

# **Race to the bottom or differentiated policy implementation?**

*Measuring and explaining environmental policy  
integration in the Common Agricultural Policy (2022-  
2027)*

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# Context of the research project

- Collaboration created during Enfasys
- Common interest on agri-environmental governance and policies, with interdisciplinary backgrounds
- Research gap identified: gap between stated environmental ambition and actual implementation
- Comparative analysis obsession – aim was to conduct a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)

# The puzzle around AE policies in the CAP

- Prescribed set of EU-wide agri-environmental objectives and instruments in the CAP
- However, implementation varies widely
- AE issues mainly addressed by two (financial) policy instruments: Eco-Schemes and Agri-environmental and climate measures (AECM)
- Member states make use of flexibility provided by the shared European legal framework (subsidiarity)
  - Adjusting relative budget allocation
  - Concret design of the measures

**AE policy are underperforming: is it as race to the bottom or different policy implementation?**

# General objectives

## GENERAL CONTRIBUTION

Measure and explain the integration of environmental concerns in the CAP

## SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION

Implementation of agri-environmental policy instruments and their calibration

## BROADER AIMS

- Contribute to a better understanding of agri-environmental policy implementation
- Inform (and hopefully advise) policy-makers at both EU and MS level

# Conceptual framework - EPI

- Environmental Policy Integration (EPI): Incorporation of environmental issues in non-environmental policy areas (Lafferty/Hovden 2003)
- Focus on policy output (Runhaar, 2016): policies and programs adopted
- EPI unavoidably leads to policy mixes
- Strong vs. weak EPI (Knudsen & Lafferty, 2016)
- Importance of calibration (Grohmann & Feindt, 2023)

# Conceptual framework – DPI

- Differentiated Policy Implementation (DPI): diversity in the existence and use of discretion during the implementation of legal and practical policies in the EU (Zhelyazkova et al. 2024)
  - Discretion leads to great variation in implementation patterns (Thoman & Zhelyazkova, 2017)
  - Factors affecting implementation patterns (Princen, 2022)
    - Pre-existing domestic policies
    - Political context and issue salience
    - Institutional and administrative capacities
    - Policy networks and coalitions
- > Comparative analysis needed

# Why a QCA?

- Because it accounts for causal complexity
- Because allows for equifinality
- Because explains multifinality



What explains the survival rates of offices' plants?

## Causal complexity

Watering routine

Awareness of their existence

Optimal light exposure

Accidental soil experiment

## Equifinality

Watering schedule

Election for THE master of plants

Replace all plants with cactus

## Multifinality

Plants continue to die

Plants survive

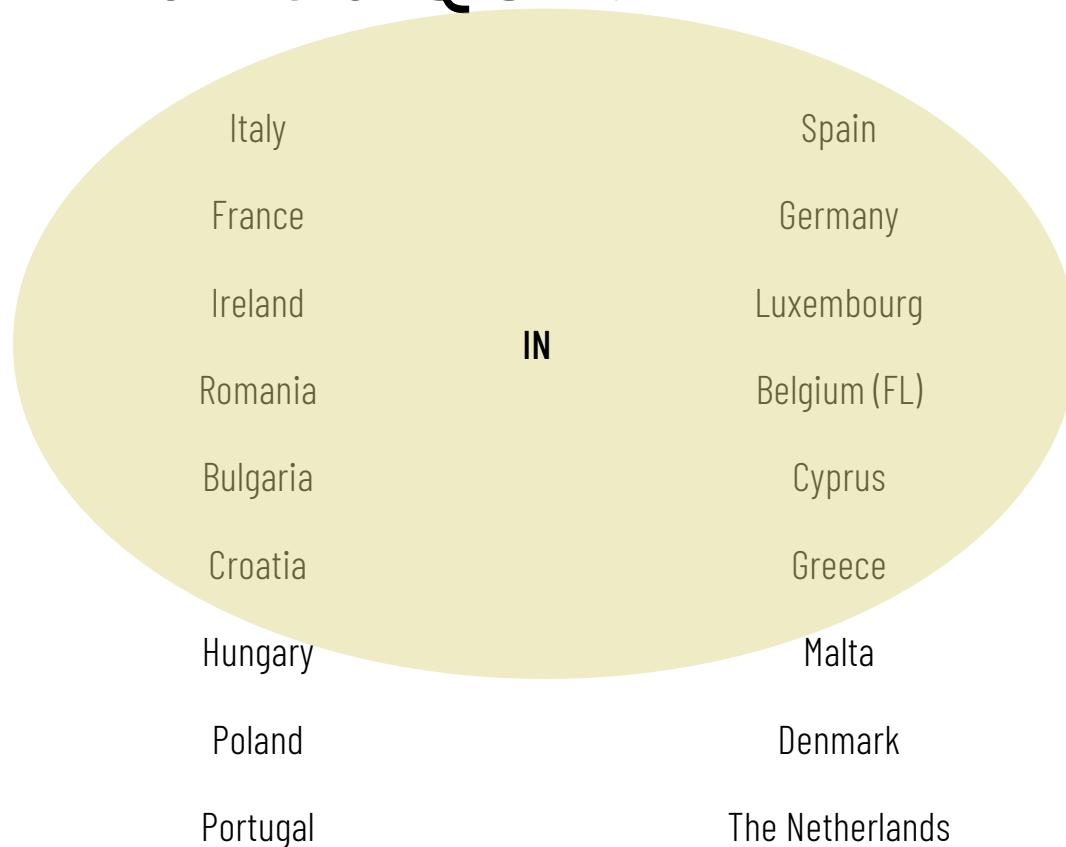
# What is a QCA?

