

European Regional activation towards Brussels: From the heart to the Ultra-periphery of Europe. Walloon and Canary Islands' strategies

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Résumé :

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Wallonia and the Canary Islands are both regions with legislative capacities within the European Union (EU). They have traditionally shared serious socio-economic deficits. Therefore, while a new European Regional policy was being designed, they both built regional strategies in order to extract as much as they can from the EU. How far are these Sub-State activations towards Brussels linked to regional gains (outputs) from the EU? How different are both mobilisations? How can the higher degree of success of the Canary Islands be explained, taking into account that the Archipelago is far away from the heart of Europe and Wallonia is within it?

The research, based on a qualitative analysis method, will be carried out through findings about the regional mechanisms developed to influence the European institutions: the participation (direct and non direct) within the Council of Ministers, the Committee of the Regions, the regional interaction with the European Commission, the establishment of representative bodies in Brussels and the participation within interregional associations.

Introduction

Wallonia and the Canary Islands are both regions with legislative capacities within the European Union (EU).¹ They have traditionally shared serious socio-economic deficits. Therefore, while a new European Regional policy was being designed, they both built regional strategies in order to extract as much they can from the EU. Acknowledging this, we can ask ourselves how far are these Sub-State activations² towards Brussels linked to regional gains (outputs) from the EU? How different are both mobilisations? What are the factors that have influenced and continue to influence its European mobilisation? How is it possible to explain the higher degree of success of the Canary Islands taking into account that the Archipelago is far away from the heart of Europe and Wallonia is within it?

This article will include a comparative study of the political role that Wallonia and the Canaries play in the on-going Europeanization process. The analysis will be developed through the different key mechanisms that these sub-state entities with legislatives capacities have developed and their chances to influence the European decision-making process. The guidelines of both partner regions involve strategies of mobilization towards Brussels, and their participation in the ascending phase of the European integration process.

The article will be based on findings about the direct mechanisms developed to influence European Institutions: the participation within the Council of Ministers, the Committee of the Regions, the

regional interaction with the European Commission, the establishment of a regional office in Brussels and the participation within the interregional associations. It will also compare regional participation in the European national position building process in order to deal with European Affairs.

The research, based on a qualitative analysis method, will explain the different regional performances. It will also advance the independent and the control variables. It will compare how the independent variables (regional and national dimensions) support or obstruct the two regions' European mobilisation and will also show how the most decisive control variables can influence both regional activations. Therefore, factors such as political elites' interest, their synergy with administrative elites, the socio-economic factor, national identity feelings, path dependency, distinctiveness, or its distance (Ultra-periphery) from Brussels, will be dealt with.

1. Wallonia and the Canaries within the European regional activation framework

The Regional European activation has been a well known phenomenon in the field of political science since the beginning of the 90s. Liesbet Hooghe (1995) first used the 'sub-national mobilisation' concept, which has been regularly adopted by other academics.³ Their aim is to describe the sub-national entities performance within the European decision-making process. Their research was not limited only to a descendant dimension. Regions are not analysed as mere 'arenas' of European policies. They also used an ascendant perspective, studying how sub-national entities developed strategies in order to become influent actors within the European process.

Therefore, this article will describe and analyse the initiatives, actions, elections and strategies that administrative and political regional elites adopt to develop an active presence at the Community level in order to try to influence and interact with the European institutional decisions. Currently, it is no longer possible to deny that regions develop a vast European activation through different paths or mechanisms.⁴

Since the 90s, European sub-state entities became conscious of the advantages given by the development of access channels to European institutions. Regions realised the amount of influence they would be able to reach in the design of European policies. Therefore, regions have gradually established direct mechanisms to deal with Brussels, while they have also promoted non direct or mediated mechanisms through their own national states. Within the described framework, we would like to underline two very remarkable European regional activation performances: the Walloon one, only a few kilometres away from Brussels, and the Canary Islands' one at the Ultra-periphery of Europe.

Wallonia has only been a constitutional actor of the Belgian federalism since its regional conformation in 1980.⁵ Back then, it received the legal option to build its own regional parliament and government. However, it is impossible to understand Wallonia without taking into account its close relation with the French community in Belgium. Both of them match in the whole southern part of Belgium, but not in Brussels or in the small Eastern German community area.⁶ In spite of the fact that Belgium is formed by more sub-national entities, Flanders and Wallonia are its two major components. While Flanders embarked on a project of national construction, the Walloon approach of the Belgian federalism is more loyal and pragmatic. At present, Wallonia (like Flanders)

appears as an exception in the international scene.⁷ Articles 127, 128, 130 and 134 of the Belgian Constitution give competencies to the federate entities in the international relations area. The latter allows Wallonia to conclude its own international agreements (within its federate competences) and to directly access the Council of Ministers of the EU, a forum of tantamount importance within the EU.

