



ORIGINAL PAPER

Key terms in European governance and Europeanisation theories. A conceptual analysis

Cătălina Maria Georgescu¹⁾, Silviu Dorin Georgescu²⁾

Abstract:

The analysis highlights the coining and usage of key specific terms in European governance and Europeanisation theories. The conceptual analysis uses special online instruments to account for the use and dynamics of terms from the following dimensions: (1) administrative convergence and Europeanisation studies, (2) European governance theories and models, (3) institutionalism theories. Methodologically, the analysis points out the frequencies associated to scientific terminology for the selected period 1951-2019. Consequently, this analysis based on political discourse analysis, concept stretching and frequency delves into Europeanization, agenda-setting, contingency and path-dependence theories and models unfolding the tendencies of interdisciplinary research using online tools. The results show systematic use of key concepts in European governance and Europeanisation theories which help to build the future trends of research.

Keywords: *Europeanisation theories, European governance, Member States, Candidate Countries, frequency.*

¹⁾ Lecturer, Ph.D., Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Craiova, 13th Street A. I. Cuza, Craiova, Romania, Email: catalina.georgescu@edu.ucv.ro, ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4462-4689>.

²⁾ Ph.D., ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5187-6892>.

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Introduction

The question of Europeanization phenomenon trended massively beginning with the 1990s, some publications devoting their entire thematic area or issues to the subject.

Thus, the *Journal of European Integration* published 1509 articles and 9 special issues and collections. Some of the most relevant researches tackle Europeanisation and integration process in the context of the Euro-crisis through the lens of neo-functionalism (Nicoli, 2020: 897-916) approaching explanatory variables “path dependency”, “endogenous preference change” and “functional spill over” (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 321-337). The influence of crisis to “policy change” is a subject of seminal discussion and analysis especially on the new roles of national and supranational actors (Falkner, 2016: 219-235). Some of the most cited analyses of crises draw on the “critical junctures”, “windows of opportunity” and “policy learning” literature for reviewing policy responses to major “existential” crises within a historical institutionalist approach contributing heavily to the pandemic literature (Ladi, Tsarouhas, 2020: 1041-1056; Schmidt, 2020: 1177-1193). Some papers especially describe EU action during pandemic in terms of “adaptability” to this state of threat (Wolff, Ladi, 2020: 1025-1040). In a different line of thought, “rule of law conditionality” and “financial conditionality” are other explanatory variables to policy change and “institutional design” (Blauberger, van Hüllen, 2021: 1-16).

Europeanisation is a top subject for the *Journal of European Public Policy*, featuring in 2408 articles and 20 special issues and collections. The most cited articles explore competition policy as influenced by (de-)Europeanisation within Brexit (McGowan, 2023: 2372-2396) or EU foreign policy experiencing a sense of (de-)Europeanisation within in the context of populist parties actions (Rivera Escartin, 2020: 1195-1214), or “domestic effects” and economic-social relations (Seikel, 2023), or the Europeanisation of national policy styles (Candel, Parsons, Barling, Loudiyi, 2021: 1748-1769), or the outlooks of regionalization process within European multi-level governance (López, Tatham, 2018: 764-786). Analyses explored the actions and resources that enhance Europeanisation such as national interest groups actions (Beyers, Kerremans, 2007: 460-481), correlate conditionality with agency “institutional capacity” in regulation assessing Europeanisation degree (Ozel, 2013: 741-759), discuss “EU rule transfer” as “conditionality” to candidate countries (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, 2004: 661-679). Research on factors or conditions increasing “policy convergence” is consistent across countries (Holzinger, Knill, 2005: 775-796). Research analyses the influences of “ideational processes” and “institutional constraints” on reforms and policy change within historical institutionalism views (Béland, 2009: 701-718).

