

Representative Bureaucracy and Contracted Government Officials*

Zuzana Murdoch ^{a,b}, Jarle Trondal ^{a,c} and Benny Geys ^{d,e}

^a Department of Political Science and Management, University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway.
Email: zuzana.murdoch@uia.no

^b Research Area ‘Organisation and Governance Studies’, University of Bremen, Germany.
Email: zmurdoch@unibremen.de

^c ARENA Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway.
Email: jarle.trondal@uia.no

^d Department of Economics, Norwegian Business School (BI), Oslo, Norway.
Email: Benny.Geys@bi.no

^e Department of Applied Economics, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Brussels, Belgium.
Email: Benny.Geys@vub.ac.be

Abstract

Modern public sector organizations increasingly consist of contracted staff with ambiguous organizational affiliations. This article extends the Representative Bureaucracy (RB) literature by analysing such ‘contracted’ government officials – using seconded national experts (SNEs) in the European Commission (Commission) as the empirical laboratory. The analysis also moves beyond bureaucrats’ socio-demographic characteristics, and argues that it is important to address representativeness in terms of the *constituent population’s policy preferences*. Our empirical analysis – based on a unique survey among Commission SNEs – highlights two novel results: First, contracted Commission staff does not appear passively representative of its constituent population. This holds both when looking at socio-demographic characteristics and policy preferences. Second, Contracted Commission staff’s self-perceived decision-making behaviour appears to reflect the policy preferences of their home country population (rather than their socio-demographic characteristics). The latter suggests a potential for active representation in terms of policy interests, but not socio-demographic characteristics.

Keywords: Representation, Seconded national experts, European Commission, Bureaucracy.

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* Corresponding author: Jarle Trondal, University of Agder, and ARENA Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo, Norway; e-mail: jarle.trondal@uia.no; Tel: +47 38141561. We are grateful to the editor and three anonymous referees for excellent comments and suggestions, to CLENAD (especially its former president Matthew Snoding) and Nina Bonge (WZB Berlin) for invaluable assistance with the survey, and to FWO Vlaanderen (grant nr. G.0022.12 to Benny Geys) and the Norwegian Research Council (“EURODIV: Integration and division: Towards a segmented Europe?”) for financial assistance. The usual caveat applies.

1. Introduction

One classic field of enquiry in political science and public administration concerns those who hold public office. Scholars of Representative Bureaucracy (RB) thereby pose two essential questions: Who are public officials? And does it matter who they are? The majority of studies addressing such questions of bureaucratic representation focus on the demographic composition of permanent full-time street- or executive-level bureaucrats in national governments, and the policy outcomes linked to these bureaucracies (Rhodes *et al.* 2007; Vibert 2007; Meier and Capers 2013; Kennedy 2014). With the increasing significance of international organizations (IOs) (Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009; Costa and Jorgensen 2012) and the rising influence of IO bureaucracies (Mathiason 2007; Trondal *et al.* 2010), scholars began recently also to evaluate the representativeness of international bureaucratic staff (Stevens 2009; Gravier 2008, 2013; Ban 2013).

While this article likewise studies bureaucratic representation in international bureaucracies (taking the European Commission as empirical laboratory),¹ our main contribution lies in moving attention away from *permanent* full-time bureaucratic staff, and towards *temporary* bureaucratic staff. This shift of focus is inspired by the increasing reliance on part-time contracted officials and the concomitant down-sizing of permanent staff across many (inter)national public bureaucracies. Such tendency – recently referred to as a shift towards “contracted government” (Murdoch and Trondal 2013, 1) – follows one of the curative prescriptions of the New Public Management (NPM) reform wave, and is designed to promote greater flexibility in, and performance of, public services (Hall 2002; Lægreid and Wise 2007). As budgetary constraints imposed by the ongoing global financial crisis have

¹ Our choice for the Commission is guided by the fact that it is increasingly perceived as an ideal test-bed in the fields of public administration and organization science (Egeberg 2012a). This provides an important opportunity to embed our analysis within an existing body of scientific knowledge on the Commission (e.g. Hooghe 2005, 2012; Gravier 2008, 2013; Stevens 2009; Bauer 2012; Murdoch and Geys 2012; Ban 2013; Kassim *et al.* 2013). Moreover, and more practically, Commission staff data are more easily publicly accessible than those of other IOs.

only strengthened this development in recent years, knowledge about the representativeness of contracted bureaucratic officials thus carries relevance to most IOs as well as to national governments facing administrative cut-backs.

The rising presence of ‘contracted’ bureaucratic staff in our view requires a re-assessment of the representativeness of the public sector workforce. Indeed, when an increasing share of the bureaucratic staff works on short-term and time-limited contracts, these flexible arrangements might well affect the overall representativeness of the bureaucracy. On the one hand, the more flexible hiring procedures for temporary staff leave more room for manoeuvre in the hiring decision, which can affect the passive or descriptive representativeness of the bureaucracy. On the other hand, ‘contracted’ government officials might feel less bound by the impartiality requirement implicit in (Weberian) bureaucratic decision-making (Cox 1969; Geuijen *et al.* 2008; Trondal *et al.* 2013), which may raise concerns about how they actively represent the citizenry (more details below). The ambition of this article thus is two-fold.

