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## Missed opportunities: The impact of internal compartmentalization on EU diplomacy across the international regime complex on climate change

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**Key words:** climate diplomacy, European Union, compartmentalization, regime complex

### Abstract:

International climate governance no longer takes place only in the UNFCCC but is spread across numerous fora that collectively form the international regime complex on climate change. For climate leaders like the EU, the regime complex creates opportunities for strategic activity in its diplomacy across the different fora. This article examines how internal compartmentalization affected the EU's diplomacy across the international regime complex on climate change in the negotiation of four climate agreements: the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC), CORSIA (ICAO), the Kigali Amendment (Montreal Protocol), and the Initial Strategy (IMO). It finds that internal compartmentalisation indeed hinders the EU's pursuit of a comprehensive climate diplomacy, making the regime complex a missed opportunity for the EU. Various combinations of a lack of communication channels, different priorities and policy framings, and a lack of resources and expertise contributed to situations where the EU was limited in using the regime complex.

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## 1. Introduction

While the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is considered the main forum for international climate governance, a variety of other international fora have over recent decades become important settings for dealing with different aspects of the broader climate challenge, including informal plurilateral institutions like the G7, treaty-based frameworks like the Montreal Protocol, and formal international organizations like the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Collectively, these fora constitute the international regime complex on climate change. The overlapping nature of the fora within a regime complex creates situations in which action in one forum can impact outcomes in another (Alter, 2022).

For international actors like the European Union (EU)<sup>1</sup>, with climate leadership ambitions and the objective to facilitate global climate governance via multilateral agreements, this regime complex offers the potential for conducting diplomatic activities across various fora to achieve that overall climate objective. In recent years, the EU has developed a robust and increasingly strategic climate diplomacy apparatus to encourage ambitious international mitigation action on climate (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021; Schunz, 2019). Furthermore, the EU itself seems to hint at the possibility of diplomatically working across the different fora of the regime complex in support of multilateral climate negotiations. The European External Action Service (EEAS) and European Commission issued Joint Reflection Papers in 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2016 that underlined the importance of using various fora in order to facilitate ambitious multilateral climate agreements (European Commission & European External Action Service, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016). Taken together, the EU's ambition, resources, and own statements suggest that the EU seeks to comprehensively make use of the available fora in the regime complex in order to facilitate reaching ambitious multilateral climate agreements.

However, the potential offered by the regime complex seems undercut by the compartmentalization, or lack of communication and alignment, of EU institutional venues that handle its involvement in various fora of the regime complex. The EU has a policy-making system that is principally organized by policy area. EU positions for the different fora are determined in separate venues that often operate in relative isolation from each other, with different Council configurations, Council working parties or Commission Directorates General being the key institutional loci for internal EU coordination. Due to its institutional set-up, EU policy-making in general is characterized by siloes, complicating cooperation across policy-making venues and thereby hindering the EU's full use of the different fora. Although the compartmentalization of the internal policy-making system is proper to many international actors, the EU is likely more compartmentalised than many other actors. It is not only compartmentalized within the institutional setting that is responsible for determining its position for international fora, but there are also multiple institutions involved (mainly Commission and Council) as well as the member states. The EU is thus a likely case to observe a hindering effect of internal compartmentalization on the

comprehensiveness of its climate diplomacy, due to the number of segregated stakeholders involved.

Hence, on the one hand, the EU's recent track-record as a climate leader and its Joint Reflection Papers suggest a strong potential to strategically work across the different fora of the regime complex. On the other hand, its internal compartmentalization makes such a comprehensive use of the regime complex less likely. The article therefore answers the following research question: *How do EU internal coordination structures affect the extent to which the EU demonstrates a comprehensive climate diplomacy across the international regime complex on climate change?*

For each negotiation process on a multilateral climate agreement, we distinguish between two types of constitutive fora of the regime complex: (1) *focal fora*, which are the default fora for concluding agreements for their respective areas; and (2) *non-focal fora*, which are the remaining fora of the complex, where these negotiations could also be brought up. By *comprehensive climate diplomacy*, we refer to the extent to which the EU makes use of the different non-focal fora of the regime complex when negotiating multilateral climate agreements in a given focal forum. In other words, with a comprehensive climate diplomacy, the EU has an encompassing view of the broader regime complex and seeks to connect what it does in non-focal fora to work towards the focal forum negotiations (Morin & Orsini, 2014).

To answer the research question, we examine the EU's diplomacy relating to the negotiation of four international climate agreements from 2015-2018, concluded in four different focal fora: the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015), the Carbon Offsetting Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA; ICAO, 2016), the Kigali Amendment (Montreal Protocol, 2016), and the Initial Strategy on Reducing GHG Emissions in Shipping (IMO, 2018). Based on triangulation of official documents and 43 semi-structured interviews (see Annex), we qualitatively assess (1) the diplomacy employed by the EU in non-focal fora for each negotiation and (2) the impact of the EU internal coordination structures on the (absence of the) EU's use of non-focal fora.

We find that internal EU compartmentalisation in general hinders the EU's attempts to pursue a comprehensive climate diplomacy. In the case of the Paris Agreement and the Kigali Amendment, the EU evoked the negotiations in a wide variety of non-focal fora, though these uses were limited to building political support and consistent messaging. However, in the case of CORSIA and the Initial Strategy, the EU used barely any non-focal fora, with the exception of efforts undertaken unilaterally by DG CLIMA (ICAO) and France (IMO). This was due to various combinations of three variables relating to the compartmentalization of the EU's institutional structure: a lack of communication channels, different priorities and policy framings, and a lack of resources and expertise. Overall, the four case studies show that the three identified variables affect the EU's climate diplomacy in support of the negotiations in the focal forum, though they work differently in each case.

The article is organised as follows. Section 2 introduces the existing literature on the EU as an actor in the international regime complex on climate change, as well as the literature on

bureaucratic politics and EU compartmentalization. Section 3 lays out the conceptual framework. Section 4 presents the four case studies. The impact of internal compartmentalization on the EU's activities in the whole regime complex is examined in detail in section 5. Finally, section 6 concludes and identifies avenues for future research.