The *Public Administration* journal published 1911 articles and around 20 collections to the Europeanisation issue. Some of the most cited works analyze the (de-)Europeanisation process in conjunction to the “Open Method of Coordination (OMC)” (Copeland, 2016: 1124-1139) and try to label Europeanisation as “step-change” adaptation correlated to “public support for the EU” (Bulmer, Burch, 2005: 861-890). Europeanisation impact on national regulation in relation to the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* for candidate countries is a major theme for research accounting for national legislatives roles during the process (Jenny, Müller, 2010: 36-56; Müller, Bovens, Christensen, Jenny, Yesilkagit, 2010: 75-87), comparative analyses display a higher level of “partial Europeanisation” in “new” member states than “old” members (Meyer-Sahling, Van Stolk, 2015: 230-247).

The *West European Politics* journal published, 3031 articles and 9 special issues

and collections. Works published in one of the special issues seek to find the manner and level of “diffusion” of EU institutions and policies (“emulation”) (Börzel, Risse, 2012a: 1-19) and shed light to “agencification” literature and “institutional convergence” (Börzel, Risse, 2012b: 192-207). Some of the most cited articles also discuss the level of Europeanisation and the role of special national actors in preserving the established trend following accession (Sedelmeier, 2012: 20-38), thus observing the explanatory influence of “domestic power configurations”, “mediating domestic institutions”, and “actors’ strategies” (Fischer, Nicolet, Sciarini, 2002: 143-170). Consequently, national actors are crucial in determining the rhythm of change which becomes obvious for explaining the formation of “clustered convergence” (Dyson, 2007: 417-442) which was also analysed in conjunction to political parties change over EU matters (Ladrech, 2012: 574-588).

The *Journal of Legislative Studies* published 759 articles and 1 special issue comprising 9 articles on Europeanisation and European governance. Researches focus broadly on legislatives’ organization, functioning, even staffing for supporting European democratic values (Peters, 2021: 577-594), in their response, or “adaptation”, to European institutions within the specificity of different systems of government, with a focus on parliamentary systems (Auel, Benz, 2005: 372-393).

The *European Law Journal* published 1160 articles and 12 collections in the field of Europeanisation and European governance, some of the most read papers devoting their attention on Europeanisation and the free movement regulations’ effects on different policy area and citizens’ rights (van Leeuwen, 2020: 61–82) or on discursive practices logic and changes in a changing European context (Schmidt, 2000: 277-300).

The *Journal of Common Market Studies* published 4126 articles and 23 collections featuring, among others, the issue of human rights diplomacy and national role in international organizations (Smith, 2017: 628–644), human rights and (de-)Europeanisation in the context of national regulation (Bodur Ün, Arıkan, 2022: 945–962) or societal role in democratization and Europeanisation (Noutcheva, 2016: 691–708).

The *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* published 539 articles on Europeanisation process, papers scrutinizing different types of Europeanisation, their efficiency and conditions for positive mark identifying “top-down” or “bottom-up” directions in a “contingent model” (Zahariadis, 2008: 221-238), in line with the approaches outlining the relation among “Europeanization, policy learning, and new modes of governance” in the “Open Method of Coordination (OMC)” (Radaelli, 2008: 239-254). It is arguably challenging to apply a single methodology in Europeanisation researches, since one has to account to differences in national contexts, domestic actors, policy fields, ideas, forces, competences etc. (Saurugger, 2005: 291-312). Researchers also draw attention upon “negative integration” and the impact of “legal uncertainty” (Schmidt, 2008: 299-308), while correlating the concepts of “Europeanization”, “goodness of fit” and “adaptation pressures” in several policy areas in cross-country comparisons (Mendez, Wishlade, Yuill, 2008: 279-298).

The *Governance* journal published 954 articles and 3 collections. Some of the most cited works explain Europeanisation by focusing on the “Multiple Streams Framework” and “policy stages” (Bérut, 2022: 1–19). Moreover, research has found differences in Europeanisation among Member States, with some states experiencing “reform policies and politics”, while others “incremental institutional change” (Trampusch, 2009: 369-395). Also, research has established that post-accession period

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has not always been synonymous to continuing Europeanisation in all sectors, with countries continuing pre-accession reforms, some “reform reversal”, while others “reform reorientation” (Meyer-Sahling, 2011: 231-260). On the other hand, Europeanisation analyses also synchronize the evolution of EU competencies, especially those of the European Commission, as a central and visible institution in European action, and the EU different “methods of harmonization” (Majone, 2002: 375-392).