## A list of cases

|          |                 |              |
|----------|-----------------|--------------|
| Italy    | Spain           | Austria      |
| France   | Germany         | Finland      |
| Ireland  | Luxembourg      | Lithuania    |
| Romania  | Belgium (FL)    | Belgium (WL) |
| Bulgaria | Cyprus          | Sweden       |
| Croatia  | Greece          | Czechia      |
| Hungary  | Malta           | Slovakia     |
| Poland   | Denmark         | Slovenia     |
| Portugal | The Netherlands | Estonia      |



# What is a QCA?



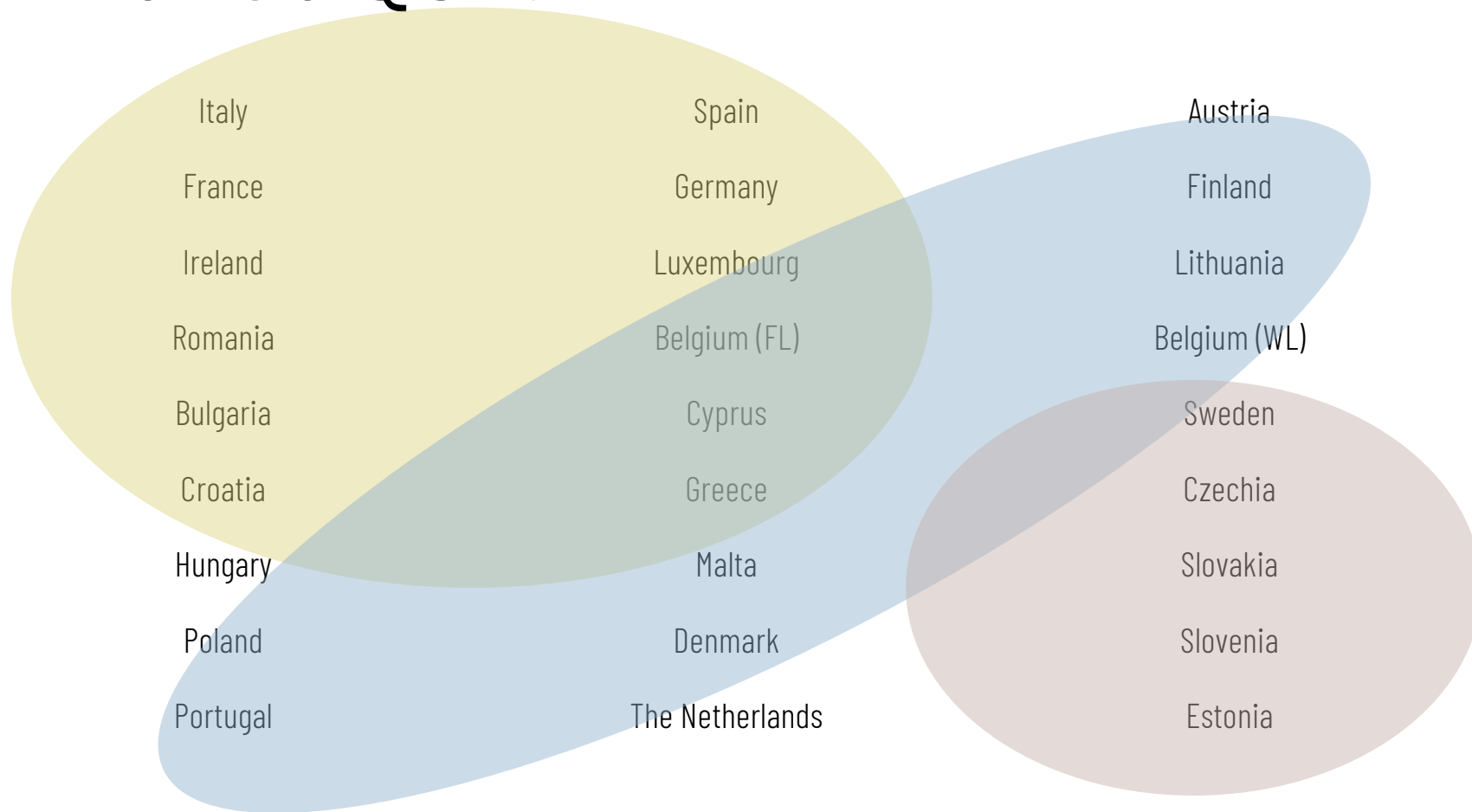
**Condition(s): for which  
cases can be either in  
or out**

