



(Cedefop), and community trade marks (Ohim). More specifically, the analysis is focused on the everyday discourses of the selected agencies' staff in constructing the role of the EU agencies. The goal is to identify whether there are similarities and/or differences between the three agencies given that they represent different functional categories (monitoring, cooperation and (quasi-) regulatory). The paper also explores the theoretical paradigms that are used to study the agencies and provide the main repository of scientific ideas and discourses. This analysis aims to evaluate the agencies' function as regulatory and independent, monitoring or cooperation and also vis-a-vis a series of other important actors, such as the European Commission, Parliament, member states and other international organisations operating in the respective policy areas. In a nutshell, the paper will present the discourses of the agencies' self-images in an effort to juxtapose them with the theoretical frameworks that proclaim the role of the agencies.

## **1. Introduction**

This paper studies the ways interviewees in three Community agencies construct the meanings of the role and nature of the EU agencies. The three selected agencies belong in three different functional categories. These are: the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the Office for Harmonisation of the Internal Market (Ohim). Following the example of the American regulatory agencies, a debate has emerged recently whether the EU agencies are, or should be, regulatory. So one can identify competing scientific frameworks regarding the appropriate role of the Community agencies. The analysis puts forward the argument that individuals' discourses in the EU agencies about the agencies could draw on some of the major scientific arguments and ideological dilemmas found in the scientific literature on the EU agencies. If this emerges to be the case, then we will be better able to understand the meaning attributed to the EU agencies by the agencies' discourses in



subordinated to a superior (or supreme rule making bodies with legislative powers) or to reach binding decisions in particular cases (adjudication) (Coleman 2004; Yataganas 2001; Chiti 2000). Regulatory agencies could enjoy discretionary power to the extent that they establish, monitor and reform rules in their field of responsibility. Regulatory agencies have been initially founded within national contexts. The reasons for their creation are mostly due to the difficulties of the legislative processes to deal with the growing complexity of issues that require regulation and the rapid development in highly technical and specialised policy areas (Kelemen 2002). As a result, discretionary rule-making and adjudicative powers are delegated to bureaucratic agencies that are able to provide the necessary technical expertise (Kelemen 2002). This means that agencies are autonomous from their respective governments in order to enhance the credibility of their policy commitments.

In short, the normative characteristics attributed to regulatory agencies are the following: a) they operate at arm's length from the main hierarchical 'spine' of central institutions, b) they perform public tasks e.g. service provision, regulation, adjudication, certification at a national level, c) they consist of public servants, d) they are subject to public administrative law procedures and e) are financed by the state budget (Talbot et al. 2000). In addition, there is a common rhetoric regarding the agencies' goals and benefits in political, policy and administrative terms (Talbot et al. 2000). Politically, agencies are regarded as a method of enhancing the legitimacy of public institutions in the eyes of an increasingly sceptical and detached public. In policy terms, agencies are seen as a rational and strategic method for the definition of policy goals, means and outcomes. Finally, in administrative terms agencies are considered as less bureaucratic, performance oriented, consisting of flexible managers and motivated experts, who are accountable to the central institutions, avoiding, thus, the diffusion of responsibility.

Yet, in practice one can realise that the aforementioned normative definitions and characteristics attributed to regulatory agencies apply



inter-relations, similarities and differences between the two “ideologies” (Billig et al. 1988)<sup>1</sup>. This will help us understand the pervasiveness of some discourses and the strengthening of dominant ideologies for the agencies and the EU in general, or respectively their ‘disarticulation’ through the articulation of alternative lines of argumentation.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

There are two aspects that are relevant to the theoretical framework adopted in this paper. The first is related to the discipline that has provided the analytical tools of this paper: ‘discursive psychology’. The second aspect concerns the theoretical paradigms that are used, mostly in the field of political science, to study the agencies and provide the main repository of scientific ideas and discourses. Each are surveyed in brief below.

