B2.1 Intra-party Heterogeneity and its Political Consequences in Europe

Directors/ Marc Debus
Researchers/ Markus Baumann, Jochen Müller (Greifswald)
Funding/ DFG

Project outline

This project aims at
- enhancing the notion of parties being unitary actors,
- measuring ideological heterogeneity within parties, and
- exploring the causes and consequences of intra-party heterogeneity.

Theoretical framework:
In our attempt to assess varying levels of intra-party heterogeneity, we take into account
- theories on political socialisation,
- the principal-agent approach,
- incentives stemming from institutional constraints (e.g. electoral systems).

Data and methods:
- Individual features of MPs and ministers
- Parliamentary speeches (analysed with computerised methods)
- Co-sponsorship of bills
- Legislative voting behaviour

Cases:
- Austria
- Czech Republic
- Estonia
- Finland
- Germany
- Ireland
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Sweden

Recent publications and working papers:

An overview based on three studies

MPs’ personal attitudes affecting their behaviour in the decision on pre-implantation diagnostics (PGD) in the German Bundestag in 2011
- Behaviour of MPs is influenced by partisan issues and constituency preferences...
- …and by their personal traits such as religious denomination, gender, and parental status.

Above: Catholic MPs communicated more restrictive standpoints regarding PGD in their legislative speeches.

Left: The likelihood of co-sponsoring a more permissive regulation depends on church attendance in the constituency. Furthermore, personal characteristics have a significant impact.

2001 Irish debate on abortion
- Not followed by a free-vote
- Party-cohesive voting behaviour
- Analysing speeches reveals diverging positions
- Cabinet members adopted more conservative positions than did MPs from the government parties not holding cabinet offices

Allocation of speaking time to issues and individual MPs in Sweden, Norway and Ireland

Right: Unequal allocation of speaking time: Varying dominance of frontbenchers during the electoral term, depicted by using Lorentz curves

Left: MPs’ presence on the floor depends on the policy area at stake: Most parties have a gender-specific division of labour in parliamentary debates; women speak more often on “soft” issues, whereas men speak more frequently on “hard” issues.

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.