The issue of Europeanisation was also tackled in the *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* journal which published 1329 articles on the matter. Researches have address the issue of national and European citizenship in conjunction to those of sovereignty, national and European identity and solidarity (Dragoman, 2008: 63–78). Also, researches have accounted EU and NATO membership status, foreign and domestic evolution to the issue of sovereignty, democratization and Europeanisation of former communist states in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans (Ágh, 1999: 263–279). Valuable, extensive work have appeared in ARENA Working Papers, the European Integration online Papers (EIoP), and also in the Living Reviews in European Governance.

Objectives and scope

The paper aims at identifying the specific concepts in use in the scientific literature, while analyzing their frequency, associations and development. Thus, the analysis highlights the coining and usage of key specific terms in European governance and Europeanisation theories.

The conceptual analysis uses special online instruments to account for the use and dynamics of terms from the following dimensions: (1) administrative convergence and Europeanisation studies, (2) European governance theories and models, (3) institutionalism theories.

Research methodology

Methodologically, the analysis points out the frequencies associated to scientific terminology for the selected period 1951-2019. Consequently, this analysis based on political discourse analysis, concept stretching and frequency delves into Europeanization, agenda-setting, contingency and path-dependence theories and models unfolding the tendencies of interdisciplinary research using online search tools supplied by Google Ngram Viewer platform.

The research is disposed to identify the frequency of associations around some key concepts used within Europeanisation phenomenon and European integration process research: studies on administrative values, norms and convergence, Europeanisation and adaptation, different understandings of governance.

The analysis is consequently centred around identifying the frequency in the use of concepts: “administrative convergence”, “administrative values”, “administrative norms”; frequency of usage for concepts: “Europeanization” and “benchmarking”; frequency and comparison of usage for concepts: “Europeanisation”, “goodness of fit”, “adaptation”; frequency of usage for concepts: “transnational harmonization” (Majone, 2002: 375-392), “dependency” (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 321-337), “soft law”, “centralization” (Majone, 2002: 375-392), “moderate convergence”, “emulation” (Börzel, Risse, 2012a: 1-19), “basic convergence”.

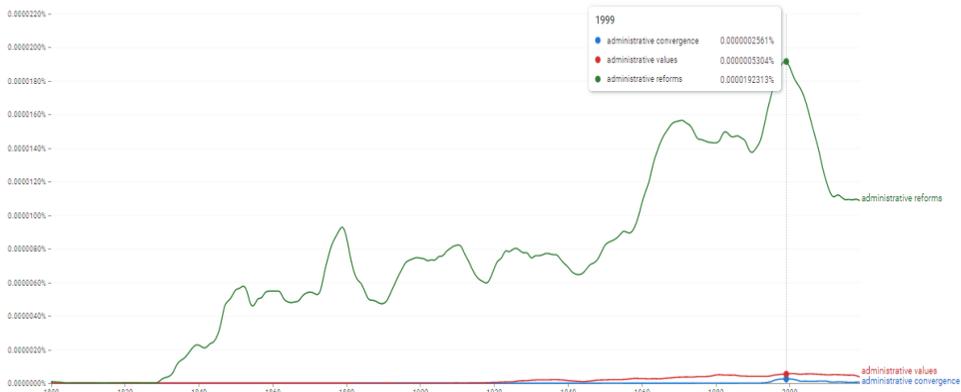
Another research direction aims at highlighting the most frequent association around some specific concepts. Thus, the research employs a wildcard search for the

most frequent associations around the concept “administrative”, a wildcard search for the most frequent associations around the concept “European administrative”, a wildcard search for most frequent association around the concept of “convergence”, and a wildcard search for most frequent association around the concept “multi-level”.