#### ***3.1 Discursive psychology***

Epistemologically speaking, discursive psychology draws heavily on social constructionism. It is as an eclectic approach that combines a post-structuralist strand that focuses on discourse, power and the subject as well as an interactionist perspective that builds on an analysis of people’s everyday discursive interactions. The basic principle of discursive psychology is the focus on language and not on individuals as in traditional psychology. One of the goals of discursive psychology is to study how people construct their understanding of the world in their social interactions and how discourse is constructed in relation to social action (Potter & Wetherell 1994). Discourse is defined “as all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal and written texts of all kinds” (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 7). Language is not understood as a transparent mirror

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<sup>1</sup> Intellectual ideologies are products of intellectuals or academics in a form of a system of political, religious or philosophical thinking (Billig et al. 1988: 27-28; Edley 2001). Lived ideology, on the other side, is society’s common sense, way of life or culture (Billig et al. 1988: 27-28). These ideologies seek to describe the social patterning of people’s everyday thinking and are often considered as the condensed wisdom of a society (Billig et al. 1988).



of 'reality'. In this sense, there are various constructions of the world, some of which are preferable or more effective than others; c) Knowledge, whether common or scientific, is seen as social, intrinsically rhetorical, historically and inter-subjectively produced. Accordingly, the objectivity of scientific knowledge is doubted; d) In order to understand the meaning of a discourse, it is important to understand the socio-historical context in which discourse is produced.

The above principles underpin the three selected concepts, "interpretative repertoires", "subject positions" and "ideological dilemmas" that guide the empirical analysis. The focus of the latter is on the macro-discursive as well as the micro-discursive phenomena of talk-in-interaction. In other words, we will need to study the broader context of the agencies in order to make sense of the discursive patterns that emerge in the everyday interactions (Potter & Wetherell 1987).

### **3.2 Scientific discourses on EU agencies**

The scientific theories on EU agencies are important because they can be used as discursive resources by the interviewees in the agencies. That is to say that when individuals speak about the role, nature, and relation of the agencies to the EU, they draw on the scientific literature. At least three strands of the scientific theories can be identified in the everyday discourse of individuals.

The first can be considered as a normative discourse since it employs very similar argumentation like the one which defines a regulatory agency in section 2. It frames EU agencies as 'independent regulatory agencies with power' and one of its chief advocates can be considered as Majone (1996; 2002a, b). According to Majone, an agency is defined as "a part of government that is generally independent in the exercise of its functions and that by law has authority to take final and binding action affecting the rights and obligations of individuals" (Majone 2002b: 300). As with their US counterparts, EU agencies are considered as fulfilling a very important public service function. However, the normative approach has been





for the agencies' creation, to provide a more "pragmatic" elaboration of the concept of independence, as well as a more "pragmatic" account of the forms and structures of the existing agencies (Kelemen 2002). In this account inter-institutional politics, intergovernmental dynamics, and ultimately power politics take the centre stage (Williams 2005; Kelemen 2002; Shapiro 1997). This discourse tends to undermine the notion of independence, although it does acknowledge EU agencies are granted limited autonomy and powers.

The last scientific discourse relates to the EU's own official discourse on the agencies. All agencies are assigned with a set of tasks which all aim at providing support to the EU and its member states. In many respects, the common goals of the agencies can be interpreted as promoting the Community's services as well as serving the supranational interest: on the one hand, by working for all member states to identify new needs that the EU should respond to, and, on the other, by serving the 'European public interest' (Groenleer 2005). It becomes clear that although the official EU discourse on agencies can be close to both the normative and pragmatic discourses it has broader political ambitions. The use of similar argumentation or jargon does not necessarily mean that it subscribes to either of the two previous discourses. Instead, what is distinct about this discourse is its emphasis on the symbolic role of the agencies as well as the importance of the EU as their founder.

#### **4. Methodology**

The empirical research focused on three out of the ten agencies that existed at the time (Cedefop, EMCDDA, Ohim). The selection was based on three different categories and subcategories that are used in the classification developed by Kreher (1997)<sup>2</sup>. The main tool used for collecting the everyday discourses in the agencies was through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. A total of seventy interviews were conducted that lasted up to an hour each. Nineteen took place in the agency in Lisbon, thirty-two in Alicante and nineteen in the agency in Thessaloniki<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 1 for further details on the breakdown of agencies by role-function.

<sup>3</sup> The process of data collection took place in the period between the end of April until



- Why do you think agencies were created and what is their function?
- What do you think about the fact that agencies are referred to as decentralised or independent bodies of the EU? What is the meaning of this reference?

Following the premises of discursive psychology, the research sample was chosen according to the criterion of variety and differentiation of linguistic patterns rather than representativeness of individuals' characteristics (Marshall 1994). Nevertheless, the sample was designed to be broad by including participants with "typical" as well as "exceptional" formal characteristics (Taylor 2001; Wood & Kroger 2000). Annex 2 provides a statistical breakdown of the gender, nationality and socio-economic status of the interviewees.

