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The emergence of European boundary-spanning policy regimes: analysing intersectoral policy coordination in education and employment

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ABSTRACT

While much attention has been paid to European policy arrangements in individual policy fields, European intersectoral policy coordination has been mostly an overlooked phenomenon, especially within the sectors of education and employment. Thus, in the introductory paper for this Special Issue, we offer a contemporary discussion of European intersectoral policy coordination. We firstly review the literature on intersectoral policy coordination, and secondly look at the application of concepts related to intersectoral policy coordination to supranational arrangements, especially the European Union. We then employ the concept of boundary-spanning policy regime and the related 'I' framework (*issues, ideas, interests, and institutions*) to discuss the individual pieces' contributions. This serves to explore the strength of the intersectoral perspective when analysing European policy coordination in education and employment. We conclude with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of this approach and offer a research agenda to study supranational intersectoral policy coordination (in education and employment).

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1. Introduction

The growing complexity of societal issues calls for creative policy-making approaches at the national and, especially in recent decades, at the supranational level. The latter is especially evident for the European Union (EU) where cooperation and integration since the mid-20th century have resulted in a growing and unprecedented capacity to put forward supranational political agendas which bring together several policy domains and address them at the scale of the EU.

Traditionally, due to the bureaucratisation of national systems and the government division of labour into ministries and other (quasi)-public agencies, policy-making processes were very much confined to policy sub-systems or individual sectors, targeting single-issue aspects without paying significant attention to policies developed in other sectors (see Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Freeman 1985). A sector can be roughly understood as a specific policy domain (education, employment, agriculture, energy, etc.) that integrates formal and informal rules as well as organisations and groups that are involved in the creation and development of a policy (Bourgeois 2013; Freeman 1985; Scott and Meyer 1991; Shannon and Schmidt 2002). These 'policy monopolies' (Baumgartner and Jones 1994) have often resulted in inadequate policy designs (Capano and Howlett 2020) that do

not sufficiently consider the multidimensional and interconnected nature of societal issues, such as educational inequalities, unemployment, health crises, or climate change.

In response, policy-making in recent decades has increasingly involved a more complex framing of issues, accompanied by inter-sectoral coordination or integration strategies. To make sense of these developments, a range of concepts and approaches have been proposed in the research literature, primarily with a focus on national political levels and entities (see below). Intersectoral or cross-sectoral coordination analysis is a well-established field of study in areas such as health, forestry, or climate change and development (Baulenas and Sotirov 2020; McQueen et al. 2012; Papa et al. 2015). The relationship between education and employment at the level of national political economies has also been explored, for instance, by application of the concept of institutional complementarities (Crouch et al. 2005; Graf and Gardin 2018; Hall and Soskice 2001). However, going beyond national policies and politics, we know much less about intersectoral coordination and integration in the contexts of supra- and international politics and policies, including how the EU, as a distinctive multi-level configuration, seeks to recognise cross-sectoral implications of policy issues. It is in this context that our Special Issue 'The emergence of European boundary-spanning policy regimes: Analysing inter-sectoral policy coordination in education and employment' contributes to filling a gap in the literature.

This introductory paper discusses the contributions that the set of papers makes to existing scholarship on policy coordination and EU governance. Overall, the Special Issue intends to contribute to the understanding of the emergence, trajectories, and dynamics of European intersectoral policy coordination in the education and employment sectors, paying particular attention to how specific issues or policy challenges are tackled, especially those related to high levels of uncertainty and complexity (Head 2008). In this respect, our objectives are both empirical and theoretical. Empirically, the included papers provide a set of original studies that unpack the dynamic relations between the education and employment policy domains in EU governance, thereby highlighting the specific features of the EU as a contemporary political construction. In this way, the papers also speak to the question whether developments in one of the domains influence the other one, that is, to what extent developments in the labour market influence those in education – which corresponds, for instance, to the traditional functionalist perspective in human capital theory (Becker 1993) – or whether the opposite is the case, in line with arguments about the educationalisation of a wide range of social problems (Smeyers and Depaepe 2008; Valiente, Capsada-Munsech, and de Otero 2020) or the schooled society perspective on the educational transformation of the world of work (Baker 2009).