First, we aim to assess whether the demographic profile of *temporary* government officials reflects the characteristics of their constituent population (passive representation). Our analysis thereby concentrates on Seconded National Experts (SNEs) working in the Commission. These constitute approximately 10% of the Commission’s AD-level staff (i.e. administrative staff with policy-making responsibilities), and are particularly interesting from a theoretical perspective because they owe allegiance both to their home organization (that continues to pay their salaries) and the Commission (under which they have to serve loyally).²

² The Commission in 2008 formalized new rules on the secondment of national experts to the Commission (Commission Decision C(2008) 6866 of 12 November 2008). These maintain that SNEs are obliged to behave solely in the interests of the Commission, and cannot accept any instructions or duties from their home government. However, they do not have the authority to represent the Commission externally on their own, or to enter into any commitments on behalf of the Commission. Compatible with the wishes of Jean Monnet when staffing the High Authority in 1952, SNEs’ main role consists in providing the Commission with additional expertise, supplying learning across levels of government, securing the Commission a more flexible workforce hired through a fast-track recruitment system, and offering national governments with added experience.

The cross-pressures that arise from such duality imply that socialization from long-term embedment within the organizational structures may be absent from – or more difficult to establish for – such individuals, which makes them important for studies of bureaucratic representation (for a similar argument regarding street-level bureaucrats, see Thompson 1976; Meier 1993). Furthermore, SNEs have an explicit policy-making role within the Commission, which is less often the case for other types of temporary staff. Such policy relevance is obviously crucial where it concerns studies of RB. Importantly, our analysis at this point also maintains that an exclusive focus on bureaucrats' passive representativeness in socio-demographic terms (as in existing RB studies) is unwarranted, and should be supplemented by additional examination of representativeness in terms of the *constituent population's policy preferences*. As discussed in more detail below, this is particularly important since public officials' demographic characteristics and policy preferences need not necessarily coincide (Whistler and Ellickson 2010).

Second, we examine the potential for active representation among temporary government officials. While previous studies have often uncovered a link between passive and active representation (Hindera 1993; Meier 1993; Keiser *et al.* 2002; Atkins and Wilkins 2013), the question remains whether active representation can likewise be seen among officials who experience ambiguous affiliations to organizations, such as contracted government staff. It is important to observe here that we operationalize active representation by SNEs' *role perceptions* (i.e. the extent to which they feel they act as a representative of their country's government in their daily work) rather than actual policy decisions or outcomes (see also Selden 1997; Sowa and Selden 2003; Bradbury and Kellough 2007). The reason behind this operationalization is that the discretionary power of bureaucrats is critical for active representation (Meier 1993; Sowa and Selden 2003). Final outputs, however, unlike personal decisions and individuals' perceptions thereof, are often determined by numerous factors

beyond bureaucratic control (such as, for instance, citizen coproduction of public goods and services; Whitaker 1980; De Witte and Geys 2011, 2013), which limits their relevance in measuring active representation (Bradbury and Kellough 2007). We thus study “the potential for active representation (...) rather than seeking evidence of policy outcomes in line with the interests of specific groups” (Bradbury and Kellough 2007, 698).

The data – which derive from official documents detailing the staff composition of the Commission, and a unique survey among Commission SNEs (N≈400) – reveal two novel findings: First, Commission SNEs are *not* passively representative of its constituent population (i.e. the EU27-population).³ This holds both when looking at socio-demographic characteristics and policy preferences, but the extent of this (un)representativeness varies substantially across policy areas within the Commission. Second, while the role perceptions of Commission SNEs (i.e. reflecting their potential for active representation) do not consistently differ depending on their socio-demographic characteristics, they do appear to reflect at least in part the policy preferences of their home country. This suggests a potential for active representation in terms of policy interests, but not socio-demographic characteristics.

In the next section, we briefly review the foregoing RB literature, and highlight the extensions to this literature in our analysis. Then, in section 3, we use a variety of datasets to unveil Commission SNEs’ demographic and policy profiles (passive representation) and their role perceptions (potential for active representation). Finally, section 4 concludes.

³ As our analysis relates to 2011, we employ information about the EU population without Croatia (i.e. EU27).

2. A review of the RB literature

In a Weberian sense, bureaucracies represent a particular organizational setting based on a professional and certified administrative staff working in “a larger organizational and normative structure where government is founded on authority” (Olsen 2006, 2). A key characteristic of ideal-type Weberian bureaucracies is that its bureaucrats follow “rules with regard to their office with dedication and integrity” and avoid “arbitrary action and action based on personal likes and dislikes” (Olsen 2006, 5; Weber 1978). As such, personal background characteristics *and* policy preferences are assumed to be irrelevant for explaining staff behaviour.

Clearly, as also recognized by Weber himself, such an ideal can at best be approximated in reality. This realisation is central to the theory of RB, which assumes that the socio-demographic make-up of bureaucratic staff “should be broadly representative of the public it serves” (Meier *et al.* 1999, 1026), because civil servants’ race, gender, class/income, educational background, geographical origin etc. are likely to affect the way they perform in office (Meier and Nigro 1976; Peters *et al.* 2013; Schröter and von Maravić 2014). Bureaucrats’ background characteristics are thereby thought to matter in two ways:

First, organizational demography may matter *symbolically*. It has, for example, been shown that the legitimacy of government agencies depends on the extent to which their staff composition reflects salient demographic characteristics of their constituencies (Meier and Capers 2013; Gade and Wilkins 2013; Riccucci *et al.* 2014). This reflects the normative viewpoint that “representation and staffing carries important implications for the delivery of public services [and] the sharing of power in society” (Schröter and von Maravić 2014, 6). In line with such view, a more representative bureaucracy has been linked to improved overall administrative performance (Kingsley 2003), increased worker loyalty and job satisfaction (Choi 2009) and higher legitimacy and accountability of the bureaucratic organization (Selden

and Selden 2001). From a more political perspective, RB can also play a symbolic role by suggesting equality of opportunities and equity (Groeneveld and van de Walle 2010; Gravier 2013; Peters *et al.* 2013), and prove helpful during the implementation of controversial or unpopular (but necessary) policy programs (Pitts *et al.* 2010; Peters *et al.* 2013). In the EU context, one could similarly ask whether trust in EU institutions and support for the EU is partly contingent upon the degree to which constituent nationalities are ‘represented’ within EU institutions, the existence of gender balance, or merit-based hiring procedures (Norris 1997; Rohrschneider 2002).