The Canary Islands officially became a Spanish Autonomous Community in 1982. They received the legal option to build their own regional parliament and government, and their main regulation, the Regional Statute (*Estatuto de Canarias*). The Canary Islands' reality is highly influenced by its geographical situation in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Therefore, the Canaries are the Autonomous Community with more singularities, but also one of the European regions with more specificities that are legally recognised. Indeed, it is not possible to approach the Canary Islands' reality without acknowledging the decisive influence of its Ultra-peripheral condition.⁸ It was recognised by the EU in 1997, when a protocol and the article 299.2 of the Amsterdam Treaty firstly acknowledged the Ultra-periphery in a Primary Legal text.⁹ In addition, the Spanish constitutional framework offers to the Canaries different options to develop a legitimate external action. Some of these are intermediated through the Spanish state, while others are directly carried out by the main actors of the autonomous institutional organisation.¹⁰ In this context, the Autonomous Government has undertaken different actions to consolidate European Canary Islands' action. Indeed, sub-state direct activation towards Brussels, or initiatives to establish permanent networks with the European institutions and the sub-state authorities from many other countries, are extensive and well developed.

2. The European activations of Wallonia and the Canaries (general remarks)

A first approach to the Canary Islands' European activation would reveal a high an extensive mobilisation, which could be compared in terms of attitude, extension or intensity to the most developed strategies all over Europe (among others, the Catalan, Bavarian or Tuscan ones). Within the Spanish framework, the Canary Islands have led the Autonomous Communities (ACs) claims close with very involved regions in European affairs like Andalusia, Catalonia, Madrid or the Basque Country. The Canary Islands' leadership is due to its Ultra-peripheral circumstances. Furthermore, the Canary Islands' European activation could also be considered proactive in terms of its attitude, because the Archipelago always promoted its own specific initiative to deal with singular (Ultra-peripheral) claims within national and European frameworks. Mainly through non formalised channels, it has been interacting with European institutions before and more closely than many other European regions could even imagine. The Canary Islands' activation is also extensive and systematic, due to the accumulative strategy chosen. The Canaries prefer to invest time and resources in every single mechanism, even if some have a higher impact on the Archipelago than others. However, the regional activation is remarkably pragmatic. Until now, the Canary Islands have exclusively mobilised themselves to get different type of funds from the Regional European policies.¹¹

A thorough examination of the Canary Islands' activation shows the key factors that produced the described regional mobilisation. First of all, the Canaries have always expressed a strong interest in participating and influencing the European topics that affect them. Therefore, the Archipelago has followed a cumulative strategy, and has never rejected any activation channel, either institutional

or informal. In contrast with Wallonia, the Canary Islands used different mobilisation mechanisms, in spite of knowing that not all of them are equally useful. Moreover, that cumulative strategy is not determined by the constitutional Spanish model, but it is a consequence of its legal European recognition as an Ultra-peripheral region (RUP). This main factor determines also its special and different (in comparison to the vast majority of European regions) approach to the EU, and its preference to use interregional associationism. In fact, the Canary Islands have successfully led the RUP group, and developed a particular lobbying and interaction model with and within the European Commission.¹²

As described before, until today the Canary Islands have pragmatically mobilised themselves to get different European regional policies' funds. Therefore, the key factor that was determinant in the absence of any other kind of activation is the lack of personal interest shown by the governmental political elite. In fact, the former regional President (1987-1989), Fernando Fernández, confessed that none of the current regional politicians could become the Canarian Jordi Pujol,¹³ dealing with European matters.¹⁴ Comparing with Wallonia, we could only underline a minor exception. The former president Adan Martín (2003-2007), showed some personal interest in modifying the regional approach to the European dynamics. During his presidency, he pursued a more refined and less pragmatic approach to obtain higher recognition and visibility in Europe.¹⁵ Far away from this moderate opening, the Canary Islands' political elite has been local, insular or regional, but not European. Therefore, EU matters have always been dealt with by an active and skilful administrative elite. Canarian top administrative officials (very linked to the regional government) consider European matters as their own challenges. Thus, they became often responsible for the Canary Islands' political success in Brussels.

It is possible to assert that the Canary Islands' influence in Europe has been one of the highest among the European regions. In fact, the Canaries received not only a prevalent position in the primary European law as a RUP region, but they have also been the object of many specific secondary European regulations.¹⁶ Not only regional European impact but also Canary Islands' activation, could be explained by some factors. Activation was obviously encouraged by the socio-economic variable, that is the large difference twenty years ago (reduced nowadays) between regional economic figures and European ones; its political and geographical distance to the European decision centres that promoted its RUP strategy; and the above explained administrative top elite interest. However, the Canary Islands' European activation has also been discouraged by the lack of European perspective of the regional political elite and the lack of path dependency or continuity of the regional presidents during the last fifteen years.

Table 1. Regional European activation main characteristics.

Source: TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*, 2009, p. 450.

