

Differentiated integration in Portugal: saliency and government positions¹

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Abstract

This article analyses the saliency of and governmental positions on differentiated integration (DI) in Portugal in the 2004-2020 period. Employing quantitative and qualitative analyses, it first examines the saliency and position of the successive Portuguese governments towards DI using documents such as government programmes, Prime-Ministerial speeches, parliamentary debates, and statements by the Prime Minister in European Council meetings. The results from the saliency analysis demonstrate a low saliency of DI. Saliency was enhanced by an increasing intersection between domestic and European politics during the euro crisis period, politicising the debate especially around DI instances of an economic nature. The position of Portuguese governments regarding DI during the period analysed was overwhelmingly negative. A wide consensus stood out among Portuguese political parties that DI models clearly go against both the European – by risking a disaggregation of the EU – and the national interest – by possibly pushing Portugal into an even more peripheral position.

Keywords: differentiated integration; Portugal; government

Introduction

Despite the increasing recent research on differentiated integration (Holzinger and Schimmelfennig 2012; Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2020), extant studies have not yet shed light on how the governments of the different EU Member States think about differentiated integration. This article aims to make a contribution in that direction by providing a general outlook on the Portuguese government's views on multiple dimensions of differentiated integration in the period ranging from 2004 to 2020. It investigates how salient differentiated integration is in Portugal, and what positions Portuguese governments took on differentiated integration.

While European integration has typically been little politicised in Portugal (e.g. Freire and Santana-Pereira, 2015; Jalali and Silva, 2011), the timeframe of analysis, covering several important milestones in the process of European integration, may have constituted an opportunity for further politicisation of the topic. Moreover, the euro crisis may have created a favourable context for parties to politicise DI (Kriesi and

¹ The research leading to this report was conducted within the InDivEU project. The project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 822304. The funders had no role in the study design, data collection or analysis.

Grande 2016). Although media content analyses of this period show little salience of EU integration issues in Portugal (Silva and Mendes 2019), studies present some evidence of politicisation in the 2011 election (Hutter and Kriesi 2019).

To help frame the Portuguese political context during this period, Table 1 presents some contextual information on the prime ministers and the political parties in government in different periods of the analytical timeframe.

Table 1 *List of Portuguese governments and prime ministers, 2004-2020*

Prime Minister's name	Political party	Government(s)	Period
José Manuel Durão Barroso	Social Democratic Party (<i>Partido Social Democrata</i>)	XV (coalition with CDS-PP)	06.04.2002 - 17.07.2004
Pedro Santana Lopes	Social Democratic Party (<i>Partido Social Democrata</i>)	XVI (coalition with CDS-PP)	17.07.2004- 12.03.2005
José Sócrates	Socialist Party (<i>Partido Socialista</i>)	XVII; XVIII	12.03.2005 - 21.06.2011
Pedro Passos Coelho	Social Democratic Party (<i>Partido Social Democrata</i>)	XIX (coalition with CDS-PP); XX (pre-electoral coalition with CDS-PP) ²	21.07.2011- 26.11.2015
António Costa	Socialist Party (<i>Partido Socialista</i>)	XXI (parliamentary agreement with PCP, PEV, and BE) ² ; XXII	26.11.2015- present

Theory and methods

The theoretical framework laid out in the introduction to the present special issue conceptualises differentiated integration in terms of *policy* (referring to different degrees of participation in EU policies stemming from divergent MS integration preferences/capacities), *polity* (an outcome of policy differentiation and a product of MS preferences regarding the nature of the European Union as a polity), and *mechanisms* (the means to achieve MS demands for more/less integration). These three dimensions guide the present analysis of the Portuguese case.

For that purpose, this article examines the salience and position of differentiated integration (DI) in Portugal in the period 2004-2020. Employing a quantitative and a qualitative analysis, it first examines the salience of DI models and mechanisms for the successive Portuguese governments using documents such as government programmes, Prime-Ministerial speeches, parliamentary debates, and statements by

² The XX government was formed and presented a government programme, but this programme was rejected in parliament leading to the fall of the government and the subsequent constitution of the XXI government.

² Portuguese Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português), Ecologist Party – The Greens (Partido Ecologista – Os Verdes); Left Bloc (Bloco de Esquerda).

the Prime Minister in European Council meetings (Telle et al. 2021). Secondly, it reviews governments' general positions on DI, while zooming in on four peaks of salience: the Lisbon Treaty, the debate on the Unitary Patent, the financial crisis and the discussions on the Financial Transaction Tax and the Fiscal Compact, and the White Paper on the Future of Europe.

The salience of policy DI, polity DI, and DI mechanism was assessed by counting key words in the above-mentioned documents (Appendix 2). To determine government positions, references to DI key words in parliamentary debates were manually coded as negative, neutral or positive. The following sections show the results of this analysis in terms of polity DI, policy DI, and DI mechanisms.

Polity differentiation

Salience

To determine how much polity differentiation is discussed by the Portuguese government (and opposition parties), the analytical focus was placed on a manual count of key DI words in these documents. A word count analysis of eight Portuguese government programmes (XV to XXII Constitutional Government) covering the period from 2002 to 2019 using computer-assisted software revealed no references to key words relative to polity DI. To complement the quantitative word count analysis, a qualitative analysis of the government programmes was carried out. This examination revealed almost constant yet very tenuously salient references to DI in government programmes. Such references occurred in passages within broader sections on foreign policy instead of specific sections devoted to the role of Portugal in the EU. While very rarely directly mentioning specific models, instruments or instances of DI, the majority of these government programmes highlighted the importance of deepening European integration and the challenges that may arise in this process. Among the first four government programmes analysed (2002-2009), these issues tended to be mentioned under the umbrella topic of the Constitutional/Lisbon Treaty.

