The EU Institutional Architecture in the Covid-19 Response: Coordinative Europeanization in Times of Permanent Emergency

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Introduction

The European Union’s (EU) reaction to the Covid-19 crisis will be discussed for a long time and will inform policy and academic debates about European integration, the relationship between EU institutions and member states, and the power struggles between member states. The outcome of the EU policies adopted in 2020–21 will also determine the Union’s longevity and its role as a global actor. Decisions were made and policies were re-designed and, on some occasions, designed from scratch in areas where close cooperation pre-existed such as economic governance, competition policy and borders control but also in less developed domains such as health policy and a common vaccines strategy (Wolff and Ladi, 2020). The EU institutions had to adjust to a new form of distant work, away from Brussels and to coordinate the EU’s reaction in a health crisis, which soon affected almost all EU policies. Along with key EU institutions, a previously less-known EU agency, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), found itself at the forefront of the response. Although the EU’s response at the beginning looked uncoordinated and slow, it soon picked up with trust in the EU reaching its highest level since 2009 in April 2021.1

In this article we explore the EU’s reaction to the Covid-19 crisis and we argue that a new mode of Europeanization that can be best described as coordinative Europeanization has emerged. Moving from ‘coercive Europeanization’ (Leontitsis and Ladi, 2018) that had characterized the Eurozone crisis with conditionality and monitoring of EU member states by EU institutions, coordinative Europeanization is defined as a bottom-up process where the member states are actively involved in the policy-making process early on in order to guarantee the highest level of implementation possible. It is a pragmatic approach to Europeanization and the channels of member states’ involvement are often informal and online. The Commission has played a leading role and has offered innovative tools in this process. The new ‘permanent’ state of emergency caused by the Covid-19 crisis brought to the EU a realization of what interdependence really means and the need to coordinate in order to find policy solutions even if they are just ‘good enough’.

The article is organized in four sections. First, we analyse how Covid-19 revealed that the state of emergency in the EU could be more permanent than temporary, how the EU institutions reacted and how the coordinative mode of Europeanization emerged. In the

1 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_1867 (accessed 7/6/21).
next two sections we go deeper by analysing two key EU policy responses: the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the coordination of freedom of movement within the EU despite Covid-19 restrictions. These two policy areas were selected to compare and contrast two responses that followed a different pace but where the coordination between member states and institutions has been central for their design and remains central for their successful implementation. The concluding section summarizes our findings and offers some ideas for further avenues for research.

I. The EU’s Institutional Response to a ‘Permanent’ State of Emergency

The EU is confronted with what we call a ‘permanent’ state of emergency. The Covid-19 crisis started only a few years after the end of the Eurozone crisis and while the migration and Brexit issues were still ongoing. The EU, similar to most of its member states, is learning to deal with crises as part of its normal mode of policymaking. How have EU institutions responded and adjusted to the Covid-19 crisis compared to prior crises? In this section we first define what a permanent state of emergency is, and we then move to explore the EU’s institutional response. We argue that a new mode of Europeanization has emerged. We call it coordinative Europeanization.

Crisis is a situation which threatens the high-priority goals of the decision-making unit, restricts the amount of time available for response and surprises the members of the decision-making unit by its occurrence (Hermann, 1969; Degner, 2019). Undoubtedly, the spread of Covid-19 across the globe and in Europe falls under the definition of a crisis. Covid-19 disrupted life in the continent but also the policy-making process within the EU. It was soon framed as an ‘existential’ crisis since EU leaders very quickly realized that if they did not rise to the challenge the EU project would once more be threatened with becoming obsolete (Russack and Blockmans, 2020). The amount of time the EU had to respond was restricted but despite early chaotic national responses including the closure of borders, it was soon followed by the mobilization of the EU’s crisis instruments, swift decision-making processes and financial packages for the economy (Wolff and Ladi, 2020). It can also be said that the multifaceted character of the disruption, the geographical universality and length of the crisis took the EU by surprise. However, after the previous turbulent decade quite a few discussions had taken place about the inevitability of crises and new procedures and mechanisms had already been put in place (e.g., Pilati and Zuleeg, 2019; Rhinard, 2019). In that sense, we could claim that in the context of the Covid-19 crisis the EU was less surprised than in previous crises.

