EU-EPI, Policy Co-ordination and New Institutionalism

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Abstract

The objective of integrating environmental protection requirements into all sectors of EU policy making policies (EU-EPI) imposes major new demands on the administrative coordination capacities of the very many actors involved. One crucial question, which is rarely addressed in the EU governance debates is do the actors involved in addressing EPI from a networked governance perspective possess the necessary coordination capacities? This question is interesting from an empirical as well as a theoretical perspective. Empirically, it concerns the extent in which EPI can be delivered via soft, relatively non-hierarchical networked forms of governance or are the administrative demands – particularly in relation to horizontal policy co-ordination spanning many administrative levels - simply too onerous? Theoretically, this question relates to the assumption of path-dependency in historical institutionalist theory, because EU-EPI seems to imply much greater administrative change than path-dependency would appear to allow. By studying the co-ordination capacities of several important EU actors (viz. three Member States, the Commission and the European Parliament), this paper seeks to address this apparent discrepancy between the horizontal aspirations of EU-EPI and what administrative systems are capable of providing by way of policy coordination. What emerges from the analysis is actually quite positive: it *is* possible to address the very ambitious EU-EPI agenda via networked governance, but only if the need for adequate administrative coordination capacities is satisfactorily addressed.

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1. INTRODUCTION: CO-ORDINATING GOVERNANCE

It is widely accepted that that the EU is a multi-level governance system (Marks, Hooghe and Blank 1996; Kohler-Koch and Eising 2000). Within the governance literature, networks assume a central place. Networked governance can be defined as a form of steering in which central bodies are 'dependent upon the cooperation and joint resource mobilization of policy actors outside their hierarchical control' (Börzel 1998: 260). The networked based nature of governance and the need for co-operation between national and EU actors for administrative and political support is underlined in the burgeoning literature on *inter alia* new modes of governance, impact assessment and multi-level governance (Hayward and Menon 2003; Peterson 2004). However, one crucial question is rarely posed, let alone satisfactorily answered: do the EU actors actually possess the capacities to participate in networked governance? Due to limited systematic attention for multi-level capacity building, there are only hints as to whether and how national administrations adapt in general to new_governance challenges (Egeberg 2005). Environmental policy integration in the EU - which relies on simultaneous horizontal and vertical co-ordination - is a useful area to start addressing the administrative implications of choosing to rely on networked government.

Environmental integration has been firmly established as a formal objective in EU policies since the 1990s (Lenschow 2002). With this, the Council, Commission and EP involved have created expectations to deliver as also appears from the stream of supportive Conclusions from the European Council, the incorporation of Article 6 in the Treaties and a range of other measures and instruments such as the Cardiff process, and the Commission's efforts to create Partnerships for Integration (CEC 1998; for a review see Jordan and Schout 2006; Pallemaerts et al. 2007; Wilkinson 2007).

Given its formal status, it is appropriate to introduce the acronym 'EU-EPI' (i.e. EPI at EU level) to distinguish it from integration at the national level. Despite the legal and political prominence of EU-EPI, the attempts to put it into practice have been rather disappointing (EEA 2005a, 2005b; CEC 2005d; Jordan and Lenschow forthcoming). The European Commission openly concedes that it is not difficult to identify sectoral policies (e.g. transport, agriculture and energy) that undermine the pursuit of EU-EPI (COM (2004) 394: 5-8). The European Environment Agency has suggested that the

"implementation of more integrated approaches to policy making needs to be accelerated if Europe is to ensure proper protection of the environment and meet its aspirations of sectoral integration and sustainable development" (EEA 2003: 7). So, despite its legal and political importance, it seems as though EU-EPI is failing to make headway, at least via networked governance mechanisms such as the Cardiff Process that obliges Councils (and with that Commission and Member States) to formulate plans for making EU policies more sustainable. In this paper we argue that this has a lot to do with the disconnection with the administrative reality of the EU. Engaging in OMC type exercise is one thing and thus trying to put mutual pressure on Councils and Member States. However, specifying what such an OMC type process involves in horizontal and vertical coordination capacities is quite another. The objectives of EU-EPI raise much wider questions about networked governance and, ultimately, the overall governance of the EU (compare Määttä 2006).

By examining the administrative capacities needed to secure ambitious governance objectives by using network-based modes of governance, we seek to shed more light on the *polity* dimension of the governance debate in a manner that is supportive of the administrative 'turn' in EU scholarship more generally (Hofmann and Türk 2006; Trondal 2007).

In this chapter we will explore the administrative capacities EU-EPI require. EU-EPI is essentially and exercise in better policy coordination. As co-ordination is the very essence of governance (e.g. Pierre 2000), it is necessary to examine more carefully what is involved in the management of the interdependence between policy sectors. As argued below, when studying governance processes it is not sufficient to merely recognise that there are three main co-ordination mechanisms that can be used (namely, competition, networks and hierarchies; see Thompson et al. 2005; Schout and Jordan forthcoming). We have to go deeper and address the mechanisms that influence the horizontal and vertical co-operation between officials at the level of daily policy making in the sectors of the EU. In this chapter we examine the extent to which networked governance responses to EU-EPI require increased co-ordination within and between the various actors involved, i.e. their sectoral 'departments' (ministries, DGs and EP Committees). These are inherently administrative matters, hence the need to understand the *administrative* implications of networked governance.

A range of governance instruments have been deployed by the EU in past to achieve greater horizontal co-ordination. Using the broad definition of governance instruments developed by Von Homeyer (2006), we might say that the EU's environment policy has traditionally been approached via the traditional top down instrument of issuing 'end of pipe' legislation. This approach has been highly successful at EU level and more than 500 pieces directives and regulations have been adopted (Jordan 2005). However, the vast majority have not been fully implemented. This, coupled to mounting pressure for more cost-effective approaches ('better regulation') and the increasing differentiation between Member States (CEC 2000d) post 2004, has triggered a search for 'new' tools from the governance tool box. These 'new' instruments include: major policy reports and mission statements such as the SDS, the EAPs, and the Lisbon processes; policy appraisal (or impact) systems; and OMC-like exercises such as the Cardiff process (for a review see Schout and Jordan 2006). Crucially, the assumption behind these new instruments has been that the sectoral officials will learn about the negative consequences of their policies and, once informed, will start to take responsibility for addressing them (Eberlein and Kerwer 2004). This contrasts with older instruments such as legislation which essentially involved the environmental sector demanding certain behavioural changes from their colleagues in the sectors.

Thus far these various 'new' instruments' have not been as successful as was originally expected. For example, the various attempts to create impact assessments systems at EU level have been critically evaluated on a number of occasions since they were first developed in the early 1990s (Wilkinson 1997; CEC 1997). The same applies to the Cardiff process (e.g. Hinterberger and Zacherl 2003: 15). As concluded elsewhere, this indicates that "the environmental sector has pretty much failed to get the sectors to 'own' and implement its preferred interpretation of EPI" (Jordan and Schout 2006). What appears to be occurring is a incremental search for new approaches (e.g. from green star to integrated impact assessment; and the reformulations of Cardiff-like OMC processes and sustainable development strategies (CEC 2005a), without a systematic analysis of why previous approaches failed. The evaluations noted above all point to lack of clear objectives and commitments (i.e. too much wheel re-invention), but there has been no systematic diagnosis of the underlying causes of failure.