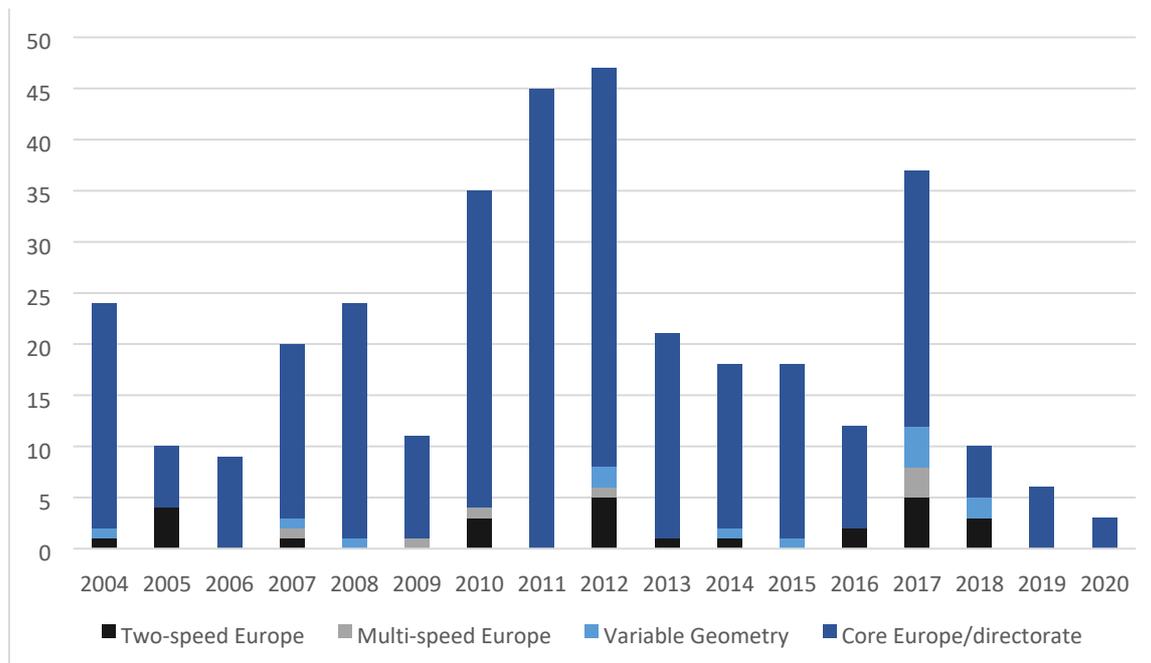
A subsequent set of analyses of multiple types of prime ministerial speeches confirmed these previous indications. The first speeches by the new prime ministers following each election were analysed to measure the extent to which DI emerged as a salient domestic political issue. The word count analysis revealed no use of DI key words and very limited references to EU-related issues. An analysis of the Prime Minister's speech in the national and European Parliaments on taking the presidency of the Council of the European Union again did not show use of key DI words. EU-related issues were, nonetheless, mentioned with some regularity. Furthermore, the presence of DI key words in the subsequent national and European parliament debates was analysed. Again, the results showed virtually no use of DI key words in the parliamentary debates, be they in the national or European arena (a single mention of 'two-speed Europe' in the EP debate was found).

In light of these findings, the governments' positions were predominantly analysed based on a manual attitude analysis of parliamentary debates between 2004-2020³. Figure 2 plots the frequency of key words related to DI models made in the Portuguese Parliament over the 16-year period of the analysis. As can be seen, the overall frequency

³ The end date was set at 01-03-2020.

of these conceptual key words was low in Portuguese parliamentary debates (N=363). The years of 2011 and 2012 come out as the peak-salience years, overlapping with the euro crisis period (2010-2012). Also, in 2017, in the context of the debates on the Future of Europe, there is a noticeable peak in reference to these key words.

Figure 1 Breakdown of references to DI models in parliamentary debates, 2004-2020



Out of the four key words identified, there is significant variation with respect to their frequency of use: ‘core Europe,’ measured using the key word ‘directorate’⁴, constitutes the great majority of the references to DI key words (84%), while the other key words have a residual weight in parliamentary debates. Moreover, there is a strong concentration around key words referring to different end points, as only 9% of the references concern multiple speeds. However, this imbalance seems to attenuate over time, as in 2017 ‘directorate’ accounts for less than two thirds of all the key words, with a visible growth in references to key words associated with different speeds.

Position

The government’s position on DI models is unequivocally negative (Tables 2 and 3). Remarkably, in the 134 references analysed, polity differentiation keywords were never referred to in a positive manner, either by the government or the opposition. Consequently, there were no significant differences between these two types of actors in this regard. However, opposition parties appear to have referred much more frequently to multi-speed Europe, with a strong concentration in the period 2017-2020 which can be attributed to the informal meeting held at Versailles in March 2017 between the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain pushing for a multi-speed Europe, and to the parliamentary debate held on the occasion of the celebration of the 60-year anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

⁴ The qualitative analysis showed that parliamentarians often used the term ‘directorate’ to refer to a core group of powerful Member States.

