

Greek nationals in the European Commission: national, Southern or simply European?

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This chapter reflects on Greek nationals in the European Commission. It considers the number of Greek staff members in the organisation, where they are located, and the country's profile relative to its share of the total European Union (EU) population. It discusses the age at which Greek nationals enter the Commission, their educational and professional backgrounds, patterns of mobility within the institution, and experience of the Commission as a workplace. It then examines the beliefs of Greek nationals concerning the EU as a system of governance, as it is and how it should be. It examines where Greek members of staff locate themselves in terms of their economic philosophy – whether they prefer more state or more market – and their social values – more liberal or more conservative. It also considers whether, towards the end of the Juncker Commission (2014-19) and after the experience of what became known as the second Greek crisis, Greeks nationals felt more or less optimistic about the future of the EU than their counterparts.



Across these areas, the chapter compares Greek nationals with staff members both from other southern European states – Cyprus, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain – and from the other EU member states more broadly. It asks what Greek nationals have in common and how they differ from their counterparts from other southern European countries and more broadly from the other 22 member states.

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Understanding the people who work for the European Commission

In the literature on the EU, studies that focus on the staff composition of the main institutions are sparse,³ and those that look beyond the backgrounds of senior officeholders are even rarer (see, e.g., Kassim *et al.*, 2013, Connolly and Kassim, 2015). This limitation of scholarship is important for several reasons. First, the experience and expertise of its workforce are a key determinant of an institution's capacities and capabilities (Kassim *et al.*, 2013). While this is an important consideration for any bureaucracy, it matters especially for the European Commission whose first President Walter Hallstein set as a priority the creation of a career service that would be able to rival those of the member states (Loth, Wallace, and Wessels, 1998).

Second, whether EU citizens can see their compatriots among the ranks of 'Brussels bureaucrats' (Stevens and Stevens, 2001) -- and be assured that people like them are involved in decision making -- is central to questions of legitimacy.⁴ In particular, the extent to which the Commission can be considered a representative bureaucracy is a key concern (see Meier 1975, 2018, Krislov, 2012). Yet few studies focus on or compare individual nationalities inside and outside the institution, or consider how closely the worldviews of member state nationals in the EU institutions align with those of their compatriots at home (though see Murdoch *et al.*, 2022).

Third, recent initiatives aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of nationals from certain member states in the Commission signal a new approach to the question of the 'geographical balance'. Historically, that issue was a taboo subject, but under the Juncker Commission the challenge of increasing recruitment from underrepresented member states led to a new openness to discussion of the issue (see, e.g. European Commission, 2018a). Efforts to correct imbalances continue to be ongoing under the von der Leyen Commission (see, e.g., European Commission, 2022).⁵

In a series of research projects, 'The European Commission in Question', 'European Commission: Facing the Future' and 'The European Commission:

3. Page (1997) was the pioneering work. See also Georgakakis and Weisbein (2010), Rowell and Manganot (2011), Georgakakis and Rowell (2013).

4. The distinction between 'active' and 'passive' representation is key here. For discussion, see Meier, Wrinkle, and Polinard (1999).

5. See European Democracy Consulting (2021) for a study of geographical representation across EU institutions.

Where now? Where next?', a team of researchers led by the two authors have sought to go beyond existing scholarship to discover more about the people who work for the EU administration.⁶ The ambition was to advance understanding of EU personnel by developing new knowledge about the origins, backgrounds, career experiences, and beliefs of EU civil servants, and testing empirically accepted wisdoms about 'Eurocrats';⁷ for example, whether the Commission is an 'administration of lawyers', or whether it is populated by federalists, who want always and everywhere to expand EU competencies and therefore their own power. The programme of research has offered new insights into the educational and professional pathways taken by the nationals of EU member states into the institutions, and their experience in career mobility as well as of the EU as workplace. Combined with the breakdowns by nationality that the Commission has made available, this makes it possible to develop a sense not only of the background demographics of staff, but what motivated them to undertake a career in the EU institutions and their beliefs about the EU as it is and how it should be.



Profile, numbers and location

Before looking at where precisely Greek nationals are located, it is important to begin with two general observations about the population of Greek staff members inside the Commission. The first relates to staff category. Staff in the Commission are employed in four main function groups: Administrators (AD officials or 'ADs'), or policy officers, who are the largest single group, accounting for 46 per cent of Commission staff; Assistants (AST and AST-SC officials), in technical or executive functions, who make up 30 per cent; and Temporary Agents (GFIV) and Contract Agents (GF-OTH), who can be employed in the full-range of work across the organisation on time-limited contracts, and who constitute 24 per cent of the overall workforce. Among Greek nationals in the Commission, 43 per cent are ADs, 26 per cent are ASTs or AST-SCs, and 32 per cent are in Temporary or Contract Agent roles.

6. 'The European Commission in Question', 'European Commission: Facing the Future' and 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?'