In theoretical terms, the Special Issue aims to discuss the epistemic gains in applying an inter-sectoral perspective in policy analysis to the European level considering that the characteristics of EU policy-making and intersectoral coordination are likely to differ from those at the national level in member states. We follow the invitation of Zürn to consider supranational governance as 'more than the sum of institutions that produce regulations in different issue areas' (Zürn 2018, 6). The papers thus analyse and discuss the evolving interplay between institutions associated with different policy sectors, how these institutions are embedded within the larger field of EU governance, and how they are involved in the framing of and responses to policy issues via governance arrangements likely to be distinct from those observed in national political systems. The importance of these interplays between institutions, or intersectoral coordination, is accentuated by a central characteristic of the EU's internal supranational governance system that is – relative to national political systems – defined and organised more by the boundaries of the (policy) sectors (economy, education, employment, etc.) than by its territorial borders. In short, in adopting intersectoral coordination as our analytical lens, the ambition of the papers is to make an empirical contribution to the study of the trajectories and dynamics in EU policy-making concerning education and employment, as well as a theoretical contribution concerning contemporary EU governance arrangements.

This paper proceeds with outlining the research problem related to the governance of education and employment and intersectoral coordination. Next, it briefly reviews relevant theoretical resources for policy analysis and distinguishes between government- and governance-centred approaches. It then zooms in on the concept of boundary-spanning policy regimes (BSPR), the main heuristic connecting the different contributions contained in this issue, as a key example of a governance-centred approach to understanding intersectoral coordination. We illustrate this theoretical discussion with examples from the contributions to the Special Issue. Subsequently, we provide a brief overview of the complementary paper contributions. This includes a study by Marques, Graf and Rohde-Liebenau that explores the formation of intersectoral coordination in the European boundary-spanning policy regime between education and employment. Moreover, a contribution by Sorensen and Dumay examines the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE), as a specific case emerging from and co-constituting the aforementioned boundary-spanning policy regime. Furthermore, Cino Pagliarello uncovers the central role of European (supranational) business actors, in particular the European Round Table of Industrialists, in the creation and framing of the boundary-spanning policy regime. Finally, we discuss the papers' joint findings and summarise the respective contributions to the theoretical debate on intersectoral coordination and point to avenues for future research.

2. European Union governance of education and employment and intersectoral coordination: the research problem

Our entry point is that intersectoral coordination is increasingly being used to frame as well as to address complex policy problems in EU governance and that directing an analytical focus towards such coordination is likely to result in pertinent findings concerning important and defining features of EU policy-making. While there is still limited knowledge about the character of such coordination, the analysis of vertical and horizontal coordination in the EU (Borrás and Jacobsson 2004; Elken 2015; Gornitzka 2010; Lægneid et al. 2016) suggests that EU governance in this respect involves features that are different from those of nation-states.

The existing scholarship suggests that education and employment as policy domains are conceived and strategised in particular ways in the EU. Since the 1990s, the notion of lifelong learning has been represented as pivotal for Europe's competitiveness in the global knowledge economy, and the policy domain of education has accordingly been opened to influences from other policy areas – and these other areas (e.g. economic, employment, social and digitisation policy) have begun to consider education-related issues (Lawn and Grek 2012; Walkenhorst 2008). European policy flagship initiatives for both sectors – like Education and Training 2010/2020, the European Employment Strategy/Europe 2020 Growth Strategy, and the Skills Agendas 2016/2020 – have revolved around the issue framing of the urgency of improved integration of employment and education policies to upskill and reskill the European workforce to the demands of a globally competitive European knowledge-driven and digital economy, while tackling long-standing issues such as youth unemployment, precarious jobs and vulnerable groups of workers. In recent years, such efforts have given rise to several European policy initiatives with direct implications for (not exclusively) the education and employment sectors, such as the Youth Guarantee and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, as well as being prominently incorporated in the European Semester, the major mechanism for socio-economic governance in the EU during the 2010s (Milana, Klatt, and Vatrella 2020; Stevenson et al. 2020; Graf and Marques 2023).

