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Postprint / Postprint

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

**Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:**

Tanil, G. (2013). How European structure impacts on national actors: the case of Norwegian policy-makers. *CEU Political Science Journal*, 8(4), 445-469. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-381631>

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# HOW EUROPEAN STRUCTURE IMPACTS ON NATIONAL ACTORS: THE CASE OF NORWEGIAN POLICY-MAKERS

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## Abstract

*This article seeks to explain the role of identity politics in defining the national elite's perceptions of the European Union and their foreign policy choices. It is argued that when analyzing foreign policy choices of the national elite, not only the interests and preferences but also the identity questions must be taken into account. In any national context, ideas, identities, and perceptions of self and the EU are expected to impact on the subsequent policy choices about Europe. This article seeks to explain this impact by applying a combination of the fusion approach and social constructivist approach on Norwegian policy-makers. Although not a member of the EU, Norway established a good level of economic integration and political cooperation with the EU through the European Economic Area Agreement. This article seeks to analyse this relationship empirically using Justice and Home Affairs Policy as a case study area.*

**Keywords:** Norway, Europeanization, policy-makers, justice and home affairs.

## 1. Introduction

Because of its evolution from merely an intergovernmental economic cooperation into a supranational one with distinct institutions, rules and norms influencing the member states, the EU is assumed to fuel processes of Europeanization of domestic institutions, policy processes, and actors. An ever increasing number of scholars seek to answer how the EU structure fuels these processes of Europeanization of domestic institutions, policy processes, and actors. While some scholars focus on its structural effects, others focus on its impact on the national actors. For example, for Olsen and Sverdrup, Europeanization implies that "the integration process in the EU becomes more relevant and important as a factor leading to adaptations and changes in domestic institutional and administrative arrangements"<sup>1</sup> whereas Larsson and Trondal argue that:

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<sup>1</sup> Johan Olsen, *The Many Faces of Europeanization* (Oslo: ARENA Working Papers, 2001); Ulf Sverdrup, *Ambiguity and Adaptation: Europeanization of Administrative Institutions as Loosely Coupled Processes* (Oslo: ARENA Report, 2000).

the EU and its many institutions and common policies mobilize particular modes of behavior, identities, and role conceptions among the actors involved which results in Europeanization of domestic institutions and policies.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, notwithstanding different foci of attention, Europeanization theories presuppose that European integration process leads to changes in domestic structures, actor attributes (ideas, identities, interests) and attitudes (national foreign policy decisions).

This study concerns the impact of Europeanization on the ideas, identities, EU-attitudes and foreign policy choices of national policy-makers. In this way, it provides theoretical and empirical explanation and understanding of the role of Europeanization at actor-level in the context of identity politics. To reach this goal, Norway is chosen as the case study area and Norwegian national policy-makers are taken into empirical investigation. The assumption here is that the impact of Europeanization is not limited to the EU-member states. The EEA states and non-member states are also affected by the forces of Europeanization as much as the member states due to their intense participation in EU institutions and policies.

Accordingly, the selection of Norway, a small and non-EU member state, for the study of Europeanization can be justified on three points. First, the question of membership/non-membership should be dealt with. Some scholars suggest that processes of Europeanization may be observed in EU member-states only: "With EC-membership states will start moving in the direction of Europeanization and convergence whereas countries outside the EC will not follow this direction until they have gained full membership".<sup>3</sup> However, there is a caveat in this argument. Egeberg and Trondal inform us that "nation-states may have different forms of affiliation to the EU, as well as different degrees of interaction with different Union bodies".<sup>4</sup> For example, while Denmark made reservations concerning the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Norway decided to provide troops to a European rapid reaction force. Therefore, the distinction between insiders and outsiders of the Union becomes blurred and ambiguous. Consequently, EU membership versus non-membership distinction becomes ambiguous, and seldom explains real life situations. As Trondal explains:

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<sup>2</sup> Torbjorn Larsson and Jarle Trondal, "After Hierarchy? Domestic Executive Governance and the Differentiated Impact of the European Commission and the Council of Ministers," *European Integration Online Papers* 9:14 (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Rometch and Wolfgang Wessels, eds, *The European Union and Member States: Towards Institutional Fusion?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 357.

<sup>4</sup> Morten Egeberg and Jarle Trondal, "Differentiated Integration in Europe: The Case of EEA Country: Norway," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 37:1 (1999): 133-142.

the various levels of enhanced cooperation and different forms of affiliation towards the Union makes the membership versus non-membership dichotomy a less adequate analytical tool-kit; rather, the duration and intensity of the contact matters more.<sup>5</sup>

It is argued in this study that national officials attending EU committees fairly intensively and for protracted periods of time are more likely to be influenced by EU structure than national officials devoting little time and energy participating in these committees; and this is not a matter of membership.

Second, the EEA Agreement and various sectoral treaties provide Norway close cooperation and good level of harmonization with the EU in many policy areas similar to the member states. Currently, Norway is an associate member of the EU through EEA Agreement, and closely cooperates with the EU by means of sectoral treaties in Justice and Home Affairs, Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Internal Market, research and higher education, and so on. The EEA Agreement integrates Norway into the EU's internal market with a purpose to maximize the freedom of movement of persons, capital, goods and services, and to strengthen and spread the cooperation to neighboring policy areas. The European Union's Directorate General for External Policies argued that:

Norway is solidly attached to the European construction through the EEA Agreement and through its membership in all relevant multilateral organizations including the Nordic, Barents and Baltic Councils, EFTA, OECD, WTO, Council of Europe and OSCE.<sup>6</sup>

For these reasons, analysis of Norwegian interaction with the EU structure and policies is as important as any other member-state.

