

# International Higher Education and the Bologna Process

## What part does the European Commission play?

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### ***Abstract***

The signing of the Bologna declaration by 29 European countries is unprecedented in the field of educational policy. It pursues a goal as wide reaching as to establish a common European Higher Education Area. Interesting is the fact that signatory states committed themselves to those far reaching goals in a declaration deliberately signed *outside* EU-institutions, entirely based on voluntary commitment, although initiatives of the European Commission, even less ambitious, have been turned down in earlier years.

Coevally also *inside* EU-institutions a historically new level of activities was set in motion in the field of educational policy. Future objectives were formulated, the Open Method of Coordination introduced and the efforts started to create a European area of vocational training, all of which is now integrated in an overall work programme "education and training 2010". Surprisingly, the Bologna process suddenly became integral part of this work programme. At the same time, when observing the developments in the Bologna Process it has changed quite significantly since 1999 into a process that is in thematic and organisational aspects increasingly concordant with the work of the Commission.

The aim of this study is to analyse which role the European Commission takes in the Bologna Process. For that I explore the forms of governance the European Commission exercises to influence national policy-makers and the formation of policies on the European level.

Theoretically, my approach to European governance and its analysis is informed by sociological institutionalism. Empirically, I can draw on a wide range of official and unofficial documents and semi-standardised interviews with relevant EU-, state- and non-state-representatives active in the Bologna process.

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\* The heads of his project on “International Education Politics” are HD Dr. Reinhold Sackmann and Prof. Dr. Ansgar Weymann, both University of Bremen^.

# International Higher Education and the Bologna Process

## What part does the European Commission play?

### 1. *Introduction*

The today so-called Bologna process envisions the creation of a European area of higher education. Initiated in 1999, education ministers from 29 countries have agreed to reform the structure of their higher education systems in such a way that it will enhance mobility across borders by the year 2010. Subsequent conferences in Prague 2001 and Berlin 2003 added goals and specified activities. The Bologna-process has led to the most intense reform of higher education in Europe and is unprecedented in the field of education. Many signatory countries have reformed their higher education policy with clear reference to the Bologna process. By today, most countries introduced (more or less successfully) a higher education with a two-cycle-structure, the Bachelor and the Master degree, as it was agreed in the Bologna declaration. As a further consequence of the impact of Bologna, the development of convergence in European higher education systems seems to be in the making. In fact “Bologna has become a new European higher education brand, today easily recognized in governmental policies, academic activities, international organisations, networks and media” (Zgaga, 2003: 7).

Originally, the Bologna process was deliberately situated *outside* EU-institutions. Set off in 1998 in Sorbonne, education ministers from France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy agreed to strive for the “harmonization of the architecture of the European higher education system” (Sorbonne 1998). One year later and based on the preparatory work of the European Rectors Conference (now European University Association) and the General Directors for Higher Education, Bologna was signed. Although most activities and meetings were already financed by the European Commission, it was only in Prague 2001 that the European Commission was invited as full member.

Parallel to the historically new and startling Bologna Process a lot was set in motion *inside* EU-institutions concerning educational policy. In 2000 on a special meeting, the European Council agreed on the new strategic goal to “become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world” (Lisbon European Council, 2000). As a result, education and training was raised on the agenda and the Council for education was

commissioned to formulate concrete future objectives of education systems and to introduce the Open Method of Coordination in this policy field. Diverse activities followed, one of them the Bruges-Copenhagen process which tries to establish a European area of vocational training, following the example of Bologna. This initiative was equally supported and signed by 30 states.

Now, when looking at the connection between the Bologna process and the work of the European Commission it seems that bit by bit the Bologna process was included in the work of the European Commission and the character of Bologna on the other hand was changed by the EU-institution without intervention by the member states. In 2004 a work programme was presented to the spring conference of the European Council, where Bologna is explicitly integral part of a larger framework on “education and training 2010”, the most ambitious goal by the European Commission getting all individual initiatives in the bag. These developments change the character of the Bologna Process and especially the purely voluntary aspect in this initiative. Nevertheless today most countries are willing to bring education on the European Agenda whether inside or outside EU-institutions (as the Bruges-Copenhagen process demonstrates).

