

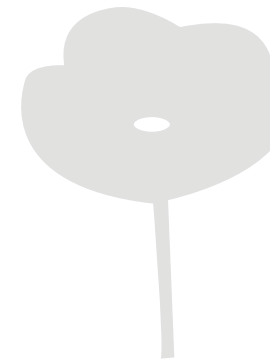
MATTHEW BUMFORD

THE ASCENT OF AUTONOMOUS NATIONS

THE INSTITUTIONAL
ADVANTAGES OF BEING
AN EU MEMBER STATE

2ND EDITION

CENTRE MAURITS COPPIETERS
BRUSSELS | 2012



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OF BEING AN EU MEMBER STATE**

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2012

**'I believe in the virtue of
small nations. I believe in the
virtue of small numbers.
The world will be saved
by the few.'**

André Gide

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jill Evans MEP for her continued support, not just of myself but also the nations of Europe who are seeking independence. I would also like to thank Ignasi Centelles of the Centre Maurits Coppieters and Syd Morgan and Alan Sandry of the Welsh Nationalism Foundation for their continued patience and commitment, as well as their helpful input. Finally I would like to thank Alex Hadley for his invaluable contributions.



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Preface

WE ARE NOT ALONE¹

This publication has its origins in the short but pioneering piece of research I commissioned in 2008 from Marc Gafarot. It looked at how Wales might benefit as an EU member state compared to its current sub-state status.² The work proved the institutional advantages of full membership by comparing Wales with then-existing small and medium EU member states.

The Welsh Nationalism Foundation, founded in 2009, planned to publish that research and make it available for wider public debate. However, its findings were overtaken by events. First, by the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, which came into effect on 1st January 2010 and changed the power structure of the EU. Secondly by the, often spectacular, political advances made by European Free Alliance parties which put '*independence in Europe*' firmly on the agenda.

¹ The title comes from the novel by James Hilton (1937), *We Are Not Alone*: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, London

² Marc Gafarot, *The benefits of being small in the European Union* (unpublished, 2008)

DYDYN NI DDIM AR EIN PENNAU'N HUNAIN¹

Mae'r cyhoeddiad hwn yn tarddu o'r ymchwil byr ond arloesol a gomisiynwyd gen i yn 2008 o Marc Gafarot. Cymerodd olwg ar sut allai Cymru elwa o fod yn aelod wladwriaeth o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd o gymharu â'i statws presennol fel is-wladwriaeth.² Profodd y gwaith y manteision sefydliadol a geid drwy gymharu Cymru gyda'r aelod wladwriaethau bychain a chanolig a fodolai bryd hynny yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd.

Ar gael ei sefydlu yn 2009, cynlluniodd y Sefydliad Cenedlaetholdeb Cymreig i gyhoeddi'r ymchwil hwnnw a'i gyhoeddi er mwyn iddo gael bod yn destun trafodaeth gyhoeddus ehangach. Fodd bynnag, cafodd ei gasgliadau eu goddiweddidd gan ddigwyddiadau. Yn gyntaf, cadarnhad Cytundeb Lisbon, a ddaeth yn weithredol ar Ionawr 1, 2010 ac a newidiodd strwythur pŵer yr Undeb Ewropeaidd. Yn ail, gan y cynnydd gwleidyddol, rhyfeddol ar adegau, a wnaed gan bleidiau Cynghrair Rhydd Ewrop a roddodd 'annibyniaeth yn Ewrop' yn gadarn ar yr agenda.

¹ Daw'r teitl o'r nofel gan James Hilton (1937), *We Are Not Alone*: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, Llundain

² Marc Gafarot, *The benefits of being small in the European Union* (heb ei gyhoeddi, 2008)

I am very grateful to the Centre Maurits Coppieters for agreeing to the request of the Welsh Nationalism Foundation not only to publish but also to commission further comparative research by Matthew Bumford, the outcome of which you see here. Matthew worked as a stagiaire in my parliamentary office and is now a researcher in my national office. He has done great justice to the subject, taking the wider view required and making the case for member-state status for a number of emerging nations with compelling evidence and illustrations.

How Wales and the others would become Member States of the European Union is outlined in the *'route map'* that was the inspired work of the late Professor Sir Neil MacCormick MEP of the Scottish National Party. In his role as an alternate member of the Convention on the Future of Europe (February 2002 – June 2003), Neil developed the legal concept of *'internal enlargement'*, whereby the component parts of an existing member state would become member states in their own right on achieving independence.

In his submission to the Convention in September 2002³, he made the case for *'statehood from within'* as part of his plea for clear rules and definitions. In January 2003, he made a distinction between *'regions'* that were, in reality, nations wanting member-state status and those regions content to remain within existing states⁴. In late 2003, Neil concluded that while the Draft Constitutional Treaty agreed by the European Convention did not *'unequivocally acknowledge'* the possibility of internal enlargement, its clause that EU membership shall be open to states which respect and promote European values *'opens a door to internal enlargement'*⁵. The Lisbon Treaty, of course, replaced the Constitutional Treaty. This research is based on that.

In 2010, the Fundacio Josep Irla initiated an analysis of the legal and political consequences for the EU on the secession or dissolution of a member state⁶. Their study concluded that a legal basis does exist in Article 48 to set out

³ Neil MacCormick (2002) *Democracy at all levels: European Constitutional Reform* (CONV 298/02)

⁴ Neil MacCormick (2003) *Stateless Nations and the Convention's Debate on Regions* (CONV 525/03)

⁵ Neil MacCormick (2003) *The European Constitutional Convention and the Stateless Nations: International Relations 2004*; 18; 331 on behalf of the David Davies Memorial Institute for International Studies

⁶ Jordi Matas, Alfonso Gonzalez, Jordi Jaria & Laura Roman (2nd edition, 2011) *The Internal Enlargement of the European Union: Centre Maurits Coppieters*

Rwy'n ddiolchgar iawn i Centre Maurits Coppieters am gytuno i gais y Sefydliad Cenedlaetholdeb Cymreig nid yn unig i gyhoeddi ond hefyd i gomisiynu ymchwil gymharol bellach gan Matthew Bumford, y gwelir deiliant hwnnw yma. Mae wedi gwneud cyfiawnder mawr â'r pwnc, gan gymryd y golwg ehangach oedd ei angen ac yn dadlau'r achos dros statws aelod-wladwriaeth ar gyfer nifer o ddarpar genhedloedd gyda thystiolaeth ac eglurebau cymhellgar. Mae Matthew nawr yn ymchwilydd yn fy swyddfa genedlaethol.

Mae'r modd y byddai Cymru a'r lleill yn dod yn Aelod Wladwriaethau o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd wedi ei amlinellu yn y 'map taith' oedd yn waith ysbrydoledig y diweddar Athro Syr Neil MacCormick ASE o Blaid Genedlaethol yr Alban. Yn ei swyddogaeth fel aelod eiledol o'r Confensiwn ar Ddyfodol Ewrop (Chwefror 2002 - Mehefin 2003), datblygodd Neil gysyniad cyfreithiol *'helaethiad mewnl'*, lle byddai rhannau cydrannol aelod wladwriaeth sy'n bodoli ar hyn o bryd yn dod yn aelod wladwriaethau eu hunain ar gyflawni annibyniaeth.

Yn ei gyflwyniad i'r Confensiwn ym mis Medi 2002³, fe wnaeth y ddadl o blaid 'dod yn wladwriaeth o du fewn' fel rhan o'i grid am reolau a diffiniadau clir. Ym mis Ionawr 2003, gwahaniaethodd rhwng 'rhanbarthau' oedd mewn gwirionedd, yn genhedloedd sydd yn dymuno cael statws aelod wladwriaeth a'r rhanbarthau hynny oedd yn hapus i aros o fewn y gwladwriaethau sydd yn bodoli ar hyn bryd⁴. Daeth Neil i'r casgliad yn hwyr yn 2003, er nad oedd y Cytundeb Cyfansoddiadol a gytunwyd mewn ffurf drafft gan y Confensiwn Ewropeaidd, yn *'cydnabod yn ddiamwys'* posiblirwydd helaethiad mewnl, mae'r cymal y dylid aelodaeth o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd fod yn agored i wladwriaethau sydd yn parchu a hybu gwerthoedd Ewropeaidd 'yn agor drws i helaethiad mewnl'⁵. Cymerwyd lle'r Cytundeb Cyfansoddiadol wrth gwrs, gan Gytundeb Lisbon. Mae'r ymchwil yn seiliedig ar hwnnw.

Yn 2010, cychwynnodd y Fundacio Josep Irla ddadansoddiad o'r canlyniadau cyfreithiol a gwleidyddol ar gyfer yr Undeb Ewropeaidd yn dilyn ymwaha-

³ Neil MacCormick (2002) *Democracy at all levels: European Constitutional Reform* (CONV 298/02)

⁴ Neil MacCormick (2003) *Stateless Nations and the Convention's Debate on Regions* (CONV 525/03)

⁵ Neil MacCormick (2003) *The European Constitutional Convention and the Stateless Nations: International Relations 2004*; 18; 331 ar ran Sefydliad Coffa David Davies dros Astudiaethau Rhyngwladol

a procedure for internal enlargement. So by working together in solidarity, those nations seeking 'independence in Europe' can assist one another to achieve their common aim.

In parallel with the debate on internal enlargement are the moves towards greater fiscal autonomy within many member states. This was the subject of a comparative study in September 2010 by the Centre Maurits Coppieters. Their findings, *A European Perspective on Tax Autonomy, Self-Reliance & Regional Economic Performance*⁷, are part of a growing body of academic work forming the intellectual architecture for 'independence in Europe'. This was a political slogan first used by Eusko Alkartasuna in the 1989 elections to the European parliament. Today it is used by many EFA parties and has been the subject of major conferences at a pan-European level, the latest being *From Stateless Nations to Member States (2011)*⁸ and research publications such as *The Flotilla Effect*, which I published in 2011⁹.

As I write this Introduction it seems that change is unstoppable and that many of the EU's stateless nations will get their longed for state. There is no doubt that this will change not only our own nations, but also the whole of Europe, for the better.

Jill Evans

MEP: 1999-

First Vice President, Green/EFA Group, European Parliament: 2009-

President, European Free Alliance MEPs, European Parliament: 2009-

President, Plaid Cymru: 2010-

⁷ Centre Maurits Coppieters (2012, in preparation), *A European Perspective on Tax Autonomy, Self-Reliance & Regional Economic performance: Proceedings of the Conference held in the Aland Islands, 18th September 2010*

⁸ Green/EFA Group in the European Parliament (2012, in preparation), *From Stateless Nations to Member States: Proceedings of the Conference in the European Parliament held on 9th November 2011*

⁹ Green/EFA Group in the European Parliament (2011), *The Flotilla Effect: A Report for Jill Evans MEP by Adam Price & Ben Levinger*

niad neu ddiddymiad aelod wladwriaeth⁶. Daeth eu hastudiaeth i'r casgliad fod yna sail gyfreithiol yn bodoli yn Erthygl 48 i amlinellu gweithdrefn ar gyfer helaethiad mewnol. Felly drwy weithio gyda'n gilydd mewn undod, gall y cenedloedd hynny sydd yn ceisio am 'annibyniaeth yn Ewrop' fod o gymorth i'w gilydd i geisio cyflawni eu nod cyffredin.

Yn gyfochrog â'r ddadl ar helaethiad mewnol mae'r symudiadau tuag at ymreolaeth ariannol bellach o fewn nifer o aelod wladwriaethau. Dyma oedd testun astudiaeth gymharol ym mis Medi 2010 gan y Centre Maurits Coppieters. Mae eu canfyddiadau, *Persbectif Ewropeidd ar Ymreolaeth Treth, Hunandibyniaeth & Pherfformiad Economaidd Rhanbarthol (A European Perspective on Tax Autonomy, Self-Reliance & Regional Economic Performance)*⁷, yn rhan o gorff o waith academaidd sy'n parhau i dyfu ac sy'n ffurfio'r bensaerniaeth ddeallusol ar gyfer 'annibyniaeth yn Ewrop'. Arwyddair gwleidyddol oedd hwn a ddefnyddiwyd yn gyntaf gan Eusko Alkartasuna yn etholiadau 1989 i Senedd Ewrop. Fe'i defnyddir heddiw gan nifer o bleidiau EFA a bu'n destun prif gynadleddau ar lefel Ewrop gyfan, gyda'r diweddaraf, *O Genhedloedd heb wladwriaeth i Aelod Wladwriaethau (2011)*⁸ a chyhoeddiadau ymchwil fel *Effaith y Llynges*, a gyhoeddais yn 2011⁹.

