Abstract

The need for EU agencies’ expertise in policy-making is increasing in the areas characterized by complexity, uncertainty and risks, such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and aviation safety. While most studies focus on the legitimacy, accountability and autonomy of EU agencies, we know little about their de facto influence on European policy-making. How and to what extent do EU agencies – advisory bodies without decision-making competence – exert influence in the policy-making process? By focusing on the production and dissemination of expertise, this article examines the conditions under which EU agencies function beyond the mere advisory role. The empirical results are drawn based on the analysis of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in the health policy field.

Keywords: expertise, EU agencies, influence, power, policy-making process, ECDC

* NOTE: This paper is work in progress. Do not cite without permission from the author. Comments and recommendations are welcome.
1. Introduction

Policy competences of the European Union (EU) have gradually expanded from the first day of the European Coal and Steel Community. Especially since the EU has structurally shifted from ‘positive’ to a ‘regulatory’ state (Gilardi, 2008; Majone, 1996), the need for technical information and scientific expertise has increased in various policy areas. Now, specialized expertise from independent experts is required as a crucial resource of policy input in the European policy-making process. However, the European Commission (Commission), the sole and formal policy initiator under the ordinary legislative procedure, is a relatively small bureaucracy which lacks expertise and resources to handle highly technical regulatory issues (e.g. Christiansen and Larsson, 2007). It means that it is inevitable for the Commission to seek external technical input for policy-making.

One of the important sources that the Commission officials can rely on outside its bureaucratic structure is the EU agencies which perform specific technical, scientific or managerial tasks within their field of expertise. Indeed, the establishment of EU agencies has facilitated the development of EU policies, and they have made a valuable contribution to the EU over the years (CEC, 2009). Particularly in risk-related sectors such as medicines, food safety, disease prevention, and so on, policy formulation and decision-making are influenced more and more by EU agencies (Versluis et al. 2011).

Since EU agencies have become a significant component of EU governance (e.g. Curtin, 2009; Geradinet al. 2005), scholarly attention for EU agencies has grown. Yet, most research focuses are given to their institutional design, independence, legitimacy, autonomy, and accountability (e.g. Busuioc, 2010; Groenleer, 2009; Lord, 2011; Thatcher, 2002; Wonka and Rittberger, 2010). Surprisingly, no systemic empirical evidence has been gathered so far on de facto influence of EU agencies on European policy-making. This is problematic not only because it does not provide the comprehensive picture that is necessary for understanding what actually happens during the policy-making process, but also because it does not help us understand the potential
impact of the growing role and responsibilities of EU agencies both at the European and the national level.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to understand how and when EU agencies influence European policy-making. This is the topic of the PhD research project, upon which this paper is based. The main research question is: ‘to what extent and under which conditions do EU agencies influence policy-making in the European Union?’ The aim is not about measuring how much influence each EU agency exerts in the policy-making process but about finding out different (combinations of) factors that come into play when EU agencies do exert high as well as low influence. If some EU agencies are generally more influential in particular policy domains or policy-making stages, what are the reasons? Why are some EU agencies more contacted by the EU institutions or stakeholders to provide expert advice while others are less visible in EU governance? The policy-making process, in this paper, refers to the first two stages of the policy process, which are policy preparation and policy decision. The policy implementation stage is not considered here. As the first vital step to answer this question, the theoretical and analytical frameworks are developed. Now, the empirical data is being gathered and analyzed to establish a concrete picture in the field of health policy area.

2. EU agencies

There is no formal, universal definition of an agency, but it generally refers to a “variety of organizations that perform functions of a governmental nature, and which often exist outside the normal departmental framework of government” (Majone, 2000, p. 290). At the European level, EU agencies are decentralized and independent legal entities which operate outside Brussels. There are currently over 30 EU agencies in various policy areas, such as environment, railway, aviation, fisheries, chemicals, food safety, medicines and so on.

Generally speaking, most of the EU agencies perform one of the following functions as their primary task: information-gathering (or fact finding); standard setting by issuing opinions or recommendations to the EU institutions; or monitoring and enforcing European legislations in
member states of the EU. Agencies with the information-gathering task collect and analyze objective, reliable and comparable data on a specific policy area. They formulate advice based on this information, and disseminate it to the EU institutions, Member States and the general public. In terms of the standard setting function, Eberlein and Grande (2005) explain that the role corresponds fully with the concentration of European regulation in particular policy areas such as labor, health and consumer protection. They argue that these agencies set not just low standards at the level of a lowest common denominator; but indeed, very high regulatory levels are often reached (Eberlein and Grande, 2005).

