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Coordination Processes in International Organisations: The EU at the International Labour Conference in 2005

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Abstract

The EU is not a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), but relatively elaborate EU coordination takes place anyway. This paper addresses two research questions: 1) How is it possible to evaluate the coordination of the EU in its specific observable configuration in the ILO?, and 2) To what outcome does this coordination lead and why? Based on an analysis of EU coordination before and during the International Labour Conference in 2005, and on a comparison with coordination processes of the IMEC group, it is found that the Commission and the Presidency act as twin-agents vis-à-vis their principals, the Member States. The Commission is the leading agent in the phase leading up to the Conference; the Presidency then takes over.

On the one hand, due to the Treaty obligations and their interpretations by the Court of Justice, both the Presidency and the Commission are kept within tight limits by the principals. On the other hand, both before and during the Conference, the Member States accept the so-called discursive coordination of the Commission, which seems to be of great (but often neglected) importance. Owing to the organisational set-up in which coordination takes place, the EU is able to coordinate relatively elaborate agreements due to the strength of its coordination as far as professional or technical and political activities (excepting the ILO budget) are concerned. In other more clear-cut or 'simple' policy areas such as the ILO budget, the EU coordination is weak: this contrast with the strong coordination of the IMEC.

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Coordination Processes in International Organisations: The EU at the International Labour Conference in 2005^(*)

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1. Introduction [↑]

In spite of the fact that the European Union (EU) is not – and cannot become – a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), EU coordination processes play a significant role both before and during the main ILO event, the three week long International Labour Conference held every year in Geneva. The simple question which is addressed in this paper is: how?

Assuming that coordination encompasses more than bargaining and negotiation (even though these two phenomena play a role in the processes), this paper will identify the factors that influence the outcome of these processes when international organisations (1) attempt to coordinate their policies in relation to other international organisations. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the debate about EU policy coordination in international organisations.

Based on a combination of coordination theory (Malone and Crawston 1991; 1993), principal agent theory (Pollack 2003, Damro 2007), and theories about 'discursive coordination' (Hajer 1995; Nedergaard 2007a), a range of propositions relating to the factors that influence coordination processes and outcomes in international organisations is developed. The propositions are first and foremost examined by a qualitative analysis of the coordination processes in the EU in relation to the ILO, but also through a tentative comparison with similar processes in the IMEC group, also in relation to the ILO. The ILO is chosen because it does not – as an international organisation established before World War II – recognise international organisations in its statute, but only states. The fact that the EU is not represented at the International Labour Conference means that it cannot take for granted that it is in charge of the coordination processes amongst its Member States (2). On top of that, the employers' and workers' delegations which are, in contrast, well represented at the Conferences, often react negatively to strong EU coordination (Johnson 2005: 159). Hence, an analysis of EU coordination in the ILO is a sound test of its strength in international organisations because it is, to a certain degree, coordination against all odds. In short, it is therefore reasonable to assume that the EU coordination processes seen in the ILO can be found in all international organisations where EU Member States are represented.

The qualitative analysis draws on detailed information from participating officials and numerous documents concerning the policy coordination among the EU Member States, particularly before and during the ILO's three-week International Labour Conference in Geneva in June 2005. This is the most coordination-demanding event in the ILO, and it is therefore one which fits the purpose of this paper (see Johnson 2005: 148, 161). It will be suggested that the nature of the relationship between members of the international organisation and the coordinating agents to which the authority to facilitate the coordination process has been delegated, along with the ability of coordinating agents to act as discursive coordinators, are both of great significance.

[Section 2](#) outlines a theoretical framework on the basis of which a range of propositions concerning factors that influence the outcome of the coordination process are formulated. [Section 3](#) adapts the theoretical framework to the specific situation in which the EU coordinates its policies in relation to the ILO. In [Sections 4](#) and [5](#) the coordination process that took place both before and during the International Labour Conference is analysed. [Section 6](#) offers a comparison of EU coordination with that of the IMEC, which constitutes a contrasting setting for international policy coordination at the 2005 ILO International Labour Conference. [Section 7](#) is the conclusion of the paper.

2. Theory and Propositions [↑]

In order to analyse the factors that influence the outcome of coordination processes, a framework is presented which modifies coordination theory (Malone and Crowston 1991; 1993) to better fit power relations in the political world by capturing the impact of both horizontal bargaining processes and regulated vertical power relations between principals and agents. It is suggested that, within the room for manoeuvre allowed by formally regulated principal-agent relations, discursive entrepreneurship must be included in order to account for the ability of coordinating actors to facilitate compromise and consensus.

Coordination problems in a narrow sense have been analysed as coordination games, which include various conventions about social behaviour. However, it is not possible to analyse most practical coordination problems as games (Mueller 2003: 14-16). Coordination problems in a broader sense have been dealt with by a few scholars who have also developed a general coordination framework as a body of principles about how activities can be coordinated (e.g. Malone and Crowston 1991, 1993), and this framework is used in this paper in an attempt to take the general study of practical coordination further. There appears to be a need for more research in coordination problems in the broad sense of the word.

The questions that this coordination framework tries to answer are the following: how are overall goals subdivided into activities? How are resources allocated among these activities? How are activities assigned to groups or to individual actors? How is information shared among different actors to help achieve the overall goals?

According to a broad definition, coordination means 'the act of working together'. Thus there must be one or more actors performing some activities that are directed toward some goals. By the word 'together', the definition implies that the activities are not independent. Instead, they must be activities carried out by actors that in a way help to achieve the goals. These goal-relevant relationships between the activities are called interdependencies.

In [Table 1](#) below the relevant components and the coordination processes associated with them are summarised.

[Table 1](#)

According to the proposed framework, all four components – goals, activities, actors and interdependencies – are necessary for a situation to be analysed in terms of coordination.

Efficient coordination occurs when an agreement based on compromise or consensus is reached with regard to all four dimensions concerning the issue at hand. Note that the ability to reach an agreement does not in itself necessarily indicate a high quality coordination process. Coordination

can result in various kinds of agreements that are more or less elaborate. Efficient coordination generally results in elaborate agreements that include all four dimensions. Less elaborate agreements can be the expression of a coordination process in which informed actors agree to disagree on most substantial dimensions.

A couple of examples from the ILO's International Labour Conferences will illustrate the point. The 2004 Conference's deliberations on the topic of 'migrant workers' (migration) are an illustration of this type of efficient coordination. The EU succeeded to a large extent in finding common ground in determining the ILO's goals and mandate in relation to migrant workers. There are numerous examples of less efficient EU coordination which, taken to extremes, has sometimes meant that it has been reduced to an exchange of information on the respective Member States' national positions, or that all attempts at any further coordination have been abandoned. An example of such a 'failure' is the inability of the EU Member States to reach an agreement on a common approach to the treatment of the 'Employment Relationship' topic at the ILO's 2003 International Labour Conference.

