Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of European Integration

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/geui20

Cyclical Europeanisation during the COVID-19 crisis

Waltteri Immonen, Johanna Ketola & Henri Vogt

To cite this article: Waltteri Immonen, Johanna Ketola & Henri Vogt (18 Mar 2024): Cyclical Europeanisation during the COVID-19 crisis, Journal of European Integration, DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2024.2329640

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2024.2329640

Published online: 18 Mar 2024.

JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2024.2329640

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Cyclical Europeanisation during the COVID-19 crisis

Waltteri Immonen, Johanna Ketola and Henri Vogt

Political Science, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

ABSTRACT

Utilising expert interviews, the article examines how different but overlapping logics of action guided the policies of the EU and its member states in the first year and a half of the Covid pandemic. We see three distinct logics – selfishness, emulation and coordination – taking shape, which together form a framework of cyclical Europeanisation. Efforts to cope with the pandemic made tensions between the Commission and its self-interested member states apparent. However, the member states were simultaneously able to learn from each other and thus emulate policy practices under conditions of uncertainty. Hence, regardless of the problems incurred, the ability to revert the tensions between the different logics of action and combine them pragmatically has reinforced some sense of Europeanisation within the European polity. External shocks intensify the cycles through which Europeanisation evolves and materialises, and bring to light the EU's ability to act and react, improvise and adapt.

KEYWORDS

EU; Europeanisation; governance; Covid-19 pandemic

1. Introduction

The pandemic emergency of 2020–22 revealed significant aspects of the functioning of the EU's multi-level political system. It clearly demonstrated in which ways and to what extent Brussels' institutions can shape and coordinate the operational frameworks of its member states. It further displayed how and on which grounds member states might seek to advance their own individual agendas or are willing to take into account other member states' policies as well as shared EU practices and objectives.

In this context, the present article explores the nature of interaction between national and EU-level decision-making during the first year and a half of the COVID-19 crisis. We seek to understand *what the basic logics of (inter)action were with which the EU member states and Brussels institutions managed the pandemic*. Conceptually, we draw from and add to the existing research on *Europeanisation* – a process wherein national political systems, and concomitant social practices, come to resemble each other across the European continent; citing resemblance but not necessarily policy convergence (cf. Radaelli 2000, Goetz 2006). The opening section of the article reviews existing Europeanisation literature and, on that basis, formulates the definition of what we label

CONTACT Waltteri Immonen wreimm@utu.fi Department of Philosophy, Contemporary History and Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Turku, Assistentinkatu 7, Turku 20014, Finland

as *cyclical* Europeanisation, our main theoretical contribution. The notion implies a holistic, *spatio-temporal* model, or a heuristic framework, for identifying the ways in which national actors, interests and ideas interact: top-down, bottom-up, horizontally and over time.

The empirical section of the article, focusing on the EU-institutions–member state relations during the COVID-19 crisis, is composed of three sub-chapters, derived from the key dimensions of the cyclical Europeanisation model. We note that despite the initial lack of firm EU strategies, the various informal practices, flexibility in interpreting regulations and active measures taken by the Commission, all succeeded in creating a genuine framework for cooperation. At the same time, however, a very sizeable proportion of member state measures were undertaken with purely national objectives in mind, while often through emulation of what others did. Therefore, in this all-encompassing crisis – and possibly in the context of other crises, too – several different logics of action operated in an interlinked manner, together forming a cyclical, dynamic sphere of Europeanisation as time progressed.

Our interpretation is based on semi-structured interviews conducted around the first half of 2021 with high-ranking Finnish and European officials from several Finnish ministries and the European Commission (total $N = 33$).[1] It needs to be stressed, however, that this is not, in essence, a case study of the policy choices of (our native) Finland, although the Finnish context inevitably brings forth a number of country-specific viewpoints.[2] By having the Finnish perspective at the forefront, we aim to build a holistic picture of the EU-wide pandemic governance. In other words, the insights we offer help us make sense of the wider ramifications of pandemic policies within the entire European polity. Our questionnaire focused on coordination between national and European levels of governance and was divided in three temporal periods: the beginning of the crisis in the winter and spring of 2020; the stage of stabilisation in summer and autumn 2020 and early 2021; and the actual moment of the interviews.

To 'deconstruct' the interviews, we employed a form of qualitative content analysis, enabling a systematic examination of the informational content. We implemented the method by way of what could be called as abductive category formation. We first grouped the central insights of the transcribed interviews under several broad themes – for instance, 'the main problems of coordination'; then thoroughly discussed these themes and their central individual viewpoints within the research team, seeking to refine the themes and their mutual linkages. In this process, the conceptual framework of cyclical Europeanisation that we develop in the article gradually evolved – and began to inform the thematic categorisation itself. In other words, the framework, also heavily drawing on current European Union and COVID-19 literature, did not exist before conducting the interviews but only after, as a result of our analysis. It is worth noting that our interest lies in the ways in which *actively involved individuals (civil servants) understood* and interpreted the *modi operandi* that they were part of during the pandemic. We do *not* seek to create a historical, factual reconstruction of the EU-wide struggle against the pandemic.

2. Cyclical Europeanisation in the covid 19-crisis: coordination, emulation, selfishness

The notion of Europeanisation has long been criticised for its ambiguity as well as for its explanatory narrowness vis-à-vis any complex, multidimensional political processes (e.g. Olsen 2002). In our view, however, the concept does make it possible to structure and describe institutional and social learning and goal-setting within the European polity and, above all, among the EU member states. We thus concur with Simon Bulmer (2007) that Europeanisation is not a theory in and of itself but rather a phenomenon requiring explanation. Attempting to define Europeanisation in general terms, Claudio Radaelli (2002, 108) talks of the processes through which existing formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, approaches to managing issues, shared beliefs and norms are construed, disseminated and institutionalised in EU-level policy-making, as well as within national political structures, and in constant interaction between these levels. It is noteworthy that these processes do not have any specific end and do not necessarily lead to either policy convergence or divergence.

Scholarly literature habitually differentiates between the three main types of Europeanisation processes, two vertical and one horizontal. First, national policy *adapts* to European norms and practices (Cowles, Caporaso, and Risse 2001; Ladrech 1994). In this process of downloading (Börzel 2002, 195), the policy of a member state is harmonised in line with EU requirements, involving both legislative and administrative practices. The second form of Europeanisation concerns the idea of national *projection* onto the EU level. The member states continuously influence the formulation of common European policies and (try to) upload their best practices; the eventual outcomes of these uploads, European compromises, ultimately trickle down back to the member states to adopt or resist (*ibid*, 196). The third aspect is that of horizontal, interaction-based *emulation* and *learning* between the member-states, also known as cross-loading (Howell 2004). Here the EU institutions' role is limited to facilitation.

