

Working Paper Series

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**BRUEGEL, EU THINK TANK IN THE EU MULTI-  
LEVEL GOVERNANCE**

SOG-WP35/2016

ISSN: 2282-4189

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Printed in Italy, October 2016

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# ABSTRACT

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*This working paper aims to analyze the repertoire of actions of Bruegel, EU think tanks involved in a multi-level governance. As key case, the analysis of Bruegel allows us to go back to the historical and conceptual development of think tanks in the European Union. Considered as knowledge agents, we will focus on the way that think tanks mobilize “knowledge” or scientific facts to have influence on the public debate.*

Keywords: *think tank, multi-level governance, repertoire of actions, European Union*

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# INTRODUCTION

Far from being “catch-all” concept, *governance* refers to a mode of decision-making process, partly including non-state actors. Considered as a unique governance mix (Börzel, 2012: 12), the EU has been the object of many theoretical attempts that have been developed in order to conceptualize the European polity. Without entering the debate, this working paper will give advantage on the multi-level nature of the EU. Within one of the main characteristic of the EU governance, this working paper will focus on a policy network analysis which refers to the role of non-state actors in shaping policy outputs. Therefore this working paper will essentially refers essentially to the capacity of non-state actors to influence the policy outcomes during the decision-making process.

According to the Transparency Register<sup>1</sup> (Europa.eu, 2015) of the European Parliament and European Commission, 413 think tanks and research institutions are present in the European Union (EU). This represents 5.1% of all groups represented in the EU. Despite their low number, various scholars (Sherrington, 2000 ; Ullrich, 2004) have recognized the active role of think tanks within the EU decision-making process. Think tanks acting at the European level are indeed active in various policy areas subject to EU competence.

While much of the European literature focus on “national” think tanks (focusing on domestic and/or foreign/European issues), it takes less into consideration EU think tanks, i.e. Brussels-based think tanks that oriented their researches on the European Union as central object. However those EU think tanks are increasingly taken into account – in the practice – by both European and national (non-)state actors. This double inclusion may be partly explained by the multi-level character of the European governance.

In the framework of this EU multilevel governance, it is relevant to think about the way how “European public policies” objects are build. The choice of analysis tool is indeed closely linked to the way the object is built. Therefore, as underlined by Hassenteufel and Surel (2000), how to build the “European public policies” object may be based on the idea according to which the analysis focus on the EU as key player in matters of public policies. Therefore the analysis will focus on institutions and various actors who are part of EU policies production.

In this perspective, the analysis will focus on EU think tanks, considered (by Stone (2012)) as knowledge agents. The development of those actors are, according to Sherrington (2000 : 173), « a consequence of increased policy activity at the EU level, the growth in think tanks may also have arisen out of EU institutional and national administrative needs for greater policy advocacy ». Therefore this paper will focus on EU think tanks activities in a multi-level governance. The purpose of this paper is to provide an initial examination of the extent to which EU think tanks can contribute to EU policy formulation.

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<sup>1</sup> In the interest of transparency of the European decision-making process, the European Commission created (in 2008) a register which takes a census of all « groups and organizations with which they [European Commission and European Parliament] interact » (Europa.eu, 2015).

In the framework of this paper, the analysis of EU think tanks activities in a EU multi-level governance will rely on a case study. The focus will be on the intellectual and institutional dynamics of a subset of EU think tanks, seen through the prism of their policy interventions, all long of the decision-making process. Therefore this analysis will focus on Bruegel, EU think tank. We may consider Bruegel as a *key case* which is – according to Thomas (2011) – selected due to its representativeness. The analysis of this case will be based on interviews with Bruegel’s scholars/managers and documents/reports.

## 1. Think tank and the EU Policy Environment

As specified by Börzel (2012), the European Union is a unique governance mix. Even if various theoretical attempts have been developed in order to conceptualize the European polity, the purpose of this paper is not to examine this debate. However, as pointed out by Sherrington (2000 : 174), « a single-model is inappropriate for analysis EU policy-making – the multi-level nature of the system, the operational differences between policy sectors, and the informal as well as formal nature of policy-making necessitate theoretical flexibility ». Even if some scholars give advantage new institutionalism, multi-governance or policy network analysis, scholars widely agree that EU decision-making process cannot be summed up as a “simple” bargaining between member states, plus an important role of non-state actors in shaping policy outputs. This consensus refers essentially to the capacity of non-state actors to promote interests during the decision-making process. In this perspective, think tanks have this ability to generate and promote ideas at the EU level and to promote expertise on specific EU policies. As specified by Abelson (2009 : 4), « think tanks in both countries have at times played an important role in shaping the political dialogue and the policy preferences and choices of policymakers, but often in different ways and during different stages of the policy cycle ». Therefore it relevant to identify EU think tanks and their “repertoire of actions” (Fillieule, 2010) in order to determine their role in policy communities<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore – and as specified previously – the multilevel nature of the EU decision-making process opens various access points for think tanks. As underlined by Sherrington (2000), comparatively to some national political system, the European Union may be considered as relatively open. The European Union is even considered – by Peters (1994) – as less formalized than within some member states. Therefore it is quite difficult to identify the different informal routes mobilized by think tanks in order to promote their ideas; while those mechanisms are a central part of the policy-making process. As underlined by Sherrington (2000 : 175), « think tanks have the opportunity to use a variety of informal routes, either within an EU institution, between EU institutions, within national structures, or between member state and EU institutions ».

