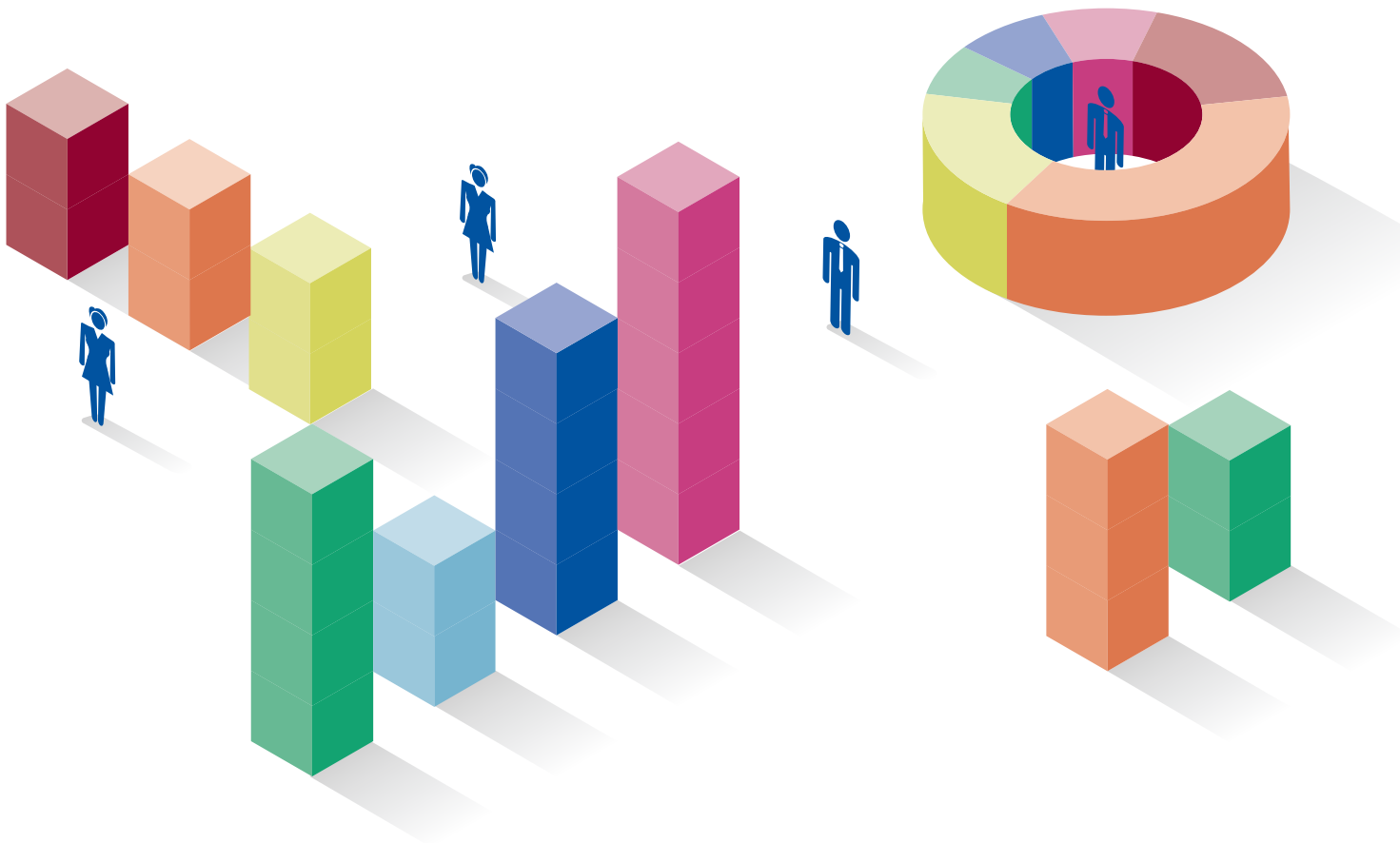




The European Commission: Facing the Future

Sara Connolly and Hussein Kassim



Preface

In a decade that has been extremely testing for the peoples, governments and institutions of the European Union, the European Commission has faced a number of challenges. First, it had to meet the institutional demands arising from the enlargement of the EU in 2004, in 2007 and in 2013¹. As well as finding a way to work with a College of 27 and later 28 members - one from each member state - the Commission had to absorb a substantial number of new recruits from the acceding states. Second, the outbreak of the financial and economic crisis confronted the EU with arguably the most serious challenge in the history of the European Communities. While the crisis demanded an urgent policy response from the Commission, the political fallout saw a rise in Euroscepticism and calls to downsize and deprivilege the EU civil service. Third, following a protracted process of constitutional deliberation, treaty negotiation, rejection and re-negotiation, the enactment of the Lisbon Treaty introduced significant changes to the EU political system. As well as creating new offices and institutions, the treaty altered the balance of powers and responsibilities between the institutions of the EU.

Over the same period, the Commission has undergone significant internal changes. José Manuel Barroso became Commission President in 2004 in the wake of the ‘big bang’ enlargement and following implementation under his predecessor of the most far-reaching administrative reform in the Commission’s history, aimed at enhancing the Commission’s central planning and programming capacity, ensuring rigorous financial management and control, and modernizing the Staff Regulations. From the outset, the former Portuguese Prime Minister took an avowedly presidential approach to leadership

of the organization. Emphasizing the importance of coordination and coherent action, Barroso sought to strengthen the Presidency organizationally by among other things transforming the Secretariat General into a service of the Commission President and by supporting a more interventionist role for the Secretariat General in policy making². The Secretariat General also underwent two reorganizations: the first to reflect the Commission President’s ‘better regulation’ agenda, the second to improve coordination and oversight across the policy cycle. Other institutional and procedural changes were incremental until the review of the Staff Regulations, which led to a significant revision in 2014.

After a decade of change and adjustment, it is timely to reflect on aspects of the Commission’s organization, the changes it has enacted and how well it is placed to respond to current and future challenges.

- Does the Commission have a workforce with the skills, experience and diversity necessary for the organization to carry out its responsibilities effectively?
- Can the organization attract highly motivated, well qualified graduates in an increasingly competitive labour market?
- Ten years after the ‘big bang’ enlargement, is there a common culture or do recruits from the EU13 (that is, member states that joined the EU in 2004 or after) have a different profile and outlook to their colleagues from the EU15 (that is, member states that joined the EU before 2004)?
- What do Commission employees think of the 2014 reform of the Staff Regulations, and what kind of consequences do they foresee for the organization and the people who work for it?

¹ The states joining the EU in 2004 were Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania acceded in 2007 and Croatia became the EU’s twenty-eighth member in 2013.

² The position of the Secretariat General had already been enhanced by the Kinnock reforms and by its role in impact assessment (Kassim 2006, Radaelli and Meuwese 2010).

- Do employees believe that the ambitions of President Barroso and Secretary General Day for more coherent action on the part of the Commission have been realized, and what is their attitude towards centralized leadership?
- Do staff think that communications are managed effectively within the organization and that the Commission communicates clearly with the outside world?

This report, informed by the views of Commission staff across and at all levels of the organization, and written by two independent academic researchers, aims to assist in such a reflection. It presents the preliminary findings of research carried out by a team of researchers, led by Professor Hussein Kassim and Dr Sara Connolly, both University of East Anglia (UEA), and that includes Professor Michael W. Bauer, German University of Administrative Sciences Speyer, Professor Renaud Dehousse, Sciences Po Paris, and Professor Andrew Thompson, University of Edinburgh. Former and current doctoral students at UEA, Dr Henry Allen, Dr Vanessa Buth, Ms Suzanne Doyle, Ms Helen Fitzhugh, Ms Francesca Vantaggiato, and Dr Nicholas Wright, as well as Mr Stefan Becker, PhD candidate at the German University of Administrative Sciences Speyer and Ms Nuria Garcia, PhD candidate at Sciences Po Paris, worked as part of the team in the field and at home, while officials in the Commission's Directorate General for Human Resources (DG HR) provided logistical assistance, and staff and interns at the East of England Office in Brussels and Jenny Wilkinson in the School of Political, Social and International Studies at UEA lent occasional administrative support.

The findings reported below are based on data collected by the research team from three sources:

- an online survey administered to all Commission staff in March-April 2014
- interviews conducted by members of the research team between April and October 2014, and
- focus groups carried out by the research team in May and September 2014.

These instruments enabled views to be solicited from a representative sample of the Commission workforce, including members of the Commission, and by combining qualitative and quantitative data, allowed the team to take a mixed methods approach. The results presented below are mainly descriptive. However, analysis of the data will continue and further findings will be published over the next three years. Information, briefings and notification of publications based on the research will be available in time on the project website at <https://www.uea.ac.uk/political-social-international-studies/facingthefuture>

Although the project was endorsed by the Secretary General of the European Commission and the Director General of Human Resources, and links to the survey, as well as communication about the project, were distributed to Commission employees by DG HR, the research team enjoyed full academic independence in its conception, design and execution. Funding for the fieldwork was raised by Professor Kassim and Dr Connolly from an independent, private source.

Layout

The report is divided into three parts: preface and general observations, which set out the background for the report and describe the data used; an executive summary; and six chapters, which form the main body of the document.

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Executive summary

Chapter 1 The Commission's workforce

As with other public administrations, the Commission needs a workforce that is expert, representative of the population that it serves, and offers equal opportunities for career advancement to both its male and female staff. With respect to the first, the survey data shows that, contrary to popular perceptions, the Commission commands a considerable diversity of expertise and experience. On the second, at least by one measure of representativeness there is an issue. There are fewer nationals from France, Germany, Poland, and the United Kingdom in the Commission in proportion to those countries' relative share of the EU population. Third, although important progress has been made in improving the gender balance within the Commission, women remain underrepresented in middle and senior management and are less positive about their prospects for career progression. At the same time, when questioned about their treatment by managers and expectations of them at work, male and female respondents did not report significant differences, except when their managers assign tasks of high visibility.

Recommendations

The Commission has a wealth of human capital at its disposal, but the range of educational and professional experience is not well known outside the organization and not utilised as fully as it might be inside. The Commission might record more systematically the educational qualifications and professional experience of its staff and take a more active approach in career management in order to ensure that maximum use is made of the high calibre human resources at its disposal.

The underrepresentation of nationals from the larger member states is a serious problem. The importance of geographical balance as underlined by Vice President Šeřčovič and the new possibility of running member state-specific external competitions is an important response,

but the Commission needs to work with the governments of underrepresented member states to create programmes that encourage well qualified candidates to apply for positions at all levels of the organization.

The Commission has made significant progress towards correcting the gender imbalance within the organization and evidence from the online survey suggests that gender equality is taken seriously by managers. However, a problem remains at middle and especially senior management levels. The Commission could learn from its most successful departments to ensure that best practice is applied. It could also investigate what deters women from seeking promotion and study the results of promotion committees.

Chapter 2 Why join the Commission? Recruitment in a highly competitive labour market

If in an increasingly competitive market place it is to attract well-qualified graduates, the Commission needs to know what motivated its current staff to join the organization, how they experience the Commission as a workplace and what aspects of working life staff like and dislike. 'Experience of an international environment' and 'commitment to Europe' are the two most frequently cited motivations, followed by 'competitive remuneration' and 'job stability'. A majority of staff offer a positive evaluation of the Commission as a workplace and believe that they are well managed, even if they think that too many approval stages and unnecessary tasks or projects adversely affect the quality of their work. Respondents are less happy about career progression and about formal feedback. A significant number think that career development in the Commission is problematic and are unimpressed by the appraisal system. In the wake of the financial and economic crisis, staff morale is not high, but neither is it at rock bottom.

Recommendations

Commission staff generally offer a very positive evaluation of their job and workplace, but the picture across the organization is differentiated. In particular, staff in delegations register higher levels of dissatisfaction than employees based in Brussels and Luxembourg. The causes of this dissatisfaction need to be better understood by the organization and solutions sought as appropriate.

More than half of respondents identify too many approval stages, and unnecessary tasks or projects as factors that adversely affect their work. These are factors that lie largely within the Commission's control to address. The first calls for efforts to reduce the number of signatures needed for routine work items; the second for more efficient management.

Although Commission staff are strongly engaged and highly committed to the organization, more than a third are dissatisfied with the availability of information about career advancement, current arrangements concerning career progression, and professional development opportunities. Career development is somewhat arbitrary and little guidance is offered to employees on how to plot, plan and manage a career. Staff who do not aspire to rise through management ranks, but who want mobility and a varied career that suits their talents, consider themselves to be especially disadvantaged. The Commission needs urgently to develop a robust system of talent management so that it can offer existing staff the possibility of professional fulfillment, make the best use of the resources at its disposal as an organization, and remain attractive to well-qualified graduates. Career paths need to be mapped for different professional groups, horizontal mobility to be centrally supported and effectively resourced, and opportunities for professional development to be systematized, publicized and accessible. The Commission also needs to align its human resources practices to an organization that is fundamentally career based, but that increasingly incorporates elements of a position-based system.

A large segment of staff are dissatisfied with the current appraisal system. Although the system has been reformed several times over the past decade, a further change may be necessary if staff are to feel confident that appraisal provides a genuine assessment of their achievements and

performance. In devising a more satisfactory scheme, the Commission may be able to learn from systems used in other international organizations and public administrations.

The Commission may wish to re-examine the opportunities for staff employed on fixed-term contracts as temporary agents or contract staff to become permanent officials. Where such employees have demonstrated their abilities, investment in their recruitment and training will have been wasted if the possibility of continuing to work in the organization remains a remote possibility. Finally, given the high percentage of assistants who are recruited with qualifications that are higher than the threshold educational requirement, the Commission should consider whether the expectations of staff in this group need to be better managed and should review pathways into other roles.

Chapter 3 The Commission's workforce after ten years of enlargement

A decade after the largest accession of new members in the EU's history, perceptions about the management of enlargement and its consequences are somewhat negative. A significant number of staff do not believe that the process was handled with fairness and equity and an even larger number think that enlargement has had a negative impact on the organization.

In terms of whether staff think that a common culture exists in the Commission, the results are mixed. While nearly as many respondents disagree as agree that Commission staff 'broadly share the same values' wherever they are from, twice as many think that there are differences in 'beliefs' and 'outlook' between staff from the EU15 and staff from the EU13.

Examination of the profiles of staff shows that recruits from the EU15 and the EU13 do differ first in their educational and professional backgrounds and second in motivations for seeking to pursue a career in the Commission. On job values and job satisfaction, however, there are few differences.

In their philosophical values, preferred visions of EU governance, and beliefs about the appropriate locus of decision-making authority,

the results reveal a mixed picture. Respondents from the EU13 tend to be more economically liberal and more culturally conservative than their colleagues from the EU15. Although only slightly less likely to harbour federal preferences for the EU's future, respondents from the EU13 were less pessimistic about the EU's future and less likely than respondents from the EU15 to perceive the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the Commission's position in the EU system as negative. With the exception of competition policy, where their views were very close, EU15 and EU13 respondents expressed different preferences for where decision-making competence should reside. Staff from the EU15 were more likely to want less 'Europe' in agriculture and more 'Europe' in foreign and security policy, immigration, economic and fiscal policy, and environment.

Recommendations

While there is not much that the Commission can do about past enlargements or their circumstances, and nothing that it should do about differences in philosophical values among its workforce, the results suggest that it would be valuable for the Commission to consider how effectively new recruits, especially when they join in large numbers, are socialized by the organization. Incoming staff need to be familiarized with the Commission's mission, conventions and practices. At the same time, the Commission needs to explain to existing staff the importance to its effectiveness of recruiting nationals from the new member states at all levels. Existing staff need also to be made aware that such an operation is likely to be disruptive in the short term.

Recruits from the new member states need to be made welcome and supported in their new working environment. It would be useful for the Commission to solicit their views on how they experience their new workplace at the end of their first year of employment and at regular intervals thereafter. A regular staff survey is an appropriate method for monitoring attitudes, but a question on national origins needs to be included so as to allow analysis of aggregate data by nationality.

The socialization of staff from new member states appears to have been effective, even

if the perception among respondents is that enlargement was not well-handled and has had a negative impact on the Commission. The Commission could publicize the results of independent research as well as its own studies concerning the organization's performance before and after the 'big bang' enlargement so that staff can base their views on evidence and data rather than perception and hearsay.

Chapter 4 The 2014 review of the Staff Regulations

The 2014 reform of the Staff Regulations was one of a series of measures adopted by the Commission in response to the financial and economic crisis. The most radical since the 2004 overhaul enacted as part of the Kinnock reforms, the 2014 changes affected the working life and conditions of Commission employees. Although staff were unconvinced by the reasons given for the reform, and expressed generally negative views about its handling, likely impact on the Commission, and the salary freeze, they were positive about action to raise the retirement age and the possibility of longer terms for contract agents.

Recommendations

Reform is difficult for any organization, especially when the material conditions of employees are affected and where decisions are taken by other institutions with final legislative and budgetary decision-making powers. In the Commission's case, concerted efforts are needed to make staff aware of the rationale for change, especially when alternative sources are likely to present more partisan interpretations, to offer rank-and-file employees the opportunity to raise concerns, and to explain the purposes of the reform, especially when the burden falls more heavily on some categories of personnel than others. Previous experience also shows the importance of visible ownership of reform measures by the whole College.

The results from the survey show that respondents do not think the Commission handles change management effectively. The Commission needs to review this aspect of its operation, which is closely linked to leadership, management and communication (see Chapters 5 and 6 below). It might usefully

learn how other bodies approach change management. An examination of the role of staff unions should feature in any review and future modernization should be a joint project of management and workforce.

Chapter 5 Leadership, coordination and management

Leadership, coordination and management have all been problematic for the Commission historically, but serious attempts have been made within the organization to achieve improvements in regard to all three. On leadership, results from the online survey and the interviews show that staff recognize the value of strong presidential leadership and an interventionist Secretariat General acting as an arm of the Commission Presidency. However, a number express reservations about the centralization of power and its consequences, serious concerns about communication, and ambivalence about the new role of the Secretariat General.

On coordination, the results show that staff at street-level identify with the objectives set by the College, which is an important measure of the effectiveness of the interaction between the political and the administrative levels of the organization. However, respondents are less confident that coordination works effectively between the cabinets and services or between departments.

Management is the issue that provokes the most dissatisfaction. First, there is a perception among staff that the Commission's managerial culture is overly risk-averse. Second, a significant proportion of managers do not believe that they have the right tools to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Third, although the Commission has historically placed a premium on technical expertise in appointments to management positions, managers and others believe that managerial skills should be considered at least as important. Fourth, many respondents expressed strong support for a modern management style and were critical of the old-fashioned hierarchical approach that is taken by some top managers.

Recommendations

Although most respondents understood and accepted the rationale for presidential leadership, concern was expressed by members of the Commission that there was not always sufficient opportunity for collective discussion and a wider sense among staff that the reasoning behind policy decisions was not always clearly communicated or explained. The Commission may need to experiment with alternative forms of deliberation involving sub-groups of Commissioners to ensure that members of the Commission are able to contribute to policy formation. Internal communications strategy and procedures should also be reviewed (see also Chapter 6).

The relationship between cabinets and services has historically been characterised by tension and lack of mutual understanding. Results from the survey suggest that there is still work to be done, since the perception persists among a significant proportion of staff that while on the one hand, cabinets do not respect the technical expertise of staff, the political role of the cabinets is not well understood in the services on the other. Better information exchange about political priorities, greater visibility and involvement of the part of the political leadership and greater openness with staff in the services about the considerations affecting policy decisions may improve relations.

Despite improvements, interdepartmental coordination also remains problematic. Evidence from the interviews suggests that coordination works most effectively where Directors General of the concerned departments take an active interest and become personally involved. Greater coordination, more systematic reflection and a more concerted approach at the political level could also improve inter-departmental cooperation.

Management and managerial style remain contested issues in the Commission. Both need to be addressed urgently (see also Chapter 2). The perception of a risk-averse managerial culture among staff is a first problem. Management needs to be dynamic if the Commission is to respond effectively to the challenges that confront the EU and to make the best use of the considerable resources

available to the institution. Second, a significant proportion of managers consider that the tools they have at their disposal are not adequate if they are to carry out their responsibilities effectively, in recruitment or in getting the most out of their staff. Nor do they consider that systems for staff allocation are sufficiently flexible or effective. The Commission needs to review these issues urgently in consultation with managers. Third, perceptions of deficiencies in strategic and person management among respondents point to a need to enhance the leadership roles of middle and senior managers. The Commission needs to promote a more proactive leadership approach among managers and to ascribe at least as much importance to managerial skills as to technical expertise in their appointment. Fundamentally, the Commission needs to decide what role it wants its managers to play in the organization and what steps need to be taken to implement its preferred vision. Fourth, data from the interviews suggests that staff prefer a modern, open style of management, to the closed, hierarchical approach, which they consider antiquated and demoralising.

Chapter 6 Communications

Communications is important to build support, develop a shared vision and maintain loyalty inside the organization, and to project a positive image, create understanding of its mission, and build trust outside. Public institutions rarely understand its importance and, as a consequence, their internal operation is hampered, staff morale is hard to sustain and their reputations suffer. Results from the online survey and face-to-face interviews show that respondents consider that the Commission performs poorly on both internal and external communications.

Recommendations

Internal communications, especially from the very top, the College and top management, has been a problem for the Commission. The increasingly presidential style of priority setting and decision making needs to be accompanied by an effective communications strategy. The Commission urgently needs to review internal communications and put in place a system that ensures a better flow of information.

The review of internal communications needs to be accompanied by a similar examination of external communications strategy. The Commission needs to re-think its external communications, to bring its practices in line with the best elsewhere, including in the use of social media, and to overcome the fragmentation of responsibilities across the organization. The Commission needs a strategy that enables the organization to communicate effectively, coherently and in timely fashion to other EU institutions, to policy stakeholders and especially to EU citizens.