## 2. State of the Art

### 2.1 The EU in the international regime complex on climate change

Though its progress has not always been linear, the EU has established itself as an international climate leader over the past decades (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021). Moreover, the EU's ambitious internal policies give it a vested interest in reaching ambitious, international climate-related agreements (Delreux, 2018). From the 1990s through the early 2000s, the EU played an important diplomatic role in pushing for international climate action (Afionis, 2017). Following its side-lining at COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, the EU successfully reinvented itself as a pragmatic 'lead actor', focusing on bridge-building and capacity building (Bäckstrand & Elgström, 2013). This role was reinforced at COP21 in Paris (Oberthür & Groen, 2018).

Overall, the EU has become increasingly strategic in its pursuit of ambitious climate action at the international level (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021; Schunz, 2019). The EU has developed a robust climate diplomacy toolbox, including the Green Diplomacy Network and Joint Reflection Papers (Biedenkopf & Petri, 2021; Torney & Cross, 2018). The Joint Reflection Papers, drafted in collaboration by the EEAS and Commission, identified diplomatic priorities and key outreach opportunities, both bilaterally and multilaterally. At the same time, such a comprehensive, encompassing approach to climate diplomacy requires close coordination and information sharing between different actors and structures within the EU, including the Commission, the EEAS and the member states. Although coordination has improved in recent years, it is neither entirely streamlined nor optimal (Schunz, 2019).

While the UNFCCC was originally envisioned as the principal venue for climate governance, there has been a proliferation of international fora dealing with climate change over the past decades. These fora overlap with each other in the sense that they all deal with aspects of the larger climate challenge and share similar memberships, thus constituting an international regime complex (Abbott, 2012; Keohane & Victor, 2011). The international regime complex on climate change is generally understood to include a variety of fora such as international organizations like ICAO and IMO, established treaty frameworks such as the Montreal Protocol and UNFCCC, plurilateral institutions like the G7 and G20, and mixed arrangements bringing together public and private actors, such as the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC). These fora deal with diverse policy areas like the environment, transport, finance, general diplomacy, and of course those focusing exclusively on climate (Abbott, 2012). The literature has mostly focused on mapping the complex and its consequences for global governance (Earsom & Delreux, 2021a).

The overlapping, interrelated nature of a regime complex creates a dynamic where action in one forum can influence an outcome in another. For actors with significant resources and expertise, this presents opportunities for strategic activity across the fora of the regime complex to achieve overall objectives (Faude & Parizek, 2020; Jupille et al., 2013). Thus far, the literature has mainly focused on situations in which an actor finds one forum unsatisfactory for reaching its objectives and therefore looks elsewhere in the regime complex. Such activity includes 'forum shopping' (Busch, 2007), 'regime shifting' (Verdier, 2021); 'contested multilateralism' (Faude & Parizek, 2020; Morse & Keohane, 2014), and institutional 'use, selection, change, and creation' (Jupille et al., 2013). Until recently, the EU as an actor has remained outside the scope of the literature on regime complexity. However, recent special issues edited by Marx and Westerwinter (2022) and by Delreux and Earsom (2023) have started to examine how the EU navigates and is shaped by regime complexes. In that regard, it is likely the EU makes use of similar strategic activities as state actors.

With respect to explanatory factors of cross-forum activity, the literature has predominantly focused on the impact of the regime complex and its constitutive fora in shaping an actor's behaviour (Alter, 2022). There has been less focus on the role of bureaucratic politics and compartmentalisation in shaping how actors navigate a regime complex. A notable exception is the work by Morin and Orsini (2014), who contend that, since actors are not unitary, internal institutional structures shape their policy coherence across a regime complex. We build on this work by explaining how specific internal institutional structures bring about compartmentalisation and affect the EU's action in the regime complex.

## 2.2 Compartmentalisation and silos in the EU

As is the case with other actors, the EU's internal bureaucratic structures ultimately influence its external action (Allison, 1971). Hence, in order to understand the EU's external action, we must also look at its internal bureaucratic politics (Delreux, 2015; Vanhoonacker et al., 2010). The EU is a highly-complex political system with many different policy-making venues which are made up of different member state and institutional actors with their own interests and understandings of a given issue (Jordan & Schout, 2006; Marangoni & Raube, 2014). Coordination requires cooperation between them. The literature has long acknowledged the importance of compartmentalisation and silos inside the EU (Hartlapp et al., 2014; Vantaggiato et al., 2020). Specifically, different working cultures, differing priorities, and infrequent communication across these autonomously operating policy-making channels have been found to contribute to compartmentalisation (Jordan & Schout, 2006; Skovgaard, 2018).

The EU's track record of compartmentalisation, particularly in the domain of EU external action (Elgström & Pilegaard, 2008; Furness & Gänzle, 2017; Young & Peterson, 2013), calls into question its capacity to employ a comprehensive climate diplomacy. Generally speaking, positions are developed in different Council configurations (or their associated working parties), with different

Directorate Generals (DGs) of the Commission involved. Hence, EU external action in international fora remains the purview of a series of different venues that do not necessarily share the same priorities, constituents or working methods, nor do they regularly coordinate with each other (Elgström & Pilegaard, 2008; Furness & Gänzle, 2017). Such an absence of cooperation could limit the potential for utilising non-focal fora handled by different EU venues, as these venues could be unaware of or uninterested in the focal forum. Also, the literatures on environmental and climate policy integration stress the likely impact of such compartmentalisation and silos on limiting the extent to which climate and environmental objectives are integrated into EU policy processes and policy outcomes (Dupont, 2016; Jordan & Lenschow, 2010; Jordan & Schout, 2006; Kurze & Lenschow, 2018).

