

## The Europeanisation of Research and Higher Educational Policies – Some Reflections

**Jarle Trondal**

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### Keywords

EEA agreement, europeanization, implementation, multilevel governance, path dependence, RTD policy, political science

### Abstract

This study poses the following question: To what extent do EU policies affect national policies? In concrete, this article studies the europeanisation of policy in the field of Research and Higher Education (R&E). The field of R&E is largely neglected in the literature on European integration and europeanisation. I argue that processes of europeanisation of R&E policy mirror two interrelated processes: Both the emergence of supranational policies at the EU level and national convergence towards these policies. The empirical scope of the study is the relationship between EU's R&E policies and the corresponding policies of Norway. Our empirical observations based on documentary data and existing bodies of literature reveal that the emergence of creeping supranational R&E policies at the EU level has accompanied moderate convergence of Norwegian R&E policies. This moderate level of convergence, I argue, reflects a mix of moderate institutionalised linkages between Norwegian ministries and agencies and EU institutions, moderate adaptational pressures towards Norwegian R&E policies from the EU, and institutional path-dependencies in Norwegian R&E policies.

### Kurzfassung

Diese Studie stellt die folgende Frage: Inwieweit wirken sich die EU-Politiken auf nationale Politiken aus? Konkret studiert dieser Artikel die Europäisierung der Politik im Bereich von Forschung und Hochschulwesen (F&H). Das Feld F&H wurde bislang von der Literatur zur europäischen Integration und Europäisierung weitgehend unberücksichtigt gelassen. Ich behaupte, dass der Europäisierungsprozess der F&H-Politik zwei miteinander verschränkte Prozesse widerspiegelt, nämlich das Auftauchen der supranationalen Politiken auf der EU-Ebene und die nationale Anpassung in Richtung dieser Politiken. Die empirische Reichweite dieser Studie ist das Verhältnis zwischen den EU F&H-Politiken und ihren Gegenstücken in Norwegen. Unsere empirischen Beobachtungen auf Grundlage von Dokumenten und der einschlägigen Literatur machen deutlich, dass die schleichende Entwicklung von supranationalen F&H-Politiken auf EU-Ebene von einer bescheidenen Konvergenz der norwegischen F&H-Politik begleitet wurde. Ich argumentiere, dass dieses bescheidene Ausmaß an Konvergenz eine Mischung aus bescheidenen institutionalisierten Verbindungen zwischen den norwegischen Ministerien und den Dienststellen der EU, eines moderaten Anpassungsdrucks durch die EU sowie von institutionellen Pfadabhängigkeiten in der norwegischen F&H-Politik widerspiegelt.

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## 1 Introduction <sup>↑</sup>

The europeanisation of the nation-state has become a growing laboratory for studying conditions for institutional and policy transformation (Knill 2001; Knill and Lenschow 1998; Olsen 2002). This laboratory has been utilised to analyse the europeanisation of government institutions (polity), decision-making processes (politics) as well as policy outputs (policy) (Olsen 2002). Drawing on insights from studies of the europeanisation of policy, this article poses the following question: To what extent do EU policies affect national policies? To answer this question this study compares the degree of convergence and divergence between EU policies of research and higher education (R&E) and the corresponding Norwegian policies. I argue that we need to go beyond comparing domestic policies towards analysing the vertical integration, fusion and penetration of policies *across levels of governance*. Moreover, the europeanisation of policy reflects two interrelated processes: Both the emergence of supranational policies at the EU level and the domestic convergence towards these policies. The value added of this approach is basically that it allows us to highlight middle-range hypotheses on policy convergence *across levels of governance*. Moreover, this article suggests and discusses four hypotheses on policy convergence and divergence (cf. [below](#)). By analysing these hypotheses in the context of Norwegian R&E policy this article reveals that the emergence of an increasingly supranational R&E policy at the EU level accompanies only moderate transformation of domestic (Norwegian) R&E policies.

The field of higher education has been central in the nation-building processes of most European nation-states (Rokkan 1987). I argue that domestic policy convergence towards the EU partially challenges existing national policies of R&E in Europe. Since World War II the level of international co-operation in the field of R&E has increased substantially among European scientists, universities and nation-states. This article analyses trends of europeanisation of Norwegian R&E policies at the edge of 2000. During the late 1990s and the early 2000 the europeanisation of Norwegian R&E policies have moved from being largely occasional, non-routinised, non-institutionalised and intergovernmental processes towards becoming increasingly routinised, rule-driven, institutionalised and supranational. The question of europeanisation is given increased government priority in Norway as seen in recent Government White and Green Papers. Still, I argue that the degree of policy convergence towards the EU is only partial.

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EU integration has traditionally been stronger economically and legally than politically, culturally and socially (Olsen 2001). Higher education is a fairly recent field of close and deep co-operation at the EU level (De Wit and Verhoeven 2001:178). Despite the fact that the EU has weak legal and financial instruments and that EU governance of R&E rests on the principle of *subsidiarity*, we are witnessing a strengthened *de facto* willingness and capacity of the EU to act in the field of R&E. Moreover, based on new legal capacities, the post Maastricht area has witnessed new EU initiatives within this policy field (e.g. European Commission 2000a).