A general overview of Walloon European activation would reveal some kind of interest in participation in European issues, but with a very different extension, attitude or intensity to the Canary Islands' activation. First of all, Wallonia only shows a medium activation in terms of extension. Indeed, the Walloon strategy is much more the consequence of the possibilities offered by the Belgian federal system than a properly regional scheme. Thus Wallonia mainly invests in some of the mechanisms (essentially in the Council of Ministers, but also in the Belgian position formation, or in the CoR) but not in all of them. Furthermore, the Walloon activation intensity is intermittent and not systematic, depending on the internal and external circumstances. In addition, Walloon European activation is

not as instinctive and proactive as the Canary islands' one, because it obeys other motivations. It is a reactive and mimetic activation to Flanders and the rest of the most powerful European regions. Walloon activation is not due to a remarkable political interest, but it is a reaction to the Flemish attitude.¹⁷ As indicated in table 1, both Canary Islands' and Walloon activations only share their pragmatic approach to get benefits from the European regional policies. However, the Walloons add (to this pragmatic approach) a remarkable technical and administrative dimension, as well.

A thorough examination of the Walloon activation reveals the factors that produce the described regional mobilisation. We will now advance some of the key ones. First of all, one can observe a large difference in consciousness about the importance of European topics between civil servants and the high administrative elite on the one hand, and citizens and politicians on the other one. As it also happened in the Canary Islands, Walloon politicians' lack of interest (that is the reception of European funds with the exception of the former regional president, Jean Claude Van Cauwenberghe), led the administrative and civil servant elite to design the whole Walloon European activation strategy by themselves.

Furthermore, in spite of the fact that Wallonia has shown some kind of interest in participating in European affairs, it behaves in a very heterogeneous way while dealing with the different mechanisms we analysed. As a consequence of the Belgian federal system, Wallonia decides to restrict its resources' investments to the mechanism it sees as the most profitable. This attitude involves a well-known lack of interest in its participation in the committees of the European Commission, in the interregional associations, or a limited strategy of regional representation in Brussels.

In addition, the current Walloon ascendant activation towards the EU institutions is in line with the traditional regional approach to the European dynamics. Indeed, the weak Walloon socio-economic situation during the last thirty years has determined the regional pragmatic approach to the European phenomenon, focused on getting funds in order to solve this deficit situation.

To conclude, the pragmatic approach matches the lack of interest of the population and the regional top politicians in European dynamics, as explained above. Academics and civil servants confirm the Walloon lack of European sensitivity,¹⁸ its passive approach and ridiculous purely economic interest. They think that the regional attitude should change as soon as possible and that Wallonia cannot approach Europe in economic terms, but in terms of the added value of the strong position that EU represents.¹⁹ Only a small regional opening with a developed European conscience, linked to the personality of the regional president, could be observed during Van Cauwenberghe's presidency (2000-2005).²⁰

3. The Walloon and the Canary Islands' European activation mechanisms

3.1. The Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is obviously the key mechanism in the Walloon strategy. The region has directed particular attention to this channel due to its own importance and the access facilities given by the Belgian constitutional system. Its participation has been periodic since the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993. Due to a rotation system (in which the other Belgian sub-state entities are also

included), Wallonia participates in the Council of Ministers of the EU around 25 times per year, mainly in what concerns regional policy and industry formations. This regional participation has not only a symbolic value, but also a practical one. Therefore, the Walloon representative could accompany the federal one, or lead the Belgian formation himself, representing (alternately) the whole Belgian position and not only the Walloon one.

By contrast, this mechanism does not represent a clear priority for the Canaries, as it does for Wallonia or other Spanish Autonomous Communities (ACs) such as Catalonia or the Basque Country. However, the Canaries enjoy (formally or informally) higher participation chances in the Council of Ministers than the rest of the ACs. A rotation system (as in Belgium) allows all of them to participate in the four formations opened to the regional presence since 2005. Due to the high number of ACs (17), the Canary Islands only participate approximately once a year in the Council of Ministers formations and in its working groups. Nevertheless, the Canaries are the only AC that also enjoy other lesser known participation chances: it formally assists to the Ultra-periphery group a half dozen times per year since 1997. Anyway, the Canary Islands' appearances in the Council of Ministers are less systematic and extensive than the Walloon ones.

3.2. The European Commission

This is a mechanism characterised in Wallonia and the rest of Belgium by its lack of institutionalisation and its high informality. The Walloon preference for the Council of Ministers has provoked a second-rate interest in this channel. Nevertheless, it was able to develop informal contacts with the European Commission officials and periodic attendance at some of its committees.²¹

On the contrary, the interaction within the European Commission is one of the priorities that produce more benefits for the Canaries. Within a channel much institutionalised in Spain, the ACs can nowadays attend the 95 (out of 300) committees. By contrast with the Council system, the ACs are able to attend a certain number of committees, following their own regional interest. The Canaries often attend six or seven committees, which is less than many other ACs. The reason is not a lack of interest, but the result of the choice to exploit other channels. Indeed, the Archipelago enjoys a particular (almost formalised) presence inside the European Commission through the RUP unit within the Directorate-General for regional policy. Moreover, the Canary Islands use profusely totally informal paths as institutional lobbying towards the Commission officials (which involves around 25 Canary Islands' civil servants), and private lobbying.

