

# Promoting the agenda for a social economic and monetary Union: attention, credibility and coalition-building

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## Abstract

In the aftermath of the crisis, new instruments of economic governance have been adopted at the EU level. Until recently, these have been strongly dominated by what I assume to be the ECFIN coalition. However, at least since 2011, this coalition's supremacy has been challenged by the competing coalition's (EPSCO) willingness to rebalance the economic governance so that social concerns are better taken into account. This rebalancing seems reflected in the recent Commission Communication of 2 October 2013 entitled 'Strengthening the Social Dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union'. Hence, drawing on the agenda-setting literature in the EU context as well as on the Advocacy Coalition Framework, this thesis aims at retracing the process that has led to put this issue of the social dimension of the EMU on to the EU political agenda. Three sets of assumptions are made concerning respectively the career of this issue, the strategies employed by agenda-setters and the policy subsystem of the economic governance. I show that the interest for this issue has been gradually aroused thanks to the efforts made by MEP Pervenche Bérès in the European Parliament. Then, I explain that, due to its 'high politics' nature, this issue could only be initiated 'from above' (European Council) and then expand to lower levels of decision-making (Commission). At this level, I examine how DG EMPL has managed to gain attention around this issue and to build its credibility in dealing with it. I demonstrate that in order to do so, DG EMPL had, on the one hand, to strategically frame the issue so as to arouse interest and claim authority and, on the other hand, to direct the issue towards the EPSCO venue so as to build sufficient capacity and to mobilize its coalition. Finally, I analyze the outcome of this agenda-setting process by assessing to what extent the two new social scoreboards which form part of this social dimension have been taken into account during the European semester 2014. The result of this analysis is that the new economic governance has not been genuinely rebalanced insofar as its dominant policy core remains that of the ECFIN coalition.