### 3. Conceptual framework

In this section, we introduce our conceptual framework, in which we make a distinction between ‘fora’ and ‘venues’. While *fora* are the constitutive units of the regime complex (e.g. UNFCCC, IMO, G20), *venues* are the institutional loci in the EU’s internal coordination system that handle EU involvement in various fora. We develop the conceptual framework in three steps. First, at the international level, we focus on the opportunity to use non-focal fora within an international regime complex in the context of a negotiation in a focal forum. Second, at the EU level, we assess the potential impact of compartmentalisation and silos across the different internal EU venues – each responsible for EU external action in a given forum – on its overall climate diplomacy. Third, we develop three variables that could hinder the EU’s comprehensive climate diplomacy.

#### 3.1 Focal fora and non-focal fora in international regime complexes

An international regime complex is made up of fora, which are institutional settings that can take the form of, among others, international organizations, treaty frameworks or informal plurilateral institutions (Alter & Meunier, 2009). We distinguish between focal and non-focal fora, depending on the negotiation process in question. A ‘*focal forum*’ is the forum that is the natural, default setting for negotiating agreements in a particular subset of the issue area (Jupille et al., 2013, p. 27). For instance, in the case of the negotiations on the Paris Agreement, the UNFCCC is the focal forum. The other fora where the agreement will not be concluded, but which actors could use to influence the negotiations, are the ‘*non-focal fora*’. At the same time, these non-focal fora can exercise climate governance functions separately from the focal forum, but such functions fall beyond the scope of this article.

A comprehensive diplomacy differs from the aforementioned cross-fora activity (e.g. forum shopping), as the actor is in this case limited in its ability to move away from the negotiations in the focal forum. Activities in a non-focal forum therefore supplement and facilitate an actor’s endeavours in the focal forum. Nonetheless, there are inherent limits to the extent to which an actor can make

use of a non-focal forum. As each forum has its own objectives, norms, functions, and membership (Kellow, 2012), they create different opportunity structures for supporting negotiations in the focal forum. Furthermore, an actor may have specific priorities in a given non-focal forum that overshadow those of the negotiation in the focal forum.

### 3.2 Focal venues in the EU's coordination system

As outlined above, the EU's coordination on its participation and/or position for a climate negotiation in different international fora often lacks uniformity and a central hierarchy. It is instead spread across a variety of EU venues. Indeed, each forum in the regime complex has its own corresponding '*focal venue*' inside the EU for coordinating the EU's action in the forum in question. We define a focal venue as the institutional locus in the EU where EU actors and member states come together to discuss and coordinate the EU's participation and/or position in a forum (irrespective whether it is focal or non-focal). These venues are most often Council working parties but can vary depending on the forum in question (see below in Table 2). For instance, the focal venue of the UNFCCC is the Working Party on International Environmental Issues – Climate Change (WPIEI-CC) because the EU's participation in UNFCCC negotiations is primarily prepared in the WPIEI-CC. Based on the work of the focal venue, the EU member states, the Commission and other EU actors (e.g. EEAS) then carry out the EU's diplomacy in that international forum of the regime complex.

Connecting activity between fora in a regime complex therefore involves alignment and communication between the respective focal venues responsible for the EU's involvement in each forum (unless the focal venue is the same in both fora). Hence, the EU's ultimate ability to achieve a comprehensive climate diplomacy depends on alignment and cooperation between the focal venue of the focal forum and the focal venues of relevant non-focal fora.

### 3.3 The potential impact of compartmentalisation across focal venues

Based on literature on policy coherence, bureaucratic politics and environmental policy integration, we identify three variables that are likely to affect the EU's ability to employ a comprehensive climate diplomacy: (1) the existence of communication channels; (2) adequate expertise and resources; and (3) similar priorities and policy framings. The presence of these variables can ensure that EU actions on one issue synergise with its actions on a related issue and, consequently, that the negative impact of compartmentalization on a comprehensive climate diplomacy is minimized (Dupont, 2016; Jordan & Lenschow, 2010; Kurze & Lenschow, 2018). Their absence (or limited presence), however, can complicate the ability of relevant EU venues to cooperate, implying that compartmentalization leads to siloed action (Hartlapp et al., 2014; Vantaggiato et al., 2020). Hence, these variables allow us to assess the impact of

compartmentalisation on EU climate diplomacy in the international regime complex. These are expectations to guide the subsequent empirical analysis.

First, the *extent to which communication channels exist between the focal venue of the focal forum and the focal venue of the non-focal forum* could affect the use of a non-focal forum. The exchange of information between venues is a precondition for an actor's internal coordination (Vantaggiato et al., 2020). In that sense, established communication channels between different venues facilitate integrated policy-making and coordination in the EU (Hartlapp et al., 2014; Vantaggiato et al., 2020). Extending this to EU action in an international regime complex, communication channels and regular interactions between focal venues facilitate the potential for cooperation, with the venues remaining informed of each other's work. Conversely, a lack of communication channels makes it difficult for focal venues to keep up with each other's work, while also raising the cost of using a non-focal forum.

Second, the *expertise and resources available in the focal venue of the non-focal forum* could affect the EU's ability and/or willingness to engage on a given issue in the non-focal forum to support the negotiations in the focal forum. Generally speaking, increased specialization inside governments and their bureaucracies reduces the ability for coordination, as different specialized structures lack expertise on areas outside their specific policy area (Peters, 2018). The specialized nature of venues in the EU implies that a given venue's level of expertise generally does not extend beyond its specific policy area (Vanhoonacker et al., 2010). The negotiation of an international climate agreement is inherently specialized and requires significant technical expertise. The focal venue responsible for a given non-focal forum may not have the necessary technical expertise to understand the intricacies of the negotiations and then adapt its activity accordingly, particularly if climate is not a regular part of its work. Moreover, they might not have the resources available to dedicate to the negotiations. This could thereby limit their potential to use a given non-focal forum.