The aim of this paper is to explore the mechanisms by which the European Commission takes part in and influences the Bologna process. These mechanisms are described as forms of governance.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the first part an analytical grid will be developed for systematically investigating the forms of governance as exercised by the European Commission. Drawing on institutionalist approaches, the major components of governance will be extracted and adopted for the purposes of this study. Following a short historic overview over the Commission’s work in education policies, the theoretical frame will then be evaluated by an empirical investigation about governance as exercised by the European Union in the context of the Bologna Process.

The paper presented in this workshop presents a first and partial step in the attempt to analyse and evaluate the significance of internationalisation processes in educational politics by focusing on the influence of the European Union. At the current stage of the project, theoretical accounts are formulated provisionally and tentatively in order to guide the descriptive empirical inquiry. For the empirical part, a major part of the analysis derives from

expert interviews with staff members of and governmental representatives to the EU and from the analysis of official documents of this organisation.

## **2. *Forms of Governance by the European Union in the field of education*** **– *Developing a Theoretical Grid***

The notion of governance has attracted increasing attention over the last couple of years and became applied in various strings of literature. Originally, the term *governance* was synonymous with *government*, as it was the sole source of power and the provider of the rule of law (Brown 2001: 130). However, its content has significantly evolved over time. As other actors began to gain influence and to shape political processes, the term was gradually applied to the collective impact of the various actors participating within the defined sphere of domestic politics. Governance thus has to be “seen as the pattern or structure that emerges in a socio-political system as a ‘common’ result or outcome of the interacting intervention efforts of all involved actors. This pattern cannot be reduced to one actor or group of actors in particular” (Kooiman 1993: 258).

As a result, the content of the notion of governance thus shifted to presenting the framework of rules by which all the participating parties agreed to abide (Young 1994: 15; O’Brien et al 2000: 2). In comparison to *government*, governance is thus not restricted to activities of the a priori defined representation in parliament, rather it is more encompassing and embraces not only governmental organisations but also informal mechanisms and regulatory mechanisms in a sphere of activity which function effectively even though they are not endowed with formal authority (Rosenau 1992: 3-6). In fact, it “refers to a change in the meaning of government, referring to a *new* process of governing ... governance refers to self-organizing, interorganizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state” (Rhodes 1997: 15).

In particular, with the attribute *global*, governance increasingly symbolises the rules, norms and organisational structures intended to address transboundary questions as well as to refer to all actors which are involved in finding solutions for problems of world-wide concern (Groom and Powell 1994: 81). Global governance thus encompasses not only the relations among states and the performances of international organisations, but also includes links between individuals, people and groups across borders (Woods 1999: 39). As Rosenau (1995: 13) defines, “global governance is conceived to include systems of rules at all levels of human

activity – from the family to the international organization – in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions.”<sup>†</sup>

As a result, governance has increasingly been associated with the management of international relations in the post-Cold War era. In particular, multilateral systems of regulations and international organisations make up the structures of governance in the interdependent global system. Unlike the Westphalian model of sovereign states, the absence of any central authority is emphasised in the concept of global governance; therefore, it presents a model of ‘governance without government’ (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992). Thus, the notion of governance refers to the sum of the modes of governing through formal and informal types of regulating social processes. It also expresses the capacity of international organisations to develop and shape policy-making in international relations.

### *Dimensions of Governance – An Institutional Approach*

Following such accounts, in this paper, the mechanisms of the European Union by which member states adhere to their policies will thus be interpreted as governance. Drawing on a sociological perspective on institutionalism the forms of governance as exercised by the European Union will be examined. For the research objectives of this paper, three dimensions of governance will be distinguished: (1) governance by co-ordination, (2) governance by opinion formation, and (3) governance by instruments.

#### *(1) Governance by co-ordination*

Governance by ‘co-ordination’ refers to the ability of the European Union to provide the means to organise, manage and handle procedures which promote initiatives in educational policy. Governance by co-ordination marks the special capacity to ‘pull the strings together’. It encompasses activities such as the organisation of conferences and meetings where diverse and significant actors come together, but also its infrastructure such as the size of the organisation, the number of staff (manpower) and their professional background and network they bring into the organisation.

Through such co-ordinative governance, the European Union can give incentives, initiate projects, and structure future developments. It is able to influence political processes

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<sup>†</sup> For an overview on the various theoretical accounts of the notion of global governance and their specific supporters, see Hewson and Sinclair (1999) and Desai (1995).

by organising, directing and speeding up programmes and processes in educational policy. In particular individual staff members or groups of members can be very influential through their organisational position in the design and carrying out of projects since they have the necessary expertise and experience (Haas 1992).