7. The term was first coined by Richard Mayne (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Table 1
Greek nationals compared to staff from other southern European member states: staff category and gender (%)

	Greece	Cyprus	Spain	Italy	Malta	Portugal	All staff
Staff category							
Administrator (AD)	43	51	45	37	78	46	46
Assistant (AST)	23	22	21	23	13	24	28
Assistant Secretaries (AST-SC)	3	2	2	2	2	1	2
Contract agents (GFIV)	14	9	15	17	2	12	10
Temporary agents (GF-OTH)	18	15	16	20	5	17	14
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total n	1,340	138	2,391	3,908	159	796	29,625
Gender							
Percentage of women among nationals	51	52	50	46	53	54	55
Percentage of women among Administrators (AD)	41	41	38	37	51	44	44
Percentage of women among Assistants (AST)	62	68	59	47	57	58	67
Percentage of women among Assistant Secretaries (AST SC)	62	33	78	80	67	90	79

Source: European Commission Statistical Bulletin, 2018

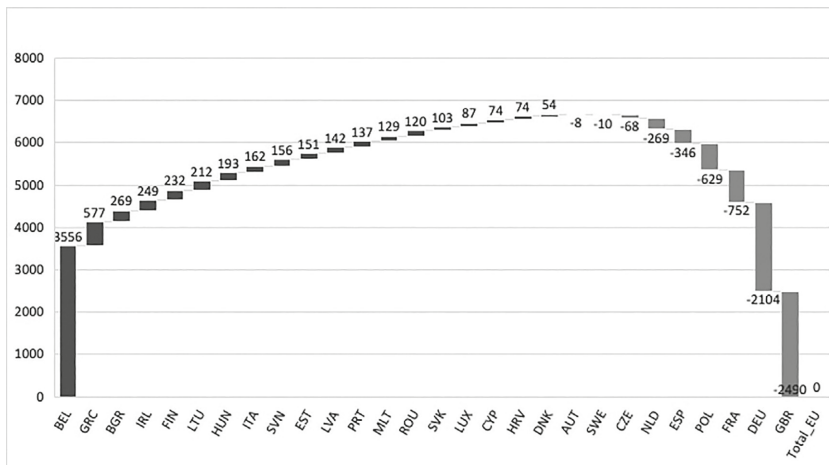
The second observation concerns gender. Across the Commission, 55 per cent of staff are women and 45 per cent men. Although women also outnumber men among Greek nationals, the margin of difference is slighter: 51 to 49 per cent. The same pattern is found in the gender breakdown among staff categories. Table 1 shows that across the Commission men are more likely to be AD officials (56 per cent), while women are more likely to be in AST (67 per cent) and AST-SC (79 per cent) roles.⁸ Among Greek nationals, 55 per cent of ADs are men, while 62 per cent of ASTs and of AST-SCs are women.

With respect to the number of Greek nationals, a key consideration is whether a country's representation is roughly in line with the size of its population relative to the EU as a whole. Taking 2018 as a reference point, European Commission data published by the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security reports that there were 1,340 Greek nationals working in the Commission out of a total

8. Malta, among whose nationals women outnumber men in all staff categories, is an exception.

workforce of 29,626 (European Commission, 2018b). This amounts to 4.5 per cent of staff, defined as officials, temporary agents, and contract agents, based on first nationality.⁹ Though at first sight the percentage looks small, Greece is in fact very well represented relative to its share of the total EU population. Indeed, an application of the proportionality index, introduced by Edward C. Page in his 1997 study of the *People who run Europe*,¹⁰ shows that Greece is among those member states that have a larger number of staff than its share of the EU population. In this ranking, as Figure 1 (below) shows, Greece comes second only to Belgium.

Figure 1
Number of member state nationals in the European Commission relative to share of the EU population, 2018



Source: Figure constructed by authors, applying Edward C. Page's (1997) proportionality index to data from European Commission (2018). 0 is where nationals from a particular member state are present in exact proportion to their country's share of the total EU population by number of staff. The blue bars show the countries whose nationals are present above this share, while the red bars show the countries below the share.

In terms of where Greek nationals are located (Appendix 2; European Commission, 2018b), the largest numbers are to be found in the Joint Research Centre (JRC) (134),

9. An interesting feature of the Commission is that a small number of staff hold more than one nationality.

10. Although proportionality can be measured in several different ways, from the stylized distributions used in allocating votes in the Council of the European Union and seats in the European Parliament, arguably the most precise metric is suggested by Edward C. Page. In his 1997 study, Page introduced the proportionality index which measures the presence of a member state by comparing the number of its nationals working in an institution to that country's relative share of the EU population.

the Directorate-General for translation (DGT) (107), and Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (RTD) (104). Next, but quite a long way behind, are the Directorate-General for Communication (CNECT) (55), the Secretariat General (51), the Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (COMM) (48), Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels (OIB) (47), the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) (43), and the Directorate-General for Agriculture (AGRI) (43). Thereafter, departments with more than 30 Greek nationals, but fewer than 40 include the Directorates-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship, and SMEs (GROW) (39), Health and Food Safety (SANTE) (38), Human Resources and Security (HR) (38), and Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO) (32), and the Publications Office (OP) (31). The departments in which Greece is most weakly represented include the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), the Directorates-General for Climate Action (CLIMA) and for Financial Stability, Financial Services, and Capital Markets Union (FISMA), Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), ECHO, Internal Audit Service (IAS), Infrastructure and Logistics in Luxembourg (OIL), European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO), and the *Comité central du personnel*. Given the importance to the country of its fishing and maritime industries, it is surprising that the headcount of Greek nationals in the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MARE) is 17 and in the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (MOVE) is 20.

