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EU Education Policy Development Dynamics and Tools of the Open Method of Coordination

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the European education policy developments from the Rome Treaty provisions and the historical Council Decision of 2 April 1963 laying down General Principles for implementing a Common Vocational Training Policy to the present "Education and Training 2010" programme. The study emphasis on the governance and actors involved in the processes defines choice of multi-level governance paradigm as the theoretical framework

The research evidence base testifies to a close link of education policy and economic and political integration processes dynamics and its congruency with the four phases of economic integration and social policy development interdependence.

Though the Open Method of Coordination was established by the Lisbon European Council, the diverse tools of coordination emerging and maturing as the EU education policy was unfolding include almost a full specter of the OMC features in the dense and increasingly sophisticated legal and instrumental framework of the education cooperation whereas the soft and hard law tools are equally important. The study explores the tools and factors of success for OMC in Education and suggests that Education should be relegated to the group of policy areas where OMC is used as the main working method.

The analysis provides ground for a positivist assertion that as the EU education policy agenda will continue to deepen and expand remaining under the subsidiarity principle. The OMC tools in the area of Education policy have a high capacity for strengthening

both the horizontal and hierarchical interaction and shaping convergence of decisions and actions within the next decade.

Paper keywords: Education policy**,** common vocational training policy, institutional framework for cooperation in education, soft law and hard law tools, Open Method of Coordination.

Introduction

The EU policy in education is a major factor influencing all spheres of the EU member states social life and defining in many aspects the vector of European integration. But how specifically does (can) education policy help the European Community member states in effective implementation of their long term goals. The question is gaining importance in the last decade as Europe is pushing towards knowledge-based economy[1].

To help build the analytical foundations required for better understanding of education policy role in constructing integration in Europe this study undertakes several tasks. First, it offers an analytical framework for research of the political and normative dimensions of cooperation in education policy in the EU to reveal its interdependence with the economic and political integration processes. Second, it explores the principles, methods and tools of education policy development, assessing their comparative effectiveness and identifying factors of success for the OMC application in education. Third, it offers evidence that the OMC elements have been emerging long before the formal inauguration of the "new" governance framework by the Lisbon European Council. Fourth, it presents a hypothesis that education policy is a rich field for European integration theories application. Fifth, the study attempts to contribute to phasing away the contradiction between the education policy contribution towards the attainment of the EU objectives and its marginal role in the integration processes research mainly due to the fact that education remains with the competency of the member states.

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[1] In response to this demand a new research field is developing, communication is being organized to shape new discourse. Recent research includes: Corbett Anne. Universities and the Europe of Knowledge: Ideas, Institutions and Policy Entrepreneurship in European Union Higher Education Policy, 1955-2005. – Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. – 268 pp.; Bache Ian. The Europeanization of Higher Education. // Journal of Common Market Studies. – 2006, vol. 44(2). – Pp. 231-248.; 1976 – 2006: Thirty Years of European Cooperation in Education. / European Commission. – RAPID IP/06/212. – 23.02.2006.

The research of the main driving forces and principles, approaches and tools used in the developing European education policy; identification of the main success factors and regularities has direct practical implications for the EU-Russia cooperation within the Road Maps for the creation of the four Common Spaces, foremost the common space on research, education and culture in accordance with the main provisions of the Bologna Process. Understanding of the historical, political, normative foundations of the European education policy may have significant impact on development of the institutional framework for cooperation in the field beyond the current PCC.

Analytical framework

Evidence base of the study includes the Rome Treaty and other Treaties' provisions, official documents including Council Directives, Regulations, Resolutions, Decisions, Conclusions; minutes of the Council of Education meetings; "Education and Training 2010 Programme" documents[2], EC Proposals and Recommendations, reports of the working groups, EC official analytical and statistical data, other EU institutions and independent expert institutions documents[3].

The **temporal spectrum** embraces the period from the end of the 50th to 2007.

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[2] 2006 Joint Interim Report of the Council and the Commission on progress under the "Education & Training 2010 work programme" (February 2006) http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/c_079/c_07920060401en00010019.pdf;

"Education & Training 2010" – The success of the Lisbon Strategy hinges on urgent reforms. Joint Interim Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe (February 2004) http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/jir_council_final.pdf;

Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of Education and training systems in Europe. Work programme of the Education Council in cooperation with the Commission (February 2002). http://europa.eu/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2002/c_142/c_14220020614en00010022.pdf;

Future objectives of education and training systems. Education Council report (February 2001). http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/rep_fut_obj_en.pdf

[3] External evaluation of ERASMUS: institutional and national impact. European Commission DGEC. November 2004;

Ex post evaluation of the curriculum development projects funded in the framework of Socrates 1997-2001. DG Education and Culture. February 2005.

Interim Evaluation Report of the cooperation programmes in Higher education and Training between the European union and Canada and between the European Union and the United States. European Commission DGEC. March 2005;

Report from the Commission to the Council on the interim evaluation of the third phase of the Tempus programme. Brussels, 08.03.2004. COM(2004) 157 final.

Report from the Commission to the Council Interim evaluation report on the results achieved and on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates' Brussels, 8.3.2004 COM(2004) 153 final.