As for the implementation function, many EU agencies perform this role. The main reason for this is that EU law should be applied in all 27 member states and the Commission as the EU’s administrator does not have the capacity to handle this task. In the same vein, Groenleer et al. (2010, p.1226) argue that “officially, independent regulatory agencies such as the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) were created because member states do not always comply with their obligations with regard to implementation of EU law, and the European Commission is not in the position to ensure the efficient and flexible implementation itself”.

The responsibilities of EU agencies are not limited to one of the primary tasks listed above. In all cases, EU agencies have diverse tasks, involving both the primary (e.g. implementation role) and the secondary (e.g. information-gathering role) tasks. When considering both the primary and secondary functions of EU agencies, some common features emerge. Firstly, most of the EU agencies do not have decision-making power which can produce legally binding decisions on third parties. There are only a few exceptions, such as the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) and the Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (OHIM). Secondly, EU agencies support European policy-making by collecting, analyzing and disseminating technical information as either the primary or the secondary task. For example, while the primary task of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) is to set a standard of chemical safety by managing the registration, evaluation, authorization and restriction processes for chemical substances, it also gathers information on chemicals and their safe use and makes them publically accessible.
These two features are important for the aim of this paper because it reveals the fact that EU agencies’ expertise and technical information that are provided to the Commission as policy input are not legally binding. As a consequence, the Commission is not obliged to take agencies’ advice into consideration even though it receives opinions from EU agencies at the stage of policy formulation. This fact will serve as a crucial base that distinguishes political influence from political power, which are the main concepts of this research. The limited competence of EU agencies leads to an assumption that on the surface it seems difficult for EU agencies to exert influence (let alone power) in the policy-making process. This assumption will be revisited in the following sections.

3. Concepts of Power and Influence

Almost all scholars in political science would agree that ‘influence’ and ‘power’ are important phenomena of political analyses, but there is hardly any consensus on the definition and on the relations of the two terms. Although there have been some attempts by scholars to define the concepts of influence and power, there is a lack of clarity of the meaning of influence distinct from the one of power – and vice versa – which can be generally accepted and adopted in political science as well as in ordinary language in a broader context. One reason why there lacks the clarity of these concepts is that we all understand what they mean when we hear or talk about them. These words are commonly used to describe situations of our everyday interaction with other persons or groups in a society, and particularly in a situation that involves political behavior. Thus, Dahl and Stinebrickner (2003, p.12) mention that “most theorists seem to have assumed, as did Aristotle, that they needed no great elaboration (on defining these terms), presumably because their meaning would be understood by people of common sense”.

In the absence of the clear meanings of influence and power, what is immediately noticeable is that these two terms are closely related and used as synonyms to each other. Some authors’ definition of power can be interpreted as the one of influence by other authors and similarly, some authors use the term influence to describe a certain phenomenon which is also described as power by other authors. Therefore, it is important to review the literature on both power and
influence – and some authors use these terms interchangeably as mentioned earlier (see e.g. Wallace, 2005) – if one tries to understand the concept of one of them. Since there is a higher volume of literature describing power rather than the ones specifically mentioning influence, this section will elaborate on the concept of power first and present what makes influence distinct from power. Then the specific concepts of the two terms in the context of the policy-making process in the EU, which is the focus of this research, are suggested.

3.1 Power

The concept of power is understood in many different ways from discipline to discipline. In political science, power should be considered in a relationship between and among various actors that are involved in a political procedure and/or process (e.g. Dahl, 1957; Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950; Simon, 1953). Robert Dahl is one of the most important scholars in the studies of influence and power in a policy process, and he clearly illustrates the relational aspect of power. He suggests that “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dahl, 1957, p.202). The actors can be individuals, groups or organizations, and what he emphasizes is that different preferences of actors should be looked at in order to study power. Those who can realize their own preferences rather than preferences of others can be considered as power-holders.

Based on the relational aspect of power, one approach to systematically organize the concept further is to classify conceptions between the one emphasizing ‘power over’ and the other emphasizing ‘power to’. With regard to the ‘power over’ view, one of the most-cited scholars is Max Weber. To him, power is the “probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (Weber, [1922]1978, p.53). In a relation between actors, power here implies that power-holders have the ability with which they ‘can’ impose their will on the power subjects and that the power subjects do something against their own wishes or interests. This reveals the coercive characteristics of power.

