

**EU Agencies:  
What is Common and what is Distinctive  
Compared with National Level Public  
Agencies**

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# Public agencies and the (global) trend to agencification

- ‘Global’ trends towards the establishment of semi-autonomous single-purpose public sector organisations (‘dismantling large bureaucracies’): public agencies as a subject of study in public management
- A trend also promoted by international organisations like OECD
- Exceptions, deviations, national differences (e.g.: ‘Next Steps’ British agencies vs. Swedish tradition of relatively autonomous organisations) – and a number of concerns raised (information asymmetries and democratic accountability, coordination in the public sector, ....)
- However, some ‘common themes’ seem to be emerging, following up seminal works (Pollitt and Talbot, 2004; Pollitt et al., 2004): a growing research agenda on the autonomy, the steering & control, the management and the effects on policy of such agencies
- The EU level under-investigated, although it is of growing importance (both from a theoretical and a policy-oriented standpoint)

# EU Agencies

- Three waves (before 1990, the 1990s, the 2000s)
- They nowadays represent a significant ‘portion’ of the EU polity – in EU terminology, at September 2009 there are
  - 23 ‘Community’ Agencies (First Pillar)
  - 3 CFSP and 3 JHA Agencies (Second/Third Pillars)
  - 6 ‘Executive’ agencies
- Various classifications have been proposed – and perspectives of investigation (effects on regulatory regimes, issues of accountability, ....)

# EU Agencies (cont'd)

- Main task: information gathering
- More than information gathering:
  - Handling of individual cases ('adjudicational', e.g. EMEA regarding pharmaceutical products)
  - Policy advice (no legal power, but knowledge basis...)
  - Issuing of implementation guidelines
  - (Executive Agencies: support services, like training for EU staff, etc.)
- Executive bodies embedded in multi-level frameworks (national and sub-national administrations, national agencies)

# Practitioners' concerns: the reform context

- The political and reform policy process: status
  - European Commission proposal withdrawn (the debate can be considered open) - Barroso invited (June 2008) inter-institutional working group
  - Evaluation procedure (complete on December 2009) – Reference Group composed of representatives of Agencies, Commission, Council, Parliament, stakeholders, as well as two independent academics
  - Possible output: a 'design model' for new EU Agencies (including those in the pipeline?), to be embodied into a new EU regulation?
- Practitioners' main concerns
  - Agency governance structure (Management Board, Director, ...): what types? how many types (one or more)?
  - 'Who' are the principals?
  - Modalities of steering and control/oversight/accountability

# Research questions and design

- Research Questions: Does a ‘European type’ of public agency exist? What are its features? And how does it differ from the world of the national- and sub-national-level agencies?
- Research design: mainly based on public sources (statutes, reports, evaluations, etc.); focus on First Pillar agencies
- Limitations in the variables that could be observed: focus (selectively) on structural disaggregation, autonomy, contractualisation
- The national cases: stylised cases of public agencies in Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom (examined through literature plus survey & case analysis)
- The ‘Tripod model’ of agency (first theorised by Pollitt, 2004) – it is a ‘Practitioners’ model’, whose main features are
  - Mono-task, focused on operations
  - Managerial, no strategic autonomy
  - Steered through a performance contract

# Features of EU agencies (dependent variables)

- Structural disaggregation
  - Structural disaggregation and division of labour between the agency and the ‘parent administration’ is at the core of the idea of agency (*institutional specialisation, task complexity*)
  - Legal basis, agency statute, personnel status, the board and the broader ‘corporate governance’ (*institutional distance and specialization*)
- Autonomy
  - autonomy from what institution(s):
    - usually from the ‘Parent Administration’
    - agencies are in general conceived as ‘semi’-autonomous organisations
  - autonomy in what respects:
    - *financial autonomy*
    - *personnel management autonomy*
    - ‘*strategic/policy*’ *autonomy*
- Steering and control – the ‘performance contract’
  - The system through which the parent administration(s) steers the agency (goals assignment, evaluation, reward and punishment, ....)
  - A central notion and instrument: the ‘performance contract’ (*contractualisation*)

# Findings

	EU	Tripod Model	UK	Sweden	Italy
<b><i>Structural Disaggregation</i></b>					
Indicator					
A. INSTITUTIONAL DISTANCE	High (though agencies do not resolve upon their statutes - uniform values for all agencies)	High	Mixed	High	Mixed
B. TASK COMPLEXITY	Low (agencies operate only in one policy area)	Low	Mixed-Low	Mixed	Mixed
C. INSTITUTIONAL SPECIALIZATION on operation	High (uniform values for all agencies)	High	Mixed-High	Mixed-Low	Mixed-High
<b><i>Autonomy</i></b>					
Indicator					
D. FINANCIAL AUTONOMY	Low (though a few agencies can acquire further resources outside Commission funding)	Low	Mixed	High	Mixed
E. MANAGERIAL AUTONOMY	Low (uniform values for all agencies)	High	Mixed-High	High	Mixed-High
F. STRATEGIC AUTONOMY	Low (concerning the formulation of policy targets) High (concerning the determination of policy instruments)	Low	Mixed	High	Low
<b><i>Contractualisation</i></b>					
Indicator					
G. DEGREE OF CONTRACTUALISATION (PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING)	Low (uniform values for all agencies)	High	High	Mixed-Low	Low

# Findings (addressing RQs)

- Does a ‘European type’ of public agency exist? There is an ‘EU type’ of agency – but different from the tripod model
  - very limited degree of contractualisation
  - limited managerial autonomy (personnel management)
  - No financial autonomy (this is common with Tripod model)
  - but it does have autonomy in the definition of policy instruments (a kind of strategic autonomy)
- What are its features? The EU type of agency has the features described in the above Table
- And how does it differ from the world of the national- and sub-national-level agencies? The EU type of agency is less differentiated than national-level agencies (i.e.: it is a ‘type’) (which elicits further RQs: what explains such relative uniformity? What are the effects on policy and management of such uniformity?)

