

THE AGENCIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

GABRIELA BUȘAN, CONSTANȚA ENEA
„CONSTANTIN BRÂNCUȘI” UNIVERSITY OF TÂRGU-JIU,
24 VICTORIEI STR., TARGU-JIU, GORJ, ROMANIA
gabriela_busan@yahoo.com, eneaconstantina@yahoo.com

Abstract:

A number of specialized and decentralized European Union agencies have been established to support the European Union Member States and their citizens. These agencies are an answer to a desire for geographical devolution and the need to cope with new tasks of a legal, technical and/or scientific nature. The European Union's agencies are grouped into four different categories: Community agencies, Common foreign and security policy agencies, Police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters agencies and Executive agencies.

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Community agencies. A Community agency is a body governed by European public law; it is distinct from the Community Institutions (Council, Parliament, Commission, etc.) and has its own legal personality. It is set up by an act of secondary legislation in order to accomplish a very specific technical, scientific or managerial task, in the framework of the European Union's „first pillar”. At present, the European Community agencies are:

- *The Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA)* is a European Union body established in 2005 to organize operational coordination of fisheries control and inspection activities by the Member States and to assist them to cooperate so as to comply with the rules of the Common European Union Fisheries Policy in order to ensure its effective and uniform application. CFCA has its official seat in Vigo, Spain.

- *The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)* - opened on 1 March 2007, it is a body of the European Union based in Vienna. The Agency provides the relevant institutions and authorities of the Community and its Member States when implementing Community law with assistance and expertise relating to fundamental rights in order to support them when they take measures or formulate courses of action within their respective spheres of competence to fully respect fundamental rights. The Agency focuses on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union and its 27 Member States. Candidate Countries and countries which have concluded a stabilization and association agreement with the EU can be invited to participate following a special procedure.

- *The European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA)* established in 2004, was set up to enhance the capability of the European Union, the European Union Member States and the business community to prevent, address and respond to network and information security problems. In order to achieve this goal, ENISA is a Centre of Expertise in Network and Information Security and is stimulating the cooperation between the public and private sectors. Communication networks and information systems are essential factors in the development of the economy and society. Secure networks are increasingly becoming as indispensable as electricity or water supply to make the Digital Economy function.

- *The European Medicines Agency (EMA)* established in 2004, is the European Union body responsible for coordinating the existing scientific resources put at its disposal by Member States for the evaluation, supervision and pharmacovigilance of medicinal products. The Agency provides the Member States and the institutions of the European Union the best-possible scientific advice on any question relating to the evaluation of the quality, safety and

efficacy of medicinal products for human or veterinary use referred to it in accordance with the provisions of European Union legislation relating to medicinal products. The mission of the European Medicines Agency is to foster scientific excellence in the evaluation and supervision of medicines, for the benefit of public and animal health.

- *The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)* manages the registration, evaluation, authorization and restriction processes for chemical substances to ensure consistency across the European Union. These REACH processes are designed to provide additional information on chemicals, to ensure their safe use, and to ensure competitiveness of the European industry. In its decision-making the Agency take the best available scientific and technical data and socio-economic information into account. It also provide information on chemicals and technical and scientific advice. By assessing and approving testing proposals, the Agency may minimize animal testing.

- *The European Environment Agency (EEA)* provides a wide range of assessments, assessing the status and trends in the environment, with pressures caused by economic and social driving forces. EMEA deals with the development of scenarios, policy evaluation and quality assurance data. In addition, the EMEA coordinates the European Network of Environmental Information and Observation (Eionet). Agency operates in four major thematic areas: tackling climate change, addressing biodiversity loss and understanding spatial change in level, protect human health and quality of life and use of natural resources and waste.

- *The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (Frontex)* was created in 2004 particularly to integrate national border security systems of Member States against all kind of threats that could happen at or through the external border of the Member States of the European Union. Frontex promotes a pan European model of Integrated Border Security, which consists not only of border controls but also other important elements. The first tier of the model is formed by exchange of information and cooperation between Member States, immigration and repatriation. The second tier is represented by border and customs control including surveillance, border checks and risk analysis. The third tier is linked with cooperation with border guards, customs and police authorities in neighboring countries. The forth tier is connected with cooperation with third countries including common activities.