The ‘power to’ view emphasizes the ability of power-holders to satisfy their wants and desires or to achieve goals in line with preferences of power-holders. The core concept, in other words, is the ‘competence’ or ‘capacity’ of the power holder(s) to bring about consequences. Hobbes’s
idea of power was built in this line that the power of a man is “his present means to obtain some future apparent good” (Hobbes, [1651]1991). Likely, the power of political actors can be seen through the “production of intended effects” (Russell, 1938, p.25). If one thinks about the policy-making process, there are various actors who try to shape certain policy in a way that is closest to their preference. Not everyone is able to achieve what they want when there are conflicts among actors’ preferences, but those who realize intended results are the power-holders as Dahl explains.

This leads to another approach to systematically organize the concept: three faces of power. The realization of preferences in the process of decision-making or policy-making, which is just explained above on the basis of Dahl’s definition, is the ‘first face’. The ‘second face’ is developed by Bachrach and Barats (1962,p.948), who argue that “power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively nocuous to A”. This is what they call ‘nondecision-making’ that suppresses conflicts and intentionally prevents certain issues from even being discussed in the political process. The ‘third face’ of power is proposed by Lukes (1974). He argues that non decision-making is still considered in the decision-making process and thus, the ‘second face’ omits a situation of a latent conflict that prevails even before agenda-setting, which assumes that “there would be a conflict of wants or preferences between those exercising power and those subject to it” (Lukes, 1974, p.25).

3.2 Influence

The most usual way to define influence is based on its relationship to power, and many authors elaborate their ideas on this by analyzing whether or not one concept is subordinate to the other. According to this approach, three relational categories of influence and power can be identified:

(a) influence as the general concept and power as a special case of influence; (b) power as the general concept and influence as a special case of power; and (c) influence and power as the mutually exclusive concepts.

The first category (a) considers power as a subordinated concept that belongs to the broad meaning of influence. Lasswell and Kaplan (1950) are the most cited scholars in this view, and

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1 For comprehensive elaboration and discussion on these three relations, see Zimmerling (2005).
they argue that what makes power a special case of influence is the threat of sanctions. They define power as “participation in the making of decision: G has power over H with respect to the values K if G participates in the making of decisions affecting the K-policies of H” (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950, p. 75). In this definition, ‘decision’ refers to “a policy involving severe sanctions (deprivations)” (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.74). Dahl (1963, p.50) continues with this line of argument, and defines power as “influence based on the applicability of severe sanctions”. Therefore, power is exercised “when compliance is attained by creating the prospect of severe sanctions for noncompliance” (Dahl & Steinbrickner 2003, p. 38).

In order for influence to be transformed into power, in this view, the threat of sanctions should be accompanied, and sanctions should be important enough to the ones being affected to make them do what power-holders want. However, it does not necessarily mean that power is considered to be exercised only when sanctions are actually imposed. Without any opposition on the part of the power subject – thus compliance is achieved without imposing sanctions because exercise of power is accepted – power is also conceivable (Van Doorn, 1962, cited in Wrong, 1995). Moreover, it does not mean that those with influence are always required to possess legal competence to impose sanctions in order to exercise power. Deprivation in a broad sense includes risks of losing credibility, reputation or being criticized as a form of invisible means of influence. It implies that actor A may be able to exert influence on actor B without directly doing something, and perhaps only the presence of actor A is enough for actor B to be influenced. This is called unintended, anticipated, implicit or indirect influence (see e.g. Wrong, 1995). Thus, those without legal competence to impose sanction may be able to exercise power if, for example, they can generate criticism about noncompliance and in this way, logically convince them to comply.

The second category (b) – influence as a special case of power – considers power in terms of “a kind of ability to exert purposefully a causal influence on social results or other people. In short, power is the ability to influence social outcomes according to one’s wants” (Kliemt, 1981, p.52). Similarly, Hoogerwerf (1972) sees power as potential influence, and defines power as the possibility to influence the behavior of others in accordance with the actor’s own purposes (cited

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2 However, there are scholars who question whether power comprises only those cases where sanctions are included. For example, Parsons (1963a, p.237) rejects this view of power and states “securing compliance with a wish […] simply by threat of superior force is not an exercise of power”.
in Mokken and Stokman, 1989). To him influence occurs wherever behavior leads to change in behavior. Moreover, Cartwright (1969, p.125) provides a clear explanation of power and influence in this view by stating that “when an agent, O, performs an act resulting in some change in another agent, P, we say that O influences P. If O has the capability of influencing P, we say that O has power over P”. Since influence is subordinate to power, influence cannot exist without power. To put it differently, all actors who are influential must also be powerful although it is possible that some powerful actors do not have influence. However, the main criticism of this view arises from this point. In a situation where there is influence without exercising power, this view is not applicable.