Choice of the **multi-level governance as theoretical framework** is defined by the study emphasis on the governance and actors involved processes. Though education policy yields equally rich ground for other analytical paradigms.

Thus, neo fuctionalism with its transformative nature rooted in observation of gradual, normal, unobtrusive exchanges across a wide range of actors[4] will find in education plenty of evidence in support of and for further development of its key concepts such as the central institutions (EC) role to act as a "precipitating unity" and activate socioeconomic processes affecting policy making through generation of consensus and new patterns of interaction impacting the overall system. Education policy also features spill over (from sector vocational education and training into higher and general education and subsequently into LLL) based on entrepreneurial expansive behavior of the central institution, activation of elites, facilitated as the participating groups build a tradition of consultations and shared values.

Karl Deutsch's proposition that the sense of community among states would be a function of the level of communication between states depending on shared and compatible values and expectations held by politically relevant strata, incorporated in political institutions and habits of political behavior, has found expression in the EU education policy aimed at stimulating communication processes and mobility of persons, building links of communication at various levels of education, balancing the flow of transactions in terms of initiatives, stimuli and opportunities.

Institutionalism with its focus on the effects of institutions as intervening variables will find in the education policy a proliferation of data on employing discourse and communicative actions as a powerful strategic tool for shaping and deploying ideas, beliefs, knowledge, norms, thus influencing preferences and loyalties of the public.

Actor based policy network analysis can generate stimulating evidence for empirical verification of its hypotheses and as well as agenda for development as "clusters of actors" in education policy sector are gaining capacity to exert influence on policy making at different levels both through serving as venues for pooling and exchanging information, mediation, compromise, and norms creating and reinforcing.

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[4] Philippe C. Schmitter (2003) "Neo- Neofunctionalism" in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (eds), European Integration Theory.Oxford university press.

The study considers the EU education policy development as a continuous process of setting consensual goals for society and intervening (at different levels) in it in order to achieve these goals[5]. It centers on the premises that decision-making competencies are shared by actors at different levels, and •national "political arenas are interconnected rather than nested"; "states are an integral and powerful part of the EU, but they no longer provide sole interface between supranational and subnational arenas"[6] conceding a share of influence and responsibility to other actors such as education networks and epistemic communities.

The education system was analyzed as a subsystem of the regional integration processes system, thus the study looked into education policy through the chronology and historical context of the political, economic and social developments reflected and documented in the key acts, decisions, conclusions, resolutions etc. The table listing the chronology of the documents and events allowed for a quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis included the number of various kinds of decisions made and carried out in education, whereas qualitative analysis looked at their distribution across the period, correlations and trends in dynamics between the spheres.

Key Findings

Interdependence with the economic and political integration processes

The evidence base comprises 106 different types of motions plus thirteen Communications from the Commission and five reports[7] indicating a steady growth in the intensity of the common deliberations and decisions (see chart 1) in the education and an expected inclination in favor of resolutions and decisions.

Table 1.

Type of motion	Number
Resolutions	37
Decisions	25

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[5] Yachtenfuchs M. and Kohler-Koch B. in Governance and Institutional Development.

[6] Marks G., Hooge L., Blank K. European Integration from the 1980s: State-Centric v. Multi-Level Governance

[7] The word "motion" was used to denote all types of acts. Only the most vital communications and reports were included into the count, such as "Investing efficiently in education and training: an imperative for Europe". (Communication from the Commission. Brussels, 10.01.2003 COM (2002) 779 final), or "Modernizing education and training: a vital contribution to the prosperity and social cohesion in Europe" 2006 Joint Interim report of the Council and the Commission on the progress under the "Education and Training 2010" work programme (Council of the European Union. Brussels, 6 March 2006, 7022/06. EDUC 49 SOC 112); though many other reports including those on the results of the education programmes evaluation have been included in the study.