Crisis, by definition, should only last for a specific, limited time and then give space to a period of ‘normality’. Emergency should last for an even shorter period. However, in the case of the EU, but also globally, ‘normality’ does not seem to last very long. Zuleeg et al. (2021) call it the age of permacrisis and claim that this is the environment that the EU will need to operate in the future. We argue that if this proves to be true, which is very likely, the new ‘normal’ for the EU will be a state of permanent emergency where crisis decisions will need to be made more often. Crises are not new to the EU and compromise and change during crises have been thoroughly analysed in the literature (Dinan et al., 2017; D’Erman and Verdun, 2018). One could argue that the European project has been developing through a series of crises. After the Second World War, the European Political Cooperation emerged from the 1970s as a result of the oil crisis, while the...
disintegration of Yugoslavia and the end of the permissive consensus led to the Maastricht Treaty. Competences have always expanded through crises. Although the crisis this time is transnational and trans-sectoral, it does not (yet) call for major governance or Treaty changes. Instead it seems that the current decision-making process in place had learned from previous crises and had some structures and mechanisms in place to respond to the pandemic.

However, concepts such as ‘critical junctures’ and ‘critical moments’ that have traditionally been very useful in helping us navigate through changes that occur during and after crises need to be rethought since crises are no longer short and rare events but instead take place in a continuum of time. In that sense, inter- and intra-crisis learning is more likely to take place and often the same policy entrepreneurs are faced with multiple and similar crises during their career. Ladi and Tsarouhas (2020) show the importance of the same policy entrepreneurs (e.g., Merkel, Lagarde) learning from the Eurozone crisis during the decision-making process for the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) in the summer of 2020. The normalisation of the EU response to this permanent emergency seems to have been accelerated by the exceptional nature and scale of the Covid-19 crisis. Although the implications for the legitimacy of European integration and its institutions have already been explored (Kreuder-Sonnen and White, 2021; Schmidt, 2021), fewer authors have looked into what this state of ‘permanent emergency’ means from a European integration and governance perspective. We argue in particular that ‘permanent emergency’ reveals new aspects of the interdependence between member states and EU institutions and has created an increased demand for an adequate response from the EU. This new mode of interaction between member states and the EU institutions can be framed as coordinative Europeanization. We’ll return to this argument at the end of this section.

The EU institutions found the Covid-19 crisis challenging to start with not only because of uncoordinated member states’ actions, but also because of the changing working pattern, which did not allow for unhindered travel for meetings as in the past. Yet, they adjusted to the new reality, although each one at a different pace and not always with the same success. Nevertheless, they managed to perform and to deliver important policy outcomes such as the RRF and the EU vaccination policy. As is often the case when there is a crisis and in line with its competence (Nugent, 2017), the European Council’s coordinating role has been central. From March 2020 until April 2021, the European Council met 16 times to discuss the Covid-19 emergency and 11 of these meetings were held virtually. The issues that it dealt with were numerous and included the limitation of the spread of the virus, the provision of medical equipment, the socio-economic conditions, the vaccination strategy and more recently, the digital certificates. It has certainly made some historic decisions such as the 750 billion euro recovery fund during the 17–21 July Special European Council and has managed to keep member state leaders aligned despite the usual tensions. We can observe a continuity in the significance of its role similar to previous crises but this time a process of politicisation took place at the top since the crisis was perceived as ‘existential’ and pushed European leaders to make quick decisions (Wolff and Ladi, 2020).

2https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/calendar/?Category=meeting&Page=1&dateFrom=2020%2F01%2F01&dateTo=2022%2F04%2F20&filters=2031&filters=69020 (accessed 14/6/21).
Nonetheless, we do not observe a turn towards intergovernmentalism, but rather a change in the dynamics between the EU institutions and the member states. The European Commission and its President, Ursula von der Leyden, have been clearly leading the developments in Brussels. Following a pattern that started during the Eurozone crisis, the Commission’s powers and de facto importance in day-to-day management continued to increase (Bauer and Becker, 2014). The strengthening of the executive during crises has been confirmed multiple times both at the European and at member state level (Moury et al., 2021). Russack and Fenner (2020) in a preliminary study of EU crisis decision-making show that the Commission was the quickest to adjust and to take advantage of pre-existing decision-making instruments, such as the inter-service consultation, and fast-track them. Yet this pattern takes on a new dimension given the obstacles to meeting in person and to travelling to Brussels. In fact, except for the European Central Bank and the European Court of Auditors where rules regarding teleconferencing, written procedures and remote voting already existed, the rest of EU institutions were ill-equipped to deal with social distancing and remote working (Bodson, 2020).