Second, background characteristics of officials become important when ‘passive representation’ leads to ‘active representation’. Passive or descriptive representation thereby refers to shared characteristics along (usually socio-demographic) dimensions of interest, whereas active or substantive representation refers to decision-making processes in the interest, or on behalf, of the represented (Kennedy 2014; Schröter and von Maravić 2014). Both forms of representation – i.e. passive and active – need not necessarily occur jointly or be causally connected. Indeed, as already articulated by Pitkin (1967) and Mosher (1968), it is not required that a bureaucracy is representative in a descriptive sense for it to take decisions that are representative in a substantive sense, or vice versa. Although recent work on RB has often uncovered a link between passive and active representation (Hindera 1993; Meier 1993; Keiser *et al.* 2002; Atkins and Wilkins 2013), such studies generally rely on aggregate- rather than individual-level data, “which limits the ability to draw inferences about the actions of individuals” (Ricucci *et al.* 2014, 13; see also Theobald and Haider-Markel 2008; Bradbury and Kellough 2011). Nevertheless, much has meanwhile been learnt about the relative importance of the direct and indirect mechanisms linking passive and active representation (Lim 2006; Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006), and the potential role of threshold issues or

‘tipping points’ in such passive-active translation (Meier 1993; Keiser *et al.* 2002; Atkins and Wilkins 2013).

Yet, recent reviews indicate that the RB literature has thus far been predominantly concerned with permanent full-time street- or executive-level bureaucrats in national governments (Meier and Capers 2013; Kennedy 2014). In our view, the increasing relevance of ‘contracted’ bureaucratic staff discussed in the introduction requires that we move at least part of our attention from *permanent* towards *temporary* staff. The reason is that an increasing share of short-term and time-limited contracts within a bureaucracy – which often implies recruitment outside the standard procedures – might well affect the overall representativeness of the bureaucracy. As indicated above, such influence can be expected in two dimensions. First, since the hiring procedures for temporary staff tend to be more flexible, they might leave more room for manoeuvre in the hiring decision. This can make short-term contracts an attractive instrument to bolster staff contingents that are under-represented in the permanent staff (e.g. women, minorities, disabled, experts), and thereby improve passive or descriptive representation. However, the same flexibility can also be invoked to exclude applicants with unfavourable characteristics. Hence, whether contracted government leads to an improvement or deterioration in terms of the passive representativeness of the bureaucracy is an important question that has not received empirical attention. Second, ‘contracted’ government officials may raise concerns about how they actively represent the citizenry. For instance, national officials working as temporary agents in the Commission regularly invokes the fear that member-states strategically use such officials to their own advantage (Cox 1969; Geuijen *et al.* 2008; Trondal *et al.* 2013). The underlying apprehension is that temporary staff may feel less bound by the impartiality requirement implicit in (Weberian) bureaucratic decision-making, or feel less loyal towards the institution to which they are temporarily assigned. Hence, simply studying *who* works as temporary bureaucratic elites (i.e. passive

representation) is insufficient when evaluating their overall representativeness (thus including active representation).

This proposed shift towards analyses of contracted bureaucratic staff immediately raises an additional question. Most empirical work on passive as well as active RB concentrates on *socio-demographic* characteristics such as race or gender (Meier and Capers 2013; Kennedy 2014). Yet, even when a bureaucracy is representative in socio-demographic terms, it need not be representative in terms of the *policy opinions and preferences* of the population at large. Individuals are indeed likely to retain opinions and viewpoints from previous organizational environments in which they were embedded, and thus might be ‘pre-socialized’ towards certain behavioural perceptions before entering a new organization (Pfeffer 1982; Selden 1997; Hooghe 2005; Beyers 2010). As re-socialization takes time, and arguably depends upon individuals’ perception of the continuity of their position (Egeberg 2004; Christensen and Lægheid 2009), such influence of previous organizational environments may be more important for short-term, contracted staff. The result of such pre-socialization, however, might be that individuals’ policy preferences are *not* perfectly captured by their socio-demographic characteristics (Whistler and Ellickson 2010). This is implicitly acknowledged in Selden’s (1997, 133) conclusion that “scholars need to establish a relationship between demographic characteristics and work attitudes, and attitudes and administrative behaviours”. It is likewise reflected in recent findings by Bradbury and Kellough (2007, 712), who argue that “it is attitude congruence (...) rather than race, per se, or any other demographic characteristic, which appears to be the most important direct influence on administrator adoption of a (...) representative role”. As one might contend that a truly representative bureaucracy reflects the policy preferences – not just the socio-demographic characteristics – of its constituency (Rosset 2013), it evidently becomes

important to go beyond mere socio-demographics when evaluating the representativeness of any bureaucracy.