- *The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)* established in 2003 promotes the highest common standards of safety and environmental protection in civil aviation in Europe and worldwide. The agency's responsibilities include: expert advice to the European Union for drafting new legislation, implementing and monitoring safety rules, including inspections in the Member States, type-certification of aircraft and components, as well as the approval of organizations involved in the design, manufacture and maintenance of aeronautical products, authorization of third-country (non European Union) operators, safety analysis and research.

- *The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)* monitors, collects and analyses scientific findings, statistical information and *prevention measures*. It also supports the exchange and sharing of information. Every year in the European Union there are 5.720 fatal work-related accidents and millions of people are injured or have their health seriously harmed in the workplace. Workers and employers need to be made aware of the risks that they face and how to manage them. Set up in 1996 by the European Union and located in Bilbao, Spain, EU-OSHA is the main European Union reference point for safety and health at work. EU-OSHA is a key player in the *Community Strategy for Health and Safety at Work, 2007-2012*, which aims to cut work-related accidents by a quarter across the European Union and to reduce occupational illnesses.

- *The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)*, created in the aftermath of the Erika disaster, contributes to the enhancement of the overall maritime safety system in the Community. Its goals are, through its tasks, to reduce the risk of maritime accidents, marine pollution from ships and the loss of human lives at sea. The Agency provides technical and

scientific advice to the Commission in the field of maritime safety and prevention of pollution by ships in the continuous process of updating and developing new legislation, monitoring its implementation and evaluating the effectiveness of the measures in place. Agency officials cooperate closely with Member States maritime services. Following major shipping disasters in European waters, such as the sinking of the ferry Estonia and the tankers Erika and Prestige, very substantial packages of European Union legislation have been adopted to improve maritime safety and to reduce pollution from ships.

- *The European Railway Agency (ERA)*. The construction of a safe, modern integrated railway network is one of the European Union's major priorities. Railways must become more competitive and offer high-quality, end-to-end services without being restricted by national borders. The European Railway Agency was set up to help create this integrated railway area by reinforcing safety and interoperability. The Agency also acts as the system authority for the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) project, which has been set up to create unique signaling standards throughout Europe. The main task is to prepare new and updated legislative acts for adoption by the Commission, after a positive opinion from the Committee of Member States, and to give other technical support to the Commission.

- *The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)* was set up in January 2002, following a series of food crises in the late 1990's, as an independent source of scientific advice and communication on risks associated with the food chain. EFSA was created as part of a comprehensive program to improve European Union food safety, ensure a high level of consumer protection and restore and maintain confidence in the European Union food supply. EFSA's independent scientific advice underpins the European food safety system. Thanks to this system, European consumers are among the best protected and best informed in the world as regards risks in the food chain. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is an independent European agency funded by the European Union budget that operates separately from the European Commission, European Parliament and European Union Member States.

- *The European GNSS Supervisory Authority (GSA)* was established as a Community Agency on 12 July 2004. The European Council took this important step because of what it saw as the strategic nature of European satellite positioning and navigation programs, which include both EGNOS and GALILEO, and the need to ensure that essential public interests in this field are adequately defended and represented. Satellite radio navigation has made major inroads in many realms of society, impacting in increasingly profound ways on business, public services and consumer behavior. Along with delivering economic benefits to innovative service providers and related businesses, satellite radio navigation devices, now integrated within a wide variety of vehicles and transport systems, has changed in fundamental ways how we manage the mobility, safety and security of people and goods.

- *The Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union (CdT)* was created by Council Regulation (EC) No 2965/1994. Its mission is to meet the translation needs of the other decentralized Community agencies. In addition it participates in the Interinstitutional Committee for Translation and Interpretation, which is working to promote collaboration between the services based on the principle of subsidiarity and to achieve economies of scale in the translation field.

- *The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)* was established by Council Regulation (EC) No 851/2004, based in Stockholm, Sweden. It is an European Union agency aimed at strengthening Europe's defenses against infectious diseases. ECDC's mission is to identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to human health posed by infectious diseases. In order to achieve this mission, ECDC works in partnership with national health protection bodies across Europe to strengthen and develop continent-wide disease surveillance and early warning systems. By working with experts throughout Europe, ECDC pools Europe's health knowledge to develop authoritative scientific opinions about the risks posed by current and emerging infectious diseases.