Introduction

The closing months of the Barroso Commission are the ideal time to collect the views of staff on how the Commission has responded and adapted to changes over the past ten years, to reflect on the Commission as an organization, and to consider how well it is positioned to meet the challenges that confront it in the short- and medium- terms. Respecting the objective of maintaining a permanent EU civil service of the highest quality, this report aims to contribute to these reflections. It draws on the inside experience of staff from across the organization at all levels of seniority, in all roles and based in Brussels, Luxembourg and beyond. The research team solicited the views of Commission staff, members of the Commission and seconded national experts between March and October 2014 through an online survey, interviews and focus groups. The data was collected on the strict understanding that the anonymity of respondents would be assured, that it would not be possible to identify any particular individual in any of the publications resulting from the research, and that the data set would be seen by and available to named researchers only.

The report sets out the views and experience of Commission staff in relation to six key themes:

- the skills, expertise and experience available to the Commission
- staff experience of the Commission as a workplace
- the backgrounds, values and outlook of the workforce ten years after the ‘big bang’ enlargement
- attitudes to the 2014 reform of the Staff Regulations
- leadership, coordination and management in the commission
- internal and external communications

These themes are discussed respectively in the chapters that follow, each of which adopts a similar format: the main questions relating to each theme are outlined; the overall results are reported; and where a breakdown by staff category, cohort, gender, location of employment, or department has revealed significant differences, variation is discussed.

For each theme and for a number of sub-themes, the report offers a number of recommendations. It does so, first, in the knowledge that the Commission operates in a complex institutional environment, where it is often not the master of its own fate. Although independent of national and sectional interests, the Commission is politically accountable to several institutions and actors, which also control its budget and define the rules governing financial management and control within the organization as well as across the EU system more generally. In addition, the Commission works within a unionised framework, where key processes are governed by paritaire structures. Such a system imposes further constraints on the freedom of manoeuvre available to Commission management. To this extent, the recommendations in this report are not only addressed to the Commission leadership. Second, many of the challenges and difficulties confronted by the Commission are generic to public sector institutions and some to all organizations more broadly. Although the Commission is a multinational and multilingual institution, operating in a complex institutional environment, there may be lessons it can learn from other public institutions. In this connection, its interactions within multilateral organizations, such as the European Public Administration Network, as well as bilateral relationships with bodies such as the UN Secretariat, are invaluable.

Dataset informing the report

The link to the online survey was sent to 31,280 staff on 21 March 2014. The survey was started by 7,790 respondents and completed by 5,545, representing a response rate of 17.7 per cent. The achieved sample was benchmarked against the Commission population. The resulting weighted sample is representative of the Commission workforce by staff category, location, EU15 or EU13, gender and cohort.

A first round of follow-up interviews was conducted mainly in the spring and early summer of 2014 with 83 respondents, out of the 232 who indicated their willingness to participate in the project when completing the online survey. The breakdown by staff category was as follows: assistants 5; contract agents 4; non-management administrators 58; deputy heads of unit 5; heads of unit 6; *cabinet* members 2; seconded national experts 3. The interviews were semi-structured and different templates were used for seconded national experts, non-managers, managers and members of *cabinet*. The templates included both closed and open questions.

Whilst the first set of interviews was carried out with self-selecting respondents, a second round was conducted among a stratified sample of members of the Commission and their *cabinets*, middle and senior managers. Invitations were

sent to all *chefs de cabinet* and through them to all Commissioners, to all Directors General and to a random sample of Directors and heads of unit. One-hundred-and-sixty-two respondents were interviewed in total in this second round. The breakdown was as follows: Commissioners 9; Directors General 17; deputy Directors General 1; Directors 52; head of unit 50; deputy head of unit 3; assistant to the Director General 1; *chef de cabinet* 13; *cabinet* member 12; non-management administrator 3; seconded national expert 1. The interviews were semi-structured and different templates were used for Commissioners, *chef de cabinets*, members of *cabinet*, Directors General, and middle managers and (other) senior managers. As with the first round of interviews, the templates used both closed and open questions.

Focus groups were conducted with randomly selected individuals from the following staff categories: temporary agents, contract agents, assistants, non-management administrators, and seconded national experts. One meeting was convened per staff category and the groups were small. The largest brought together 11 participants.

Figure 0.1 Sources of data collection for ‘European Commission: Facing the Future’

	Online survey	Interviews						Focus groups
		Assistants, Non-Management Administrators and Contract Agents	SNEs	Middle managers	Directors General	<i>Cabinet</i>	Commissioners	
Education	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Employment history	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Motivation	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Commission as a workplace	•	•	•				•	•
Enlargement	•							
Role of the Commission	•		•	•		•	•	
Coordination	•			•	•		•	
Role of Secretary General	•			•	•	•		
<i>Cabinets-services</i> relations	•			•	•	•	•	
Role of <i>cabinet</i>	•	•				•	•	
Communications	•	[•]		[•]				
Reform of the Staff regulations	•	•		•	•	•		•
Role description and interaction	•			•		•	•	•
Values	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Today's European Union	•							
Career progression	•	•	•	•	•	•		[•]
Gender and career progression	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Your future prospects	•							•
Your ambitions	•							•
Management	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Role of managers	•		•	•	•	•	•	
Rules and procedures	•			•	•	•		
Operation of the College	•			•	•	•	•	
Preferred vision of the EU	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Informal contacts	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Contrast with administration in home State	• SNEs only		•					

Note: The online survey was circulated to the entire staff of the Commission. This includes by staff group: administrators, assistants, contract agents, temporary agents, and seconded national experts; and by hierarchy: non-managers, middle managers, senior managers, and cabinet members.

Presentation of data

The report that follows is based mainly on two sources: responses to the online survey; and responses to the closed questions posed in the interviews. For each topic, it reports the headline findings first, then the most notable breakdown from the analysis - by gender, staff category, cohort, location or nationality. Data is presented in tables or figures as appropriate. To avoid overloading the document, hyperlinks to supplementary figures denoted 'Appendix Figure [number].[letter]' are included throughout the text. A full list of these appendices is set out on pages viii to x of this report.

The report presents preliminary findings and mainly descriptive statistics. The team continues to undertake analysis of the results, using more detailed and sophisticated techniques than the timeframe for the current text allowed, the results of which it will report in due course. For further information or to sign up for alerts when new findings become available, please visit the project website at <https://www.uea.ac.uk/political-social-international-studies/facingthefuture>

The following conventions have been used throughout the report:

- decimals have been rounded. Percentages are reported in integers only
- 'significant' refers to a difference of 5 per cent or more
- as well as comparing respondents according to staff category, comparisons are sometimes made within the category of administrators between managers and non-management administrators, which we acknowledge is an inelegant formulation
- in some parts of the report, the responses given by Directors General are compared with those made by other managers. In these instances, 'managers' refers to all senior and middle managers except Directors General

As agreed with the Commission, this report is embargoed until 21 March 2015.

Chapter 1 The Commission's workforce

As a public bureaucracy, the European Commission needs to satisfy certain requirements. First, the Commission's workforce must have a profile that is appropriate to the functions and range of responsibilities entrusted to it. It must command the technical expertise and specialist knowledge in the fields and at the levels necessary to propose, manage and enforce policy across the breadth of the EU's areas of competence. Second, for reasons of legitimacy as well as the capacity to do the job, the Commission needs to be representative of the population it serves. Without foregoing the requirement that staff should be recruited and promoted on merit, the workforce needs to include nationals from all EU member states at all levels of seniority and across the range of policy areas in which the EU is active³. Third, at least since the 1980s, society has demanded that public bureaucracies should promote equal opportunities. In the Commission, women should be able to advance their careers as easily as men.

Technical expertise and specialist knowledge

Two of the most widely accepted wisdoms about the Commission and the people who work for it relate to human capital and assert that the Commission draws on an overly narrow seam of specialist knowledge and experience. According to the first, the Commission is 'an administration of lawyers', while the second holds that the Commission is populated by career civil servants, with little experience of life beyond Brussels or outside the public sector. Evidence from the online survey conducted as part of the current project, however, shows in fact that the Commission has a diverse range of expertise and experience at its command.

Educational background

In the survey, respondents were asked about the level and the subject of their highest educational qualification. The findings confirm that the Commission has a highly educated workforce. Nearly 90 per cent of the workforce have attended University and no fewer than sixty per cent hold a postgraduate qualification. While the near-100 per cent figure for administrators was expected, it is perhaps more surprising given the threshold entry qualification required that 75 per cent of assistants are graduates and that 31 per cent have a postgraduate degree (Appendix Figure 1.a).

In terms of the subject studied, an earlier study reported that law graduates are outnumbered not only by economists, but also by natural scientists (Kassim *et al* 2013: ch 2). However, the data on which that research drew was limited to a sample of 1901 administrators with policy-related responsibilities. The survey for the current project was open to all staff in all categories. Of those that responded, 25 per cent achieved their highest education qualification in business or economics, 20 per cent in 'STEMM' subjects (that is sciences, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine), 13 per cent in politics and international relations, 17 per cent in humanities, and 3 per cent in other social sciences. Moreover, as Figure 1.1 shows, in every staff category there are more business and economics graduates than law graduates and, also, that in all categories law graduates are outnumbered by graduates of 'STEMM' subjects, in the case of seconded national experts by 2:1 (33% STEMM compared with 17% law).

³ As an official interviewed for the 2008 study underlined: 'If one country isn't represented at all, or is significantly under-represented, I think that it poses a problem of perception and maybe some problems in reality. . . . [W]hy a certain policy or formulation of it won't play in the United Kingdom . . . won't come to the attention of the Commission if there isn't sufficient UK voice at the very top tables. And that's important because there's no point in the Commission proposing a policy or a line or a technical solution if in fact that isn't going to work (interview 69)', cited in Kassim *et al* (2013: 51).

Turning to how the profile of staff has changed over time (Figure 1.2), the results show that over the past thirty years there has been a steady increase in the number of business and economics graduates and lawyers, and a very significant rise in the number of politics and international relations graduates. At the same time, the number of STEMM graduates has declined, and the percentage of humanities graduates has fallen steeply.

Figure 1.1 Subject of highest qualification (% with post-graduate qualifications)

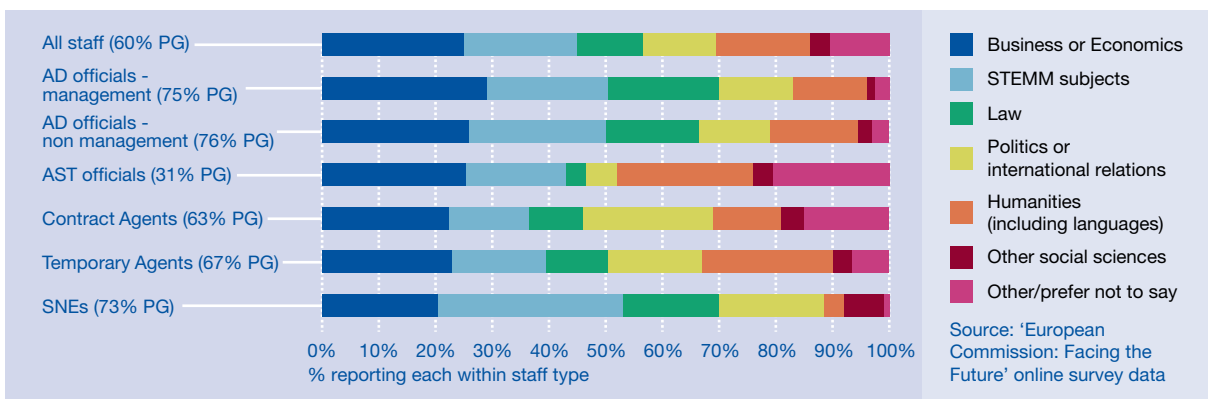
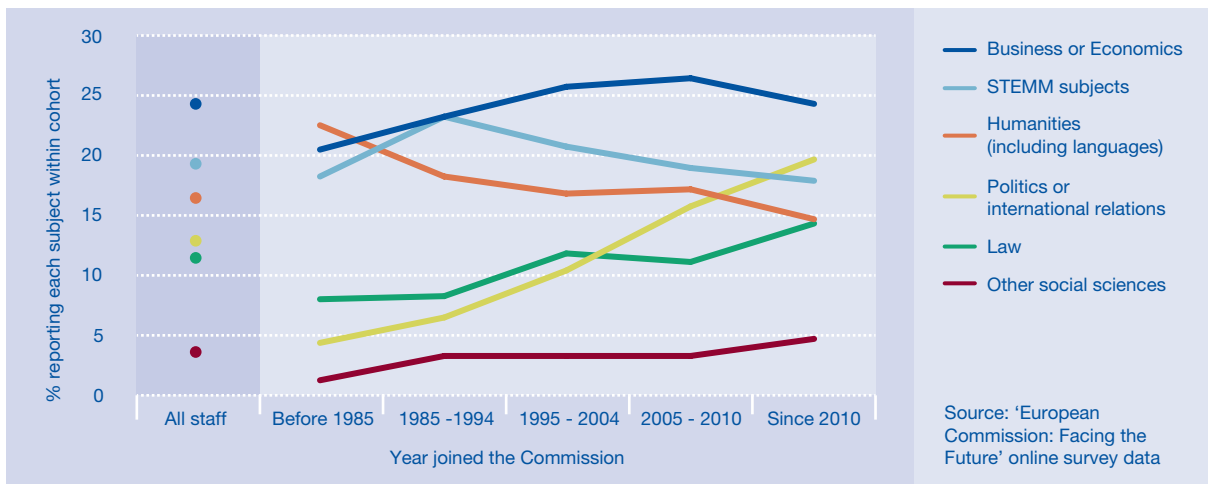


Figure 1.2 Trends in recruitment of staff by subject of highest qualification



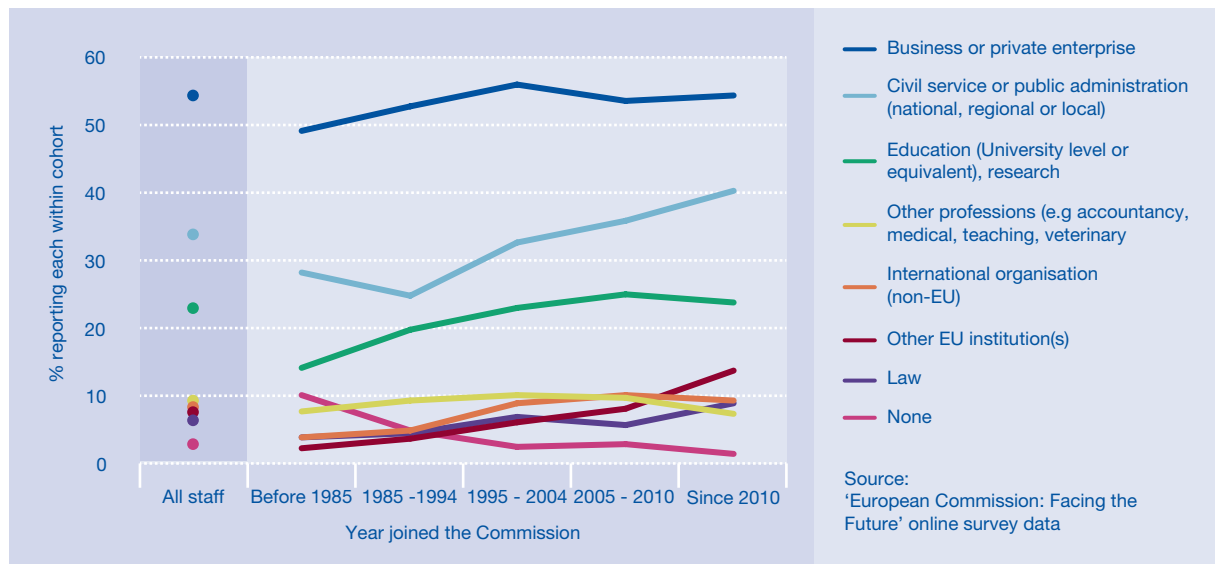
Professional background

The survey results also challenge the contention that Commission staff have little experience outside the Brussels ‘bubble’ or the public sector more broadly. In the survey, respondents were asked detailed questions about their employment history, both before and after joining the Commission. According to the data, no fewer than 97 per cent of staff had worked somewhere else before they decided to pursue a career in the Commission. Moreover, well over

half were recruited from business or private enterprise. Thirty-four per cent came from public administration and just over a fifth from education.

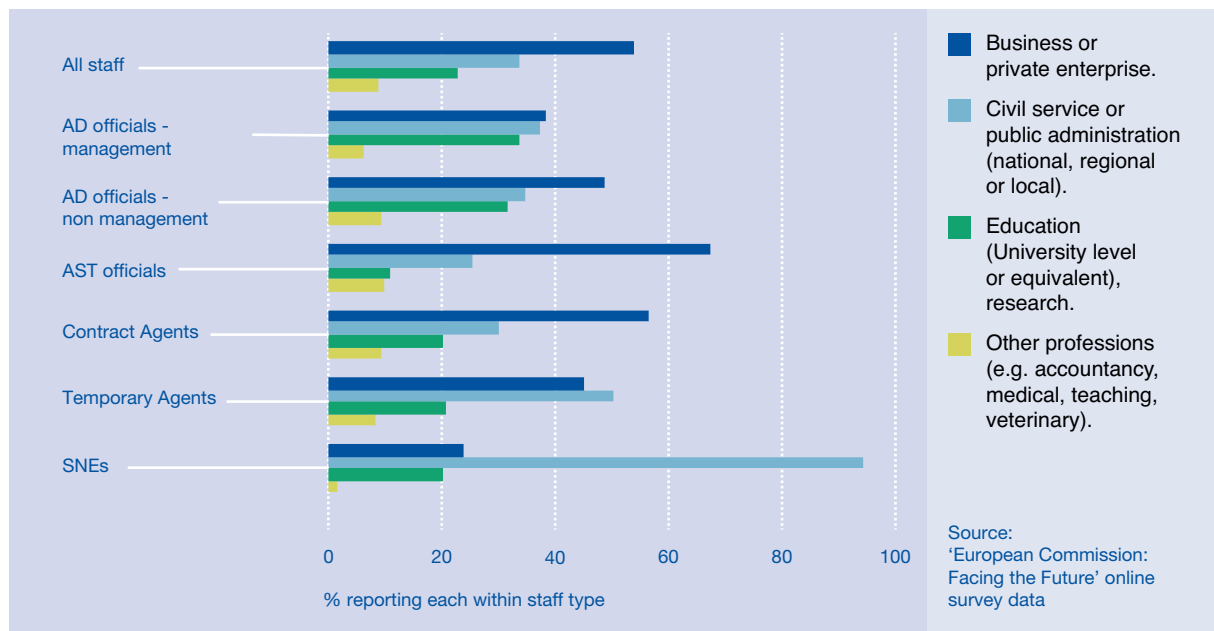
Figure 1.3 shows how the professional experience of recruits to the Commission has changed over time. There has been a slight decrease in recruitment from the private sector, a substantial increase in numbers from the civil service, and a significant rise in staff from education and research.

Figure 1.3 Previous working experience of Commission staff over time



Comparison between staff categories - and between non-management administrators and managers - as shown in Figure 1.4 reveals significant differences. Managers are almost as likely to have come from a background in public administration or education and research as from business, but the same is not true of non-management administrators. Like assistants and contract agents, they are more likely to have private sector experience. Among temporary agents, by contrast, civil service recruits outnumber those from business.

Figure 1.4 Previous working experience of Commission employees by staff category



Nationality

The demands of nationality pose a particular challenge to the Commission⁴. Although as a career bureaucracy it is committed to merit-based recruitment and promotion, the Commission needs to have nationals from all member states in all departments and at all levels across the organization⁵. As well as knowledge of national political systems, economies, legal traditions, and cultural norms, it must have at its disposal the native- or near-native language competences of member state nationals if it is to be able to carry out its responsibilities effectively⁶. Not least, the Commission needs to be able to communicate with EU citizens in their own language, since all citizens have the right to be addressed in their mother tongue.

Using official data from the Commission, an analysis was undertaken to assess how closely the number of nationals from each member state approximates to that country's share of

the total EU population. This measure, which was developed by Edward C. Page (1997), generates an index, showing by how many staff members each member state is under- or over-represented in the Commission workforce⁷.

The results of the analysis suggest that there are some serious problems and, when the data for 2014 are compared with 2008, that in a number of instances the situation is getting worse. Table 1.1 shows the disproportionality index for administrators in 2008 and 2014.

Three findings are particularly noteworthy. First, older member states are underrepresented among administrators by 758, while new member states are overrepresented by 734. Second, several larger member states are underrepresented. The UK's 'deficit' is 1010, Germany's 748, France's 410, Italy's 313, Poland's 272 and Spain's 183. Third, the direction of travel for some member states - the UK, France and to a lesser extent Poland - is negative.

4 See Coombes 1970, Page 1997, Stevens and Stevens 2001, Kassim *et al* 2013: ch 2 for further discussion.

5 The results of the survey administered for the current project show that, while there is strong majority among staff in favour of a diverse representation of nationalities within the Commission, the same demand does not exist for a geographical quota. Seventy per cent of respondents stated agreement with the proposition that 'staff should be employed on the broadest geographical from among the nationals of all EU member states'. Thirty-eight per cent believe that the Commission 'needs a quota system to ensure that the number of staff from each member state reflects its share of the EU population', while 43 per cent disagree (Appendix Figures 1.b and 1.c).

6 According to one senior official interviewed as part of the 2008 study, '[w]ith 27 member states and 11 languages you clearly need to be able to have native speakers on file ... You can never ask someone not originating from Latvia to deal with Latvian cases because nobody else masters the language (interview 72)', cited in Kassim *et al* (2013: 51).

7 Of course, there is not only one way to measure proportionality. The Commission mentions voting weights in the Council and shares of MEPs as alternative possible metrics (Commission 2010).