The corresponding emphasis in EU governance on the dynamic effects of education and lifelong learning as a lever to solve a wide range of social and economic issues in contemporary European societies (youth unemployment, skills mismatches, nurturing European identity, environmental sustainability, digitalisation, etc.) has resulted in new ways of thinking about policy instrumentation and intersectoral coordination (Sorensen, Grimaldi, and Gajderowicz 2021; Traianou and Jones 2019). In fact, Dale (2009) suggested that the

emergence of a European ‘Knowledge Economy and Lifelong Learning’ space in the EU – subject to the constraints and resources of the EU Treaty’s definitions of political mandates and competences, including the principle of subsidiarity still in place for the policy area of education, and the workings of the Open Method of Coordination – marks a departure from member states’ ‘education’ sectors in terms of purposes, substance and values. In this respect, the strong emphasis in EU governance on the linkages between lifelong learning, employment and labour market demands (Bohlinger 2019) is one of the features that render the EU a *sui generis* phenomenon, a feature likely to result in novel conceptions and configurations of coordination between sectors and domains (Dale 2009).

Notwithstanding the contributions above, critical lacunae remain in terms of analysing and explaining the emergence, trajectories, and dynamics of intersectoral policy design and coordination in EU governance. This is not least evident regarding EU education and employment policies, where research has tended to be concerned mostly with either European educational policies or European employment policies. Moreover, research has failed to keep up with major political developments in EU governance over the recent decade, including but not limited to the European Semester, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Skills Agendas, and the Digital Education Action Plans (Sorensen, Grimaldi, and Gajderowicz 2021; Stevenson et al. 2020), initiatives that all serve to deepen further the ‘wider determinations’ of education across EU policy domains (Traianou and Jones 2019).

In this way, EU governance appears to involve distinctive and evolving ways of conceiving sectors and intersectoral coordination, effectively challenging researchers to consider the limitations of categories such as education, employment, economy, etc., which have come to be taken for granted as national ‘policy monopolies’ and subsystems. This illustrates the more general point that in making sense of EU policy-making as reflexive ‘multi-scalar metagovernance’, analytical categories associated with the nation-state and its workings are not adequate (Jessop 2007, p.210).

In getting at the *sui generis* nature of the EU, Hooghe and Marks (2001) notion of multi-level governance remains relevant. The notion conveys that the EU since the 1980s has crystallised into a distinctive multi-level polity, where political competencies and decision-making are dispersed between agents at different levels. In EU multi-level governance, national and European political arenas are interconnected rather than nested in each other. In this respect, the supranational institutions of the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice and the European Commission have policy making capacities that go beyond merely being agents for national governments or the Council. Like member state governments, a diverse range of agents such as trade unions, employers, NGOs, local authorities, industry, and business often seek to operate in both national and European arenas. These actors are consequently also being considered as key players in the contributions to this Special Issue.

Our acknowledgement of the specific and globally unique features of the EU as a political construction does not imply that these features cannot be analysed, compared, and theorised with reference to other political systems, whether national or supranational, and as part of the context and structures of the global governance system (cf. Zürn 2018, 54). A range of questions can be derived from this perspective that is pertinent for advancing empirical analysis and theoretical debate about intersectoral coordination. Most crucially, considering that prior BSPR studies have mainly studied national systems, one set of questions – on which we focus here – concerns the specific characteristics of EU policy making and intersectoral coordination and the conditions, mechanisms and/or factors that help to explain them. However, one might, for instance, also ask how the EU with its distinctive features constitutes a special case of supranational sectoral, as well as territorial, integration in a global governance system which is otherwise primarily characterised by loosely coupled ‘spheres of authority’ and a lack of centralised coordination (Zürn 2018, 56–57).

The paper next turns to conceptual resources that are helpful in addressing these issues.

