

## *Tensions within Eurocracy ? A sociomorphological view*

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NB. A first draft of this paper has been presented in the European Union Studies Association biannual meeting, Los Angeles, April 2009. Thanks for Alex Warleigh-Lack (who was the panel discussant) and the other participants for their comments. This shorter and partly renewed text contains new data tables. The paper being still in progress, those data could be completed further. Thanks to contact me for quotation.

### Abstract.

Founded on an analysis of biographies and carriers of top-rank officials and members of the European Commission, this paper suggest that a lot of recent polemic within the EU Institutions (such as Verheugen controversy, Kinnock reform, etc.) are the expressions of the tensions originating from socio-morphological transformations. To put it simply, the gap between the members and the officials of the Commission has never been so wide on this score. Commissioners seem to be gaining in political capitals to the detriment of a professional commitment in European politics, which implies for example a minimum degree of attendance in the political space of the EU or the accumulation of capitals relating to this space. Conversely, the top-level officials increasingly appear to owe their positions to long-term investment in institutions involving the production and, simultaneously, the accumulation of European capitals, a general tendency whereof the meaning is precisely questioned within the conjuncture of the Kinnock reform and more widely that of the political issues which characterised the mid 2000s. Beyond the conventional issue of the differentiation or de-differentiation processes of the political and administrative elites, this approach enables to underline the unique relationship between these staff categories in the case of the EU and to point out, to a greater extent, an opposition between temporary and intermittent EU elites and staff which seems to be a correct indicator of the specific and inequal objectivation process of the European institutions.

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Let us start with an anecdote. In an interview given to the German daily newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in October, German European Commissioner Verheugen, 62 years at the time and Commissioner for a second term, declared that "the evolution over the last ten years has given so many powers to top-level officials that the most significant political task of the 25 Commissioners now consists in controlling this system". He then went on to say "when I read certain statements by officials, I am baffled, their tone is technical, arrogant and condescending", before commenting: "there is a constant turf battle between commissioners and high-level officials. Some of them seem to think: the Commissioner will be leaving after his five year-term any way, he is but a tenant in the house, whereas *I* am here to stay". His statement did not go unnoticed and caused immediate uproar among communitary circles. Retorts were not long coming, whether from his Commissioner Colleagues, the lady General Secretary of the Commission or officials unions. To the extent that the following week, the Commissioner attempted to back-pedal before the officials of his directorate general: "I love you all, you got me wrong", he hastened to say.

Several interpretations can be made about this episode. As regards the European political game, the Verheugen polemic may appear first of all as a "political coup". In keeping with the German pressure to reduce the costs of the Brussels "bureaucratic Moloch" according to expression coined by Helmut Kohl in 1992 as the French journalist Jean Quatremer rightfully pointed out<sup>2</sup>, it is a way of closing ranks with the German government in the perspective of the German presidency, possibly to influence their agenda. It should thus be seen as one more "coup" in a series, which since the end of the Delors Era via the "crisis" caused by Santer's resignation in particular, partakes of re-defining the European Commission and its political and administrative organisation.

But such polemic can also be taken at face value. This polemic indeed raises the problem of transforming relationships between the Commissioners and the Commission officials. If these relationships have long been considered as fusional, at least apparently, for the good of the Community, the last ten years of the Commission have shown that the mechanic solidarity which seemingly united the College and the officials of the Commission has been shattered on more than one occasion: officials' strike (Georgakakis, 2002), scandals under the Santer Commission (Georgakakis 2000), criticism and resentment against reform (Ellinas, Suleiman 2008; Bauer 2008). The question is even raised whether such a phenomenon is not a new feature of the current operating conditions of the institutions (Wille 2007, 2009).

In this article, we intend to build on these interpretations to suggest the hypothesis that such polemic is one of the expressions of the tensions originating from the in-depth transformation (socio-morphological transformation) of the structure of the position of the participants. To put it simply, the gap between the members and the officials of the Commission has never been so wide on this score. As far as the Commissioners are concerned, they seem to be gaining in political capitals to the

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<sup>2</sup>. <http://bruxelles.blogs.liberation.fr/>

detriment of a professional commitment in European politics, which implies for example a minimum degree of attendance in the political space of the EU or the accumulation of capitals relating to said space. As regards the top-level officials, conversely, they increasingly appear to owe their positions to long-term investment in institutions involving the production and, simultaneously, the accumulation of European capitals, a general tendency whereof the meaning is precisely questioned within the conjuncture of the Kinnock reform and more widely that of the political issues which characterised the mid 2000s.

Beyond the conventional issue of the differentiation or de-differentiation processes of the political and administrative elites, this approach enables to underline the unique relationship between these staff categories in the case of the EU and to point out, to a greater extent, an opposition between temporary and intermittent EU elites and staff which seems to be a correct indicator of the specific and unequal objectivation of the European institutions. To support this observation, we shall analyse the careers of the high-level and top-rank officials of the Commission then those of the Commissioners, successively<sup>3</sup>.

### Note on the theoretical and methodological frame

*This article elaborates on developments in the sociology of elites in history (Rheinhart 1996, Charle 2001, 2005) and sociology research (Bourdieu 1994, 1998; Scott 2007; Savage & Williams 2007). Unlike studies that use given positions to define elites, these researches emphasise social processes of construction of elites as elites. They also highlight the social anchoring of these elites (less in terms of the social class they originally belong to than of the middle-term social strategies they develop) and the structure of their relation, both structured by the differential possession of social capitals (here, for instance, the resources and credit accumulated during more or less national or European careers). These differences and the gaps they induce are the principle of the dynamic of the social spaces studied (Fligstein 2001) and particularly political regimes (Charles 1997; Dogan, Higley 1998) or more largely different states of the field of power (Bourdieu 1994, 1996).*

*In relation to these theories, one of the underlying hypotheses of this paper – made more explicit in other studies (Georgakakis 2008) – is the idea that European institutions can be analysed as a social field, structured as any other field by the unequal distribution of the resources that count and simultaneously the struggle for the definition of the legitimacy or value of these resources. Among the various authors who use or discuss this concept within the framework of the EU (Kauppi 2005, Stone 2007, Cohen, Dezalay, Marchetti 2007, Fligstein 2008, Vauchez, 2008), I argue that the originality of this institutional field lies in the fact that its political centre of gravity is occupied by a European temporary staff whereas the administrative core is occupied by permanents of EU. This feature represents a major difference with most constituted political fields and suggests reconsidering certain aspects of the theory of political fields. I argue that it has far-reaching effects on the functioning of the EU. It cleaves the different conceptions of Europe, those they represent or the action shared (or not) by the agents of the field, and broadly speaking, the uses of the EU they make. On a deeper level, it weighs on the capacities of objectivation and institutionalisation of this central space and is at the core of the frequent tensions and “crises”.*

<sup>3</sup>. Many thanks to Jean-Yves Bart and Patrice Cochet-Balmet for their help for the translation.

*In order to show this, we have recourse to instruments favouring the study of individual and collective biographies. Statistical elements are drawn from a database on Directors-General which was assembled in the Centre for European Political Sociology GSPE-Strasbourg), from 2001 up to now. This database was funded through a MISHA program (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Alsace) and Not only does it integrate a number of classical properties (sex, age, studies, profession, etc.), it also presents a year-by-year follow-up on the agents' entire careers. This enables us to not only consider the last position held and more largely typify the agents' paths and careers (although a lot of sufficient precise elements on social origins are still lacking for many of them). Further details on this database as well as pre-requirements to using it can be found in Georgakakis, De Lassalle 2004, 2009, and I would like to thank the many colleagues who have contributed to it, especially Marine de Lassalle, Philippe Juhem and currently Victor Lepaux (CNRS ingeneer) who is very helpful for collecting and building new datas and tables. The more qualitative elements used in this paper are drawn from the author's ongoing research on the genesis of European top civil service. Sources include archives in the European Commission and the University Institute of Florence, internal written sources such as Commission staff correspondence, the magazines of officials' unions, institutional autobiographies or biographies, interviews, and direct observation. Some results have already been published or will be soon.*

### **The formation of a hard core of European permanent staff: the high-level officials of the Commission.**

The officials and the high-level officials of the European Commission form *a priori* quite a well-known group. Since their origin, a collection of academic works have attempted to assess their loyalty, discuss the contours of the group as well as the homogeneity thereof. From this viewpoint, authors have especially insisted on the internal differences in the group, for example by highlighting the weight of the cultures or of the interventions of the Member States in the officials' careers, the heterogeneity of the internal administrative cultures, or still the differences marking their "preference" in economy or politics (for a review, Eymeri, Georgakakis, 2008). By keeping a set of general figures updated, the European Commission contributes to insist on these internal differences<sup>4</sup>. Because like other official statistics, these figures seek to neutralise the political stakes presiding over the numbering of the staff in the Commission<sup>5</sup>, their classifications emphasise not so much the relative unity of the staff as the equilibrium of the segments making up such unity (national distributions, DG distributions, status distribution).