So, if EU-EPI has been disappointing than this can maybe - if not due to lacking political will - then partly be explained by the underlying design weaknesses in the governance instruments. We will therefore explore what internal co-ordination capacities the administrations have to support the EPI instruments in the day-to-day policy processes.

As we will argue below, examining the administrative demands of networked governance of EU-EPI requires that we compare how Member States and EU institutions operate. This multilevel analysis is necessary because it does not make much sense if only the Commission produces an 'EPI proof' proposal. The Member States and the EP have to put pressure on the Commission and indicate that they will take EPI serious otherwise why should the Commission take EPI on board if it is not sure that the other Institutions will focus on the sectoral objectives only? The question however is whether the Commission and the Member States have the required capacities and what these capacities are.

1.1. Outline

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. Section two presents our view of EU-EPI as an exercise in/example of bureaucratic politics. Section three discusses what the shift towards more governance-based forms of co-ordination demands by way of the administrative arrangements within each actor. The next section addresses the discrepancy between the co-ordination demands resulting from EU-EPI and the predictions of what can be supplied arising from neo-institutional theory. We use the organisational design literature to formulate some basic hypotheses concerning co-ordination ambitions in complex policy environments. The actors studied in Section five are the Netherlands, the UK and Germany. We opted for these as they have been strong proponents of EU-EPI, have sufficiently long experience with EU co-ordination – including co-ordination reforms – and offer a selection of different co-ordination approaches. The Commission is a vital player throughout the initiation and shaping of a proposal and the implementation stages. The European Parliament is hardly ever present in EU co-ordination literature but it is a key player nevertheless when it comes to political impetus also when cross-sectoral policies are concerned. Moreover, by taking national and EU actors together, we can begin to move beyond discussing the EU and

national policy systems independently, towards studying the interdependence between administrations in an increasingly multi-levelled system of governance.

2.   EPI AS BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS

2.1.   EPI from a bureaucratic politics perspective

The thinking that lies behind the concept of EPI is neither sophisticated nor especially novel (Von Homeyer 2006). The basic idea that 'the environment' functions as a single, integrated whole whereas the human world is divided into different parts, has been one of the guiding axioms of green political thought since time immemorial. In an early analysis, Weale and Williams (1992: 46) concluded that there was 'no canonical statement of precisely what [EPI] might involve' by way of responding to Brundtland's plea for policies and institutions that bring the two - the environmental and the human – into sync with one another. In view of the different interpretations of EPI, we need to clarify how we use it in this Chapter. Drawing implicitly on Easton's (1965) subdivision of policy processes into a series of inputs, outputs and outcomes, Collier (1997: 45) usefully argued that integration could occur in relation to the formulation of policy objectives, the adoption of policy measures and their implementation. In a similar way Lafferty and Hovden (2003) distinguish between EPI as an agenda setting policy principle establishing the relative 'value' of environmental protection within the broader discourse of sustainable development; EPI as a governing process of developing and applying different institutional and procedural measures to implement this principle; and EPI as the cumulative outcome of implementing these instruments in different policy systems. These perspectives offer different areas for empirical research (compare for example Nolkaemper 2002; EEA 2005a, 2005b; Haigh 2005).

The view on EPI we take in this Chapter would fall in Lafferty and Hovden's governing process category. We are interested in the processes in which the government – i.e. the multi-level EU – produces policies. Our interest therefore concerns the polity of the governance dimensions as summarised by Treib et al. (2007). The question however is which elements of the machinery of government do we have to analyse?

The main point of contention in EPI debates is precisely what level of attention (or priority) that should be given to environmental protection in sectoral policy making. EPI

does not determine how heavily environmental factors should be weighted in the decision making process, only that they are integrated into the process of making decisions at a sufficiently early stage (EEA 2005a: 13). There is no definitive legal ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) which can conveniently be cited to resolve this matter (Jans 2000: 18-9).

Therefore, EPI is a matter of *bureaucratic politics*, i.e. of pulling and hauling between the departments and government levels involved (Schout and Metcalfe 1999). This perspective forces us to specify the organisational processes that produce EPI. It forces us to look beyond the governance schools that emphasise 'learning' (see e.g. the deliberative governance school or the network approaches more generally, Eberlein and Kerwer 2004). Integration requires more than exchange of information, trustworthy impact assessments or 'ownership'. In the shady policy world of competing values and overload, ownership or learning – let alone reliable impact assessments - cannot be simply assumed (compare Wildavsky 1996). The bureaucratic political view focuses on the more obscure forces of power and the games that people in organisations play (Pfeffer 1981; 1994). The extent to which the environment is incorporated depends on pressure, arguments, deliberate manipulation of information, lobbying, etc. (Schout and Metcalfe 1999).

Defining EPI as an exercise in bureaucratic politics leads to a specific view on whether or not EPI has been successful. In the process of setting standards, it is the fight that counts. In the formulation of policy is EPI only one of the objectives next to sectoral and other horizontal objectives such as deregulation, reduction of costs of regulation and ensuring a global level playing field. A modest recognition for the environment in the final policy does not mean that there was no concern for EPI. The definition of Article 6 in the Treaties imposes that environmental protection must be integration in the definition and implementation of policies. Without legal clarity, this means as much that the different values have to be compared in the policy processes and that officials and politicians have to fight for the balance between the various objectives. This may well mean that the environment loses from social or economic values. In that case the environment has been considered – 'integrated' in the policy process – but left little traces. Even that is EPI.

2.2. Politics or administration?

Within political science, bureaucratic policy co-ordination is often equated with informal relations and competition between the various constituent parts of the state (Allison 1971; Chisholm 1989). A key assumption is that co-ordination emerges spontaneously as actors realise their interdependence and take steps to address it in the absence of a dominant or common purpose (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Hierarchical co-ordination from above or allocating specific co-ordinating roles to actors is often assumed to be unnecessary. Typically such organisational roles would, in the pure political model, add extra layers of bureaucracy, slow down decision making, stifle creativity and drag the core executive into micro managing the line ministries (see also Lindblom's 1965 notion of "partisan mutual adjustment"). This theme is expressed in the titles of many other articles and books by (among others) Pressman and Wildavsky (1979: 90) (co-ordination without a co-ordinator) and Chisholm (1989) (co-ordination without hierarchy). Some even go so far as to deny the relevance of hierarchy and present organisational rules and roles as solutions for yesterday's problems (Palumbo 1975).

