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The Post-agencification Stage between Reforms and Crises. A Comparative Assessment of EU agencies' Budgetary Development

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Abstract

The proliferation of European Union (EU) agencies, known as ‘agencification’, has been widely studied by scholars of EU governance. In spite of the success in explaining the roots of agencies’ establishment, evidence is lacking about their development over time: have they been empowered through new resources, or have their capabilities remained the same? Which EU agencies grew the most, and why? Ultimately, how much do policymakers value these bodies? Through a newly collected longitudinal dataset, the analysis covers EU agencies’ budgetary trends in the past three decades and assesses the determinants of their variation through a cross-sectional time series regression analysis and a Traj group-based model. The results show that trends in agencies’ budgetary allocation follow a punctuated equilibrium pattern. The observed variation is explained by EU-level crisis response, by the expansion of agencies’ tasks and by the type of agency under analysis.

Keywords: EU agencies; agencification; budget; EU governance

Introduction

The proliferation of EU agencies in the past three decades, known as ‘agencification’, has gained increasing attention from scholars in different branches of EU studies ranging from regulation and governance to theories of EU integration. While the creation of these bodies represents an exceptional administrative advance, entailing an expansion of the EU bureaucracy (Kelemen, 2005), it also points to a change in the way EU integration has proceeded after the Maastricht Treaty. In fact, besides the value attached to agencies for the expertise they provide (Majone, 1997, 2001) as part of the construction of the ‘EU regulatory state’ (Levi-Faur, 2011; Majone, 1994), recent studies show how agencies can be considered second-best design choices (Keleman and Tarrant, 2011, p. 929) deriving from compromises among EU decision-makers (Thatcher, 2011) and, according to new-intergovernmentalism, as an indicator of member states’ pursuit of higher integration while resisting further supranationalism (Bickerton *et al.*, 2015; Puetter, 2012).

Although scholars have extensively addressed the reasons behind the origins of these agencies, there are no theoretical and empirical contributions on the post-agencification stage, that is, the dynamics affecting the development of the agencies after their establishment, across time and sector. What ‘fortunes’ (Davis *et al.*, 1966) have they experienced? Which ones have been empowered the most, and why? What is the actual value of these novel institutions within the EU institutional architecture? Are agencies given more

power and resources as a consequence of functional and political pressures? And do they play a significant role in increasingly salient policies and EU-wide crises?

Addressing these questions is highly relevant both to the study of the EU system of governance in terms of its organizational structures, as well as for grasping the significance of these agencies within the wider process of EU integration. In fact, on the one hand, their existence and development may lead to potential changes in power relations within the state administration, between politicians, bureaucrats and citizens (Levi-Faur, 2011, p. 813; Slaughter, 2009) channelled through the creation of an EU-level administrative space (Egeberg and Trondal, 2009; Hofmann, 2008). On the other, observing the trajectories in their comparative advancement may shed light on the logic behind EU policymakers' integration strategies in response to changes over time, in conditions and priorities by means of the institutional tools they have at their disposal.

This study provides the first comprehensive analysis of the development of the plethora of EU agencies in their post-agencification stage, by assessing their budgetary evolution.

The reminder of this article is structured as follows. After a review of the literature on EU-level agencification, I discuss the role of budgets as sources of bureaucratic empowerment. I then introduce an original dataset covering EU agencies' budgetary evolution from 1992 to 2016 and assess it through budget theory. I develop a set of hypotheses aimed to explain variation across time and agency, and I test my framework with a cross-sectional time series regression analysis and a Traj-generated model. The agencies' budgetary development is explained by three major factors. First, the financial crisis provoked a general decrease in budgets accompanied by the empowerment of the EU supervisory authorities, while the refugee crisis generated a significant advancement of asylum and border management-related agencies. Second, when agencies' mandates are reformed, they are granted more resources. Third, agencies providing services and coordination in the single market have systematically received more resources than information providers.

I. Agencification and beyond

The impressive mushrooming (Schout, 2011) of EU agencies since the 1990s has led to a thorough assessment of the origins and significance of this phenomenon (Gilardi, 2002; Keleman, 2002; Levi-Faur 2011; Majone, 1997, 2000; Thatcher, 2002a, 2002b, 2011). Notably Majone (1997, 2001) explains the establishment of agencies as a response to the need of gaining policy credibility and reliable regulatory policies in the internal market. Other scholars note that agencies represent compromise solutions deriving from political bargains (Kelemen and Tarrant, 2011) and previous chains of delegation (Thatcher, 2011). According to new intergovernmentalism, they are a sign of member states' quest for more integration while resisting further supranationalism (Bickerton *et al.*, 2015; Puetter, 2012). Neo-institutionalists, in turn, see agencies as a legitimate kind of body for pursuing specific tasks (Gilardi, 2002), while organizational approaches (Egeberg and Trondal, 2011, 2017; Egeberg *et al.*, 2015) look at them as administrative expansions of the European Commission. These different views are complementary, as exemplified by agencies' much-diversified origins across policy sectors. Whereas, for instance, the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) originates from the institutionalization of a pre-existing network of regulators (Levi-Faur, 2011), the creation of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was a concrete response to

a food scare known as the bovine spongiform encephalopathy crisis, alongside substantial policy reforms (Groenleer, 2009).