Taking a step further from the idea of cross-loading, several scholars have used the attribute *circular* to emphasise that Europeanisation does not only materialise linearly, vertically or horizontally. It is, in effect, a circular phenomenon, a combination of these three. Sabine Saurugger (2005, 292), for example, talks of 'a circular movement', of a process whereby various parallel or coevolving policies, ideas and practices occur between the national and the EU levels, making the distinction between the dependent and the independent variables unclear. Krzysztof Wach (2015, 15), in turn, maintains that the circular approach combines the existing approaches of top-down and bottom-up, and is 'an attempt to create a holistic concept, both description and explication, assuming mutual linking of these [Europeanisation] processes'. Overall, it appears that the circular approach has been perceived as something inherently spatial, while being temporally understood to a very limited degree.

Hence, in order to emphasise the *temporal boundedness* of the circular processes, we prefer to use the notion of *cyclical* Europeanisation – a notion passingly mentioned in a few articles in the early 2000s (e.g. Goetz 2002) and which has remained undeveloped ever since. Our point of departure is that crises and external shocks strengthen and speed up the cycles – or, even more metaphorically, waves – through which Europeanisation

evolves and materialises, via more or less intentional and well-prepared policy actions. The process of Europeanisation, in other words, becomes more intense in crisis situations – and the cycle becomes, in fact, faster and more intense – whereupon the Union's regulatory orientation and normal bureaucratic practices are forced to make way for hectic negotiations and *ad hoc* activities (cf. Truchlewski, Schelkle, and Ganderson 2021). With time, as the new modes of action have been established, this intensity wanes, to reappear again only when the next significant external pressures accumulate.

The idea of the Europeanisation cycle intensifying under crisis conditions suggests another key concept of current EU studies, namely *government-by-emergency* (or simply emergency governance). In Jonathan White's (2015, 2019) vocabulary, the concept refers to exceptional and vital activities that challenge existing norms and rules. It differs from problem-solving-geared crisis management as it shakes the foundations of political decision-making, generally increasing the role of the executive – in the EU context trans- and supranationally – and making it more possible to exploit any crisis for various (potentially non-democratic) purposes. In many cases, both the definition of the crisis, and the (proposed) responses to it, are the result of the governing actors' desire to preserve and accentuate some specific elements of the prevailing condition, often upholding that a chosen policy line is presented as unavoidable. Such an imperative not only narrows the scope of possible policy responses but also undermines the ability to analyse the successes and failures of applied responses in further decision-making. We will return to these points towards the end of the article. Here, it suffices to note that the cyclical model may encompass a period of time when the emergency governance modus prevails; in the ensuing period, normal institutional practices are reinstated.

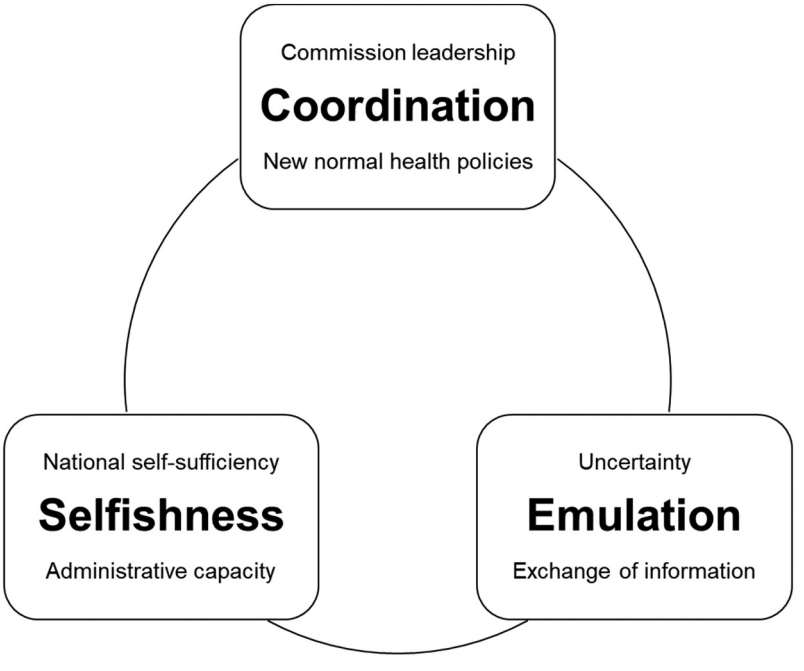

Figure 1. Cyclical europeanisation in the Covid-19 crisis.

In our analysis of the European management of the COVID-19 crisis, the idea of cyclical Europeanisation materialises through three basic logics of action (cf. Cachia 2021). We refer to these with the terms *coordination, emulation* and *selfishness*. Figure 1 below presents a visualisation of the interlinkages between these three logics within the framework of cyclicality, including their main subcategories as presented in the empirical section below.

The idea of *coordination*, as in more efficient transnational policymaking in EU-wide crisis management, has been repeatedly emphasised, both by scholars and policymakers (Connolly 2008; Greer 2006). The COVID-19 crisis was no exception. Stella Ladi and Sarah Wolff (2021) introduce the notion of *coordinative Europeanisation* for referring to the mechanisms of European governance adopted during the pandemic. According to them, such Europeanisation is pragmatic, informal and partly takes place through new digital channels; it is significantly different from the nature of *coercive* Europeanisation, which had characterised the management of the prior Eurozone crisis (2009–2014) – a notion that in fact closely resembles that of 'emergency governance'. Our empirical analysis affirms this interpretation but further emphasises the coordinative rather than forceful role of the Commission. It is noteworthy that the degree of *improvisation* within this mode of coordination was high – or perhaps it always is under existential crisis conditions.

Selfishness represents the antithesis of coordination and refers to the explicit promotion of one's own interests regardless of the impact on other member states. Most interviewees highlighted their own strong 'national interest first' perspective, which is, of course, unsurprising, as a politician's or a civil servant's moral responsibility primarily pertains to the citizens of the country they serve – the citizens must find the employed measures legitimate. Therefore, under crisis, the technocratic regulatory activities offered by the EU as its *raison d'être* are insufficient for turning the Union into a transnational source of legitimacy or object of identification for lay people. Nor does it seem particularly important to national political elites to demonstrate a Europe-wide sense of community as they only need to convince their own national citizens of the legitimacy of their actions (cf. e.g. Kinski 2021; Schmidt 2022). It is noteworthy, however, that in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, selfishness was essentially *shared* with others, thus possibly making the need for stronger EU coordination more pertinent. Indeed, this type of 'bounded' selfishness does not imply increasing member-state divergence in the short term.