- *The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)* established in 1975 - is a European agency that helps promote and develop vocational education and training in the European Union. It is the European Union 's reference centre for vocational education and training. Cedefop works to promote a European area of lifelong learning throughout an enlarged European Union. It does this by providing information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice. Cedefop is the centre of expertise to support the development of vocational education and training and evidence based policy making. It provides advice, research, analysis, information, and stimulates European cooperation and common learning. Its networks allow the centre to keep abreast of recent developments and to cooperate and share information.

- *The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EUROFOUND)* is a European Union body, one of the first to be established to work in specialized areas of European Union policy. Specifically, it was set up by the European Council in 1975, to contribute to the planning and design of better living and working conditions in Europe. Eurofound's core areas of work include living and working conditions, quality of work and quality of life, industrial relations and the management of industrial change. Eurofound's core activities are twofold: research management and information and communication. In addition, it maintains the following support areas: administration, human resources, operational services and information and communication technologies. These activities are managed by Eurofound staff at its offices in Dublin.

- *The European Training Foundation (ETF)* is an agency of the European Union based in Turin, Italy. It was established in 1990 and became operational in 1994 to contribute to the development of the education and training systems of the European Union partner countries. Its mission is to help transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the Eu's external relations policy.

- *The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)* was established in 1993. Inaugurated in Lisbon in 1995, it is one of the EU's decentralized agencies. The EMCDDA exists to provide the European Union and its Member States with a factual overview of European drug problems and a solid evidence base to support the drugs debate. Today it offers policymakers the data they need for drawing up informed drug laws and strategies. It also helps professionals and practitioners working in the field pinpoint best practice and new areas of research.

- *The Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO)* has been operating since 27 April 1995. On 6 December 1996, the Intergovernmental Conference of representatives of the Member States (IGC) decided that the seat of the CPVO would be in Angers (France). The CPVO, which is a decentralised Community agency, has its own legal status. It is self-financing, mainly on the basis of the various fees paid. The Community system is very successful. In 2008 more than 3000 applications for Community plant variety rights were received by the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO). At present more than 16.500 Community plant variety rights are in force. This development shows that the breeding industry is still able to create a constant stream of new varieties. New varieties with traits such as higher yield, better quality traits, have more effective resistances against pests and diseases.

- *The Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (Trade Marks and Designs) (OHIM)* is the European Union agency responsible for registering trade marks and designs that are valid in all 27 countries of the European Union. The Community trade mark and registered Community design are the gateway to the European single market – providing protection for Intellectual Property Rights throughout the European Union. OHIM is an independent, self-financing, non-profit-making European agency. Based in Alicante in Spain, the Office's investment in e-Business tools allows it to work with companies from all over the world via the Internet.

Common foreign and security policy agencies. Agencies have been set up to carry out very specific technical, scientific and management tasks within the framework of European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) – the "second pillar" of the European Union. At present, these agencies are:

- *The European Defense Agency (EDA)* was established in 2004 to support the Member States and the Council in their effort to improve European defense capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the European Security and Defense Policy as it stands now and develops in the future. EDA functions are: developing defense capabilities, promoting Defense Research and Technology, promoting armaments cooperation, creating a competitive European Defense Equipment Market and strengthening the European Defense, Technological and Industrial Base.

- *The European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)* is a Paris-based agency of the European Union. Its goals are to find a common security culture for the European Union, to help develop and project the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and to enrich Europe's strategic debate. The EUISS is an autonomous agency with full intellectual freedom. As a think tank it researches security issues of relevance for the European Union and provides a forum for debate. In its capacity as an European Union agency, it also offers analyses and forecasting to the Council of the European Union and to the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy. This double role makes it a unique institution in Europe.

- *The European Union Satellite Centre (EUSC)* was founded in 1992 and incorporated as an agency into the European Union on 1 January 2002. The Centre shall, in coherence with the European Security Strategy, support the decision-making of the European Union in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, in particular of the European Security and Defense Policy, including European Union crisis management operations, by providing, as appropriate, products resulting from the analysis of satellite imagery and collateral data, including aerial imagery, and related services.