## **5. Three Interpretative Repertoires on Community Agencies**

In this part, we will discuss the meaning of an agency as this is constructed by selected small and representative extracts from the interviews with individuals in the three EU agencies. The analysis has shown that within every agency there are similar discursive constructions of the role of the agencies independently of the functional category to which every agency belongs. Only in one repertoire we find that there is a distinct line of argumentation that appears in the Ohim, which is representative of the so called category of the 'quasi-regulatory' agencies. The selected extracts included in the analysis fulfil a series of criteria, concerning comprehensiveness, content, length and variety. Furthermore, as the three repertoires emerged in the discourse in all the three agencies, equally extracts have been selected from the interviews from all the three agencies. Yet for practical constraints regarding the length of this paper, just one extract is displayed for every line of argumentation<sup>4</sup>. The extracts are given a number according to the order they are presented here. They are also labelled by a pseudonym of the

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<sup>4</sup>The rest of the material can be at the disposal of every interested reader.



distance from the EU and in an independent way.

### **1. “Agencies as being closer to Europe and its citizens”**

The first line of argumentation constructs agencies as carriers of the EU and, more broadly, the European idea. This normative goal of agencies’ decentralisation is represented in terms of physical distribution of Europe’s ideals and values in the country or city where an agency is situated. Agencies, thus, are constructed as means for increasing the visibility of the EU, disseminating the European idea, responding to the needs of the citizens and increasing the citizens’ knowledge about the EU throughout the EU member states.

Extract 1: Kostas<sup>5</sup>

- 1 First of all there are (.) a quick result there are immediate results from the creation of
- 2 these agencies (1) the possibility with people and also with the citizens and then for
- 3 Alicante (.) people for Thessaloniki people for the London people or for Bilbao, Angers
- 4 and so on. They know they know that the Community (.) the European Community
- 5 exists. This is because at least there are some bodies or at least there are bodies (.) there
- 6 is one body in the need of citizens which a:h there are European civil servants (.) there
- 7 are European bureaucrats working here and they are doing something not just earning
- 8 money.

### **2. “Agencies as promoting integration through their specialised task”**

In the second line of argumentation the agencies are presented as contributing to European integration. This is done mainly in terms of the harmonization of different areas of interest through cooperation, the exchange of information, and the production of outputs. The integration task of the agencies is presented in functional rather than in physical or symbolic terms as in the previous line of argumentation. It could be said

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<sup>5</sup> All extracts have been transcribed based on a simplified “Jefersonian” style. See annex IV for the explanation of symbols used in the extracts.



3 compares this data (.) that fact only makes the way we are European. I  
mean the fact  
4 that we are bringing together this data (.) analysing them together (.)  
comparing them  
5 and publishing one report with the view of the state of the drugs  
problem (.) that fact  
6 well (.) is European integration.

### **3. “Agencies as maintaining the balance in the EU”**

In the third line of argumentation of this repertoire, the interviewees focus on representing the agencies as European public bodies or services putting forward, firstly, their link with the EU and, secondly, their actual function. With respect to the first aspect, agencies are contrasted with the notion of a private company. Emphasis is placed on their links with the Commission and, in particular, the fact that they are under the Commission’s control. This is actually constructed as a necessary condition for their effective operation. With respect to their function, this is described as the provision of “objective” information in their respected area of interest, by operating as an “interface” between various actors.

#### Extract 3: Andreas

1 But we are in the middle of a very big debate (.) because e:: some  
people want they  
2 think that it’s more in (.) to transform us into a modern company which  
gives us what  
3 the hell with that (.) we are not a company (.) we could never be a  
company (.) we are  
4 public service public service we have to to (.) I mean I have to apply  
the regulations the  
5 (.) some wherever so efficiency on the one hand of course but (this)  
goes with the  
6 European with the public function you know. Prodi gave a speech in  
November and I  
7 think in the European Parliament and he told that agencies should be  
(.) they have to be  
8 under the strong manner of the Commission. A:m::: strong (.) they  
mean they want  
9 more control of the agencies and I think it’s necessary as well. It’s  
necessary you know  
10 because otherwise we will have fifteen agencies which are working  
around and doing  
11 whatever they want because for example (.) yeah (.) but it’s (.) where  
do you draw the  
12 line e::h. Because we are more really kind an interface of...like a





they deviate from their appropriate role as European public bodies inextricably linked to and dependent on the bigger EU institutions.

