}

First process relates to *globalisation of market economy* which has reduced state ability to regulate global forces in the national context. Second, according to Theo Jans, *regional integration* and the development of supranational authorities have resulted in a gradual but important transfer of state powers to supranational bodies. The European Union is recognised as a supranational entity in which not only national governments but also national pressure groups, expert groups, national and sub-national administrations, and national parliaments came into focus.²³

Third, even within the state, there is a global trend towards *decentralisation*. Central governments have been, willingly or unwillingly, delegating powers to sub-national authorities such as regions and municipalities. Last process refers to *privatisation* of the public sector which has led to further involvement of private actors.

As a result of these processes, many regional or local authorities become stakeholders and effective policymakers in policy areas previously regulated from the centre.²⁴

Multi-level governance, as its name indicates, assumes that within the EU context, policies are developed in a multi layer system in which EU supranational bodies such as the Commission and the European Parliament are involved. At the intergovernmental level, such as the Council of Ministers. At the national level and at the decentralised level within the member states (regional and local authorities). But also organizations of civil society such as consumer protection groups, knowledge groups and so on. Further it assumes that all political

¹⁹ idem. (p.5)

²⁰ idem.

²¹ Theo Jans, M., (2007, p. 15)

²² Hooghe, L. and Keating, M. mention more or less the same factors in explaining 'regionalism'. In Richardson, J. (2006) *European Union: Power and Policy making*, New York: Routledge, p. 269-286

²³ Lenschow, A. (2006)

²⁴ Wright, 1998, in Theo Jans, M. (2007, p. 17)

actors involved with policy making are confronted with interdependencies that stimulate them to co-operate to deliver desired policy outcomes.

The nature of the EU as a multi-layer governance system has often been mentioned as a pull factor for regions to be established at the EU stage. Multi-level governance assumes that regions exercise a direct influence on the EU policy-making and have significant powers with regard to implementation of EU policies in particular policy areas such as Structural and Regional development policies.²⁵

Although multi-level governance does not assume that regions have power equal to those of states, it places much importance to the role of regions, especially in implementation of EU decisions. However, its opponent often argues that multi-level governance overrates the role of regions. In that regard, they point to the limited role of the Committee of the Regions as a recognised EU body which represents regions in the EU. Apart from the question of how fair the argument is, it falls short to explain the existence of regional representation offices. In other words, even when using the limited power of CoR as a shortcoming of multi-level governance theory, the existence of regional offices and their participation as in the decision making process can be used as a strong argument in favour of multi-level governance.

In this regard, the existence of regional offices needs more attention. First, the limited resources of the Commission in terms of labour and knowledge, has been argued as an important factor (van Schendelen, 2002; Mazey and Richardson, 2006; Wiercx, 2007; Mahoney, 2007). van Schendelen refers to techniques of the Commission to expand its capacity through 'outsourcing' and 'insourcing' of work.²⁶

Outsourcing happens when the Commission involves national governments with implementation and inspection of legislation and private consultancies mainly for research and management. Insourcing relates to consultation of representatives from interest groups and others who are involved in the preparation and consultation stage of a proposal. Regions regard this as a chance to influence EU policy development in a very early stage of the decision making process.

Furthermore, according to Wiercx, regions are used as an instrument to respond to the democratic deficit. Through their involvement, both Commission and the Parliament hope to use interest groups as a link between decision-makers and citizens. With that aim, Commission and the EP prefer those groups who are representing a larger community. Regional offices as representations of elected authorities are therefore considered to be important partners.

Other major developments in the EU could be seen as factors pulling regional offices to Brussels. In this regard, the creation of the Internal Market created interdependencies between different layers of authorities.

²⁵ Huyseune, M. and Theo Jans, M., (2007)

²⁶ Van Schendelen, (2002, p. 66)

Chapter 3 Dutch Regions in the European Union: The Management of the European affairs

Which interests do regions have in the EU political arena and in which way do they defend them?

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to shed a light on two things. First, the existence of regions in the EU political arena is analysed. This is done by reviewing the literature regarding the history of regions in the EU and the reasons for regions to set up a representation office in Brussels. This part contains also an overview of the variety of regional offices and the political authorities they represent. The second section of this chapter concentrates on the history of Dutch regions. However, the biggest part of the chapter is devoted to the management of European affairs by Dutch provinces and the organisation of their lobby in that regard.

At an abstract level, mentioned differences between regional representations in the EU, could be sought in the existed variety of constitutional state structures among the member states of the Union. Regions of countries with a federal state structure have traditionally had relatively more play ground in the conduct of their own policies and so have had more freedom and perhaps also resources available to open and run a representation office in Brussels. As an example of this, one can refer to the German regions (Länder) which have been among the first that opened a representation office in Brussels in the 1980s. However, state structure could not be seen as a sole determinant for power and playground of regional representatives in the EU. In contrast to German Länder, the Spanish regions found themselves in disputes with the central government as to how far they can go with regard to the representation of their regions in the European Union.

In this regard, relying on rational choice and new-institutionalism theories, Joke Wiercx developed a framework to explain the emergence of interest groups in the European Union. Wiercx mentions the *push* and *pull* factors. Whereas the push factors refer to the relevance of the EU as the deciding factor for groups to be present in the European arena, the pull factor relates to the limitations of the EU system itself that requires contribution of those groups in the policy making process. We use push and pull factors that explain the emergence of *regions* in Brussels in particular.

Push-factors

First, the creation of the *Internal Market* created interdependencies between different layers of authorities. However, it allowed several EU supranational institutions to be more involved in policy areas which were considered before as state affairs.²⁷ Particularly the Commission, as the guardian of the internal market, took these opportunities to 'harden' its style of regulation in the 80s. This resulted in more decisions from the EU with more impact on national and sub-national authorities. Regional entities were confronted with implementation of EU regulations and directives that had large impact on their functioning.

Especially regions with relative more powers and competences in certain constitutional arrangements (e.g. Federal state structures) saw the need to influence policy development as an opportunity to reduce undesired outcome of EU legislation. This may explain why German

²⁷ An example of this is the increased involvement and the hardening of the Commission style in the competition policy which existed before but its regulation became more necessary in order to guard the internal market. (Sinneva, 2002)

region were among the first who advocated for the *subsidiary principle*²⁸ and for the creation of CoR in the same period.

One significant event, in this regard, was the creation of the Committee of the Regions in 1994. Provided by the treaty of Maastricht (1992), the CoR is recognised as an official EU institution that should be consulted in those policy areas that have directly impact on regions.²⁹ *The establishment of the CoR* is regarded as another significant step in giving Union's regions 'a say' in the EU decision-making process.

Another push factors is the *European Regional Policy* as part of a wider European focus on its regions. Started once with the European Regional Development Policy ERDP in 1967, the Regional and the Cohesion Policy, which later lead to the Structural Funds were subsequently launched to accomplish different community objectives.³⁰

Within the framework of these policies, a wide range of programs were launched by which regional projects were funded. Monitoring those programs and securing European funding could be seen as another motive for regions to be directly present in the EU.

Pull-factors

The nature of EU as a multi-layer governance system has often been mentioned as a pull factor for regions to be established at the EU stage. As said before, the interdependency of authorities at different levels have paved the way for interest groups to be involved in policy development and in the decision making process in particular.

In this regard, the *limited resources of the Commission* in terms of labour and knowledge, is argued as an important factor (van Schendelen, 2002; Mazey and Richardson, 2006; Wiercx, 2007; Mahoney, 2007) van Schendelen refers to techniques of the Commission to expand its capacity through 'outsourcing' an 'insourcing' of work.³¹

Outsourcing happens when the Commission involves national governments with implementation and inspection of legislation and private consultancies mainly for research and management. Insourcing relates to consultation of representatives from interest groups and others who are involved in the preparation and consultation stage of a proposal. Regions regard this as a chance to influence EU policy development in a very early stage of the decision making process.

Furthermore, according to Wiercx, regions are used as an instrument to respond to the democratic deficit. Through their involvement, Both Commission and the Parliament hope to use interest groups as a link between decision-makers and citizens. With that aim, Commission and the EP prefer those groups who are representing a larger community.

Regional offices as representations of elected authorities are therefore treated as credible partners and are closely involved in different stages of the decision making. However, there are large differences between these representation offices which is mainly related to the position of the authorities they represent in the national context. An obvious difference can be observed between representation offices of regions with a constitutional granted rights in the national context, which is the case for federal states as Germany and Spain.

²⁸ The subsidiarity principle pursues two opposing aims. On the one hand, it allows the Community to act if a problem cannot be adequately settled by the Member States acting on their own. On the other, it seeks to uphold the authority of the Member States in those areas that cannot be dealt with more effectively by Community action. The purpose of including this principle in the European Treaties is to bring decision-making within the Community as close to the citizen as possible. (EU documents)

²⁹ Joint-decision is arranged by the Treaty within the framework of *consultation* decision-making mechanism.

³⁰ The main goal of these policies was to bring the regions socially and economically closer to each other.

³¹ Van Schendelen, (2002, p. 66)

The offices of these regions are relatively big, have a larger staff and have therefore a wider range of activities. There is an explanation for this. Regions with strong constitutional legislative powers in Federal State systems such as Germany have seen a loss of their domestic, constitutionally provided competences as a result of a deepening of EU integration process. These regions want either uphold their powers by reducing EU involvement, and if not achievable, exert pressure or influence EU policy development and decision making in their benefits.

Based on their competences, tasks and activities, the following typology of representation offices can be made:³²

- Regional representation offices; the biggest group of all representation offices
- Representation Offices of cities (local) ; e.g. Eurocities
- Representations of regions with constitutional competences; e.g. German Länder
- Public-private partnership offices; Regions and counties from the U.K.
- Regional offices of new Member States
- Objective-1 Regional Offices
- Other public representations e.g. consortia of regional and local authorities and international networks; e.g. UCLG, CEMR³³

The Commission makes a distinction between regional and local units to provide a single, uniform breakdown of territorial units for the production of community regional statistics³⁴ This division is referred to as NUTS (Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics). In line with this classification, regional and local entities in the Netherlands can be divided into four NUTS.³⁵

NUTS 1: Regions (landsdelen)

NUTS 2: 12 Provinces (provincies)

NUTS 3: 40 COROP Regions (Coördinatiecommissie Regionaal Onderzoeksprogramma)

NUTS 4: The Netherlands has no units on the NUTS 4 level.

NUTS 5: municipalities (gemeenten)

3.2 History of the Dutch provinces (and regions) in the EU

Dutch provinces have no constitutional competences in the area of international relations. Those competences are reserved for the central government. However, the situation is quite different in the European context. As mentioned in the last chapter, the (institutional) involvement of the EU paved the way for regions to be involved in a variety of European policy areas.

The Dutch provincial representation to the EU dates from 1989. A notable trend in this regard is that provinces initially started in Brussels individually. A notable trend is the swift cooperation between provinces from the same regions soon after they came to Brussels.

The provinces of Northern Netherlands and the province of South-Holland were among the first that sent a representative to Brussels. However, with the establishment of the House,

³² Political science group and the Institute for European Studies, University of Brussels Regional Representation in Brussels

³³ CEMR stands for Council of European Cities, Municipalities and Regions and UCLG is an international association, which stands for United Cities and Local Governments

³⁴ (Schobben, 2000)

³⁵ Lem, M., 2003, Regional Offices in Brussels and the Added Value of a Strategic Agenda, A Comparative Research Between Various Regional Offices in Brussels.

finally all Dutch provinces were present in Brussels. The reason for going to Brussels was acquirement of subsidies. Soon, however, the representative started to work for provinces of North-Holland and Utrecht as well.