Wrth i fi ysgrifennu'r cyflwyniad yma, ymddengys nad oes modd atal newid a bydd nifer o genhedloedd di-wladwriaeth yr Undeb Ewropeidd yn cael eu gwladwriaeth hir-ddisgwyliedig yn y pen draw. Does dim amheuaeth y bydd hyn yn newid Ewrop gyfan, yn ogystal â'n cenedloedd ein hunain, er gwell.

Jill Evans

ASE: 1999-

Is-Lywydd Cyntaf, Grŵp Gwyrdd/EFA, Senedd Ewrop: 2009-

Llywydd, ASEau Cynghrair Rydd Ewrop, Senedd Ewrop: 2009-

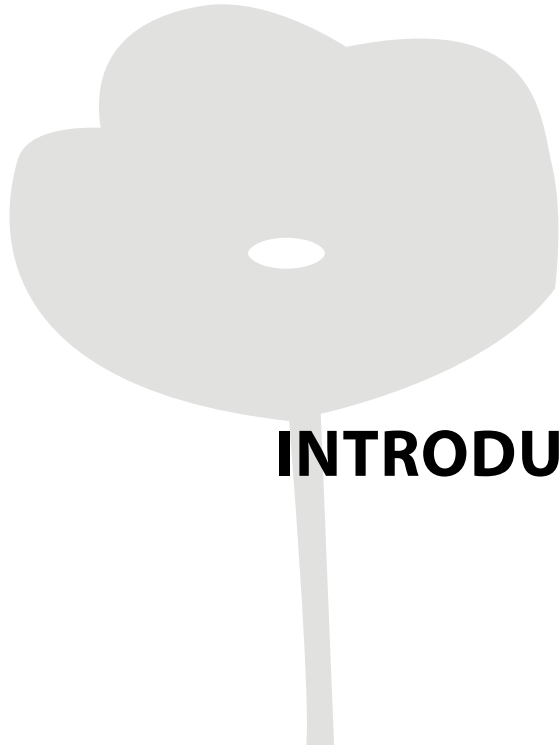
Llywydd, Plaid Cymru: 2010-

⁶ Jordi Matas, Alfonso Gonzalez, Jordi Jaria & Laura Roman (2il argraffiad, 2011) *The Internal Enlargement of the European Union: Centre Maurits Coppieters*

⁷ Centre Maurits Coppieters (2012, yn cael ei baratoi), *A European Perspective on Tax Autonomy, Self-Reliance & Regional Economic performance: Proceedings of the Conference held in the Aland Islands, 18th September 2010*

⁸ Grŵp y Gwyrddion/EFA yn Senedd Ewrop (2012, yn cael ei baratoi), *From Stateless Nations to Member States: Proceedings of the Conference in the European Parliament held on 9th November 2011*

⁹ Grŵp y Gwyrddion/EFA yn Senedd Ewrop (2011), *Effaith y Llynges: Adroddiad ar gyfer Jill Evans ASE gan Adam Price & Ben Levinger*



INTRODUCTION

Many people will empathise with Antoine, the main protagonist in Sartre's seminal work *Nausea*. What once felt normal and mundane can start to feel distinctly unusual. Existentially, our surroundings can start to appear differently to us and our perception changes. This can take place not only in the individual but also collectively; and collectively people's perceptions of Europe appear to be changing.

The nation states of old are already losing sway to forces such as globalisation but, in antithesis to this, Europe is becoming more hyper-local, with a new emphasis on cultures that we now realise that we must not lose. These conditions have led to a new drive to reinstate the historic nations of Europe, who had lost their ability to express themselves and to make decisions for themselves. Hence, the British are ever more strongly becoming the Welsh, the Scottish, the English and the Irish; the Belgians are increasingly the Flemish and Walloons, the Spaniard is replaced by the Basque, the Catalan and the Galician, and yet all within the wider concept of being European.

I am not for one moment suggesting that such developments are the result of an existentialist crisis, they are instead part of a growing trend towards self-determination that is taking place globally; a trend that means that there are now 193 members of the United Nations, when twenty years ago there were only 159; a trend that has seen oppressors in the Middle East overthrown in the name of democracy; and a trend that means that in 2014 the Scottish people will be presented with a referendum on independence from the United Kingdom (UK).

In fact, if we look at current developments around Europe we see that in the United Kingdom the Scottish National Party (SNP) now governs with a majority in a political system that was designed to ensure coalitions, Sinn Féin is again part of the unity government that operates in Northern Ireland and Plaid Cymru has just completed a four year term in coalition government in the National Assembly for Wales, where it delivered full law-making powers via a referendum that produced an overwhelming majority.

In France autonomists have managed to form a successful electoral alliance with Greens through Europe Écologie, whilst in Spain parties seeking independence continue to find success at the ballot box, with unofficial referendums demonstrating a persistent enthusiasm for Catalan independence (Tremlett, 2011). Perhaps most notably in Europe, Belgium broke the world record for the longest time without having formed a government after the Belgian federal election of June 2010, a record previously held by post-war Iraq of 248 days. It would seem that the Walloons and Flemings are simply no longer able to agree on a programme of government for Belgium, in contrast to their ability to govern in their respective parliaments in Wallonia and Flanders.

The pressure for increased representation from the historic, but stateless, nations of Europe had been growing throughout the 20th Century, especially in the more centralised European countries of Spain, France,

'A little while ago, just as I was coming into my room, I stopped short because I felt in my hand a cold object which held my attention through a sort of personality. I opened my hand, looked: I was simply holding the door knob'.

Jean Paul Sartre

the United Kingdom and Belgium. As a result of this pressure by the turn of the 21st Century the United Kingdom and Spain had established sub-state governments for the historic nations within their territories whilst Belgium had become a federal state. With these developments in mind, in 1995 George Robertson, the then Shadow Scottish Secretary declared that devolution would kill nationalism '*stone dead*' (Robertson, 1995). By this he meant that the offer and delivery of sub-state government would appease those calling for independence and put an end to such calls. This has not proved to be the case.

Perhaps more astutely in 1999 the former Shadow Welsh Secretary Ron Davies declared that '*devolution is a process... not an event*' (Davies, 1999). This assessment has proved the more accurate as historic nations throughout Europe that have gained increased autonomy have subsequently looked to continue that process, with the end goal for many being full membership of the EU and the United Nations. The concept of 'independence in Europe' was thus given institutional form.

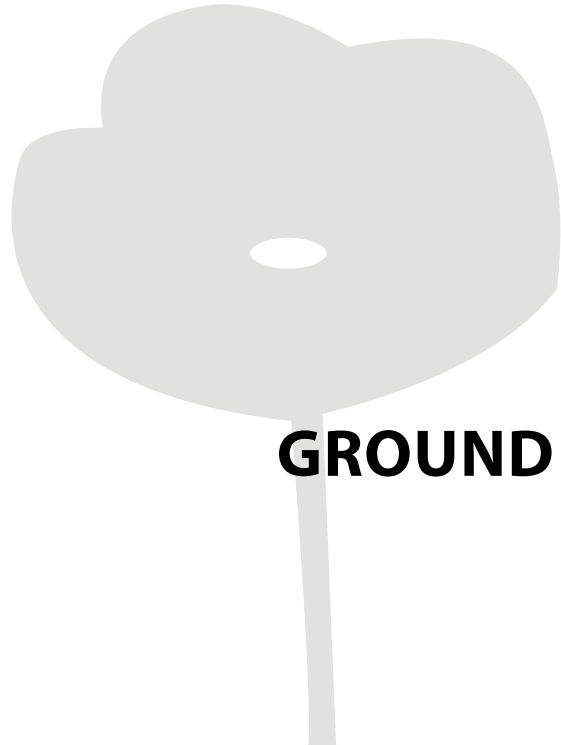
Based on these developments I would argue that one thing is clear; if current trends continue then we will start to witness stateless nations within the EU seceding from current member states - an occurrence for which the EU seems ill prepared. There is simply no precedent for this possibility, with the withdrawal of Greenland from the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1985 the only example of a region of a member state seceding from what is now the EU, although not from the member state of Denmark. But what is intriguing about the autonomist movements within the EU of today is that what they look to achieve is precisely the opposite of that achieved by Greenland, i.e. secession from the member state whilst maintaining membership of the EU.

This possibility is not one that is welcomed by the EU, with lines in the sand already starting to be drawn. In fact, the current President of the European Council, Hermann van Rompuy (2011), has declared that separatism does not make the Union stronger and that it is not '*the best idea for Europe*'. He has even gone so far as to declare that he knows of '*no pro-European nationalist party in Europe*' (van Rompuy, 2010). This seems completely contrary to studies such as those by Seth Jolly (2007), which finds that '*regionalist*' political parties are amongst the most pro-European, and consistently more so than parties of the conservative right that presently dominate European politics.

It is easy to see how '*separatist*' parties may seem hostile to the EU because, put quite simply, this is the position that many of them previously held. But autonomist parties no longer view the EU as an institution that removes sovereignty and dilutes the possibility for independence but as an institution that can in fact facilitate it. It is in this climate that, as Jill Evans MEP (2010) notes, '*internal enlargement is all about opting in, not opting out of the EU*'. This is confirmed by Jolly(2007) who observes that a '*supranational organization and subnational autonomy movements may seem odd bedfellows, but instrumentally their interests align*'.

It is exploring these interests that is the purpose of this report. In the words that follow we will assess the advantages that being a small member state in the EU can bring vis-à-vis being a sub-state government, or to put it another way, to ask the question '*is it better to be a small, independent member state, or a small, dependent region that is part of a larger member state?*' We will explore this question not through looking at economic advantages, as these have been covered elsewhere¹⁰, but instead through the incentives that the institutions of the European Union offer to full members; and by incentives I mean the power, influence and maximum representation that is afforded to full members. But first we must establish some ground rules.

¹⁰ For a thorough examination of the economic advantages of being a small state in the EU see A. Price & B. Levinger (2011), '*The Flotilla Effect: Europe's small economies through the eye of the storm*', published by Jill Evans MEP and available here: www.english.plaidcymru.org/flotilla/?force=1



GROUND RULES

When discussing independence in Europe nothing is simple. This stems from three main issues; the first being that hostility towards autonomist movements means that language is often loaded in a way so as to discredit such movements. It is for this reason that I will be referring to them as either autonomist movements or movements for self-determination in this document. The word nationalism may sometimes be too controversial a term, even though it accurately describes those movements insofar as what they seek is the fullest possible expression of their nationhood. The word independence can also engender arguments about what that constitutes in the current globalised world context.

It is for this reason that I will also be using the term '*sub-state government*' to describe those devolved governments in the EU that are at a lower level than the central governments of the member states. The term '*region*' is insufficient in that it implies something less than a nation, whilst the often used term '*subnational government*' is deficient in that it gives the impression of the government of part of a nation, when we may be dealing

with the governments of nations in their own right. Hence, the Welsh and Scottish Governments are the governments of the Welsh and Scottish nations respectively, although they are sub-state to the centralised state of the United Kingdom.

The second principal confusion when discussing independence is who to include. There are many movements seeking self-determination or greater levels of autonomy in Europe and it is not possible to deal with them all here. Furthermore, in the interests of sound analysis it is necessary to avoid too much speculation. It is for this reason that I have chosen to analyse nations with sub-state governments that are already in existence with autonomist movements that have had electoral success within those governments. This means the analysis will focus on Spain, Belgium and the UK and hence the sub-state governments within those member states of the Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, Flanders, Scotland and Wales.