However, there are also important power relations in the coordination processes which are neglected by the coordination theory presented above. These are handled through bargaining and delegation, which must therefore be included in order to analyse coordination processes in the political world. Bargaining occurs in relation to power distribution among the different decision-making units at the same hierarchical level, whereas delegation takes place in connection with power distribution across different hierarchical levels, either as part of the policy that is to be coordinated, or as an element in the coordination process itself. The latter occurs when the competency to coordinate a series of policies is delegated to an agent that then takes on the role as facilitator. For example, in the case of the EU, the competency to facilitate coordination is often delegated to the Commission or the Presidency. At the same time, as mentioned, coordination encompasses more than bargaining and delegation processes. That is also why the concept of coordination is used by EU Member States and EU institutions to characterise the EU's performance at the International Labour Conference, as well as in other international organisations.

In accordance with mainstream political science, bargaining at the same hierarchical level is studied in this paper both in the institutional context within which the process occurs, and with the focus on the interests of the actors involved, the means of communication of bargaining moves, and the methods of completion of the process. However, other forms of bargaining will also be considered, when it takes place through intensive discussion and information about the 'acceptable' argumentative logics and storylines (e.g. also Hajer 1995; Nedergaard 2007a). In the case of the EU, the central actors in the bargaining processes that are involved in policy coordination are, obviously, representatives of the Member States, as it is their interests and argumentative logics that must be reconciled through compromise and consensus during the coordination process.

There is a huge collection of political science literature on delegation (and an even more voluminous literature in economics), e.g. Evans, Jacobson and Putnam 1993; Moravcsik 1993, as well as on the principal-agent theory on delegation in political systems, e.g. Thatcher and Sweet 2002; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Tallberg 2002; and Pollack 2003. In addition, some scholarly work has been conducted on, for example, delegation to international institutions acting within the framework of international organisations (Damro 2007) (3).

However, most of the relevant literature analyses the EU's role in international trade negotiations where the 1957 Treaty of Rome had already provided the Commission with authority to represent the Member States in GATT and, later, the WTO. One of the themes that this literature (e.g. Meunier and Nicolaïdis 1999) shares is that it tries to address the questions of whether the delegation of policy authority to the European level has varied over time, and whether the Member States have opposed an extension of the scope of delegation at some time but not at others. These questions are also important for this paper; however, they are placed in the different context of coordination processes. This line of literature also found that Member States generally do not control the Commission by way of tight mandate, but instead provide it with fairly imprecise directives. One reason for this is that Member States can (sometimes) exercise control at the ratification stage. Another lesson to be learned from the relevant literature is that it is in the Commission's interests to consult Member States early: this avoids reprimands at a later stage. In general, there seems to be consensus that the EU is often a much more effective actor in international trade negotiations than

has previously been thought. In his review of the literature, Dür (2006) invites more studies of societal actors' involvement in policy-making when it comes to the EU's role in international organisations. Obviously, the ILO is an "ideal" organisation to study in this respect.

There have also been some much less intensive scholarly studies of the EU's role outside the trade policy area. Laatikainen and Smith (2006) investigated EU coordination as a problem and an asset in international negotiations in the UN. The role of the EU within ILO has also been addressed by Johnson (2005). She found that the level of EU coordination varies considerably by issue area, and that it is related both to EU competences and to Member State preferences. It is most efficient in political matters, has mixed results in spheres of technical cooperation, and is weakest in the area of budgeting (Johnson 2005: 144) (4).

Elgström (2006) has also examined EU coordination in various international organisations. He found, among other things, that the EU has a high degree of so-called 'international actorness', both in an intergovernmental setting and in its dealings with the ILO. At the same time, he distinguished an increasing attempt by Member States to actually coordinate their activities in still more international organisations.

In this paper, two research questions are addressed: 1) How can the coordination of the EU in its specific observable configuration in the ILO be interpreted? 2) To what outcome does this coordination lead and why?

In order to answer these questions, 'delegation' is conceptualised within the principal-agent framework, where it is assumed to be inherently problematic because of the opportunistic behaviour of agents (i.e. agents want to maximize their own interests despite the preferences of their principals). Recent research has shown that in order to assess the nature of a delegation process, it is not enough to analyse the sanctioning measures of the possibility of strategic behaviour. Instead, one should also (and rather) be investigating the conditions under which delegation takes place, and the level of discretion allocated to the agent (cf. Pollack 2003).

Damro (2007) also examined the principal-agent approach and its usefulness when analysing the EU in international settings. He found that while the principal-agent approach seems well suited to evaluating international negotiations in regulatory policies such as competition, it appears to be less useful in analysing developments in distributive policies such as trade (Damro 2007: 833). In addition, Franchino (2004) in his principal-agent analysis on delegation found that in the EU the relationship between disagreement and discretion is a positive one as far as implementation of already made decisions is concerned. However, since coordination processes analysed in this paper are 'up-stream' decision-making processes and not 'down-stream' processes, we cannot necessarily expect to find the same logic in the context of this paper. In this respect, it is also important to note that the ILO mainly serves as an organisation dealing with regulatory policies; in fact, it has been characterised as a forum for the development and review of legislation that is adhered to on a kind of pick-and-choose basis by its Member States (Johnson 2005: 149).

Delegation of authority to carry out sub-tasks is often a factor in the coordination of a specific policy. In this paper, however, the focus is primarily on the delegation of coordination competency to coordinating agents who are then given the task of facilitating compromise and consensus. In the case of the EU, the most important coordinating agents are the Commission and the Presidency. They have been given the responsibility of facilitating the horizontal bargaining processes that are involved in EU coordination.

The literature on delegation has shown that the degree of discretion allowed to agents (i.e. the Commission and the Presidency) by principals (i.e. Member States) depends on the latter's perceptions of potential agency problems. If the principals fear that agency drift is likely, or if the consequences of this are perceived as damaging to their core interests, the room for manoeuvre allowed to the agent is normally reduced (e.g. Damro 2007).

The room for manoeuvre left by the regulation of agents by principals defines the limits for the coordinating agents' task as facilitators of compromise and consensus. Within the limits, the agent performs a variety of functions, ranging from information distribution, facilitation of compromise via

mediation of strategic interests in the process of bargaining between actors on the same hierarchical level, and 'discursive coordination' via the formulation and promotion of argumentative logics and storylines (Hajer 1995, 2002; Nedergaard 2007a). Discursive coordination is important “on the grounds that the storylines binding discursive coalitions together must constantly be produced and reproduced at the European level, as they are not assumed to be a direct function of domestic pressures and interests stemming from within Member States” (Nedergaard 2007a: 700).

Hence, efficient coordination processes depend both on the ability of the coordinating agent to facilitate compromises and to formulate perceptions and solutions that resonate not only with the Member States but also with other actors in the subsequent bargaining process (in the case of the ILO Conference, the social partners, in particular).