Third, *differences in priorities and policy framings* between the focal venue of the focal forum and the focal venue of the non-focal forum could affect the use of the non-focal forum. Officials working in a particular issue area have their own priorities and objectives. Moreover, they frame issues within their own experiences and expertise (Bach & Wegrich, 2019; Scharpf, 1994). Within the EU, this extends to policy venues, which typically frame issues within their larger sectoral policy priorities (Furness & Gänzle, 2017; Young & Peterson, 2013). This likely implies that action in a given forum of the regime complex is ultimately shaped by the principal interests and priorities of its associated focal venue in the EU. Hence, the extent to which the non-focal forum will be used to support the focal forum negotiations depends on how the focal venue of the focal forum and the focal venue of the non-focal forum each frame and prioritise the negotiations. Should they correspond, this would ultimately facilitate the use of the non-focal forum, as both venues would recognise the importance of supporting the negotiations and would be motivated to cooperate to that end. If there is a significant difference, the potential for its use would be limited.

## 4. Focal fora, non-focal fora, and focal venues in the negotiation of four international climate agreements

We study the impact of the EU's compartmentalisation on its use of non-focal fora in the context of four negotiations that have led to multilateral agreements on climate change in the period 2015-2018: the Paris Agreement, ICAO CORSIA, the Kigali Agreement, and the IMO Initial Strategy. Our selection of these cases is based on the fact that each of these multilateral negotiations substantively dealt with different aspects of climate change, ultimately led to an agreement, and were negotiated within a similar time frame, which keeps a number of contextual factors constant. Furthermore, the EU's diplomacy for each negotiation was prepared within a separate internal coordination structure (i.e. separate focal venues), and the EU had declared its desire to reach climate agreements in the four fora.

### 4.1 The four negotiations and their corresponding focal venues

First, the *Paris Agreement* (2015), reached at UNFCCC COP21, was the end-result of a tumultuous negotiating process of working towards a universal, binding agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol. The WPIEI-CC of the Environment configuration of the Council was the focal venue for coordinating the EU position, with an informal team of lead negotiators representing the EU in the negotiations (Delreux, 2018).

Second, the negotiations leading to *CORSIA* (2016) in ICAO were centred around a long-discussed market-based measure for GHG emissions from aviation. EU coordination for ICAO matters takes place within the Aviation Working Group (AVIA) of the Transportation, Telecommunication, and Energy (TTE) configuration of the Council, making it the focal venue for ICAO. However, a broader coordination takes place in an extra-EU coordination venue – the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC), a grouping of the 44 European states (including all EU member states and the Commission), where the EU and its member states hold outsized influence.

Third, the negotiations leading to what would become the *Kigali Amendment* to the Montreal Protocol (2016) were focused on the international phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), industrial chemicals often used in air conditioning and refrigeration that were introduced as an alternative to harmful, ozone-depleting substances (Roberts, 2017). Parties to the Montreal Protocol agreed in 2015 that an HFC amendment to the Protocol would be agreed upon by the end of 2016. EU coordination mainly takes place within a National Experts Group (NEG), convened by DG CLIMA of the Commission and co-chaired by the Council Presidency, making it the focal venue.

Fourth, the negotiations on the *Initial Strategy* (2018) inside the IMO's Marine Environmental Protection Committee (MEPC) focused around how shipping could contribute to reduce its share of global emissions. EU coordination takes place in the Shipping Working Party (SWP) of TTE Council configuration. The SWP thus served as the focal venue. Outside of official EU coordination, a group of EU member states, supported by the Commission, informally collaborated with Pacific Island

States as part of a 'Shipping High Ambition Coalition' (SHAC), which serves as an extra-EU coordination venue (Earsom & Delreux, 2021b).

Table 1 summarises the relevant focal fora and associated EU focal venue for each case presented above. For each focal forum, we focus on the year leading up to the final agreement, as our research suggested that was when the EU was most diplomatically active.

[Insert Table 1 here]

## 4.2 Non-focal fora and their corresponding EU focal venues

In order to identify the different non-focal fora in the regime complex the EU might have utilised as part of its diplomacy, we looked at academic literature, press reports, and official documents to devise a list of potentially relevant non-focal fora for each negotiation. These are international institutions bringing together at least three actors on at least two occasions and not directly linked to the focal forum. We then systematically worked through these non-focal fora during the semi-structured interviews, asking respondents to speak about the fora's relevance to the EU's diplomacy and if any other fora were missing. Table 2 lists the non-focal fora which appeared pertinent for the corresponding negotiations, along with the relevant EU focal venues. Collectively, these fora stand out as being generally relevant for the EU's negotiation activity in the regime complex, though some are clearly more relevant for particular negotiations than others. The aim of this article is therefore to determine the extent to which EU compartmentalization drives the different uses of non-focal fora across these negotiations. At the same time, we acknowledge the different opportunity structures present in each negotiation and associated non-focal fora.

[Insert Table 2 here]

## 5. Empirics

This section presents the empirical data from the four case studies. The analysis of each case is divided into two parts: (1) the EU's diplomacy across the regime complex and (2) the effect of compartmentalization on the comprehensiveness of the EU's climate diplomacy across the regime complex.

### 5.1 Paris Agreement

#### 5.1.1 *The EU's diplomacy across the regime complex*

Of all four cases, the EU's use of non-focal fora was the most extensive for the Paris Agreement, both with respect to the number of fora it used and the way it used them. Non-focal fora were used in three main ways (Earsom & Delreux, 2023). First, the EU used a number of non-focal fora entirely dedicated to climate change to address issues directly related to the UNFCCC negotiations. For instance, the EU used the Cartagena Dialogue, C2ES 'Towards 2015' Dialogues, the Major Economies Forum, the OECD Climate Change Expert Group (OECD CCXG), and the

Petersberg Dialogue to advance the EU negotiation positions, and identify potential solutions for a final agreement (interviews 1a, 2a, 4a, 5a, 6a). The EU actively worked in the Cartagena Dialogue and the Progressive Ministerial Club to form alliances with progressive developing countries and agree on concrete solutions on negotiation texts (interviews 1a, 3a, 4a, 6a; Brun, 2016). It also used the Major Economies Forum and the G20 to overcome specific issues related to the negotiations (Betts, 2021).