The disparity between government and opposition parties is even clearer regarding the key words pertaining to multi-end Europe. The opposition was about seven times more likely to use these key words than the government in the period analysed. Among key words relating to multi-end Europe, it is also worth noting that ‘core Europe’ (directorate) appears much more frequently than variable geometry. The key word ‘directorate’ is used in the Portuguese political context with an inherently pejorative tone, as it conveys the notion that a given group of powerful countries hold disproportionate decision-making power over the EU, often forcing their will on smaller countries such as Portugal, at the cost of their national interests. Therefore, attention should be drawn less to the fact that the references are, unsurprisingly, mostly negative, than to perhaps the most noteworthy aspect – the imbalance between the opposition and government parties in the frequency of use of this key word. The reasons for this discrepancy stand out in the qualitative analysis below.

Table 2 *Position on multi-speed Europe (two-speed + multi-speed)*

(n = 23)	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Government	5	1	0
Opposition	20	3	0

Table 3 *Position on multi-end Europe (variable geometry + core Europe/directorate)*

(n = 111)	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Government	12	5	0
Opposition	82	12	0

There is a single direct reference to multiple speed key words by the Portuguese Prime Minister in the context of the parliamentary debate and vote approving the Lisbon Treaty in the Portuguese parliament. The Treaty was approved in parliament with a consensus among the mainstream parties that it represented the only way forward in terms of European integration and was a necessary tool to avoid undesirable models of differentiated integration, as was exemplified in the Prime Minister’s address:

“The Lisbon Treaty was concluded and ratified during the Portuguese Presidency. This was one of the main goals of our presidency and it was fully achieved. We should be proud of it. Just think of what we would be debating here today should there be no Treaty. We would certainly be debating topics such as the European crisis, the European standoff or multi-speed Europe. The truth is that we are here today approving the new Lisbon Treaty and not a European crisis.” (Prime Minister José Socrates (Partido Socialista), Parliament, 24.04.2008).

In an intervention during the debate on the white paper on the Future of Europe, it becomes clear that the Portuguese government considered that the EU had not been moving at a single speed and towards the same end point – regrettably – but that the Future of Europe and the advancement of the process of European integration should not be slowed down by countries that were reluctant to move forward. In those instances, DI may be a useful instrument to solve political deadlocks, problematic as it may be.

“The EU’s problem is not of **speed** but of direction. We have lived with different **speeds** for a long time, that of the countries belonging to the eurozone and that of the countries belonging to Schengen, to name the most significant ones. Regarding the scenarios proposed by the President of the European Commission, it should be clear that no Member State will be excluded from an **enhanced co-operation** if it is in the condition to join and that is its political will” (MP Edite Estrela (Partido Socialista), Parliament, 29.03.2017).

Although government references to multi-end models are more frequent, they too are relatively scarce in this period. In the few instances in which the key word ‘directorate’ was used by the government, it was either to assert the inexistence of a directorate or to ensure such a directorate never materialised. The following quotation from a debate on Reports on the Participation of Portugal in the Process of European Construction is exemplary:

“But I must be quite frank in answering a question posed in this debate by saying that Portugal will never accept that the European Union becomes governed by a **directorate**. We have always said it and we will continue to say so: we shall not allow it. The Union is a creation of all, and shall be governed by all to the satisfaction of goals shared by all. We will only work on these grounds, nothing else” (Deputy Secretary of State for European Affairs Manuel Lobo Antunes (Partido Socialista), parliament, 25.05.2007).

The salience of this key word increased with the debates on the Lisbon Treaty, given concerns that the Treaty could accentuate regional differences and the peripheral character of Portugal. However, the government refrained from using it often, as compared to the opposition. Nevertheless, answering the opposition’s concerns, the Prime Minister argued that the Treaty was the appropriate instrument to avoid such a directorate:

“Only with a stronger and more agile institutional architecture can Europe fulfil its responsibilities to European citizens, the European economy, and also the rest of the world. Unlike what some say, this is the way to fight the logic of a small **directorate** of major countries over the remaining ones” (Prime Minister José Sócrates (Partido Socialista), Parliament, 24.04.2008).

The Socialist Prime Minister António Costa’s intervention during the parliamentary debate on the white paper on the *Future of Europe* effectively summarised the longstanding consensus among the mainstream parties about the Portuguese position on European integration, and DI in particular: advocating for further European integration at one speed and towards a common end point, Portuguese governments tended to be resistant to DI until they envisioned no other way of advancing with the integration process, at which point they embraced it as inevitable. When it came to choosing between halting integration but remaining united as one, or moving forward through DI with those on board, Portuguese governments tended to stand for the latter. In this sense, variable geometry, understood mainly as deriving from more enhanced cooperation under the third scenario, was perceived as a lesser evil compared to more regressive scenarios emanating from the white paper.

“I would like to be clear, repeating what I have said previously: **variable geometry** may be a lesser evil, but it is always a risk. And it is a lesser evil because it has a potentially dissolving effect, which is all the more dissolving the

less coherent that geometry is, and the more some states aggregate around the euro, others around security and defence, others on other domains. But I cannot ignore that there are today states that not only do not want to go further, but they even want to regress, and either we stand in a complete blockade or we open a door to advance. I would obviously prefer a door through which we all could advance. If that is impossible, I think that those who are willing should be allowed to go further. What I have said (...) is that Portugal's strategy has been to stand among the frontrunners, to always be among what can be called the core, the forefront for advance and progress in the EU" (Prime Minister António Costa (Partido Socialista), parliament, 08.03.2017).