Although many raised issues of accountability and the lack of in-depth debates online, it seems that social distancing and remote working has opened the path towards a new mode of Europeanization by coordinating ‘from a distance’. Innovative experiments have taken place in the everyday administration and politics of Europe through virtual meetings. Brussels was indeed a successful space of socialization for many decision-makers who suddenly had to quickly coordinate through online meetings from their national home countries. This time Brussels came to national capitals, instead of national policy-makers coming to Brussels. In this reverse coordination, EU institutions performed differently and the Commission did very well in increasing its coordinative activity not only among EU institutions but also with the member states. A new structure emerged which brought together national ministries and Directorate Generals in online meetings and created ‘Commission-Capital networks’. It was the European Council that initiated this new coordinative activity of the Commission in order to design policies that would bring fast results and would effectively combat the most acute outcomes of the crisis (Russack and Fenner, 2020).

The Council of Ministers and the European Parliament both had many more difficulties in adjusting to the online meetings and subsequent decision making because of the voting procedures and the geographical disparity of their members. For the European Parliament, its size and its multilingual functioning made it even more difficult to adapt. The Council could rely on the Permanent Representatives in Brussels and a lot of the work was concluded at the COREPER meetings but it was clear that the online environment was an obstacle to negotiations and non-verbal communication (Russack and Fenner, 2020). Initially, the Council was thus ‘low on output performance and throughput efficacy or accountability’ (Schmidt, 2021, p. 9). However, their role does not seem to have changed significantly from previous crises since they both continued performing their tasks adequately.

The European Parliament despite all the difficulties, managed to play a key role in the negotiation of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) from July 2020 when it disagreed with the European Council’s proposed cuts to future-oriented programmes on
climate change, digital transition, and youth among others. It also pushed for the inclusion of a mechanism to protect the budget against breaches of the rule of law. An agreement was reached in December 2020 after trilateral negotiations, which was welcomed with relief since the adoption of the MFF unblocked the RRF. Important demands of the Parliament, which included the increase of funding for future-oriented programmes, were accommodated (D’Alfonso, 2020). It can be claimed that the supranational dimension of EU decision-making expressed by the European Parliament survived intact during the Covid-19 emergency.

We claim that a new mode of Europeanization has emerged from the EU’s institutional response to the Covid-19 crisis that can be best described as ‘coordinative Europeanization’. This new ‘permanent’ state of emergency in the EU brought a realization of what interdependence really means and the need to coordinate in order to find policy solutions even if they are ‘good enough’. Previous modes of Europeanization that focused on the uploading of best practices in the 2000s or in coercive mechanisms during the Eurozone crisis (Boerzel, 2002; Ladi and Graziano, 2014) seemed to be inadequate in light of this new fast-spreading virus. Instead, this time the focus was on coordination with the member states at early stages and often via the Commission in order to devise policies that would work for everyone. A similar approach was successfully adopted during the Brexit withdrawal negotiations when the Commission created the Task Force 50 to guarantee unity among member states (Schuette, 2021). Our analysis reveals that this new coordinative Europeanization is characterized by discursive coordination and the persuasive power of ideas (Schmidt, 2021) and also by a swifter decision-making process facilitated by existing crisis management mechanisms developed over the past 12 years of ‘crisis’. This new coordinative mode of Europeanization emerged in parallel to intergovernmental and supranational tendencies in the EU that remain the driving forces of integration. It is very much linked to what we have described as politicisation at the top (Wolff and Ladi, 2020).

In the next two sections we explore this new mode of Europeanization and its mechanisms in two of the most important policy developments of the last year: the RRF and the coordination of mobility in the Schengen area. This allows us to go more in-depth to explore the role of EU institutions during this period.

