PUBLIC HEARING

COMMITTEE ON BUDGETARY CONTROL

Tuesday, 17 September 2013

09.00 to 12.30 ROOM: **JÓZSEF ANTALL (JAN) 6Q2**

BRUSSELS

Accountability of the European Commission as administrator responsible of the management and the control of the EU budget over the last 10 years

Chairman

Michael Theurer

Rapporteur

Inge Gräßle

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PROGRAMME

Hearing on "Accountability of the European Commission as administrator responsible of the management and control of the EU budget over the last 10 years"

Rapporteur: Ingeborg Gräßle (EPP)

Tuesday 17 September 2013, from 9.00 to 12.30

Brussels

Room: József Antall (6Q2)

5 min 9.00 - 9.05	**Opening remarks** by the **Chairman**
5 min 9.05 - 9.10	**Introduction** by **Ingeborg Gräßle**, rapporteur
15 min 9.10 - 9.25	**The Commissioner and the administration: Budget implementation** - Who has the final word? The Commissioner or the Bureaucracy? By **Günter Verheugen,** former Member of the European Commission
10 min 9.25 - 9.35	**The costs of decentralisation** - Is there a clear borderline between politics and management? By **Maros Šefčovič,** Vice-President of European Commission, Interinstitutional relations and Administration

20 min 9.35 - 9.55	**Questions, replies, debate**
10 min 9.55 - 10.05	**Parochial isolation or inter-service cooperation: how decentralisation works** - The role of middle management and Director-Generals By **Stefan Becker,** Speyer University, Speyer
10 min 10.05 - 10.15	**- Decentralisation: successes and shortcomings** - What did the decentralisation deliver from a staff point of view? By **Cristiano Sebastiani,** President of the Central Staff Committee of the European Commission
30 min 10.15 - 10.45	**Questions, replies, debate**
15 min 10.45 - 11.00	**Accountability arrangements** - Which effects had the decentralisation on Parliament's ability to effectively gain insight in and control of the executive? By **Anchrit Wille,** University of Leiden
10 min 11.00 - 11.10	**Presidentialisation versus collegiality** - The role of the President and the Secretary-General of the Commission and the Commission's delivery of policy By **Hussein Kassim,** University of East Anglia
60 min 11.10 - 12.10	**Questions, replies, debate**
20 min 12.10 - 12.30	**Closing remarks** by **Ingeborg Gräßle**, rapporteur

1. The Commissioner and the administration: Budget implementation

Who has the final word? The Commissioner or the Bureaucracy?

by Günter Verheugen, former Member of the European Commission

Hearing on "Accountability of the European Commission as administrator responsible of the management and control of the EU budget over the last 10 years"- 17 Sept. 2013
Committee on Budgetary Control

GÜNTER VERHEUGEN

HEARING, SEPTEMBER 17, EUROPÄISCHES PARLAMENT IN BRÜSSEL

THEMA: The Commissioner and the administration: budget implementation

Who has the final word? The Commissioner or the bureaucracy

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren Abgeordnete,

Es überrascht Sie vielleicht, aber ich bin bewegt, wieder einmal hier im Europäischen Parlament zu sein. Es gehörte immer zu dem angenehmen Teil meiner Pflichten als Mitglied der Europäischen Kommission, gemeinsam mit Ihnen und Ihren Kollegen nach den besten Mitteln und Wegen zu suchen, um gemeinsame politische Ziele zu verwirklichen. Aber wir haben nicht nur über Fragen meiner damaligen Verantwortungsbereiche diskutiert, sondern auch darüber, wie sich das Verhältnis der Institutionen gestaltet und welche Herausforderungen und Zukunftsfragen sich bei der weiteren Entwicklung einer so komplexen Institution wie die der Europäischen Kommission stellen. Sie kennen daher vielleicht meine These, dass die Sicherung der politischen Führung – eine Frage, die sich auch auf jeder anderen politischen Ebene –bis hinunter in die Kommunen – stellt, die alles entscheidende Schlüsselaufgabe ist. In diesem Sinne verstehe ich auch diese Anhörung: Wie kann durchgängig gewährleistet werden, dass sich der politische Wille von Parlament, Rat und Kommission auch in der täglichen Arbeit auf der Ebene der Dienste verwirklicht?

Erwarten Sie bitte keine einfachen Rezepte von mir, denn das Zusammenspiel zwischen politischer Leitung und Verwaltung der Kommission folgt nicht schlicht und einfach dem berühmten „Yes-Minister-Prinzip“, in dem der Politiker wie eine Marionette an den Fäden seiner Mitarbeiter hängt, die ihn nach Lust und Laune auflaufen lassen oder auch nicht. Als Lektüre ist das zweifellos sehr amüsant, aber untauglich als Beschreibung, wie sich die Führungsfrage in der Europäischen Kommission stellt.

Das hat mehrere Gründe, auf die ich im Folgenden näher eingehen will

I. Die Europäische Kommission vereint Kontinuität und Diskontinuität in sich.

Zunächst einmal bildet sich die Kommission, so wie es der Vertrag will, alle 5 Jahre immer wieder neu. Kein Kollegium tritt, wie auf der nationalen Ebene, mit einem eigenen Regierungsprogramm an und entwirft seine politischen Zielsetzungen sozusagen aus dem Nichts. Es handelt auf der Grundlage von –mittlerweile- sehr umfangreichem europäischen Recht. Dazu kommen Rechtsetzungsvorschläge aus der Vorgängerkommission. Der Haushalt ist auch bereits festgelegt. Und es gibt Erwartungen und langjährige Diskussionen, sei es im Parlament, bei den Mitgliedstaaten oder bei sogenannten Stakeholdern, die ebenfalls zu berücksichtigen sind. Kein designiertes Mitglied der Kommission kennt das alles, kann das alles kennen, egal wie erfolgreich die eigene politische Karriere war, wenn er oder sie sich dann auf die Anhörung im Europäischen Parlament vorbereitet. Diese Anhörung ist

entscheidend – wer durchfällt, kann den Posten nicht antreten. Was habe ich also gemacht: ich habe auf den Rat, das Wissen und die Erfahrung – oder besser auf das kollektive Gedächtnis - der Kommissionsdienststellen gesetzt. Denn diese Dienststellen kennen das gewachsene Recht, sie haben keinen engen nationalen Blickwinkel, und sie kennen auch die Erwartungen des Parlaments und der europäischen Öffentlichkeit. Für jedes designierte Mitglied der Kommission ist das eine sehr intensive Arbeitsphase, mit den künftigen Mitarbeitern, aber auch mit anderen Dienstellen der Kommission. In dieser Arbeitsphase lernt man sich kennen. In dieser Arbeitsphase muss man darauf vertrauen, dass man voll und loyal gebrieft wird, sonst kann man einpacken. Aber natürlich bringt man in diese Arbeitsphase auch die eigenen politischen Erfahrungen und Kenntnisse ein. In dieser ersten Arbeitsphase stellt sich das generelle Verhältnis zu den Diensten her – und das kann ich aus eigener Erfahrung nur so beschreiben: alle ziehen an einem Strang. Und die Mitarbeiter, mit denen ich vor den Anhörungen intensiv gearbeitet hatte, waren wahrscheinlich während meiner beiden Anhörungen im Parlament viel nervöser als ich selbst und haben mir die Daumen gedrückt, dass alles gut läuft.

Aber es braucht mehr, um ein echtes Team zu werden. Egal, wie groß der eigene politische Erfahrungshorizont ist, man lernt sehr schnell, dass eine Arbeit als europäischer Kommissar nicht zu vergleichen ist, mit einer Arbeit in einem Ministerium. Schon deshalb nicht, weil die Kommission als Kollegialorgan funktioniert und man sich also immer des Rückhalts der Mehrheit und vor allem des Präsidenten und seiner Dienste versichern muss. Dazu kommen noch die Interessen der Mitgliedstaaten und die im Parlament, wo man keine sogenannte eigene Hausmacht hat, sondern sich Unterstützung von Fall zu Fall suchen muss. Das alles kann man nicht im Alleingang bewerkstelligen. Aber auch die Dienste müssen sich immer wieder auf neue Chefs einstellen – jeder bringt ja nicht nur seine eigene Biographie mit, sondern auch einen bestimmten Arbeitsstil, eine Sprache, eine Persönlichkeit. Als ich Vizepräsident wurde und die Generaldirektion Unternehmen und Industrie verantwortete, habe ich darum gebeten, mir alle Vorlagen in Englisch vorzulegen. Mein Nachfolger wiederum bevorzugt, soweit ich weiß, das Französische – um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen. Und natürlich erkennen die Dienste auch sehr schnell, ob man jemand ist, der alles kommentarlos entgegennimmt, ob man ein harter Arbeiter ist oder nicht, oder ob man sich mit den fachlichen Fragen auseinandersetzt, nachfragt, eine eigene Meinung hat oder ob man alles blind schluckt.

Ich bin davon überzeugt, dass die Dienste jemanden, der hart arbeitet, bevorzugen. Ich bin auch davon überzeugt, dass die Dienste feedback brauchen, dass es dann am besten läuft, wenn man von Anfang an die Politikfindung kollektiv gestaltet, so dass jeder weiß, was die Ziele sind und sich auch jeder des Rückhalts des Kommissars sicher sein kann. Aber ebenso habe ich gelernt, dass das nicht notwendigerweise für jeden einzelnen Mitarbeiter gilt. Ich habe mich in einem Fall von einem leitenden Mitarbeiter trennen müssen, der unbelehrbar war und immer wieder gemeinsam getroffene Beschlüsse geflissentlich ignorierte, als stünde er über allem. Ich hatte damals dafür ein Artikel 50 Verfahren vorgeschlagen, bin damit aber zunächst nicht durchgekommen, der Mitarbeiter wurde zunächst versetzt, aber da er auch in einer anderen Generaldirektion dasselbe Verhalten an den Tag legte, schließlich doch aus der Kommission entlassen. Das war ein Extremfall. Ich will auch nicht behaupten, dass alle meine Mitarbeiterinnen oder Mitarbeiter immer glücklich über meine Anforderungen oder Sichtweisen waren, aber sie waren loyal und auch fair, wenn sich am Ende herausgestellt hat, dass meine politische Entscheidung richtig war. In keinem Fall habe ich erlebt, dass mich jemand mit vollem Bewusstsein ins Messer laufen ließ.

Das wirkliche Problem lag vielmehr darin, dass meine Mitarbeiter ein plötzlich auftauchendes politisches Problem gar nicht erkannten, daran herumwerkelten, als wäre es eine technische Frage, die man alleine auf Arbeitsebene schaffen kann, ohne den Chef zu behelligen. Was bekanntlich nicht funktioniert. Das betraf nicht nur Fragen der Rechtsetzung sondern auch der Budgetimplementierung.

Ich erinnere mich gut daran, wie empört zunächst ein leitender Mitarbeiter war, als ich ihm eine Sache aus der Hand nahm, die er für eine Routinesache der Dienste hielt, die aber unter Umständen das Gelingen der Erweiterung sehr, sehr schwierig gemacht hätte. Oder nehmen Sie ein Beispiel aus meiner Zeit als zuständiger Kommissar für Unternehmen und Industrie. Ich hatte auch die Zuständigkeit für die Sicherheitsforschung, eine sehr sensible Angelegenheit. Dennoch waren meine Dienste überrascht, als ich darauf bestand, diese Forschungsprojekte völlig transparent zu machen, damit die Öffentlichkeit und auch das Parlament weiß, was wir mit den zugesagten Mitteln im einzelnen machen. Als eine parlamentarische Debatte einsetzte, waren auch meine Mitarbeiter sehr froh, darauf verweisen zu können, dass wir selbst diese Transparenz wollten und hergestellt haben.

Ich komme nun zu einem weiteren Element, das die Beziehungen prägt.

