

## New Book – Varieties of European Subsidiarity: A Multidisciplinary Approach

Written by Günter Walzenbach and Ralf Alleweldt

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Subsidiarity as a principle in favour of decentralised decision-making is a cornerstone of the very legal construction of the EU. Yet, the question of how decision-making powers should be distributed between the EU and the member states is not, or only to a minimal extent, answered in Article 5 (3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). This collection draws on social science disciplines to go beyond a purely legal analysis to provide clarity over this principle as applied. With the help of theoretical exploration and empirical case studies the contributors identify significant variation in the implementation of the subsidiarity concept. By tracing the precise location of political authority at different levels of European governance they examine the pressures for effective decision-making despite the changing policy preferences of governments.

The Treaty on European Union (TEU) offers a simple rule on the application of the idea of subsidiarity. Article 5 (3) TEU demands that in cases of joint competence between Brussels and the member states, responsibility of any kind should always be allocated to the lowest level possible: local, regional and national action should take priority in line with the criterion of operational efficiency. However, while this definition of subsidiarity provides guidance as a legal principle in favour of decentralised decision-making, it encounters many practical challenges when it comes to implementation. Fundamental questions related to state sovereignty, democratic participation, and political culture make drawing the line over which level of government should have, and does in fact have, decision-making authority in specific cases far more difficult. For this reason, political science and the sub-disciplines of public policy, political economy, political sociology and international relations augment the concept's relevance beyond its foundation in EU law.

To understand the implementation of subsidiarity in European public policy, this collection works with multiple disciplinary perspectives and identifies conceptual variation with the help of empirical case studies and case-specific evaluations. The variation observed in subsequent chapters depends in no small measure on whether subsidiarity concerns have their root cause in the interaction of different forms of political authority, the interpretation of legal doctrine, the need for effective decision-making or the changing nature of governmental preferences.

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