

Coordination Committees in European Parliaments

Their Agenda-setting Powers and Internal Decision-making Procedures

Introduction

Most parliaments delegate important decisions on the content and timing of their agenda to specific bodies, which we call “coordination committees” (e.g., the President’s Council in the Austrian Parliament and the Conference of Presidents in the European Parliament). CCs play a crucial role in coordinating parliamentary business and bridging diverging interests of party groups.

The research project “**Coordination Committees as Parliamentary Agenda Setters**” analyses the decision-making within CCs and maps their agenda-setting powers comparatively across European democracies.

For information on the project scan the QR code on the right



How many members of the CC do formally need to vote for a proposal for it to be accepted?	How consensual or conflictive is decision making in the CC in practice?				
	Very conflictive	Rather conflictive	Neither consensual nor conflictive	Rather consensual	Very consensual
More than half of the voting members (simple majority)		CH	FI LV SI	LU(BU), LU(CP) PT(CL) EU LT(SV) RO(BC), RO(CL) CZ	EL
Qualified majority		IT		LT(SS)	
All members (unanimity)				AT IE	

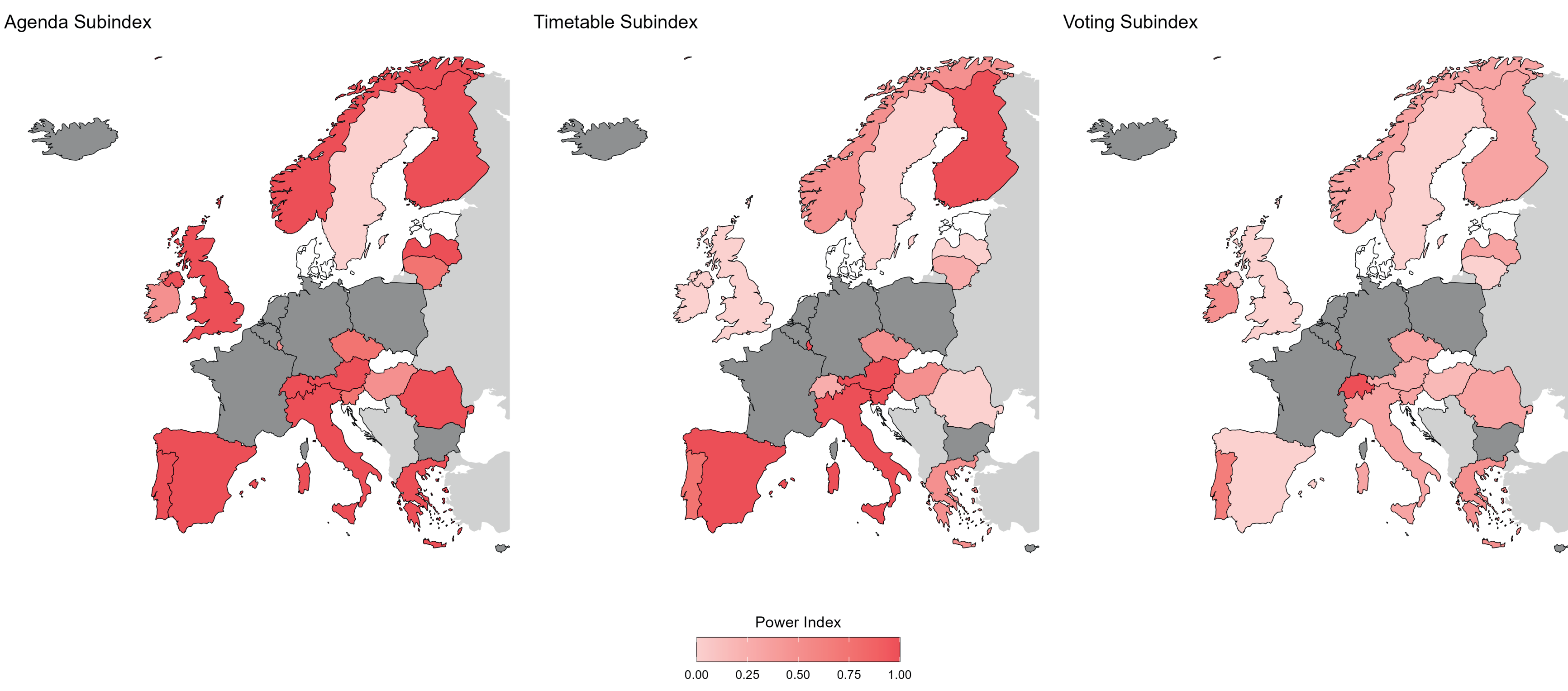
Decision-Making

CCs make collective decisions raising two crucial questions:

- What are their **internal decision rules** (e.g. majority requirement)?
- How **conflictive or consensual** are decisions in practice and what drives these patterns?

Coordination Committees?

A coordination committee (CC) is a **permanent** formal parliamentary body that in holds powers in the area of **agenda setting** and **coordinating** the political aspects of parliamentary business. A CC usually includes the president of the parliament and a number of other actors so that **all main opinions** in the chamber are represented. The members of the CC hold formally **co-equal powers** in making collective decisions.



A Survey

We study agenda-setting powers and decision making in CCs through an expert survey in **31 European parliaments** (running Dec. 2022 – August 2023). The survey contains combination of open and closed questions and reveals aspects that are only loosely regulated in parliamentary standing orders.

Measuring Agenda-Setting Powers

We measure the agenda-setting power of CCs with a newly-created CC Power Index, consisting of three equally weighted sub-indices on three dimensions of agenda-setting:

- (Topical) **Agenda Sub-Index**: Does the CC impact the topics dealt with during the plenary sessions; can it place topics on the agenda?
- **Time-table Sub-Index**: Does the CC set up an annual schedule of plenary sittings; can it decide upon question time?
- **Voting Sub-Index**: Does the CC decide the voting procedure in plenary, the distribution of speaking time in plenary; the order of speakers in floor debates?

Findings

The survey shows that the **powers of CCs vary greatly** between parliaments and the dimensions of agenda-setting. While most CCs have impact on the plenary agenda, only some are powerful in terms of the time-table of plenary and only few have a strong impact on voting and speaking times in plenary.

CCs make their decisions by **simple or qualified majority rules**. Irrespective of the voting rule, most of them **decide rather consensually** in practice. Future work in the project will explore the basis for these consensual practices and relate decision-making to CCs’ formal powers.