II. Die Europäische Kommission hat eine eigene institutionelle Kultur

Die Europäische Kommission rekrutiert in der Regel sehr junge, engagierte und talentierte Menschen. Deren Arbeits- und Lebenswirklichkeit ist die Kommission – Brüssel. Die Fäden ins eigene Mutterland sind unterschiedlich stark ausgeprägt, auch die Kenntnisse der unterschiedlichen sozialen Wirklichkeiten. Kommissare spielen für den Anfänger in der Kommission keine Rolle, der eigene Head of Unit schon und eventuell der Direktor. Gleichzeitig werden auch sehr junge Menschen schon mit schwierigsten Dossiers betraut, die sie mit den Vertretern der Mitgliedstaaten, des Parlaments oder auch mit Interessenvertretern beraten. Kurz – sehr früh im Berufsleben handeln sie bereits für und im Namen der Kommission. Das führt nicht nur zu Selbstbewusstsein, was man zwingend braucht, sondern prägt auch das eigene Selbstverständnis – der einzelne empfindet sich als Vertreter der ganzen Institution, nicht aber notwendigerweise als direktes Sprachrohr des eigenen Kommissars. „Die Kommission wird niemals“, solche Sätze können sie problemlos aus dem Mund eines Bediensteten der Kommission hören, obwohl die Kommission sich politisch nicht einen Moment mit der Frage befasst hat.

Selbstverständlich will auch jeder in der Kommission Karriere machen – und dieser Weg führt nicht von Anfang an über den politischen Chef, sondern über das Wohlwollen der eigenen direkten Vorgesetzten – erst ab einer bestimmten Stufe wird der Kommissar oder die Kommissarin interessant – sowohl was die Arbeitskontakte betrifft, als auch was eine etwaigen Beschäftigung im Kabinett angeht – in jedem Fall wirkt das nicht nur persönlich bereichernd, sondern auch karrierefördernd. Das führt zu einem intensiven Beziehungsgeflecht in der Kommission. Networking gehört zum A und O der Kommission. Wer ein guter Networker ist, der ist in der Lage, Dinge erfolgreich mit anderen auszuhandeln. Jeder Kommissar braucht solche guten Networker. Aber networking und Kungelei liegen nicht weit auseinander und es kann passieren, dass jemand eine politische Entscheidung zu vermeiden sucht, und einem deal unter den Networkern Vorrang gibt – weil es die bequemere und auch strategisch bessere Lösung für das eigene Fortkommen in der Kommission ist Schließlich muss man mit seinen Kolleginnen und Kollegen auch dann noch auskommen, wenn der eigene politische Chef die Kommission schon längst verlassen hat. Umgekehrt, und das habe ich selbst mehr als einmal mitbekommen, werden Mitarbeiter, die loyal für einen eher unbeliebten Chef gearbeitet haben, nach dessen Ausscheiden quasi stellvertretend abgestraft, indem sie kein interessantes Jobangebot in der Kommission bekommen.

Zudem gab es jedenfalls zu meiner Zeit eine Kultur unter einigen Generaldirektoren, Kommissare für schmückendes Beiwerk und sich selbst für den Letztentscheider zu halten. Ich will das sicher nicht für alle Generaldirektoren verallgemeinern, aber eine Tendenz dahin gab es zweifellos. Mein damaliger eigener Generaldirektor, Enrico Landaburu, hat das sogar – ohne jedes Problembewusstsein– in einem

Interview gegenüber einer französischen Zeitung verkündet. Wir hatten daraufhin ein sehr intensives Gespräch unter vier Augen – und eine sehr gute Arbeitsbeziehung in den folgenden Jahren.

Ich habe auch später immer wieder erlebt, dass Generaldirektoren dort, wo sie „wir" hätten sagen müssen, nur „ich" dachten und sagten. Klar ist, dass Generaldirektoren einen sehr schwierigen und sehr verantwortungsvollen Job haben, gewissermaßen auf zwei Schultern tragen müssen: sie haben die ganze Verantwortung für eine Generaldirektion, sie müssen mit wechselnden Politikern klarkommen, sie haben die Budgetverantwortung – sie sind oft die Schlüsselansprechpartner für Dritte. Da soll man sich nichts vormachen – viele halten die Generaldirektoren für wichtiger, als die Mitglieder der Kommission. Ich denke nicht, dass sich das beschriebene Problem durch die eingeführte Rotation lösen lässt. Ich persönlich glaube, dass das deutsche Modell einer politischen Leitung einer Generaldirektion zielführender wäre – zumal ich sowieso davon überzeugt bin, dass es wichtig wäre, Kommissare mit politischen Stellvertretern auszustatten, so wie es jüngst der Auswärtige Ausschuss für den Bereich der Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik vorgeschlagen hat.

Ich will noch auf ein weiteres Element eingehen

III. Die Dienste der Kommission haben sehr wenig Anreize von außen

Kommissionsbediensteter zu sein, ist eine Lebensstellung. Ich lasse jetzt mal die ausgelagerten, weniger gut bezahlten Jobs in den Agenturen der Kommission beiseite. Ein Lebenszeitbeamter zu sein hat Vorteile, aber es hat auch Nachteile. Die Kommissionsdienststellen bekommen so kaum frischen Wind von außen, außer durch die Erweiterung. Nationale Beamte sind allenfalls nur auf Zeit da, und mit Ausnahme von Kabinettposten nie in Schlüsselpositionen. Das verengt natürlich die Sicht. Das ist vor allem spürbar, wenn es um individuelle Bedürfnisse und Besonderheiten von Mitgliedstaaten geht, es wird auch meines Erachtens auch im Umgang mit dem Parlament spürbar, wo es leider immer wieder Fälle von Arroganz gegenüber gewählten Abgeordneten gibt. Das beginnt schon beim Niveau der Präsenz der Kommission in Ausschusssitzungen. Viele Mitarbeiter haben schlicht nicht das Gespür, dass es einen höheren Wert darstellt, sich in der politischen Debatte erfolgreich zu schlagen, als im Concours oder in einer Ratsgruppensitzung erfolgreich zu sein.

Und ganz sicher gilt das auch für soziale Probleme und Bedürfnisse in den Mitgliedstaaten Ich habe es deshalb nicht für zufällig gehalten, dass die Kommission so spät bemerkte, welchen sozialen Preis viele Mitgliedstaaten aufgrund des Krisenmanagements der Schuldenkrise bezahlen. Das gehört nicht zu ihrem Horizont. Wie Sie möglicherweise wissen, hatte ich meine Mitarbeiter der Generaldirektion verpflichtet, in kleine und mittlere Unternehmen zu gehen, damit sie die Lebenswirklichkeit derer, für die sie arbeiten, vor Ort kennen lernen. Ich erinnerte mich noch gut an die Bemerkung eines Mitarbeiters, der bei einem Bäcker für eine Woche arbeitete und mir seine Eindrücke nach seiner Rückkehr zusammenfasste. Insgesamt war er begeistert, am meisten aber hatte ihn überrascht, das der Bäcker tatsächlich jeden Tag um 3 Uhr in der Früh aufstand. Es ist auch nicht zufällig, dass sonst nur die Generaldirektion Landwirtschaft, so wie auch das Parlament, ähnliche Praktika durchführt. In den allermeisten Kommissionsdienststellen fehlt schlicht das Bewusstsein, es könnte ihnen an Erfahrungen fehlen.

IV Europapolitischer Idealismus und Arbeitsethos in der Kommission

Die allermeisten Bediensteten der Kommission sind hoch motiviert und wollen einen Beitrag zum Gelingen der Integration leisten. Leider lebt in den Fluren der Kommission immer noch das Gefühl, das sich mehr Integration in immer mehr gemeinsamen Regeln verwirklicht. Das kommt aus einer Zeit, in der die Kommission sich jeden Integrationsfortschritt, wie den Binnenmarkt oder auch Umweltschutz regelrecht ertrotzen musste. Heute ist dieses Gefühl nicht mehr zeitgemäß. Aber wie man am Beispiel der Besseren Regulierungsinitiative sieht – sie war erfolgreich, weil ich sie zur politischen Priorität gemacht hatte und meine Mitarbeiter sich heftig engagierten. Heute wäre ihre energische Fortführung durch die Kommission zwingender als je – jetzt nennt sie sich smart regulation und ist in Wahrheit beinah eingeschlafen, allen Aufforderungen des Europäischen Rates zum Trotz. Aber es geht in der Kommission nicht nur um Regeln, sondern um möglichst viel gleiche Regeln. Ich erinnere mich sehr gut, dass ich vorgeschlagen habe, kleine Inseln von der statistischen Erfassung des Güterverkehrs auf der Insel auszunehmen, da wir bereits statistisch erfassen, welche Güter angelandet und abtransportiert werden. Das Kollegium hat das auch so gesehen, Ende 2009, aber passiert ist gar nichts seitdem, denn dieser Vorschlag ist mit der Homogenitätsvorstellung des Binnenmarktes, die immer noch in der Kommission die Oberhand hat, nicht zu vereinbaren. Hier werden künftige Mitglieder des Kollegiums sehr, sehr viel Überzeugungsarbeit zu leisten haben, denn hier besteht der größte, regulatorische Entrümpelungsbedarf in der Zukunft. Sie sehen also, man kann als Kommissar schon seine individuelle politische Handschrift hineinbringen, aber das ist nicht notwendigerweise von Dauer.

Ich will noch eine letzte Frage ansprechen – das betrifft die Kultur des Umgangs mit Fehlern. Ich glaube, dass wir mit der Integration jeden Tag Neuland betreten, überall, bei Politikvorschlägen, auch im Budget und seiner Implementierung. Da können, ja müssen Fehler passieren. Und dafür muss es Offenheit und Toleranz geben und weder eine Kultur der Fehlerverleugnung, noch eine Kultur, die Kommission haftbar zu machen für Fehler, die andere begingen. Wenn die Mitgliedstaaten schlampig mit europäischem Geld umgehen, ist es an der Kommission, das zu sanktionieren. Stattdessen erscheint sie oft als Sündenbock, wenn ich etwa an deutsche Berichterstattungen über unsinnige Grillhütten denke. Aber der Glaube, so etwas vollständig mit Regeln verhindern zu können, hat lange während meiner Amtszeit vorgeherrscht. Das alles hatte und hat seine Auswirkungen auf die Arbeitswelt – ich bin zunächst nur gegen Wände gerannt, als ich bereits 2003 für mehr Flexibilität in der Financial Regulation stritt, die es inzwischen ja Gott sei Dank gibt. Oder denken Sie an REACH, eine Mammutgesetzgebung, mit soviel verschiedenen Interessen, dass jeder vermeidet, das Bündel aufzuschnüren, wohl wissend, dass sich auch einzelne Fehler oder falsche Annahmen eingeschlichen haben. Aus meiner Sicht ist hier die Politik gefragt, handwerklich schlechtes oder fehlerhafte Annahmen offensiv anzugehen, ohne gleich die gesamte Stabilität des Pakets infrage zustellen.

Ich komme zu meiner Schlussbemerkung. Ich habe als Mitglied der Kommission auf Teamarbeit gesetzt. Ich, auch mein Kabinett, kannte jede Arbeitseinheit, ich habe jeden Politikvorschlag lange und ausführlich mit meinen Mitarbeitern diskutiert. Das begann mit dem ersten Entwurf. Es gab keine Küchendiplomatie allein in der Generaldirektion oder allein im Kabinett. Ich habe es wunderbar gefunden, dass ich während meiner Zeit als Erweiterungskommissar im selben Haus mit meiner DG saß. Die räumliche Trennung von meiner zweiten Generaldirektion hat die Arbeit im Team viel schwieriger gemacht. Ich habe von meiner Generaldirektion und von meinem Kabinett große Transparenz und enge Zusammenarbeit verlangt. Das galt auch für die Implementierung unseres Budgets. Mein Generaldirektor hatte klare Vorgaben und als wir Implementierungsprobleme in der DG Unternehmen und Industrie hatten, gab es eine politische Intervention und meine Generaldirektion hat die Rückstände aufgearbeitet.