Second, the EU used non-focal fora like the G7, G20, and UN Secretary General Summits to create political momentum for the negotiations by seeking high-level commitments from parties (interviews 3a, 5a, 8a). Within the G7 and Petersberg Dialogues, it reframed climate change as a security issue in order to attract more interest from foreign affairs ministers and heads of state and government (interviews 7a, 8a).

Third, for those non-focal fora not directly dealing with climate change and at a lower level of political authority, the EU was mainly focused on maintaining coherent messaging on climate related issues. This included the 2030 Agenda negotiations, Financing for Development (FfD) negotiations, ICAO, and IMO (4a, 5a, 7a, 8a, 9a, 10a).

### *5.1.2 The effect of compartmentalization on the EU's diplomacy*

The absence of a coordination structure between the UNFCCC focal venue (the WPIEI-CC) and focal venues of the non-focal fora restricted how the EU was able to use other fora that did not regularly deal with climate change. This was reinforced by a lack of resources in the EEAS to organize such coordination. Although the EU used quite a few non-focal fora (14), compartmentalisation affected how it used them to support the negotiations.

The *lack of communication channels* between the WPIEI-CC and the focal venues of the other fora manifested itself in the absence of central coordinating structure for the EU's multilateral climate diplomacy (interviews 2a, 8a). The lack of such a system meant that for those non-focal fora not dealing directly with climate change, the EU relied on a 'coordination through narrative, more than hands on coordination, because the complexity of the system – the number of stakeholders is just mindboggling' (interview 8a). This mainly entailed drafting Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions mentioning the importance of fora like ICAO, IMO, and the G7, and G20 in acting on climate, thereby pushing the relevant venues to action, as opposed to detailed coordination and reflection on how each non-focal forum could be used (interview 8a). The lack of regular contact between the WPIEI-CC and other focal venues meant that, although there were high-level political signals on the importance of ambitious agreement, the actual utility of non-focal fora not directly dealing with climate change, was relatively limited.

Additionally, *the lack of resources* dedicated to climate diplomacy by the EEAS reinforced the relatively compartmentalised approach to the regime complex. The EEAS, which had been charged with liaising between the WPIEI-CC and the focal venues of the non-focal fora, only had a maximum of three people working on climate diplomacy issues at the time, with a strong focus on

coordinating the bilateral outreach by EU Delegations in third countries (interviews 1a, 2a, 5a, 7a, 10a). The EEAS did not have the human resources necessary to invest in working across focal venues in a way that facilitated an efficient use of the regime complex in support of EU objectives in the UNFCCC.

## 5.2 CORSIA

### 5.2.1 *The EU's diplomacy across the regime complex*

Overall, the use of non-focal fora in the regime complex appeared restricted to four fora and of limited value to the EU's objectives on the CORSIA negotiations in ICAO. First, EU negotiators prepared briefing material for the G20 but noted it was more informative than anything (interview 7b, 9b). Second, the EU discussed the CORSIA negotiations at a Transportation G7 Meeting in September 2016, which served as a 'formal alignment of thoughts' amongst transportation ministers who were largely already in agreement on a negotiation position (interview 8b). Third and fourth, DG CLIMA attempted to conduct outreach in the Petersberg Dialogue and the Major Economies Forum (interviews 6b, 7b, 11b). However, these fora were of limited use as they primarily convened climate and foreign affairs officials, while the ICAO negotiations were under the purview of transportation ministries (interviews 4b, 6b). Moreover, unlike in the negotiations on the Paris Agreement, the EU was not particularly active on the ICAO negotiations in high-level political fora, such as the G7 summit, the G20 summit, or the UN General Assembly (interviews 3b, 4b, 5b, 11b).

### 5.2.2 *The effect of compartmentalization on the EU's diplomacy*

The limited EU diplomatic activity outside of ICAO seemed strongly influenced by the attitude of the Aviation Working Party (AVIA), i.e. the focal venue for the ICAO negotiations. These different priorities and framings were then reinforced by a lack of expertise on the negotiations in other EU venues than the AVIA. Finally, the limited efficacy of those diplomatic activities employed appeared affected by the lack of communication channels between AVIA and the focal venues dealing with other fora.

With respect to *different priorities and policy framings*, there was a strong consensus inside AVIA that ICAO was the only appropriate forum for negotiations 'because the very specific nature of the global international aviation industry' (interview 5b). AVIA emphasised that it was best equipped to handle the negotiations due to the technical nature of a market-based measure and the particularities of international aviation (interviews 1b, 4b, 5b). At the same time, AVIA viewed it as only one part of ICAO's broader work and did not wish to re-create the tensions that emerged in earlier ICAO Assemblies following the EU's attempt to extend its Emissions Trading System to flights arriving in and departing from the EU (interviews 1b, 2b, 3b, 6b). In contrast, DG CLIMA viewed the issue as part of the EU's larger climate policy and sought to incorporate its approach from the UNFCCC, including coordination in WPIEI-CC, the UNFCCC focal venue (interviews 4a, 5b, 7b). While DG CLIMA pushed for a larger outreach, they struggled to make their transport counterparts

understand ‘that we could not just go to Montreal [ICAO], arrive the day before, and just wait and see what our partners were thinking about’ (interview 6b). It therefore appeared that there was little appetite inside the ICAO focal venue for working outside the ICAO negotiations proper.