In the Brussels-bubble, the market of ideas are closely competing with (amongst others) interest representation, considered by Hix and Hoyland (2011), highly dense at the EU level. For example, business

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<sup>2</sup> *Policy Communities* are defined – by Coleman and Skogstad (1990) – as the set of public and private actors who are coalescing around an issue area.

interest groups (with the most financial and political resources) willingly play the Brussels game. Regarding the interest groups, the European Union looks like primitive US pluralism; which means that there is a little countervailing power in order to reduce or even halt the manipulation of the decision-making process by business interests groups or “owner of the capital”. Given that there is no European political parties, others interest groups hardly struggle to compete with business interest groups. This vision of an European Union dominated by business interest groups (against “people of Europe”) was a common criticism developed by left-wing parties scholars in the 1970s and 1980s (Holland, 1980). However « business interests do not have it all their own way » (Hix & Hoyland, 2011: 185). On the one hand, there is a focus on public interests (such as trade union or environmental issues) due to the centralization of the market regulation within the European Union. On the other hand, due to the competition between institutions, the European Commission and Parliament allow their access to underrepresented interest groups. According to Hix and Hoyland (2011 : 185), « the promotion of transnational alliances spanning both sides of a policy debate strengthens the information capacity and the credibility of these supranational actors against the Council ». Therefore the European Commission and Parliament reinforce their public support by fostering the allegiance of transnational socio-economic alliances – which overcomes national divisions.

Given that the European Commission is charged (by EU treaties) with the legislative initiative; it becomes an important stage for the agenda-setting and formulation of EU policies. As underlined by Mazey and Richardson (1995), the European Commission is specifically the marketplace for interests and ideas at the EU level. EU think tanks are facing a key audience because it is « the agent that largely designs the policy process in terms of which procedures to use, which actors to include, and how to define policy issues » (Haaland Matlary, 1997: 273). Some scholars – such as Laffan (1997) has even gone as far as considering the European Commission as a think tank (even if the European Commission already have its own internal think tank<sup>3</sup>).

Then as highlighted by Sherrington (2000 : 175), think tanks and the European Commission are in a dependence relationship. As formal initiator of EU policies, the European Commission constitutes « a natural think tank constituency ». As « adolescent bureaucracy » (Mazey & Richardson, 1993: 10), the European Commission is therefore actively in search of policy expertise.

Then the *European Parliament* becomes – over time – more important to think tanks due to the increasing legislative powers that it acquired. Nonetheless the European Parliament is less important than the European Commission in terms of ideas promotion. That is the reason why think tanks will turn to the European Commission (due to the supranational interests that it aims to promote) contrary to the members

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<sup>3</sup> Originally called *Forward Studies* [1989 – 2000], this internal think tank was directly reporting to the then President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors. The evolution of this think tank was in accordance with the development of the European Commission. Furthermore its evolution was accompanied with a change in its name. This think tank is called *European Political Strategy Centre*.

of the European Parliament who are always oriented towards the national public opinion (and national voters).

While the *European Council* could be an important place for think tanks (due to its decisive position on the European scene), the Council – and its administration – are rarely lobbied by think tanks (and interest groups). « For the most, access to the EU Council occurs through national groups via the national ministries rather than directly to the collective decision-making body of the EU » (Eising, 2008: 13). Therefore the Council is rarely impact by think tanks actions and influence.

The *European Court of Justice* – as European judiciary - « monitors compliance with and interprets EU law » (Eising, 2008: 13). The European Court of Justice constitutes mainly an interesting channel for interest groups which play with the interpretation of an European legislative act in order to invalidate it (preliminary rulings procedure). However given the uncertainty of the outcome, the heavy financial costs and the lengthy period of the case, interest groups rarely takes a case to the European Court. Consequently, litigation strategies are rarely used by interest groups. This strategy is mobilized if the stakes are high for the group.

The *Economic and Social Committee* has been setting up in order to collect opinions of non-state actors. However due to its consultative role within the European decision-making process, non-state actors assign marginal importance to the institution.

## **2. Think tanks, agents of knowledge**

As Börzel (2012) argued, the European decision-making process takes place in a complex, diversified and dynamic environment. This environment includes various national and European public actors who are increasingly dependent on the resources of non-state actors. Therefore she proceeds to assert that « policy networks provide a most efficient form of governance at the European as well as the national level ». She justified her assumption by claiming the inefficiency of the hierarchical coordination; and the limited possibilities of privatization due to the problem of market failure. In this perspective, governance involved non-state actors who have limited resources. Therefore no actors may have the leadership in terms of resources. Therefore the understanding of this resources dependence within the governance process, the focus will be laid on the power dependence approach.

Following this conceptual approach, *policy networks* are defined as « sets of resources-dependent organizations» (Rhodes, 2006: 431). One of the main feature of those relationships (between organizations) is power dependence. Rhodes (2006) underlines the inextricable relationship between organizations which is mainly due to the need of (additional) resources of organizations in order to reach their goal(s). There is a need – for each organization – to exchange their resources. From that moment on, each organization considers each relationship as a ‘game’ – with its own rules . Each organization deploy its own resources to maximize its influence on outcomes whilst avoiding being dependent on others players. So according to Rhodes (1997), the *policy network* is like a game which is regulated by rules. Each

rules have been negotiated and agreed by all players. Therefore there are various variations or differences between networks due to the specific distribution of resources in each network. Finally, Rhodes also specifies that « networks have a significant degree of autonomy from government » .

Considered as knowledge producer, think tanks are mobilizing knowledge as resource of power dependence. Knowledge, as such it, does not exist. As specified by Callon and Latour (1991 : 8), scientific facts result from construction : « nature is not speaking on his behalf ». Those two sociologists underlined that science « could not be reduced to a mere record of results provided by experiments ». However even if knowledge constitutes a resource-dependence, this working paper doesn't aim to open the debate on knowledge, but on what is knowledge is referring. According to Diane Stone (2012 : 339), knowledge refers to « first, research and evaluation studies and other in-house expert products originating from within official or public domain; second, scholarly and scientific knowledge that is used, abused, or adapted for governance activities and deliberations; third, independent policy analysis and advice commissioned or given on the basis of recognized expertise of individuals or organizations ». Following Diane Stone (2012), knowledge has long had a particular “task” : inform and/or legitimize public policies. However, nowadays, knowledge agents are involved in a devolution of governance. Diane Stone (2012 : 339) underlines that « knowledge agents have intrinsic governance capacities in their power to define problems, shape the climate of or engage in standard-setting, rule-making, or other regulatory activity ».