Third, this study covers officials from a small European country. One bias that may accompany this selection is that "officials from small states tend to be more supranational than officials from larger states."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jarle Trondal, *Beyond the EU Membership-Non-Membership Dichotomy? Explaining Supranational Identities Among EU Decision-Makers* (Oslo: ARENA Working Papers, 2001) 11.

<sup>6</sup> Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, *Information on the Political and Economic Situation of Norway and EU-Norway Relations* (Report no: Expo/B/Poldep/Note/2006-099), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Beyers, "How Supranational is Supranationalism? National and European Socialization of Negotiators in the Council of Ministers," *Acta Sociologica* 33:4 (1998): 378-408; Liesbet Hooghe, "Supranational Activists or Intergovernmental Agents? Explaining Orientations of Senior Commission Officials towards European Integration," *Comparative Political Studies*, 32:4 (1999): 435-463.

Regarding the case study area, this article concerns national officials employed in the justice and home affairs policy. This policy area is selected because JHA policy is heavily integrated in the EEA *aquis*, and the Norwegian and EU JHA policies achieved a good harmonization. Hence, selecting this policy area increases the likelihood of selecting civil servants with widely different experiences from EU committees.

This research employs a conceptual and theoretical framework borrowed from the social constructivist and fusion scholars. The social constructivist approach is chosen because it is good at explaining the impact of ideas/identities/structures on the actions of national actors; and fusion approach is chosen because it is good at defining, explaining and formulating the composition of national elite's interests and the impact of these interests on their EU-attitudes. The merger of these two approaches reveals the impact of domestic structure and the EU structure on national actors' attributes and attitudes in a much better way; and demonstrates Europeanization at actor level both theoretically and empirically. So, the contribution of this research to the existing body of literature is that, firstly, it demonstrates Europeanization process not only in the institutional context, which is commonly found in many academic papers, but also in the context of identity politics. Secondly, it presents an empirical validation of the impact of abstract notions like ideas, identities, interests, norms, political culture on foreign policy choices.

The following section discusses the theories of Europeanization and presents previous research on the topic. It emphasizes the contribution of the social constructivist approach to the existing literature. The third section explains and discusses the concept of ideational socialization/social learning. After defining the contextual explanatory theories and concepts I will focus on the delicate and complex question of how to explain and measure the impact of norms, political culture, ideas, identities on the EU-attitudes and foreign policy preferences of the national policy-makers. So, the fourth section elaborates and discusses the research methodology and data sources of the empirical research. The fifth part demonstrates the empirical validation of the hypotheses of the social constructivist fusion perspective on the case study area. The aim of this part is to show the operationalization of this approach, and to give future researchers an idea about how to carry out empirical research in this context. The last part presents the conclusions of this paper.

## **2. Explaining Europeanization**

Europeanization has already moved beyond the theoretical statement stage and into the practical working stage. This section revisits some of its main theoretical

explanations by focusing on the central questions and arguments. It also compares and contrasts major theoretical statements defining and explaining this concept.

A decade ago, Radaelli defined Europeanization as:

processes of construction, diffusion, institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ways of doing things, shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of European Union decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public procedures.<sup>8</sup>

Because of its evolution from merely an intergovernmental economic cooperation into a supranational one with distinct institutions, rules and norms influencing the member states, the EU is assumed to fuel processes of Europeanization of domestic institutions, policy processes and actors. Different theories have been used to explain differentiated processes of Europeanization of domestic structures and actors.

*Institutional approaches* analyze Europeanization focusing on the change in core domestic institutions of governance and politics, understood as a consequence of the development of European-level institutions, identities and policies. European-level development is treated as the explanatory factor<sup>9</sup> and changes in the domestic institutions and systems of governance as the dependent variable<sup>10</sup>. The research tasks are to account for variations in European impacts and to explain the varying responses and robustness of domestic institutions against pressures from the European level<sup>11</sup>. The bulk of the empirical literature concerns effects of the EU on member states, focusing on its impacts on domestic policies.

Europeanization's domestic impact is not limited to structural and policy changes. *Social constructivist approaches* analyze "how European values and policy paradigms are internalized at the domestic level, shaping discourses and identities."<sup>12</sup> It is argued by social constructivist scholars that institutions like the EU impact on the national elite substantively through the socialization process since "an institution is nothing

<sup>8</sup> Claudio Radaelli, "The Europeanization of Public Policy," in *The Politics of Europeanization*, ed. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio Radaelli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). 30.

<sup>9</sup> Hussein Kassim, Guy Peters and Vincent Wright, eds., *The National Co-ordination of EU Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 236.