Wir haben immer, egal worum es ging, gemeinsam mit der Generaldirektion, die Linie besprochen und auch immer wieder im Licht der Diskussionen in Rat und Parlament nachjustiert. Meine Mitarbeiter wussten allesamt, woran sie mit mir waren und dass sie auf mich vertrauen konnten, wenn Not am Mann war.

Ich habe nicht immer das gemacht, was mir geraten wurde, ich habe manchmal mehr verlangt, als gedacht wurde, wir hatten gute und auch weniger gute Diskussionen, wir hatten Momente, in denen ich nur die Antworten bekam, nach denen ich suchte, was nicht notwendiger Weise das Gesamtbild war, aber wir hatten uns zusammengerauft. Jedenfalls hatten wir bei vielen Vorhaben am Ende das Gefühl, gemeinsam etwas geschafft zu haben und das haben wir dann auch gemeinsam gefeiert. Aber meine Mitarbeiter wussten von mir auch: ich trage die politische Verantwortung und das bedeutet, dass ich -und niemand sonst - das Team leite.

2. The costs of decentralisation

Is there a clear borderline between politics and management?

By Maros Šefčovič, Vice-President of European Commission, Interinstitutional relations and Administration

10 September 2013

Speech by Vice-President Šefčovič

The Costs of Decentralisation

- Check against delivery –

CONT Hearing on

"Accountability of the European Commission as the administrator responsible for the management and control of the EU budget over the last 10 years"

17 September 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

Chairman, Honourable Members, Dear Colleagues,

You have asked me today to speak about the costs of decentralisation. Your concern about this question is understandable. As the English say "*out of sight, out of mind*" – or as the French more poetically put it "*loin des yeux, loin du coeur*"? How has the Commission fared entrusting specialised bodies – within or outside the Commission – with certain of its tasks?

But you can rest assured: the Commission's decentralisation measures over the last decades have led to both savings and better performance – without any loss of control and accountability of the Commission. To be very clear about this point right from the outset: in accordance with the Treaty, **the Commission always retains overall responsibility for budget execution**, irrespective of the degree of decentralisation.

This is fully in line with **the management reforms** of the Institution since the year 2000. In fact, they created the necessary framework for decentralisation. They set the objectives for future decentralisation, emphasising outcomes and efficiency. Transparency and accountability, as now enshrined in our rules, are a precondition for delegating tasks.

This Committee actively accompanied and shaped the reforms at the time, in particular in the domain of financial management and control. It has also attentively followed the reforms that have ensued reforms since. Through the discharge procedure and the reporting of the European Court of Auditors to Parliament, this Committee has taken its role as the Public Accountability Committee very seriously throughout. I am very appreciative of your work and pleased to be speaking here today.

I would like to start by recalling the thrust of the most important management reforms in the Commission, before moving on to look at three specific decentralisation measures, notably: the decentralisation to Commission Administrative Offices, the decentralisation to Executive Agencies and the decentralisation to Regulatory Agencies.

2. MANAGEMENT REFORMS IN THE COMMISSION

The management reforms were **based on four principles**, which are essential for any decentralisation measure:

- **Clear responsibilities**: by the year 2000, in many areas of the Commission's work, responsibility had become blurred by

procedures that tended to obscure, rather than to reveal who had actually taken a decision or approved expenditure. The reform process remedied this by clearly defining the responsibilities of individuals at all levels, including the College of Commissioners, Portfolio Commissioners and, notably, of Directors-General.

- **Strong accountability**: As a European Institution, the Commission is accountable to the citizen in various ways. European Parliament, Council, Court of Auditors, Court of Justice and I can add the European Ombudsman and the European Data Protection Supervisor: they all exercise some form of institutional control over the Commission. At the same time, the Commission's accountability has also been strengthened by much greater openness to public scrutiny.

- **High efficiency**: In general, but in particular in the current economic context, the Commission has to deliver its services in the most cost-effective way. Decentralisation has made a key contribution in this regard by moving the implementation tasks of certain programmes to Executive Agencies or the administrative tasks to Commission Administrative Offices. I shall return to this issue in greater detail in a moment. But I should also mention other issues like the rationalisation of IT-systems; zero-growth in posts over the last years; the 5% staff cut which the Commission has recently proposed; the increase of weekly working time to 40h designed to partially compensate for this; the freezing of salaries, allowances and pensions for two years; the internal redeployment of staff – which means that some DGs will lose up to 10% of their staff; or the simplification

of internal procedures. These are other important issues with regard to improved efficiency which we should bear in mind.

- **Transparency and responding to the public**: Reform has brought significant improvements to the Commission's transparency and efficiency in dealing with the public. The Code of Good Administrative Behaviour and the regulation on access to documents were some examples for the reforms in the early 2000s. Others have followed since then like the Financial Transparency System or the Transparency Register during this mandate. Since 2012, you can find all transparency related information through one single Commission website which we called the Transparency Portal. So, this is an on-going process.

Let me now explain in more detail how the Commission put these principles into practice:

- **Through better planning and organisation of the way it carried out its work**. For this purpose the Commission introduced an annual strategic planning cycle. It now defines its political priorities and objectives for each year and allocates the resources necessary to get there. Each DG has a Management Plan, which translates political priorities and strategic objectives into concrete operations, and links the activities with the necessary financial and human resources. Each Director-General reports back to the College on achievements through Annual Activity Reports. Let me add that this planning cycle also facilitates the work of the other institutions and external stakeholders because it makes the Commission's work more predictable and therefore transparent.

- **Through a restoration of public confidence in the EU's control of expenditure**. The key principles of the reform in the area of financial management were simplification, modernisation, decentralisation to each DG and the taking of responsibility by management departments. The central elements are annual assurance declarations by each Director-General and the College's annual synthesis report on management performance and controls, in which the College takes political responsibility for the performance delivered by managers.

- **Through the safeguarding of professional and ethical standards**. The Commission placed the whole sphere of ethics, professional underperformance, discipline, wrongdoing and the reporting of wrongdoing on a new footing aiming at detecting undesirable developments as soon as possible and ensuring that effective but fair and consistent disciplinary measures could quickly take effect. These were the main elements of the reforms in early 2000. I should add that we have continued during this mandate to work in this field: a new Code of Conduct for Commissioners; new Commission guidelines for whistleblowers which received recognition from a well established organisation like Transparency International; new guidelines for Commission staff on gifts and hospitalities; and a joint European Parliament and Commission Transparency Register which sheds light on those who try to – legitimately - influence the decision-making in the institutions. Last but not least, Parliament, Council and Commission agreed recently on

further changes to the ethical obligations of staff in the framework of the reform of the Staff Regulations.

I would now like to go over to look at a few of the Commission's decentralisation measures in greater detail.

3. DECENTRALISATION TO ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

Let us first look at an example of decentralisation within the Commission, meaning from one Commission body to another. In 2003, the Commission decided to decentralize a large part of the operational services performed by DG HR. It created three Administrative Offices: one in charge of financial rights (PMO), and two in charge of infrastructure and logistics (OIB and OIL). So we speak here about the decentralisation of administrative support services from one Commission central service – DG ADMIN at the time – to these more specialised but still corporate level offices.

The decentralisation to Administrative Offices not only allowed DG HR to focus on the policy aspects of human resources, but also generated **multiple other benefits**:

- Cost reduction: the staff of the Offices is mainly composed of contract agents – between 50%-60% of the total staff. They mostly perform operational tasks. This has resulted in cost savings.

- A client-oriented approach: client orientation is the main priority of each Office. They measure their performance in this regard

against key indicators and the satisfaction rate ranges between 80% and 90% in most cases.

- Simplification is another one of the top priorities of the management of the Offices.

- Synergies with other institutions: Service Level Agreements have been and are being signed with agencies and other institutions. This allows the Offices to deliver the services they are specialised in to a larger client base, creating economies of scale to the benefit of other Institutions and body using these Offices.

Let me stress that the Commission keeps control over the activities of the Offices and I think this is important for the sake of clear responsibilities. The College entrusted the steering of the offices to a Management Board composed of the Commission's central services, client DGs and other client institutions.

4. DECENTRALISATION TO EXECUTIVE AGENCIES

A second example of externalisation is the recourse to Executive Agencies, which can be considered an extension of the Commission – although they are separate legal entities. The creation of these bodies is unanimously considered as an instrument of success – including by the European Court of Auditors.

Executive Agencies are the outcome of a reform of the Commission's externalisation policy that was triggered mainly by

two factors: (1) the end of the collaboration with so-called Technical Assistance Offices and (2) the need for the Commission to refocus on policy-making and strategic management. Executive Agencies are created through a Commission decision and can be tasked with implementing all or a part of a Union programme on the Commission's behalf. However, implementation will be under the Commission's control and responsibility.

The **Court of Auditors has pointed out several advantages of Executive Agencies**:

- They are highly specialised structures, with good rates of performance in their specific tasks of programme management.
- This specialisation also makes it easier to promote EU actions for the general public.
- They are executing programmes with wide visibility such as Marie Curie Actions or the Transport infrastructures TEN-T.
- The quality of service has been improved, the time needed to process files has been reduced and payments are made sooner.
- Executive Agencies make life easier for citizens and enterprises since they provide a one-stop shop.
- They bring savings for the EU budget since three quarters of their staff are contract agents. There are currently six Executive Agencies. In view of the present context of restrained administrative expenditure, the Commission wants to make a **more intensive use** of these entities.

A legally necessary cost-benefit analysis covering all six Executive Agencies is being carried out at this moment. The cost-benefit analysis compares the relative qualitative and quantitative advantages of different delegation scenarios – the "cost of decentralisation", if you so wish. In the context of this analysis, the Commission has to reconcile the expected increase of human resources needs in the Executive Agencies with the overall 5% staff reduction of all institutions, agencies and bodies. All possible sources of efficiency gains are being explored: simplification; a coherent portfolio of programmes for each Executive Agency; an improved learning curve in well-established Executive Agencies; and the potential benefits of centralising some administrative support tasks in a single Executive Agency to achieve economies of scale.

The **Commission keeps full control over the Executive Agencies in several ways**:

- The political responsibility lies with the College and with each Commissioner responsible for a parent DG. They are duly informed of the implementation of the work of the Executive Agencies and of any significant matter relating to management, in particular financial management.

- The parent DGs themselves have the responsibility to ensure that the necessary internal control systems and procedures, accounting systems and administrative procedures have been put into place in the Executive Agency. They conduct regular reviews and draw up an assessment in their Annual Activity Report. Through the submission by the DGs of these reports to

central services and College the accountability chain remains totally intact.

- The Steering Committee that leads the activities of the Executive Agency is composed of high-level Commission officials. And all key positions in Executive Agencies, including of course the Executive Director, are occupied by seconded Commission officials.

5. DECENTRALISATION TO REGULATORY AGENCIES

Finally, let us look at EU Regulatory Agencies. They form another specific category of autonomous bodies contributing to the implementation of EU policies in a decentralised way. Their number has increased significantly in the last decade: the first two were set up in 1975, there were ten in 2000, and over 30 agencies are now up and running.

This "boom" can be largely explained by the usefulness of such bodies: Regulatory Agencies pool independent expertise and thereby help EU Institutions to concentrate on policy-making. They perform different tasks ranging from collecting and analysing information (example: European Environment Agency) to adopting binding decisions (example: European Chemicals Agency), providing scientific advice (example: European Medicines Agency) and conducting operations on the ground (example: FRONTEX, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU). They have either taken over tasks previously carried out by

the Commission or are charged with new EU competencies. However, and differently from the executive agencies, the Commission is not managerially or politically accountable for the work of these Regulatory Agencies.