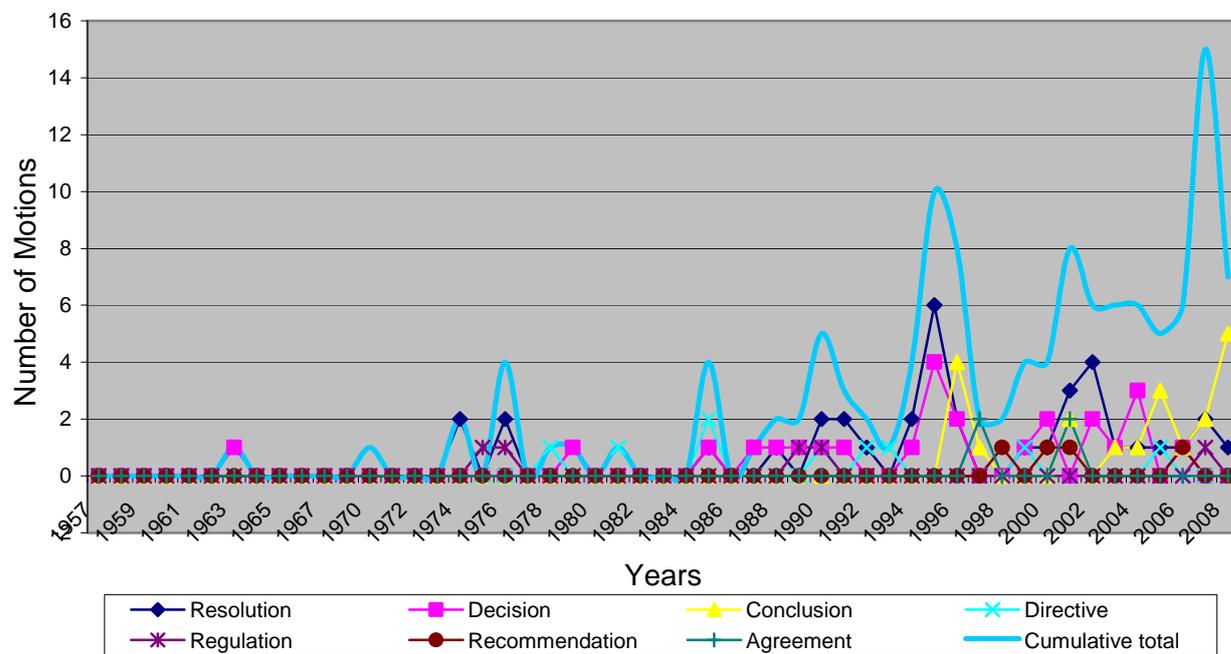| Conclusions	20
Directives	9
Regulations	4
Recommendations	4
Agreements	4
General guidelines	1
Convention	1
Annex VII to Agreement on the European Economic Area — Mutual recognition of professional qualifications — List provided for in Article 30	1
Subtotal	**106**
Declaration	3
EC communication (Ind-s, Lingu,Mundus, Teachers, EQF, JR)	6
Report	2
Ministers meeting "Education unites"	1
Total	**118**

The dense fabric and increasingly sophisticated architecture of the education cooperation legal and instrumental framework integrates tools of soft law, such as Resolution, Conclusions, Recommendations, numerous EU programmes in education; and hard law, such as Directives, adopted to regulate mutual recognition of professional qualifications from the first Council Directive 78/1026/EEC of 18 December 1978 concerning the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in veterinary medicine, including measures to facilitate the effective exercise of the right of establishment and freedom to provide services[8] to the recent Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of the professional qualifications[9]. The four cases of Regulations provide for setting up and financing of the CEDEFOP and ETF. However, the majority of decisions are formalized through softer tools.

The evidence base confirms a close link of education policy developments with the dynamics of economic and political integration processes and its congruency with the four modification phases of economic integration and social policy development interdependence (see chart and annex 1).

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[8] Official Journal L 362, 23.12.1978, p. 0001—0006 (31978L1026)) Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament.
[9] Official Journal L 255. 30.09.2005, p. 0022—0142) // Text with EEA relevance.

Chart 1. Education policy developments distribution and correlation with the chronology of European integration events

1951 – 1969	1970 – 1980	1981 – 1989	1990 – 1999	2000 – 2006	
1962 The second phase of transition to common market	1970 Werner's plan 1972 Decision to convert the entire relationship into a EU before the end of the decade 1974 Decision on the European Council	1981 Gensher-Colombo plan 1985 Milan summit decision to complete the single market establishment by 1992, decision to convene the IGC 1985 IGC on the SEA 1986 SEA signed 1989 Decisions on the EMU and IGC	1990 Decision on the EMU second stage of the EMU 1990 Launch of the IGC 1991 Maastricht Treaty signed 1993 Adoption of the Action plan on Employment 1997 Amsterdam Treaty signed 1999 Amsterdam Treaty effective	2000 Lisbon Agenda 2000 The Treaty of Nice	2006-2008

In the initial phase, end of the fifties and the sixties, beginning of the Customs union and the Common market construction, high rate of economic growth and relatively low unemployment, we see nascent coordination in education. The second phase, the seventies' economic crisis and exchange rate volatility, deterioration of the social environment and increased unemployment bringing to disintegration tendencies pushed forward introduction of active social policy and increased funding of social programmes, including vocational education and training. In the third phase of the eighties, completion of the single market demanding measures aimed at enhancing real

mobility, necessitated adopting of the series of directives and the decision on Erasmus[10].

The fourth phase, the nineties, marked by the development and implementation of the EMU, signing of the Treaty of European Union, and the fifth accession preparations, whereas effective employment policy becomes a major social and economic objective of the EU, is characterized by real interdependence of economic integration and social development processes. The EU member-states enhanced cooperation in education through intensifying targeted action programmes[11]; building up mechanisms for comparability of qualifications[12]; improving mechanisms for information exchange and analysis[13]; refining procedures for cooperation[14].

Finally, two new phases of the current decade were launched by the Lisbon March 2000 Council. Development, adoption and beginning of the "Education and Training 2010" programme implementation in 2000-2005[15]. And deepening and refinement of cooperation within the Programme following the 2006 joint interim report of the Council and the Commission on progress "Modernising education and training: a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe"[16].

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[10] Council Decision of 15 June 1987 adopting the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (Erasmus), 87/327/ EEC//Official Journal L 166, 25.06.1987, p. 0020—0024)

[11] Council Decision of 6 December 1994 establishing an Action programme for the implementation of a European community vocational training policy//Official Journal L 340, 29.12.1994, p. 0008—0024.
Decision № 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 14 march 1995 establishing the Community action programme "Socrates"//Official Journal L087, 20.04.1995, p. 0010—0024.