<sup>10</sup> Olsen, *The Many Faces of Europeanization*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Johan Olsen, "The Many Faces of Europeanization," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40:5 (2002): 935.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Checkel, "The Europeanization of Citizenship?," in *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, ed. Maria Green Cowles, James Caporaso, Thomas Risse (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001)

but a relatively stable structure of identities and interests."<sup>13</sup> Such structures are often codified in formal rules and norms, but these have motivational force only in virtue of actors' socialization to and participation in collective knowledge. As collective knowledge, they are experienced as having an existence over and above the individuals who happen to embody them at the moment. In this way,

institutions come to confront individuals as more or less coercive social facts, but they are still a function of what actors collectively know. Identities and such collective cognitions do not exist apart from each other; they are mutually constitutive.<sup>14</sup>

In this view, institutionalization of new rules and norms occurs as a process of internalizing new identities and interests, not as something affecting only behavior. Socialization or the social learning mentioned here is a cognitive process, not just a behavioral one. Agents, including elite decision-makers, "adopt prescriptions embodied in norms, which then become internalized and constitute a set of shared inter-subjective understandings that make behavioral claims."<sup>15</sup>

In sum, European-level developments do not dictate specific forms of institutional adaptation but leave considerable discretion to domestic actors and institutions:<sup>16</sup> "Governmental elites choose specific policies, policy ideas, strategies, and concrete interests because they (or their justifications) are consistent with more general, deeper, collectively held ideas or discourses."<sup>17</sup> That is to say:

adaptation reflects variations in European pressure as well as domestic motivations and abilities to adapt. European signals are interpreted and modified through domestic traditions, institutions, identities and resources in ways that limit the degree of convergence and homogenization.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46:2 (1992): 399.

<sup>14</sup> Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," 399.

<sup>15</sup> Checkel, "The Europeanization of Citizenship?," 57.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Marcussen, Thomas Risse, Daniela Engelmann-Martin, Hans-Joachim Knopf, Klaus Roscher, "Constructing Europe? The Evolution of Nation-State Identities," in *The Social Construction of Europe*, eds. Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jørgensen, Antje Wiener (London: Sage Publications, 2001); Martin Marcussen, *Ideas and Elites: The Social Construction of Economic and Monetary Union*, (Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 2000); Jeffrey Checkel, "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework," *International Organization* 59:4 (2005).

<sup>17</sup> Marcussen et. al "Constructing Europe?"; Marcussen *Ideas and Elites*; Checkel, "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe".

<sup>18</sup> Olsen, *The Many Faces of Europeanization*, 16.

The *fusion approach*<sup>19</sup> also contributes to the understanding of the process of Europeanization for the national policy-makers. It focuses on providing insights into understanding the attitudes and policy-priorities of national policy-makers responsible for the formulation of the national EU policy. The fusion approach conceptualized that such policy-makers maintain a specific fusion-based value set (performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion) that influences their attitudes towards the European Union and their policies towards European integration.

In his book *Fusing with Europe? Sweden in the European Union* Miles explains the fusion values and provides an empirical validation of the fusion approach by analyzing the Swedish national elite's reactions to the EU. First, he puts forward that

most countries favor joining the Union not because they have a vision of an integrated Europe, but largely because they perceive there are substantial output benefits in utilizing EU supranational policy-making. In other words, national governments want to solve domestic and other problems efficiently using EU decision-making procedures.<sup>20</sup>

This EU-attitude is described as national elite having performance fusion value. Secondly, the form of cooperation/integration with the EU is under discussion. National governments seek to maintain the final say within the EU system; however, the results of an intergovernmental cooperation are limited due to the lack of mechanisms to ensure universal compliance. So, dissatisfied with both the intergovernmental cooperation and the construction of a federal state, national elite embrace supranational decision-making to secure the benefits of performance fusion. This EU-attitude is called as national elite having political fusion value. Finally, relations between national and EU policy-makers, institutions and policies are analyzed. Miles argues that

national political elites are willing, albeit to a limited extent, to pool sovereignty if the Union is perceived as providing value-added for the member states. Consequently, the joint use of public instruments is perceived, where governments, administrations and actors increasingly pool and share public resources from several levels to attain commonly identified goals.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lee Miles, "Enlargement: From the Perspective of Fusion- Symposium on the Swedish 2001 European Union Council Presidency," *Cooperation and Conflict* 37:2 (2002): 190-198; Lee Miles, *Fusing with Europe? Sweden in the European Union* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2005); Lee Miles, "Domestic Influences on Nordic Security and Defense Policy: From the Perspective of Fusion," in *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defense Policy*, ed. Alyson Bailes, Gunilla Herolf, Bengt Sundelius (Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Miles, *Fusing with Europe*, 52.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

This EU-attitude means the national elite having compound fusion value. The relevance of the fusion perspective for this research is that, analyzing the impact of Europeanization on the identities, interests and behaviors of the national elite, it provides insights into understanding the *attitudes* and *policy-priorities* of national policy-makers responsible for the formulation of the national EU policy. It contributes to social constructivist approach by providing an explanation of the *interests and EU-attitudes* of the national policy-makers.

To conclude, previous theoretical and empirical studies of Europeanization either focused on the structural effects of Europeanization and analyzed institutional, administrative, and legislative impacts of the EU; or focused on the impacts of Europeanization on national actors and analyzed the change of role perceptions and loyalties of the national policy-makers. In the latter case, the impact of EU institutions on the national civil servants is limited to changing roles or loyalties which involve non-calculative behavioral adaptation. In other words, they presuppose an agent's passive, non-calculative acceptance of new roles evoked by certain environmental triggers. As opposed to that condition, what is offered in this research is a situation,

where agents go beyond role playing and accept community or organizational norms as the right thing to do, meaning that agents adopt the interests, or even the identity, of the community of which they are a part.<sup>22</sup>

This process is drawn from cognitive and social psychology, where "individuals, when exposed to the prescriptions embodied in norms, adopt new interests."<sup>23</sup> Through social learning or ideational socialization, national actors actively and reflectively internalize new understandings of appropriateness in the EU atmosphere.