However, in the absence of an overall framework for their governance and functioning, Regulatory Agencies were all created in an ad-hoc way and were designed to operate very differently. Given the important increase in the number of such agencies, I feel this diversity has become more and more problematic: the system has become difficult to understand, and the efficiency and accountability of agencies could also be put into question. To address this, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission concluded a ground-breaking agreement on a Common Approach on EU Regulatory agencies endorsed by the three Institutions in the summer of 2012.

This important text now serves as the reference point for the creation of future Regulatory Agencies and the reform of existing ones. The need to rationalise the landscape of such bodies is acknowledged, with several provisions touching upon possible synergies or mergers, the need to conduct evaluations and to regularly re-examine the continued need for such decentralisation.

Since the endorsement of this agreement, the Commission has taken a leading role in its implementation: in a Roadmap adopted at the end of 2012, we listed a series of 90 measures to be implemented or deliverables to be developed to follow-up on the Common Approach. This work is well on track. In parallel, following careful case-by-case analyses, we have used the opportunity of

the planned review of several founding acts of agencies to adapt them to the common approach. Please allow me to turn back to you with a plea for support also in the future.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

I hope that I have been able to reassure you of the Commission's successful management of the decentralisation process, in line with the administrative reforms since the year 2000. The recourse to decentralisation has led to better quality and savings. But the Commission stays in charge and remains accountable.

I would also like to stress that the activity-based approach, linking activities with resources, allows us today to better assess the "cost of decentralisation" in each case. We should be free to benefit as much as possible from decentralisation, but not at any cost. Let us not be afraid to call its use into question where it is not or no longer justified by the input-output/outcome ratio. The current cost-benefit analysis relating to a stronger recourse to Executive Agencies does exactly that. You have also taken note of my concern for establishing together with Parliament and Council a more homogeneous framework within with Regulatory Agencies operate.

The key to best performance does not lie in "centralisation" or "decentralisation", but in the right mix. I think we are on a good track, although there remains work to be done. We shall continue to listen carefully to the views and suggestions of this Committee, whether in the context of the discharge or in hearings like the one today.

Thank you very much.

3. Parochial isolation or inter-service cooperation: how decentralisation works

The role of middle management and Director-Generals

By Stefan Becker, Speyer University, Speyer

Hearing on "Accountability of the European Commission as administrator responsible of the management and control of the EU budget over the last 10 years"- 17 Sept. 2013
Committee on Budgetary Control

Public Hearing of the Committee on Budgetary Control (CoCoBu)

17 September 2013

9-12h, European Parliament, Brussels

Accountability of the European Commission as administrator responsible of the management and control of the EU budget over the last 10 years

Topic of the panel:

Parochial isolation or inter-service cooperation: how decentralization works

Topic of the presentation:

The Role of Middle Management and Directors-General

by

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Introduction

The roles of senior and middle management in the Commission, i.e. Directors-General and Heads of Unit, have undergone considerable changes since the year 2000. Most of these were introduced by the so-called Kinnock reform. Whereas earlier reform efforts had been modest and narrowly targeted, the measures enacted by former Commission Vice-President Neil Kinnock were comprehensive in scope and aimed at fundamental change. Advanced under the slogan of modernization, their proclaimed goal was to transform the Commission into a twenty-first century administration.

In presenting five theses, this paper elucidates the impact of these reforms on Directors-General and Heads of Unit, focusing on their perceptions as to how new rules and tools have altered their work. It points to improvements as well as unresolved issues in the Commission administration. By using both quantitative and qualitative attitudinal data from senior and middle management, it offers insights that elude more formal analyses.

We show that the reforms had both unintended and differential impact, empowering senior management and placing additional burdens on middle management. As regards the practicality of new instruments, officials are reluctantly supportive. However, there is still much room for improvement in terms of horizontal and vertical coordination.

Data

Unless indicated otherwise, this paper draws on data collected as part of the "European Commission in Question: Challenge, Change and Performance" (EUCIQ) project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (grant no. RES-062-23-1188) and conducted by Hussein Kassim, John Peterson, Michael W. Bauer, Sara Connolly, Renaud Dehousse, Liesbet Hooghe, and Andrew Thompson. For further information on the project, please visit http://www.uea.ac.uk/psi/research/EUCIQ.

Our observations are based on the project's large-scale online survey (n=1,901, incl. 195 senior managers and 429 middle managers) and semi-structured follow-up interviews (n=147, incl. 42 senior managers and 77 middle managers). Please note that the senior management sample includes Directors-General, their deputies and Directors. For more information on data and findings, please consult the project book (Kassim et al. 2013).

Thesis 1:

Administrative reforms never come out as planned. The 'iron law of unintended consequences' also applies to the Commission reform.

Reforms are about changing structures, processes and ultimately people. It follows that they are complex undertakings and that their implementation is never 'automatic'. Reforms can radically overhaul structures and establish new procedures, but they will lead to little, if the people concerned do not accept them. Likewise, even with their best intentions, people may not be able to work with top-heavy, cumbersome procedures. Targets may thus be missed as reform blueprints play out differently in practice. This also applies to the reforms the Commission has witnessed since the year 2000.

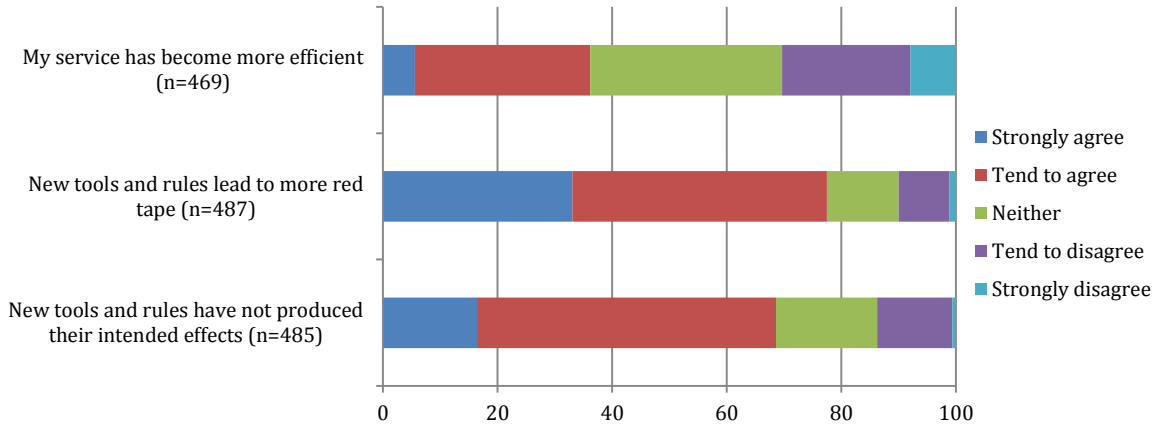
As regards the acceptance of these reforms, our data shows that Directors-General and Heads of Unit were very critical in the beginning, but their resistance decreased over time. This, yet again, proves that fundamental changes need time, another iron law of administrative reform. In case of the Commission, however, the quality of staff is so high that – as long as they are not made materially worse off and their career perspectives remain intact – reformers seemed to be able to convince senior and middle management about the merits of change considerably faster than their national counterparts in identical situations (Bauer 2012).

Still, general acceptance does not mean support for every single measure, and it does not preclude unintended consequences. The Commission reforms of this millennium are inspired by a top-down new public management philosophy focused on performance control, merit-based personnel policies and sound financial management. Consequently, they carry a heavy weight in terms of consultation, coordination and reporting. The Commission has thus bureaucratized its internal working procedures even further – which, to a certain extent, runs counter to the reform goal of empowering officials "to exercise their own initiative" (Commission 2000, 8).

This consequence is reflected in the overall reform assessment by our sample of senior and middle management (see Figure 1). While only a minority of around 30% explicitly denies that its unit/service has become more efficient, an overwhelming majority of

77% states that the new tools and rules also lead to more red tape and increased the administrative load. Furthermore, 69% of Directors-General and Heads of Unit in our sample agree that these measures have not produced their intended effects but rather remain formalistic exercises.

Figure 1 Attitudes of senior and middle management towards overall reform



Question: Thinking of the administrative reforms implemented since 2000, what are your views on the following statements?

Thesis 2:

Heads of Unit have turned managers, while their leadership role in policy development has been considerably reduced.

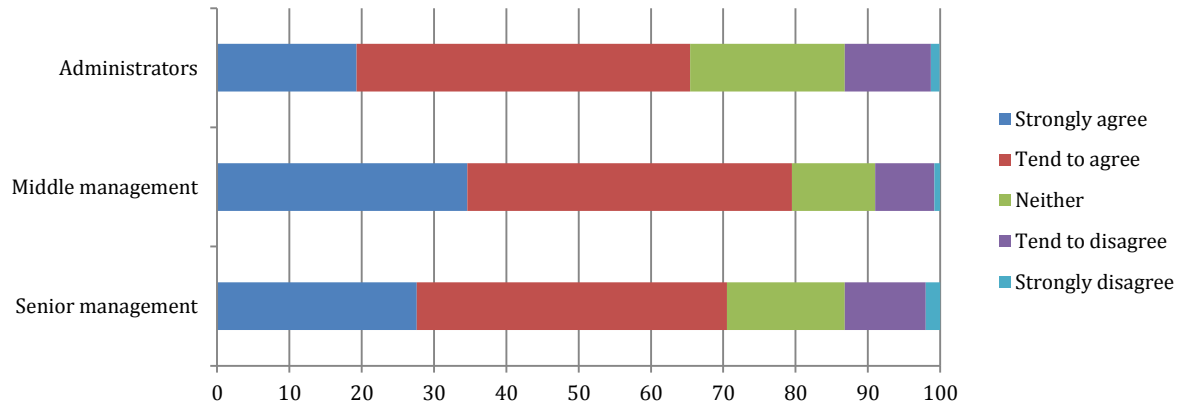
At the turn of the millennium, Heads of Unit could be considered to be the intellectual and administrative backbone of the Commission. It was in this middle management position that policy expertise culminated and interlinked with the politics stream of EU public policymaking (Kingdon 1995; Richardson 2006). Below this level, the individual power of officials was too weak; and above this level, senior management was too busy to engage intensively in the minutiae of an individual dossier while taking into account the various national and societal positions to identify viable lines of compromise.

In policy departments, the Heads of Unit thus occupied a pivotal position. As regards content, they used to be the acknowledged expert. At the same time, Heads of Unit were considered experienced insiders who knew the Commission machinery, the informal side of the organizational hierarchy and the crucial policy pundits within the other

European institutions, national administrations or relevant lobbies. The fragmentation of the Commission and the deficient horizontal and vertical co-ordination mechanisms reinforced their role and importance. It was the rule rather than the exception that the sensible task of policy drafting laid in the hands of a single Head of Unit (Peters 1994).

This role has considerably changed over the last decade, as successive reforms have altered the middle management's task portfolio. On the one hand, Heads of Unit are now heavily involved in the Strategic Planning and Programming cycle. Writing proposals for policy objectives, conceiving (measurable) progress and quality indicators, conducting impact assessment exercises, suggesting priorities, drafting reports, evaluating as well as communicating decisions to the rank and file have become the bread and butter of their daily job. On the other hand, regarding the changes in personnel policies, it is also the Heads of Unit who have to instruct, supervise and guide their unit staff so as to fit the human resource variable to the equation of the new priority-setting, programming and co-ordination approach. They have thus gained in direct power over their personnel, but that power comes with high bureaucratic costs.

Figure 2 *Attitudes towards increasing administrative workload*



Statement: New tools and rules lead to more red tape.
N=1217 (senior management = 98, middle management = 390, administrators =729).

Heads of Unit therefore acknowledge that the reforms have considerably increased their administrative workload (see Figure 2). Almost 80% of our middle management sample states that there is now more red tape, while only 9% outright deny this claim. What is more important is that these figures vary significantly from both higher and lower levels of administration. Directors-General and Administrators also report on increasing red

tape, yet they do so to a lesser degree. This indicates that Heads of Unit are most affected by the reforms; they bear a large part of the new requirements.