In 1993, the three provinces decided to intensify their efforts in Brussels and send each a representative to Brussels. Those three provinces worked in a single office. With the participation of Flevoland in the same office in 1995, the four provinces of Randstad Region were present in one office. In the same period other provinces from the Netherlands came to Brussels. By 1994, Gelderland had also its representative, who was by that time working inside the office of the German region Nordrhein-Westfalen. Soon, the same representative started to represent the interest of the Overijssel province as well.

In 1997, Overijssel sent a representative who worked with his colleague from Gelderland and together they represented the interests of both Gelderland and Overijssel. The same trend goes for the three provinces from the Southern part of the country. In 2000, two representatives, one from Limburg and one from North-Brabant were sent. In 2003 Zeeland followed.

The three provinces from the Northern part of the Netherlands had already joined forces back home through the creation of the SNN in 1992. Their European mission was incorporated in the SNN in 1995 and covered a wide area of co-operation between the provinces Fryslân, Drente and Groningen in the European Union. In 2000 SNN sent a second representative to Brussels. A notable trend in the representation of Dutch provinces is that provinces initially came to Brussels on their own but soon started to seek partnership with other provinces from the same region.

3.3 Management of EU affairs

3.3.1 North Netherlands Region

Organization back office

The co-operative Union of Northern Netherlands (SNN) had created a strategic think tank in 1995 with the goal of stimulation, unification and co-ordination of European activities.

Compared to other provinces, co-operation between the three Northern provinces is most institutionalized. Formally, the provinces have committed themselves to the arrangement, the best example of which is the Provincial Assembly (interprovinciale Statencommissie) which has been called to life in 2000. In this assembly, several members of the provincial Parliaments from the three provinces work formally together on a permanent basis on issues bearing European importance.

Organization in Brussels (front office)

Within the House, the SNN has two representatives. They have the mandate to position the three provinces as a region on the EU stage. Further, they are entitled to act on behalf of the three provinces. The main tasks of the two representatives are to lead or participate in working groups of the House. In this way they are informed of themes of importance for SNN. Furthermore, they function as a link between the home front and Brussels. Providing information is regarded to be crucial. Last but not least, raising awareness about the EU in the three provinces, form other tasks of the SNN representatives in Brussels. In this context, they welcome SNN delegations and working groups and provide them with information about the EU.

European Priorities

The environmental and economics are the most important fields of activities for the SNN.³⁶ The Northern provinces try to promote the region through clusters like Energy Valley and prominent projects such as LOFAR. The Energy valley is promoted as a successful cluster by which existing gas resources are combined with available expertise (through universities, knowledge institutions, etc.) However, though, agriculture remain an important sector for the three Northern provinces. Agricultural Policy is another priority of SNN. Besides, Budget review and Regional Policy debates are high on the agenda of the SNN.

Furthermore, the LOFAR project is a specific priority of the region. The LOFAR concerns a next-generation astronomical telescope, which is a jointly funded project between the European Community, European Regional Development Fund and the Northern Netherlands Assembly.

Since 1996, the three SNN provinces have participated in the greater regional cooperative pacts of North Sea Commission and the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe CPMR. Last but not least, the three provinces prepared the 'Nordconnect' initiative to play as an economic link in the so-called Northeastern corridor linking St Petersburg-Helsinki-the Baltic States, Hamburg and Helsinki with the Randstad region.

3.3.2 East Netherlands Region

Organization back office

Although their cooperation has not resulted in creating an institution like the SNN, the two East Netherlands provinces of Overijssel and Gelderland have a long standing and strategic cooperation. Already in 1995, the representative of Gelderland province was given mandate to defend the interests of the Overijssel province as well. The forming of the East Netherlands region has to do with the fact that both regions have very similar interests. Both regions share a border with Germany and have traditionally been in close relation with German Länder like Nord-Rein Westfalen and Lower Saxony.

Formally, the provinces have their own EU agenda. However, their priorities are practically the same. The only exception is the Delta-line train connection, which is funded within the Transnational European Network program. The line passes through the Gelderland province and is therefore of specific importance for that province.

Within the provinces, the European Affairs are dealt with by different units.

In Overijssel, there is a unit called 'international affairs' which is lead by a Provincial Deputy. On the civil service level, there is a team consisting of five persons, which is lead by a so-called 'Europe co-coordinator'. Each person is responsible for one area such as interregional contacts (e.g. with German Länder), European legislation, Europaproof.

In Gelderland, however, EU affairs are coordinated within the 'Foreign office' unit.³⁷

For which the Queen's commissioner has the responsibilities³⁸. On the civil service level, like in Overijssel, a Europe c-coordinator leads a group of five civil servants each of them responsible for one or more policy fields and maintaining contacts with partners.

It should be noted that others are involved with the EU dossiers on both the executive and servant levels. Here, only permanent EU units within the provinces are mentioned.

³⁶ Information package 'the North Netherlands Provinces', 2007

³⁷ Bureau Buitenlandse Zaken.

³⁸ Queen's Commissioner is responsible for all 'lobby activities' of the Gelderland province on national and foreign level.

Organization in Brussels (front office)

The tight and longstanding cooperation allows the two representatives in Brussels to work together in an effective way. They are assigned as representatives of East Netherlands region and act accordingly. In that context, they have the mandate to represent the interest of the region as a whole. This concerns lobby activities, informing home base about European decision making and policy developments, but also practical information about European subsidies. Furthermore, they organize events and try to fulfill a guidance role for delegations and other people from provinces who come to Brussels. Raising awareness of EU Affairs in the own region is an important aspect of that task.

East Netherlands region has several bilateral relationships with regions from other member states. Moreover, they participate in several networks. As mentioned before, East-Netherlands provinces share a long border with two German Länder. Both provinces have been benefiting from their geographical position. Maintaining bilateral relationships with those regions, back at home and in Brussels is therefore regarded to be crucial.

In line with the priorities, the provinces of Overijssel and Gelderland have participated in the Environmental Conference of Regions of Europe (ENCORE), the Environmental Platform of Regional Offices in Brussels (EPRO) and the European Enterprise Platform. ENCORE project aims at improvement of environmental policies of regions and cohesion of it in order to make it easier for regions to implement several environmental related directives.

European Priorities³⁹

The priorities of Overijssel and Overijssel could be found in several sectors; Regional Policy, Environment, Agriculture and Transport are the main sectors of importance for the East-Netherlands region. Prioritization of European dossiers is made on the basis of own needs. Within environmental dossiers, the strategy for soil, Air quality, high water management, priority substances, waste prevention. Other priority dossiers structural funds, Agricultural Policy, Budget review, state aid, transport policies (rail and road) and Delta rail connection (Gelderland).

There is an extensive communication line between the representatives in Brussels and the responsible groups in the two provinces. Apart from daily email and phone contacts, there is meeting each week in one province in which one of the two representatives is present. In this way, both representatives in Brussels and the back office can exchange information and co-ordinate their actions. Within the House, the two representatives of East Netherlands lead or participate in several dossiers that are lobbied for with other Dutch provinces.

3.3.3 Randstad Region

Organization back office

In 1993 the provinces of Randstad Region (Flevoland was not yet included) opened their representative office in Brussels.

Randstad region developed already in 2001 its own strategic EU agenda in which its priorities were laid down. The framework of cooperation was extended in 2002 through the creation of the 'intercommunal regulation' which concerned an agreement between the four provinces (P4), the four big cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht (G4) and four surrounding urban areas K4.⁴⁰ This was generally referred to as P4G4K4. However, this

³⁹ Source; Provincie Gelderland and Overijssel document 'jaaroverzicht 2007 prioritaire Europese dossiers'

⁴⁰ Urban areas are the so-called 'kaderwetgebieden' Bestuur Regio Utrecht, Regionaal Orgaan Amsterdam, Stadsgewest Haagland and Stadsregio Rotterdam (K4)

arrangement ended in 2007 after the four big municipalities decided to go their own way. Although, co-operation with the G4 remain a desire of the provinces, the provinces decided to develop their own strategic EU agenda. In this 2007-2011 agenda, the priorities of the Randstad provinces are outlined. Moreover, it includes a division of tasks and allocation of people on both executive and servant levels.

Like other provinces, each Randstad region province has its own European work plan, own unit and responsible on executive and servant level. There are four Council deputies of the provinces who are responsible. However, other deputies could be involved with European dossiers on themes for which they are responsible. E.g. Environment deputy can be involved with several dossiers that have to do with environmental matters. This is also the case on the civil service level. Several departments co-operate with the Europe unit.

Organization in Brussels

The Randstad Region office in Brussels is located within the House of the Dutch provinces. Within the office, there are eight representatives. The province of North Holland has two representatives. Utrecht and Flevoland have each one representative. South Holland province has one representative and one policy assistant. There are two persons who are in duty of Randstad region. Those are the Randstad co-coordinator and a policy assistant.

Randstad region promotes itself as an economic giant in Europe. With the existence of Schiphol airport and Rotterdam seaport it can equate itself with other giants as London, Paris and Frankfurt.

Randstad region has a network of partners. Currently it is leading two networks. These are the PURPLE and the Lisbon Regions networks. Whereas the PURPLE aims at stimulating peri-urban areas, the Lisbon Regions Network's objective is to stimulate regional economic growth through exchange of practices on knowledge and innovation.

Like other regions in the House, the Randstad representatives lead and participate in several common dossiers of the Dutch provinces. They fulfill several other tasks such as exchange of information and guidance of Randstad delegations in Brussels.

European priorities

The priorities of the Randstad Region are outlined in the Randstad work plan 2008. There are three number one priorities of the regions. Those are Climate adaptation, Air quality (related to mobility) and the last priority is the relation between nature and spatial development. It should be noted, however, that other environmental issues like soil, water. Energy issues like renewable energy and CO2 emissions are also priorities of the Randstad. Furthermore, in line with its strategic agenda, the Randstad region tries to position itself as a large economy in Europe. However, the region regards Regional and Cohesion policies and the review of Common Agricultural Policy as priority issues.

3.3.4 South Netherlands Region

Organization back office

In general, the organization of European affairs is quite similar to those of other provinces. Compared to other three regions, however, the South Netherlands provinces of Limburg, North Brabant and Zeeland have a less record of co-operation. This has mainly to do with the geographical position of the provinces. All provinces share a significant border with a neighboring country or in case of Zeeland it has a large coast line. This might explain why provinces have been focusing on cross-regional cooperation with regions in Belgium and Germany rather than intra-provincial Dutch provinces.

A similarity, however, with other provinces is the existence of a 'Europe' or 'foreign' office under which EU working groups function. The involvement of the provincial apparatus on both the Provincial governance and servant level is quite similar to those of the other provinces.

Organization in Brussels (front office)

Like other regions, the three provinces are officially present under the name of South Netherlands Region. Although, there have been efforts to set up co-operation, this has not lead to joint action arrangements in Brussels. The provinces of North Brabant and Zeeland have each one representative in Brussels. Limburg officially has three representatives. However, only two of them are settled in the House of the Dutch provinces. Like other representatives in the House, the representatives of the Southern provinces participates or lead dossier teams in the House which are involved with common priority dossiers of the Dutch provinces.

