

Epistemic Community? Experts and Expertise in European Political Co-operation (EPC)

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The European Political Co-operation (EPC) established a new diplomacy among the EC member states in the 1970s. Strictly intergovernmental in principle, the EPC, operationalized at different hierarchical levels ranging from foreign ministers, political directors, correspondents, ambassadors to – relevant in this context – expert working groups on EPC topics, nevertheless profoundly changed national foreign policymaking and European diplomacy.

The proposed paper discusses the role and impact of these expert groups within the EPC in dealing with different political issues at stake in this decade. A particular emphasis will be given to the question whether the experts in the EPC expert working groups were united by common core beliefs and understandings of the issues at stake or shared a common understanding of the importance of expertise in foreign policy-making and whether they considered themselves as an “epistemic community”¹; and if so, whether this was essential for the so-called “coordination reflex”/“concertation reflex” which is assumed to have developed between the national administrations of the EC member states due to the EPC. The main questions to be discussed for this purpose are:

- What was the role initially assigned to the various expert working groups institutionalized within the EPC and how did this role alter throughout the period under consideration here?
- Which impact did the work of these expert groups have upon national and European foreign policy making within the EPC, i.e. which interdependency existed between expertise and political considerations on the decision-making level?
- How were those expert groups composed, which kind of working relationship existed between the national experts and, most of all, were those experts Europeanized² by regularly and intensely communicating and co-operating on their respective issues? In other words: did institutionalized transgovernmental and transnational expert co-operation within the EPC change formal and informal decision-making processes, operational habits and perceptual patterns?

In a broader perspective the proposed paper discusses the prospects for reassessing the concepts of epistemic communities and Europeanization as analytical frameworks both for a New Diplomatic History and for the history of European integration. The proposed paper is *inter alia* based on source material from government archives, especially from the archives of the *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes* (PA AA), Berlin, and the archives of the Belgian foreign ministry (A.M.A.E.B.), Bruxelles. The findings to be presented in the proposed paper originate from the DFG funded research project “‘To Speak with One Voice’? Europeanization in Intergovernmental Policy Areas – the Case of the European Political Cooperation (EPC), 1970-1981” (cf. <http://www.geschichte.uni-hamburg.de/personal/DFGProjektEuropaeisierung.html>).

1 See in more detail Peter M. Haas: Introduction. Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination, in: *International Organization* 46/1, 1992, pp. 1-35, especially p. 3.

2 Cf. for the concept of Europeanization Kevin Featherstone/Claudio M. Radaelli (Hg.): *The Politics of Europeanization*, Oxford 2003.