The third main logic of Europeanisation in our framework is *emulation*. The European Union member states copy models of action from other actors. In a crisis characterised by heightened uncertainty (such as the coronavirus pandemic), this logic is easily applied, although it is not always known what exactly is being emulated or what the consequences will be (governance by way of 'best practices', regularly employed in various policy fields of the EU, is typically based on a stronger knowledge base). As there was only limited systematic evidence of the effectiveness of the measures taken during the early stages of the crisis, the interaction and exchange of information enabled by the EU's political arenas organically enhanced emulation between the member states (Alemanno 2020).

With the accumulation of information, as more systematic assessments of the pandemic policies in various national contexts became available, emulation gradually evolved into *learning* (c.f. Shipan and Volden 2008). If the countries are in some way part of the same epistemic community, e.g. with regard to administrative conventions, learning is

usually easier.[3] Nonetheless, these types of cultural practices are often subtle and multi-layered. For example, the crisis management traditions of Finland and Sweden differ significantly, to the extent that learning (or emulation) between the two countries proved to be highly limited during the early phases of the pandemic despite the intensive intergovernmental exchange of information, which came as a great surprise to many at the beginning of the crisis (Rainio-Niemi 2020).

As a final note here, it is evident that this framework of cyclical Europeanisation can also be conceptualised through the vocabulary of traditional EU integration theory. *Both* member-state-driven intergovernmentalism *and* Commission-led supranationalism informed the management of the pandemic. A decisive and strong Commission was responsible for any coordinated, supranationally-oriented action across the continent, and member states simultaneously worked diligently to employ their individual measures for keeping their societies functioning. This correlates with Vivien A. Schmidt's (2020) suggestion that to best assess the depth of integration during a crisis, we should pay attention to these two approaches in parallel – as the concept of cyclicality does.

We now turn to an empirical exploration of these three logics in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, beginning with the notion of selfishness, the prevailing logic during the early waves of the pandemic.

3. Selfishness

The European Union never managed to introduce a comprehensive, common strategy for the continent at the onset of the pandemic in January–February 2020 – although it already activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism at the end of January, whereby the first EU citizens were repatriated from Wuhan in early February and the first joint procurements of personal protective equipment issued on 28 February.[4] Excluding the countries hit first and worst (e.g. Italy), the member states' efforts to safeguard their own national interests offer the primary explanation for this absence of a general strategy (Cachia 2021, 86) – an account that our interview material strongly supports. Indeed, in the initial stages of the pandemic, the prevailing mind-set in most member-states was to concentrate on one's own national well-being in an exclusive manner, for example, in terms of the provision of health equipment. Perhaps this outlook represented a matter of negative peer pressure: it was easy to understand selfishness and being only concerned with, and responsible for, one's own citizens, as this is what other actors did too. The following two quotes accurately summarise the focus on national interest:

> There were these very strong national viewpoints when countries began to employ the restrictive measures. . . Everyone simply made the decisions on the basis of their national interests and in the beginning, totally against the recommendations of the WHO. (interviewee 24)

> Pragmatically speaking, everyone sees that 'hey, we should think this through together [in Europe]', but still this 'close the borders' mentality was found in a nanosecond in 90% of the population. (interviewee 18)

Apart from the idea of primary responsibility, several other reasons for focusing on one's own national orbit can be highlighted. Health systems across Europe differed significantly in terms of their crises competences, attitudes and preparedness; and given that the infection rates and timing significantly fluctuated across countries, there was no point in

resorting to the same measures simultaneously everywhere. Indeed, emphasising *state agency* under such conditions seemed only natural. The interviewees noted two significant and intertwined factors that shaped the early pandemic responses in the Finnish context: the country's *self-sufficient* attitude in terms of a historically proven crisis awareness; and, typically for a representative of the Nordic model, adequate administrative resources for managing the crisis efficiently.

3.1. National self-sufficiency

Most established democracies embellish narratives of their own exceptionalism and specificity, narratives that also profoundly influence their legislative and administrative cultures. The pandemic rendered these types of exceptionalist beliefs clearly visible as state actors employed their own measures to counter the disease, ultimately in a self-reliant, independent manner. For example, the patterns through which states declared states of emergency in the spring of 2020 were determined by varying national traditions and legislative frameworks, resulting in significant differences in the nature of the declarations (e.g. Engler et al. 2021; Wodak 2021). However, this type of self-sufficiency does not, in principle, involve the threat of conflict with others, especially in situations in which others are likely to follow a similar logic.

In the Finnish case, the belief in its own self-sufficiency has certainly been fed by its narrative of an exceptionally well-planned national crisis preparedness, coupled with the notion of comprehensive security, which has served as the guideline for the country's general understanding of security policy (see Mörttinen 2021). From this starting point, it appeared fairly simplistic for the country to disregard or challenge the solutions proposed by the leading EU actors, be they large member states or the Commission. One of the interviewees vividly describes this self-sufficiency in the initial stages of the pandemic, believing, however, that other countries also followed the same kind of logic:

> The attitude was that 'we don't need that stupid EU for anything, we know these things. And it was the same with every member state [. . .] they all had this 'we know how to deal with our health care, dammit'. (interviewee 11)

It is noteworthy, however, that the EU's constitutional framework, including the division of competences between the member states and Brussels institutions, reinforced this very sense of national self-sufficiency across the Union during the pandemic. Article 168 of the EU Treaty emphasises the EU's complementary role vis-à-vis the member states in health matters; apart from occasional health crises, health policy has been all but side-lined by both Commissions and Presidencies (Greer and Löblová 2017; Brooks and Bürgin 2021). Many countries, primarily wealthier ones, sought to defend this principle of complementarity even in the exceptional conditions of the COVID-19 struggle. There were even efforts to disrupt common policy formation as the interviewee below elucidates:

> There's also still a quite cautious group of member states saying 'well, public health is very much national' [and] 'member states indeed want to reserve the right to introduce their own decisions without waiting for the EU approach' [. . .] Before the pandemic, the most important part of my job here in Brussels was to collect and stabilize a stable blocking minority against certain intentions for harmonizing EU health system aspects. (interviewee 12)

This primacy of national political decision-making did not prevent the introduction of new *technocratic* (and seemingly non-political?) health innovations, illustrated for instance in the EU's COVID-19 recovery package. Such innovations apparently did not challenge the traditional division of competencies within the EU polity (cf. the last section of the article).