Beyond their genesis, these agencies have developed in very different ways. For example, the EU border agency Frontex was established in 2006 and endowed with a small budget and a narrow mandate. At the time of writing, it has a budget of over € 300 million and is consolidating its role of pooling intelligence and national resources (Scipioni, 2018) in an attempt to reinforce the Schengen system after the 2015 refugee crisis (Angelescu and Trauner, 2018; Schimmelfennig, 2018). Yet the European Environment Agency was established in 1993; its mandate has never been substantially reformed and its budget has changed only modestly. In contrast, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) which opened in 1995 with 60 staff members, is now one of the largest agencies in the EU (Heims, 2016).

In spite of these remarkable differences, to date the literature offers little by way of comparing agencies across sectors and time in the post-agencification stage. Apart from Levi-Faur (2011), who mapped the transformation of regulatory networks into EU-level agencies in the regulatory state, other authors focus only on one sector or a limited number of cases. Busuioc and Groenleer (2013) and Busuioc *et al.* (2011) examined the European Police Office, Europol Eurojust's development beyond the design stage. Groenleer (2009) analysed some agencies' *de facto* autonomy, Mathieu (2016, 2019) tackled regulatory integration through case studies. Boin *et al.* (2014) addressed agency-led management of transboundary problems and crises, while Scipioni (2018) compared the development of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Frontex with the Commission's growing role in asylum and immigration policy. Other studies have mapped agencies' entrepreneurial strategies (Arras and Braun, 2018; Wood, 2017) and shown how agencies' involvement in policy implementation becomes more likely as the Commission's powers increase (Migliorati, 2019).

Against this varied backdrop, we still do not know how EU agencies have developed across different policy sectors, how many resources they are granted, and what mechanisms explain these differences. In this article I provide the first systematic analysis of the post-agencification stage taking into account all EU agencies across sector and time.

In the next section I draw on budget theory to make a preliminary assessment of the budget evolution of EU agencies. Given that budgets are one of the primary sources of bureaucratic empowerment (Meier, 1980), and, that, in turn, budget changes reflect the relative priority given to different policy issues, varying budgetary trends may point to the relative importance given to different agencies in the EU system of governance.

II. Assessing Bureaucratic Empowerment through Budgets

Assessing the relevance of an institution in a complex system of governance as the EU is no trivial task. In the US context, a straightforward way of assessing how bureaucratic structures are shaped and eventually empowered in terms of resources and tasks (Meier, 1980) has been to look at their budget. According to Jones and colleagues:

[B]udgets quantify collective political decisions made in response to incoming information, the preferences of decision makers, and the institutions that structure how decisions are made. The distribution of budgetary outputs is crucial to the study of policy change, as budget changes reflect changing governmental priorities. (Jones *et al.*, 2009, p. 856)

It follows that changes in an agency's budget can be employed as a proxy for the relevance they are assigned by policymakers in different scenarios within the growingly complex system of EU governance. In short, observing how agencies' budgets change across time and sector provides insights on whether and how policymakers adapt agencies' resources to different set of conditions. Although regulatory changes may not be systematically reflected in the budget as much as in redistributive policies (Citi, 2013; Heims, 2016), analysing the budget variations of agencies can shed light on the relative importance that EU policymakers give them compared with each other across time. The source of power of any organization, in fact, resides in their ability to influence policy outcomes, which in turn resides in the capabilities that they are given to pursue the tasks they are assigned. Hence, even organizations dealing primarily with regulation may be given new resources, for example, to deal with an upcoming policy problem or to pursue a wider mandate.

Interpreting budget changes

Budget evolution in public policy is traditionally explained via two competing theories. According to budgetary incrementalism (Wildavsky, 1964) annual budgeting is a function of the previous year's expenditure:

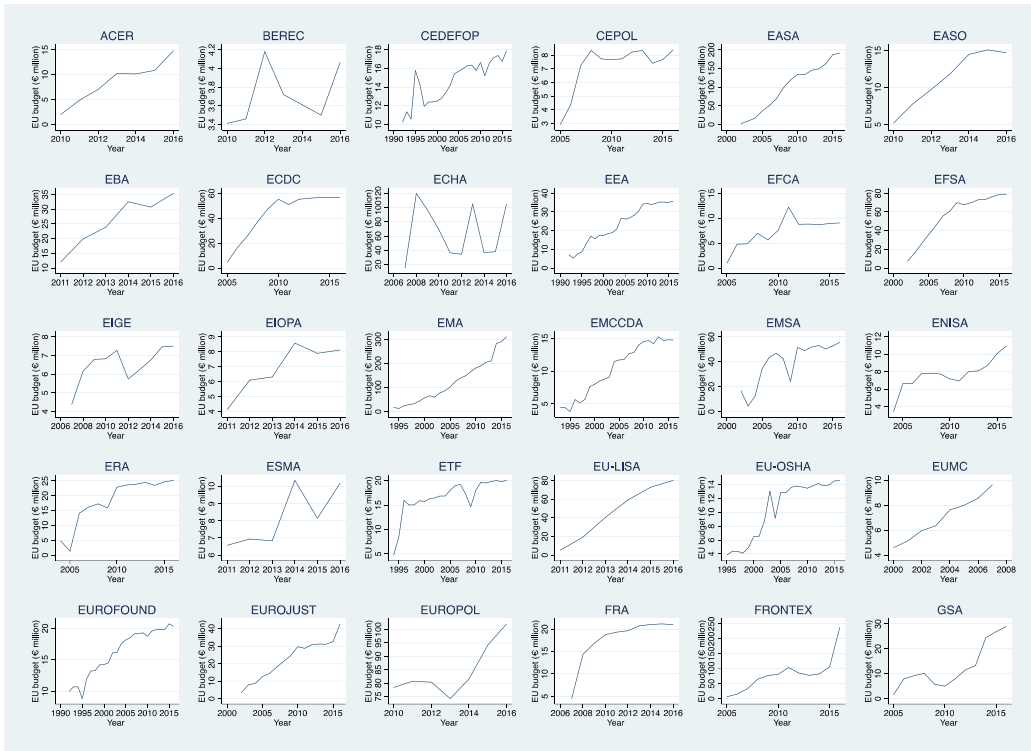
[B]udgeting is so complex that decision makers largely forfeit a review of existing expenditure, referred to as the 'base'. Rather, 'this year's budget is based on last year's budget, with special attention given to a narrow range of increases or decreases. (Davis *et al.*, 1966, pp. 529–530)

Punctuated equilibrium models (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Jones *et al.*, 2009; Jones and Baumgartner, 2012), on the other hand, claim that, although public policies generally evolve through small-scale policy adjustments, the same forces that produce incremental changes can be responsible for major departures from the status quo. As governments are assumed to have limited time, attention and information, they tend to focus on the few items that are salient on the political agendas and overlook a number of other issues. Yet if any of the neglected issues reach a high level of severity, the pattern of incremental adjustments is likely to be interrupted by sudden changes.

In the context under analysis, there are three reasons to expect to observe a punctuated equilibrium trend: first of all, as Baumgartner *et al.* argue, 'an incremental model, leading to a purely Gaussian distribution, characteristic [...] of a fully rational, comprehensive and proportionate-response model' (2009, p. 1088) has hardly ever been observed. Second, Citi (2013) has demonstrated how EU budgeting for redistributive policies follows a punctuated equilibrium trend. Finally, all EU agencies are by definition tightly linked to the process of policy implementation and the EU budget for administration is relatively small, compared with other budget areas. Hence, it is reasonable to expect policymakers to readjust their limited resource outputs in response to different scenarios requiring different implementation strategies. A preliminary hypothesis, which I name H0, about agencies' budgetary distribution, is as follows:

H0 : Agencies' budgetary allocation follows a punctuated equilibrium trend

Figure 1: EU Agencies Budgetary Trends (1992–2016), Fixed Amounts. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



Notes: The definitions of the acronyms can be found in the Supporting Information.

To test this hypothesis, I now introduce a novel dataset including EU agencies' budget variations between 1992 and 2016.¹ Figure 1 shows the absolute variation of funds received by each agency from 1992 to 2016. Data reveal that differences in agencies' budgets are observable both across agencies and over time. Certain agencies received systematically higher budgets than others, and some budgets followed rather regular trends, whereas other presented a less clear trajectory. Some EU agencies, such as the European Medicines Agency, have seen their budget growing steadily, while one of the most striking examples of steep and discontinuous growth is Frontex. Eurojust, dealing with judiciary coordination, was given more funds starting in 2015, and EU-LISA had a remarkable budget increase since 2010. Eurofound and the European Training Foundation instead, showed modest variation since the 1990s. The European Chemical Agency received more money in 2015–16, which, according to the Commission, was due to the increase in the balancing contribution to the chemical activities of the European Chemicals Agency (European Commission, 2015, p. 206).

My initial hypothesis, H0, states that budgetary allocation should present punctuations. In order to test this claim, following Citi (2013) I calculated the percentage changes of EU

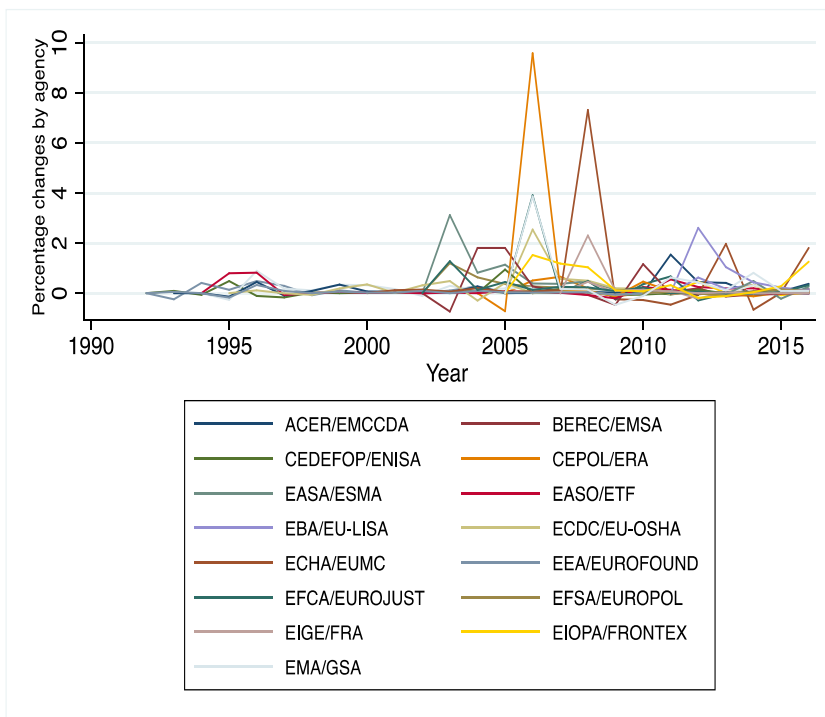
¹ Additional information in the Supporting Information

