Preface and acknowledgements

This book finds its origins in my doctoral dissertation, which was defended in March 2004 at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. When I started the research in 2000, independent regulatory agencies had not yet become a fashionable topic in European political science, and I remember vividly the difficulties I had finding even the most basic pieces of information, such as whether an independent regulator existed in a given country and sector. This was especially true for social regulation domains. When I contacted the European Commission to ask whether they had a list of national regulatory authorities for food safety, I was amazed to learn that no such list existed. Indeed, very little systematic comparative information was available at the time. Seven years later all this has changed. Independent regulatory agencies have proliferated, and information has become much more abundant. The academic literature on the subject has also grown considerably. While in 2000 most of the literature on regulatory agencies was from and on the United States, there is now a sizeable scholarly community working on regulatory authorities and regulatory policies. As a result, numerous studies on independent agencies have appeared in print. Nevertheless, I believe that this book has maintained much of the freshness it had when the research was conceived. The dataset I assembled is still the most comprehensive available, at least for information on the formal independence of regulators, and as a result the analysis is one of the most comprehensive, while testing theoretical hypotheses in a rigorous way. I am very happy that this research is now part of a consolidated literature that has been very fruitful and that continues to explore patterns of regulation in European countries and beyond.

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- 'The same, but different: central banks, regulatory agencies, and the politics of delegation to independent authorities', *Comparative European Politics*, **5** (2): 303–27.
- 'The formal independence of regulators: a comparison of 17 countries and 7 sectors', *Swiss Political Science Review*, **11** (4): 139–67.

A few paragraphs from the first article appear in Chapters 1, 3 and 4, and a paragraph from the second in Chapter 4.

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