3.2. Administrative capacity

The notion of self-sufficiency is closely related to the prevailing *perceptions of the administrative capacity of one's own system* – a capacity that makes the system complacent vis-à-vis any external influences (Goetz 2006, 1). In this regard, our Finnish informants' views expressed somewhat contradictory views. On the one hand, established institutional mechanisms and processes were seen as laying the foundation for the country's success in dealing with the pandemic emergency. Administrative processes and coordination mechanisms for EU affairs are well embedded in the political system. The country's bureaucracy functions (or is believed to function) in an efficient and transparent manner, while the official and informal networks with Nordic and European counterparts are extensive. If we think that the handling of COVID-19 was about maintaining some kind of administrative continuity, even under emergency conditions, then it seems intuitively clear that it would be difficult to accept proposals or orders from a 'higher' authority. One interviewee reflects:

> But perhaps they were nationally, from a national perspective, of the sort that we didn't have the willingness to receive those recommendations of the Commission, neither did we have that kind of national sentiment that their guidelines would have fully served our objectives health-security-wise. And I can also understand that in that situation our decision makers definitely had the need to appear as firm leaders and show that we are not just rubber stamps for Brussels. (interviewee 18)

On the other hand, several interviewees claimed that the Finnish competence level in EU matters often proves to be low, and the distinction between EU and national affairs remains overly strong – an assessment that one can expect to hear in many other member states, too. The decision-making difficulties in connection with EU joint-procurements in the spring of 2020 epitomised this explicitly: Finland was in the end left out of the joint procurement of personal protective equipment due to an unclear division of EU responsibilities between the different government bodies and a lack of communication between them (see Mörttinen 2021, 52). One interviewee referred to these issues as follows:

> The capacity to deal with the information is pretty limited for Finnish national authorities, there are so few people who follow the European agenda, so I think that they can't handle it. I know that even today, there is still only this one person in the ministries and agencies who deals with international and European matters. However, they don't know a lot about our issues but still they visit Brussels. In some member states there was a better capacity to absorb and influence [European policies]. (interviewee 17)

The interviewees also alluded to an even more concrete issue that has, of course, been identified in analyses of governance capacity in many country contexts (e.g. Peters 2015). The employment of executive power is strongly sectorised in Finland and it is often difficult to get past these sectoral structures or, as it were, siloed administration.

Transcending these sectoral boundaries requires a great amount of political will, coupled with significant resources, which the ministries often lack, especially time-wise. Civil servants work too much at too fast a pace and can therefore barely consider policy areas outside of their own sphere of responsibility (Finland is hardly an exceptional case here). Under emergency conditions, the problem is further exacerbated. During the pandemic, especially the health sectors civil servants found the possibilities of cooperation with other policy domains limited (Stenvall et al. 2022). In the words of one interviewee:

> This sectoring or siloing . . . it means that it is awfully difficult to obtain an overall picture and then there's this time issue as well, as everyone here in the health sector has his or her hands full with Covid, so perhaps even less than normally have we been able to follow what goes on elsewhere. (interviewee 24)

In conclusion, the logic of selfishness was grounded on national perceptions of a nation's own responsibilities and the belief in the (superior) capacity of one's own administration. The longer-term consequences of this selfishness seemed, in the end, limited. However, selfishness itself did not undermine the search for shared European solutions in the fight against the pandemic and situational awareness was certainly shared across the continent from the outset of the crisis, in contrast to the financial and refugee crises a few years earlier. Indeed, selfishness, self-reliance or perhaps simply 'valued independence', manifested itself across the European countries by way of more or less *similar* policy measures.

4. Emulation

In the early stages of the pandemic, the activities of EU member states can also be described as *uncoordinated emulation*. By and large, EU countries adopted the same measures ad hoc and, most importantly, in a horizontal fashion without any greater supra-level coordination or systemic planning – although they did consider the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) health experts. As there were no ready-made operating models for this type of pandemic, it appeared natural to follow the example of others (cf. Alemanno 2020; Ferrera, Miró, and Ronchi 2021). Of course, emulation did not happen all at once but rather in a sequential manner: the overall mix of individual measures and their enforcement timetables varied significantly from one member state to another, and examples were not only sought from the European context but globally (cf. Aaltola et al. 2021). Member states discussed with each other on an equal basis, and exchanged crucial information, but '*it was not that, "Angela, you tell me what to do", [instead] we need time to consider so that we see what we could actually learn*,' (interviewee 32).

The pace and nature of emulation in EU member states depended on many factors, such as a country's administrative capacity, emergency legislation and decision-making as well as geographical position in the continent. In addition, *the degree of politicisation*, the ways in which the chosen policy measures were critically reflected upon or challenged in society, also proved crucial, as several interviewees emphasised. In countries with a strong legal culture and active civil society, politicisation tended to be intense, while in countries with low administrative capacity and weak civil society, the impact of politicisation was more limited. There is some evidence that the latter group implemented COVID-19

measures slightly faster than the former in the early stages of the pandemic (Toshkov, Carroll, and Yesilkagit 2021, 16). The importance of politicisation also indicates that the executive branch was unable to act in a straight-forward manner under the banner of emergency governance in the EU member states (White 2015, 2019). At least in some countries, despite critical counterforces, the introduction of exceptional measures barely followed the principles of democracy, for instance, with regard to the temporal limitations of these measures (Hungary initially received particular attention in this respect, e.g. Pozen and Lane Scheppele 2020). In the words of one interviewee:

> Compared with the other pandemics that I have been involved in, starting from the SARS and so on and so forth, this pandemic has been extremely political. We can provide all the scientific evidence-based information but the decisions are political. When decision-makers come together there seems to be a consensus that 'okay we do it like this' but then when they go home and if there is resistance or something, they do something different. (interviewee 31)

Several interviewees took up two key factors enabling emulation in the European political space. The first of these was (scientific) uncertainty and the lack of information; attempts to minimise these uncertainties in many instances informed the pandemic struggle. The internal institutional dynamics within the Union provided the frame within which emulation thus materialised.

4.1. Uncertain conditions requiring exchange of information

The primary objective of pandemic management was clear from the beginning: preventing the loss of life. However, the ways of achieving this objective were shaped by a deep sense of *uncertainty* in terms of reliable information during the early stages of the Corona struggle, which apparently created favourable conditions for emulation. This uncertainty restricted the member states' capacity to ascertain what ultimately worked and what possibly did not; all they could do was introduce incremental solutions adopted from others, and these were easily adoptable for yet others (cf. Reh et al. 2013, 1117).

Given this realm of uncertainty, the patterns of emulation essentially depended on the accumulation of knowledge and exchange of information, extensively promoted by EU institutions and agencies, in particular by the EDCD. The knowledge provided by the EDCD was indeed widely trusted, perhaps because its role did not extend to the implementation of preventative measures. The primary purpose of the EDCD was essentially to coordinate and collect information from the member states on the path of the disease and to publish a weekly colour-coded map of European regions. The map and other provided information significantly contributed to mutual *learning* between the member states (Pacces and Weimer 2020). In this manner, the all-European strategy for the control and prevention of diseases was implemented on a voluntary basis as opposed to strong regulation (Ladi and Wolff 2021).