Table 1.1 Nationality disproportionality index: administrators 2008 and 2014 compared; assistants 2014

Nationality	2008				2014					
	All AD	Administrator 5-10	Middle management 11-13	Senior management 14-16	All perm officials	AST	All AD	Administrator 5-10	Middle management 11-13	Senior management 14-16
Austria	59	9	45	5	24	-27	51	-13	53	10
Belgium	978	489	420	69	3673	2658	1015	541	415	60
Bulgaria	102	187	-77	-9	211	38	173	232	-54	-5
Cyprus	51	49	-2	5	62	19	43	36	5	3
Czech Republic	48	165	-105	-12	-30	-66	36	131	-84	-11
Germany	-732	-323	-352	-57	-1781	-1032	-748	-532	-179	-38
Denmark	116	20	90	7	123	28	95	10	74	11
Spain	-169	-113	-43	-14	-485	-301	-183	-203	18	1
Estonia	91	99	-10	2	143	44	99	102	-6	4
Finland	190	61	128	2	257	77	180	50	130	1
France	-265	-183	-81	-1	-793	-383	-410	-392	-23	5
United Kingdom	-791	-504	-255	-32	-1959	-949	-1010	-753	-223	-35
Greece	242	10	209	23	404	154	249	30	190	30
Croatia					-37	-45	8	50	-36	-6
Hungary	121	226	-99	-6	157	21	137	217	-76	-5
Ireland	118	26	75	17	231	124	108	11	76	21
Italy	-334	-172	-122	-40	-374	-62	-313	-276	-18	-18
Lithuania	107	139	-32	0	183	56	127	146	-20	1
Luxembourg	31	2	21	7	155	99	28	0	19	8
Latvia	83	102	-19	1	125	31	94	102	-9	1
Malta	97	94	0	2	121	22	99	91	6	1
Netherlands	12	-38	44	5	-176	-165	-11	-77	59	6
Poland	-264	197	-416	-45	-630	-358	-272	103	-338	-38
Portugal	125	-24	143	6	169	49	120	-45	148	18
Romania	-121	144	-239	-26	-40	-76	37	227	-170	-20
Slovakia	63	121	-54	-4	74	16	57	102	-41	-3
Slovenia	108	127	-20	1	131	28	104	115	-13	1
Sweden	97	25	70	3	68	-5	73	-10	87	-4
EU - 15	-322	-715	392	1	-464	265	-758	-1660	826	75
EU - 12	486	1650	-1073	-91	471	-271	742	1655	-836	-76

Source: Authors' calculations using European Commission data for 2008 and 2014

There are a number of possible explanations for the underrepresentation of nationals from certain member states. Some are political, such as the rise of Euroscepticism or cultural, such as a tendency to monolingualism or multilingualism. Others are economic. One possibility is that working for the Commission is more likely to be more attractive to nationals from member states where the average graduate wage or the wages and salaries of public sector employees are low by comparison (see Commission 2014: 29). However, the data as shown in Tables 1.2, 1.3 or 1.4 below does not show a direct correlation or suggest that there is straightforward causal relationship. A more detailed analysis of push and pull factors is necessary if the dynamics behind recruitment are to be fully understood.

Table 1.2 How do you feel about the EU's future? (% reporting optimistic, Eurobarometer Spring 2014)

EU-28	56	PL	68	CZ	55
MT	77	LV	66	HU	53
RO	75	BE	65	CY	50
LT	75	LU	64	ES	49
IE	71	SL	64	PT	48
DK	71	BG	62	IT	48
NL	70	DE	61	FR	48
EE	69	SE	60	UK	44
FI	69	SK	56	EL	43
HR	69	AT	56		

Source: European Commission (2014)

Table 1.3 Mean earnings of workers in EU member states (Tertiary education, literacy level 4/5, US\$ 2012)

	Monthly	Annual
Austria	5,094	61,128
Czech Republic	2,255	27,058
Denmark	5,536	66,435
Estonia	2,635	31,621
Finland	4,132	49,581
France	3,688	44,257
Germany	5,738	68,852
Ireland	5,462	65,548
Italy	3,702	44,419
Netherlands	5,390	64,682
Poland	2,612	31,338
Slovak Republic	2,749	32,991
Spain	3,645	43,740
Sweden	4,028	48,330
Sub-national entities		
Flanders (Belgium)	5,099	61,192
England (UK)	5,284	63,403
Northern Ireland (UK)	4,400	52,805
England/N. Ireland (UK)	5,260	63,119
OECD average	4,546	54,549

Source: Compiled using data from OECD (2014) *Education at a Glance 2014*, Paris: OECD, chapter 6

Table 1.4 Wages and salaries of public sector employees (annual, US\$ 2011)

	Senior managers		Middle managers		Professionals		Secretarial
	D1	D2	D3	D4	Senior	Junior	
Austria	140,596	130,482	81,377	63,426			32,248
Belgium	226,275	158,208	128,524	115,917	92,674	60,413	43,628
Denmark	212,260	142,828	101,842		77,719	53,651	44,150
Estonia	73,797	50,056	30,046		17,121		10,948
Finland	118,280		78,208		64,602	51,548	35,975
France	168,997	136,631	113,483	79,737	56,210	40,180	34,390
Germany	149,156	128,191	104,314		71,544	60,763	40,898
Italy	426,083	248,633	114,720	83,515	40,381		33,092
Netherlands	180,957	161,482	132,239	121,662	90,199	69,465	54,814
Poland	134,240	101,733	86,067	57,060	45,282	33,073	29,180
Portugal	105,345	87,280	73,475	62,400	37,650		21,489
Slovak Republic	50,289	57,754	39,611		31,062		6,698
Slovenia	84,650		63,331		57,493	39,477	20,813
Spain	99,738	107,103	79,468	59,706	74,639		36,668
Sweden	117,844	84,660	69,458	54,032	52,033	42,314	31,048
United Kingdom	224,442	148,879	111,447	78,591	49,435	38,073	28,620
OECD	162,819	120,727	86,846	77,390	59,155	47,846	33,066

Source: Compiled using data from OECD (2013) *Government at a Glance 2013*, Paris: OECD, chapter 5.

Gender

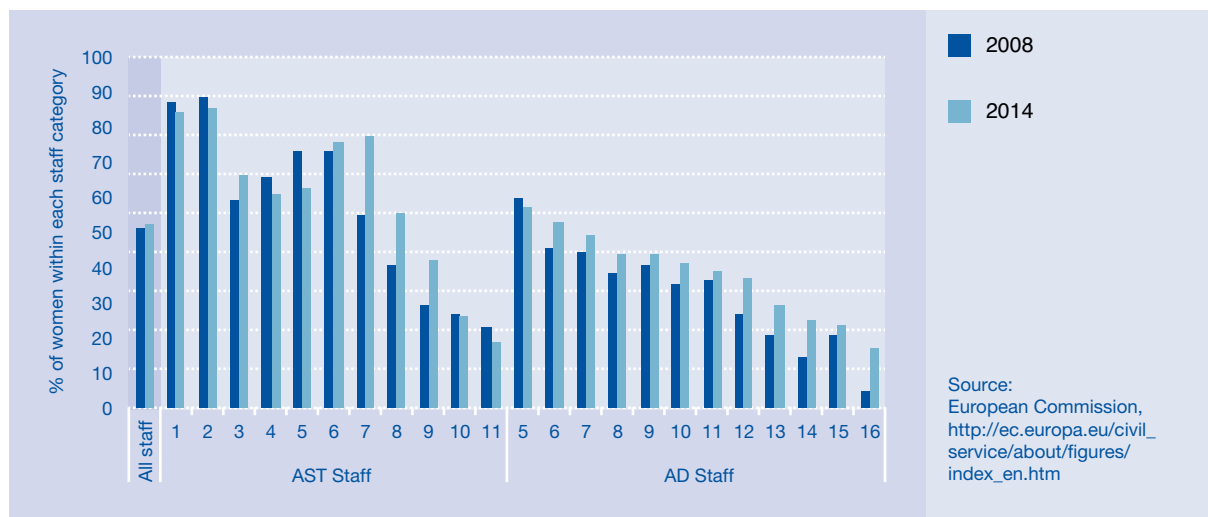
Until the 1990s, there was a sharp gender imbalance within the Commission workforce. Women were concentrated in lower grades, underrepresented in middle management, and almost entirely absent from senior positions (see Commission 2004, 2005, 2010)⁸. Efforts have been undertaken to redress the imbalance since the mid-1990s against the background of gender equality campaigns at national and international levels and changing social attitudes (Woodward 2011). The Commission has implemented a series of action plans, which has included setting specific targets for recruitment at different levels of the organization over the short, medium, and long term (Commission, 2004, 2010). It also used the exercise associated with the 2004 and 2007 enlargements to increase the recruitment of female staff members (Commission 2011a, Ban 2013).

The Commission has succeeded in bringing about a marked improvement in the gender balance of its workforce over the past ten years. Women now account for 53 per cent of Commission staff, and the percentage of female administrators has grown from 24 percent in

2003 to 40 percent in 2009 and 55 percent in 2012. Over the same period, the number of women in middle management positions has increased from 17 percent to 23 and 29 percent and in senior management from 14 percent to 21 and 27 percent (Commission 2004, 2005, 2012a). Most visibly, perhaps, the top post in the Commission’s administration, the position of Secretary General, has been held by a woman - namely, Catherine Day - since 2005.

Figure 1.5 shows, however, that there is still work to be done. Despite the impressive aggregate figure, the number of women diminishes with every upward step of the administrator scale. Nor does the Commission fare well when compared with member states administrations or other EU institutions (Figure 1.6). Based on 2014 figures (Commission 2015) only four national administrations had a lower percentage of female managers in the very top jobs (level 1) and nine had a lower percentage of women in the next tier of senior jobs (level 2). At the level of the EU, meanwhile, the European Parliament - but not the Council of the European Union - has a higher percentage of women managers in level 1 and level 2 positions.

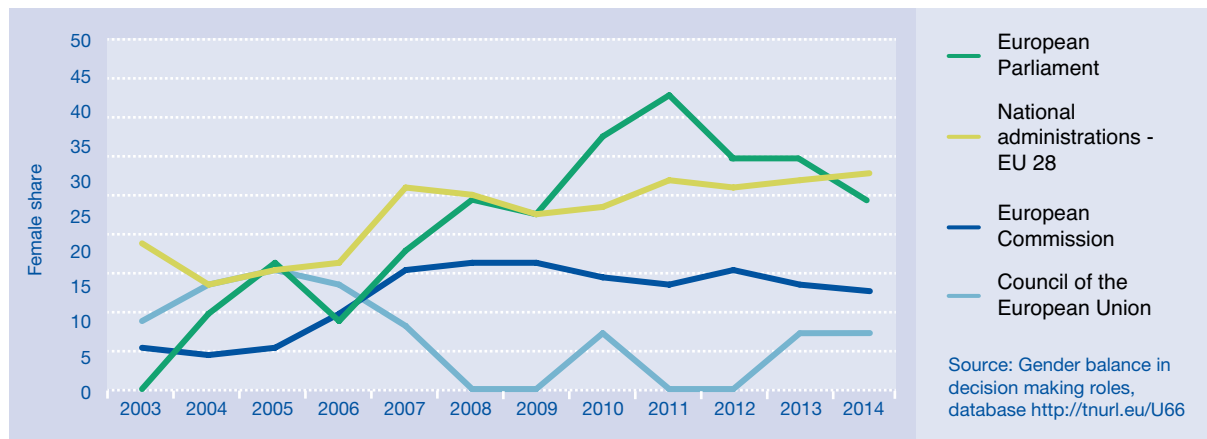
Figure 1.5 Women as percentage of Commission officials by grade, 2008 and 2014



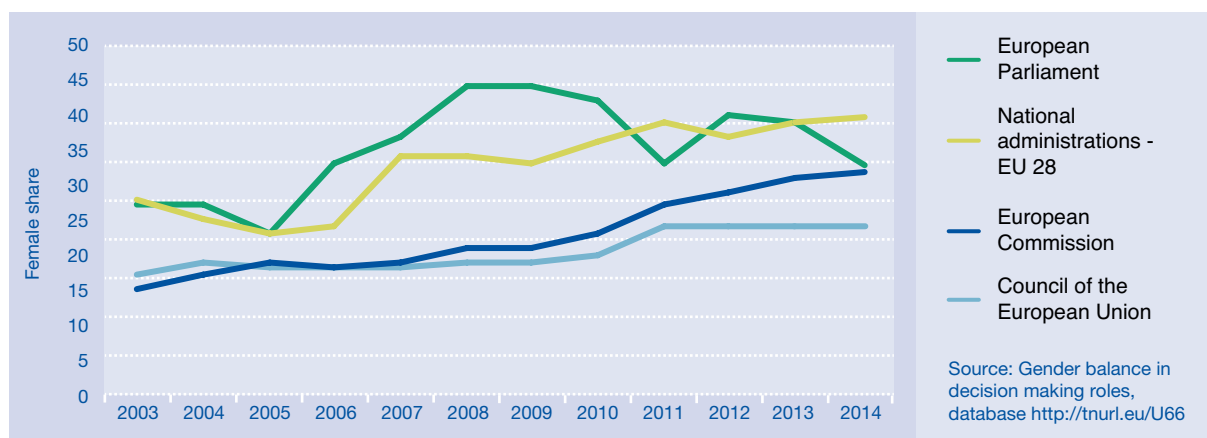
⁸ For example, in the mid-1980s only 9.3 per cent of administrators were women, men outnumbered women in middle management by more than ten to one (735 men; 69 women), and of 162 senior positions only two were held by women. Eleven years after the Commission had created a standing Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, improvement was at best incremental: women accounted for 13.5 per cent of administrators, 11 per cent of middle managers, and 2.4 per cent of top positions.

Figure 1.6 Women in senior administrative positions. The Commission and other administrations compared.

Level 1 - AD 16 or equivalent



Level 2 - AD 15/14 or equivalent



The results from the online survey also offer a mixed picture on gender in the Commission. On the negative side, when asked for their views on the proposition, ‘It is as easy for women to advance their careers in the Commission as men’, only 35 per cent of respondents agreed. Twenty seven per cent disagreed and the remainder were either neutral or did not know. However, the gender breakdown of these results is striking: while nearly half of men agreed (49 per cent) and only 12 per cent disagreed, less than a quarter of women (23 per cent) agreed, while 41 per cent disagreed. By contrast, when asked for their views on the proposition, ‘My manager acts to promote gender equality’, 46 per cent of respondents agreed - 44 per cent of men and 48 per cent of women. A majority either disagreed or were neutral (neither agree nor disagree) or did not know, while 11 per cent of women and 5 per cent of men disagreed (Appendix Figures 1.d and 1.e).

Table 1.5 To what extent does gender play a role?

Number of responses	Directors General	Managers	Cabinet
It matters a lot	8	15	2
It matters	5	49	13
It doesn't matter	1	22	3
It doesn't matter at all	0	4	0
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	0	1	0

Source: ‘European Commission: Facing the Future’ interview data.

In face-to-face interviews, an overwhelming majority of Directors General, middle and other senior managers and *cabinet* members thought that gender played a role in career advancement. Many underlined the attention paid to the ‘underrepresented gender’ in personnel decisions.

Analysis of responses to a series of questions used in surveys of national administrations to investigate the extent to which men and women are treated differently by their managers

produced findings that were somewhat surprising given the contrasting responses to the ‘as-easy-for-women-to-advance-their-careers-as-men’ question given by men and women. Either male or women respondents gave roughly similar answers, or women did not report experience of negative treatment.

The exception was on visibility where 66 per cent of men, but only 59 per cent of women, agreed with the proposition, ‘I am assigned tasks or projects with high visibility by my manager’.

Figure 1.7 ‘I am assigned tasks or projects with high visibility by my manager’. Responses of male and female members of staff compared.

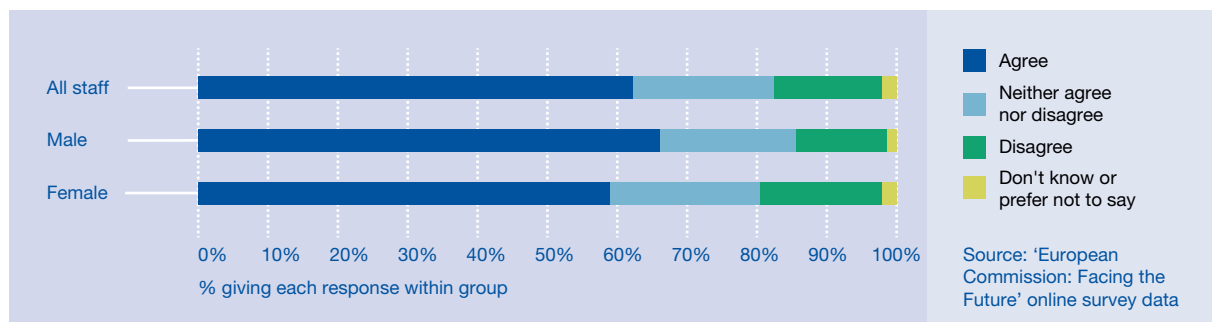


Figure 1.8 ‘Subject to operational requirements, my manager supports the use of flexible work arrangements.’ Responses of male and female members of staff compared.

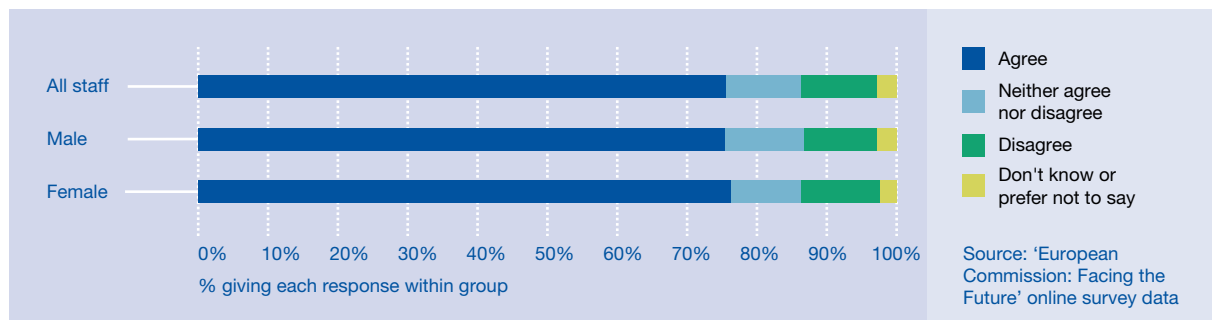
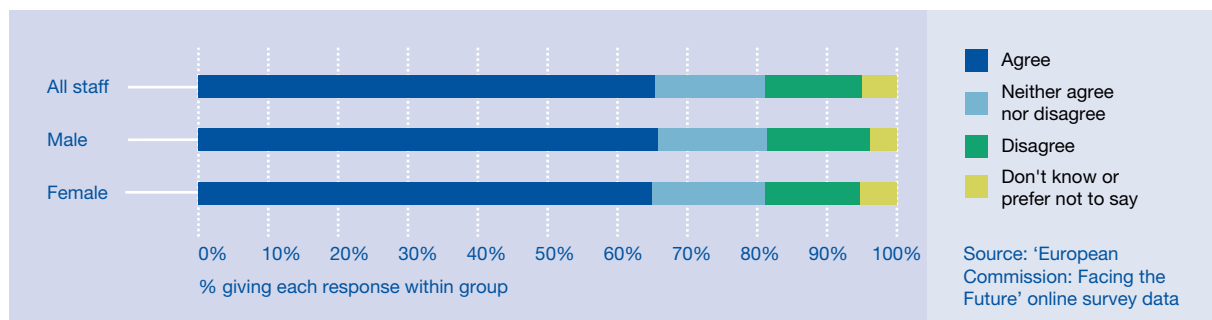


Figure 1.9 ‘My performance is judged on the basis of what I produce rather than the time that I spend in the office’. Responses of male and female members of staff compared.



The above findings are provisional, but there does appear to be a tension between the responses. On the one hand, there is a perception among staff, especially female employees, that it is not as easy for women to advance their careers as men, which is supported by Commission data showing that a gender imbalance remains in management positions. Moreover, women are less likely than men to report that 'I am assigned tasks or projects with high visibility by my manager'. On the other hand, more than three-quarters of men and women believe that 'Subject to operational requirements, my manager supports the use of flexible work arrangements,' and well over 60 per cent of male and female respondents agree with the proposition, 'My performance is judged on the basis of what I produce rather than the time that I spend in the office'.

Recommendations

The Commission has a wealth of human capital at its disposal, but the range of educational and professional experience is not well known outside the organization and not utilised as fully as it might be inside. The Commission might record more systematically the educational qualifications and professional experience of its staff and take a more active approach in career management in order to ensure that maximum use is made of the high calibre human resources at its disposal.

The underrepresentation of nationals from the larger member states is a serious problem. The importance of geographical balance as underlined by Vice President Šefčovič and the new possibility of running member state-specific external competitions is an important response, but the Commission needs to work with the governments of underrepresented member states to create programmes that encourage well qualified candidates to apply for positions at all levels of the organization.

The Commission has made significant progress towards correcting the gender imbalance within the organization and evidence from the online survey suggests that gender equality is taken seriously by managers. However, a problem remains at middle and especially senior management levels. The Commission could learn from its most successful departments to ensure that best practice is applied. It could also investigate what deters women from seeking promotion and study the results of promotion committees.

Chapter 2 Why join the Commission? Recruitment in a highly competitive labour market

The market place for well-qualified graduates, especially those who speak two or more languages, has become increasingly competitive. As it cannot match salaries in the private sector and since it is not the only organization that offers the experience of working in a multinational environment, the Commission needs to be aware of what makes it an attractive place to work. It needs to know what its employees like about it as a workplace, what they think about the working environment and working conditions, and how staff view career-building, promotion and professional development in the organization. As well as its value to the Commission's recruitment strategy, information about what staff find positive and negative in their working environment can be used to improve procedures and processes within the organization.