This ambiguous stance on variable geometry was reinforced in statements by MPs from the Socialist Party on multiple occasions, also mentioning other key DI words:

"It is not impossible to have **variable geometries** with whoever wants to go further in certain areas, as already happens with the euro, Schengen, security and defence policy or, in the future, with the European Public Prosecutor. However, as the Prime Minister highlighted, these **variable geometries** cannot be the rule and cannot obey a simple logic of a **directorate** or exclusion of Member States just because they are medium of small-sized, or peripheral, or have certain problems" (MP Vitalino Canas (Partido Socialista), parliament, 08.03.2017).

Contrary to the government's predominantly neutral references to multi-speed and multi-end Europe, the opposition tended to express much more frequent and more negative views in the debates on the Future of Europe. This also applied to the Social Democratic Party, which tended to be very much aligned with the Socialist Party on European affairs:

"I still remember the time when the greatest threat to the future of the EU was said to be the creation of a **directorate**, an informal directorate. As the Prime Minister mentioned, the white paper, and mostly the meeting that took place this week between the heads of state and heads of government – Italians, French, German and Spanish, from our standpoint, from Portugal, suggests that what happened in Versailles, if it is not the creation of a **directorate** it is certainly something very similar. And, ironically, as the Prime Minister is so busy meeting with the countries from the south, behold, the three greatest countries from the south ran to join Germany to form this **directorate**. And what did this directorate say this week? It said that Europe needs to move at different **speeds**. It is very important to understand what this means. I admit that such indefiniteness has even affected the government. Even yesterday, the Minister of Finances said that Portugal rejected the idea of a **multi-speed Europe**, and not minutes later, the Prime Minister made a contrary statement, saying that Portugal, after all, did not fear a **multi-speed** Europe and even wanted to join the forefront of such a project. This indefiniteness must be put to an end, for a simple reason: a **two-speed Europe**, or a **multi-speed Europe**, already exists. It exists among the EMU countries and those that did not join; among those belonging to the Schengen area and those which do not; among those that have **opt-outs** and those which do not. Therefore, we need to know what new aspects this carries. Is it an appeal to an intensification of the **enhanced co-operation** mechanism? Well, there are initiatives in the context

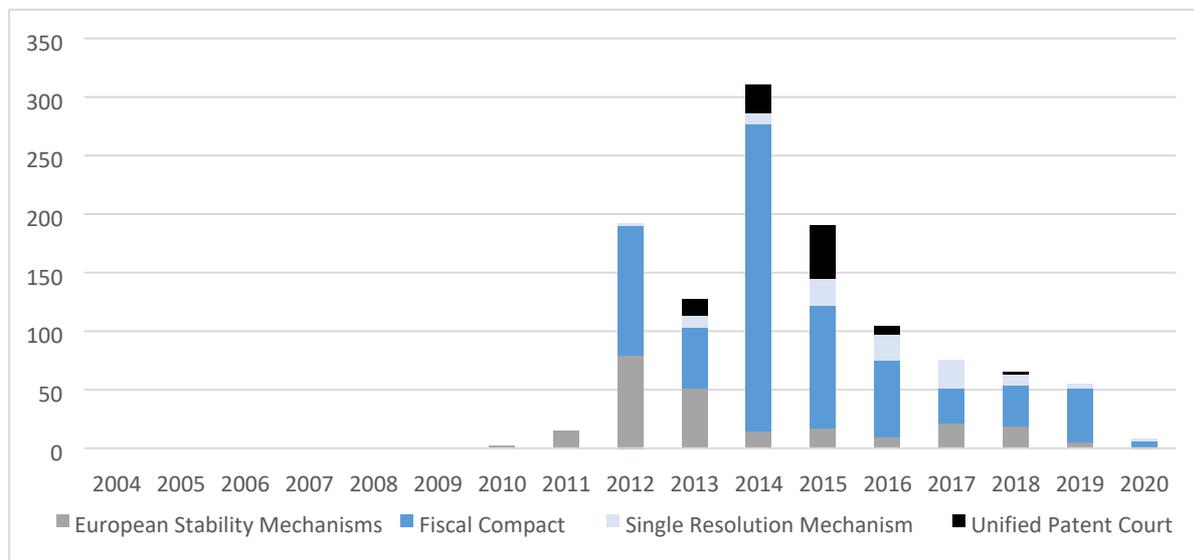
of **enhanced co-operation** such as, for example, the Financial Transaction Tax, which has already been under way for a few years and, apparently, came to a halt. Should we assume that this **multi-speed** Europe happens within the eurozone? That would not only be an undesirable development but also a dangerous one, because it would lead to fragmentation and not greater unity in Europe. In fact, that would be the true **Europe à la carte**, and that has been the headline used by some of the press, especially French, in the aftermath of this summit” (MP Miguel Morgado (Partido Social Democrata), parliament, 08.03.2017).