Results analysis and discussion

This section presents the results of the key concepts frequency use and discuss the association values especially the peaks obtained in the Google N-gram Viewer searches.

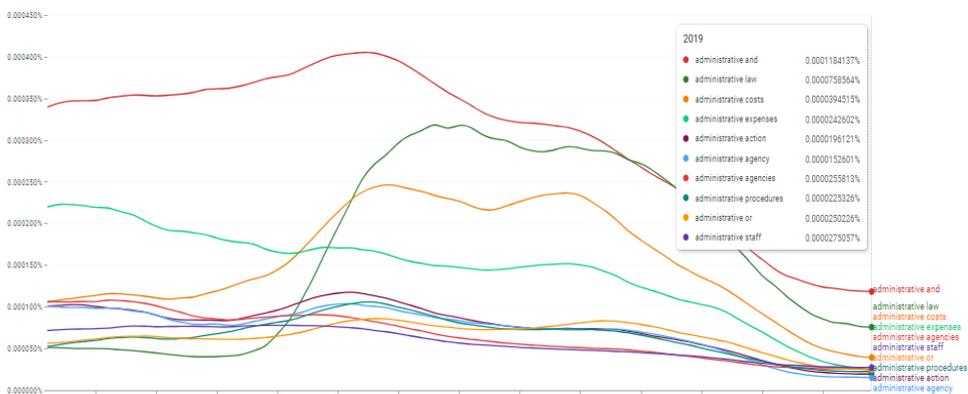
Figure 1. Frequency in the use of concepts: “administrative convergence”, “administrative values”, “administrative norms”



Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

The online search for establishing the frequency in the use of concepts “administrative convergence”, “administrative values”, “administrative norms” (Meyer-Sahling, 2011: 230-247; Peters, 2021: 577-594) has shown a peak around 1999 for “administrative reforms” (0.0000192313%).

Figure 2. Wildcard search for most frequent associations around the concept “administrative”

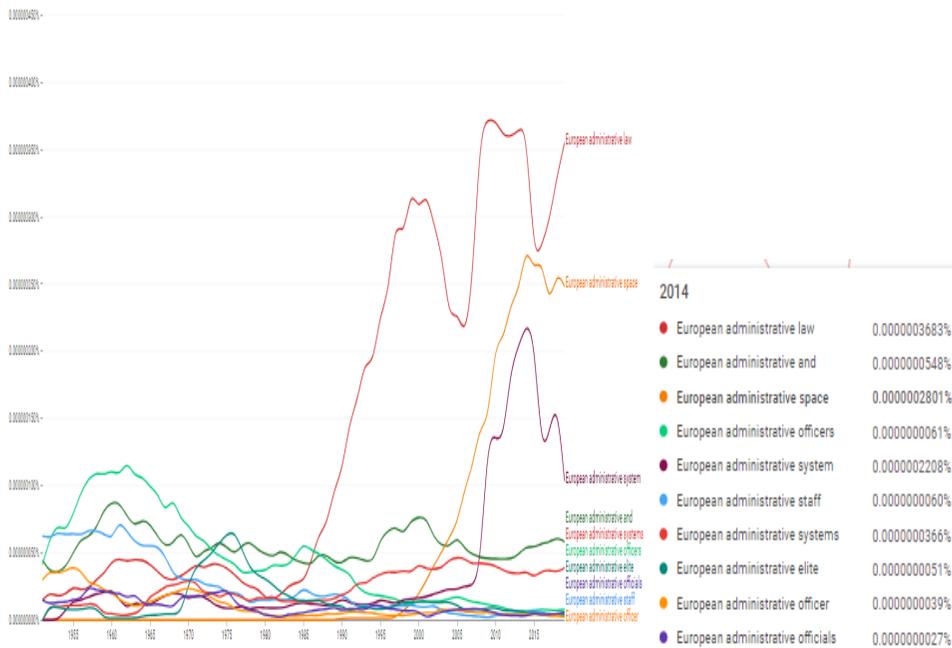


Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

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The Ngram wildcard search for most frequent associations around the concept “administrative” has identified the most frequent usage for “administrative law”, “administrative costs”, “administrative expenses”, “administrative agencies”, “administrative staff”, “administrative procedures”, “administrative action”, “administrative agency”. Since 1970, the term “administrative law” has shown a massive increase in usage, especially during 1985-2000.