Moreover, it is important to thereby take into account that public sector organizations often cover a broad spectrum of public policy tasks. Intuitively, there is no reason to believe that a generally representative bureaucracy is equally representative within each of its constituent elements. Research in organization theory indeed indicates that decision-making logics, incentives and discretion may vary substantially across policy areas (Egeberg 2012b). For instance, it is easy to imagine that bureaucrats have less leeway for personal initiative in sensitive policy areas compared to less sensitive areas. Government units may also “foster different cultures of representation” (Kennedy 2013, 6), which can become reflected in the (interpretation of) staffing policies (Cayer and Sigelman 1980; Gravier 2013; Murdoch and Geys 2014). Consequently, and following recent suggestions to “bring institutional variety back into diversity research” (Schröter and von Maravić 2014, 4), our analysis below will take into account that looking at the representativeness of the bureaucracy *at large* is likely to be insufficient to get an accurate view of its overall representativeness.

3. Empirical analysis

3.1. Datasets

The analysis rests on a number of different data sources. First, we collected information about the characteristics of the European population, since this is the most relevant comparison group to evaluate the representativeness of European-level bureaucrats (Gravier 2004, 2013; Stevens 2008). Information about the socio-demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, age, educational background and nationality) of the population in the EU27 was obtained from Eurostat. To operationalize the European population’s policy preferences, we rely on the annual Eurobarometer surveys (more details on the exact measurement are provided below).

Second, we collected information about the staff composition of the Commission. This is obtained from official publications of the Commission including, but not restricted to, the 2011 *European Commission Human Resource Report*, the *Draft General Budget 2012* and online publications documenting the *Distribution of Staff by Statutory Links and DGs*. (European Commission 2011a, 2011b, 2011c).⁴ We supplement the limited official information available about SNEs via a unique web-based survey administered between January and April 2011 to all 1098 then active SNEs in the Commission. This survey received 667 responses, which equals a response rate of just over 60 percent. As not all SNEs answered all questions relevant to the present analysis, the final sample employed in the analysis hovers around 400 respondents. It is important to note that the distribution of the SNEs across Directorate-Generals (DGs) in our final sample compares to that observed for *all* Commission SNEs in 2011: i.e., we have more respondents from policy-intensive areas (such as Eurostat, taxation, climate action) compared to less policy-intensive areas (such as human resources and language services). This similarity suggests that non-response within the targeted population was independent of the DG in which SNEs work, which improves the generalizability of the results reported below.

3.2. Passive representation

Table 1 documents the passive or descriptive representativeness of Commission SNEs in terms of gender (percent female and male), education (share of tertiary graduates with a social science, law or other degree), age (share of population between 26 and 67 within four age bands) and geographic origin. While the first three socio-demographic characteristics are commonly included in RB studies (Kennedy 2014), the last characteristic (i.e. geographic origin) arguably becomes a more important dimension of representation in international

⁴ The year of analysis – 2011 – is determined by the year in which our survey among the Commission’s SNEs took place (see below).

bureaucracies (Gravier 2008, 2013). Table 1 documents geographic origin via countries in the original EU6 (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), the nine countries joining prior to 2004 (referred to as ‘EU9’: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom), and the twelve countries from the most recent enlargement rounds (referred to as ‘EU10+2’: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia).

Table 1: Representation by Gender, Education, Age and Geographic origin (%)

	Female	Male	Social Science	Law	Other	26-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60-67 years	EU6	EU9	EU10+2
EU27	52	48	28	5	67	34	26	24	19	47	38	15
SNEs	40	60	37	16	47	41	30	18	11	30	33	37

Note: For EU27, N=500700753 individuals (i.e. total EU27 population). For SNEs, N=1098 individuals. Sources: Eurostat; European Commission (2011a, 2011b, 2011c); Authors’ survey among Commission SNEs.

Table 1 indicates that the gender composition of Commission SNEs is significantly skewed towards men. This mirrors the fact that women are substantially under-represented also among the Commissions’ total Administrative (AD) staff (40% female; not reported in table 1) – even though women are over-represented in Assistant (AST) positions (65% female; not reported in table 1). This gender division is in line with recent observations on the Commission’s persistent ‘macho-culture’ (Ban 2013), but creates a significant potential for under-representation of female viewpoints in the Commission’s policy work. We return to this observation in section 3.3. With respect to educational background, we find that lawyers are significantly over-represented within the Commission’s SNEs (16%, versus 5% among tertiary graduates in the EU27 population), while there is a marginally smaller discrepancy between the share of tertiary graduates in the European population holding degrees in social sciences (i.e. economics and political science) and the share of SNEs with such degrees. Although legal expertise is obviously highly valued for drafting official documents and delimiting discussions within the boundaries of EU law, the Commission thus clearly experiences substantial under-representation of hard science experts. The age distribution of

the Commission's SNEs suggests a slight over-representation of young working-age individuals and a likewise slight under-representation in the 50-67 age range. Although this is likely to reflect the fact that younger people may be more interested in secondment to the Commission (e.g. for career reasons) and might be more easily able to engage in them (e.g. due to fewer family-related domestic obligations), it creates at least some potential for an age-related bias in the Commission's policy work. Finally, compared to the share of the EU27-population living in EU6 (47%), EU9 (38%) and EU10+2 (15%) countries, new member states are heavily over-represented among Commission SNEs.