### 3. Ideational Socialization Effect

European studies scholars distinguish between two forms of Europeanization: adaptation and learning. For Rieker "adaptation refers merely to instrumental adjustments, while learning tends to lead to a more stable and enduring policy change."<sup>24</sup> This distinction is the main difference between institutionalist approaches and social constructivist approaches since the latter emphasizes the EU institutions have thick socializing effects on actors, which go beyond adaptation of institutions and procedures to include the internalization of norms and rules into self-conceptions. Employing a social constructivist approach, this article argues that

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<sup>22</sup> Checkel, "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe," 804

<sup>23</sup> Checkel, "The Europeanization of Citizenship?," 58

<sup>24</sup> Pernille Rieker. "Europeanization of Nordic Security: The European Union and the Changing Security Identities of the Nordic States," *Cooperation and Conflict* 39:4 (2004): 372

the participation in EU institutions and meetings transforms and re-directs the ideas, identities and interests of national experts about themselves and about the EU. More precisely, it asserts that national government officials who participate in EU institutions and meetings become re-socialized, thereby changing their ideas, identifications and actions (in particular, foreign policy choices).

The mechanism through which new European norms diffuse into particular national settings and socialize agents is identified by social constructivists as *social learning*. As such, "social learning constitutes an agency-centered mechanism to induce transformation in actors' interests and identities."<sup>25</sup> However, we need to distinguish between instances in which actors merely adjust means and strategies to achieve their given goals and preferences, i.e. *single-loop learning*; and situations that lead actors to change their goals and preferences, i.e. *double-loop learning* or *complex learning*. In complex social learning "agents –typically elite decision-makers- adopt prescriptions embodied in norms, which then become internalized and constitute a set of shared intersubjective understandings that make behavioral claims."<sup>26</sup> In this respect, social learning is different from individualist/rationalist accounts of simple learning, which assumes that agents acquire new information, alter strategies, but then pursue given, fixed interests.

The potential for re-socialization is positively related to the *duration* and the *intensity* of interaction among actors.<sup>27</sup> Contact thesis<sup>28</sup> seeks to explain the causal relation between institutions and core agent properties, and argues that preference change is a function of time: "The longer that agents reside in a particular institutional setting, the more likely there will be a shift in actor properties."<sup>29</sup> So, "the length of interaction among actors increases the socializing potential of institutions."<sup>30</sup> Moreover, "protracted and intensive actor interaction is conducive to the development of group belongingness and an esprit de corps"<sup>31</sup>, and to "the internalization of the norms, rule and interests of the community."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Risse, "A European Identity? Europeanization and the Evolution of Nation-State Identities," in *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, ed. Maria Green Cowles, James Caporaso, Thomas Risse (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001) 12

<sup>26</sup> Checkel, "The Europeanization of Citizenship?," 57.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 26; Jarle Trondal, "Is the European Commission a Hothouse for Supranationalism? Exploring Actor-Level Supranationalism," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 45:5 (2007): 1117.

<sup>28</sup> Beyers, "How Supranational is Supranationalism"; Morten Egeberg "Transcending Intergovernmentalism? Identity and Role Perceptions of National Officials in EU Decision-Making," *Journal of European Public Policy* 6 (1999): 456-474.

<sup>29</sup> Jeffrey Checkel, "Going Native in Europe? Theorizing Social Interaction in European Institutions," *Comparative Political Studies* 36:1-2 (2003): 210.

<sup>30</sup> Checkel, "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe," 811.

<sup>31</sup> Trondal, "Is the European Commission a Hothouse for Supranationalism?"

<sup>32</sup> Checkel, "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe"

Scholars agree on that the best condition for the transfer of new ideas into domestic structure is *resonance*<sup>33</sup> or *norm fit*<sup>34</sup>:

New ideas are transferred to national discourses to the extent that they resonate with given and pre-existing consensual identity constructions and concepts of political order embedded in a country's institutions and political culture.<sup>35</sup>

The resonance argument is supported on the grounds that "diffusion is more rapid when a cultural match exists between a systemic norm and a target country, in other words, where it resonates with historically constructed domestic norms."<sup>36</sup> Thus, new ideas, norms and policies are internalized by actors and domestic structures more easily when they resonate with pre-existing domestic ones.

#### 4. Research Methodology and Data

This article seeks to reveal the impact of Europeanization not only at the structural level but also at the actor-level and in the context of identity politics. Social constructivist studies maintain and explain such an impact, but most of them find it difficult to validate empirically. This failure stems from that the fact that core concepts of social constructivism - ideas, identities and interests - being mostly abstractions that are difficult to test empirically.

The merger of social constructivist approach and fusion perspective, and inclusion of testable hypotheses offer a new way of testing the impact of Europeanization in the context of identity politics. The social constructivist fusion perspective, used in this article, provides researchers means and methods for empirical validation by including some concrete, measurable concepts into analysis: national elite's perception of the identities, interests and policies of own country and the EU, their fusion values, their foreign policy choices, and changes initiated by the EU structure on actors' ideas, identities, interests, EU-attitudes and behaviors by means of ideational socialization. Thus, what is attempted here is to find evidence of identity politics in operation. By this way, the social constructivist fusion perspective contributes to knowledge on how constructivist approaches can be utilized in empirical studies of the national elites.