The ability of the coordinating agent, however, does not only depend on the room for manoeuvre that is determined by the conditions in which delegation of authority has been initiated. The organisational resources of the coordinating agent significantly affect the range of activities that can be carried out. Accordingly, number and skills of employees, access to information about problems at hand, the positions of its principals and effective channels of communication affect the ability of the agent both to coordinate policies and to formulate unifying argumentative logics and storylines. Another factor that, despite its common sense nature, must be emphasised because of its practical importance is time constraints. Both the ability to negotiate compromises between actors with diverging strategic interests and to formulate narratives can be expected to be significantly hampered accordingly when significant time constraints apply.

Based on the framework presented above, four general propositions concerning factors that affect the outcome of coordination in international organisations can be formulated. In addition, one further proposition relating to the effect of the rules and procedures of the international organisation in which the bargaining ultimately takes place must be included. All in all, these five propositions can contribute to answering the two basic research questions in this paper.

2.1. Proposition 1: The nature of principals ↑

In international organisations, the actors whose activity is to be coordinated can have more or less homogeneous interests and perceptions of the issues involved. As has been seen in the research of the EU's role in international trade negotiations (e.g. Dür 2006), the degree of homogeneity will affect the potential for success both directly - through increasing or decreasing the challenges that are involved in achieving compromise and consensus - and indirectly, through the effect it has on the nature of delegation. The less homogeneous the actors (or principals), the more likely it is that they will want to keep agents on a tight leash and thus seek to reduce the discretionary powers of the agents when delegating authority. Hence, a high degree of homogeneity among members of the international organisation increases the potential for elaborate coordination agreements, both directly, as compromise and consensus are more easily reached, and indirectly, as it is likely to allow a broader and deeper delegation of coordination competencies to a coordinating agent.

2.2. Proposition 2: The nature of issues to be coordinated ↑

The homogeneity and intensity of actors' interests and perceptions vary according to the issue at hand (e.g. Damro 2007). In some spheres, actors have heterogeneous interests and perceptions, which make coordination more challenging. In other areas that touch on national interests or understandings that are deeply embedded in the national context, it will be more difficult to coordinate policies, and actors will be hesitant in delegating coordination competency to an agent. Hence, in accordance with historical institutionalist accounts on path dependency (Campbell 2004: 23-27), in issue areas where members of an international organisation have either very different or very intense interests and perceptions, coordination agreements are likely to be less elaborate.

2.3. Proposition 3: The nature of the delegation to coordinating agents ↑

The nature of the vertical relationship between principals and agent(s) determines the room for manoeuvre of the coordinating agents and thus the range of tasks they can assume in the coordination process (Pollack 2003). The room for manoeuvre is constituted by the degree of

discretion the coordinating agent has both in establishing working groups, for example, and also in the amount of freedom enjoyed (or not) in the decision making process. In general, it is proposed that the greater the room for manoeuvre for the coordinating agent, the greater the likelihood of elaborate coordination agreements being reached.

2.4. Proposition 4: The nature of the agent(s) ↑

The nature of the agents also affects their ability to facilitate coordination. Abundance or scarcity of organisational resources such as staff, knowledge, communication channels or time will increase or decrease the capability of the coordinating agents to achieve compromise or consensus through information distribution, facilitation of compromise and formulation or unifying argumentative logics or storylines. Hence, it is expected that the greater the organisational resources and time of the coordinating agent, the more likely it will be that elaborate coordination agreements are reached.

2.5. Proposition 5: The nature of the international organisation ↑

Finally, the coordination process in international organisations is also affected by rule and procedures in the international organisation in which bargaining ultimately takes place (e.g. Johnson 2005). It is difficult to predict the impact of regulatory arrangements in international organisations on the coordination processes in supranational organisations a priori. Rather, the effects of such regulation must be assessed through concrete analysis.

The propositions presented above will be examined through a qualitative analysis of the regulatory setting ([Section 3](#)) that exists concerning EU coordination in relation to the ILO and its connection to the coordination processes that occurred both prior to and during the 2005 ILO Conference ([Sections 4 and 5](#)). Thereby, Section 3 mainly examines the coordination of the EU in its specific observable configuration in the ILO (research question number 1), whereas Sections 4 and 5 focus on the outcome of the EU coordination before and during the ILO Conference (research question number 2). In addition, the results will be contrasted with a brief analysis of coordination processes carried out in the IMEC group, also in relation to the 2005 ILO Conference ([Section 6](#)). The qualitative approach is chosen due to the preliminary nature of the investigations. A challenge for future research will be to develop ways of testing the propositions through quantitative analysis to enable large-n studies.

EU coordination in the ILO is an area encompassing many institutions and organs, all of which are presented and described in the [Appendix](#).

3. The Setting: EU Coordination in relation to the ILO ↑

The setting in which coordination of EU policies in relation to the ILO takes place has evolved over the last 20 to 30 years. It is the result both of developments in the EU's general organisational characteristics and of specific demands stemming from the constitution of the ILO.

One of the organisational strengths of the EU is that many of the goals and activities of its various actors are very well defined when facing an event such as the ILO International Labour Conference, due to a flexible and strong judicial system (Nedergaard 2007b). The Commission and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers act as agents on behalf of their principals (Pollack 2003). The respective roles of the Commission and the Council are defined in the Treaty. In the ILO outside the yearly International Labour Conference, the Commission represents the EU in areas that affect it ([5](#)). In other spheres and, due to the special constitution of the ILO ([6](#)), close cooperation between the Commission and the Presidency is necessary. In various issues under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that are especially relevant, the Presidency acts on behalf of the Council of Ministers. In the context of the 2005 ILO International Labour Conference, this required EU opinions to be issued in cases relating to Burma/Myanmar, Zimbabwe, and Colombia, for example.

However, the Presidency does not always have a clear mandate from the Council of Ministers. The time factor determines whether or not a reading in the Council is possible before the International Labour Conference takes place. The documents for the Conference are usually ready in March at the

earliest, which makes formal preparations in the EU system more difficult. The schedule for the Working Group for Social Affairs of the Council of Ministers is, moreover, very busy from March to May due to preparations for the June meeting in the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council. Hence, most often, but depending on the policy area, the Presidency is allowed, for practical reasons, a high level of discretion during the International Labour Conference, which is also due to the fact that its principals on the spot can most often control the Presidency during the Conference.

On the other hand, if an issue at the Conference might concern significant aspects of EU competency or EU policies, or when there is a clear and apparent potential for conflict between ILO and EU regulations or policies, urgent and extensive coordination meetings in the Working Group for Social Affairs (or other relevant working groups) of the Council of Ministers may be necessitated in order to identify common goals among the EU Member States before the Conference takes place.

The practice of involving the Council of Ministers before the Conference stems from the early 1990s. In 1992 and 1993, the Council discussed the upcoming Conferences according to a recommendation from the Commission regarding Conference negotiations on the prevention of major industrial accidents and part-time work (7). However, the Council of Ministers failed to reach any conclusions before the Conference.

