

EUROPEAN UNION AGENCIES: A GLOBAL GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE¹

Agencias de la Unión Europea:
una aproximación desde la gobernanza global

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Abstract

European Union agencies have been studied explicitly or implicitly from two distinct perspectives: an intergovernmental or a supranational point of view. Both relate to broader dynamics and aim to understand the forces that EU agencies respond to. However, different authors have pointed out that both perspectives can be observed simultaneously in EU agencies. This is because they combine intergovernmental coordination and access to supranational power with different intensities under conditions of institutional isolation and a strong professional identity. This article takes as its starting point this integrating vision and argues that EU agencies function as a new type of regional trans-governmental body that is flexible, adapts to the new age of global governance and actively participates in it. The paper discusses the literature on EU agencies along these lines and concludes with a plea to favour an analysis that includes global governance, in order to better understand how these

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bodies operate in transnational spaces. The fragmentation of sovereignty into multiple levels and regulatory spaces, where complex sectorial systems take on a global dimension to produce public goods, requires articulating hybrid institutional structures. EU agencies respond perfectly to this need as their institutional design endows them with a strong capacity for multilevel interaction.

Keywords

EU agencies; intergovernmentalism; supranationalism; transnationalism; global governance.

Resumen

El estudio de las agencias de la Unión Europea se ha realizado, explícita o implícitamente, a partir de dos lógicas distintas: una lógica intergubernamental y una supranacional. Ambas lógicas se relacionan con dinámicas más amplias que tienen como objetivo comprender las fuerzas a las que responde el surgimiento de las mismas. Recientemente, diversos autores han señalado que ambas perspectivas pueden considerarse simultáneamente, entendiendo que las agencias de la UE combinan la coordinación intergubernamental y el acceso al poder supranacional con diferentes intensidades, según las temáticas que abordan, en condiciones de aislamiento institucional y una fuerte identidad profesional. Este artículo parte de esta visión integradora para argumentar que las agencias de la UE funcionan como un nuevo tipo de organismo regional transgubernamental que es flexible y se adapta a la nueva era de la gobernanza global, participando en ella activamente. En esta línea, la fragmentación de la soberanía en múltiples niveles y espacios reguladores, donde complejos sistemas sectoriales toman una dimensión global para producir bienes públicos de alcance mundial, conlleva la necesidad de articular estructuras institucionales de carácter híbrido, con elevadas capacidades de interacción multinivel, algo a lo que el diseño institucional de las agencias de la UE responde perfectamente.

Palabras clave

Agencias Europeas; intergubernamentalismo; supranacionalismo; transnacionalismo; gobernanza global.

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I. INTRODUCTION

It has been claimed that the agencification of public administration at the European level is a reconfiguration of the EU executive power (Egeberg and Trondal, 2009). It marks the appearance of new actors with influence over European policy-making (Coen and Thatcher, 2008; Wonka and Rittberger, 2010). More generally, the establishment of EU agencies in recent decades has received significant scholarly attention and interest has been shown in understanding the logic of how they are created and consolidated. Most debates about the significance of EU agencies are centred on the motivations behind their design, their levels of political independence, their organisational autonomy and the mechanisms of accountability they convey (Majone, 1996; Kelemen, 2002; Borrás, *et al.*, 2007; Dehousse, 2008; Christensen and Nielsen, 2010; Busuioc, 2013; Buess, 2014; Pérez-Durán, 2018). In this paper, we complement these perspectives by discussing whether EU agencies as administrative artefacts are capable of pooling resources and sharing leadership among EU member states to go global, particularly in regulatory fields where global governance has accelerated in recent decades. We aim to explore to what extent these agencies can be understood as a European response to the development of new global governance patterns across the entire world in recent decades. In our understanding, EU agencies play a singular role, contributing to European participation in global governance as epistemic authorities (Zürn, 2018), and this is compatible with their activities within the already existing institutional order at the national and European level.