However, the difficulties of relying upon bureaucratic politics to deliver EPI – or co-ordinated action in general - are many (Schout and Jordan 2005). Firstly, environmental quality has a strongly public good character and no single actor (apart from perhaps the environment ministry) has a sufficiently strong incentive to automatically take the environment into account or to take the lead in protecting it from harm. Secondly (and partly because of this), environmental ministries tend to be rather small and weak in comparison to amount of work and power organised in the sector ministries: "it is extremely unlikely that a ministry of environment will, with any degree of consistency, win when faced with opposition from ministries of finance, industry, transport, energy or agriculture".

Asking the sectors to take environment into account is also unlikely to do much either as the ability of most ministries to achieve what Lindblom referred to as 'synoptic rationality' is severely limited and hence the extent to which the plea to integrate "will be anything other than a distant aspiration is open to question" (Weale 1998: 24). A potentially more successful strategy might be to build up the size and budget of the environment ministry to win the sectors around to its way of thinking.

2.3. Managing bureaucratic politics

Without denying the essentially (bureaucratic) political nature of organisations and the importance of informal relations, scholars from the Carnegie School (Simon 1976; Cyert and March 1963) have presented various administrative devices to overcome the cognitive limitations of individual actors (Bendor and Hammond 1992). They enable complex, co-ordinated decisions to be taken by setting down rules and supervising their implementation. Administrative structures, in other words, influence behaviour and, hence, matter (Egeberg 1995; Croley 1998).

In this organisational science approach, bureaucratic conflict can be managed for the betterment of all. Co-ordination is thus not only about conflict but also about creating the right administrative conditions to facilitate sectors to exchange their real (as opposed to their perceived) differences and find common values and objectives (Cyert and March 1963; Egeberg 2003). There will always be incoherence in government but what matters "is not simply whether contrasted policies are being pursued, but whether they are being pursued knowingly or unwittingly" (OECD 1995: 9).

The organisational process view does not say that administrative structures determine everything or that they entirely overcome bureaucratic politics. They simply facilitate co-ordination by lowering transaction costs and determining the location and timing of any inter-sectoral conflict. Importantly, they can be more or less hierarchical. However, despite the pervasiveness of organisations, our understanding of the relationship between administrative structures and administrative behaviour remains surprisingly "modest" (Egeberg 2003: 120; Olsen 2005: 11) due to, *inter alia*, the difficulty of organising empirical proof. We have defined co-ordination capacities as mechanisms that facilitate co-ordination within networks of interdependent actors (Jordan and Schout 2006: Chapter 1). They do this by: helping the participants exchange information amongst them; lowering transaction costs; identifying issues requiring co-ordinated solutions; and arbitrating when conflicts cannot be settled informally and bilaterally. When carefully designed, these capacities, which can involve hierarchical levels, can greatly facilitate the process of co-ordination.

2.4. EU-EPI - Organisational hypotheses

EU-EPI makes the operating environment of administrations more complex, interdependent and dynamic. Building on contingency theory (in particular Mintzberg 1979), from the many potentially relevant contingency hypotheses, the following seem to be the most relevant to the conditions of EU-EPI (Schout 2006)[i]:

- More dynamic and complex environments require matrix-type co-ordination structures (i.e. cross-sectoral teams) (Galbraith 1973). However, matrix structures these can only be sparsely used as they are time consuming and expensive to operate. Hence, matrix structures are bound to be needed, but what can the actors do to prevent matrix-type structures from becoming overly complex and burdensome and how many matrixes are feasible? The various stages in the EU policy processes, the major policy fields and the horizontal objectives may easily threaten the viability of matrix structures. The question therefore is what the actors will actually do in reality: create several matrix arrangements or actually dismiss them as the EU calls for evermore structures to manage cross-sectoral policies?

- New arrangements will require new rules (Simon 1976; Mintzberg 1979; Scott 1995). In view of the importance of being proactive and efficient, in earlier work we elaborated the distinction between active and passive co-ordination (Schout and Metcalfe 1999).[ii] In the case of *passive information*, the ministries that are not in the lead are entitled to receive the relevant information about spillover effects, but they have to hunt around to find out what the lead is doing and continuously monitor the developments. In terms of EPI, this adds up to a huge amount of work for environmental ministries due to its horizontal mission.

  Active information on the other hand means that the lead department is formally *obliged* to ensure that other departments are informed and their views incorporated in the co-ordination process. Because it is a proactive way of co-

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[i] Other aspects that could be taken into account would be age of the organizations involved (e.g. length of EU membership), political sensitivity of the EU, size of the country and the preferences and EU interests of ministers will undoubtedly be an issue as well. More hypotheses can easily be added – e.g. about the emergence of co-operative values – but for practical reasons, we limit ourselves to the two hypotheses listed

[ii] Other rules and procedures to support EPI can, of course, be envisaged (Jacob and Volkery, 2004: 302). For example, the environment ministry could be given a formal right to veto an environmentally destructive policy generated by one of the sectors. A slightly weaker form of this rule, might allow

ordination, problems are detected early on in the policy making process, thereby facilitating EPI. However, care must be taken in choosing what to share, lest it leads to information overload (which can make co-ordination harder not easier) (OECD 1995: 16).

- Coordination roles can contribute to 'boundary spanning' (Schout 1999) and help to maintain a focus on agreed objectives. The problem with such roles – also knows as 'ambassadors' or 'linking pins' (Schout and Jordan 2008) – is that they are often too junior and the first ones that fall victim of internal reorganizations as departments and units have the tendency to focus resources on core tasks instead of on tasks for which other departments have the lead (Schout 1999). Alternatively, planning and coordinating units can be given ample resources and centrality within the organization to actually perform their coordinating roles (Egeberg 2003).

This opens question about, if the actors have adapted, in what why they did this. Given the level of complexity, what seems to work better, more matrix-type structures or less? Are bureaucratic mechanisms a way to better co-ordination or does this produce more red tape? Have coordinating roles proven to be useful? These questions can only be answered on the bases of empirical research.

3.   EU-EPI AS MULTI-LEVEL MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

A study on EU-EPI helped to clarify the administrative requirements (Jordan and Schout 2006). As environmental integration affects all policy areas, it is highly labour-intensive. Consideration of environmental aspects does not amount to merely indicating once what the environmental consequences are. Permanent involvement of environmental officials is necessary to ensure that the environmental dimension is considered throughout the negotiation phases in the various sectoral Councils. In more detail the management of EU-EPI realistically necessitates:

- Sector DGs in the Commission and sector ministries to give sufficient attention to environmental implications when a new policy is contemplated. However, sectoral departments have their own objectives, respond to sectoral pressures

environment ministries to initiate policy making proposals in the sectors. In practice, Jacob and Volkery (2004: 302) could not find a single OECD state that adopted such rules.

from their working environment and lack time. Hence, it would be naive to assume that they will give environment equal status.

- DG Environment to monitor new policy proposals in the other DGs to ensure that the environment is incorporated.

- Sector DGs in the Commission and national officials to ensure support from their sector Council. The sector officials will be particularly motivated to keep an eye on environmental consequences if they know that the Council is actually keen on more ambitious environmental objectives. Hence, national officials that support DGs in the writing of new proposals in the experts committees already have to indicate that their countries will monitor environmental implications. However, national sector officials may lack the commitment to environmental objectives. The link between the levels of governments is clear: the Commission DGs will be motivated if their national counterparts show their commitment to EPI (i.e. vertical interdependence).