agencies' budget allocation over time. Figure 2 shows the percentage of budget changes over time and across agency: and several positive and negative punctuations are easily observable.

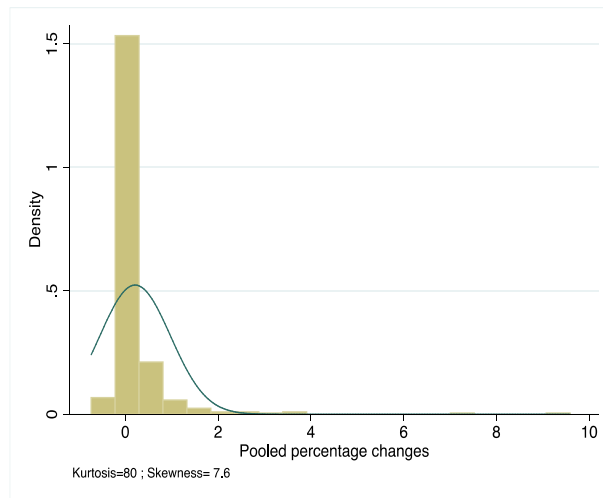
Moreover, histogram in Figure 3 shows the pooled annual percentage of budget change of all agencies. In statistical terms, the histogram depicts a leptokurtic distribution, that is, a distribution with high peaks of small changes levelling around 0, representing the high number of cases of minor budgetary adjustments (Citi, 2013), long, fat tails, representing budget punctuations (Alexandrova *et al.*, 2014) and a kurtosis index exceeding three (Bevan and Jennings, 2014). Specifically, in Figure 3 most observations are concentrated around plus or minus 1%. Kurtosis is high (80) and skewness positive and pronounced (7.6), indicating an upward trend and the presence of fewer higher values. According to Baumgartner *et al.*, many cases in the centre and large numbers in the extremes 'makes a leptokurtic distribution strong evidence of a punctuated equilibrium process' (2009).

In sum, the evidence corroborates H0 by showing that the distribution of EU expenditure for agencies is not normal and follows a punctuated equilibrium trend. This empirical test allowed me to proceed with the formulation of more precise hypotheses to account for budgetary variation across agencies and over time.

Figure 2: Budget Percentage Changes by Agency. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



Notes: The definitions of the acronyms can be found in the Supporting Information.

Figure 3: Pooled Percentage Changes. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

III. Explaining Agencies' Budgetary Evolution: Hypotheses

As outlined in the literature review, the very existence of agencies is justified by means of several arguments pointing to functional, political, administrative and legitimacy-driven mechanisms. Considering that each and every one of these approaches has attained at least some empirical corroboration, just as the reasons for agency establishment vary, so may the reasons for granting them more or less resources also vary. I narrowed these reasons down to five main dynamics that should account for cross-agency differences, on the one hand, and for the observed budget punctuations, on the other: these are the degree of supranational integration of a policy; agencies' institutional reforms; crisis management; issue salience and agency type.

Supranational Integration

While Bickerton *et al.* observed a post-Maastricht tendency to support the creation and empowerment of agencies (Bickerton *et al.*, 2015, p. 713) at the expense of further supranationalization, most scholars see agencies as an integral part of the development of a supranational administration built around the European Commission (Egeberg and Trondal, 2017; Egeberg *et al.*, 2015; Trondal, 2013). Agencies are seen, in sum, as a further degree of expansion of the EU and specifically, the expansion of its administration. Ripoll Servent argues that in the EU 'power is usually not delegated horizontally (from the Commission to the agency) but vertically – which means that creating an agency is often preceded by a transfer of competences to the EU level' (2018, p. 5). Moreover, according to Egeberg and Trondal (2011) and Trondal (2013) the rise of EU agencies is correlated with the expansion of the Commission's capacity, which, in turn, may derive from an increase in the demand for EU-level capacity generated by deeper and wider policy integration at the EU level (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2013). Given that reliance on EU

agencies seems to be the result of the Commission's expansion of competences (Migliorati, 2019 p. 17), and that more delegation tends to lead to higher capacity in the EU (Trondal, 2013), I argue that the process of policy integration at the EU level may be connected to the expansion, not only of the Commission, but also of EU agencies. If an agency deals with a policy that gets more integrated over time, the demand for supranational implementation should increase as policy integration becomes deeper (Börzel, 2005). In sum, the progressive integration of EU policies leads to greater delegation to the Commission and this delegation is, in turn, reflected not only in the empowerment of capacity and the expansion of the competence of the Commission itself, but also in that of agencies.