At the same time, the particular instruments introduced over the last decade – job descriptions, defining individual responsibilities, setting individual targets, annual appraisal exercises, systematically assessing achievements, monitoring and reporting duties – are evaluated kindly by middle management, at times even very positively. This indicates a worrying level of alienation, as it stands in contrast to their role perceptions.

The majority of Heads of Unit has misgivings about the reform and, more importantly, they dislike the new roles which the reform has assigned to them. Two-thirds still seem to prefer a role model as policy innovator and not one as public manager. As good public servants, however, they accept their fate and endorse those reform elements which improve their capacity to do a proper job. In other words, they make an effort to function like managers, but in their hearts they still feel like policy entrepreneurs. This is also reflected in their stance on the basis on which Commission officials should be promoted. Asked whether the brightest policy innovators, irrespective of their level of seniority, should get more scope and better career prospects, two-thirds of the Heads of Unit would like to see more space given to the policy innovators, while only one-sixth object this proposition (Bauer 2008).

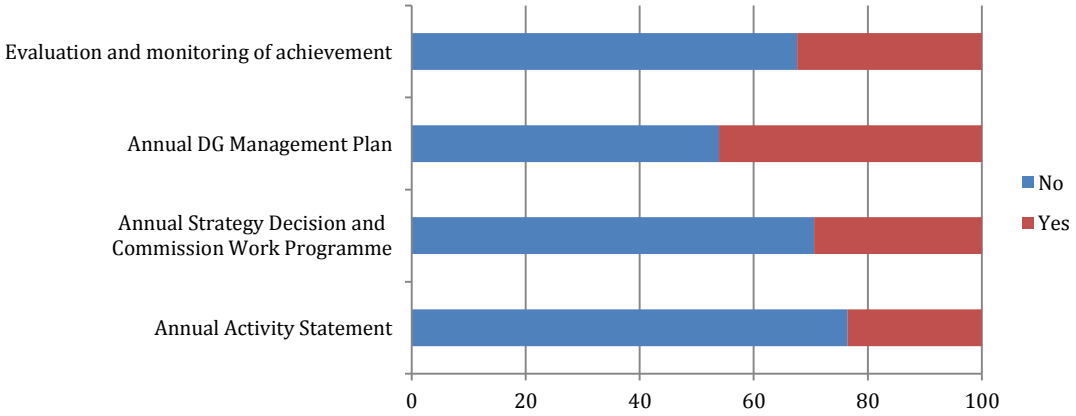
Thesis 3:
Directors-General are reform winners; decentralization empowers them.

A central aim of Commission reform has been the decentralization of responsibility to the senior civil service. And indeed, Directors-General emerge as reform winners, they now carry much more responsibility in strategic and financial management.

In the Commission's Strategic Planning and Programming cycle, Directors-General are now responsible for drafting an Annual Management Plan that operationalizes the Commission strategy for their respective department and for reporting on its progress in an Annual Activity Report. Our sample of senior managers shows ambivalent attitudes

towards these instruments (see Figure 3). Overall, most Directors-General believe in the principle of strategic management and think that it has considerably improved since its introduction, even if they still consider it a 'necessary evil'. In terms of specific tools, almost half of our sample agrees that drafting management plans has improved their capacity to do their job, while the respective reporting duties are appreciated by less than a quarter of our sample. Part of this discomfort is based on the accountability that comes with more responsibility. As Wille (2013, 141) argues, Directors-General now have "greater freedom to choose their means and to deploy their inputs; but, at the same time, they have become less free to define the goals themselves and feel they are under closer scrutiny than ever before". However, this can be read as a normal side-effect that comes with the degree of discretion that senior management can now employ.

Figure 3 *Attitudes of senior management towards activity-based management*



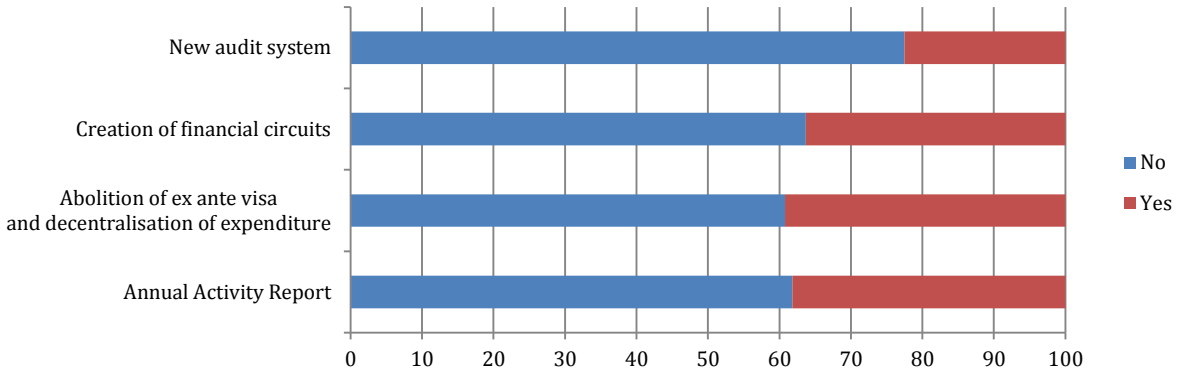
Question: Which of the following has improved your capacity to do your job?
N=98.

Financial management reveals a similar picture. As 'authorizing officers by delegation', Directors-General are now more flexible in allocating resources, but they are once again subject to closer scrutiny. They bear much more individual responsibility, as symbolized by the personal declaration of assurance that is to be provided along with the annual activity report, stating the sound use of resources and any reservations they might have.

On the whole, our sample of Directors-General appreciates these financial management reforms. Those who argue that resources are not better matched to policy priorities or that their service has not become more efficient are in the minority (40% and 28%). The qualitative interviews further reveal that many deem the reforms necessary and that

they are under no illusion about why they were introduced (i.e. against the background of fraud and mismanagement in the Santer Commission).

Figure 4 Attitudes of senior management towards financial management



Question: Which of the following has improved your capacity to do your job?
N=98.

However, many criticize the current financial management regulations for failing to find the right balance between accountability and efficiency. In our sample, overwhelming majorities of 65% and 70% of senior management respectively agree that the new rules have not produced their intended effects and that they created additional red tape. In terms of specific instruments, our sample of senior management also remains critical as to the impact of all financial management reforms regarding their capacity to do their job, with the decentralization of expenditure being seen most favorably (see Figure 4).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the reform of financial management has differential impact depending on the nature of departments. In our interviews, a middle manager mostly engaged in 'shared management' averred that "it certainly does strike a right balance" for the service concerned, but also recognized that "it really is a completely different ballgame compared to direct financial management, which is more risky in many ways than what we do". It is fitting that quite a few officials note that the responsibilisation in financial management eventually results in risk-averse behavior.

Yet another limiting factor to the increased influence of Directors-General can be seen in the compulsory rotation introduced by the reforms, which is to prevent parochialism and also foster inter-service cooperation. Consequently, senior management should be

focused on their performance and display a more 'generalist' outlook in order to be considered for other positions. As many officials are nearing the end of their career as they are appointed to senior management, however, the importance of this regulation should not be overestimated.

Thesis 4:
Steering or being steered? The relationship between the political level and the administration is ambiguous and open to interpretation

First of all, and unsurprisingly, on the basis of our data, there is no evidence for a general inclination among Directors-General to oppose or even directly work against the College of Commissioners. A majority of 96% of our senior management sample agrees that it is the responsibility of the services to support the politically-agreed position of the college. Furthermore, only 31% argue that Commission officials work for their department first and then for the Commission.

Still, our interview data suggest that actual coordination and cooperation very much depend on the specific constellation between Commissioner and Director-General. The former's capacity and will to provide leadership determines whether he or she pushes the administration ahead or is pushed ahead. If the respective Commissioner leaves the administration in auto-management, and restricts itself to the role of 'chief lobbyist' for his or her department, the power of the Director-General rises. If the Commissioner is more active in steering the administration, the Director-General's discretion decreases. In practice, the former model does exist, but mostly with the Commissioner's approval.

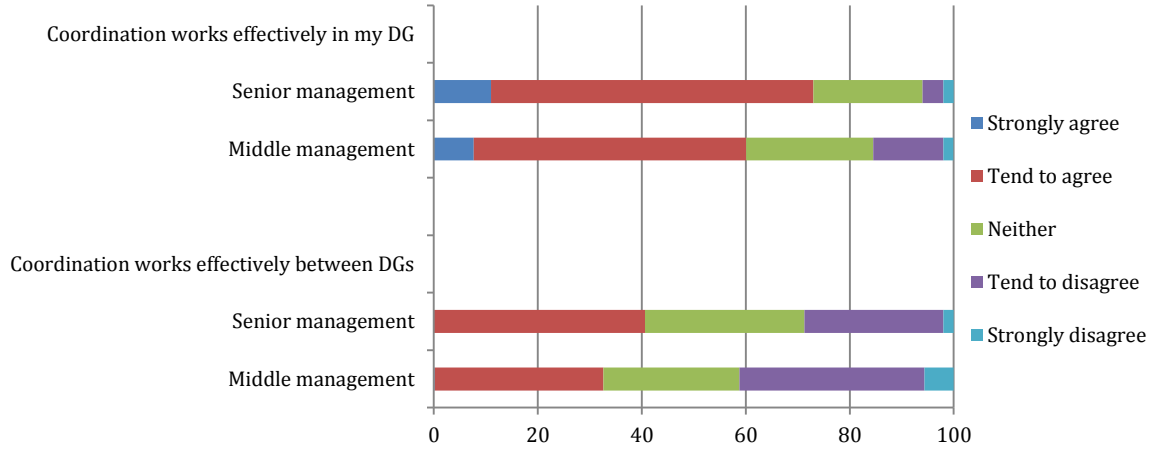
The relationship between the political and administrative levels is always precarious. In this case, the link is particularly weak as the Commission functions as a collective body. Commissioners can generally exercise less influence than national ministers. Informal arrangements and routines with senior management are thus more important. Our data shows, however, that this coordination is not always smooth. A significant minority of 31% in our senior management sample explicitly denies effective coordination between the services and the College of Commissioners.

Thesis 5:

Parochial isolation or inter-service cooperation: Coordination is in need of improvement, but 'silo thinking' is not widespread

Horizontal coordination between units and departments is another thorny issue, often thought to be deficient in the Commission. In our sample, however, senior and middle management are overall satisfied with the current state of interaction, most Directors-General and Heads of Unit do not regard coordination as ineffective (see Figure 5). Yet there are important differences. While 63% of our sample senior and middle managers agree that coordination works effectively in their department, only 34% state the same for inter-service interaction. It is also worth noting that middle management is more critical about coordination in both dimensions. The disapproval of current coordination between and in departments is 11% and 9% higher among Heads of Unit.

Figure 5 Attitudes of senior and middle management towards coordination



Question: What is your position on the following statements?
N=514 (senior management = 100, middle management 414).

Our qualitative data also confirms that institutional advocacy plays a strong role in the Commission bureaucracy. Some senior and middle managers are strongly dedicated to their institution, but many more feel primarily obligated to their units. There is hardly any evidence for 'silo thinking', however, and most officials are well aware of interests of other actors – be they inside or outside the Commission – and take them into account in their daily work. The dominant mode in the administration is thus more cooperative than confrontational, but inefficient coordination still puts strains on the departments.

Summary and Outlook

This analysis shows that the role of Directors-General and Heads of Unit has significantly changed over the last years. The reforms strengthened performance control, introduced more merit-based personnel policies and tightened financial management. Some proved to be improvements, while others failed to produce their intended effects. Readjustment thus seems to be necessary in some cases, although there is a certain fatigue and skepticism among staff with respect to more organizational change, as was argued in an earlier expertise (Bauer/Knill/Balint/Benzing 2008). Still, in order to safeguard effectiveness and accountability, the findings outlined above establish the following fields of action for the Commission:

1. Abolish rubber stamp exercises: Both senior and middle management lament procedures that are applied in mere formalistic ways. Controlling and reporting are essential for effective management, but they are no ends in themselves.