Up to now, approaches of scholars studying EU agencies have either emphasised the intergovernmental nature of agencies or discussed the relevance of an emerging supranational logic in their development (Egeberg *et al.*, 2015). A major difference between these two approaches is whether they understand the role of the European institutions as encompassing the activities of EU agencies or not. The two logics aim to identify the core dynamics

that either the member states or the European institutions respond to. They harken back to two traditional views about the EU that have been in dispute for decades in academic circles. The intergovernmental logic claims that member states are behind the integration process. As part of this process, they agree to pool resources with other states while designing the EU institutions that oversee them (Puchala, 1999). In contrast, a supranational logic views EU institutions as autonomous poles of power that concentrate resources and decision-making capabilities while promoting European integration on their own (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet, 2012: 9). However, as Schimmelfenning (2015: 723-730) asserts in a critique of liberal intergovernmentalism, each of these two logics alone seems to be insufficient for analysing the drivers behind how EU institutions operate. In fact, Stone Sweet and Sandholtz (1997), in their seminal article on supranational governance in the EU, offer an initial idea by placing the intergovernmental and supranational logics at the opposite ends of a continuum where policy areas transition from national to European logics. Current approaches to EU agencies tend to dismiss these two logics as opposing interpretations, while looking for more nuanced explanations (Egeberg and Trondal, 2017).

Against this backdrop, in this paper we ask to what extent considering a global governance perspective contributes to a better understanding of EU agencies, providing a view that is complementary to the current debates. We argue that this perspective could help the academic community better interpret some characteristics of EU agencies, as well as their behaviour, one in which the intergovernmental and supranational logics may coexist depending on the characteristics of each policy area and the dynamics of global governance. In fact, EU agencies are often considered singular artefacts that combine intergovernmental coordination and potential access to supranational power with different levels of intensity under conditions of institutional isolation and strong professional identities (Dehousse, 2008). To supplement this view, we suggest that many EU agencies' activities are closely related to the need to develop a European voice in highly regulated areas of global governance, particularly those in which regional regulatory disputes arise and epistemic authorities are becoming the most relevant actors. By doing so, we widen our focus from multilevel EU power relations to include the logic of European representation as a whole.

In their daily operations, EU agencies respond to multiple interactions based on the mandate, tasks and operations they perform, combining intergovernmental and supranational dynamics to different degrees. They are made up of representatives from EU institutions, member states and, in some cases, stakeholders related to the agency's policy area, all of which have some level of influence on the agencies' policy-making. In this paper we aim to further

develop the conceptual operationalisation of EU agencies' role in European governance by introducing the global governance perspective. Our paper is an attempt to conceptually expand the geographical, organisational and legal boundaries in which agencies have traditionally been studied.

This paper is divided as follows: first, we introduce the global governance perspective in relation to EU agencies, discussing how it might contribute to inspiring arguments about their activities. Next, we examine how the global governance framework can contribute to clarifying the transnational logic of EU agencies' activities. Finally, we put forward a plea that EU agencies be studied further as artefacts under the framework of the dynamics of global governance, for which we also provide examples.

II. ESTABLISHING EU AGENCIES: THE SUPRANATIONAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL PERSPECTIVES

Scholars of public administration and European integration have paid enormous attention to the growth and consolidation of the agencification process in the EU. Researchers on EU agencies perceive these organisations as autonomous and specialised and as having a clear mandate within specific areas in which different principals are involved (e.g., the Council, the European Commission, member states). They define EU agencies as "EU-level public authorities with a legal personality and a certain degree of organisational and financial autonomy that are created by acts of secondary legislation to perform clearly specific tasks" (Kelemen, 2002: 175-176; Kelemen and Tarrant, 2011: 929). To describe the nature, establishment and behaviour of these agencies, the literature has explicitly or implicitly followed the intergovernmental or the supranational perspectives but its focus has mainly been on EU dynamics without considering major changes to the global environment.

The *intergovernmental logic* defends the notion that EU agencies were created as a mechanism to implement or monitor policies that were jointly approved by the member states (Thatcher and Coen, 2008). According to Pollock (2003), this emphasises the power preferences of the member states, which contribute to the development of the EU's capacities in a fragmented manner. This fragmentation is connected to a model that argues that EU institutions (agencies included) depend on member states' material and immaterial resources. The intergovernmental logic builds on Moravcsik's (1993) proposal of a theory of liberal intergovernmentalism. He holds that EU institutions and the whole process of integration are the results of, first, national preference formation, second, an intergovernmental EU-level bargaining model and, third, the incentives that derive from interstate

commitments. The classic intergovernmental logic holds that agencies should incorporate the views of different member states' apparatuses, including their national agencies and ministries, as well as those of different domestic stakeholders (Puchala, 1999: 319).

