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# EUROPEANIZATION, INTEGRATION AND IDENTITY

*A social constructivist fusion perspective on Norway*



GAMZE TANIL

# Europeanization, Integration and Identity

This book analyses how domestic and European structures impact national actors' identities, interests and foreign policy practices. Employing Norway as the case study area, the author uses this nation as an example to assess Europeanization and identity politics across the European Union (EU).

Utilizing an original and innovative approach called 'social constructivist fusion perspective', the author addresses Europeanization across several key factors. She assesses the influence of the EU on 'half-way member countries', and the impact of identity politics and domestic structures, which factors contribute towards or hinder Europeanization, and attempts to empirically measure Europeanization at the actor level. She analyses the impact of domestic and European structures on the identities, interests, attitudes and foreign policy practices of the Norwegian policymakers. While contributing towards knowledge and literature on how constructivist approaches can be utilized in empirical studies of political elites, this book goes beyond theory to demonstrate that Europeanization is not only institutional, and provides evidence of the influence of identity politics.

*Europeanization, Integration and Identity* will be of interest to students, scholars and policymakers in the field of EU politics, Scandinavian politics, international relations and identity politics.

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*Gamze Tanil*

# **Europeanization, Integration and Identity**

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on Norway

**Gamze Tanil**

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# Contents

|          |  |           |
|----------|--|-----------|
|          | <i>List of illustrations</i>   | ix        |
| <b>1</b> | <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
|          | <i>Norway and the European Union: a variable geometry</i>            | <i>1</i>  |
|          | <i>Theorizing the EU effect: Europeanization</i>                     | <i>2</i>  |
|          | <i>Aims of the book and primary research questions</i>               | <i>6</i>  |
|          | <i>Actors to analyse</i>   | <i>8</i>  |
|          | <i>Policy areas to analyse</i>                                       | <i>9</i>  |
|          | <i>Methodology and source of data</i>                                | <i>10</i> |
|          | <i>Outline of the book</i>   | <i>11</i> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Theoretical framework</b>   | <b>13</b> |
|          | <i>Introduction</i>  | <i>13</i> |
|          | <i>Definition of concepts</i>  | <i>13</i> |
|          | <i>Ideational socialization</i>                                      | <i>18</i> |
|          | <i>Fusion perspective</i>  | <i>22</i> |
|          | <i>Social constructivist fusion perspective</i>                      | <i>24</i> |
|          | <i>Empirical testing of the hypotheses and the causal mechanisms</i> | <i>26</i> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Foreign and security policy</b>                                   | <b>29</b> |
|          | <i>Introduction</i>  | <i>29</i> |
|          | <i>Empirical analysis</i>  | <i>34</i> |
|          | <i>Conclusions</i>   | <i>48</i> |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Justice and home affairs policy</b>                               | <b>57</b> |
|          | <i>Introduction</i>  | <i>57</i> |
|          | <i>Empirical analysis</i>  | <i>60</i> |
|          | <i>Conclusions</i>   | <i>73</i> |



|          |  |            |
|----------|--|------------|
| <b>5</b> | <b>Energy policy</b>                                     | <b>78</b>  |
|          | <i>Introduction</i>                                      | <i>78</i>  |
|          | <i>Empirical analysis</i>                                | <i>86</i>  |
|          | <i>Conclusions</i>                                       | <i>95</i>  |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Agricultural and food safety policy</b>               | <b>99</b>  |
|          | <i>Introduction</i>                                      | <i>99</i>  |
|          | <i>Empirical analysis</i>                                | <i>103</i> |
|          | <i>Conclusions</i>                                       | <i>119</i> |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Fisheries policy</b>                                  | <b>123</b> |
|          | <i>Introduction</i>                                      | <i>123</i> |
|          | <i>Empirical analysis</i>                                | <i>128</i> |
|          | <i>Conclusions</i>                                       | <i>139</i> |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Conclusions</b>                                       | <b>144</b> |
|          | <i>Comparative analysis of the empirical findings</i>    | <i>144</i> |
|          | <i>Conceptual implications of the empirical findings</i> | <i>154</i> |
|          | <i>Relevance of the empirical findings</i>               | <i>156</i> |
|          | <i>Implications for Norway's future EU membership</i>    | <i>157</i> |
|          | <i>Further research on Norway</i>                        | <i>158</i> |
| <b>9</b> | <b>Appendix</b>  | <b>159</b> |
|          | <i>A. Interview questions</i>                            | <i>159</i> |
|          | <i>B. Questionnaire</i>                                  | <i>160</i> |
|          | <i>Notes</i>   | <i>164</i> |
|          | <i>Bibliography</i>                                      | <i>170</i> |
|          | <i>Index</i>   | <i>181</i> |