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<sup>33</sup> Marcussen et.al "Constructing Europe?"; Marcussen *Ideas and Elites*.

<sup>34</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52:4 (1998): 887-917.

<sup>35</sup> Marcussen et.al "Constructing Europe?" 631.

<sup>36</sup> Jeffrey Checkel, *Why Comply? Constructivism, Social Norms and the Study of International Institutions* (Oslo: Arena Working Paper, 1999), 5; Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, ed.s, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 199-201.

Based on the social constructivist fusion perspective, this article attempts to empirically test four hypotheses by means of interviews, questionnaires, observation and documentary data:

H1: Domestic structure (norms, values, political culture and traditions) impacts on national elite's ideas, identities and interests about that policy area.

H2: National elite ideas, identities and interests impact on their EU-attitudes (fusion perceptions) in that policy area.

H3: Europeanization impacts on national elite's ideas, identities, interests, and foreign policy choices (through ideational learning).

H4: Ideal condition for structural adaptation and actor-level ideational learning is the norm fit between domestic and EU structures.

Empirical testing of these four hypotheses is carried out by using primary sources of data (interview, questionnaire, observation) and secondary sources of data (official documents and reports). This empirical study compares two categories of national elite: the national ministerial elite (top-level civil servants who are active in EEA/EU work) and the transnational elite (civil servants working in Brussels at the Norwegian Delegation to the EU). The selection of these two categories of national actors is justified based on the special circumstances of Norway's relations with the EU. As an EEA country,

Norway's participation in the EU institutions is limited to participation in preparatory and implementation committees connected with the Commission system, and in comitology committees, whereas its contact with the Council, the European Parliament, the Court of Justice, and the Court of First Instance are almost non-existent.<sup>37</sup>

This structure implies that the Norwegian Ministries and the Agencies are connected to the EU-level through preparatory work in the expert committees in the Commission, but the Norwegian Stortingare largely absent from the EU-work since they do not have a body to connect to at the EU level. Moreover,

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<sup>37</sup> Per Læg Reid, Runolfur Smari Steinthorsson, Baldur Thorhallsson, *Europeanization of Public Administration: Effects of the EU on the Central Administration in the Nordic States* (Bergen: Bergen University Research Foundation, 2002) 12.

the EEA cases are left in the hands of civil servants, and politicians are largely absent from the formal EEA decision-making system. The civil servants have somewhat more influence compared to politicians in EU/EEA cases.<sup>38</sup>

For this reason, an analysis of Norwegian top-level ministerial civil servants is expected to reveal accurate results about the impact of EU-socialization on domestic actors.

Two respondents from each category were chosen for this article. These respondents were chosen based on their position, work experience, and expertise area. All four respondents are working at director/counsellor level, have more than five years of work experience in the field, and have good expertise on EEA and EU relations and policies. This empirical study was carried out confidentially and upon the condition that the names and titles of the respondents will not be disclosed and their answers will be treated anonymously. For this reason, the names and titles of respondents will not be disclosed throughout this article, and they will simply be indicated as Respondent I, II, III, and IV.

A small number of in-depth, qualitative interviews was preferred rather than a quantitative survey. As this study focuses on exploring identity questions, qualitative interviews provide a better research tool to reveal such abstract notions. Employing a structured interview technique, 15 interview questions were prepared beforehand, and these questions were delivered in a standardized manner to all respondents. All interviews were recorded, and then fully transcribed by the researcher herself. Interviews were conducted in 2008-2009 time period, at different locations (Oslo and Brussels), and at different dates. Each interview lasted approximately one hour; some respondents preferred having more discussion after the interview questions are finished, while some of them preferred only to respond to the questions.

In addition to interviews, a questionnaire was distributed to all respondents. It consists of 15 questions which clarify the interview questions by asking identical questions in kind but with multiple choice answers. The aim of the questionnaire is to measure the responses by using percentile categories (very much 100%-76%, much 75%-51%, fairly 50%-26%, a little 25%-1%, not at all 0%). By this way, interview and questionnaire results complement each other, that is to say, qualitative answers in interviews were complemented and validated by numerical measures in questionnaires.

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<sup>38</sup> Per Læg Reid, Runolfur Smari Steinthorsson, Baldur Thorhallsson, "Europeanization of Central Government Administration in the Nordic States," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 42:2 (2004): 357.

Secondary data were also used to discover the composition of domestic and EU structures, relations between Norway and the EU, policy priorities and goals, and the discourses. Documentary data was used in conjunction with interviews and questionnaires in order to supplement the primary data. These were relevant polity and policy documents of the Norwegian governments and ministries in the last decade (1999-2009). This set of data covers both official and unofficial documents from the relevant institutions of the EU and Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs.

The contribution of this empirical study to the existing literature is that previous researches on the civil servants active in EU-work have mostly addressed whether government officials become regular participants at the EU level of governance, but not how and why they become affected by it. This article introduces a new research avenue: the impact of domestic and EU structures on the identities, interests, EU-attitudes and foreign policy choices of the national and transnational civil servants.