**OUT**

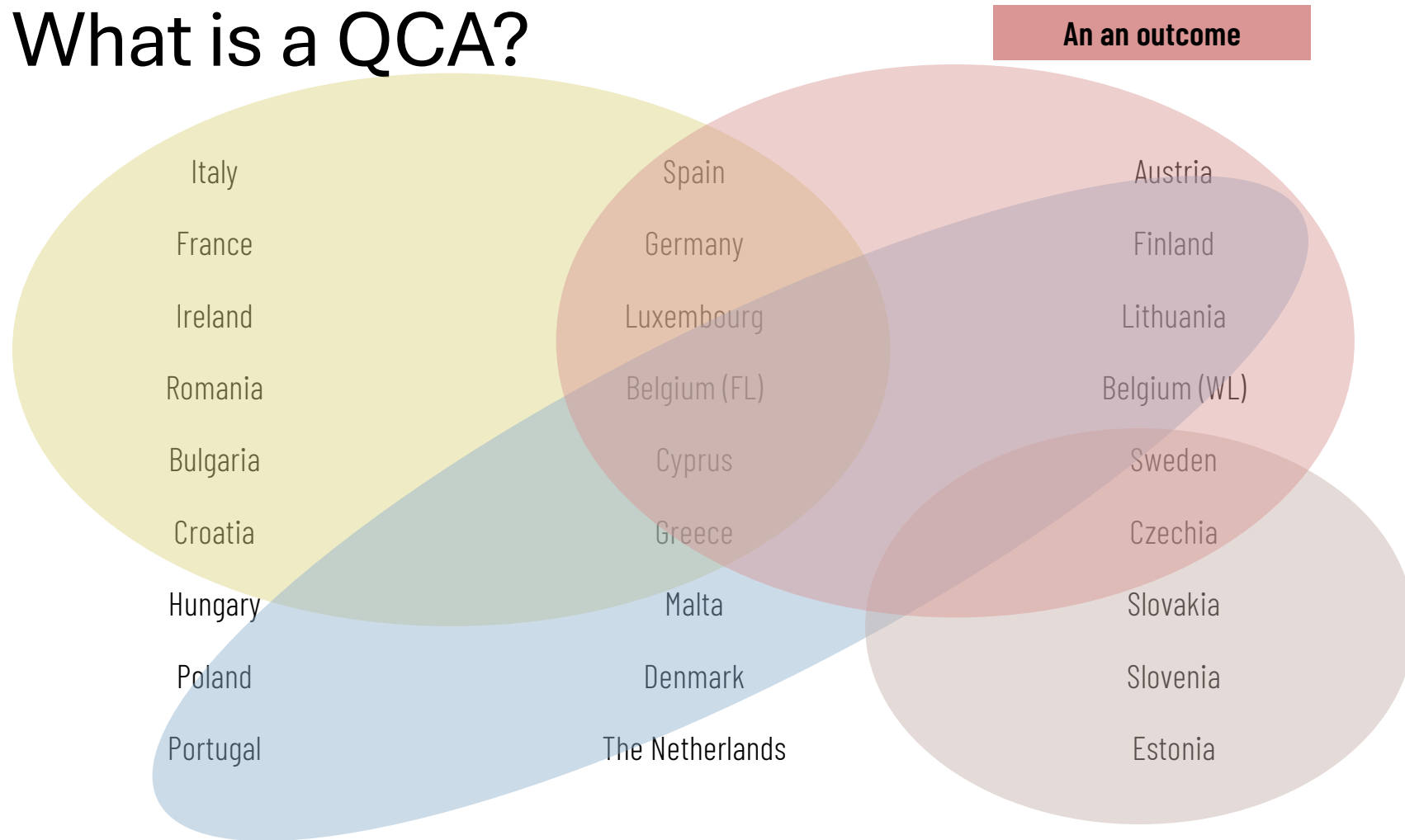
|              |
|--------------|
| Austria      |
| Finland      |
| Lithuania    |
| Belgium (WL) |
| Sweden       |
| Czechia      |
| Slovakia     |
| Slovenia     |
| Estonia      |