The online survey thus posed three sets of questions. First, it invited staff to recall their original motivation for deciding to pursue a career in the Commission. Second, with the aim of assessing levels of job satisfaction and engagement, and to discover what staff value about their job, respondents were asked about their work environment, their workload, and their experience of managers and management. A number of these questions were modeled on the Commission's own 2013 staff survey in order to provide a longitudinal measure of engagement⁹. Others took their inspiration from official surveys of civil servants conducted in Canada, the UK and the US¹⁰. Where it is available, data from those surveys has been used to contextualize

the results of the current project by comparing levels of satisfaction within the Commission with public sector employees elsewhere. A third set of questions asked staff about their career advancement and career aspirations. As well as highlighting what staff like and dislike about the Commission as a workplace and an employer, the responses give an insight into levels of morale among the Commission workforce.

Motivation

The first series of questions asked staff about their motivations for choosing to pursue a career in the Commission. Respondents were given a list of possible reasons and were invited to select as many that applied to them. The aim was to discover whether Commission employees are attracted by idealistic motivations, such as 'building Europe', or by material, professional or personal considerations.

Looking at the responses, 'international experience' and 'commitment to Europe', each cited by 61 per cent of staff, emerged as the two most important reasons for deciding to join the Commission. 'Competitive remuneration' was third (50 per cent), followed by 'job stability' (44 per cent). Four others - professional development, public service, quality of the work and promising career prospects - were cited by over a quarter of respondents, while personal or family reasons were mentioned by a fifth.

⁹ Commission (2013a).

¹⁰ Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2012), Cabinet Office (2013), US Office of Personnel Management (2013).

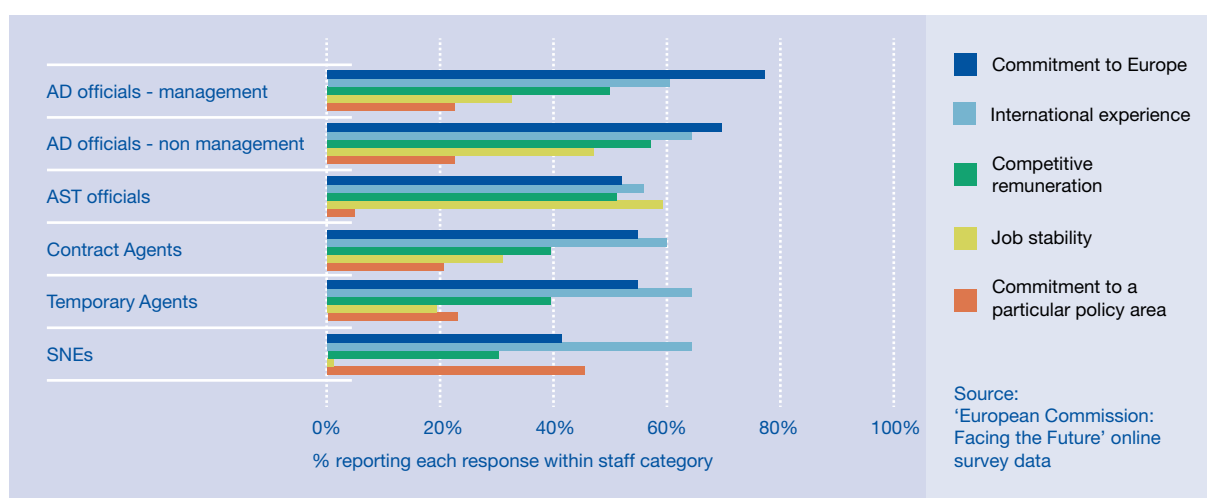
Since ‘international experience’ was not included as an option in the 2008 survey reported in Kassim *et al* 2013 (ch 2), a direct comparison is not possible, but analysis according to when respondents joined the Commission shows ‘international experience’ as the most important reason for staff recruited in or after 1995, with ‘commitment to Europe’ the second most-cited motivation. ‘Competitive remuneration’, the second-most important motivation for respondents joining before 1995, is the third most cited for those recruited in or after that year (Appendix Figure 2.a).

Breakdown of responses according to the nationality of respondents shows a significant difference between staff from the EU15 and the EU13 in relation to the leading motivation identified (Appendix Figure 2.b). For respondents from the EU15 ‘commitment to Europe’ was the main reason (63 per cent) and ‘international experience’ second (59 per cent). For respondents from the EU13 ‘international experience’ headed the list (66 per cent), with ‘commitment to Europe’ in second position (55 per cent) - a shade ahead of ‘competitive remuneration’ (54 per cent) in third. Further

(multivariate) analysis will be necessary to establish the relative importance of coming from the EU15 or EU13 as against variables, such as year recruited, gender and professional background.

The motivations cited and their respective ranking also varies between respondents from different staff categories, as Figure 2.1 shows. The leading motivation for administrators - both managers and non-managers - is ‘commitment to Europe’. For assistants, both ‘job stability’ and ‘international experience’ are more important than ‘commitment to Europe’, while for contract agents, and temporary agents, ‘international experience’ is cited more frequently than ‘commitment to Europe’. For seconded national experts, ‘international experience’ is also the most important motivation, but ‘commitment to a particular policy area’ is second and ‘commitment to Europe’ a close third. It is noteworthy that ‘commitment to a particular policy area’ is much more important to SNEs than to respondents from any other staff category. Determining the precise impact of staff category as against other variables will again be the subject of further analysis.

Figure 2.1 Motivation for joining the European Commission: staff categories compared (main four reasons given)



Job satisfaction and engagement

The survey asked Commission staff for views on their work and the Commission as an employer, work expectations and how effectively work is managed, what they value most about working for the Commission, and how well supported they feel in their job. Respondents were also asked about the obstacles that they most often encounter in their work. The aim was to develop an overview of how staff experience the Commission as a workplace. The results are summarized in this section.

Experience of the workplace

Responses to the following questions give a sense of what Commission staff value about their work, how they rate the Commission as an employer and how manageable they consider their workload to be.

Working in the Commission: On the question of what they value most about working in the Commission, 70 per cent reported that they considered ‘working in an international environment’ as extremely or very important, 66 per cent ‘the quality of work we do’, 60 per cent ‘making a difference to the life of European citizens’, 62 per cent ‘building Europe’, 46 per cent the ‘remuneration package’ and 42 per cent ‘influencing policy’. There is a strong match between the motivation cited for joining the Commission - ‘working in an international experience’ and ‘commitment to Europe’ - and the value that staff place on their work in the Commission suggesting that these ambitions are realized. Fifty-six per cent of staff thought themselves ‘fairly remunerated compared to people doing a similar job in other organizations’ (Appendix Figures 2.c and 2.d).

Workload: Fifty-four per cent of respondents agreed with the proposition, ‘I have a manageable workload and can complete what is expected of me within the working week’, while 31 per cent disagreed. A breakdown by staff category (administrators, assistants, temporary agents, contract agents, and seconded national experts) shows administrators are least likely to agree. Focusing on managers only, it is striking that more managers believe that their workload is not manageable (47 per cent) than those who think that it is (41 per cent). (Appendix Figure 2.e).

Personal attachment: Fifty-five per cent of respondents reported that they feel a strong personal attachment to the Commission. Managers, despite their views on the manageability of their workload, feel the strongest attachment - 77 per cent as compared to just under or a few percentage points over half for non-management administrators, assistants, contract agents and temporary agents (Appendix Figure 2.f).

The Commission as an employer: Fifty-five per cent consider that the Commission is a good employer, while 19 per cent do not and 24 per cent are neutral. Across the various staff categories, temporary agents are most likely to think that the Commission is a good employer (around 67 per cent), while managers (just over 60 per cent) are also positive (Appendix Figure 2.g).

Doing my job: Sixty-three per cent of respondents believe that the work of their team is managed effectively. However, a fifth do not. When asked why their work might suffer, 54 per cent identified too many approval stages, 51 per cent unnecessary tasks or projects, 45 per cent unreasonable deadlines, 37 per cent constantly changing priorities, and 36 per cent excessive hours (Appendix Figures 2.h and 2.i).

Looking at the questions overall, breakdown by location and by cohort reveals respondents in delegations to be the least positive and staff recruited since 2010 (as opposed to respondents who joined the Commission before 1985, between 1985 and 1994, between 1995 and 2004, or between 2005 and 2010) the most positive.

Engagement

In 2013, the Commission Directorate General for Human Resources (DG HR) combined answers to the questions it posed in its staff survey of the same year to construct an engagement index (Commission 2013a). The questions it brought together were as follows:

- I have a clear understanding of what is expected from me at work
- My colleagues are committed to doing quality work
- I have recently received recognition or praise for good work

- My manager seems to care for me as a person
- I have the information, material and resources to my job well
- At work, my opinions seem to count
- My line manager helps me to identify my training and development needs

The index was used, first, to establish an overall measure of engagement and, second, to compare Commission departments (Appendix Figure 2.).

Both exercises were repeated for the current report, using data from the 2014 online survey conducted as part of the research. The overall level of engagement based on the 2014 survey was 67 per cent compared to the 71 per cent from the 2013 Staff Survey (European Commission 2013a). As with the 2013 Staff Survey, the ratings for Commission departments reveal significant variation as Figure 2.2 illustrates. At the same time, all DGs except for two achieved an engagement rating of over 60 per cent and even the two lowest scored above 50 per cent.

Comparison of engagement scores by gender, by staff category, by location, and by cohort produced several interesting results (see Figure 2.3):

- **Gender:** there is no significant difference between the engagement levels of men and women
- **Cohorts:** analysis of levels of satisfaction by when respondents joined the Commission showed no significant differences between cohorts
- **Staff categories:** there are low levels of variation, with administrators and assistants more engaged than contract agents and temporary agents
- **Location:** the score for delegations is low - a result that is replicated in other responses relating to job satisfaction across the survey - but surprisingly, given the views expressed in interviews about the cost of living and the difficulties caused by remoteness from HQ, staff in Luxembourg show high levels of engagement.

Figure 2.2 Engagement index 2014: comparison by Commission department (DG)

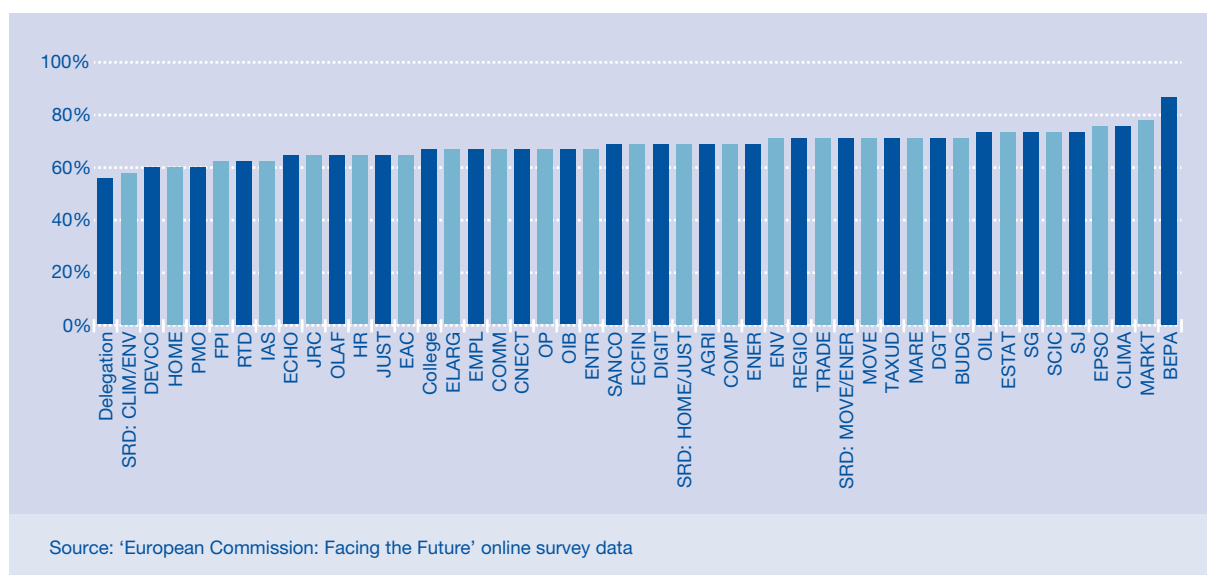


Figure 2.3 Engagement index: comparison by gender, staff category, location and cohort



Source: 'European Commission: Facing the Future' online survey data

Comparative engagement

The responses indicate high levels of engagement on the part of Commission employees with their work, colleagues and employer. However, the scores of national civil servants who responded to similar questions about their working environment show that it is possible for public sector employees to register even higher levels of job satisfaction.

A comparison between responses on job value questions, which are similar but not identically-worded to the question posed in the survey for the current project, is shown in Table 2.1 on page 22.

Table 2.1 Responses to job satisfaction and job value questions: the European Commission, Canadian public administration, UK civil service and US federal employees compared.

	% agree or strongly agree			
	European Commission 2014 ¹	Canada 2011 ²	UK 2013 ³	US 2013 ⁴
My work gives me a high level of personal accomplishment	64	76	75	70
I have a manageable workload and can complete what is expected of me within the official working week	54	67	60	58
I am proud when I tell others I work for [insert name of relevant body]	59	89	56	No data
The work of my team is managed effectively	60	50	43	57

Notes:

1 'European Commission: Facing the Future' online survey data

2 Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2012) *2011 Public Service Employee Survey Organizational Results: Public Service of Canada*, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pSES-saff/2011/results-resultats/bq-pq/00/org-eng.aspx>

3 Cabinet Office (2013) *Civil Service People Survey 2012. Summary of Findings*, http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/csps2012_summary-of-findings_final.pdf

4 US Office of Personnel Management (2013) *2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Employees influencing change*, <http://www.fedview.opm.gov/2013/Reports/ResponsesW.asp?AGY=ALL>

When responses to the questions that make up the engagement index are compared - see Table 2.2, which again are similar but not identically-worded to the questions posed in the survey for the current project - a more mixed picture emerges.

Table 2.2 Engagement index: the European Commission, Canadian public administration, UK civil service and US federal employees compared.

	% agree or strongly agree			
	European Commission 2014 ¹	Canada 2011 ²	UK 2013 ³	US 2013 ⁴
I have a clear understanding of what is expected from me at work	85	No data	83	79
My colleagues are committed to doing quality work	79	94	84	73
I have recently received recognition or praise for good work	72	58	77	45
My manager seems to care for me as a person	65	74	80	77
I have the information, material and resources to my job well	62	82	69	70
At work, my opinions seem to count	60	67	54	50
My line manager helps me to identify my training and development needs	35	68	61	50

Notes:

1 'European Commission: Facing the Future' online survey data

2 Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2012) *2011 Public Service Employee Survey Organizational Results: Public Service of Canada*, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pSES-saff/2011/results-resultats/bq-pq/00/org-eng.aspx>

3 Cabinet Office (2013) *Civil Service People Survey 2012. Summary of Findings*, http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/csps2012_summary-of-findings_final.pdf

4 US Office of Personnel Management (2013) *2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Employees influencing change*, <http://www.fedview.opm.gov/2013/Reports/ResponsesW.asp?AGY=ALL>

In summary, staff have a positive view of their job and of the Commission as a workplace, although there is some variation by location and staff type. Given the freeze in salaries and the changes to working conditions introduced following the financial and economic crisis (discussed in chapter 4, below), it is perhaps just as well that Commission employees are less motivated by material considerations, such as remuneration, than by ideals, such as working in an international environment and commitment to Europe. In engagement and some areas of job satisfaction, however, the Commission is scored more modestly by its staff than civil servants in national administrations score their institutions.

Career progression

Career prospects and professional development are a key dimension of employee experience. In a modern workplace, especially one with a career-based system¹¹, staff should be aware of the career paths and opportunities available to them. They should know what steps are necessary to advance their careers and should be confident that promotion is based on merit. They should be able to benefit from constructive feedback from managers, reasonably expect appraisal to be a meaningful exercise, and have ready access to information and career advice, as well as training opportunities.

Results from the online survey, face-to-face interviews and focus groups suggest that the Commission is at some distance from this ideal. First, although 38 per cent of respondents to the online survey agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition 'I know what is expected of me if I am to advance my career within the Commission', that figure is nearly matched by the 35 per cent who disagreed, sometimes strongly. A quarter neither agreed or disagreed or did not know. A further question revealed significant levels of uncertainty. When asked if they thought that 'working in several DGs is advantageous to career development', 46 per cent agreed, but 38 per cent were neutral or did not know (Appendix Figure 2.k).

Second, respondents to the online survey were divided on the current system of appraisal. Those expressing a positive opinion were outnumbered by those who took a negative view. While 24 per cent agreed that appraisal 'offers an accurate evaluation of how well I do my job', 45 per cent disagreed, 19 per cent strongly disagreed. A quarter of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed¹². Staff were considerably more positive about informal feedback. Fifty per cent of respondents reported that they received 'regular feedback on my performance', which 'helps my performance'.

Third, although there was no question on the topic in the online survey, results from the face-to-face interviews suggest that there is a significant minority of staff in the Commission who do not consider that promotion is handled according to merit. In interviews with non-management staff, 59 per cent of the 53 respondents who answered the question thought that 'by and large promotion in the Commission is handled according to merit', but 42 per cent disagreed. Among middle and senior managers (but excluding Directors General), 66 per cent of the 84 interviewees who answered the question agreed, while 35 per cent disagreed¹³.

Fourth, on the question of professional development, only a fifth of respondents believed themselves 'able to access the right career development opportunities when I need to'. Fully 46 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposition, while 30 per cent were neutral or did not know. Compared against other bureaucracies, the Commission does not fare well. The 35 per cent of Commission respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that 'my line manager helps me identify my training and development needs' were greatly outnumbered by the 61 per cent of officials in the Canadian administration, the 68 per cent in the UK civil service and the 50 per cent in the US federal administration who gave a positive answer to this question.

11 A career-based model has long been in place in the Commission, but elements of a position-based system have been progressively incorporated.

12 The views expressed in face-to-face interviews were no more positive.

13 A majority of the *cabinet* members asked for their views disagreed with the proposition - 8 to 6 - but, since only 14 interviewees answered the question, the sample is very small.

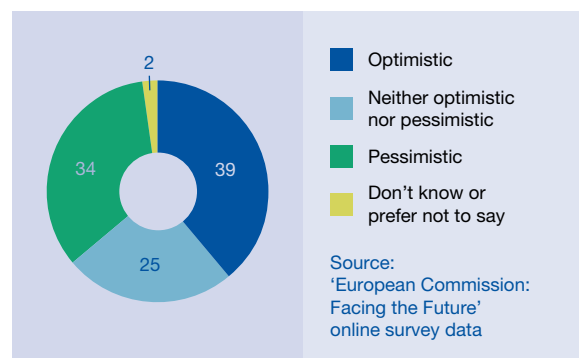
Fifth, career paths and career management frequently emerged as a problematic issue in face-to-face interviews with staff at all levels. Although respondents testified universally to the quality and calibre of staff in the Commission, the absence of career advice and the failure of the Commission to provide or support pathways for employees with particular professional training - most often, economists or lawyers - across the organization was mentioned by more experienced interviewees. Senior officials often pointed to the haphazard way in which their careers had developed. Frequent reference was made to the 'coat tails' effect - following a former boss to another Directorate-General in the Commission when he or she is appointed to a new position. Although not necessarily problematic in itself, interviewees did not believe that career development should depend on such happenstance and thought there should be a coherent system in place for encouraging and supporting horizontal mobility. Career trajectories will be a subject of further analysis by members of the research team.

Finally, participants in the focus group that brought together temporary agents regretted the paucity of opportunities available to remain in the Commission and were frustrated at the lack of support or guidance they had received from human resources, central or local, as the end of their contracts approached. They also pointed to what they saw as the irrationality and wastefulness of a system that invests heavily in the recruitment of staff, sees those recruits learn the job and perform to a high level, then allows them to depart, in the knowledge that they will have to be replaced.

Morale

Responses to a number of questions give a sense of levels of morale among Commission staff. Two questions asked respectively about the future of the EU and about the position of the Commission. They were intended to gauge whether Commission employees feel optimistic or pessimistic about the future. Third and fourth questions asked staff for more personal reflections - on whether they had thought about leaving the Commission and where they saw themselves working in the future.

Figure 2.4 How do you feel about the EU's future?



First, in response to the question - taken from the Eurobarometer - 'How do you feel about the EU's future?' - 39 per cent of respondents indicated that they were optimistic, 34 per cent were pessimistic and 27 per cent were neither or did not know. When asked for their views on the proposition, 'The Commission's power is increasing', however, only 13 per cent of respondents agreed, while (just) over 60 per cent disagreed.

Second, when asked if they had thought about a future elsewhere, just over a third - 35 per cent - of respondents indicated that they had 'seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years'. (Appendix Figure 2.1). They, however, were outnumbered by the 46 per cent of respondents who had not. When asked where they saw themselves in ten years time, the most significant finding was that respondents who joined between 2005 and 2010 were more likely than any other cohort to see themselves working elsewhere. This finding appears to lend support to the hypothesis (to be tested in future research) that more recent recruits are more likely than previous cohorts to see working for the Commission as a 'normal' job, less likely to have been attracted by a desire to 'build Europe' and less likely to see working for the Commission as a vocation.

Postscript: the impact of the 2010 reform in the recruitment of EU civil servants

In 2010, after a long period of debate and reflection, the EU civil service changed its method of recruitment from examinations based on general knowledge of European history, politics and geography to psychometric and competence testing. A provisional analysis of the results from the online survey administered as part of the current project suggests that the changes have not affected the profile of recruits in terms of educational qualifications or professional experience. However, there has been a change among recent recruits in motivation and job value. With respect to motivation, 42 per cent of respondents recruited since the reform cite ‘professional development or training’ as a reason for seeking to pursue a career within the Commission compared to 27 per cent overall, 35 per cent cite ‘job stability’ compared with 44 per cent overall, and in terms of job value 50 per cent highlight ‘influencing policy’ compared with 42 per cent overall (Appendix Figures 2.a and 2.m).