## 5. Empirical Findings

Justice and Home Affairs policy is chosen as the case study area to test the impact of Europeanization on Norwegian national actors for three reasons. First, the analysis of documentary data revealed that there is good level of adaptation and harmonization of Norwegian JHA policy with the EU. Norway signed the Schengen Association Agreement on 18 May 1999, which entitled Norway to take part in drafting new legislation on the implementation, application and further development of the Schengen *acquis*. Articles 1 and 2 of the Association Agreement<sup>39</sup> state that Norway is bound by the provisions of the Schengen *acquis*.<sup>40</sup> Apart from certain exclusions (for example, responsibility for processing applications for asylum) Norway must apply a long list of measures adopted by the Executive Committee of the EU's JHA domain. These include the abolition of internal frontier controls, countervailing measures for control of the external frontiers, measures connected with police, security and the Schengen Information System.

When it comes to the right of participation and political influence, the institutional aspects of the Schengen agreement offer good opportunities for participation by Norway. Norway and Iceland have working sessions in the Mixed Committee with members of the corresponding EU bodies. The Mixed Committee works to develop and implement Schengen rules, and settles disputes between Norway, Iceland, the EU and other member states. It also takes up matters raised by Norway or Iceland. Although the Mixed Committee is not a decision-taking body it is still more than a

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<sup>39</sup> The Schengen Association Agreement, Official Journal L 176/36, 10.07.1999.  
<sup>40</sup> The Schengen Acquis, Official Journal L 239, 22.09.2000.

discussion forum, or a decision-shaping institution. Schengen-related proposals are drafted by the Commission or the EU member states, and then associated states have the right to make suggestions in the Mixed Committee for initiatives or proposals. Since the EU Council takes decisions in many cases more or less automatically on the basis of the recommendations of its committees and working parties, including the Schengen Mixed Committee, Norway can still exert significant influence in the policy shaping process in the Schengen system. So, "Norway has the right to participate in the formulation of Schengen decisions on the same basis as experts from EU member states but cannot participate in the decision-taking in the Council."<sup>41</sup>

As a result, there is considerable amount of coordination and cooperation between Norwegian and EU institutions and actors. The harmonization of Norwegian and EU JHA policies brings about intense involvement of Norwegian national actors in EU committees and working groups; and protracted and intensive interaction of Norwegian national actors with the EU institutions, policies and supranational actors helps them develop group belongingness and *esprit de corps*, and also internalize the norms, rules, identities and interests of the community. This makes JHA policy an ideal area to observe ideational learning.

Second, Norway faces the same challenges as the EU member states regarding serious transnational crime, such as terrorism, drug smuggling and human trafficking. Thus, Norway has the same interests with the EU member states in cooperation and coordination in JHA policy area. That's why Norway's cooperation with the EU in JHA extends beyond the scope of the Schengen *acquis* and includes Schengen-relevant and non-Schengen-relevant measures as well. Where appropriate, Norway is also interested in concluding additional agreements to associate itself more closely with the non-Schengen-relevant JHA measures, including the European Arrest Warrant, Europol and Eurojust. As a result, Norway is an associated party to many initiatives within the JHA policy. Due to experiencing similar problems in JHA policy area as all other EU-member states, Norwegian policy-makers are susceptible to ideational learning from the ideas, objectives, methods, and way of doing things in the EU. The EEA Agreement and Schengen Agreement contribute to this process by providing solutions and answers to such problems. This makes JHA policy an ideal area to observe ideational learning.

Thirdly, previous empirical researches show that "in JHA policy, identity elements and national/sectoral interests are non-existent, and the values, political-cultural traditions and national interests in Norway and in EU are very similar and

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<sup>41</sup> Clive Archer, *Norway Outside the European Union -Norway and European Integration from 1994 to 2004*. (London: New York: Routledge, 2005) 163

compatible".<sup>42</sup> Thus, the situation of norm fit between Norwegian and EU structures in JHA policy is expected to help policy adaptation, policy harmonization, and ideational learning for Norwegian national actors. This is another reason why JHA policy is an ideal area to observe ideational learning.

Respondent I perceives Norwegian structure as a rural identity: "Norway is not a country of big cities, and the values are not attached to that; there is important value linked to living outside the cities". He defined the EU structure as "a peace project", and as "a project improving the standards in human rights, raising living standards, securing peace in Europe, maintaining stability and the welfare". He underlined that "these general political cultural values are shared by all European countries". So, Norwegian identity is a rural identity; but it shares the political-cultural values, traditions, and the same principles with EU members, so there is no clashing structural definition between Norway and the EU.

For Respondent I the objective of the Norwegian JHA policy is "to cooperate closely with the EU almost everywhere possible. That's why we sign lots of agreements with the EU like Schengen, Europol, Eurojust". Regarding the EU's JHA policy objectives, he argued that:

there are many principles we share like the same way of thinking, the same political principles and ideals. So we have few problems with adjusting to the EU's way of thinking and way of working, and there is a total similarity between EU and Norway in JHA policy.

Regarding the structural adaptation and harmonization, he argued that

Norwegian participation in the Schengen area is very easy and it has very smoothly impacted on Norway. There are no problems and political discussions. Therefore, Schengen cooperation from Norwegian side is perceived as very successful.

This confirms the hypothesis that situation of fit leads to easy and smooth harmonization.

Respondent I's performance fusion value is political influence ("having voting right in the EU"), political fusion value is intergovernmental ("respect for Norway's status as a non-member"), and compound fusion value is positive ("there is very close, open, and good-minded cooperation and relationship between various players").