H1 : The more a policy is or becomes integrated at the EU level, the higher the budget of agencies dealing with that policy

Agency Reforms

Several EU agencies' mandates have been reformed over time.² The reasons behind reforming an institution may be symbolic, including normative visions and policy ideas (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Scott, 1983; Scott and Christensen, 1995). On the other hand, reforms can be linked to an actual willingness to implement better policies. According to Niskanen (1971) bureaucrats are able to attract higher budgets because politicians are misinformed about the needs of the administration in performing a given task. Yet Bendor and Moe (1985) argue that legislators can strategically use budget cuts and increases in different ways. The budget is an incentive in and of itself, as well as a means of generating output: when policymakers are genuinely interested in a particular output to be delivered, they may be willing to increase an agency's budget in order to make it able to perform well in that domain. It follows that when a mandate is reformed this should lead to a significant increase of resources. If that is the case, this would point to EU policymakers' willingness to empower agencies not only by giving them symbolic tasks, but also giving them the means necessary to actually cover more extensive mandates and contribute more substantially to the pursuit of new policy objectives. For example, in the ongoing reform of Frontex, policymakers have committed to endow the agency with new resources, although we do not yet know whether member states will respect this commitment alongside the envisaged reform.

There is also a difference in the kinds of reforms that can be undertaken. In general, agencies can be granted new tasks or they can have their scope of action widened (European Commission, 2015). While the former is connected to substantial reforms in the regulation of a policy and requires new and different kinds of expertise and equipment, an enlarged scope of action may have a more symbolic purpose and could be addressed using the same amount of resources. For example, the extension of the European Environment Agency's work to researching on coastal and marine protection in 1999 was not followed by budgetary or staff increase, nor it seemed motivated by the willingness to change the nature of the agency's activities and its impact on the

²see the "Measurement" section

regulation of environmental provisions. As the European Parliament (EP) specifies, it was legislation aimed at consolidating certain activities of the Agency in clearly defined fields, but without strictly speaking giving it any new tasks (European Parliament, 1997). Conversely, Frontex was reformed in 2011 to coordinate joint return operations, to operate information systems and provide assistance to the European border surveillance system. Its mandate passed from that of risk assessment to operational tasks and was accompanied by an increase in funds for 2011.

H2 : An agency's budget increases following to a reform granting it more tasks

EU-level Crisis

The creation of some EU agencies was crisis-induced. For example, the European Food Safety Authority was established after the bovine spongiform encephalopathy epidemic to provide uniform food security regulation across the Union (Groenleer, 2009), while the three supervisory authorities, European Banking Authority, European Securities and Markets Authority and the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority, were set up in response to the 2008 financial crisis (Dehousse, 2016). Frontex, on the other hand, was created in the absence of any particular crises, but was substantially reformed during one (Niemann and Speyer, 2018). The link between the response to a crisis and EU agencies should also be reflected in the budget they are granted. Although scholars have interpreted 'crisis' in various ways, in general terms we can refer to it as a situation in which policy-makers experience 'a serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a system, which under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances necessitates making vital decisions' (Rosenthal *et al.*, 1989, p. 10). In turn, crisis management is the set of efforts aimed at minimizing the impact of such threat (Boin and Hart, 2007). Handling a crisis at the EU level calls for both regulatory and capacity-building solutions (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2018), which may include strategies bolstering the economic resources of the regulatory and operational instruments that can help in solving the situation at hand. Agencies in the EU are mainly tools of policy implementation, and crisis management requires precisely good and efficient implementation (Donahue and Joyce, 2001). Thus, periods of crisis affecting the whole EU may account for positive budget punctuations for the agencies involved in managing the crisis. In this context, I refer to crisis situations that affect the EU systemically, given that crises taking place at the regional or local level (such as natural or man-made disasters) are protected, among other mechanisms, by the solidarity clause (art. 222 TFEU)

H3 : When there is an EU-level crisis, agencies dealing with policies associated with the crisis receive higher budgets than those that are not

Issue Salience

Besides the occurrence of extreme crises, EU policy issues may have fluctuating levels of salience over time for several other reasons and, as punctuated equilibrium theory suggests, when issues are placed very high up on the agenda they cannot be neglected any

longer. Notably, public attitudes towards the EU have changed considerably over the past 30 years and attention given to EU matters is much higher than it used to be (Hobolt and de Vries, 2016). Many accounts support the view that in the post-Maastricht era EU elites need to ‘look over their shoulder’ before taking decisions (Hooge and Marks, 2009). As a consequence, responding to salient policy issues increasingly matters both for the Commission (Guidi and Guardiancich, 2018; Hartlapp *et al.*, 2013; 2014; Rauh, 2016, 2018) and for the Council (Wratil, 2015, 2018) in the process of policy formulation and implementation. Given that agencies are part of the EU administration and take an active part in the policy implementation process, those dealing with policies that are deemed more salient at the EU level may be granted more resources than others. Saliency peaks, in sum, may be associated with budget peaks.