Backgrounds

Although official statistics are available for the basic demographics of Commission staff, it is necessary to turn to data from ‘The European Commission in Question’ (2008), ‘European Commission: Facing the Future’ (2014), and ‘The European Commission: Where now? Where next?’ (2018) for information about other characteristics.¹¹ The data from these projects, which are based on samples that are representative by EU region, seniority, and gender, show that only a very small proportion of staff enter the Commission before their thirtieth birthday. Contrary to the accepted wisdom that Commission officials move directly from university into the ‘Brussels bubble’ where they remain for their entire career, the evidence shows that in fact an overwhelming majority – no fewer than 97

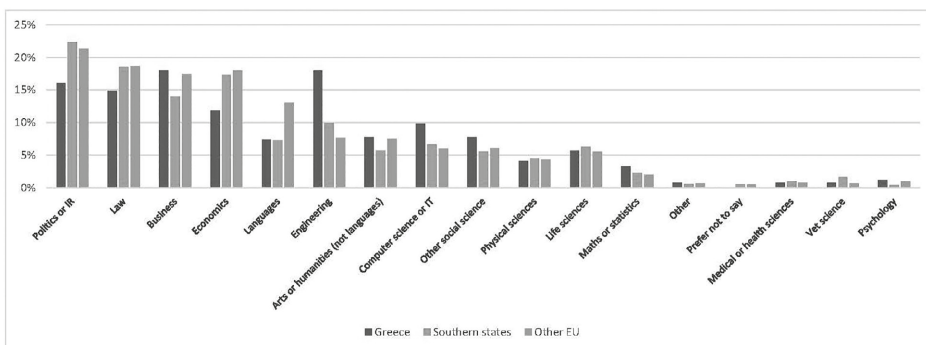
11. See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of the number of Greek respondents, other southern European respondents, and respondents from other member states taken from ‘The European Commission: Where now? Where next?’ (2018).

per cent of the respondents to our 2018 survey – have worked somewhere else before they join the Commission (see Table 2) and for a non-negligible period. In the case of Greek nationals, the average age when entering the Commission is 34 years and 8 months – a few months older than other southern European nationals – while the figure for other EU nationals is 33 years and 5 months. In all cases, the age of joining was slightly higher in 2018 than it had been in 2014.

A further accepted wisdom – that the EU is an ‘administration of lawyers’ – also receives little empirical support from the data. The Commission commands a far greater and more diverse range of expertise than suggested by this supposition. As Figures 2 and 3 show, comparing the educational backgrounds of staff by nationality reveals striking differences in the pathways into the organisation taken by nationals of the EU27 (Kassim and Connolly, 2019). Among Greek nationals, a plurality reported engineering – a background that distinguishes Greeks in the Commission from many other nationals -- and business (both 18 per cent) as the subjects in which they had attained their highest educational qualification. Politics or international relations (16 per cent) and law (15 per cent) followed in third and fourth place, while economics (12 per cent) and computer sciences (10 per cent) are fifth and sixth. The higher share of Greek nationals as compared to other nationalities with a background in engineering, mathematics, physical, life, computer and medical science is entirely consistent with the location of Greek nationals in the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (RTD) and the Joint Research Centre (JRC).

Figure 2

Commission staff. Subject of highest educational qualification reported by staff, 2018*



Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of ‘The European Commission: Where now? Where next?’ 2018.

*Responses to the question: *What is the main subject of your highest qualification? (You may give more than one answer e.g. if you have two Masters degrees in different subjects)*

In comparative terms, the educational background of Greek nationals differs from other southern European states, where politics or international relations tops the ranking (22 per cent). Law (19 per cent), economics (17 per cent) and business (14 per cent) are next, with engineering in fifth place at 10 per cent. Both the ranking and the subject-shares contrast even more sharply with other member states, where politics or international relations tops the list (21 per cent), followed by law (19 per cent), economics (18 per cent), business (17 per cent), and languages (13 per cent).

The professional experience of Commission staff is also more varied than accepted wisdoms suggest. Although it is widely assumed that Eurocrats have had little experience beyond the public sector and are likely to have moved from a position in their respective national civil service directly into the EU administration, data from all three projects reveals a much broader range of professional backgrounds. Most significantly, perhaps, given assumptions that Commission officials are lifelong bureaucrats, more than forty per cent have worked in the private sector, while a further eighteen per cent come from the liberal professions ('The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' 2018).

Cross-national differences in professional pathways are significantly smaller than differences in educational background. Of Greek respondents to the 2018 survey, 47 per cent had previously worked in business or private enterprise. The next most frequently occurring categories were public administration and education -- both at 27 per cent -- while twenty-three per cent had worked freelance or been self-employed. Ten per cent had worked for another EU institution, 7 per cent in an international organisation other than the EU, and 7 per cent for civil society or in a non-government organisation. Four per cent had worked for a political party, 3 per cent in journalism, and 2 per cent in a trade union or social movement.

The main differences when compared to their counterparts concern backgrounds in the civil service or as freelance or self-employed, where Greek nationals have different experience than either other southern states or other EU nationals. In terms of the civil service, the percentage from other southern countries is 4 per cent and the remaining EU states 8 per cent higher than among Greek nationals, while the figures for experience in freelance or self-employed work is nine per cent and 12 per cent higher amongst Greek nationals. In other categories, the breakdowns are remarkably similar (see Table 2).

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Table 2

Professional backgrounds. Greek nationals, other southern European nationals, and nationals from other EU member states compared, 2018 (%)*

	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals from other member states
Business or private enterprise	47	45	45
Civil service or public administration	27	31	35
Education	27	25	21
Other professions	22	18	18
Other EU institution(s)	10	8	8
Freelance/self-employed	23	14	11
Law	11	9	9
International organisation (non-EU)	7	8	7
Civil society/NGO	7	11	9
Journalism	3	3	3
Other	0	0	0
None	3	3	3
Trade union, social movement, interest group	2	1	1
Public relations	1	2	3
Political party or politics	4	1	2
Prefer not to say	0	0	0

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?'