Recent literature on the europeanisation of domestic policies and institutions apply middle-range hypotheses that are tested against selected empirical evidence (e.g. Cowles, Caporaso and Risse 2001; Knill 2001; Trondal 2001a). This “scholarly field” thus moves away from grand theorising of European integration and europeanisation towards more conditional generalisations of it. Accordingly, this article suggests the following four hypotheses on policy convergence and divergence between EU and domestic policy:

***H1: Europeanisation due to policy differences:*** Policy convergence reflects real and perceived differences between domestic and EU policy, accompanying domestic adaptational pressures

***H2: Europeanisation due to institutional linkages:*** Policy convergence reflects institutional linkages across levels of governance

***H3: Europeanisation filtered:*** Policy divergence reflects policy path-dependencies

***H4: The virtual reality of europeanisation:*** Policy divergence reflects policy de-coupling accompanying mere symbolic policy convergence

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The argument develops in four sections. The next section outlines an empirical proxy of europeanisation: policy convergence. Next, I suggest four partly conflicting and partly supplementing hypotheses on policy convergence and divergence. The baseline theoretical model integrating these four hypotheses is an institutionalist approach. This institutional perspective is outlined to link the field of R&E to the scholarly field of europeanisation and to guide our empirical discussion. Next I present the data and methodology that underpins this study. I argue that the Norwegian case represents a ‘least likely case’ for studying processes of europeanisation of R&E policies. Our empirical analysis shows a patchy picture of europeanisation of R&E policies. Based

on existing bodies of literature and official documentation from the EU and Norway this final section illuminates creeping supranational R&E policies at the EU level and moderate convergence of Norwegian R&E policies. This moderate level of adaptation, I argue, reflects a mix of moderate institutional linkages across levels of governance, moderate adaptational pressures from the EU, as well as policy path-dependencies.

This conclusion, however, should be treated with caution due to the lack of genuine empirical testing of the suggested hypotheses. The main purpose of this study is to suggest middle-range hypotheses on the convergence and divergence of R&E policies between the EU and Norway (cf. above). This article does not provide firm empirical tests of these hypotheses. Only some few empirical illustrations of policy convergence and divergence are provided on the basis of public documents and existing bodies of literature. To *test* the relative validity of each hypothesis we need regression analysis on data not yet available. However, the probability distributions generated from our analysis may serve as guidelines for future empirical studies.

## 2 Europeanisation Operationalised <sup>↑</sup>

How do we operationalise europeanisation? I argue that europeanisation equals transformational change in general, and with respect to government policies in particular. Transformational change denotes both the emergence of new supranational policies at the EU level and national adaptation towards these. Together, these aspects are phrased policy convergence. Policy convergence is measured and identified by “decreasing variations in relevant indicators” of EU and national policies (Martin and Simmons 1998:753). Far reaching convergence implies the replacement of existing national policies with a comprehensive new Community policy. More moderate convergence implies a merger or integration of Community and national policies (Héritier 2001:44). The lack of policy replacement or policy integration is labelled policy divergence. Policy divergence is measured and identified by increased variation in relevant indicators of policy. Hence, the distinction between policy convergence and divergence refers to the degree to which domestic policies are, or become more, similar to EU policies. This distinction has to do with the degree to which different policies appear like images of one another (policy isomorphoses) (Bennett 1991). Convergence is often seen as a fixed state of affairs, denoting policies ‘being more alike’. However, the concept of convergence also attributes a dynamic element of ‘becoming more alike’ (Bennett 1991:219). This latter conception of convergence, however, does not imply unidirectional or linear processes of convergence. Hence, this study suggests explicit and exclusive distinctions between what is considered europeanisation and what is not (Radaelli 2000).

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Different yardsticks might measure europeanisation (Olsen 2002). Scholars measure europeanisation by focusing on particular processes of policy shaping, policy-making, policy implementation and policy re-formulation at the EU and the national levels of governance (e.g. Rometsch and Wessels 1996). Other scholars emphasise particular institutional and constitutional traits of the EU together with aspects of institutional adaptation at the national level (e.g. Egeberg 2001; Knill 2001). This study, however, measures europeanisation mainly by particular aspects of policy output (e.g. Cram 1997). The degree of europeanisation is measured by assessing the degree of convergence in policy content across levels of governance (Kjellberg and Reitan 1995:21). The content of politics refer to the problems to be solved, the general and more specific objectives and goals to be reached, the normative basis for politics, as well as the instruments applied for implementation (Bennett 1991:218; Kjellberg and Reitan 1995). The europeanised policy, as operationalised above, is seen synonymous with the *convergence* of policy content across levels of governance. Non-europeanisation is viewed synonymous with *divergence* in policy content across levels of governance. Moreover, our assessment of policy convergence and divergence derives from official

policy documents, not from legal texts. Overall, the europeanisation of national R&E policy goes largely beyond legal ‘harmonisation’ and transposition. Policy convergence in this article has more to do with the advent of similar policy goals and policy rationales across levels of governance.

### 3 Four Hypotheses on Policy Convergence and Divergence <sup>↑</sup>

Different scholars have suggested different conceptions of ‘europeanisation’ due to competing ontological and epistemological stands and due to different empirical laboratories for study (Olsen 2002; Radaelli 2000). Conceptual disagreements also reflect different levels of abstraction (Knill and Lenschow 1998). One solution to this search of the ‘Nature of the Beast’ is to study europeanisation at the middle-range level. This section suggests a general institutionalist account of policy transformation and derive four middle-range hypotheses from this.

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The question of policy convergence and divergence in the context of the EU is a question of policy integration across levels of governance. Moreover, it is a question of what happens when pre-established national policies become part of another larger policy-making system, like the EU, which have policies that more or less correspond to these (Olsen 2001). According to Schattschneider (1960:71) EU policies contribute to a “mobilization of bias” of domestic policies when these policies “meet” EU policies. New-institutional perspectives in organisational analyses present several causal mechanisms of transformational change (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; March and Olsen 1989 and 1995; Peters 1999; Scott 1987). Rational choice institutionalism focuses on bounded rational choice constrained by institutional rules and procedures. Historical institutionalism emphasises policy path-dependencies and ‘lock-in’ effects. Sociological institutionalism addresses mechanisms of socialisation, persuasion, learning, the logic of appropriateness, etc. One common denominator of these institutional approaches is their emphasis on contextualised, endogenous policy dynamics. Attention is directed towards the way different institutional contexts mould policy differently. Institutions not only constrain policy change, as viewed by the rational choice and historical institutionalists, they also contribute to the initial construction and formation of policy, as considered by the sociological institutionalists.