3. From government-centred to governance-centred approaches in intersectoral policy coordination

In this section of the paper, we provide a review of the several key concepts that have been developed throughout the last decades in the study of intersectoral policy coordination. Related analytical approaches can be aggregated into two different groups – government-centred and governance-centred approaches (Tosun and Lang 2017), which is in line with the broader distinction between more state-centric perspectives, on the one hand, and more multi-actor oriented ones, on the other (Bekkers, Fenger, and Scholten 2017). Overall, the set of government-centred approaches pays particular attention to government structures/agencies to design and implement effective policies, often in a rather hierarchical way, which then shapes the institutional and organisational dimensions of policy coordination accordingly. More recently – connected not least to ongoing processes of globalisation, Europeanisation and internationalisation – governance-centred approaches have become increasingly prominent with their greater emphasis on cases in which a multitude of public and private actors are involved in various forms in the policy-making process to address increasingly complex governance challenges¹ and ‘ensure the embeddedness of the governing dimension in the wider society’ (Kjaer, 2010).

Within a government-centred perspective, concepts such as holistic government (Wilkinson and Appelbee 1999), joined-up government (Pollitt 2003), policy coherence (May, Spotichne, and Workman 2006), or whole-of-government (Christensen and Lægreid 2007), among others, have been developed over time to raise awareness to the cross-sectoral nature of societal issues and the pressing need experienced by governments to develop coordination or integration strategies to better respond to them. To a great extent, all of these concepts refer to an approach that promotes coordination, collaboration, and integration among different government departments and agencies to effectively address complex societal issues and deliver cohesive and streamlined public services. The only concept of the government-centred perspective that had some momentum at the EU level is the concept of policy coherence. Here, the concept was first introduced with the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), and later reinforced in the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), both times within the context of external relations of the EU (Carbone and Keijzer 2016). Thus, the principle of policy coherence has been used in EU development policies as a way to take into account developing countries’ needs in all policy areas and the potential impact of the EU policies.

Within the governance-centred approach, the concepts of horizontal governance (Termeer 2009), network governance (Maggetti 2014), experimentalist governance (Sabel and Zeitlin 2012), policy integration (Candel and Biesbroek 2016) and, more recently, boundary-spanning policy regimes (BSPR) (Boucher 2017; Conteh and Harding 2021; Jochim and May 2010) have been flagged in policy analysis as a way to better articulate cross-sectoral policy design, implementation and analysis. With the partial reallocation of authority from national states to supranational settings (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2001, 2003), the proliferation of governance-centred concepts, and their application to supranational contexts as in the case of the EU, has gradually increased.

Specifically, horizontal governance refers to a set of strategies that promote horizontal interactions between several actors and stakeholders to gain legitimacy for policy implementation, enrich policy proposals, and diminish the gap between governmental structures and other societal actors (Termeer 2009) as, for instance, in the context of European higher education (Gornitzka 2010; Powell et al. 2012). The related concept of network governance focuses on networks as flexible and informal structures (Héritier 2003) that are particularly suited to coordinate activities in complex multilevel architectures and to facilitate consensus-building – a key example for this being European regulatory networks (Maggetti 2014). In the case of experimentalist governance (Sabel and Zeitlin 2012), a principal (such as the European Commission) defines broad framework goals but then grants a relatively high level of discretion to the actors implementing the policies on the ground (e.g. public administrators). At the same time, the implementation process is systematically monitored, and experiences from the actors on the ground are transferred to the top level to continuously revise framework goals, thus creating an iterative learning cycle. Furthermore, the concept of policy

integration has been used to understand how to govern policy problems that cross-cut different subsystems or sectors (Candel and Biesbroek 2016). The concept of policy integration has supported the rationale of designing and implementing the EU environmental policy (Jordan and Lenschow, 2010) while, at the same time, has served as a conceptual framework to understand policy processes related to governing cross-cutting policy problems, such as the case of the EU governance in food security (Candel and Biesbroek, 2018). Finally, boundary-spanning policy regimes (BSPR) – as envisaged by Jochim and May, (2010) – consider that there are policy problems or issues that can only be addressed through inter-sectoral articulation. The BSPR concept has originally been developed for analysing governing arrangements in the US that span multiple subsystems and facilitate integrative policies, attributing a key role to congressional committees and associated governmental bureaus at the federal level (Jochim and May 2010). However, as the collection of papers in this Special Issue shows, the conceptual foundations of BSPR (elaborated below) can also be fruitfully applied to the case of governance challenges in supranational contexts such as the EU.

