

## **The Europeanization of national knowledge regimes**

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## Introduction

Decision-making in the European Union is often characterized as technocratic and depoliticized, relying heavily on technical agencies, expert groups and European networks of experts. But has European integration also influenced the role of experts and expertise in national policy-making? There is by now an extensive literature on Europeanization, understood as the processes through which national governance systems adapt to European-wide norms and EU institutions. Studies have examined the European integration of political institutions, administrative systems, interest group representation and civil society, showing how the character of national institutions is gradually being reshaped by the institutional architecture at the EU level. By contrast, the Europeanization of national institutions for the provision of knowledge and advice to policy-makers has received little attention. Given the essential role of technical expertise in EU policy-making (see introductory chapter), this is an important missing piece in our understanding of how national institutions have changed in the face of EU integration.

This chapter attempts to fill this gap by developing a theoretical argument about the interaction between the systems for the provision of expert advice at the European and national levels. It does so by combining arguments from the literature on Europeanization with recent work on ‘knowledge regimes’ (Campbell and Pedersen 2014). A knowledge regime is “the organizational and institutional machinery that generates data, research, policy recommendations, and other ideas that influence public debate and policymaking” within a specific polity (Campbell and Pedersen 2014, 3). This encompasses the range of organizations that produce policy-relevant knowledge – research bodies, temporary and permanent advisory bodies, think tanks, etc. – and the institutions that govern them. The notion of knowledge regimes is useful since it points

to the multitude of institutions involved in the provision of policy-relevant knowledge and how these institutions have nationally specific characteristics. However, how knowledge regimes at different governance levels relate to each other has so far not been explored.

The argument put forward in this chapter is the following: Just as Europeanization has implied the integration of production regimes (i.e. the creation of the internal market and harmonization of economic regulation) and policy-making regimes (i.e. the creation of EU political institutions and a European administrative order), we would expect knowledge regimes at the European and national levels to become increasingly intertwined. In other words, national institutions for the production of policy-relevant knowledge adapt to the knowledge architecture at the EU level. This adaptation may be driven by different processes of institutional change, such as coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Yet, there are also mechanisms that work towards continued variation, such as institutional complementarities and path dependence. The Europeanization of knowledge regimes may take place within several institutional sites: expert agencies; advisory bodies and consultation mechanisms; parliamentary expertise; and research and education policy and institutions. For each of these institutional sites, the paper discusses potential mechanisms of adaptation or continued divergence. While it is beyond the scope of the chapter to test this argument empirically, it does point to important topics and questions for future research.

The chapter proceeds as follows: We first introduce the literature on Europeanization and highlight that this literature has so far not been extended to expert systems. We then present and discuss the concept of knowledge regimes and the determinants of knowledge regime dynamics. We subsequently bring insights from

these two literatures together to construct an argument about the adaptation of national knowledge regimes to EU-level structures, drawing out the mechanisms and institutional sites of adaptation.

## **Europeanization**

A central theme in EU literature is that European integration has transformed the conditions for national policy-making. 'Europeanization' most commonly refers to the ways in which national governance systems adapt to European-wide norms and EU institutions (Olsen 2002, 932). That is, the progressive development of EU institutions and policies has produced changes in core domestic governance institutions. This adaptation is however not to be conceived of as a passive top-down process. Such an understanding was arguably underlying in the first wave of Europeanization studies with its focus on European integration and increasing national and institutional convergence (Exadaktylos & Radaelli 2012). The second wave and more recent studies have had a stronger emphasis on the active role of national actors in interpreting and shaping the speed and form of Europeanization and on national and institutional variation across Europe in the adaptation to EU (Radaelli & Pasquier 2006). The latter focus has also contributed to an increased interest in the range of mechanisms involved in Europeanization processes. Existing work has suggested certain mechanisms, such as experiential learning and competitive selection (Olsen 2002, 932-33). This chapter proposes a different typology of institutional mechanisms underlying Europeanization, drawing on insights from different branches of organizational theory and neo-institutionalism.

