

European and/or EU Studies Curriculum between Internal and External drivers

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***Abstract:** The main objective of this paper is to determine whether the particularity of courses in European Studies can still be characterized as 'traditional,' or whether such courses remain disjointed, seated in various disciplines. We surveyed the field of EU Studies/European Studies from two perspectives: as a 'Disciplinary Framework' of Political Science and as an 'Interdisciplinary Framework.' We argued that the process of specialization of such academic fields as European Studies and International Studies was triggered by a number of stimuli, both internal and external. We conclude by taking into account a third perspective, approaching EU Studies/European Studies as a 'Multidisciplinary Framework.' We argue that interdisciplinarity is the new orientation in drafting academic curricula .*

Varying from country to country, the academic realm of *European Studies* has evolved in different ways. The pattern is at times convergent, but the lines of development of the realm are hardly the same. The pattern ranges from the classical “transdisciplinary approach” (Manners 2009) to postmodern, cosmopolitan approaches (Beck 2009; **Calhoun 2009**). The evolution of the pattern should be seen from the perspective of the development of the curricular paradigm. We conducted a survey and gathered information on courses in European Studies from twelve European countries: Slovakia, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, France and Denmark. The courses we surveyed were from the academic year 2008/2009, the field was the same, European Studies, on the three levels of BA, MA and PhD.

To analyse the evolution of European Studies/EU Studies Curricula we used the working model of C. Flood’s survey, whose course descriptor suggested that European Studies were delivered as a type of interdisciplinary programme rather than a predominantly unidisciplinary degree containing European elements (**Flood 1997: 4-5**). According to Michael Smith, *European Studies* are taught: a) within one specific ES degree programme, which in the acceptance of our suggested model would correspond to a disciplinary programme (Political Science, Law, Economics, History); b) within more than one ES degree programme, which would correspond to a Multidisciplinary Programme; c) As a joint combination with other degree programmes, which, in our view, would match an Interdisciplinary Programme (**Smith M. 2003**).

First, we adopted quantitative analysis methods. These methods of analysis have become more and more influential in the field of ES. Second, we tried to enhance the explanatory and predictive power of the analysis: the move from mere engineering towards a scientific

understanding entails a thorough evaluation of rivalling approaches, or, when rivalling approaches do not exist, an explicit relation to a null hypothesis (König 2007). This approach allowed us to apply yet another methodology used in the European analysis, namely, qualitative methods (Caporoso 2007; Mahoney 2007). Indeed, a distinctive qualitative approach makes European Studies an increasingly autonomous field in relation with political science.

In the first place, our investigation suggested that **there is a flexible and differentiated curriculum for European Studies**. This fact is nuanced by the various connotations that distinguish one field from the other, and that varies from one level of study programme to another, and from one country to another.

For instance, the curriculum for *EU Legal Studies* and partially of *EU Economics Studies* is less flexible than the curriculum for *EU Political and Administrative Studies* or *EU Historical Studies*. The curriculum for traditional academic fields is more rigid than the curriculum for the transition field of *EU Interdisciplinary Studies* and less flexible than the curriculum for *New EU Studies* (EU Intercultural dialogue Studies, EU International and Diplomatic Studies, EU Regional Comparatives Studies; EU Communication and Information Studies).

If we draw comparisons within European Studies curricula at the level of study programmes, we see that they are very flexible at the MA programme compared to the BA, and rather difficult to define in relation with the doctoral programme.

We looked at curricula from the perspective of the countries that were subject of the survey. We observed that there is greater curricula uniformity in Germany, Denmark, Italy, Lithuania and Poland than in Belgium, France, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia. There are tendencies of curricular interdependency due to the cultural, historical and political legacies. The curricula from Romania and Slovakia (e.g. EU Legal Studies or EU Economics Studies) are similar in many courses with the ones in France and Belgium. The curricula for EU Legal Studies, EU Economics Studies from Poland and Lithuania have more similarities with the one in Germany and partially Denmark. Dimensions of historical and cultural integration are best seen in the courses proposed in the fields of EU Political and Administrative Studies and EU Historical Studies (the UK curricular model has also been found in Denmark, Belgium, Portugal; the curricular model from France has also been found in Spain, Italy, Romania and Slovakia; the curricular model from Germany has also been found in Poland, Lithuania).