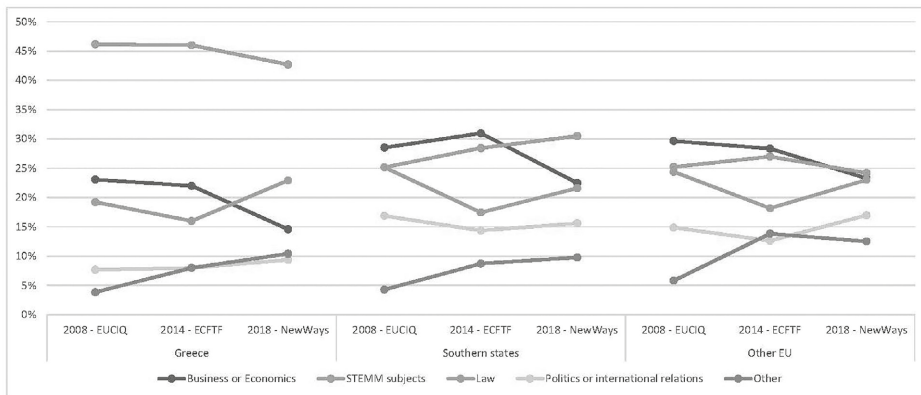
*Responses to the question: *What career (paid employment), if any, did you follow before you started working in the Commission, and for how long? (Please choose as many as are relevant and indicate the approximate number of years for each)*

Since multiple answers can be given, totals do not sum to 100 %

It is possible to explore some of these trends for a sub-sample of Commission staff between 2008, 2014 and 2018. While the surveys in 2014 and 2018 included all staff, the 2008 survey sample comprised AD officials and *cabinet* members only. To ensure comparability, only findings from the sub-sample are reported for these longer-term comparisons. These amount to just under 50 per cent of the full sample (see Table 1). Between 2008 and 2018, the number of Greek AD officials or *cabinet* members whose highest educational qualification is in law or especially politics or international relations increased, while those graduating in STEM subjects and especially in economics and business fell significantly (see Figure 3). In these respects, Greece differs from other southern states and

is more aligned with other EU countries, where the proportion of AD officials or *cabinet* members whose highest educational qualification is in law and politics or international relations also increased, while the number of those who graduated in business or economics fell. Overall trends in the main professional background amongst Greek nationals and other nationals (from this sub-sample of AD officials and *cabinet* members) between 2008 and 2018 are also roughly similar, as Figure 4 shows.

Figure 3
Change in subject of highest educational qualification reported by AD staff and cabinet members, 2008 to 2018



Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'The European Commission in Question' (2008), 'European Commission: Facing the Future' (2014), and 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' (2018)

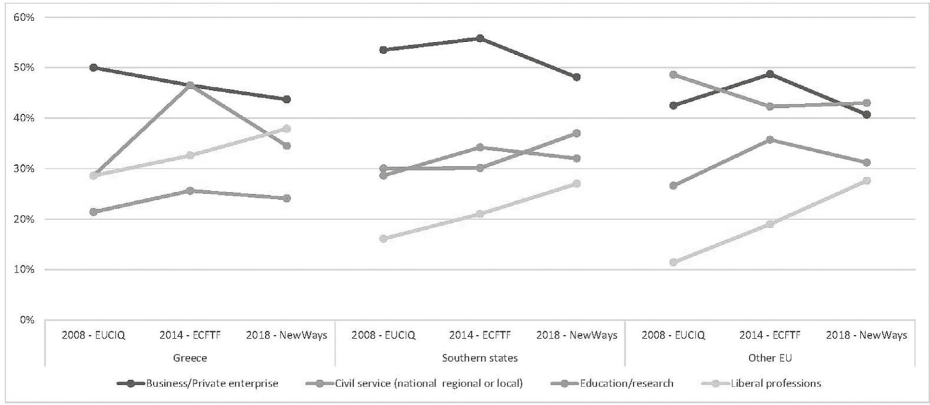
Motivation, careers, and mobility

In the context of the so-called 'war for talent', the task of making the EU institutions an attractive place to work for well-qualified, multilingual graduates, and addressing the underrepresentation of certain nationalities is shared between several bodies. The European Commission, the European Personnel and Selection Office, which organises recruitment to EU institutions and agencies, and national governments have all paid increasing attention in recent years to why people choose to pursue a career in the EU, the job values of staff, and employee experience of the workplace.

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Figure 4

Top four professional backgrounds reported by AD officials and cabinet members, 2008 to 2018: Greeks, other southern European nationals, and nationals from other EU member states



Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'The European Commission in Question' (2008), 'European Commission: Facing the Future' (2014), and 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' (2018)

Looking first at what leads individuals to join the Commission, there is considerable similarity between Greek nationals and others. The top four motivations cited by respondents, for example, are the same: 'Commitment to Europe', 'International experience', 'Competitive remuneration', and 'Job stability'. However, the ranking varies between the three groups. 'Competitive remuneration', the reason stated most frequently by Greek respondents for joining the Commission -- nine per cent more than other southern Europeans and 14 per cent more Greek nationals than respondents from the other member states -- is only the third most cited motivation for nationals from elsewhere (see Table 3). By contrast, 11 per cent fewer Greek nationals than southern European respondents and eight per cent fewer than other nationals state 'commitment to Europe'.