# Illustrations

## Figures

|     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 2.1 | Ideational life cycle   | 22  |
| 2.2 | Causal pathways of social constructivist fusion perspective                         | 25  |
| 5.1 | Norwegian GDP, by main activity, 2009   | 79  |
| 5.2 | The world's largest oil-exporting countries (2008), million barrels per day         | 80  |
| 5.3 | Norway's oil production and consumption (1986–2006)                                 | 81  |
| 5.4 | Norwegian petroleum activities (2006)   | 81  |
| 7.1 | Value-added of fishery, and as percentage of gross national product (2000–2006)     | 124 |
| 7.2 | Export of fish and fish products to European Union and other countries              | 124 |
| 7.3 | Employment in the fisheries sector in 2009 (left), fishing quantity in 2009 (right) | 125 |

## Tables

|     |   |    |
|-----|---|----|
| 3.1 | Composition of the respondents in the FSP   | 35 |
| 3.2 | Comparative analysis of the interviews with Norwegian ministerial elite at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs          | 53 |
| 3.3 | Comparative analysis of the interviews with Norwegian transnational elite in Brussels                               | 55 |
| 4.1 | Composition of the respondents in the JHA policy  | 61 |
| 4.2 | Comparative analysis of the interviews with Norwegian ministerial elite at the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs | 66 |
| 4.3 | Comparative analysis of the interviews with Norwegian transnational elite in Brussels                               | 72 |
| 5.1 | Imports and exports, by destinations and commodity group, 2009, NOK million   | 82 |

|     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 5.2 | Imports and exports, by destinations and commodity group, 2009, NOK million  | 82  |
| 5.3 | Composition of the respondents in the energy policy  | 86  |
| 5.4 | Comparative analysis of the interviews with Norwegian ministerial elite at the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy          | 93  |
| 5.5 | Analysis of the interview with Norwegian transnational elite in Brussels   | 94  |
| 6.1 | Composition of the respondents in the field of agricultural and food policy  | 104 |
| 6.2 | Comparative analysis of the interviews with Norwegian ministerial elite at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food          | 116 |
| 6.3 | Analysis of the interview with Norwegian transnational elite in Brussels   | 118 |
| 7.1 | Composition of the respondents in the fisheries policy area  | 129 |
| 7.2 | Comparative analysis of the interviews with Norwegian ministerial elite at the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs | 134 |
| 7.3 | Comparative analysis of the interviews with Norwegian transnational elite in Brussels                                    | 138 |
| 8.1 | Comparison of five policy fields   | 145 |

# 1 Introduction

## **Norway and the European Union: a variable geometry**

This book<sup>1</sup> analyses the impact of the European Union on Norway focusing on the Norwegian policymakers and Norwegian policies. In this sense Norway is ‘a crucial laboratory for studying processes of Europeanization’ (Trondal 2009) due to its position as a ‘half-way member of the EU’.<sup>2</sup>

Norway is currently an associate member of the European Union through various sectoral treaties and agreements with the Union on areas such as Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Internal Market, research and higher education. The European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement integrates the remaining the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries (except Switzerland) into the European Union’s internal market with a purpose is to maximize the freedom of movement of persons, capital, goods and services in all of the EEA, and to strengthen and spread the cooperation to neighbouring policy areas. The European Union’s Directorate General for External Policies argues that

despite two failed attempts by referendum to enter the European Community in 1972 and the European Union in 1994, 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>3</sup>