II. The Recovery and Resilience Facility

The EU’s initial response to the economic challenge of the spread of Covid-19 was more coordinative than in the case of border closures straight from the beginning with the EU institutions taking decisive steps and the member states largely supporting them. The European Commission evoked the flexibility and general escape clauses on the deficit and state aid rules and launched a number of funding schemes such as the ‘Pandemic Crisis Support’ and a temporary recovery fund (SURE). Similarly, the ECB created a ‘Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme’ (PEPP) in mid-March 2020 aiming at stabilizing financial markets and the economic outlook of the Euro area. Ladi and Tsarouhas (2020) argue that this was the result of contingent learning because of the emergency of Covid-19, which led to policy learning from the Eurozone crisis experience.

3https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/29/multiannual-financial-framework (accessed 21/4/2021).
It became apparent early on that a more ambitious EU reaction would be necessary to tackle the impact of the pandemic on the European economy but also to convince European citizens that the EU was competent and could rise to the occasion. EU leaders gave the mandate to the European Commission’s President Ursula von der Leyen to prepare a proposal for growth, mixing grants and loans and outlining the linkage of this fund to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (European Council, 2020a). In May 2020, France and Germany took a bold initiative and proposed the distribution of grants of 500 billion euros to member states in need. A few days after the Franco-German proposal, the Commission unveiled a recovery instrument named ‘Next Generation EU’ (NGEU) worth 750 billion euro (European Commission, 2020b). Central to NGEU was the proposed Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), with €310 billion in grants envisaged to be dispersed to member states. An agreement worth approximately €1.8 trillion was reached on 17 July after intense negotiations between the ‘Frugal Four’ (Austria, Denmark, Netherlands and Sweden) and the rest of the member states (European Council, 2020b). The disagreement concerned the conditionality attached to loans and grants, the actual size of the budget and the increase of rebates of the Frugal Four together with the reduction of their net contribution to the budget. Additionally, there was a debate on the content of the funding with the ‘Frugal Four’ arguing for R&D, digital and green investment at the expense of cohesion funds (Ladi and Tsarouhas, 2020).

Compromises were made from both sides and a historical decision was reached. For the first time ever, the Union committed itself to engage directly in a fiscal stimulus by agreeing to set up the RRF and to move from a rule-based economic governance to a mixture of rules and transfers. The total amount of the RRF was maintained at €750 billion with grants reaching €390 billion and loans of €360 billion. The Commission for the first time would borrow from the international markets, in effect realizing the Eurobond aspirations initially discussed during the Eurozone crisis (Moesen and De Grauwe, 2009). To repay the borrowing, the Council decided to increase its own resources system with a tax on non-recycled plastic from 1 January 2021 and to consider additional resources, such as a carbon tax, digital tax, and financial transactions tax (European Council, 2020b).

Some of the compromises made during the July summit haunted the process of ratification of the agreement by the European Parliament in autumn 2020 when the MFF was discussed. De Feo (2020) describes the Parliament as the 28th member state, emphasising the importance of the autumn negotiations. The Council’s agreement of a total EU budget of €1.074 billion rather than €1.1 billion which was the Commission’s proposal meant that cuts were proposed for the Horizon Europe and Erasmus programmes (by 6 per cent and 14 per cent respectively), as well as the Just Transition Fund and Health programme (European Parliament, 2020, p. 2). Similarly, the ‘rule of law’ conditionality clause, which was watered down to ensure that countries like Poland and Hungary would sign up to the final deal, was discussed once more during the MFF debate. A final agreement of the MFF after a new compromise between the Council and the Parliament was reached in December 2020 opening up the next stage of the implementation process (D’Alfonso, 2020).

Although coordination was of paramount importance during the design of the RRF, co-ordinative Europeanization can be observed more clearly during the implementation phase since EU institutions and member states alike are central to the process. Grants
and loans will be paid out based on the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRP) that member states submitted to the Commission. The NRRPs had to follow the European Semester priorities and focus on six major policy areas: green transition; digital transformation; smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth; social and territorial cohesion; health, economic, social, and institutional resilience; policies for the next generation, children, and youth. The Commission is responsible for assessing the NRRPs while the final decision is made by the Council. A Recovery and Resilience Task Force (RECOVER) has been created to coordinate the implementation of the RRF (Kyriakidis, 2021). The aim is for 70 per cent of the funds to be directed to member states in 2021 and 2022 while the remaining 30 per cent is to be disbursed in 2023 based on members’ GDP performance in 2020 and 2021 (Ladi and Tsarouhas, 2020).