A further problem arises stemming from these decisions in that full membership of the EU for these sub-state governments would leave behind rump-territories, which does require some speculation as to what these territories may be called or look like. Therefore, in the analysis, with the dissolution of the UK I have assumed that England and Northern Ireland emerge as separate entities.

This is very unlikely given that the debate in Northern Ireland is on whether to be a part of the Republic of Ireland or the United Kingdom, not full autonomy. Therefore, the likelihood is that if Wales and Scotland gained autonomy without Irish unification taking place first then Northern Ireland would in fact then be absorbed into the existing full member state of Ireland or that England and Northern Ireland would emerge as a single member state. Nonetheless, since Northern Ireland already has a long-established sub-state government I have chosen to include it within the analysis as a separate entity for comparison's sake, whilst it is possible to analyse England, in spite of its lack of sub-state government, as the remainder of what is left of the UK when Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are taken away.

With regards to Belgium I have decided to include the German speaking region in the south-east as part of Wallonia because it borders Wallonia and would not become a part of an independent Flanders. This explains why in my analysis Wallonia is deemed to currently elect nine MEPs when in fact it elects eight, with the German speaking region of Belgium electing one.

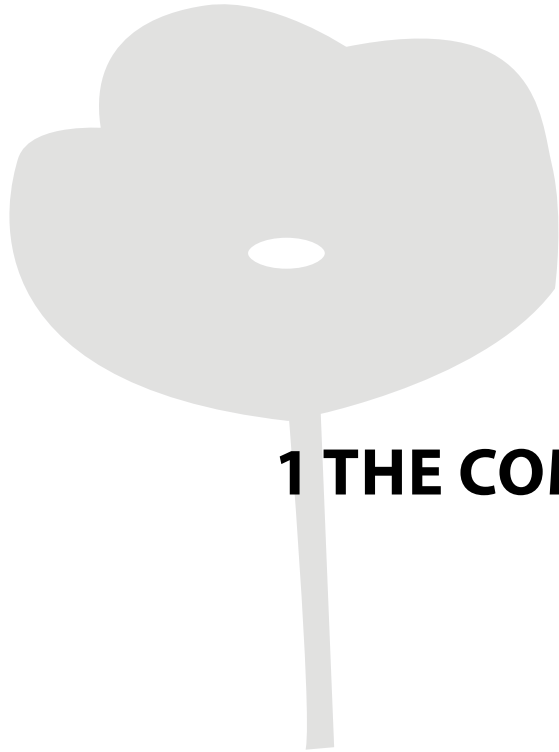
Finally, for Spain, deciding what constitutes the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia proves very difficult because the historic areas of Catalonia and the Basque Country, as well as the Catalan and Basque languages, spread across several of the autonomous communities of Spain as well as southern France, which leads to the third confusion over what borders to use for the nations being analysed. Given that there are no agreed borders for these nations I have chosen to again focus on Spain's sub-state governments. This means that Catalonia will be considered as the Autonomous Community of Catalonia alone, which represents the minimum amount of territory that would comprise a future Catalan state. As for the Basque Country I have included both the Basque Autonomous Community as well as Navarre. This is because in combination both autonomous communities roughly comprise what is generally regarded as the Basque Country, with Basque an official language in both communities along with a more significant degree of devolution to the sub-state governments of both communities than is found in the majority of Spain's devolved regions. The area left when you have taken away the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia I have decided to call Rest of Spain. This is purely to avoid the confusion that would be caused by continuing to call this area Spain during the analysis, even though this may well be its name in the event of the secession of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia.

Spain poses further problems for analysis because of its electoral method for European elections. Rather than being divided into smaller areas that correspond to the nations within Spain, such as happens in the UK and Belgium, for Spanish elections the country is considered one constituency. This means it is impossible to predict the number of Catalan, Basque and Galician MEPs with certainty, unlike the other areas being analysed. Nonetheless, some research has been carried out on this topic and so I will be using the dataset provided by the Centre Maurits Coppieters (2011) on the number of Basque, Catalan and Galician MEPs.

With regards to the institutions of the EU there are currently seven but only three of them have law-making powers and so it is these that I have chosen to focus on. It may well be that the other institutions can provide advantages for small, full members of the EU but for the purposes of this report I will be focussing on those institutions that constitute the principle triangle of law-making in the EU; namely, the Commission, the Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

The last issue to address, and perhaps the most important, is defining what constitutes a small state. With regards to the European Union a small state is generally considered to be those with a population of less than 15 million.¹¹ A second indicator used is to include those countries with a lower vote than the average in the Council of the EU, which is 12.78. Conveniently, this method again results in the same countries being defined as small i.e. the 19 member states of the EU with a population of less than 15 million. It should also be noted that the term '*small*' should in no way be interpreted as a judgement on the abilities or viability of those countries with a population of less than 15 million. It has no relation to the economic merit of smaller countries and is purely a numerical indicator based on population.

¹¹ See, for example, D. Salvatore. (2000). *Defining Country Size in Small countries in a global economy: new challenges and opportunities*. Ed. D. Salvatore, M. Svetlicic and J. P. Damijan. Basingstoke: Palgrave. All populations used are for 2009, the year of the last Parliament election.



1 THE COMMISSION

With our ground rules established we will now begin to analyse the institutional advantages to small nations that full membership of the EU affords. We will start this analysis with the European Commission because this is the place where European legislation also starts its journey.

WHAT IS THE COMMISSION?

The Commission itself was formed in 1951 as the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and after successive treaties it has become a supranational institution with a monopoly of the executive powers of the EU. This means that the Commission has exclusive powers to propose legislation through the '*right of initiative*'. Legislation must then be agreed by the Council and the Parliament through the ordinary legislative procedure.¹²

¹² Also known as the co-decision procedure.

COMPOSITION AND DECISION MAKING

The Commission is in essence, although not in name, the government of the EU and is comprised of 27 Commissioners who make up the College of Commissioners. This means there is one Commissioner for every member state. The members of the College are each appointed by their member state, usually from the governing party in the member state at the time of the appointment. One of the Commissioners is the Commission President, who is appointed by the Council through a qualified vote. That person, in coordination with the Council, must then assign each Commissioner to particular departments, or Directorates-General (DGs) as they are known. The Commission as a whole is then either accepted or rejected by the European Parliament. As a result of the Lisbon Treaty one of the Commissioners is also appointed to the post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy as well as being the Vice President of the Commission.

The Commissioners are aided by 25,000 employees that make up the civil service of the Commission as well as the Court of Justice of the European Union that aids the Commission in its role as guardian of the treaties.

The Commission must meet on a weekly basis, which takes place on Wednesdays in Brussels and Tuesdays during plenary in Strasbourg. These meetings are part of the '*oral procedure*' through which the Commission makes its decisions. However, most decisions are made through a written procedure, whereby the Commission's departments distribute drafts of proposed new laws, without physically meeting. If fourteen of the twenty-seven Commissioners - i.e. a simple majority - agree then the draft is sent to Council and Parliament for approval through the ordinary legislative procedure.

SMALL STATE ADVANTAGE?

The main question when exploring the Commission is the even-handedness of the Commissioners. We need to look at whether member states can influence their Commissioner because if they can then clearly there are incentives for sub-state governments to have their own Commissioner rather than their larger member state Commissioner. A second question is how easily sub-state governments are able to influence their larger member state government, which is addressed in Section 3, on the Council of the EU.

The first issue to note is that the Commission is not mandated to represent the interests of the member states, and hence, even though there is one Commissioner from each member state the Commissioners are not intended to represent their own member state. The Commission is instead intended to represent the interests of the Union and to work towards advancing what is good for the Union as a whole. Were this to be the case then the need for having an individual Commissioner from every member state would be diminished; and it is notable that the pre-Lisbon, Constitutional Treaty, which was rejected by French and Dutch voters in 2005 and subsequently abandoned, did aim to take away this provision to avoid the College of Commissioners growing too large as a result of EU enlargement.

The Lisbon Treaty also made this attempt before it was rejected in 2008 by the Irish after a national referendum, one of the reasons being the Irish electorate's opposition to losing its Commissioner (EU Observer, 2008). Hence, a concession was made to the Irish that maintained one Commissioner for every member state, amongst other concessions, and a second referendum was then passed in 2009.

With future enlargement the College is, therefore, set to grow even larger. There are currently five official candidate countries of the EU and four potential candidates, meaning the College of Commissioners could, in the near future, rise to as many as thirty-six, even without internal enlargement from current member states.

COMMISSIONER EVEN-HANDEDNESS?

Given that maintaining their own Commissioner was of such importance to the Irish the question of whether Commissioners are neutral to their own member states and only working for the Union is debateable and a question that we will now explore. Commissioners are appointed, not elected, and in some cases have never held any elected office. The fact that they are appointed directly by the governments of the member states means that Commissioners cannot be entirely free of the wishes of their member states.

History shows that Commissioners are, more often than not, members of the governing political party that makes the appointment, with smaller member states more likely to send Commissioners from the governing party than larger member states (Döring, 2007). It should be noted, however,

that for many years larger states were able to appoint two Commissioners each, meaning they could appoint an opposition as well as a governing Commissioner, whilst smaller member states could not.

Through this use of appointments commentators such as Pollack (2003) have claimed that member states can effectively monitor the Commission and influence its decision making. Such a scenario seems even more probable when one also considers that Commissioners rely on their home government for reappointment and often pursue a career in domestic politics after leaving the Commission. This argument has also been advanced in a study on Commissioner appointments by Wonka (2004) who concluded that member states can exert control over the Commission by appointing loyal party members. Hence, the appointment of Commissioners by member states would make it unlikely that Commissioners would be willing to diverge greatly from the wishes of their member state and domestic political party, even if it was for the good of the Union.

Döring (2007) has also found that the Commission is becoming more politicised as Commissioners have begun to be appointed from more political backgrounds, rather than public service backgrounds, whilst also coming from increasingly important political backgrounds, such as government ministries. Interestingly, smaller states were again more likely to send a higher profile delegate to the Commission compared to larger states. This is possibly because, as Thorhallsson (2000) notes, smaller member states have a more limited institutional capacity than larger states and hence rely more on the Commission to get their proposals through the Council than larger member states.

Egeberg (2006), meanwhile has also argued that a Commissioner's party and country role do effect the Commissioners' decision making process, although they are not necessarily the most important factors, whilst Liesbet's (2001) ground-breaking work has shown that Commissioners are influenced by their party affiliation and the position of their member state within EU, although again these are not necessarily the most important factors.

THE FUTURE

It is true that after the Irish rejected the first Lisbon Treaty in 2008, they were then given promises that each member state would be allocated one

commissioner each. However, groups in Ireland opposed to ratifying the treaty noted that these promises were worthless because they were not written into the treaty itself (BBC, 2009). In fact, Article 9d, point 5, of the ratified treaty still reads:

As from 1 November 2014, the Commission shall consist of a number of members, including its President and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, corresponding to two thirds of the number of Member States, unless the European Council, acting unanimously, decides to alter this number (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007).

This means that unless every member state of the EU agrees by November 2014 that there should continue to be one Commissioner for every member state, there will in fact only be Commissioners from two thirds of the member states as of that date. This further means that each member state will only have a Commissioner for two thirds of the time.

Attempts have also been made by Welsh Plaid Cymru MEP Jill Evans and Scottish SNP MEP Alyn Smith (2009) to change the nomination of Commissioners within the UK. Their proposed changes would mean that the UK Government's suggested Commissioner would come before committees of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies in order to assess their intentions and suitability before taking the appointment. There were also suggestions that Commissioners should rotate during the five year term between an English, Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh appointee. Both proposals were rejected by the UK Government on the basis that this would give the implication that the Commissioners were receiving instructions from the various elected governments of the UK.