In addition to the official information sources offered by the EU framework, there were special personal relationships that enabled the exchange of information with close partner countries. In the case of Finland, these relationships were primarily with Sweden, even though the COVID-19 strategies of these two countries originally differed to a significant degree (cf. Rainio-Niemi 2020). There were also unofficial frameworks of

government officials among the Nordic countries, dealing with such issues as supply security. One interviewee reflects:

> Yeah, we kept in touch weekly [with Sweden], so that the exchange of information reached a level of concretion that, for instance in Finland we have laws about emergency supplies and we have the National Emergency Supply Agency, which Sweden doesn't, so we provided our Swedish translation of the law to the Swedish colleagues, so they looked at it to see what they could implement from it. (interviewee 15)

In terms of the uncertainty regarding knowledge about the virus and the exchange of information, the role of the *media* proved essential. In the Finnish context, the national broadcasting company in particular created a communal ethos of sorts by a highly systematic reporting on the disease in different countries and the measures these countries had taken. Through contrasting all this to the situation in one's own surroundings, a strong sense of nationally *shared* information culture was created (cf. Oleart and Gheyle 2022). The media also acted as policy guardians: the justifications for policy-measures had to be carefully considered for reasons of publicity. One interviewee (6), for example, notes that as it proved impossible to implement the entire range of EU COVID-19 recommendations, '*this caused a lot of pressure from the media*.' Another interviewee reflects upon this:

> It has had a great effect that the media has been allowed to keep an eye on this, it adds to that peer pressure. In this respect it was very relevant, that in the public level the public knows how things are elsewhere and how things are done there. (interviewee 31)

All in all, the pandemic was undoubtedly the most media-intensive event of our time, creating a shared global awareness never before seen; all major channels of communication were saturated by the pandemic. The logic of emulation was, of course, significantly reinforced by this publicity.

4.2. Institutional facilitation

The multi-level governance mechanisms of the EU managed to alleviate the inherent early-pandemic uncertainty by guaranteeing the functional flow of information horizontally between the member states, enhancing emulation. The role that the Council of the European Union played at this stage was essential in this respect, despite the limited resources of then-president Croatia. The number of EU meetings increased significantly at different levels of governance immediately after the outbreak of the disease. The heads of the member states had to be very actively involved: at all 16 European Council meetings between March 2020 and April 2021, the Council of the European Union was able to speak in concrete terms about its actions. The role of Coreper, the meeting of the EU ambassadors, was apparently also strengthened as a decision-preparing organ. These two interview statements are illuminative here:

> [At the meetings in Brussels] member states told, in their own addresses, about their restrictions and changes, and then I could feed this overall picture up the ladder [to the national decision makers] of where Europe is going, so that might have helped. Even though we lost a number of these dimensions in decision making, we gained a lot of information. (interviewee 18)

> I strongly believe that the EU is the only context where this type of peer discussion among such a large group is possible. And it's not hierarchical but everyone at the table is equal. Covid is one of those examples that concerns both the large and the small. It crosses all these classical boundaries and, in this sense, makes people at different levels much more equal. (interviewee 32)

However, many actors also considered the European Union's preparedness for a global pandemic to be relatively weak – several interviewees seconded this point. For example, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, which was established in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, was not originally created to deal with an event of this magnitude (Brooks and Geyer 2020). The limited preparedness of the Union as a whole created a sort of *vacuum of competency*, which almost automatically led to each member state taking measures of their own and to horizontal measures between member states (Schmidt 2020). Thus, the governments of the member states had to be flexible and create new informal channels for information exchange, transcending conventional boundaries of executive power in some cases, too (Engler et al. 2021; Pozen and Lane Scheppele 2020).

This was also reflected at the rhetorical level. In their public addresses, the top decision-makers in Finland and elsewhere repeatedly emphasised the need to cooperate and coordinate, while in practice the measures were essentially only adopted at the national level. This discrepancy between European words and national deeds can be seen as one of the inherent dimensions of politicisation during the pandemic, with a distinct impact on the patterns of emulation. And perhaps it relates to what Paul 't Hart (1993) once called *masking* in his classic analysis of the symbolic dimensions of crisis management. Those responsible for the adoption of counter-measures often seek to lessen the sense of crisis by way of various symbolic or rhetorical acts; they try to manage people's impressions of the crisis (cf. Boussaguet, Faucher, and Freudlsperger 2021).

Emulation can be seen as an integral part of EU-wide crisis management. Not only did it contribute to the accumulation of knowledge, but it led to member states beginning to understand the importance of EU cooperation in order to normalise the situation. No one wanted the borders to remain closed forever – people and goods had to be able to move. It was thus understood that pandemic management is not a zero-sum game but rather everyone had the same desire to emerge from the emergency as soon as possible and at the lowest of costs. This objective was a constant for all the member states even if the measures taken to achieve this varied between them.

5. Coordination

As explained above, although the member states' own measures dominated the early phases of the pandemic, the support of EU institutions proved valuable for the planning of these policies. With the passage of time, this support increasingly turned into coordinated action, i.e. into action that *committed* all member states to operating within the same framework and to observing the same guidelines. A sense of pragmatic flexibility in interpreting the boundaries of competences between different institutional actors provided the basis for this coordination. However, it was the Commission that assumed a leading role from the outset. This was no coincidence

as the Commission had sufficient resources for doing so (see Schomaker, Hack, and Mandry 2021, 1290).

Significant results were achieved quickly and by the summer of 2020, a comprehensive support package covering the whole of the EU was already agreed upon. With the introduction of NextGenerationEU, an addition of 807 billion euros to the 2021–2027 multi-annual budget of €1211 billion, and the first policies of vaccine development and joint procurement were drafted. There was also successful coordination between the Commission and the member states from the beginning of the crisis. For example, more than 90,000 EU citizens were jointly repatriated from all over the world. The successes engendered trust in the system and made it possible for the chosen course of action to be established.

5.1. Commission leadership

In the spring of 2020, when COVID-19 measures were being feverishly contemplated all over the world, the powers of EU bodies were being loosely interpreted, to the extent that we can speak of *improvised coordination*. The Treaties were thus not followed to the letter, but the Commission in practice took on some of the Council's responsibilities (Kassim 2023; cf. Moloney and Princen 2023). According to Zbigniew Truchlewski et al. (2021), the member states that were not immediately at the centre of the first wave had more time to consider their own measures due to the strong actions taken by the Commission. A summary by one interviewee reflects this:

> What worked well was the fact that there was a common need and perception that something had to be done together. And there was a need for coordination. So, the Commission, also together with the presidency of course, took the lead, coordinated. There was a lot of coordination, trying to make joint purchases of equipment, to agree on what kind of tests will be recognised [etc.]. In normal situations this would never have been accepted by the member states. Because they would have said 'hey, stop, this is our competence, don't even dare'. But the crisis made our boundaries more fluid. (interviewee 21)

The Commission was undoubtedly able to draw on previous crisis experiences. This was immediately concretised in March 2020, when the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. For example, the conditions for distance working had been in place since the 2016 terrorist attacks in Brussels if not earlier; it proved possible to move an agency of 30,000 office occupants to work from home relatively quickly. One Commission official even proudly noted that the EU had acted as an '*agile dinosaur*' (interviewee 28) in handling the situation. The managerial expertise of the Commission was also essential for guaranteeing the commitment of other bodies and the member states. In the interviews, the Commission's leadership was thus mainly praised.