Therefore, on 12 January 1994, the Commission presented a proposal for a Council of Minister's decision on the exercise of external Community competencies at the Conference in the areas that are within the scope of shared competencies between the EU and the Member States (cf. COM(94)2 final) (8). In other words, once and for all, the Commission wanted rules of delegation with regard to the yearly ILO International Labour Conference (9).

The proposal should be seen in the context of the European Court of Justice's 19 March 1993 opinion (opinion 2/91), which obliges the Commission and the Member States to cooperate closely on issues within the shared and exclusive competencies of the EU, i.e. in cases where there is a need to manage their interdependencies. The Council of Ministers did not conclude its discussions on the Commission's proposal. However, according to Commission sources, the proposal is used today in practice in EU coordination at the ILO.

The impact of both the proposal from the Commission and the opinion from the European Court of Justice signifies the importance for EU coordination in international organisations of both the Court and the Commission as actors in the EU decision-making processes, also in instances of non-decision-making by the Council of Ministers. In practice, COM (94)2 outlines the goals, activities, actors, and interdependencies of the EU's coordination during the International Labour Conference.

The Commission later unsuccessfully proposed strengthening EU coordination in the ILO (cf. COM (2003)526/F). However, Spain and Greece have expressed particular resistance to the Commission's proposal to the Council for strengthened EU competencies during the Conference. This is due to the fact that such measures could lead to various issues concerning fishing and maritime transportation – where Spain and Greece have strong national interests – having to be coordinated at EU level. Other Member States such as France, Germany and the UK have cited legal reasons for their opposition to EU coordination on ILO issues if under formal Commission leadership. France and Denmark have also opposed formal Commission coordination of submissions to the ILO (Johnson 2005: 160). Essentially, this illustrates the conditions under which delegation takes place during the ILO International Labour Conference, i.e. that delegation to the Presidency and the Commission are being kept within tight limits due to Treaty obligations and the Court of Justice's interpretations.

However, in the period leading up to the negotiations, EU coordination has a far greater role to play. In the phase before the ILO Conference, issues are presented at meetings between interested national experts. These sessions are summoned and funded by the Commission itself, pending approval by the Presidency or by meetings called by the Presidency via the Council of Ministers in close cooperation with the Commission.

As can be seen, in the EU the Commission and the Presidency almost act as twin-agents vis-à-vis their principals, the Member States: however, the Commission plays the role of leading agent until

the Conference starts and the Presidency then takes over. Hence, EU coordination vis-à-vis the Conference is also a question of managing interdependencies between the Presidency and the Commission. However, this is not so different from the daily 'agent coordination game' in Brussels (Nedergaard 2007b).

In sum, the relatively heterogeneous nature of the Member States generally results in the coordinating agents (Commission and Presidency) being kept on a tight leash, especially in areas where national interests of Member States are at stake. However, EU coordination with regard to the ILO can be understood as occurring in two distinct phases.

In the first phase leading up to the Conference, the resource-rich Commission plays the role of the coordinating agent. The Commission is a strong coordinating agent that has access to significant organisational resources and time. This allows it to function both as information provider and facilitator of compromises, and to act as a discursive coordinator. This should enable the Commission to coordinate elaborate agreements on policies prior to ILO Conferences. It is, however, relatively tightly regulated by the Member States, particularly in areas that touch on the important national interests of one or more of them and with regard to distributive policies such as budgetary matters. This significantly reduces the Commission's ability to guard its own autonomous interests.

In the second phase, the Presidency formally assumes the role as the coordinating agent, albeit with the assistance of officials from the Commission. The Presidency also has significant resources, even though communication channels and time in particular are scarce during the Conference. In addition, even though the Presidency formally has more discretion than the Commission, it is kept on an even tighter leash, as Member States on the spot act defensively towards attempts at coordination that affect their core interests. Accordingly, we cannot expect the Presidency to be able to solve coordination problems that arise during ILO Conferences as effectively as the Commission can prior to them. On the other hand, given the organisational resources available to the Presidency, it might be more effective than coordinating agents from other organisations (e.g. the secretariat of the IMEC group, see below).

The two phases of coordination are summarised in the overview table below.

Table 2

In general, the EU Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice have expanded the scope of issues that are relevant to the ILO and the EU's internal and external policies. This, for instance, applies to the strategies for employment and social inclusion, social dialogue, working conditions, and fundamental rights including non-discrimination (Hix 2005: 256-258). Hence, one could expect an increasing demand for pre-emptive EU coordination of ILO issues. This could also imply facilitating contacts to third countries and regions (industrialised as well as developing) via the International Labour Conference and other relevant meetings. However, many Member States see or act differently, and the increased relevance of the ILO for the EU is only reflected to a certain extent in their position vis-à-vis a strengthened EU coordination during the Conference.

On the other hand, the Commission *has* in more recent years strengthened its efforts in preparing for the Conference. However, as mentioned, the intensity of EU coordination before the Conference depends on the issues on the agenda. Issues that affect overall EU policies and strategies require extensive EU coordination. This is, for example, the case in occupational safety, gender equality, and non-discrimination – issues that affect the free movement of labour, informing and consulting employers, collective dismissals and corporate takeovers, as well as sector elements such as working conditions in the fisheries and maritime industries.

The same applies to issues of growing importance for EU policies towards various ILO initiatives, such as its *social dimension of globalisation* (i.e. interdependencies between economic, employment and social policies, trade and external relations, and cooperation) and the connection between the EU's employment strategy and the ILO's '*Decent Work*'. The Council for Employment and Social Policy thus approved conclusions on the social dimension of globalisation at a meeting on 3 March 2005. These have to a large extent contributed to strengthening the input of the EU (both the European Union and the Member States) into the ongoing ILO and UN debates as well as the ILO

initiatives regarding the social dimension of globalisation, 'Decent Work' and core labour standards.

At the same time, in the period leading up to the 2005 ILO International Labour Conference, the EU was in the process of strengthening its cooperation with the ILO (10). The 14 May 2005 exchange of letters between the ILO and the Commission, the 9 February 2005 European Social Agenda, and other relevant documents in the area of development policy, including the Commission's 13 July 2005 Communication (cf. COM (2005) 311 final) and the July 2004 strategic partnership in the area of development cooperation that is implemented through the 2001 exchange of letters, are all examples of this (11). On the other hand, more cooperation between the EU and ILO does not necessarily lead to strengthened EU coordination vis-à-vis the ILO at the yearly Conference. As noted earlier in this paper, EU coordination vis-à-vis the ILO Conference mainly takes place when either the Treaty or the European Court suggests it.

In addition, judging from information obtained from government representatives from the various Member States, it is clearly a shared experience that the scope and quality of EU coordination is increasing in intensity. Participants with long historical experience point out that a similar development was noted at the beginning of the 1990s, but that conditions changed in the mid-1990s due to resentment on the part of some Member States.