Extract 4: Paul

Question: What are the agencies (.) their role (.) their function=

Answer:

- 1 =Agencies are European without acting like this. [...] Maybe because they become too
- 2 much decentralized (.) too much specialised and in this manner independent. They only
- 3 have contacts with scientists without really being interested in Europe or EU. Certainly it
- 4 is clear that they wouldn't exist if EU didn't exist (.) because they are also funded by it.
- 5 But it is an issue (.) because some of them they have already started to be even
- 6 financially independent. So it can be a serious problem.

### **Discussion**

The lines of argumentation discussed in this repertoire construct the EU agencies as agents of Europeanization whose goal is to diffuse the European idea to the member states either through their symbolic or technical role. The dilemma negotiated in this repertoire is whether agencies are dependent and close or independent and distant from the EU. The antithetical components of the dilemma were expressed in a series of dualities such as public versus private, service versus company, European versus independent. The interviewees built their argumentation by choosing the characteristics of these dualities that built the agencies as "Community agencies" as a normative reality (European, decentralised, public services, subsidised by the Commission). At the same time the antithetical characteristics (non-European, independent, private companies, self-financed and profit oriented) are undermined. This is achieved by the use of a consistent rhetoric that is based on the use of a normativity jargon (organised either upon systematic vagueness, consensus and corroboration or footing). This jargon presents the arguments on agencies' role as a undisputable reality with reference to the agencies and to the overall functioning of the EU. The construction of the agencies as "European public bodies" is further reflected in the



motto “bringing the Union closer to its citizens”. In this sense, agencies do not operate in an autonomous manner but under principles designed by the core EU institutions (Chiti 2004). Decentralisation/independence is described as a cleavage that relegates agencies to the political periphery, according to the last line of argumentation. According to the official EU rhetoric, agencies with increased independence can turn into entities dominated by technocracy. In order to avoid this situation the best solution proclaimed by the EU institutions has been the monitoring of the agencies’ work to ensure the clear subordination of them to the core EU institutions (Coleman 2004). This is besides what is also promoted as the best solution in this repertoire.

## ***5.2 Agencies as independent from “Brussels”***

The second repertoire contains three lines of argumentation which are structured on the core argument that agencies are specialised, independent and decentralised. The reference to “Brussels”, and in particular to the Commission, plays a crucial role in this repertoire. “Brussels” is represented as closely linked with politics, political interests, bureaucracy and other negative characteristics that usually accompany the notion of a public administration. Agencies are frequently compared to them in order to be presented as differentiated, distant and independent, specialised, efficient and better organisations. Therefore, agencies’ positive representation is structured upon their efficiency and lack of politics. Following this argument, agencies are only represented negatively in the last line of argumentation where they are depicted as operating without independence, autonomy and flexibility.

### **1. “Agencies as specialised and efficient organisations compared to other EU institutions”**

The first line of argumentation presents the agencies as specialised and task-focused organisations. Agencies are evaluated positively in terms of their efficiency, which is the crucial characteristic that differentiates them



poses its own  
5 requests. The agencies I can say that they are a part (.) of a think tank  
that puts forward  
6 ideas-proposals (.) which are not certainly binding for the Commission  
(.) but  
7 they provide however according to my opinion (.) a valuable fuelling of  
viewpoints (.)  
8 opinions(.) perspectives (.) alternative proposals (.) which subsequently  
the Commission  
9 examines and channels for implementation (.) through the Council in  
all member  
10 states. Certainly the ideas that the agencies produce are products of  
thought and  
11 work independent from pressures (.) and political interests. And that's  
why  
12 they [agencies] are useful. I think also it's [there is] less bureaucracy in  
the agencies than  
13 the Commission (.) it's more (.) you have much more manoeuvre (.)  
much more I think  
14 responsibility (.) much more variety because you have to take on much  
more [tasks].

## 2. "Agencies as independent from "Brussels" "

As in the previous line of argumentation, here agencies are also constructed as specialised bodies, independent from Brussels' politics. In this case, however, independence is related to financial autonomy. This line of argumentation is found only in the talk of the interviewees in the agency of Alicante. This is hardly surprising given that this is the only self-financed agency of the three.