Regardless how precious, the sophistication of these different viewpoints still tends to mask what, hypothetically, we think is a more fundamental feature. Indeed, the hard core of European officials, who numerically as well as politically prevail over the agents with other statuses within the Commission (END, contract-based agents,

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<sup>4</sup>. [http://ec.europa.eu/civil\\_service/about/figures/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/about/figures/index_en.htm)

<sup>5</sup>. To list some of these stakes, the number of officials as a whole is a stake of interinstitutional struggles between the services of the Commission on the one hand, and the Council on the other, since several countries wish to reduce said number, and also the Budget Control Commission of the European Parliament. The distribution of these officials is also a political stake, from the viewpoint of the equilibrium between the nationalities represented such as allocation sectors, or still in the context of union mobilisations about the reform of the equilibrium of the statuses.

temporary agents<sup>6</sup>), defines one of the rare groups within the European political system which has grown while securing its position on permanence, and along the same line, the production and the tendential accumulation of a European institutional capital.

*The European formation of a status group (or Stand)*<sup>7</sup>.

Before considering high-level and top-rank officials of the Commission, it may prove useful to understand the larger group of European officials better from which they most often originate and which, to a certain extent, they represent before the “political authority” of the Commissioners College. It is useful to grasp its form but, all the more so, its process or, if we prefer, the dynamics and the inertia characterising its collective trajectory.

This perspective implies in the first place to specify what we mean by group and, consequently, the contribution we may expect from an objective viewpoint with respect to works which favour the analysis of individual preferences of its members. To handle the production of the European officials as a group does not imply, first of all, that the European officials form a group marching like a one man army. By group is meant here a collection of positions which may be both convergent (status-led social position, level of salary in his category, lifestyle) and divergent (according to the social and national origins, the admission mode to public service and his seniority, his rank, the public political sector or his directorate general, the type of job he fulfils), but which is subjected to a process of social unification. From this viewpoint, the European officials may be said to fulfil the EU professionals’ space as classes in the social space analysed by Bourdieu: they represent not so much a circumscribed and homogeneous pocket as a region in space and whose regional (or common) character refers simultaneously to a collection of objective conditions (status, selection by competition or *concours*, social position) and communalisation<sup>8</sup> processes.

Even if inevitably plagued with failures, such perspective enables to complement the existing literature fruitfully. It prompts in particular not to presuppose their common conviction (either to any asserted collective adherence to supranationalism, partially denied by investigations) but conversely to situate such conviction (which remains to be determined) as a rationalisation (fluctuating between a form of reasoned pragmatism and a certain idealism) as to what Europe is providing them,

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<sup>6</sup> Its important here to underline that despite they are a growing number, the external staff still remains on the margins, numerically as well as “model”. EU organizations are here specific comparing other international organizations.

<sup>7</sup> As T. Parsons noticed there’s no English term that approaches the concept of *Standische Herrschaft* used by Max Weber. After his English translator, one can although say “it refers to a social group the member of which occupy a relatively well-defined common status, particularly with reference to social stratification, though this reference is no always important In addition to this common status, there is further criterion that the members of a stand have a common mode of life and more or less code of behavior.”, Weber (1947 n347-8)

<sup>8</sup> Here again, the translation is not easy. In Parsons’s translation of Weber, the term in use is “communal relationship”. The German original term *Vergemeinschaftung* though indicates a process, not a status, that is why I choose communalisation that is also the French term.

i.e. in this case a kind of social elite position in the making rather than a craft. This social elite position should however be specified. It is obviously variable according to the ranks as well as the statutory and hierarchical position. But it consists mainly of transnational administrative elite, which means, in a nutshell, that it contrasts sharply with constituted national administrative elites (Bourdieu, 1994) as well as with transnational capitalist elites (Robinson, 2001). Part of a *Bourgeoisie de Robe* (or law bourgeoisie) in the making rather than a State nobility, most of European officials are still directly dependent on the existence of the European institutions, regardless of the institutional formula in force. Taking into account the very exploded organisational structure of the Commission, the *a priori* heterogeneous positions of the officials highlighted in investigations reveal their common attachment to the Institution rather than their divisions from this point of view (which translates in the defence of, often very conflicting, sectorial beliefs and interests of their directorates general) and to the perpetuation of its general mission (which, in practice, implies reaching a compromise, whatever it may be, almost, providing that rupture has been skilfully avoided, that such compromise does not seem to favour any particular interest and that it can be justified by one of the incommensurate values of the UE, etc....).

This perspective also enables to specify their position in the European power relations. Such position does not belong to political professionals, such as commissioners or Euro MPs, but to administrators. Even if they may be driven by deep-rooted beliefs, this position does not predispose them to stand as official spearheads of a supranationalism hardly shared by their counterparts, but rather to adopt a prudent attitude. The idea then is to “move things forwards”, “not to rock the boat” by ill-timed political stands, to elaborate “lines of convergence”<sup>9</sup>. For those who negotiate with the institutional partners of the Commission<sup>10</sup>, their position is linked with their capacity, if not always to control the game, at least to keep it within reasonable bounds, i.e. also their capacity to articulate, possible to integrate often extremely heterogeneous viewpoints voiced by the representatives of the Member States and the various lobbyists, if not connected with other non-coercive means to remind of the elements at stake. From this viewpoint, their “driving” role is not necessarily a “guiding” role. If they may objectively nudge along a given a direction, it is often in forms strongly dictated by the configuration of the balance of power of the lobbyists and in non-directive forms.

They are certainly not at a loss to do so. They are in the best position to word formulations in the communautary interest and to express the “legal basis”, possibly to benefit from this function as “Guardians of the Treaties”, a function which the treaties indeed ascribe to the Commission. They are also the only ones, and quite understandably so, their social position is linked directly with this provision, to be able to place matters in long-term perspective (which by the way allows resorting to old recipes when it is more difficult to follow the temporal order of the European political game).

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<sup>9</sup>. These expressions are extracted from interviews with officials.

<sup>10</sup>. It should be mentioned here that an increasing number of officials dedicate their work to management tasks.

If we want to fix a few characteristic elements of this group and of its collective trajectory, we must henceforth highlight that the European officials have grown historically and socially as a “status group” (in the Weberian sense). By “status group” (or Stand in Weber’s terminology) should be meant a group whose existence is guaranteed legally and has the monopoly of a collection of resources, which can be qualified as material (associated with social positions, life conditions, etc.) but also political. This aspect is important, since it enables to situate the officials as a whole and, especially, to notice what differentiates them collectively (in all senses of the term) from the other agents of Europe, so that they are the only ones who may avail themselves durably of being EU civil servants. They are thus the only ones to secure their permanent position in this guaranteed space and the only ones to owe their status to the European institutions, unlike other officials for instance.

Such feature is linked with the legal provisions founding the group and erecting its permanence as a principle (Andréone 2008). The legal aspect is here important indeed, as shown by the jurisprudential activity regarding the status of the European officials. After having presided to the creation of Tribunals of First Instance for relieving the CJEC, it has governed the principles (the same causes producing the same effects) of the creation of the Public Service Tribunal of the European Union instituted in December 2005. This aspect as a status group also rests on wider social processes. If their way of impersonating this model is of course different, the officials also go through a set of social filters which produce a rupture with respect to the other agents of the EU institutional field and which contribute to grant them attributes liable to embody the European Interest more durably than said other agents.

Among these filters, the Concours is the major prerequisite for producing and reproducing the group in these forms, and more particularly in a context where it is more difficult to control more conventional social institutions (family, school) which generally partakes of the formation of elites. What EU officials call the Concours, referring to the French word for open competition, has not been enough analysed, with the recent and notable exception of Carolyn Ban works (Ban 2008). Despite it would be too long to develop here a thorough analysis of it and his European specificities (for more detail of our work in process, Georgakakis, 2009 a et b), we would although point out it that this “institutional act” causes major effects on the definition of this group and of its members. In this regard, the Concours is a selection process as well as a socialisation and a consecration process. It contributes to recruit agents with not only high level of qualification and minimum linguistic skills (variable according to countries), but especially with privileged relation to Europe, which can be gauged by the education, the experience gleaned in other countries, possibly more directly prior experience within or in connection with European or international institutions. As a socialisation process, it contributes, *in fine* and so far as the staff registered on the pre-qualification list succeed in passing the recruitment process, to produce significant differences between this category of staff and the others. The duration of the Concours (with over a year between the first and the last part, and close to two years before effective recruitment), the form of the tests and especially the very high selectivity are such that in spite of their difference,

they are "like-minded" people and share consequently a whole collection of founding mythologies (meritocracy, competence). By consecrating them as the sole servants of Europe, entering the institution then grants them a guaranteed income which makes them independent from the outside world, and simultaneously dependent on the institution (at least for most of them and to a variable degree according to their original social position). It secures their position as permanent staff members of Europe, a position which most of time socially evolves into a position of no-return (like priests to some extent).