Nevertheless, problems also emerged in the Commission-led coordination. The Commission rapidly made recommendations in different policy areas, the objectives and contents of which remained sometimes unclear. Coordination meetings were hurriedly arranged but were not as well-prepared as during normal times. The number of meetings also expanded, which often proved problematic for the schedules of the key individuals: '*At some point, ministers didn't have the time to attend all of these [Commission-organised] meetings because they had national crisis management stuff to deal with too*'

(interviewee 24).[5] Furthermore, the Commission's range of activity was not seen as unproblematic due to these sensitive divisions of labour between the different bodies, even within the Commission itself. Some even anticipated longer-term trends towards concentration of power in Commission activities that needed to be approached with some degree of reservation:

> The Commission is of course ecstatic that this is a step towards something federal, the more centralised the better. And the member states, especially small Northern ones like us, don't always agree with that. (interviewee 24)

The Council, on the other hand, did not fully keep up with the rapidly evolving situation. '*It did take quite a long time for the Council to find modes of operation that enabled teleconferencing, for example,*' noted one interviewee (16). An important reason for this was the Presidency of Croatia at the beginning of the crisis, coupled with its relatively limited resources as the newest member state. '*As the President, Croatia acted a little flustered, wasn't very transparent and didn't report things*,' claimed another interviewee (6). However, Croatia did manage to make use of the Council's Integrated Political Crisis Response mechanism (IPCR), the purpose of which is to support the Presidency, particularly in the exchange of information.

5.2. New normal health policies

By the autumn of 2020, EU decision-making had almost returned to normalcy. Germany had assumed the Presidency of the Council, and the organically formed *ad hoc* working groups within the Commission had, for the most part, disappeared. As an interviewee (4) put it, '*at first, the Commission was active, but quite quickly the ball was handed back to the member states and decision-making processes were more and more formalised*.' In the cyclical Europeanisation model, the weight of selfishness weakened and the commitment to coordination became stronger.

The Commission continued its strong crisis management policies and maintained this approach throughout the crisis; most of the significant reforms were indeed primarily driven by the Commission. Both the national elites and the wider public across the continent were also willing to accept and implement these reforms. By way of example, according to the Eurobarometer of March–April 2021, more than half of EU citizens were satisfied with the Union's COVID-19 response. Indeed, the general legitimacy of the Union may have been strengthened by the crisis (see e.g. Papageorgiou and Immonen 2023). The interviewees also showed satisfaction in this respect, one of whom claimed that the NextGenerationEU package with its green and digital focuses was an '*awesome display of operational capability*' (interviewee 4). Another one noted:

> And I'm incredibly proud that the machine reacted in this way. This is how it should be; it was an emergency. We need to have exceptional and extraordinary responses. And these came to a large extent from volunteers within the Commission. There was a lot of groundwork then by few people. (interviewee 26)

The EU Health Union initiative of November 2020 is doubtlessly the most significant of the Commission's active measures for coping with any major health challenges in the foreseeable future. The initiative is meant to improve the EU's crisis preparedness and response

capacity by strengthening the ECDC and the European Medicines Agency (EMA), for instance. Less than a year later, in September 2021, the Commission established the internal European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA). HERA institutionalised some of those *ad hoc* practices that had been adopted during the COVID-19 crisis in connection with the procurement and equal distribution of resources, such as masks or vaccines. Its aim is to strengthen the coordination of health security between member states and the Union as well as with industrial enterprises in that field. Funding for the health sector also increased to unprecedented levels during the crisis, in particular through EU4Health, which received more than five billion euros in funding for the current financial framework period (2021–2027).

Overall, these Commission-led actions during the pandemic crisis have certainly improved the EU's capacity to prepare for, and respond to, public health emergencies and cross-border health threats. The political will of the member states to invest more in the sector *collectively* was set at a completely different level than before. However, the basic institutional arrangement has not changed: each member state still bears the ultimate responsibility for its own national health preparedness. Indeed, although we can identify tendencies towards (some sort of health sector) Europeanisation, led by the Commission (cf. Cachia 2021, 97–98), these developments also highlight the continuing independent role of the member state.

6. Conclusions: cyclicality as a way of understanding Europe

It may yet be premature to reach this conclusion, and more comparative research still needs to be conducted, but the EU measures for coping with the COVID-19 pandemic proved in many respects successful. The recovery packages were intensive, with essentially the entire Union backing them. The Union demonstrated its strength as a technocratic community, displaying a genuine sense of pragmatism and allowing open dialogue to inform its policymaking. As we have described, it was possible to change the working approaches and develop new operating methods extemporaneously; there was flexibility and leadership even if the principles of competence would not have allowed this. The EU also served as a central platform for the exchange of information between member states. In fact, the crisis seemed to erase the traditional lines of demarcation between countries small and large, rich and poor, north and south, new and old. This is not to say that there is no room for improvement with respect to a shared future approach to the management of serious health crises in the EU. Overt member-state selfishness ought to be avoided, or at least replaced with more emulation, and coordination should be more systematic from the onset.

In addition to these general observations, two conclusive points deserve special emphasis. First, the cyclical Europeanisation model has highlighted how different logics in today's EU can operate at the same time and overlap. Member states can emulate each other and act together in a coordinated fashion while being utterly selfish. *These operating logics are not mutually exclusive*, but they occasionally in fact reinforce each other. Their reciprocal balance fluctuates, i.e. occurs in cycles, depending on the impacts of external conditions at any given point in time. Institutional regulation and flexible improvisation in policy making during the COVID-19 crisis, for example, proved to be important. This also supports the conclusion reached by Wolff and Ladi (2020) concerning the *adaptive*

capacity of the Union. Together, these different logics of action can effectively implement the idea and ethos of Europe, both in terms of multi-level governance and the principle of subsidiarity, as a kind of combination of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism.