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δικά του.  
5 Οι agencies μπορώ να πω (.) ότι αποτελούν μέλος δεξαμενής σκέψης και  
υποβολής  
6 ιδεών-προτάσεων (.) οι οποίες δεν είναι βέβαια δεσμευτικές για την επιτροπή  
(.) αλλά  
7 ωστόσο είναι κατά τη γνώμη μου (.) πολύτιμη τροφοδοσία με απόψεις (.)  
γνώμες (.)  
8 προοπτικές (.) εναλλακτικές προτάσεις (.) τις οποίες στη συνέχεια τις  
επεξεργάζεται η  
9 επιτροπή και τις διοχετεύει για εκτέλεση (.) μέσω του συμβουλίου σε όλες τις  
χώρες-  
10 μέλη. Οι ιδέες βέβαια που παράγουν τα agencies σαφώς είναι προϊόντα  
σκέψης και  
11 δουλειάς ανεξάρτητης από πιέσεις (.) και πολιτικά συμφέροντα. Γι' αυτό και  
είναι  
12 χρήσιμα. Επίσης νομίζω ότι υπάρχει λιγότερη γραφειοκρατία στα agencies  
από ότι στην  
13 Επιτροπή (.) είναι πιο (.) έχεις πολύ περισσότερο ελιγμό (.) πολλή περισσότερη  
ευθύνη  
(.) πολλή περισσότερη ποικιλία γιατί πρέπει να αναλαμβάνεις πολύ περισσότερα.



### 3. “Agencies as executive and bureaucratic organisations without power”

In this line of argumentation, agencies are attributed with negative characteristics mainly due to the lack of the independence, autonomy and better operational principles such as flexibility. Therefore, this line of argumentation is the antithesis of the previous two. Although agencies are evaluated negatively, the aforementioned characteristics (independence, autonomy and flexibility or lack of bureaucracy) are considered to be necessary, significant and positive. In fact, it is the absence of these characteristics that generates the critique of the way agencies operate. To this end, this line of argumentation draws ideologically on the normative discourse, according to which agencies being dependent, bureaucratic and without power, does not constitute an appropriate model.

Extract 7: Michael

Question: What do you think about the role of the agencies in the EU architecture (.) with other EU institutions?

Answer:

- 1 It's the same relationship like between being Christian and loving the
- 2 Pope. I mean
- 3 the Commission it's the kind of Pope (.) it says that represents the
- 4 European idea but it
- 5 does represent as well the idea as the Pope represents Christianity.
- 6 That's the same
- 7 thing. Agencies the same. Because they are kind of (.) often they are
- 8 kind of small
- 9 replicates of Brussels and this [agency is a] serious a big replicate of
- 10 Brussels (1) Yeah
- 11 (.) I think that it's not a problem of Brussels. It might (.) it's a good idea
- 12 to do the
- 13 decentralisation but it could (.) it depends on what (.) if the culture
- 14 pushes around inside
- 15 the agencies and if the agency is run by Brussels and is strongly
- 16 depending on
- 17 Brussels and all its values. And there is no way of changing it (.) if you
- 18 don't change the
- 19 people inside (.) the attitudes (.) there is no way of changing anything.
- 20 Even (1) it's (1)
- 21 b:h this (.) and even it's some rumours people say (.) Brussels you are
- 22 freer Brussels it's
- 23 more at least (..) rules more democratic (.) applies at least to
- 24 everybody. Here
- 25 sometimes it's exactly like in the faraway colony (.) like colonies where
- 26 defects to law





advanced in the first repertoire. Even the rhetorical organisation of this repertoire is very similar to the first one, consisting of vivid descriptions and the deployment of a normative jargon. As mentioned before, the consequence of such a rhetorical formation is the construction of the agencies as independent bodies, like a normative reality that cannot be doubted.

The emphasis on efficiency through the provision of regulatory powers or the autonomy to take decisions, as described by the interviewees, is consistent with the essential thrust of this technocratic discourse (Meynaud 1969). The analysis brings about how this repertoire is informed by a technocrat discourse, which employs specialised knowledge as the critical resource in regulatory policy-making (Radaelli 1999). Agencies constructed in these terms concentrate on efficiency. Similarly, the normative discourse on independent, regulatory agencies promoted by several academic researchers (Majone 1997, 2002b; Everson 1995; Vos 2000a, b; Yataganas 2001) is built on the same argumentation. In particular, agencies are constructed as having distinct tasks from the rest of the EU institutions or as operating at arm's length because the bigger EU institutions lack the skills and abilities to undertake the agencies' specialised tasks (Kelemen 2002; Majone 2002a; Talbot et al. 2000). Moreover, in both the everyday discourses in the agencies, as well as in the normative scientific discourse, agencies are constructed as independent from political interests and pressures from the bigger EU institutions (Yataganas 2001; Kreher 1997; Radaelli 1999). Besides, this notion of independence of the agencies' scientific assessments and outputs from vested, political interests and pressures deriving from the bigger EU institutions, is one of the normative criteria for the definition of a regulatory agency (Talbot et al. 2000). It is this characteristic that permits the agencies being better organisations in administrative and organisational terms (efficient, expert, financially and organisationally flexible, objective and neutral) than the rest of the EU bodies (Majone 1996, 1997, 2002b; Yataganas 2001; Talbot et al. 2000; Radaelli 1999; Ahrendt 1996; Dehousse 1997). In the last line of argumentation agencies