Drawing on insights from the above institutional perspectives four partly supplementary and partly conflicting hypotheses on policy convergence and divergence are suggested in the following. Assuming that the europeanisation of policy reflects several different social mechanisms, our goal is to suggest four hypotheses that shed light on the different faces of the europeanisation of R&E policies. In the following, the first and second hypotheses account for policy convergence, whilst the third and fourth hypotheses explain policy divergence.

#### H1: Europeanisation due to policy differences <sup>↑</sup>

According to this first perspective the europeanisation of R&E policy is fostered by real and perceived *differences* across levels of governance with respect to the content of policy. *Adaptational pressures* stem arguably from real and perceived differences between national policies of R&E and the corresponding policies at the EU level (Cowles, Caporaso and Risse 2001:6). The causal mechanisms underlying this hypothesis rest on both rational choice institutionalist and sociological institutionalist accounts (Knill 2001). According to this hypothesis a high degree of policy difference is causally related to policy convergence.

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Moreover, we assume that the degree of policy difference is lower in old EU member-states than in non-member-states or “quasi-member-states” like Norway. EU member-states have been subject to legal sanctioning from the European Court of Justice, institutional learning processes and benchmarking exercises more closely than Norway. Member-states are also subject to the rationalist mechanism of shaming and shunning, according to which policy convergence results from changes in actors’ cost-benefit calculations. Accordingly, we assume that the degree of adaptational pressure is fairly *strong* in new EU member-states and in states that are located at the institutional rim of the EU – like Norway. This argument goes largely counter to Wessels and Rometsch (1996:357) who argue that, “with EC-membership [states] will start moving in the direction of europeanisation and convergence whereas countries outside the EC ... will not follow this direction until they have gained *full* membership” (emphasis added). Contrary to this, our first hypothesis assumes that the pressure for policy convergence is stronger in Norway than in established EU member-states.

## H2: Europeanisation due to institutional linkages <sup>↑</sup>

Reform processes seldom come alone and are seldom distinct from past and present reform processes. Reforms are often internally inconsistent and have points of resemblance with other ongoing processes. The borderlines between various reforms are often diffuse and difficult to identify by the reformers as well as by the observers. Reforms in one part of an organisation easily trigger reforms in another part of that same organisation, particularly if the organisation is internally tightly coupled (Krasner 1988).

The links between EU institutions and Norwegian governmental institutions have grown increasingly close and manifold in the 1990s. Due to closer formal and informal linkages across levels of governance reforms in EU’s R&E policies may penetrate the corresponding Norwegian policies. This argument stresses that the degree of adaptational pressures varies more between policy sectors and governmental institutions than between states. Assuming that European integration resembles a multi-speed Europe of differentiated integration, one could also assume that the distinction between EU membership and the EEA affiliation of Norway is moderate (Stubb 1996; Trondal 2002b). Norwegian government authorities and individual civil servants are in fact involved in the decision-making processes of the EU – through various expert committees and comitology committees (Schaefer et al. 2000). Such participation is likely to accompany adaptational pressures (Trondal 2001a). Phrased otherwise: there is a positive relationship between strong, institutionalised and routinised relationships between EU institutions and national institutions and the perceived adaptational pressure towards policy convergence.

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These arguments rest on institutional theory, contact theory, theories of elite socialisation and the ‘epistemic community’ literature (Haas 1992; Olsen 1996; Pollack 1998; Trondal 2001a). According to this argument the R&E policies of Norway might be fairly strongly europeanised. However, Norway remains formally a non-member of the Union and thus has no voting rights in the Commission, the Council of Ministers or the Parliament, let alone in other Union bodies. Consequently, Norwegian R&E policies are likely to become only moderately europeanised compared to the R&E policies of existing EU member-states.

This hypothesis supplements the first hypothesis presented above. Whereas H1 argues that policy convergence stems from real and perceived policy differences, H2 claims that policy convergence is fostered by normative, causal and epistemic consensus among elite actors due to institutional linkages across levels of governance. Hence, whereas the first hypothesis underscores differentiation as a catalyst of europeanisation the second hypothesis emphasises institutional interaction and normative and causal consensus among elite actors as the vital driving force of europeanisation.

Moreover, [H1](#) and [H2](#) generate different empirical expectations on the europeanisation of Norwegian R&E policies.

### **H3: Europeanisation filtered: Towards policy divergence** ↑

Notwithstanding the various reasons for policy convergence, EU policies are likely to be mediated, modified and filtered through pre-existing domestic policies, formal structures, legal rules and policy instruments (Héritier 2001; Knill 2001). Arguably, the adaptational pressure felt by national institutions and actors are weakened and modified when domestic policies are strongly integrated and/or non-compatible with EU policies (Checkel 2001:222; Johnston 2001:499). Hence, the sheer existence of strongly integrated and old national policies is assumed to limit the degree of policy convergence. In situations where these priors are weakly integrated and/or compatible with EU policies the adaptational pressure for policy convergence is expected to be stronger (Cowles, Caporaso and Risse 2001). Henceforth, I hypothesise that the differences between EU member-states and non-member countries are filtered and modified by pre-established national policies of R&E. The fact that Norwegian R&E policies are fairly strongly integrated and old are likely to accompany only modest degrees of policy convergence towards the EU.