2. Relieve middle management: Heads of Unit currently face an excessive amount of administrative tasks, not all of which are related to the initial reform rationale.

3. Take responsibility: Decentralization of financial management is fair, but it comes close to surrendering responsibility altogether. The institution as a whole should also be accountable.

4. Clarify politico-administrative relations: Relationships between Commissioners and Directors-General are prone to misunderstandings, as much depends on the former's personal understanding of his or her role.

5. Improve coordination: In an institution that is far more fragmented than national executives, awareness of and attentiveness towards other departments is crucial for effectiveness. The current state of inter-service coordination is deficient.

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4. Decentralisation: successes and shortcomings

What did the decentralisation deliver from a staff point of view?

By Cristiano Sebastiani, President of the Central Staff Committee of the European Commission

*** No written contribution ***

5. Accountability arrangements

Which effects had the decentralisation on Parliament's ability to effectively gain insight in and control of the executive?

By Anchrit Wille, University of Leiden

Accountability Arrangements

Brussels, 17 September 2013

Hearing on the accountability of the European Commission as administrator responsible of the management and control of the EU budget over the last 10 years

Anchrit Wille, Leiden University

Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

What is Accountability?

Accountability includes the following four elements:

1. An agent or institution who is to give account
2. An area of authority or responsibilities
3. The existence of an accountability forum—which can be political, administrative, legal, or financial—to whom the agent is to give account
4. The right of this forum to be informed, to reach a judgement and to sanction.

Assessing Accountability:

Key questions relevant for assessment of accountability arrangements:

1. who is accountable?
2. about what?
3. to whom?
4. and how?

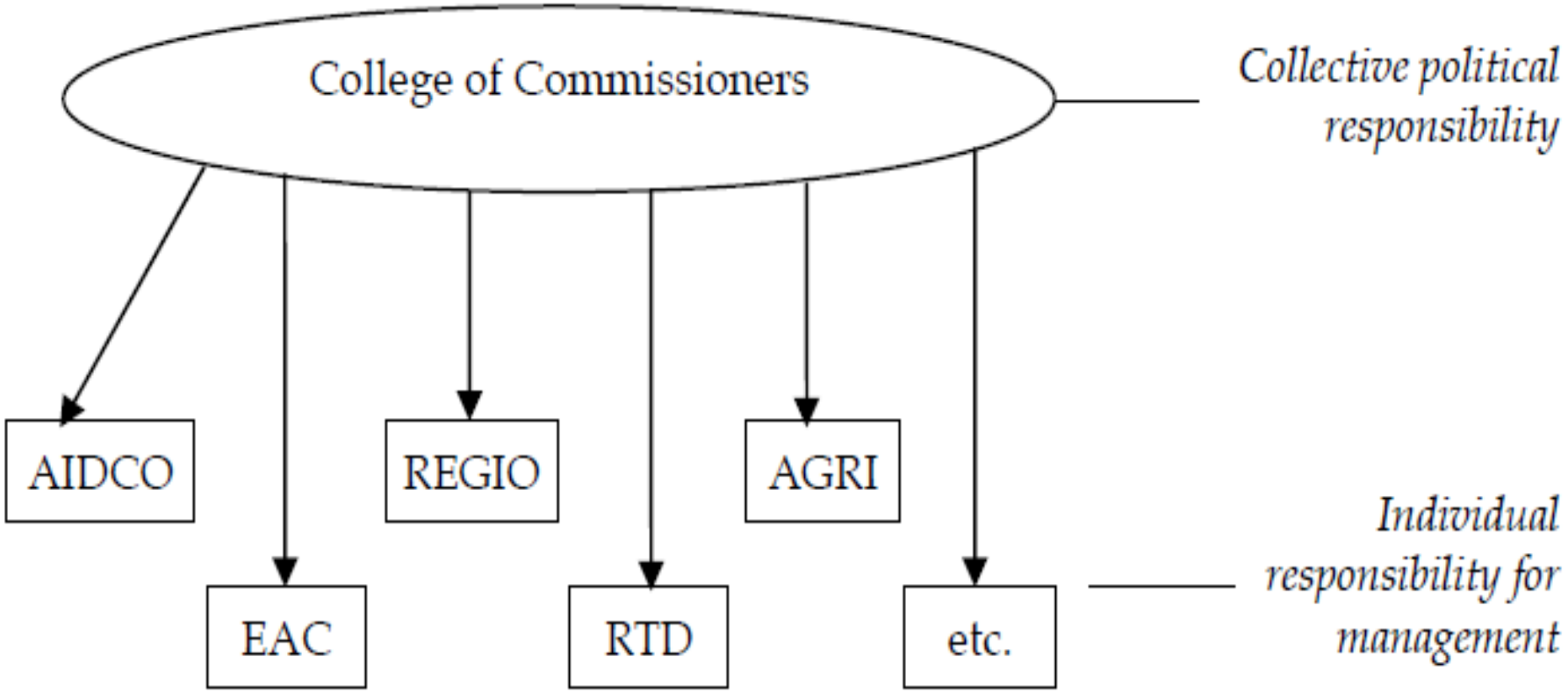
Modernization of the Commission's Accountability Architecture

	Political Accountability Arrangement	Administrative Accountability Arrangements
Internal Accountability Arrangements	▪ Presidentialisation ▪ Political guidelines ▪ Codes of Conduct	▪ Strategic Programming and Planning (SPP) ▪ Financial Accountability System
External Accountability Arrangements	▪ Enhanced use of the tool for ex ante and ex post controls by EP	▪ European Court of Auditors ▪ European Ombudsman ▪ OLAF ▪ Transparency Initiative

Modernized Financial Accountability in the Commission

Responsibilisation	• Director-generals were given direct responsibility for the financial decisions they take • those who authorise expenditure and payments are personally liable for actions
Audit	• Internal audit capabilities set up at departmental level, • a separate Internal Audit Service
Detailed, formal procedures	• to ensure that the accounting system, the management of contracts and the financial control of the Commission's services are responsibly conducted and that it becomes clear who is answerable for what
Transfer in 'sensitive' posts	• compulsory transfer anyone who has occupied a financial post for more than seven years
Central Financial Service	• That gives central professional support and advice to those dealing with budgetary and financial management

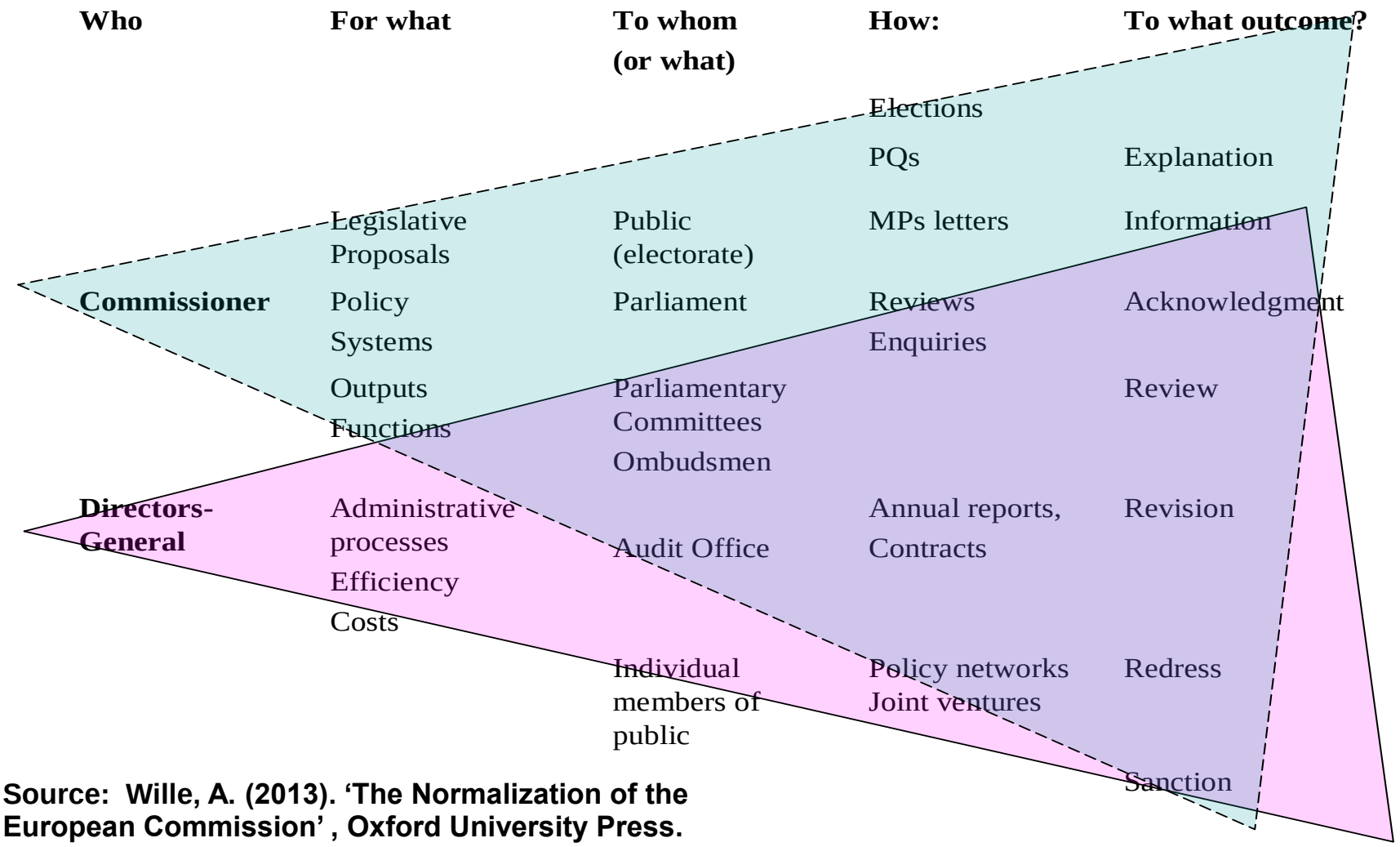
Who is accountable?



How?