(Report 2006–099:15)

In this regard, Norway’s close cooperation with the European Union in almost every possible policy area provides Norway high level of economic integration and political cooperation with the European Union similar to that of member states.<sup>4</sup>

However, there is clear demarcation to that integration in two senses: First, there are certain policy fields left out of the EEA Agreement. The EEA Agreement does not integrate Norway into the European Union’s fisheries, agriculture and foreign policy, customs union, and common commercial policy. Norway therefore negotiates and speaks on its own behalf in the World Trade Organization (WTO), and is free to determine tariff rates, enact trade sanctions

## 2 Introduction

and enter into trade agreements with third countries (Eriksen 2008). Second, although participating at the preparatory stages in the policy formulation on equal grounds with the EU member states, Norway remains a non-member of the Union with no power in the decision-making or implementation stages, and no political representation in the Commission, the Council or in the European Parliament (Trondal 2009:240; Egeberg and Trondal 1999:133). This situation leaves Norway subject to incorporate all EU law that is of relevance to the EEA Agreement.

Therefore, the EEA Agreement has an asymmetrical impact on Norway in two senses: First, it does not harmonize all Norwegian policy areas with the European Union evenly. Second, its impact on Norway is both active and reactive: in some areas, it is forced upon Norway by being part of the *acquis*, in others it represents a notable choice by the Norwegian political elite to be involved in aspects of European integration. Nation states' different degrees of interaction with different Union bodies and policies are described as variable geometry or differentiated integration, and Norwegian case is a good illustration of this.

The explanation of different levels of harmonization of the domestic policies with the European Union might be found in identity politics. Different policy areas might have different levels of identity and interest linkages impacting on their openness to the institutionalization of new (European level) ideas and policies into the domestic structure. The domestic structure, which is made of ideas, norms, interests and identities, might be an important factor impacting on the level of Europeanization in a policy area.

### **Theorizing the EU effect: Europeanization**

In the last two decades, the European Union has been developed from being merely an intergovernmental organization into a supranational one with distinct institutions, rules and norms influencing the member states as well as others in the region. Now the European Union can be defined as a 'community of values' based on a set of explicitly stated principles in a variety of policy areas which have strong implications in terms of ethics: the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, anti-discrimination, the mainstreaming of human rights in EU policies (Leconte 2008:1072). This evolution is reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in the Treaty itself, and in secondary EU law. As a result, 'the European Union is having an increasing impact on the allocation of values and norms in Europe' (Hix 1999:70). The question is how the EU structure fuels process of Europeanization of domestic institutions, policy processes and actors.

*Europeanization* implies that the integration process in the European Union becomes more relevant and important as a factor leading to adaptations and changes in domestic institutional and administrative arrangements (Olsen 1996, 2001; Sverdrup 2000). It refers to a process by which change occurs due to membership in or exposure to political and economic cooperative institutions in the European Union. Radaelli defines 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.

(Radaelli 2003:30)

For Larsson and Trondal (2005), the European Union and its many institutions and common policies mobilize particular modes of behaviour, identities and role conceptions among the actors involved which results in Europeanization of domestic institutions and policies.

Europe is thus ‘a laboratory for getting at some bigger issues concerning the relation of institutions, states, and individuals’ (Checkel 2005:802). When do international institutions create senses of community and belonging? If and when this happens, what does it mean for individual and state allegiances, interests and identities? What processes underlie such transformative dynamics? What happens to the national and domestic in such situations? These are big questions, ones to which we still have incomplete answers.

Different theories have been used to explain differentiated processes of Europeanization of domestic structures and actors. The *institutionalist approach*, *organizational approach*, *social constructivist approach* and *fusion approach* reveal how the EU organizations matter for the actors involved, and how the ‘EU effect’ is filtered and mediated through pre-existing domestic institutions, rules, norms and cultures.