Considered in the third Diane Stone's perspective, knowledge organization are non-public organizations which are undertaking policy researches. Weidenbaum (2009) specifies that think tanks represent a form of knowledge organization which seek to influence (in)directly policy. Think tank often claims the “independence” of their researches and findings

With regards to think tanks, Stone (2007 : 344) underlined that they often highlight and claim the “independence” of their findings; considered as more credible than government researches. Think tank claim indeed their freedom « to think the unthinkable and question policy orthodoxy ».

### **3. EU Brussels-based think tanks**

In order to assess the role of think tanks in the EU decision-making process, it is relevant to specify what constitutes this type of research institute (even if there are almost as many definitions as researchers writing on think tanks). Generally speaking, think tanks « vary considerably in size, structure, policy ambit and significance » (Stone & Denham, 2004: 2). Those various differences between definitions reflect the numerous cultural comprehension and analysis of these organizations. Considering that the first definitions of think tanks were expressed in the Anglo-American literature, a first development of those definitions will be provided before the development of a an European definition.

In a global comprehension, James Mc Gaan (2007 : 11) – American scholar – defines think tanks as « organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international

issues in an effort to enable policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues ». On his side, Donald Abelson (2000) – Canadian scholar – remains more cautious about a complete and precise definition. However, Abelson and Carberry (1998 : 529) give a first definition of a think tank. Based on these principles, a think tank « may consist of a handful of people involved actively in studying a particular policy area who seek to inform and educate policy makers and the public through a variety of channels ». According to those two scholars, this definition may fit for the biggest majority of think tanks in Canada and the United States. Given the diversity of think tanks, no global definition is providing by Abelson (2009 : 9), only some common features of think tanks, which are « nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations engaged in the study of public policy ».

Then Stone and Denham (2004 : 2) – English scholars – try to put the “North-American” definitions into perspective. They stressed indeed that « adopting an Anglo-American definition of ‘think tank’ is problematic »; especially regarding the ‘free-thinking’ notion – supported by the North-American authors – which does not travel into other cultures (as in Europe). Generally speaking, Stone (2000 : 154) considers that the term of think tank is used to mean « independent [...] policy research institutes containing people involved in studying a particular policy area or a broad range of policy issues, actively seeking to educate or advice policy-makers and the public through a number of channels ». According to Stone (2000), think tank should not be classified as a (sub-)category of non-governmental organization (NGO). Even if we can consider think tank as a non-state actor; it is not a question – once again – of NGO. In some cases, think tanks are closely linked to government or universities, which creates dependence and connections, which is denied by NGOs.

On the basis of those different scientific submissions, we can deduce some characteristics of “European think tanks”, i.e. think tanks active in the European arena. The first two features are common with north-American think tanks; there is a difference on the third feature. Firstly, think tanks are “permanent organizations”, which differentiate them from social movements. Most think tanks are nowadays established as (international) association without lucrative purpose or non-governmental organizations. Hence, they take place outside the public sector. Therefore this allows them a significant autonomy from any corporate and other any interest. Secondly, as non-state actor, think tanks have no formal decision-making power. They are organizations producing policy-oriented researches and/or analyses, with their own research team. As shown later, these analyses can take several different forms, according to the “type” or “category” of think tanks. According to Denham and Garnett (1998 : 16-17), the primary objective of the think tank is the communication of their results to policy-makers (to inform public policy decisions), and public opinion in order to influence the climate of opinion. Finally, if we wish to define think tanks from a European perspective, think tank are non-profit organization, financed through public and private funds.<sup>4</sup> A precise definition shall not be further developed in this working paper. As William Wallace (1998 : 226) stresses, « it therefore makes little sense to define a “think tank” too

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<sup>4</sup> Based on the report from the *Bureau of European Policy Advisers* (2012), we can argue that the big majority of “European” think tanks are funded by the European Union and various stakeholders.

precisely. The functions which think tanks fulfil – research relevant to public policy, promotion of public debate, the questioning of the conventional wisdom, the formulation and dissemination of alternative concepts and policy agendas – can be fulfilled in many ways, under different constraints ».

Furthermore, as stated above, Stone, Denham, and Garnett (1998) take some distance from the notion of independence developed by Mc Gaan (2007). In one of his studies, this latter makes a clear distinction between independent and affiliated think tanks. However Stone *et al.* (1998 : 3) consider that « the notion according to which a *think tank* requires independence or autonomy vis-à-vis the State in order to enjoy a perfect 'freedom of thought' is a peculiarly Anglo-American notion that does not export well in other cultures ». This 'free-thinking' linked to think tanks is an Anglo-American norm which could not be translated into other different political cultures. Furthermore Stone (2000) points out that this distinction – between independent and affiliated think tank – is not clear.

Prior to a better understanding of think tanks through their institutional development, it is necessary to analyze the notion of dependence to which think tanks are associated. Think tanks have indeed specific engagement or relationship with “government” in order to succeed in influencing policy. However, according to Stone and Ullrich (2003 : 6), « their desire to preserve intellectual autonomy means that most institutes try to strike a delicate balance between dependence on government and total isolation from it ». That is the reason why the notion of “(in)dependence” should be taken with care precaution.

According to Stone and Ullrich (2003 : 6), « the degree of independence of these organizations varies across at least three dimensions »: a legal, financial and/or scholarly independence. Firstly, the *legal independence* means that we face a private organization located outside the formal / public apparatus. Various “types” of status are present, these organizations could be established as a commercial entity or as a non-profit organization. However even if some organizations are – by their status – considered as private organization, they are directly linked to government, political parties or corporation. Secondly, the *financial independence* « could be constructed as developing an endowment or having numerous sponsors and a diverse funding base » (Stone & Ullrich, 2003: 7). According to Stone (2000), the increase in the number of stakeholders and financial sources allows think tanks to tend to an intellectual integrity. Thirdly, the *scholarly independence* is analyzed through the research practices within an organization, such as the freedom of the research agenda definition, the peer review of the research, the critical analysis,... Overall, « cultural understandings of independence, the degree of research autonomy and the extent of interest in policy and political issues, varies [...] from one institute to another » (Stone & Ullrich, 2003: 7).