In short, there has been a real increase in EU coordination activities – at least since the mid-1990s – as well as a greater need for them. Obviously, the Commission has also strengthened coordination in the run-up to the International Labour Conferences, and all actors seem to be satisfied with that. However, due to the specific characteristics of the ILO Constitution, EU coordination at the Conference itself officially is left to the Presidency and its willingness and ability to coordinate at the event. At the same time, the Presidency as an agent is under the strict control of its principals during the Conference, with the Commission playing an important role as a behind the scenes coordinator.

4. EU Coordination Prior to the ILO International Labour Conference in 2005 [↑]

Section 4 (before the Conference) and [Section 5](#) (during the Conference) mainly follow an analysis of the research question about the outcome of EU coordination in 2005 and reasons for this.

As in previous years, general coordination among the EU Member States regarding the overall execution of the Conference as well as coordination in the areas of the different activities took place ahead of the 2005 Conference.

The goals of the ILO International Labour Conference may be divided into three activities:

- Procedural: Procedural questions regarding, for example, methods for selection of critical country cases (12), the rules of procedure of the Conference, and elections for the Governing Body of the ILO.
- Professional or technical: In 2005, these activities were occupational safety and health, work in the fisheries sector, promoting youth employment, and the Committee on the Application of Standards.
- Political: The budget of the ILO and specific country cases selected by the ILO's independent mechanisms of monitoring international labour market issues (e.g. the Committee of Experts and the Committee on Freedom of Association).

There was a great deal of intense coordination activity in the period leading up to the 2005 ILO Conference, primarily with the resource-rich Commission in the driver's seat. A number of preparatory meetings were held regarding each of the activities. In these sessions, there were discussions on the relevant Council of Ministers' decisions and EU regulations, and on possible issues relevant to the European area in the background reports to the committees at the Conference, professional or technical activities were of particular concern. The meetings on work in the fisheries sector and youth employment were held jointly in Brussels in May. These were called and funded by the Commission according to an agreement with the Presidency. The meeting on occupational safety and health was also held in Brussels in May during the week leading up to the Conference and was

organised in the same manner. However, due to practical reasons related to the working agenda of the Presidency, this session was placed on the fringes of the common preparatory meeting between the EU government representatives at the EU's Tripartite Advisory Committee.

Furthermore, there were informal exchanges on other relevant matters, such as political issues regarding Belarus, the ILO Convention no. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise in the light of the EU's examinations of the GSP system (13), and '*the social dimension of globalisation*', which was included in the Director General's report to the Conference. The Commission prepared an informational note with the intent of contributing to and facilitating EU coordination on these issues.

In addition, the branches of the Commission maintained close contact with the EU employers' and employees' representatives from the Member States. For some years, there has been a deliberate attempt by the Commission to deal with the resistance from these groups towards strong EU coordination at the ILO International Labour Conferences (Johnson 2005: 159). In relevant sectors with a functioning EU Sector *Social Dialogue*, committees have been formalised in areas such as fisheries and the exchange of information regarding ILO issues. In doing so, according to information from Commission officials, the Commission deliberately took the special set-up of the ILO into consideration. First and foremost, the Commission considers the tripartite set-up, which implies that ILO issues are to an increasing extent relevant to the social dialogue of the EU, as in, for example, the *Social Dialogue* sector committees. To enhance coordination, the Commission also maintains contact with the social partners in the EU as well as other international actors before the Conference and other relevant ILO meetings. The purpose of this intensive activity from the Commission prior to the Conference is to ease the bargaining processes at the Conference itself where the social partners' representatives are present. According to the Commission, the information process vis-à-vis the social partners contribute to a common understanding of the challenges facing the EU at the Conference. In other words, the intensive meeting and information activities arranged by the Commission are a kind of 'discursive coordination' which occurs through the creation of a community of participants who adhere to the same argumentative logic.

This logic may have been shared by the participating Member States at a certain level beforehand, but the Commission endowed the common stance with a specific framework that was shared by all Member States, corresponded to the EU's common interests, and meant that Member States' representatives used the same concepts and argumentative lines at the Conference. According to many participants in the ILO International Labour Conference, the Commission therefore has a much greater influence on EU coordination than is apparent when analysing its formal roles in the coordination process.

The Commission has the resources needed to coordinate interdependencies between various actors before the ILO Conference. Even though its role is defined formally, its resources enable it to actively facilitate compromise and consensus between its principals; it is able to work similarly with other actors on prime issues for other actors (i.e. social partners from the committees of employees' and workers' delegations) in order to coordinate a common position. This happens not only through compromise but also through the use of argumentative logics and storylines that appeal to the involved actors. The result is that very elaborate coordination agreements between Member States generally exist prior to the Conference. Essentially, the prior argumentative logic that the Commission promotes is based upon the idea of the so-called European social model, which denotes that free market forces shall be underpinned by strict regulations concerning all aspects of working conditions – ideally at the same level as within the EU. According to the Commission, this is equivalent to a so-called 'humanisation' of the economic globalisation processes.

5. EU Coordination at the 2005 ILO International Labour Conference [↑]

As mentioned in the introduction, EU coordination in the ILO is conducted in a special context compared to most other UN organisations (14). Most other international organisations identify and recognise relevant parties such as the EU when the latter's competencies are involved (cf. COM (2003)526/F). This is not the case in the ILO due to its age. In fact, the ILO was the only element of

the League of Nations to survive the Second World War, becoming in 1945 a specialised agency of the new United Nations (Johnson 2005: 147).

Hence, the Commission does not play any formal role at the ILO International Labour Conference. However, in recent years the Commission has lobbied with a view to achieving an independent status for the EU in the context of the ILO – yet with little success. As mentioned in footnote vii of this paper, the ILO's Constitution (Art. 2) still allows only states to be members of the organisation. The Commission thus lacks legal competence to champion EU interests during the Conference, and this has had a significant impact on EU coordination at the event (cf. [Section 2](#) above).

The Presidency is the formal representative of the EU during the three-week ILO International Labour Conference, leading EU coordination and acting as agent on behalf of the Member States. Its role encompasses preparing and initiating policy statements based on elements of overall EU policies, such as the Lisbon declaration. The Presidency also handles all logistics and practical tasks, calling and chairing meetings and exchanging information. The intensity and quality of coordination depends to some extent on the Member State holding the Presidency (cf. the power-of-the-chair thesis in e.g. Tallberg 2004). The Luxembourg Presidency maintained an exceptionally high level of coordination during the 2005 Conference. Recognising its limited knowledge of and interests in the Conference's activities on work in the fishing sector, Luxembourg, with no expertise whatsoever in fisheries policy, mapped out the activities beforehand and elected to leave coordination to the Netherlands.