The institutions complement this production work. Progress in the career depends, due to the multinational character of the organisation, on elements which combine case study skills and capacity to act and evolve not only in a "multicultural world", but especially under the authority of a boss of another nationality. But it also contributes to stylisation work of collective values, i.e. to the collective credit. This work is the fruit of competitive processes, supported by multiple agents and socialisation authorities without having the co-ordinating power of an "apparatus". Autobiographies, internal newspapers, union reviews or mobilisations organised by officials unions on various occasions (salary negotiations, reform of the European public service, are good indicators as to how these common representations are produced, updated and partially reproduced. To name but a few examples, the watchwords used by unions to define collectively the European public service are, « competence, independence, permanence ». The portraits of exemplary officials celebrate the wealth of the multicultural environment, the commitment to a long-term European project, persevering and resorting to a small-step method and to values opposing those of a grey bureaucracy.

From this viewpoint, the rather centre-left political stand of the European officials seems to translate this public service ethos and the provisions which go therewith and should not be construed as a predictive indicator (which in the case of an administrator and surprisingly in the unique context of the European political system is rather doubtful), as to what the European officials actually do and may promote. Of course, this majority stand does not exclude political differences. In interviews given, the internal market DG is very often shown as a far more political DG, quite directly impregnated with neo-liberal doctrine, which is hardly seen in other DGs. But the general tendency is gauged using several indicators (opinion polls, election). In the absence of more substantiated datas, everything suggests, but roughly, that the hard core of officials sociologically belongs to a kind of transnational "bourgeoisie de Robe". Unlike an economic or industrial bourgeoisie, it is characterised by a high cultural and linguistic capital and a commitment to a new form of public service. Unlike State nobility, the creation of lineages of officials is not an issue in view of the small number of open positions and of heavy contingencies associated with successive enlargements.

It goes without saying that these structural elements ought to be understood as a tendency. But it helps to better understand the differentiation process between this group and other people working in and around EU institutions (external member of commissioner's cabinets, national experts, contractual agents, members of permanent representation, lobbyist, etc.). Still, the tendency, i.e. the inertia effect as

well, which governed the durable constitution of this group are due to agents who are the more so likely to "close ranks" and to identify with the institution, as for many of them, the evolution of their social and political-administrative positions goes hand in hand with the construction of Europe.

*The EU institutional capital of the directors general.*

The directors general pull the strings in this process. They delineate even more so a circumscribed population enabling better understanding of the European capital build-up process supported by the production of this system. The directors general could have been expected indeed to have totally different profile from the mass of officials. Situated at the apex of the hierarchy of the administration of the Commission, the DG and deputy DG are indeed typical from a traditional dominant group. Age (average more than 50 for accessing), level of education (more than 30% own a PhD) and gender variable are from this point of view illuminating. Women acceded very recently to those positions. The first deputy DG is Inger Nielsen, Danish, from 1981 à 1985, and the first DG, Collette Flesch, Luxembourger, from 1990 to 1998, whose profile is very particular since (beyond she was also a high level fencer in the 60's): directly nominated at this position, she was minister and member of European Parliament before. The nomination of women as DG or dDG only took off since the Barroso Commission (16 nominations). But, furthermore here, the directors general are considered as the most "political" agents of the Commission. Their member states play a major role in their appointment. The directors general are also often considered as network heads or "points of entry" for the Member States, on a par with the members of Commissioner's cabinets. If these dimensions are important, studying their career shows that they combine these national properties with an institutional credit exclusive to the European Commission, which tends to become a major variable.

The European capital may be defined as a specific symbolic capital (Bourdieu) liable to exert a kind of "charisma" in the European circle, possibly a function charisma as coined by Weber which enables them to officiate. This institution capital can take on different forms. From an ethnographic viewpoint, it is expressed in the reference signs demonstrated not only within their administration, but more largely in European circles when they take part in external colloquia, or more largely any event associated with the institutional life in the outside world. From a bureaucratic viewpoint, it is illustrated in the efforts made historically for improved transparency in appointment procedures, guided as far as possible by skills rather than political pressure criteria. From a political viewpoint, it can be seen when this relative transparency is betrayed, for example when unions expose appointments apparently too strongly dictated by political considerations.

This credit is not apportioned equally. As in other administrations, there are indeed central figures within the European Commission. These directors general distinguish themselves through achievements, as for example having succeeded in negotiations or cases considered as against all odds, or politically undermined by Member States or their strong differences. The differential reputations from which certain directors general benefit are a good example thereof.

“Some are good, other not so good ... this is an enormous difference. One cannot ... I mean somebody like Landabaru who for example goes from the structural funds to the enlargement, to RELEX, etc. ... then, he obviously benefits from a strong support, probably by certain Member States as well as commissioners with whom he may have worked, or thanks to decisions he may have made .... What I mean to say is that he is objectively good. He is very good, everybody acknowledges to the extent that he is still widely supported and not victim to any national equilibrium, a change in majority or whatever, he is someone who continues to be used by the institution simply because he is good.”

The case of Landabaru (which is by the way the recordman of longevity at this position - 23 years) mentioned in this interview given by a director general's assistant from another directorate general, is most interesting. It illustrates first of all the belief, all the stronger so here taking into account the interviewee's position, in properties considered as personal. It also unveils some of the principles and simultaneously the oppositions whereon such charisma is founded. The heart of the matter is here the transversality of the career, having worked on cases burdened with heavy successive stakes as shown by the series of responsibilities for structural funds (when Spain, then Portugal joined, but more generally the intensification of said funds), the enlargement or external relations today. It is still the capacity to collect very wide supports, i.e. not related to any partisan affiliation, or especially any national marking. It can also be defined *a contrario* by the opposition between what is considered as normal (how come the Institution may operate, the answer being stability, and there again, the permanence of administration) and what as pathological, we mean all the external political interferences connected with changes in national majority or the effects of national balance.

This type of credit is rarely apportioned at random. It is founded on path elements. Landabaru's case is here again exemplary while exhibiting certain borderline aspects. As regards borderline aspects, this director general is one of the increasingly few (except for the case of enlargements to which he precisely owes his admission) who joined the European Commission directly as a director general. He is also one of the very few who fulfilled a political mandate. It still remains that studying his CV, which by the way informs us simultaneously on the constitutive stylisation work of such credit, shows characteristic properties. Although appointed directly, E. Landabaru benefits today from a long seniority, i.e. 20 years, within the Commission. Other distinctive signs: his open claim to Delorist networks (Our Europe) which accounts for a European rather than a partisan political commitment while evidencing membership to a top-rank transnational circle. The equilibrium of his accrued investments in academic and economic sectors should also be noted. When referring to other biographical sources<sup>11</sup>, one should add that E. Landabaru was born in Paris, studied in University in Paris, worked in the administrative and financial department of a pharmaceutical company then as a researcher in a centre specialised in the study of multinational companies. If being born in another country is not necessarily a prerequisite, it should be noted that he is a Spaniard who has spent most of his career in France, Switzerland or Belgium. It then becomes obvious

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<sup>11</sup>. Elizabeth Sleeman (dir.), *The international Who's Who*, Taylor & Francis Group, Europa Publications, Europa Publications Limited, 2004.

that, although his direct admission to the Commission gives the impression that he was suddenly landed by a specific nation, he has accumulated all the titles and undoubtedly all the predispositions to embody the perfect example of a top-rank servant of Europe.

Beyond particular situations of anyone, this production and build-up process of a specifically European credit shows in the statistical study of the directors general' careers. To go back to elements already highlighted (Georgakakis, Delassalle 2004, 2007) and only to emphasise here common properties, it should be reminded, to counteract any preconceived idea, that the directors general of the Commission are high-level administrators whose career is based on long-term investment in the public service, regardless whether national or European to start with. Only 3% of them have never worked in any national public service or the European public service (on the 200 individuals considered with at least a 10 year-career before being appointed). Very few of them made a career in the international public service. The "studies" variable there again confirms the exemplary status of the directors general relative to all officials.