His perception of EU methods is not positive ("compared to Norwegian system, EU methods are very bureaucratic and very legal"), and he still prefers Norwegian methods ("I still prefer the Norwegian way of doing things as a lawyer and

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<sup>42</sup> Tanil, *Europeanization*, 154.

ministerial civil servant"). When asked if he perceives any change due to close cooperation and intense involvement in JHA policy, he argued that "I do not think so". Therefore, there is no evidence of ideational socialization in this case: he is not influenced by the EU methods, and he is not influenced by the EU values and ideas.

Respondent II defined Norwegian identity with a reference to "being a small country at the outskirts of Europe, traditionally living on fishing and agriculture, being an important energy nation, and having a good economy". She defined EU's political cultural traditions as "comprising many different cultures".

Comparing Norwegian and EU JHA policy objectives, Respondent II argued that "Norway rarely has diverging views from other member states in JHA policy area; we mostly agree with the EU's policy objectives and perceive them as useful". When she was asked to compare Norwegian and EU policy methods, Respondent II argued that "EU methods are working quite sound and fine" and that "I do not perceive any significant difference between the two".

Respondent II's performance fusion value is political influence ("it could be a benefit for Norway to be an EU-member to achieve complete cooperation in JHA area"); political fusion value is intergovernmental; compound fusion value is positive ("there are very good relations between Norwegian and EU institutions and actors").

Respondent II learnt only the policy details and working methods of the EU institutions and processes. But she has not learned from the EU ideas and values because "the EU ideas are common to all European states". There is no evidence for ideational learning and change in this case.

Respondent III perceives a significant difference between Norwegian and EU structures:

we all have experience from the Scandinavian way of doing things which is partly informal and partly continental. We do not have formal ties whereas the EU is centralistic and very formal; we do things in our own pragmatic ways; we come from transparent societies; and we do not need all these EU rules and regulations saying us to do things differently.

Respondent III's performance fusion value is political influence ("it is frustrating to sit in Oslo and work with this business from outside because a lot of political interaction happens in Brussels and we are totally left out of the political dynamism that is going on here"); political fusion value is intergovernmental; compound fusion value is positive because both parties "work in cooperation and interaction". Regarding the structural adaptation and harmonization, he argued that "the EEA Agreement influences us quite clearly, and it is beyond dispute that it is extremely important for us politically and legally".

The EU methods have no impact on Respondent III: "The technicalities of the EU business are foreign for a Scandinavian. For this reason there is quite a lot of scepticism towards Brussels in Norway". But the EU values and ideas have considerable impact on Respondent III: "It is extremely important for Norwegian civil servants to come to Brussels and take part in meetings because that shapes their own view of Europe and international cooperation". For him, working in Brussels influences national civil servants "by giving them certain insight on the EU processes". So, notwithstanding the clashing structural perceptions, there is certain amount of ideational socialization in this case.

Respondent IV perceives Norwegian political tradition closely linked to the Nordic tradition and significantly different from the EU: "In the Nordic or Norwegian way, we have a practical approach to problems and tasks whereas in the EU they have a very formal way of approaching it". He perceives Norwegian and EU JHA policy objectives the same:

Our objectives are to catch the criminals, and prevent crime and terrorism. In this policy field objective of any country is not different, in fighting crime everybody has the same interest.

Respondent IV's performance fusion value is political influence ("In my field of work it is definitely becoming more and more important for us to take part in this cooperation"); political fusion value is intergovernmental; compound fusion value is positive ("there is a good degree of political influence by taking part in the policy discussions in the Mixed Committee").

Regarding the structural adaptation and harmonization, he argued that:

there is implementation of a considerable part of the EU JHA acquis in Norway through the Schengen agreement. There is also a good degree of cooperation and harmonization existent not only in the Schengen context but also in the field of police cooperation through certain agreements.

Working in Brussels and the intense involvement in EU institutions and meetings taught him the speed of decision-making processes in the EU, and impacted on his way of doing things: "I learned that everything goes very fast here, and there is need to adapt to this high speed which I was not aware of before coming here". However, working in Brussels had no impact on his policy preferences: "the policy objectives are the same whether we work back home or work here". Therefore, there is little evidence for ideational learning in this case.

There are a few conceptual implications of these empirical findings. The first hypothesis is that domestic structure impacts on national actors' ideas, identities

and interests about that policy area. Empirical findings show that in all cases perception of Norwegian and EU structures are similar (they share the same political-cultural values) but working methods and way of doing things are perceived different (the Nordic way of doing things and informal methods versus centralized, bureaucratic and formal EU working methods). This perception impacts on national actors' ideas about JHA policy objectives and methods: in all cases they perceive Norwegian and EU JHA policy objectives similar and compatible, whereas they (except for Respondent II) perceive policy methods different. As a result, there is easy structural adaptation and harmonization of institutions, legislations, and policies; but at the actor-level, refutation of applying EU methods in carrying out everyday work is evident. The empirical findings validate this hypothesis.

The second hypothesis is that national elite's attributes (ideas, identities, interests) impact on their EU-attitudes (fusion values). Empirical findings show that similar and positive perceptions of EU ideas and objectives give way to positive EU-attitudes. All respondents find EU-membership beneficial for Norway's political participation in the decision-making process, all of them prefer intergovernmental cooperation with the EU, and all perceive close and positive interactions between Norwegian and EU institutions and actors. This empirical finding validates this hypothesis.