The tasks of the representatives are exchange of information with the back office, guidance of provincial delegations, raising awareness about the EU in own provinces and last but not least, maintenance of bilateral contacts and participation in networks.

European Priorities

The European priorities of the Limburg province are mainly those INTERREG programs which have been developed by the Commission within the framework of Regional and Cohesion Policies. Moreover, the province regards budget review, Agricultural Policy and Environment as priority areas.

North-Brabant region has several priorities divided between themes such as Mobility, connection, Information, Culture. Because of its long border with Belgium, the province seeks partnerships with Belgian regions in many areas.

Zeeland has several priority dossiers which fall within Environmental and Agricultural policies. However, Zeeland put particular importance to Maritime policy due to its geographical location.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter shows several interesting trends and phenomena. By studying the history of the Dutch provinces in Brussels, a trend could be revealed through which provinces from the same region co-operate together in the very early stages of their presence in Brussels.

There are several similarities to be observed. First of all, the way they represent themselves is quite identical. This is in most cases done by sending a consultant to Brussels and gradually extending the staff and their activities. Moreover, the way EU is managed and lobby activities are organised in the home front, that is to say inside the provinces seems to be quite similar. In all provinces, there is at least one Provincial Deputy who is responsible for European affairs and has a team of civil servants dealing with European issues on daily basis.

Perhaps the most interesting observation is the similarity of several European priority issues. Almost all provinces have at least one environmental issue as a high priority. Regional policy, Cohesion, Structural Funds seem to be other areas where all provinces share an interest. The priority of the provinces and the areas of common interest will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Regional Interests in the European Arena: A Convergence of Priorities

How have various EU public policy issues become common priorities of the Dutch provinces?

4.1 Introduction

The establishment of the House in 2000 became reality after all Dutch provinces, within the framework of IPO, decided to settle themselves in one office in Brussels. The House was created under the motto “*We have more in common than that we are each other’s competitors*”. This indicates an understanding among provinces that representing provincial interests in a collective setting and through co-ordination of (lobby) activities was highly desirable or even necessary.

In the previous chapter, a similar trend by which provinces and regions deal more or less in the same way with the European policies and take somewhat same measures to cope with EU policy development and decision making. This indicates two interrelated things. First, the symmetrical pressure of EU public policies on the provinces over a variety of areas for which provinces are responsible. Second, the equal position of the provinces (in the national context) that makes them exposed equally to the pressure. This indicates a convergence of priorities of the provinces on the European arena. First of all, the concept convergence needs more clarification.

There is a broad consensus on the definition of convergence as ‘the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes and performance’.⁴¹

As a concept, *policy convergence* has been widely used in the political literature. Political scientists have been attracted by this phenomenon and its underlying causal factors (Knill, 2006). However, it has been used in political literature in a rather inconsistent way. According to Knill this is due to the use of policy convergence in a wide variety of social and political disciplines e.g. various studies in the tradition of new institutionalism, which have even been challenging the concept of policy convergence by focusing more on the divergences rather than convergence of policies (Knill, 2006)

Referring to Tews⁴², Knill identifies another reason for the empirical and theoretical hampering of the concept policy convergence. He argues that policy convergence is often equated with related notions, such as *isomorphism*, *policy transfer* and *policy diffusion*. This terminological variety often coincides with analytical confusion (Knill, 2006).

Based on this, Knill and Holzinger try to conceptualize policy convergence. Their analysis concentrates on cross-national convergences. Knill et al managed to clarify the concept by providing indicators and explaining the underlying causes of policy convergence.

- *Imposition*; This refers to coercive nature of legislation imposed on one by another or other which emerge as result of asymmetrical distribution of power.

⁴¹ Kerr, C. (1983) *The Future of Industrial Societies: Convergence or Continuing Diversity?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, in Knill, C. (2006) *Cross-National Policy Convergence: Causes, Concepts and Empirical Findings*, New York, Routledge

⁴² Tews, K. (2002) ‘Der Diffusionsansatz für die vergleichende Politikanalyse. Wurzeln und Potenziale eines Konzepts, Eine Literaturstudie’, FU-Report 2002-02, Berlin: Environmental Policy Research Centre. In Knill.

- *Harmonization*; which can lead to convergence of needs and desires.
- *Existence of communication*; communication help involved parties or entities learn from each other (lesson-drawing).
- *Setting*; the communal setting can lead to the improvement of mutual understanding, coordination of actions that lead to convergence

The strength of policy convergence in this regard, is that it does not only explain causal factors of convergence resulting from authorities (on equal positions) being exposed to policy pressure from higher authorities, but also deals with several other factors that help to develop common policies. Applying this to Dutch provinces, the existence of various communication channels and the establishment of the House as a result of a longer communication tradition might help us to understand the process of These will be elaborated.

Regions can be formed on the basis of economic performance or can have a political basis through the existence of an elected authority. In the Dutch context, however, regions have no political meaning. Instead, provinces are the bodies that have the constitutional mandate over a variety of policy areas. This has to do with the governance system of the Netherlands.

Formally, as concluded in the 1848 Constitution, Dutch provinces function as a meso-governmental layer. They are constitutionally autonomous bodies, which function between national government and municipalities. The governmental structure of the Netherlands has three managerial levels: the central government, the provinces and the municipalities.

First and foremost, all the responsibilities and powers are with the central government, unless such responsibilities and powers are assigned by constitutional law to the decentralized authorities. The activities of the provinces and municipalities are in any case strongly dependent on the scope given them by the legislative central government. The provinces and the municipalities are regional and local democracies and have their own legislative and administrative powers. These powers are subject to different forms of control in order to ensure that the unity of the state is not disturbed by the decentralized system.

Provincial Authority's structure

In the Netherlands, provincial authorities are elected by citizens. Every four years the inhabitants of the province elect their own provincial parliament: the 'Provinciale Staten' (Provincial Council). The number of members is dependent on the number of inhabitants in a province. The council elects the members of 'Gedeputeerde Staten' (the Provincial Executive), which is responsible for the day-to-day running of the province. This executive board has approximately five to seven members and is chaired by the Queen's Commissioner, who is appointed by the national government.

Policy areas and competences

The major tasks of the provinces are in the areas of spatial planning, the environment, nature and the countryside, traffic and public transport, the economy, welfare, care and culture. Only a very small part of the provinces' revenues come from their own levying of taxes (road tax). The major part of the expenditure is covered by tax revenues transferred from the central

government by way of the Fund for Regional Finance, and through payments from the central government for the implementation of the plans from the provinces.

Imposition of EU legislation

Imposition can be explained in different ways. Although used under different headings, it frequently used as 'coercive policy transfer' between two states or more whereby convergence of policies take place as result of certain pressure from one side. (DiMaggio and Powel, 1991; Gulet *et al*, 2002, Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996)⁴³ Knill and Holzinger's definition of imposition has rather the same substance. Imposition, according to them is, convergence through imposition occurs whenever an external political actor forces a government to adopt a certain policy. This presupposes asymmetry of power'.

Applying this to Dutch provinces in the European arena, EU policy can be seen as an imposition factor. To understand this, We should first make clear what the constitutional position of the Dutch provinces are. This is important since the main political responsibility policy areas for which the provinces are responsible are outlined in the Constitution.

Formally, as concluded in the 1848 Constitution, Dutch provinces function as a meso-governmental layer. They are constitutionally autonomous bodies, which function between national government and municipalities. The governmental structure of the Netherlands has three managerial levels: the central government, the provinces and the municipalities.

First and foremost, all the responsibilities and powers are with the central government, unless such responsibilities and powers are assigned by constitutional law to the decentralized authorities. The activities of the provinces and municipalities are in any case strongly dependent on the scope given them by the legislative central government. The provinces and the municipalities are regional and local democracies and have their own legislative and administrative powers. These powers are subject to different forms of control in order to ensure that the unity of the state is not disturbed by the decentralized system.

Provincial Authority's structure

In the Netherlands, provincial authorities are elected by citizens. Every four years the inhabitants of the province elect their own provincial parliament: the 'Provinciale Staten' (Provincial Council). The number of members is dependent on the number of inhabitants in a province. The council elects the members of 'Gedeputeerde Staten' (the Provincial Executive), which is responsible for the day-to-day running of the province. This executive board has approximately five to seven members and is chaired by the Queen's Commissioner, who is appointed by the national government.

Policy areas and competences

The major tasks of the provinces are in the areas of spatial planning, the environment, nature and the countryside, traffic and public transport, the economy, welfare, care and culture. Only a very small part of the provinces' revenues come from their own levying of taxes (road tax). The major part of the expenditure is covered by tax revenues transferred from the central government by way of the Fund for Regional Finance, and through payments from the central government for the implementation of the plans from the provinces.

⁴³ In Knill *et al*, 2006, p. 16-17

Dutch provinces have responsibilities in a range of policy fields. The major tasks of the provinces are in the areas of spatial planning, the environment, nature and the countryside, traffic and public transport, the economy, welfare, care and culture. Many of these policy areas are regulated on the European level. In fact, Dutch provinces are responsible for implementation of 70% of all EU legislation and regularization related decisions⁴⁴.

The equal position of Dutch provinces in terms of competences and responsibilities makes them to have the same set of challenges. However, thought, this does not indicate that the impact of a specific policy area is the same for all regions and provinces.

This wide range of competences and responsibilities of the Pprovinces in the national context, expose them to EU legislation in those areas. In this regard, the Subsidiary Principle should be mentioned which set out that matters ought to be handled by the smallest (or, the lowest) competent authority. Moreover, as a result of European integration process, new policy areas are regulated on the EU level partially or exclusively, a phenomenon categorized as 'sectoral integration'⁴⁵. Besides, the European economic integration leads to distribution of competences across the member states or to delegation of competences to supranational bodies such as the European Commission. This is characterized as 'vertical integration' by Schimmelfennig and Rittberger.

Intra-regional communication, communal setting and harmonization of policies

The intra-provincial communication between Dutch provinces has a long history. Within bilateral or multilateral partnerships, provinces set up channels to learn from each other's practices through exchange of information. With the establishment of the Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO), provinces institutionalized their partnerships. IPO which is comprised of the twelve Dutch provinces was to fulfill several functions⁴⁶; first, it represents interest of Dutch provinces in the national context. Within this framework, IPO acts, on behalf of the provinces, as a negotiation partner in national debates with the central-government and Association of Municipality Authorities (VNG).

The second task of the IPO is to serve as a platform for intra-provincial co-operation through exchange of expertise, information, experiences and practices. In this context, intra-provinciaal and channels independent-working groups are created to work together on specific themes within policy areas where provinces have competences.

The third main task of the IPO is to serve as generator of innovative process. This is closely related to the former, since intra-communication is used to accomplish this objective.

Issues of common interest

To make sure the regions cooperate as closely together as possible on policy issues, they have defined a number of priority dossiers in which they strive to exert influence together. Provinces selected several policy fields as common priorities in which they see common challenges from EU policy developments. Within these policy fields, more specific thematic dossiers are selected. The list of the dossiers and their substance will be presented in the next chapter.