Recommendations

Commission staff generally offer a very positive evaluation of their job and workplace, but the picture across the organization is differentiated. In particular, staff in delegations register higher levels of dissatisfaction than employees based in Brussels and Luxembourg. The causes of this dissatisfaction need to be better understood by the organization and solutions sought as appropriate.

More than half of respondents identify too many approval stages, and unnecessary tasks or projects as factors that adversely affect their work. These are factors that lie largely within the Commission’s control to address. The first calls for efforts to reduce the number of signatures needed for routine work items; the second for more efficient management.

Although Commission staff are strongly engaged and highly committed to the organization, more than a third are dissatisfied with the availability of information about career advancement, current arrangements concerning career progression,

and professional development opportunities. Career development is somewhat arbitrary and little guidance is offered to employees on how to plot, plan and manage a career. Staff who do not aspire to rise through management ranks, but who want mobility and a varied career that suits their talents, consider themselves to be especially disadvantaged. The Commission needs urgently to develop a robust system of talent management so that it can offer existing staff the possibility of professional fulfillment, make the best use of the resources at its disposal as an organization, and remain attractive to well-qualified graduates. Career paths need to be mapped for different professional groups, horizontal mobility to be centrally supported and effectively resourced, and opportunities for professional development to be systematized, publicized and accessible. The Commission also needs to align its human resources practices to an organization that is fundamentally career based, but that increasingly incorporates elements of a position-based system.

A large segment of staff are dissatisfied with the current appraisal system. Although the system has been reformed several times over the past decade, a further change may be necessary if staff are to feel confident that appraisal provides a genuine assessment of their achievements and performance. In devising a more satisfactory scheme, the Commission may be able to learn from systems used in other international organizations and public administrations.

The Commission may wish to re-examine the opportunities for staff employed on fixed-term contracts as temporary agents or contract staff to become permanent officials. Where such employees have demonstrated their abilities, investment in their recruitment and training will have been wasted if the possibility of continuing to work in the organization remains a remote possibility. Finally, given the high percentage of assistants who are recruited with qualifications that are higher than the threshold educational requirement, the Commission should consider whether the expectations of staff in this group need to be better managed and should review pathways into other roles.

Chapter 3 The Commission's workforce after ten years of enlargement

The recruitment exercise associated with the enlargements of 2004 and 2007 brought over 5,000 new members of staff into the Commission¹⁴. New appointments were made across and at all levels of the administration to ensure the availability of the expertise and skills necessary for the Commission to carry out its responsibilities in the enlarged European Union. As with any organization, the infusion of new staff on such a large scale - the number of recruits from the EU10 who joined in 2004 represented nearly a fifth of the total workforce prior to the enlargement - presented a major challenge of adjustment and socialization. For the new recruits, as well as for existing personnel, the enlargement gave rise to a variety of concerns¹⁵.

This chapter reviews attitudes to the 2004 and 2007 enlargements and their consequences. It looks, first, at the views of staff on the management and the effects of enlargement on the Commission. It examines whether employees consider that a single culture and common set of values exists within the administration or whether they believe that there is a difference in outlook between staff from the old and staff from the newer member states. Second, it tests these perceptions by comparing the educational and professional profiles, motivations and experience of staff from the EU15 and EU13. Third, it compares the outlooks and beliefs of staff from the old and the new member states. It examines their philosophical values, their preferred visions of where power should reside in the European Union and their preferences for whether decision-making authority in particular policy areas should be located at the EU or the national level.

Enlargement and its consequences

In the online survey, staff were asked, first for their views on the management of the enlargement process. Only a quarter of respondents agreed with the proposition that 'The 2004 and 2007 enlargements were handled with fairness and equity'. Thirty-four per cent disagreed, while the remaining 41 per cent either did not know or neither agreed nor disagreed. Staff took an even more negative view on the impact of enlargement. Fifty per cent of respondents did not believe that the 2004, 2007 and 2013 enlargements had strengthened the *esprit de corps* within the Commission's administration - only 12 per cent agreed - while 57 per cent thought that 'a 28-member College has made internal coordination more difficult'. Only nine per cent disagreed (Appendix Figures 3.a, 3.b and 3.c).

Staff were then asked for their perceptions of the extent to which there is a common culture of values across the administration. While 37 per cent of respondents agreed that 'Whatever their home country Commission staff broadly share the same values', nearly as many (36 per cent) disagreed. Asked specifically whether 'There are no significant differences in beliefs or outlook between staff from countries that joined the EU before 2004 and staff from countries that joined the EU in 2004 or after', the number of respondents who disagreed (48 per cent) was exactly double the number who agreed (24 per cent) (Appendix Figures 3.d and 3.e).

14 The Commission surpassed its target of recruiting 3,500 officials from the EU10 (or 16 per cent of the approximately 22,000 pre-enlargement posts in the organization) between 2004 and 2010 by 496 (European Commission 2011a) and 977 for the EU2 (Bulgaria and Romania) between 2007 and 2011 by 228 (European Commission 2012b). The target associated with Croatia's accession in 2013 is 249 (European Commission 2012c).

15 Existing studies focusing on the Commission's output suggest, however, that the Commission's effectiveness was not negatively affected (see, for example, Dehousse *et al* 2006).

Comparing the views on these propositions expressed by respondents from the EU15 and the EU13 respectively represents a first step in determining whether the perception of a difference is backed by empirical evidence. Unsurprisingly perhaps, given the new (and worse) conditions introduced for members of staff recruited after 1 May 2004, respondents from the EU13 were marginally less likely than their counterparts from the EU15 (23 and 26 per cent respectively) to agree that the enlargements were ‘handled with fairness and equity’. They were also far more likely to agree and less likely to disagree that enlargement had strengthened the *esprit de corps* within the Commission (23 and 34 per cent against 10 and 54 per cent) and more likely to agree and less likely to disagree that a 28-member Commission is more difficult to coordinate (34 and 15 per cent against 63 and 7 per cent respectively) than respondents from the older member states.

The results also show a difference in perception on the questions of whether Commission employees share a common culture and whether staff from the EU15 and EU13 differ in outlook. On the first, 49 per cent of staff from the EU13 agree that whatever their origins ‘Commission staff broadly share the same values’, while 23 per cent disagree, compared with 34 per cent and 40 per cent respectively of staff from the EU15. On the second question, 30 per cent of respondents from the EU13 take the view that ‘There are no significant differences in beliefs or outlook between staff from countries that joined the EU before 2004 and staff from countries that joined the EU in 2004 or after’ - a belief shared by 23 per cent of respondents from the EU15 - while 44 per cent disagree compared to 49 per cent of respondents from the EU15.

Backgrounds, careers and job satisfaction compared

As reported in chapter 1, the online survey asked staff detailed questions about their educational and professional backgrounds. It sought to discover what motivations led to the original decision to pursue a career in the Commission, to examine the career aspirations of staff, and to elicit views on experience of the Commission as a workplace, as discussed in chapter 2. This section compares the responses to these questions given by staff from the EU15 and EU13.

Educational and professional backgrounds

Data on the subjects studied by staff shows that, compared to respondents from the EU15, a marginally larger percentage of employees from the EU13 have studied law, a significantly higher percentage humanities, and politics and international relations, and a much higher percentage business and economics. Figure 3.1 (overleaf) compares EU15 and EU13 respondents by subject of highest qualification.

With respect to professional experience, respondents from the EU13 are slightly less likely to have come from a business background and more likely than their colleagues from the EU15 to have come from a background in public administration or education and research. Figure 3.2 (overleaf) compares EU15 and EU13 respondents by their previous working experience.

Figure 3.1 Subject of highest qualifications. Respondents from EU15 and EU13 states compared.

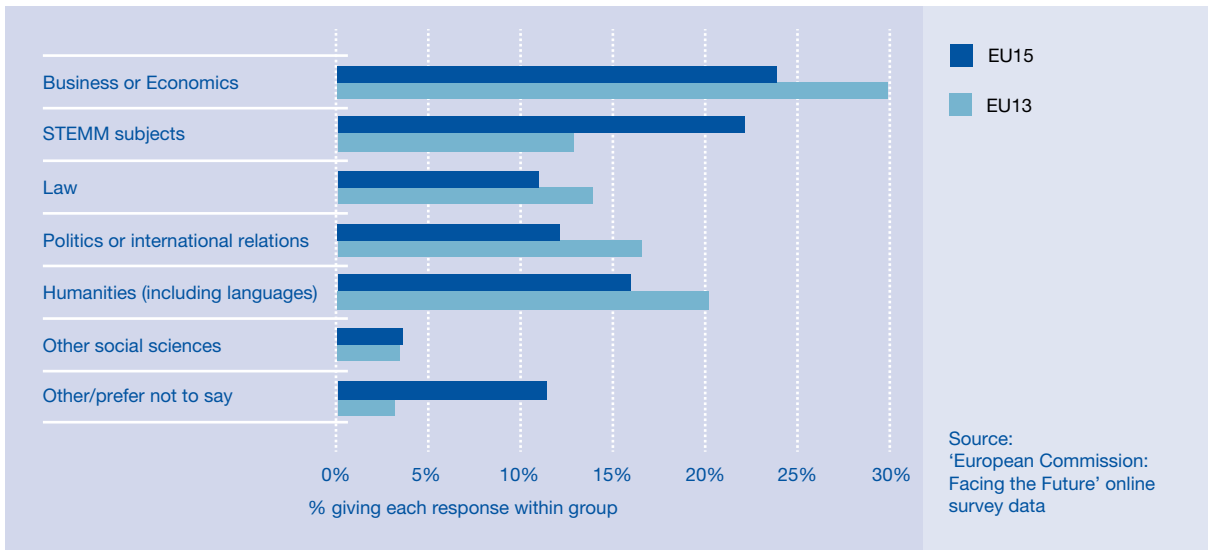
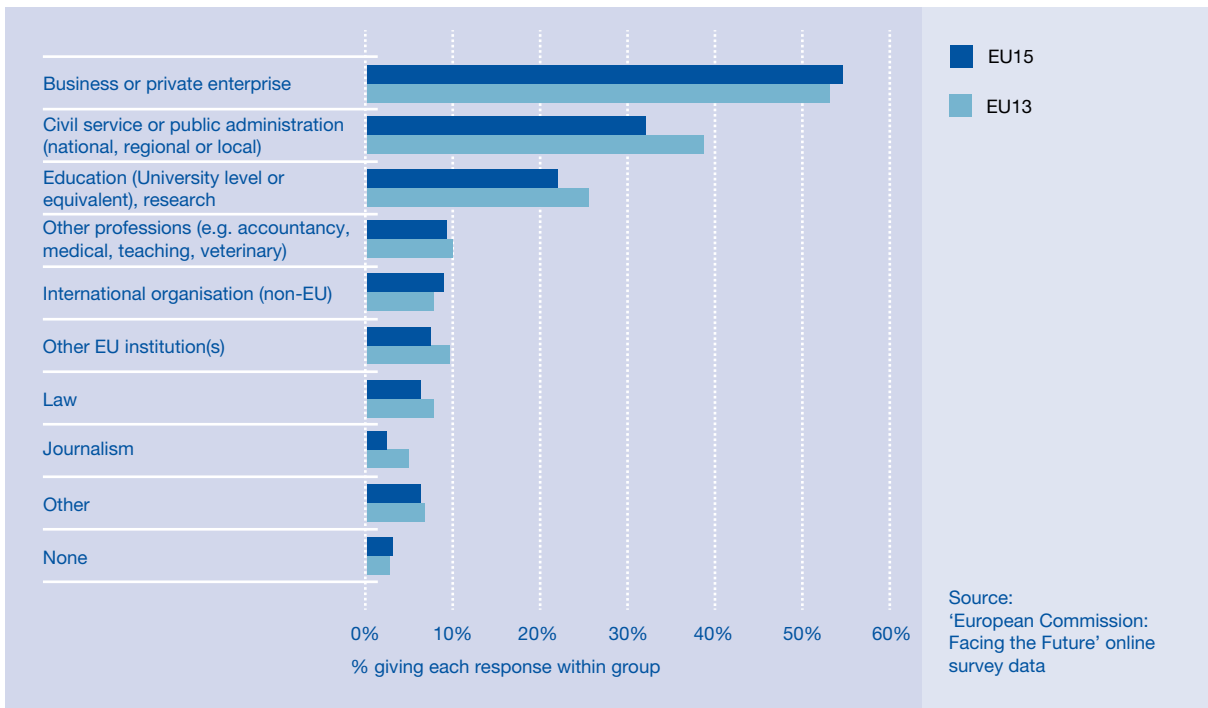


Figure 3.2 Previous working experience. Respondents from EU15 and EU13 states compared

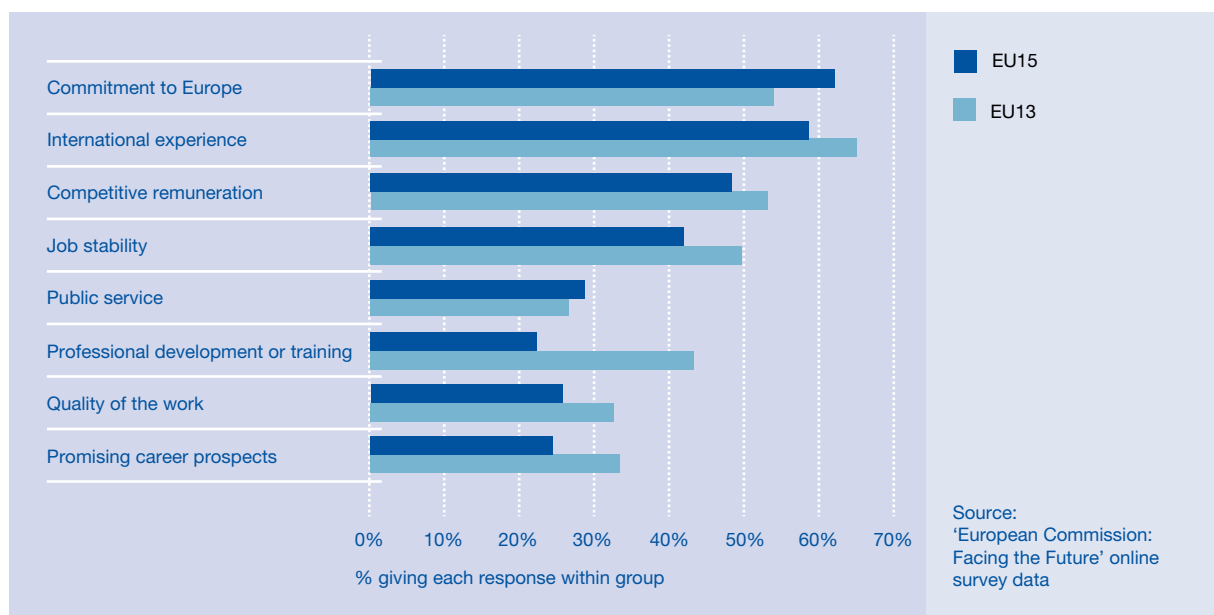


Motivation

Analysis of the reasons leading to the decision to pursue a career in the European Commission shows that respondents from the EU13 were less likely to have been motivated by a commitment to Europe and marginally less likely to have been moved by considerations of public service.

They are more likely to have been attracted by a desire to gain international experience, quality of the work, and job stability, slightly more likely to have been attracted by competitive remuneration, and much more likely to have been attracted by promising career prospects and, especially, opportunities for professional development or training.

Figure 3.3 Motivation for pursuing a career in the European Commission. Respondents from EU15 and EU13 states compared



Job satisfaction

On questions relating to job satisfaction, there is no significant difference between staff from the EU15 and the EU13 on the questions 'I feel 'a strong personal attachment to the Commission'', 'the work of my team is managed effectively', 'compared to people doing a similar job in other organizations I feel I receive a fair remuneration package' or 'I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years'. However, employees from the EU13 are much more likely than their colleagues from the EU15 to consider the Commission a good employer (67 against 52 per cent) and more likely to agree with the proposition, 'I have a manageable workload and can complete what is expected of me within the official working week' (59 against 53 per cent) (Appendix Figures 3.f and 3.g).

Similarly, on job values, there were few questions on which there was significant divergence. Respondents from the EU13 were marginally more likely than their colleagues from the EU15 to cite 'influencing policy', 'building Europe', 'the calibre of my colleagues' and 'the quality of the work we do in the Commission', significantly more likely to cite 'Making a difference to the life of European citizens' and 'the remuneration package', and marginally less likely to cite 'working in an international environment' as what they valued about working for the Commission. (Appendix Figure 3.h). It is interesting to note that most of the differences in motivation for joining the Commission reported by EU15 and EU13 respondents are reflected in these differences in job values, except 'working in an international environment', which staff from the EU13 value more.

Finally, the online survey asked staff to identify the factors that have an adverse effect on their work quality. The list included:

- having to work on unnecessary tasks or projects
- having to work excessively long hours
- constantly changing priorities
- too many approval stages
- unreasonable deadlines

On all five questions, respondents from the EU13 were less likely to agree than respondents from the EU15 that the quality of their work suffers as a result of the factor identified (Appendix Figure 3.i).

Values, visions and preferences.

What kind of EU?

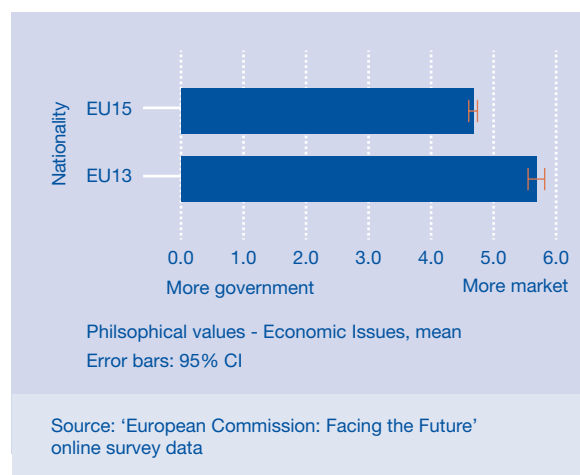
An earlier study (Kassim *et al* 2013: ch 9), based on a survey of 1901 administrators conducted in 2008, found that officials from the EU12 were likely to be more economically liberal and socially conservative than their counterparts from the EU15. Recruits from the EU12 were also less likely to want the Commission to become a future government of Europe, more likely to see the member states as the central pillar of the European Union, and less enthusiastic about expanding EU competencies.

The current study sought to investigate whether these differences were still in evidence five years later and whether the outcome would be similar when the same questions were put to the entire Commission staff as opposed to a segment of permanent officials.

Philosophical values

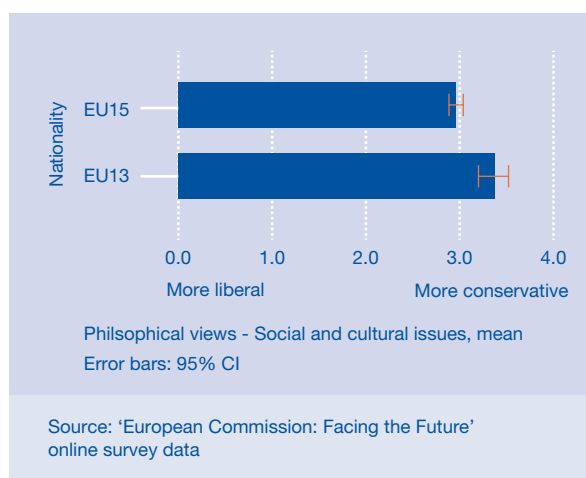
Responses to the online survey did indeed echo the earlier findings. Staff were asked to locate their position on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represented 'more government' and 10 'more market'. Analysis of the data, as presented in Figure 3.4, shows that respondents from the EU13 are more likely to position themselves towards the 'more market' end of the scale than respondents from the EU15.

Figure 3.4 Philosophical values - economic. Respondents from EU15 and EU13 states compared.



Respondents were also asked to locate themselves on a scale designed to register socio-cultural values. In this case, 0 represented 'more liberal' and 10 'more conservative'. As Figure 3.5 shows, respondents from the EU13 were more likely to position themselves towards the conservative end of the scale.

Figure 3.5 Philosophical values - socio-cultural. Respondents from EU15 and EU13 states compared.



Preferred visions of EU governance

A further question sought to investigate the ideal vision of the EU held by Commission employees. In the online survey, staff were asked for their views on the following propositions in order to solicit their preferred vision of the European Union:

- the College of Commissioners should become the government of the European Union.
- 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 member states - not the Commission or European Parliament - should be the central players in the European Union.

Analysis of the responses showed that the views of respondents from the EU13 and the EU15 to the first question were broadly similar (35 and 36 per cent agreed respectively), on the second question identical (75 per cent agreed), and on the third

within four percentage points (16 to 13 per cent agreed) (Appendix Figures 3.j, 3.k and 3.l).

Although the views of respondents from the EU13 are near-convergent with those of from the EU15 on who should hold power within the EU, there are three issues on which positions diverge. First, respondents from the EU13 are much more likely to be optimistic about the future of the EU. Fifty-two per cent declared themselves to be optimistic and 21 per cent pessimistic compared with figures of 35 per cent and 38 per cent respectively for respondents from the EU15. Second, EU13 staff are less likely to believe that the Commission is losing power to national capitals, to the European Parliament or to the European Council. Third, EU13 respondents are much less likely to offer a negative interpretation of the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the Commission (Appendix Figures 3.m, 3.n, 3.o, 3p and 3.q).

EU competences

A further comparison was made concerning where staff believe that decision-making authority should reside in key areas of policy. Following the model used in Kassim *et al* (2013: ch 4), respondents were asked to locate on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 represents national or sub-national and 10 the European Union, first, where they thought that decision-making authority actually resides and second, for the same domains on a similar scale, where they think decision-making authority should reside¹⁶. For each policy area, their responses to the second were subtracted from the first to give a measure of the desirability of change relative to the perceived actual position.