A *lack of expertise* on the issues being negotiated in other EU venues appeared to reinforce AVIA’s unique position as the only EU venue for coordination (interviews 3b, 4b, 6b, 7b, 11b). For instance, DG CLIMA attempted to bring up the negotiations in COREPER, but the lack of technical understanding complicated the matter. An EU official summarized the issue:

But the challenge was over time, it’s very, very easy to talk about generalities, ambition...at the end of the day you have to translate that into highly technical rules, and COREPER is not the best place to talk about technicalities. (interview 6b)

In that sense, the lack of technical expertise and detailed understanding of the issues reinforced the agency of the focal venue and its attitudes towards outreach. As the focal venue, AVIA maintained a monopoly on the negotiations and the associated outreach (interviews 4b, 6b). There was a dominant mindset that ICAO would take care of the problem (interviews 1b, 6b).

Finally, the interviews suggest that a *lack of communication channels* between AVIA and other focal venues could have also complicated ICAO negotiation-related diplomacy in the non-focal fora. The level of communication inside both the EU and the member states on climate issues in ICAO varied (interviews 5a, 4b). In many cases, the climate and transport processes existed in parallel, with little interaction between them (interviews 4b, 6b). For example, when asked about coordination with climate colleagues on the Petersberg Dialogue, an EU member state official noted ‘The topic was there on the agenda, I’m pretty sure, but we were not involved in the preparation’ (interview 11b).

## 5.3 Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol

### 5.3.1 *The EU’s diplomacy across the regime complex*

Similar to the Paris Agreement, the EU used a variety of non-focal fora to advance its objectives on an HFC phase down within the Montreal Protocol, with three main types of uses emerging. First, the EU used the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), which had a specific HFC workstream, to engage concretely on specific issues related to the negotiations. At the CCAC, EU member states worked to show certain developing states that resources are available to facilitate the phase out of the HFCs (interviews 4c, 5c, 7c, 8c). The EU used the CCAC HFC meetings to go ‘beyond the political discussion to show developing countries that some others had already put in place some measures and that it was working and it was possible’ (interview 5c).

Second, thanks in part to strong political interest from the United States, the Kigali Amendment negotiations was a regular item of discussion at high-level international fora (interviews 1c, 2c, 4c, 5c, 6c, 8c; Zaelke et al., 2017). In the G7, Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom worked to push for general language that would ‘step by step be more clear and more supportive’ of an Amendment (interview 1c). The EU also used the G20 to a similar end. One month before the

final negotiations at the 28th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, the EU also participated in a meeting of the 'Coalition to Secure an Ambitious HFC Amendment,' convened on the side-lines of the UN General Assembly, with several EU member states pledging additional financial resources to help developing countries transition away from HFCs (interviews 1c, 3c, 5c; Council of the EU, 2016).

Third, the EU also used more traditional climate and environmental fora like the UNFCCC, the UNEA, the Major Economies Forum, and the Petersberg Dialogue in a somewhat limited capacity (interviews 1c, 4c, 6c) to 'familiarise with the [HFC] problem and to signal that this is something important to us' (interview 4c). At the UNFCCC, this mainly took the form of side events and presentations, as well as bilateral outreach. Inside the UNEA, the EU, at the initiative of a Montreal Protocol negotiator who also covered the UNEA, unsuccessfully tried to include ambitious language on the Kigali Amendment inside a decision (interview 5c).

### *5.3.2 The effect of compartmentalization on the EU's diplomacy*

In the case of the Kigali Amendment, a combination of a lack of expertise outside the Commission-convened National Expert Group (NEG), which serves as focal venue for the Montreal Protocol, and a lack of interest in other focal venues (different priorities and policy framings) appeared to limit how the non-focal fora not dealing directly with HFCs were used. This was exacerbated by the relative isolation of the NEG (lack of communication channels).

A *lack of expertise* on HFC-related matters in other venues than the NEG limited the extent to which the NEG could rely on other venues in its outreach for the negotiations. The NEG was confronted with needing to explain an inherently technical subject to relevant non-focal venues where there was not a strong familiarity with the issues (interviews 1c, 4c, 5c). The focal venue at times had difficulty finding 'the right level to do justice to the real difficult crunch issues, and, at the same time, you know, is really comprehensible for the political level' (interview 1c). Ultimately, the lack of understanding appeared to affect the engagement of EU officials outside of the NEG. According to an EU member state official in the NEG: 'There is a certain resistance that comes out of the people. It's a very personal, very reservational: "OK, this is very technical. I don't really have any idea of that, and let the technicians deal with that."' (interview 6c). Ultimately, this appears to have had two impacts on the EU's ability to pursue a comprehensive climate diplomacy. First, coordination for the negotiations and outreach mainly stayed within the NEG (interviews 1c, 2c). Second, outreach arguments provided to the focal venues of the non-focal fora were relatively simplified and pedagogical (interviews 4c, 5c).

Additionally, *the different priorities and policy framings* of the focal venues meant that, despite the fact that the negotiations were discussed in high-level political fora like the G7 and G20, there appeared to be a lack of interest within focal venues responsible for those non-focal fora handling climate issues at lower political levels (i.e. not the leader or minister level). This manifested itself in less-than-successful efforts by the NEG to have the Kigali Amendment negotiations included in

climate diplomacy discussions in the WPIEI-CC, serving as the UNFCCC focal venue. According to an EU official in the NEG, 'In the run up, of course also the focus was so much on reaching the Paris Agreement that until 2015, the system was largely absorbed, and all we could do is to try to mention that here and there, to organize side events and give presentations at the margins of the COP' (interview 4c). Another EU member state official noted that it could be difficult to include the negotiations in Council Conclusions, with officials in the WPIEI-CC arguing 'You know that's very nice, but it's a very specific issue and maybe we don't need it.' (interview 5c). In the case of the UNEA, the EU ultimately decided to drop the reference to the Kigali Amendment in favour the priorities of that negotiation itself (interview 5c). Concretely, with the potential exceptions of the G7 and the G20, the negotiations were not necessarily being seen as a priority outside of the NEG.

Finally, while its precise impact is difficult to assess, there was a *lack of communication channels* between the NEG and other EU venues, as the NEG was relatively insulated from the other venues (interviews 2c, 5c). The ozone experts working on the Kigali Amendment did not have systematic contacts with climate experts, though some EU member states were more integrated than others (interviews 2c, 6c).