Europeanization has affected different parts of national governance systems. First of all, national political institutions have adapted to EU-level structures. This most obviously concerns the way in which national governments on the one hand have become constrained by EU rules when formulating policies and on the other hand have drawn into decision-making at the EU level. Similar developments are also visible in the legislature: national parliaments have adopted new structures and practices in response to the increasing amount of EU legislation and the expanding role of the European Parliament (EP). This process is not only top-down; there is also bottom-up diffusion of norms and policies from the national parliaments to the EP and increased interaction across national parliaments coordinated through the EP. This complex structure of democratic representation in the EU has been referred to as a “multilevel parliamentary field”, a concept developed to capture the different ways representative bodies in the EU are interlinked across levels (Crum and Fossum 2009).

Second, there is an extensive literature on how national administrative institutions have changed in response to a growing administrative apparatus at the EU level. With the creation of EU agencies and European networks of regulatory agencies, national administrative bodies have gradually been integrated into a ‘European executive order’ with a high degree of interaction and coordination between different levels of public administration (Trondal 2010). This has given rise to a ‘multi-level administration’ (e.g. Bauer and Trondal 2015). A central argument is that the emergence of a European administrative order has changed the patterns of control and autonomy. Through transnational agency networks, national agencies have become increasingly oriented towards peer agencies in other European countries and EU agencies, and towards the European Commission as a principal. This has empowered national

agencies vis-à-vis their parent ministries and loosened the control of national politicians over their activities (Egeberg and Trondal 2016).

Third, the representation of societal interests has also changed with the expansion of decision-making power at the EU level. The strong preference of the European Commission for European interlocutors has led interest groups to form European federations and shift their efforts at influencing policy towards the European level (Beyers and Kerremans 2007; Klüwer 2010). Studies have also reported the development of an increasingly Europeanized public sphere, although there is substantial variation across countries and issues (de la Porte and van Dalen 2015). National publics communicate more and more across and with EU levels, and citizens' discussions in mass and social media include claims and narratives referring to Europe or the EU. Obviously, this does not mean that deliberation and storytelling are EU-friendly. A significant part of the Europeanized public discourse is Eurosceptic. This discourse questions and criticizes EU policies, but can also be skeptical of EU's legitimacy as a an independent polity (Trenz 2016)

However, the Europeanization of another important part of the governance system, namely the institutions providing decision-makers with expert knowledge and advice, has received little attention. To be sure, arguments about administrative integration to some extent cover questions of expertise, in particular the technical knowledge provided by agencies. Interest representation, moreover, also includes the provision of technical knowledge (Bouwen 2002), and the public sphere also includes expert networks and publics, and experts communicating in the mass media and other lay publics. But the transformation of expert and advisory institutions in the context of growing European cooperation has so far not been tackled directly. In the next section,

we propose to theoretically capture this process by drawing on the concept of knowledge regimes.

### **Knowledge regimes**

An approach that draws the attention towards the role of expert knowledge in the governance system is the recent work on ‘knowledge regimes’ (Campbell and Pedersen 2014, 2015). Campbell and Pedersen argue that how knowledge production is organized is crucial for understanding the ideas that inform public policies. Beyond policy-making regimes (i.e. political institutions) and production regimes (i.e. varieties of capitalism), knowledge regimes are a key element of the decision-making system. A knowledge regime refers to the whole field of organizations that produce research, data, policy ideas and advice, and the institutions that govern them. This includes “policy research organizations like think tanks, government research units, political party foundations, and others that produce and disseminate policy ideas” (Campbell and Pedersen 2014, 3).

Exactly where the knowledge regimes starts and ends is a moot point. Campbell and Pedersen emphasize a particular set of knowledge-producers, namely the ‘policy research organizations’ occupying the space between the academic sphere and the political-administrative system (e.g. think tanks, applied research institutes), while excluding universities on the one hand and the provision of expert advice from within administrative bodies on the other hand (Campbell and Pedersen 2015, 684). Yet, this exclusion is not theoretically justified by the authors, and a somewhat broader understanding of knowledge regimes seems perfectly in line with the underlying notion.