All in all, the Commission's SNEs can barely be called descriptively representative of the EU27-population in terms of basic socio-demographic background characteristics. SNEs are more likely to be younger, male individuals from the 'new' member states (i.e. those acceded in or after the 2004 accession round) with a degree in law or social sciences. Table 1, however, only looks at the Commission as a whole, and the results thus obtained obviously need not play out similarly across different sections of this large and diverse bureaucracy (Kennedy 2013, 2014; Meier and Capers 2013; Schröter and von Maravić 2014; see also section 2). Hence, Table 2 reports the representativeness of SNEs across seven sets of Commission administrative services (DGs) covering distinct policy areas previously differentiated by Murdoch and Trondal (2013).⁵

Table 2 illustrates that the representation of different population groups differs dramatically across policy areas. This holds both in terms of educational background (i.e. substantial over-representation of social scientists in DGs occupied with External Relations and Research, while lawyers are over-represented in Central and Social Regulation DGs), as well as age

⁵ The seven policy areas are 'Market', which is comprised of DGs COMP, ECFIN, ENTR and MARKT; 'External Relations' is DGs ELARG, DEVCO, FPI, ECHO and TRADE; 'Social Regulation' is DGs CLIMA, EAC, EMPL, ENV, SANCO, HOME and JUST; 'Supply' is DGs ENER, CNECT, MOVE, RTD and TAXUD; 'Provision' is DGs AGRI, MARE and REGIO; 'Research' is DGs ESTAT and JRC; Central consists of BUDG, COMM, IAS, BEPA, SJ and OLAF (DG acronyms are explained in the appendix).

distribution (e.g. young SNEs are particularly over-represented in Market and Provision DGs). Moreover, Table 2 illustrates that the under-representation of women is particularly strong in Market-, Supply-, and Research-related DGs, but does not arise in DGs linked to the Commission administration ('Central'). The latter is interesting as it obtains confirmation when looking at the representation of women in AD-level permanent posts across policy areas (details upon request). This may reflect the fact that the Commission's credibility in requiring adherence to non-discriminatory gender hiring rules depends on the observance thereof in Central DGs, which might play "the role of a kind of model employer" (Peters *et al.* 2013, 9). Even so, despite a steadily increasing representation of women in AD-level posts (Ban 2013), this gendered variation reflects that the Commission, "more than a decade after the introduction of its [gender] mainstreaming mandate, has fallen well short of its goal" of gender equality (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2009, 129). SNEs' more flexible hiring procedures may be particularly important in this respect, as it allows greater freedom from following the 'mainstreaming mandate'.

Table 2: Demographic representativeness of Commission SNEs by policy area (%)

	Female	Male	Social Science	Law	Other	26-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60-67 years	EU6	EU9	EU10+2
EU27	52	48	28	5	67	34	26	24	19	47	38	15
Market	38	62	48	20	32	56	30	7	7	38	34	28
External Relations	46	54	51	11	38	35	32	22	11	28	43	29
Social Regulation	46	54	30	21	49	40	29	20	11	25	36	39
Supply	34	66	26	16	58	33	31	21	15	32	31	37
Provision	39	61	32	4	64	52	12	20	16	16	32	52
Research	31	69	50	0	50	35	33	20	11	33	20	46
Central	53	47	35	35	30	45	40	10	5	40	40	30
All DGs	40	60	37	16	47	41	30	18	11	30	33	37

Note: For EU27, N=500700753 individuals (i.e. total EU27 population). For SNEs, the sample depends on the DG cluster: N=379 (All DGs); N=61 (Market); N=59 (External Relations); N=94 (Social Regulation); N=72 (Supply); N=23 (Provision); N=46 (Research); N=20 (Central).

'Market' is DGs COMP, ECFIN, ENTR and MARKT;

'External Relations' is DGs ELARG, DEVCO, FPI, ECHO and TRADE;

'Social Regulation' is DGs CLIMA, EAC, EMPL, ENV, SANCO, HOME and JUST;

'Supply' is DGs ENER, CNECT, MOVE, RTD and TAXUD;

'Provision' is DGs AGRI, MARE and REGIO;

'Research' is DGs ESTAT and JRC;

'Central' consists of BUDG, COMM, IAS, BEPA, SJ and OLAF.

*Translation and administrative services are excluded. (DG acronyms are explained in the appendix).
Sources: Eurostat; European Commission (2011a, 2011b, 2011c); Authors' survey among Commission SNEs.*

Thus far, we have only looked at RB in socio-demographic terms – as in the existing literature. Turning now to representativeness *in terms of policy preferences*, we introduce a number of measures of citizens' opinion towards the EU polity and its activities. The first is a measure of Euroscepticism. This reflects a general preference for less EU influence in public policy decisions, because it is likely to make citizens want to install accountability and control measures in order to avoid a 'run-away bureaucracy' in Brussels (Lubbers and Scheepers 2005; Serricchio *et al.* 2013). We measure Euroscepticism within the European population using the Eurobarometer question: "Generally speaking, do you think (your country's) membership is a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad?". A country is defined as Eurosceptic if more than 20% of the population answers that EU membership is a bad thing. To avoid this measurement from being influenced by the recent economic recession, we use information from the last Eurobarometer *before* the onset of the on-going financial crisis (Eurobarometer 67.2 from 2007). This defines Austria, Finland, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom as Eurosceptic.