### General tables

#### Age/Position

		agedebut	agefin	age actuel pour ceux en poste
DG	N	173	140	33
	Moyenne	50,5	56,9	60,0
DGA	N	126	86	40
	Moyenne	52,6	60,0	58,5
Cumul	N	40	26	14
	Moyenne	50,6	60,3	60,9

#### Studies

	Effectifs	%	Valid %
No information	44	15,2	
PhD	89	30,7	36,2
master	49	16,9	19,9
« grande école »	11	3,8	4,5
Ingeneer's degree	12	4,1	4,9
Bachelor	49	16,9	19,9
Not determined	36	12,4	14,6
Total	290	100,0	100,0

**Gender Balance**

	F	M	Total
DG	11	174	186
	5,9%	93,5%	100,0%
DGA	14	131	146
	9,6%	89,7%	100,0%
cumuldirgenA	3	38	42
	7,1%	90,5%	100,0%

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**Gender Balance/Commission**

	F	M	Total
hallstein_58_61		15	15
		100,0%	
hallstein_62_67		30	30
		100,0%	
rey_67_70		36	36
		100,0%	
malfatti_70_72		29	29
		100,0%	
ortoli_73_76		41	41
		100,0%	
jenkins_77_80		46	46
		100,0%	
thorn_81_84	1	50	51
	2,0%	98,0%	
delors_85_88	1	67	68
	1,5%	98,5%	
delors_89_92	1	60	61
	1,6%	98,4%	
delors_93_94	1	52	53
	1,9%	98,1%	
santer_95_99	4	77	81
	4,9%	95,1%	
prodi_99_04	6	95	101
	5,9%	94,1%	
barroso_05_09	16	76	92
	17,4%	82,6%	
Total	22	267	289
	7,6%	92,4%	

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... [1]

**Institution before becoming DG(A)**

	Effectifs	Pourcentage
No information	13	4,5
National business	11	3,8
International business	3	1,0
National public carrer	50	17,2
Commission	187	64,5
Internat public carrer	8	2,8
National Political Carrer	5	1,7
International PC	1	,3
Permanent Representation	9	3,1
ConsMin	3	1,0
Total	290	100,0

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... [2]

**Position before becoming DGA**

	Effectifs	Pourcentage
Administrator	1	,5
DG's assistant	5	2,7
Member of SG	8	4,3
Cabinet chief	14	7,5
Chef service, unité etc.	4	2,2
Director ou ChefDel	144	77,4
DG (avant 58)	2	1,1
Under administrator	3	1,6
Member of cabinet	4	2,2
Porte-parole	1	,5
Whole	186	100

**Carrer after the Commission**

	Effectifs	%	% carrière connue
National business	10	4,8	9,5
International business	17	8,1	16,2
National public carrer	33	15,8	31,4
Commission	31	14,8	29,5
Internat public carrer	5	2,4	4,8
National Political Carrer	3	1,4	2,9
International PC	1	,5	1,0
Permanent Representation	5	2,4	4,8
nsp + de 60 ans	55	26,3	
nsp entre 55 et 60 ans	25	12,0	
nsp moins de 55 ans	24	11,5	
Total	209	100,0	
No information	81		

In order to better understand the dynamics of this group, it is worth to point out its socio-morphological transformations. In terms of trend, we must observe that the average age for accessing to the position increased since the beginning and particularly since the eighties, from 48 to 53 years old. The average of current DG is close to 60 year old. This means that people recruited seems in this case to have a more heavy profile. Crucial point for understanding the European capital of DG, the portion of "in-house" careers as coined by the indigene jargon has increased considerably. As we showed in a precedent paper concerning the Commission before enlargement (Georgakakis, Delassalle, 2007), the "communautory career" portion has grown (33,4% in 58-73, 39,3% in 74-85, 42,3% in 86-96 and 56,3% since 96) as the "national career" portion has decreased (55,2% in 58-73, 43,6% in 74-85, 36,4% in 86-96 and 28,5% since 96). Conversely, the portion of direct appointment has dropped: 25,93% of the appointments in the years 58-73, 24,24 %; 10,87% in the years 96-2005. The more recent data including the last enlargement are not so different. The part of the European Career comparing to the whole career increased up to 64%.

In the same way, the number of DG having a degree obtained in a foreign country increases regularly up to 63 % under Barroso's presidency. It is difficult here to say if it results from the change of the recruitment procedure, but it is a remarkable change (+ 20 point) since Prodi.

From a broader point of view, if enlargements are time when the model is partially questioned, they do not always change the rules of the game (as shown by the exceptional longevity of the Spaniards who joined as high-level officials for instance). From a statistical viewpoint, they have a mechanical effect of the shortened longevity of the staff as a whole, which means that the tendency appears even more strongly. Beyond that, it may also be noted that the new directors general do not always depart from the set model, even though by definition they have not had the time to claim seniority. Independently from the support of their Member States, their profile shows a form of compromise between technical skills associated with the position and capitals acquired in international organisations or appointments.

An other key variable is the accumulation of political resources internal to the Commission, which has also become an unescapable prerequisite. The number of directors general who worked in a commissioner's cabinet tends to be growing. Between 1958 and 1973, 17.86% of the general and deputy managers have worked in a commissioner's cabinet. They were 43.5% of them in the years 1996-2005. These internal political resources are increasingly denationalised. Since 1958 the promotion of those who have worked in a Commissioner's cabinet from another nationality has increased significantly (which can be measured by the appointment rate to a position as director general or deputy director general). The rate was 0% in 1958 -1973, 21.43% in 1974-1985, 20 % in 1986-1996 and 45.95 % in 1996-2005. Here again, the last enlargement don't change the general tendency. The table below shows that the number of members of commissioner's cabinet increase regularly as well as the rate of those who were members of several cabinets and including of a Commissioner from an other nationality.

It does not mean that the national resources are no longer valued. The potential directors general may effectively bear the brunt of a change in internal majority. Although the agreement concerning the hitherto so-called flagged GMs (i.e. the fact that belonging to a given nationality was a prerequisite for fulfilling a GM position, such as agriculture for a Frenchman, etc.) formally ceased to exist with the Prodi Commission, some habits are hard to break, not to mention claims voiced by certain States, so that equilibria are not necessarily threatened. It still remains that the resources are not self-sufficient any longer and appear to be internalised or absorbed in one of the more specifically European resource.

## Comparing Commissions

### Age for accessing by Commission (both DG et DGA)

		agedebut	agefin	age actuel
hallstein_58_61	N	14	14	
	Moyenne	48,3	56,0	
hallstein_62_67	N	27	27	
	Moyenne	48,1	55,6	
rey_67_70	N	32	32	
	Moyenne	47,2	54,7	
malfatti_70_72	N	25	25	
	Moyenne	48,7	57,6	
ortoli_73_76	N	36	36	
	Moyenne	48,9	58,9	
jenkins_77_80	N	43	43	
	Moyenne	48,2	58,7	
thorn_81_84	N	48	48	
	Moyenne	49,1	58,9	
delors_85_88	N	68	67	1
	Moyenne	49,9	59,9	61,0
delors_89_92	N	60	59	1
	Moyenne	49,5	59,8	61,0
delors_93_94	N	53	51	2
	Moyenne	50,1	60,6	61,5
santer_95_99	N	75	64	11
	Moyenne	51,2	60,3	60,6
prodi_99_04	N	93	65	28
	Moyenne	52,4	59,9	60,2
barroso_05_09	N	82	23	59
	Moyenne	53,4	58,9	58,7

### Position before becoming DG(A)

		privé	public national	commission	autre	Total
hallstein_58_61	Effectif	0	5	5	2	12
	%	,0%	41,7%	41,7%	16,7%	
hallstein_62_67	Effectif	0	7	18	3	28
	%	,0%	25,0%	64,3%	10,7%	
rey_67_70	Effectif	0	3	28	4	35
	%	,0%	8,6%	80,0%	11,4%	
malfatti_70_72	Effectif	0	3	24	1	28
	%	,0%	10,7%	85,7%	3,6%	
ortoli_73_76	Effectif	4	6	27	1	38
	%	10,5%	15,8%	71,1%	2,6%	
jenkins_77_80	Effectif	2	11	28	4	45
	%	4,4%	24,4%	62,2%	8,9%	
thorn_81_84	Effectif	2	12	29	5	48
	%	4,2%	25,0%	60,4%	10,4%	
delors_85_88	Effectif	7	13	40	6	66