H4 : An agency's budget increases as saliency of the policy it deals with increases

Agency Types

As noted earlier, some agencies have a systematically higher budget than others. I argue that the type of agency at hand may influence the budget it receives. EU agencies have been categorized in different ways, notably, by Kelemen (2005), Yataganas (2001) and Wonka and Rittberger (2010). These categorizations are mainly based upon the kind of function the agency performs (such as providing information, regulation or coordination).

I distinguish among different degrees of demand for different types of agencies which depends upon the extent to which a policy area produces policy externalities (that is, domestic costs) and has dysfunctional effects on member states economies and security if the policy is not implemented correctly. In an expanding common market, the necessity for uniform product regulation has become increasingly relevant. It is, for example, more likely that negative externalities are produced by the lack of uniform licenses for chemicals and aircrafts than reports on standards of human rights. Secondly, in an enlarging border-free area, internal security and border management issues represent a problem, as inefficient border management or police operations in one state may affect all the others. Open borders tend to call for border and police coordination more than, for example, reports on environmental performance.

In sum, a high demand for services and coordination in from member states, deriving from the interdependencies generated by the common market and the border-free area, may account for significant differences in budgetary levels across different types of agency. Moreover, with the expansion of the EU, these effects should be stronger over time.

H5 : agencies dealing with market authorizations, services and operational activities receive higher budgets than information providers, and their budget increases more steeply over time

IV. Measurement

EU Integration Level

The balance of policy authority between the EU and national levels has primarily been investigated through case studies, focusing on individual treaty-effects or the effects of

secondary legislation (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003; Saurugger and Radaelli, 2008). Moreover, Börzel (2005) has mapped the degree of integration of EU policies considering the level and scope of integration, while Hix and Høyland (2012) show how different treaties have modified the competences and the decision-making process in the EU. Finally, Leuffen *et al.* (2013) calculated of the evolution of *formal*, treaty-based authority over time in different fields of EU governance which, in turn, builds on Börzel's breadth and depth conceptualization (Börzel, 2005). They distinguish between six levels of formal authority: no coordination at the EU-level (0); unanimous intergovernmental coordination without involvement of supranational institutions (1); unanimous intergovernmental cooperation with limited involvement of supranational institutions (2); joint decision-making by majority with limited involvement of the EP (3); joint decision-making by majority with EP involvement (4); supranational centralization (5). Given that this is the most recent and up-to-date policy-specific measurement of depth and breadth collapsed into one single dimension, I employ this measurement for my analysis.

Agency Reforms

I retrieved data from the Eur-Lex database, which identifies all the amendments made to each legislative act over time. As shown in the Figure A4 included in the online Appendix the variation across agencies is considerable. Starting from this evidence I have categorized the development path each agency has undergone over the years. I have divided the kinds of reforms into 'task expansion' and 'scope expansion', basing my coding on the original reforming legislation and Commission's annual reports on the agencies. Details on the coding can be found in the Supporting Information. Task reforms are counted as 1 in the year the task reform took place and over the following 2 years to take into account the minimum administrative times necessary to put a reform into practices. The absence of a reform is coded as 0.

Crisis

I coded the occurrence of the two major EU-level crises (Schimmelfenning, 2018) for the period under examination: the 2008 financial crisis (followed by the European debts crisis) and the 2014 Schengen borders crisis. For the financial crisis I opted for a dummy variable, taking the value of 1 between 2009 and 2014, in order to differentiate between the standard situation (0), to the start of a sudden and disruptive change lasting for a certain period (1), to the reabsorption of such change (0). Although it is hard to set the exact moment of start and end of crisis periods, as regards the financial and debt crises Pisani-Ferry (2014) claims that in 2013 there still was a rise of economic and social unrest among European countries. Moreover, at the EU crisis management level, only in December 2013 was approved a single resolution mechanism. Finally, according to the World Bank Data (2015), EU GDP returned to the pre-crisis levels only after 2014.

To measure the refugee crisis, I have retrieved from Eurostat the total amount of asylum applications in the EU per year. By employing a continuous variable, first of all, I limited the risk of generating a measurement overlap with the financial crisis. Secondly, it allowed me to account for the progressive increase and decrease of refugees before,

during and after the crisis. In fact, the EU as a whole has been exposed to refugee influxes since the entry into force of the Dublin Convention in 1990.

Salience

To measure policy salience I employed the comparative agenda project (Alexandrova *et al.*, 2014) which contains information about Council conclusions over a large time span. Although public opinion surveys (Alexandrova *et al.*, 2016) or Eurobarometer data would be an even better source of information, I was unable to use them, as their data are available only from the 2000s. Using it would thus produce a high number of missing values in my dataset. Nevertheless, I deem that Council conclusions are a good proxy for general EU policy salience, especially given the typical endogenous nature of public opinion and political responsiveness (Gabel and Scheve, 2007; Rauh, 2018).