Campbell and Pedersen argue that knowledge regimes have nationally specific characteristics – that is, the organization of the production and dissemination of policy knowledge varies across countries. The knowledge regime is shaped by the character of

a country's policy-making and production regimes. This follows from the idea of 'institutional complementarities', namely that the different institutions in a national economy or political system have complementary features (Hall and Soskice 2001). The particular features of institutions in one sphere enhance the results produced by specific institutional arrangements in another sphere. A particular political system will favor certain knowledge regime traits and certain types of knowledge actors. For instance, countries with a highly coordinated economy are likely to have a knowledge regime where corporatist interest groups play an important role, whereas countries with a liberal market economy are likely to have a knowledge regime populated by private actors and characterized by strong competition (Campbell and Pedersen 2014). Moreover, the development of the knowledge regime is influenced by dynamics within the field of knowledge-producing organizations. One such dynamic is competition between different knowledge providers. Another is that the existing configuration of knowledge providers conditions the emergence of new institutions. For instance, limited analysis capacity in parliament may encourage the formation of partisan think tanks.

However, Campbell and Pedersen's discussion of knowledge regimes is limited to national polities. They do not explore knowledge regimes at the international level or discuss the possible relationships between knowledge regimes at different governance levels. In the next section, we therefore attempt to extend the notion of knowledge regimes to the EU decision-making system and theorize about the linkages between national and European knowledge regimes.



## The Europeanization of knowledge regimes

### *The EU knowledge regime*

Although developed for national systems, the notion of a knowledge regime is applicable also to other polities. Specifically, the three types of regimes proposed by Campbell and Pedersen are discernible at the EU level: a production regime, made up of the European internal market, firms operating within it and the rules and institutions governing it; a policy-making regime, composed of the legislative, executive and judicial institutions of the EU and the actors operating within it (e.g. national governments, European party groups); and a knowledge regime, encompassing the institutions that provide research and advice at the EU level and the institutions governing them.

A range of institutions can be said to be part of the EU knowledge regime: EU regulatory agencies providing technical expertise (Mathieu 2016; Rimkute 2018); the system of European Commission expert groups (Gornitzka and Sverdrup 2008; Metz 2015); European networks of national experts; mechanisms for stakeholder consultation in the Commission and the EU agencies (Arras and Braun 2017); the EU impact assessment procedure (Radaelli et al. 2013); research institutes, think tanks and consultancy firms operating at the EU level; the European Parliamentary Research Service; and the European Research Council.

Decision-making in the European Union is often characterized as technocratic and depoliticized, relying heavily on these mechanisms for expert input (see also introductory chapter). To be sure, expertization of policy-making may be thought of as a general trend. One sign of such a development is what Frank Vibert (2007) refers to as “the rise of the unelected”: the expanding role of courts, agencies, central banks and other expert bodies inhabited by academics with substantive discretionary powers (see