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	%	10,6%	19,7%	60,6%	9,1%	
delors_89_92	Effectif	6	13	33	6	58
	%	10,3%	22,4%	56,9%	10,3%	
delors_93_94	Effectif	4	11	31	6	52
	%	7,7%	21,2%	59,6%	11,5%	
santer_95_99	Effectif	6	14	48	11	79
	%	7,6%	17,7%	60,8%	13,9%	
prodi_99_04	Effectif	6	14	73	8	101
	%	5,9%	13,9%	72,3%	7,9%	
barroso_05_09	Effectif	2	11	72	7	92
	%	2,2%	12,0%	78,3%	7,6%	
Total	Effectif	14	50	187	26	277

**Rate of the time spent**

	NB	Busi	Nat pub	Com/EU	PI	NP	IP	Other	?
hallstein_58_61	15	6,8	51,4	<b>39,5</b>	,2	1,2	,0	,9	,0
hallstein_62_67	30	8,6	41,8	<b>46,3</b>	1,1	,6	,0	1,6	,0
rey_67_70	36	7,6	33,5	<b>53,1</b>	1,7	2,7	,0	1,4	,0
malfatti_70_72	29	4,1	33,1	<b>59,2</b>	,1	2,5	,0	1,0	,0
ortoli_73_76	41	12,3	32,3	<b>52,4</b>	1,1	1,0	,1	,8	,0
jenkins_77_80	46	7,9	32,3	<b>53,5</b>	1,9	1,8	,0	2,6	,0
thorn_81_84	51	9,8	30,0	<b>51,7</b>	3,1	1,9	,0	2,7	,7
delors_85_88	68	12,5	24,7	<b>54,4</b>	3,4	1,5	,2	2,8	,5
delors_89_92	61	11,3	22,7	<b>57,0</b>	2,0	1,9	1,0	4,0	,0
delors_93_94	54	9,1	21,5	<b>61,1</b>	,9	1,5	1,1	4,8	,0
santer_95_99	82	7,2	22,5	<b>63,9</b>	1,6	,8	,6	3,4	,0
prodi_99_04	102	7,7	21,0	<b>66,1</b>	2,2	,4	,0	2,4	,0
barroso_05_09	93	7,0	19,8	<b>67,0</b>	2,4	1,6	,0	2,0	,1

**DG(en dDG) who have been Commissioner's member of cab (%)**

Commission	Effectif	Cabinet	Cab. Mème natio	Cab natio diff.	Cab mème natio + diff
hallstein_58_61	15	6,7%	6,7%	0,0%	0,0%
hallstein_62_67	30	3,3%	3,3%	0,0%	0,0%
rey_67_70	36	16,7%	16,7%	0,0%	0,0%
malfatti_70_72	29	27,6%	27,6%	0,0%	0,0%
ortoli_73_76	41	31,7%	26,8%	9,8%	4,9%
jenkins_77_80	46	26,1%	21,7%	8,7%	4,3%
thorn_81_84	51	25,5%	23,5%	5,9%	3,9%
delors_85_88	68	23,5%	20,6%	5,9%	2,9%
delors_89_92	61	26,2%	23,0%	8,2%	4,9%
delors_93_94	54	29,6%	27,8%	7,4%	5,6%
santer_95_99	82	42,7%	37,8%	12,2%	7,3%
prodi_99_04	102	38,2%	34,3%	12,7%	8,8%
barroso_05_09	93	39,8%	36,6%	16,1%	12,9%

**Studies**

		Studies in foreigner countries	
		oui	non
hallstein_58_61	Effectif	1	8
	%	11,1%	88,9%
hallstein_62_67	Effectif	2	16
	%	11,1%	88,9%

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rey_67_70	Effectif	4	21
	%	16,0%	84,0%
malfatti_70_72	Effectif	3	18
	%	14,3%	85,7%
ortoli_73_76	Effectif	5	28
	%	15,2%	84,8%
jenkins_77_80	Effectif	11	29
	%	27,5%	72,5%
thorn_81_84	Effectif	10	32
	%	23,8%	76,2%
delors_85_88	Effectif	14	41
	%	25,5%	74,5%
delors_89_92	Effectif	11	38
	%	22,4%	77,6%
delors_93_94	Effectif	13	32
	%	28,9%	71,1%
santer_95_99	Effectif	25	41
	%	37,9%	62,1%
prodi_99_04	Effectif	28	37
	%	43,1%	56,9%
barroso_05_09	Effectif	28	16
	%	63,6%	36,4%
	Effectif	62	116

After Com career

		privé	FP nationale	Commission	Autre	nsp + de 60 ans	nsp entre 55 et 60 ans	nsp moins de 55 ans
hallstein_58_61	Effectif	2	5	0	0	3	1	3
	%	14,3%	35,7%	,0%	,0%	21,4%	7,1%	21,4%
hallstein_62_67	Effectif	3	6	1	0	7	5	5
	%	11,1%	22,2%	3,7%	,0%	25,9%	18,5%	18,5%
rey_67_70	Effectif	3	7	2	1	7	7	6
	%	9,1%	21,2%	6,1%	3,0%	21,2%	21,2%	18,2%
malfatti_70_72	Effectif	1	4	3	0	9	6	3
	%	3,8%	15,4%	11,5%	,0%	34,6%	23,1%	11,5%
ortoli_73_76	Effectif	2	7	5	0	16	4	4
	%	5,3%	18,4%	13,2%	,0%	42,1%	10,5%	10,5%
jenkins_77_80	Effectif	3	11	6	1	16	6	2
	%	6,7%	24,4%	13,3%	2,2%	35,6%	13,3%	4,4%
thorn_81_84	Effectif	5	10	8	6	14	6	1
	%	10,0%	20,0%	16,0%	12,0%	28,0%	12,0%	2,0%
delors_85_88	Effectif	12	7	10	6	22	7	3
	%	17,9%	10,4%	14,9%	9,0%	32,8%	10,4%	4,5%
delors_89_92	Effectif	14	7	9	5	16	4	5
	%	23,3%	11,7%	15,0%	8,3%	26,7%	6,7%	8,3%
delors_93_94	Effectif	12	7	9	6	13	2	3
	%	23,1%	13,5%	17,3%	11,5%	25,0%	3,8%	5,8%
santer_95_99	Effectif	13	8	14	5	19	6	2
	%	19,4%	11,9%	20,9%	7,5%	28,4%	9,0%	3,0%
prodi_99_04	Effectif	11	3	13	4	22	10	5
	%	16,2%	4,4%	19,1%	5,9%	32,4%	14,7%	7,4%
barroso_05_09	Effectif	1	0	5	0	9	7	3
	%	4,0%	,0%	20,0%	,0%	36,0%	28,0%	12,0%

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## **Political professionalization and European intermittence: the members of the Commissioners' College.**

By way of comparison, the Commissioners' position is altogether different. European Commissioners nowadays clearly embody the *political* function within the European Commission. This embodiment is in no way self-evident. Officials have often been assimilated to technocrats, high-level officials (see Smith 2003, Joana and Smith 2004 for a different version). Commissioners are also political leaders of a specific type, and part of their job can hardly be compared with that of national government members (Joana and Smith 2004). The fact remains that the function has been construed as a political function, labelled and identified as such, through a complex process of formation and circulation with different types of European standards. Under certain aspects, the existing literature underlines this process, emphasising that in terms of morphology of the group, the Commissioners' profiles have been getting tendentially more political. However we would like to qualify this process (which could wrongly suggest a mechanically federal process of political integration) and stress that Commissioners, unlike Directors-General, accumulate very little European capital.

### *The hypothesis of growing politicisation*

While studies on the EU have devoted very little attention to the biographies of Europe's political and administrative staff, with a few rare exceptions (Page 1997), there have been some studies analysing the Commissioners: two books (Cordorelli Brown 1972, and thirty years later Joana and Smith 2002) and several articles (Page 1997, Mac Mullen 2000, Joana and Smith 2002, Wonka 2005 and Döring 2007) have been published on the subject.

This literature has underscored several important elements. First, elements on the general structure of this population have been highlighted. Mac Mullen provides figures which among other things show that women are in the minority. Much like the average minister, the average Commissioner is a middle-aged man (ca. 55 years old). Commissioners, studied since the beginning, are also shown to be a group with little cohesion. As Joana and Smith very rightfully point out, this heterogeneity reflects the coexistence of different definitions of the institution. This explains for instance the very high rate of French high officials vs. their total absence in other countries, or the high rate of ministers in other countries. In his recent paper, Döring also shows that small countries (i.e., over a long period Benelux countries in particular) provide Commissioners with a higher political level than those of bigger countries, which is confirmed by our data.