### **3.1 Development of think tanks in Europe**

As in the United States, the European continent also faces four waves of development of think tanks. The first wave of development of think tanks occurred in Britain between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the Second World War. This period corresponds to the emergence of complex societies (young democracies, growth of middle class, development of mass media). At that specific period, think tanks were generalist institutes, located outside of the government, and publishing mainly book-length researches

(e.g. the Fabian Society in 1884; Chatham House in 1920; the National Institute of Economic and Social Research in 1938). And we also find a first wave of development in other European countries such as in Germany (e.g. Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung in 1908; Institut für Weltwirtschaft Kiel in 1914), Austria (e.g. Österreichisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung in 1927) and Sweden (Industriens Utredningsinstitut in 1939). However in comparison with British think tanks, other ‘European think tanks’ are less institutionalized; there are – in most cases – more informal associations.

The second wave of think tank took place in Western European countries from the Second World War until the late 1970’s. This post-war period is synonymous with the emergence of the current well known European think tank (e.g. International Institute for Strategic Studies in 1958; German Institute for International and Security Affairs in 1962). It is the « period of massive growth of policy research and analysis capacity both inside and outside government, spurred by government funding » (Stone & Ullrich, 2003: 9). Contrary to the first wave (where think tanks tended to be more generalist), the second wave is mostly composed by ‘technocratic think tanks’. This new category of think tanks could be subdivided into two groups : (1) think tanks focusing on *domestic policy* (e.g. the Policy Studies Institute), and (2) think tanks focusing on *security, defense and foreign policies* (e.g. Austrian Institute for International Affairs). At that period, there is a clear will of specialization of think tanks. However the orientation taken by those think tanks in their research production are state-centric.

The third wave of think tanks ‘development took place from the 1980s to the late 1990s. This wave is characterized by a greater specialization of the think tanks and a development of ‘independent’ think tanks (e.g. Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)). Nevertheless another characteristic feature sees the day in this third wave : the ideological positioning of some think tanks, with a clear normative agenda. Those new ‘ideological think tanks’ are more present in some countries (in France and Britain) than others (such as in Germany). Those partisanship think tanks – called New Right think tanks - are in an advocacy position, trying to create a bridge between research and policy.

The fourth wave appears since the early 1990s (the last waves overlapped). Research conducted by think tanks transcend national borders. According to Stone and Ullrich (2003), this trend is primarily observed among independent think tanks; independence which gives them an autonomy vis-à-vis the national government. Furthermore, one can underline a significant increase in the number of EU-oriented think tanks, i.e. think tanks focusing European issues (such as the enlargement of the European Union, institutional reforms, financial regulation, etc.). The significant growth of EU-oriented think tanks can be analyzed as a direct response to (1) the growing area of competencies of the European Union, (2) the increasing complexity of the policy-making activities, and (3) the increasing demand on policy-makers of expertise. At that period a majority of non-state actors are increasingly involved in the decision-making process through various policy-relevant activities. Further to the difficulties met during the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992-1993 (CVCE 2012), European decision-makers acknowledge the need for transparency in the decision-making process. That is the reason why we may underline a window of opportunity for non-states actors, such as think tanks. Stone and Ullrich (2003 : 11) notes that « the EU’s

relatively transparent and open policy-making process provide think tanks with potentially numerous targets for their research and ideas ».

Complementary to those four waves of development, various other thesis aims to explain the expansion of think tanks on the European continent. A first thesis makes a direct connection between the development of think tanks with the spread of democracy; which contributes to more open even plural societies. On this argument, the development of various think tanks is synonymous with the spread of various political analysis and a public opinion. Another thesis regarding think tanks growth is linked to the ‘overload’ of issues processed by the government and the increased complexity of the decision-making process. Given that economies and societies become more and more complex, governments are dependent to « a need for more information, analysis and advice » (Stone & Ullrich, 2003: 12).

While governments are looking for ‘evidence-based policy’, think tanks seek to develop rational policy process (Dror, 1984). Stone and Ullrich (2003 : 12-13) considers a model as ‘rational’ if « it follows a logical and ordered sequence of policy-making phases. It is ‘comprehensive’ in the sense that it canvases, assesses and compares all options, calculating all the social, political and economic costs and benefits of a public policy ». This model is principally based on the idea according to which think tanks are able to collect and analyze all data’s. This model also assumes that the collection of the set of information will allow the identification of the best policy option. This view gives think tanks a role of neutral expert which present all policy options.

Rather than the mobilization and use of a ‘rational’ knowledge in public policy, the development of think tanks could be also an indicator of the level of politicization of knowledge. Instead of the previous model, this model argues that researches and analyses are used *ex post facto* in order to legitimate a pre-determined public policy.

### **3.2 Classifying think tanks**

Various think tank typologies were developed by “North American” and “European” scholars (Abelson, 2009 ; Boucher & Royo, 2012 ; Mc Gaan, 2007 ; Stone & Denham, 2004). This part aims to develop a typology of EU think tanks which brings another analytic view.

First developed in the United States, this part will focus on the typology – developed by James Mc Gaan (2007) – which is one of the more detailed one. Mc Gaan (2007) initiate his typology by differentiating the type of affiliation, i.e. the way they are financed. This typology generally constitutes a first basis to other typologies (developed around the world). Through this typology, Mc Gaan (2007) aims to describe all the different types of think tanks presents in the Unites States. The first basis of his typology is the distinction between the funding models of the think tanks; he distinguishes independent and affiliated think tanks. These two categories are divided into four types of think tanks.