### *(2) Governance by 'opinion formation'*

Governance by 'opinion formation' refers to the capacity of the European Union to initiate and influence national discourses about educational issues. It is thus 'thematic' governance and refers to the manufacture as well as the content of such discourses. It encompasses the material, facts and information it generates, such as internal communications, memos and the like as well as official output, such as books, brochures and other material. Moreover, it also includes the models and concepts which the European Union creates and further develops, such as assessment schemes, policy proposals and benchmarking mechanisms.

With governance by 'opinion formation', the European Union generates visions and values which shape policymaking of its member states. Thus, within the forums of international organisation new ideas, concepts and models are raised, analysed and further developed (Cox and Jacobson 1973). These foster processes which lead to the origination of new constitutive norms or generate normative pressures (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 891, DiMaggio and Powell 1991).

### *(3) Governance by instruments*

Governance by instruments is a rather direct and 'technical' form of governance and includes the regulations to which states need to adhere due to their membership in the European Union and it refers to the resources the organisation is having at its disposal. Thus, governance by instruments includes the processes by which the European Union pushes and organises the design of binding decisions for its member states and translates the outcome into policy proposals. It also includes the resources the organisation is able to use for advancing its projects, such as financial means.

Governance by instruments thus encompasses the body of legal acts and other formal acts to which states by membership agree to comply with (Reinalda and Verbeek 1998: 6). Governance by instruments thus refers to the capacity of the European Union to draft and prepare legal decisions, international arrangements and agreed principles which influence

national policies. With such instruments of governance, the European Union produces regulative norms, which organise and constrain the behaviour of states (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). It is a strong form of governance, since such regulations have strict binding character and can be directly applied to member states. Often, however, such regulations need to be translated into national decision-making first, before affecting state behaviour.

### ***The EU and Educational Policy***

To understand the novel of the Bologna Process and the latest activities of the European Commission, a short historic overview will be given on the work of the European Union in education and the perception of it by the member states.

In 1963 “general principles for vocational training” were already adopted by the Council of the European Economic Community (EEC). To pursue the agreed principles of free movement of labour, as envisaged by the six initial member states, the recognition of qualifications and vocational certificates was an important and integral part (see Treaty of Rome 1957, Art. 128). However, only in 1974 a first meeting of the ministers of education in the Council was set up and educational policy received an institutional frame. Ensuing this meeting, a set of action lines were finalised which provided the basis for work until Maastricht 1992 (Blanke 1994: 23) and even constituted the work on community level until the 1990s (Müller-Solger 1990: 807).

In the 1980s, several first projects in the field of vocational training (PETRA, FORCE, Commett etc.) were introduced and implemented by the European Commission. With the launch of the Erasmus programme in 1986 to enhance the mobility of students of higher education in Europe, however, disputes on the degree of competences of the Commission emerged. To settle this argument, the European Court was addressed which in its decision emphasised that higher education needs to be regarded as part of the preparation for work (Berggreen-Merkel, 2000: 52). Combined with the enforcement of legal acts by simple majority, this assessment increased the competences by the Commission significantly. In reaction, member states feared the fortification of the Commission and their prerogative in educational policy.

As a consequence, the concept of a common educational policy as set in the treaty in Rome, Art. 128, was reconsidered and Art. 127 of the treaty of Maastricht accentuated instead the principles of subsidiarity and even banned harmonisation in order to circumvent interfer-

ence of the European Commission in national educational systems. This decision marked a shift in the work of the Commission and characterises its activity until today. Whereas the programmes of the 1980s were the first acts in the field of education that were legally binding, the work of the Commission expanded now in the main by nonbinding acts and bottom-up instead of top-down approaches.

In the late 1990s the developments in the field of educational policy in the EU accelerated. In several policy fields, matters of education climbed up in the agenda of the European Union. Most importantly, the conclusions of the European Council in Lisbon 2000 demonstrate the culmination of the rise of educational policy. On the way to becoming the most competitive economy in the world by 2010, education is meant to play a major role in the knowledge-based society. Owing to that, quite a few initiatives, today bundled under the framework “education and training 2010” have been started. Next to concrete future objectives that have been formulated, the Bruges-Copenhagen Process has been started in 2002, to erect a European area for vocational training until the year 2010, signed by more than 30 states.