3.3. The Regional Representations in Brussels

The Walloon regional representation is not a formal traditional representation office in Brussels, but a part of the Permanent Representation of Belgium in the EU. The Wallonia-Brussels delegation (a consequence of the fusion in 1998 of the representations of the Walloon Region and the French-speaking Community) is the result of a different strategy due to geographical proximity. Even if two delegates have a diplomatic status, it does not avoid the preponderance of a bureaucratic profile.

The representation office of the Government of the Canaries in Brussels follows the traditional model of regional representation office in Brussels, but it only deals with administrative, technical and bureaucratic tasks. It is the third oldest ACs office in Brussels after the Catalan and the Basque one, and it enjoys a medium-high size (similar to the Walloon one) compared to the other Spanish representations. Its most important handicap is the lack of political negotiation power and the fact

that it reproduces some of the dysfunction latent in the regional administration.²²

3.4. The Committee of the Regions

This body is not the one preferred by Wallonia or the Canary Islands. However, Wallonia enjoys a large representation in this organ through its two representatives and two other French Community ones (about eighty per cent of the French Community Belgian citizens are Walloons). Moreover, Wallonia focused more than expected (and more than many other European regions) on the Committee, due to internal Belgian politics and by contrast with the Flemish attitude. It sent generally qualified representatives, notably the regional president during Van Cauwenberghe's presidency (2000-2005).

At a first glance, the Canaries developed a more restrictive participation in the Committee with one out of the 21 Spanish representatives. Moreover, it is the less privileged Canary Islands' activation formula, and the regional presidents (with the exception of the former president Adán Martín between 2003 and 2007) rarely showed up at the Committee of the Regions' meetings. However, the Canary Islands' singularities also give the Archipelago privileged opportunities to participate in the Committee through its Ultra-periphery commission. In spite of the lack of direct effectiveness of the mechanism, the Canaries see it as a complementary asset, and a tool for developing their European visibility and networks.

3.5. Interregional associations

The Walloon participation in the interregional associationism is of a medium extension and generally displays a passive attitude and low intensity. It has been noticed in the largest and the more general associations like the Group of Regions with Legislative Capacities (REG-LEG), the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), or the Assembly of the Regions of Europe (ARE). The Walloon interest in participating in these forums was a mimetic reaction to the Flemish behaviour during the late eighties and early nineties. This initial Walloon interest has gradually declined since the reduced general effectiveness of these regional associations (in comparison with the other activation channels) was proven.

One of the major singularities (and differences with the Walloon and most other European regions) of the Canary Islands' activation strategy is the bet for this mechanism. Indeed, it is (with the European Commission) a major priority of the Canary Islands. Once again, the Canary Islands' specificities and preference for the most discreet formulas, promoted this mechanism. Therefore, the region has decisively participated in the RUP group, an association the Canaries created, led and turned into their major political success. Indeed, the Archipelago managed to involve the national governments of France, Portugal and Spain, and eventually received special recognition from the EU. The Canaries also participate significantly in the powerful Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CRPM) as a permanent member of its Islands Commission. The Canary Islands also participate, but without a similar leading attitude, in important associations as REG-LEG or CALRE.

3.6. Participation through their own national states

The non-direct Walloon participation in the European decision-making process is ruled by the

Cooperation Agreement of 1994. It allows Wallonia to actively participate in the common Belgian position formation to defend its own interests in European institutions. First of all, it occurred through the administrative scale (the P.11 directorate in the Foreign Affairs Federal Ministry) and, in only five per cent of the cases, through the political one (the Foreign Affairs Inter-ministerial Conference and, if necessary, the high level Concertation Committee). Even if this system could dilute the Walloon position during the negotiations, it also promotes compromises. Each entity has a veto right and in case no compromise can be reached, Belgium has to abstain at the European level. Being one out of the five sub-state entities and one out of two in a mainly bipolar system, the Walloon impact options offered by the mechanism are very important.

The non-direct ACs participation through the Spanish state is ruled by the European Communities Affairs Conference Agreements (CARCE) of 2004. This legal framework allows the Canaries to participate in the formation of the Spanish European position through different mechanisms: first of all, through multilateral channels (Multilateral Conferences with other ACs); secondly, through the bilateral formulas (since 2001 the formalised Bilateral Commission State-Canaries); thirdly, through the semi-structured presence of the 'hidden' Canary Islands' interests representative within the Spanish Permanent Representation in Brussels (REPER); or fourthly through mere informal and non-structured contacts, both at administrative and political levels, between the Spanish and the Canary Islands' Governments. As usual, the Canaries aim at using the more effective bilateral channels, gaining from the discretion given by its low formality.²³

4. Variables and correlations which determine Walloon and Canary activation achievements

It is difficult to analyse the output and impact of different regional activations. It is not possible to causally attribute certain impacts to any specific regional activation. Yet, we can establish some correlations between EU outputs and regional inputs. Regional activation and the benefits or damages caused by European decisions to the sub-state entities can be described and using a qualitative method one can observe correlations between regional activation mechanisms and regional satisfaction. The Canary Islands' and the Walloon levels of regional satisfaction are summarised in Table 2 using a high-medium-low scale.²⁴

Table 2. Regional satisfaction and impact index through the European activation mechanisms

(Results are qualitatively presented due to more than fifty qualified expert agent interviews, which are part of the below mentioned research project)

Source: TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*, 2009, p. 486.