Mokken and Stokman (1989) support the third category (c) – mutually exclusive concepts – by arguing that it is possible that power and influence exist independent of each other. When explaining this point, they use an example that man has power over wild animals by restricting their territory, but without influencing animals’ freedom to move around within the territory. Their definitions of power and influence are:“Power is the capacity of actors (persons, groups or institutions) to fix or to change (completely or partly) a set of action or choice alternatives for other actors; and influence is the capacity of actors to determine partly the actions or choices of other actors within the set of action or choice alternatives available to those actors” (Mokken & Stokman 1989, p.46).

Similarly, Parsons (1963b) and Zimmerling (2005) support that political influence is analytically independent of power although they are closely interconnected, and influence and power should be understood as two disjoint categories rather than sub- and superordinations. According to Zimmerling (2005), power is linked to power subject’s action while influence affects belief. Thus, she defines power as the “ability to get desired outcomes by making others do what one wants” and influence as the “ability to affect others’ beliefs, that is, their knowledge or opinions either about what is or about what ought to be the case, about what is (empirically) true or false or what is (normatively) right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable” (Zimmerling, 2005, p.141, italics in original). However, this view is hard to adopt especially in a political decision-making process because deciding on one policy requires at least a majority of decision-makers agreeing on the policy under discussion, which implies that a certain number of decision-
makers need (to be convinced) to share beliefs. In this respect, influence and power cannot be mutually exclusive.

3.3 Definitions in this research

In terms of power in its relational aspect, this research focuses on the ‘power to’ perspective because what is interesting to find out is about how and to what extent EU agencies without decision-making competence interact with other actors in the policy process to shape and to produce policies in line with agencies’ preferences. Moreover, the ‘first face’ of power is mainly concerned because this research looks at both policy preparation and policy decision stages, and it means that EU agencies play a role in the process of making decisions rather than nondecision-making. The concept of power is taken as a special case of influence, which is the first one of the relational categories between power and influence. In this sense, those who exert influence can transform influence into power if they have the capacity to utilize either sanctions or deprivation. By considering deprivation, the analysis looks at both direct (visible) and indirect (anticipated) influence.

On the basis of these concepts, the definitions of political power and political influence are developed by modifying Mokken and Stokman’s (1989) distinction between the ability to fix or change a set of action or choice alternatives and the ability to determine something from the set of action or choice alternatives that are provided. They are understood as follows:

- **Political influence** is the ability to fix or change (partly or completely) a set of action or choice alternatives available for collectively binding decisions by formal power holders; and
- **Political power** is the competence (conferred by a system of normative and legal rules) to determine (partly or completely) the choice for a specific decision out of the given set of action or choice alternatives with a collectively binding effect

In other words, those who exercise political influence provide a ‘menu’ of political choices and those who choose one from the menu as a collectively binding decision are power-holders. These concepts imply that the focus should lie on the input and output sides of a collective process of policy-making, which is about deciding on one policy – output – out of a set of choice
alternatives – input – that are offered to the formal decision-makers. In order to compose a set of choice alternative, those responsible for it should be able to collect, aggregate/synthesize, and disseminate information and advice in a manner that is relevant and understandable for the political authorities. This is the role of many EU agencies as they gather, identify and construct technical information and expertise in their specific policy area, and provide them directly or indirectly to the Commission as well as other EU institutions in the policy-making process. Next section elaborates more on the access points of EU agencies to exert influence.

4. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework is developed based on the theoretical framework as well as the literature review (see Table 1). When it comes to the empirical studies on influence in the policy processes, some clusters of research subjects are noticeable in the context of the United States and the EU, and at the national and international levels. Most analyzed subjects are interest groups including lobbying and non-governmental organizations, and the influence of the Council Presidency and small (or newer) Member States in the EU are also becoming more popular topics for empirical research. When reviewing the existing literature on influence, regardless of their research subjects, some determinants for influence in the policy process emerge.