⁴⁴ Source: Overijssel province documents (2007), 'coalitie-akkoord'

⁴⁵ Schimmelfennig, F. and Rittberger, B. (2006) 'Theories of European integration, Assumptions and hypotheses' in Richardson, J. 2006, 'European Union, Power and Policy Making, Third Edition, Routledge, New York

⁴⁶ Source: Interprovinciaal –Overleg, Gewijzigde statuten 2007

1 European Regional Policy (Cohesion policy)

Dutch provinces and municipalities, assisted by European funding, will strengthen their economic structure and increase employment opportunities. The EU Cohesion Policy has a fundamental contribution to the establishment of regional growth and employment opportunities. Provinces and municipalities experience the contribution from the EU structural funds as an essential addition to the national policy efforts as laid down in the policy documents *Space, Peaks in the Delta* and *Agenda for a Healthy Countryside* (*Ruimte, Pieken in de Delta* and *Agenda Vitaal Platteland*). With EU support, such programmes as these can be implemented faster, better and in a more coherent manner. The EU funds contribute to socio-economic development at local, regional and national level. This picture is underlined by the Fourth Cohesion Report of the European Commission.⁴⁷ However, preparations are already underway in Brussels for the review of Cohesion Policy beyond 2013.

According to Dutch provinces and municipalities, the strengthening of structure and the transition of regional and local economies is a continuous process that even in the years beyond 2013 will call for considerable efforts. Their argument for this stance is that increased competition from the emerging economic powers outside the EU adds another dimension.⁴⁸ In addition, the climate and energy targets of the EU for 2020 will impose new demands in the field of sustainability of regional and local economies. Meanwhile, demographic developments will demand particular attention when it comes to the future development of regions and municipalities. This aspect is above all relevant in rural areas, where Cohesion policy can contribute to the redevelopment of the agricultural sector. Given these arguments, The Dutch de-centralised bodies think that a continuation of the Cohesion Policy in all Member States of the EU beyond 2013 is justifiable.

2 Common Agricultural Policy (health check)

The European Agricultural policy is of importance to Dutch provinces, because provinces have been assigned by the national government of the Netherlands to carry out the execution of all Rural Development Programmes. It is their task to cooperate with e.g. farmer organisations, water boards, nature organisations, municipalities, local entrepreneurs, knowledge institutions, food processing companies, to ensure meeting targets and objectives. Specialised provincial officials are out in the field and engage in matters relating to agricultural and rural development every day, supporting initiatives, linking parties and experts and guarding the overall and integral quality of output and outcome of policies and programmes.

The European Commission has planned to evaluate its 2003 reforms of the common agricultural policy (CAP) in 2007 and 2008. The European Commission wants to undo the errors that were made at the last reform, make the current rules more effective and make sure the policy is harnessed for the future. Next to fine-tuning the current policy, the health check can also be seen as a preparation for the position on the review of the European budget which is foreseen for 2009. The amounts reserved for agricultural policy in the overall budget form an important point of discussion for this review.

⁴⁷ European Commission, *Growing regions, growing Europe. Fourth report on economic and social cohesion* (Luxembourg 2007)

⁴⁸ Position paper of the IPO and VNG – January 2008, “The future of European Cohesion Policy beyond 2013: regions and municipalities working together on a strong and sustainable Europe”

Any change in the CAP will affect and should preferably support the agricultural objectives of the Dutch Provinces. The CAP affects the regional economy, socio-economic well-being and the environment. Therefore the Dutch Provinces are convinced that they can and should be involved in CAP reform initiatives. IPO and VNG believe that the Common Agricultural Policy will have to develop more into a policy for rural areas, in which territorial and social cohesion play a vital role. It would therefore seem obvious to establish closer ties between the CAP and Cohesion Policy.

3 *EU budget review*

After the decision making in the European Council on the budget of the European Union for the period 2007 - 2013 had led to a conflict between member states on the financial burden sharing within the European Union, the Commission has decided to start a debate in an early stage on the aspired priorities for the European budget after 2013. The idea is to better aim the priorities of the European Union towards challenges such as globalization and climate change and next to that review the high amounts that were spent in the last decades on the common agriculture policy and the structural funds.

The budget review debate has become a big priority for Dutch de-central authorities since the distribution of the budget can affect the share of other priority areas such as regional and agricultural policies.

4 *Energy and environmental policies*

The European climate and energy policy is one of the most important challenges facing the European Union. Promoting sustainable development (Göteborg strategy), restricting the rise in temperature and adaptation to this rise, guaranteeing the supply and price level of energy are the fields in which we expect an active role from the European Union. As a player at global level, the Union continue to play a leading role in tackling climate change and the energy problem.

Dutch local governments have a role in establishing and enforcing legislation for the environment and thereby fulfil a major role in achieving European environmental standards⁴⁹. They set the parameters for the establishment of businesses and sustainable energy production, stand surety for water management and encourage citizens and businesses to actively contribute to a more sustainable environment, partly by themselves setting a good example in such areas as transport and mobility, housing, employment and production. Provinces and municipalities bring the various parties together, thereby playing an important initiating and encouraging role.

Faster European decision-taking on environmental and energy legislation is essential (for example in the field of reform of the trade in emission rights) in order to meet the policy objectives of the Union. It is vital that an ambitious but at the same time consistent long-term policy be implemented in these policy fields. This is not possible by approaching the various areas of policy separately, but by integrating them in all relevant policy sectors of the European Union. Finally, it is essential that innovative projects such as CO₂ capture and storage (CCS), sustainable energy consumption, energy storage and further research into new innovations will be stimulated.

⁴⁹ Source: IPO and VNG position paper on Budget review, "The European Union beyond 2013: working together on a stronger and more sustainable Europe. Response from the IPO and VNG to the Commission"⁴⁹ – March 2008"

This includes a wide range of themes which are of importance for provinces. On the one hand, the policy developments in these areas will have direct effect on the quality of life in urban and rural areas of the Netherlands. Environment and energy (more recent) have been topics where the European Union has tried to regularize mainly through directives. Energy and Environment have their significance since provinces are responsible for implantation of legislation in these two fields. Therefore, it is considered to be necessary to exert influence on EU decision making in the short term and policy development in the longer term, in an as early possible stage.

Climate (change) can be divided into several thematic issues. Those issues are:

It should be noted that the following dossiers are not necessarily a common priority of all provinces.

- § Thematic strategy on soil
- § Air quality
- § Priority substances
- § Waste prevention and recycling
- § Water management and maritime policy

Energy theme can also be divided into several specific areas such as:

- § Second strategic review of the energy policy
- § Action Plan on Energy Efficiency
- § Roadmap sustainable energy / bio fuels
- § EU Emission Trading System (ETS)
- § Nearly 0 Coal Emission

4.2 Conclusion

The analysis regarding the emergence of intra-provincial co-operation of Dutch provinces show that the choice to establish and institutionalise European co-operation was result of a longer existed tradition of co-operation and communication among the provinces in the national context. By the time they created the House in Brussels in 2000, provinces had already a history of institutionalized partnership in the national context through the creation of bodies such as the inter-provincial authority.

However, the mere existence of inter-provincial communication channels and partnership is in the national context is not sufficient to fully explain the extended partnership at the European stage. In this regard, other elements are important to mention. First, the analysis showed that the Dutch provinces are responsible for a range of policies in the national context. Coupling this with the deepened integration process of the EU and the establishment of rules such as the Subsidiarity Principle, provinces became responsible for the implementation of policies developed at the EU level. This equal exposure to EU legislation could be seen as the main reason for extending inter-provincial partnership to the EU. The existence of inter-provincial partnership was supportive element which smoothened the process.

This analysis included an overview of the main European policy areas and issues and has explained why these areas are of common interest to the provinces.

Chapter 5 Co-operation on Common Priority Issues: The Common Agenda of the provinces

How does the common agenda generate co-operation between the Dutch provinces on the selected issues of common interest?

Introduction

In this chapter the common agenda of the Dutch provinces is analyzed. In the previous chapters we looked to the emergence of inter-provincial co-operation of Dutch provinces regarding European affairs. We have seen that the establishment of the House was a result of a long tradition of co-operation among the provinces. They acknowledged the added-value of co-operation in those policy issues where they face the same challenges.

It also showed that provinces have a clear understanding of what their common challenges are in the EU. However, the study of regional agendas show that in some cases regions have a top priority which does not fall within the fixed set of common priorities.. Having argued this, still, the significant question remains to what extent a possible mismatch between regions top priorities and common priorities endanger two important elements of collective actions; *mobilization of actors* and *co-ordination of their actions*.

The purpose of this analysis is to find out how people from different provinces and regions at different levels are mobilized and subsequently, in which way their actions are co-ordinated with regard to the selected priority dossiers.

It should be noted that mobilization and co-ordination of actors are interrelated and can follow each other in a process. One can argue that co-ordination of action cannot occur before actors are mobilized. On the other hand, however, mobilization of actors can be result of an already taken action between actors without having formally mobilized themselves.

First, with regard to mobilization of actors, the *degree of actor's involvement* in different stages of collective action is important to assess. Therefore, the *existence of methods* for mobilization of people will be important to look for.

As far as co-ordination of actions is concerned, the term 'action' refers to whole range of activities and efforts undertaken with relation to the common priority dossiers.

The *degree of interaction intensity*, *degree of interaction standardisation* between actors is used to develop several indicators upon which the agenda of the House is examined.

The determinants of Carlsson have also been helpful in generating attributes of a regional agenda. Van Schendelen however has enormously contributed to this area.

As he makes the distinction between professional and amateur groups lobbying the EU, he put particular emphasis on the importance of a work plan/agenda. In that context he makes the distinction between long term and short term management of actions. He developed the concept '*lobby situations*' which refer to stakeholders, issues, time, and action arena.⁵⁰ The criteria of van Schendelen are interesting since his focus is more specific lobby groups working on the European Union level.

Here, the mentioned variables together with the criteria of both Carlsson and van Schendelen are condensed to develop the following attributes upon which the common agenda is examined.

As a first step, we look at the different forms of agendas to qualify the examined common agenda of provinces within that framework.

⁵⁰ Van Schendelen, R. (2002) *Machiavelli in Brussels; the art of lobbying the EU*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press

5.2 The different forms an agenda can take

In essence, an agenda is problem orientated. It consists of elements such as actions and measures to tackle things that are somehow identified as a “problem”.

However, though, agendas can take different forms as different policy actors are involved with its formation (politicians, administrators, etc.) or the origin of the problem differs (public pressure, political interest, etc.) Van de Graaf and Hoppe developed the following classification of an agenda.⁵¹

Policy agenda: a policy agenda consists of subjects in which the policy actor not only takes an interest, but for which he is also taking measures.

Political agenda: list of subjects that enjoy the attention of both politicians and administrators. It will be put on the agenda when both acknowledge this as a “problem” or “challenge”.

Public agenda: list of subjects that emerge on the agenda as result of public pressure.

It is worthwhile to note that an agenda can overlap between the mentioned categories as it can be result of public pressure and policy actors at the same time. However, the typology is useful in assessing the nature of the examined agenda.

5.3 Preconditions

These are conditions that should exist prior to formation and are crucial in different stages of agenda building such as problem identification, issue selection and implementation. The following requirements will be into account in examining the common agenda of the Dutch provinces. The development of this criteria is based on the review of literature on the role of an agenda. Van Schendelen in particular has contributed greatly to this subject. However, some of the criteria are defined in a way that it can be applied to the case.