If we consider the pattern from the perspective of *EU Interdisciplinary Studies*, especially *New EU Studies*, the cultural-historical and political biases are not as relevant as within traditional EU Studies. These new fields emerged after 2000 and become more and more popular especially after 2004 and 2007. This curricular development has to be seen in the context of the

enlargement of the EU and of the new challenges over the continent. These challenges, though, do not generate mimetic mirroring between curricula, they rather prompt imports from UK or Spain into Eastern Europe. They often produce local initiatives as a response to political trends initiated in Brussels. A relevant indicator of this feed-back effect is the doubling within one year of the number of projects (2010 vs. 2009) submitted for financial support through Jean Monnet Programme, for teaching structures specific to *EU Interdisciplinary Studies* and especially to *New EU studies*.

In reviewing the pattern from the perspective of the *typology* of the study programmes, we observed that the courses proposed within the Disciplinary Framework— comprising Legal Studies, Economics, Political Science and even History – are rather uniform. European Studies as Multidisciplinary Framework contain uniform courses, at least at MA programme level, whereas courses of some traditional disciplines show a more varied pattern, which appears to indicate a higher degree of flexibility.

If one takes, instead, the viewpoint of the practical applicability of European/EU Studies curricula, one can see that there are fields amenable to significant applicability, such as EU Legal Studies, EU Economics Studies seen from all three perspectives – as Disciplinary Framework, Multidisciplinary Framework, Interdisciplinary Framework – and fields that provide practical applicability within a Multidisciplinary curriculum (as it is the case of European Studies), especially within an Interdisciplinary curriculum. Traditional fields like EU Political and Administrative Studies can generate a practical perspective by partaking in Interdisciplinary programmes and also by helping to consolidate newer EU Studies programmes. When EU Interdisciplinary Studies emerged at the beginning of 2000 within the traditional fields of European/EU Studies curriculum they were based on the need to respond to arising tendencies for new courses or new theoretical approaches that could not have been included in the traditional fields category.

All the same, the explosion after 2004 -2007 of courses in *theoretical* reflections within the subfield of *New EU Studies* responded to the need to diversify curricula. New challenges in the European construction process – Europe as a global actor, the rising of the intercultural dialogue as an antidote to a possible clash of civilizations, the need of a more direct communication and of a better citizens information—had an immediate spill-over effect on the development of new trends in drafting academic curricula.

The findings of our survey of curricula for European/EU Studies support the conclusion that, on one hand, curricula for European Studies support mobility across disciplines (transdisciplinarity). In general, there are primary compatibilities between disciplines taught

within the curriculum for European/EU Studies which allows for the transdisciplinarity dimension. Except for *EU Legal Studies*, and partially for EU Economics Studies (which have a more standardised curriculum, i.e. the case of BA and MA programmes core curriculum), courses in other fields have more fluid contents (sometimes a negative element) with a ‘duplication’ of knowledge given by 2-3 disciplines (e.g. courses of *European Integration* or *European/EU Studies* might as well be part of the curriculum for EU Political and Administrative Studies, EU Economics Studies, or EU Historical Studies).

On the basis of these findings we believe that the curriculum for European/EU Studies may have a future only if an increasing transdisciplinarity is ensured; we also believe that this could be achieved only in the context of meeting two criteria: a clearer definition through future research of each EU Studies field, so that certain confusions that may arise would be resolved – e.g. traditional fields, such as EU Political and Administrative Studies, EU Economics Studies (**Gerace 2004**) and EU Historical Studies – or fields of *New EU Studies* and the traditional ones.

We see that the current tendency is for the curriculum transdisciplinarity of European/EU Studies being more visible at the MA degree programme than at the BA degree programme; this a natural response of this study area to the evolution of European higher education following the implementation of the Bologna process. The fact that our survey noticed very few examples of transdisciplinarity at the doctoral degree programme should not suggest that advanced programmes are falling behind. We should rather look at these slower development in the context of a natural evolution towards growing specialization through teaching and the development of transdisciplinarity through research.