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### **H4: The virtual reality of europeanisation** ↑

Finally, governmental policies are sometimes geared towards action and sometimes meant solely for talk and symbolic signalling (March 1984). Similarly, reforms in R&E policies may both reflect a sincere willingness towards instrumental implementation as well as symbolic window-dressing. This argument refers both to national and to EU policies (De Wit and Callan 1995:87). Accordingly, policy convergence “may have more to do with government fashions”... than with real patterns of policy convergence (Pollitt 2001:934). One empirical proxy of policy instrumentality is clarity, operability and consistency of various policies and the number of concrete policy instruments – like financial resources - suggested for implementation. According to Cerych and Sabatier (1986:13), “the ability to evaluate the extent of goal achievement is heavily contingent upon the clarity and consistency of the goals involved”. By contrast, unclear, opaque and non-consistent policies, and the lack of concrete suggestions for implementation indicates policy symbolism and hypocrisy. Moreover, we assume that the level of organisational hypocrisy and policy signalling increases to the extent that EU policy conflict and collide with existing national policies (Brunsson 1989). Accordingly, this hypothesis contradicts H1 stating that policy differences accompany substantive policy convergence. According to H4 we assume that policy differences between Norway and the EU accompany only symbolic policy convergence.

## **4 Data and Methodology: Comparing Norwegian and EU Policy** ↑

This study goes largely beyond the “horizontal” comparison between different domestic policies and applies a “vertical” comparative design between the policies of the EU and that of one nation-state (Norway). This vertical comparative design may measure the vertical convergence, integration and fusion of national and supranational policies in Europe. Moreover, relying on the logic of the ‘least likely research design’, this study focuses on the non-EU member-state Norway which we assume is less likely to converge towards the supranational policies of the EU than other EU member-states. This ‘least likely design’ thus rests upon the assumption that EU membership “matters” as to the degree of policy convergence domestically (cf. [H2](#) above).

This methodological logic, however, is not clear-cut when put to test. This is due to the fact that the EU membership versus non-membership distinction has become a continuum rather than a clear-cut dichotomy. Nation-states have different forms of affiliation to the EU as well as different degrees of interaction with different Union bodies (Egeberg and Trondal 1999; Stubb 1996; Trondal 2002b). Due to the EEA agreement(1), Norwegian decision-makers are integral members of the decision-making cycles of the European Commission (Trondal 2001a). Despite having rejected full EU membership, Norway is currently an associate member of the EU through various sectoral treaties and agreements with the Union on areas like in the Justice and Home Affairs, Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Internal Market and R&E. In the field of R&E the distinction between EU membership and non-membership is fairly ambiguous due to Norway's participation in EU's educational and research programmes (Olsen 1998; St.meld. nr. 40 (1993-94)). Consequently, the distinction between insiders and outsiders of the Union have become increasingly blurred (Trondal 2002b). Consequently, the 'least likely research design' does not perfectly match the Norwegian case.

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EU governance has become vital for Norway in many respects (Olsen 1996). The Norwegian government adapt to EU regulations and standards on a daily basis (Claes and Tranøy 1999; Egeberg and Trondal 1997; Jacobsson, Læg Reid and Pedersen 2001; Sollien 1995). Moreover, Norwegian civil servants from the Ministry of Education and Research and from the Research Council participate in Commission expert committees and comitology committees on a weekly basis. One of the most notable effects of EU governance in R&E is that some Norwegian decision-makers participate, interact and learn directly at the EU level. Norwegian civil servants attend several preparatory and comitology committees in relation to the Framework Programmes (FP) of the EU (Olsen 1998; Statskonsult 1999; Trondal 1998). Studies demonstrate that few Norwegian directorates are more intensively involved in the EU committees than the Norwegian Research Council (Trondal 1998). The Commission committees and the comitology committees assist the Commission in relation to thematic and horizontal programmes under each FP.

In sum, the Norwegian participatory status in the EU resembles that of the EU member-states in the field of R&E. Consequently, EU governance has become increasingly relevant for Norwegian R&E policies (cf. the next section). However, Norway remains formally a non-member of the Union and thus has no voting rights in the Commission, the Council of Ministers or the European Parliament, let alone in other Union bodies. Hence, Norway represents an important empirical laboratory for studying processes of europeanisation of national policies in general, and within the field of R&E in particular. This owes to the fact that Norwegian R&E policies are likely to be affected less by EU policies than that of other EU member-states (cf. H2). Hence, the case of Norway is 'critical' in order to assess and explain processes of policy convergence in EU member-states as well as in the new applicant states in Central Europe.

Taking into account the main purpose of this article (cf. *above*), we do not present or analyse primary empirical data. Our major empirical sources are official policy documents of the R&E policies of EU and Norway, supplemented by existing bodies of empirical literature. However, studies on the europeanisation of R&E policies are currently scarce. I utilise those bodies of literature currently available to assess the degree of convergence of EU and Norwegian R&E policies. Secondly, we employ Commission Green and White Papers on R&E to disentangle its R&E policy. We do not consider policy documents from the Council of Ministers or the European Parliament because Norway is institutionally affiliated only to the European Commission. Finally, Norwegian Green and White Papers on R&E are utilised to analyse the degree of policy convergence towards the EU.

The time frame of the following sketchy empirical illustration is shortly before and after 2000. By using this short time frame we are likely to observe only marginal degrees of policy change. This time horizon may thus strengthen the ‘least likely research design’ that goes with the Norwegian case. Accordingly, if we observe policy convergence in Norwegian R&E policies at the edge of the millennium, this finding should be considered fairly robust.