self-financed is deployed as a warrant for an agency's independence, autonomy, specialisation and business orientation.

### **5.3 Agencies as “Political Agents”**

The last repertoire contains two lines of argumentation in which agencies are represented in negative terms and are described as not being able to fulfil their goals. This is not considered as the agencies' fault. Instead, agencies are portrayed as the victim of inter-institutional politics and inter-governmental interests operating within an ineffective system that lacks strategic planning. The dominant concept that explains interviewees' discontent is the lack of agencies' power to act on their preferences. This inability is the result of power wielded by different and diverging interest groups. This is an argument that has been advanced by a pragmatic discourse on agencies.

#### **1. “Agencies as victims of the conflicting interests of their multiple principals”**

In the first line of argumentation, agencies are presented in negative terms mainly because they are not able to accomplish their assigned tasks. The responsibility is attributed to EU inter-institutional tensions and inter-governmental politics and interests, which put into question the reasons for the agencies' creation and the success of their overall mission.

Extract 8: Frank<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Original text transcribed in Italian:

- 1 il fatto è che (.) se facciamo se permettiamo faremmo un po' di storia nel senso che tutto
- 2 questo conflitto di interesse di vari attori (.) proviene dal fatto che e:h quando si è creato
- 3 il fenomeno delle agenzie è stato creato il modo un consiglio europeo che faceva questo
- 4 show off (.) senza poi vedere pensare cosa sta dietro di conseguenza. E non parlo di
- 5 questa agenzia (.) parlo di tutte le agenzie. Il che è successo che e:h la commissione
- 6 come entità umana (.) ha visto un nemico nel fatto di fare agenzie. Perché sia detto
- 7 stiamo prendendo un alto (.) ci stiamo prendendo pezzettini tirandosi fuori da Brussels o
- 8 da Lussemburgo spezzatine di nostra competenza per fare agenzie più veloci autonome
- 9 rapide etc. Questo no va (.) dunque ci hanno sovra-carricato di burocrazia.



has seen an enemy  
7 in the fact of creating agencies. Because it was said that we are getting  
at the top (.) we  
8 are taking small pieces pulling them outside Brussels or Luxembourg  
parts of our  
9 competence for making agencies more quick autonomous rapid etc. So  
this is not ok (.)  
10 so they have [...] they have loaded with bureaucracy. You get it? And in  
general  
11 e:h there are organs of control as I call them which according to the  
entity of [an] agency  
12 (.) so according to the entity of work of the subject of work of the  
agency is more than  
13 strong. Take for example we are taking the case of the agency eeh of  
Alicante. They are  
14 doing a bit whatever they want. It has power (.) financial resources.  
Too many (.) from  
15 one part too many. [...] It is not the same thing for Cedefop (.) the  
contrary (.) it is not  
16 the same thing for Torino and it is not the same thing for us and it  
won't be still at least  
17 for the others. So this conflict of interest (.) the fact that there are  
many actors is due  
18 also to I would say reluctance to give a bit speed to the things [...]. So