Normally, the Presidency maintains contact with the ILO office and keeps it informed of latest developments, especially in the case of political issues (15). The Presidency also attempts to create good relationships with other ILO decision makers: *employers* and *employees*, thereby being at the cutting edge of opinions and strategies. The ILO Constitution implies that labour market parties may form a majority versus governments in the decision-making process, except when it comes to questions regarding the ILO budget. Hence, the formal and informal contacts between the Commission and the social partners of the European Union before the yearly Conference serve not only to accommodate the employers and employees, but also to improve the manoeuvrability of the EU and its Member States when negotiating during the Conference, if and when they are in accordance with their 'own' social partner representatives.

In relation to EU coordination at the Conference itself, the Commission anticipates indirectly through providing the Member States' representatives with information on overall EU policies in the relevant areas, in the same way as before the Conference. The Commission assists coordination efforts with information on Council of Ministers' decisions and conclusions in order to make the bargaining process among Member States as smooth as possible and to create a common EU understanding on the nature of the problems on the table. The Commission also offers its interpretation of relevant EU directives and regulations in relation to legal questions. A minor Conference task for the Commission's Representation in Geneva is to print and distribute EU submissions at the Conference.

Even though the Commission does not play any formal role during the Conference, it is still highly visible: 23 officials from the Commission took part in the 2005 Conference (16). The Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities also attended, as she had the overall responsibility for cooperation with the ILO. Normally, at least, the Commissioner and/or the Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities participate in part of the Conference's second week (the 'ministerial week') when the ministers of employment and labour attend.

EU coordination meetings during the Conference take place in the Council of Minister's Geneva representation, in the UN mansion, or in the ILO building. If Member States require interpretation, the meetings are held in the Council's representation, where suitable services are available. With an increasing workload in recent years, the options for leaving the Conference are limited. In consequence, there is a growing tendency to hold EU coordination meetings in English without any interpretation.

There are no formal requirements for EU coordination at the ILO International Labour Conference.

Some Presidencies prefer that their permanent UN Ambassador preside over the initial and general meetings, i.e. those concerning political issues where the UN delegations can utilise their significant expertise and also have an opportunity to examine the cases in connection with those brought before the Human Rights Commission or the UN's Economic and Social Council.

Due to relatively dated facilities at the Conference where access to electronic devices is scarce, ongoing communications between the Presidency and the Member States' embassies in Geneva has been established. When the EU criticises individual countries (in 2005: Burma/Myanmar, Belarus, Sudan, and Zimbabwe), coordination begins with a draft statement from the Presidency, which encompasses updated input from the Commission. During the coordination process, the representatives of the Member States clear the draft policy statements with the national authorities. Through the ongoing dialogue a consensus regarding the contents of the EU statement is established that can be interpreted in no other way than the Presidency being an agent under the strict control and permanent surveillance of its on-the-spot principals. The Presidency then makes the policy statement in the committee/in plenum on behalf of the EU.

The coordination processes vary according to the issues being dealt with. Professional or technical activities such as working environment, labour law, social law, and maritime affairs are usually covered by representatives from the ministries of the Presidency. The coordination of these issues differs to some extent from that of political activities, as the relevant national experts are present in Geneva and thus do not require the same degree of close contact with national ministries. The working routines of the technical committees therefore make greater demands on the discretion of the EU coordination, however, most often with experts from the Member States present in the committees: this again limits the actual discretion of the EU coordination. It is often difficult to predict, for instance, which parts of a draft convention will be discussed on a specific day of the Conference. Therefore, several daily EU coordination meetings concerning professional or technical activities are often scheduled.

With respect to professional or technical issues, the first priority is to establish the areas where Member States have the same positions, i.e. with a relevant EU regulation as a starting point. The Commission's representatives at the Conference contribute information on relevant regulations as well as EU policies in other multilateral forums in order to help the bargaining processes to run as smoothly as possible. However, time constraints apply which make it difficult to negotiate unforeseen problems, particularly when in relatively rare cases they affect the core interests of one or more Member States. Nevertheless, at least in this case study where the coordination attempts before the ILO Conference have also been analysed, technical matters are much more a part of the EU coordination than indicated in the analysis by Johnson (2005: 144).

In sum, due to the special constitution of the ILO, the Presidency is the primary coordinating agent at the Conferences, albeit heavily assisted by the Commission. Formally, the Presidency has wider room for manoeuvre than the Commission has prior to the conferences, but the principals (Member States) who are all present 'on-the-spot' keep it on a very tight leash: the de facto manoeuvrability of the Presidency is therefore significantly reduced, particularly in areas where the core interests of one or more Member States are at stake. The result is that most coordination processes function smoothly when they are based on prepared agreements facilitated by the Commission prior to the Conference. Coordination of unforeseen problems and issues that involve national interests are much more challenging, but the Presidency, with the aid of the Commission, is normally relatively efficient in managing them.

6. Comparison: Coordination in the EU and IMEC [↑]

It has now been established that the pre-Conference coordination of the Commission, as well as the efforts made by the Dutch substitute presidency, helped to ensure the relative efficiency of EU coordination at the 2005 ILO Conference (cf. [Section 5](#) above). In order to assess preliminarily the significance of the factors such as time, organisational resource, and the regulatory framework in which the coordinating agent is embedded, a comparison with policy coordination in the IMEC in relation to the 2005 ILO Conference will suffice. Thereby, the research questions given in [Sections 3](#) through [5](#) are also addressed, taking into account the five broad propositions about the outcome of the coordination processes. However, it should be noted that the comparison with the IMEC case is

difficult in advancing the argument for methodological reasons: both the independent variable (coordination in an international organisation) and the major explanatory variables (interdependencies of Member States, discursive coordination by coordinating agents) vary.

Traditionally, the so-called IMEC group has been the strongest coordinator during the Conference. IMEC is the agent for a group of countries consisting of the *Industrialised Market Economic Countries*. In other words, IMEC coordination functions as the strongest competitor to the EU Presidency coordination at the International Labour Conference. IMEC was formed in the late 1970s in reaction to the threatened departure of the US from the ILO (Johnson 2005: 164).

The composition of the IMEC group more or less corresponds to the make-up of the OECD. Due to the accession of the new EU countries to the IMEC group in the autumn of 2004, it is less homogeneous than the EU. As coordination happens by consensus at the Conference (17), it is a logical consequence that the scope of areas susceptible to IMEC coordination is smaller than that of the EU Presidency and that the coordination competencies delegated to the IMEC secretariat have remained very limited.

IMEC coordination is, as a starting point, only carried out in relation to *formal activities*: procedural questions, working methods, elections for the ILO's Governing Body, etc. Submissions may frequently be framed only in general terms and based on common goals regarding transparency, efficiency, decentralisation, and a result-oriented solving of tasks. The IMEC as an agent is therefore probably under even stricter control by its principals than the EU Presidency in the sense that fewer coordinating competencies are delegated to this organisation.