The principle of the RRF implementation is not dissimilar to previous schemes such as the financial assistance programmes during the Eurozone crisis. However, there are two key differences that make the implementation of the RRF more coordinative and European and less coercive. First, the process is totally EU-based without the participation of international actors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Even further, it is embedded in the European Treaties since the rules of the European Semester are followed without the need of intergovernmental tools such as the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) or bilateral agreements, as was the case during the Eurozone crisis (Kyriakidis, 2021). Second, the conditionality attached to the disbursement of funds is lighter since it has by now been realized that strict conditionality works only partially and that member states agreement is necessary for successful implementation (Moury et al., 2021). The RRF conditionality relies on sanctions when member states fail to comply (negative conditionality) and its linkage to the rule of law is certainly one of the novelties of the 2021–27 MFF (Vita, 2020). However, the process of obstructing funding is not easy. One or more member states can call for an extraordinary summit, should it consider another country’s plan to significantly deviate from agreed milestones and targets. Nevertheless, it will have to do so within a three-month timeframe and obtain the consent of a qualified majority at Council in order to stop the flow of funds. With a mix of responsibilities between member states and EU institutions, it can be argued that a shift from coercive Europeanization to coordinative Europeanization is taking place.

III. The Schengen Area

Restrictions on freedom of movement in the Schengen area were at first uncoordinated across EU member states. As a result, EU institutions were left only with the possibility to react to the unilateral reintroduction of internal border controls in 17 member states. Confronted with a discourse that defined public health as a national security issue, the European Commission had initially very little leverage and prioritised the re-establishment of green lanes by calling EU member states to ease freedom of movement for goods, medical professionals, and cross-border workers (Wolff et al., 2020). It discursively mobilised a functional-solidarity frame where coordination and

4https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en#national-recovery-and-resilience-plans (visited 28/5/21).
non-discrimination were key principles to contest this uncoordinated renationalisation of Schengen by EU member states. Schengen states, as a first response to the pandemic, felt comfortable to resort to an administrative territorial logic of border management rather than prioritising a coordinated response (Bigo et al., 2021, p. 15). This first phase (March–August 2020) of restrictions for the freedom of movement did not lead to much contestation by the public or legislators, due to the fact that many legislatures had to adapt to the pandemic and were in the first instance relatively marginalized (Griglio, 2020). It was indeed politically costly for legislatures, including the European Parliament, to ‘politicize the breaches to the freedom of movement, as it would have meant to question the discourse of ‘doing everything necessary to protect citizens’ in times of uncertainty’ (Wolff et al., 2020, p. 1129).

The second phase which started in autumn 2020 can be characterized instead as coordinative Europeanization that culminated with the adoption of a vaccination passport in spring 2021. Under the German presidency efforts were made to coordinate a response to the restriction of free movement, and a recommendation was adopted at the Luxembourg meeting of 13 October 2020 (European Commission, 2020a). Insisting on the need to improve transparency and predictability for citizens and businesses, as well as to avoid fragmentation and disruption, the recommendation focused on the idea that ‘any measures restricting free movement to protect public health must be proportionate and non-discriminatory, and must be lifted as soon as the epidemiological situation allows’. The ECDC’s mandate was expanded to coordinate and collect data from EU member states on the epidemiological outlook and publish a weekly colour-coded mapping of regions in Europe. Although this document is not legally binding, member states have followed its main principles, highlighting that coordinative Europeanization happens through voluntary participation and ‘guidelines’ rather than formal legislation. Additionally, Council recommendations call for not restricting the free movement of people coming from green areas and adds that ‘member states should in principle not refuse entry to persons travelling from other member states’ and could offer a quarantine or a test upon arrival. This second phase shows that although coordinative Europeanization could not be initially observed, it took place later. The European Commission managed to work closely with the member states by avoiding the debate on Schengen governance and reform, which had been highly politicised for years, and relying instead on pre-existing crisis management mechanisms and institutions such as the ECDC to coordinate a return to the freedom of movement. Thus, coordinative Europeanization was eventually made possible through the involvement of an agency that evaluates health risks and is not one of the traditional internal security actors.