It is very hard to find any literature that does not discuss the importance of possessing specialized information and scientific expertise that other actors do not have. In European governance, information is often described as the most important currency (Bouwen, 2002). EU agencies are created to collect technical and scientific data, analyze them and provide expert advice as policy input to the EU institutions as well as Member States. Therefore, the presence or absence of high level of expertise should not be considered as one of the factors affecting EU agencies’ influence; rather, it should be in the center of the research as the point of departure. In other words, it is not about whether or not an EU agency possesses scientific knowledge and how it affects its influence as all EU agencies are supposed to work using their expertise in specific policy areas. Instead, the focus should be on the formal and informal conditions and mechanisms that EU agencies utilize to ‘enhance’ their scientific knowledge (in order to become more competitive with other actors who also provide information as policy input, such as interest
groups) and to more strategically ‘transmit’ their scientific knowledge to the policy-makers (in order to constantly appeal to the ones with political power). The significance of the conditions and pathways of influence is asserted by Chalmers through his research that “the medium (of influence) is more important than the message” (2013, p.41).

Here, it is crucial to note that there are three dimensions of analysis in this research: (1) production: how EU agencies produce expert knowledge, (2) transmission: what EU agencies do to make this knowledge available and appealing to the policy-makers for a decision, and (3) influence: how and to what extent the production and transmission of expert knowledge by EU agencies affect the output of a policy decision. These three-dimensional approaches are developed based on the modification of the two-dimensional analytical framework from Betsill and Corell (2011) who study the influence of NGOs in international environmental negotiations. They explain that two dimensions in the notion of NGO influence are the intentional transmission of information by NGOs and alterations in behavior in response to that information. Compared to Betsill and Corell’s framework, the three dimensional approach in this research allows a more systematic and complete analysis of the very process between expert knowledge and the influence in two ways. Firstly, instead of beginning the analysis with the transmission of information, this research considers conditions in both production- and supply-side of expert knowledge. EU agencies are equipped with their specific expertise, but what happens within these agencies in order to guarantee best expert advice to policy-makers should also be considered if one tries to understand the influence of agencies. Secondly, instead of treating expertise as one type of resources, expertise remains in this research as a common control variable and is analyzed in combination with other factors.

For the analysis of the intentional transmission of information, Betsill and Corell (2001) apply three variables which are “evidence regarding NGO activities (such as lobbying, submitting information or draft decisions to negotiators on a particular position), their access to negotiations (such as the number of NGOs attending negotiations and the rules of participation) and/or NGO resources (such as knowledge, financial and other assets, number of supporters and their particular role in negotiations)” (p.69). Moreover, alteration in behavior is measured based on goal attainment, which focuses on “the outcome of negotiations (e.g. the text of a treaty) as well
as the *process* of the negotiation (e.g. the agenda) (Betsill and Corell, 2001, p.75, italics in original).

While their framework clearly links actors’ use/non-use of information to the effect/non-effect of that information in international policy negotiations, it cannot be directly applied to EU agencies which have different types of status, mandates and functioning. In this research, therefore, three variables are defined differently, considering the formal and informal aspects of the influence mechanisms. Formal mechanisms are connected to the formal rules which affect behavior and the structure of the institutional environment where EU agencies, the EU institutions and other policy actors function. They are the official channels utilized in the selection of policy output in the policy-making process. Ostrom (1986, pp. 6-7) explains that rules specify sets of actions or sets of outcomes in three ways:

“(1) a rule states that some particular actions or outcomes are forbidden, (2) a rule enumerates specific action or outcomes or states the upper and lower bound of permitted actions or outcomes and forbids those that are not specifically included, and (3) a rule requires a particular action or outcome”

In contrast, informal mechanisms are defined as non-written mechanisms in the institutional environment that have been created outside the official channels of how actors function and interact in policy-making. Accordingly, informal mechanisms are not part of agencies’ mandates and are not subject to formal sanctions when agencies do not utilize informal mechanisms in their working. Details of the three variables are explained below.
Table 1. Framework for analyzing EU agencies’ influence in the European policy-making process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension 1) Production of expert knowledge within EU agencies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1) Access:</td>
<td>1.1) Number of official networks established with other organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Official networks established with other organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2) Activities:</td>
<td>1.2) Frequency of making phone calls, emailing and having face-to-face meetings among experts in an agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Contacts and meetings with experts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3) Resources:</td>
<td>1.3) Frequency of making phone calls, emailing and having face-to-face meetings with experts in other organizations handling scientific information</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Staff and experts in an agency</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Budget of an agency</td>
<td>- Attending conferences and workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Years of existence of an agency</td>
<td>- Number of staff and experts in an agency and their background</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Amount of annual budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Number of years an agency has functioned</td>
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<td><strong>Dimension 2) Transmission of expert knowledge from EU agencies to policy-makers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1) Access:</td>
<td>2.1) Number of requests by the EU institutions for expert advice or oral presentations from an agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ By request of the EU institutions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ By own initiatives of an EU agency</td>
<td>- Number of own initiatives from an agency to the EU institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ As part of the policy-making procedure</td>
<td>- Presence of the formal procedure that the EU institutions must consult an agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2) Activities:</td>
<td>2.2) Frequency of making phone calls, emailing and having face-to-face meetings with the EU institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Contacts and meetings with the EU institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3) Resources:</td>
<td>2.3) Number of scientific opinions, reports, recommendations and academic articles by an agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Scientific output</td>
<td>- EAR instrument (Arts and Verschuren, 1999; Dür, 2008a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Scientific authority</td>
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</table>
Dimension 3) Influence of EU agencies (dependent variable)