Police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters agencies. Another group of agencies has been set up to help the European Union Member States co-operate in the fight against organized international crime. This cooperation in criminal matters is the "third pillar" of the European Union. At present, these agencies are:

- *The European Police College (CEPOL)* is a European Union Agency, established in 2000. CEPOL's mission is to bring together senior police officers from police forces in Europe, essentially to support the development of a network, and encourage cross-border cooperation in the fight against crime, public security and law and order by organizing training activities and research findings. CEPOL organizes between 80-100 courses, seminars and conferences a year on key topics relevant to all police forces in Europe. The implementation of the activities takes place at the National Police Training colleges of the Member States.

- *The European Police Office (EUROPOL)* is the European Law Enforcement Agency which aims at improving the effectiveness and cooperation of the competent authorities in the Member States in preventing and combating terrorism, unlawful drug trafficking and other serious forms of organized crime.

- *The European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit (Eurojust)* is a judicial cooperation body created to help provide safety within an area of freedom, security and justice. Eurojust was set up by the Council of the European Union in February 2002, to improve the fight against serious crime by facilitating the optimal co-ordination of action for investigations and prosecutions covering the territory of more than one Member State with full respect for fundamental rights and freedoms.

Executive agencies are organizations established in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 58/2003 with a view to being entrusted with certain tasks relating to the management of one or more Community programs. These agencies are set up for a fixed

period. Their location has to be at the seat of the European Commission (Brussels or Luxembourg). At present, these agencies are:

- *The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)*. Fully operational from the 1st of January 2006, the Executive Agency operates under supervision from its three parents Directorates-General of the European Commission: Education and Culture, Information Society and Media and EuropeAid Cooperation Office. Its role is to manage European funding opportunities and networks in the fields of education and training, citizenship, youth, audiovisual and culture. Seven key Community programs have been partly or fully delegated to the EACEA: Lifelong Learning, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Culture, Youth in Action, Europe for Citizens and Media, as well as several international Cooperation Agreements in the field of higher education.

- *The European Research Council Executive Agency (ERC)* is the first European funding body set up to support investigator-driven frontier research. Its main aim is to stimulate scientific excellence by supporting and encouraging the very best, truly creative scientists, scholars and engineers to be adventurous and take risks in their research. The scientists are encouraged to go beyond established frontiers of knowledge and the boundaries of disciplines. The ERC complements other funding activities in Europe such as those of the national research funding agencies, and is a flagship component of the „Ideas Program” of the European Union's Seventh Research Framework Program.

- *The Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI)* established in 2004, it manages a part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Program (CIP), program on behalf of the European Commission. With small and medium-sized enterprises as its main target, the CIP supports innovation activities (including eco-innovation), provides better access to finance and delivers business support services in the regions. It encourages a better take-up and use of information and communication technologies and helps to develop the information society. It also promotes the increased use of renewable energies and energy efficiency.

- *The Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC)* was created on 1 January 2005. In 2008, the Agency's mandate was prolonged and expanded to include actions in consumer protection and training for safer food. The EAHC currently manages close to 200 public health projects involving more than 2,200 beneficiaries: government agencies, academic institutions, NGOs, commercial entities - from all European Union Member States and some associated countries. The Agency provides a professional service in performing the tasks and activities entrusted to it by the European Commission, and it works closely with the Health and Consumers Directorate General.

- *The Trans-European Transport Network Executive Agency (TEN-T EA)* is established in 2006. It is responsible for managing the technical and financial implementation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) program, one of the most important means of infrastructure funding. An effective TEN-T benefits all European citizens by allowing more efficient and more environmentally friendly transport, while reinforcing economic and social cohesion across the continent at the same time. The TEN-T EA is closely linked with its parent, Directorate-General Energy and Transport (DG TREN). DG TREN deals with all policy-making issues related to the TEN-T program, while the Agency exists to execute the program's specific tasks with a limited duration (31 December 2015).

In conclusion, each agency is indeed unique and fulfils an individual function defined at the time of its creation. This function might be modified in the future but, nevertheless, there are a number of general aims underlying an agency's operation as a whole:

- they introduce a degree of decentralization and dispersal to the activities;
- they give a higher profile to the tasks that are assigned to them by identifying them with the agencies themselves;
- some answer the need to develop scientific or technical know-how in certain well-defined fields;

- others have the role to integrate different interest groups and thus to facilitate the dialogue at a European (between the social partners, for example) or international level.

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