First of all, regional activation in the Council of Ministers is high for Wallonia and medium for the Canaries. These results match with the importance both regions and their countries give to regional representation in the Council of Ministers. This is the most developed, important and useful mechanism for the Belgian regions, but not for the Spanish ones. The extensive direct representation opportunities that the Belgian system gives to Wallonia explain its higher investments in this participation avenue. By contrast, the Canaries (with fewer opportunities) prefer to focus its action to more effective mechanisms. Specifically, the regional level decisively promoted the Canary Islands' participation within the Ultra-periphery group. In addition, the Walloon approach to this mechanism is moderately influenced by the socio-economic variable, while the Canary Islands' one is conditioned by the distinctiveness factor.

Secondly, the regional interaction with the European Commission is low for Wallonia and high for the Canaries. Since Wallonia has not a cumulative activation strategy, it invests mainly in the Council of Ministers and forgets some of the other mechanisms. There is no sense for the Walloons to hardly interact with the Commission while they enjoy a much more privileged (than many other European regions) direct presence in the Council of Ministers. However, the interaction with the Commission is one of the key points in the Canary Islands' strategy. There, the Canaries enjoy a privileged and quasi-permanent presence due to its Ultra-peripheral condition. Furthermore, the Canaries invested in a well developed network of contacts and lobbying practices.

Specifically, the regional dimension influences the Canary Islands' activation towards the European Commission, while the national Belgian dynamics discourage Walloon interaction with European institutions. Furthermore, the extensive Canary Islands' interest is decisively promoted by the synergy between the less interested political elite and the much more interested administrative elite and moderately by socio-economic factors (specific funds are available in order to counter-balance its Ultra-peripheral disadvantages). The socio-economic variable is the only factor that moderately encourages Wallonia to use this mechanism of activation.

Thirdly, the impact and satisfaction index of the performance of regional representations in Brussels is high for the Canaries but medium for Wallonia. Both delegations have a medium-large size compared to other regional offices in Brussels. Both of them also share the weakness of a bureaucratic profile. This profile is even more remarkable in the Canary Islands' case. The Walloon representation has also another decisive weakness due to regional European strategy. It is not a formal and independent regional representation office, but a Walloon delegation in the Belgian permanent representation. This is not the case of the Canary Islands' delegation which reached a high visibility and reliability among officials of European institutions and other regional representatives.

Specifically, the Walloon performance within this mechanism is decisively discouraged by the above mentioned national dimension, while it is only moderately promoted by weak socio-economic circumstances. At present, the Canary Islands' office performance is decisively encouraged by the narrow synergies that exist between the political and bureaucratic elites within the regional administration. Therefore, its performance is also moderately promoted by the path dependence or longevity of the same political party in the regional government, which made a very close relation with the administration and Brussels office top officials possible. Furthermore, its performance is also moderately encouraged by the distinctiveness with the national government and the socio-economic factor.

Table 3. Research regional correlations contrasted in intensity and orientation.

(Results are qualitatively presented due to more than fifty qualified expert agent interviews, which are part of the below mentioned research project)

Source: TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*, 2009, p. 506-507.

Fourthly, the impact of regional participation in the Committee of the Regions is both medium for Wallonia and the Canaries. In spite of the fact it is not an essential mechanism, both of them use it. Wallonia benefits from an extensive representation (two plus two members), while the more restricted Canary Islands' representation is also privileged thanks to its permanent presence in the Ultra-periphery Commission, which provides the Archipelago with an extra visibility.

Specifically, both regional participations in the Committee of the Regions have been reasonably encouraged by the punctual personal interest of their political elites (presidents Van Cauwenberghe in 2000-2005 and Martín in 2003-2007).²⁵ However, while the Canary Islands' participation has been moderately promoted by a specific regional dimension, Walloon participation has been decisively encouraged by the national level, allowing the region to have an extensive presence in the Committee. Furthermore, Walloon participation has also been positively promoted by path dependence which has allowed the former president Van Cauwenberghe to remain as one of the Walloon representatives in the organ and decisively by the remarkable Walloon regional identity that is loyal to the Belgian state by contrast with the Flemish attitude, always more uncomfortable to use this mechanism.