OUTCOMES

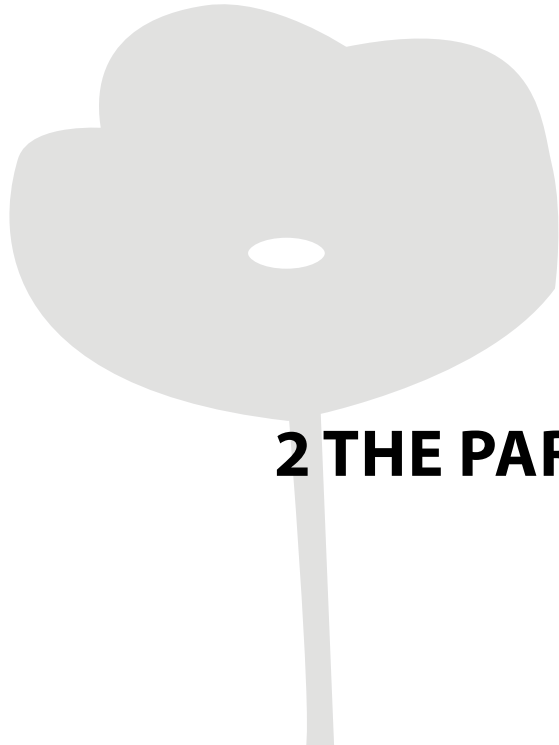
We see, therefore, that the Commission is becoming increasingly politicised as a result of the higher number of Commissioners from high-profile, political backgrounds, that those Commissioners are, for the most part, affiliated to the governing party of the member state that appointed them, and that the Commissioner's political party affiliation does effect his or her decision making within the Commission through member states' use of appointments.

Such a scenario is likely to disadvantage sub-state governments and particularly parties seeking autonomy, as Commissioners are highly likely to come from parties that are opposed to autonomy movements. The stark reality is that every Commissioner who has sat on the two Barosso Commissions has come from a party that is opposed to full independence for sub-state governments in their own territories.¹³ Autonomist parties may, therefore, struggle to influence the decision making process of a Commissioner, compared to those from the same party as the Commissioner.

Hence, whilst the Commission is intended to be a supranational institution that works for the Union as a whole, not the member states from where Commissioners have come, through the use of appointments the dominant parties of a member state are able to subtly influence the decision making process of a Commissioner.

Nonetheless, research still shows that smaller member states find it easier to get their proposals passed when they are dealing with the Commission and that having the support of the Commission increases the likelihood of proposals being adopted. Furthermore, as it stands full membership still entitles all EU members to appoint one's own Commissioner, even though this is likely to change in 2014. The College may then be reduced to two-thirds of the number of member states but even if this proves to be the case, with a Commission that has a monopoly over EU executive powers it is clearly in the interests of sub-state governments to have one of their representatives in the Commission for at least two-thirds of the time, rather than relying on the neutrality of Commissioners that are appointed by, and members of, anti-autonomy political parties all of the time.

¹³ Irish and Cypriot Commissioners typically come from parties that are in favour of the unification of Ireland and Cyprus respectively, although this would not increase the number of member states of the EU.



2 THE PARLIAMENT

We move now to look at the advantages of being a full member in the European Parliament because under the ordinary legislative procedure this is the first port of call for a draft law after proposal by the Commission.

WHAT IS THE PARLIAMENT?

If the Commission is the Executive of the EU and the Council the representative of the member states then the Parliament can be considered as the representative of the citizens. As the only directly elected institution of the EU it is also the only institution to have a direct mandate from the people of Europe.

From its beginnings in 1952 as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the Parliament became directly elected in 1979 and has, through successive treaties, built up more and more power and influence.

Today the Parliament is composed of 754 members but is set to be reduced to 751 under the terms of the Lisbon Treaty. One of those MEPs is elected by the other MEPs to become the Parliament's President for terms of two and a half years. The MEPs have also positioned themselves into seven political groupings along with a small minority with no political grouping who are known as non-inscrits.

As a result of the Lisbon Treaty the MEPs now legislate through the ordinary legislative procedure in almost all areas of the EU, including the entire EU budget of €129 billion in 2012. This means that after proposal by the Commission, legislation goes first to the Parliament to be approved or amended before moving to the Council, with approval needed from both institutions before legislation can proceed. The ability to block and make amendments to almost all legislation, and especially the budget, means that the Parliament is now a powerful institution within the EU and is thus able to have a very direct influence on the legislative process.

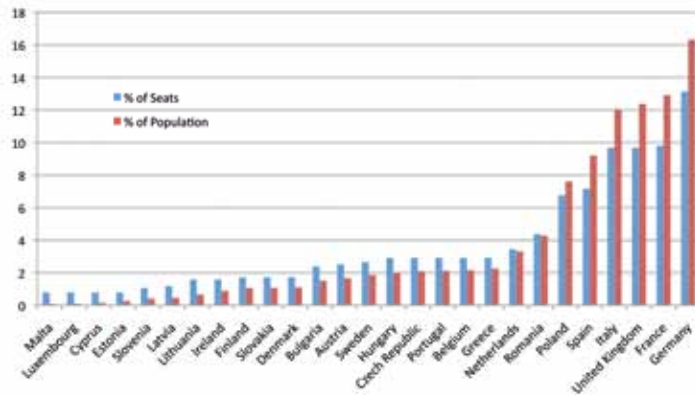
The Parliament's power to elect the Commission President and to approve his or her proposed Commission means that the Parliament also has the potential to wield a significant degree of influence over the composition of the executive of the EU, were it prepared to use this power.

SMALL STATE ADVANTAGE?

It is evident that as a directly elected and increasingly powerful institution, that usually makes decisions based on simple majorities, it is in the interests of the member states to gain as many MEPs as possible. The opportunity to increase this representation takes place during the horse-trading that goes on before signing any new treaty, although with certain caveats.

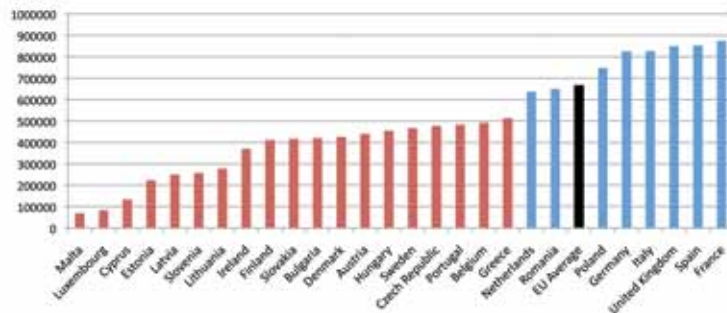
After the Lisbon Treaty there is now a minimum number of MEPs per member state set at six and a maximum set at ninety-nine. The EU also uses a system of degressive proportionality that means the smaller member states are over-represented in comparison to larger states. This can be seen in Figure 1 below whereby the larger, existing member states have a poorer ratio between their populations within the EU in comparison to the percentage of seats they hold in the Parliament.

Figure 1: Member states' percentage of population and percentage of seats



In Figure 2 below we see the number of constituents that each MEP represents (shown in blue for larger states - those over 15 million - and red for smaller member states, with the EU average of 667,457 constituents per MEP shown in black).

Figure 2: The average number of inhabitants represented by each MEP



It is evident from Figure 2 that constituents in smaller member states are better represented than their larger counterparts with, at their extremes, Maltese MEPs representing an average of just 69,389 constituents compared to 874,452 per French MEP. This is done deliberately to ensure that smaller member states retain a degree of influence in the Parliament. The result is that on average French MEPs represent more than twelve times the number of constituents compared to each Maltese MEP. Clearly this has an impact on democracy, with MEPs from larger member states representing so many more constituents in comparison to smaller ones.

It should be noted, however, that this is not a perfect representation since there is no set electoral method for EU elections. Member states do not have uniform divisions within each country and the result is that whereas French MEPs, for example, are representing one of eight smaller electoral constituencies, Spanish MEPs are technically each representing the entire population of Spain because there are no electoral divisions in Spain. Nonetheless, Figure 2 shows that on average the ratio between the number of inhabitants in a member state and the number of MEPs they are then allocated gives constituents in smaller member states a much more desirable level of representation than their larger counterparts.

However, this does not hold true for sub-state governments that have populations less than 15 million, which would thus designate them as a small member state. This can be seen below in Figure 3, where the principal sub-state governments from emerging member states are shown in green.

Figure 3: The average number of inhabitants represented by each MEP, including sub-state governments

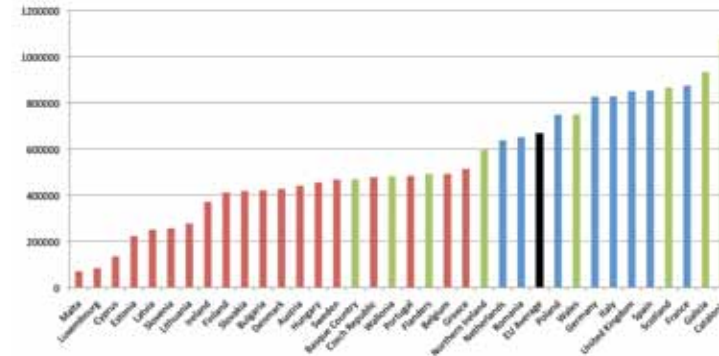


Figure 3 clearly shows that sub-state governments suffer from a poor level of representation compared to independent smaller states. In fact, three out of the four worst represented areas are now sub-state governments, with only the Basque country and Flanders emerging as countries with reasonable numbers of MEPs in relation to their population, although still with less than would be expected as member states. Catalonia meanwhile, with a population of over 7 million, finds itself with only 7 MEPs, meaning each MEP represents an average of over 1 million constituents. This makes Catalonia by far the worst represented sub-state government being examined.

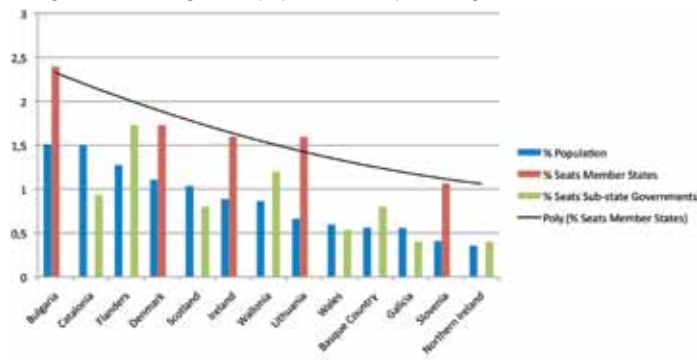
Galicia and Scotland do not fare much better, whilst Wales, Northern Ireland and Wallonia are currently left with low levels of representation in relation to their population.

Interestingly, if we were to add the representation levels of England and Rest of Spain we find that England has a worse representation level than the sub-state governments in the UK.¹⁴ So whilst Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are very poorly represented in comparable full members of the EU they get a reasonable share of the MEPs available to the UK. This suggests that a redistribution of the MEPs of the UK would not be possible. Instead, full membership seems the only available avenue to bring the representation level of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in line with the full members of the EU.

This is not the case for Spain however, where the The Rest of Spain enjoys a much better level of representation than either Galicia or Catalonia. There is, therefore, a strong case to be made for reform of the electoral system in Spain to more fairly distribute seats, regardless of whether the sub-state governments of Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country become full members of the EU.

The disparity between full members and sub-state governments can be further seen in Figure 4, where the overall percentage of EU population and percentage of seats of similar sized member states and sub-state governments are seen next to each other, with a trendline showing the percentage of seats of the full members. Member states are shown in red, sub-state governments in green and their populations in blue.