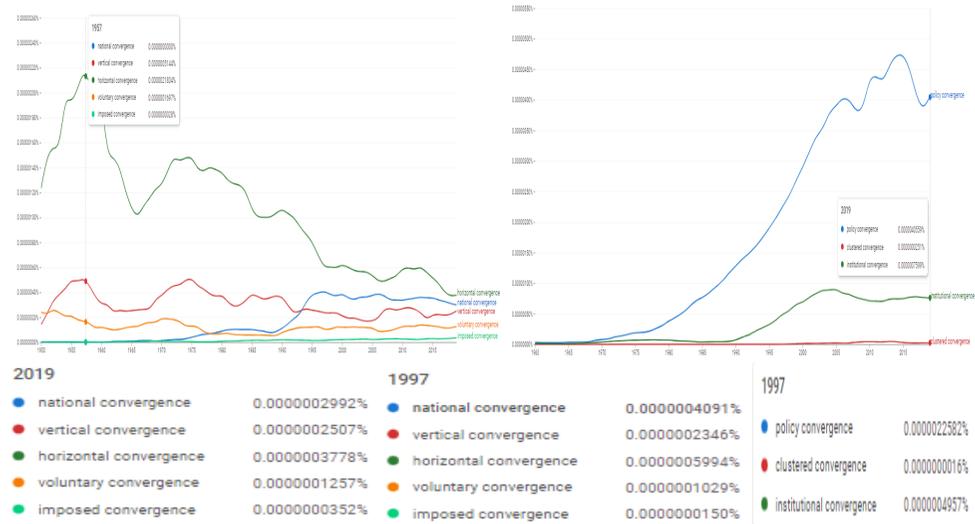
Figure 3. Wildcard search for most frequent associations around the concept “European administrative”



Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

Assuming there are frequent associations around the concept “European administrative”, the Ngram wildcard search detected “European administrative law” (scoring highest between 1995-2000, then between 2005-2015), “European administrative space”, “European administrative system(s)”, “European administrative officer(s)”, “European administrative elite”, “European administrative officials”, “European administrative staff”.

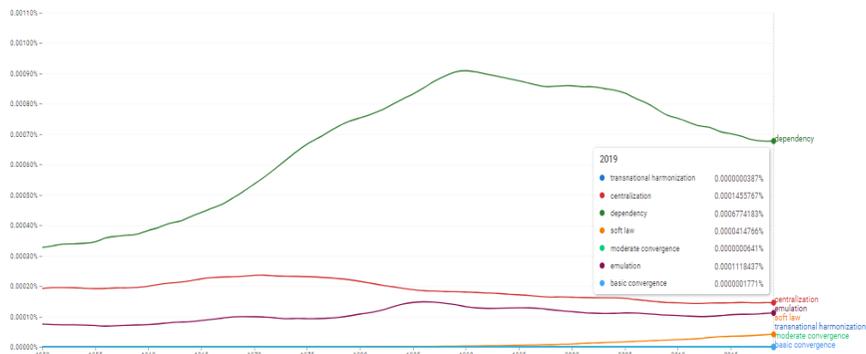
Figure 4. Frequency of associations around the concept “convergence”



Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

The search undergone for determining the most frequent associations around the concept of “convergence” has revealed the following phrases “national convergence”, “vertical convergence”, “horizontal convergence”, “voluntary convergence” and “imposed convergence” (Bennett, 1991; Dolowitz, Marsh, 2000), “policy convergence” (Holzinger, Knill, 2005: 775-796), “institutional convergence” (Börzel, Risse, 2012b: 192-207), and “clustered convergence” (Dyson, 2007: 417-442).