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## 5 Europeanisation Illustrated <sup>↑</sup>

This section applies the empirical data described above to shed light on our four hypotheses on policy convergence and divergence. The following discussion, however, does not provide a conclusive test of each hypothesis, only illustrations of their probable validity. We reveal *preliminary empirical illustrations* of creeping supranational R&E policies at the EU level as well as Norwegian adaptation towards these. Taking into account the fact that the question of europeanisation is under-researched within the field of R&E, the conclusiveness of the following empirical analysis should be considered provisional.

### 5.1 Creeping Supranational Policies <sup>↑</sup>

EU policies generally include common policies (e.g. competition, agriculture, internal market), shared policies governed in tandem by the EU and domestic authorities (e.g. research, structural funds), and policies primarily governed by domestic governments (e.g. culture, education). The policies of R&E could be considered a shared portfolio of the EU and the member-states, however with a strong component of national sovereignty (European Commission 2002, 20; Neave 2001; Nòvoa 2001). ‘Supranational policies’ refer to the emergence of ‘independent’ and ‘de-nationalised’ policies at the EU level.<sup>(2)</sup>

EU institutions engage in regulative, re-distributive, re-interpretative and re-organising activities on a daily basis (Olsen 1996:264-266). In the field of R&E the main emphasis has been on regulative and re-distributive measures. The regulative activities include mainly secondary legislation through the *acquis communautaire*. Whereas the higher educational policy of the EU is mainly a product of regulatory action, the research policy has primarily been re-distributive through the FP (Banchoff 2002:13). However, EU activities in R&E have increasingly targeted other measures as well, both with respect to the funding of R&E, the creation of a European identity among international mobile students and teachers, and the formal organisation of national degree systems, grade systems, and the whole symphony of national R&E. Hence, the R&E policy of the EU has become increasingly complex and penetrates large aspects of academic life.

Recent White and Green Papers from the European Commission, particularly on the recent “European Research Area” (ERA) initiative (cf. [below](#)), reflect a strong determination and commitment to develop and strengthen an independent EU policy of R&E (e.g. European Commission 2000a; Foss 2001). According to the European Commission (2000a:7), “[w]e need to go beyond the current static structure of ‘15 + 1’ towards a more dynamic configuration”.

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Efforts towards EU co-operation in the field of higher education are more recent than in the field of research. Yet, an independent supranational EU policy of R&E has gradually emerged in the 1980s

and 1990s. Whereas EU initiatives in R&E were mainly supportive to nation-state policies prior to the 1980s, 1983 witnessed the emergence of a ‘supranational turn’ in R&E policy. This turn has gained increased momentum thereafter (Beukel 2001; De Wit and Verhoeven 2001:187; Field 1997; Ruberti 2001). The Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties have later confirmed this supranational shift, however, counterbalanced against the principle of *subsidiarity* (Beukel 2001). Reflecting this supranational turn, European ideas and visions increasingly dominate the Commission’s arguments for closer EU co-operation in R&E (e.g. European Commission 2000a). Less emphasis is put on arguments of supplementing, strengthening and co-ordinating national policies of R&E (Beukel 2001).

The move from intergovernmental co-operation towards supranational governance in R&E, however, has not been a swift and abrupt process (Karlsen 1994). The advent of increased supranational governance in R&E has not come about through careful planning and grand visions alone. It reflects very much the accumulated effects of Commission initiatives and decisions by the European Court of Justice during the 1980s and 1990s (Field 1997). Hence, despite the lack of Treaty provisions, the EU has achieved significant results in R&E (European Commission 2002:21). At the end of the 1990s the supranational turn in EU’s R&E policies also reflect the strengthened supranational competencies of the Union more generally (cf. European Commission 2002). However, this supranational turn in R&E policies also parallels the so-called “Bologna process” aimed at constructing an “European Higher Education Area” (De Wit and Verhoeven 2001:186; Laffan, O’Donnell and Smith 2000).

EU’s re-distributive activities in R&E have mainly centred around the various higher education and research *programmes* promoting mobility and various forms of transnational networking (Laffan, O’Donnell and Smith 2000:86). Inter-European mobility and networking are still the main goals of EU’s R&E programmes. Moreover, in addition to the goal of strengthening EU’s economic and technological competitiveness worldwide, an important goal of current EU programmes is to construct a “People’s Europe” and an “ever-closer Union”. Hence, notions of European citizenship and the construction of a common European identity supplement the instrumental, economic and market rationales of EU’s R&E policies. However, the latter rationales still predominate Commission White Papers on higher education and research as they are reflected in the research priorities of the 5<sup>th</sup>. FP (e.g. Council of the European Union 2001). Moreover, the 6<sup>th</sup>. FP is basically oriented towards technological and economic fields of research. The theme “Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society” is the only theme from the social sciences and humanities included in the 6<sup>th</sup>. FP.

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Illustrative of the focus on societal utility in current EU research policy, “[r]esearch will need to play an even stronger and more central role in the workings of Europe’s economy and society” (European Commission 2000b:3). Even more, EU’s research support measures should increasingly “be designed to exert a more ‘structuring’ effect on European research than is the case at present” (European Commission 2000b:4). Hence, long-term basic research seems not to be the main focus of current EU research policy.