# Findings (practitioners' concerns)

- There is already an 'EU type' of agency: the new regulation (very likely on the way) might first recognize this fact and then intervene on specific aspects (more personnel autonomy? Better alignment with policy instruments autonomy?)
- Manipulating the degree of autonomy and the modalities of steering and control may be conducive to improved performances (and accountability?)
- Other aspects are crucial, however, like the policy network context (future research needed)

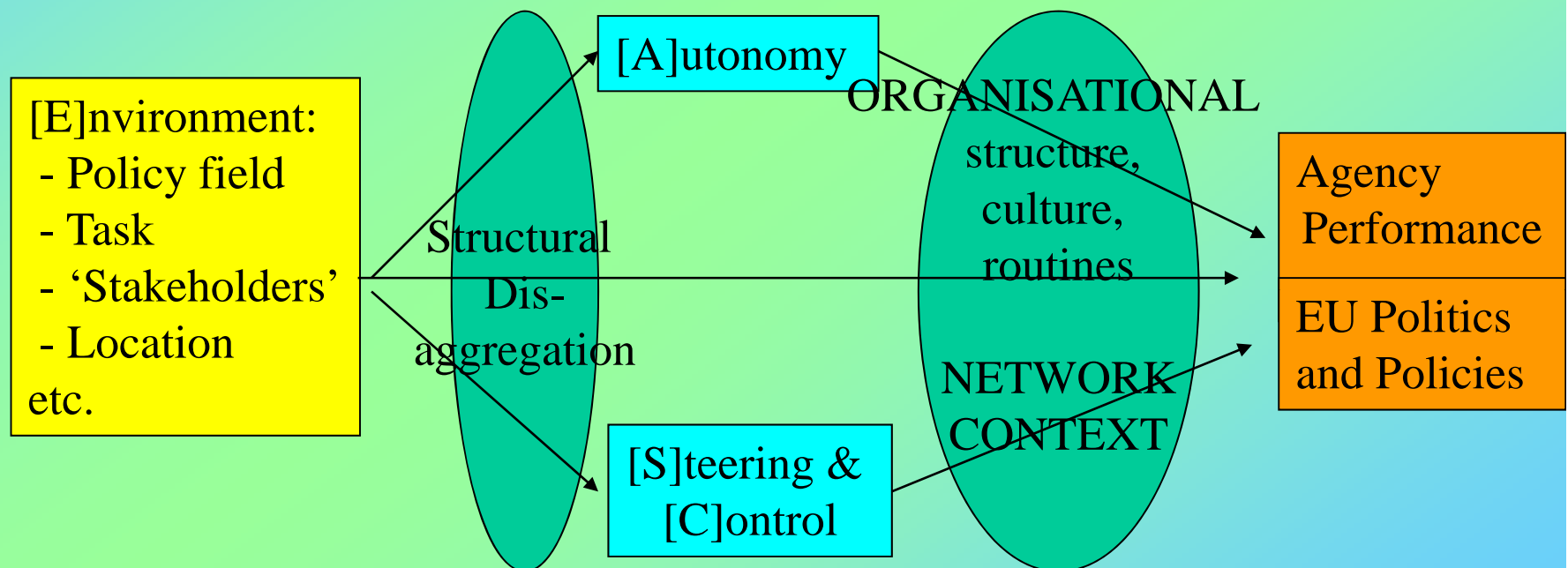
Ongoing research work

# Comprehensive analysis of EU Agencies (research project 2009-10)

- Research questions
  - What are the features of EU agencies?
  - What are the linkages (cause-effect) and what explains such linkages (Reference model)?
- Research design
  - Case study (preparatory survey) + survey (questionnaire-based) + Multiple case study (analysis of causal linkages)
- Research context
  - Internal: COST Action ‘CRIPO’ partners/’COBRA’ research network
  - External: ongoing evaluation (European Commission) and possible new regulation

# A first approximation reference model of analysis

- How [E] affects [A, S&C]?
- How [E, A, S&C] affect [Agency performance], [Agency influence on EU policies and (executive) politics]



# Addressing the broader Research Questions

Influence of agencies on EU politics and policies,  
and performance

Overarching Research Questions include:

- Under what conditions will EU agencies affect EU politics and policies?
- Under what conditions will EU agencies be more or less performing, and in what respects?

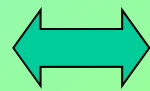
The reference model is also a frame for mapping  
'clusters of factors' and 'main lines of influence'  
around these and similar RQs

# Your Presenter's broader research agenda on EU PM&G

## Coordination:

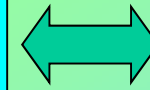
- EU system level:  
coordination mix [HTM, NTM, MTM] and integration (>,<, mutual interactions)

- Policy level:  
Coordination mix in EU policies (research & Innovation, etc.)



## EU 'core' institutions

- PM reforms of the European Commission:  
towards NPM or Neo-Weberianism?  
- ...



## EU Agencies

- Features  
- [reference Model]



## EU Multi-Level Governance

- [Permanent Study Group on IGR and EU MLG]