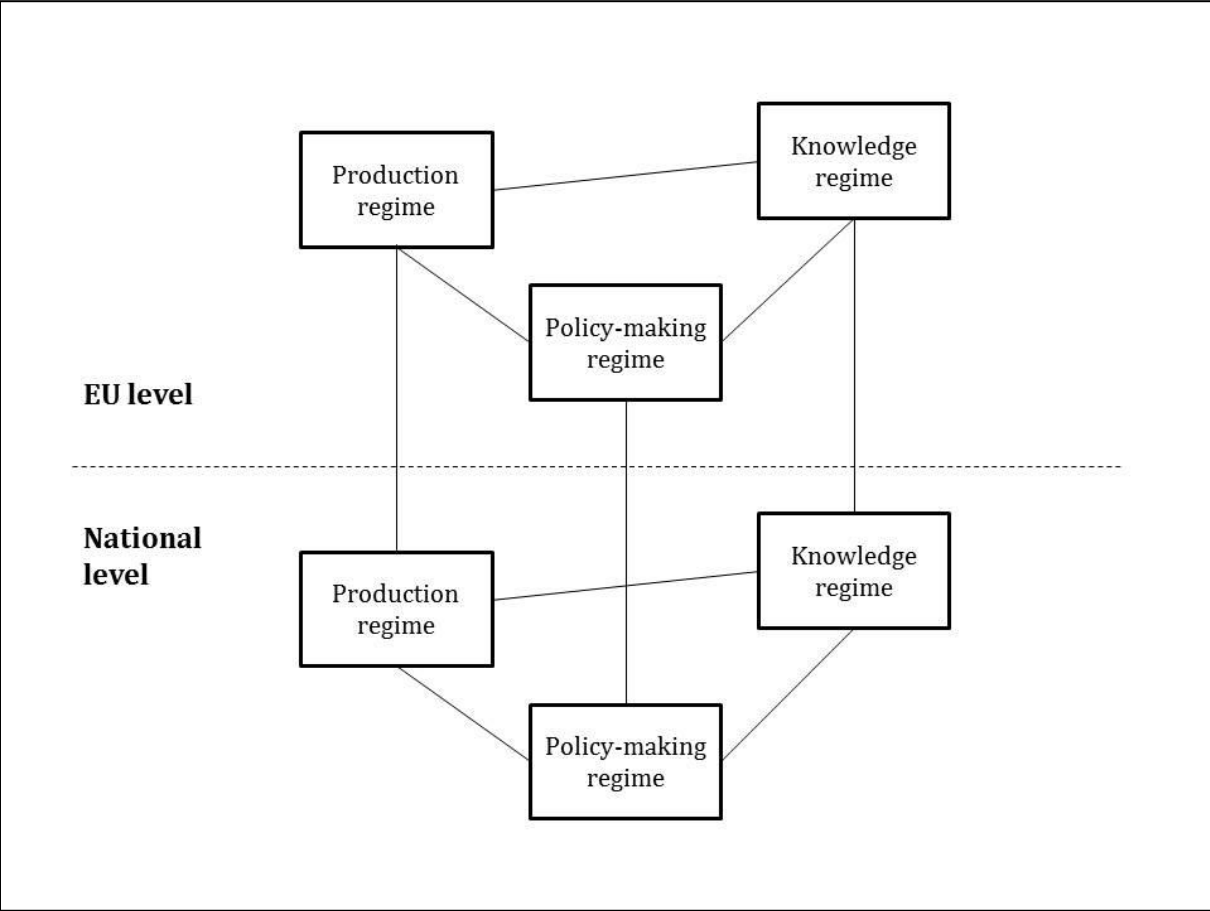
also Olsen 2010). We also see an increased significance of epistemic logics in parliamentary processes and in the public sphere, as civil society organizations and political parties increasingly feel the need to support their proposals with references to expert knowledge (Fischer 2009). However, accusations about technocracy have targeted the EU particularly hard. This is linked to the fact that the EU mostly engages in regulatory policy-making, in which technical expertise is a crucial resource (Majone 1996, Radaelli 1999). The EU's direct democratic legitimacy is also limited – the EU arguably has a democratic deficit. This has led to a focus on expert knowledge as an alternative way to achieve legitimacy, and to a priority of output above input legitimacy (Scharpf 1999). In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis and the stagnation period that followed, political processes and decision-making have become even more technocratic, with new competencies given to the Commission, EU agencies and the European Central Bank (Fabbrini 2015). There are of course exceptions to the general picture of expert-based decision-making. The European Commission for instance has a relatively generalist profile, emphasizing generic 'competences' rather than specialist qualifications and expertise when recruiting civil servants (Christensen 2015; Christensen et al. 2017). Perceptions of a democratic deficit also depend on the conception of democracy (Christensen & Holst 2017), and on how one conceives of the proper division of labor and relationship between different representative and participatory bodies and structures in the EU as a multi-level polity.

The question is then what influence the technocratic character of policy-making at the EU level has had on decision-making at the national level. Has increasing European integration strengthened the role of expert and expertise also at the national level? Theoretically, this raises the issues of the interaction between knowledge regimes at different levels.

### *The interaction between knowledge regimes at different governance levels*

The relationship between regimes at different levels of governance is illustrated in figure 1. At each level of governance, there is a production regime, a policy-making regime and a knowledge regime, and these three regimes are linked to each other. Additionally, we would expect there to be links between the production regime at the EU level and the production regimes at the national level, and likewise for the policy-making and knowledge regimes. These vertical links correspond to arguments in the Europeanization literature about the adaptation of national governance systems to EU-level institutions. The link between the production regimes corresponds to European economic integration, for instance the removal of trade barriers and harmonization of economic policy. The link between the policy-making regimes corresponds to European political and administrative integration, such as the participation of national governments in EU decision-making and the closer ties between EU agencies and national agencies.