- **Defined common vision** (what is the position of provinces regarding the selected issues)
The agenda should make clear what the common position of the provinces is in the European Union. This vision should be compatible with the interest of all involved actors. That requires an outlined strategy as to how provinces should behave in the national and European level. Guegen developed identifies three lobbying strategies: ⁵²Negative, re-active and pro-active. The first one is the same as blocking strategy used by van Schendelen. Reactive approach relies on cautiousness instead of action and initiatives. While pro-active approach refers to bringing own developed issues on the Commission’s agenda.
A clear defined vision will prevent internal and external confusion as to what the provinces pursue and how they want to represent their interests in a collective setting.

⁵¹ Source: Lem, M., 2003

⁵² in Mazey and Richardson (2006)

- **Prioritised issues** (what are the problem areas)
It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to follow the entire arena of EU public affairs. Moreover, much of what happens in the EU should not necessarily be of importance to Dutch provinces. Therefore, prioritising issues can be seen as an important first step of agenda forming. This requires excellent knowledge and understanding of what the own priorities are in order to monitor their development on the EU stage. Particular focus should be on the Commission since it has a monopoly in initiating legislation. This is important because it allows provinces to intervene in a very early stage of decision making. The selection of priority issues should be based on a collective cost-benefit assessment.
- **Sufficient internal support**
The agenda of a multi-actor organization like the House should be developed through debate and consensus. Internal coherence is at stake here. Internal coherence can only be met if the selected priorities and the formulated targets are supported by the involved actors (provinces). This requires a sufficient involvement of actors inside the provinces at different stages of collective action e.g. selection of the priorities and perhaps even in the implementation and evaluation stages.
- **knowledge of the home office**
The challenge of lobbying the EU is managing the home office and that of the play field (EU arena) at the same time. This could be a challenging task when there is a mismatch between the desire of the people in the home office and the actual situation on the EU arena. The home orientation is then a requirement to assess whether the demands are realistic and attainable. Considering their position as liaison officers, this could be of particular importance to provincial representatives working in the House. With regard to individual provinces means that representatives have a clear knowledge of what is demanded from their provinces.
- **knowledge of the playing field (EU arena)**
Another side of the coin is a proper management of the EU arena. As mentioned in previous chapters, the EU system can be very complex and dynamic. The wide range of EU legislative competences coupled with the multi-actor involvement in the decision making procedure requires both knowledge of the substances of the legislation and a proper understanding.
- **Subject to (re)examination**
The agenda should be shaped in a way that it allows actors to check it for its internal coherence. That is to say, its compatibility with individual actors' agendas as they could change resulting from changed norms or facts⁵³.

⁵³ Van Schendelen (2002), van Schendelen specifies facts as (something that 'is or is not') and norms as (something as 'ought to be or not'). A perceived "challenge" or "problem" can emerge when facts and norms are combined and change if one of them changes.

5.4 Issue-specific characteristics

The following points are part of a tactical approach that should be developed in difficult areas. If an agenda consists of a variety of issues, then it could not be possible to develop a all-encompassing method of action. This has to do with the nature, substance, urgency and timing of the issue and therefore different methods to be developed. Van Schendelen developed the three questions of whom to approach, where and with what message?

The following steps are interdependent in the process of developing a lobby approach for specific a policy issue or arena.

- **Defined (lobby)instruments to use**

The instrument lies at the heart of any tactics since it determines the method of action. In this regard, one can think of different instruments such as publishing a position paper. But there are also other methods to be used. One can think of direct bilateral contacts with people inside EU institutions, organization of seminars or other events to bring across the message. Position could also be made through indirect contacts or in partnerships with others.

The choice for a specific lobby instrument depends on the nature and urgency of the issue and logically follows the question how one wants to make his position clear.

- **Defined action arena** (whom to approach, where and with what message?)

If the lobby group or organization works on different issues it means that it has a different play fields of action. The boundary of action should be drawn per issue.

This contains a scan of stakeholders and partners who actually or possibly could have a same message.

These questions usually follow thought-out choices regarding partnership, the size of partnerships and the available channels to approach. The survival and visibility of the own message should be considered.

- **Specified targets with deadlines** (time action, and resources)

This could overlap with the above-mentioned determination of the position. However, this requires an issue-specific approach. Because if the targets are not well described, there will soon be internal confusion on what message to bring across. Besides, very general targets could not render any concrete results.

- **Subject to (re)examination**

The whole process should be subject to re-examination. That has two benefits. On the one hand it allows actors to check the agenda for its internal coherence. Perhaps this falls within the general agendas That is to say, its compatibility with individual actors' agendas and on the other hand it operationally could be changed This allows an assessment of outcome of lobby actions per issue. Moreover, it makes the actions more visible.

5.5 The case: common agenda of the Dutch provinces in the EU

5.5.1 Involved actors

Provinces could be seen as the main actors. However, with regard to the common agenda of the provinces, several involved groups can be identified. These groups comprise of people doing different things in a different setting or organization, working at different levels, having different tasks and mandates and working from different places. Those groups will be identified in this section.

Partly relying on the previous chapters, this section presents an overview of relevant actors who somehow are involved with the agenda of the common agenda. Their position, tasks and responsibilities in that regard are also illustrated.

Association of Provincial Authorities IPO

As a political platform, The IPO consists of the twelve Dutch provinces working on several policy areas in which they have common interests. Co-operation is in those policy areas where provinces have competences and responsibilities in the national context.

European affair is one of those areas where provinces co-operate within the framework of the IPO. The last decade has seen intensified inter-provincial co-operation on the European affairs. As a result, co-operation has gone beyond mere dialog between authorities but also lead to co-operation on the civil service and administrative level.

Located in The Hague, IPO has sixty employees. Three of them are working permanently in the European unit. Besides there are several other employees who work for different departments of the IPO such as water, climate, spatial planning, and are involved with specific European dossiers which relates to their area.

The main task of the IPO employees involved with European dossiers (permanent and others) is to bring synergy between the positions of the provinces and stimulate co-operation through communication and co-ordination of their actions. This happens on both the national and European level. First of all, the IPO employs the co-ordinator of the House of the Dutch Provinces in Brussels. The co-ordinator of the House tries to enhance co-operation between provincial representatives through co-ordination of activities and consistent communication. In addition, the co-ordinator of the House has been given the mandate to act on behalf of the provinces. This could be attendance of public events, meetings with EU institutions' officials on behalf of the provinces, enhancing and maintaining good bilateral and multilateral relationships on behalf of the House and last but not least safeguarding general interests of the provinces in the European arena.

The other two permanent employees act on the national level. As representatives of all provinces, they act as one of the three governance partners in the national debates.⁵⁴

The House: Representatives of the provinces

The House is built as front office of the Dutch provinces in the European Union. The House was founded after provinces had a common understanding of the impact of the EU on the provinces. Since then, provinces are represented in the House. Within a regional framework, provinces defend their European interests individually, regionally and also in the IPO context. As mentioned, within the House, provinces are divided into four regions. The previous chapter showed that initially provinces had developed their own European agenda. Over the years, however, provinces embarked on close co-operation with other provinces from their

⁵⁴ The other two partners are the central government and the municipalities' association.

own region. This leads to emergence of regional EU priorities and subsequently formation of EU agendas.

In this structure, the provincial representatives working in the House, find themselves following different agendas; provincial, regional and IPO agenda⁵⁵.

Recently representatives made an agreement concerning their lobby efforts. They divided the share of their efforts for each agenda. In this regard, they agreed that a third of their total working time be devoted to the IPO agenda. How they function in this regard will be presented in the next sections.

Provinces

Provinces are the employers of the representatives working in the House. Through this, they are directly represented in the European Union. The last chapter illustrated that European affairs have become one of the priority areas for the provinces. Provinces reacted by creating units which are only responsible for European issues. In some cases, however, the Europe unit is a part of a wider international affairs office. When focussing on the organization of the EU inside the provinces, several convergences and similarities between provinces can be identified.

Provincial Deputies: General Meeting and Executive Board of the House

First of all, on the Authority level, almost all provinces have at least one Deputy who is responsible for European affairs. They form together the Board of Association of the House. They convene at least twice a year in a General Meeting together with the chair of IPO and under the chairmanship of a Queen's commissioner. The GM deals with several issues regarding 'long-term' co-operation between provinces. One of their main tasks is the approval of the common agenda.

The GM members have selected between them five members who form together the Executive Board of the House.

It should be noted that other provincial deputies dealing with other policy areas could be directly or indirectly involved with the common agenda of the House as well⁵⁶. However, they are not part of the organization of the House.

Provincial Europe-Co-ordinators

Another observed similarity is the existence of a so-called European co-ordinator which functions between the several departments of the provincial authority and tries to bring synergy between them in dealing with European dossiers.

Also they are linked with the House since they function as a sound Board for the representatives working in the House.

Provincial experts

With regard to collective action in relation with the common agenda, provinces play a crucial role. Apart from the representatives who work in the House in Brussels, provinces are also involved with common priority dossiers through delegation of provincial experts. Each province has one or more experts who work on specific European policy areas.

With regard to the common agenda, provincial experts participate in different groups or teams divided over several areas.

⁵⁵ South-Netherlands does not have a regional agenda. East-Netherlands provinces work very closely together but do not have common European agenda.

⁵⁶ When EU potentially or actually has influence in the policy areas for which they are responsible.

5.5.2 Common priority dossiers: the selection procedure

As mentioned in the previous chapter, provinces have recognised some priority areas or issues where they acknowledge the need for co-operation. Based on the common priorities several dossiers are selected as common priority dossiers. The selection track of those dossiers will be presented below.

1ST stage: identification of priorities based on EC agenda

Each year, in October, the European Commission presents its work plan for the coming calendar year. Once released, the House representatives scan the work plan and analyze it.

In addition, the representatives make a categorization of the issues they see as priorities. The categorization is based on the nature of the selected issues and the estimated time period the dossier goes through the decision making procedure. The priority dossiers are divided into three categories; 'policy development dossiers', 'legislative dossiers' and finally the 'monitoring dossiers'.

The identification of priority dossiers and their categorization is a process of several months which take place in a collective setting and is result of a common agreement among representatives in the House.

2nd stage: analysis of the list inside the provinces

Once the priorities are identified and a categorization is made, the list will be sent to the EU co-ordinators of individual provinces at the same time. The list will then be discussed inside each province individually. After proper study of it, provinces will either agree on the list or suggest amendments. Amendments are adding or removing issues which a province could see as a common priority. Important here is to bear in mind that the provinces desires to have their specific top priorities as high as possible on the list of common priorities. The logic behind this choice is that how higher an issue is on the priority list, how more provinces will benefit from effectiveness and efficiency that collective action yields.

3rd stage: Discussion of the list between the EU co-ordinators

The EU co-ordinators of the provinces discuss the list among themselves. The list should anyhow be approved unanimously and will then be sent to the next General Meeting.

4th Stage: Discussion of the list in a General Meeting

The last stage of the selection track is the discussion of the dossiers by the provincial deputies who discuss the list in one of their General Meetings. Their approval is more a political one. However, their approval must be unanimous.

Once accepted by the Deputies, the list of common priority dossiers will be the official common agenda of the provinces for the next calendar year.