Table 3

Motivation for deciding to pursue a career in the European Commission. Greeks, other southern European nationals, and nationals from other EU member states compared, 2018 (%)*

	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals from other member states
Commitment to Europe	71	82	79
International experience	78	81	79
Competitive remuneration	82	73	68
Job stability	52	43	44
Quality of the work	37	39	38
Public service	32	41	38
Professional development or training	46	40	38
Promising career prospects	41	25	26
Influencing or shaping policy	32	29	30
Commitment to a particular policy area	27	30	27
Personal or family reasons	19	13	15
Other	0	1	0
I was asked to apply	4	3	7
Prefer not to say	0	0	0

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' 2018.

*Responses to the question: *Why did you choose to follow a career in the EU civil service? (Please choose as many as are relevant).*

Since multiple answers can be given, totals do not sum to 100 %

Moreover, job stability is more highly valued by Greek nationals than their counterparts -- ~~nine~~ and ~~eight~~ per cent by Southern European and by other nationals respectively. Beyond the top four motivations, other differences relate to public service, which is ranked lower by Greek respondents, while they rank promising career prospects, professional development or training and, to a lesser extent, personal or family reasons, more highly. Although some studies have speculated on the factors that shape these motivations, how, when, and why the prospect of pursuing a career in the Commission becomes an ambition still remains an under-researched area.

Job values offer a further insight into what individuals find attractive in the workplace, and what they like and dislike. Greek nationals cite 'making a

difference to the life of EU citizens’ as what they most value about working for the European Commission (see Table 4). To a slightly higher degree than their counterparts from elsewhere in southern Europe and significantly more than respondents from other member states, they also value ‘building Europe’ – 79 per cent compared to 77 and 69 per cent respectively. Although the ‘quality of the work we do’ is cited less frequently by Greek respondents than their counterparts, the opposite is the case with ‘influencing policy’ by a margin of six per cent in relation to other southern states and 11 per cent compared with other EU countries.

Table 4

Job values. Greeks, other southern European nationals, and nationals from other EU member states compared, 2018 (%)*

	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals from other member states
Building Europe	79	77	69
Making a difference to the life of EU citizens	80	74	69
The quality of the work that we do	62	70	70
The remuneration package	65	51	46
Working in an international environment	69	72	68
The calibre of my colleagues	47	53	54
Influencing policy	56	50	45

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of ‘The European Commission: Where now? Where next?’ 2018

*Responses to the question: *What do you value most about working for the Commission? Please comment on each of the following propositions.*

With respect to job satisfaction (Table 5), 73 per cent of Greek respondents are ‘proud when I tell others I work for the Commission’ – marginally less than those from southern countries, but six per cent higher than respondents from other EU member states. Eighty-four per cent consider that the Commission is a good employer, which is higher than either respondents from other southern states (71 per cent) or other European states (65 per cent). Sixty-seven per cent of Greek nationals, meanwhile, consider that they ‘receive a fair remuneration package’ -- a couple of percentage points lower than the other two groups.

Table 5

Job satisfaction. Views of Greeks, other southern European nationals, and nationals from other EU member states on work and Commission as an employer compared, 2018 (%)*

	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals from other member states
I am proud when I tell others I work for the Commission	73	76	67
I feel I receive a fair remuneration package	67	69	70
The Commission is a good employer	84	71	65
I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission	33	31	31

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' (2018)

*Responses to the question: *We are interested in your view(s) on your work and the Commission as an employer. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following propositions: ...*

In an institution where levels of mobility are generally low, 30 per cent of Greek respondents report that their current position is the only position in which they have worked in the Commission (Table 6). This figure is slightly higher than for nationals from other southern states and five per cent higher than for other EU nationals. A similar picture emerges for inter-departmental mobility, which is also relatively low in the Commission (Alayrac, Connolly, and Kassim, 2019). Forty-nine per cent of Greek respondents have worked in one Directorate-General compared to 45 per cent and 43 per cent of respondents from respectively other southern European countries and other European countries. At the same time, more Greek nationals agree that 'Gaining experience by working in several DGs is advantageous to career development' and that 'I know what is expected of me if I am to advance my career within the Commission' than their counterparts from elsewhere, but report that they are less able than members of staff from other European countries 'to access the right career development opportunities'.

Table 6

Staff mobility in the European Commission. Greeks, other southern European nationals, and nationals from other EU member states compared, 2018 (%)

	Is your current position the only position you have held in the Commission?			Is your current DG the only department in which you have worked in the Commission?		
	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals from other EU member states	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals from other EU member states
Yes	30	29	25	49	45	43
No	70	71	74	51	55	56
Prefer not to say	0	0	0	0	0	0
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' (2018)

Responses to the questions: *Is your current position the only position you have held in the Commission?* And *Is your current DG the only department in which you have worked in the Commission?*

Beliefs, views, and attitudes

Other accepted wisdoms about 'Eurocrats' concern their beliefs and supposed ideological commitments. The three most widespread – that the Commission is populated by zealous federalists, that it is a citadel of neoliberalism, and that it is culturally liberal -- are not necessarily consistent or imputed by the same sub-literatures. The first dates back to the creation of the European Communities, the second is more recent and is associated with the Eurozone crisis, while the third is increasingly asserted by Eurosceptic populists.

'Zealous federalists'?