The Bologna declaration (1999) has called for a new architecture of European higher education. Its ambition is to create an open European area for higher education, create systems for international recognition of degrees, strengthen intra-European mobility, and the competitiveness of European higher education internationally. The launch of the European Commission “ERA” initiative on January 18 2000 (European Commission 2000a) follows up on the intergovernmental declarations from Bologna and has introduced new dynamics to EU’s R&E policies (Hackl 2001; Van der Wende 2001). The ERA initiative is “the most ambitious effort yet to co-ordinate and integrate research

policy in Europe” (Banchoff 2002:13). This is also an effort to move EU’s research policy from mere distributive towards more regulative measures. Moreover, the ERA initiative is illustrative of the supranational turn in EU’s R&E policies. A key concept in the ERA initiative is the so-called “European value added” which underscores the justifications for independent and supranational R&E activities at the EU level. The ERA initiative aims at strengthening and building new research networks in Europe, increase EU funding, increase the coherence of national implementation of research activities, and increase the mobility of students and researchers (European Commission 2000a:8). In order to implement the ERA, the Commission adopted the 6<sup>th</sup> FP on February 21 2001 (Council of the European Union 2001; European Commission 2001a). Both the ERA and the 6<sup>th</sup> FP indicate that the intergovernmental dynamics from the “Bologna process” are lifted to a supranational level of governance. The primary focus of the 6<sup>th</sup> FP illustrates this supranational turn: Focusing and integrating Community research; structuring the European Research Area; and strengthening the foundations of the European Research Area (Council of the European Union 2001: Annex 1).

Whereas the declarations and agreements ratified under the “Bologna process” are legally non-binding, the Commission has followed up the ERA initiative by benchmarking mechanisms, concrete guidelines for implementation, etc (Hackl 2001). The ERA initiative has thus been accompanied by concrete suggestions for implementation (cf. European Commission 2000b, 2001c and 2001d).(3) At present, however, the political momentum of the ERA is temporarily weakened due to fierce debates about the 6<sup>th</sup>. FP (Banchoff 2002:16).

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To conclude this section, we see the advent of creeping supranational R&E policies at the EU level (Ruberti 2001). EU’s resource base is limited but its regulatory activities have increased substantially in the 1990s. The next section addresses the question: Does this supranational turn accompany transformational changes of Norwegian policies of R&E. According to Adam (2001:6), “[n]ational autonomy and sovereignty in the domain of higher education ... have never before been challenged on such a scale”.

## 5.2 Aspects of Policy Convergence and Divergence <sup>↑</sup>

Studies demonstrate that processes of policy convergence are not unidirectional and vary between different policy sectors (Claes and Tranøy 1999; Mallea et al. 2001). Some aspects of government and governance also converge more than others – i.e. talk more than decisions, and decisions more than actions (Brunsson 1989). The level of policy convergence and divergence also varies across time and between different European nation-states (Pollitt 2001). Hence, studies reveal a patchy picture of policy convergence and divergence (Rometsch and Wessels 1996; Steunenber and Dimitrova 1999). This section illuminates that mixed patterns of policy convergence of Norwegian R&E policies is fostered by moderate institutional linkages across levels of governance (H2), moderate adaptational pressures from the EU (H1) as well as national filtering processes (path-dependencies) (H3). We observe few examples of symbolic policy convergence in the Norwegian case (H4).

At the EU level there is a fairly clear distinction between policy formation and policy implementation.(4) Correspondingly, policy initiatives like the “European Research Area” are subject to gaps between EU policy formulation and domestic policy implementation. Both soft law and community legislation are to be implemented by domestic administrations, according to national administrative law and practice (Graver 2002:67). Due to the weak implementation capacities of the EU, the possibilities for EU initiatives and policies to be properly implemented at the national level

depend on the willingness and capacities of member-state authorities to ensure that they are transposed and enforced effectively, fully and on time (European Commission 2001b:25). Consequently, we might arrive at a potential principal-agent problem to the extent that national policies of R&E diverge substantially from the corresponding policies of the EU. Lack of compatibility in this respect is assumed to accompany problems of national implementation of EU policy (cf. [H3](#) and [H4](#)) (Cerych and Sabatier 1986:17). However, these problems are assumed salvaged due to adaptational pressures from the EU ([H1](#)) and institutionalised linkages across levels of governance ([H2](#)).

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### A Patchy Picture of Policy Convergence

The europeanisation of R&E policies is reflected among a complex set of actors and within different government institutions. Those few empirical studies that go beyond the Norwegian case indicate that domestic government institutions converge with respect to their R&E policies (Adam 2001; Nòvoa 2001). Moreover, studies that cover other policy areas than R&E also indicate that different domestic institutions adapt differently to EU policies (Bulmer and Burch 1998; Goetz 2000; Jacobsson, Læg Reid and Pedersen 2001; Olsen 1996; Spanao 1998; Trondal 2001b). In the case of Norwegian R&E policies, dynamics of path-dependency ([H3](#)) are indeed reflected in Government Green and White Papers. For example, the recent Norwegian White Paper on R&E consider EU's ERA initiative largely supplementary and supportive to pre-existing Norwegian policy priorities (e.g. St.meld.nr. 27 (2000-2001)). Moreover, the Norwegian Research Council (2001a:1) states that it "is generally in agreement with the proposed specific programmes implementing the 6<sup>th</sup>. Framework Programme". The Research Council (2001b:1) also agrees "with the overall Scientific and Technological Objectives as well as the main targets for the new Framework Programme...".

Van der Wende (1997a) argues that bad records of national adaptation towards supranational R&E policies reflect 'missing links' between national policies of R&E and national policies of internationalisation. However, due to the distinction between national and international politics becoming increasingly blurred, the 'missing links' between R&E and internationalisation is generally strengthened (Trondal and Veggeland 1999). In the Norwegian case I argue that the convergence of R&E policies partly reflect those institutionalised linkages ([H2](#)) that have emerged between the EU and Norwegian ministries and agencies. In example, the participation of Norwegian decision-makers in the policy-making processes of the European Commission has strengthened the perceived need to co-ordinate the "Brussels strategies" among these actors (Schaefer et al. 2000; Trondal 2001a). In example, the Norwegian R&E policies seem fairly strongly co-ordinated vertically between the ministry level and the Research Council. Studies demonstrate that Norwegian ministries that attend the decision-making processes of the Commission evoke *intra-sectoral* co-ordination activities *ex ante* in order to arrive at a coherent voice towards the EU (e.g. Trondal 2001a). One apparent effect of institutional linkages between domestic government actors and the EU is that Norwegian policies of R&E have become increasingly intertwined and intermeshed with the corresponding policies of the EU. Hence, institutional linkages across levels of governance accompany policy convergence across these levels ([H2](#)).

