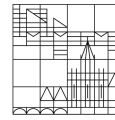


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The European Commission in Question

Although the European Commission occupies a central role in the European Union, influences the daily lives of EU citizens, and is active in global regulation, much about the organization is unknown or misunderstood. Certain views about the Commission and its staff have nevertheless become accepted wisdoms; namely, that its officials have little experience beyond Brussels or the public sector; that it is an administration of lawyers; that its officials want always and every to extend the competencies of the EU and therefore their own power; that the Commission is a deeply fragmented institution, where departments are silos, *cabinets* and services are perennially at odds, and leadership is precarious; that the organization is an antiquated continental-style bureaucracy, resistant to change.

In this project, a team of multinational researchers collected original primary source material to answer key questions about the Commission and the people who work for it, and to test these views. It thereby contributes to key debates about the organization's staff, its internal operation and administrative capacities.

Specifically, it asks:

- What are the educational and professional backgrounds of Commission officials? What led them to pursue a career in the Commission? Which member states are under- and overrepresented?
- What are the main patterns of career development within the Commission? Do some nationals progress more quickly than others? Are male officials promoted more quickly than female officials?
- What do Commission officials believe? Do they want 'more Europe' always and everywhere? Are they economic liberals or social democrats? Are they cultural liberals or conservatives?
- How do officials navigate the institution? To what extent are their personal networks based on shared nationality, language or ideological outlook?
- How effective is coordination between Directorates-General and between services and the *cabinets*? How widely is information shared?
- What has been José Manuel Barroso's approach to the Commission Presidency? How does his leadership style and the power that he exercises compare to his predecessors?
- How do Commission officials view the effect and impact of the reforms enacted by the Prodi Commission? Do managers consider that the new instruments enable them to be more effective?
- What has been the impact of the influx of officials from the 'new' member states since 2004? How do recruits from the 'new' member states compare in background and beliefs with EU-15 officials?

The project is informed by the richest data on the Commission and its staff ever collected by independent researchers. It draws on two main sources: an online survey administered to a representative sample of Commission officials and *cabinet* members in the autumn of 2008 (n=1901; n=1820 after iterative proportional fitting); and responses to a structured programme of interviews with Commissioners, *cabinet* members, and middle and senior managers conducted in 2009. The findings will appear in *The European Commission of the Twenty-First Century*, published by Oxford University Press in 2013 (see <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199599523.do#.UKX6XUKWRFI>).

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