### ***Overview over the Bologna Process***

In 1999, 29 European countries signed a declaration in Bologna, committing themselves to establish a common European higher education area until the year 2010. This route is now publicly known as the Bologna Process and associated with the European Commission. The initiation of this process, however, can be traced back to single minister’s initiative who deliberately started without the EU’s incorporation. It was the French minister for education, Claude Allègre, who was searching for solutions to reform the French higher education system and invited the Italian, German and English education ministers, facing similar problems, to come up with a European solution to their problems in a voluntary multilateral agreement (interview EU2). They signed a declaration in Sorbonne at the occasion on the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Paris.

This Sorbonne Declaration endeavours to create a European area of higher education by “harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system” (Sorbonne Declaration May 1998). A university structure with a system of two cycles and the use of credits were the two main ideas on the way to create this European higher education space. With the Sorbonne Declaration, other European countries were appealed for joining these four countries in their objectives. In spring 1999, the general directors for higher education of the

EU member states and the European Rectors Conference (now European University Association) prepared a draft for a declaration to establish the proceedings on a wider European level, which was signed in June 1999 by education ministers of all EU member states and 15 other European states in a meeting on the invitation of the Italian education minister Luigi Berlinguer in Bologna.

In Bologna it was also agreed to meet in a biennial modus to analyse progress, possibly redefine the goals and decide on further steps. The first of such follow-up meetings took place in Prague in May 2001, the second one in Berlin in September 2003. Other participants joined the process on these occasions. In Prague the European Commission became full member, the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESIB and UNESCO/CEPES have been accepted as observers, and Croatia, Cyprus and Turkey as new members. In Berlin 2003, the list of members was expanded to 40 states by the acceptance of Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holy See, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

### ***Governance by co-ordination and the European Commission: from exclusion to inclusion***

It was only in Prague, that the European Commission was invited to become a full member of the process. During the preceding meetings, it was explicitly not meant to invite the European Commission to join the process. In fact, it was the goal of the initiator of the process to find a European solution to tackle domestic problems, not a process to bring educational policy on the European agenda as a policy field (Interview EU2). In Prague, instead, the decision to allow the Commission in the process was very much pushed by the Swedish presidency and accepted because of the necessity of having a coordinating organ. It was also acknowledged that the activities the Commission was involved in during earlier years were very much concordant with the goals of the Bologna process (Interview EU2 & EU3).

The greater incorporation of the Commission is mirrored in better co-ordination activities. In the beginning, the Sorbonne declaration reflected the vision of four education ministers from Italy, Germany, France and Great Britain to create a European education area. Resulting from the meeting in Sorbonne, as a next step it was decided to find more ministers to join this vision. To reach this goal, the general directors for higher education and the European Rectors conference prepared a draft to be proposed to a wider audience in Bologna one year later (Interview EU3). In 1999, this paper was signed without many changes as the Bologna declaration and the first concrete targets were set. “In any case within the first decade of

the third millennium”, it was agreed, the European higher education area shall be established with the six above mentioned goals (Bologna 1999). However, no further commitments were set providing a road map on how to reach those goals. Intergovernmental cooperation and cooperation with nongovernmental organisations as well as with universities was the proposition made.

Only with the Commission’s official entry into the process in Prague, the need for structured follow-up work was articulated more explicitly. A follow-up group and a preparatory group were set up with the support of the Commission. The follow-up group was constituted by representatives, new participants and the European Commission, chaired by the EU-Presidency. Its creation was encouraged with the aim in mind to arrange seminars in certain areas according to the main targets of the Bologna process. The preparatory group is composed of the representatives of the countries having hosted the previous ministerial meetings and hosting the following ministerial meeting, two EU member states and two non-EU member states (elected by the follow-up group), the European Commission and the present EU-Presidency. It is especially their task to work on a draft to be presented at the next ministerial meeting.

During the Berlin meeting in 2003, the road map to reaching the set targets was spelt out even clearer. To give the process further momentum, it was decided to concentrate on three of the set targets, namely the effort to put up quality assurance systems, to introduce systems of two cycles and the recognition of degrees and periods of studies. Moreover, it was also agreed that by 2005, a quality assurance system at institutional, national and European level shall be build up, the implementation of the cycle system shall have started and a diploma supplement shall be given out to all graduating students from 2005 onwards.