Fifthly, regional participation in the different interregional associations is medium for Wallonia and high for the Canaries. In spite of this not being a decisive priority for Wallonia, the region showed extensive participation in some of the most general and powerful associations at first. Currently, its interest has declined, and its participation is mainly passive, but still remarkable. On the contrary, the participation in the interregional associations is one of the key elements within the Canary Islands' strategy if not the most important and successful. Canarian attitude towards Europe cannot be explained without taking into account its participation and leadership in the RUP group, the latter being its major European success.²⁶

Specifically, Walloon participation in interregional associations has been promoted decisively by the national level and a mimetic reaction to Flanders association's membership and moderately by socio-economic weaknesses. The Canary Islands' extensive and privileged participation has been encouraged by several factors: its regional Ultra-peripheral location, the deep and narrow synergy between political and administrative regional elites, and socio-economic factors. But this participation has also been moderately encouraged by regional distinctiveness, path dependence or its specific archipelagic identity.

Finally, the regional participation in European matters through its own state is high for both Wallonia and the Canaries. When Wallonia is not directly present in the Council meetings, its interests make up almost half of the Belgian position in the Council. None of other legislative regions (except Flanders) enjoy such a significant influence on its country's European position formation. The Canaries traditionally reached an important and specific influence within the Spanish position dealing with European matters. Its specificities and singularities opened bilateral (formal and informal) channels in order to include its regional demands in the national position. None of the other ACs developed these formulas as extensively as the Canaries did.

Specifically, both regional participations in the formation of national European positions have been encouraged by national or constitutional dimension. While in the Walloon case the promotion has been decisive, it has only been moderate in the Canaries'. Furthermore, the Canary islands' participation has also been reasonably encouraged by the distinctiveness factor, when different political majorities led the national and regional executives.

5. Impact, results and conclusions

Even if it is not possible to directly link regional activation with European influence, both regional European impacts cannot be denied. On the one hand, Wallonia deals with a contradictory environment. The Belgian federalisation and its institutional framework allowed the region to

benefit from higher European influence options than most other European regions. Therefore, its recent regional activation impact on the different community policies is evident: 'the regional deal in the agreement for the 2007-2013 structural funds programming period; the success in the VII Research framework programme; the importance for the Charleroi airport in the State Aid dossier on Regional Airports; the decisive new European pollution environmental regulations; or the resistance and influences to modify the controversial Bolkenstein directive'.²⁷ However, Wallonia faces another reality. Despite its interest, which is not the highest among the European sub-state entities, the influence of a European region with a reduced population of 3.3 millions citizens is limited.

On the other hand, the Canary Islands' European impact is even more obvious. As stated by former Spanish Justice Minister, the Canary Islands' academic and politician Juan Fernando López Aguilar, it cannot be denied that the Canary Islands 'have been specifically included in the former project of European Constitution and in the recent Lisbon Reform Treaty; a beneficial new Economic and Fiscal System for the region was negotiated during 2006; more than 1.300 million €, from the programming period 2007-2013 of the European funds will reach the Archipelago due to the legally recognised Ultra-peripheral status and despite the exit from the European poorest group; the spectacular budget obtained from the FRONTEX programme in order to avoid irregular immigration; or the benefits due to the new European Neighbourhood Policy'.²⁸ Indeed, the Canary Islands' European impact is higher than the one of any other comparable region (in terms of population), but also of any other richer and more populated one. Moreover, the Canary Islands' impact can be more easily quantified due to the large amount of general regulations about the RUP regions integration within the EU, but also specific legislation about the Canary Islands system.²⁹ However, this high impact cannot be attached only to regional activation, but also to a concomitant EU arising sensibility about Ultra-peripheral issues.

Similarities and differences between the Walloon and the Canary Islands' European activations can be summarised. Among the similarities, both regional activations share a mainly pragmatic character, due to their initial weak economic situation. While the Canaries almost reached the European average (92 %), Wallonia is still far away (85-86 %).³⁰ Moreover, the Walloon and the Canary Islands' activations developed without the help of deeply interested (in European matters) political elites. Traditionally, both regions sub-state top executive politicians have been more interested in local matters than in European ones. Therefore, European regional strategies have been led by a very qualified administrative elite in both cases. Sub-state top officials designed the regional approach, and its hypothetical success became their personal own challenge.

However, the Walloon and the Canary activations also show several differences that illustrate different impacts. First of all, Walloon European activation is characterised by the most extensive direct participation in the Council of Ministers' mechanism, along with Flanders'. Due to the prerogatives derived from Belgian federalist arrangements, Belgian regions show up in the Council much more than any other European region. Specific participation options of the Canaries through this channel remain much more reduced than the Walloon ones.

Secondly, both regional activations also differ on the resources invested. Despite the fact that Wallonia and the Canaries shared a similarly weak economic situation, the Archipelago always focused on the European challenge much more than Wallonia. Therefore, the Canary Islands' lobby has always been one of the better financed and equipped representation in Brussels.

Thirdly, both strategies differ regarding their extension. While the Walloon strategy focuses on a few number of mechanisms (mainly the Council of Ministers), the Canary Islands opted for a cumulative activation strategy and split a large amount of resources among them (sometimes looking for visibility and networking and not for direct efficiency). The explanation of this difference is linked to the psychological feeling of distance from the heart of Europe. Thus, the Archipelago feels the necessity to bring demands to Brussels using every single channel available.