5.5.3 Common priority dossiers: Categorization and allocation of resources

Dossier Drivers		Region	Region	Region	Region
Policy development dossiers		Randstad	North-NL	South-NL	East-NL
Regional Policy Health Check 1	Randstad		X	X	X
EU Budget Review 1	East-NL	X	X	X	
Common Agricultural Policy Review 1	North-NL	X		X	X
Environment & Energy 1	Randstad		X	X	X
Green Paper Territorial Cohesion 1	South-NL	X	X		X
Legislative dossiers					
Climate adaptation /cat.1		X			
State Aid /cat.1			X		
Renewable Energy /cat.1				X	
Air quality (NEC+IPPC) /cat.1		X		X	
Industry Policy /cat.2				X	
Soil strategy /cat.2		X			
Priority Substances/cat.2				X	
Waste Prevention /cat.2		X			
Concessie /cat.2					X
Null Coal Emission /cat.2			X		
Monitoring dossiers / cat. 3					
Green Paper city mobility		X			
Lisbon Strategy		X			
Better regulation		X			
Review of Bird and Habitat Directive		X			
Transport Green Paper					X
Action Program				X	
Diensten van Algemeen Belang		X			
European Research Area		X			
Biodiversity Package					X
Environment-Effect Report				X	
House seminar		X	X	X	X
Working Group MAR					
Working Group Env.& Water	South-NL				
Working Group Communication		X	X	X	X
Working Group Env. & Energy	Randstad				

The common priority dossiers are categorized in two ways:

IPO categorization: based on impact assessment

This categorization is value-focused. The value is the result of an impact-assessment whereby the wins and losses, potential threats and opportunities are weighted out against each other. The absolute priority issues are the category 1 issues. These are dossiers for which maximum (lobby) efforts are required. They are considered category 1 priorities based on the common agreement on the equal effects of the dossiers on the provinces. All provinces regard category 1 dossiers as their priority number one and have put it high on their own agenda as well.

The dossiers with relative less impact to *all* provinces are placed under the category 2 priorities. Like the first category, the category 2 dossiers are also perceived as common priority areas. However, in most cases the impact of the dossiers on the provinces differ as result of provincial specific characteristics such as geographical factor e.g. combination of rural and urban areas, demographical factors e.g. population density, nature of the economy, etc. One clear example of this is the air quality dossier which is a category 2 priority on the common priority agenda, but it is one of the absolute top priorities of the Randstad region. The used argument is that impact of air quality has more urgency as result of a relative larger industry density (e.g. existence of a major international airport) and a relative more population density (location of the four largest cities of the Netherlands in this region). Therefore, Randstad is assumed to have relatively more to lose (or win) from EU legislation on air quality. This fact is accepted by others.

The category 3 dossiers are those issues in which have an interest. However, they are not actively being worked on in terms of lobby activities. They are only monitored. The reason for this is that in many cases these dossiers get stuck in one stage of the decision making process and in this way disappear from the annual agenda of the Commission. Many of the category 3 dossiers are therefore called “sleeping” dossiers.

All provinces are comfortable with this categorization of the common priority dossiers.

House categorization: takes also into account the status of a dossier on the EC agenda

This categorization is used only in the House of the Dutch provinces. The dossiers are divided into three different categories. These are the ‘Policy development’ dossiers, the ‘legislative dossiers’ and the ‘monitoring dossiers’. Compared to the value categorization, the importance of the dossiers could be assessed in following way: policy developments dossiers are equal to the category 1 dossiers. The legislative ones are equal to the category 2 and monitoring dossiers are equal to the category 3 dossiers.

This categorization is based on two logics. First of all, the *nature* of the dossiers is taken into account. Some dossiers concern those areas where the EU aims to review its policies. These are policies with a long-term character and relative larger impact and are therefore called policy development dossiers.

The *current status* of the dossiers on the EU agenda is the second reason for this categorization. Those dossiers which are marked as development dossiers are very actual and “hot” on the EC agenda and are therefore argued to require more involvement and lobby efforts.

One clear example is the Green Paper Territorial Cohesion. Whereas it is qualified as a category 2 dossier, representatives in the House put this dossier in 2000 among the policy development issues. The reason for this choice is that the dossiers have become more urgent and actual on the EU agenda and therefore require intensified common efforts.

5.5.4 Mobilization and co-ordination in relation with the common priority dossiers

Mobilization of actors with the purpose of working on the common priority dossiers forms the essence of co-operation. Through a good and well functioning mobilization of actors and co-ordination of actions, efficiency and effectiveness can be yielded. This section focuses on the whole process of mobilization of actors and the way resources are allocated and actions are co-ordinated. The mechanisms will therefore be presented below. In addition, the role of different individuals and groups acting in different working methods are clarified as well.

With regard to the common priority dossiers, actors are mobilized in three different ways. Dossier teams, working groups and the triangle method are set up as arrangement for mobilization of people.

Working groups

This is an old method of work, which is being partially abolished two years ago. The method has a multi-issue focus and is therefore very actor- inclusive. Based on the substance of selected themes, thematic working groups were created for areas such as environment and water, energy, and so on. This mechanism resulted in activation and participation of several groups and actors like the House representatives, provincial experts, IPO, and in some cases representatives of the Dutch Permanent Representation in the EU and representatives from different ministerial departments could also participate. Though abolished as an official method for mobilization of actors, the working group method still exists. As showed in the overview, there are still three working groups. These are the Environment and Water, and MAR working groups. There is also a communication working group which was created among the representatives of the House with the aim of enhancing communication in the House. However, the communication working group has currently a “non-active” status.

Dossier teams

This is a new method for mobilization of actors unlike the working groups; the dossier teams are dossier-focused. That is to say, the dossier teams are involved with one selected dossier instead of themes that could contain a range of dossiers. However, the size and the level of involvement of actors depend on the categorization of the dossier. This is more specified below:

Structure

The structure of the dossiers depends on the fixed qualification of a dossier. The policy development dossier teams consist of representatives from the four regions. Moreover, one of the representatives is appointed as dossier holder. Legislative dossiers are divided between the regions. One region holds the dossier. In most cases the distribution of the dossiers is based on the importance and urgency of the dossier for a particular region.

For instance, the Transport dossier is of special importance for the Gelderland province. This makes clear why East-Netherlands is the driver of the transport dossier. The same goes for air quality dossier for which Randstad is the driver.

Involved actors

Apart from representatives in the House, other people participate in the dossier teams. The IPO participates in the dossier teams though its co-ordinators. Provincial experts are also involved. Formally, for each priority one dossier is also one provincial deputy is appointed as being the ‘political responsible’ dossier holder.

The 'Triangle' method

The term 'action' refers to whole range of activities and efforts undertaken with relation to the common priority dossiers. Lobby activities, however, is the 'output' or the 'outcome' of the collective action.

The developed method for co-ordination of actions is the so-called 'triangle'. Within this framework, House representatives, provincial experts and IPO work closely together and divide and co-ordinate their actions.

Through this method, each of the three parties has their tasks. As the title indicates, the provincial expert has the specific technical expertise in the dossier area. He or she is expected to deal with the substance of the dossier and in his way provide detailed and specific input to the representatives and the IPO. The added-value of the expert's input is that provinces will be aware of the substances of the dossiers. This is crucial for the successfulness of any actions that follows.

Actor's responsibilities with regard to co-ordination

The IPO's involvement is to bring synergy between the provinces. For instance, if IPO publishes a position paper, it does that on behalf of all Dutch provinces. The job of the IPO co-ordinator is to generate communication between the provinces and keep them aware of the common position. While taking into account the specific demands of individual provinces or regions. Moreover, recently, the IPO appointed a co-ordinator for the House. One of his responsibilities is to bring coherence between the provinces and regions and enhance co-ordination through better communication and a certain level of control of activities

The representatives in the House play a crucial role. They are responsible for priming, framing and timing of co-ordination. They guard the European arena. Potential and actual developments are sent to IPO and to the provinces through formal communication channels like the weekly newsletter. However, the contacts with the home regarding the priority dossiers are on the daily basis and in most cases through phone and email.

5.5.5 Output of collective work: the action instruments

Output is referred to as the instrument or intervention action that results from cooperation of the provinces. These actions could manifest themselves as formal documents such as position papers or organization of meetings, seminars. But they could also be direct informal meetings with policy makers inside the Commission.

Position could also be made clear through European partners such as associations of European Regions and Municipalities CEMR or through other partners active on the European stage. Following instruments can be identified.

Formal instruments

Direct instrument: Position papers

Position paper is a document through which the own position regarding a policy issue is stated. The statement relies mainly on arguments and ends with demands or recommendations. It is generally accepted as one of the main intervention tools for any interest group trying to influence policy making and decisions.

Position papers are often used by the Dutch provinces. Through position papers provinces state their position on a specific policy issues are in most cases directed to the European Commission. With regard to the timing of the publication of a paper, almost all position papers are developed and published in the consultation stage of the decision making. This is assumed to be the best period to intervene position since the intended decision is subject to change at that stage.

The common position papers of the provinces are developed with the help of provincial experts and are published by the IPO. The position papers are

Indirect instrument: House seminar

The seminar could be a helpful instrument to take a position in an policy area and also use the seminar to gain knowledge about the policy issue. Moreover, the seminar can be used as a tool or network formation, extension and image building purposes. Each year the House of the Dutch provinces organizes a seminar. The seminars are held on the basis of a selected theme such as internal market or regional policy. Partners from other regional offices and regional politicians are invited to the seminar.

Informal instruments

Direct informal: Bilateral meetings

Bilateral meetings with EU officials could be very useful to bring across the position of On the collective level, that is to say the House level the office of the Giant 4 cities is a close partner. The Dutch Permanent Representation in the EU is another partner of the House. The contacts between the House and the PR have been enhanced.

In this regard, the House has developed and published several

Indirect informal: attendance of meetings, use of networks

Meetings, events, congresses, seminars held by EU institutions or other (regional) partners provide an opportunity to bring across the own message indirectly.

Moreover, networks, that is to say partners can be used to convey a message.

The co-ordinator of the House is involved in activities in this regard.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the common European agenda of the Dutch provinces was analysed The analysis tried to get answer to two important questions. (1) How actors are mobilized through the common agenda? And (2) how actions are co-ordinated among the involved actors?

First of all, the analysis shows that based on the common priority dossiers, different mechanism of actions are set up to arrange mobilization of actors inside the provinces and in Brussels. The triangle mechanism is a clear evidence of a used method whereby actors at different levels, with different expertises and from different places are brought together to work on specific issues. Although, one method of co-operation can be preferred, the structure of co-operation between provinces has a permanent character.

The role of the IPO in this regard is important to mention. Both in the national arena and in Brussels, it has appointed co-ordinators to normalize and standardise interactions between the provinces. The high level of agreement on the common challenges and the involvement of actors stimulate further mobilization of actors for the common agenda.

The importance of the agenda is that it has prioritised the common issues in a way that involvement of actors is based on the urgency of the issues for all provinces. The selection procedure of the dossiers shows that different groups of people have a say in the selection. The second point is also met since the triangle makes a clear distinction of who does what when and with which mandate. By bringing together House representatives who are lobbyist and specialised in the European decision making process, the provincial expert who are part of the internal organisation of the provinces and have a thorough knowledge of the substances of the dossiers, and finally, the IPO persons who safeguards co-operation and communication, the provinces have developed a mechanism by which required specific knowledge and expertise are combined and utilized in an effective way.

Chapter 7 Conclusions and recommendations

In this research, the co-operation of the Dutch provinces in the European Union arena was examined. For that reason, the common agenda of the Dutch provinces was analyzed.

