

The Politics of Network Governance: The Case of Energy Regulators¹

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Abstract

European Regulatory Networks (ERNs) constitute the main new governance instrument for the informal Europeanization of regulation, in a number of important domains, such as banking, securities, insurance, electricity and gas, telecommunications, broadcasting, and competition. The main task of ERNs is the production and dissemination of non binding-standards, guidelines, and recommendations, in order to achieve coordination among regulators and ensure the consistent application of harmonized pro-competition rules across Europe. In this contribution, we focus on the case of energy regulation to explore policy-making patterns within these networks. We expect regulatory authorities' logics of cooperation to be associated with functional, structural and local properties of the network, while the domestic implementation of standards should vary according to node-level measures such as degree centrality, betweenness and structural equivalence. The first analytical step consists of mapping networks according to some basic social network analysis properties, such as centralization, cohesion and topological hierarchy, in order to describe how do agencies interact within the network in the course of the development of standards. On this basis, in a second step, the impact of ego-network variables is examined in relation to the effectiveness of standards in member states. Data collection is based on own survey inquiry, official documents, and face-to-face semi-directive interviews.

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