Figure 1: The interaction between knowledge regimes at different governance levels



What about the link between the knowledge regimes? Just as with the other regimes, we would expect processes of integration between EU and national knowledge regimes. In other words, national institutions for the production of policy-relevant knowledge adapt to the knowledge architecture at the EU level. However, adaptation will not be complete or uniform; the degree of adaptation is likely to vary across institutional spheres and policy areas (Olsen 2002, 933). Drawing on neo-institutional theory, we propose a set of mechanisms for understanding both convergence or isomorphism between knowledge regimes and continued variation between knowledge these regimes.

The degree to which national institutions become similar to European ones is an instance of the general phenomenon of institutions becoming more similar to each other – that is, institutional ‘isomorphism’. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) propose three mechanisms of isomorphism: coercive, normative and mimetic. *Coercive isomorphism* means that institutions are forced to change due to external pressures from organizations on which they are dependent for resources. Applied to knowledge regimes, this would mean that knowledge institutions at the national level adapt to EU-level structures because they are dependent on EU-level institutions for resources such as funding or expertise.

*Normative isomorphism* means that institutions adopt similar structures and practices due to pressures from professional communities. Particular standards and ways of doing things spread among members of a profession working in different institutions, leading to convergence between institutions. This would imply that national knowledge and advice bodies pick up policies, practices or premises from the European level through interaction between personnel with the same professional background working at the two levels. That is, practices spread through networks of researchers or expert administrators.

*Mimetic isomorphism* means that institutions imitate the structures of other institutions that are perceived as legitimate. Institutions adopt fashionable organizational models in order to increase their own legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Applied to knowledge regimes, this would imply that national institutions adopt specific knowledge and advisory structures (e.g. expert groups or a scientific advisor) or procedures (e.g. impact assessments or stakeholder consultations) from the EU level in order to enhance the credibility of national governance institutions.

While these dynamics may explain convergence, there are also important barriers to adaptation. One mechanism that points towards continued institutional divergence or variation is the argument about *institutional complementarities*. Institutional complementarities are usually seen as a barrier to institutional change, since they produce institutional equilibria that cannot be upended without simultaneous changes across several institutional spheres (e.g. Streeck 2005). Knowledge regimes have nationally specific characteristics since they stand in a functional relationship to specific national production and policy-making regimes (Campbell and Pedersen 2014). That is, there is a specific 'fit' between the nature of the national economy and political institutions and the character of the national knowledge regime – that is, who participates in knowledge and advice production, whether knowledge institutions are public or private, etc. This fit represents a barrier to adaptation to European-level structures. Convergence with European institutions would undermine the institutional complementarities at the national level by leading to incongruence between national knowledge regimes and other national institutions.

A second mechanism that suggests continued variation is *path dependence* (Pierson 2001). National knowledge regimes are not blank slates. They are made up of a set of organizations and institutions that are the product of specific historical processes of institutional formation, and these institutions may be highly resilient to change. Existing institutions may mediate and condition the processes of Europeanization, leading to differing changes in national knowledge regimes.

### *Institutional sites of adaptation*

Adaptation between knowledge regimes at the national and EU levels can take place in different parts of the regime. Here we discuss some of the potential institutional sites for the Europeanization of these regimes.

*(1) Agencies:* Agencies are key providers of specialized expertise for policy-making. Given the expansion of EU agencies and the growing integration of national administrative bodies in EU-wide administrative networks, this can be expected to be a key site for processes of Europeanization in the provision of policy knowledge. Research has pointed to the formation of strong networks between staff in national and European agencies, who share a professional background and sector-specific expertise (Vestlund 2015). This kind of network has stimulated the pooling of knowledge and information resources and a division of labor between different national agencies and the EU agency. This is in line with the idea of normative isomorphism, where institutions become more similar as a result of professional networks that cut across organizations. There may also be coercive dynamics at work. Given that EU agencies often form the hub in agency networks, national agencies may be dependent on EU agencies for knowledge and information. This may allow EU agencies to demand changes within national agencies, for instance in the way analyses are carried out.