[12] Council Resolution on the Comparability of vocational training qualifications//Official Journal C 109, 24.04.1991, p. 0001—0001,
Directive 1999/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 June 1999 establishing a mechanism for recognition of qualifications in respect of the professional activities covered by the Directives on liberalization and transitional measures and supplementing the general system for the recognition of qualifications//Official Journal L 201/77, 31.07.1999.

[13] Resolution of the Council and Ministers of Education, 6 December 1990 concerning the Eurydice Information network in the European Community, 41990X1231 (07), Official Journal C329, 31.12.1990),
Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers meeting within the Council of 25 November 1991 on education research and statistics in the European community//Official journal C 321, 12.12.1991, p. 0001—0002),
Council resolution of 5 December 1994 on the promotion of education and training statistics in the European Union//Official journal C 374, 30.12.1994, p. 0004—0006).

[14] Council resolution of 17 December 1999 on "Into the new millennium": developing new working procedures for European cooperation in the field of education and training"//Official Journal C 8/6. 12.01.2000 (2000/C 8/04).

[15] Detailed work programme on the follow up of the objectives of educational and training systems in Europe. Outcome of proceedings. Council of the European Union. Brussels, 20 February 2002. 6365/02 EDUC 27.

[16] "Modernizing education and training: a vital contribution to the prosperity and social cohesion in Europe" 2006 Joint Interim report of the Council and the Commission on the progress under the

A steep increase of in the number of actions in education which began in the nineties'
continues throughout the following decade as chart 2 illustrates.

Chart 2. Cumulative number of motions in the sphere of education
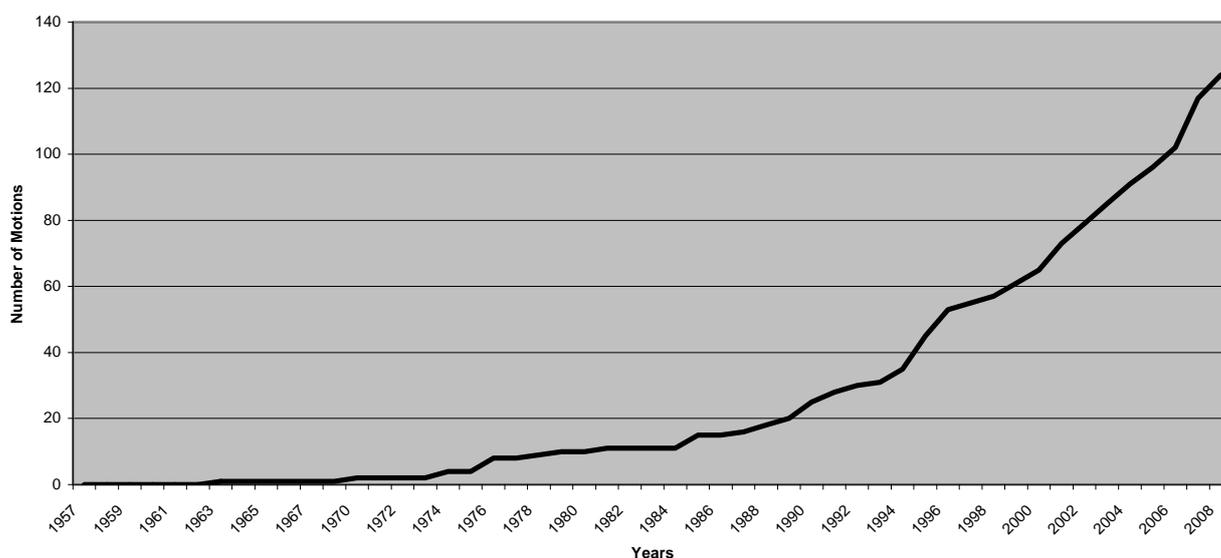
Though subsidiarity and proportionality principles and the intergovernmental nature
remain the cornerstone of the education policy cooperation, the evidence base confirms
its steady deepening[17] (inclusion of quality issues is one example[18], development of the
EQF is another[19]) and widening (spilling over into the field of language learning[20] and

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"Education and Training 2010" work programme, Council of the European Union. Brussels, 6 March
2006, 7022/06. EDUC 49 SOC 112).

[17] Enhanced European cooperation on Vocational education training - Council Conclusions. Council of
the European Union. Press release. 2762nd Council Meeting. Brussels, 13-14 November 2006. 14965/06
(Presse 309).

[18] Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in
higher education, 98/561/EC//Official Journal L 270/56;
Proposal for a recommendation of the Council and of the European parliament on further cooperation in
quality assurance in higher education, Brussels, 12.10.2004, COM (2004) 642 final).

[19] Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of
the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. Commission of the European Communities.
Brussels, 5.9.2006. COM (2006) 479 final. 2006/0163 (COD).