Looking first at federalism, the three studies on the Commission aim to capture the beliefs of EU civil servants by asking for their views in three areas:¹² where they locate themselves on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 corresponds to the EU being a union of sovereign states and 10 corresponds to the EU as a supranational state; what model of EU governance they favour; and, with respect to five different policy areas, where they think decision-making authority should ideally be placed - where 0 is where decision-making authority is currently located, -5 is exclusively at the national or sub-national level and + 5 exclusively at the EU level.

12. For a discussion of the use of these measures, see Connolly and Kassim (2016).

With respect to where respondents locate themselves on the national-EU governance scale, Greek nationals placed themselves at the 7 mark (6.94) -- a strong indicator of a preference for a more pro-integrationist position (see Table 7). Greek respondents were marginally more integrationist than their counterparts from elsewhere in southern Europe (6.88) and significantly more integrationist than their counterparts from other member states (6.14). Interestingly, in all three groups, there was a movement towards a more integrationist position between 2014 and 2018, but the largest move has been among Greek nationals – 0.51 vs 0.34 and 0.35 respectively.

Table 7

Positioning of staff on European integration. Greeks, other southern European nationals, and nationals of other EU member states compared, 2014 and 2018*

	EU integration	
	2014	2018
Greek nationals	6.43	6.94
Other southern European nationals	6.54	6.88
Nationals from other EU member states	5.79	6.14

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'European Commission: Facing the Future' (2014), and 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' (2018)

*Responses to the question: *We are interested in your views on European integration, the process of economic, political, legal, social and cultural integration, and the related transfer of powers. Where would you place yourself on the question of European integration, where 0 corresponds to the EU being a union of sovereign states and 10 corresponds to the EU as a supranational state?*

Table 8

Model of EU governance favoured by staff. Greeks, other southern European nationals, and nationals of other EU member states compared, 2014 and 2018*

8.a

'The member states - not the Commission or European Parliament - should be the central players in the European Union' (%)

	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals of other EU member states
Agree	17	12	17
Neither agree nor disagree	19	14	18
Disagree	60	70	61
DK or PNS	3	3	4
	100%	100%	100%

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8.b

‘The College of Commissioners should become the government of the European Union’(%)

	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals of other EU member states
Agree	35	48	35
Neither agree nor disagree	22	19	19
Disagree	38	27	40
DK or PNS	4	6	6
	100%	100%	100%

8.c

‘An EU where the Commission performs the functions of policy initiator and guardian of the treaties and where the Council and European Parliament share legislative power’(%)

	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals of other EU member states
Agree	77	71	77
Neither agree nor disagree	16	15	12
Disagree	6	9	7
DK or PNS	2	4	4
	100%	100%	100%

8.d

‘Some want the Commission to share its sole right of initiative with the European Parliament.
What is your view? (%)’

	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals of other EU member states
Agree	41	42	38
Neither agree nor disagree	23	18	17
Disagree	32	33	37
DK or PNS	5	7	8
	100%	100%	100%

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of ‘The European Commission: Where now? Where next?’ (2018)

*Question asked: ‘We are interested in your views about where power should reside in the European Union. What is your assessment of the following propositions?’ ...

On preferred model of EU governance, respondents were asked for their views on four propositions (see Table 8). The first was ‘Some argue that member states—not the Commission or European Parliament—should be the central players in the European Union’. The second was ‘Some people want the College of Commissioners to become the government of the European Union’. The third was ‘An EU where the Commission performs the functions of policy initiator and guardian of the treaties and where the Council and European Parliament share legislative power’. The fourth, which was less about overall governance, but about a rebalancing of agenda-setting power within the existing system, was: ‘Some want the Commission to share its sole right of legislative initiative with the European Parliament’.

On the first of these questions, the responses of Greek nationals were close to those of other southern Europeans in opposing a state-centric EU and supporting the idea of the Commission as a government of the EU, but significantly different from those of other EU states. With respect to a state-centred vision, the position of Greek respondents (17 per cent agreed, 60 per cent disagreed) was closer to other EU member states, where 17 per cent agreed, 61 per cent disagreed, than it was to other southern European nationals, where the respective figures were 12 and 70 per cent. The question of whether the Commission should be a future government produced a similar distribution of views: 35 per cent of Greek respondents agreed – the same percentage of respondents from other member states, compared with 48 per cent of other southern European nationals -- while 38 per cent of Greek respondents disagreed, compared with 40 per cent respondents from other member countries and 27 per cent from other southern member states. Greek respondents were similarly aligned with ‘other EU’, but diverged from nationals from other southern member states on the third option, which essentially asked views on the institutional status quo: 77 per cent of Greek and other EU respondents agreed, while 6 and 7 per cent respectively disagreed, while 71 per cent of respondents from southern European states agreed and 9 disagreed. On whether the European Parliament should share the right of legislative initiative, respondents from the three groups were much more closely aligned: 41 per cent of Greek respondents, 42 per cent of respondents from other southern members, and 38 per cent of respondents from ‘other EU’ agreed, while 32 per cent, 33 per cent, and 37 per cent respectively disagreed.

Policy change was the third dimension of the investigation of preferences concerning federalism and state centrism to be investigated. Staff were asked where decision-making authority was located and where, in an ideal world, they

would like it to be located. The difference between the two serves as a measure for whether respondents would prefer to see decision-making to be closer to the member state level (negative numbers) or to the EU level (positive numbers). In all cases, all nationals expressed a preference for ‘more’ rather than ‘less’ Europe. However, as Table 9 shows, there is variation both between policy areas and between the three groups that are the focus of this chapter.