Secondly, the literature provides insights on the evolutions or dynamics of this population, with the thesis of a differentiation on the technocratic/political axis (Wonka), the growing politicisation of the Commissioner's functions, measured on the basis of their former ministerial experiences. This is not a continuous process, but

some particularly interesting figures stand out: the elevation of the political level of the first Delors commission (70%) and the tendential decrease of the number of MEPs, which we will study in more detail later on. Döring's paper also proves insightful when he switches to a different indicator to analyse the Commissioners' former position more finely. By analysing the political dimension on the basis of ranks (MP, MEPs, junior ministers, ministers and important positions within a party) he is able to show in greater detail than most authors that while the weight of political affiliations remains more or less unchanged, Commissioners have more and more political capital, beyond the presence of former Prime Ministers, which is also problematic in many ways.

Although these studies have provided a number of insights, they raise several issues. As this paper does not only deal with the Commissioners and their prosopography (another paper is in the making), we will only mention a few. In short, these problems are related to the normative character of several questions. Certain authors seem to be more or less openly looking for arguments on the Commission's efficiency, along the lines of "diversity is a performance factor", "political professionalization is a proof of professionalism and increased power of the Commission". Such arguments warrant further discussion - the latter is true to some extent, but does not take into account other elements, such as the fact that the increased prestige favours end-of-career strategies of top-ranking officials, not necessarily appointed to produce effects. Another normative problem is the underlying issue of comparability with governments and the Commission's "legitimacy", when the question political sociology should raise is that of legitimisation, as Andy Smith's research shows very convincingly.

The principal-agent model, at least as it is used here, also raises major problems. Indeed these papers tend to posit a link between an individual's properties and his behaviour (which even a Marxist would no longer do) and thus to minimise the core of the problem, i.e. the effects of relational structures (such as the displacement of the structure's centre of gravity) and effects of situation (raising the issue of the updating of dispositions). In addition to the issues raised in terms of social science theory, there are very concrete problems. Wonka's analysis is based on the (partly accurate) assumption that Member States send Commissioners to Brussels either with a defensive aim (slowing down reforms) or an offensive one (furthering them at European level). This seems to be clear enough, but if the link was so clear, one might think that governments send their finest elements to the College, or at least agents whose profile involves both political dependence towards their Member State and European competence likely to advance their strategy. This does not seem however to be the case.

At the crossroads of a critique on theoretical assumptions and methodology questions, we can also notice that the authors devote little interest (and this is our point) to how the European nomination ties in the broader political path, and to the governmental possibilities at the time of nomination. Thus indicators are often focused on the last position held and not on the path followed, which is not adapted to understand effects linked to holding several positions, or shifting from one to another, and induces artefact effects. Case in point: we can ask whether F.X. Ortoli is

a former French minister, a former French official or a former European official – as the Economist wrote when he was appointed (14 October 1972): “M. Ortoli is less a politician than a functionary; but, having been a successful civil servant in the Commission itself 10 years ago, and since then a senior minister in the French government, he will travel to Brussels with more political influence than any of his French predecessors have had”.

What is the field of possibles of these agents at the time of their nomination? Several high-ranking Commissioners are in positions of semi-opponents (Malfatti, or today Almunia, Mendelson, etc.): high-ranking and members of the governing party in their country according to Döring’s categories, but also in relative opposition to their party’s leader. One may suggest that their moving to Brussels has meanings other than the nomination of high-ranking staff in order to defend positions. Others, such as former Prime Ministers or major ministers like Delors himself have often exhausted all the positions available to them in the national political field. Rarely situating them in their evolution (with the remarkable exception of Wonka), these papers overestimate the importance of determinations by the past and overlook the “causality of the probable” (*causalité du probable*).

The analysis we put forward here is itself far from perfect, and it is provisional. But it seeks to shed a different light on the issue of the Commissioners’ power or dependence, not starting with their intrinsic properties, but with their path and their relative position in the institutional field. Biographical variables are thus used to understand structure effects, and for Commissioners specifically, the nature of their investment in the fields, their “social skills” as Fligstein puts it (2001), their ability to be brokers, the probability for the Commission to be cohesive (which includes the question of the objective proximity between Commissioners and officials). More precisely, we are also studying a blind spot. The case is similar to that of Poe’s purloined letter: there is a visible reality, but that isn’t seen because it is repressed through several reasonings (here, political and politist, focused on comparisons with governments). The authors have neglected to consider what is European in this political staff both in itself and in comparison with other elites or other professionals, high officials as well as permanent lobbyists.

#### *The increasing weakness of the European capital*

In order to analyse the Commissioners’ Europeaness (and here European political capital), two points have to be cleared up first. The first is the possible normative bias. Asking in which way they are European does not amount to asking, as those who are the most converted to the European cause do, whether they are “good” or “true” Europeans (the reverse of what Eurosceptics do with “true traitors”). We are considering here their experience, their resources and their European political credit, not to assess its value, but to measure what it represents in sociological terms. In the name of an extreme intergovernmentalist vision, one might also question the usefulness of analysing the Commissioners’ European capital; were they mere State representatives, the question would indeed be meaningless. This however ignores the reality of these posts and the process through which they are constructed.

The definition of the post was institutionally indeed constructed on the basis of the agents' capacity to embody Community interest. The treaties, but also the institution rites involved in the nominations attest to this. On a legal level, the treaties emphasise the fact they have to be chosen for their general competence, and offer every guarantee of independence, notably from their government. As it is said, "The Members of the Commission shall, in the general interest of the Community, be completely independent in the accomplishment of their duties. In the performance of these duties, they shall neither seek nor take instructions from any government or from any other body. They shall refrain from any action incompatible with their duties. Each Member State undertakes to respect this principle and not to seek to influence the Members of the Commission in the performance of their tasks". This is also the meaning of the pledge to the Court of Justice.

Therefore the question is here to understand what are the socio-political condition of their capacity for embodying and representing this EU common interest. As in the case of Directors-General, we assume than a EU political capital is in the making. Combining qualitative and quantitative indicators is here useful to fix it. Indeed, like Directors-General, Commissioners stylise their biographies to make them fit this ideal of embodying Community interest. The definition of the Commissioners' value is also constructed through other indicators, such as common commentaries or nowadays rankings published in newspapers. Discourses are generally important as well as quantitative analyses of the careers.

### **The biographical construction of a European political capital**

Manuel Barroso's biography is emblematic of the process of the biographical construction of political elite Europeaness. To save place, we won't quote here the entire public and official biography, which can be easily found :

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/president/personal/profile/index\\_en.ht](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/personal/profile/index_en.ht).

But we would like to point out the process of stylisation it testifies. This process doesn't mean that the CV is a fake, even if all the part of trajectory isn't shown. The bio is not more a propaganda act than other bio from other professional of politics, but the categories in use, the experiences put forward are here typical of the making of an *European* high politician. First of all, we can observe the accent put on defining the former politician career as an European career. One could indeed expect the mandates of Foreign Affairs minister and Prime Minister to be sufficient references, but on the opposite, the biography highlights Europe-related academic references and former political engagement in favour of Europe - with those surprising the categories "Europe-related work while in Foreign Affairs" and "Europe-related work while Prime Minister of Portugal". So to say, the president was already at service of Europe while governing his country. And he is shown as particularly active for the accession from the new countries. "Signed on Portugal's behalf the Europe Agreements with Romania, Bulgaria, the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic (1993), the Treaty of Accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden to the European Union, in Corfu (June 1994)". While Prime Minister of Portugal : "Participated in all European Union events requiring Portugal to be represented at the Head of State and Government level, in particular the European Councils. Key events include the signing of the Accession Treaties with Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic, the accession ceremony for these 10 countries,

meetings of the European Convention, the Intergovernmental Conference and the adoption of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. Secondly, the accent put on academic career (Master's degree in Political Science, with honours (sic), from the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, University of Geneva, with a thesis on "Le système politique portugais face à l'intégration européenne". Internships and short courses at Columbia University (New York), Georgetown University (Washington, D.C.), the International University Institute (Luxembourg) and the European University Institute (Florence). Successively, teaching assistant at the Law Faculty of the University of Lisbon, teaching assistant at the Department of Political Science, University of Geneva, and visiting professor at the Department of Government and School of Foreign Service (Center for German and European Studies), Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. (1996-1998). Head of the International Relations Department, Lusíada University (October 1995 - March 1999)." Those titles are in line with claiming for competencies and intellectual values marking some former Commissions. So is the publication list. Third, the list of "Decorations, prizes and distinctions" show his European credibility and central position. Beyond Portugal, prizes come from US, Spain, Italy, Slovakia, Japan, Brasil, Scotland, France, Poland, Greece, Cyprus, Peru, England, Belgium, Estonia, Czech Rep, Germany (since mai 2009).