## 5.4 IMO Initial Strategy

### 5.4.1 *The EU's diplomacy across the regime complex*

The EU's use of non-focal fora outside the IMO appeared restricted to two fora: the UNFCCC and the One Planet Summit. First, SHAC members, including the European Commission, used UNFCCC COP23 and other UNFCCC preparatory meetings to raise awareness of the importance of reducing shipping emissions and the IMO negotiations (interviews 1d, 3d, 5d, 6d, 7d, 11d). Second, at the initiative of France, SHAC crafted a declaration to be considered by world leaders at 'One Planet Summit', organized by France on the occasion of the second anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Agreement, in 2017 (interviews 5d, 7d, 9d, 11d). The objective of the so-called 'Tony de Brum Declaration' was to draw political attention to the negotiations and overcome situations in which a state's position in the IMO contradicted its level of ambition in the UNFCCC (interviews 1d, 3d, 5d, 7d). Unlike the other cases, the EU did not use fora like the G7, G20, or UN to advocate for its negotiating position, nor did it use climate-specific fora like the Major Economies Forum or the Petersberg Dialogue. Moreover, the efforts to draw attention to the IMO negotiations at the UNFCCC and via the One Planet Summit were undertaken primarily via an extra-EU coordination setup.

### 5.4.2 *The effect of compartmentalization on the EU's diplomacy*

The EU's very limited use of non-focal fora appeared influenced by a combination of a lack of interest in the shipping negotiations outside of the Shipping Working Party (SWP) – the IMO focal venue (different priorities and policy framings) – and a lack of communication channels with other focal venues. This was then aggravated by a lack of resources inside DG CLIMA, which was tasked

with coordinating with the WPIEI-CC. Like the case of ICAO, focal venues of the non-focal fora were largely absent from the EU's approach to the negotiations. Instead, it was internal EU entrepreneurs, here acting via the SHAC, who sought to work across the UNFCCC and the One Planet Summit.

The *different priorities and policy framings* manifested itself in a relative lack of interest in the negotiations inside focal venues of the non-focal fora (interviews 1d, 5d, 7d, 11d). Such a lack of interest made it difficult to get shipping on the agenda of other EU venues and of international fora outside the shipping bubble (interview 1d). This is perhaps best exemplified by the short amount of time dedicated to the Tony de Brum Declaration at the One Planet Summit. According to an EU member state official, it took up two minutes of 'a meeting that we controlled and with a declaration that that we had made and a meeting agenda that we oversaw. That is to say that for a lot of people it's really a small issue' (interview 5d).

The concentration of EU diplomatic coordination within the SWP, serving as the focal venue for the IMO, corresponded with a *lack of communication channels* between the SWP and the larger climate diplomacy apparatus. The SWP, made up of officials with transportation backgrounds, had little contact with the other focal venues (interviews 4d, 11d). In this case, that meant that their involvement and input on multilateral diplomacy coordinated elsewhere was limited. An EU official from the SWP summarised their knowledge of an outreach demarche as 'I heard of it from the side-line shall we say' (interview 8d).

Finally, the *lack of resources* inside DG CLIMA's shipping unit further contributed to limited diplomacy. With a team of three people at its high point, DG CLIMA's shipping-dedicated team did not have resources to coordinate using various climate fora in service of the IMO negotiations (interviews 1d, 7d, 8d).

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

The impact of compartmentalisation on the EU's diplomacy in the international regime complex on climate change primarily manifests itself in two ways. First, in the case of the Paris Agreement and the Kigali Amendment, the EU evoked the negotiations in a wide variety of non-focal fora, but this was mainly limited to building political support and consistent messaging. Second, in the case of CORSIA and the Initial Strategy, the EU did not use non-focal fora, with the exception of efforts undertaken unilaterally by DG CLIMA (ICAO) and France (IMO). In each case, the three variables – a lack of communication channels, different priorities and policy framings, and a lack of resources and expertise – had differing levels of impact on the EU's use of non-focal fora. Nonetheless, three larger observations on overarching patterns can be drawn.

First, the importance of the broader prioritization of climate change within the EU stands out. The Paris Agreement was the only case in which *different priorities and policy framings* did not appear to affect the EU's diplomacy across the regime complex. The general prioritization of climate change and the UNFCCC in the leadup to COP21 appeared to be reflected in how the different focal venues coordinated to work towards an ambitious outcome. In contrast, in the other three

negotiations, the absence of such a prioritization affected the EU's diplomacy in the sense that the non-focal fora were less utilised. Second, a *lack of communication channels* between focal venues affected the EU's diplomacy in each case, though to different degrees. Indeed, various EU actors present in multiple focal venues (such as DG CLIMA and the EEAS) had the potential to serve as liaisons between the venues. However, their own *limited resources* meant they did not realize that potential. Third, there is a dichotomy in the EU's climate diplomacy for negotiations taking place in transport-specific focal fora (ICAO and IMO) and those in environmentally-focused focal fora (UNFCCC and Montreal Protocol). The focal venues for ICAO and IMO are indeed largely isolated from those focal venues that play a prominent role in coordinating the EU's position and approach for the UNFCCC and the Montreal Protocol. In that regard, the effects of compartmentalization were most evident in the two transport cases and call into question the extent to which the EU deploys a climate diplomacy in support of transport negotiations. The EU's approach to those transport fora is clearly inscribed in a particular sectoral context.