Moreover, as a result of the Berlin meeting, the follow-up structure was altered in order to foster the implementation process. Most importantly, a Board became established, the preparatory group was expanded and a Secretariat was set up. These measures were introduced to take stock of the progress achieved in the Bologna process and mirror a new quality of the process. The Board, chaired by the EU Presidency and composed of three participating countries elected by the follow-up group, the European Commission, the next host country, the preceding and the following EU Presidencies as well as the Council of Europe, the EUA, ERASHE and ESIB as consultative members. The Secretariat supports the overall follow-up work. For the next meeting in Bergen 2005, this follow-up group has the new task, to organise a stocktaking report.

To sum up, since Prague 2001, the Bologna process got an institutional body which provides a roadmap to reach concrete targets. The European Commission as coordinating organ is involved to foster the process

Such modes of implementation as set by the European Council propose this kind of target achievement. The Lisbon European Council in 2000 not only set thematic impetus but also introduced special modes of governance. As a consequence for the educational sector, the European Council appealed to introduce the Open Method of Coordination in this field. The Open Method of Coordination contains certain specified elements: setting specific timetables to achieving the goals, establishing indicators and benchmarks, setting specific targets and periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review. Almost all of these elements can now be found in the activities around the Bologna process.

### ***Governance by opinion formation: from redefining the Commission to adding new targets***

The role of the European Commission in terms of forming public opinion can on the one hand be seen in the forefront of the Bologna declaration and on the other hand, in the redefining and adding new targets to the ongoing process. In other words, “[a]lthough the Bologna process was initiated mainly as an intergovernmental process, there is an evident and growing convergence with EU processes aimed at strengthening European co-operation in higher education” (Zgaga, 2003: 7).

The Bologna declaration identified six goal, which were in Prague and Berlin added by further targets. When looking closer at the additions it becomes obvious that those are targets highly concordant with the Commissions work. In Bologna the following goals were set. First, it is envisioned to adopt a system of easy readable and comparable degrees. Second, it was agreed on a system of two cycles to be put in practice in all signatory countries. Third, a system of credits, such as the ECTS shall be established. The promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles was pronounced as another goal, as well as the cooperation in quality assurance and the acceleration of the European dimension.

None of these goals (except the system of two cycles) of Bologna, however, are new or have not been addressed by the European Commission in previous years. Rather, Bologna can even be understood as very important in mainstreaming many of the activities the Commission has been trying to do for the last 15 years (Interview EU3). It was even said in one of the interviews that the Bologna process would not have taken place without the activi-

ties of the Commission in putting them on the agenda again and again and that the pristine reason for working together came from the European Union (Interview EU4).

In 1993, for example, in the White book on “Growth, Competitiveness, Employment” the goal was already mentioned to “establish a genuine European area of [...] skills and training by increasing the transparency, and improving the mutual recognition of qualifications and skills; to promote European level mobility among teachers, students and other people” (White book 1993: 122). Similarly, questions of student mobility have also been addressed by the European Commission since the late 1980’s within the ERASMUS and SOCRATES programmes. Moreover, mutual recognition was seen as having been developed “by the generation of the system of ‘credit’ transfers” (White book 1995: 55), accompanied by pre-operating studies for the introduction of ECTS in the European Commission. In the White book “Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society”, the idea of a European method on accreditation was also introduced.

Ever since the Commission’s full membership of the process since Prague, it actively influences the targets and goals of the undertaking. In particular, it uses its mandate to have the floor for a great amount of time during conferences, and for spreading ideas about how to proceed with activities and what to do next (Interview EU3). Moreover, with its seats in the preparatory group responsible for the draft outline to be discussed at the Conferences, the European Commission has greater options to influence the content of the Bologna process. In fact, certain developments indicate that the readjusting of the Bologna goals is highly concordant with the more recent activities of the Commission:

One year after the Bologna declaration, in 2000, the European Council met in Lisbon. They then called upon the member states to reach six targets in the area of education. Next to very concrete measures like an annual increase in per capita investment in human resources, two targets are especially worth mentioning. A European Framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning. Next to that, the means for fostering the mobility of students, teachers, and training and research staff shall be defined (Lisbon Presidency Conclusions 2000: 7). Lisbon also emphasises the important role of research in this context and underlines the need to establish a European Area of Research and Innovation.