Evidently, this only provides a very general measure of popular policy preferences within a European Union context. As individuals' stance towards the EU may vary across policy areas, we also introduce a more fine-grained analysis based on the Eurobarometer survey question: "For each of the following areas, do you think that decisions should be made by the national government, or made jointly within the European Union?". Support for the first half of the statement (and thus in favour of *national* policy-making) receives value 1, while support for the latter half of the statement (and thus in favour of *EU* policy-making) receives value 2. The question is repeated for 18 policy areas (including 'fighting crime', 'taxation', 'defence and foreign affairs', 'health and social welfare', 'agriculture and fishery', and 'transports'), which

can be matched to the seven DG-clusters differentiated in table 2. As such, we can calculate the share of a country’s population that favours/opposes EU-level decision-making for each DG-cluster (i.e. policy area). A country is subsequently defined as opposing EU-level decision-making if the share of its population opposing EU-level decision-making in a given policy area lies more than one standard deviation above the EU27 average in that policy area.⁶

Table 3 reports the results. Specifically, we show the share of the EU27 population (row 1) and the share of SNEs within a given DG cluster (row 2) that derive from countries that *do not* favour EU-level decision-making in that particular policy area. In Column 1, we look at general feelings of Euroscepticism, while the remaining columns analyse preferences specific to six of the seven DG clusters separated above (no data are available for ‘Central’ DGs as their activities cannot be linked unambiguously to particular public policy programs).

Table 3: Representation by EU-population policy preferences (%)

	General	Market	External Relations	Social Regulation	Supply	Provision	Research
EU27	30	19	23	28	18	31	20
SNEs	17	18	22	21	14	16	11

Note: For EU27, N=500700753 individuals (i.e. total EU27 population). For SNEs, the sample depends on the DG cluster: N=379 (General); N=61 (Market); N=59 (External Relations); N=94 (Social Regulation); N=72 (Supply); N=23 (Provision); N=46 (Research).

Source: Own calculations based on Eurobarometer surveys and authors’ survey among Commission SNEs.

Table 3 illustrates that, compared to their population share, countries with a generally Eurosceptic population tend to be substantially under-represented in the Commission’s temporary staff (Column 1). Indeed, the share of the EU27 population living in countries defined by a Eurosceptic population (30%) is substantially higher than the share of all

⁶ This defines Finland and the United Kingdom as opposing EU-level decision-making in all policy areas. To this ‘core group’, Sweden and Denmark are added for ‘Market’ DGs, Sweden, Denmark and Austria for ‘External Relations’, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands for ‘Social Relations’, Austria for ‘Supply’, Czech Republic, Austria and France for ‘Provision’, and Denmark and Austria for ‘Research’. Note also that we refrain from setting an absolute fixed threshold here, as opposition to EU intervention is much higher in some policy areas (e.g. Social Regulation; over 65% of EU27 population) than others (e.g. External Relations; under 35% of EU27 population).

Commission SNEs who derive from Eurosceptic countries (17%). This under-representation is particularly obvious in Social Regulation (28% of EU27 population lives in countries most opposed to EU-level policy-making in this area, compared to 21% of SNEs deriving from such countries) and Provision DGs (31% versus 16%), but appears completely absent in Market and External Relations DGs. This pattern suggests that the Commission may particularly avoid recruiting SNEs from countries opposed to EU-level policy-making in DGs dealing with policies for which there is more opposition within the EU27 population (remember that opposition to EU intervention is much higher in Social Regulation than External Relations; see note 6). An alternative explanation could be that individuals deriving from countries with a more questioning position towards EU policy-making may be less interested in working for the Commission, or may face governments that are less willing to deprive themselves of skilled staff through the secondment system (especially where it concerns DGs they consider as lacking legitimacy for these policy areas). Overall, while the results in table 3 thus *need* not imply that the Commission actively works to limit access to individuals from EU-critical countries, it does illustrate that the Commission might fall short of reflecting the policy preferences about (further) European integration within its constituency.

3.3. Active representation?

Evidently, beyond the possibly symbolic role of RB (Groeneveld and van de Walle 2010; Gravier 2013; Peters *et al.* 2013), bureaucrats (i) with certain socio-demographic characteristics or (ii) arriving from countries with certain policy preferences may also actively represent their background. To assess this passive-active relationship, we analyze Commission SNEs' behavioural *role perceptions*, measured by the extent to which SNEs' feel they act as a *representative* of their country's government in their daily work. The specific question employed is: "In your daily work, to what extent do you feel you act as a

representative of your country's government?". Answers are coded using a six-point scale from 'fully' (coded as 0) to 'not at all' (coded as 5). This question directly asks about role perceptions regarding the arguably most salient characteristic in our setting (i.e. nationality, or country of origin), and has therefore already attracted substantial attention in the literature studying socialization effects among *permanent* Commission staff (Hooghe 2005, 2012; Trondal *et al.* 2010) as well as those officials' belief structures (Kassim *et al.* 2013). SNEs emphasizing national roles view European policy-making as an act of exchanging and balancing member-state interests. Adopting this role makes them more likely to defend national positions, and less likely to view Europe as an autonomous level of authority primarily designed to find policy solutions in the interests of a common European good. Exploring the extent to which Commission staff evokes 'European roles' thus also taps into the old neo-functionalist discussion on the conditions for loyalty transfer across government institutions (Haas 1958).

Our focus on role perceptions follows previous work by, among others, Selden (1997), Sowa and Selden (2003) and Bradbury and Kellough (2007), and implies that we study "the potential for active representation" rather than the policy consequences thereof (Bradbury and Kellough 2007, 698). Although this diverges from the mainstream approach of measuring active representation through macro-level policy outputs or socio-economic outcomes, we believe that a focus on role perceptions is appropriate in our setting. The reason is that policy outcomes depend on numerous factors that lie well beyond direct bureaucratic control (such as, for instance, citizen coproduction; Whitaker 1980; De Witte and Geys 2011, 2013), which obscures a clear assessment of the (theoretically crucial) discretionary power of bureaucrats over final outcomes (Meier 1993; Sowa and Selden 2003; Bradbury and Kellough 2007). This difficulty does not arise for officials' role perceptions, over which they have full control. Furthermore, previous scholarship has illustrated that "administrators who perceive their role

as that of an advocate or representative of minority interests, are more likely to make decisions that benefit the minority community” (Selden 1997, 140). Hence, role perceptions can be viewed as “a primary determinant of active representation” (Bradbury and Kellough 2007, 711; Selden *et al.* 1998).