On agriculture, respondents from all member states wanted less 'Europe'. In all other policy domains, they wanted more. On competition, there was no difference in the preferences expressed by respondents from the EU15 and EU13. On agriculture, economic and fiscal policy, and asylum and immigration, there were differences, but they were not statistically significant. By contrast, on foreign and security policy, and on environmental policy, respondents from the EU15 wanted more 'Europe' than respondents from the EU13.

16 This question was posed to administrators, seconded national experts and *cabinet* members only.

Figure 3.6 Views on decision-making competence. Respondents from EU15 and EU13 compared

Figure 3.6a Agriculture

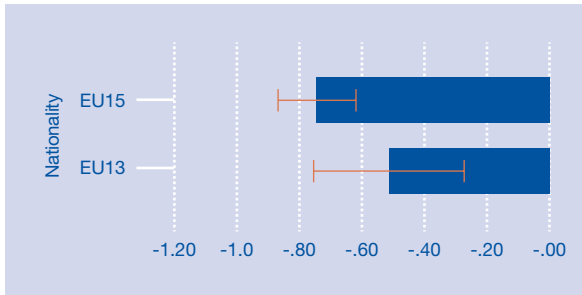


Figure 3.6d Economic and fiscal policy

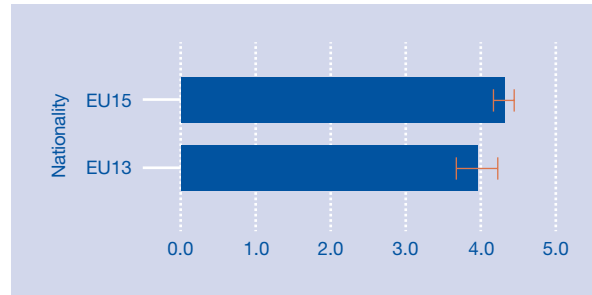


Figure 3.6b Foreign and security policy

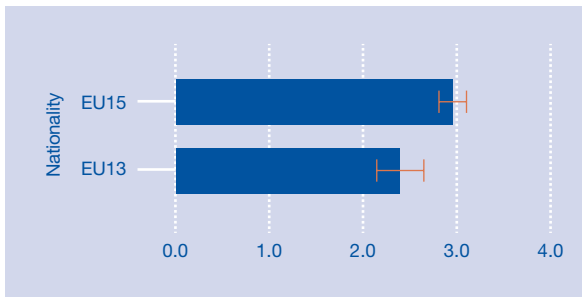


Figure 3.6e Environmental policy

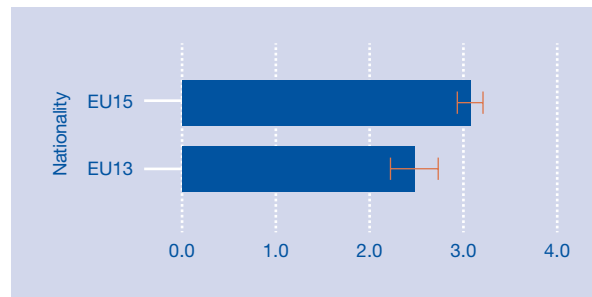


Figure 3.6c Asylum and immigration policy

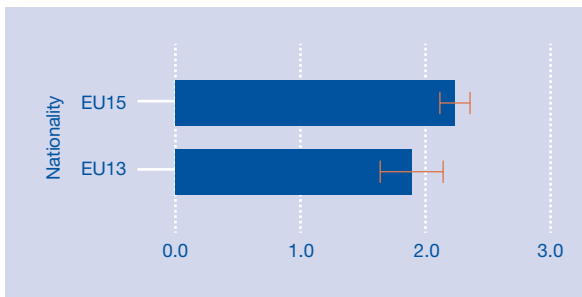
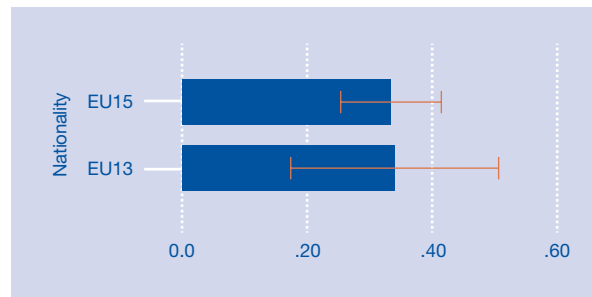


Figure 3.6f Competition policy



Key

Negative values: member states should have more competence; Positive values: the EU should have more competence

Error bars: 95% CI

Summary

Ten years after the event, the perceptions of staff concerning the management of enlargement and its consequences remain somewhat negative. A significant number of respondents consider that enlargement was not handled with fairness and equity, and an even larger group believe enlargement has had a negative impact on the Commission's working and operation.

On the question of whether staff in the Commission share a common culture, the results are mixed. Nearly as many respondents disagree as agree that, wherever they are from, Commission staff 'broadly share the same values'. Twice as many think that there are differences in 'beliefs' and 'outlook' between staff from the EU15 and the EU13.

Analysis of the data also shows that recruits from the EU15 differ from those from the EU13 in the reasons they cite for what led them to join the Commission, and in their educational and professional backgrounds. On job values and on job satisfaction, however, there are few significant differences.

Finally, examination of philosophical values, preferred visions of EU governance, and beliefs about the appropriate locus of decision-making authority reveals a mixed picture. Respondents from the EU13 tend to be more economically liberal and more culturally conservative than their colleagues from the EU15. Although no more likely to harbour federal preferences, respondents from the EU13 were less pessimistic about the EU's future and less likely than respondents from the EU15 to perceive the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the Commission's position in the EU system as negative. With the exception of competition policy, where views were similar, preferences for where decision-making competence should reside differed between EU15 and EU13 respondents, but the differences were significant only on environmental policy, and on foreign and security policy.

Recommendations

While there is not much that the Commission can do about past enlargements or their circumstances, and nothing that it should do about differences in philosophical values among its workforce, the results suggest that it would be valuable for the Commission to consider how effectively new recruits, especially when they join in large numbers, are socialized by the organization. Incoming staff need to be familiarized with the Commission's mission, conventions and practices. At the same time, the Commission needs to explain to existing staff the importance to its effectiveness of recruiting nationals from the new member states at all levels. Existing staff need also to be made aware that such an operation is likely to be disruptive in the short term.

Recruits from the new member states need to be made welcome and supported in their new working environment. It would be useful for the Commission to solicit their views on how they experience their new workplace at the end of their first year of employment and at regular intervals thereafter. A regular staff survey is an appropriate method for monitoring attitudes, but a question on national origins needs to be included so as to allow analysis of aggregate data by nationality.

The socialization of staff from new member states appears to have been effective, even if the perception among respondents is that enlargement was not well-handled and has had a negative impact on the Commission. The Commission could publicize the results of independent research as well as its own studies concerning the organization's performance before and after the 'big bang' enlargement so that staff can base their views on evidence and data rather than perception and hearsay.

Chapter 4 The 2014 review of the Staff Regulations

This chapter examines the views of Commission staff on the reformed Staff Regulations that came into effect on 1 January 2014¹⁷. The changes represent the most significant revision of the Regulations since the 2004 overhaul that formed part of the Kinnock reforms¹⁸. As Table 4.1 shows, they affect many aspects of the working life and conditions of Commission employees, most notably pay, pensions and allowances, career progression, and the working week. The reforms to the Staff Regulations were negotiated alongside an inter-institutional agreement under which the Commission undertook to reduce the headcount of its workforce by 5 per cent by 2017 and the Multiannual Financial Framework, which sets the EU budget for 2014 to 2020.

In the shadow of the financial and economic crisis, the amendments to the Staff Regulations were negotiated in a highly charged political environment. Simplifying for the purposes of contextualization, there were three interlinked sets of discussion.

First, with important provisions governing the ‘special levy’ (an extra tax on salaries), the salary adjustment method and elements of the pension scheme scheduled to expire in 2012, the Commission was obliged to propose amendments to the Staff Regulations. Having already committed itself to modernizing and cost-cutting measures, including zero growth of posts, the Commission proposed wide-ranging reforms in the proposals that it submitted to the Council and Parliament in June 2011¹⁹. The Commission estimated its changes would lead to savings of €1 billion by 2020. Though it welcomed the Commission proposals as a reasonable point of departure, the Council called for even more radical cuts. The Commission’s revised proposals, tabled in December 2011, duly went even further²⁰, but some member governments called for still deeper measures. After difficult negotiations, a final agreement was reached in October 2013.

17 European Union (2014) Regulation No 31 (EEC), 11 (EAEC), laying down the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community, online at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1962R0031:20140101:EN:PDF>; European Commission (2013b) Commission Decision of 16.12.2013 amending Commission Decision of 2 March 2011 on the general provisions for implementing Article 79(2) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union, governing the conditions of employment of contract staff employed by the Commission under the terms of Articles 3a and 3b of the said Conditions, online at http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/docs/ca_rules_en.pdf

18 The 2004 reforms included: a revision of the career system; introduction of a new category of staff (‘contract agents’) with generally lower salaries; a revision of the salary grid for officials and temporary agents, allowing staff to be recruited at lower grades and on lower starting salaries; introduction of more flexible and family-friendly working conditions; increase of the retirement age from 60 to 63 with transitional measures for staff members already in place; for staff recruited after 1 May 2004, pension accrual rate reduced from 2 per cent to 1.9 per cent and pension rights are no longer subject to correction coefficients for higher cost of living; new ‘method’ adopted (online at http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/docs/toc100_en.pdf) The changes to the staff regulations were part of a wider reform package. See Kassim (2004a, 2004b, 2008), Schön-Quinlivan (2011) for discussion.

19 Its proposals tabled in June 2011 included: a 5 per cent reduction of staff in all categories in all institutions 2013-17 through natural wastage; an increase in the minimum working week for all staff in all institutions from 37.5 hours to 40 hours; minimum age for retirement increased from 55 to 58 and normal retirement age from 63 to 65, and easier to work until 67; the ‘method’ to be simplified, extended and calculated with reference to 10 rather than 8 member states; introduction of a new solidarity levy of 5.5 per cent; secretarial and clerical tasks to be carried out by contractual staff; maximum leave days for annual trip to home country reduced from 6 to 2; and possibility for each institution to establish flexible working arrangements (Commission 2011b, 2011c).

20 The revised measures proposed: an increase of the proposed ‘solidarity levy’ to be paid by staff from 5.5 per cent to 6 per cent; introduction of a new career structure for secretarial tasks with lower salaries and career perspectives corresponding to the level of responsibilities; ten year extension of the ‘method’ and calculations to be based on the spending power of civil servants in all member states; and an increase of maximum duration of employment of contract agents from three to six years (Commission 2011d, 2011e).

Table 4.1 Summary of the 2014 reform measures**Pay and pensions**

The minimum retirement age is raised to 58 and the statutory retirement age from 63 to 65 years for current staff and 66 years for new staff

The working week is increased from 37.5 to 40 hours without an equivalent pay increase

The 'special levy' is renamed a 'solidarity levy' (to acknowledge the need for the institutions to contribute to savings in the current financial crisis) and fixed at 6% for most staff and 7% for European commissioners and officials in the top two grades

Allowances

Travel allowances are reduced

The number of annual holidays and travel days for staff in delegations is reduced

The 'method'

The salary adjustment 'method' is to be calculated using salary changes in all member states as the basis of salary adjustments and a change in the measure by which cost of living increases are calculated to cover Luxembourg as well as Belgium

The new 'method' will remain in force until 2020, so as to be aligned with the next financial perspective

Salary adjustments are to be decided by delegated act rather than by the Council

Introduction of a 'crisis' clause, which allows for the automatic suspension of wage and pension updates when triggered by macroeconomic indicators

Changes to the career structure designed to tighten links between officials' responsibilities and their pay levels, including:

Link between grade and responsibility is tightened for administrators and assistants, and promotion rates are reduced for higher grades, but increased for the starting grades

Introduction of a new career structure for secretaries, starting at two levels below the current lowest pay grade

Contract staff can be employed for up to six, rather than three, years

More frequent internal competitions which are also open to contract staff.

Introduction of a new category of temporary staff for agencies to be recruited indefinitely following open competition and interchangeable between agencies where necessary

Source: Compiled by the authors from various sources, included 2014 Staff Regulations, House of Commons European Committee (2014)

Second, discussions on the annual adjustment of salaries and pensions had become politicized and litigious²¹, even before the Commission came forward with its first proposal for the reform of the Staff Regulations in June 2011. The conflict between the Council and the Commission continued for several years, with both institutions initiating action before the Court of Justice of the European Union²². At issue was whether, in the prevailing economic climate, EU staff should be permitted the pay increase as calculated by the salary adjustment ‘method’ - the system used since the mid-1970s to calculate the salary levels of EU employees by reference to the pay of national civil servants from a sample of member states - or whether an exception clause (Annex XI, article 10), allowing the Commission to depart from the method when there is a ‘serious or sudden deterioration in the economic and social situation’, could be activated. The Council, with France, Germany, the UK and the Netherlands taking the lead, insisted that such conditions existed, but the Commission disagreed. Although the Court of Justice ruled in the Commission’s favour in the case concerning salaries for 2010 - the initial case brought by the Commission - it found against the Commission for 2011, with consequences for the 2012 and 2013 settlements.

Third, the Staff Regulations became an issue in negotiations of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020. Pay and pensions, as set out in the Staff Regulations, account for roughly half of the relevant budget heading, Heading 5 Administration which is allocated around 6 per cent of the total EU budget. The Commission proposed a 5 per cent reduction in staff, a lowering of salaries for some staff, and an increase in the working week without compensation. After difficult negotiations, agreement was finally reached in the European Council in February 2013.

This chapter examines attitudes to the reform of the Staff Regulations. Questions in the online survey administered as part of the current project asked staff whether they considered the reforms necessary, whether the need for them had been well explained, and what impact they thought the reform was likely to have on the administration and on their own circumstances. It also asked a more general question; namely, whether staff believe that the Commission handles change management effectively.

21 Case C-40/10

22 Case C-63/12 Commission action to annul Council Decision 2011/866/EU of 19 December 2011 concerning the Commission’s proposal for a Council Regulation adjusting with effect from 1 July 2011 the remuneration and pensions of the officials and other servants of the European Union and the correction coefficients applied thereto; and to order the Council of the European Union to pay the costs; Case C-66/12 Council action against the Commission on 9 February 2012: primarily, annul, under Article 263 TFEU, the communication from the Commission, COM(2011) 829 final of 24 November 2011, in so far as the Commission thereby refused definitively to submit appropriate proposals to the European Parliament and the Council on the basis of Article 10 of Annex XI to the Staff Regulations and also annul, under Article 263 TFEU, the Commission’s proposal for a Council Regulation adjusting, with effect from 1 July 2011, the remuneration and pensions of officials and other servants of the European Union and the correction coefficients applied thereto, and alternatively, find established, under Article 265 TFEU, an infringement of the Treaties by reason of the fact that the defendant has failed to submit appropriate proposals to the European Parliament and the Council on the basis of Article 10 of Annex XI to the Staff Regulations; order the European Commission to pay the costs.

Case C-196/12 Commission action Declare that, by failing to adopt the Commission’s Proposal for a Council Regulation adjusting with the effect from 1 July 2011 the remuneration and pensions of the officials and other servants of the European Union and the correction coefficients applied thereto, the Council has failed to fulfil its obligations under the Staff Regulations; and order the Council of the European Union to pay the costs;

Case C-453/12 Commission action against the Council on 9 October 2012, Declare that by not adopting the Commission’s proposal for a Council Regulation adjusting, from 1 July 2011, the rate of contribution to the pension scheme of officials and other servants of the European Union, the Council has failed to fulfil its obligations under the Staff Regulations and under the notional fund scheme provided for in those Regulations; and Order the Council of the European Union to pay the costs.

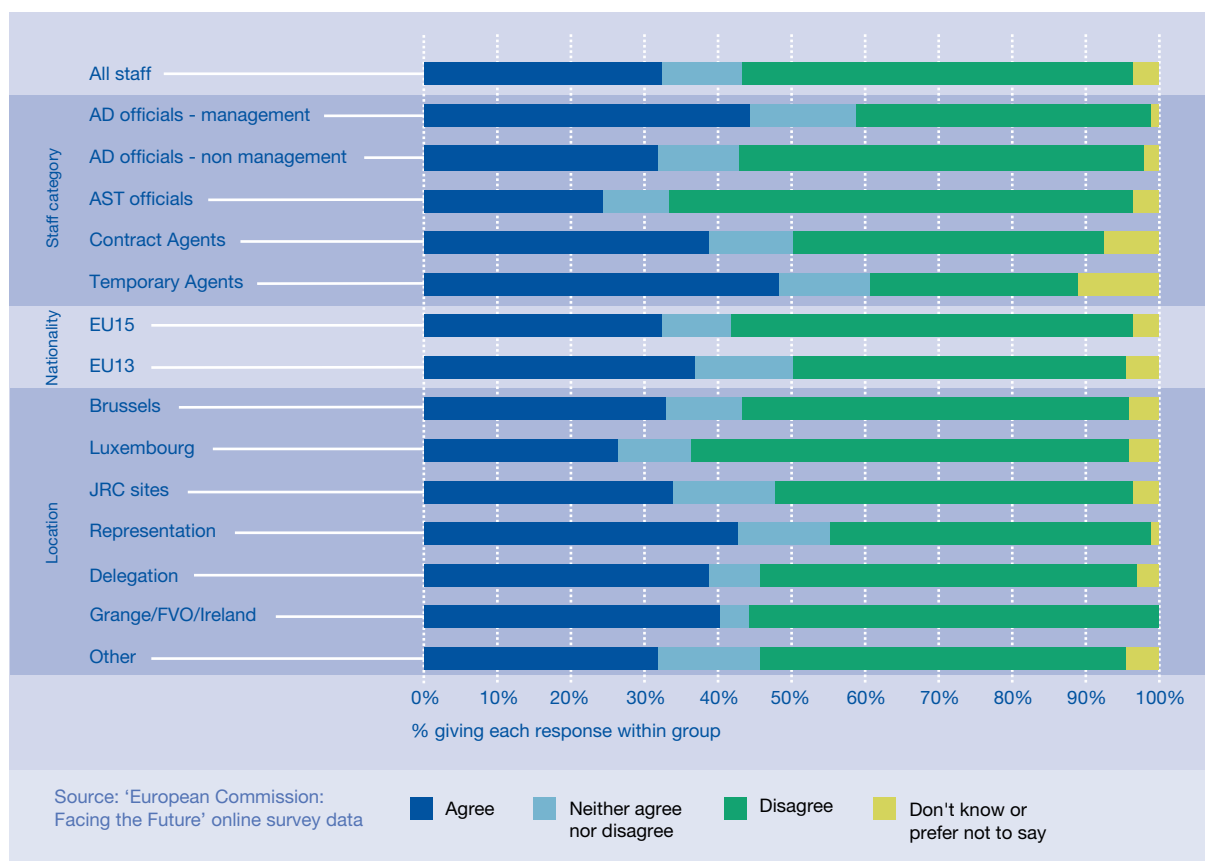
Explaining the reforms

The axiom in the academic literature that bureaucrats are negatively disposed towards reform is only partially borne out by the responses to the questions in the online survey relating to the rationale for the reforms and the explanations offered by Commission leadership for their introduction and content. Although a clear majority of respondents were negatively disposed towards the reforms, a significant minority was sympathetic. A first examination of the breakdown by staff category, location and level of seniority suggests that there is evidence of patterned variation, which will be tested in further analysis.

A first question asked staff for their views on the proposition, ‘A review of the Staff Regulations was a necessary response to the state of the European economy and the climate of financial austerity’. This question was phrased to speak to the main justification offered by Commission leadership for

the reform. Overall, 32 per cent of respondents agreed, but 53 per cent disagreed. As Figure 4.1 shows, there was some variation between and among staff categories. Among managers, for example, more agreed (44 per cent) than disagreed (40 per cent). The same was not true of non-management administrators: 32 per cent agreed; 55 per cent disagreed. ASTs were strongly opposed - the 24 per cent who agreed were outnumbered by the 63 per cent who disagreed - but contract agents were more evenly split: 39 per cent against 43 per cent. More temporary agents agreed (48 per cent) than disagreed (28 per cent). The percentage of respondents expressing agreement was higher among staff from the new member states (37 per cent) than among staff from the older member states, officials who joined the Commission since 2004 were more likely to agree than those who were recruited earlier and staff based in representations and delegations were more likely to agree than staff in Brussels and, especially, Luxembourg.

Figure 4.1 Responses to ‘A review of the Staff Regulations was a necessary response to the state of the European economy and the climate of financial austerity’



Other questions sought to explore whether staff thought that specific elements of the reform were justified either by the state of the European economy or because they brought the Commission in line with practices elsewhere. A question asked for their views on the proposition, 'The increase in the working week is an appropriate response to the state of the economy and changes elsewhere in the member states'. Twenty-five per cent of respondents agreed, but 59 per cent disagreed. Again, managers showed strong support: 42 per cent agreed; 38 per cent disagreed. Far fewer non-management administrators, AST officials and contract agents registered agreement (27 per cent, 14 per cent and 29 per cent respectively)²³. Forty-five per cent of temporary agents, however, agreed with the proposition - the highest proportion of any staff category. Again, staff in representations and delegations were more likely to agree than staff based in Brussels and Luxembourg (Appendix Figure 4.a).

A third question asked staff for their views on whether 'The freeze of salaries, pensions and allowances in 2013 and 2014 and the payment of a solidarity levy are appropriate responses to the state of the economy and changes elsewhere in the member states.' As above, the question was phrased so as to enable respondents to express their views about an intended rationale for the reform. The pattern of results was similar to the second question discussed above. The 21 per cent of respondents who agreed were outnumbered by the 63 per cent of staff who disagreed (Appendix Figure 4.b).