- National officials from environment departments to monitor sector officials. In the multi-level negotiations, officials from environmental departments have to monitor the sector experts in each phase of decision making to put pressure on Commission DGs and to ensure that officials negotiating in the sector Councils keep an eye on sustainability. This conclusion underlines the interrelation between vertical and horizontal interdependence: in order to 'green' new Commission proposals, national environment officials have to monitor national experts already in early phases of policy making so that the Commission knows that integration is taken serious. This will help officials from DG Environment to find receptive ears in the sector DGs.

- Environment officials to switch their current focus on Environment Council, towards policy making in sector DGs and sector Councils.

- Environment departments to be able to work proactively on the basis on the workplans and agendas from the Commission and EU presidencies. This would allow identification of the important upcoming initiatives.

- Greater co-operation between national and European impact environmental impact assessment mechanisms. Due to the regional differences, environmental impact assessments are very difficult to carry out at EU level (e.g. water and

waste are major problems in some countries but not in all). Therefore, co-operation between national and Commission impact assessments mechanisms is essential.

These requirements underline that EU-EPI imposes a collective responsibility upon the EU Institutions. The Commission needs to know that its EPI ambitions will not disappear from the agenda during the negotiations in and between Council and EP and hence that its efforts to 'green' proposals and investments in impact assessments are not wasted. Simultaneously, national environment officials have to ensure that their colleagues in cognate ministries push the sectoral DGs of the Commission to incorporate environmental interests into their work before the die of a policy is cast.

These requirements also mean that, given that monitoring negotiations in other sectors throughout successive policy phases is very labour intensive, co-ordination is *efficient* to prevent environment officials and co-ordination mechanisms from being overloaded. To ensure efficiency and influence, the efforts have to focus on *priorities*; and be *proactive*. Priority setting is crucial because not everything needs to be co-ordinated and there are many instances in which local rationality, sequential attention of environmental problems and more implicit ways of co-ordination will be sufficient (compare Egeberg 2005). But these dossiers have to be set aside from those such as the emergence of an air quality directive that demands careful attention (Rood et al. 2005). Given the many actors involved in EU policy making, once priorities have been identified, it is advisable to subsequently be proactive so that the environmental information can be part of the considerations every step of the way (compare Van Schendelen 2004).

These administrative challenges clearly underline the enormous horizontal and vertical co-operation that is needed to implement the governance objectives in the EU's multi-level context. Appeals to agreed objectives such as EPI or consistency will not be sufficient. Proof and continuous pressures will be needed to support such claims. If these conditions are fulfilled, EU-EPI will be feasible with a small Commission that is intertwined with national administrations.

4. NEO-INSTITUTIONAL THEORY - CHANGE AND STABILITY

European integration has demanded that actors adapt their administrations (Kassim 2000). This applies in particular for the directions that the EU has taken with accepting a number of horizontal policies such as quality of legislation, subsidiarity and consistency (CEC 2001). EPI is one of these horizontal objectives that have to be managed and as discussed, this demands so much from the actors involved that multi-level adaptations may be necessary – of the actors individually as of the way in which the work together (Jordan et al. 2004; Schout and Jordan 2005).

The abilities of, and the extent to which, organisations are able to change is the field of neo-institutional theory (March 1981; Bulmer and Burch 1998; Scott 1995; March and Olsen 1989). Moving beyond the formal descriptions of organisations, neo-institutional theory emphasises that organisational behaviour and development are the result of a number of related influences including rational decision making, rules, norms and symbols governing political behaviour (March and Olsen 1989). Behaviour and structures can be changed and modified in relation to new developments in the environment of an organisation.

On the one hand, institutional theories point to the various ways in which organisations can change. Adaptation can be rule following and leading to new routines, calculated adaptation, a power-play (conflict settlement) and based on learning (mimicking) (March and Olsen 1989; Scott 1995). Competition also plays a role as organisations compete for profit, influence and/or reputation (Milgrom and Roberts 1992). This type of competition may have become more important in the EU due to the increased use of benchmarking exercises (see the increase in name-shame-fame OMC exercises such as the Cardiff and Lisbon processes). An additional change pressure is 'isomorphism' (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Zucker 1988). Applied to the EU, the isomorphology thesis would posit that lower levels organise their administrative processes parallel to the central level so that they can life up to the expectations. It is a type of mimicking spurred by the logic of appropriateness (compare March and Olsen 1989). But there are other mechanisms that may lead to isomorphology. The power of the argument that impact assessments gives to the Commission may stimulate Member States to use national impact assessments systems for analysing EU policies (compare the logic of consequentiality in March and Olsen 1989: 160-162). Whatever the drivers for

isomorphology, with the multi-level polity in the EU, it appears to be a requirement for old and new EU governance instruments that the lower levels mimic the organisational innovations at EU level. The formulation of ambitious EU legislation (EU-EPI), working successfully with impact assessments, moving open co-ordination beyond mere talk, and concern for horizontal objectives will only work if EU and national institutions co-operate in their achievements, set up quality control mechanisms and pool information, powers and activities both within and between their administrations.

On the other hand, neo-institutional theory also stresses the historical-institutional stabilising forces in and around organisations. For an administration, these will include the political system of preferences that lays an overload of claims on the administration and the existing interministerial power relations (such as the tradition of ministerial autonomy and vertical differentiation between ministries). Moreover, small changes tend to be lost in the noise of ordinary historical experience and competing decisions (March and Olsen 1989: 170). Applied to EPI, 'integration' may be a major innovation for some in the administration; it remains only one of the objectives among many competing values. Furthermore, there are many intermediate variables that influence the link between the identification of a need to change and the actual change itself. This applies to organisations (March and Olsen 1989) as well as to individuals and their capacities to learn and to act upon what they learned (Radaelli 2003). To give just one example related to EU-EPI, in our interviews with national and EU officials working on the formulation of 'integration' policies, few had an impression of what EU-EPI would demand from administrations nor in terms of multi-level co-operation. Moreover, there are biases of enactment of a problem (Weick 1979), 'trained incapacities' in organisations due to previous experiences and resistance related to vested interests (Schout 1999).

These obstacles to change does not mean that change cannot be managed or that they suffer from unsolvable undirected garbage can problems in which problems, solutions, decision makers and choice opportunities are all independent from each other. Egeberg (1987) identifies mechanisms that can guide change through to management of attention, management of conflict, management of ambiguity, management of innovation and management of organisational change (see also Challis et al. 1988).

With the pressures to change and those that check changes, neo-institutional theory is a typical mid-range theory (Bulmer and Burch 1998). The various pressures above may lead to successful rational transformations, unsuccessful adaptations ('historical inefficiency', see March and Olsen 1989) or stability[iii].