To understand our case better, a theoretical context was drawn within which the presence of regions in the European Union arena is discussed. This started with the traditional discussion between Neo-corporatism and Pluralism and showed that both theories fail to fully explain the behaviour and the interaction of interest groups and EU institutions. Multi-level Governance, on the other hand, with its focus on governance as dispersed in which actors at different levels interact based on interdependency and mutual interest, has stronger explanatory power in the context of the European Union. In this regard, the existence of representative bodies for regions within the EU system and the powers and responsibilities attached to them (e.g. through Subsidiarity Principle) shows that regions have significant powers within the EU polity. Also the existence of regional authorities can be defended within the context of Multi-level governance. In this regard, the limited sources of the European Commission is referred to which makes it dependent on knowledge provided from interest groups. Regional offices are no exception in this matter.

As a next step of this research which concentrates on the Dutch regions, the history of Dutch regions and provinces in Brussels was presented. Furthermore, the organisation of EU affairs by provinces was analysed. This has revealed several interesting similarities as to how Dutch provinces deal with European affairs and how they have organised their apparatus.

First, regardless of the timing of their settlement in Brussels, from the early 1990s onwards, Dutch provinces increasingly dealt with European affairs. As a result, by mid 1990s, almost all provinces had established an office in Brussels or at least had sent a consultant to Brussels. Furthermore, this steady growth of attention led to development of units or even departments responsible for European affairs.

Another interesting trend could be observed in the way regions soon after they were in Brussels established close contacts with other provinces or regions of the country. This has eventually led to the establishment of the House of the Dutch Provinces in Brussels in 2000.

The establishment of the House as institutionalisation of inter-provincial partnership at the European stage needs more explanation which goes beyond economic and logistic efficiency arguments. It was in many ways result of the consciousness among the provinces of the need for co-operation. As presented in chapter four, several factors lead to this intensification of co-operation. First of all, the growing impact of EU legislation as result of extended first pillar and granted powers, allowed the Commission to develop policies and compel national and local authorities with their implementation.

In this regard, one can observe similarities between the kind of policies for which the European Commission has competences to develop coercive policies on the one hand, and the constitutionally granted competences and responsibilities of the Dutch provinces on the other hand. This has led to the emergence of the belief that provinces have common interests in the EU arena for which they should collaborate. An important part of this partnership in the EU was the creation of an office in Brussels which would allow representatives of all provinces working closely together, subsequently the development of a common agenda in which the common priorities of the provinces is outlined. It should be said, however, that the existence of inter-provincial authority and other communication channels have greatly helped and smoothened intensified co-operation in the EU arena.

After having explained the emergence of inter-provincial co-operation, the common agenda was assessed for the extent it could instigate mobilization of actors and co-ordination of

actions between provinces. Based on literature and used theories, several characteristics of a successful agenda were developed as criteria upon which the common agenda could be assessed. The analysis was largely based on interviews with different actors involved with the common agenda. It showed that the agenda which is composed of priority dossiers is a problem oriented agenda. The study of the agenda showed a high level of involvement of people at different levels which has led to satisfaction among the provinces. Moreover, based on the substance of the common agenda, several mechanisms for co-ordination of actions between involved actors could be found. In this way, it can be argued that the common agenda has been successful in steering co-operation by allowing for mobilized actors from provinces and for co-ordinating their activities.

The setting of co-operation is facilitated by the House since most of the intra-provincial what happens between provinces in the EU arena, in terms of problem identification, mobilization of actors, and co-ordination of actions takes place in the House. However, some elements require more attention.

First of all, as mentioned, the agenda of the House is based on the European Commission's annual work plan. Considering this, the agenda could be qualified as re-active of nature. It should be a good thing to think about ways to influence the European agenda in a pro-active way. This requires another approach which should not per se be based on an identified 'problem'. Rather it can be efforts regarding something which could be an opportunity for the provinces. With the aim of contributing to the start of such approach, an effort is made to identify a common opportunity for Dutch provinces in the EU. In this plan, the area of common interest is identified. Moreover, possible methods of actions are outlined.

The current agenda is an annual work plan and has a short-term focus. It, therefore, lacks a long-term vision as to how provinces should act towards partners on both European and national arenas. There should be more strategic focus by formulating a strategic paper within IPO framework in which long term vision, mission, and other strategic questions within both the EU and the national contexts are outlined.

As for mid-term plans, many priority dossiers are interrelated. A European decision in an particular policy area might affect other policies (dossiers). Provinces should think about a broad mid-term (multi-annual) plan in which different plausible scenarios and outcomes are predetermined for the interrelated dossiers.

Even on the short-term objectives, the agenda shows shortcomings regarding targets and deadlines for specific issues. Having argued this, the nature of EU public affairs and its decision making procedure should be taken into account. It is, however, desirable to think to consider the development of STEP-formulated short-term (annual) targets and deadlines for specific issues. This will make it possible to evaluate the agenda as a whole or activities in specific areas. Moreover, setting evaluating targets will make the actions of people involved with the common priority dossiers more visible to others such as politicians back home and the outside world.

The analysis revealed successful methods of actor mobilization (e.g. triangle and dossier teams). However, communication related to the category 2 (legislative) dossiers seem to be less smooth compared to the category 1 dossiers. This requires more efforts to enhance exchange of information regarding the priority dossiers. The House co-ordinator has a role to play in tightening the communication lines between several dossier teams and individuals who are involved with the common priority dossiers. This view is broadly supported by interviewed groups in and outside the House.

A solution could be sought in the re-activation of the 'communication' working group. Another solution might be creation of an intranet system on which progresses and activities regarding the dossiers could be placed

Another solution might be found by re-launching the lobbyfisches, which is regarded as a good communication instrument by actors in the House.

In this regard, different possible solutions should be considered and possibly combined.

As far as the categorization of the priority dossier's list is concerned. Having two different lists creates confusion among people who are involved with the dossiers. Therefore, provinces should start work with just one list. With other words, they should have just one categorization of the dossiers.

As for intervention instruments and actions, the position papers are relatively an effective instrument. However, other (indirect) methods and ways for action should be considered as well such as participation in wide (European) networks through approach of stakeholders with the same interests in a specific policy area, or even strategic allies.

Another good (indirect) instrument is organization of seminars or meetings. These activities should not necessarily be related to the priority dossiers. One can think of promotion of regional best practices (e.g. clusters). Next chapter will elaborate on this as part of a pro-active approach of the European Union arena.

References

- Alvaro, X., Lopez, M., (1999) The Resistance to Change in the State Model, *Regional and Federal Studies*, Vol. 9, No 12, In Booijink, M. (2001), De Europese regio's; met dezelfde uitrusting naar Brussel? Een onderzoek naar de invloed van de staatsvorm op de functies van de regionale bureaus' in Brussel, intership report
- Berry, J. M. (1986) *the interest group society*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company
- Börzel, T. A. (1997), 'What is So Special about Policy Networks? – An Exploration of the Concept and its Usefulness in Studying European Governance', *European Integration online Papers (EIoP) Vol. 16 European Governance' Integration online Papers*
- Carlsson, L. (2000) 'Policy Networks as Collective Action' *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (502-520)
- Deschouwer, K. and Theo Jans, M. (2007), *Politics beyond the State: Actors and Policies in Complex Institutional Settings'*, Brussels: VUB University Press
- Drezner, D. (2001) 'Globalization and Policy Convergence', *International Studies Association*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers
- Eising, R. (2004) 'Multilevel Governance and Business Interest in the European Union', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (p. 211-245)
- European Commission, *Growing regions, growing Europe. Fourth report on economic and social cohesion* (Luxembourg 2007)
- Geschwend, T. and Schimmelfennig, F. (2007) *Research Design in Political Science: How to practice what they preach*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Greenwood, J. (1997) *Representing Interests in the European Union*, Basingstoke: Macmillan
- Hooghe, L. and Keating, M (2006) Bypassing the nation-state? Regions and the EU policy process, In Richardson, J. (2006), *European Union, Power and Policy Making*, Third Edition, p.269-286, New York: Routledge
- Huyseune, M. And Theo Jans, M., (2005), 'Vertegenwoordigingen van lokale en regionale overheden bij de Europese Unie', Institute for European Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- Huyseune, M. and Theo Jans, M., (2007) the Third Level in Brussels? Regional information Offices and the European Policy Community', in: Deschouwer, K. and Theo Jans, M., (2007), *Politics Beyond the State: Actors and Policies in Complex Institutional Settings'*, Brussels: VUB University Press

Kerr, C. (1983), *the Future of Industrial Societies: Convergence or Continuing Diversity?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press in: Knill, C. (2006) *Cross-National Policy Convergence: Causes, Concepts and Empirical Findings*, New York, Routledge

Knill, C. (2006), *Cross-National Policy Convergence: Causes, Concepts and Empirical Findings*, New York: Routledge

Lem, M. (2003), 'Regional Offices in Brussels and the Added Value of a Strategic Agenda, A Comparative Research between Various Regional Offices in Brussels' Internship report

Lenschow, A. (2006), Europeanization of public policy, In Richardson, J. (2006), '*European Union, Power and Policy Making*, Third Edition, p.55-71, New York: Routledge

Lijphart, A.1984, *Democracies, Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries*, Yale University Press, New Haven in: In Booijink, M. (2001), *De Europese regio's; met dezelfde uitsrusting naar Brussel? Een onderzoek naar de invloed van de staatsvorm op de functies van de regionale bureaus' in Brussel*, intership report

Mahoney, C. (2007) 'the Role of Interest Groups in Fostering Citizen Engagement: The Determinants of Outside Lobbying', in: Deschouwer, K. and Theo Jans, M. (2007), *Politics beyond the State: Actors and Policies in Complex Institutional Settings*, Brussels: VUB University Press

Marks, Hooghe and Blank 1996; and Hooghe and Marks 2001 in: Warleigh, A. and Fairbrass, J. the New Politics of Persuasion, Advocacy and Influence in the European Union.

Mazey, S. and Richardson J. (2006) Interest groups and EU policy making; organizational logic and venue shopping, p. 248-268, In: Richardson, J. (2006), '*European Union, Power and Policy Making*, Third Edition, New York: Routledge

Michalowitz, I. Beyond Corporatism and Pluralism: Towards a New Theoretical Framework, In Warleigh, A. and Fairbrass, J. (2003) *Influence and Interests in the European Union: The New Politics of Persuasion and Advocacy*, Europa Publications

Michalowitz, I. (2005) Service bureaux of decision-makers or successful spin-doctors: Assessing interest group influence in the EU and the US, *Institute for Advanced Studies*, Paper prepared for the EUSA Ninth Biannual International Conference 31March – 2April 2005, Austin/Texas

Ministerie Binnenlandse Zaken interne document (2004) 'De EU coördinatie van BZ: Goed, beter, best' Prof Mr. Jaap W. de Zwaan, Hoogleraar Recht van de Europese Unie, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam

Ministerie Binnenlandse Zaken interne document (2004), 'Nationale coördinatie van EU-beleid: een politiek en proactief proces

Nauta, J., Mennes, A. Jans M.T.H. (2006) 'Evaluatierapport Huis van de Nederlandse Provincies', Evaluation report of the House of the Dutch Provinces in Brussels.

Patton, M., (1990) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Second Edition, New York: Sage

Radaelli, M. (2006) Diffusion without convergence: how political context shapes the adoption of regulatory impact assessment, In Knill, C. (2006), *Cross-National Policy Convergence: Causes, Concepts and Empirical Findings*, New York: Routledge

Randstad Region, Economic Strategy Randstad Holland, (2004) 'A Joint metropolitan Strategy and an Agenda to Stimulate the Economy of an Internationally Competitive Randstad', Source: Internal document Randstad office, Brussels.