However, adaptation to the knowledge practices of EU-level agencies may threaten institutional complementarities at the national level. The way national agencies gather and analyze information may be closely linked to distinct national styles of regulation, which again are linked to economic structures (Vogel 1986). Distinct national styles of regulation and the interests supporting them will then represent a barrier to

adaptation. The central question is then how national agencies alter their knowledge and advice production in the face of these conflicting pressures.

(2) *Advisory bodies and consultation mechanisms*: The European Commission has established a vast network of expert groups in which interest group representatives, national representatives and academics take part (Gornitzka and Sverdrup 2008; Metz 2015) as well as mechanisms for stakeholder consultation. Distinct advisory institutions also exist at the national level, in the form of permanent advisory bodies or temporary advisory commissions (Craft and Halligan 2017; Christensen and Holst 2017). This is thus a potentially important site of interaction and adaptation. One possible link between advisory bodies at the national and EU levels runs through the personnel taking part in these bodies. Do the same academics, government specialists and industry experts take part in advisory groups at both levels? Is national advisory personnel integrated into the European system, or do EU advice bodies seek their own experts? A great degree of overlap would provide a scope for normative isomorphism. While the overall patterns so far have not been examined, studies of singly policy fields and processes do provide some support for such links. For instance, studies of Nordic *ad hoc* advisory commissions in the area of gender equality, family and anti-discrimination policy highlight the central role of personnel links both in civil society, public administration and transnational expert networks (Seibicke 2018, Indregard 2018, Holst, Skjeie & Teigen 2018).

There may also be resource dependencies between advisory bodies at the national and European levels. Given limited analysis capacities, national advisory bodies may have to rely on analyses produced by EU-level bodies. This may in turn shape the content of the advice provided at the national level. The above-mentioned studies



highlight for example how Norwegian and Swedish advisory commissions and reports rely on EU policy documents in their approach to key issues in the development of gender equality and anti-discrimination laws and policies, such as ‘gender mainstreaming’ and ‘intersectional’ or ‘multiple’ discrimination (Holst, Skjeie & Teigen 2018). Moreover, the imitation of advisory forms from the EU level may be a way to increase the legitimacy of policy-making at the national level. For instance, EU ‘best practices’ such as stakeholder consultations or formal rules about the composition and operation of expert groups may put pressure on member states to move in the same direction.

However, there are also obvious barriers to adaptation. Advisory bodies have distinct national features and deep historical roots. For instance, the Swedish series of official advisory reports produced by *ad hoc* commissions stretches back to 1922, and the practice goes much further back in time (Heclø 1974). These distinct ways of organizing the production of knowledge and advice for policy-making are likely to be highly resilient, based on the accumulated legitimacy of advisory bodies and the support from the actors with a stake in these bodies. As a result, adaptation to the EU-level knowledge regime may take particular forms, such as the layering of new elements on top of existing institutions or the conversion of existing advisory bodies to new ends (cf. Streeck and Thelen 2005). For instance, previously corporatist advice bodies may be converted into institutions for scientific advice through changes in participation (Christensen 2017).

*(3) Parliamentary expertise:* The European Parliament has expanded its research and analysis capacities in recent years, among other things through the expansion of a parliamentary research service and the use of commissioned studies (Rosen and

Tørnblad 2018). National parliaments in many cases have limited independent analysis capacities, forcing them to rely on expertise produced by government. Against the backdrop of increasing contacts between the EP and national parliaments (Crum and Fossum 2009), parliamentary expertise is an area with considerable potential for interaction and integration.