The curriculum for European Studies helps mobility in various across *national* borders. The national-transnational ambivalence (**Wiener 2002**) is mostly visible at the level of BA degree programmes, in comparison with MA and Doctoral degree programmes. It is more frequently listed within the traditional fields than it is within *EU Interdisciplinary Studies* and *New EU Studies*. It is more visible at *EU Legal Studies* and *EU Historical Studies* than it is in any other fields.

From a different angle we have noticed that the transnational dimension is less present within the curricula of monodisciplinary fields than it is within those multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary fields. At the same time, it is more frequently listed within the curricula of new EU entrants than it is within the older EU members.

Looking at these facts in a more detailed fashion, at the level of the Disciplinary Framework, we notice that within the curriculum for BA in EU Legal Studies even if it is the most standardised one, it has yet a very deep national imprint (France, Germany, Italy, Portugal,

UK); more open to a transnational perspective we found the curriculum for BA in Law in Belgium, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia or Spain). In the curricula for EU Legal Studies for MA degree programmes, the national imprint is very scarce, bearing a strong transnational interdependence, often translated into copying (for the new EU entrants). Comparing facts, the curriculum for EU Economics Studies bears a strong national imprint at all levels, the national perspective being present in very few cases (France or Germany). Unfortunately, with the exception of Germany and partially of Italy and France, the curriculum for European/EU studies does not offer to western European students more knowledge about the new EU entrants and neighbouring European areas (the Balkan, East-European and Mediterranean spaces). Eileen Fuchs and Robin van der Hout, have asked a rhetorical question since 2005: “Teaching the EU to Europeans: How Can “old” and “new” Europe be Brought Together?” (**Fuchs and Hout 2005**). The same lack was found within the curriculum for European/EU Studies in the new EU entrants, which fail to provide knowledge about their own area and immediate neighbours.

Things are rather different for the curriculum for European/EU Studies within Multidisciplinary Framework. Here, the transnational dimension is very strong. This dimension does not perfectly cover what we might describe as a cosmopolitan thinking of those who teach such programmes, but it appears from within the contents themselves of the curriculum for European/EU Studies within Multidisciplinary Framework (European Studies Programme) which has in general a greater transdisciplinary profile at all degree study programmes. On the one hand, the most majority of courses within this programme come in addition to other programmes components: Political Science, Public Administration, Economics. On the other hand, within Multidisciplinary Framework, the curriculum for European/EU Studies can diversify its profile in conjunction with other disciplines from the aforementioned study programme and allow for the emergence of new study fields like EU *Interdisciplinary Studies* or *New EU Studies*. *Nevertheless*.

Also, the transdisciplinarity distance between BA and MA degree programmes is not that big. Within the Multidisciplinary Framework, the curriculum for European/EU Studies does not actively partake in the curricular Europeanization process, by double majors, by student mobility within Lifelong Learning Programme, by creating new European-profiled MA degree programmes. Thus, the curricula for European/EU Studies part of Multidisciplinary Framework are highly flexible.

The partaking of European/EU Studies in the curricula for Interdisciplinary Framework is a consistent premise to ensure the field transnational feature. Unfortunately, the number of

Interdisciplinary study programmes is still low on the European educational market at all levels, with some pluses for MA degree programmes, for certain countries that have developed such programmes (Belgium, France, Germany, UK). The inclusion on a larger scale of courses of European/EU Studies within the Interdisciplinary Framework curriculum shall assist in creating a greater transnational interdependence of this type of programme.

Reviewing, even briefly, the action of the three stimuli- *collective will* (academic, professional) and *individual initiative; transdisciplinary and transnational vocations*- in the evolution of the curricular development for European/EU Studies, we can venture to state that these are the main vectors that led to the integration of European higher education.

In conclusion, our survey demonstrates that all the curricula for European Studies are like a mosaic, with a very varied pattern. Curricula for European Studies are listed within the traditional fields in all three aspects: disciplinary, multidisciplinary (transdisciplinary) and interdisciplinary. The curricula for European Studies within new fields are listed only as multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary. Therefore, a core curriculum exists by natural synthesis and not by the constructive action of some projects. Even if it has played a dynamic role in the curricular construction of the European Studies, the “Jean Monnet” Action has never undertaken, nor performed in the direction of shaping a core curriculum, but it has rather been concerned with the synergy of diversifying the initiatives, in order to be able to respond to the increasing challenges of both European and global agendas.

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