Due to the EU's supranational governance architecture characterised by a multiplicity of relevant stakeholders rather than a strong central government, we situate our Special Issue within the governance-centred perspective. More specifically, we build on the BSPR concept (Jochim and May 2010) as a heuristic to organise and connect the paper contributions. The BSPR concept appears as a pertinent theoretical resource to analyse European intersectoral policy coordination in education and employment because it offers a well-developed and flexible model that can capture the complexity of supranational governance arrangements while, in principle, also allowing the researcher to infer the strength of the policy regime(s). Jochim and May (2010) point out that they are concerned with the analysis of how *issues, ideas, interests, and institutions* (the 'I'-framework) shape boundary-spanning regimes, allow them to emerge and take hold, and how these regimes gain strength or atrophy. As such, the BSPR concept and related 'I' framework provides us with a well-structured yet flexible heuristic tool to situate and connect different contributions to the study of intersectoral policy coordination within the EU context.

Besides the flexibility offered by the BSPR concept, it is arguably the theoretical perspective that is paying the most attention to the emergence and strength of intersectoral coordination, which represents a key concern for us. Considering the fairly long historical developments of the EU's competences in the fields of education and employment, the BSPR concept offers a theoretical perspective that can capture the complex process of the formation and institutionalisation of a (intersectoral coordination) policy regime. Considering that the BSPR concept has thus far mainly been used in the analysis of national settings, we test this concept in a supranational setting, applying it to the case of the intersectoral work of the EU in education and employment.

In the following section, we introduce the BSPR concept in greater detail and, referring to the papers included in the Special Issue, illustrate how the associated 'I'-framework sheds light on key dynamics in contemporary EU governance and inter-sectoral coordination in education and employment.

4. European intersectoral policy coordination in education and employment as a boundary-spanning policy regime

A BSPR is defined as 'a governing arrangement that spans multiple subsystems and fosters integrative policies' (Jochim and May 2010, 303). As such, in the original sense, '[T]hey foster integrative action among subsystems by putting pressure on players within those elements that are relevant to a given, messy problem to work more or less in accord toward similar ends' (idem). Building on established concepts in policy process analysis (Hall 1997; Palier and Sured 2005), Jochim and May (2010) introduce *issues, ideas, interests, and institutions* as key analytical properties for the study of BSPR. While the study of *ideas, interests, and institutions* has a long tradition in social sciences, political science, and policy studies (Hall 1997), we follow Jochim and May (2010) in highlighting in addition the crucial role of *issues* as attention-focusing mechanisms but also integrative forces for the emergence of BSPR.²

Here, *issues* typically entail 'crises, problems, or other disruptions [that] garner attention of relevant actors' (Jochim and May 2010, 311), require political action, and have the potential to forge new policy approaches and forms of coordination. Crucially, they provide impetus for action and help to bind together *ideas*, *interests*, and *institutions* within a given BSPR. As such, *issues* concern stimuli to gain attention across subsystems (Jochim and May 2010). Thus, in this collection of papers we pay particular attention to the salience of different policy issues for a particular BSPR. For instance, the piece by Marques, Graf and Rohde-Liebenau draws a distinction between exogenous and endogenous *issues* in the policy-making process, to find out that endogenous *issues* also have the capacity to trigger the emergence of BSPR, a phenomenon that in prior literature has mainly been attributed to exogenous events such as external shocks, as in the case of financial crises. Rather than looking at the interplay between issues and the emergence of BSPR, Sorensen and Dumay's contribution delves into the discussion of how *issues* are framed in ways that legitimise calls for action and recommendations at European, national and local levels. The article shows how the ESSDE since 2010 has played an important role in framing certain *issues* associated with education, employment and other sectors that, ultimately, confer strength to the European BSPR of education and employment. Closely aligned with the foundational proposal of BSPR, Cino Pagliarello shows how the rise of unemployment, technological change, and the lack of economic performance of the EU in comparison to Japan and the US – as exogenous *issues* that European actors perceive in global comparison – were paramount in strengthening the framing capacity of the European Round Table of Industrialists in bridging the education and employment sectors.