3.1) Goal attainment

- Final policy output includes text drafted by EU agencies

Source: Author’s compilation based on the modification of mainly Betsill and Corell (2001) and to some extent Arts and Verschuren (1999) and Dür (2008a)

- Access

‘Access’ is considered as part of the formal mechanisms, which is connection with the formal rules under which EU agencies perform their tasks. This variable specifically looks at how the founding regulations of EU agencies define the main tasks of the agencies. In the production of expert knowledge, access refers to the tasks defined by the founding regulations that should be performed in order to enhance and guarantee the high quality expert knowledge. For example, in the founding regulation establishing a European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), ECDC is mandated to “establish clear procedures for cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO)” in order to conduct surveillance of communicable diseases\(^3\). Then, ECDC’s cooperation with WHO is treated as one access point in the official networks. When this agency cooperates with more organization or actors who possess technical information and expertise, meaning that there are more access points in the official networks, it will contribute positively to the production of ECDC’s expert knowledge as information sharing and knowledge accumulation can be faster in a larger pool of information.

For the transmission of expert knowledge, most EU agencies have three formal ways to access the EU institutions in the European policy-making process: first, when the EU institutions considers it appropriate or necessary, they may request agencies to submit their expert advice; second, as part of the policy-making procedure, some agencies are formally required to provide their opinions before the Commission formulates the policy drafts – in other words, the Commission must consult these agencies; and last, EU agencies may submit their own initiative opinions.

Regarding these three access points, Hönnige and Panke (2012) tested the contending hypotheses in their study of influence of the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in European policy-making. On the one hand, they expect to see the high influence when these consultative committees provide advice by request because the EU institutions’ request in the first place means that they are interested in listening to the committees’ opinions. On the other hand, they expect that these committees are significantly more influential in the case of their own initiatives because they initiate recommendations if their members have high stakes in a specific legislative proposal and thus, their initiatives will be in time with sound arguments. The empirical results, however, reject both hypotheses since the origins (by requests or by own initiatives) of committees’ opinions are not significant (Hönnige and Panke, 2012).

Considering the similar roles as advisors to the EU institutions and functions between these committees and EU agencies, it is plausible that the number of access points – for example, how many requests for expert advice an EU agency receives from the EU institutions – is more important to consider as a condition affecting the agency’s influence rather than how these access points are initiated. This leads to the following expectation:

*Hypothesis 1) in both dimensions of the production and transmission of expert knowledge, the more access points an EU agency has under the formal rules, the more influence it is likely to exert.*

- *Activities*

Activities mainly consider networking activities that are not necessarily specified as agencies’ tasks in their founding regulations. Thus, activities constitute the informal mechanisms, and they refer to contacts and networking activities by EU agencies toward the EU institutions as well as other actors involved in the policy-making process, such as the major international organizations, civil societies, national competent authorities, etc. In order to clarify the targets of informal activities from the ones in formal access, the founding regulations become the reference point. If the targets and activities are specified in the founding regulations, they will be considered under the first condition – access. Other organizations and activities not specified in the founding regulations will be treated as informal interactions.
From the perspective of EU agencies, informal interactions are important in both production and transmission dimensions of expert knowledge. In the production part, EU agencies might be able to get information about future agenda and plans on EU policies through networking with the EU institutions. This will give agencies more time to prepare expert advice in accordance with the need of policy-makers, and it will make possible that agencies exert influence since “there is a premium on early, efficient and reliable information in the EU” (Chalmers, 2011, p. 477). Moreover, networking with experts in other organizations will help EU agencies enhance their level of expertise.