Table 9

Difference between preference for locus of decision-making authority and actual locus. Greeks, other southern European nationals, and nationals of other EU member states compared, 2018*

	Greek nationals	Other southern European nationals	Nationals of other EU member states
Agriculture policy	1.1823	1.237	0.7146
Asylum and Immigration policy	2.817	2.6594	1.9247
Economic and Fiscal policy	1.9459	2.3197	1.8395
Environmental policy	3.2648	3.1798	2.8926
Foreign and Security policy	2.5346	2.8425	2.4058

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of ‘The European Commission: Where now? Where next?’ 2018

*Responses to the question: *We are interested in your views on the location of decision-making authority on a range of policies. On the scale below 0 is the point where decision-making authority is currently located. Please indicate where, if -5 is exclusively at the national or sub-national level and +5 is exclusively at the EU level, you think decision-making authority should ideally be located.*

First, Greek respondents share the same ranking with other southern European nationals, while both groups diverged from ‘other EU’. All three groups agree that less integration is needed in agricultural policy and integration is needed most in foreign policy and environmental policy, but respondents from Greece and other southern European states prioritise more integration in asylum and immigration policy compared with economic and fiscal policy – perhaps not surprising given their geographical location and immigration routes into Europe. Second, although Greeks and respondents from other southern states share the same ranking, Greek respondents are marginally less enthusiastic about Europe in agriculture, economic and fiscal policy -- unsurprising in view of the Eurozone crisis and the second Greek crisis – and in foreign and security policy, but feel somewhat more intensely about asylum and immigration, and environmental policy than other southern European nationals. Third, respondents from other

EU member states are less enthusiastic than their Greek or southern European counterparts for more Europe across all five policy areas.

Neoliberals

The beliefs of Commission personnel became a matter of particular interest during the financial and economic crisis, when scholars and others speculated that the neoliberal beliefs of staff accounted for a hard-line, pro-austerity position. Asked in 2018 to locate themselves on a scale where 0 is 'more state' and 10 is 'more market', economic philosophies are polarised but the average (mean) is 4.64 and the modal value is 3, suggesting a leaning towards more state involvement. Interestingly, and despite expectations that they would be more strongly disposed towards 'more state' and less to 'more market', the survey results show that Greek nationals only slightly favour more state (4.78, see Table 10). Respondents from other southern European countries show a slightly stronger preference for 'more state' (4.31). However, respondents from other European states position themselves more or less centrally at 4.77. Contrasting findings from 2014 to 2018, Greek nationals appear to becoming more pro-market compared to other southern nationals or their counterparts from other EU member states.

Table 10

Economic and cultural values of staff. Responses from Greek nationals, nationals of other southern members, and other EU member states compared, 2014 and 2018*

	Economic values		Cultural values	
	2014	2018	2014	2018
Greek nationals	4.47	4.78	3.25	3
Other southern European nationals	4.38	4.31	2.96	2.73
Nationals from other EU member states	5	4.77	3.05	2.8

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'European Commission: Facing the Future' (2014), and 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' (2018)

*Responses to the questions: *People often think of themselves in terms of their personal philosophical stance on economic issues. Some favour an active role for government on economic policy questions. Others look primarily to markets. Where would you place yourself in terms of economic philosophy on a scale of 0-10, where 0 represents a greater role for government and 10 a greater role for markets?; People often think of themselves in terms of their personal philosophical stance on social and cultural issues. Many people who consider themselves to be progressive/libertarian tend to favour expanded personal freedoms on (for example) abortion, same-sex marriage, and so on. People on the conservative/traditionalist side tend to favour more traditional notions of family, morality, and order. Where would you place yourself in terms of social-cultural philosophy on a scale of 0-10, where 0 represents more liberal and 10 more conservative?*

Cultural liberals

The social values of Commission officials have become more salient with the rise of Eurosceptic populism, which criticises 'Brussels' for its elite attitudes that it claims are out of touch with European citizens. In surveys of Commission staff, the studies asked respondents to locate themselves on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'more liberal' and 10 is 'more conservative' (see Table 10). In general, Commission personnel locate themselves at the more liberal end of the spectrum. In 2018, the result for all staff was 2.8.

The comparison between Greek nationals, other southern Europeans, and the nationals from other member states does reveal a number of differences. The most culturally liberal are respondents from other southern European countries at 2.73, followed by respondents from other European member states at 2.8. Greek respondents are the least liberal – or the most conservative – at 3. As with economic philosophy, the surveys show that there has been a shift over time. In the case of social values, the move has been in a more liberal direction in all three groups. Identifying the drivers of this trend would be an interesting avenue for future research.

Optimism

Both the 2014 and 2018 surveys asked staff whether they were optimistic or pessimistic about the future. Given the experience of the Eurozone crisis and the second Greek crisis, it was anticipated that less optimism and greater pessimism would be shown on the part of respondents from southern Europe and Greece in particular. These expectations were only partly met. In 2014, Greek respondents were indeed less optimistic than respondents from other southern European countries – 29 per cent to 34 per cent – and much less optimistic than respondents from other member states (40 per cent). They were also more pessimistic than either group – 49 per cent versus 37 and 34 per cent respectively.

Differences in outlook were still evident four years' later, but in 2018 the views of respondents from Greece and other southern European states were more closely aligned. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents in both groups reported themselves optimistic and 35 and 36 per cent respectively pessimistic. This contrasted with respondents from other member states, where 45 per cent declared themselves optimistic and 30 per cent pessimistic. Further research is necessary to determine exactly what concerns were being reflected in these results, and whether the economic crisis and the sense that southern European states were bearing the brunt of the influx of asylum-seekers lie behind the

different levels of optimism and pessimism felt by respondents from southern European member states and those from other parts of the EU.