In this sense, we are inclined to argue that the concept of emergency governance promoted by White (2019; cf. Heupel et al. 2021) is not entirely apt in the context of the European COVID-19 crisis. Of course, while some countries have crossed the bounds of traditional democratic practices, none of these countries has ultimately been able to act alone, in a 'decisionist' fashion, repeatedly exceeding the desirable limits of executive power. The concept of cyclical Europeanisation, by contrast, emphasises how power is distributed and constantly in motion, multidimensional and pluralistic – even though an emergency mode sometimes dominates. The more open and jointly shared the political space remains, and the more systematically member states are able to follow the acts of each other and the political bodies of Brussels, the more self-evidently this logic of cyclicality can materialise and offer pragmatic policy solutions at the appropriate political level when they are truly needed. Perhaps this also involves an element of positive politicisation in determining the 'correct' level of decision-making. All in all, cyclicality, with its three basic components presented here, will certainly serve as a useful analytical metaphor in numerous EU policy contexts, including the previous crises of the 2000s and also in regards to future developments.

Second, health policies reinforced by pandemic conditions surely make changes towards shared European practices in the social sector more likely. In terms of the future legitimacy of the Union, this strengthening of the health and social sector can be essential. As important as the green and digital foci of the current recovery package are, the health and social issues very concretely shape people's daily life; it is thus particularly easy to become committed to the European idea through them. However, the questions of competences will have to be reconsidered in this respect, as we have repeatedly pointed out. Member states ought to develop a more permanent awareness of the benefits of collective action, of the benefits of shared Europeanness. More policy convergence is needed, after all.

Notes

1. The interviews were conducted between January and August 2021 by the authors and doctoral researcher Aappo Pukarinen. Five of the interviews were conducted in pairs. The interviewees were selected through direct contact with national and EU institutions based on their professional status. The quotes used in the empirical section have been translated when needed (22 interviewees spoke Finnish) and lightly edited for clarity while preserving the original informational content.
2. For a more Finnish-specific effort, see Ketola et al. (2023). Unlike in many other policy sectors, Finland has sought to defend its traditional social and health policies against the pressures of European integration since the beginning of membership, to the extent that the Finnish approach in this field could be characterised as 'reluctant Europeanisation'. The Finnish well-resourced welfare model, relying on public service providers, has been preserved despite the generally progressing integration in many areas. See e.g. Saari and Kari (2006).
3. Indeed, Greitens (2020, E175) that the management of the initial phase of the COVID-19 crisis was more about *clustering* than some type of international diffusion: Countries with similar

resources began to act in roughly the same manner during the crisis, under the pressure of an external shock.

4. Read more on the Commission's COVID-19 response: https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/timeline-eu-action_en.
5. Several interviewees mentioned the frequency of meetings as being burdensome and overlapping between different institutions. Member states were also in very different situations where capacities were concerned and, as a result, there were inequalities between them. When health policy came to the forefront, national experts in the field had to describe EU situations that caused problems in cooperation, something which was entirely novel and foreign to some.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The work was supported by the Academy of Finland [335690]; Strategic Research Council [345950, 345951].

ORCID

Waltteri Immonen http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6202-0128
Johanna Ketola http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2530-3115
Henri Vogt http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1368-0925

References

Aaltola, Mika, Johanna Ketola, Aada Peltonen, and Karoliina Vaakanainen. 2021. "An Abrupt Awakening to the Realities of a Pandemic: Learning Lessons from the Onset of COVID-19 in the EU and Finland." *FIIA Working Paper 122*.

Alemanno, Alberto. 2020. "The European Response to COVID-19: From Regulatory Emulation to Regulatory Coordination?" *European Journal of Risk Regulation* 11 (2): 307–316. https://doi.org/10.1017/err.2020.44.

Börzel, Tanja. 2002. "Pace-Setting, Foot-Dragging, and Fence-Sitting: Member State Responses of Europeanization." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (2): 193–214. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00351.

Boussaguet, Laurie, Florence Faucher, and Christian Freudlsperger. 2021. "Performing Crisis Management: National Repertoires of Symbolic Action and Their Usage During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Europe." *Political Studies* 71 (4): 1090–1109. https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211058305.

Brooks, Eleanor, and Alexander Bürgin. 2021. "Political Steering in the European Commission: A Comparison of the Energy and Health Sectors." *Journal of European Integration* 43 (6): 755–771. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1812063.

Brooks, Eleanor, and Robert Geyer. 2020. "The Development of EU Health Policy and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Trends and Implications." *Journal of European Integration* 42 (8): 1057–1076. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1853718.

Bulmer, Simon. 2007. "Theorizing Europeanization." In *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*, edited by Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink, 46–58. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230584525_4.

Cachia, Jean Claude. 2021. "The Europeanization of the COVID-19 Pandemic Response and the EU's Solidarity with Italy." *Contemporary Italian Politics* 13 (1): 81–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2021.1871808.

Connolly, John. 2008. "Europeanization, Uploading and Downloading: The Case of Defra and Avian Influenza." *Public Policy and Administration* 23 (1): 7–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076707083283.

Cowles, Maria, James Caporaso, and Thomras Risse, eds. 2001. *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501723575.

Engler, Sarah, Palmo Brunner, Romane Loviat, Tarik Abou-Chadi, Lucas Leemann, Andreas Glaser, and Daniel Küber. 2021. "Democracy in Times of the Pandemic: Explaining the Variation of COVID-19 Policies Across European Democracies." *West European Politics* 44 (5–6): 1077–1102. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2021.1900669.

Ferrera, Maurizio, Joan Miró, and Stefano Ronchi. 2021. "Walking the Road Together? EU Polity Maintenance During the COVID-19 Crisis." *West European Politics* 44 (5–6): 1329–1352. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2021.1905328.

Goetz, Klaus H. 2002. "Four Worlds of Europeanisation." *Paper Prepared for the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops*. Turin, Italy, March 22–7, 2002.

Goetz, Klaus H. 2006. "Territory, Temporality and Clustered Europeanization." In *Reihe Politikwissenschaft Papers*. Vol. 109. Vienna: Institute of Advanced Studies. https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/24577/ssoar-2006-goetz-territory.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-2006-goetz-territory.pdf.

Greer, Scott L. 2006. "Uninvited Europeanization: Neofunctionalism and the EU in Health Policy." *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (1): 134–152. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760500380783.

Greer, Scott L., and Olga Löblová. 2017. "European Integration in the Era of Permissive Dissensus: Neofunctionalism and Agenda-Setting in European Health Technology Assessment and Communicable Disease Control." *Comparative European Politics* 15 (3): 394–413. https://doi.org/10.1057/cep.2016.6.

Greitens, Sheena Chestnut. 2020. "Surveillance, Security, and Liberal Democracy in the Post-COVID World." *International Organization* 74 (S1): E169–E190. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000417.

Hart, Paul't. 1993. "Symbols, Rituals and Power: The Lost Dimensions of Crisis Management." *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 1 (1): 36–50. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5973.1993.tb00005.x.

