



STUDY PROGRAMME

1. POL

2. MATA

ACADEMIC YEAR

2025-2026

SEMESTER

First

COURSE TITLE

The Role of EU Agencies as Policy Entrepreneurs in Decentralizing EU Governance

COURSE PROFESSOR

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COURSE ASSISTANT

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NATURE OF COURSE (COMPULSORY, OPTIONAL)

Optional

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

English

ECTS CREDITS

4

1. COURSE OBJECTIVE

European agencies have become increasingly important features in EU decision-making, being arguably one of the most prominent institutional innovations at the EU level in recent history. They aim to provide expert advice independent of political or economic considerations. This Optional Course assesses whether and under what conditions EU agencies comply with this scientific mandate. How are EU agencies created in the first place, are they formally independent, and do they also behave autonomously in practice? How does actual autonomy vary across EU agencies and how does this affect the role these agencies play in the multi-level system of European governance? And, whether the advent of EU agencies tends to underpin a basically intergovernmental, transnational or supranational order has potentially huge consequences for the distribution of power across levels of government, for the degree of policy uniformity and pooling of administrative resources across countries, for the role of genuinely European perspectives in the policy process, and for accountability relations. Since the jury is still out on most topics, this Optional Course will offer answers to many of the unresolved answers by addressing these questions theoretically and empirically comparing various EU agencies and providing also an excellent opportunity for developing those ideas further into a MA thesis project.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Timely and engaging, this Optional Course will be of great interest to all students interested in a hands-on, interdisciplinary seminar dealing with the design and operation of EU agencies in light of the ongoing agencification and Europeanisation of the executive in the EU. In this Optional Course students will be able to discuss the political and legal limits to EU agencification. They will be able to analyse EU agencies comparatively, from an institutional and constitutional perspective, tracing the development of EU agencies, exploring the different tasks they perform, investigating the limits to agencification, and discussing critically the legal basis for such agencies.



- Students have a general knowledge of the main components of the EU political system: institutions, actors, decision-making procedures, competences and policies.
- Students possess an in-depth knowledge of fundamental aspects of the EU political system (institutions, actors, policies etc.).
- Students can communicate in both French and English in an academic or professional context.
- Students can analyse the process and actors of EU policy-making at different levels of governance and can reflect on potential developments.
- Students can transform a complex problem into a research question, mobilize theories, develop a research design, and conduct empirical work to provide solutions in an analytical and balanced way.
- Students can flexibly apply theories and analytical frameworks from different disciplinary perspectives to the main issues of EU politics and policies.
- Students can communicate clearly and effectively, through oral presentations or written documents, to different kinds of audiences.
- Students can evolve in a multi-cultural context and of taking into account the variety of political systems, institutional logics and cultural backgrounds.

3. COURSE CONTENTS

This Optional Course offers a comprehensive analysis of the agency phenomenon in the European Union. It takes stock of the emergence and development of EU agencies, providing insight into the characteristics as well as the consequences of the ongoing EU agencification process. The Optional Course traces the varied roots of and routes to agency emergence and institutionalisation. It also covers everyday decision-making processes within EU-level agencies, notably the management of such agencies, their role in the creation of network structures in European executive governance and in the implementation of EU legislation at the member state level, and the varied sources of agency accountability. The ambition of this Optional Course is to offer an even-handed, interdisciplinary assessment and explanation of agency creation, design, and evolution at the EU level. The Optional Course is structured as follows:

1. **Session 6.10.25** (4h): Taking stock of the emergence and development of decentralized agencies as a global phenomenon and across Europe in particular
2. **Session 7.10.25** (3h): Tracing the varied roots of and routes to agency emergence and institutionalization at the EU level
3. **Session 9.10.25** (4h): To which extent has the advent of EU agencies contributed to the transformation of the EU's political-administrative order?
4. **Session 9.10.25** (2h): Decentralised agencies' location and governance
5. **Session 10.10.25** (4h): Decentralised agencies' powers and tasks
6. **Session 16.10.25** (4h): Decentralised agencies' autonomy, independence, budget and personnel
7. **Session 17.10.25** (4h): Relations among EU, national agencies and European networks and EU institutions and stakeholders
8. **Session 20.10.25** (4h): Future of differentiated Europe, external differentiation, third countries (with a guest lecture by François Ziegler, European Commission, Secretariat General, Unit F4: Institutional Matters)

4. TEACHING METHOD(S)

The Optional Course follows a seminar-style and is heavily interactive, discussion-oriented and practice-driven. Students will work regularly in groups to familiarise themselves with academic and policy work, and official documents to study specific agency features case-by-case. Students are expected to prepare some readings for each session to support in-class participation.

5. COURSE MATERIAL*

For each session the following **readings** are obligatory.

1. Session 6.10.25 (4h): Taking stock of the emergence and development of decentralized agencies as a global phenomenon and across Europe in particular:

Thatcher, M. (2011) 'The Creation of European Regulatory Agencies and Its Limits: a Comparative Analysis of European Delegation'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 6, pp. 790–809.

Trondal, J. (2011) 'Domestic Agencies in an Emergent European Executive Order'. *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 55–74.

2. Session 7.10.25 (3h): Tracing the varied roots of and routes to agency emergence and institutionalization at the EU level

Egeberg, M. and Trondal, J. (2011) 'EU-level Agencies: New Executive Centre Formation or Vehicles for National Control?'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 6, pp. 868–87.

3. Session 9.10.25 (4h): To which extent has the advent of EU agencies contributed to the transformation of the EU's political-administrative order?

Schout, A. and Pereyra, F. (2011) 'The Institutionalization of EU Agencies: Agencies as "Mini Commission"'. *Public Administration*, Vol. 89, No. 2, pp. 418–32.