Figure 4: Percentage of EU population and percentage of seats in Parliament

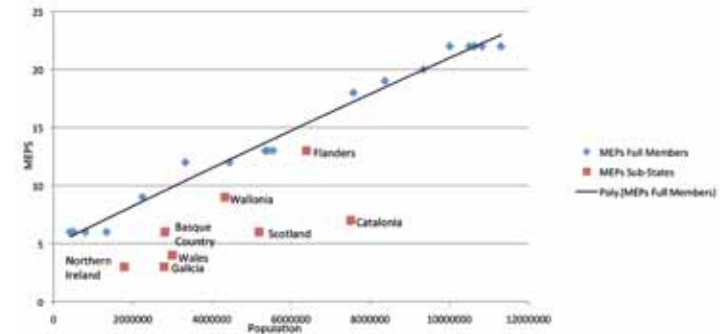


¹⁴ Full details can be found in Appendix 1

It is again evident that the percentage of seats that sub-state governments receive in comparison to full members puts them at a disadvantage. In Figure 4 one would hope to see the green bars coming close to the trend-line. Instead only Flanders and Wallonia come anywhere near to the trend-line, which is because these sub-state governments come from the small state of Belgium, rather than the larger states of Spain and the UK. So whilst Bulgaria and Catalonia have almost identical populations Bulgaria has 18 MEPs whilst Catalonia has just 7. Scotland has over half a million more people than Ireland and yet has half the MEPs. Wales and Galicia meanwhile have populations more than a million higher than Slovenia and yet Slovenia has more than double the MEPs of both of them.

In Figure 5 this discrepancy is perhaps best seen as the MEPs and populations of member states are presented on a scatter graph, as well as the MEPs to population of the sub-state governments being analysed. There is an autotrend line showing the average for full members. The closer to the line the better but it is clear that most sub-state governments fall very short.

Figure 5: MEPs/Population - full members and sub-state governments



THE DISCREPANCY

We have now established that sub-state governments suffer from a poor level of representation in the Parliament in relation to full members of a similar size. We will now begin to analyse what level of representation sub-state governments could expect if they were full members of the EU. To do this we must first establish how the EU itself determines the number of MEPs per member state, which is based on a combination of population,

the over-representation of smaller member states and horse-trading. The last of these factors means that it is impossible to establish a perfect method for determining future MEPs for prospective members states. Nonetheless, it is possible to create a theoretical fit-line that arrives at a very close point to the likely outcome. This fit-line can be seen in Figure 6.

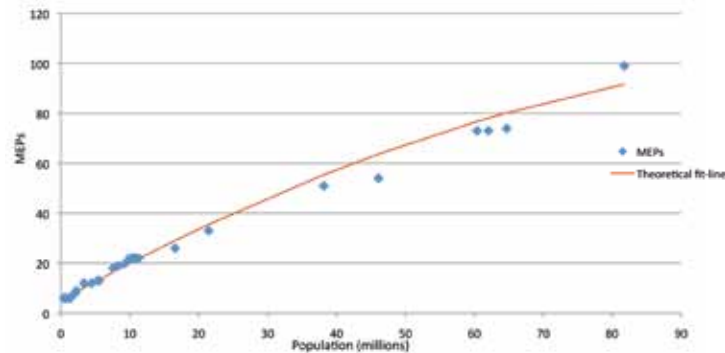
To create the fit-line one's initial instinct may be to use a linear relationship between population and seats, but this would not allow for the accepted over-representation of smaller countries within the EU. I have therefore chosen to use a 2nd-degree polynomial, with a negative coefficient for the x² term to allow for an increasing penalty on population size.

I believe that the coefficients chosen best encapsulate the current spread of data. I began with a 2nd-order polynomial best-fit line, and did little more than sanitise the coefficients. Adding in the minimum number of seats allocated per member state of 6, the maximum permitted allocation of 99 was not reached.

The equation used is: $MEPs = 5 + 1,55x - 0,006x^2$ where x is the population in millions.

The number of MEPs was then scaled down to give a total of ~754, with rounding.

Figure 6: Theoretical Fit-Line

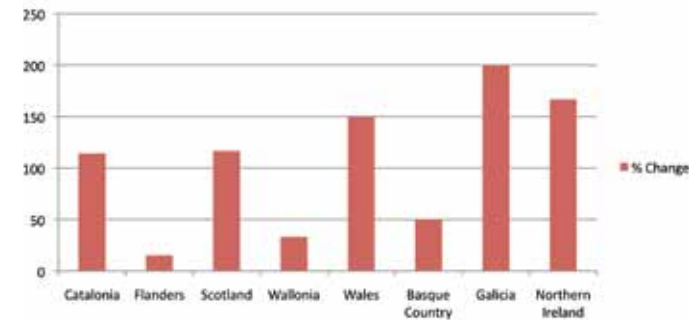


Using this method we can predict the likely number of seats a full member state would receive, based on its population. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1 and Figure 7.

Table 1: Actual and Predicted MEPs for Sub-state Governments

Country	Current MEPs	Predicted MEPs	% Change
Catalonia	7	16	114
Flanders	13	15	15
Scotland	6	13	117
Wallonia	9	12	33
Wales	4	10	150
Basque Country	6	9	50
Galicia	3	9	200
Northern Ireland	3	8	167

Figure 7: Percentage Change of MEP



In Figure 7 the percentage change in number of MEPs for sub-state governments that become full members is shown. For most sub-state governments this change is very significant, with three over 150%, and shows the level of underrepresentation that sub-state governments currently suffer from.

Nonetheless, by using this methodology questions arise because by increasing the representation for these sub-state governments we have also increased the total number of MEPs in the Parliament. It is unclear whether the EU would be willing to change the provision in the Lisbon Treaty to increase the number of MEPs by up to 41 (or 35 if you discount Northern Ireland), not least because this would require extra facilities and the added cost of these MEPs. It is more than possible, therefore, that new full member states joining the EU would result in other members states losing some MEPs - as has happened after previous enlargements. For the next section, therefore, we will use this same methodology to calculate how

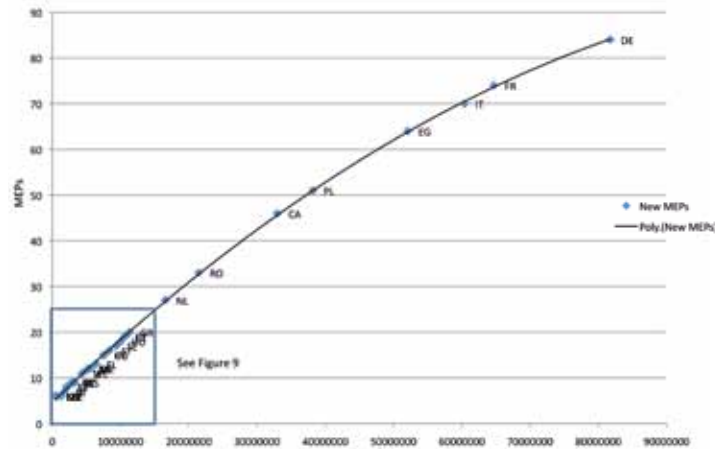
the European Parliament might look in the event of full EU membership for the sub-state governments being analysed, whilst still keeping the total number of MEPs at the current 754.

REACHING 754

As stated in the previous section the current treaties of the EU have established that there should be 754 MEPs. Any additional MEPs would incur extra cost on the EU taxpayer at a time when governments are cutting back through austerity measures. Extra MEPs would also take up more room in the Parliament and would necessitate extra office space etc. for themselves and their staff. It is, therefore, more desirable at present to take away MEPs from existing members states for new member states, rather than increasing the total numbers of MEPs.

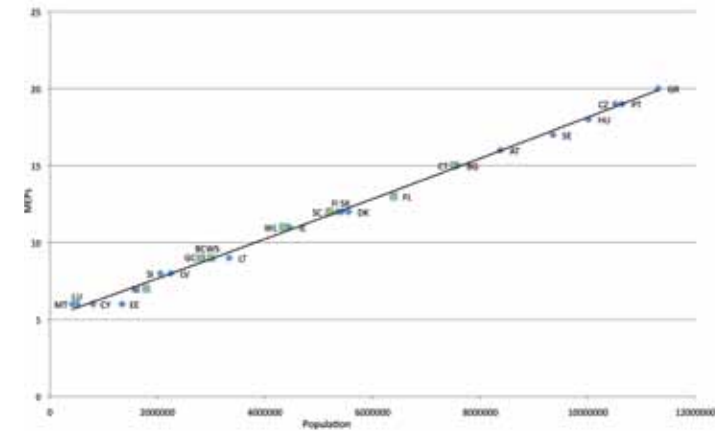
To do this it is again possible to use the theoretical fit-line that we used previously, only this time making adjustments so as to cater for other member states losing MEPs. This means we can arrive at a total number of 754. The results of this calculation can be seen in Figures 8 and 9. Figure 8 shows the result for all full and emerging members states, whilst Figure 9 shows only the smaller ones.

Figure 8: MEPs with Adjustment for Internal Enlargement (all nations)¹⁵



¹⁵ See Appendix 1 for country codes

Figure 9: MEPs with Adjustment for Internal Enlargement (smaller nations)



The change in the number of MEPs in this scenario can be seen in Table 2.¹⁶

Table 2: Predicted MEPs with 751 total

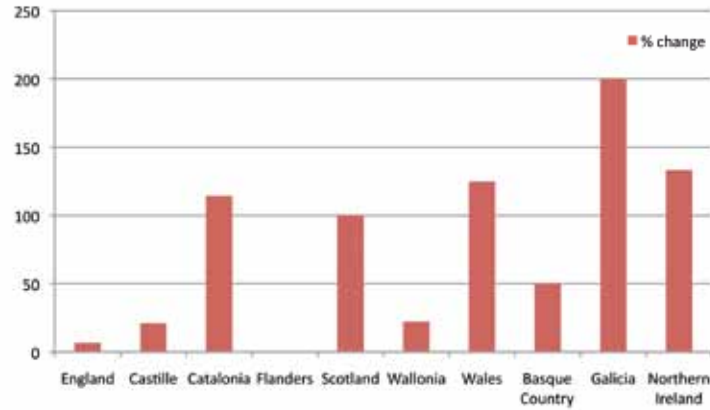
Country	Population	Current MEPs	Predicted MEPs	% Change
England	52059506	60	64	7
Rest of Spain	32961873	38	46	21
Catalonia	7512378	7	15	114
Flanders	6388239	13	13	0
Scotland	5194002	6	12	100
Wallonia	4331008	9	11	22
Wales	2999300	4	9	125
Basque Country	2815266	6	9	50
Galicia	2797653	3	9	200
Northern Ireland	1788900	3	7	133

This change can be seen more clearly in Figure 10¹⁷, where five of the sub-state governments being analysed are predicted to see at least a 100% increase in their number of MEPs. Even England and The Rest of Spain are predicted to increase their number of MEPs by benefiting from the over-representation the Parliament affords to member states of smaller size.

¹⁶ See Appendix 2 for full results

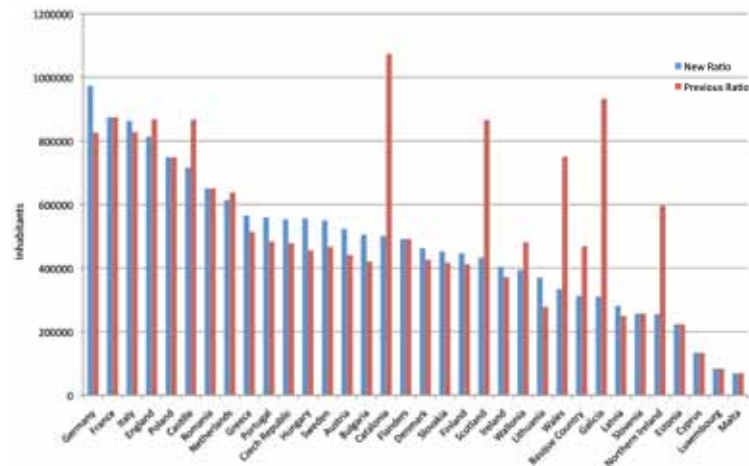
¹⁷ See Appendix 3 for full results

Figure 10: Percentage Change of MEPs



In our final analysis on the advantages of full membership, as far as democratic representation in the European Parliament is concerned, we can look to Figure 11, which shows what the average number of constituents per MEP would be following this model. We can see in Figure 11 that constituents from the sub-state governments being analysed now receive an appropriate level of representation to their size compared to their previous representation and that existing member states have seen a small drop in representation to accommodate the emerging member states.