Figure 5. Frequency of usage for concepts: “transnational harmonization”, “centralization”, “dependency”, “soft law”, “moderate convergence”, “emulation”, “basic convergence”

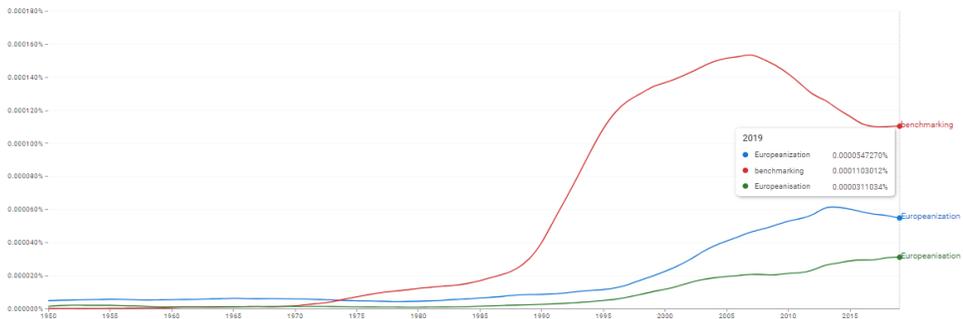


Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

The frequency of usage for concepts search has determine the following situation identifying Ngram values for the concepts “transnational harmonization” (Majone, 2002: 375-392), “dependency” (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 321-337), “soft law”, “centralization” (Majone, 2002: 375-392), “moderate convergence”, “emulation” (Börzel, Risse, 2012a: 1-19), “basic convergence”.

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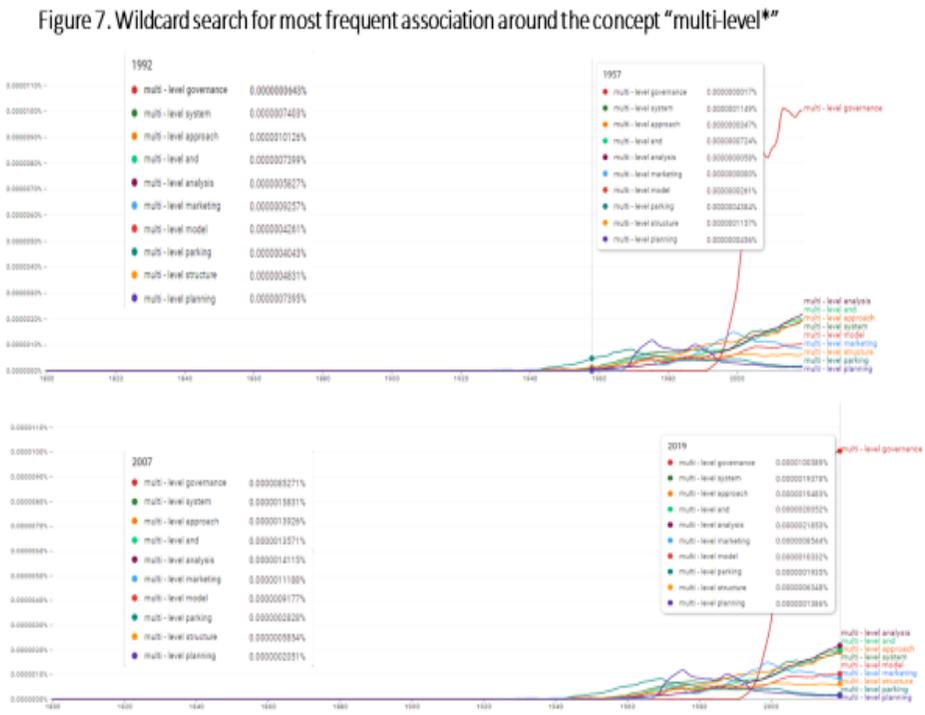
Figure 6. Frequency of usage for concepts: “Europeanization” and “benchmarking”



Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

Frequency of usage for concepts “Europeanization” and “benchmarking” has shown an increase for “benchmarking” especially beginning with 1990, while “Europeanization” experienced a relatively lower usage.