A fourth question similarly addressed a particular measure. It asked staff for their view on the proposition, 'Raising the retirement age is a necessary measure to bring the Commission into line with the member states and the Commission's own policy recommendations'. The pattern of responses on this element of the reform was markedly different from views on the earlier questions. Fifty-three per cent of all respondents agreed as against 28 per cent who disagreed and, moreover, more respondents in all staff categories, in all cohorts and in all locations agreed than disagreed (Appendix Figure 4.c).

While the first four questions concerned the need for the reform and the rationale for particular measures, a fifth question sought views on how the reform was managed. Staff were asked whether 'The need for the review was explained satisfactorily by members of the College and Commission management'. The results were somewhat negative. Fifteen per cent of staff overall agreed, but 67 per cent disagreed. Even among managers and temporary agents, who were more positive than employees in other staff categories, agreement was low: 28 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. Respondents in representations were more likely than those in Brussels, Luxembourg and, especially, delegations to agree (26 per cent, 15 per cent and 4 per cent respectively) (Appendix Figure 4.d).

Impact of the reform

A further series of questions invited staff for their thoughts on the likely impact of the reform. Four were concerned with the consequences for the organization; three asked about the effects on individuals.

The reform's impact on the organization

A first question asked staff for their general assessment of the reform 'All things considered, the changes to the Staff Regulations will make the Commission a more effective organisation': 6 per cent of respondents agreed; 75 per cent disagreed.

Opinion on individual elements of the reform varied considerably. On 'Making it possible for contract staff to be employed for longer periods enables the Commission to better meet its staffing needs', a majority were positive. Sixty-two per cent of respondents agreed, and 21 per cent disagreed. On the question, 'The stronger link between grade and responsibility introduces greater clarity into the career structure', by contrast, responses were negative: 29 per cent agreed, but 45 per cent disagreed.

On whether 'The introduction of faster promotion rates for starting grades will introduce greater fairness in career progression', views were more evenly split, but the overall balance was negative: 26 per cent of respondents agreed and 37 per cent disagreed (Appendix Figure 4.e).

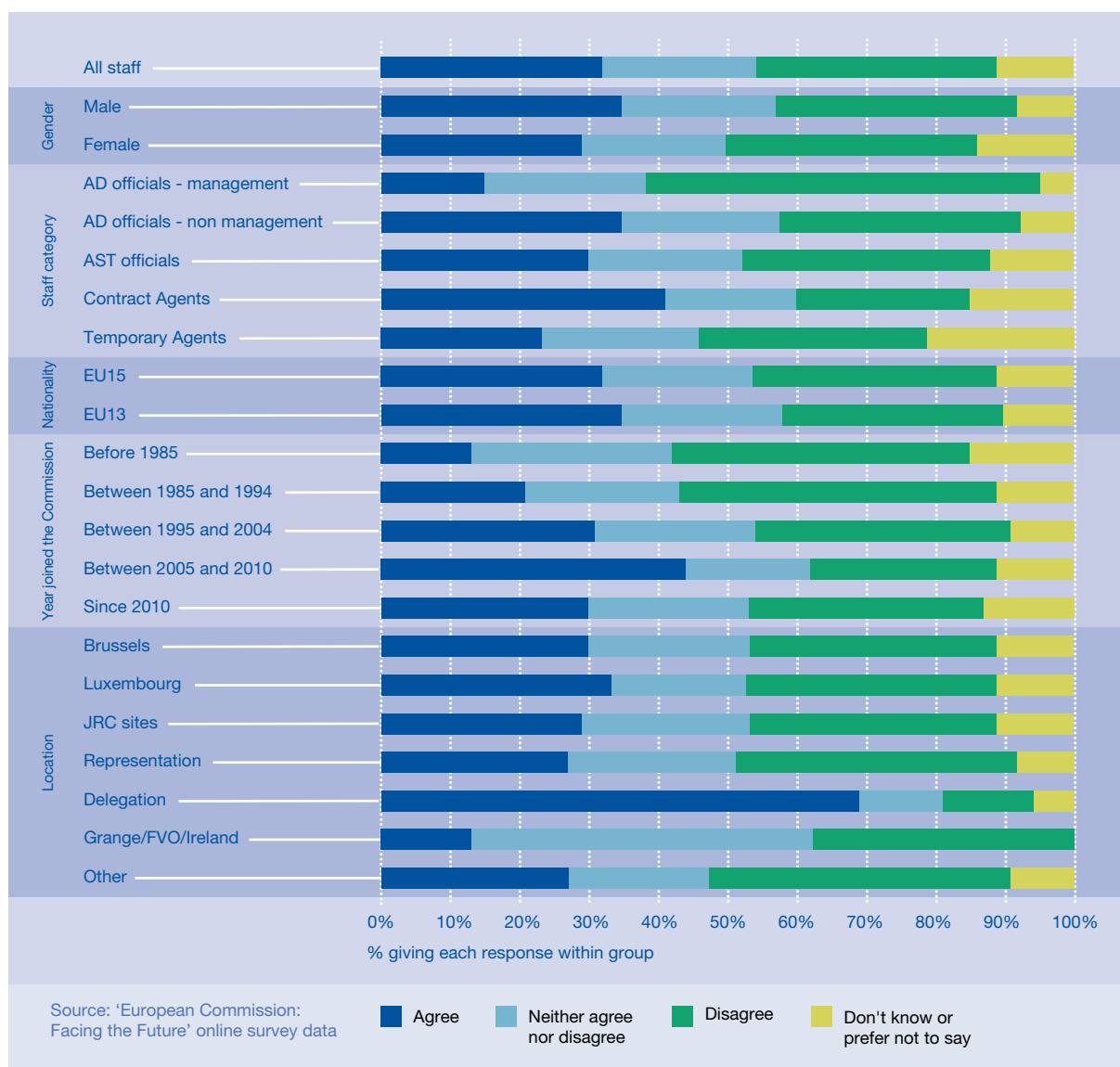
²³ Fifty-eight per cent of non-management administrators disagreed. The figure for assistants was 75 per cent and for contract agents 52 per cent.

Impact on the reform on individuals

As above, the opening question invited respondents to offer a general appraisal. Staff were asked whether, ‘Changes to the Staff Regulations make it less likely that I will spend the remainder of my career in the Commission’. Overall more respondents thought that they were less rather than more likely to spend the rest of their career in the Commission, but the margin was very small - 35 per cent to 32 per cent. As Figure 4.2 below shows, however, the aggregate score conceals considerable variation by gender, by staff category, by cohort and by location:

- thirty-five per cent of men agreed and 35 per cent disagreed with the proposition; 29 per cent of women agreed and 36 per cent disagreed.
- among permanent staff, 15 per cent of managers agreed, but 57 per cent disagreed, as many administrators agreed as disagreed (35 per cent), and 30 per cent of assistants agreed while 36 per cent disagreed.
- staff recruited since 2004 were more likely to agree and less likely to disagree than employees who joined the organization before that date.
- staff at delegations were far more likely to agree than disagree with the proposition by 69 per cent to 13 per cent.

Figure 4.2 Responses to ‘Changes to the Staff Regulations make it less likely that I will spend the remainder of my career in the Commission’.



Responses to the remaining questions were more negative. When asked whether 'Changes to the career structure make it easier for me to advance my career', only 4 per cent of respondents overall agreed; 68 per cent disagreed. There was little variation between staff categories as regards levels of agreement, but a smaller percentage of temporary agents and of contract agents - 46 per cent and 55 per cent respectively - than other staff categories disagreed. However, overall, there was also a very high percentage of 'don't knows'. For example, 72 per cent of non-management administrators and 77 per cent of assistants disagreed. On the question, 'The new method makes no difference to me', 13 per cent of respondents agreed, while 61 per cent disagreed (Appendix Figures 4.e and 4.f).

Change management

The final question was more general. Staff were asked for their views on the proposition, 'I feel that change is managed well in the Commission'. Only 11 per cent of respondents agreed with the proposition. More than half - 55 per cent disagreed, 20 per cent strongly. It is worth putting this response in context, since few organizations are thought by their employees to handle change management well. For example, in the UK, only 29 per cent of respondents to the Civil Service People Survey 2012 (Cabinet Office 2013: 6) gave a positive response to the question, 'I feel that change is managed well in my organisation' and that figure represented a four-year high. No similar question was posed in the Canadian or the US survey.

Recommendations

Reform is difficult for any organization, especially when the material conditions of employees are affected and where decisions are taken by other institutions with final legislative and budgetary decision-making powers. In the Commission's case, concerted efforts are needed to make staff aware of the rationale for change, especially when alternative sources are likely to present more partisan interpretations, to offer rank-and-file employees the opportunity to raise concerns, and to explain the purposes of the reform, especially when the burden falls more heavily on some categories of personnel than others. Previous experience also shows the importance of visible ownership of reform measures by the whole College.

The results from the survey show that respondents do not think the Commission handles change management effectively. The Commission needs to review this aspect of its operation, which is closely linked to leadership, management and communication (see Chapters 5 and 6 below). It might usefully learn how other bodies approach change management. An examination of the role of staff unions should feature in any review and future modernization should be a joint project of management and workforce.

Chapter 5 Leadership, coordination and management

Leadership, coordination and management have all been highlighted as problem issues for the Commission. First, the Commission Presidency was historically a weak office, with few of the resources, procedural, political and administrative, that prime ministers in national political systems are typically able to mobilise and without the authority that prime ministers enjoy vis-à-vis members of the *cabinet* and the administration more generally (Kassim 2012). Second, in the absence of centralized political authority, effective coordination, both vertical - between the College and the services - and horizontal - between *cabinets* and between Commission departments - has proven elusive (Coombes 1970; Spence 2006; Kassim *et al* 2013: ch 5). Third, management is seen as an area where the Commission is weak. People management has rarely been a priority of the institution, with technical expertise prized more highly than managerial skills (Hooghe 2001).

Building on the initiatives taken by its predecessors - and the strengthening of the Commission Presidency through a succession of treaty reforms - the Barroso Commission took action to address all three problem areas. First, against the background of enlargement, which expanded the College to 27 members (and later 28), President Barroso took an explicitly presidential approach to his leadership of the organization. As part of this vision, President Barroso sought to transform the Secretariat General into both a service of the President and a more interventionist actor within the organization (Kassim *et al* 2013: ch 5). Second, while the Prodi Commission introduced rules to denationalize the *cabinets* and formalise relations between *cabinets* and services - measures intended to make vertical coordination less conflictual - efforts were made to improve horizontal coordination through the Kinnock reforms, which sought to enhance the central coordinating capacity of the Secretariat General in an effort to promote more effective

programming and planning, and the promotion by President Barroso and Secretary General Day of a more coherent approach to policy making (Commission 2010, Kassim *et al* 2013: ch 8). Third, improving and promoting management was an important ambition of the Kinnock reforms (Bauer 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2012; Kassim 2004a, 2004b, 2008; Kassim *et al* 2013, ch 8; Schön-Quinlivan 2011). Subsequent initiatives have sought to ensure that officials considering management positions are aware of the functions and responsibilities should they be successful, that would-be managers are able to test their aptitudes for a managerial role, and that dedicated training and professional development opportunities are available to managers.

As part of the current project, staff were asked about leadership, coordination and management in both the online survey and face-to-face interviews. Respondents were invited to express their opinions on the leadership style of the Barroso Presidency and on the role of the Secretariat General. They were asked for their views on the interaction between *cabinets* and the services, and on coordination at departmental and interdepartmental levels. Managers were asked for their overall assessment of management in the organization, their reflections on the adequacy of the tools available to them, and their views on the role - actual and ideal - of managers in the Commission.

Leadership

The majority view among interviewees - members of the Commission, the *cabinet* members and the managers interviewed - was that the Barroso Commission is best characterized as presidential. This was the view of a majority of the nine Commissioners, 22 of the 24 *cabinet* members, 12 of the 15 Directors General, and 69 of the 92 middle and senior managers who answered the question. Most accepted the President's rationale

- namely, that with a significantly enlarged College, strong presidential leadership is the only option if the Commission is to be able to take coherent and effective action. However, a number of Commissioners voiced discontent about the limited possibilities for a full discussion of policy at the weekly meeting of the College and the limited opportunities available to them to advance policy objectives relating to their portfolio. Neither Commissioners nor *cabinet* members considered President Barroso's experimentation with groups of Commissioners in certain areas of policy to have succeeded as a coordinating or steering device.

A series of questions were asked about the Secretariat General, which has on most accounts grown in strength under both Prodi and Barroso (see, e.g., Kassim *et al* 2013: ch 6). A majority of interviewees considered that the Secretariat General was more the 'service of the President' than 'the guardian of collegiality'. This view was expressed by 19 *cabinet* members against 7 who thought that the Secretariat General remained the guardian of collegiality, by 13 Directors General against 10, and 66 managers against 30. When asked in the survey for their views on the proposition that the Secretariat General is a neutral arbiter between the services in policy coordination, only 17 per cent agreed and 36 per cent disagreed. This was a question on which managers expressed polarised opinions. A larger proportion of managers both agreed with the proposition on the one hand - 22 per cent - and disagreed on the other - 49 per cent - than in any other staff grouping. (Appendix Figures 5.a and 5.b)²⁵.

Two questions sought to examine the extent to which staff think of the Secretariat General as the guardian of procedures rather than a body that seeks to influence the direction or the substance of policy. The first asked *cabinet* members and administrators only for their views on the proposition 'The Secretariat General is concerned more with procedure and less with the content of policy'. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents agreed with the proposition, while 22 per cent disagreed. The second question invited opinions on whether 'The Secretariat

General is too interventionist on matters of policy content'. Among all respondents - this question was also only put to *cabinet* members and administrators - 24 per cent agreed and 18 per cent disagreed, while among managers 30 per cent agreed and 24 per cent disagreed (Appendix Figures 5.a and 5.c)

A final subset of questions sought to examine the extent to which staff identify their day-to-day work with the priorities set by the leadership. The Kinnock reforms had aimed to create a set of interlocking mechanisms that linked the strategic goals set by the College to the tasks of individual officials, while the Commission President has since 2004 sought to personalise the process of priority setting around the Presidency starting with the annual State of the Union speech.

When asked for their views on whether 'I can see how my work is linked to my DG's Annual Management Plan', 61 per cent agreed and 14 per cent disagreed. On 'I can see how my work is linked to the Commission's Annual Work Programme', 52 per cent agreed, while 17 per cent disagreed. However, when asked for their opinions on the proposition, 'I can see how my work is linked to the ambitions outlined by the Commission President in his "State of the Union" speech', the percentage of respondents who agreed fell to 27 per cent, while the percentage who disagreed increased to 27 per cent (Appendix Figure 5.d)

Coordination

Coordination is a challenge in any organization (Peters 1998). Even in small organizations, the division of labour and functional differentiation that task specialization produces requires cooperation between units if duplication, incoherence and redundancy are to be avoided. In the Commission, the difficulties in achieving effective coordination have been compounded by several features of the organization. They include the autonomy enjoyed by Commission departments early in its history (Coombes 1970), the emergence of *cabinets* as national enclaves, which added competition with each other to the classic tension between them as

25 The question was asked of administrators and *cabinet* members only

political appointees and the services as permanent staff (Joana and Smith 2002; Spence 2006), and until recently the absence of centralized political authority (Kassim *et al* 2013: chs 5 and 6), which in national political systems is strong enough to compel line ministries to coordinate.

Earlier studies have suggested that efforts by the Commission's leadership to address these problems have met with some success. First, rules requiring the multinationality of *cabinets* have led to their formal 'denationalization' (Egeberg and Heskestad 2010) and perhaps also their functional denationalization (Kassim *et al* 2013: ch 6). In other words, since defending the interests of their Commissioner's home state is no longer a priority, interaction between *cabinets* is no longer governed by an intergovernmental logic. A second set of changes concern the rules of procedure introduced in an effort to normalize relations between *cabinets* and services. At the beginning of each new College, a formal agreement is signed that sets out how working relations are to be organized between the Commissioner, his or her *cabinet* and the services for which they are responsible. The text also defines the respective roles of the Commissioner and *cabinet* on the one hand, and the services on the other. Third, both the Prodi Commission and the Barroso Commission introduced measures to improve coordination between the services. They included the strengthening of interservice consultation notably through the use of IT tools, impact assessment, and, on cross-cutting issues, such as the Multiannual Financial Framework, the use of *ad hoc* groups with members drawn from both the involved *cabinets* and departments to steer and coordinate policy.

The current study looked first at *cabinets* - at how they are perceived by others in the Commission and at how they see their own role. The online survey invited staff to offer their views on whether they see *cabinets* as the representatives of the Commissioner's home state. While 25 per cent of staff indicated that this was indeed how they saw *cabinets*, 23 per cent disagreed. More than half of respondents, however, neither agreed nor disagreed or did not know. The balance of opinion differed somewhat among policy officers. Among administrators in non-management roles, 24 per cent agreed and 29 per cent disagreed,

while 28 per cent of managers agreed and 32 per cent disagreed (Appendix Figure 5.e).

How *cabinets* see themselves was examined in face-to-face interviews. *Cabinet* members were shown a list of responsibilities and asked to indicate the level of importance attached to each task by the *cabinet* as a whole. The list included the following:

- Assisting the Commissioner in overseeing the Directorates-General for which he or she is responsible
- Ensuring that the interests of nationals from the Commissioner's home state are appropriately safeguarded in appointments and promotions
- Managing the political dimensions of dossiers falling within the Commissioner's areas of responsibility
- Providing a link to the Commissioner's home state
- Providing support for the Commissioner's portfolio responsibilities
- Providing support for the Commissioner's role as a member of the College
- Representing the Commissioner to other EU institutions and to the member states
- Representing the Commissioner to the world outside Brussels

'Managing the political dimensions of dossiers falling within the Commissioner's areas of responsibility', 'Providing support for the Commissioner's portfolio responsibilities', and 'Providing support for the Commissioner's role as a member of the College' emerged as the three most important responsibilities. Twenty-four of the 27 *cabinet* members who cited the first, twenty four of the 26 who cited the second, and 23 of the 26 who cited the third identified the function in question as a strong priority. 'Providing a link to the Commissioner's home state' or 'Ensuring that the interests of nationals from the Commissioner's home state are appropriately safeguarded in appointments and promotions' were not accorded similar priority. On the first, the responses of *cabinet* members were as follows: 6 'strongly', 14 'well enough' and 7 not at all strongly. On the second, none responded 'strongly'. Nine qualified the responsibility 'well enough' and 14 'not at all strongly'.

A second set of questions were concerned with relational issues between *cabinets* and the services. The survey asked staff for their views on whether *cabinets* respect the technical expertise of the services. Thirty per cent of respondents from all staff groupings agreed that they did, while 23 per cent disagreed. Among non-management administrators, 35 per cent agreed and 26 per cent disagreed. Among managers, 42 per cent agreed and 30 per cent disagreed. Staff were then asked whether the political role of the *cabinets* is widely understood within the services. Forty-one per cent of respondents from all staff groups agreed, 20 per cent disagreed. Among non-management administrators, 48 per cent agreed and 19 per cent disagreed, while among managers 58 per cent agreed and 22 per cent disagreed (Appendix Figures 5.f and 5.g). *Cabinet* members divided equally on the issue. In face-to-face interviews, 11 agreed and 12 disagreed.

The results from the online survey on the effectiveness of coordination between the services and the College were somewhat negative. This question was posed to members of *cabinet*, administrators and SNEs only²⁶. Only 18 per cent of respondents overall agreed with the proposition that ‘Coordination works effectively between the services and the College’, while 32 per cent disagreed. Only 16 per cent of non-management

administrators agreed, while 33 per cent disagreed. Among managers, 23 per cent agreed and 34 per cent disagreed. Among SNEs, included because they offer an outsider’s perspective, only 14 per cent agreed and 31 per cent disagreed (Appendix Figure 5.h).

In face-to-face interviews, 12 Directors General considered that the relations between their department and *cabinet* were either very harmonious or harmonious, while only 1 said ‘not harmonious’. *Cabinet* members were similarly positive. Thirteen thought the relationship was ‘effective’ or ‘very effective’ and 4 ‘not effective’ or ‘not at all effective’. The pattern among managers was no different. Sixty thought the relationship ‘harmonious’ (n=37) or ‘very harmonious’ (n= 23) and 18 ‘not harmonious’ (n=9) or ‘not at all harmonious’ (n=9).

Coordination within and among the services was a final concern. The online survey asked about effectiveness within the unit, within the DG and between DGs. Again, these questions were put only to *cabinet* members, administrators and SNEs. As in 2008 (Kassim *et al* 2013: ch 6), respondents were most positive about coordination at the unit level, less positive at the DG level and least positive about interdepartmental coordination. The results are shown in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1 Views on coordination within and between Commission departments
(% of respondents)

	Agree			Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree /Do not know		
	All AD, SNEs and Cabinet	Non-management ADs	Managers	All AD, SNEs and Cabinet	Non-management ADs	Managers	All AD, SNEs and Cabinet	Non-management ADs	Managers
Coordination works effectively...									
in my unit	73	71	88	14	15	4	13	14	7
in my DG	42	40	50	31	31	27	27	28	22
between DGs	18	17	20	46	46	45	36	37	35

Source: ‘European Commission: Facing the Future’ online survey data

26 The idea was that SNEs could offer an outsider’s perspective.

In the face-to-face interviews, respondents were asked whether moves in the direction of more coherent action on the part of the organization, following statements of ambition by Commission President Barroso and Secretary General Day, had been realized. Most thought that they had. Among *cabinet* members, 7 interviewees thought that the institution’s efforts had been successful, while 4 considered that they had not been successful or not all successful. Among Directors General, the figures were 10 and 4 respectively, and among managers 37 and 20.

Management and managers

In the online survey, staff were asked several questions about their experience of management in the Commission. The results were generally positive. However, the negative responses suggest that there are problems in some parts of the organization. These will be explored in further analyses.