Despite these options, neo-institutional theories often emphasise stability. Internal power balances, rule systems, value systems and routines help to decompose complexity but also limit search options and responses to changes. Hence, path-dependency is a major theme in neo-institutional theory (North 1991). Institutions make organisations robust (Selznick 1957) but this also implies that they create potential incompatibilities with new demands (March and Olsen 1989).

4.1. Convergence, stability and the suitability of the EU's organisational co-ordination capacities

The EU co-ordination literature and the literature on Europeanisation underline the stability in national administrations. One of the recurring questions in the debates on Europeanisation is whether national administrations converge. Convergence is a more general debate in administrative reform literature and the public management literature presents little empirical proof of national administrations converging under the influence of public management modernisation programmes (Welch and Wong 2001). Neither have national administrations converged due to the widening and deepening of European integration. The internal market, common policies and legislation, nor the intense co-operation between national officials have resulted in administrations becoming more comparable (Olsen 2005).

Similarly, and closely related to the co-ordination demands of EU-EPI, there is little proof of institutional learning when it comes to EU policy co-ordination. There is hardly any convergence towards best practices (Harmsen 1999; Kassim 2000). The available literature report only incremental changes in the pre-existing systems. Peters and Wright (2001: 167) noted in this respect that improvements often fall foul of persistent rivalries.

[iii] These change and stabilising pressures show the many sources of change in the EU polity. For a deeper analysis, these pressures also point to the question of, if EU-EPI has produced organisational change, what the drivers for the changes have been: rational adaptation, mimicking/learning, or a bureaucratic politics reform process?

Some convergence trends are visible such as the emancipation of sectoral ministries vis-à-vis foreign affairs and the pragmatic creation of different kinds of co-ordination procedures to serve the various stages of EU policy making and implementation (e.g. Hanf and Soetendorp 1998; Wessels, Maurer and Mittag 2003). Nevertheless, the adaptations found are few and the stability of the systems is usually emphasised. The picture that emerges is that all the actors gradually and voluntarily adapt within the constraints of their existing systems to cope with the demands of EU membership (e.g. Hanf and Soetendorp 1998; Olsen 2001; Kassim 2000; Kassim 2003). The results from change processes seem to reflect 'the pre-existing balance of domestic institutional structures, as well as the broader matrices of values' (Harmsen 1999: 81). Changes away from reactive EU policy co-ordination and towards developing efficient co-ordination based on priority setting have not been reported so far.

Though evidently not primarily concerned with the question of convergence, the literature on the Commission as organisation and its reforms also emphasises its stability (Levy 2003, 2004, 2005; Cini 2005). Traditionally, the Commission has a notoriously bad reputation (Spence 1994, 2000; Dinan 1999; Metcalfe 1996, 2000; Wise Men Report (I & II) 1999; Nugent 2002: 156-160) and this does not seem to change according to the evaluations of its recent reforms. Spence's (2000) title summarises what neo-institutional theory might have predicted rather nicely: 'Plus ca Change, Plus C'est la Meme Chose: Attempting to Reform the European Commission' (see also Levy 2005).

As regards the EP, there are very few studies to refer to. The EP is mainly studied in political terms (Hix et al. 1999; Corbett et al. 2005) despite the fact that some internal reports clearly point to organisational weaknesses and obstacles to co-ordination (see Jordan and Schout 2006 for details). EP literature has concerned descriptions of its operating procedures and the development of its powers (e.g. Corbett et al 2005), voting behaviour of MEPs and party discipline. There is very little on the decisive EP committee and even less on co-operation between committees. Hence, Hix et al. (2003: 196-197) note that the internal administration of the EP is something we need to know much more about.

The convergence debate underlines the stability in administrations as it emerges from institutional theory. This thwarts EU-EPI in two ways. Firstly, neo-institutional theory posits that major changes in policy are not automatically complemented with the administrative reforms that would be needed. In fact, the reforms may run far behind the changes in policy. Secondly, given the need for Member States to work together and to work with the Commission in the implementation of EU-EPI, some kind of convergence would be needed when it comes to agenda setting, aligning national and EU impact assessment systems and capacities to co-ordinate environmental and sectoral objectives throughout the phases of EU policy making. In other words, the stability that emerges from neo-institutional theory would make EU-EPI overly ambitious if the co-ordination systems cannot cope with the administrative requirements specified in Section 3.

5. CO-ORDINATION CAPACITIES OF SELECTED ACTORS

5.1. Co-ordination requirements and national co-ordination capacities

The co-ordination requirements imposed by EU-EPI seem to be at odds with EU co-ordination capacities as they appear in the EU policy co-ordination literature. What stand out from the available country and Commission studies are the complaints about reactive policy making and fragmented systems (Wright 1996; Rometsch and Wessels 1996; Hanf and Soetendorp 1998; Kassim et al. 2000; Metcalfe 2000). Actors often wait with problem solving until later on in the decision making process. The instruction meetings for Coreper and Council are in most Member States the main points to settle disputes. Denmark and the UK are the notable exceptions due to the role of Commission and Presidency agendas in their planning and the watchful eye of parliament (Schout and Metcalfe 1999; Peters and Wright 2001). Germany and the Netherlands are examples of countries that have been struggling for years with making their systems pro-active. Compared to the UK, with its civil service culture, these two countries have a traditionally strong ministerial autonomy and weak central co-ordination roles. The Commission has also a highly reactive tradition and reputation. Due to strong and often nationally oriented Directors Generals (also known as 'barons') and Commissioners, early co-ordination was often prevented from the top (Dinan 1999; Spence 1994, 2000) and also in interviews officials explained that they were not allowed to involve colleagues from cognate sectors. The Secretariat General's position has been too weak

to correct this and has been comparable to the post box role of Foreign Affairs Ministries.

Below we will examine the horizontal co-ordination capacities – and the changes herein - of the three Member States and two EU Institutions (Commission and EP) to see whether the co-ordination systems have indeed remained stable or there has been build up of capacities to deal with more horizontal interdependence and hence can deal with a greater co-ordination workload and the complexities of this (priority setting, conflict solving, continuous exchange of information).

This empirical section emphasises the change process and trends. These are analysed from an organisational design perspective: what are the co-ordination mechanisms that we see? Using Mintzberg's presentation of key co-ordination mechanism we are particularly interested in whether we see new specific of general rules and new matrix structures ('co-ordinating teams') being created.[iv]

This section will clarify whether the current literature gives adequate presentations of the trends in national capacity building for EU co-ordination. Building on this, we can discuss path-dependency.