Policy differentiation

Saliency

In general terms, policy differentiation is the most discussed dimension by both the Portuguese government and the opposition parties, although very rarely mentioned in government programmes (twelve mentions of a total of three internal DI key phrases: Schengen; Economic and Monetary Union; area of freedom, security and justice; and three mentions of a total of two external DI key words: European Stability Mechanism and European Economic Area). An important element of policy differentiation are inter se agreements – international agreements allowing Member States to circumvent the institutional constraints of the community method. In the analysis were included the Prüm convention, the European Stability Mechanism, the Fiscal Compact, the Single Resolution Mechanism, and the Unified Patent Court. A longitudinal analysis of the aggregated key words in parliamentary debates suggests that they became salient in Portuguese parliamentary debates in 2012 and remained highly salient until 2016 (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Breakdown of inter se agreements into DI instances 2004-2020

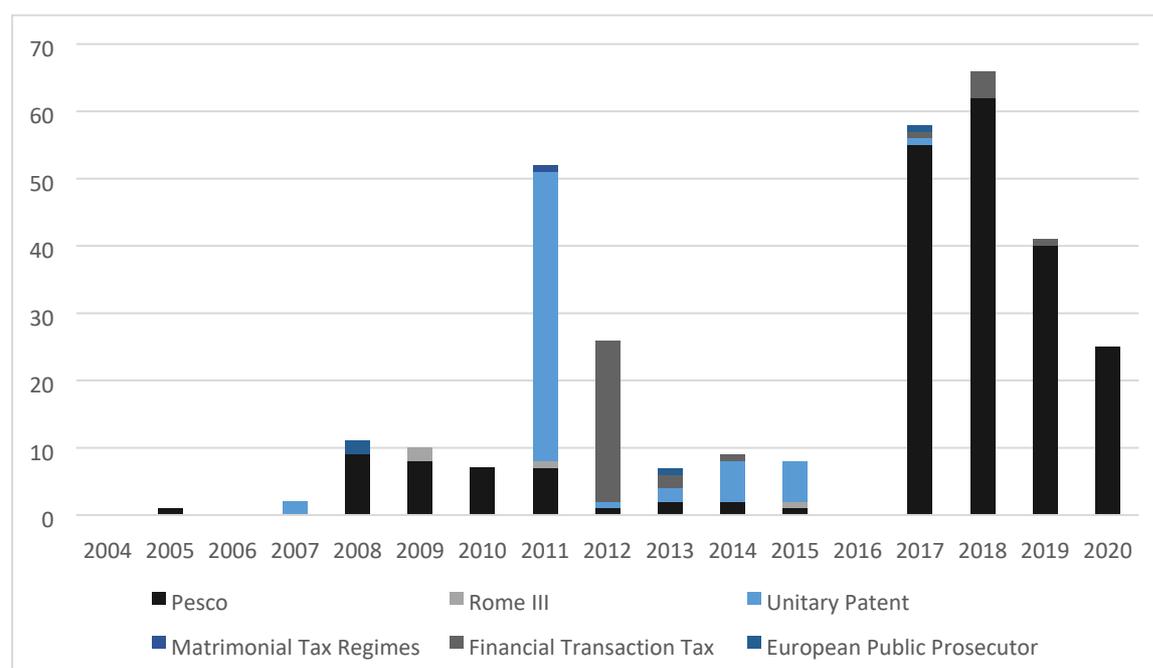


The signing of the Fiscal Compact in 2012, the entry into force of the Single Resolution Mechanism and the establishment of the European Stability Mechanism, together with the subsequent debates in the Portuguese Parliament, are largely in line with the saliency peaks. This time trend is also contemporary with the most severe period of the economic crisis in Portugal and the implementation of the Economic Adjustment

Programme. Therefore, the impact of the euro crisis seems to go hand in hand with the salience and politicisation of inter se agreements. This becomes all the more evident when looking at the most frequently used key words: nearly two-thirds of all the references relate to the Fiscal Compact (62%), and a fifth to the European Stability Mechanism (21%). Together with the Single Resolution Mechanism (9%), these inter-Member State economic agreements amount to over 90% of all the references. It can therefore be concluded that the salience and politicisation of inter se agreements – and more generally policy differentiation – were tightly related to the euro crisis and its consequences in public debate in Portugal.

As for instances of enhanced cooperation, the analysis considered PESCO, Rome III, Unitary Patent, Matrimonial Property Regimes, Financial Transaction Tax, and the European Public Prosecutor. Figure 3 depicts references to these instances in a longitudinal fashion. A clear peak is notable in 2017-2018, dominated by debates on PESCO. The Unitary Patent was also particularly salient in 2011, as the Financial Transaction Tax in 2012. These indications were confirmed once we broke down the data by the different DI instances: about 65% of the references concentrated on PESCO and 20% on the Financial Transaction Tax, which was particularly discussed domestically during the economic crisis period.

Figure 3 Breakdown of DI instances of enhanced cooperation, 2004-2020



Position

The euro crisis hit the Portuguese economy severely, leading to the 2011 bailout request. In 2012, in the midst of the Economic Adjustment Programme there was a lively debate focused mostly on the economic dimensions of European integration. Unsurprisingly, the references to DI key words related to the Financial Transaction Tax and, to a greater extent, the dimensions of the Fiscal Compact were prevalent.

The Prime Minister made one direct reference to the Financial Transaction Tax as mechanism of enhanced cooperation during a parliamentary debate in 2012.

“Yes, Mr. MP, from the start the **Financial Transaction Tax** deserved approval by the Portuguese government – and that was explicit in a letter signed by the Minister of State and Finances himself. Portugal has been favourable to the introduction of such a ‘Tobin tax’ in the European area, considering that the eurozone is the unequivocal area to implement such a tax. However, as you know, several Member States have expressed a desire to proceed in this matter. That is the case of France, which has already introduced the second amendment to the mechanism which was adopted in August of this year; of Spain, which has already expressed its intentions; and of Portugal, which expressed interest in the same direction and which, as a matter of fact, has joined this **enhanced co-operation** mechanism, at least within the eurozone, but also with other countries which, although they do not belong to the eurozone, want to be part of this **enhanced co-operation** effort, to implement this tax on financial transactions which, somehow, implies the possibility of the whole eurozone maximising its contribution against the challenges to funding and growth in Europe” (Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho (Partido Social Democrata), parliament, 13.10.2012).