*Institutional approaches* analyse 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 and changes in the domestic institutions and systems of governance as the dependent variable (Olsen 2001:12). 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. The bulk of the empirical literature concerns effects of the European Union on the member states focusing on its impacts on domestic policies and behaviour.

Institutionalists put forward that the degree to which Europeanization impacts on the domestic institutions varies considerably among states. Although European developments are an important reason for administrative reforms and improved domestic coordination (Kassim *et al.* 2000:236), governments and administrative systems differentially adapt to European pressures on their own terms: ‘Adaptation reflects institutional resources and traditions, the pre-existing balance of domestic institutional structures, and also the broader matrices of values which define the nature of appropriate political forms in the case of each national polity’ (Olsen 2002:935). Such an argument brings the ideas and values into the picture.

Europeanization, in institutionalist account, is not limited to institutional changes in the domestic context. *Sociological institutionalism* is interested in the

#### 4 Introduction

capacity of cultural and organizational practices (institutions) to mould the preferences, interests and identities of actors in the social world. As Hall and Taylor note, sociological institutionalism emphasizes the way in which institutions influence behaviour by providing the cognitive scripts, categories and models that are indispensable for action because without them the world and the behaviour of others cannot be interpreted (Hall and Taylor 1996:948). In addition, sociological institutionalists place emphasis on the ‘mutual construction’ of institutions and the actors that populate them. For them, interests as well as the contexts of action are socially constructed by institutional scripts. They argue that institutions perform a ‘symbolic guidance function’ and contribute to actors’ senses of who they are and what their interests must be.

There are clear affinities here with social constructivism in the analysis of the subjective aspects of social life: how actors construe the world in which they operate and what the implications of those construals might be in terms of choices and constraints on action. In terms of EU studies, sociological institutionalist approaches together with social constructivist approaches produce several routes into the study of ideas, beliefs, knowledge and discourses and their application to EU policymaking. The thesis here is not only that the discourses are shapers of policy initiative, but also that the capacity to shape and deploy these ideas is a powerful strategic tool.

Another approach to the analysis of Europeanization is the organizational theory. Olsen explains *organizational theory* based on two key assumptions: (1) the organization of political life can make a difference and political institutions can have an independent explanatory effect; and (2) institutional genesis, developments, performance and effects are generated by standard, comprehensive processes that are unlikely to be specific to Europe (Olsen 2010:25).

In addition, Trondal argues that organizational theory can be used to answer two general questions: (1) under what circumstances will an institution that is thought to challenge the existing power structure be established? And (2) if established, under what conditions will institutions be able to actually transform politics and policies? (Trondal 2010:10).

Organizational theorists argue that political processes and political systems cannot be adequately understood or explained without including the organizational dimension(s) of executive orders. Focusing on the organizational dimension(s) of executive orders entails studying how organizations are formally structured, the mutual relations that may emerge between organizations and their incumbents, and ultimately their effects (Trondal 2010:10).

According to this approach, organizations ‘buffer the information and role expectations relevant for civil servants, thereby simplifying their search for alternatives, their preference formation and ultimately their choice of decision-making behaviour’ (Egeberg 1999; Trondal 2010:11). The local rationality of civil servants is systematically aggregated by this buffer function into organizational rationality. Consequently, the organizational selection of relevant information, of premises for decision-making and of role enactment affects how civil servants think, feel and act (ibid.:11).

Organizational variables regulate, constitute and construct the decision-making processes that emerge within political institutions, ultimately affecting the decisions being made: 'Working rules of behaviour inform the everyday boundaries of what governmental officials must do, what they can do and what they can expect others to do' (Skowronek quoted in Trondal 2010:11). Organizational theory has succeeded in explaining decision-making processes and human behaviour by focusing on explanatory variables such as 'the formal organizational composition of institutions, types of organizational affiliations among actors, degrees of organizational compatibility across levels of government, patterns of actor-level interaction, recruitment procedures' (Trondal 2010:12).