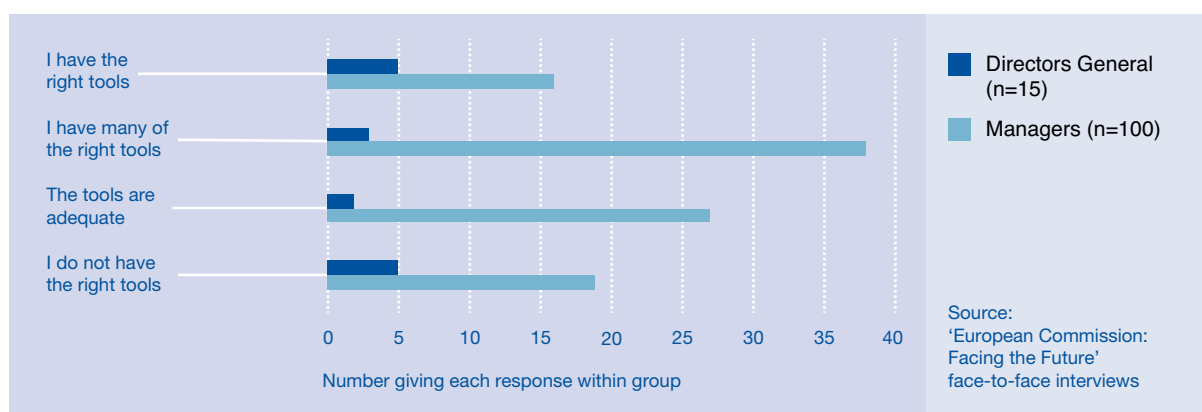
The interviews examined how well managers consider that they are supported in carrying out their responsibilities. Directors General were generally much more positive than middle managers or other senior managers. In response to the question, ‘To what extent does the Commission provide you with the tools necessary?’ 33 per cent (or 5 out of 15) Directors General indicated that they had the right tools, 20 per cent (n=3) that they have many of the right tools, 13 per cent (n=2) that the tools are adequate and 33 per cent (n=5) that they do not have the right tools. Among managers, by contrast, 16 per cent (or 16 out of 100) indicated that they had the right tools, 38 per cent that they have many of the right tools, 27 per cent that the tools are adequate and 19 per cent that they do not have the right tools.

Table 5.2 Responses from ‘European Commission: Facing the Future’ online survey on managers and management (%)

Please give us your views on the following:	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree or do not know
The work of my team is managed effectively	63	18	19
I receive regular feedback	50	23	27
The feedback I receive helps me improve my performance	53	18	29
I have recently received recognition or praise for good work	72	14	15
My line manager helps me to identify my training and development needs	35	35	30
My manager seems to care about me as a person	66	15	20

Source: ‘European Commission: Facing the Future’ online survey data

Figure 5.1 To what extent does the Commission provide you with the tools necessary to carry out your responsibilities as a manager?



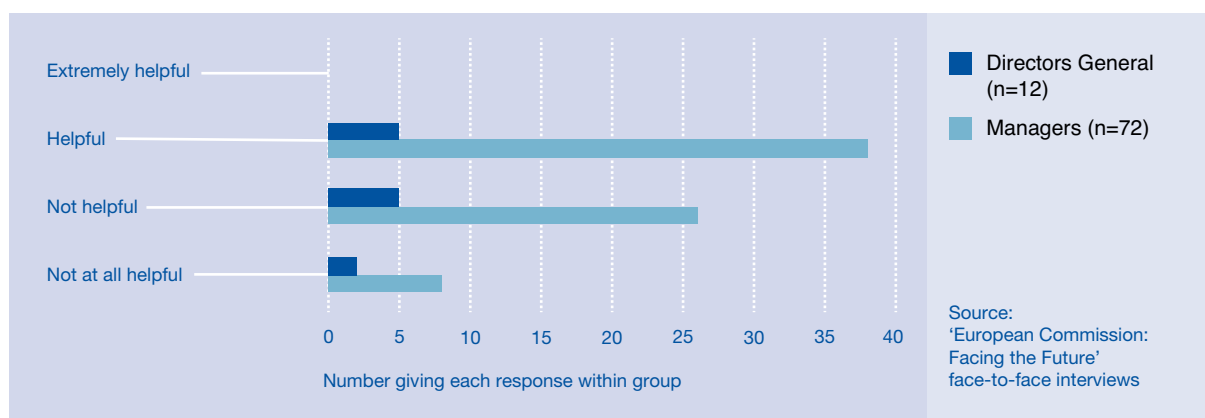
When asked more specifically about the means available to them for motivating staff, Directors General were more divided and more negative than positive. When invited to give their views on ‘How effective are the mechanisms available to you for getting the best out of your staff?’ 42 per cent (5 out of 12) gave the answer ‘helpful’, but the remaining 58 per cent thought them ‘not helpful’ or ‘not at all helpful’ (n=7). Managers were also divided, but more were positive than negative. Fifty-three per cent (or 38 out of 72) thought the mechanisms were ‘helpful’ and 47 per cent ‘not helpful’, including 11 per cent who considered them ‘not at all helpful’. However, the same was not true on the extent to which ‘the procedures for recruiting and promoting staff help or hinder you’: 44 per cent considered them ‘helpful’, while 55 per cent thought them ‘not helpful’.

A strong message from the interviews, though as yet unquantified, was that the Commission has still to grasp the nettle of underperforming staff. The issue was raised spontaneously by many interviewees. Managers thought procedures for dealing with such staff were too time-consuming, with the result that only the most resolute were prepared to initiate them. They noted that the sub-optimal methods to which managers were compelled to resort, were counter-productive to the organization as a whole, since the problem was invariably not resolved, but merely shifted to a different location. More junior officials, meanwhile,

considered the presence of underperforming staff to be damaging to morale, especially in an period of staff cuts and reductions.

Managers were also asked about their views on wider systems and procedures in the Commission. In response to the question, ‘Do the financial management rules and procedures strike the right balance between accountability and efficiency?’, more of the managers who expressed a view disagreed than agreed: 46 believed the balance to be ‘not right’ or ‘not at all right’, while 36 considered it ‘about right’ or ‘precisely right’. Among Directors General, responses were more evenly split. Of the thirteen who answered, 7 thought that they were ‘about right’ and 6 ‘not right’ or ‘not at all right’. Views on strategic planning and programming (SPP) were also divided. Fifty-three per cent of the 72 managers interviewed considered SPP to have been effective in making planning more efficient across the Commission, while 36 per cent disagreed, and 46 per cent thought SPP had optimised the use of resources; 40 per cent disagreed. The number of Directors General who answered the same question is too small to yield robust data, but several expressed dismay and disappointment at the rigidity of systems for allocating human resources, the tendency to make only incremental adjustments at best and the Commission’s apparent inability to redistribute personnel between departments when new, and sometimes urgent, priorities emerge.

Figure 5.2 Responses to ‘How effective are the mechanisms available to you for getting the best out of your staff?’



A further question asked managers for their reflections on the expertise and experience that should be possessed by a manager in an ideal world. A long-standing debate in the Commission concerns the extent to which managers in the organization need to be technical experts and the relative importance of managerial skills. The traditional view that technical expertise is paramount has been challenged at various points in the Commission's history, not least by the Kinnock reforms, which argued for strengthening management in the organization and promoting managerial skills. Supporters of the traditional conception contend that management is different in the Commission. They believe that because they can be called to the European Parliament or participate in working groups of the Council of the European Union, middle and senior managers in the Commission need to be technical experts.

Against this background, *cabinet* members, Directors General and middle and (other) senior managers were asked in face-to-face interviews which of the following options most closely captured their view of the basis on which managers should be appointed in the Commission:

- 1) managers should foremost be technical experts
- 2) managers should be technical experts and professional managers
- 3) managers should be professional managers first, and technical experts second if at all.

Cabinet members and Directors General had similar views: a small majority in favour of the second option - 12 to 11 and 11 to 9 respectively²⁸. However, among the broader population of managers not including Directors General, there were 52 endorsements of the third option and 44 of the second²⁹. Overall, respondents recognized and emphasized the importance of managerial skills.

Finally, in many face-to-face interviews, managers and non-managers alike reported that management in the Commission tends to be rigid, conservative and hierarchical. Several described a management culture that is strongly and stiflingly risk-averse. Others pointed to what they considered rare examples of outstanding managers. The figures they identified were invariably modern managers - open and consultative. Many expressed dismay, by contrast, at the persistence in the Commission of what they considered to be an old-fashioned, hierarchical approach. The sense of dissatisfaction was felt most acutely when a modernizing Director General was succeeded by a follower of the old school. Another view was that the Commission had not yet decided what kind of management culture it wants to promote and that, as a result, several approaches co-exist uneasily. Further analysis of the interview data is currently underway and will be reported in due course.

28 Responses rather than number of respondents

29 There was only one endorsement of the first option.

Recommendations

Although most respondents understood and accepted the rationale for presidential leadership, concern was expressed by members of the Commission that there was not always sufficient opportunity for collective discussion and a wider sense among staff that the reasoning behind policy decisions was not always clearly communicated or explained. The Commission may need to experiment with alternative forms of deliberation involving sub-groups of Commissioners to ensure that members of the Commission are able to contribute to policy formation. Internal communications strategy and procedures should also be reviewed (see also Chapter 6).

The relationship between cabinets and services has historically been characterised by tension and lack of mutual understanding. Results from the survey suggest that there is still work to be done, since the perception persists among a significant proportion of staff that while on the one hand, cabinets do not respect the technical expertise of staff, the political role of the cabinets is not well understood in the services on the other. Better information exchange about political priorities, greater visibility and involvement of the part of the political leadership and greater openness with staff in the services about the considerations affecting policy decisions may improve relations.

Despite improvements, interdepartmental coordination also remains problematic. Evidence from the interviews suggests that coordination works most effectively where Directors General of the concerned departments take an active interest and become personally involved. Greater coordination, more systematic reflection and a more concerted approach at the political level could also improve inter-departmental cooperation.

Management and managerial style remain contested issues in the Commission. Both need to be addressed urgently (see also Chapter 2). The perception of a risk-averse managerial culture among staff is a first problem. Management needs to be dynamic if the Commission is to respond effectively to the challenges that confront the EU and to make the best use of the considerable resources available to the institution. Second, a significant

proportion of managers consider that the tools they have at their disposal are not adequate if they are to carry out their responsibilities effectively, in recruitment or in getting the most out of their staff. Nor do they consider that systems for staff allocation are sufficiently flexible or effective. The Commission needs to review these issues urgently in consultation with managers. Third, perceptions of deficiencies in strategic and person management among respondents point to a need to enhance the leadership roles of middle and senior managers. The Commission needs to promote a more proactive leadership approach among managers and to ascribe at least as much importance to managerial skills as to technical expertise in their appointment. Fundamentally, the Commission needs to decide what role it wants its managers to play in the organization and what steps need to be taken to implement its preferred vision. Fourth, data from the interviews suggests that staff prefer a modern, open style of management, to the closed, hierarchical approach, which they consider antiquated and demoralising

Chapter 6 Communications

Communications, internal and external, are important in any organization. Good communications ensure that staff have information about concerns that affect them or that is necessary for them to do their jobs. They also help to build and maintain loyalty, as well as to develop a shared vision and sense of ownership among employees. Effective internal communications enables organizational identity to be created and sustained. It establishes trust in the leadership, which is an important resource when the organization faces external challenges or when it needs to manage change. When staff have access to information, they can interact with outside institutions and actors with confidence. They identify with the goals and mission of the organization, and feel supported in doing difficult work.

Effective external communications similarly creates value. It is key to projecting a positive image of the organization, to developing understanding of its mission in the outside world, and to building trust among stakeholders and the wider public. It is also fundamental for staff morale and confidence. Staff are likely to feel their position undermined in their dealings with outside actors where the organization has failed to communicate its purpose effectively.

Public institutions have a reputation for weak and ineffective communications. Although the leadership may understand the importance of vision, purpose, and mission, it often fails to devise or enact a communications strategy that supports their pursuit. Communications is often an afterthought, rarely accorded the same importance as policy. In strongly hierarchical organizations, leaders may not have the time or may not have invested the resources necessary to run communications effectively or professionally, while actors who are not at the summit may consider that they lack the authority to play a part. By contrast, if it is unclear where responsibility lies and coordination is

ineffective, communication may be confused, with competing, even contradictory, messages sent out by the organization, leading inevitably to reputational damage.

Given the challenges that confront the Commission in this area, both internal - how to accommodate the desire of all members of the College to have direct access to the media, and to coordinate the sharing of responsibilities among different actors at the political and the administrative levels - and external - the lack of familiarity with the EU as compared with national political systems, the difficulty of accessing EU citizens directly, and the size and quality of the Brussels press corps - communications is a major interest of the current project. The online survey asked staff for their views on the effectiveness of internal and external communication within the Commission. There was also an open question about future priorities answered by several thousand respondents at the end of the survey. In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a number of officials in different parts of the organization with communications-related responsibilities.

Internal communications

The online survey asked staff for their views on three propositions. Responses are shown in Figure 6.1. On the first, 'The College communicates its priorities effectively to staff', only 12 per cent of respondents agreed while 53 per cent disagreed. Comparing responses across different staff groupings, managers - 19 per cent - were most likely to agree, though more than a half - 55 per cent - disagreed. Fifty-seven per cent of non-management administrators and 54 per cent of assistants also disagreed. Looking at responses by location, staff in delegations were much less likely to agree and much more likely to disagree (Appendix Figure 6.a).

Figure 6.1 Responses to questions on effectiveness of internal communications in the Commission



The second asked whether ‘The top management of the Commission communicates its priorities effectively to staff’. Nearly a fifth of respondents - 18 per cent - agreed, but more than half - 52 per cent disagreed. Breaking the responses down by staff category, 25 per cent of managers agreed, while 47 per cent disagreed, and 17 and 16 per cent respectively of non-management administrators and assistants agreed, while 54 per cent in each category disagreed. Again, looking at the results by location, staff in delegations were much less likely to agree and much more likely to disagree (Appendix Figure 6.b).

The generally negative responses on internal communications expressed in responses to the online survey were echoed in many face-to-face interviews. A number of communications officers in Commission departments believed that communications was not well understood by management and rarely, therefore, a priority. An interviewee at a delegation, meanwhile, expressed despair that the Brussels press corps often received news from the Commission before s/he had heard it. Even at the centre of the organization - in the responsible department and in the Spokesperson’s Service - staff thought that, despite experimentation with various structures and approaches, the importance

of communications was still not properly appreciated inside the organization and that coordination between actors in different parts of the Commission was a serious problem. They argued that communications needed to be mainstreamed by management, and that the Commission could not afford to take traditional hierarchical approach to the issue.

Opinion on the third question was somewhat more positive. Asked if ‘Senior managers in my Directorate General communicate their priorities effectively to staff’, 35 per cent agreed with the proposition, though 39 per cent disagreed. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, managers were the most likely to agree (48 per cent), as opposed to around a third for non-management administrators, assistants and contract agents and least likely to disagree (30 per cent), as opposed to around 40 per cent for non-management administrators, assistants and contract agents. Results by location show staff at delegations are much less likely to agree and much more likely to disagree, while staff based in Luxembourg and at JRC sites are less likely to agree and more likely to disagree, than those based in Brussels (Appendix Figure 6.c). Also, a breakdown by DG - see Figure 6.2 - shows considerable cross-departmental variation across the Commission.

Figure 6.2 Responses to ‘Senior managers in my Directorate General communicate their priorities effectively to staff’ by Commission department (DG)

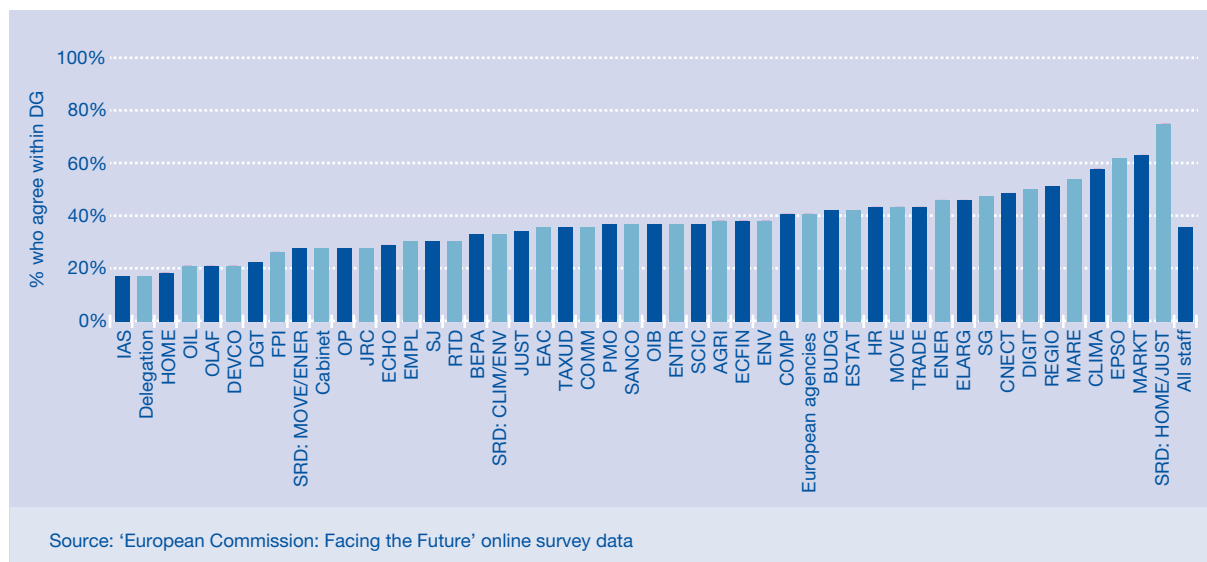
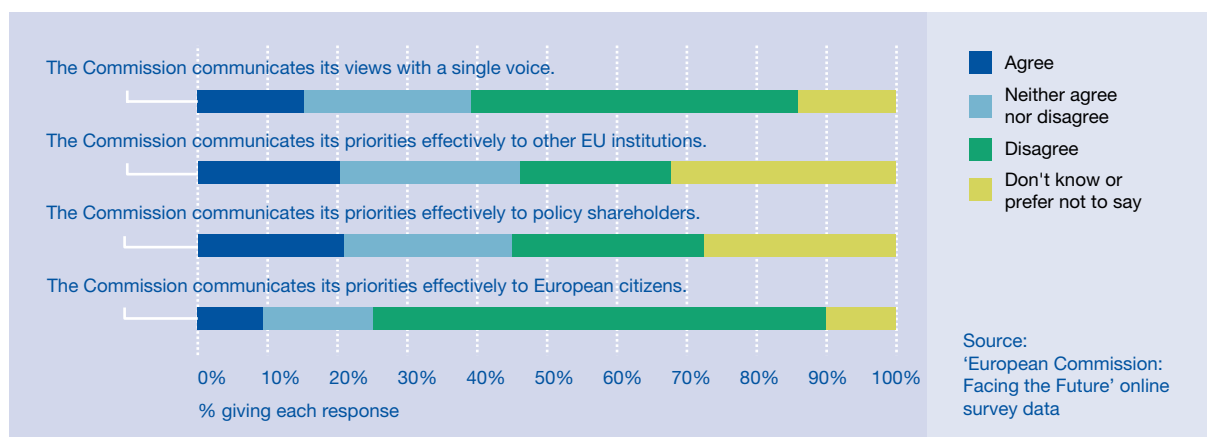


Figure 6.3 Responses to questions on effectiveness of external communications in the Commission



External communications

The results from the four questions on external communications suggest that employees are not confident. The results are shown in Figure 6.3. In the first, staff were asked for their views on the proposition ‘The Commission communicates its views with a single voice’. The 15 per cent of respondents who agreed were outnumbered by the 47 per cent who disagreed. Significantly, managers were the most likely to disagree: 61 per cent of managers disagreed as compared to 49 per cent of non-management administrators, 45 per cent of assistants and 42 per cent of contract agents. Results by location show that staff based in delegations and representations are more likely to disagree than those in Brussels or Luxembourg. (Appendix Figure 6.d).

The second question asked staff for their views on ‘The Commission communicates its priorities effectively to other EU institutions’. Twenty per cent of respondents agreed, while 22 per cent disagreed. However, more than half - 58 per cent - were either neutral or did not know. Managers were most likely among staff groupings to agree - 29 per cent - but also to disagree - 25 per cent. A breakdown of results by location shows staff based outside Brussels but not those working in representations, were much less likely to agree (Appendix Figure 6.e).

The third question asked staff whether ‘The Commission communicates its priorities effectively to policy stakeholders’. Twenty-one per cent of respondents agreed, 27 per cent disagreed, and just over half - 52 per cent - were

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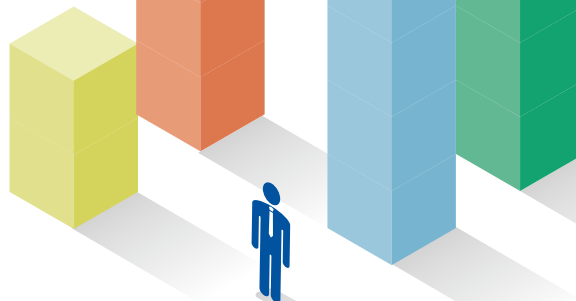
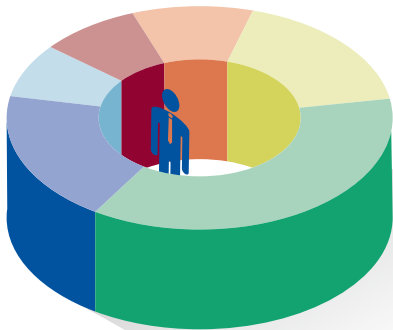
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University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich, NR4 7TJ
01603 456161
www.uea.ac.uk



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