

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
EUROPEAN DOCUMENTATION AND RESEARCH CENTRE
Course Descriptions and Bibliographies
ACADEMIC YEAR 2007-2008
European Studies (Undergraduate)

EST 3150 EU Policies and Political Dynamics
(2 credits – 4 ECTS)
Assessment – 2 hour written test at the end of the semester
Lecturer – Mark Harwood

This course aims to give students a thorough understanding of the shifting decision-making processes which can be found within the EU. Conservative estimates calculate that there are at least twenty-five different decision-making mechanisms operating across the EU's various policies. This figure does not include the additional complication of informal political dynamics which can further complicate and condition the official decision-making mechanisms. This credit aims to show clearly this complexity by taking some of the key EU policies, especially from within Pillar I, and analysing how decisions are made and who conditions policy outcomes.

Each policy will be analysed in detail, starting with an overview of the actual policy and what competence the EU has in that matter before moving on to look at the main players within each policy sector, the relationship between actors and the role played by institutions marginalised in certain sectors.

For this reason we have chosen an interesting set of policy areas. A key aim of the course is to address policy areas not covered in other courses. We will start by looking at the general policy process and the dynamics of policy making within the EU before moving on to look at the EU's policy process in agriculture and fisheries. Differences between the two highlight the importance of DG structures and the importance of lobby groups. We then move on to the budget as an interesting example of EP-Council interaction. After the budget we will look at the EU's external trade policy which gives an interesting case of Member State control in an EC competence area. Our last few lectures will cover Justice and Home Affairs (as an example of a Pillar I and Pillar III policy area) and Economic and Monetary Union (as a policy area increasingly shifting decisions back to the Member States). We will conclude by looking at the problems of implementing policy. As the final stage in the policy making process, students must be aware that, after the rhetoric and the commitments to introduce policy, an implementation gap can often leave policy being ineffective.

Select Bibliography

European Union: power and policy-making, Jeremy Richardson (ed.). 2nd Edition, Routledge, UK. 2001

European Union Politics, Michelle Cini. 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press, UK. 2007.

Making Policy in Europe. Svein Andersen and Kjell Eliassen (Editors). Sage Publications, UK. Second edition. 2001.

The Common Agricultural Policy. Wyn Grant. Macmillan, UK. 1997.

The Political System of the European Union, Simon Hix. 1st Edition, Palgrave, UK. 1999

The Government and Politics of the European Union. Neill Nugent. 5th Edition. Palgrave, UK. 2003.

Policy-making in the European Union. Helen Wallace and William Wallace (eds.). 4th Edition. Oxford University Press, UK. 2000.

Decision-making in the European Union. John Peterson and Elizabeth Bomberg. Macmillan Press, UK. 1999.