**Table 1: think tank typology developed by James Mc Gaan (2007)**

<b>Independent</b>		<b>Affiliated</b>	
<i>Academic-diversified and academic-specialized</i>	<i>Advocacy</i>	<i>Party-affiliated</i>	<i>Private / for profit</i>
<i>Contract-research organization or contract consulting institution</i>	<i>Policy enterprise</i>	<i>Government sponsored</i>	<i>University-based</i>

### 3.3 European typology

As with the ‘North-American’ typology, various EU think tank typology were developed by scholars (Boucher & Royo, 2012 ; Ullrich, 2004). In the framework of this working paper, we suggest the development of two typologies. The first typology – developed by Boucher and Royo (2012) – is directly derived from the typology developed by Mc Gaan (2007) previously presented. The second typology – developed by Ullrich (2004) – introduces the distinction between Member States and Brussels-based think tanks.

#### *Typology developed by Boucher and Royo (2012)*

On basis of this ‘American’ typology, Boucher and Royo (2012) developed a typology focused on EU think tanks. In this typology, those scholars take into consideration the assumption according to which the autonomy or independence held by think tanks vis-à-vis the State constitutes a Anglo-American notion, not relevant for ‘European’ cases.

Therefore Boucher and Royo (2012 : 27-45) developed four types of affiliated think tanks in their typology:

- (1) *University-based think tanks* or “universities without students” are think tanks focusing on the development of a scientific research. That are « analytical organizations » (Weiss, 1992) which pursue the goal of producing high quality academic researches.
- (2) *Contract think tanks* are quite similar to the previous category. The only difference is in the funding source; contract think tanks are essentially funded by government agencies.
- (3) *Advocacy think tanks* are involved in the category of think tanks which produce ideas and recommendations closely linked to specific values and opinions. The goal of such type of think tank is to win the war of ideas rather than looking forward selflessly the best policy solution to an issue.

- (4) *Party-affiliated think tanks* are specific organ of the political party. The conducted researches of this type of think tank are directly linked to political values and agenda of the political party.

#### *Typology developed by Ullrich (2004)*

Another typology of EU and EU-oriented think tanks have been developed by Ullrich (2004). Just like Boucher and Royo (2012), Ullrich (2004) developed four category within his typology.:

- (1) *EU's internal think tank*: this first category is directly linked to the think tank which operates within the European Commission (EC), better known as European Political Strategy Centre. This think tank consists of experts giving policy advice to the President of the EC and his cabinet.
- (2) *Member-state EU-oriented think tanks*: this category includes various EU member-state and EU-oriented think tanks. Those latter vary depending on their objectives and methods of operation. According to Ullrich (2004 : 53), this is « due to the nature of their particular domestic political system ».
- (3) *Brussels-based EU think tanks*: just like the name indicates, that are think tanks located in Brussels. They differ from their EU member-state counterparts because of their “independence” vis-à-vis a member-state. That means that this third category of think tank is relatively independent from the national issues and/or political agendas.
- (4) *University-based European institutes* : this category of think tank claims their independence in term of research and research agenda. They « often collaborate with each or other think tanks on specific research projects. Thus a mutually beneficial relationship is formed » (Ullrich, 2004: 53).

Given the multi-dimensional nature of the European decision, Ullrich (2004 : 54) underlines that there are significant differences in objectives within each category of this typology. He outlines three different primary functions/objectives of think tanks : « (1) generating ideas; (2) policy-oriented analysis and outreach; and (3) furthering debate ».

#### *Typologies put into question*

Contrary to North-American typologies on think tanks, we consider that those categorizations are not relevant for think tanks working at the EU level. Two main reason could be underlined : (1) due to the “late” emerging and development of Brussels-based EU think tanks, they don't have – in their general work – any specific primary functions. Some primary functions are present in their mission statement. However, EU think tanks adapt their objectives accordingly with the stage of the decision-making process. Therefore UE think tanks fulfil the three functions in accordance with the policy process. However the “extreme” typology (of functions) – developed by Ullrich (2004) could be partially validated. Some think tanks (such as Bruegel) often favor one of the three functions in their daily work. (2) Contrary to the typology

developed by Boucher and Royo (2012), the American typology could not be transposed into the EU model. EU think tanks are a specific category, with some common characteristics:

- *Legal independence*: EU Brussels-based think tanks are established as international not-for-profit organization under Belgian law.
- *Financial independence*: every EU think tanks see themselves as independent think tanks (in global way) (with the exception of the European Political Strategy Centre, internal think tanks of the European Commission). They justify this independence through their numerous stakeholders or members. This allows think tanks to preserve an intellectual integrity.
- *Scholarly independence* : research practices of EU Brussels-based think tanks are not linked to specific contracts or political parties requests. However the scholarly (in)dependence is directly partly linked to the agenda definition and the peer review organized by the supervisory board.

## 4. Bruegel

Established in 2005, Bruegel is a EU (Brussels-based) think tank. Its conducted researches focus on economic policy, financial regulation and global economic governance. Bruegel considers itself as an independent and non-doctrinal think tank. According to its website, the mission statement of Bruegel is to «improve the quality of economic policy with open and fact-based research, analysis and debate».

### 4.1 Funding sources

Funding sources of Bruegel rely mainly on membership funding<sup>5</sup>. Bruegel's membership includes various type of actors : EU Member state governments, international corporations and autonomous public institutions. *Corporations* contribute the same amount : €50.000 per year; and the contribution of *EU member states* depend on the size of the country. For example, for state members 'subscriptions amounts (for the year 2015) vary from 33.203€ (for countries from category 1, such as Malta or Luxembourg) to 199.218€ (for countries from category 5, such as France or United Kingdom). The global « subscription funding is balanced between public and private-sector contributions, and no single member contributes more than 3% to 5% of the yearly budget » (Bruegel 2015). The financial independence claimed by Bruegel is justified by the idea according to which the amount of the different members do not take too many weight on their global budget.

### 4.2 Organization

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<sup>5</sup> 85% of Bruegel's funding comes from membership funding.

Bruegel is a “non-profit international association” (AISBL<sup>6</sup>) under Belgian law, governed by its statutes and bylaws. Bruegel is organized around three “hubs”: the *board*, the *director* and the *scientific council*.