[20] Council Resolution of 14 February 2002 on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning
in the framework of the implementation of the objectives of the European Year of Languages
2001//Official Journal C 50/1. 23.02 2002.
"A new framework strategy for multilingualism" Communication from the Commission to the Council,
the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the
Regions, Brussels, 22.11.2005 COM(2005) 596 final.

lifelong learning[21]. The European (supranational?) dimension and role of the European institutions are gradually expanding. Meetings of the Council in its Education and Youth formation have become as frequent as three times a year, establishing a practice of two formal and one informal meeting a year. Funding of the Community action programmes is increasing[22].

Chart 3. Contribution of the EC to the education policy development
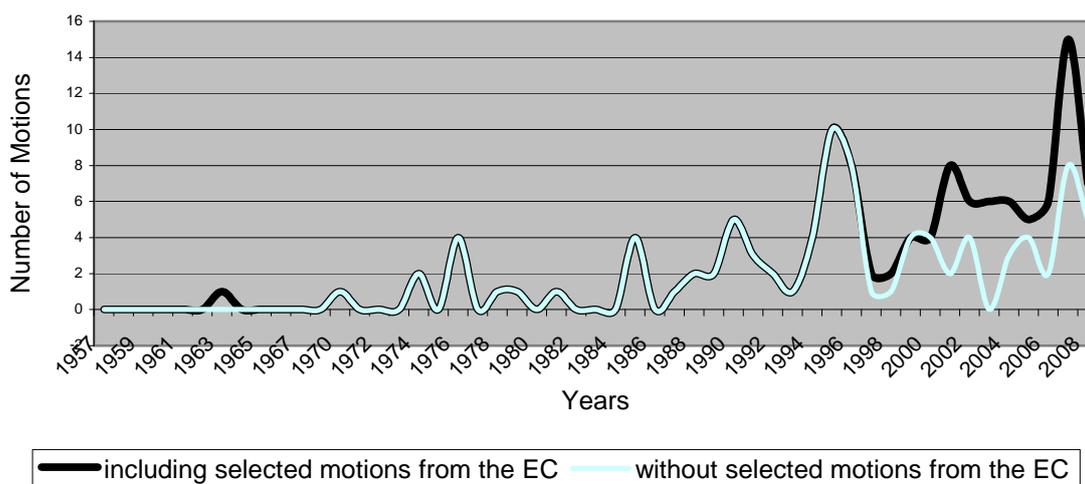
The European Commission remains the key driving force of the process both in initiating, operating and monitoring implementation of the Community action programmes; coordinating activities such as development of the European qualifications framework, and in the context of the Council and the Commission joint work on reviewing progress on implementing the "Education and Training 2010" work programme. Its role is well represented by chart 3 which includes Communications and Reports from the Commission mostly over the 2000-2008 phase indicating the degree of intensity of the policy making process.

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[21] Proposal for a European Parliament and Council recommendation on key competencies for lifelong learning (5758/06)).
Decision № 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning. Official Journal of the European Union. 24.11.2006 (L 327/45).
[22] For a recent example, the overall budget for the entire programming period (2009-2013) for Action 1 and Action 3 (joint masters and doctoral programmes, including scholarships, and attractiveness projects) amounts to 493.69 million euros, as indicated in the Proposal for a Decision of the European parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries (Erasmus Mundus) (2009-2013) (presented by the Commission) [SEC(2007) 949] [SEC(2007) 950] COM(2007) 395 final 2007/0145 (COD). Commission of the European Communities. Brussels, 12.7.2007.

Thus the European education policy cooperation development is accompanied by and based on a steadily consolidating and increasingly sophisticated normative framework and institutional architecture, building up the quality and resources of cooperation. Success factors include:

- Expansive behavior of the supranational institution (EC) executing effectively in and in an entrepreneurial way its competency of supporting, coordinating and supplementing the member-states policies and actions;

- Effective vertically and horizontally distributed institutional infrastructure which includes agencies of multilevel coordination, structures generating and providing information flows, methodological support, monitoring, statistical data;

- Sufficient experience of cooperation necessary for ensuring a high level of trust between the stakeholders of the process;

- Adequate to the goals agreed resources allocation at the various levels of cooperation (European, national, local, institutional).

Open Method of Coordination

Since its formal inception by the Lisbon European Council[23] the Open Method of Coordination has become an object of intensive study and debate[24]. This paper will not engage in the discussion of the merits of the OMC, the study undertakes to demonstrate that diverse tools of coordination emerging and maturing as the EU education policy has been developing include almost a full specter of the OMC features, and this is one of the factors accounting for the current success of this new mode of governance as a working method in education.

As a decentralized mode of governance the OMC employs such instruments as fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals, establishing quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks, multilevel monitoring, evaluation and peer review organized as reiterative learning process,

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[23] Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 2000, Presidency Conclusions, 37-40

[24] See for a very comprehensive discussion:
Luca Barani Hard and Soft Law in the European Union: The Case of Social Policy and the Open Method of Coordination Constitutionalism Web-Papers, ConWEB No. 2/2006
Radaelli M. Claudio. Who Learns what? Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination. ESRC Seminar series: Implementing the Lisbon Strategy. Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination ERI University of Birmingham. November 2004;
Lodge Martin. Comparing New Modes of Governance in Action: the Open Method of Coordination in Pension and Information Society. ESRC Seminar series: Implementing the Lisbon Strategy. Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination. London School of economics and Political Science.

exchange and mutual analysis of experiences, lessons learnt and the best practices, implementation of shared goals within the framework of national policies and legislature[25].