However, the core of debates on DI during this period concerned the Fiscal Compact. The centre-right coalition government formed by the Social Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner, the CDS – People’s Party, was a strong advocate of the Fiscal Compact. This government was responsible for the implementation of the bulk of the Economic Adjustment Programme’s austerity measures and perceived the Fiscal Compact as an important mechanism not only to further European integration but also to avoid in the future the economic pitfalls that led to the Portuguese bailout and the euro crisis in general. Hence, there was a clear intersection between European and domestic agendas on this topic.

“The Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance introduces, on the one hand, the implementation of more effective mechanisms to guarantee the fulfilment of the goals so often exalted by Portugal and its partners and, on the other hand, the transposition into the internal legislation of each Member State of the obligation to uphold a balanced budget. (...) The solution adopted in this treaty is therefore more coherent with our understanding of an autonomous political community, able and responsible for defining its own objectives and defending them in its choices. (...) In this sense, the treaty makes an important contribution to enhance the democratic character of our societies and the great European society. This treaty, in the end, represents our refusal to repeat the mistakes of the past. And I am not referring only to the mistakes made by several European countries in the last two decades. I am referring also to the mistakes which we allowed being committed in Portugal in our democratic history. We must not forget that in less than 35 years we have had to ask for external financial support three times. In this sense, the treaty is even more pertinent for the protection of countries such as Portugal than for other European partners which are, perhaps, more mature and with more longstanding reputations of financial responsibility” (Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho (Partido Social Democrata), parliament, 13.04.2012).

Although the Socialist Party, in opposition, voted in favour of the Fiscal Compact, the party presented a motion recommending that the government should propose and support political and institutional measures legally binding the Member States to an

agenda of growth and employment creation, considering that Portugal was “too hasty in ratifying the Fiscal Compact” and that the government “should have fought for an additional title which would be fundamental to enable European growth and unemployment policies.” On the occasion of this debate, the Socialists’ parliamentary group leader made several critical references to DI but actively distinguished between enhanced co-operation and a two-speed Europe:

“The Lisbon Treaty comprises an inter-governmental vision of the EU. This inter-governmental perspective derives from the assumption that countries, when they are allowed to work in an intergovernment solution, would structure in **enhanced co-operation**. And, as happened with the euro and Schengen, would take other interesting measures of **variable geometry**, not a **two-speed Europe** but a **variable geometry** Europe. What have we realised? We have realised that a **variable geometry** Europe has rapidly transformed into a **two-speed Europe**, with a Franco-German **directorate** and a set of other countries which, de facto, do not participate in European decision-making (...). But at the same time, we are in favour of transferring competences, not to the **directorate** but to the European Commission” (MP Carlos Zorrinho (Partido Socialista), parliament, 24.05.2012).

Regarding PESCO, most references to it were made by the opposition parties. Still, the Prime Minister addressed this policy differentiation mechanism in a parliamentary debate preceding the European Council meeting of September 2017, presenting it as yet another necessary step in deepening the European integration process:

“Regarding security and defence, it is fundamental to guarantee the deepening of European collaboration in the security and defence areas as yet another factor of cohesion in the Union, able to strengthen its ability to provide a combined, structured response to the multiple external challenges facing the Union. (...). This **Permanent Structured Cooperation**, which we are analysing, should constitute a challenge of deepening the European project, but should also, as we have been arguing, rely on solid grounds and solid grounds only exist by completing and consolidating the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the greatest challenge ever fulfilled by the European Union and whose conclusion we must ensure” (Prime Minister António Costa (Partido Socialista), parliament, 13.09.2017).

Mechanisms of differentiation

Saliency

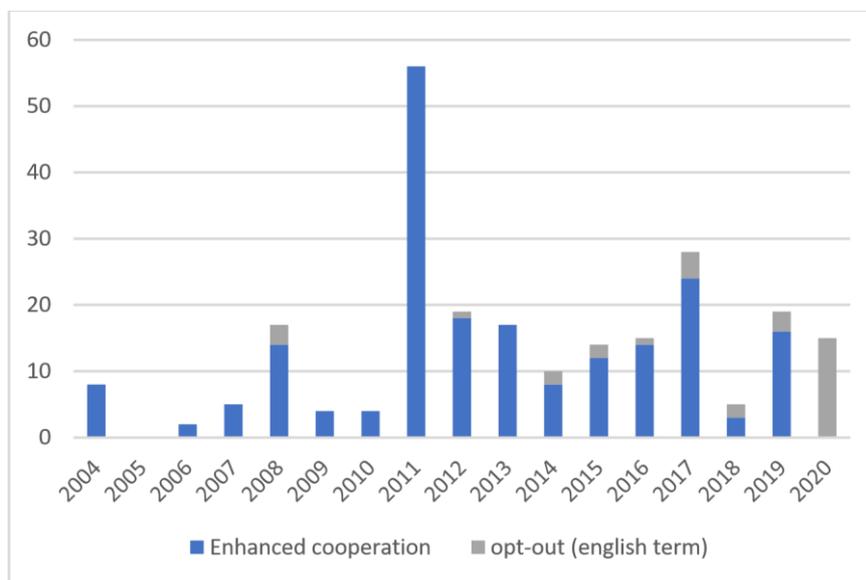
Regarding mechanisms of differentiated integration, the analysis focused specifically on the concepts of ‘enhanced co-operation’ and ‘opt-out.’⁵ No references to mechanisms of differentiation were found in government programmes during the period of analysis. Figure 3 displays the distribution of mentions of the two concepts in parliamentary debates over time, counting 238 references over the period of