5.2. Germany – increasing inefficiency

Germany belongs to a group of Member States with a decentralised system for managing European affairs with a great deal of autonomy for individual departments (Kassim 2003). Apart from the highly political sensitive files, there is little political steering from the Chancellery or the two co-ordinating departments (since 1998, Foreign Affairs, and Finance). Formally, the head of government sets the strategic guidelines of the federal government, but in practice, this is only applied to the most contested issues (Derlien 2000). The strong role of the finance department is a legacy of the EU's traditional focus on economic and trade matters (Derlien 2000: 59; Maurer and Wessels 2001: 124). Deubner and Huppertz (2003) among others note the following reasons for the poor co-ordination:

[iv] For a discussion of Mintzberg's view on co-ordination mechanisms and how this can be interpreted in EU contexts, see Schout 1999

- the principle that departments are independent (*Ressortprinzip*), which encourages bureaucratic politics;

- the passive manner of co-ordination, which asks a lot from dependent departments;

- the highly 'event' nature of co-ordination, focusing on COREPER meetings. Not the conflictual issues but the events of Coreper and Council meetings are co-ordinated;

- coalition politics;

- the physical distance between officials working in Berlin and Bonn and in the regional authorities (*Länder*).

Expert opinions reveal Germany's poor reputation with no central agency that has the power to formulate a 'coherent European strategy' (Maurer 2003: 119) but not everyone believes the system is this bad (Derlien 2000). Be that as it may, even very poor co-ordination has its advantages. For example, some commentators note that co-ordination in Germany is quite flexible in the sense that nothing is really finalised until the end (Jordan and Schout 2006).

The tendency among German departments has been to articulate their interests directly in Brussels. The search for a common position is either delayed or never really sought. This breeds mistrust and forces departments to send 'watchdogs' to shadow the lead department in Brussels. Very few involved see the co-ordinating Foreign Affairs, Finance or the Chancellery as honest brokers so that their involvement in conflicts is put off. The German Chancellery does not involve itself in the daily process of EU policy making. Only in major cases does it step into alter a sector department's position (Deubner and Huppertz 2003).

The major inter-departmental co-ordination committee for European affairs is the COREPER instruction meeting on Tuesday. The Coreper instruction meeting is a matrix-structure that gathers European Affairs units and it is chaired jointly by Finance and Foreign Affairs. This arrangement also leads to the problem that the neutrality of the co-ordinating department (Finance) is questioned by many in the system. Second, the system is highly reactive as the co-ordination meeting to bring problems out into the open is very close to the endgame in the Council.

As a general backup, there is a layered system of matrix-structures. The heads of the European units – the European officers (*Europabeauftragte*) – meet every Tuesday under the chairmanship of Foreign Affairs (or Finance), mainly to prepare Coreper. However, this committee is weak and lacks high level support which creates vicious circles of ineffectual problem solving and non-attendance. Consequently, the Cabinet becomes the main forum for solving problems, but its role is restricted by the workload that has normally accumulated when this relatively late stage in the policy process is reached. The lack of early discussion on positions commonly generates a great deal of mistrust between departments, symbolised by the huge German delegations that regularly attend EU negotiations. Consequently, co-ordination is reactive, conflict ridden and - especially for those departments that are not in the lead - highly time consuming.

In an attempt to remedy some of these defects, in 2000 Foreign Affairs lobbied for a number of changes. This was accompanied by a new co-ordination handbook (i.e. a rule-based reform) which had limited impact. Also at the start of the new millennium, the Head of the Chancellery recommended a set of further changes including reinforcing the poorly attended weekly COREPER instruction meeting through binding participation and encouraging the European officers (*Europabauftragte*) in all departments to meet more regularly to discuss upcoming dossiers/problems (i.e. creating a new matrix structure). Also an interministerial matrix-type structure was established that should function as an early warning system among others through the German permanent representation. It resulted in an early warning report 3 times p.a. To support this, departments have been expected to invest in monitoring units to better track developments in the wider Commission agenda in order to stimulate the fight for influence. Being an intra-departmental reform, this attempt seems to have only succeeded in the bigger departments (such as Finance) which indeed instituted watchdogs shadowing different policy areas. The more general problem with monitoring units is that they tend to lack authority and lose out to line units in the battle for departmental resources – whose foci have tended to remain on their own priorities (Jordan and Schout 2006).

Crucially, in making these changes the Germans are trying to improve their co-ordination system by reinforcing and creating additional matrix-type arrangements.

However, they seem ineffective in improving actual co-ordination between officials from different departments. Our interviews suggest that the reforms have already begun to lose momentum. There was hardly an attempt to have a fresh look at the co-ordination system. As a result, the traditional system has not been affected. The creation of additional co-ordination mechanisms (new matrix-structures on top of the existing ones and early warning systems) seems to make the already inefficient system even more inefficient.

5.3. The Netherlands – increasing inefficiency

The Dutch co-ordination is based on ministerial autonomy as well as on collective responsibility for external relations. From the early days of the EU onwards, co-ordination has been reactive with the focal point on the CoCo meeting (Co-ordinating Committee for International and European Affairs) chaired by the junior minister for EU affairs. This late co-ordination reflects the original unanimity decision making in the Council which implied decisions concentrated at the end of the Council negotiations. Over time several changes have been implemented. First of all, when Coreper become more important (De Zwaan 1993) a special committee was created for co-ordinating instructions for Coreper. The increase of EC legislation in the 1980s following the initiation of the '1992' programme resulted in several nasty surprises concerning the major impact Commission proposals and Council agreements can ultimately have (e.g. the financial consequences of equal opportunities for employers) and the mediocre implementation track record of the Netherlands in the Commission's implementation charts. Hence, a new committee was created around 1990 to assess new Commission proposals ('BNC') in terms of financial and legal consequences. However, this body lacked expertise, weight and time to consider new proposals with sufficient depth so that it had to be upgraded and complemented with subcommittees ('ICERs') for legal questions and to prepare implementation plans. Hence, there has been an incremental process of building matrix-type structures.

In addition, there has been a constant search for formalising the BNC by adding rules about different kinds of impact assessments (tests for gender equality, development co-operation, administrative costs, subsidiarity and environment) and legal and financial implications of new Commission proposals. However, given the early stage, these rules have not led to major improvements in analysis or co-ordination.

The system has remained point of concern and reform discussions have remained on the agenda. Several reports have been dedicated recently to upgrading co-ordination with the aims to make it pro-active, to stimulate early political choices and to make co-ordination more efficient (Schout 2004; ROB 2004; Report Van Voorst tot Voorst 2005; Steunenberg and Voermans 2005). These reports from scholars and advisory committees provide rational support for structural changes by underlining the needs for reform and presenting a range of options. Their follow up however remained marginal and interviews indicate a strong tendency to keep the system mainly as it is. There is very little capacity at central level to initiate organisational changes. The prime minister's office can do little as this would be seen as if the primus interpares is grabbing for power. Foreign Affairs has a difficult position as any discussion about reform is seen as a criticism on this ministry. Moreover, it fears it has a lot to loose e.g. if the Prime Minister's Office becomes the co-ordinating body. Furthermore, no other ministry can initiate discussions on reform nor do they have the incentives fearing a further loss of independence.