First of all, national parliaments may become dependent on analyses (especially of EU issues) produced by the EP. A recent example is the controversy around the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), where the EP gradually and in parallel to an increased politicization of the issue started to challenge the European Commission's agenda and developed an independent knowledge basis and positions that were later relied on in debates in national parliaments (Rosen and Tørnblad 2018). This would suggest a degree of coercive isomorphism. Yet, it may also have elements of normative isomorphism, if substantive ideas and analysis practices spread among national and European parliamentarians who have a shared role perception. In other policy areas, we see how best practice policy proposals travel from member states to EU institutions such as the Commission or the EP where the proposals are further developed and analyzed before travelling on to national parliaments. Such diffusion patterns have been identified in recent studies of how Nordic-style gender quotas in corporate boards have spread across Europe (Teigen 2016, Inderhaug 2018). This is a typical example of mimetic isomorphism. Cases like these come on top of the standard procedure across member state parliaments where parliamentarian committees or the plenary regularly discuss and vote over the implementation of EU policy and regulations based on premises and information provided them by the EP and other EU institutions (Crum and Fossum 2009).

*(4) Research and education policy and institutions:* Research and higher education is one of the areas where the European institutions have pushed for the creation of a truly European system (Trondal 2001), and where an institutional architecture has been set up at the European level, including the European Research Council (Gornitzka and Metz 2014). This is also an area with strong national institutions – universities, education ministries, research councils, accreditation bodies, etc. – making it an interesting site for examining institutional changes. To start with, considerable harmonization of higher education policies in the European countries has taken place over the last two decades. The Bologna Process led to the harmonization of degree structures and credit systems. The Erasmus program for intra-European student mobility has also stimulated the harmonization of national education system.

But there are also other potential mechanisms of adaptation. For one, European research funding schemes may influence the character of research being conducted at the national level, by favoring research corresponding to specific criteria, such as academic excellence or EU-wide collaboration/networks or user involvement. The underlying mechanism here would be dependence on research funding. Second, national education and research officials participate extensively in European Commission expert groups and comitology committees (Trondal 2001, 341), which may contribute to the diffusion of shared understandings about research and education policy within professional networks, i.e. normative isomorphism. There may also be mimetic processes at work. Organizational structures or practices from the EU level may be imitated at the national level in order to increase the legitimacy of national education and research systems. For instance, EU programs for research and innovation may be imitated at the national level, or national resource councils may copy European research funding schemes.

## Conclusion

This chapter has pointed to some important gaps in existing theorizing of the role of expert knowledge in EU policy-making. First of all, despite the central place of expertise and technocracy in discussions of the EU's institutional features, legitimacy sources and democratic deficit, the notion of knowledge regimes has so far not been applied systematically to the EU system. We have argued that the idea of a knowledge regime is highly relevant to the EU, since it captures the various ways in which expert knowledge is incorporated into decision-making and stresses how the organization of knowledge for policy matters.

Second, despite the extensive literature on 'Europeanization' within different institutional spheres, there has been little work on the Europeanization of institutions for the production and dissemination of policy knowledge. When these research questions have not been pursued, it may be due to an apparently persistent bias in studies of politics working against studies that focus on the role of knowledge and ideas. It may also be related to the fragmented nature of academic literature on the role of expert knowledge in policy-making, where different sub-disciplines operate with different concepts and theories – each with its own focus and blind spots. In line with the inter-disciplinary approach of this volume, this chapter has sought to bring together concepts and theoretical arguments from literatures that usually do not speak to each other.

The argument developed in this chapter points to several avenues for further research. First of all, a systematic mapping of the knowledge regime at the EU level is needed. Which institutions exist for the production of policy-relevant knowledge? What

characterizes knowledge production in these bodies? How do these institutions relate to each other and to the policy-making regime? Second, there is a need for a review of existing studies of how knowledge and advice institutions in different countries have changed in the context of European integration. The set of mechanisms and institutional sites proposed in this chapter may constitute a useful matrix for systematizing existing findings. Third, the theoretical argument should be assessed empirically through in-depth studies of Europeanization within specific knowledge and advice institutions. The proposed mechanisms suggest several different types of empirical studies: analyses of participation patterns in national and European advisory bodies based on administrative and biographical data; analyses of the reliance on European expertise based on text and citation data; or studies of the imitation of EU-level structures and practices based on the mapping of administrative bodies across countries.

Finally, analyses of Europeanization of knowledge regimes should be related to normative discussions of democracy and good governance, and in particular the debate on EU technocracy and democratic deficits. Do the ways in which national knowledge and advice institutions adapt to EU-level institutions cause democratic challenges? Do they contribute to increased or decreased policy and outcome quality?

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