4. Session 9.10.25 (2h): Decentralised agencies' location and governance

Buess, M. (2014) 'European Union Agencies and their Management Boards: an Assessment of Accountability and Demoi-Cratic Legitimacy'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 94–111.

Font, N., and Pérez-Durán, I. (2020) 'The information phase of accountability: The role of management boards in European Union agencies'. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 88; Issue 3, pp. 882-898.

Andreone, F. and F. Ziegler (2024) 'La fixation du siège des agences décentralisées de l'Union européenne : évolution de son fondement juridique et des pratiques interinstitutionnelles'. *Revue de l'Union Européenne* 681, pp: 485- 493.

5. Session 10.10.25 (4h): Decentralised agencies' powers and tasks

Sindbjerg Martinsen, D., Mastenbroek, E., and Schrama, R. (2022) 'The power of 'weak' institutions: assessing the EU's emerging institutional architecture for improving the implementation and enforcement of joint policies'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 29, Issue 10, pp. 1529-1545.

Versluis, E. and Tarr, E. (2013) 'Improving Compliance with European Union Law via Agencies: the Case of the European Railway Agency'. *JCMS*, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 316–33.

6. Session 16.10.25 (4h): Decentralised agencies' autonomy, independence, budget and personnel

Leidorf-Tidå, B., and Busuioc, M. (2025) 'Legislative oversight of EU agencies through hearings: police patrols versus fire alarms?'. *Journal of European Public Policy (Latest Articles)*.

7. Session 17.10.25 (4h): Relations among EU, national agencies and European networks and EU institutions and stakeholders (with a guest lecture)

Busuioc, M., and Jevnaker, T. (2020) 'EU agencies' stakeholder bodies: vehicles of enhanced control, legitimacy or bias?'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 29, Issue 2, pp. 155-175.

Eckert, S. (2022) 'European administrative networks, private networks and agencies: coexisting, cooperating or competing?'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 29, Issue 10, pp. 1610-1630.

8. Session 20.10.25 (4h): Future of differentiated Europe, external differentiation, third countries (with a guest lecture)

Kaeding, M. and M. Milenkovic (2023) Candidate Countries' Engagement with European Union Agencies – Alternative Modes of EU Integration?, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 6, 1002–1019.

This **Annex** lists important background material which will be discussed occasionally during class:

1. Joint Statement of the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission on decentralised agencies. (Common Approach), July 2012
2. COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2019/715 of 18 December 2018 on the framework financial regulation for the bodies set up under the TFEU and Euratom Treaty and referred to in Article 70 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council
3. Court of Auditors Annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2019
4. Court of Auditors Special Report 22/2020: Future of EU agencies – Potential for more flexibility and cooperation
5. Ombudsman press release no. 1/2020 on "Inquiry finds the EBA should have forbidden Executive Director's move to finance lobby group, 11/05/2020
6. Communication from the Commission on the strengthening of the governance of Union Bodies under Article 70 of the Financial Regulation 2018/1046 and on the guidelines for the Single Programming Document and the Consolidated Annual Activity Report. C(2020) 2297 final
7. Annex 1 to the Communication from the Commission on the strengthening of the governance of Union Bodies under Article 70 of the Financial Regulation 2018/1046 and on the guidelines for the Single Programming Document and the Consolidated Annual Activity Report. C(2020) 2297 final
8. Annex 2 to the Communication from the Commission on the strengthening of the governance of Union Bodies under Article 70 of the Financial Regulation 2018/1046 and on the guidelines for the Single Programming Document and the Consolidated Annual Activity Report. C(2020) 2297 final

6. EVALUATION

This course will be assessed in three parts:

- 25% In-class participation
- 25% Hand-in essay paper. The essay consists in choosing an EU agency of choice and answering the research question: "*To which extent has the advent of your agency of choice contributed to the transformation of the EU's political-administrative order and its future?*" (deadline 17th October)



- 50% Final Exam. The final exam will be an open book exam, based on an essay question. Details will follow.

Plagiarism: Pursuant to Articles 39a and subsequent provisions of the College of Europe Study Regulations 2025–2026, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, and the falsification of data are expressly prohibited and shall be deemed to constitute academic misconduct. All written work submitted by a student shall be subject to assessment with regard not only to its originality but also to the scope and rigor of the research undertaken. Any instance of plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, or falsification of data, as defined in the aforementioned Study Regulation, shall give rise to the imposition of penalties in accordance with Article 40 thereof.

Artificial Intelligence: Pursuant to Articles 38 and subsequent provisions of the College of Europe Study Regulations 2025–2026, the category of permitted generative AI (genAI) use for the present course is **bounded use**. Students may employ genAI tools at both foundational and advanced stages of the work process, including brainstorming, literature screening, data organisation, analysis, interpretation, argument generation, and as a feedback tool. The final text of any assignment, however, must be written by the student in their own words, without copying AI-generated text blocks, using translation tools, or similar automated assistance. The non-generative use of AI tools, such as for spell-checking, reference style management, or information searches, remains by default permitted for all course work and the Master's thesis. Any use of genAI must be transparently acknowledged in accordance with the department's referencing guidelines. Students bear full responsibility for the entirety of the content they submit, irrespective of the tools used, and must ensure compliance with College regulations on academic integrity, data protection, and intellectual property. Violations of the permitted scope of AI use, or failures to acknowledge such use, shall constitute academic misconduct and will be sanctioned in line with Articles 39a, 39b, and 40 of the Academic Regulations on plagiarism, falsification of data, and related infringements.

7. Assessment at second attempt

During the second examination session the course is assessed **100%** on the basis of a written resit exam.