Unlike the intergovernmental approach, the *supranational logic* holds that having a supranational authority brings about a change in the expectations and behaviour of social actors, "who in turn shift some of the resources and policy efforts to the supranational level" (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet, 2012: 20). The supranational logic also defends the fact that the EU promoted an integrated and uniform administration (Olsen, 2007). With this logic, agencies are instruments to manage and centralise regulatory functions at the EU level (Majone, 2005), or at least, as EU institutions, they take on, *de jure* or *de facto*, supranational powers regarding member states (Ossege, 2016). As a political body, the European Commission has presented itself as the promoter of the agencification process in the EU (Dehousse, 2008: 792). Sandholtz and Stone Sweet (2012: 19) claim that supranational organs "would possess the formal attributes necessary to make them an agent of integration". A more procedural argument claims that although the EU initially followed a more network governance-approach based on consensus-building among member states, there has been a growing tendency since the 2000s for a lead-agency model, in which the EU institutions have a prominent role (Kelemen, 2002; Thatcher and Coen, 2008; Egeberg and Trondal, 2009; Boin *et al.*, 2014; Levi-Faur, 2011).

Studying agencies through the intergovernmental and supranational lens has been part of the exercise to understand their origin and expansion. The early formation of networks of national agencies throughout Europe in key areas (Magetti and Gilardi, 2014; Blauberger and Rittberger, 2015), their evolution towards EU agencies with a specific mandate (Rittberger and Wonka, 2013) and the development of regulatory governance (Coen and Thatcher, 2008; Thatcher and Coen, 2008; Mathieu, 2016) indicate successive steps towards the formalisation of stable organisations with specific responsibilities and mandates. However, it has not been easy to discern whether this evolution was driven by member states or directly by the Commission, in that both were heavily involved in each successive step. In fact, as Busuioc (2013: 73) argues, "agencies have emerged as a strategic, political compromise between main institutional actors at the EU level".

Blauberger and Rittberger (2015) suggest that the European Commission acted first as an orchestrator of European-wide networks before later promoting the formation of EU agencies following a more supranational logic. National agencies were also interested in joining the networks to gain influence and obtain information regarding Europe-wide regulatory developments.

Indeed, Eberlein and Grande (2005) adopt a functional perspective and argue that these networks filled a policy gap in Europe that was required by the development of a single market with a common regulatory framework. We might add that the same functional logic could be argued in regard to global governance: there was a need to have a more visible and coherent European voice in many transnational policy processes. As a result, networks—and later agencies—were perceived by member states as being a better option than concentrating all responsibilities in the European Commission. The *functional argument* (non-purpose-oriented) claims that the emergence of agencies is an equilibrium-driven outcome of the coordination dilemma among EU member states (Majone, 1996, 2016; Eberlein and Grande, 2005; Sabel and Zeitlin, 2010; Levi-Faur, 2011; Chiti, 2013; Rittberger and Wonka, 2013; Heims, 2016, 2017). In this sense, it might be observed that member states (and their agencies) reacted to these functional needs by preventing a major concentration of power within the most important of all supranational EU institutions, the European Commission. However, beyond this perspective, scholars in this field have offered another line of thought to explain the creation and design of EU agencies: a *political argument* (purpose-driven).

From a *political perspective*, it might be argued that the European Commission promoted EU agencies as a strategy for expanding administrative capacities at the European level and beyond. There are many possible reasons for this aim to develop additional supranational capabilities, in spite of strong resistance from the member states, including expectations to increase the Commission's leadership role within regulatory global governance (Busuioac, 2013: 25; Rittberger and Wonka, 2013). More specifically, some authors have studied the agencification of the EU as a process that advanced after transboundary crises in specific policy areas, so to offer coherent, unified responses (Vos, 2000; Paul, 2012). Following this argument, we might suggest that particular windows of opportunity and European Commission strategies to expand EU-level powers, rather than functional pressures, were what facilitated the occasional removal of veto power by member states. This perspective also involves a significant supranational hypothesis, given its understanding of the role of the European Commission as being more autonomous and relevant than in the functional explanation. In contrast, the functional perspective might recognise that some more supranational powers may emerge but only those accepted by member states and potentially required by (technical) coordination needs.