Similar to Germany, there is a broadly shared concern about co-ordination capacities. Also here, there is an increase in number of matrix committees trying to make a reactive system proactive. Despite the reforms, the emphasis has remained on co-ordinating Council decisions. In the case of disagreements, officials also indicate to each other to wait until the proposal reaches the Coreper instruction or the CoCo meetings. Due to the addition of committees, there are now approximately sixty people fully occupied in preparing and taking part in the – mostly weekly – meetings (Schout 2004: 77). Hence, Dutch EU policy making has become increasingly cumbersome and inefficient. What is more, the original problems of reactive policy making – i.e. identifying priorities and solve problems early on – have not been solved. Despite rational support, change processes have not really emerged.

5.4. The United Kingdom – towards even greater efficiency

Not being a founding father, the UK had the opportunity to examine different co-ordination systems when deciding on its own structure (Wallace and Wallace 1973). The conclusion was that the then existing interdepartmental relations were suitable as a model for the co-ordination requirements of the EU. Ever since, the arrangements have

been reviewed at regular intervals and the UK has made deliberate attempts to ensure that the administrative arrangements were strong enough to manage interdependence (Cabinet Office 1999). The UK is widely recognised as having one of the strongest and most effectively co-ordinated systems of any Member State (Bulmer and Burch 1998; Wallace 1997: 687; Metcalfe 1994).

Although sometimes presented as a centralised system (Armstrong and Bulmer 1996; Kassim 2003: 93), it is actually highly decentralised and based on the subsidiarity principle: the departments are primarily responsible for their files including the co-ordination. Coherence is guaranteed not just by a civil service value system plus a strong set of rules. The British administrative system is guided by a well known set of rules and policy guidelines. The dozens produced by the Cabinet Office have been presented as "the Bible of European business" (Humphreys 1996: 31). 'Active co-ordination' is an important principle in the UK system (Schout and Metcalfe 1999). The lead department has the formal obligation to point out to others what the implications are of Commission proposals. The active co-ordination obligation is backed up by the stick of direct intervention from the Cabinet Office. This means that the workload of co-ordination lies primarily on the shoulders of the lead ministry. This underlines that the rule system is not simply one of specific operating rules stating what to do at specific steps in the processes, but it is highly based on the general rule of active co-ordination.

These values and rules make co-ordination particularly efficient, as the lead ministry should take steps to involve others and pay heed to their interests. Active co-ordination stimulates a proactive exchange of information and the early detection of problems. This leads to 'issue co-ordination', i.e. dealing with problems when they arrive (Schout 1999). Importantly, the workload of horizontal co-ordination is on the foot of the lead department. They have to warn of new developments, point to potential consequences, and ensure that view of cognate departments are incorporated.

In addition, the British have a modest but effective system of interministerial matrix structures. Recently, the number of such teams was even reduced. Previous co-ordinating committees – concerning senior officials (EQ(S)), middle raking civil servants (EQ(O)), legal (EQ (L)) and personnel matters (EQ(P)) - have been replaced by

one interministerial meeting on Fridays named after the senior official for EU affairs from the Cabinet Office and the Permanent Representative (the Grant-Darroch meeting). The meeting only involves those ministries that have a stake in the issue(s) on the agenda. As the meeting moves through the agenda, officials from the relevant ministries arrive and then depart. It is peculiar form of 'meeting on the move' and stresses the subsidiarity way of working of the British system (only those have to be at the meeting who are also directly related). If and when necessary, problems can be moved up to the foreign ministry and even up to Cabinet Office, but this last option is rarely used as the threat of involving the most senior level is usually enough.

Whereas the Dutch and German systems have searched for more horizontal matrix-type structures, the British improved the system quite rationally by reducing the number of committees. As a result, the system has increased its efficiency even more. This would suit the expectations from co-ordination theory quite well: more interdependence would need more efficient matrix-type structures (instead of merely more matrix-type systems). Similar, the UK does not simply add rules but the heart of the matter is the principle of efficiency creating active co-ordination.

The British change pattern also fits the neo-institutional model of path-dependent adaptations as it builds on its efficient model. Moreover, with the use of rules stressing the importance of informing other departments of potential implications of the EU negotiations and the use of less but more subsidiarity based teams, the system is based on a mix of horizontal and bureaucratic governance mechanisms. In the two previous Member States, the mechanisms are not mutually reinforcing but "it is the mix that matters" seems to apply in the UK (Rhodes 1997; Olsen 2005: 16).

5.5. Commission – From inefficient to efficient co-ordination

When looking at the reputation of the Commission as an organisation, one would almost wonder why horizontal objectives such as quality of legislation or EU-EPI have even been initiated. For many reasons, as discussed above, many present it as a highly fragmented organisation. Moreover, its policy planning system has been highly criticised by the Committee of Wise Men when it wrote that the Commissions ambitions are disconnected from its resources (1999). Yet, it has been a great supporter of better law making and good governance principles (e.g. CEC 2001; CEC 2003; CEC 2005b)

but following neo-institutional path dependency theory, our hopes of successful reforms should not be too high (cf. Scott 1995).

The organisational weaknesses have been known inside the Commission for a long time. Commission president Santer initiated a range of studies and change measures giving the reform a highly rational – i.e. deliberate - reform basis (see the DECODE Report (discussed in Jordan and Schout 2006); CEC 2000a and 2000b). This development of its internal system reveals a deliberate learning approach and institutionalisation of a co-ordination system in terms of organisational roles (leadership through units in various DGs and SG), operating rules and codes of conduct for Commissioners and officials (Jordan and Schout 2006). The Commission was well motivated to tackle its organisation in view of its legitimacy crisis. Following the fall of the Santer Commission, administrative reform has developed from a mainly voluntary process to a central theme headed by a Commissioner dedicated to reform. These 'Kinnock reforms' resulted in a range of bureaucratic operating mechanisms (in the positive sense). Code books have been produced insisting on better – active – co-ordination (e.g. SEC(2004)1617/4) and an overhaul of the Commission's workplanning has been carried through. The new programming initiatives is run by an enlarged Secretariat (Strategic Planning and Programming Unit) and organised on a rolling system of 3 monthly and (multi-)annual programming. Internally as well as externally, this programming offers maximum transparency as every proposal is supported by at least a short description and impact assessment ('roadmap'). These are also presented on the Commission's website. In addition, the Commission's workplanning is now linked to interinstitutional workplanning with the European Parliament and Council (2003/C 321/01) adding to its influence and focus. Furthermore, co-ordination has been upgraded among other by a range of pleas for among others early consultation and the roadmaps and the full impact assessments. These steps have lowered many of the barriers between DGs.