Fourthly, both regional activations differ due to the Canary Islands' Ultra-peripheral geographical location but also legal recognition. After the Ultra-periphery legal European recognition (Treaty of Amsterdam), the whole Canary Islands' activation strategy revolved around it. The Canary Islands have used this major political success to get a unique and different presence through the whole range of mechanisms identified. Therefore, the region has a privileged presence in the Ultra-periphery group of the Council of Ministers, the RUP unit in the European Commission Directorate-General for regional policy, the Ultra-periphery commission within the Committee of the Regions, the successful RUP association the region leads, the Islands' commission within the CRPM, or the Canaries-State bilateral commission. All these facilities led the Canaries to develop a strategy focused on networking, lobbying practices and informal approaches towards European institutions, but also on collaborating with other European regions and the Spanish state. In fact, this Ultra-peripheral variable is the key element that distinguishes, not only the Canary Islands' and Walloon activations, but also the mobilisations of the Canary Islands and every other European regions (apart from the other six RUP ones).

In spite of the fact that the link between EU policies and regional economic performances has been only weakly demonstrated, the data (between 1986 and 2006) shows an exceptional Canary Islands' growth (from 65 % to 92 % of the European average), and a limited Walloon one (between 82 % and 85-86 %). Moreover, the number of specific legal European Ultra-peripheral regulations,³¹ also proves the extraordinary Canarian impact within the EU framework. Therefore, despite an often more direct Walloon presence in the Council of Ministers, the Canary Islands' impact is stronger. These results comfort Jeffery's³² theories, which argue that it is more important to influence European national position than being directly present at meetings to defend an agreed common position. Our research also proves that it is not always so crucial to directly participate in the Council of Ministers. Specific and informal channels, derived from the Ultra-peripheral European recognition, ended up being of a major usefulness.

However, despite permanent handicaps, the EU cannot ensure the Archipelago with permanent transfers from European funds. The accession of new member States will make the Canary Islands' (but also the Walloon) pragmatic approach towards the European institutions less efficient. How could the Canaries (92 % of the average European GDP) explain it still deserves access to European funds? The Canaries, mainly, but also Wallonia, may adapt themselves to this new reality. None of them (2 and 3.3 million citizens respectively) will have a higher influence in the European decision-making process and on the EU outputs in the future. Therefore, Wallonia and the Canaries may renew their activation strategies to limit a progressive loss of influence in an enlarged EU.

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Notes

¹ A previous version of this paper was presented at the 4th Congress of the Belgian Political Science Association-French Speaking Community (ABSP-CF) 'Science politique et actualité: l'actualité de la science politique', Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium), 24-25 April 2008. My colleagues' comments and suggestions then, but also those of two anonymous expert reviewers have been extremely useful for the final edition. I am indebted to all of them.

2 The concept of 'activation' refers to the actions, strategies or elections carried on by the regional institutional elites in order to position the sub-state entities in the European arena and to defend its interests as, for example, through the representation offices in Brussels, the Committee of the Regions, the inter-regional associations or networking practices [MORLINO (L.), 'Europeanization and the Reshaping of Representation in Southern Europe', paper presented at the VIII Biennial International Conference of the European Union Studies Association, Nashville, Tennessee, 27-29th March 2003]. According to Leonardo Morlino, this concept of activation should be preferred to Hooghe's concept of 'mobilisation' as the described phenomenon does not involve mass behaviours (as suggested by the concept of 'mobilisation') but elites attitudes [FARGION (V.), MORLINO (L.) and PROFETI (S.) (ed.), *Europeizzazione e rappresentanza territoriale. Il caso italiano*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2006, p. 55]. This article will use indistinctly both denominations.

3 See: HOOGHE (L.), 'Subnational Mobilisation in the European Union', *European University Institute Working Paper*, n° 95/6, 1995; HOOGHE (L.) and MARKS (G.), 'Europe with the Regions: Channels of Regional Representation in the European Union', *Publius*, vol. 26, n° 1, 1996, p. 73-91; MARKS (G.), SCHARPF (F.), SCHMITTER (P.) and STREECK (W.) (ed.), *Governance in the European Union*, London, Sage, 1996; CLAEYS (P.), GOBIN (C.), SMETS (I.) and WINAND (P.) (ed.), *Lobbysme, pluralisme et intégration européenne*, Brussels, Presses interuniversitaires européennes, 1998; NÉGRIER (E.) and JOUVE (B.) (ed.), *Que gouvernent les régions d'Europe ?*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1998; KEATING (M.) (ed.), *Regions and Regionalism in Europe*, Cheltenham (United Kingdom), The International Library of Comparative Public Policy, An Elgar Reference Collection, 2004.

4 CACIAGLI (M.), *Regioni d'Europa: Devoluzione, regionalismi, integrazione europea*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2006, Second edition, p. 220.