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The EEA agreement has introduced legal sanctioning mechanisms by the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) in Norwegian R&E policy. The adaptational pressure on Norwegian R&E policies ([H1](#)) is thus strengthened by ESA's legal actions. Despite the introduction of the EEA agreement in

1994 accompanied no immediate legal changes in Norwegian R&E legislation (Sollien 1995), the secondary R&E legislation has been substantially modified thereafter. Recently, the ESA sent a reasoned opinion to Norway on the question of “equal treatment of men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions” (ESA 2001). This reasoned opinion refers to female professorships at Norwegian universities, directly financed on the State Budget. This is a case of supranational law meeting national policy priorities. Moreover, this is a case of conflicting interpretation of the constitutive aspects of a particular policy: Are female professorships to be considered as gender policy (the Norwegian position) or as competition policy (ESA’s position)? The conclusion of this case has yet to be drawn, but one likely outcome is that the case is put on trial in the EFTA Court. Conflicts between EU Competition Law and Norwegian gender policies are likely to go in favour of the former in cases such as this. Accordingly, the Norwegian policy on the equal treatment of men and women is to be *re-categorised* as competition policy through legal ruling. This example reveals that policy differences between the EU and Norway accompany processes of policy convergence through legal enforcement (H1).

More generally, studies of policy adaptation towards supranational governance in R&E conclude that “the net tendency ... is probably more convergent than divergent” (Green 1997:179). In the Norwegian case, one convergent trend is that Norwegian policy-makers and policy documents have directed increased *attention* towards the emerging EU policies of R&E. An increased Norwegian awareness of intra-European student and research mobility, particularly through institutional agreements, is an apparent policy effect of EU’s R&E programmes (Innst.S.nr. 337 (2000-2001):16; Olsen 1998; St.meld. nr. 27 (2000-2001); St.prp. nr. 1 (2001-2002):152; Van der Wende 2001). Convergent trends in Norwegian R&E policy that most directly relate to EU policy have to do with the question of student mobility, vocational training, and institutional co-operation (Van der Wende 1997b:238). EU’s emphasis on institutionalised student and research mobility in Europe is reflected in the greater emphasis that Norwegian authorities put on the implementation of a harmonised degree structure (ECTS) and a harmonised grade structure (bachelor and master). These policy changes are likely to reflect a mix of perceived policy differences (H1) and learning processes due to institutional linkages across levels of governance (H2). Future empirical studies are needed to illuminate the relative validity of each hypothesis.

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Recent Norwegian White Papers on R&E contain no significant elements of symbolic window-dressing (H4). This is demonstrated in the newly suggested financial model for higher education in Norway, where the annual budgets of each university and state college is directly linked to their success in promoting international student mobility (St.prp.nr. 1 (2001-2002)). More generally, we observe tendencies whereby national policies of most European states converge towards the corresponding EU policies with respect to their basic conceptions of the constitutive principles of R&E (Nòvoa 2001; Van der Wende 2001). A greater emphasis is put on the economic and competitive rationales of R&E, not only in rhetoric but also in practice – as illustrated in the new financial model for higher education in Norway.

However, the supranational turn in R&E at the EU level has accompanied only moderate transformational changes in Norwegian policies of R&E (cf. also the next sub-section). At present, Norwegian policies of R&E seem more strongly affected and penetrated by broader intergovernmental dynamics in R&E, for example illustrated by the “Bologna process” and the WTO negotiations on the “General Agreement on Trade in Services” (GATS) (Field 1997; Van der Wende 2001). There are several unresolved questions when it comes to the status of R&E in a global economy with multilateral trade liberalisation. One of the most pertinent issues relates to the global free trade agreements and whether higher education should be treated as “public good” or “tradable services” (Mallea et al. 2001).<sup>(5)</sup> The Bologna declaration has led to greater emphasis on

accreditation, mobility and lifelong learning. The GATS negotiations have put additional emphasis on the commodification of R&E, moving from a conception of “education for free” to “education for fee”. These aspects are also introduced in recent Norwegian White Papers on R&E. Whereas Norwegian R&E policies have traditionally rested on a mix of academic, cultural, political and economic rationales, recent reforms have been increasingly biased towards uni-dimensional arguments of cost-effectiveness and societal utility. Current Norwegian R&E policy should therefore be considered the result of existing national priorities and broader global trends towards the commodification and institutional de-regulation of R&E. Future studies need to illuminate the relative effect of these factors compared with the adaptational pressures from the EU (H1) and the institutional linkages between national government institutions and the EU (H2).

### 5.2.2 Aspects of Path-Dependencies

When studying the europeanisation of national R&E policies it is important to analyse how processes of policy convergence are modified and filtered by national institutions, policy priorities and established practises (H3 and H4). Studies of the europeanisation of domestic institutions and decision processes outside the field of R&E demonstrate that processes of national adaptation are path-dependent, subject to inertia and local resistance (e.g. Cowles, Caporaso and Risse 2001; Knill 2001; Olsen 2001).