*Social constructivist approaches* analyse how European values and policy paradigms are internalized at the domestic level, shaping discourses and identities. 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 but 'a relatively stable structure of identities and interests' (Wendt 1992:399). 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'. In this view, institutionalization of new rules and norms occurs as a process of internalizing new identities and interests (ibid.:399). Therefore, agents adopt prescriptions embodied in norms, which then become internalized and constitute a set of shared intersubjective understandings that make behavioural claims (Checkel 2001b:57).

In sum, European-level developments do not dictate specific forms of institutional adaptation but leave considerable discretion to domestic actors and institutions. 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 (Marcussen *et al.* 1999, 2001; Checkel 2005). 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 (Olsen 2001:16).

*Fusion approaches* also contribute to the understanding of the processes of Europeanization of domestic institutions, policy processes and actors. The institutional fusion approach (Rometsch and Wessels 1996; Wessels *et al.* 2003) seeks to explain the reactions and adaptations of national institutions to the EU policy-making cycle, and assesses the Europeanization and institutional adaptation within national governments. The fusion perspective, focusing on the national policymakers, or the national elite, and their EU perceptions and EU attitudes, analyses the attitudes and policy priorities of national policymakers responsible



## 6 Introduction

for the formulation of national EU policy (Miles 2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007, 2009).

Miles (2005a) conceptualizes the national elite perceptions of the European Union by employing the notions of performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion, which are central concepts prevalent within the thinking of most national elites dealing with questions of European integration. First, he claims that most countries favour 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 policymaking. In other words, national governments want to solve domestic and other problems efficiently using EU decision-making procedures (performance fusion). Then, he moves on to the form of this cooperation by arguing that dissatisfied with both the intergovernmental cooperation and the construction of a federal state, national elites embrace supranational decision-making to secure the benefits of performance fusion (political fusion). Finally, he 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 (compound fusion) is perceived, where governments, administrations and actors increasingly pool and share public resources from several levels to attain commonly identified goals (Miles 2005:52).

Some scholars validate fusion by analysing the interaction and convergence of institutional, organizational and constitutional traits of the European Union and the national governments (Börzel 2002:15; Wessels *et al.* 2003; Olsen 2007; Trondal 2007). Other scholars measure fusion by assessing processes of policy shaping, policymaking, policy implementation and policy reformulation (Rometsch and Wessels 1996; Egeberg 2006; Miles 2005). What this research contributes to the existing literature on fusion approach is that it takes into account the identity politics while analysing the interaction between national and European actors, and theorizes and explores the impact of the EU structure (European-level ideas, norms, procedures, policies and ways of doing things) on the Norwegian government officials who are in close contact with the EU institutions.<sup>5</sup>

### **Aims of the book and primary research questions**

This book asks several questions: how the European Union impacts on the national civil servants of a half-way member country due to its institutional arrangements? How this impact can be conceptualized by taking into account the identity politics? What is the role of existing rules, norms, values (domestic structure) in enabling or disabling the forces of Europeanization? Which factors contribute to or hinder the Europeanization? How can the Europeanization at the actor level be measured and tested empirically? In other words, how can social constructivist and fusion approaches be operationalized?

To answer these questions, this book brings together a social constructivist approach and fusion perspective, and offers a new approach to analyse a

relatively untouched field, that is, the impact of Europeanization (EU-level norms, values, policies, institutions and actors) on the attributes (identities and interests) and attitudes (foreign policy perceptions) of the national civil servants of a half-way member country, Norway. The contribution of this book to the existing literature on the Norwegian policymakers is: (i) to address a deficiency in the previous work by adding the role of identity through a social constructivist perspective; and (ii) to offer contribution by applying social constructivist concepts in practice to the case of elite policymakers.

This book suggests that when analysing Norwegian national elite's foreign policy choices relating to the European Union, the identity questions must be taken into account. Identities are important for research on Europeanization for several reasons:

First, they provide a cognitive, moral and normative system of orientation and self-reference. Secondly, they provide the actor with a shared system of meaning. Thirdly, they might influence the framing of action. Hence they provide conceptions of reality, standards of assessment, affective ties, and endowments, and thereby, with a capacity for purposeful action.