The *Board* is composed of 12 members (the chairman and 11 members). « The board is appointed by the members with some board members being directly elected » (Bruegel 2015). This board is currently chaired by Jean-Claude Trichet and eleven members. All the members of the board have backgrounds in national/European government, business, civil society and/or academic institutions. The Board manage the global organization of the think tank: « the board decides on strategy, adopts the research program and budget and approves appointments of senior staff » (Bruegel 2015).

The *Director* is in charge of the management of Bruegel. Jointly with the *deputy director*, the *director* prepare the research program, annual work plan, budget, and annual report; the whole should be approved by the *board*. The *director* and the *deputy director* have also an important role on the publications of Bruegel. They exercise an editorial oversight over all the publications. However Bruegel justifies its independency by claiming that no institutional standpoint is taken; and that the «publications reflect the views of the authors only » (Bruegel 2015).

The *Scientific Council* is appointed by the *board*. Its main role is to advice and evaluate Bruegel’s management and staff on the quality of its researches. Moreover the chairperson of the *council* participate to the meetings of the *board*.

### 4.3 Production/researches

The independence and objectivity of Bruegel’s researches is claimed by the organization. They insure this objectivity through a *Statement of Research Integrity* that each scholar/researcher should sign. Through this “contract”, they commit to avoid any partisanship or parochialism.

Bruegel is composed of five types of researchers: resident scholars, visiting scholars, non-resident scholars, research assistants and fellows at large. Bruegel operates a *Visiting Fellow program* which allows “outside” researchers to contribute – during a limited period – to Bruegel’s research. Those researchers are generally from another research institute.

Main of the researches conducted at Bruegel are based on a research program. The research agenda/ program is defined in two steps. In a first time, stakeholders are consulted; but the consultation is opened to the scientific council and academics. This is an annual process which gather every concerned persons in a big meeting wherein researchers and stakeholders are debating on the policy agenda. After the meeting, a draft is written and send to a number of stakeholders to comment in detail. Comments could be accepted or rejected. Then the research program is presented to the Board which approves the program. Bruegel makes sure that the research agenda covers a certain percentage of the year. In this perspective, they keep time and space to react to new facts and actuality. Therefore the research program cover

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<sup>6</sup> AISBL refers (in French) to *Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif*.

researchers time for 75 -80 % of the time. Therefore if something happens, Bruegel gets ready to bring an answer to the issue. In this perspective, Bruegel try to find a balance between the short and long termism . Bruegel, as EU think tank, differ from US think tanks. The traditional model of US think tanks favor very long term researches. They are mainly in a long term influence on debates by – for example – writing books and providing a lot of background material. The EU model of think tanks is more in a short term perspective. There is a deep questioning for a EU think tank to where should they make investment and where should they be focusing in the short / long term.

Furthermore, on basis of interviews lead with Bruegel's scholars, Bruegel may be considered as an « umbrella » organization. That means that each scholars working for Bruegel may develop their own position or point of view in their paper. The Bruegel brand aim to bring quality researches in the policy debate. Therefore an internal reviewing is established within Bruegel. This review focus essentially on the quality of the paper written by Bruegel scholars and the consistency of the intellectual lines. A first reviewing is organized between Bruegel's scholar of a specific section. A final reviewing is done by the Director of Bruegel.

## **5. Competing in the marketplace of ideas in a EU multilevel governance**

This part will underline the strategies EU think tank employ to generate attention in the public arena and in policy circles. A specific emphasis is placed on the role and balance played by those think tanks in a multi-level governance. Moreover, as underlined by various scholars (Abelson, 2000 ; Mc Gaan, 2007 ; Stone & Ullrich, 2003 ; Ullrich, 2004), a distinction should be made – within the global repertoire of actions of think tanks – between *public* and *private* influence.

### **5.1 Public influence**

While think tanks are often considered as « elite organizations composed of scholars pursuing research in relative isolation » (Abelson, 2009: 78), they are increasingly visible. Furthermore in the market of ideas, think tanks are still competing to catch the attention of policymakers and the public. Then in the repertoire of actions of think tanks, some strategies of influence are hidden from the public, others may be easily identified.

#### *Holding conferences and forums to discuss EU issues*

One of the most common strategy employed by think tanks – to increase awareness about a particular issue – is holding forums and conferences. « Policymakers, journalists, academics and representatives from the private and nonprofit sectors are regularly invited to discuss timely and often controversial issues before public audiences » (Abelson, 2009: 78)

Different types of conferences and forums (generally called *events*) are organized within think tanks. We may first mention *standard events* which are events organized by the EU think tank in order to promote studies or reports (developed by researchers of the think tank) on EU issues. Attending to those events is totally free and gather mainly representatives of EU and national non-state organizations and representatives of EU institutions. By way of example we might refer to an *event* organized around the publication of a book – *Europe's economic priorities 2010-2015. Memos to the new Commission* – written by Bruegel Scholars and edited by Senior Research Fellow, André Sapir.

We may refer secondly to *events* organized on demand of an EU official representative. Numerous events are organized by EU think tanks on demand of European Commissioners. As an example, we may mention the event organized (on demand) with Andrus Ansip, Vice-President of the European Commission and European Commissioner for the Digital Single Market on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016. In the first instance he presents « the place of parcel delivery in the DSM » (Bruegel, 2016). Then he discussed and commented a research conducted by a Bruegel scholar « suggesting there are useful parallels with telecommunications interconnection and roaming » (Bruegel, 2016).

Thirdly, EU think tanks also organize close-door events. « The aim of the event is to brainstorm with a small circle of Bruegel scholars, members, and selected officials on priorities for the new Commission» (Bruegel, 2013). Those type of events may be organized by the think tank on its own initiative or on demand of an EU official.

The various elements developed previously in this point highlight the area of influence developed by think tanks in their own building through the organization of *events*. By allowing the exchange of ideas and point of views, EU think tanks may have a (in)direct influence on decision-makers. Furthermore those events gather numerous types of (non-)state actors (EU/national professional and business associations, diplomatic actors, (non-)governmental organizations,...). By gathering those different types of actors (from EU/national levels), EU think tanks become a “*buffer zone*” wherein those latter highlight and escalate some specific national issues – especially – to EU officials. Therefore they become an area wherein informal interactions take place and wherein ‘national’ and ‘local’ ideas/interest may be discussed.