The second phase has been characterized by more direct consultations between EU institutions and national stakeholders in the decisions regarding travel in Europe. The breakthrough was the involvement of ministries of health into Schengen governance. This led to a ‘new Covid-19 approach’ where Schengen states decided to evolve from stopping people from crossing borders and forbidding them to do so to an approach ‘which dissuades people from travelling on account of the consequences’ (Bigo et al., 2021, p. 14). Instead of barring EU citizens from travel, the shift has been to put the onus on citizens themselves, to dissuade them from travelling and to ‘create a reluctance’. This has been balanced by more measures to track and trace people’s movements, whose personal data on quarantine and travel movement is increasingly subject to scrutiny. In a way
instead of relying on national borders, measures of quarantine, isolation and lock-down are calling upon the sense of civic duty among people and also pushing the borders from a national level to that of people’s homes (Bigo et al., 2021, p. 15). This approach has left more room for health experts to enter the debate about freedom of travel.

Another example of coordination in the Schengen area is the adoption of vaccination passports. It is an interesting example of coordination, since originally the idea was not really welcomed by EU member states, who feared it would introduce some discrimination to freedom of travel. While France was originally against the idea, it seems that discursive coordination led by the European Commission led France to shift its position and to adopt in its national model the principles proposed on 17 March 2021 by President Von der Leyen. The idea of an EU-wide travel certificate was also strongly supported by Spain and Greece whose economy depends on tourism. Direct coordination between the Commission and EU member states led to the adoption by the Council on 14 April 2021 of a negotiating mandate with the European Parliament. The so-called Digital Green Certificate involves a draft legislative proposal concerning EU citizens and their families as well as third country nationals legally residing in the EU. The legislation was adopted by July 2021, illustrating that the EU has considerably evolved and adapted its decision-making procedure to governance in times of emergency. Adopting legislation in such a short time frame is after all rare in traditional EU decision-making.

Conclusions

Coordinative Europeanization has enabled EU institutions to respond to the pandemic by demonstrating that they have learned from past crises. Coordinative Europeanization is neither a supranational nor an intergovernmental mode of cooperation. Instead direct consultations with EU member states on key emergency policies have enabled the EU to find compromises and to reach outstanding achievements like the RRF. This is a change from coercive Europeanization that characterized the EU’s institutional response to the Eurozone crisis and whereby ‘European institutions enforce change onto the member states’ (Leontitis and Ladi, 2018, p. 772). It is also different from the idea of diffusing ‘best practices’ in order to achieve the best policy solutions. In the case of the pandemic we find that lessons have been learned and that the EU’s institutional response has been one of direct consultation and dialogue with its member states. This was visible in our case studies. In the case of the RRF the implementation relies on the NRRPs and no appetite for harsh conditionality and Troika-like monitoring is in sight. In the case of Schengen, the focus changed from internal security and traditional Schengen governance, where EU member states and the Commission had reached a deadlock, to a more pragmatic approach with a stronger role for the ECDC and national health ministries. Interestingly, cooperation is voluntary in relation to the freedom of movement and was made possible without legislation but instead with guidelines and recommendations.

This does not necessarily mean that coercive Europeanization has disappeared. For example, in the RRF some conditionality is in place. Future research could explore further whether coordinative Europeanization is just a characteristic of periods that we describe as ‘permanent emergency’ or whether it is here to stay. We need to further explore whether coordinative Europeanization, namely close cooperation between EU member states’ capitals and EU institutions and agencies, leads to more pragmatic policy decisions
and thus more compliance. However, coordinative Europeanization took place during a period of politicization at the top, which involved agreement between European elites about the need to react to the Covid-19 emergency (Wolff and Ladi, 2020). Emergency politics strengthen executives, presenting a risk of compromising European governance legitimacy (Kreuder-Sonnen and White, 2021, p. 9). Is coordinative Europeanization only possible during emergencies and does it suffer from the same fallacies as emergency politics? Whatever the answer, the Covid-19 crisis is not just another crisis but one that will shape the EU institutional architecture and its relationship with its member states for a long time.

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