Agency Typology

I divided agencies into three main groups, or clusters: the first includes all agencies dealing neither with market authorizations nor with operational activities. The second includes agencies dealing with operational activities, market authorizations and services financed only through the EU budget. The third includes agencies dealing with authorizations and services financed also by the industry. Further information is provided in the Appendix, Figure A1, A2 and A3.³

Control Variables

I included the lagged value of each agency's budget, as each year's budget is influenced the previous year. I also inserted dummies for years corresponding to the multiannual financial framework and for the financial reform passed in 2003, and I controlled for the expansion of agencies' scope reform. Moreover, I controlled for the number of member states in order to take into account the expansion of the common market over time. Summary statistics can be found in the Appendix, Table A2⁴

V. Analysis

I estimated a statistical model by means of a pairwise cross-sectional time-series regression analysis with panel corrected standards errors. Models I to 5 progressively test my hypotheses and model VI provides a summary regression inclusive of all independent and control variables. To test H3 I included the interaction between the financial crisis and the three supervisory authorities as well as between the refugee crisis and the Frontex and European Asylum Support Office.

Table 1 shows the results.

First, Model 1 shows that budgets are significantly higher when a policy is less integrated at the EU level. However, this effect loses significance when including other Independent Variables (IVs). The finding may, on the one hand, suggest that at lower levels of integration agencies are more needed for policy implementation than in more integrated

³Further information is provided in the Supporting Information, Figure A1, A2 and A3

⁴Summary statistics in Supporting Information, Table A2

Table 1: Determinants of Agencies' Budget Allocation

<i>Dependent Variable: agency budget</i>	<i>Model 1 H1</i>	<i>Model 2 H2</i>	<i>Model 3 H3</i>	<i>Model 4 H4</i>	<i>Model 5 H5</i>	<i>Model VI summary</i>
Budget lag	1.061*** (0.0242)	1.053*** (0.0252)	1.060*** (0.0259)	1.063*** (0.0243)	0.980*** (0.0467)	0.980*** (0.0506)
Number of member states	37.87 (105.8)	-26.83 (82.01)	28.77 (92.29)	241.0** (105.6)	120.5 (122.4)	158.0 (135.8)
Financial framework	-681.8 (2126.8)	-447.7 (2190.0)	-612.1 (2191.5)	-698.5 (1433.0)	-750.6 (2156.1)	-722.3 (1511.3)
Integration (1)	6358.6*** (1577.1)					-2643.0 (3679.9)
Integration (2)	198.0 (1638.2)					-1104.8 (1873.9)
Integration(4)	2650.2 (2233.2)					3541.7 (2324.8)
Task expansion		10938.9** (4872.5)				9518.0** (4417.5)
Scope expansion		4011.6 (2771.5)				1200 (2950)
Saliency			-1.250 (5.219)			-5.720 (9.427)
Financial crisis				-4837.1*** (1209.2)		-4567.9*** (1326.6)
Financial crisis* supervisory				6605.5** (2776.1)		7433.1** (3144.8)
EASO and Frontex*				-5039.9 (9011.8)		-11788.4 (8718.4)
Asylum applications				-3.595*** (1.372)		-1.823 (1.827)
EASO and Frontex*				26.69** (11.33)		27.32*** (10.20)
asylum applications						
Agency type 2					8117.9*** (2474.7)	7741.0*** (2414.3)
Agency type 3					12770.5** (5964.3)	12558.3** (6364.5)
Constant	1107.6 (2530.1)	2187.8 (1672.1)	1749.5 (1768.0)	-315.4 (1963.2)	-1041.7 (2358.0)	-1585.5 (4126.9)
Observations	403	403	403	403	403	403
R ²	0.915	0.918	0.915	0.921	0.921	0.929

Note: Operational/service provider agencies, agency type 2; operational/service provider agencies with industry fees, agency type 3; EASO, European Asylum Support Office; unanimous intergovernmental coordination without involvement of supranational institutions, integration 1, unanimous intergovernmental cooperation with limited involvement of supranational institutions, integration 2, joint decision-making by majority with EP involvement, policy integration 4, pairwise cross-sectional time-series regression analysis with panel corrected standards errors. * $P < 0.1$ ** $P < 0.05$ *** $P < 0.01$

areas. On the other, it may point to the fact that integration in some sectors has proceeded through agencies at the expenses of other supranational bodies.⁵

Second, the analysis shows that punctuations are connected to task expansions. On average agencies that are task-reformed received about €10 million more during and after the reform. This result points to the fact that, as hypothesized (H2), policymakers truly value agencies as useful policy implementers and therefore choose to grant them more resources when they assign them new competences.

Response to a crisis, both the financial crisis and the refugee influxes, corroborates H3. The financial crisis led to a general decrease in the budgets of EU agencies (on average, about € 4 million), yet, this this does not apply to agencies dealing with banking supervision and financial markets, which have received more resources (on average, about 6 million more) in comparison to all others. Part of the observed punctuations can be explained by the *reduction* effect of the financial crisis on the budget of several agencies and the *increase* on just some of them. A similar argument holds for the Schengen crisis, as the European Asylum Support Office and Frontex's budget increased significantly with the increase of asylum applications. This did not seem to affect other agencies' budgets, as the weak effect falls short of significance in the summary regression model.

There is no evidence corroborating the connection between the empowerment of agencies and policy-makers' responsiveness to issue salience, as hypothesized in H4. The absence of significant results may be due to the fact that punctuations became manifest only when an issue was exceptionally salient and therefore, small salience fluctuations—compared with severe crises— were not sufficient to have a substantial effect on budgetary variation.