Heupel, Monika, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, Christian Kreuder-Sonnen, Markus Patberg, Astrid Séville, Jens Steffek, and Jonathan White. 2021. "Emergency Politics After Globalization." *International Studies Review* 23 (4): 1959–1987. https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab021.

Howell, Kerry E. 2004. *Europeanization, European Integration and Financial Services*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230503120.

Kassim, Hussein. 2023. "The European Commission and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Pluri-Institutional Approach." *Journal of European Public Policy* 30 (4): 612–634. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2022.2140821.

Ketola J, Immonen W and Vogt H. (2023). Syklinen eurooppalaistuminen, koronakriisi ja Suomi. Politiikka, 65(1), 10.37452/politiikka.117058

Kinski, Lucy. 2021. "What Role for National Parliaments in EU Governance? A View by Members of Parliament." *Journal of European Integration* 43 (6): 717–738. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1817000.

Ladi, Stella, and Sarah Wolff. 2021. "The EU Institutional Architecture in the COVID-19 Response: Coordinative Europeanization in Times of Permanent Emergency." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 59 (S1): 32–43. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13254.

Ladrech, Robert. 1994. "Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32 (1): 71–88. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.1994.

tb00485.x.
Moloney, David, and Sebastiaan Princen. 2023. "Assessing the Role of the European Council and the European Commission During the Migration and COVID-19 Crises." *West European Politics* 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2023.2225403.
Mörttinen, Matti. 2021. Valtioneuvoston Ydin Kriisitilanteessa – Covid-19-Pandemian Paineet Suomalaiselle Päätöksenteolle. Helsinki: Sitra.
Oleart, Alvaro, and Nils Gheyle. 2022. "Executive Gladiators in the European Arena: Discursive Intergovernmentalism in the Politicization of the COVID-19 EU Recovery Plan." *Journal of European Integration* 44 (8): 1095–1111. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2022.2085695.
Olsen, Johan P. 2002. "The Many Faces of Europeanization." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (5): 921–952. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00403.
Pacces, Alessio M., and Maria Weimer. 2020. "From Diversity to Coordination: A European Approach to COVID-19." *European Journal of Risk Regulation* 11 (2): 283–296. https://doi.org/10.1017/err.2020.36.
Papageorgiou, Achillefs, and Waltteri Immonen. 2023. "How Supranational Institutions Benefit from Crises: Member states' Solidarity and the EU's Image During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *European Union Politics* 24 (3): 601–621. https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165231156846.
Peters, B. Guy. 2015. *Pursuing Horizontal Management: The Politics of Public Sector Coordination*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
Pozen, David E., and Kim Lane Scheppele. 2020. "Executive Underreach, in Pandemics and Otherwise." *American Journal of International Law* 114 (4): 608–617. https://doi.org/10.1017/ajil.2020.59.
Radaelli, Claudio M. 2000. "Policy Transfer in the European Union: Institutional Isomorphism As a Source of Legitimacy." *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* 13 (1): 25–43. https://doi.org/10.1111/0952-1895.00122.
Radaelli, Claudio M. 2002. "The Domestic Impact of European Union Public Policy: Notes on Concepts, Methods, and the Challenge of Empirical Research." *Politique Européenne* n° 5 (1): 105–136. https://doi.org/10.3917/poeu.005.0105.
Rainio-Niemi, Johanna. 2020. "Koronakriisi Ja valtio: Suomen Ja Ruotsin Mallien Vertailua." *Kosmopolis* 50 (2): 162–173.
Reh, Christine, Adrienne Héritier, Edoardo Bressanelli, and Christel Koop. 2013. "The Informal Politics of Legislation: Explaining Secluded Decision Making in the European Union." *Comparative Political Studies* 46 (9): 1112–1142. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414011426415.
Saari, Juho, and Matti, Kari. 2006. "Sosiaali- ja terveyspolitiikka: Nopeasti Muuttunut Politiikkalohko." In *Eurooppalaistuminen – Suomen sopeutuminen Euroopan Integraatioon*, edited by Tapio Raunio and Juho Saari, 140–180. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
Saurugger, Sabine. 2005. "Europeanization As a Methodological Challenge: The Case of Interest Groups." *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis* 7 (4): 291–312. https://doi.org/10.1080/13876980500319337.
Schmidt, Vivien A. 2020. "Theorizing Institutional Change and Governance in European Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Journal of European Integration* 42 (8): 1177–1193. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1853121.
Schmidt, Vivien A. 2022. "European Emergency Politics and the Question of Legitimacy." *Journal of European Public Policy* 29 (6): 979–993. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1916061.
Schomaker, Rahel M., Marko Hack, and Ann-Katrin Mandry. 2021. "The Eu's Reaction in the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic Between Centralisation and Decentralisation, Formality and Informality." *Journal of European Public Policy* 28 (8): 1278–1298. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1942153.
Shipan, Charles R., and Craig Volden. 2008. "The Mechanisms of Policy Diffusion." *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (4): 840–857. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00346.x.

Stenvall, Jari, Riikka-Leena Leskelä, Pasi-Heikki Rannisto, Helena Tolkki, Anniina Cansel, Ulriikka Leponiemi, Jan-Erik Johanson, Elias Pekkola, and Teemu Tupala. 2022. "Koronajohtaminen Suomessa: Arvio covid-19-Pandemian johtamisesta Ja hallinnosta Syksystä 2020 Syksyyn 2021." Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnnan julkaisusarja 34.

Toshkov, Dimiter, Brendan Carroll, and Kutsal Yesilkagit. 2021. "Government Capacity, Societal Trust or Party Preferences: What Accounts for the Variety of National Policy Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Europe?" *Journal of European Public Policy* 29 (7): 1009–1028. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1928270.

Truchlewski, Zbigniew, Waltraud Schelkle, and Joseph Ganderson. 2021. "Buying Time for Democracies? European Union Emergency Politics in the Time of COVID-19." *West European Politics* 44 (5–6): 1353–1375. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2021.1916723.

Wach, Krzysztof. 2015. "Conceptualizing Europeanization: Theoretical Approaches and Research Designs." In *Europeanization Processes from the Mesoeconomic Perspective: Industries and Policies*, edited by Piotr Stanek and Krzysztof Wach, 11–23. Cracow: Cracow University of Economics.

White, Jonathan. 2015. "Emergency Europe." *Political Studies* 63 (2): 300–318. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12072.

White, Jonathan. 2019. *Politics of Last Resort: Governing by Emergency in the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198791720.001.0001.

Wodak, Ruth. 2021. "Crisis Communication and Crisis Management During COVID-19." *Global Discourse* 11 (3): 329–353. https://doi.org/10.1332/204378921X16100431230102.

Wolff, Sarah, and Stella Ladi. 2020. "European Union Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Adaptability in Times of Permanent Emergency." *Journal of European Integration* 42 (8): 1025–1040. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1853120.