Ideas, in turn, can be seen as a set of political commitments (Jochim and May 2010, 312) with prognostic features that animate the involvement of key players and provide direction for problem solving and governing. In other words, this 'I' reflects the extent to which both actors central to the regime and others embrace the core ideas that serve as a motivating purpose (Jochim and May 2010) for the development and maintenance of a cross-boundary policy regime. On this matter, the Special Issue's papers speak to the debate around the concept of *ideas*, their source and to what extent they are determinant to animate and shape the direction of the policy regime. The piece by Marques, Graf and Rohde-Liebenau uses the distinction between deep core ideas – fundamental values – and policy ideas – diagnoses and prescriptions related to a particular area of state intervention, as suggested by Sabatier (1988). This distinction is fruitful to not only uncover the fundamental values ingrained in each policy sector but also to consider the interplay between deep core and policy ideas in a continuum and how the latter can shape the former via continuous reinforcement of certain ideas over others in the work carried out by the European Commission's departments connected with education and employment. The contributions by Sorensen and Dumay and Cino Pagliarello are less focused on the operational side of ideas and more concentrated on their implications for intersectoral policy coordination. The piece by Sorensen and Dumay shows how ideas assume a central role in co-constituting political fields by highlighting the consensus-orientation and ideational alignment between the ESSDE and EU policy-making that ultimately reinforce the European BSPR of education and employment, while Cino Pagliarello shows how ideas facilitate coordination between policy and business actors in the development of intersectoral policy coordination.

Interests, which refer to things that bring the respective actor or actors advantages and help them in some way, provide political power and legitimacy to a given regime. Embodied and mobilised by organisations as well as individual actors, interests provide the 'energy' for the operation and maintenance of a BSPR. Accordingly, interests also need to be analysed considering possible conflicts and the ability of policy makers to overcome the criticisms of opponents. The contribution by Marques, Graf and Rohde-Liebenau provides insights on how the political interests of the Commissioners can affect the development of intersectoral policy coordination in the work of the European Commission. Sorensen and Dumay demonstrate how the continuous efforts of the two European social partners in education in mobilising their membership and building their capacity for social dialogue at various levels, along with the European social partners' pursuit of a common

agenda and issuing of documents, help to stabilise and confer strength to the European BSPR of education and employment. In turn, the paper by Cino Pagliarello highlights the complexity of supranational governance processes at the EU level, by illustrating how business actors' interest are gradually embedded in the EU's policy agenda. By placing attention to the role of business actors and their capacity in influencing European education and employment policies, Cino Pagliarello's contribution shows how non-state actors also play a fundamental role in shaping European policies alongside the regular policy-making structures, which points to the importance of taking into consideration the dynamic multiverse of actors seeking to influence (supranational) intersectoral policy-making.

Finally, *institutions*, which refer to regularised 'patterns of participation, information flows, and authority' (Jochim and May 2010, 311), structure cohesion by channelling attention, authority, and information flows. Institutional designs develop the governing capacity of a regime by focusing attention and resources on the purposes of the regime (Jochim and May 2010). Within this analytical category of institutions, we add a nuance to the I-framework that helps us to adjust the framework to the European governance level. More specifically, we include the notion of *instruments* as institutional carriers. For instance, while the Open Method of Coordination was originally understood as 'merely' an instrument, it is now increasingly seen as an institution itself. This addition is inspired by the instruments-as-institutions approach (e.g. Lascoumes and Le Gales 2007). For our purpose, *instruments* refer to policy tools that are explicitly or implicitly designed to foster European intersectoral policy coordination. Integrating instruments in this way indicates a theoretical innovation regarding the four 'I' framework which is warranted especially by the plethora of policy instruments introduced at EU level in recent years. In this context, the contribution by Marques, Graf and Rohde-Liebenau shows how institutional rules and norms on how to carry out bureaucratic work within the European Commission gradually strengthen intersectoral policy coordination, alongside soft policy instruments that gather and share evidence on member states' progress as a way to signalise further areas of policy intervention, as in the case of the Open Method of Coordination and the European Semester. Sorensen and Dumay illustrate how the institution of ESSDE since the outset in 2010 has been embedded in wider institutional arrangements, which have continued to shape the trajectory of the committee, including its operation, the issues addressed, and the status of social partners in EU policy-making. Lastly, Cino Pagliarello outlines how business actors not only contribute to animate the debate surrounding which ideas are relevant for intersectoral policy coordination, but also on how to best achieve it by suggesting, for instance, specific policy instruments, such as benchmarking.