In line with H5, agency effects are visible: Group 2, in which EU-funded operational and services provider agencies belong, receives on average €8 million more than the reference group, that is, agencies dealing with information and research. Group 3 (the partly self-funded agencies) received about twice as much as Group 1. By means of a group-based model, which is displayed and explained in the Supporting Information (see theory-driven groups and Traj clusters: a comparison, figure A5 and Table A3), I show how groups 2 and 3 also presented steeper budgetary trends over time. This evidence points not only to cross-sectional variation among groups, but also a significant difference in trend trajectories over time. This signifies that operational and service providers have expanded their capabilities more than information providers. In sum, these effects corroborate H5, according to which agencies that might have been able to reduce negative externalities and security issues produced by the integration of the internal market, were granted more resources than information provider-agencies.

VI. Discussion

Agencies have come a long way since the start of the agencification process. Two decades ago Majone (2001) looked on them as tools able to produce credible and substantial expertise. In 2008 the European Commission claimed that 'agencies can bring real added value to the Union's governance structures' (European Commission, 2008, p. 9). In 2017 Jean Claude Junker called for the establishment of a European Cybersecurity

⁵ Another way to test this link would have been by including the actual Commission's budget disaggregated by DG, which was, however, not feasible due to the lack of data.

Agency 'to help defend us against [cyber] attacks', and a common Labour Authority for ensuring fairness in the single market. So far, the increasing attention given to these bodies by both policymakers and scholars has not been matched by evidence about their actual capacity and relative importance in the system. This contribution has aimed to go beyond the origins of the agencies and to address their development by analysing the post-agencification stage.

The observed punctuated equilibrium trend points to a link between the economic empowerment of the agencies and shifting governmental priorities. A deeper analysis shows that agencies do not receive more resources as the policy they deal with becomes more supranational: rather, the opposite seems to occur. The negative correlation between the delegation of more competences to the supranational level and the creation of higher capacity at the agency level may support the argument of Bickerton *et al.* (2015), according to which the post-Maastricht era is characterized by integration via 'de novo bodies', which are established at the expenses of higher supranationalization as part of an 'integration paradox' (Bickerton *et al.*, 2015). However, this may also suggest that agencies are preferred as implementation tools in less-integrated policy areas because the Commission is the most competent actor at the high levels of integration (Migliorati, 2019). The empowerment of the supervisory authorities vis-à-vis a general budgetary reduction during the financial crisis, and the empowerment of the border-related ones during mass refugee fluxes provides evidence about the importance given to agencies as part of a supranational crisis management strategy. In fact, although policy salience alone does not appear enough to have an impact on the budgets of agencies, EU-level crises have pushed for the search of policy solutions *also* through agencies. Moreover, the significant resource increase following to task reforms is a positive signal as it suggests that agencies' reforms are undertaken with a view to enabling them to perform better in new areas. Both findings, importantly, point to the ability of the EU to combine regulatory overhaul (Caporaso *et al.*, 2015) with acts of capacity building which, however limited as compared to the whole EU budget, can uphold the managing of different policy issues. Furthermore, the article shows that policymakers have systematically granted more funds to agencies providing services to the industry and security providers such as Frontex, Europol and EU-Lisa, compared with the stability and modest growth of the budgets of information providers over time. In sum, although information and pure regulation are deemed essential to the functioning of the regulatory state, it seems that agencies performing coordination and services supply are increasingly valuable implementation tools at the EU level.

To conclude, the relative empowerment of agencies in the post-agencification stage derives from the need performing better implementation connected with policy reforms, crisis responses and the expansion of the common market. These findings point to the importance of agencies as dynamic components in both the administrative and political developments in the EU. Whether their role will continue to grow may depend on what strategies will be put in place in light of the multiple threats of disintegration faced by the EU (Webber, 2018), as well as on the occurrence of new systemic crises in the near future. Relating to this debate, recent scholarly accounts (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2018; Schimmelfennig, 2018) point to the increase of EU-level capacity building as a desirable step towards further and better functioning supranational policy integration. There are still, important limits in budgetary assessment, as this technique does not show whether these resources are actually used for their original purpose. Granting more resources can be a symbolic act, as much

as of reforming a mandate. There is empirical evidence or example, that the economic empowerment of Frontex has not been accompanied by a real effort to change the EU border management regime (Schimmelfennig, 2018). Moreover, informal resources may be mobilized by agencies outside their budget lines, such as information, knowledge and reputation. Future research may enrich this contribution by engaging in theory building through an in-depth analysis of the budget process for specific agencies or policy sectors.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Figure A1: European Medicines Agency Budget Evolution

Figure A2: European Union Aviation Safety Agency Budget Evolution

Figure A3: European Chemicals Agency Budget Evolution

Figure A4: Number of Amendments to Agencies' Mandate

Figure A5: Comparison Between Group-based Budgetary Trends and Traj Clusters

Table A1: Agency Types and Reforms

Table A2: Summary Statistics

Table A3: Group-based Budgetary Trends versus Traj Clusters