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**Author**

VEIGA, Amélia (MAGALHAES, António M.)

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**Abstract**

European level institutions developed instruments with the aim of further involving member-states in common goals and objectives of higher education policies. This chapter analyses the role of ideas, interests, instruments and institutions in shaping European governance in practice. The power of ideas in politics and policy-making is underlined in legitimating and justifying the EU's attempt to create an integrated higher education area. On the basis of interviews with European Commission (EC) officers and European Parliament (EP) members, the analysis shows the centrality of cognitive ideas in the political coordination process in higher education. The content of this chapter was presented at the European Consortium of Political Research General Conference held at University of Glasgow, on 3–6 September 2014 in the section “Europe of Knowledge” under the topic of the role of the ‘four I’s’—ideas, interests, instruments and institutions—in the construction of the Europe of Knowledge.

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