5. Advancing the research agenda on policy coordination and EU governance: contributions and avenues for future research

While each of the contributions adds specific insights and together reflect a diversity of approaches to study intersectoral policy coordination, the Special Issue as a whole contributes to the scholarship in European policy studies by tackling the analytical challenge to understand the emergence of BSPR and their gradual institutionalisation within the European multi-level governance architecture. That is, an overarching point of discussion concerns strategies, opportunities and challenges related to the analysis of European intersectoral coordination in education and employment.

In addressing this topic, our analyses are attentive to different aspects of BSPR, which for us includes the exploration of both exogenous drivers (e.g. economic crisis) and endogenous drivers (e.g. European agencies serving as agenda setters) of relevant reforms. Hence, like Jochim and May (2010), we highlight the important role of exogenous drivers, for instance, in the form of *issues*. However, in addition, our collection of papers identifies that endogenous drivers play a key role in bringing about and crucially shaping a BSPR, as alluded to before. In doing so, we move beyond a perspective in which issues driving the emergence of a BSPR are mainly seen as externally given to one in which these are also endogenously constructed and (re)-shaped

through governance actors in the relevant sectors. This point is highlighted by the papers' combined findings concerning the European Commission's policy capacity, and the distinctive roles of the ESSDE and the European Round Table of Industrialists in reinforcing and defining particular issue framings. Furthermore, we study the mechanisms that might explain the (in-) stability of boundary-spanning policy regimes in view of inherent tensions related to them. This temporal aspect relates, for instance, to ideational tensions between diverse vision(s) and features of European societies – which can be more socially or more economically oriented – that the European BSPR of education and employment entails. It should also be noted that while this Special Issue focuses on the policy areas or domains of education and employment, we identify linkages to other policy areas – like policies related to social affairs (Sorensen and Dumay) or to economic competition and competitiveness (Cino Pagliarello) – whenever relevant. Considering, for instance, the major crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and environmental sustainability, as well as the ongoing adoption and implementation of Recovery Packages in member states, we suggest that further research is urgently needed with regard to intersectoral policy coordination involving education and employment as well as other relevant sectors such as health, migration, public administration/home affairs and environment.

The paper by Marques, Graf and Rohde-Liebenau charts the emergence of a supranational BSPR in education and employment. By applying the I-framework, they unpack the conditions for the emergence and further institutionalisation of European intersectoral coordination in education and employment from the 1990s, looking at the specific case of the work conducted by the European Commission's departments. That is, this paper analyses a new generation of policy initiatives explicitly sought to promote intersectoral governance between education and employment sectors. Based on semi-structured interviews with European policy-makers in education and employment and EU policy documents, Marques, Graf and Rohde-Liebenau analyse which type of issues (exogenous or endogenous) contributed to the emergence and further strengthening of intersectoral coordination, the extent to which ideas for European education and employment stress intersectoral policy designs, how interests support or hinder intersectoral work, and which institutions are developed with intersectoral reasoning. Contrary to national BSPR where exogenous issues are often associated with its emergence, they find that endogenous ones played a significant role in the emergence of a European BSPR in education and employment. Furthermore, they show how structural aspects and policy instruments (as *institutions*), alongside ideas and interests, contribute to the maintenance and institutionalisation of the European BSPR in education and employment.