Richardson, J. (2006), *European Union, Power and Policy Making*, Third Edition, New York: Routledge

Richardson, J. (2006), Policy making in the EU: interests, ideas and garbage cans of primeval soup, In Richardson, J. (2006), *European Union, Power and Policy Making*, Third Edition, p.3-30, New York: Routledge

Schimmelfennig, F. and Rittberger, B. (2006) 'Theories of European integration, Assumptions and hypotheses' in: Richardson, J. (2006), *European Union, Power and Policy Making*, Third Edition, New York: Routledge

Tews, K. (2002) 'Der Diffusionsansatz für die vergleichende Politikanalyse. Wurzeln und Potenziale eines Konzepts, Eine Literaturstudie', *FU-Report 2002-02*, Berlin: *Environmental Policy Research Centre*, In: Knill, C. (2006), *Cross-National Policy Convergence: Causes, Concepts and Empirical Findings*, New York: Routledge

Theo Jans, M., (2007) Politics Beyond the State, in Politics Beyond the State, in: Deschouwer, K. and Jans, M. T. (2007), *Politics beyond the State: Actors and Policies in Complex Institutional Settings*, Brussels: VUB University Press

Schobben, R. (2000), *Politieke Regio en Europese Unie*, Delft: Eburon

Van Schendelen, R. (2002) *Machiavelli in Brussels; the Art of Lobbying the EU*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press

Vaus de, D. (2001), *Research Design in Social Research*, London: sage

Wiercx, J. (2007), 'the Weakest Link? Interest Representation by Eurogroups in a Multi-level Governance System, in: Deschouwer, K. and Theo Jans, M. (2007), *Politics beyond the State: Actors and Policies in Complex Institutional Settings*, Brussels: VUB University Press

Yin, R.K In: de Vaus, (1989), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Beverly Hills and London: sage

IPO documenten

IPO and VNG position paper, (2008), 'the future of European Cohesion Policy beyond 2013: regions and municipalities working together on a strong and sustainable Europe'. Source: intern House

IPO and VNG position paper, (2008) 'The European Union beyond 2013: working together on a stronger and more sustainable Europe. Response from the IPO and VNG to the Commission – March 2008'

IPO and VNG position paper, (2008) VNG-IPO Position paper over de toekomst van de Europese meerjarenbegroting na 2013

IPO document (2005) 'IPO en VNG reactie op Thematische Strategie Luchtverontreiniging Voorstel voor een nieuwe Richtlijn Luchtkwaliteit', november 2005

IPO document (2005) 'Standpunt Nederlandse provincies inzake voorstel voor een Verordening betreffende het openbaar personenvervoer per spoor en over de weg, COM (2005) 319 definitief.'

IPO document (2003) position paper van de Nederlandse provincies betreffende COM (2003) 32 definitief, 2003/0022(CNS)

IPO document (2006) 'EU Thematische strategie inzake bodembescherming Voorstel voor een richtlijn tot vaststelling van een kader voor de bescherming van de bodem en tot wijziging van Richtlijn 2004/35/EG 'december 2006.

IPO document, (2004) Rapportage Prioritaire Europese Dossiers 2004

IPO document, (2005) Rapportage Prioritaire Europese Dossiers 2005

IPO document, (2006) Rapportage Prioritaire Europese Dossiers 2006

IPO document, (2007) Rapportage Prioritaire Europese Dossiers 2007

IPO document, (2008) Rapportage Prioritaire Europese Dossiers 2008

HNP documenten

HNP document (2005) 'Provinciale belangenbehartiging in Brussel; De weg tussen zelfprofilering en goede belangenbehartiging', Cannegieter, H. en Van den Barg, B.

HNP document (2004) 'Verdere professionalisering van de provinciale lobbyactiviteiten'

HNP document (2004) 'De toekomst van provinciale belangenbehartiging in Brussel: Vier scenario's voor samenwerking in het kader van INPA Huis van de Nederlandse Provincies', van den Barg, B. en Pluckel, H.

HNP document (2003) 'Evaluatie van de werkwijze en organisatie van het Huis van de Nederlandse Provincies' C. Crasborn en A. Mennes

HNP document (2008) HNP werkplan 2008 Huis van de Nederlandse Provincies te Brussel.

HNP document (2008) Eerste opzet van een Actielijst HNP Coördinator in 2008. Van Eijkeren, R.

HNP document (2008) Verslag ronde tafel gesprek 2008

HNP document (2007) Verslag ronde tafel gesprek 2007

HNP document (2006) Verslag ronde tafel gesprek 2006

HNP document (2006) Verslag Werkgroep Communicatie 2006

HNP document (2007) Verslag Werkgroep Communicatie 2007

HNP document (2007) 'EC werkplan: Werkprogramma Europese Commissie 2007'

HNP document (2008) 'EC werkplan: Werkprogramma Europese Commissie 2008'

Websites:

Huis van de Nederlandse Provincies: <http://www.nl-prov.be/nl-prov>

European Commission website: http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm

Regio Randstad website: <http://www.regio-randstad.nl>

Samenwerking Noord Nederland website: <http://www.snn.eu>

Provincie Overijssel website: <http://provincie.overijssel.nl/>

Provincie Gelderland website: <http://provincie.gelderland.nl>

Provincie Limburg website: <http://provincie.limburg.nl>

Provincie Zeeland website: <http://www.zeeland.nl>

Provincie Noord Holland website: <http://www.noord-holland.nl>

Provincie Zuid Holland website: <http://www.zuid-holland.nl>

Provincie Flevoland website: <http://www.flevoland.nl>

Provincie Utrecht website: <http://www.utrecht.nl>

Provincie Groningen website: <http://www.provinciegroningen.nl>

Provincie Drenthe website: <http://www.drenthe.nl>

Provincie Friesland website: <http://www.fryslan.nl>

Provincie Noord Brabant: <http://www.brabant.nl>

Britannica online encyclopedia: <http://www.britannica.nl>

Wikipedia online encyclopedia: <http://www.wikipedia.com>

Google search machine: www.google.com

EU observer: www.wuobserver.com

ANNEX

Interview with provincial Representatives in the House of the Dutch Provinces- Brussels

Priority in Brussels

- 1 What are the priorities of your province in the European Union?
- 2 What are your tasks in Brussels?

Co-ordination and communication between Brussels and the home office

- 3 Does your province have a (strategic) European agenda or action program?
- 4 How is EU organized/ dealt with, within the provincial apparatus?
- 5 Who are the people involved with the European affairs inside your province?
What is your position within that framework?
- 5 Who are the people in the provinces with whom you have regularly contact s
regarding the priority issues/dossiers?
- 6 How could you describe/qualify the awareness of EU inside you province? And what
role do you play in that regard (creating awareness of EU inside the province)?
- 7 How is the Communication between you and the home front? Which communication
instruments are use?

Co-operation in regional framework (in the home office and in Brussels)

- 8 How is co-operation shaped between your provinces and other provinces from the
region?
- 9 To what extent is the Strategic EU agenda of your province similar to that of the
regional EU agenda?
- 10 How is the co-operation shaped with Other Representatives from Other provinces in
the House in Brussels?

Common Priority dossiers of the Dutch provinces

- 11 Does the common agenda make it clear to you what the strategic position of
the Dutch provinces is in the European Union?
- 12 Which areas or issues do you regard as a common priority? Why?

- 13 To what extent is the common agenda consistent with the agenda of your province or region? What are the Converging issues? Diverging issues?
- 14 Is selecting common priorities a good method? Are there any other options?
- 15 Are there any targets, deadlines set in advance with regard to the common priority dossiers? If no, how would they be formulated?
- 16 What is your opinion about the created dossier teams? Are there any other options to mobilize people?
- 16 What is your opinion about the selection process of the common Priority dossiers? Is there any other option?
- 17 What is your opinion about the categorization of the priority dossier's list?
- 18 Which list should be proffered and why?
- 19 What direct or indirect intervention/influencing methods are used (e.g. position papers, seminar, and meetings)?
- 20 What specific method should be used more or less and why?
- 21 What is your opinion about internal communication (the House) regarding the (progresses and actions) common priority dossiers?
- 22 How is the communication from the House towards the provinces?
- 23 Which communication instrument should be preferred and why?
- 24 How is the communication from the House towards the provinces?

Interview with EU co-ordinators inside the provinces

Province

- 1 What are the priorities of your province in the European Union? Why?
- 2 How do you defend your interests on the European Union's arena?
- 3 Does your province have a (strategic) European agenda or action program?
- 4 How is EU organized/ dealt with, within the provincial apparatus?
- 5 Who are the people in the provinces with whom you have regularly contact s regarding the priority issues/dossiers?
- 6 How could you describe/qualify the awareness of EU inside your province? And what role do you play in that regard (creating awareness of EU inside the province)?

- 7 How is the Communication between you and the home front? Which communication instruments are use?

Co-operation in regional framework (in the home office and in Brussels)

- 8 How is co-operation shaped between your provinces and other provinces from the region?
- 9 To what extent is the Strategic EU agenda of your province similar to that of the regional EU agenda?
- 10 How is the co-operation shaped between your province and other provinces regarding EU policies?

Common Priority dossiers of the Dutch provinces

- 11 Does the common agenda make it clear to you what the strategic position of the Dutch provinces is in the European Union?
- 12 Which areas or issues do you regard as a common priority? Why?
- 13 To what extent is the common agenda consistent with the agenda of your province or region? What are the Converging issues? Diverging issues?
- 14 What is the best way for defending common interest of provinces in the EU?
- 15 What is your opinion about the created dossier teams? Are there any other options to mobilize people?
- 16 What is your opinion about the selection process of the common Priority dossiers? Is there any other option?
- 17 What is your opinion about the categorization of the priority dossier's list?
- 18 Which list should be proffered and why?
- 19 What is your opinion about internal communication (the House) regarding the (progresses and actions) common priority dossiers?
- 20 How is the communication from the House towards the provinces?
- 21 Which communication instrument should be preferred and why?
- 22 How is the communication between provinces? What is the role of IPO?

Interview with IPO co-ordinators

- 1 How did inter-provincial co-operation emerge?
- 2 What are the policy areas of co-operation between provinces in the national context?
- 3 How did intra-provincial co-operation on EU policy arena emergence?
- 5 What was the role of IPO in that context?
- 5 How is EU affairs organized within the IPO? Who are responsible people?
- 6 What is exactly your task towards provinces regarding European arena?
- 7 What is the added-value of the House in Brussels? What are the objectives with which it was founded?
- 8 What is your opinion about current state of co-operation between provinces on the European arena?
- 11 Does provinces have a common strategic European agenda?
- 10 Which areas or issues do you regard as a common priority of provinces? Why?
- 11 To what extent is the common agenda consistent with the agenda of your province or region? What are the Converging issues? Diverging issues?
- 12 at is the best way for defending common interest of provinces in the EU?
- 13 What is your opinion about the created dossier teams? Are there any other options to mobilize people?
- 14 What is your opinion about the selection process of the common Priority dossiers? Is there any other option?
- 15 What is your opinion about the categorization of the priority dossier's list?
- 16 Which list should be proffered and why?
- 17 What is your opinion about internal communication (the House) regarding the (progresses and actions) common priority dossiers?
- 18 How is the communication from the House towards the IPO?
- 19 Which communication instrument should be preferred and why?
- 20 How is the communication between provinces together?