Figure 11: Proposed Average Number of Constituents to MEPs



SUMMARY

In this section we have seen how the European Parliament has evolved to become a powerful EU institution comprised of 754 MEPs, who are the only directly elected individuals of any of the European institutions. Within the Parliament small member states are over-represented vis-à-vis their larger counterparts, but this does not hold true for sub-state governments. In fact, inhabitants from emerging member states such as Catalonia, Galicia, Scotland and Wales are some of the worst represented people numerically within the EU.

Through calculations made based on the present allocation of MEPs I have made an approximation of the number of MEPs the emerging member states would hope to gain, which suggests that most emerging member states would see a large increase in the number of MEPs they would be allocated if they became full member states of the EU.

Therefore, when considering level of representation in the Parliament and the ability to have an impact on passing legislation through it, there are clearly incentives to being a full member of the EU for emerging member states, rather than continuing to be sub-state governments within a larger member state.



3 THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

We have now covered the starting point for EU legislation with the Commission and then analysed the next port of call with the Parliament. With both institutions we have seen how the advantages of being a small, independent state are far greater than being a small, dependent region. Nonetheless, so far we have analysed an institution that works for the good of the Union i.e. the Commission, and an institution that works for the good of the citizens i.e. the Parliament. The Council of the EU, however, is the representative of the member states and it is here, therefore, that we would expect to see the biggest advantages derived from full membership of the EU.

DISCLAIMER

We must start our analysis with a disclaimer. There is an array of institutions with similar names in Europe. Firstly, the Council of Europe is an international institution that promotes co-operation between European countries but is an entirely separate institution that is not part of the European Union.

Secondly, there is the European Council, which is an EU institution. The European Council is an intergovernmental institution where the governments and heads of state of member states come together to set the general political direction and priorities of the EU. It has its own President who is nominated and selected by the member states to a two-and-a-half year term that can be renewed once. The current President is Herman van Rompuy.

The European Council does not have any powers to make laws and so it is not being considered in a separate chapter. Nonetheless, the advantages of being a small, independent member state as opposed to a small, dependent region in the European Council should be obvious. Without one's own sub-state government being represented at the European Council's quarterly meetings a sub-state government must instead rely on the government of its member state to advance its interests. Whether the UK Government, for example, genuinely advances the interests of the Welsh Government at such meetings is a conclusion I will leave to the reader.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Also known as the Council of Ministers and often shortened simply to the Council, the Council of the European Union is the institution that completes the principle triangle of institutions with power to formulate laws in the EU. In the checks and balances law making system of the EU, the Council's role is simple; to advance the interests of the member states. For this reason the Council is not comprised of elected members but instead of representatives of the 27 member state governments. These representatives are not permanent, as they are in the Commission, but instead alternate depending on the policies being discussed. Hence, when the environment is being discussed in the Council the 27 relevant member state ministers for the environment will make up what has now become the Environment Council, for agriculture the 27 agricultural ministers from the member states will make up the Agriculture Council, and so on.

The ministers are aided in their work by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER). These representatives help to prepare the meetings of the member state ministers and also coordinate the hundreds of other Council committees that are made up of civil servants from the 27 member states.

The Council itself is headed by one of the member states through a system of rotating, six-monthly presidencies.

THE POWER OF THE COUNCIL

The Council is one of the three key institutions that formulate law in the EU. After proposition from the Commission no regulation can be passed without the agreement of the Council.

Historically, the Council has been a more powerful institution than the Parliament, although this has changed through successive treaties, which have left the Council and the Parliament with an equal share of power through the ordinary legislative procedure. Nonetheless, if the Council doesn't agree legislation will not pass and as such the power of the Council in the EU legislative process is significant.

SMALL STATE ADVANTAGE?

The Council offers two main advantages to full member states compared to sub-state governments: the first of these is the ability to be part of negotiations and vote on legislation in the Council, which again over-represents smaller members in voting weight; the second advantage is the agenda setting power afforded to all full members resulting from the rotating, six-monthly Presidency of the Council that all full members enjoy.

We will now begin to analyse these advantages in more depth, starting with the voting system that the Council employs.

THE VOTING SYSTEM

At present the Council uses a voting system known as qualified majority voting. This means that for a decision to be positive it must meet two requirements. The first is that a majority of the member states vote yes (occasionally this is raised to two-thirds) and that at least 255 of the 345 votes are cast. The weight of votes for the member states is seen in Figure 12 and 13.

Figure 12: Council Votes for Large Member States

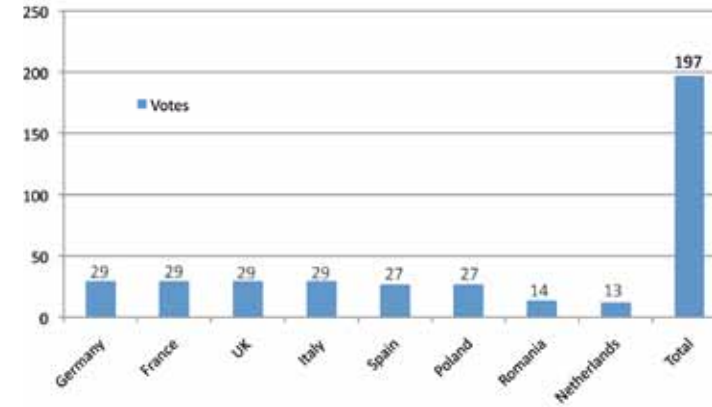
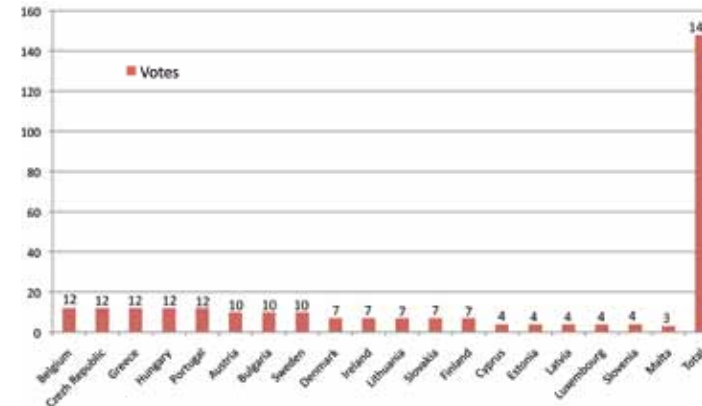


Figure 13: Council Votes for Smaller Member States



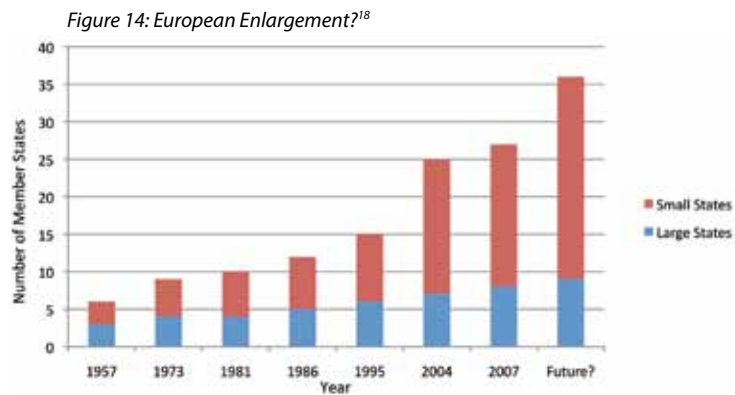
A simple majority of countries also applies meaning fourteen member states must also vote positively. Since large countries account for only eight of the twenty-seven member states this means that to reach the 255 necessary votes as well as meeting the simple majority, at least six of the smaller states need to vote yes for any legislation to pass through the Council.

Furthermore, for sensitive topics such as security, internal affairs and taxation the Council must vote unanimously, granting tiny Malta the power to block any legislation being adopted on these issues.

THE FUTURE – DOUBLE MAJORITY VOTING

In line with the Treaty of Lisbon from 2014 the voting system of the Council will change. From that point onwards legislation will only be passed via a double majority, whereby a majority of countries must vote yes and those that do vote yes represent 65% of the EU's population. If we look at the past, present and the likely future composition of the EU in Figure 14 we see that again this system means that smaller nations are left holding a significant degree of influence within the Council. With 78% of the population at present the larger member states can reach the threshold necessary to meet one half of the double majority requirement but they still fall six member states short of a majority of the countries of the EU. Furthermore, Figure 14 shows that future enlargement would mean even more smaller members states will be required to pass legislation.

It is more than possible that this change will lead to smaller member states losing influence as the increased number of member states leads to more informal decision making processes in the Council. This argument has been made by Elsig (2010), who states that there is anecdotal evidence that *'the increasing reliance on informal decision-making empowers larger member states'*. But at the same time the increasing number of smaller member states could lead to blocs being formed by smaller members, which could lead to them acquiring a greater degree of influence.



¹⁸ Please note that the Netherlands is counted as a large country from 1991 onwards and the future column includes the five candidate countries of Croatia, Iceland, Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey as well as the potential candidates of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo.

SMALL STATE ISSUES – SMALL STATE SOLUTIONS

It would be disingenuous, however, to imply that in the current circumstances smaller countries hold all of the cards when it comes to negotiations in the Council. Lesser institutional capacity, smaller numbers of votes in the Council and lower overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) mean that small states are not able to exert influence in the same way as the larger member states. It is, therefore, unlikely that a very small country such as Slovenia, with only 4 votes out of 345, a lesser institutional capacity and low overall GDP (although not per-capita), is going to use its threat of veto against the larger members, although that option clearly exists within certain competences.

Nevertheless, there are other ways in which small states can overcome structural disadvantages and exert influence on EU negotiations. One such way that Panke (2010) identifies in her study on small states coping with structural disadvantages is through making high quality arguments (i.e. argumentative power). This can mean appealing to common concerns, highlighting the overall good to Europe and emphasising the innovation in small state proposals. The latter may seem like a difficult proposition when one considers the lesser institutional capacity of small states and their lower pool of policy expertise and yet, as Price (2011) notes, small countries have historically been *'great little innovators'*.

The second method identified by Panke is to draw on the reputation of a country (power of reputation). Put simply this means that if a country, or the person representing that country, has a good reputation, especially with regards to even-handedness and working for the good of Europe, then other member states will more quickly come around to their point of view.

Overall, Panke identifies six strategies for smaller states that can help them to influence Council negotiations whilst demonstrating how those smaller members who actively engage with the EU using these methods find they are able to exert influence over the legislative process.¹⁹ She concludes her study by noting that *'small states are not deemed to be inactive in negotiations, since they can resort to a variety of counterbalancing strategies to effectively make their voice heard despite their smaller size'*.

¹⁹ The most successful small countries at influencing negotiations that Panke's study identifies are: Denmark, Luxembourg, Ireland, Belgium, Sweden and Finland.

SUB-STATE GOVERNMENTS IN THE COUNCIL

In many ways there is very little to say about sub-state governments within the Council. The Council is there to represent the member states, not the sub-state governments of Europe. How much influence sub-state governments have on negotiations is, therefore, at the discretion of the member state from where the sub-state governments have come.

Sub-state governments do have the opportunity to express their viewpoint through the Committee of the Regions but this is a less desirable forum for emerging member states because the Committee of the Regions must only be consulted on legislation, it cannot block legislation. Membership of the Committee is, therefore, certainly not comparable to the influence obtained through voting rights in the Council.

This deficiency has increasingly been observed by leaders of sub-state governments. In his address to the Scottish Parliament upon being re-elected First Minister of Scotland Alex Salmond (2011) argued that *'many of us agree that, in this globalised era, Scotland needs more influence in the European Union and particularly in the Council of Ministers. At the moment that is in the gift of Westminster. Sometimes it is forthcoming, more often it is withheld'*.

Furthermore, the decision by the UK Prime Minister to veto attempted treaty change as a result of the Eurozone crisis in 2011, without any discussion with the sub-state governments of the UK, prompted the First Ministers of both Wales and Scotland to write a joint letter to the UK Prime Minister to express their disappointment with their exclusion from the decision-making on using the veto (BBC, 2011).