# What is a QCA?

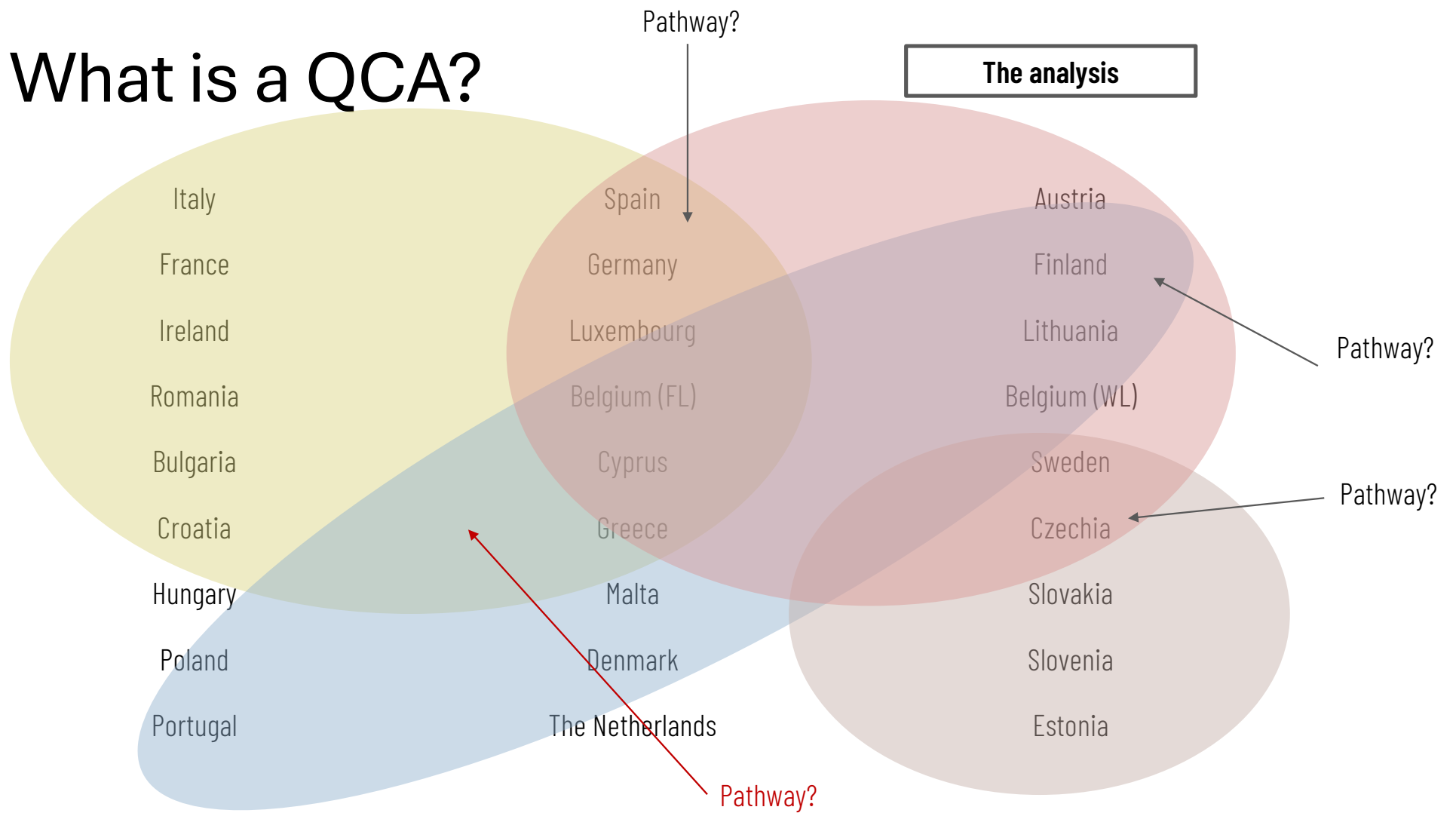
Multiple conditions



# What is a QCA?



# What is a QCA?



# What is a QCA?

|                | Condition 1      | Condition 2  | Condition 3   | Condition 4 | # cases |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|---------|
| Truth table(s) | 0                | 1            | 1             | 0           | 4       |
|                | 0                | 0            | 1             | 0           | 3       |
|                | 1                | 0            | 1             | 1           | 2       |
|                | 0                | 1            | 0             | 1           | 2       |
|                | 1                | 0            | 0             | 1           | 1       |
| Solution(s)    | Solutions        | OUT          | Cases         |             |         |
|                | $C1 * C2^* - C3$ | Presence OUT | 1, 2, 5, 7    |             |         |
|                | $C1^* - C2$      | Presence OUT | 3, 4, 6, 8    |             |         |