There are diverse assessments of the OMC as a cognitive instrument providing for necessary knowledge and achievement of common objectives without transforming norms and values or as a normative instrument exerting influence on the values paradigm[26]. Several limitations of learning as a policy making instrument within the OMC are generally pointed out.

(1) Capacity for learning depends on the policy sphere where the OMC is applied and is constrained by the political character of the context of its application[27]. Experience and empirical data as decision making factors depend essentially on the paradigm of interpretation[28]. Moreover the paradigm within which decision makers interpret the data may be impermeable for perception of facts and data. Political bias and prejudice are fundamental features influencing cognitive processes within the framework of the OMC[29]. Effectiveness is also mitigated by predominant attention to towards the best practices whereas analysis of mistakes can be equally useful. Perception and multiplication of the best practices dampens down disposition to experiment and innovation[30].

(2) Effectiveness of the OMC application relies on the architecture of the organizational network, or networks, ensuring the cognitive process and quest for the best solution of political problems. Efficient learning process can be assured only in conditions of horizontal exchange of knowledge at several levels and organization of the knowledge flows from bottom to the top and from top to bottom[31].

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[25] Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 2000, Presidency Conclusions, 37-40
[26] Vandenbrouke F. Intervention at the experts hearing of 21 January 2003 of Working group XI of the European Convention on Social Europe.
[27] Lodge Martin. Comparing New Modes of Governance in Action: the Open Method of Coordination in Pension and Information Society. ESRC Seminar series: Implementing the Lisbon Strategy. Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination. London School of economics and Political Science.
[28] Richardson J.J. "Actor based models of national and EU policy making" in H. Kssim and A. Menon (Eds.) The European Union and national industrial policy, Routledge: London. 1996.
[29] Radaelli M. Claudio. Who Learns what? Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination. ESRC Seminar series: Implementing the Lisbon Strategy. Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination ERI University of Birmingham. November 2004.
[30] Levitt A. and J.G. March "Organizational Learning" Annual review of Sociology 14: 319-340. 1988.
[31] Radaelli M. Claudio. Who Learns what? Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination. ESRC Seminar series: Implementing the Lisbon Strategy. Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination ERI University of Birmingham. November 2004.

(3) Other features limiting the OMC capacity include, first, an endemic contradiction between the Method as an instrument providing for accommodation of the national and regional differences of the member-states and the aim of achieving greater convergence towards the main EU goals. Second, the OMC concept does not define what type of convergence it aims at. Third, the OMC instruments may reduce diversity and heterogeneity necessary for evolutionary systems and lack sensitivity to the process context. Fourth there is a contradiction between competitive and cooperative types of learning in the OMC, whereas the members have to resolve the problem of balance between competition and cooperation. The task which is rendered feasible by the nature of the education sphere. Fifth, as Radaelli M. Claudio points out the OMC concept and practice do not respond to the fundamental question of how to ensure the bottom to the top learning process and do not foresee the space and form of participation in the governance process of all categories of stakeholders[32].

The spheres of the OMC application are grouped into three categories. The first includes the spheres where the OMC is used as the main method on the basis of the Treaties' provisions and the Council Conclusions. Here belong the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and the European Employment Strategy, as well as the Social cohesion, Pensions policies and the Research and Innovation policy. The second category includes the spheres where in spite of the political will the OMC instruments application is limited. Radaelli M. Claudio includes Education into this group alongside with the Environment policy, Migration and Health policies. He relates to the third category cases of unintentional use of the OMC such as direct taxation policy[33].

However, the study suggests that Education should be relegated to the first group of policy areas of Claudio M. Radaelli's classification, "demonstrating a deliberate attempt to use OMC as the main working method on the basis of the Council Conclusions" and adopting national action plans, indicators and benchmarks, biennial reporting as instruments of the "Education and Training 2010" programme.

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[32] Radaelli M. Claudio. Who Learns what? Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination. ESRC Seminar series: Implementing the Lisbon Strategy. Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination ERI University of Birmingham. November 2004.
[33] Radaelli M. Claudio. Who Learns what? Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination. ESRC Seminar series: Implementing the Lisbon Strategy. Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination ERI University of Birmingham. November 2004.

Now, let's look at the main features of the OMC in application to the sphere of education. The OMC effectiveness hinges on such instruments as systematic dissemination of knowledge and experience, persuasion on the basis of practice and dialogue, generation of new knowledge, including formation of new discourse, compatible statistics, common indicators, reiteration and strategic use of political linkages[34]. These mechanisms have been established and institutionalized within the framework of a system of instruments and institutions of cooperation in education developing in the EU since the end of the seventies. Some of the most indicative examples include:

- Adopting General principles for implementing a common vocational training policy on the basis of the Council Decisions of 2 April 1963 laying down[35] ;

- Adopting General guidelines for drawing up a Community action programme on vocational training[36] ;

- Establishing Education Committee by the Resolution of the Ministers of education, meeting within the Council, of 6 June 1974 on cooperation in the field of education[37];

- Establishing a European center for the development of Vocational training (CEDEFOP) Regulation (EEC) N0 337/75 of the Council of February 1975[38];

- Implementing Community action programmes in the field of education[39], with appropriate mechanisms for experience exchange, monitoring and evaluation, information support and decentralized management system;

- Establishing and development of the information networks[40];

- Creating a system of mutual recognition of qualifications[41];

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[34] Borras S and K. Jacobsson "The Open method of coordination and new governance patterns in the EU" Journal of European Public Policy, 11 (2) April: 185-208. 2004.