These concepts leave us with a varied picture of functional and political arguments about the creation and design of EU agencies that also reflect the theoretical and empirical tensions between the intergovernmental and supranational logics. However, the Eurocentric view of these logics prevent us from being able to zoom out to take in global initiatives that make EU agencies into

actors that develop their own transnational space. Given the development of European regulatory frameworks in multiple areas and the relevance of expanding these frameworks beyond Europe, it appears that EU agencies have progressively become more relevant to this purpose.

III. EU AGENCIES AND THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

According to Dohler (2011: 518), regulation is “part of a complex web of transnational governance in which nation-states, international organisations, and private actors —ranging from multinational firms to nongovernmental organisations (NGOs)— participate to set standards and enforce rules to regulate markets, as well as technical or product-related risks”. If we aim to better understand how EU agencies developed from a global perspective then we need to acknowledge that both regulation and EU agencies have evolved in parallel with the advancement of globalisation in different economic and social areas. Regulatory capitalism has reshaped the role of states by making their power diffuse and sharing it with numerous actors on a global scale (Levi-Faur, 2005). Placing EU agencies in a global governance framework implies recognising that they behave in a transnational context where they do not only respond to the internal EU dynamics but also to global ones. In fact, EU agencies compete with other actors to become organisations with the capacity to play a more central role in policy areas on a global scale (Zürn, 2018: 56). This implies expecting them to play in the global sphere to advance European views, in particular those regulatory frameworks that have been emerging in recent decades in the context of the single market.

To understand EU agencies in the framework of global governance, we need to remember the role of the EU as a global actor aiming to lead political, social and economic developments. A classic definition of global governance is “systems of rule at all levels of human activity—from the family to the international organisation—in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions” (Rosenau, 1995: 13)—. Using an actor-based definition, Bevir and Hall (2011: 352) define global governance as “the management of transnational issues by international organisations and other nonstate actors as well as by sovereign states”. Looking at global governance in the aforementioned terms implies that there are issues beyond the boundaries of the nation-state that require cooperation and coordination if they are to be regulated. Zürn (2004: 81) defines global governance as “the sum of all institutional arrangements —be they international, transgovernmental or transnational— beyond the nation-state”. This definition makes us think of EU agencies as representatives of institutional arrangements to steer

political, social and economic transnational processes in various policy areas. Although EU agencies are not international organisations *stricto sensu*, their mission is naturally outward-looking due to the characteristics of the European integration process. In fact, in his empirical study of four EU agencies as global actors from a legal approach, Coman-Kund (2018: 267) states that: "Although the Founding Treaties do not expressly assign a role to EU agencies in external relations, this does not mean that these bodies are barred *a priori* from any involvement in international cooperation". Hence, they are called to deal with transnational issues.

Although transnationalism has mainly been applied to the European regulatory space, this logic is a starting point to open the scope of EU agencies towards global governance. As specialised bodies with expert knowledge and a specific mandate that virtually isolate them from political pressures, EU agencies can be considered organisations with the capacity to (a) guide the interplay between state and nonstate actors and (b) move beyond a specific space to participate in broader global regulatory networks (based on Zürn, 2018). Moreover, if we want to look at agencies through the global governance lens then we need to acknowledge that denationalisation in the responses to international collective action problems has powered the move "from government to governance" (Cutler, *et al.*, 1999). In fact, the denationalisation of responses has challenged the ability of national policies to bring about social outcomes (Zürn, 2004: 266). If we want to place EU agencies in the context of global governance, we need to understand that they are part of "[t]he rising need for enlarged and deepened international cooperation in the age of globalization" (Zürn, 2004: 261).

From the literature, we identify that the *policy area* an agency belongs to may guide how far they are able to navigate in a global context. From this central feature, the literature on EU agencies help us to identify other characteristics that can strengthen or weaken their transnational space in a framework of global governance: the political *independence* they enjoy, the *authority relationship* they have with other actors and their *specialised nature*. Below we will we reflect upon these elements.

Different interests and aspirations embedded in *specific policy areas* mean that EU agencies are organisations with connections to actors that place them closer or further away from intergovernmental or supranational logics. EU agencies base their actions on their mandate but also on informal procedures and practices that sometimes are out of reach of the principals behind their design. The degree of conflict between political actors and the likelihood of coercion necessary to enforce a policy depends on the type of decision the agency is able to make but also the policy area it belongs to (Dohler, 2011: 519). However, as Chamon (2016) claims, the lack of a clear basis in the EU

Treaties for the creation and work of EU agencies results in the absence of clear criteria establishing when they may be empowered to act, especially in the presence of the member states and the Commission. This has contributed to a differentiated capacity of action depending on the agency.