|                | $-C2^* - C3$     | Absence OUT  | 12, 10, 19, 9 |             |         |
|                | $-C1^* - C3$     | Absence OUT  | 11, 15        |             |         |

# And in our QCA?

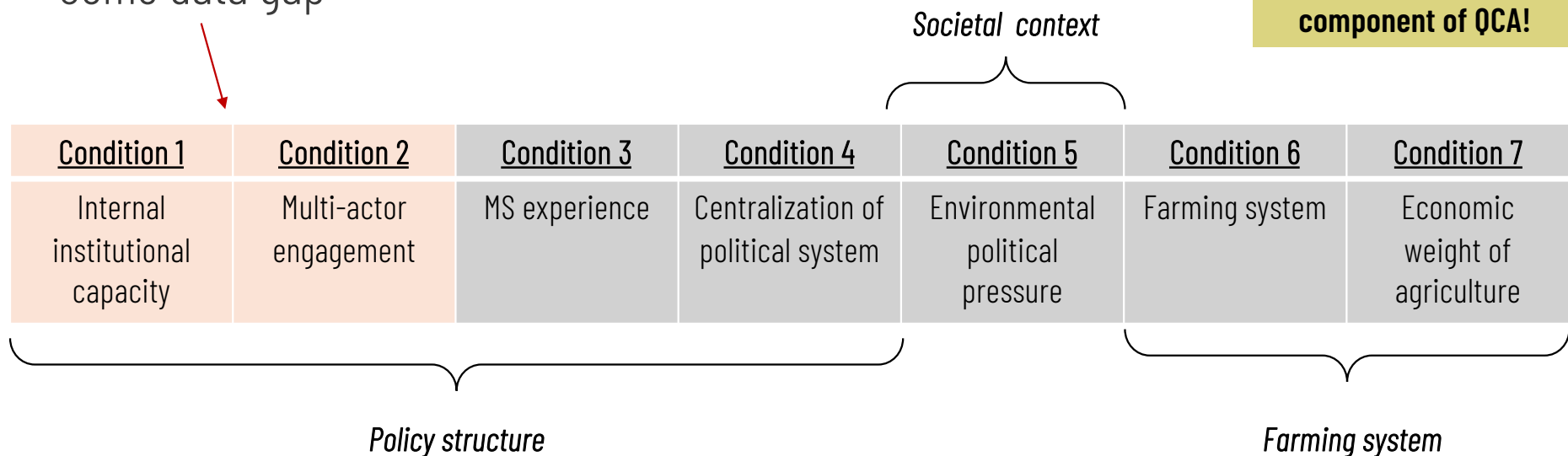
|            |                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CASES      | EU Member States' CAP Strategic Plans                                                                                                                                                  |
| OUTCOME    | Environmental ambition: strong or weak EPI (budget; stringency)<br>Budget: share of budget for AECMs and eco-schemes<br>Stringency: depth of AECMs and eco-schemes set of requirements |
| CONDITIONS | i) Policy structure; ii) Farming system; iii) Societal context                                                                                                                         |

# The conditions

- Three dimensions for the conditions: policy structure, societal context, farming system
- Some data gap