In the dissemination part, agencies’ networking particularly with the EU institutions will help build cooperative relationship between both parties. In fact, in the case of interest groups’ influence in the EU, Coen (1997) explains that the ‘goodwill’ of policy-makers in the Commission is considered to be crucial. In addition, if agencies interact more frequently with the EU institutions, the chances of their advice being taken by policy-makers will increase because agencies can make policy-makers aware of what is available for them. In the same vein, Eising (2007, p.331) explains that if organizations seeking policy influence want to secure a final policy outcome, they should “inform the institutions about their policy preferences and about the merits and drawbacks of alternative courses of action”. Therefore, it is logical to assume that if EU agencies seek to influence policy-making, they need to ensure that the Commission as well as other EU institutions are willing to consider expert advice from EU agencies and aware of what is available from the agencies.

The ways in which EU agencies informally interact with policy-makers are identified based on the literature review and interviews with actors involved in the European policy-making process. Frequency of these informal interactions is an important measurement because of the “simple idea that ‘more is better’” (Chalmers, 2013, p.47)⁴. To put it differently, sending expert advice more frequently will result in more chances to influence. In short, networking activities by EU agencies will affect their influence positively in European policy-making. Therefore, it is expected:

⁴ See Chalmers (2013) for the explanation of other scholars who support this view.
Hypothesis 2) in both dimensions of the production and transmission of expert knowledge, the more networking activities an EU agency engages in, the more influence it is likely to exert.

• Resources

In the literature, various things are considered as resources of an organization, such as money, legitimacy, political support, knowledge, expertise and information (Dür, 2008b). In the first dimension, which is the production of expert knowledge, resources generally refer to the administrative capacity of an agency. Copsey and Pomorska (2010, p.310), when studying the power and influence of Poland in the EU, argue that the administrative capacity is “perhaps the most important factor” since it is “essential for full and productive engagement with the Brussels technocracy”. In this research, factors such as the number of administrative staff and experts and the amount of annual budget that contribute to enhancing the level of expertise and facilitate the production of expert advice are analyzed. Additionally, the number of years that an agency has functioned in the EU is considered because agency’s experience, know-how, expertise and networks can be accumulated over time as a valuable asset.

In the transmission dimension, the number of scientific output such as scientific reports, studies, opinions and published academic articles is analyzed since they are crucial indicators of ongoing research and projects and how ready an agency is to disseminate their knowledge to other actors. The other important aspect in this dimension is scientific authority based on agency’s reputation as experts. In fact, analyzing the reputational aspect is widely used in various study areas of influence. When investigating the Nordic influence on the European security and defence policy, Jakobsen (2009) compares diverse frameworks by other scholars and actual studies in many issue areas, and points out that a reputation as a leader or expert is one of the most powerful explanatory factors of influence. Dür (2008a, p.565) calls this the ‘attributed influence’ method that, usually by a way of surveys, “one group can be asked to provide a self-assessment of its influence or a peer assessment of the influence of other groups”. Arts and Verschuren (1999), furthermore, name this approach the ‘EAR instrument’. This instrument applies triangulation of (1) political players’ own perception of their influence – ‘ego-perception
(E)’; other players’ perceptions of the influence brought to bear – ‘alter-perception (A)’; and a process analysis by the researcher – ‘researcher’s analysis (R)’ (Arts and Verschuren, 1999).

This reputational approach provides a number of methodological advantages:

“it permits the researcher to gather data on influence when the relevant political behavior or substantive political effect of an actor is unrecorded or unobservable. Likewise, this approach allows the researcher to ask the same questions of multiple respondents and thus make systematic checks of the measure's reliability” (Hall, 1992, p.207).

At the same time, it is criticized for the possible discrepancy between the level of influence based on individuals’ perceptions and the actual level of influence. However, scientific authority based on agency’s reputation in this research is not to measure the actual influence of the agency. Rather, it is to investigate whether actors’ perception, especially the one of the EU institutions, of an EU agency as high-level experts creates the informal practices such as the EU institutions usually rely on expert knowledge of the agency in European policy-making.

The attributed influence is measured by surveys that ask the selected agencies for case studies and other policy actors to evaluate the influence of the selected agencies. While all other indicators of the resources in both dimensions constitute parts of the formal mechanisms, scientific authority falls under the informal mechanisms. Each agency has a different level and amount of the resources and thus, their influence might differ. This leads to the following expectation:

Hypothesis 3) in both dimensions of the production and transmission of expert knowledge, the more resources an EU agency has, the more influence it is likely to exert.