5 However, the Walloon Parliament was indirectly elected up to 1995.

6 DE WITTE (B.), 'The experience of Spain and Belgium', in Ortino (S.), Zagar (M.) and Mastny (V.) (ed.), *The Changing Faces of Federalism*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005, p. 204.

7 MASSART-PIÉRARD (F.), 'Une étude comparée des relations entre entités fédérées au sein du système de politique extérieure en Belgique francophone', *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, vol. 12, n° 2, 2005, p. 192.

8 TUÑÓN (J.), *La activación europea de las regiones legislativas. Análisis comparado de las estrategias de Canarias, Escocia, Toscana y Valonia*, Madrid, Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad Complutense, 2009, p. 79.

9 Azores and Madeira in Portugal; Guadalupe, Martinique, Guyana and Reunion in France; and the Canaries were recognised the necessity to fight within a European framework against their special features due to the distance, the fragmentation, their underdeveloped economic surroundings, and the generally adverse weather conditions.

10 NAVARRO MENDEZ (J. I.), *La acción exterior de la Comunidad Autónoma de Canarias. Marco teórico y praxis*, Valencia, Parlamento de Canarias, Tirant lo Blanch, 2003, p. 270.

11 Within this section (both in the text and in the Table), regional activations will be labelled in relation to their: a) attitude, b) extension, c) intensity or d) kind of approach:

12 See more in TUÑÓN (J.), 'Regional activation towards Brussels within the Europeanization process', paper presented in the Centre de Politique Comparée of the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium), 22 June 2007 and TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*, 2009.

13 Jordi Pujol was the former president of the Catalan autonomous community (1980-2003). He was very well known for his ambition to develop the Catalan external action and its participation and interaction within the EU.

14 TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*, 2009.

15 In contrast to his predecessors and his successor, Adán Martín has been the Canary president most concerned about the Europeanization process. He personally attended more often the CoR sessions, travelled more to Brussels and was more kind to deal (formally or informally) with EU officials or European network partners.

16 See GOVERNMENT OF THE CANARY ISLANDS, *Normativa Comunitaria relativa al Régimen de Integración de las Islas Canarias en la Unión Europea. Selección de textos legales vigentes*, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Consejería de Economía y Hacienda, 2002.

17 See explanations in TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*

18 Walloon academics like André Frognier, Benoit Rihoux or Michel Quévit [see TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*] agree on this explanation.

19 TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*, p. 437-438.

20 Van Cauwenberghe has been the Walloon president most concerned about the European issue. During his presidency he was personally involved in the European representative commitments. Thus, he was always very kind to deal with the EU institutions personally, either formally or informally. In fact, he used to attend to the CoR meetings, even after his resignation (Regional presidents rarely show up in that forum).

21 Fifty Walloon civil servants are involved in the whole process.

22 TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*, p. 167.

23 TUÑÓN (J.), 'Regional activation towards Brussels within the Europeanization process', paper presented in the Centre de Politique Comparée of the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium), 22 June 2007.

24 Table 2 scale has been built up following the qualitative analysis method. Within a major research project [TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*], about fifty (out of one hundred) semi-structured interviews with qualified expert agents (academics, politicians, officials, journalists and members of associations) were conducted. Besides their regional activation analysis, they were also asked to (qualitatively) evaluate the regional activation impact or efficiency satisfaction, within a high-medium-low scale. Table 2 (but also Table 3) resumes the average interview results.

25 It is a symbolic practice among the Regional Presidents to be elected as full members of the CoR. However, they rarely attend its sessions, delegating in their alternate members. Only a few of them, truly and personally interested about the European Process, used to arrange their agendas to be able to travel to Brussels to show up in the meetings. Among them, Van Cauwenberghe and Martín, could be named.

26 In fact, it has had some kind of responsibility to promote the Canary spectacular growth from 65% of the EU Gross Domestic Product (GPD) average in 1986, to 92% two decades later.

27 Thierry Delaval, delegate of the Walloon delegation within the Belgian Permanent Representation, as stated in TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*, p. 444.

28 See TUÑÓN (J.), *op. cit.*, p. 165-166; LOPEZ AGUILAR (J. F.), RODRIGUEZ DRINCOURT (J. R.) (ed.), *Derecho Público de Canarias*, Cizur Menor (Navarre, Spain), Thomson Civitas, Aranzadi, 2006.

29 The mentioned RUP and Canary secondary European legislation deals mainly about: Customs Union, Commercial Policy, Taxation, Structural Funds, State Aids, Agriculture, Bananas, Fishing, Supplying Specific System, or Tobacco.

30 See data of the European Commission: European Union, 2006a; European Union, 2006b; European Union 2004a; and European Union, 2004b.

31 See GOVERNMENT OF THE CANARY ISLANDS, *Normativa Comunitaria relativa al Régimen de Integración de las Islas Canarias en la Unión Europea. Selección de textos legales vigentes*, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Consejería de Economía y Hacienda, 2002.

32 JEFFERY (C.), 'Sub-national mobilization and European integration: Does it make any difference?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 38, n° 1, 2000, p. 1-23.

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