**NB: 343553 meetings as testimony iterative component of QCA!**



# Indicators & data

|             | <u>EXP</u>        | <u>RAI</u>                         | <u>EPP</u>                                          | <u>FARM</u>    | <u>GDPA</u>                    |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Condition   | MS experience     | Centralization of political system | Environmental political pressure                    | Farming system | Economic weight of agriculture |
| Indicator   | MS accession date | RAI                                | Societal pressure<br>AND<br>Green party in gov/parl | Farm intensity | GDP agri                       |
| Data source | EU data           | Hooghe & Marks, 2018               | Eurobarometer<br>ParlGov database                   | FADN data      | Eurostat                       |

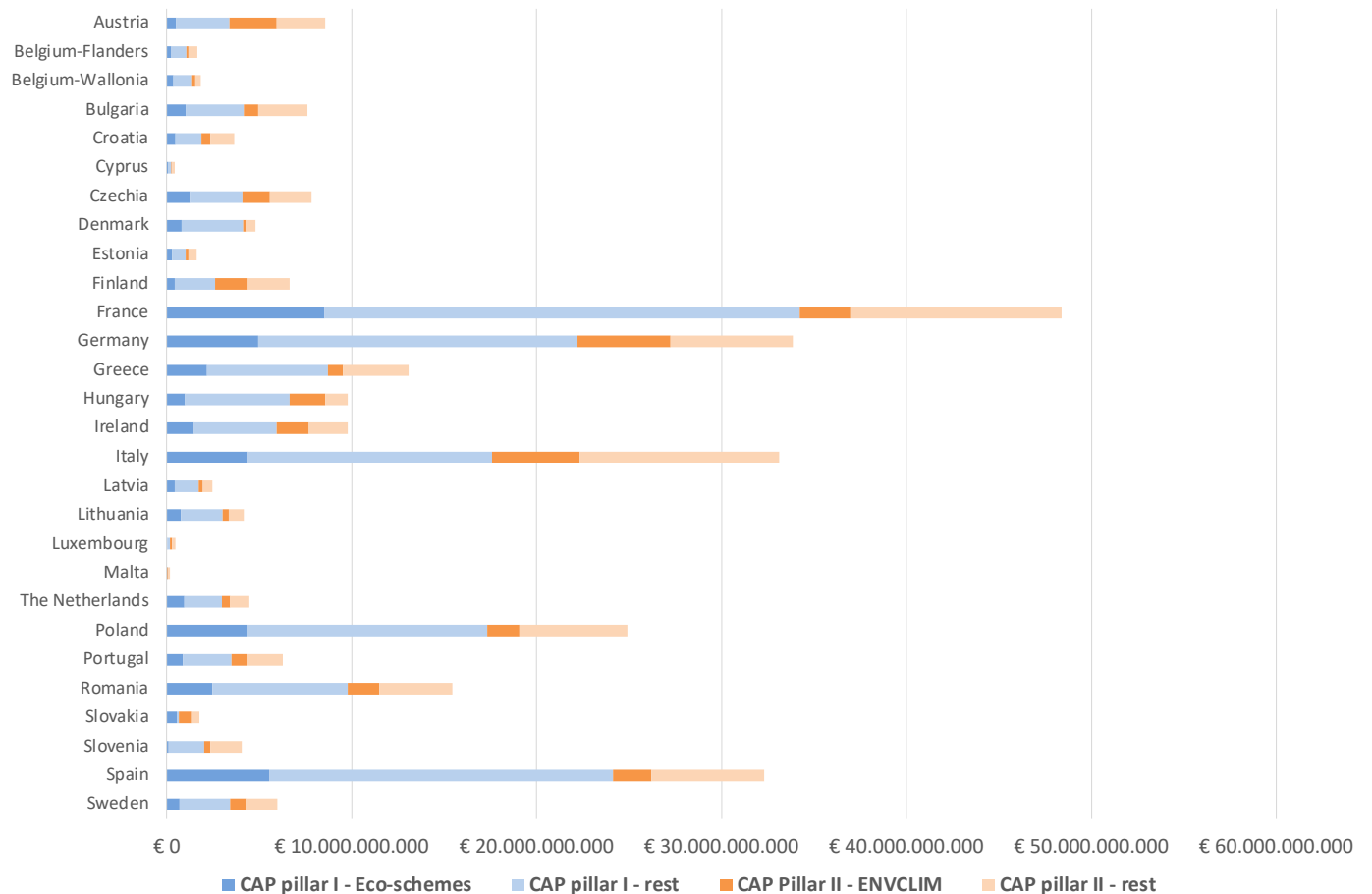


# Descriptive statistics

1. Insights on outcome
2. Calibration of conditions

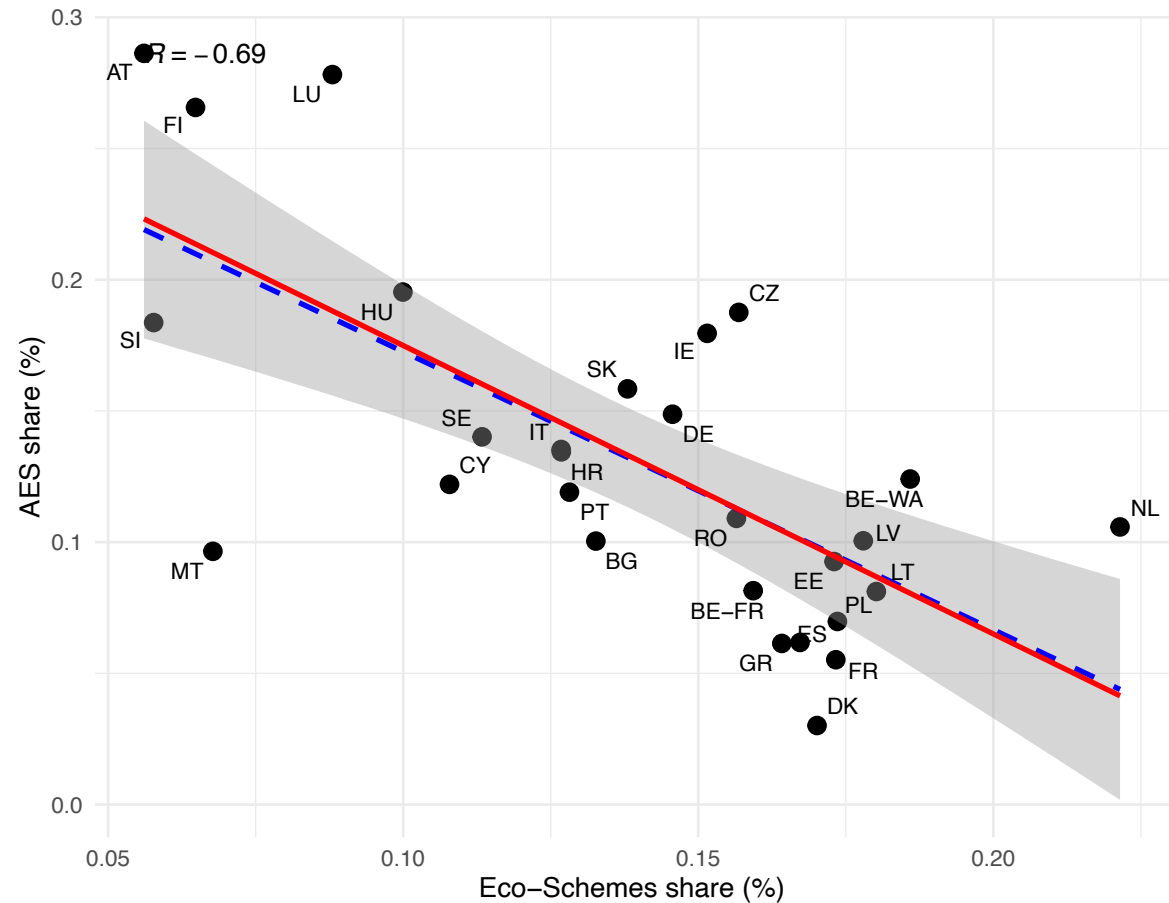
# Budgetary distribution across MS

- Different budgetary allocation across MS
- Relative figures tells a different story than absolute figures
- (spoiler: we are interested in the relative figures)



# Scatterplot AECMs & Eco-schemes

- Different budgetary allocation across MS
- Budgetary constraint for eco-schemes plays a role
- Overall tendency to trade-offs across the two policy instruments