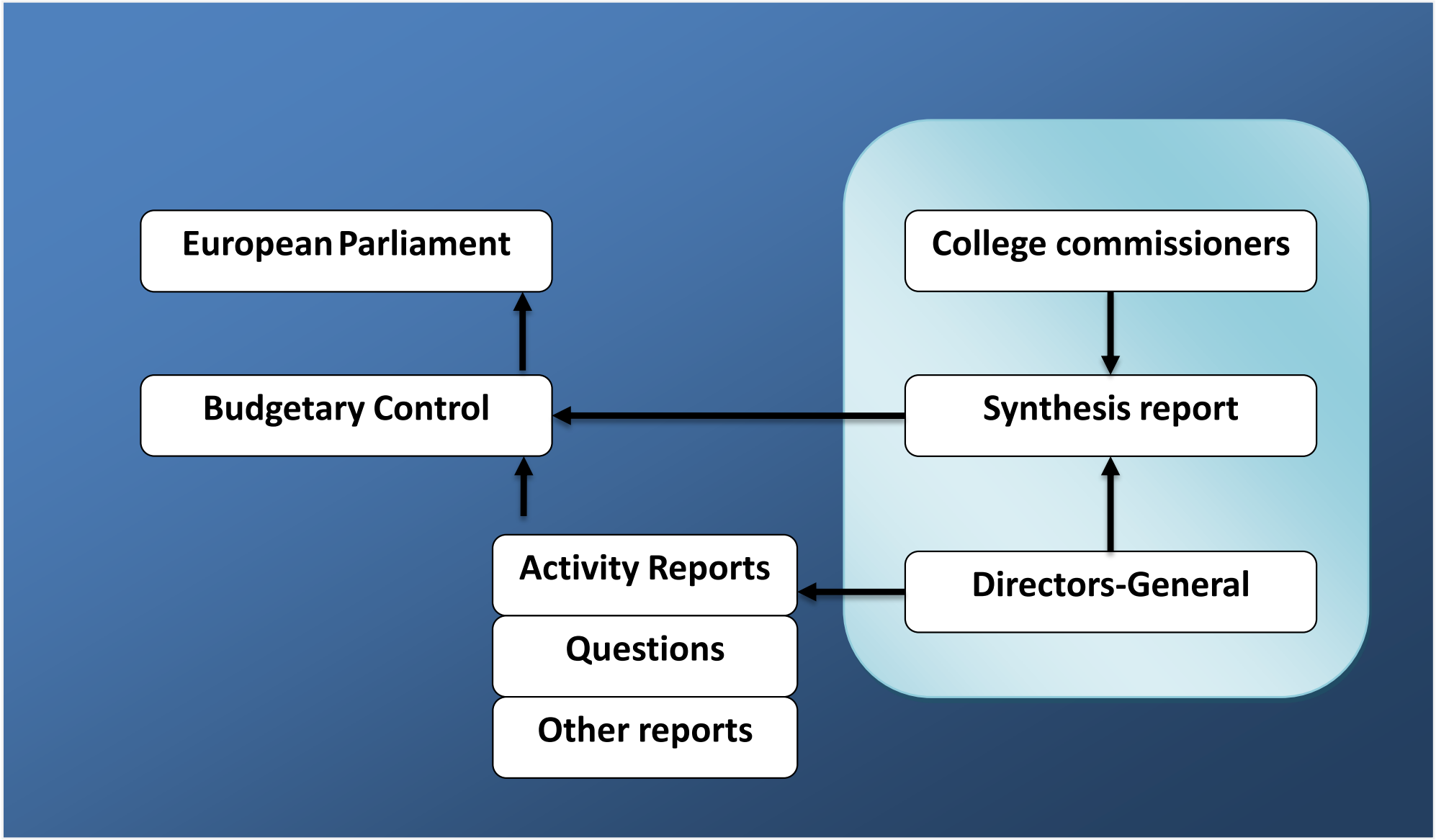
- Each Director-General has to report annually on the activity of the Directorate-General and the management of its resources.
- The internal audit unit advises on the quality of the internal control systems
- Each Director-General also has to sign a declaration on the basis of the facts in her/his possession stating
- Declaration can contain reservations that highlight risks

About what?
Zones of responsibilities



Source: Wille, A. (2013). 'The Normalization of the European Commission' , Oxford University Press.

An Evolving Accountability Architecture



Modernized accountability structure

- Reinforced role parliament as accountability forum
- Strengthened political control in Commission
- De-politicization of Commission's administration
- Clearer differentiation of political and administrative spheres

Accountability Issues

- More balanced system of both ‘bite’ and ‘burden’ of accountability; complexity and requirements of arrangements have reduced transparency and cost-effectiveness of the system.

- The organization of ‘multi-levelness’ of accountability as an answer to the ‘many hands’ problem when spending powers is shared with a third party

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

6. Presidentialisation versus collegiality

The role of the President and the Secretary-General of the Commission and the Commission's delivery of policy

By Hussein Kassim, University of East Anglia

Hearing on "Accountability of the European Commission as administrator responsible of the management and control of the EU budget over the last 10 years"- 17 Sept. 2013
Committee on Budgetary Control

Committee on Budgetary Control
European Parliament

Accountability of the European Commission as administrator responsible of the management and control of the EU budget over the last 10 years

'Presidentialization versus collegiality'

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"PRESIDENTIALISATION VERSUS COLLEGIALITY"

Summary
Presidentialism and collegiality are usually construed as ideal-types at opposite ends of the executive leadership continuum. Collegiality, which involves shared authority among equal members, is often considered preferable to presidentialism, a form of monocratic leadership, even though it (collegiality) is difficult to establish and to sustain, and rarely exists in practice. However, presidentialism can take many different forms, including those that are compatible with collective leadership, and can provide effective and accountable leadership in conditions where collegiality, especially in its purest sense, is not practicable.

In the case of the European Commission, decision making has always been *collective*. In line with the Commission's claim to represent the Union in general above any national, sectional or partisan interest, decisions are taken by all members of the College at a weekly meeting devoted entirely to that purpose and final decision-making authority cannot be delegated to individuals or group within the organization, even if procedures have been developed to expedite decision making under particular circumstances. Decision making in the Commission has, however, only rarely, if ever, been collegial.

As in the national context, the conditions for genuine collegiality are elusive: members of the Commission come from different backgrounds, differ in status, authority, and ability and do not always share the same level of commitment to the work of the organization; collegiality implies that Commissioners can and do look beyond their own portfolios and participate actively in discussion of the full range of business that comes across the College's table, but the scope of activity in which the Commission is engaged makes it difficult for Commissioners to keep abreast of developments beyond their portfolio domains; and, despite weakness of the Commission Presidency for much of the Commission's history, its incumbent have been at least primus inter pares and three Commission -- Walter Hallstein, Jacques Delors and now José Manuel Barroso -- have been considerably more powerful.

This paper considers the origins and development of the Commission Presidency, distinguishes between different approaches to executive leadership taken by Commission Presidents between 1958 and 2004, examines the model that President Barroso has constructed and pursued since that date, and considers the advantages and disadvantages of presidential leadership of the Commission. It argues:

- that the Commission Presidency has been significantly strengthened since the Treaty of Amsterdam and further enhanced since 2004;
- that Barroso-style presidentialism, which differs from other forms of presidentialism, has major benefits for the Commission and for the EU more broadly as a political system, even if it also carries some disadvantages; and
- that it may be premature to speak of 'presidentialization', since it is not clear that Barroso-style presidentialism is the result of a cumulative process or that it will prove to be an enduring model which that term implies.

Background: leadership in the European Commission

Despite its importance and visibility, the Commission Presidency has lacked the powers and resources commensurate to the role and responsibilities assumed by its incumbent soon after the Commission first came into being. Reference to the office in the EEC Treaty is scant. The functions of the Commission Presidency are not defined, and the Commission President is not meaningfully differentiated from other members of the College.

As a result, the office developed largely through a process of improvisation. Walter Hallstein, its first incumbent, was a major influence and was able to institutionalize the Commission President's leadership role largely in accordance with his vision of the Commission as an independent and strong organization able to rival member government in capacity and status. The office was shaped largely during his terms as President in response to managerial requirements arising from the functions entrusted to the Commission under the treaties and the need for the Commission to be represented in its interaction with other institutions.

The Commission President quickly emerged as a primus inter pares within the College, but the office remained weak:

- First, since the President and all other members of the College were appointed by a common accord of member governments – in practice commissioners were appointed independently by their respective national government -- the Commission President had neither the legitimacy that a popular mandate bestows nor, since he was neither a party leader nor the head of a coalition, the resources—electoral mandate, party discipline, or formal coalition agreement— that prime ministers in national settings can use to hold sway over their ministerial colleagues.[1] Moreover, since he did not appoint them, members of the College felt no personal obligation to the President.
- Second, although the Commission President convenes and chairs meetings of the College, establishes its agenda, and approves the minutes of the College, these procedural powers are qualified.[2] Moreover, in any vote, the Commission President has only one vote – the same as his peers. Furthermore, although the President has the power to create groups of Commissioners, unlike prime ministers he cannot use this prerogative to circumvent discussion or push through policy options he favours,[3] since he cannot delegate decision-making authority to subcommittees of the College.
- Third, while the UK prime minister has been able to rely on the Cabinet Office, the German Chancellor the Kanzleramt, and the French Prime Minister the Secrétariat général du gouvernement to communicate their views

[1] 'He' is used as a pronoun for the Commission President throughout only because all eleven incumbents hitherto have been men. This usage should not be construed to reflect a preference that the office should be monopolized by one gender; indeed, quite the opposite is true.

[2] Other members of the College may ask for items to be added to the agenda or for postponement of discussion of a particular dossier, and College minutes must be countersigned by the Secretary-General.

[3] Indeed, in the Commission's case, Commission President have used subcommittees have typically been used as a mechanism to affirm collegiality, and to improve the work of the College, rather than to advance the Commission President's agenda (Coombes 1970: 124).

throughout government and to monitor, oversee and coordinate its work, the Secretariat General of the Commission has traditionally been a guardian of collegiality, serving and supporting the College, rather than a personal office of the Commission President. Relations between the President's cabinet and the Secretariat-General have not always been close, even though the relationship between the two is the central axis within the Commission. Historically, the two bodies have been distinct and separate, and, indeed, one of the Secretariat-General's main functions has been to represent the administration to the Commission President. In addition, although larger than the private offices of other Commissioners, the President's *cabinet* is small relative to the range of his responsibilities.

The changing nature of the Commission Presidency

Over the past two decades, and especially since the Treaty of Amsterdam came into effect on 1 May 1999, the formal political resources of the office have increased significantly. Through a succession of treaty reforms, the Commission Presidency has become more sharply differentiated from the role of other members of the College.

- First, as a result of treaty change, the President is nominated in advance to other members of the College and subject to a different procedure from other Commissioners. The Treaty of European Union granted Parliament the right of to be consulted over the member governments' nominee for Commission President, which the Parliament interpreted as a right of veto – an understanding that was subsequently formalized by the Treaty of Amsterdam. The Treaty of Nice changed the decision rule in the European Council from unanimity to qualified majority, in effect establishing a quasi-parliamentary system of appointment. The Treaty of Lisbon stipulated that the European Council must take account of the results of the preceding elections to the European Parliament in selecting their Presidential nominee, a move intended to align the choice of the heads of state and government with the expressed will of European citizens. The effect has been to confer a personal mandate on the Commission President, as well as to politicize the appointment and the appointment process.
- Second, and over the same period, the Commission President's powers vis-à-vis other Commissioners have increased. The Treaty on European Union started the process by granting the nominee for President the right to be consulted in the nomination of other members. The Treaty of Amsterdam extended this power. Commissioners were to be nominated by common accord with the Commission President. More generally, the Treaty of Amsterdam gave explicit recognition to the Commission President's pre-eminence in the organization, declaring that: 'The Commission shall work under the political guidance of its President' (Art. 219 TEC). It also extended to the Commission President the power for the first time to assign and to re-allocate portfolio responsibilities. The Nice Treaty added the appointment of Vice-Presidents from within the College and the power to require that a Commissioner resign, while the Lisbon Treaty extended the provisions in respect of the appointment of the High

Representative.

- Third, following an initial step taken by the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Treaty of Nice gave the Commission President an important power over the administration. The Commission President was permitted to 'decide on [the Commission's] internal organisation in order to ensure that it acts consistently, efficiently and on the basis of collegiality'. The Commission President could now, like prime ministers in national settings, decide how the central administration is organized.

Approaches to the Commission Presidency

As this short overview shows, the resources at the Commission President's disposal for much of the Commission's history were considerably out of step with an office that established itself as 'fundamental to the operation of the Commission and to the coherence of the EU *per se*' (Spence 2006: 27). The authority exercised by Commission Presidents was determined largely by the personal qualities and standing of the incumbent, his capacity to perform in the European Council, and by the level of support he could command in the major capitals. The working of the College also depended on the calibre, outlook and ambitions of the nominees sent by national governments, and the performance and success of the Commission as a whole influenced by the external climate of opinion towards the desirability of EU action.

As a result, different styles and approaches developed. While a detailed discussion of the ten Commission Presidents who held office between 1958 and 2004 is beyond the scope of the paper, two important distinctions can be drawn. The first is between those incumbents who took a strong lead and those who were content with acting as primus inter pares. The second is between those who adopted ambitious policy programmes and those who set more modest objectives. These differences can be illustrated in a four-cell grid (see table 1, below).