The empirical analysis here relies on the following simple regression model (with subscript *i* referring to SNEs).

$$\text{ActRepr}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Gender}_i + \beta_2 \text{Age}_i + \beta_3 \text{Education}_i + \beta_4 \text{EU6}_i + \beta_5 \text{EU9}_i + \beta_6 \text{Policy_Pref}_i + \delta \text{Controls}_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Where ActRepr is based on the question: “In your daily work, to what extent do you feel you act as a representative of your country’s government?” (see above). Note that the nature of the dependent variable – i.e. a six-point scale from ‘fully’ (coded as 0) to ‘not at all’ (coded as 5) – requires estimation of an ordered logit model. We also cluster standard errors by DG to account for the fact that answers from SNEs within one DG may not be fully independent from one another.

The key socio-demographic explanatory variables are SNEs’ gender (1 if male, 0 if female), age (in years), educational background (separate indicator variables for a degree in social sciences or law; with other degrees as the reference group) and country of origin (separate indicator variables for EU6 and EU9; with EU10+2 countries as reference group). First, on gender, studies suggest that female permanent officials in the Commission are more supranationally oriented than their male colleagues (Kassim *et al.* 2013, 111), but it remains unclear whether this also holds for female temporary staff. Second, previous studies show no age effect with respect to permanent Commission officials’ supranational orientation (Kassim *et al.* 2013). Thus, the age variable is applied in this study without any clear prediction. Next, it may be expected that different fields of study make SNEs more or less oriented towards European vs. national concerns. Conceptualised as a continuum, ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ disciplines

are characterised by degrees of paradigmatic status and international orientation (Becher 1989; Braxton and Hargens 1996; Smeby 2000; Raadschelders 2013). We therefore expect that SNEs with an educational background in ‘hard’ sciences are more European oriented than SNEs educated in relatively ‘soft’ sciences – such as social sciences or law (Vukasovic 2013). Fourth, country of origin measures SNEs’ patterns of national pre-socialization. One might expect that SNEs originating from new and ‘un-socialized’ member states (i.e. EU10+2) give more priority to national concerns whereas SNEs from earlier accession countries have become more socialized into ‘European concerns’. SNEs originating from old EU member states may thus be expected to have learned the ‘supranational game’ more than their junior fellows, whom are likely to be less pre-socialized into a European state of mind. Given the coding of the dependent variable, this implies that we expect positive coefficient estimates for the variables EU6 and EU9.

Finally, with respect to policy preferences, we introduce the share of the population in an SNE’s home country answering that EU membership is a bad thing when analysing the complete sample of SNEs (column 1 in table 4). When looking at subsamples of SNEs within particular DG clusters (columns 2-7 in table 4), we instead rely on the share of a country’s population that opposes EU-level decision-making in that policy area. Given the coding of the dependent variable, this implies we expect negative coefficient estimates for this variable. It should also be noted here that the data suggest a significant positive correlation between SNEs’ personal beliefs in the EU project (measured on a 5-point scale from ‘advantageous’ to ‘disadvantageous’) and the share of citizens in their countries of origin with positive attitudes towards the EU (Pearson correlation coefficient=0.107; $p=0.0305$). This is important since it implies that there is a positive relation between SNE’s policy preferences and those in their home country – which is required for any form of active representation.

The results are provided in table 4, where the first column analyses the entire sample of SNEs, and later columns limit attention to SNEs within the DG clusters distinguished also in tables 2 and 3. Table 4 offers two main observations. The first is that demographic variables have fairly low explanatory power throughout the analysis, and generally fail to provide a significant effect in more than one of the estimations in table 4. The only exception is an SNE's country of origin: i.e. SNEs from EU6 countries (relative to those in EU9 and EU10+2 countries) are significantly *more* likely to profess national role perceptions when they are seconded to Market and External Relations DGs, but not when seconded to the Research department. The former two findings are clearly opposed to our initial expectations. Still, this may reflect the content of the policy area of these particular DG clusters, since dossiers in Market and External Relations DGs tend to generally be more political than technical (Kassim *et al.* 2013, 110).

Table 4: Estimation results

	<i>Full sample</i>	<i>Market</i>	<i>External Relations</i>	<i>Social Regulation</i>	<i>Supply</i>	<i>Provision</i>	<i>Research</i>
Male (dummy)	0.301 (1.37)	0.513 (0.59)	0.795 (1.07)	0.588 (1.40)	0.195 (0.39)	0.491 (0.73)	-0.516 ** (-1.98)
Age (years)	-0.016 (-1.48)	-0.001 (-0.02)	-0.025 (-1.13)	-0.030 (-1.26)	0.005 (0.14)	-0.012 (-0.19)	0.074 *** (2.75)
Social Science (dummy)	-0.100 (-0.38)	1.061 *** (4.12)	0.424 (0.95)	-0.030 (-0.09)	0.050 (0.08)	0.368 (0.32)	-1.669 (-2.81)
Lawyer (dummy)	-0.289 (-0.96)	0.508 (1.10)	0.996 (1.08)	0.288 (0.42)	-1.352 (-4.26)	0.042 (0.03)	-
EU6 (dummy)	0.146 (0.41)	-1.410 *** (-6.06)	-1.894 *** (-3.67)	-0.198 (-0.45)	0.391 (0.77)	-1.293 (-1.14)	2.068 ** (2.06)
EU9 (dummy)	0.489 (1.25)	0.441 (0.45)	0.235 (0.34)	-0.215 (-0.37)	0.581 (1.33)	-0.882 (-5.49)	1.739 ** (2.24)
Percent less EU	-0.043 *** (-2.82)	-0.114 (-1.45)	-0.059 ** (-2.55)	-0.038 ** (-2.09)	-0.072 ** (-2.12)	0.067 (0.94)	0.029 *** (4.31)
Pseudo R ²	1.36	8.68	9.50	3.10	7.93	5.32	9.46
N	379	61	59	94	72	23	46