Thinking in global governance terms helps to systematise the constellation of actors and interests that affect agencies' transnational space in different policy areas. Abbott and Snidal (2009) have pointed to the role of private actors and the modest and indirect role of the state in new global regulatory initiatives. Although in general terms this is true, the policy area in question and the functional characteristics of the EU agency determine how different actors interact and how the agency operates on a global scale.

Actors such as agencies can address all kinds of transnational challenges related to harmonising global financial markets, environmental efforts and health prevention issues (Keohane, 2001: 2-3). However, their role will be expanded or limited by the nature of their tasks and how they are aligned with the policy area they belong to. In fact, the denationalisation of regulatory policies and the entrance of nonstate actors, as well as public opinion, have contributed to differentiated needs according to the policy area in question (van Kersbergen and van Waarden, 2004: 152). For instance, the focus on new regulatory objects such as product safety, the environment and toxic substances has increasingly become more science-based and less political, reinforcing the shift from government to governance (Eisner, 1993: 129; Merrill, 2003). Moreover, the regulation of some policy areas on a global scale has positioned certain actors as orchestrators of collective measures to prevent emerging risks (Galaz *et al.*, 2017). As an example, the area of public health based on a scientific and technical approach has enhanced its transnational space on a global scale through its actions in specific pandemics or outbreaks of disease (Greer, 2012). In contrast, the defence and security area has found more challenges in developing a supranational approach that encourages the growth of a transnational space.

Within the policy area, the *authority relationship* emerges as an element that facilitates (or not) the agency's incorporation into a framework of global governance. In every governance structure there is a basic authority relationship based on the recognition of different actors. If we place EU agencies in this context then we can expect these relationships to affect the expansion of their transnational space. Galaz *et al.* (2017: 12) claim that emerging forms of governance entail collaboration between different administrative levels, epistemic communities and nonstate actors. In this universe, agencies may enhance transnational ties by "supporting information-sharing, collaboration, experimentation and conflict resolution" on a global scale. Moreover, agencies might be part of the coordination of responses to different cross-national and global challenges that affect a multiplicity of actors. In those areas where

global exchanges among different actors are more developed, we will see a more active role for the EU agency under a global governance framework. In those areas where global exchanges are not as developed, EU agencies may encounter more difficulties in expanding their transnational space. Drawing from Zürn (2018), the authority relationship may be linked to the agencies' independence which enables them to interact with different actors.

The literature has argued extensively that the more supranational an agency becomes, the more *independent* it will be when carrying out its tasks, no matter whether these cover a broad range of issues or not (Pollit and Talbot, 2004; Krapohl, 2004; Christensen and Laegreid, 2006; Busuioc and Groenleer, 2012; Busuioc, 2013; Trondal and Peters, 2013). As Dehousse (2008: 790) argued, EU agencies normatively illustrate the ideal of EU institutional architecture: they are institutions that prevent the concentration of power in the presence of a defined hegemon and vow to strengthen the multilevel nature of the system. Under the umbrella of the policy area the agency belongs, the agency's independence emerges as a central feature in developing their transnational space. Scholars studying EU agencies suggest that the salience of the policy area where they operate contributes to their design in terms of how much power they are endowed with to carry out their tasks (Groenleer, 2009; Kelemen and Tarrant, 2011; Jacobs, 2014; Font and Pérez, 2015). Hence the supranationality of agencies—that is, their capacity to act on their own in areas pertaining to the policy areas they should serve—and the area where they operate may be good indicators of how independently agencies act. Abbott and Snidal (1998) state that international organisations should be able to act with a degree of autonomy in certain areas while remaining neutral in interstate conflicts. In this sense, the independence of an agency should contribute to enlarging its transnational role as it can offer expertise while fully complying with its functional specialisation (information, coordination, regulation, among others).