The paper by Sorensen and Dumay provides an account of the trajectory of the ESSDE, and how it has formed part of EU policy-making since its launch in 2010. The ESSDE is one of more than 40 European sectoral social dialogue committees coordinated by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment. The ESSDE involves the two European social partners in education, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE). Sorensen and Dumay argue that the ESSDE since its creation has been profoundly shaped by the EU's BSPR while also contributing to its reinforcement. They demonstrate this dual dynamics in detail by identifying the ways in which: i) the ESSDE, as a distinctive institution, is deeply embedded in the wider institutional arrangements of EU policy-making; ii) the social partners seek to mobilise education employers and trade unions on a large scale; and iii) the issue framings and central ideas in ESSDE activities align with the EU's BSPR in education and employment, including also the underpinning assumptions concerning the alleged synergies between sectors and the need for intersectoral coordination. In theoretical terms, their paper therefore interrogates more specifically the central role of *institutions* in sustaining and legitimising BSPR by channelling attention to pertinent policy issues and the need for intersectoral policy coordination.

The paper by Cino Pagliarello starts with the observation that although research on European education policy has aptly focused on the role of supranational and intergovernmental actors, less attention has been devoted to its analysis as a policy arena in which

legitimacy (ideas) can be created and power (interests) can be exerted in sophisticated ways. Specifically, the role of non-state actors as agenda-setters for European education and employment policies is still underexplored. Adopting a historical perspective, and combining a neo-Gramscian approach to political economy with Jochim and May's (2010) concept of BSPR, Cino Pagliarello captures activities across policy subsystems that seek to manage 'wicked' policy problems. As its core case, this paper looks at the role of private and business actors, and specifically the European Round Table of Industrialists, in European education during the 1980s and 1990s. The findings show how this period can be considered a foundational period for the emergence of the European BSPR in education and employment, and in which ways specific goals and directions were set out in the European education agenda that are more attuned with employment goals and industry's needs. Moreover, the paper illustrates how private and non-state actors shape the BSPR at the nexus of education and employment, reflecting the economic interests and preferences of European supranational companies, for instance, related to pro-market aims and to developing a highly skilled workforce capable of improving European economic competitiveness.

Thus, the papers deal with both the *formation* and the *operation* of different key elements of European BSPR associated with education and employment. All papers work with core elements of the I-framework and all of them relate to the handling of current major education and employment-related policy challenges in Europe. With this set of complementary papers the Special Issue enhances our understanding of the institutionalisation of the European BSPR in education and employment by highlighting formation processes (Marques, Graf and Rohde-Liebenau), institutional and organisational characteristics that might either support or hinder supranational intersectoral work (Sorensen and Dumay), and the role of non-state actors and their interests in shaping 'problems' and agendas (Cino Pagliarello). The Special Issue thus offers an in-depth discussion of intersectoral coordination between education and employment at the European level, pointing to a strong and mutual influence of these two sectors on each other, rather than a unidirectional relationship.

Future research can build on the conceptual arguments outlined in these contributions to study the education-employment nexus in other supranational contexts, which can also help to explore the extent to which the EU with its distinctive features constitutes a special case of a BSPR. Similarly, it would be fruitful to extend the analysis to intersectoral policymaking in sectors other than education and employment. Furthermore, the approach taken here is likely to be of interest to researchers exploring the intricate relationship between exogenous and endogenous drivers of intersectoral policy processes. More generally, the perspective employed in this Special Issue offers an avenue to unpacking relevant tensions and complementarities that may exist related to each of the four 'I' (issues, ideas, interests, and institutions), which the papers in this collection find to represent fundamental pillars of intersectoral policymaking also in EU governance.

Notes

1. In this context, whether or to what extent governance process are shaped by some actor groups more than others is an empirical question (see, for instance, the contribution by Cino Pagliarello on attempts by organised business to shape European educational and employment policies).
2. 'Issues' have a long history in political science, especially in theories of the policy process such as the Multiple Streams Framework (Béland and Howlett 2016).

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