Note: t statistics based on standard errors corrected for clustering at the country-level between brackets, *** significant at 1%, ** at 5% and * at 10%. The dependent variable reflects SNEs' answer to: "In your daily work, to what extent do you feel you act as a representative of your country's government?" Answers are coded using a six-point scale from 'fully' (coded as 0) to 'not at all' (coded as 5).

The second, and arguably more interesting, observation is that the policy preferences of SNEs' home country population with respect to European decision-making powers in a given

policy area *do* play a significant role in most estimations. Given the coding schedule of the dependent variables, we find that SNEs from countries favoring stronger national rather than European policy-making powers are significantly *more* likely to see themselves as a representative of their home country government. This observation holds when analyzing the full sample of SNEs (column 1), as well as the subsamples related to the four largest DG clusters (Columns 2 to 5) (note, however that column 7 provides an opposing finding). The main tenor of the results in table 4 thus suggest that passive under-representation of SNEs from countries less favorable towards EU intervention (observed in table 3) *may* induce a subsequent lack of active representation of such preferences in Commission policy-making. From a more theoretical perspective, the general lack of statistical significance where it concerns socio-demographic characteristics and its presence for the policy preference variables in our view substantiates the importance of accounting more directly for policy preferences in future RB studies. That is, we find evidence of a significant potential for active representation in terms of policy interests, but not socio-demographic characteristics, which undermines the validity of a research strategy exclusively aimed at establishing representativeness in socio-demographic terms.

4. Conclusion

This study provides two main contributions to the RB literature. First, we are the first to analyse bureaucratic representation among *temporary* bureaucratic staff. Such officials require more attention in future research given that many (inter)national public bureaucracies are down-sizing permanent staff in favour of an increasing reliance on part-time contracted officials. This development in our view can affect not only the passive or descriptive representativeness of the public sector workforce (due to, for instance, the often more flexible hiring procedures for temporary staff), but could also affect the potential for active representation (due to, for instance, a possibly lower adherence to the impartiality requirement

implicit in (Weberian) bureaucratic decision-making). Second, we move beyond the current literature's focus on bureaucrats' passive representativeness in socio-demographic terms by additionally examining representativeness in terms of the *constituent population's policy preferences*. Our findings indicate that SNEs appear more likely to take up national role perceptions when the policy preferences in their home country population are more opposed to EU-level decision-making. This indicates that there exists at least a potential for active representation in terms of policy interests – something we, in line with Gravier (2013), failed to establish with respect to SNEs' socio-demographic characteristics.

What does this imply for the crisis-driven development towards administrative cut-backs and 'contracted government'? The Commission has in recent years repeatedly signalled its intention to hire more SNEs – rather than permanent staff – because they are a cheaper means to finance its steadily increasing number of tasks (remember that SNEs' home organization continues to pay their salaries during secondment; see above). For instance, the Commissioner for Inter-institutional Relations and Administration recently proposed that the Commission should *i*) implement a five percent reduction of staff in all categories in all institutions at the 2012 levels (by exploiting normal turnover rates); *ii*) fulfil secretarial and clerical tasks by contractual staff rather than officials with lifetime appointments; and *iii*) raise the maximum duration of contracts of other contract agents in the institutions from three years to five years (Šeřčovič 2011, 1-3). EU member state countries, however, likewise face financial constraints and may not only want to send fewer SNEs, but also have an increased incentive to mainly send SNEs to DGs of 'use' to them (or SNEs with a stronger national orientation, which may benefit the home country). The UK Foreign Office (2012, 9), for instance, recently stated that the seconding of UK diplomats to the EEAS is an "investment worthwhile in terms of (...) [its] policy interest in the EEAS being better able to deliver on UK security and prosperity".

Our results suggest – at least at the time of the survey in 2011 – that any such ‘self-selection’ may bear seeds of problematic representation effects from the Commission’s perspective.

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Appendix: Acronyms of Commission Directorates-General and Services

Departments (DGs)

Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI)
Budget (BUDG)
Climate Action (CLIMA)
Communication (COMM)
Communications Networks, Content and Technology (CNECT)
Competition (COMP)
Economic and Financial Affairs (ECFIN)
Education and Culture (EAC)
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL)
Energy (ENER)
Enlargement (ELARG)
Enterprise and Industry (ENTR)
Environment (ENV)
EuropeAid Development & Cooperation (DEVCO)
Eurostat (ESTAT)
Health and Consumers (SANCO)
Home Affairs (HOME)
Humanitarian Aid (ECHO)
Internal Market and Services (MARKT)
Joint Research Centre (JRC)
Justice (JUST)
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MARE)
Mobility and Transport (MOVE)
Regional Policy (REGIO)
Research and Innovation (RTD)
Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI)
Taxation and Customs Union (TAXUD)
Trade (TRADE)

Services

Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA)
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)
Internal Audit Service (IAS)
Legal Service (SJ)