Despite these developments, very little research has been carried out on the influence of sub-state governments in EU negotiations and especially on affecting the position adopted by a member state in the Council. Put simply, it is difficult to assess the impact that the Welsh Government, for example, has on the UK's position in the Council, mainly because a lack of transparency means we are not privy to the discussions that go on in member states before they go to the Council.

For this reason I carried out a series of interviews with former ministers and officials from sub-state governments to gain a greater understanding of their input. The interviewees were Elin Jones AM, the former Welsh Govern-

ment Minister for Rural Affairs, Alun Ffred Jones AM, the former Welsh Government Minister for Heritage, Linda Fabiani MSP, the former Scottish Government Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, and a former Secretary for International Cooperation for the Catalan Government who did not wish to be named, all of whom have been involved in EU negotiations.

Within the UK it is clear that the current provisions do not offer a significant degree of input into the UK's Council position at any point in the decision-making process. The first forum through which the sub-state governments have a say is the Joint Ministerial Committee on the European Union. These meetings take place four times a year and involve the UK Government, the Northern Irish Government, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government, for the purpose of discussing the co-ordination of European Policy (Davies, 2011). Ms Fabiani MSP (Fabiani, 2011) notes that when she first attended these meetings as a Scottish Minister she found that there had been a very 'cosy relationship' within the Committee between the other ministers from the UK. She attributes this to the fact that until 2007 the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments were all from the same political party i.e. Labour. She asserts that 'it was very apparent early on that the Joint Ministerial Committee had not only fallen into misuse but... was being misused'. Ms Fabiani found that at the first meeting she attended she was only able to speak under the 'any other business' section at the end, even though it was ostensibly a 'joint' meeting between ministers from the four governments of the UK. Ms Fabiani asserts that this way of operating showed 'a contempt for the devolved administrations' that was eventually changed through pressure from herself and the ministers from the other sub-state governments of the UK.

In formulating the UK's official position in Europe Ms Fabiani believes that the Scottish Government was quite influential on fisheries and legal matters. This she attributes to Scotland having the bulk of the fisheries in the UK and also because Scotland has always had a separate legal system to the UK, meaning the UK Government was already accustomed to having to cooperate with Scotland on this issue. She notes that on other subjects, however, the UK Government *'didn't have that same history, so all of a sudden they were quite indignant at the very idea that they had to give any consideration to anything that we came up with or said'*.

The experience of Welsh ministers in the Council of the EU is very similar to that experienced by their Scottish counterparts in Westminster. Elin Jones

AM (Jones, 2011) notes that discussions with the UK Government over EU legislation would begin at the behest of UK civil servants, where they, along with Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish ministers, would begin discussions in advance of the monthly Council of the EU meetings. The UK delegation would then also meet on Sunday evening before the Council meetings, which are usually on a Monday or Tuesday, to try to agree on a UK line in the form of a speaking note for the UK minister to read out. That worked well except for where there was disagreement, which occasionally there was, with the three Celtic nations often showing agreement contrary to the UK position. Where there was disagreement the sub-state governments would attempt to change the UK's position or would encourage the UK minister to state in the meetings that the UK line was not agreed to by all four of the governments, which they were very reluctant to do.

Where the UK Government did not agree they would instead override the wishes of the other three governments. Ms Jones notes that it was often the UK civil servants who were less accommodating to the sub-state governments' positions, as opposed to the UK ministers.

The script that the UK Government wanted was then read out in the Council. Ms Jones notes just how important this script was because with 27 ministers present there was no real debate and the script was the only thing the other member states heard in the meeting. And so if the UK script differed from the interests of the Welsh Government then the differing view would not be heard by the other member states. Ms Jones also notes that very often the UK Government's views, especially on agricultural matters, *'seemed to differ quite substantially from the views of the other member states'*. This meant that frequently the Welsh Government's viewpoints were in line with those of the rest of Europe but other member states were not made aware of it.

This issue was further exasperated by the fact that Welsh ministers were unable to speak in Council meeting because only one representative from each member state is permitted to do so. This meant they had to sit in the meetings behind the UK Minister and, as Ms Jones explains, *'there was always a bit of a tussle between the civil servants and the ministers from the devolved institutions as to who would get those seats'*.

Ms Jones describes this situation as *'very frustrating, especially when you were hearing a UK Government view that you hadn't signed up to'*. The frustration was made worse because in the meetings the UK delegation typically sits

between the Maltese and Slovenian delegations, meaning the sub-state ministers from Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland would have to listen to the views of countries much smaller than their own who had an equal opportunity to speak, whilst they would have to remain silent.

Nonetheless, ministers from sub-state governments are able to speak in the Council but only where they get prior consent from their member state government that they can be the representatives of the member state, not their sub-state government. For this reason the sub-state governments of the UK have made attempts to become the representatives of the UK Government on issues that were of more relevance to them than they were for the UK Government. This was, for example, on fisheries for Scotland and agriculture for Wales, where these respective industries make up a larger share of the economy than they do in the rest of the UK. Ms Jones explains how attempts made by Scottish ministers to represent the UK on fisheries and by Welsh ministers on agriculture were always denied.

However, the UK would allow sub-state government ministers to represent the UK on some issues that were less sensitive to the UK. Therefore, Alun Fred Jones was able to represent the UK on lesser used languages and was able to address the Council through the medium of Welsh. This is because Welsh was made a co-official language in all of the EU institutions except for the Parliament. Ms Jones believes that the Welsh Minister was permitted by the UK Government to be its representative because lesser used languages are not a particularly controversial issue for the UK. This is confirmed by Mr Jones who notes that the statement that was agreed to was *'very bland'* and was *'watered down to avoid causing any offence to anybody'*.

Therefore, Ms Jones argues that

'On something that wasn't particularly controversial from the UK point of view they allowed the Welsh Minister to speak, but on issues such as agriculture or fisheries, that are quite political issues both in Europe and domestically, it was not entertained that devolved government ministers could speak'

Ms Jones cites one incident in particular on fisheries in which the UK ministers had returned to London, whereas the ministers from Scotland and Wales were still at the Council. Rather than let the elected Scottish minister represent the UK Government, the civil servants, with the support of the

UK ministers, insisted that a UK civil servant represent the UK. This means that an unelected UK civil servant took precedence over the elected Scottish Minister for Fisheries, even though in the UK the overwhelming majority of fisheries are in Scotland. As Ms Jones notes *'it would have been far better served having a minister taking that role rather than a UK civil servant'*.

The experience for the Catalan Government is little different to that of sub-state governments in the UK. A former Secretary for International Cooperation for the Catalan Government (2011) noted that *'European integration is one of the main arguments in favour of independence for Catalonia because there is no real way for regions to take part in the EU decision making process'*. The interviewee attributed this to Spain having no chamber for sub-state governments to influence the Spanish position adopted in Europe. Furthermore, the Committee of the Regions *'does not meet the expectations of Catalonia'* because, within the Committee, governments such as the Catalan Government find themselves with hundreds of other European entities, including cities and local authorities. The Committee also does not have the power to meaningfully affect EU decision making because it must only be consulted on legislation, without being able to block it. In the case of Catalonia the interviewee argues that:

'We feel that we are part of Europe, we want to take part in the European decision making process, but the only way to do so is by having our own state. What the EU is telling us is that you cannot do it by being a region. You must have your own state... that is the lesson that we have to learn.'

Nonetheless, I began this section by arguing that how much influence sub-state governments have on negotiations is at the discretion of the member state from where the sub-state government has come. We have seen, therefore, that in Spain and the UK the influence sub-state governments have on their member state is minimal. However, in Belgium a different situation exists that is worth considering. There is a unique situation in Belgium with few other precedents. This is because in 1993 the three sub-state governments that make up Belgium gained the responsibility to sit on international bodies and to conclude international treaties that fall within their competences. This is granted by Title IV (International Relations) of the Belgium Constitution.

This means that the *Vlaamse Regering* (the Flemish Government) has responsibility for ratification of European treaties and the transposition of

European Directives linked to the competences devolved to them, as do the two other regional governments in Belgium.. This also means that a federal or regional minister can have a seat within the Council of the EU based on the division of competences within Belgium. Coordination of a common position for Belgium is then set by the Directorate-General for European Affairs and Coordination (DGE) and the Flemish representatives within the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the European Union.

The result is that in Belgium, sub-state governments have a much higher degree of influence over the position of their member state in the EU than the more centralised member states being analysed.

THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENCY

As we have already noted in this section, being a full member of the EU entitles all members to take part in Council negotiations, to vote in them and potentially to block legislation. Full membership does, however, offer more than these benefits alone and provides all members with the opportunity to lead these negotiations through the six-monthly, rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union (henceforth *'the Presidency'*).

There has been much debate about the power of the Presidency and there are several reasons why the Presidency may not offer a significant degree of influence to the member states. These include the shortness of the term, policy inheritance from the previous Presidency, external events that must be dealt with during the Presidency and the fact that the Presidency is meant to be impartial (Schalk, 2007).

Nonetheless, most commentators would agree that the Presidency does afford the holder a degree of influence over policy outcomes that was not the case previously (Warntjen, 2008). For example, Aksoy (2010) argues that there is ample anecdotal evidence to suggest that through the Presidency the member state governments can acquire the right to initiate proposals, to set the Council's agenda and also to obtain preferable outcomes in negotiations, including securing higher funds per capita.

This can take place because the member state holding the Presidency *'has significant control over the agenda of the Council and has easy access to information that might not be available to other members in the Council'*

(Aksoy, 2010). This means they learn of the concessional arguments that other actors make, putting them at an advantage.

There are further ways in which a member state can improve their ability to affect a desired outcome in the Council, including holding the Presidency in the final act of legislative decision making (Warntjen, 2008).

But perhaps the most interesting outcome of holding the Council Presidency is its effect on the activity levels of member states after they have relinquished it. Panke (2010) finds that member states who have held the Presidency go on to become *'significantly more active than states that have not yet encounter[ed] this experience'*. This is attributed to member states gaining a better view of what is going on, a better network, more self-confidence and improved negotiation skills.

Furthermore, although only one member state is ever the *'lead-President'* there are always two other member states involved in a shared trio Presidency, which is a new system brought in with the Lisbon Treaty. These are the outgoing member state and the member state that is to take over the Presidency once the lead-President's term is over. This means there are 18 months in total when each member state has an increased role in the running of the Council and the decision-making that goes on within. Therefore, as a full member state of the EU current sub-state governments would be entitled to hold the six-month rotating Presidency, which could then have significant advantages for political development in their countries, whilst also giving them leverage at the EU level during the time when they are holding the Presidency.

There is one further significant advantage that holding the Presidency gives and that is the increased exposure granted to the member state who is the lead-President. There are many presidencies within the EU, including the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council, which are highly influential positions. And yet these office holders have not gained the exposure to the public that these positions warrant. This seems illogical given that over the years the Presidency of the Council of the EU has lost powers through the establishment of the European Council and also the positions of President of the European Council and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. And yet the Presidency of the Council of the EU continues to maintain a high profile.

The media, even in more Eurosceptic countries, takes note of who is holding the Presidency and a change in Presidency is considered newsworthy. This

seems to stem from the incorrect understanding that the Presidency of the Council of the EU is in fact the Presidency of the European Union, which it is not. A quick glance at media outlets will confirm this, with even higher brow media leading stories with titles such as *'Denmark as EU President will seek to keep UK along'* (the Guardian, 2011, my italics). But this misconception does not just take place in Europe but on a worldwide level, meaning newspapers such as the New York Times declare that *'Denmark... will head important meetings over the next six months as the current holder of the revolving E.U. Presidency'* (Kanter, 2012, my italics). This mistaken belief is unsurprising given the array of similar and confusing names of institutions that were addressed at the beginning of this section. Nonetheless, the confusion means that the emerging member states of Wales, Catalonia, Scotland, Flanders, the Basque Country and Galicia would be considered by the media and the citizens, not just of Europe but the world, as the leaders of the EU when it is their turn to become lead-President of the Council. This type of exposure is something that is simply not possible without becoming a full member of the EU.



CONCLUSION

This report has analysed the institutional advantages of full membership of the EU in the three principal EU institutions that formulate law; the Commission, the Parliament and the Council of the EU.