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14 troppe. [...] Non è la stessa cosa per cedefop (.) il contrario (.) non è la stessa  
cosa per  
15 Torino e non è la stessa cosa per noi e anche non sarà ancora almeno per le  
altre.  
16 Dunque questo conflitto d'interesse (.) il fatto che ci sono tanti attori è dovuto  
anche a  
17 direi riluttanza a dare un po' di lesto alle cose. [...]. Dunque è soprattutto (.)  
c'è anche  
18 secondo me ma questo è totalmente personale (.) e:h una certa e:h  
ambivalenza  
19 ambiguità contro al potere come come lo vuoi con UNDCP nel senso che fino a  
quel  
20 momento UNDCP era la parola franca. Sono loro che sono gli specialisti.  
Creando  
21 questa agenzia sulle droghe prima in commissione come entità e poi creando  
un'agenzia  
22 (.) il potere si è squilibrato un po'. [...] Dunque questo fa un: e che ci sono  
molte  
23 sensibilità (.) molte. A parte di stati membri che di una parte lavorano col  
UNDCP di  
24 una parte con noi e stanno un po' in mezzo.[...]. Adesso secondo me  
paghiamo come  
25 agenzia in genere il fatto di una piccola guerra (.) tra Commissione Parlamento  
26 Consiglio perché (.) se tu vedi un po' la storia dell'unione da tre quattro anni  
c'è sempre  
27 questo potere più del Parlamento. E il parlamento ha acquisito più potere  
autonomia è  
28 diventato di fatto il vero organo legislativo. La commissione mette in atto (.)  
propone in  
29 atto (.) chi decide è il parlamento. Il consiglio ha avuto un ruolo minore ha  
perso molto.

E dunque c'è questa guerra tra sempre le tre entità in un modo in un altro.



27 Parliament and the Council because (.) if you see a little bit the story of  
28 the union since  
29 three four years there is always more power of the Parliament. And the  
30 Parliament has  
31 acquired more power autonomy it has become indeed the true  
32 legislative organ. The  
33 Commission puts [proposals] for action (.) proposes for action (.) who  
34 decides is the  
35 Parliament. The Council has had a more limited role it has lost a lot.  
36 And so there is this  
37 war between always the three entities this way or another.

## **2. “Agencies as operating in a system that does not work”**

Here, agencies and their objectives, mainly those regarding the need to be closer to the cities and member states where they are situated, are negotiated in negative terms. This is attributed to a general lack of planning or a deficient system designed and implemented by those who take important decisions about the agencies’ creation and function.

Extract 9: Andreas

1 there’s still this problem that nobody knows exactly what an agency is.  
2 You go to (.)  
3 down down down to see (.) the bottom line and you don’t see the  
4 bottom line. Because  
5 they are spread around (.) and you know it has been a hastily (.) and in  
6 big meeting like  
7 for a year last last agreement signature at the end everybody is tired  
8 and then they  
9 create fifteen agencies you know (.) which were necessary some of  
10 them but very  
11 different areas very different (.) no clear regulations and so on.

### **Discussion**

The third repertoire, apart from representing the role, function and, in some cases, the agencies themselves in negative terms, offers an alternative negotiation of the dilemma whether agencies are independent or dependent on the EU. More specifically, the focus is structured upon the notion of politics and interests. Agencies in this repertoire are constructed as not operating properly, helpless and weak for addressing their problems, independently of the normative role attributed to them (whether they are represented as “independent” or as “Community





structured on devices that provide evidence for the agencies' malfunctioning based on vivid descriptions and the use of historical narrative. In this way, the accounts are organised around the provision of truthful and objective facts that verify the problems occurring in the agencies.

The present argumentation deployed by the interviewees is informed ideologically resources in the pragmatic discourse on agencies according to which the creation and functions of the EU agencies are the outcome of politics (Kelemen 2002). Moreover, agencies are perceived to operate in the "grey zone" between pure administration and politics and are faced with serious difficulties for the achievement of managerial, technical and information-gathering tasks and for their contribution to policy-making (Vos 2000a). In particular, the arguments raised by the interviewees regarding the decisions taken for the location of the agencies are described by the pragmatic analyses as an outcome of long intergovernmental debates in which the various member states have ulterior motives for having a branch of the European public service in their territory<sup>11</sup> (Geradin & Petit 2004). Moreover, the conflict between the Council, representing inter-governmental interests, and the Commission, representing the Community interest (Coombes 1970), refers to a common tension within the literature of EU studies and emphasises the dilemma of the distribution of power in the EU. Nevertheless, the pragmatic discourse does not represent agencies only in negative terms. It also sees them as creating a new complicated order, offering a different organisational, functional and political point of view, which has its negative but also positive and innovative aspects. However, such arguments are not found in this repertoire.

## **6. Conclusion**

This paper explored how individuals working in an agency, as competent

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<sup>11</sup> Union Syndicale Fédéral (USF), *Organismes Décentralisés et Gouvernance*, Document de travail, Brussels, May 2003.



are many ways of speaking about EU agencies and not just a single dominant discourse concerning the agencies and the EU. Hence, we cannot perceive reality as presented by the EU in official documents as unique or objective. Equally, a popular representation of the agencies as new and promising organisations in the EU institutional architecture is contradicted since the agencies are also constructed as traditional public services. Accordingly, a regulatory agency at the EU level is not represented with distinct characteristics from other national agencies. Yet the self-financing capacity of an agency appears to distinguish an EU independent agency from the rest of the EU, since the former is represented as a profit-making business where the latter as traditional bureaucracies.