⁵ There is not a specific term to designate the possibility to ‘opt-out’ in Portuguese. Instead, this is usually referred to using a number of possible composite expressions which widely depend on the context and so cannot be captured with a key word search. The original English terminology is also seldomly used. With the lack of a better alternative, this was the key word adopted.

analysis. There are substantial differences across the timeframe, with a clearly defined peak in 2011.

Breaking down the word count into the two DI mechanisms analysed, it becomes evident that debates on DI mechanisms focused substantially more on ways to advance integration rather than to halt it – an expected finding given Portugal’s historical stance as a champion of European integration. 86 percent of the references to DI mechanisms concern discussions on enhanced co-operation. Furthermore, the 2011 peak corresponds exclusively to references to enhanced co-operation. This year coincides with the discussions on the Unitary Patent, which brought the topic of enhanced cooperation to parliamentary debates quite frequently, as confirmed by a qualitative content analysis. The 2017 peak, situated in the context of the Future of Europe debates, reflects the same distribution as the wider 16-year-long sample.

Figure 4 *The salience of DI mechanisms in parliamentary debates*



Position

Despite the relatively high salience of mechanisms of differentiation in parliamentary debates, both concepts were significantly more frequently mentioned by the opposition than by the government. Enhanced co-operation was generally discussed in positive terms, particularly by the government, with a relatively homogenous distribution but still a noticeable peak in 2012, mostly explained by the previously analysed discussion on the Fiscal Compact involving multiple parties. Among the opposition parties, there is more ambiguity. There is a marked peak of negative references in 2011 related to the perceived undue use of enhanced co-operation over the Unitary Patent. However, as will become evident from the qualitative analysis, these negative references had to do with procedural aspects and very specific issues, and not with the nature of the instrument of enhanced co-operation itself. The remaining references by opposition parties can be divided into positive and neutral ones, the latter being concentrated between 2017-2020. Opt-outs are virtually not discussed in parliamentary debates during the period analysed, with a single neutral reference in more recent years (Table 5).

Table 4 *Position on enhanced co-operation*

(n = 25)	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Government (n = 7)	0	2	5
Opposition (n = 18)	14	1	3

Table 5 *Position on opt-outs*

(n = 1)	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Government (n = 0)	0	0	0
Opposition (n = 1)	0	1	0

While policy DI was generally perceived negatively by both the government and the opposition, DI mechanisms seem to be more positively considered by both types of political actors. However, references to opt-outs were nearly inexistent and most discussion was on the enhanced co-operation mechanism. The debate on the Unitary Patent made clear how mainstream parties, be they in government or the opposition, perceive enhanced co-operation positively, yet as a mechanism to be used only in exceptional cases:

“To conclude, Mr. President, I would like to say the following: this Parliament and the Socialist Party’s parliamentary group are not insensitive to the strategic importance of the language or to the indispensability of **enhanced co-operation** processes being conducted in accordance with the procedures foreseen by the Treaty, but the report emanated by the European Affairs Committee summarising the arguments in other committees’ reports, safeguards the exceptionality of the procedure and the importance of guaranteeing in other domains equal dignity of all the languages.” (MP Maria de Belém Roseira (Partido Socialista), parliament, 04.03.2020).

Discussion and conclusion

The results demonstrate a low saliency of differentiated integration (DI) and, more generally, European integration in Portugal between 2004 and 2020. DI models were more salient than DI mechanisms, but this is mostly due to the high number of references to the ‘directorate’ by the opposition parties. DI instances are the most salient. Of the several documents analysed, DI was most salient in parliamentary debates (although only in key moments) and pre-European Council addresses by prime ministers. DI was rarely mentioned in government programmes. Peaks in salience can be linked to key milestones in wider debates on European integration, such as the Lisbon Treaty, the Unitary Patent, the Fiscal Compact and especially the white paper on the Future of Europe. Salience was also enhanced by an increasing intersection between domestic and European politics during the euro crisis period, politicising the debate especially around DI instances of an economic nature.

The position of Portuguese governments regarding DI during the period analysed was overwhelmingly negative. In general, this stance was also shared by the opposition parties, despite them having strong disagreements on European integration: for pro-EU parties, DI was mostly perceived as a threat to the unity and cohesion of the

European Union; for Eurosceptics, it was identified as a source of imbalances across the Member States and one of the most important drivers of inequalities within the EU, with strong negative consequences for Portugal's national interest.

There is a wide consensus among Portuguese political parties that DI models clearly go against both the European – by risking a disaggregation of the EU – and the national interest – by possibly pushing Portugal into an even more peripheral position. Actors were extremely critical of models entailing different speeds and different end points, although they were generally neutral when referring to variable geometry. Underlying the governments' positions on DI was a more or less explicit concern that Portugal could be left behind or even excluded from the core in a DI scenario. Hence, when there was a likelihood of impending DI, Portuguese governments repeatedly reiterated their intention to place Portugal at the forefront of European integration. This accounts for most of the non-negative references encountered. Notwithstanding this generally negative view of DI, mainstream parties – which alternated in government during the timeframe of the analysis – viewed the enhanced co-operation mechanism in a generally positive manner, recognising its potential to promote advances in European integration when the EU faced critical deadlocks.