The point here is that the biography of the president is more representative of a personal ability to present itself as a good European leader, than a general trend. So to says, if Commissioners are more en more high politicians, they are not higher Europeans, diverging here from the DG. José Manuel Barroso's statement in his swearing-in ceremony before the Court of Justice of the European Union (Luxembourg, 21 January 2005) is a first indicator. It shows this ambivalence in the definition of the post. He declared: "While taking up our functions in the Commission, we do not have to get rid of our nationalities; far from it. Each of us brings to the Commission's table the wealth and the diversity of our experiences and traditions. In fact, it is precisely this mix that enriches and strengthens the Commission. It allows us to play our role in defending the European common interest. It helps us build a Europe meant for European citizens, a Europe strengthened by its diversity and united by common values. The independence we have sworn to preserve today is thus unrelated to the language we speak or the passport we have; it is formal commitment to act, think and decide in complete autonomy. According to the Treaty's terms, members of the Commission 'shall neither solicit nor accept instructions from any government or organisation'. Today we stand before you and commit to this promise". It is possible to think that this speech warrants no interpretation, as it is fairly realistic on the definition of what Commissioners effectively are. But we can point out that this realism constitutes a small break, both when compared to directors-general and their will to form a rather homogeneous club, and both in historical terms. The reason matters little, but to our knowledge, this is the first time that this commentary on the meaning of independence is introduced. Diversity is opposed to the common and at least to the single body or institution that predecessors have feted. Such realism takes on a form of idealism which is typical of European institutional rhetoric. In a moment loaded with symbolic value such as the swearing-in ceremony, the introduction of this

qualification in the representation of the Commissioner's function may not be insignificant.

Significantly, the other qualitative indicators are close. For instance the biographical process is now different and shows a new configuration. In the early years, the biographies presented in the Bulletin of the European Communities or in illustrated form in the *Courrier du personnel* provided elements of career paths, but compared to national biographies, two additional dimensions used to be included: former European investments (negotiations, belonged to the field in another position, activism, expertise), and often former publications which hold a rather systematic place. So to say, European capital and intellectual capital were going together. The process also looked like also as a collective process in that sense that biographies were homogeneous. Now, it seems that each Commissioner has his CV or profile on his Website (probably wrote by his cabinet) and the political and sectoral competencies are much more higher. The public commentaries show similar trends. For instance, ranking take on different forms according to the venues in which they are published, such as formerly the French economic magazine *L'Expansion*, or nowadays papers such as The Bulletin, an English-language weekly that targets the community of expatriates in Brussels. The European value is actually much more relative in the last one.

This transformation can be better understood through the study of Commissioners on a socio-morphological level and of their collective path. In statistical terms, the Commissioners' profile rather clearly matches these features. Admittedly some Commissioners have had European experience. Many were European Affairs ministers or had relationships with the European institutions as diplomats or negotiators (especially in pre-accession periods). Some, few and far between, are former high European officials (such as Narjes, Ortoli, Deniau), some were permanent representatives (Borschette, now Balasz), and some members of other European institutions (such as Albert Coppé). There have also been major actors of federal Europe, such as Spinelli. The fact remains that this population is characterised by specific elements in terms of the dimension of their European investments. The configurations designed by members of Commission are also significant. For instance, the Malfatti Commission and his 9 members could show the image of a relatively homogeneous club, formed by Europeans figure (Borshette or *a fortiori* Spinelli – the day of the nomination the Belgian news paper *Le Soir* wrote it was 'un européen de grande classe' – a first class european), owners of high university credibility (Darendorf, Barre, Coppé), or at least experienced Commissioners.

Things have changed on several indicators. First, the share of investments in Europe is rather minor. In practice, Commissioners never have a major European experience in their background. When one considers the highest position held in the political hierarchy, ministerial positions within a Member State unsurprisingly and overwhelmingly prevail, as shown by the table below.

**Pre-Commissioner career: highest former position (1)**

	Number	Percentage
Prime Minister	7	5.0
Minister - Foreign Affairs	15	10.6
Minister - Finance	20	14.2
Minister - Interior/Defence	6	4.3
Minister or Secretary - other	43	30.5
Other national political position	13	9.2
MEP	4	2.8
Diplomat	19	13.5
High official - other	11	7.8
University/Research	1	.7
Other	2	1.4
Total	141	100.0

(1) When several types of positions were held successively or simultaneously, the order of preference chosen for this table was generally followed.

As other studies have shown, this is an increasingly strong tendency, especially as there is a greater amount of high-ranking national staff.

	hallstein 1	hallstein 2	rey	malfatt i	ortol i	jenkin s	thor n	delors 1	delors 2	delors 3	sante r	prod i	barros o
Prime Minister							6				10	6	10
Minister FA					12	8	12	6		17	15	11	21
Minister Fin	25	20	21	20	12	15	12	22	35	22	5	9	14
Minister interior/defence						15			6	6	5	9	
<b>Sub-total Government ++</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>45</b>
Minister/Secretary - other	25	30	21	10	18	15	29	28	29	33	30	31	38
Other national political position			14	20	12	23	18	17	18	17	10	9	7
MEP			7	10	6			6	6		5		
Diplomat	25	40	21	30	35	15	18	6	6	6	5	14	7
Other high official	17	10	14	10	6	8	6	17			10	6	
University/research												3	3
Other	8										5	3	
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Despite a few exceptions, there is little correlation between experience in the European Parliament and entering into the Commission. After 50 years of institutional history, there could conceivably have been, as in constituted polities, a pattern of European political career organising paths along a progressive gradation towards the top (i.e., Commissioner), along the lines of what can be observed for Directors-General. This is however far from the case. First, experience in the EP is relatively rare.

Country of origin	Number	Former or future MEPs	%
Germany	13	1	7.7
Austria	2	0	0.0
Belgium	8	4	50.0
UK	12	0	0.0
Bulgaria	1	0	0.0
Cyprus	2	0	0.0
Denmark	6	1	16.7
Spain	6	3	50.0
Estonia	1	0	0.0
Finland	2	1	50.0
France	15	6	40.0
Greece	7	2	28.6
Hungary	2	0	0.0
Ireland	8	1	12.5
Italy	21	6	28.6
Latvia	2	0	0.0
Lithuania	1	0	0.0
Luxembourg	11	3	27.3
Malta	1	0	0.0
Netherlands	8	2	25.0
Poland	1	0	0.0
Portugal	4	1	25.0
Romania	1	0	0.0
Slovakia	1	0	0.0
Slovenia	1	0	0.0
Sweden	2	0	0.0
Czech Republic	2	0	0.0
Total	141	31	22.0
Europe of the 6	76	22	28.9
9 countries 1 <sup>st</sup> enlargements	49	9	18.4
12 last accessing countries	16	0	0.0

This reality did not fundamentally change with the election of MEPs by universal suffrage from 1979. Sticking to MEPs elected by universal suffrage, only 21 Commissioners were MEPs before their mandate as Commissioners. In terms of absolute value, this is a low figure, but even more so in terms of relative value – 21/142. Among these 21 Commissioners, 11 did less than a mandate, including 9 less than 3 years and several a few months. Conversely, only 4 Commissioners (Bangemann, Redding, Scrivener and Patoutsis) did two mandates or more. While the number of presidents and vice-presidents of committees is relatively high – half of these Commissioners – it is more related to a significant amount of political capital than to a long-term investment. Only a few of them combine significant longevity in the EP and the possession of a major mandate within the Parliament. With such a small sample it is hard to draw conclusions on national variations, but the link is noticeably stronger for Belgians (4/8), Spaniards (3/6), French (6/15) than for

Britons (0/11) and Germans (1/11). Few of them then go on to be MEPs, and even less so for a long period of time. Perhaps surprisingly, the longest careers are not those of the most renowned Europeans, such as Carlo Ripa di Maena, whose profile is rather atypical (member of an aristocratic Piedmont family, involved in the PCI's student movements and then excluded from the party, president of the Venice Biennale, became closer to Craxi before he became an MEP in 1979).