- Goal attainment

Having access through the formal rules, informal activities with the EU institutions, and resources is not directly translated into an effect on the final outputs of EU policies (Eising, 2007). Therefore, the third dimension analyzes the dependent variable, which is ‘influence’ of EU agencies in policy-making in the EU. There are many scholars who point out evidence on goal attainment as the most direct indicator of influence (e.g. Betsill and Corell, 2001; Honing
and Panke, 2012). Following their logic and the definition of influence presented in the theoretical framework, goal attainment refers to the ability of an EU agency to shape the content of the final output of a policy. It is measured by comparing the scientific advice from one agency and the final policy document of the EU institutions.

5. Preliminary Insights on the Influence of ECDC

At the current stage of this research, the empirical data gathered from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is being analyzed and other complementary data from other relevant policy actors such as the European Commission, national competent authorities and NGOs is being gathered. Therefore, this section presents only the preliminary insights from expert interviews at ECDC.

With regard to the first condition – access – ECDC utilizes, when producing expert advice, many official as well as unofficial networks that are established with experts outside ECDC at the European and international levels (Interviewee 7). One source of networks stems from the training programs of ECDC which last for two years, targeting junior experts from EU Member States. Participants of these programs as well as experts who provide trainings develop strong networks during the course, and they become outside experts who stay close to the work of ECDC. Another important source of networks is the database of experts which ECDC has established over the years. Experts in health-related issues can sign up voluntarily for this database with the detailed information on their field of expertise. This information is used whenever ECDC is in need of outside experts on specific topics, and they are often involved in ad-hoc panels of ECDC (Interviewee 8). Moreover, Heads of EU agencies which provide scientific opinions to the EU institutions recently established a network, which meets once or twice a year to discuss matters related to receiving and transferring scientific opinions to the EU institutions as well as to exchange experiences.

As for the dissemination of expert advice, ECDC can access the EU policy-making process only when the agency is requested by the EU institutions to deliver an expert advice or when they produce their own initiatives on the issues the agency finds it very important to the EU. Unlike
some other agencies in certain policy-making\textsuperscript{5}, the Commission does not have to wait for ECDC to deliver its opinions before formulating policy drafts. When providing guidance to the EU institutions, ECDC provides not just one option but several options that the decision-makers can choose from (Interviewee 5).

In terms of the second condition – activities – ECDC maintains very close contacts with experts to produce scientific advice and with the EU institutions to disseminate this advice. One interviewee explains that maintaining close (formal and informal) contact with other experts is not part of their obligation, but strongly suggested by the agency. In the case of the contact from ECDC experts to the EU institutions, while ECDC remains in daily contact with the Commission officials (especially those in the DG Sanco), the agency does not directly contact the European Parliament (Interviewee 7). It is because the European Parliament sends requests to ECDC always via the Commission.

Resources for the production of expert advice in ECDC is quite limited compared to other agencies functioning in the health policy area. It is a relatively young agency, which was established in 2005, and their relatively small scale of budget is going to be even reduced next year (Interviewee 8). Nevertheless, ECDC’s resource in the dissemination side of expert advice is abundant. The agency produces daily reports after the daily Round Table Meetings where the Heads of units and sections sit together to discuss possible health threats based on the work of the Threat Detection Officer (Interviewee 7). These daily reports are sent to the Commission, Member States, Centres for Disease Prevention and Control in non-EU countries such as the US and China (Ibid.). Besides these reports, ECDC also produces and disseminates rapid risk assessments, tool kits, and guidance documents, so “there is high visibility” (Interviewee 7).

6. Conclusion

In order to understand the extent and the conditions for influence of EU agencies in the European policy-making process, this paper presents how the main concepts of political power and influence are conceptualized and how influence is analyzed. While influence is understood as the

\textsuperscript{5} For example, the European Medicines Agency has to be involved and deliver its scientific assessments in the centralized authorization procedure of medicinal products.
ability to fix or change a set of choice alternatives, power is considered as the ability to
determine a decision out of the various alternatives. This is not to say that the conceptual choice
suggested here should be accepted in all analyses of political systems or processes. Rather, this
conceptual choice is most suitable in the context of the technocratic and regulatory mode of EU
governance and the role of EU agencies herein.

During the European policy-making process, EU agencies have different access points, activities
and resources that they may utilize. Analyzing these conditions not only looks at the legal
procedures and formal competences of the actors described above, but also focuses on the actual
behavior of actors in the policy process, such as networking, bargaining or joint decision-making.
This would reveal the patterns on actual behavior and practices of both EU agencies and the EU
institutions in policy-making. By doing so, it would be possible to verify which conditions or a
combination of conditions enable EU agencies to exert high influence.
References