Finally, agencies can be said to be *specialised*, nonmajoritarian bodies with a functional mandate in different policy areas. They enjoy a level of expertise that endows them with capacities that, depending on the policy area, may reinforce a more technical and less hierarchical relationship with other actors (e.g., aviation safety, food safety, environment) (Thatcher, 2011). The level of professionalisation and expertise provided by the actors involved and the policy area where the agency operates have the potential to create an environment where decisions are based on technical capacities (Rittberger and Wonka, 2013). This is the case with the dynamics that EU agencies develop with national agencies and ministries, as their national counterparts, other actors, such as international bodies, nongovernmental organisations and private actors operating at the European level (Ongaro *et al.*, 2010). In this sense, the professionalisation and expertise within EU agencies has opened the door to progressively

becoming an epistemic authority while orchestrating capabilities and resources from their national analogue correspondent agencies when playing a role as a global actor. Scientific agencies such as the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) and their connections to global actors such as the World Health Organization (WHO) are precisely explained by the formation of epistemic communities at a global scale in particular policy areas.

The embeddedness of agencies in a framework of global governance can be seen as the outcome of the structural characteristics of the policy area but also as the outcome of emerging issues that require global answers. In fact, the way agencies are able to expand their global reach based on their specialised nature and knowledge may become evident in critical junctures with implications around the globe. This is linked to the purpose-driven or non-purpose-driven logic that guides their position in this scenario. The 2012 European banking crisis mostly affecting Southern Europe and the role of the European Banking Authority (EBA) illustrate this move. The literature has claimed that the global interconnection of the financial sector and the common risks actors may face all over the world made of the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) at the EU level—and the EBA in particular—a visible actor in the European response to global financial shocks (Howarth *et al.*, 2015; Ferran, 2016). During the crisis, the EBA was part of the group of actors in charge of implementing measures in affected EU countries (Jordana and Triviño-Salazar, 2018). This situation strengthened its ties with global international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Howarth *et al.*, 2015).

The interrelated character of the abovementioned features results in situations that illustrate the way EU agencies expand or constrain their transnational space and, therefore, their global reach. The literature on EU agencies has focused on two sectors where the abovementioned dynamics seem to be quite evident: human public health and migration.

Public health has received scholarly attention in the last two decades at the EU level (Mossialos *et al.*, 2010; Greer and Kurzer, 2012; Jacobson, 2012; Liverani and Coker, 2012). Several food and health crises brought the need to manage these risks at the European scale to the centre of the debate. The evolution of the agencies dedicated to assessing health risks captures the transnational logic of a sector interconnected to global actors. As the creation of the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) shows, the EU placed the Europeanisation of communicable disease control at the forefront (Greer, 2012: 1003). Whether we are discussing SARS, the spread of the H5N1 virus or an Ebola outbreak, communicable diseases test the prevention and control capacities of individual nations (Rhinard, 2009). This situation places transnational actors in a better position to coordinate responses to transborder and global threats. In fact, the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Sub-Saharan Africa offered

a prime example of how the ECDC expanded its transnational scope beyond its mandate. In this situation, the agency participated in an international mission with the American Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to control the pandemic affecting Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria (European Commission, 2016). The ECDC was able to convey a strong message that where its presence as a European hub for scientific expertise was necessary to counter a global risk (Jordana and Triviño-Salazar, 2018). As the ECDC shows, the way they carry out their mandate can provide them, formally or informally, with some degree of regulatory power, albeit not full regulatory power. This situation places the agency in epistemic communities at a global level which are not secluded by the geographical or legal boundaries of the EU.

Migration policy has not been considered in the literature as a global governance stronghold (Dauvergne, 2009; Mezzetti and Ceschi, 2015). In fact, Dauvergne (2009: 16) considers this policy area to be “one of the ‘last bastions’ of state sovereignty”. In the case of the EU, the evolution towards an as-yet-incomplete shared governance of migration has led to the development of different mechanisms such as Schengen, the unfinished Common European Asylum System and the common protection of the EU’s external borders (Mezzetti and Ceschi, 2015). In fact, the former Frontex, the agency in charge of managing border protection, has been considered a weak organisation with a limited mandate in a strongly politicised policy area (Niemann and Speyer, 2018). This situation hampered the agency’s capacity to expand its transnational space and become a truly coordinating node with global ties. Frontex, which was born to “ensure effective management of the external borders by coordinating member states’ implementation of relevant EU measures” (Ekelund, 2014: 101) was unable to fully comply with its mandate as the recent 2015 refugee crisis demonstrated. There, the unwillingness of member states not directly affected by the crisis to deploy resources coordinated by Frontex in countries under high migratory pressure seriously undermined the agency’s role (Jordana and Triviño-Salazar, 2018). The fragmentation in governance of migration at the European scale shows the centrality of national actors and the difficulties that supranational or intergovernmental ones face in taking on a more relevant role (Trauner, 2016).