(March and Olsen 1995:30)

Therefore, in any national context, ideas, identities and perceptions of the self and the European Union are expected to impact on the subsequent policy choices about Europe. Indeed in recent years 'there have been greater attempts at understanding the role of identity politics in determining national enthusiasm for a country's participation in European integration' since 'such approaches help us to understand a country's overall attitude towards European integration' (Miles 2005:24). Social constructivist approach helps to understand and explain Norwegian national elite's EU perceptions and attitudes, and their subsequent foreign policy choices.

A middle-ground social constructivist approach (Marcussen *et al.* 1999, 2001; Marcussen 2005) which focuses on three factors (ideas, political elite and foreign policy practices) is employed throughout this book. First, ideas are entwined with people's identity and are embedded in culture. With this feature, they define the domestic structure in a society, and therefore, the universe of possibilities for action. Second, political elites are of significance here since they select, frame and institutionalize the ideas once they are convinced that these ideas match the country's institutions and political culture as well as their perceived interests. Third, foreign policy practices are the result of this process, and provide the empirical analysis of the ideational life cycle. New ideas and challenges of the contemporary world may prove old foreign policies obsolete, as they are inadequate to address these challenges. This realization may bring about a search for new ideas to cope with the new situation. Through a set of ideational transfer mechanisms, new ideas are institutionalized and constitute the new foreign policy actions of the national elite. In this context, the new foreign policy practices of the national elite enable the researcher to do an empirical demonstration of

the change in agent attributes (ideas/interests and identities) through the process of EU socialization.

Therefore, this book seeks to answer these questions: (i) how does the domestic structure (norms, values, political traditions, identities and interests) in a policy area impact on the national elite's ideas/interests and identities regarding self and the European Union?; (ii) how do national elite's attributes (ideas/interests and identities regarding self and the European Union) impact on their EU attitudes (fusion perceptions)?; (iii) how does the EU impact on a national elite's attributes (ideas/interests and identities), EU attitudes and subsequent actions (foreign policy choices/preferences) through ideational learning/socialization? In other words, what is the impact of ideational learning/socialization in the EU atmosphere on the national elite's attributes and attitudes (with the aim to clarify whether EU socialization results in changes in actors' ideas/interests, identities and attitudes). The answers are sought in two contexts: (a) national civil servants and transnational civil servants in comparison; and (b) different policy areas in comparison.

To sum up, this book attempts to demonstrate Europeanization not only in the institutional context but also in the context of identity politics,<sup>6</sup> and to provide an empirical validation of this influence by including the concrete policy choices into the picture. It seeks to find evidence of 'identity politics' in operation with a broader goal to contribute to knowledge on how constructivist approaches can be utilized in empirical studies of political elites.

### **Actors to analyse**

In this book, elites are defined as the holders of top positions in central institutions and organizations within significant sectors of the Norwegian society. As holders of leadership positions, these elites act as representatives of the interests and concerns embodied in the particular institutions or organizations. They have been delegated power to act on behalf of the principals of the individual institutions, to whom they are responsible. They not only affect the direction of their own institutions, but they also impinge upon the operations of other institutions and organizations. Even if their power is to some extent circumscribed by various mechanisms for monitoring and sanctioning their behaviour, they nonetheless enjoy substantial room for manoeuvre. Hence, decisions and actions by elites may have significant consequences for social change and development.

In any national context, political elite, business elite, ministerial elite, non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders, academic elite, media elite can be in close relation and communication with the EU institutions and EU business; however this book restricts itself to a more specific group of national elite, that is, top civil servants at selected Norwegian ministries, due to their extensive contact with and intense participation in the EU institutions. 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 (Lægreid *et al.* 2002:12). This structure implies that while the Norwegian Ministries and the Agencies, that is, civil servants, are connected to the EU level through preparatory work in the expert committees in the Commission, Norwegian Storting, that is, politicians, are largely absent from the EU work since they do not have a body to connect to at the EU level.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, an analysis of Norwegian top civil servants and the transnational elite is expected to reveal accurate results about the impact of EU socialization on the domestic actors.