Figure 7. Wildcard search for most frequent associations around the concept “multi-level”

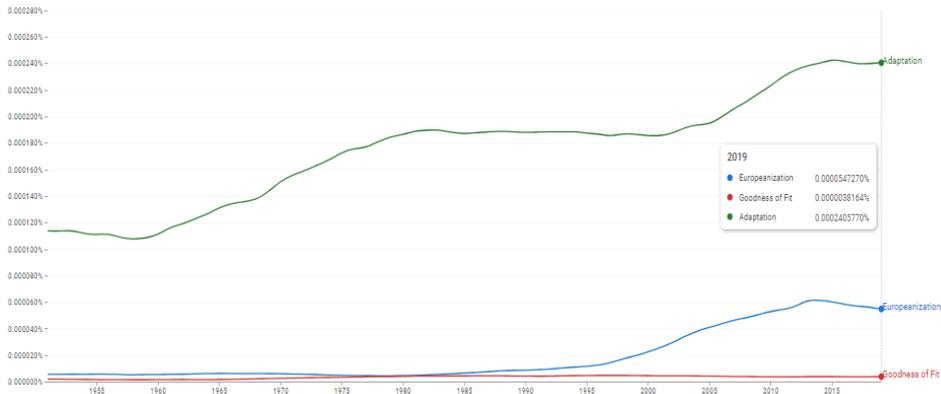


Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

The results of a wildcard search for the most frequent associations around the concept “multi-level” identifies the following uses: “multi-level governance” (López, Tatham,

2018: 764-786; Bache, 2008), “multi-level system”, “multi-level approach” (Georgescu, Georgescu, 2021: 201-2014), “multi-level analyses”, “multi-level marketing”, “multi-level model”, “multi-level parking”, “multi-level structure” and “multi-level planning” (Olimid, Georgescu, Gherghe, 2023: 126 – 138). The concept of multi-level governance has been used intensely in the late 1990s and scored highest in 2019 (0.0000106389%).

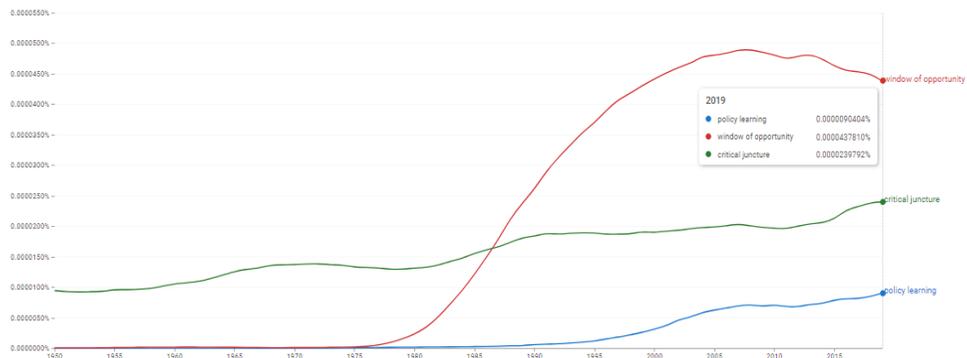
Figure 8. Frequency of usage for concepts: “Europeanisation”, “goodness of fit”, “adaptation”



Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

Frequency of usage for concepts interlinked in the literature “Europeanisation”, “goodness of fit”, “adaptation” (Bache, 2008; Mendez, Wislade, Yuill, 2008: 279-298; Auel, Benz, 2005: 372-393; Olimid, Georgescu, Gherghe, 2022a: 38-51) has emphasized the scores obtained in 2019 by “adaptation” (0.000240577%) and the increase in usage in the second half of the 1990s for “Europeanization” with a relative steady value throughout 2014-2019 (0.0000038164%).