Overall, the article makes three main contributions to the literature. First, the case studies demonstrate that the EU's diplomacy in a regime complex is affected by internal institutional structures, and particularly the existence of communication channels, available expertise and resources, and aligned priorities and policy framings across the EU focal venues responsible for individual fora. In that regard, the article bridges the literature on EU internal compartmentalization to that of the EU as an actor in global governance and regime complexes (Hartlapp et al., 2014; Vantaggiato et al., 2020). In doing so, it improves our understanding of the constraints shaping how the EU navigates regime complexity (Delreux & Earsom, 2023; Marx & Westerwinter, 2022). Second, although the institutional setting of the EU makes it a unique international actor, the observations of the three aspects of compartmentalisation can contribute to our understanding of coherence in international regime complexes (Morin & Orsini, 2014). They show that not only the multitude of focal fora matters, but rather the extent to which their interactions and relations are cooperative and synergic. Third, in focusing not only on the UNFCCC but also on ICAO, IMO, and the Montreal Protocol and the role of compartmentalisation therein, the article underscores the potential limitations of the EU's strategic climate diplomacy and nuances its role as an international climate leader. While the findings on the Paris Agreement negotiations fit with the existing literature on the EU's role therein, this absence of prioritization in the other three negotiations departs from the expected transposition of EU leadership and diplomacy into these negotiations (Bäckstrand & Elgström, 2013; Oberthür & Dupont, 2021; Oberthür & Groen, 2018).

This nuanced picture on the EU's climate diplomacy in the international regime complex on climate change looks as follows. On the one hand, the EU has attempted to use a variety of non-focal fora in support of its objectives in some focal fora negotiations. It confirms the EU is a strategic, resourceful actor on international climate issues. On the other hand, compartmentalisation undercut the comprehensiveness of the EU's climate diplomacy. The EU is clearly limited in how it uses non-focal fora because of the silos present across the different venues responsible for the different fora

of the regime complex. In that sense, for the EU, the regime complex is not the expansive, strategic 'chessboard' it would seem at first glance (Alter & Meunier, 2009, p. 16). The number of non-focal fora in which the EU is active and the ways it uses them to support negotiations in a focal forum is in fact quite restricted. Given the potential for conducting a comprehensive climate diplomacy in the regime complex, compartmentalisation indeed makes it a missed opportunity for the EU.

This article looked specifically at the impact of *internal* compartmentalization, which it has found to impact the EU's diplomacy across the international regime complex on climate change. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the different *external* opportunity structures proper to each focal forum negotiation, particularly with regard to membership or function. For instance, the EU is a party to both the Montreal Protocol and the UNFCCC, while it is only an observer in ICAO and IMO. Furthermore, different non-focal fora are more relevant for some negotiations than others. These factors are also likely to impact the EU's diplomacy and could serve as alternate explanations. Nonetheless, the article shows that internal compartmentalisation impacts how the EU navigates these contexts.

Along these lines, several avenues of future research emerge. For instance, future research could examine the role of external variables, such as the international opportunity structure and other alternative explanations mentioned above, in shaping the EU's diplomacy in the context of international regime complexes. Furthermore, research on the impact of intra-EU policy-making on its diplomacy in other regime complexes might elucidate to what extent our findings travel from the climate change domain to other policy fields. Additionally, while the EU has indeed a unique internal policy-making system making it a likely case to be hindered by compartmentalization in its climate diplomacy, its specialized bureaucracy faces many similar organizational challenges as other actors, albeit the EU is perhaps a more extreme case. In that sense, research could study other more traditional state actors to examine the extent to which findings on compartmentalization could indeed be transferrable beyond the EU. Such an agenda can help develop a more complete picture of how much the EU is actually impeded by its compartmentalisation, as compared to other actors in the regime complex.

**Note:**

1. In this article, we refer to the EU as its institutions or member states acting either individually or collectively on the basis of a common position.

## 7. References

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*Table 1: Focal fora for the negotiations and their associated EU focal venues*

	<b>Focal forum</b>	<b>EU focal venue</b>
<b>Paris Agreement</b>	<b>UNFCCC</b>	<b>WPIEI-CC (ENV)</b>
<b>CORSIA</b>	<b>ICAO</b>	<b>AVIA (TTE)</b>
<b>Kigali Amendment</b>	<b>Montreal Protocol</b>	<b>NEG (Comm.)</b>
<b>Initial Strategy</b>	<b>IMO</b>	<b>SWP (TTE)</b>

Table 2: Non-focal fora relevant for each negotiation

Paris Agreement		ICAO CORSIA		Kigali Amendment		IMO Initial Strategy	
Non-focal forum	Associated focal venue	Non-focal forum	Associated focal venue	Non-focal forum	Associated focal venue	Non-focal forum	Associated focal venue
2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	CONUN (FAC), CODEV-PI (FAC), WPIEI-Global (ENV)	G20	European Council; COREPER	Climate & Clean Air Coalition	NEG (European Commission)	One Planet Summit	Ad-hoc (French initiative)
Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)	COASI (FAC)	G7	COREPER (limited)	G20	European Council; COREPER	UNFCCC	WPIEI-CC (ENV)
Cartagena Dialogue	WPIEI-CC (ENV)	Major Economies Forum	WPIEI-CC (ENV)	G7	COREPER (limited)		
C2ES 'Towards 2015'	WPIEI-CC (ENV)	Petersberg Dialogue	WPIEI-CC (ENV)	Major Economies Forum	WPIEI-CC (ENV)		
Financing for Development (FfD)	CONUN (FAC), CODEV-PI (FAC), WPIEI-Global (ENV)			Petersberg Dialogue	WPIEI-CC (ENV)		
G20	European Council; COREPER			UN Environmental Assembly	WPIEI-Global (ENV)		
G7	COREPER (limited)			UNFCCC	WPIEI-CC (ENV)		
ICAO	AVIA (TTE)			UN Sec. Gen / General Assembly	UN Working Party (FAC), FAC, EU Delegations		
IMO	SWP (TTE)						
Major Economies Forum	WPIEI-CC (ENV)						
OECD Climate Change Expert Group	WPIEI-CC (ENV)						
Petersberg Dialogue	WPIEI-CC (ENV)						
Progressive Ministerials	WPIEI-CC (ENV)						
UN Sec. Gen / General Assembly	UN Working Party (FAC), FAC, EU Delegations						