# How QCA data looks like

**NB: conditions are not variable! They range between 0 and 1 for fuzzy set, thanks to the data... calibration ;)**

|                  |           |            |      |      |      |      |      |
|------------------|-----------|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Czechia          | 0.00      | 0.33       | 0.33 | 0.23 | 0.45 | 0.24 | 0.87 |
| Belgium-Wallonia | 1.00      | 0.27       | 1.00 | 0.96 | 1.00 | 0.03 | 0.82 |
| Luxembourg       | 0.00      | 0.25       | 1.00 | 0.01 | 0.54 | 0.01 | 0.81 |
| Austria          | 1.00      | 0.07       | 0.66 | 0.91 | 0.29 | 0.06 | 0.80 |
| Estonia          | 0.00      | 0.07       | 0.33 | 0.01 | 0.38 | 0.28 | 0.74 |
| Romania          | 0.00      | 0.27       | 0.33 | 0.13 | 0.06 | 0.98 | 0.72 |
| Netherlands      | 0.67      | 0.18       | 1.00 | 0.62 | 0.31 | 0.19 | 0.68 |
| Cyprus           | 0.67      | 0.10       | 0.33 | 0.01 | 0.94 | 0.17 | 0.67 |
| Belgium-Flanders | 0.67      | 0.27       | 1.00 | 0.96 | 0.91 | 0.03 | 0.65 |
| Slovenia         | 0.00      | 0.40       | 0.33 | 0.02 | 0.59 | 0.20 | 0.59 |
| Italy            | 0.00      | 0.47       | 1.00 | 0.96 | 0.67 | 0.22 | 0.59 |
| Portugal         | 0.67      | 0.11       | 0.66 | 0.11 | 0.66 | 0.29 | 0.56 |
| Poland           | 0.00      | 0.40       | 0.33 | 0.18 | 0.61 | 0.45 | 0.56 |
| Latvia           | 0.00      | 0.14       | 0.33 | 0.02 | 0.33 | 0.95 | 0.54 |
| Sweden           | 1.00      | 0.18       | 0.66 | 0.21 | 0.61 | 0.08 | 0.53 |
| Croatia          | 0.67      | 0.97       | 0.00 | 0.11 | 0.34 | 0.76 | 0.53 |
| Ireland          | 1.00      | 0.36       | 1.00 | 0.16 | 0.32 | 0.04 | 0.51 |
| Germany          | 1.00      | 0.10       | 1.00 | 1.00 | 0.59 | 0.03 | 0.47 |
| Slovakia         | 0.00      | 0.22       | 0.33 | 0.09 | 0.36 | 0.20 | 0.45 |
| France           | 0.67      | 0.85       | 1.00 | 0.87 | 0.53 | 0.12 | 0.43 |
| Finland          | 1.00      | 0.91       | 0.66 | 0.05 | 0.85 | 0.35 | 0.32 |
| Lithuania        | 0.67      | 0.08       | 0.33 | 0.01 | 0.30 | 0.81 | 0.28 |
| Hungary          | 0.00      | 0.18       | 0.33 | 0.07 | 0.45 | 0.86 | 0.28 |
| Malta            | 0.00      | 0.11       | 0.33 | 0.01 | 0.60 | 0.03 | 0.28 |
| Denmark          | 0.67      | 0.58       | 1.00 | 0.06 | 0.91 | 0.06 | 0.20 |
| Spain            | 0.67      | 0.80       | 0.66 | 1.00 | 0.46 | 0.60 | 0.20 |
| Bulgaria         | 0.00      | 0.58       | 0.33 | 0.01 | 0.18 | 0.89 | 0.17 |
| Greece           | 0.00      | 0.22       | 0.66 | 0.09 | 0.57 | 0.91 | 0.06 |
|                  | Green_cal | SocExp_cal | EXP  | RAI  | FARM | GDPA | OUT  |

# The analysis: some (interesting) problems

The Outcome:

- Building an index was very complex (e.g., weight stringency/budget; aggregation across AECMs)
- Data collection on stringency was an issue (primary data developed)
- Interpretation struggles (e.g., trade-off across AECMs and eco-schemes makes it hard to merge them)

# The analysis: some (interesting) problems

## The conditions

- Deriving conditions from literature or empirical knowledge/experience (e.g., relevance vs feasibility; contribution to QCA literature; data collection constraints)
  - Many compromises
  - Data collection struggles for interesting conditions (e.g., stakeholder engagement)

# Next steps

- Run analysis separating the policy instruments
- Question our conditions
- Question our calibration
- Interpret results
  - Identify pathways
  - Dig deeper in the cases



Explaining strong or weak EPI across MS

**Thanks for your attention!**