The constant search for an appropriate role of agencies in the everyday discourses brought to the fore the antagonism between various ideologies: a) the ideology of Europe as a non-politicised, regulatory state and b) the ideology of a Europe of strong political and national cultures. These dilemmas are a common feature of discussions on the EU and are rooted in the 'dilemma of power' between the centre and the periphery. Similarly, these dilemmas also pervade the scientific theories on agencies as well as the everyday discourses of the agencies thereby limiting the representation of agencies in novel ways.

Finally, the study of the everyday discourses provided a useful insight into the extent to which constructions of our world combine linguistic elements in novel ways, or whether they largely reproduce the prevailing rationalities. Thus, we were able to identify the ideologies that constrain the emergence of new discourses while also searching for new ways of talking about Europe and its institutions within the EU agencies. New ways of speaking about Europe and its institutions within the EU agencies can be seen as the seeds of novel discourses that signify a social change, since the latter can occur when individuals start speaking differently of their social world (Billig 1991). This is not unconnected to the contention that institutions cannot be separated from the discourses they are



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## **Annex**

- I. An evolved version of the 1996's classification of the agencies by Alexander Kreher (1997).

<b>ROLE-FUNCTION</b>	<b>AGENCIES</b>
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**C. "A COMBINED MODEL"**

Provide information, expertise, services are compulsory basis for decision-making but do not have decision-making powers. This category is a mixture of the categories 1 and 2.

-EMEA (London)

## II. Interviewees' individual characteristics

		<b>EMCDDA</b>	<b>Ohim</b>	<b>Cedefop</b>	Total
<i>Number of interviewees:</i>		19	32	19	70
<i>Characteristics of the interviewees:</i>					
<i>Sex:</i>	Male:	52.6% (10) <sup>13</sup>	53.1% (17)	61.2% (12)	55,7% (39)
	Female:	47.4% (9)	46.9% (15)	36.8 % (7)	44,3% (31)
<i>Grade</i>	A:	57.9% (11)	56.3% (18)	47.4% (9)	54.3% (38)
	B:	21.1%(4)	25% (8)	31.2% (6)	25.7% (18)
	C:	21.1% (4)	18.8% (6)	21.1% (4)	20% (14)
<i>Working Position:</i>	Heads, managers, supervisors:	26.3% (5)	21.9% (7)	15.8% (3)	21.4% (15)
	Experts, Scientific administrators:	36.8 % (7)	40.6% (13)	31.2% (6)	37.1% (26)
	IT, Translators, Specialised assistants	15.8% (3)	18.7% (6)	26.3% (5)	20% (14)
	Administrative/ technical staff:	21.1% (4)	18.7% (6)	26.3% (5)	21.4% (15)
<i>Age:</i>	20-30 years:	21.1% (4)	18.7% (6)	10.5% (2)	17.1% (12)
	31-40 years:	26.3% (5)	40.6% (13)	31.2% (6)	34.3% (24)
	41-50 years:	42.1% (8)	21.9% (7)	31.2% (6)	30% (21)
	51-60 years:	10.5% (2)	18.7% (6)	26.3% (5)	18.6% (13)

## III. The nationalities of the interviewees'

<b>Country of origin</b>	Rate of participation
1. Austria	2.9% (2)
2. Belgium	11.4% (8)
3. Denmark	2.9% (2)
4. Finland	1.4% (1)
5. France	15.7% (11)
6. Germany	14.3% (10)
7. Greece	11.43% (8)
8. Italy	8.6% (6)
9. Netherlands	5.7% (4)
10. Norway	1.4% (1)
11. Portugal	5.7% (4)
12. Spain	10% (7)
13. Sweden	1.4% (1)
14. UK	5.7% (4)
<b>15. Mixed Nationality</b>	1.43% (1)

## IV. Transcription notation

<sup>13</sup> The number in brackets indicates the number of the interviewees.



. Ending intonation. It is rather used in its grammatical sense to indicate an end in a sentence

(word or blank) Unclear talk because it is either inaudible or there is doubt about its accuracy. If a phrase or a word is included in brackets then it is about a guess at what might have been said