Regarding polity DI, parties made most references to the 'directorate' key word. However, there are important nuances as to how the different actors employed this term. Opposition parties tended to use it more frequently to confront the government with the need to stand up for the national interests of peripheral countries such as Portugal against the will of the most powerful countries. These parties often used DI to justify their Eurosceptic stances by drawing attention to the power disparities within the EU which relegate Portugal to a secondary and submissive role. On the contrary, the government, irrespective of which party is in office at a given point, tended to be much more contained in the use of this key word (even if it used it frequently when in opposition). Cross-pressured between the national interest and the constraints of EU politics, successive governments tended to adopt a more pragmatic and diplomatic approach, refraining from using this negatively charged word as it implied acknowledgement of a de facto bias in EU-level decision-making. Nevertheless, all the parties agreed that a more or less formal 'directorate' in the European Union was something to avoid, together with models entailing multiple speeds, although they recognised that to a certain extent they were already in place (see for example the debate on the Future of Europe). The mainstream parties (the Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party and the CDS – People's Party) saw in the Lisbon Treaty an important tool to prevent the development and institutionalisation of DI models. Inversely, the remaining parties claimed that the Lisbon Treaty would further enable a model of a core Europe in which the most powerful country would be able to control the fate of the EU.

Future research could expand the timeframe of analysis to consider the potential impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and the European Recovery and Resilience Plan (given that Portugal is the second largest beneficiary compared to national GDP) on both the salience of DI, and the positions of the government and opposition parties.

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Appendix 1

Overview of the documents analysed

	Category of document	Time period	Details
1	Government programmes	2004-2020	2002, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2011, 2015 x2, 2019
2	First speeches and parliamentary debate	2004-2020	The first speech after the election of each PM in parliament and the subsequent debates (years same as above),...
3	European Council presidency speeches and parliamentary debates a. in the Portuguese Parliament b. in European Parliament	2004-2020	28.06.2007 (Portuguese Parliament) 11.07.2007 (European Parliament)
4	Future of Europe speeches and parliamentary debates a. in the European Parliament b. for citizen consultation	2017-2020	- PM speech in the European Parliament on the 'Future of Europe' (14.03.2018) - News reports on the PM speech on the citizen consultation on the 'Future of Europe' (27.07.2018)
5	Prime minister European Council statements	2012 ⁵ -2020	All the pre-Council statements by the PM in the Portuguese Parliament: a total of 21 statements
6	Parliamentary debates ⁶	2004-2020	Documents containing any of the key words described in Table 2 (salience analysis)
		2008 2012 2017-2020	Documents including one of the following key words: multi-speed Europe, two-speed Europe, variable geometry, à la carte, enhanced co-operation, opt-out

⁵ As the legislation requiring the Prime-Minister to address the parliament before the European Council meetings was only approved in May 2012 (Lei 21/2012), these documents were unavailable before then.

⁶ Retrieved from the official repository of parliamentary debates of the Portuguese parliament

Appendix 2

Translation of key words

Keyword	Portuguese Translation	Notes
DI models (conceptual key words)		
Differentiated integration	Integração diferenciada	Not customarily used
Coalition of the willing	No translation	
Two-speed Europe	Europa a duas velocidades	
Multi-speed Europe	Europa a várias velocidades	
Variable geometry	Geometria variável	And 'União Europeia'
Core Europe	Directório/diretório	Not a direct translation but widely used to refer to the concentration of decision-making power at the EU-level in a few powerful MS
Two-tier Europe	No translation	
Concentric circles	Círculos concêntricos	
à la carte	à la carte	
Future of Europe	Futuro da Europa	Used widely without necessarily referring to the FoE debates
DI mechanisms		
Enhanced co-operation	Cooperação reforçada	And 'União Europeia'
opt-out	opt-out	Does not have an established translation
DI instances – enhanced co-operation		
Pesco	Pesco; cooperação estruturada permanente	
Rome III	Roma III	
Unitary patent	Patente unitária	
Matrimonial property regimes	Regimes de propriedade matrimonial	
Financial Transaction Tax	Taxa sobre transações financeiras	

European Public Prosecutor	Promotor Público Europeu/Procurador Europeu	
DI instances – opt-out policy fields		
Schengen	Schengen	
Economic and Monetary Union	União Monetária e Económica	
Security and Defence Policy	Política de Defesa e Segurança	Used also in the national context
Area of Freedom, Security and Justice	Espaço de Liberdade, Segurança e Justiça	
Charter of Fundamental Rights	Carta dos Direitos Fundamentais	
Social Charter	Carta Social Europeia	
DI instances – inter se agreements		
Prüm Convention	Convenção de Prüm	
European Stability Mechanism	Mecanismo de Estabilidade Europeu	
Fiscal Compact	Pacto Fiscal/Tratado Orçamental	
Single Resolution Mechanism	Mecanismo de Resolução Única	
Unified Patent Court	Tribunal Unificado de Patentes	
DI instances – external agreements		
European Economic Area	Espaço Económico Europeu	
Customs Union + Turkey	União Aduaneira + Turquia	
Eastern Partnership	Associação Oriental	
Euromed	Euromed	