In Prague in 2001, the ministers agreed to supplement the Bologna goals by three more, namely lifelong learning, the enhancement of competitiveness to other parts of the world and the involvement of higher education institutions and students in the process. This catalogue of targets was added by one more aspect in Berlin in 2003. There it was agreed to include the research area in the Bologna process as well. That the European research area was

included in the communiqué of Berlin was another step towards giving the Commission a more important role in the Bologna process since this used to be a pure EU-context (Interview EU3).

Diverse communications by the Commission in the last years underline that the thematic interest of the Commission has been included in the later Bologna process, especially the aspects of lifelong learning, research and the competitiveness-aspect. Here one can mention the communication “The role of the University in a Europe of Knowledge” (2003), which was highly acknowledged by all sides in the Bologna process. In July 2003, the Commission also published a communication on “Researchers in the European Research area, one profession, multiple careers”. In addition, another communication on “Making lifelong learning a reality” (2001) is closely linked to the discussion around Bologna.

### ***Governance by instruments: shaping process through financial capacities***

The Commission has only limited instruments at hand. Only in the recent conclusions of the European Council Spring meeting in Barcelona in 2002, the Bologna process was more explicitly mentioned and included in the calling for activities. The European Council calls “to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications (ECTS, diploma and certificate supplements, European CV) and closer cooperation with regard to university degrees in the context of the Sorbonne-Bologna-Prague process prior to the Berlin meeting in 2003” (Barcelona Presidency Conclusions 2002: 19). This means that the non-binding character of the Bologna process has, at least for the EU member states, changed to a more obligatory status due to the legislative competence given to the EU in Barcelona (Interview EU3).

In March 2004, the Commission and the Education Council proposed the European Council an overall framework “education and training 2010”, under which the European Commission plans to bundle all current activities, including the Bologna process. In other words, the Bologna process has been more and more integrated in the Commissions work and is an integral part of a bigger target by now.

Financial instruments, instead, were the most important means to push the Bologna process forward. In fact, the Commission supported it from the beginning by funding a lot of the early activities. Although no official member of the Bologna Process until Prague, the Commission contributed financially to research projects and seminars. Indeed, there would

not have been a follow-up to the Sorbonne declaration and preparation of Bologna without the financial support of the European Commission (Interview EU2 & EU3).

However, financial support by the European Commission has by now reached a new stage. In recent times, a change can be observed in the way the Commission distributes money. Over the last years, quality measures seem to have become a more important issue for funding by the European Commission. For example, universities were formerly supported for simply introducing the ECTS-schemes in their institution; by now, however, the Commission's financial contribution is bound to the quality of the introduction of those schemes (interview 3).

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

It was the aim of this paper to explore the forms of governance by which the European Commission exercises influence on domestic policy makers. The Bologna process was used as an example because here the activities of the Commission can be seen very clearly. Applying an institutionalist approach, a theoretical grid was established in which three forms of governance (coordination, opinion formation and instruments) were distinguished.

From the empirical part, two lessons can be learned when analysing the forms of governance of the EU in the field of education. Working with 'opinion formation' and with 'coordination' seem to be the strongest forms of exercising influence. To a certain extent, this is surprising, since the EU – as a supranational organisation – would have been expected to having introduced rather legal instruments. However, educational policy has always been a matter of soft governance in the EU only. Whether the *Open Method of Coordination* will be a stepping stone towards legislations will have to be seen in the future (see Wessels 2003). Perhaps, the Bologna process might prove as a good example to analyse this development. Here the question will have to be faced up, how EU-institutions will integrate those members of the Bologna process which are not members of the European Union.

Second, the European Union incorporated initiatives into its institutional framework for which the original impetus was laid outside of them. Moreover, it successfully developed the initiatives of the Bologna process even further. The Commission was not involved in the beginning, although many of the ideas had been formulated earlier by the organisation. Today, instead, the Commission is even the motor of the process and the Bologna process forms an integral part of its overall programme of work.

In sum, the piece of work presents only a preliminary and provisional step of a wider analysis. To this point, I concentrated on describing the forms of governance as exercised by European Union in the field of educational policy. From here, this work needs to evolve on two fronts. First, the theoretical framework needs further elaboration. Most importantly, the precise shaping as well as the specific implications of the different forms of governance – in particular, opinion formation and coordination – need further explanation. Second, too little is known about the implications of IO governance on the national level. Therefore, systematic case analysis of chosen countries and the impact of the two initiatives described here need to supplement this study.

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