In the same perspective, we may also mention some public sessions and restricted workshops organized outside Brussels. Even if EU officials are not always present to such events, it is also a way for national non-state actors to highlight some issues to Bruegel. Some of those issues could be later taken into consideration by Bruegel, and be subject to a specific contribution/publication from Bruegel.<sup>7</sup>

« *Encouraging scholars to give public lectures and addresses* » (Abelson, 2009: 78)

Following Abelson (2009), managing council of think tanks encourage their scholars to give lectures at universities or any organizations getting interest in current political issues. In this perspective high-profile scholars become ambassadors on behalf of their organization. « Several scholars at think tanks

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<sup>7</sup> As a reminder, the *Board* of Bruegel is in charge of defining the research agenda. Members have no (or few) impact on this agenda definition.

regularly perform this role and, in the process, remind their audience the efforts their organizations are undertaking to convince policy-makers to follow the right path » (Abelson, 2009: 79).

In this effort to promote their organization, we may notify the participation of Bruegel at the TATRA Summit. Launched by the Centre for European Affairs, this summit's objective is to bring together diverse types of participants (representatives of EU institutions, EU member states 'ministries, lobbies, think tanks). This summit is organized around numerous conferences (that aims to contribute to define/shape the future political and economic governance of the EU).

#### *Testifying before committees and subcommittees of EU/national institutions*

Abelson (2009 : 79) underlines the idea according to which « several think tanks also recognize the importance of conveying ideas to policymakers and the public in a more formal manner ». Some think tanks in the EU accomplish this by testifying before legislative committees – although some, including Bruegel. Providing and presenting testimonies to a prominent committee can promote the think tank – and its credibility – in the eyes of some decision-makers. In this perspective, Bruegel scholars have providing various testimonies to the European Parliament and to numerous national Parliaments. However we must mention the conditions under which those testimonies are presented.

Firstly, various European Parliament committees and think tanks are generally in a “contract relationship”, through call for studies. We may mention the study on the request of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee on February 2014, called “The Troika and financial assistance in the euro area: successes and failures”. Such testimonies can catch considerable attention. Oral presentation and written policy contribution are included in the official report. Therefore it allows to be cited by academics and journalists.

Secondly, think tanks – considered as expert groups or knowledge agents – are also invited for hearings at national parliaments. We may mention the hearing presented by Grégory Claeys – Bruegel scholar – at the French Senate European Affairs Committee concerning the role of the European Central Bank during the financial crisis. Such hearing are then part of the minutes of the Committee.

#### *Publication of books, reports, opinion papers, policy briefs,...*

In order to market their ideas, think tanks rely their analysis and studies in various type of publications. Unlike books (which are often outdated at the time of their publication), policy briefs provide decision-makers insights into current policy issues. « Often on a particular theme, these publication help to frame the parameters of important and relevant policy debates, and more importantly for policymakers, who have hectic schedules, they can be read in a matter of minutes, not hours or days » (Abelson, 2009: 80). However policymakers are not the only readers of think tanks' policy brief. Scholars, academics and students are also consumers of policy briefs.

In the same perspective, Stone and Ullrich (2003) developed the idea of *creative Communication*. According to those two scholars, researchers are – generally speaking – poor communicator and have difficulties to ‘market’ their findings. Therefore think tanks hire ‘policy entrepreneurs’ who can simplify – through story lines – complicated research findings. «Usually an entrepreneur is an individual, but

sometimes an organization such as a think tank or research network plays a similar role in marketing knowledge or synthesizing and popularizing research » (Stone & Ullrich, 2003: 23).

Different types of publications may be counted at Bruegel (policy brief, policy contribution, memo, blue print,...). According to its secretary general of Bruegel, the type of the publication vary in accordance with the profile of the actor. For example, an official of the European Commission will receive a more technical publication; while a member of the European Parliament will receive a memo (which can be read faster).

Therefore think tanks have to target research to key audiences. Following Stone and Ullrich (2003), the principal challenge of think tanks is to determine who are the key actors within a policy community (both inside and outside the government) at each stage of the decision-making process.

#### *Email distribution lists*

The creation of a mailing list allow think tanks to send all updates to scholars, academics, journalists, policymakers, and all people interested in the think tank. This mailing list ensure think tanks that ‘everybody’ is kept informed about current issues and organized events.

#### *Media exposure*

Following Stone and Ullrich (2003 : 23), « one supply problem is the inadequate dissemination of research result». Researches and findings should be disseminated through other routes than the academic route (which represents a small readership). The dissemination is an important method also underlined by Abelson (2009) who seeks to measure a part of the think tank’s impact on the public opinion in accordance with the number finding’s publications in media.

Therefore - to compete in the market of ideas – the exposure in media constitute one of the most visible strategy. There is an important competition for media exposure between think tanks. Numerous think tanks ‘directors analyze their policy influence through their media exposure. This may explain why think tanks are devoting so much resources to a media exposure. Following Abelson (2009 : 85), « securing access to the media on a regular basis provides think tanks with a valuable opportunity to shape public opinion and public policy ». Failing shaping public opinion, think tanks may contribute to the public debate on a policy issue. In both cases, the media exposure of a think tank produces the illusion of a policy influence. This illusion of influence is mobilized by think tanks ‘directors to claim their effective influence on public opinion.

Then the media exposure depends – in part – on the personal relationships maintained with journalists. According to Crowley (2003), journalists are firstly looking for personal relationships; ideas come next. Journalists wish to have a network of experts whom they can trust. So journalist may use the ideas developed by those experts (to write articles) without running the risk to appear ridiculous.