Table 11

Optimism and pessimism among Commission staff about the future. Greeks, other southern European nationals, and staff of other EU member states compared, 2018 (%)*

	Greek nationals		Other southern European nationals		Nationals of other EU member states	
	2014	2018	2014	2018	2014	2018
Optimistic	29	37	34	37	40	45
Neither optimistic nor pessimistic	19	25	26	25	25	23
Pessimistic	49	35	37	36	34	30
DK or PNS	2	2	2	1	2	2
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' (2018)

*Responses to the question: *How do you feel about the EU's future?*

Conclusion

This discussion has offered a detailed profile of Greek nationals among the staff of the European Commission which it has presented in comparative perspective. It has shown, first, that Greece is very well represented. Greek respondents join at a slightly later age than their counterparts from elsewhere, and while just over half (51%) are women this is lower than among other national populations in the organisation (55%), they are less likely to be in the administrator (more senior) roles. Looking at where Greek nationals are most likely to be located, RTD, JRC, and DGT are the departments of the Commission that have the strongest Greek presence.

The departments in which Greek nationals are found in the Commission coincides with their educational profile. One of the striking findings is the large number of Greek respondents who have a training in engineering, which explains at least in part why RTD and JRC are important destinations. In other respects, the combination of educational background in law, business and economics is similar. The relatively small proportion of Greek respondents with a languages background is surprisingly, especially given the number of Greek nationals in DGT. With respect to professional background, Greek nationals differ in the

higher numbers with experience in business, the liberal professions or freelance and especially the low numbers who have worked in the civil service.

In terms of values and beliefs, Greek nationals are less 'federalist' than respondents from other southern European members and on the questions on EU governance tend to align more closely with 'other EU'. This is an interesting and unexpected result, which it would be interesting to explore in future research. However, with regard to the locus of decision-making authority, Greek respondents showed a stronger preference for 'more EU' in four of five policy areas -- economic and fiscal policy was the exception -- than respondents from other southern European states. In economic philosophy, Greek respondents' preference for 'more state' to 'more market' was more intense than respondents from other members states, and in their social values, they located themselves at the liberal end of the spectrum, but respondents from both the other groups were more liberal. Furthermore, Greek respondents stood out in 2014 for their greater pessimism and lower levels of optimism, but in 2018 were more closely aligned with respondents from other southern European states.

The above analysis has shown that the characteristics of Greek nationals in the Commission are sometimes distinctive, sometimes aligned with other European states, and sometimes no different in their backgrounds or beliefs from their counterparts from other member states. More generally, it demonstrates the value of 'opening the black box' of the Commission and subjecting accepted wisdoms about the people who work for it to the empirical test. It also underlines that the views of Commission staff on issues of governance and preference for supranationalism or integration cannot be easily reduced to a single measure or metric (Connolly and Kassim, 2016).

Appendix 1

Breakdown of nationality of respondents to the 'European Commission Where now? Where next?' survey, 2018

	Greek nationals	Southern European states: Cyprus, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain	Other EU nations
Austria	0	0	178
Belgium	0	0	640
Bulgaria	0	0	100
Cyprus	0	39	0
Czech republic	0	0	129
Denmark	0	0	110
Estonia	0	0	36
Finland	0	0	135
France	0	0	692
Germany	0	0	798
Greece	198	0	0
Hungary	0	0	195
Ireland	0	0	141
Italy	0	666	0
Latvia	0	0	47
Lithuania	0	0	66
Luxembourg	0	0	30
Malta	0	42	0
Netherlands	0	0	231
Poland	0	0	336
Portugal	0	167	0
Romania	0	0	157
Slovakia	0	0	54
Slovenia	0	0	41
Spain	0	452	0
Sweden	0	0	175
United Kingdom	0	0	391
	198	1366	4682

Source: Survey of European Commission staff, conducted as part of 'The European Commission: Where now? Where next?' 2018

Responses to the question: What is the country of your (present) nationality?

GREEK NATIONALS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:
NATIONAL, SOUTHERN OR SIMPLY EUROPEAN?

Appendix 2

Distribution of Greek nationals and all staff by Commission service, 2018

	Greek nationals	All staff
COLLÈGE	19	470
SG	51	723
SJ	17	402
COMM	48	944
EPSC	1	50
TF50		53
ECFIN	27	593
GROW	39	874
COMP	42	802
EMPL	29	706
AGRI	43	889
MOVE	20	443
ENER	29	577
ENV	22	447
CLIMA	7	188
CNECT	55	851
RTD	104	1 205
JRC	134	2 731
MARE	17	313
FISMA	7	315
REGIO	32	591
TAXUD	20	413
EAC	19	441
SANTE	38	705
HOME	28	474
JUST	10	392
FPI	2	174
TRADE	19	573
NEAR	32	936
DEVCO	43	1 959
ECHO	9	368
ESTAT	25	642
HR	38	1 173
DIGIT	31	502
BUDG	15	444
IAS	7	145
OLAF	18	339

SCIC	23	752
DGT	107	2 178
OP	31	555
OIB	47	1 255
PMO	23	561
OIL	7	309
EPSO	2	125
CdP-OSP	3	44
Total	1 340	29 626
	4.5	100.0

Source: Table is based on data extracted by the authors from European Commission Statistical Bulletin, 2018

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