Concrete political cases related to specific countries are discussed in the IMEC framework, but common submissions are rarely produced. On the other hand, general IMEC submissions on political cases are produced, for example, when defending the monitoring system of the ILO (Committee of Experts and the Committee on Freedom of Association), where criticism from groups of countries that feel targeted on an unreasonable basis is countered. Similarly, general submissions on the ILO budget are produced, encouraging increased efficiency, greater focus on the ILO's core areas and decentralisation of the organisational structure.

The coordination of agreements within the IMEC group is to some extent delegated to the Canadian secretariat, which acts as the facilitator of compromise and consensus both prior to and during the ILO Conferences, albeit with much less intensity than the Commission and the Presidency of its EU counterpart. Compared with the Commission, its organisational resources and room for manoeuvre are limited: this weakens its efficiency in facilitating elaborate coordination agreements through compromise and consensus. Participants have noted, however, that in the IMEC meetings, the 'power of the argument' is perceived as dominant during the coordination. It is of less importance if a large country, such as the United States or Japan, supports the argument.

What determines whether the EU Presidency or IMEC gains the upper hand in the coordination of specific cases at the International Labour Conference? The EU's intensive coordination (more frequent and of longer duration than that of the IMEC because it starts several months before the Conference) implies that the ILO International Labour Conference activities are frequently addressed earlier and more thoroughly under EU auspices. At the same time, as agents of the EU Commission and the EU Presidency, EU Presidencies sometimes, at the Conferences, have had the habit of not informing the IMEC group of planned and delicately balanced EU submissions. A number of times this has led to IMEC members expressing frustration – after an EU submission – over not being able to support a motion, as well as over the fragmentation of the government group the EU thereby causes. So, in cases where preparation before the Conference is needed, the EU wins the 'coordination game'.

On the other hand, the strength of the IMEC group compared to the EU lies in its power over the ILO budget and guidance of the Canadian secretariat. When lack of organisational resources is not a huge problem, IMEC often stands to win the 'coordination game'. One example of such a victory can be seen in budgetary matters, when the issues discussed and the national interests involved are relatively clear.

The outcomes of the coordination processes in the EU and IMEC are quite different. Normally, the common positions reached in the IMEC group are not very elaborate in the sense that formulations are broad enough for all members to agree without significantly changing their initial stances. On the contrary, EU Commission coordination, particularly prior to Conferences, results in the creation of strategic compromises, unifying argumentative logics and storylines. This reflects both the fact that the IMEC is kept on an even tighter leash than the Commission and the Presidency and the Canadian secretariat's lack of resources needed to act as a discursive coordinator. The opposite is true with regard to the EU Commission and Presidency coordination processes, especially prior to Conferences.

7. Conclusion [↑]

This paper addresses two research questions: 1) How can the coordination of the EU in its specific observable configuration in the ILO be explained?, and 2) To what outcome does this coordination lead and why? In order to answer these two questions, relevant strands of social science theory presented at the beginning of the paper have served as the basis for the formulation of five broad propositions concerning the factors affecting the outcome of coordination processes in international organisations when operating in other international organisations. These propositions were examined with reference to EU coordination in relation to the 2005 ILO Conference and compared with coordination processes and outcomes of the IMEC group. It was shown that five broad factors influence the efficiency of the outcomes of coordination processes in international organisations.

Firstly, the degree of homogeneity among actors at the same hierarchical level significantly influenced both the challenges involved in reaching coordination agreements and the tasks delegated to coordinating agents. This was indicated in the comparison of the EU Presidency and IMEC coordination processes. The more heterogeneous nature of the IMEC group resulted in a diversity of interests and perceptions that was difficult to overcome in the coordination process, as well as in a reluctance to delegate coordination competency to the secretariat of the group, due to the fact that more preparations were needed than IMEC could deliver. In contrast, the EU Commission and Presidencies were able to coordinate more elaborate agreements, most importantly prior to the Conference when the Commission acted as the coordinating agent, but also during it, when the Presidency was formally in the driver's seat. On the other hand, when interests among the EU Member States differed and little coordination efforts were needed (such as on budgetary matters), the IMEC was likely to take over the coordination task.

Secondly, it was also clear that the potential for reaching elaborate agreements varied between issues according to the degree of divergence in interests and perceptions and the intensity with which they were held. It was noted that differences in interests and perceptions meant changes in EU coordination, as Member States were less willing to compromise and to delegate coordination competency when core interests were at stake.

Thirdly (and fourthly), coordinating agents were central to the coordination processes in both the EU and the IMEC. The greater room for manoeuvre of the Commission and Presidency compared to the secretariat of the IMEC group allowed them to play a much more active role both prior to and during the Conference. This helped to realise the potential for more elaborate coordination agreements among the EU Member States compared to the IMEC group. In addition, the resources available to the Commission allowed it to deliver a high degree of service when managing logistics and practical tasks in relation to the location and planning of meetings; it was also able to update drafts for EU submissions quickly. This facilitated the compromise and consensus formation that was needed for elaborate coordination.

Finally, the nature of the ILO constitution significantly affected the ability of the EU to coordinate its policies. This was particularly true during the 2005 ILO Conference, when the Commission was relegated to a seat on the bench while the Presidency assumed the role of primary coordinating agent, albeit with secretarial support from the Commission. It should, however, be noted that it is not clear whether or not the Commission would be allowed full discretion at the ILO Conference by its principals (the Member States), even if this was permitted by the ILO constitution.

Hence, the conclusion with regard to EU coordination in relation to the ILO is that the resource-rich

Commission (prior to Conferences) and the Presidency (at the Conferences) act as important coordinating agents through intense information distribution and facilitation of bargaining processes and unifying argumentative logics and storylines. Both the Commission and the Presidency act within a strict regulatory framework that is defined by its principals and varies over time according to their preferences. This results in relatively elaborate agreements on coordination of specific issues through compromise and consensus. The comparison with coordination processes in the IMEC group showed that the absence of a strong coordinating agent combined with a heterogeneous group of member countries results in much less elaborate outcomes.

The purpose of the paper was to develop and examine propositions concerning the factors that influence the efficiency of coordination in international organisations and to analyse the coordination processes in the EU in relation to the ILO Conferences. Due to the fact that a qualitative analysis could only be carried out for two international organisations, it is, however, difficult to assess the relative impact of single factors. Accordingly, a challenge for future research is to develop proxies that can be used to test quantitatively the propositions in large-n studies.

Generally, the strength of in-depth qualitative analysis of a small number of cases is, however, that the significance of a range of other factors that are not easily included in broader frameworks can be assessed, albeit on an ad hoc basis. Accordingly, significant additional observations in relation to the specific EU coordination processes in the ILO Conference were made.

The efficiency of EU coordination overwhelmingly depends on the initial preparations of the Presidency and the Commission, as well as on the Presidency representatives' ability to work for and achieve consensus during the ILO International Labour Conference. In this connection, the Presidency must be able to coordinate and manage the interdependencies stemming from the quite divergent views of the Commission and the Member States.