[35] Official Journal 063, 20/04/1963 p. 1338-1341 (63/266/EEC).

[36] Official Journal C 081, 12/08/1971 p.0005-0011 (31971Y0812).

[37] Official Journal C 098, 20/08/1974 p. 0002-0002 (41974X0820).

[38] Official Journal L 039, 13.02.1975, p. 0001—0004 (31975R0337)

[39] Beginning with the Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of education, meeting within the Council, of 9 February 1976 comprising an action programme in the field of education//Official Journal C 038, 19.02.1976, p. 0001—0005 (41976X0219) and up to the most recent one formalized by Decision № 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning. Official Journal of the European Union. 24.11.2006 (L 327/45).

[40] Resolution of the Council and Ministers of Education, 6 December 1990 concerning the Eurydice Information network in the European Community, 41990X1231 (07), Official Journal C329, 31.12.1990.

[41] Beginning with the Council Directive 78/1026/EEC of 18 December 1978 concerning the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in veterinary medicine, including measures to facilitate the effective exercise of the right of establishment and freedom to provide services//Official Journal L 362, 23.12.1978, p. 0001—0006 (31978L1026) and up to the recent Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of the

- Promotion of education and training statistics[42];

- Developing working procedures for coordination[43];

- Implementing "Detailed work programme on the follow up of the objectives of educational and training systems in Europe"[44], adopted by Barcelona Council meeting [45];

- Establishing European benchmarks in education and training[46];

- Agreeing and implementing a system of biannual monitoring and reporting[47]

- Establishing a Coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training[48];

- Establishing the European Institute of Innovation and Technology[49];

- Improving the quality of Teacher Education[50];

- Establishing of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning[51].

Thus an institutional framework has been created for the European education policy which includes a decentralized system of governance and information and methodological support; statistical data and coordination procedures; shared objectives as reflected in the Education and Training 2010 programme, benchmarks for implementation and inbuilt mechanisms for monitoring and peer review. In fact similar

professional qualifications (Text with EEA relevance) // Official Journal L 255. 30.09.2005, p. 0022—0142.

[42] Council resolution of 5 December 1994 on the promotion of education and training statistics in the European Union//Official journal C 374, 30.12.1994, p. 0004—0006).

[43] Council resolution: Into the new millennium: developing new working procedures for European cooperation in the field of education and training, 2224th Council meeting— Education— Brussels, 26 November 1999.

[44] Deatailed workprogramme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe. Official journal of the European Communities. C 142/1. 14.6.2002. (2002/C 142/01).

[45] Presidency Conclusions. Barcelona European Council. 15 and 16 March 2002. SN 100/1/02/ Rev 1. Para. 43- 45.

[46] Conclusions on European benchmarks in education and training: follow-up to the Lisbon European Council, 2503rd Council meeting — education, Youth and culture — Brussels.5 and 6 may 2003;
Council Conclusions on Indicators in education and training, 2661th Council meeting-Education, Youth and Culture-Brussels, 23 and 24 May 2005. 9060/05 (Presse 118).

[47] Joint Interim report of the Council and the Commission on the progress under the "Education and Training 2010" work programme, Council of the European Union. Brussels, 6 March 2006, 7022/06. EDUC 49 SOC 112

48 Council Conclusions on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training. Outcomes of proceedings. Council of the European Union. Brussels, 30 May 2007. 10083/07. EDUC 100 SOC 234 STATIS 66.

49 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council – Establishing the European Union Institute of Innovation and technology – political agreement. Council of the European Union. Brussels, 16 November 2007. Institutional File: 2006/0197 (COD) 14699/07. EIT 19 EDUC 196 RECH 329 COMPET 352 CODEC 1291.

50 Council Conclusions on Improving the quality of Teacher Education. Official Journal of the European Union C 300/6 of 12 December 2007.

51 Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (Text with EEA relevance) (2008/C 111/01) Official Journal of the European Union. 6.5.2008

mechanisms are employed within the Bologna process though the OMC is not a formally accepted mode of coordination within the European Higher Education Area.

As mentioned earlier the OMC does not provide instruments for the bottom to the top learning process and do not foresee the space and form of participation in the governance process of all categories of stakeholders[52]. However the dynamics of cooperation in education allows to conclude that in the sphere the mutual learning and transformation through cognitive processes leads to convergence at the discourse level. Common language of communication, shared understanding of the main mechanisms and instruments is especially pronounced in the case of developing the European Qualifications Framework, as well as recommendations on cooperation in quality assurance in higher education, and recommendation on key competencies for lifelong learning. Though it is difficult to assess how deep is the cognitive convergence of opinions and persuasions among the member states. Apparently it can be asserted that cognitive convergence on fundamental principles and values is reflected in the Deatailed workprogramme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe. Deeper convergence at the level of decisions and actions is more complex to attain, and again the EQF and cooperation on quality assurance are good examples of sensitive areas whereas respective recommendations provide for sufficient flexibility in their implementation.