IV. GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND EU AGENCIES: DEVELOPING DIFFERENTIATED TRANSNATIONAL SPACES?

This paper reviewed the existing literature on EU agencies, aiming to open up the scope of those studies by looking at them from the perspective of

global governance. To do so, we built on existing knowledge on transnationalism and its application to EU institutions, including EU agencies. From their emergence in the 1960s through their evolution during the different waves of agency creation, EU agencies have been seen as public bodies that apparently respond better than their national analogues to the administrative and policy needs of other EU institutions. In terms of functional motives, agencies are the outcome of a consensus to endow EU institutions with specialised bodies that harmonise rules for specific policy areas while offering credible information. Our line of reasoning prompts us to consider the development of a transnational space at a global scale to be essential to strengthening the role of these organisations in the governance of particular policy areas worldwide.

However, our approach to the role of EU agencies in a global governance framework called into question the notion of agencies as organisations that are capable of building their own transnational space thanks to the differentiated policy areas they operate in as well as their specialised nature within the EU, where they operate as a cushion between national and European institutions. These elements provide them with the independence and autonomy to relate to different actors and develop responses that converge with parallel developments in other parts of the planet. However, as Zürn (2010: 86) warns, the changes regarding regulation should “by no means be read as an indication of the demise of the nation-state”. This is because the role of EU agencies is constrained by developments in certain denationalised issue areas and not in others, a factor which also strengthened supranational attitudes in these areas. This is also the case because often the nation-state is still needed to implement those issues discussed at a more global scale. Moreover, as we discussed above, actors, such as EU agencies, are embedded in complex sectorial systems where the dynamics of national sovereignty are still present, constraining their transnational space at the European and global scales.

The regulation of policy sectors on a global scale brings forward EU agencies as central components in the construction of a networked multilevel governance (based on Stubb *et al.*, 2003: 148). In this context, coordination is seen as a core element in the effort to integrate and harmonise different pieces within the framework. The changing nature of the problems that Europe is currently facing (e.g., terrorism, the refugee crisis and systemic economic problems) require nonstandard policy solutions based on establishing coordinative tools to cope with vertical and horizontal interdependencies (Peters and Wright, 2001: 158; Jordan and Schout, 2006: 5). This implies emphasising their role as “hubs” of expert knowledge for different actors in different policy areas, although the coordination aspect of this function may be more or less intense. Developing the idea of hubs places the study of agencies partly outside the power dynamics that revolve around the usual suspects

(i.e., EU institutions and member states). In this role, EU agencies can either address critical junctures or get involved in incremental decision-making processes, in particular when a coherent strategy is not in place at the EU level. The existence of multiple actors with vested interests shapes the different channels of interorganisational relations that agencies employ when developing their transnational spaces on a global scale.

Putting agencies at the centre of a global framework is advantageous for a number of reasons. First, it treats EU agencies as organisations that are interwoven with different levels of government and different actors (Toonen, 2010: 40). Interwovenness implies focusing on flexible arrangements (both formal and informal) between actors (both institutional and noninstitutional) with the aim of coordinating coherent responses (Piattoni, 2010: 160). In this sense, studying actors' preferences and the compatibility of their goals can benefit our overall understanding of the agency and the policy area being coordinated. Second, research into the mezzo-level and its multiple actors seeks to better understand the capacity they have to mobilise each other to achieve certain goals and how the agency fits into this interaction. Finally, expanding the focus to include broad arrangements between actors contributes to our understanding of agencies as conduits noninstitutional actors use to channel their interests through member-state representatives but also through EU institutions. This is how agencies have come to be seen as a critical part of a complex picture based on interdependent actors and what makes them better adapted to play a significant role in global governance processes. From this point, our study opens up new lines of research beyond the Eurocentric view of agencies as being limited to their immediate geographical boundaries. In fact, EU agencies can go beyond "the coordination dilemma" affecting the EU as a whole (Egeberg and Trondal, 2017) by intervening in global coordination issues, as the migration crisis has shown. Moreover, it is time to discern to what extent supranational aspects of EU agencies in the global governance framework strengthen the position of those agencies in the global policy regime and whether this is to the detriment of their national counterparts or not.

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