In addition, the analysis of the paper has shown that there is a sharp difference between EU coordination before and during the ILO International Labour Conference. In general, both the Presidency and the Commission are being kept within tight limits by the Member States due to Treaty obligations and their interpretations by the European Court of Justice. However, in the phase leading up to the Conference, EU coordination has a greater role to play. During this time, the Commission summons experts from the Member States to meetings in Brussels in order to discuss activities at the Conference relevant to the EU and to inform them about already adopted EU positions on various issues. This phase of coordination is also characterised by what could be called 'discursive coordination' with the Commission as the driving force.

In order for EU coordination to be efficient, it is important that the Commission maintains close contact with the labour market parties *before the Conference*. It is also central that the Presidency understands the significance of keeping in close contact with labour market parties *at the Conference* and utilises these contacts. An EU initiative would be devoid of any real significance if it had not been cleared with at least one of the parties in advance.

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Endnotes [↑]

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(1)The EU is both an international organisation (cooperation under the second and third pillars of the Nice Treaty) and a supranational organisation (first pillar of the Nice Treaty). However, in the following, I use the concept 'international organisation' to describe the EU even though the concept is not accurate.

(2)The Commission is only granted observer status at the ILO conferences (Johnson 2005: 148).

(3)See the overview article by Dür (2006) and the special issue of Journal of Common Market Studies (2007), Vol. 45, No. 4.

(4)Obviously, political and budgeting issues are separated by Johnson, whereas later in this paper they are grouped together.

(5)In the following, I use 'EU' also when I am referring to the 'European Community', i.e. the first pillar of the European Union.

(6)The ILO's 1919 Constitution is significant for the relations between the EU and the ILO. The ILO's conventions and recommendations are prepared, negotiated, and adopted according to the 1919 rules. However, this creates problems, as regional organisations such as the EU did not exist in 1919. The closest approximation is the special challenges of federal states.

(7)Cf. Commission: COM(92)473 final; Commission, SEC(93) 766 final; Council 6757/93 of 26 May 1993.

(8) Proposal for a Council Decision on the Exercise of the Community's External Competence at International Labour Conferences in Cases falling within the Joint Competence of the Community and its Member States; Com (94) final 12.01.94.

(9)However, interest in 'speaking with one voice' in the ILO can be traced back to the 1970s on the issue of transport.

(10)Even today, there are many common EU-ILO projects, especially concerning labour conditions in the developing countries. For an overview, check www.google.com using 'EU' and 'ILO' as keywords in the search process.

(11)Cf. exchange of letters:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/jun/131_en.html. [accessed 01/05/06]

(12) Critical country cases are those that could be subject to official criticism from the ILO.

(13) The GSP system is EU's 'generalised system of preference' about removal of tariff barriers in relation to developing countries.

(14)There are other conferences (e.g. the conference on endangered species of animals and plants, CITES) where only Member States are allowed as members and where the Commission therefore has played a subdued role (see Elgström 2006).

(15) The Presidency carries out EU coordination during the International Labour Conference with practical assistance from the Council of Minister's representation in Geneva.

(16) For instance, the proposal for a revised consolidated maritime convention requires the participation of several Directorates General: DG Energy and Transport (specifically: Directorate G: Maritime and River Transport) and DG Employment and Social Affairs (specifically: Direction G: Horizontal and International Issues, Direction D: Adaptability, Social Dialogue and Social Rights, and Direction E/3: Free Movement of Workers and Coordination of Social Security Schemes). The level of seniority of participants from the Commission depends on the issue and its relevance for the Community, varying from Director to Head of Department and to Head of Section with experience in the issue. The approval of formal proposals requires the participation of the Director-General and the Commissioners.

(17) EU decision-making is also inclined toward consensus, yet after a lengthy and reiterated negotiating process.

Table 1

Components of coordination

Components of coordination	Associated coordination processes
Goals	Identifying goals (e.g. goal selection)
Activities	Mapping goals to activities (e.g. goal decomposition)
Actors	Mapping activities to actors (e.g. task assignment)
Interdependencies	'Managing' interdependencies (e.g. resource allocation, sequencing, and synchronising)

Source: Malone, T.W., and K. Crowston (1991)

Table 2

Two phases of EU coordination before and at the International Labour Conference in 2005.

	Principals	Primary agents	Most important factors determining EU coordination	Alternatives to EU coordination
First phase: before the ILO Conferences	Member States	Commission	Treaty basis and discursive coordination	No coordination
Second phase: at the ILO Conferences	Member States	Presidency	Treaty basis	IMEC coordination

Appendix

Institutions and organs in the paper

Name	Description
International Labour Conference	The yearly three-week conference held in Geneva by the ILO.
Commission	The central executive organ of the EU.
DG Energy and Transport	The General Directorate for Energy and Transport in the Commission.
DG Employment and Social Affairs	The General Directorate for Employment and Social Affairs in the Commission.
DG Justice, Liberty and Security	The General Directorate for Justice, Liberty and Security in the Commission.
Presidency	The rotating presidency of the Council of Ministers.
Council of Ministers	The primary legislative organ of the EU.
European Court of Justice	The primary judicial organ of the EU.

Council of Ministers Working Group for Social Affairs	The working group on social affairs that prepares initiatives for the Council of Ministers on Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs.
EU's Tripartite Advisory Committee for Labour	The committee carrying out discussion on labour policy in which government, employer, and worker delegates are included.
Council of Ministers Working Group for Maritime Transportation	The working group on social affairs that prepares initiatives for the Council of Ministers on Transport, Telecommunications and Energy.
Committee of Experts	The Committee of Experts is an ILO organ that evaluates the state of application of international labour standards.
Committee on Freedom of Association	The Committee on Freedom of Association is responsible for complaints submitted to the Governing Body alleging violations of freedom of association and for representations that concern such issues.
Governing Body of the ILO	The Governing Body is the executive body of the International Labour Office (the Office is the secretariat of the Organisation). It meets three times a year in March, June, and November. It takes decisions on ILO policy, decides the agenda of the International Labour Conference, adopts the draft Programme and Budget of the Organisation for submission to the Conference, and elects the Director-General.
Committee on the Application of Standards	The Conference Committee on the Application of Standards is composed of government, employer, and worker delegates. It examines the report in a tripartite setting and selects from it a number of observations for discussion.
UN's Commission on Human Rights	Commission on Human Rights procedures and mechanisms are mandated to examine, monitor, and publicly report on human rights situations in either specific countries or territories.
UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)	The principal organ to coordinate economic, social, and related work of the 14 UN specialized agencies, 10 functional commissions and 5 regional commissions.
IMEC	The coordinating organ in the ILO consisting of the Industrialized Market Economic Countries (in practical terms, the OECD countries).

Source: Compiled by the author