Figure 9. Frequency of usage for concepts: “policy learning”, “window of opportunity”, “critical juncture”



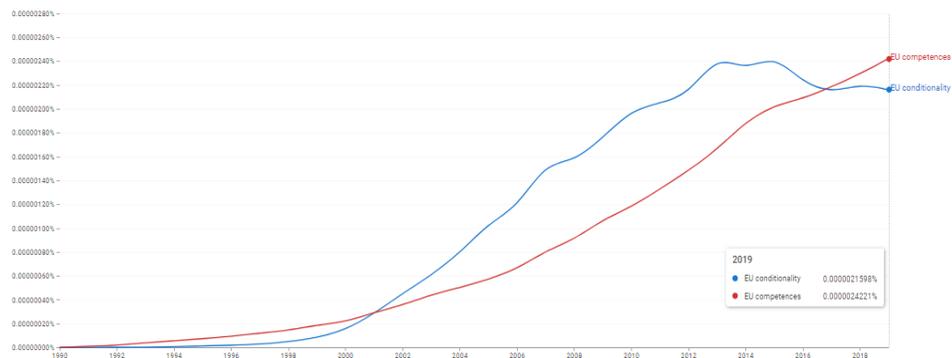
Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

Frequency of usage for concepts “policy learning”, “window of opportunity”, “critical juncture” (Ladi, Tsarouhas, 2020: 1041-1056; Radaelli, 2008: 239-254;

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Schmidt, 2020: 1177-1193) shows a massive use of “window of opportunity” concept since 1975 with a highest occurrence during the 2000s, and a relative decrease after 2015 (the value for 2019 was 0.0000437810%). The policy learning literature emerged in the late 1980s, gre in the 2000s and scored highest in 2019 (0.0000090404%).

Figure 10. Frequency of usage for concepts: “EU conditionality” and “EU competences”



Source: Data search Google Ngram Viewer

The previous figure shows the results for the frequency of usage search for concepts “EU conditionality” and “EU competences”. This is in respect to Europeanisation scientific literature (Blauberger, van Hüllen, 2021: 1-16), different levels of Europeanisation are analysed as conditionality as regards agency “institutional capacity” in the legislative and law implementation processes (Ozel, 2013: 741-759; Olimid, Georgescu, Gherghe, 2022b: 34-46), Europeanisation as “EU rule transfer” and “conditionality” to candidate countries (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, 2004: 661-679; Sedelmeier, 2012: 20-38) and addresses the issue of EU competences in European law matters (Saurugger, 2005: 291-312). Europeanisation, rule transfer and conditionality are thus more obvious during crisis (Burlea-Șchiopoiu, Ogarcă, Mihai, Drăgan, 2023: 1119–1140; Olimid, Georgescu, Gherghe, 2022a: 38-51), public investments and other financial contexts (Stanciu, Mitu, 2017: 7-20).

Limitations of the study

The study’s results and output are limited to the English language in use and the period of time covering scientific works until 2019. The online platform is programmed to show search results as recent as 2019 depending on the language corpus selected: English (different for British English or American English searches), French, Chinese, Hebrew, Italian, and Spanish.

Conclusions

The results of this study show systematic use of key concepts in European governance and Europeanisation theories especially beginning with the 1990s with an exponential growth during the 2000s which help to build the future trends of bibliometric research and political discourse analysis. The research has undergone a systematic overview of the conceptual usage in the scientific literature with online presence using Google Ngram Viewer platform. The research contributes to studies

accomplished on the national responses to Europeanization issues, domestic changes in policies and institutions, actors's actions at home and abroad, but also changes at EU institutional and policy level, discourses, values or actions. The study has contributed to identifying the frequency of usage in the conceptualization of supranational-national relations conditioned by European integration and the labelling and analysis of transfer of competencies from the national to the European sphere in the context of multi-level governance.

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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