At first sight, the results of the reforms seem to be meager (e.g. Cini 2005). Levy (2003, 2004, 2005) is more outspoken in criticising the Commission reforms and concludes that merely in more red tape has been created overloading officials even further without producing actual changes. The change package Levy evaluates covers financial and human resource management programmes. We limit our interest to co-ordination and

arrive at a different conclusion. Our interviews clearly show a drastic change from a traditionally Napoleonic hierarchical organisation with little room for horizontal co-ordination into an organisation that has become in a short span of time much more informal and open to internal and external co-ordination (Jordan and Schout 2006). The Commission has relied on the same set of co-ordinating committees for a long time (i.e. the meetings of special chefs, the cabinet chefs ('Hebdo') and the College meetings on Wednesdays). Hence, the matrix-type structures have not changed. The organisation was strengthened firstly through stronger planning mechanisms by enlarging the Secretariat. From a weak body amidst strong DGs, the Secretariat has evolved and is now clearly in the lead when it comes to workplanning, priority setting and resource allocation (CEC 2005d). This has made the monitoring of policy preparations and of the quality of the background papers more effective. Secondly, the new rules emphasise early consultation and collective responsibilities at official level and between Commissioners (see among others CEC 2004a; CEC 2005e) and foresee in an impact assessment and 'roadmap' system. The formalisation of work procedures has – including the impact assessments - has been strengthened especially by the visibility that now exists through the internet.

Summarising, the reform of co-ordination in the Commission has been highly procedure-based. This does not easily fit with the traditional Napoleonic organisation type (Levy 2005) which is typically hierarchical and build around strong personalities. Such hierarchies are usually rule-unfriendly as rules imply limitations of personal actions by management (Perrow 1986). This as was also underlined by a senior Commission official in 2001 explaining that "it is time the Commission becomes a bureaucracy". The reform of the Commission therefore implies a structural change into a Weberian bureaucracy. This does not make the Commission an easier place to work as DGs still 'fight like cats and dogs'[v] but officials emphasised that it is a big difference with the earlier habit of closing doors until a policy was more or less finalised.

5.6. European Parliament – standstill

One of the sources of political pressure for environmental integration is the European Parliament. The EP has been a champion of horizontal objectives such as sustainable

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[v] Schuwer, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the EU, in an interview in *PM*, 2 February 2006

development and the governance principles more generally (e.g. Lenschow 1999; Judge 2002; European Parliament 2001: the Hulthén report for the Gothenburg Council in May 2001). However, practically, it has been suffering from a number of constraints. Its inability to manage its input for the Lisbon underlined the depth of the internal fights over which parliamentary Committee would lead the negotiations (Jordan and Schout 2006). Moreover, the EP failed to respond - despite its initial support – to the Commission's Communication on 'partnership for integration' (COM(1998) 333) which called for each Institution to consider its internal capacities.

The EP's operating procedures are carefully written down in its Rules of Procedure (16th ed. July 2004). Of primary importance is the distribution of dossiers between the Committees (and subsequently the appointment of the Rapporteur within the lead Committee). There are rules for co-ordination related to the issuing of 'opinions' to influence the lead Committee. However, these opinions are a very weak instrument and can be ignored by the lead Committee. The wording of the relevant article in the Rules of Procedure also underlines the weak consultative function of opinions: 'should the Committee … wish to hear the view of another Committee', then it may ask the President to give the other committee the status of 'opinion giving Committee' (Rule 46, see also Rule 47).

The weak bureaucratic operating procedures make it even more important to look at the horizontal co-ordination. Without much formal structuring, co-ordination is largely informally. A lot depend on the involvement of MEPs in informal networks and contacts. With 785 MEPs and all kinds of cultural, political and language differences, informal co-ordination does not seem to be a strong mechanism. Furthermore, political groups play an important means to agree lines between MEPs. However, membership of political groups is much less strong in terms of agreeing positions compared to membership of political parties in national parliaments (Faas 2002). Moreover, there can be very strong competition between Committees that has a negative effect on political agreements within the groups. In addition to informal co-ordination and co-operation in political groups, there is very little in terms of workplanning or co-ordination mechanism.

The need for political visibility for individual MEPs ('scoring on the own domain'), the highly fragmented Committee system and the weak political groups have all contributed to general support for governance principles but also to limited influence in the actual policy making in other Council areas. Moreover, whereas the other three actors are engaged in reforming internal co-ordination mechanisms, the EP has shown very little ambitions in this direction. In fact, it is very difficult to see what could be reformed successfully – interviewees pointed for example to strengthening policy groups but this is difficult with inherently individualistically operating MEPs and a weak party system.

As a result, there is little attention for better co-ordination in the EP. Possibly, co-ordination is too 'bureaucratic' an issue to attract the attention from the politicians in the EP. The consequence is only weak political pressure for horizontal issues such as quality of legislation, consistency or sustainable development. This deprives a large deal of the governance agenda from the political incentives.

The non-action within the EP is hard to link to neo-institutional theory as change is just not an issue.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The desire for greater EU-EPI raises important, but as yet not fully addressed, questions about administrative co-ordination capacities i.e. do the actors involved in networked governance actually have sufficient capacities to work efficiently, proactively and ina sufficiently focused way? In view of the existing co-ordination literature, the conclusion would seem to be that the actors do not yet live up to the EU-EPI requirements. Germany, The Netherlands and the Commission seem particularly remote from what is needed. Moreover, the neo-institutional path-dependency thesis gives little room for optimism. If these actors are not capable of rapid change, than EU-EPI will remain tantalisingly out of reach.

However, this somewhat gloomy picture is not fully confirmed by our analysis as it misses major current developments, namely the fact that at least two of the actors have made significant strides towards greater internal coordination. Crucially, this has implications for the implementation of EU-EPI but also for the application of historical institutionalist theory.

If we plot these trends we find a varied picture in terms of adaptation. The Netherlands and Germany seem to have moved in perverse directions from what EU-EPI requires. Instead of searching for greater simplicity and more efficiency, these systems become ever more elaborate (and hence inefficient) with more matrix-structures and ever more detailed rules that hardly affect co-ordination. The EP, by contrast, does not even have a reform agenda. However, the UK stands in sharp contrast to the other two Member States as it has *reduced* the number of matrix-structures. This seems to have made the UK system even more efficient and problem oriented. It has emphasised *general rules* by focusing on 'active co-ordination' and on a subsidiarity-type of interdepartmental co-operation. Finally, the changes in the Commission are very significant, signifying a structural change towards a more bureaucratic organisation. The Commission's reforms are largely rule-based with a stronger the emphasis on procedures for impact assessments, codebooks and workplanning. Despite the negative image of 'red tape', these reforms have been successful, suggesting formalisation is a precondition for better and transparent informal relations.

In relation to historical institutional theory, our findings suggest that the EU co-ordination literature has overplayed the importance of path dependency which has given a slightly misleading picture that everything remains stable and deeply unaffected by the shift to more multi-levelled administration. As our study shows, a more detailed examination of the co-ordination mechanisms provides a much richer (and hence more complete) view of the adaptation processes. Rather than no or at least very little change, we find that changes range from the perverse (The Netherlands, Germany), to the significant (Commission, UK), with only the EP exhibiting no change.

These experiences offer some prospect for a potentially successful multi-level change process. There is a positive message: EU-EPI is possible - provided the administrative challenges are satisfactorily addressed. Moreover, this study leads to some caution on the essence of 'new' governance, i.e. networks. As appeared, there are clear limits to the number of horizontal networks ('teams') that policy officials can operate in given the demands on time they place on them.

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