In the Commission all full member states are entitled to their own Commissioner, with research suggesting that those Commissioners are becoming increasingly politicised but are able to be controlled to a degree by member states through the use of appointments and patronage. Research also suggests that having the Commission on your side significantly increases the chance of passing EU legislation for small member states, meaning there are clear incentives to having one's own Commissioner who you are able to appoint.

In the Parliament empirical research shows that citizens from the sub-state governments being analysed are some of the worst numerically represented people in the EU. This is especially true for sub-state governments from Spain and the UK who suffer very low levels of representation as a result of being part of larger member states. Within the Parliament the number of MEPs is roughly in proportion to population but distribution is weighted towards the smaller member states. Hence, research carried out

by the author further showed that proper representation is only attained through full membership and the vast majority of sub-state governments being analysed would significantly increase their share of MEPs and level of representation as independent full members.

In the final section we explored the Council of the EU and noted that the sub-state governments being analysed find it very difficult to affect the position adopted by their member state. Furthermore, in the UK unelected civil servants take precedent over democratically elected ministers from sub-state governments, even where the policy issues being discussed are more relevant to the sub-state government than the central government. It became clear that full membership of the EU would increase a sub-state government's ability to affect EU decision-making through increased power gained from a seat in the Council of the EU, as opposed to the less effective Committee of the Regions.

Full membership would also entitle every new member to hold the rotating, six-monthly Presidency of the Council, which gives them access to information and networks that they did not previously have as well as the potential to make their governments more active within the EU. They also have the opportunity to be perceived world-wide as the country leading the EU when it is their turn to become lead-President.

In conclusion, therefore, as far as institutional incentives are concerned it is clearly in the interest of sub-state governments to no longer be represented in the EU by the current member states but to represent themselves. I will close with the words of former Welsh Heritage Minister Alun Ffred Jones AM (2011), who when asked whether Wales would have more influence through the UK Government or by becoming independent, responded: *"If the stark choice is between pushing the UK government or going there ourselves, then clearly I would say going there ourselves."*

Appendices

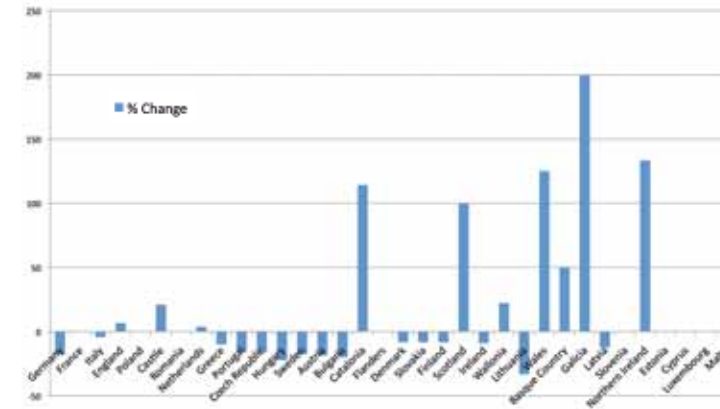
Appendix 1 – Full Data for Inhabitants per MEP

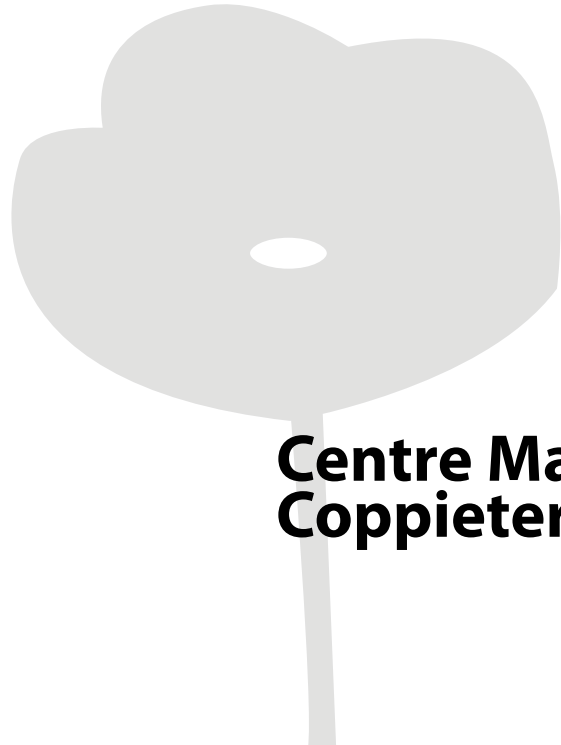
Member state	Population	MEPs	Inhabitants per MEP
Malta	416333	6	69388,83333
Luxembourg	502207	6	83701,16667
Cyprus	801851	6	133641,8333
Estonia	1340274	6	223379
Latvia	2248961	9	249884,5556
Slovenia	2054119	8	256764,875
Lithuania	3329227	12	277435,5833
Ireland	4450878	12	370906,5
Finland	5350475	13	411575
Slovakia	5424057	13	417235,1538
Bulgaria	7576751	18	420930,6111
Denmark	5547088	13	426699,0769
Austria	8372930	19	440680,5263
Hungary	10013628	22	455164,9091
Sweden	9347899	20	467394,95
Basque Country	2815266	6	469211
Czech Republic	10512397	22	477836,2273
Wallonia	4331008	9	481223,1111
Portugal	10636888	22	483494,9091
Flanders	6388239	13	491403
Belgium	10827519	22	492159,9545
Greece	11306183	22	513917,4091
Northern Ireland	1788900	3	596300
Netherlands	16576800	26	637569,2308
Romania	21466174	33	650490,1212
EU Average	501259840	751	667457
Poland	38163895	51	748311,6667
Wales	2999300	4	749825
Germany	81757595	99	825834,2929
Italy	60397353	73	827361
Rest of Spain	32961873	38	867417,7105
United Kingdom	62041708	73	849886,411
Spain	46087170	54	853466,1111
Scotland	5194002	6	865667
England	52059506	60	867658,4333
France	64709480	74	874452,4324
Galicia	2797653	3	932551
Catalonia	7512378	7	1073196,857

Appendix 2 – Countries and Predicted MEPs

Country Code	Country name	Population	New MEPs	Current MEPs	% Change
DE	Germany	81757595	84	99	-17,85714286
FR	France	64709480	74	74	0
IT	Italy	60397353	70	73	-4,285714286
EG	England	52059506	64	60	6,666666667
PL	Poland	38163895	51	51	0
CA	Rest of Spain	32961873	46	38	21,05263158
RO	Romania	21466174	33	33	0
NL	Netherlands	16576800	27	26	3,703703704
GR	Greece	11306183	20	22	-10
PT	Portugal	10636888	19	22	-15,78947368
CZ	Czech Republic	10512397	19	22	-15,78947368
HU	Hungary	10013628	18	22	-22,22222222
SE	Sweden	9347899	17	20	-17,64705882
AT	Austria	8372930	16	19	-18,75
BG	Bulgaria	7576751	15	18	-20
CT	Catalonia	7512378	15	7	114,2857143
FL	Flanders	6388239	13	13	0
DK	Denmark	5547088	12	13	-8,333333333
SK	Slovakia	5424057	12	13	-8,333333333
FI	Finland	5350475	12	13	-8,333333333
SC	Scotland	5194002	12	6	100
IE	Ireland	4450878	11	12	-9,090909091
WL	Wallonia	4331008	11	9	22,22222222
LT	Lithuania	3329227	9	12	-33,33333333
WS	Wales	2999300	9	4	125
BC	Basque Country	2815266	9	6	50
GC	Galicia	2797653	9	3	200
LV	Latvia	2248961	8	9	-12,5
SI	Slovenia	2054119	8	8	0
NI	Northern Ireland	1788900	7	3	133,3333333
EE	Estonia	1340274	6	6	0
CY	Cyprus	801851	6	6	0
LU	Luxembourg	502207	6	6	0
MT	Malta	416333	6	6	0

Appendix 3 – Percentage Change of MEPs after Internal Enlargement





Centre Maurits Coppieters

The European Parliament recognized the Centre Maurits Coppieters (CMC) as a Political Foundation at a European Level in 2007. Since then the CMC has developed political research focusing on European issues, also in the fields of multilevel governance, management of cultural and linguistic diversity in complex (multi-national) societies, decentralization, state and constitutional reform, succession of states, conflict resolution and protection of human rights.

So far, every little step has been important to the steady consolidation and growth of the Centre, that's why I'm especially proud of this publication. Indeed, it undoubtedly represents a crucial contribution to the current state of affairs and will certainly have a notorious impact both in the Academia and among European decision makers in a broad sense, including European Institutions (like the European commission, European Parliament, Council and Committee of the Regions), other political actors, think tanks, research centers and contributors to the European integration process.

On behalf of the Centre Maurits Coppieters and our partners I sincerely wish to thank the author of the report for his groundbreaking approach to the subject and his passionate, conceptually robust and well structured factual presentation.

Finally I also wish to thank you (the reader) for your interest in our organization and for reviewing our modest contribution to a much wider European political debate in this area.

Günther Dauwen
Secretary of Centre Maurits Coppieters
www.ideasforeurope.eu

GOALS OF THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL FOUNDATION CENTRE MAURITS COPPIETERS (CMC)

According to its general regulations, the Centre Maurits Coppieters asbl-vzw pursues the following objectives and references:

- Observing, analysing and contributing to the debate on European public policy issues with a special focus on the role of nationalist and regionalist movements and the process of European integration;
- Serving as framework for national or regional think tanks, political foundations and academics to work together at European level;
- Gather and manage information for scientific purposes on all nationalist and regionalist movements, organisations, structures,... in all its appearances situated in a European context;
- Making available information to the public on the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity in a context of a Europe of the Regions;
- Promoting scientific research on the functioning and the history of all national and regional movements in the EU and making the results public to as many people as possible;
- Developing actions to open information sources and historical information sources in a structured and controlled way with the aim to build a common data network on issues of Nationalism and Regionalism in Europe;
- Maintaining contacts with all organisations who are active in national movements and with the Institutions of the EU;

The Centre Maurits Coppieters asbl-vzw takes all the necessary actions to promote and achieve the higher stated goals always observing the principles on which the European Union is founded, namely the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.

MAURITS COPPIETERS (SINT-NIKLAAS, 1920 – DEINZE, 2005)

The Fleming Maurits Coppieters studied history and later became a Doctor of Laws and obtained a master's degree in East European studies. During the Second World War, he refused to work for the German occupier. After many years as a teacher, he worked as a lawyer for a while. He was one of the people who re-established the Vlaamse Volksbeweging (Flemish People's Movement), of which he was the President from 1957-1963.

Coppieters' political career began when he became a member of the Flemish-nationalist party Volksunie (VU) which was formed in 1954. With the exception of two years, Coppieters was a town councillor between 1964 and 1983. He was also elected as a member of the Belgian Chamber (1965-1971) and Senate (1971-1979). At the same time, Coppieters became President of the newly formed 'Cultuurraad voor de Nederlandstalige Cultuurgemeenschap' (Cultural Council for the Dutch-speaking Community, from which later the Flemish Parliament emanated), when the VU formed part of the government. In 1979, Coppieters was moreover elected during the first direct elections for the European Parliament.

As a regionalist, he became a member of the Group for Technical Coordination and Defence of Independent Groupings and Members in the European Parliament (TCDI). Among other things, he made a name for himself when he championed the cause of the Corsicans. In the meantime, Coppieters also played a pioneering role in the formation of the European Free Alliance, of which he became the Honorary President and in whose expansion he continued to play a role, even after he said farewell to active politics in 1981. In 1996, Coppieters joined forces with the president of the Flemish Parliament, Norbert De Batselier, to promote 'Het Sienjaal', a project with a view to achieve political revival beyond the party boundaries. Coppieters died on November 11, 2005.

Among other things, Coppieters was the author of: '*Het jaar van de Klaproos*'; '*Ik was een Europees Parlements lid*'; '*De Schone en het Beest*'. He is Honorary member of the EFA.

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