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Generally, the field of R&E seems fairly resistant towards supranational governance, initiatives and actions (Van der Wende 1997a). For example, studies demonstrate that Norwegian R&E policies have moved in path-dependent directions in the 1990s (Olsen 1998). This is due to a strong institutionalisation of Norwegian policies of primary, secondary, higher education and research. Educational policies have played a major role in the nation-building processes of European nation-states, including Norway (Rokkan 1987). Most countries still see at least education as a “process of nation-building...” (Green 1997:181). This indicates that educational policies traditionally have been closer linked to national identities than research policies. Moreover, the EU has dealt with the field of research policy for longer periods of time than educational policy. Accordingly, Norwegian research policies are likely to converge more easily towards EU policies than the policies of higher education. This is especially so due to the EU FPs and the recent ERA initiative by the European Commission aimed at constructing a common European research policy (European Commission 2000a). For example, we are witnessing increased similarities between the thematic research priorities of the EU and the corresponding priorities of Norway (European Commission 2000a; St.meld. nr. 12 (2000-2001)). One of the key properties of these research priorities is their instrumental and utility approach in the field of industry and technology (Skoie 1995:10). Norwegian research policy, however, put greater emphasis on research in social science and humanities than the EU (Karlsen 1994). Norwegian authorities also emphasise the importance of long-term basic research, arguing that “instruments must be in place to balance short-term application and exploitation with long-term targeted basic research and generic activities” (Norwegian Research Council 2001b:3). This focus clearly diverges from the research priorities emphasised in EU’s 6<sup>th</sup> FP. This example illustrates path-dependent developments of Norwegian research policies, filtering the policy priorities and initiatives of the EU. Norway may thus be considered *both* a ‘reluctant European’ *and* an ‘adaptive non-member’ with respect to R&E policies (Olsen 1996; Sverdrup 1998).

## 6 Conclusions

Teichler (1996:341) considers research on the internationalisation of domestic policies of R&E as “occasional, coincidental, sporadic or episodic”. By contrast, the scholarly field of europeanisation

represents a growing “research industry”. The study of the europeanisation of R&E policies and institutions has yet to become one. The purpose of this article has been to link studies of R&E and studies of europeanisation closer together by suggesting four hypotheses on policy convergence and divergence. The main target of this study has been to generate and discuss some fairly general middle-range hypotheses on europeanisation. Future research should be targeted at further elaboration of these hypotheses as well as firm testing of each.

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Empirically, this article illuminates a mixed picture of europeanisation of R&E policies. We are witnessing creeping supranational R&E policies at the EU level, especially related to the question of European mobility of students and researchers and inter-European networking generally. EU measures in R&E have been mainly regulative and re-distributive, and less concerned with re-definition and reorganisation activities (Olsen 1996). Moreover, the R&E policies of the EU rest primarily on instrumental and utility rationales. However, despite the emergence of creeping supranational R&E policies, Norwegian R&E policies have converged only moderately towards these policies. The supranational turn in R&E has not yet contributed to a fundamental convergence of Norwegian R&E policy. This conclusion correspond to more general observations that, “[t]here are no signs ... that point towards changing the core responsibility of the nation-state in (higher) education” (De Wit and Verhoeven 2001:225). As seen from the Norwegian case, the EU does not fundamentally challenge the key elements of political, juridical, administrative, economic and cultural sovereignty of the nation-state in the field of R&E. Moderate levels of Norwegian adaptation towards EU’s R&E policies, I argue, reflects a mixed pattern of moderate adaptational pressures from the EU, policy path-dependencies and moderate institutional linkages across levels of governance. After all, Norway is still a non-member of the EU, she has no voting rights in Union bodies (H2), and the policy differences between Norway and the EU is moderate and they are seldom enforced by legal sanction mechanisms (H1). Moreover, the old and strongly integrated Norwegian R&E policy contribute to policy divergence (H3). The level of policy integration, however, is currently challenged by the wave of New Public Management reforms under way in Norwegian R&E. Finally, elements of symbolic policy convergence and ‘cheap talk’ are less evident in Norwegian R&E policies (H4).

The above conclusions should be considered as provisional and as an encouragement for further empirical research. Future empirical studies are indeed needed to *test* the relative validity of these hypotheses. Future studies should also introduce primary data based on interview and survey techniques. These data should thus supplement the documentary data discussed in this study for the purpose of detecting the causal pathways of policy convergence and divergence. Interview and survey data are particularly apt at analysing the conditions under which our four hypotheses merit validity. Hence, future studies of europeanisation should be middle-range.

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## Endnotes <sup>↑</sup>

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(1) The European Economic Area (EEA). According to the EEA agreement, art. 99-101, the European Commission should consult experts (including civil servants) from the EEA countries Norway, Island and Lichtenstein as well as experts from the EU Member-States. These consultations are often institutionalised in preparatory expert committees and comitology committees. Empirical research demonstrates that domestic civil servants attending these committees conceive themselves as national representatives more than independent experts and supranational agents. However, officials who participate in the preparatory expert committees consider themselves more as independent experts than those attending the comitology committees (Trondal 2001a and 2002b). Hence, Norwegian civil servants are integral members of the "decision-shaping" process of the European Commission, but not in the "decision-making" process – including the permanent staff of the Commission (including the "political level"), the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

(2) Other definitions of supranationalism have been suggested elsewhere (cf. Trondal 2002a).

(3) E.g. EU directives like 89/48/EEC and 92/51/EEC on the question of recognition of qualifications, versus the Bologna declaration stating a more general goal of developing a common framework of readable and comparable degrees (Adam 2001).

(4) This is however not true for the higher education programmes of the EU, such as ERASMUS and SOCRATES. Programmes such as these have established direct relationships between the EU and individual higher education institutions without the interference of national governments.

(5) We are also witnessing growing domestic counter-reactions against a global "commodification" of R&E. These domestic reactions are mainly directed towards the WTO negotiations on GATS and not so much towards the EU.

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