This book focuses on two categories of civil servants: First, the civil servants located in Oslo and active in EEA/EU work, within five Norwegian ministries, that is, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs, and Ministry of Petroleum and Energy are analysed. Second, those civil servants working in Brussels at the Norwegian Delegation to the European Union, who are labelled as transnational civil servants in this research, are analysed. These civil servants are important to provide empirical validation of the European Union's ideational socialization impact since they might be subjected to ideational socialization in the EU atmosphere due to their intensive, close and daily contact with EU institutions, Eurocrats and the general EU business. Such a comparative empirical study is expected to reveal, first of all, the differences in identity definitions of the national and transnational civil servants; second, different levels of influence of these identity definitions on the foreign policy choices of the national and transnational civil servants; third, different degrees of EU socialization of these civil servants due to their varying degrees of contact with the EU institutions, Eurocrats and general EU business; and finally, different degrees of influence of such a socialization, if there is any, on their foreign policy choices.

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,<sup>8</sup> not how and why they become affected by it.<sup>9</sup> This book introduces a new research avenue: how identities, interests and foreign policy perceptions of the national and transnational civil servants are influenced by the EU socialization.

## Policy areas to analyse

This book focuses on five policy areas: foreign and security policy, JHA, energy policy, agricultural policy and fisheries policy in the Norwegian context. Based on a social constructivist understanding,<sup>10</sup> these policy areas are classified into two basic categories:

- 1 Policy areas where there is strong interest in harmonizing with the EU policies coupled with low-identity elements: in foreign policy and JHA, the

identity element is weak, and there is significant interest in a European-wide harmonization due to considerations of security and international prestige.

- 2 Policy areas where there is strong interest in staying outside the EU policies coupled with high-identity elements: in agriculture, fisheries and energy policies, the identity element is high, and there is no interest perceived in joining the EU common policies or in harmonizing with them.

These different degrees of identity and interest elements are expected to impact on the policy choices differently. Since foreign policy choices are not made solely on material grounds and not exogenous to the structure, rather they are based on the interaction of ideas, identities and interests of the political elites, these different combinations of identity and interest elements in five different policy areas are expected to provide empirical validation of this social constructivist assumption.

An analysis of five different policy fields in two categories is necessary to shed light on whether the existence of interest and identity elements (in a mutual construction) contributes to the extent to which the adaptation of a policy field to the European Union is made, and in turn determines the propensity for the easier EU socialization of the civil servants working in that policy field.

## **Methodology and source of data**

This book is a detailed study of Norwegian ministerial elites and their views on European integration. To attain this goal, primary sources of data; that is, observation, interview and questionnaire, and secondary sources of data; that is, official documents, reports and essays, are used.

The empirical study consists of interviews and questionnaires, both of which are concerned with the national elites' general ideas, perceptions, identity definitions of self and the European Union and subsequent policy choices. A semi-structured interview style is chosen because it brings together the strengths of the both sides: In the *structured interview*, all respondents receive the same questions in the same order, delivered in a standardized manner. Flexibility and variation are minimized, while standardization is maximized. On the other hand, when they are *unstructured* and open-ended, this means that interview questions are not pre-planned and standardized, but instead there are general questions to get the interview going and to keep it moving (Punch 2005:170). Employing a *semi-structured interview* technique, 15 interview questions are prepared beforehand, but these questions are not delivered in a standardized manner to all respondents. Instead, depending on how the interview is going and how much expertise and opinion that the respondent wants to share, either some of the interview questions are not asked, or some more additional questions are asked to go into a detailed discussion.

There are 24 interviewees from five Norwegian Ministries. Although the number of interviews is comparatively small compared to some other studies of the