The media exposure of a think tank is difficult to bring to light. We may notify the presence of Bruegel in twitter (37400 followers) and Facebook (5000 ‘friends’). However, Bruegel’s scholars are encouraged to post analysis / comments on the actuality on their own twitter account. This is a way to increase their visibility. Moreover Bruegel has also a ‘press officer’ exclusively in charge for relationship

with national press (from EU member states, but also outside Europe). Therefore we may notify interviews / extract from studies in different newsletters (such as Bloomberg, El Mundo, New York Times,...). According the general secretary of Bruegel, one of the purpose of Bruegel is to be cited in each 'relevant' national newspapers. Therefore the media exposure allows placing the European debate on national levels; that – in an indirect way – will be on the table of intergovernmental discussions. That may be the reason why Bruegel devote time and resources to reach and gain access to print media.

## 5.2 Private influence

While public influence exercises are easier to be observed and documented, private influence strategies are much more difficult to highlight.

### *Maintaining liaisons with EU officials / EU member states representatives*

As underlined by Abelson (2009 : 82), « there are few ways experts from think tanks can get closer to the policy-making process than becoming policymakers themselves ». According to Grossman and Saurugger (2006), any organized group seeks to address policy makers – in the most direct way – in order to weigh up on public policy. The purpose is the built and the maintain of stable relationships with policymakers.

According to Bruegel's general secretary, closed relationships and liaisons are indeed an undeniable plus for the organization. However those liaisons depend and vary from a scholar to another (its profile, experience, past,...).

### *Organizing closed conferences, seminar and workshop with selected policymakers*

EU officials are often invited by think tanks in specific conferences, seminar or workshops in order to discuss an issue in a small committee. This strategy enables think tanks 'scholars to discuss issues and communicate some insights with decision-makers (who are generally in a position to influence the content of the legislation). Many "closed-door brainstorming workshops" are organized at Bruegel. This type of workshops may be organized by Bruegel or in collaboration with EU institutions (generally the European Commission). It was – for example – the case of an event organized conjointly with the European Commission on the development of a Capital Markets Union. A brainstorming workshop was organized at Bruegel, bringing together EU officials (from the European Commission), representatives of EU member states, capital markets participants and independent experts. Also, some closed-door events – organized by Bruegel – bring together members and partners of Bruegel. We may mention the annual dinner organized by Bruegel. This meeting was preceded by a keynote address from Donald Tusk (president of the European Council).

### *« Offering former policymakers positions at think tanks » (Abelson, 2009: 82)*

According to Abelson (2009 : 84), « some policymakers [...] are so impressed with think tanks that they decide to make them their permanent home after completing their public service ». However those «

former high-profile policymakers are not recruited to think tanks because of their potential as researchers but because of their ability to attract funds ».

In the framework of Bruegel, we may mention the presence of some former high-profile policymakers : (1) Jean-Claude Trichet, former president of the European Central Bank, currently chairman of Bruegel; (2) André Sapir, former economic adviser to Romano Prodi (as president of the European Commission), currently senior fellow at Bruegel. In the perspective of Bruegel, such profile provide especially a wide professional network and reinforce the credibility of Bruegel with EU official and (non-)state actors.

« *Preparing studies and policy briefs for policy makers* » (Abelson, 2009: 82)

According to Stone (1996), policymakers are requestors of policy researches. However they are in a 'pressure cooker' environment. So policy researches should be relevant, and above all action oriented. Policy makers demands may refer to two different purpose. Some decision-makers are asking for research findings in order to put into question a political status quo. Others are looking for a scientific credibility in order to legitimate their actions, decisions and policy orientations. The most important – for a think tank – is to know the decision-making process and the deadline that falls to the decision-maker.

We may mention – as an example - Guntram Wolff. He focuses his researches on the European economy and governance, on fiscal and monetary policy and global finance. He is the director of Bruegel and a member of the French prime minister's council. In the perspective of those two functions, he regularly testifies at the European Parliament, the ECOFIN meetings (bringing together European Finance Ministers), the German and French Parliament.

## CONCLUSION

The theoretical and analytical perspectives on EU think tanks provides various opportunities for empirical research. The purpose of this working paper was to provide a first presentation picture of EU think tanks activities within the European multi-level governance, through Bruegel. In this perspective, Bruegel is considered as a key case, selected due to its representativeness.

Bruegel has to be analyzed in a specific policy environment: the European Union. Considered by Börzel (2012) as a unique governance mix, no single-model is relevant to describe the decision-making process. However, in the framework of this working paper, the multilevel aspect of the European governance has been taken into consideration. The purpose of this working paper was to analyze how a think tank (working especially on EU issues) get used to this multilevel environment. Think tanks are involved in this specific environment with a set of other state and non-state actors who hold limited resources. The main resource mobilized by think tanks is knowledge. Think tanks are building scientific facts in order to create a resource-dependence with public actors.

Then, before going further with the repertoire of actions (personal to Bruegel), it was relevant to conceptualize what is a EU think tank. As developed above in this working paper, there are as many

definitions as researchers working on this object. However, we will keep in mind that there are a common basis of each definitions. Think tanks are permanent organizations which generates policy researches on different (political, economic and/or social) issues. As non-state actor, those organizations have no formal power in the decision-making process; but they seek to shape the political dialogue and preferences. We will also mention that a major difference exist between north-American and European definitions : the funding sources or the question of independence. Stone, Denham and Garnett (1998) specified that this independence vis-à-vis the state constitutes an Anglo-American notion which could not be exported in others culture.

Then the paper focused on the repertoire of actions of Bruegel by highlighting practical example, representative of global practices of this think tank. Based on documents/reports analysis and interviews, the paper focus on the description and analysis of public and private strategies to influence decision-makers. Moreover, as specified by Abelson (2007 : 571), « policy influence [...] is not simply about achieving desirable outcomes. It is a process which allows various individuals and organizations to exchange ideas with journalists, academics, members of the attentive public and policy-makers throughout government. But it is important to remember that this process does not occur overnight, but may take months and years to unfold ».

Finally, even if the influence of think tanks in the European governance is difficult to measure, further empirical researches are needed to complete the theoretical approach on EU think tanks. Those further studies will underline the specific actions put in place by think tanks in a unique European governance.

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