NAME	COUNTRY	BEGIN COM	END COM	DATE EP	BEFORE AFTER
Bangemann	Germany	Jan-89	sept-99	73fev to 84	EP before EC
Bonino	Italy	Jan-95	sept-99	79 to 89; 99 to avr2006	EP before and after EC
Busquin	Belgium	Sept-99	June-04	99 (July to sept); since 2004	EP before and after EC
Cheysson	France	Apr 1973	Jan-89	89 to 94	EP after EC
Cresson	France	Jan-95	sept-99	79 to June81	EP before EC
Dalsager	Denmark	Jan-81	Jan-85	73 to 74	EP before EC
De Clercq	Belgium	Jan-85	Jan-89	79 to 81 then 89 to 2004	EP before and after EC
Delors	France	Jan-85	Jan-95	79 to 81	EP before EC
Deniau	France	July-67	Apr 1973	84 to avr86	EP after EC
Lardinois	Netherlands	Jan-73	Jan-77	63 to 67	EP before EC
Mac Sharry	Ireland	Jan-89	Jan-93	84 to March87	EP before EC
Martino	Italy	July-67	June-70	64 to 66	EP before EC
Matutes Juan	Spain	Jan-86	Apr 1994	94 to May96	EP after EC
Oreja	Spain	Apr 1994	sept-99	89 to June93	EP before EC
Palacio Valle-Lersundi	Spain	sept-99	nov-04	99 (July to sept)	EP before EC
Papoutsis	Greece	Jan-95	sept-99	84 to Jan95	EP before EC
Pisani	France	May 1981	Dec 1984	78March to May81	EP before EC
Reding	Luxembourg	sept-99		89 to 99	EP before EC
Rehn	Finland	July-04		95 to nov 96	EP before EC
Rey	Belgium	Jan-58	June-70	79 to July80	EP after EC
Ripa di Meana	Italy	Jan-85	Jan-93	79 to 84 et 94 to 99	EP before and after EC
Santer	Luxembourg	Jan-95	March-99	74 to July79 et 99 to 2004	EP before and after EC
SCARASCIA MUGNOZZA	Italy	March-72	Jan-77	61 to 72	EP before EC
Scrivener	France	Jan-89	Jan-95	79 to jan89	EP before EC
Spinelli	Italy	July-70	July-76	76oct to May86	EP after EC
Tajani	Italy	May 2008		94 to May08	EP before EC
Thorn	Luxembourg	Jan-81	Jan-85	59March to July79	EP before EC
Van Miert	Belgium	Jan-89	sept-99	79 to nov85	EP before EC
VARFIS	Greece	Jan-85	Jan-89	84 to jan85	EP before EC
Vitorino	Portugal	sept-99	nov-04	94 to oct95	EP before EC
Vredeling	Netherlands	Jan-77	Jan-81	58 to 73	EP before EC

Another indicator, the Commissioners' longevity yields observations that are different from those made for high European officials and members of national

governments. Out of 142 Commissioners, more than half (76) have one mandate, 46 have two and 19 three mandates. But these populations deserve closer scrutiny: out of the 19 who have three mandates, only 9 of them have 12 years of experience, i.e. they have effectively completed their three mandates; the others left before completion. Another significant element is that all Commissioners with three mandates left in 1999, at the time of the resignation of the Santer Commission. During the Barroso and Prodi Commissions, there is no longer any political staff endowed with long-term experience in their functions.

Number of mandates in the EC	Number
1	76
2	46
3 or more	19
Total	141

In terms of other Europe-related engagements that might show the accumulation of resources prior to the nomination as Commissioner, they are upon initial examination few and far between (complements are however under study, notably press biographies). Upon reading these examples, we can argue that the valorisation of past European activism might be a compensation effect for members of the Commission from the supposedly most Eurosceptic countries or currents, like the president of the Danish European movement. The case of former European officials is also different – for instance, Deniau and Ortoli were nominated in the EC after a relatively traditional path as French top officials, while Narjes had more longevity.

Although it does not attest to integration in EU institutions, the indicator of academic level should be considered. It is more interesting in terms of socio-political implications than in itself. First, it shows proximity or distance towards European high officials. It also shows to what extent they match socially accepted definitions and especially those valued by Commissioners in the first years. The figure of the technocrat was indeed constructed in the opposition to Member States and involved the valorisation of the members' expertise and intellectual capital (Georgakakis 1999). In terms of representations, this figure was very close to the opposition between the temporal (embodied by government members) and the intemporal (forward vision of long-term interest defended by Commission members). This figure was displayed in the Commissioners' official biographies. It is indeed very striking that the latter contain all of their publications. The singularity of commissions such as the Malfatti commission, comprising Dahrendorf, Barre and Coppé is noticeable. The 60% rate in the period of the first Commissions declined, with the exception of the last, because of the very academic profiles of enlargement Commissioners.

Lastly, Commissioners do not invest in Europe-related careers as such when they leave. Career structures after the Commission mandate are diverse. But they mostly involve either a return to a national political career, or in the most cases holding

positions in the economic field. This can be seen in the structure outlined in the table below:

**Types of post-Commission careers** (most significant position considered) (1)

	Numbers	Percentage	"Net" percentage (2)
End of career (retirement, death)	16	11.3	
Career still ongoing	27	19.1	
Government	18	12.8	18.9
<i>Higher position</i>	8	5.7	8.4
<i>Equal position or new member</i>	10	7.1	10.5
MEP	7	5.0	7.4
International organisation	1	0.7	1.1
Diplomacy	13	9.2	13.7
Private company	24	17.0	25.3
<i>Banks</i>	14	9.9	14.7
<i>Industry</i>	8	5.7	8.4
<i>Consulting</i>	2	1.4	2.1
University	8	5.7	8.4
Local/national representative	8	5.7	8.4
Party direction	5	3.5	5.3
Think tank/advisor	6	4.3	6.3
Direction of a major national organisation	5	3.5	5.3
Other or N/A	3	2.1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(1) When several types of positions were held successively or simultaneously, the order of preference chosen for this table was generally followed.

(2) Except end of career, ongoing career in the commission and other or N/A. n = 95

The observation of types of careers shows that a mandate in the Commission is a stage that does not necessarily boost a career. Either it is an end, in the sense that it puts an end to the career, or it is a time of reconversion. This is the case for those who hold economic functions. It can also be maintained. For former ministers who find a ministerial portfolio back at the end of their EC mandate, having worked in the Commission does not necessarily provide them with a higher position. This is an important point, as it is counter-intuitive and undoubtedly obscured by some major cases such as Hillery, who became President in Ireland. One might think that as Döring states, the expected national return of Commissioners constitutes a way to apply pressure, but also a promotion. This is actually not the case, which does not mean that the Commissioners are not aware of it. Among the 11 ministers who resumed ministerial duties, 2/3 of the 'minor' ministers were promoted, and there were 7 new ministers. Another paper will elaborate on these paths and their implications in more detail. The core of the matter here is that a College mandate rarely leads to a European political career, but rather tends to be a conversion operator allowing political elites that have invested in the economic field to continue with more opportunities in this field. The meaning of such paths also resides in their broader elite strategy, and not necessarily in the construction of a specific European path.

## Conclusion

This paper has shown that the structure of the Commissioners and top officials' positions and especially the evolution of their long-term collective path have rather different outcomes. In addition to the differentiation between professionals of politics and top officials, the administrators of Europe tend to be involved in a long-term process of construction of European social positions, closely linked to European institutions, while those who embody their authority (Commissioners) are less and less involved.

In this sense, our paper contributes to a better understanding of the European Commission and its deep transformations (Egeberg 2007). By revealing a new cleavage related to social investments in Europe, it complements various studies that seek to qualify the general hypothesis that EC agents also embody supranational values and interests (Hooghe 2001, Egeberg 2007). It also allows for a better understanding of a conditions of a number of contextual tensions that occasionally occurred within the EC at various points, such as the Verheugen polemics mentioned in the introduction (Wille, 2007), the debates and general misunderstanding on the EC's administrative reform (Bauer 2008, Ellinas Suleiman 2008), or the interpretations of the crisis of Europe (Ross 2007). These episodes can indeed be understood as the product of the convergence of deep sociological transformations and contextual singularities. They involve an opposition between, on the one hand, a group that constructed itself by building Europe, in a context where the reform of the European Commission questions the ethos of European civil service (based on "builder" ethos, Georgakakis 2008), turning civil servants into administrative executives, admittedly more moral (Cini 2008) but indifferntiated compared to other administrators, and threatens its objective structures of reproduction, notably by hiring huge amounts of contract workers; on the other hand, a less and less "European" and more and more political group in a context where the most political progresses of Europe are questioned by the constitutional crisis and what many commentators and actors of the field consider as a renewed control of the Commission by Member States since the end of the Delors era.

From a more general point of view, we hope to have outlined a new avenue of research in the debate on political elites and European integration. This consists in looking for one of the mechanisms of European integration not in the socialisation of elites or the hypothetical conversion of their way of thinking, but in the more substantial transformation of what makes them elites, their social investments and the type of their capitals (see also Cohen, Dezalay, Marchetti, 2007, Kauppi 2007, 2009, Georgakakis 2008). It could more generally contribute to better understand the links between 'elitisation processes' and 'formation of emerging space of power' in elites theory field as well as new interdisciplinary perspectives in EU studies (Warleigh-Lack 2008).

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