The third hypothesis is that Europeanization impacts on national elite's ideas, identities, interests, and policy choices. Empirical findings show that there is little impact of European values, ideas, methods, and way of doing things on Norwegian national actors in JHA policy area. Notwithstanding their protracted and intensive contact with the EU institutions and actors, the respondents do not experience a considerable ideational learning, changing their ideas, identities, interests, and policy choices. This empirical finding refutes this hypothesis in this case study area.

**Table 1: Analysis of interviews with Norwegian national officials in JHA policy**

	<b>Respondent I</b> (National civil servant- Oslo)	<b>Respondent II</b> (National civil servant- Oslo)	<b>Respondent III</b> (Transnational civil servant- Brussels)	<b>Respondent IV</b> (Transnational civil servant- Brussels)
Job title	Deputy Director General	Deputy Director General	Counsellor	Counsellor
Work experience	10 years	6 years	7 years + 2 years in Brussels	10 years + 2years in Brussels
Definition/ perception of Norwegian structure	Rural values, rural identity	Small country at the outskirts of Europe, traditional living on fishing and agriculture, good economy	Scandinavian tradition, direct, unsophisticated, informal working methods	Nordic tradition, practical working methods
Definition/ perception of EU structure	Peace project, human rights, stability and welfare (similar)	Close cooperation between different sovereign states (similar)	Centralistic and very formal, not democratic and transparent enough (different)	Very formal (different)
Norwegian and EU JHA policies	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Structural adaptation and harmonization	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Performance fusion	Political influence	Political influence	Political influence	Political influence

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Political fusion	Intergovernmental	Intergovernmental	Intergovernmental	Intergovernmental
Compound fusion	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Learning from work experience	International dialogue is interesting and fruitful, cooperation with European partners is important	Working methods of the EU and its institutions	Insight on the EU processes	The need to adapt to the speed of EU procedures
Impact of EU working methods	No influence	Positive influence	No influence	Positive influence
Impact of EU ideas and objectives	No influence	No influence	Positive influence	No influence
Ideational socialization	None	Slight	Slight	Slight

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The final hypothesis is that situation of norm fit provides the ideal condition for structural adaptation, harmonization and actor-level ideational socialization. Empirical findings show that the situation of norm fit in JHA policy area gives way to easy adaptation and harmonization, but it does not give way to a considerable amount of ideational learning for Norwegian national actors. This empirical finding refutes this hypothesis in this case study area.

It was a theoretical argument that intense work experience in the EU atmosphere may cause a change in attributes and attitudes of the transnational civil servants. However, when the national civil servants and transnational civil servants interviewed here are compared, the result is that working in Brussels gave both transnational civil servants certain insight on the EU processes and policies, enabled them understand and appreciate the importance of working in the EU atmosphere and cooperate with other colleagues from different EU countries to achieve desired common objectives, but it did not cause them change their attributes and attitudes.

## 6. Conclusion

This article offers a merger of social constructivist approach and fusion perspective to explain and account for Europeanization at actor level. The empirical study applied this approach to Norwegian policy-makers in JHA policy area. The selection of a non-member country was justified by the fact that "although not having membership status, the EEA countries are affiliated to the EU in very substantial ways. So, the EEA countries are to be treated like Member States as far as the preparatory stages of the legislative process are concerned".<sup>43</sup> Norway might be at the periphery of the EU, "however regarding those policy fields encompassed by the Agreement, it is integrated to the same extent as full members are as far as policy harmonization is concerned."<sup>44</sup>

The empirical research gave interesting results: When it comes to adaptation of national legislation and other policy changes at the structural level, the impact of the EU and the Schengen Agreement is most evident. However, at the actor level, there is only slight ideational socialization. The theoretical arguments, hypotheses and empirical methods of social constructivist fusion perspective defined and discussed in this article can be applied to all EU-member and non-member countries. The assumption here is that both domestic structure and EU structure have an inevitable impact on the national elite in any national context, although the level of this impact may vary. Given the diversity of different states, the complexities of asymmetrical EU participation, and different domestic conditions affecting national policy-makers in different ways, not all aspects of this approach may have

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<sup>43</sup> Egeberg and Trondal, "Differentiated Integration in Europe," 133.  
<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 134.

the same resonance in all cases. Empirical analysis of national elite's ideas, identities, interests and EU-attitudes might cause empirical difficulties in certain cases because the researcher has nothing to do but to accept that the given answers are correct and to the best of knowledge of the respondent. Evasive responses, or in some cases unwillingness to respond to some or all questions, may jeopardize the integrity and reliability of the empirical investigation.

However, given that all European states have mature democracy, transparency, open dialogue, freedom of speech and espouse other liberal democratic values, such drawbacks should not be expected to discourage future researchers. Finally, it should be noted that a working theory should be the one applied on many different instances and still be able to provide reliable and comparable empirical results. The social constructivist fusion perspective has been applied only on Norwegian national elite in JHA policy area here. It needs to be applied in other countries, other policy areas, and other types of national elite, in order to be declared as a theory with working and reliable hypotheses and empirical methods. After a few more applications on different case study areas, there would be a good amount of data to compare and contrast. Only in this way, we may analyze the real value of the impact of Europeanization at actor level in different national contexts and in different policy areas.

In conclusion, this approach has something to offer for future research and calls upon fellow researchers of European integration to give due consideration to a social constructivist fusion approach when conducting their own investigations. We suggest that the EEA countries deserve scholarly attention for the study of Europeanization impact. Knowledge about such semi-member states may also attract the interest of practitioners from both countries striving for membership and countries eager to relax their relationship with the EU.

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