Table 1. A comparison of approaches to the Commission Presidency, 1958-2004

	Strong presidential	**Primus inter pares**
Ambitious	Hallstein, Delors	Jenkins, Prodi
Modest		Rey, Malfatti, Mansholt, Ortoli, Thorn, Santer

Two points are noteworthy. First, under even the strongest 'presidential' incumbents other members of the College were able to take the lead in key policy domains. For example, Hans von der Groeben under the Hallstein Presidency and Peter Sutherland, Leon Brittan and Karel van Miert under Delors. Second, beyond their personal standings and ability to perform impressively in the Council, the two strongest and most ambitious Commission Presidents relied on quite different resources to mobilise their authority. Hallstein could draw on the solidarity and respect among contemporaries with similar wartime and post-war experiences;

Delors relied on strong support from Bonn and Paris, and an extensive network of contacts throughout the Commission, centred on his *cabinet*.

The Barroso Presidency

Although other aspects of the Barroso Commission may be the subject of debate, there is considerable agreement that it has been characterized by strong presidential leadership. It is not only the strength of presidential leadership that makes the Barroso Commission noteworthy, however, but the new model of leadership that has been apparent. The Barroso Presidency has been sharply different from any that has preceded it.

The Barroso Commission: a strong Presidency

The President has played a commanding role within the organization since 2004.[4] As well as taking responsibility for major policies, President Barroso has defined and presented the policy programme of the Commission, controlled its policy agenda, and introduced the 'State of the Union' address as an annual statement of political intent. He has sponsored a number of 'pet projects', including the Galileo system, negotiation of the successor to the Draft Constitutional Treaty, and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. He has given his personal imprimatur to initiatives launched by other Commissioners, notably energy and climate change, the services directive and the REACH directive. He has also sought a higher media profile and presence than his two immediate predecessors. From the outset, President Barroso has emphasized the importance of coherent action and loyalty within the College (cf. Kurpas et al. 2008). As a result, the Commission has been far less divided and far more successful than many had predicted on the eve of enlargement (Kurpas et al 2008).

A new model Presidency?

The Barroso Commission is not the first College to be led by a strong President, but the nature of the Presidency and the degree of control exercised by the Commission President is unprecedented. Like his predecessor, President Barroso was a beneficiary of the powers introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam and therefore, subject to approval of the Parliament, able to appoint his own team,[5] as well as to set the overall policy of the Commission. Unlike Prodi, Barroso also benefitted from the political mandate delivered from European voters via the European Parliament, and inherited an administration that had undergone a far-reaching reform under his predecessor.

[4] In a face-to-face interviews conducted by the authors as part of 'The European Commission in Question' ('EUCIQ') project in 2009, three of five serving Commissioners had no hesitation in qualifying the Barroso Commission as strongly presidential. 'We have clearly a presidential system now, and a very strong one' (interview 85). For more information about the project, see Note at the end of the text. See also the remarks of Commissioner Hübner, quoted in 'EU commission sees civil servants' power grow', EU Observer, 22 02 2007, http://euobserver.com/political/2355

[5] In November 2004, the European Parliament endorsed the Commission President's nominations after the Commission president had agreed to drop two of the original nominees and to reshuffle the portfolios of two others. In February 2010, the new College was approved after one of the Commission President's original nominees had been dropped.

To strengthen the power of the presidential office, however, Barroso transformed the Secretariat General of the Commission from a body that supported the College to a personal service of the Commission Presidency. The significance of this change was threefold:

- first, it gave the Commission President influence throughout the Commission administration, delivering a detailed grip over policy that previous incumbents of the office had rarely enjoyed;
- second, since following the Kinnock-Prodi reforms a new capacity for strategic policy and planning had been located in the Secretariat General, it placed in the hands of the Commission President a mechanism for orchestrating the development and implementation of a comprehensive policy programme; and
- third, by giving the Secretariat General the political backing it had previously lacked it gave that body the authority to play a more interventionist and more political role within the organization,[6] thereby further extending the reach of the Commission President, and enabled it to improve coordination within an organization that had previously been fissiparous and fragmented.[7]

The combination of powers and resources mobilized by President Barroso is therefore unique. To the appointment and goal-setting powers bestowed by recent treaties, he added to the presidential office the administrative capacities of the Secretariat General, themselves recently extended, but which were further expanded as soon as the Secretariat General came to be seen as a service of the Commission President. For the first time, the Commission President could call upon a body that was equivalent to a prime minister's office. As well as providing procedural expertise, the Secretariat General is the Commission's institutional memory, manages the Commission's interactions with other EU institutions and outside actors, plays a key role in internal meetings, including the weekly meeting of the *chefs de cabinets*, and is the locus of the Commission's planning capacity. In short, it is the only body to know what is going on in every Commission service and at level of the organization (Kassim 2006). It is the relationship with the Secretariat General and especially the assistance provided by the Secretariat General in devising, rolling out and defending the Commission President's programme in negotiations with other institutions that marks out the Barroso Presidency as a new model presidency.[8]

Explaining the new model Presidency

The new model Presidency is not the product of deliberate constitutional engineering on the part of member governments, even if it could not have emerged

[6] According to one senior official the Secretariat-General is `becoming more political no doubt . . . [and] clearly transforming itself into the President's services . . . they are no longer the Commission's Secretariat-General (interview 150).

[7] See Kassim et al (2013: chs 6 and 7).

[8] As Danuta Hübner observed: 'The presidential system doesn't mean the president is making all the decisions; it means that there is a strong role of the Commission Secretariat'. This point also emerged very strongly from the EUCIQ interviews with managers and *cabinet* members (see Kassim et al 2013: chs 6 and 7).

without the treaty reforms that strengthened the office.[9] Nor can it be seen as the cumulative result of accretion of power to the office over the long term or even from Delors to Barroso via Santer and Prodi, or as an instance of a more general process of presidentialization that has been taking place across liberal democracies.[10]

Rather the strong presidentialism of the Barroso Commission was shaped by the entrepreneurialism of the new President himself, drawing on new and old resources, and in realization of his claim that only strong presidential leadership could enable the Commission to navigate the challenges of the early twenty-first century. Barroso contended that only a Commission led by a strong President could be effective in an era where member governments were wary of EU initiatives, reflecting a lack of popular enthusiasm for EU action, where the Parliament was increasingly assertive, and where the Commission, led by a College of 25 (and soon 27) members following the 2004 (and 2007) enlargement and, after the implementation of the Treaty of Nice, composed for the first time of one Commissioner per member state. He argued that only a strong Commission President, supported by the Secretariat General, could control the policy agenda and ensure that the Commission tabled only those policy initiatives likely to muster political support in major national capitals, assure the accountability of the Commission to the European Parliament, and guarantee against the 'Balkanization' of the Commission executive (Peterson 2008: 763). The logic that a post-enlargement College required strong leadership -- 'a President that is seen by members of the Commission as a last resort and authority' -- appealed to many.[11]

Presidentialism: advantages and 'perils'

The centralization of power within the Commission since 2004 is a significant and important development. It has implications for the Commission—not least because it responds to long-standing criticisms of weak leadership, fragmentation (see, e.g. Spierenburg 1979), and a lack of control over decision-making and resource allocation—but also for the Union more broadly. Although there is much about the changes that is positive, there are also costs and risks.[12]

[9] Indeed, this was an outcome they wanted to avoid. The treaty changes were intended to resolve two distinct problems: the democratic deficit on the one hand and the problems that had led to the resignation of the Santer Commission on the other.

[10] The conditions identified in national political systems by Poguntke and Webb (2005), the proponents of the presidentiioalization thesis, do not apply in the same way in the EU context.

[11] For example, Danuta Hübner, a Commissioner in Barroso I and sometimes construed as a critic of the Commission President, told journalists in February 2009 that "the bigger the commission, the more presidential the system must be. This is not a negative assessment, it's just a reality." The same message was conveyed in interviews from the EUCIQ project. One manager commented, for example, that: 'There's been a heavy centralization of what we do, but I think to myself that that's inevitable, given the size of the College' (interview 134).

[12] Face-to-face interviews with Commission officials, cabinet members, and senior managers revealed an ambivalence about the strengthening of the Commission Presidency under Barroso. Although increasing presidential control was acknowledged, interviewees were divided on whether this centralization of authority was good or bad. Those in support cited the benefits of a single voice, greater coherence and more effective coordination, and a strong political message coming from the Secretariat General. Those opposed were concerned that the centre could not match the policy expertise in the departments, complained about an additional layer of bureaucracy, and were worried about perceived interference.

The benefits of strong presidential leadership of the Commission include the following:

- simplification and clarification of responsibility in and for the Commission
- enhances coherent policy making within the Commission and between the main EU institutions
- enables the Commission to speak with a single voice, thereby diminishing the risk of sending out contradictory signals that are politically damaging
- makes it easier to attune proposals to prevailing political climate
- minimizes the potential for disrepute, since the organization is identified with its President
- maximizes the effective use of resources in an organization historically been fragmented into 'baronies' and 'siloes'
- enables more effective internal coordination by strengthening the Commission's coordination capacity[13]

However, there are also potential costs:

- the stresses and pressures on a single individual
- other Commissioners, *cabinet* members and senior managers will be demotivated by tight control exerted by the centre and by limited opportunities for securing personal credit for initiatives
- Commissioners and their services may feel inhibited and discouraged from proposing major initiatives
- personalised authority may lead to excessive ambition or excessive caution (see, e.g. ,Kurpas et al 2008, Kaczyński 2009) and an end to innovation and experimentation
- the Commission may be too closely identified with a single individual necessarily from a large or small member state rather than a College in which all member states are represented

'Presidentialization'?

It is unclear whether the changes brought about is likely to prove enduring. First, the EU as a political system is characterized by fluidity and complexity, so that institutionalization is difficult and any particular intra- or inter-institutional is unlikely to be long-lasting. Second, Barroso's successor may have a different conception of the Presidency. Third, much has depended on the willingness of other members of the Commission to buy into Barroso's view that leadership of a large College must be presidential. Future colleagues may not share the same view. Fourth, the relationship between the Presidency and the Secretariat-General has worked effectively due partly to the relationship between José Manual Barroso and Catherine Day. Such a close partnership may not be possible in the future.

At the same time, there may be structural grounds for thinking that a strong presidency may survive. With a College of twenty-eight or more members, each with an interest in each other's portfolios, strong 'brokerage' may be a functional

[13] EUCIQ report on coordination; and attribution to Secretariat General

necessity. Second, the more the Commission is under siege, the more Commissioners and Commission officials appreciate central authority. Third, partner institutions and actors may appreciate the effectiveness and clarity that the strong presidency has brought to the organization and the benefits that have flown to the EU system more broadly as a consequence.

Conclusion

The contrast between presidentialism and collegiality oversimplifies the range of possible forms of collective leadership. Some forms of presidentialism combine accountability and efficiency that may be appropriate for certain complex political systems. For many decades a weak office, the Commission Presidency has been strengthened significantly since the late 1990s as a consequence of treaty change. Since 2004, President Barroso has further strengthened the office and, by transforming the Secretariat General into the personal service of the Commission President, significantly enhanced the Presidency's leadership capacity. As a result, the Commission has been able to solve many long-standing problems that previously beset the organization, which has benefitted not only the Commission, but the EU more broadly. However, there is some ambivalence about the new model Commission Presidency within the organization and it is unclear where the model will endure.

Note

This paper refers to data collected as part of 'The European Commission in Question' (EUCIQ), funded by the ESRC (RES - 062 - 23 – 1188), EU Consent and two private donors. The project created original date from two sources: responses to an online survey administered to a structured sample of Commission staff in autumn 2008 (n=4621; the achieved sample of 1901 fell to 1820 after iterative proportional sampling); and a structured programme of interviews conducted with Commissioners (n=5), *cabinet* members (n=28) and senior and middle managers (n=119) in the first half of 2009. For further details, see http://www.uea.ac.uk/politics-international-media/european-commission-in-question

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