Empirical data and independent evaluation of the community action programmes[53] testify to high efficiency of the horizontal learning process at the bottom level. Intensity of cognitive processes between the levels is due to two factors: elaborate multilevel network architecture created over the decades of cooperation to diffuse knowledge both horizontally and bottom-up; and "special quest for knowledge" nature of the academic

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[52] Radaelli M. Claudio. Who Learns what? Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination. ESRC Seminar series: Implementing the Lisbon Strategy. Policy Learning and the Open Method of Coordination ERI University of Birmingham. November 2004.

[53] External evaluation of ERASMUS: institutional and national impact. European Commission DGEC. November 2004;

Ex post evaluation of the curriculum development projects funded in the framework of Socrates 1997-2001. DG Education and Culture. February 2005.

Interim Evaluation Report of the cooperation programmes in Higher education and Training between the European union and Canada and between the European Union and the United States. European Commission DGEC. March 2005;

Report from the Commission to the Council on the interim evaluation of the third phase of the Tempus programme. Brussels, 08.03.2004. COM(2004)157 final.

Report from the Commission to the Council Interim evaluation report on the results achieved and on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates' Brussels, 8.3.2004.COM(2004) 153 final.

communication bestowing to this sensitive policy process a   "truth seeking" paradigm with a high degree of permeability to empirical evidence interpretation; active engagement of the universities community brining the ideational discourse convergence and pushing bottom-up learning processes.

Chart 4. Cognitive Flows Distribution
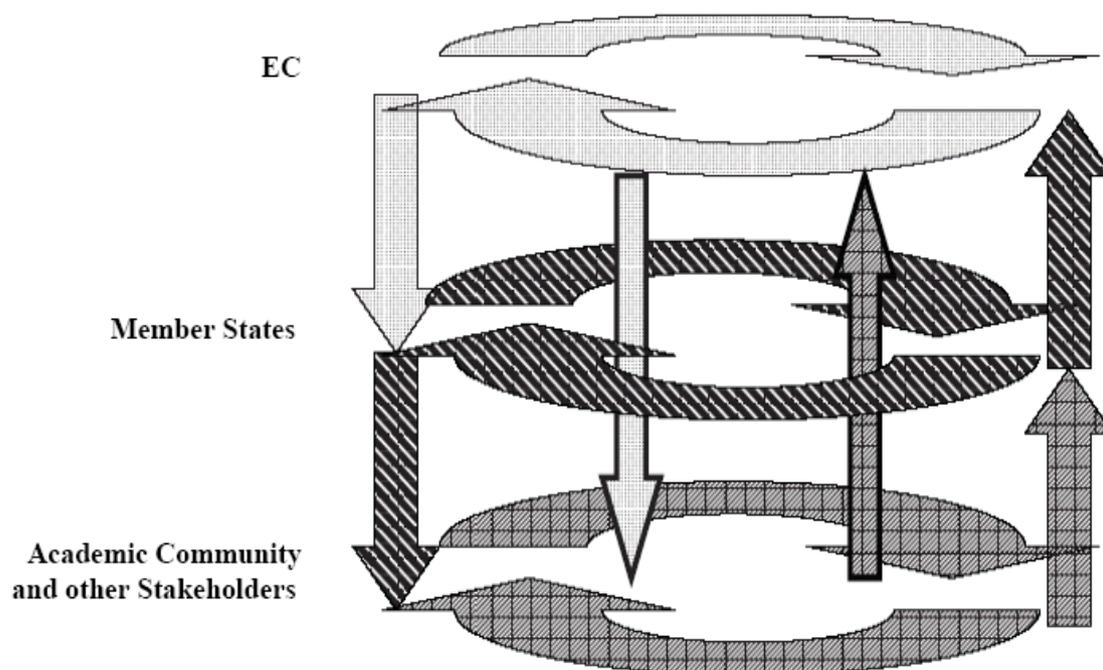
Conclusion

The capacity built within the framework of cooperation in education in the Community action programmes, network projects, double degree programmes, other actions is an important resource for further development of European education policy on the basis of the Open Method of Coordination within the EU, and beyond in the wider Europe within the European higher Education Area.

The OMC tools in the area of Education policy have a high capacity for strengthening both the horizontal and hierarchical interaction and shaping convergence of decisions and actions within the next decade as the EU education policy agenda will continue to deepen and expand remaining under the subsidiarity principle with the European Commission and European Agencies as important drivers of the process.

Finally, it seems appropriate to emphasize that education policy is a fertile field for theorizing and quote Philippe C. Schmitter's statement, which is highly applicable to this until recently neglected field: "understanding and explanation in this field of enquiry are best served not by a dominance of a single … paradigm, but by the simultaneous presence of antithetic and conflictive ones which – while they may converge in certain aspects –

diverge in so many others. If this sort of dialectic of incompleteness, unevenness, and partial frustration propels integration processes forward, why can not it do the same for the scholarship that accompanies them."[54]

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[54] Philippe C. Schmitter (2003) "Neo- Neofunctionalism" in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (eds), European Integration Theory. Oxford university press