



The Academic Research Network
on Agencification
of EU Executive Governance

Call for Papers

Call for papers – Conference on *EU Agencies: Performance, Operability & the Accountability Overload: Squaring the Impossible Circle?*

Brussels, 12-13 April 2018

and

Call for papers – Young Researchers Master Class on *Agencification of EU executive governance*

Brussels, 11 April 2018

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Agencies are in the ascendancy. Having proven themselves to be indispensable within the oversight of the Single European Market, the form of the agency has been adopted as an instrument of institutional innovation within the broad sweep of EU policy-making and action, from the control of EU borders to the safeguarding of human rights. Yet, such institutional success has been accompanied by its own problems.

Existing within complex networks of scientific expertise, social & economic information-gathering and regulatory capacity, and answerable both to the institutions of the European Union, as well as to its member states, EU agencies present their own legitimacy issues. Whether real or perceived, concerns abound about the quality of expert-led decision-making within the democratic process and potential for agency-led decision-making to escape the control and oversight of the political institutions of the EU and member states.

The response to this conundrum has crystallised around the notion of agency 'accountability'. Seen as a partner mechanism to the autonomous nature of agencies, accountability has emerged both as a constitutional principle of European law, and a mechanism of institutional design for agencies. The accountability of agencies is conceived as a catch-all concept, whereby agencies are made accountable to their 'political' and institutional masters, their stakeholders, their epistemic communities, and even to the public, both at their founding and in their day-to-day activities.

The many and varied mechanisms of accountability applying to agencies are now so complex and so diverse that actors within and outside EU agencies have begun to identify a new paradox of 'accountability overload', which has its own potential to undermine the primary legitimacy of agency

action (output legitimacy) which is to be found in their functionality, or ability to get the job done. EU agencies are now facing unparalleled challenges:

- Attempting to execute broad and complex mandates
- Addressing new and complex issues of data management
- Seeking to maximise their financial resources in an era of continuing financial constraint
- Planning to maximise their capacities through inter-agency co-operation
- Searching for forms of institutional organisation which maximise their effectiveness.

Within this context, the **TARN conference** (12-13 April) on *performance, operability & the accountability overload* aims to take a closer look at the current challenges which EU agencies are facing in their operations and to ask the complementary question of whether we must modify the legitimating concept of 'agency accountability' in order to facilitate complex agency operations.

Abstracts for **the TARN conference** will be welcomed in four broad areas:

1. Input v output legitimacy

Why are we so obsessed with the accountability of agencies? Is it possible to conceive of a scheme of legitimation which pays far greater attention to the outcomes of agency activity?

2. Contemporary problems of agency operation

Often overlooked within academic discourse, agencies are experiencing complex operational difficulties with regard to their mandates, the demand for data protection policies, the need for the consolidation of agency functions and the complexities of budgeting within a period of financial constraint. Can agencies manage these challenges?

3. New notions of accountability of expertise?

Can we conceive of new, less onerous models of accountability of expertise? Above all, can we avoid an audit culture, in which the notion of 'accountability' becomes little more than a tick box exercise, and further develop accountability models which reflect new notions of 'social learning' within the generation of expert knowledge?

4. New models of institutional design

For the past 20 years, the debate on the institutional design of agencies has been dominated by the twin notions of accountability and independence, where the accountability of agencies actors is seen as a necessary corollary to their institutional autonomy. Is it possible to conceive of alternative models of institutional design, which both satisfy the constitutional principles of European law and enable agencies to function to the best of their capacities?

The **TARN workshop** (11 April) on *Agencification of EU executive governance*, is designed to showcase the work of young researchers (PhD researchers and researchers who have recently defended their PhD). At the workshop, young researchers will present their research which will be commented upon by senior academics. Abstracts will be welcomed that relate to EU agencies or agency-like bodies and/or agencification of EU executive governance more generally.

Please send your abstract to tarn@maastrichtuniversity.nl by Friday 9th February 2018. This deadline applies for both events.