

The Europeanization of Cities in the EU Multi-level System

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the relationship between cities and the European Union. Three dimensions of the Europeanization of local authorities can be distinguished here: First, top-down (vertical) Europeanization which is the most obvious form. Cities are increasingly affected by European integration because most EU legislation is implemented at the local level. The analysis of this form of Europeanization has started only recently although local politics is increasingly shaped by EU decisions. Second, bottom-up (vertical) Europeanization has developed in response to this. European cities have developed from policy-takers to active players in the EU's multi-level system.

They have started to by-pass nation-states and influence EU institutions directly. Recent research shows that hierarchical structures wherein local authorities which are located in specific nation-states interact directly only with these, are supplemented by direct relations between local authorities and European institutions, especially the Commission.

Traditional forms of representation through national associations and formal channels (such as the Committee of the Regions) have been complemented by new transnational forms of representation. Cities have opened own offices in Brussels and have established transnational municipal networks, which represent their member cities in Brussels.

Third, horizontal Europeanization has become a common feature of local authorities' interaction in the European multi-level system. EU funding of cooperative projects involving cities from different countries have created transnational spaces independent from nation-states.

Cities learn from one another; this learning can take different forms, including both the transfer of best practice and the joint development of solutions for shared problems. This paper will focus on all three dimensions of Europeanization and how they are related to one another.

Key Words: Europeanization, multi-level governance, transnational municipal networks