

Representative Bureaucracy and the Role of Expertise in Politics

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Abstract

With the rising sophistication of modern democracies, the policy problems facing public officials have likewise increased in complexity. Simultaneously, the technocratization of political life has made professionals and specialists (or ‘experts’) more paramount to processes of proposing, implementing and legitimizing public policy. Both tendencies are reflected in an increasing reliance on external experts to assist in the development and implementation of policy decisions. This development, we argue, raises two important questions: who are these external experts? And does it matter who they are? We empirically address these questions exploiting unique survey data on seconded national experts (SNEs) in the European Commission (N≈450). Our results highlight that SNEs do not appear closely representative (in a ‘passive’ sense) of the EUs’ constituent population along a number of socio-demographic dimensions. This is important because the passive *unrepresentativeness* of experts introduced into the policy-making process has the potential to translate into an (active) under-representation of possibly relevant interests and opinions. However, the data suggests that passive (under)representation have modest effects on active representation.

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

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1. Introduction

With the rising sophistication of modern democracies, policy problems confronting public officials have likewise increased in terms of their overall complexity. The ‘business of governance [has become] more difficult’ (Flinders 2014: 3). Simultaneously, the ‘technocratization of political life’ (Bickerton 2012: 14) and the increased role of ‘the unelected’ (Vibert 2007) have made ‘experts’ and their ‘ways of doing things’ ever more paramount to processes of proposing, implementing and legitimizing public policy (Joerges et al. 1997: 7; Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Joerges 1999). One consequence is that ‘governments have increasingly employed expert assessments and formal decision-making technologies’ (Rayner 2003: 163; see also Weingart 1999). As illustrated by, for instance, Radaelli (1999), Nullmeier (2005) and Afonso (2007) in settings ranging from European Union (EU) politics to Swiss immigration policy, the presence of ‘epistemic communities, [...] (academic) expert panels [...] and a technocratic decision-making process are important influences on policy-making’ (Kuehnhanss et al. 2013: 18).

To the extent experts are working under an ‘epistemic logic’ (see below), experts would generally be assumed to prepare dossiers, argue and negotiate on the basis of their professional competences, and to legitimate their authority on scientific aptitudes and capabilities (Haas 1992; Rutgers and Mentzel 1999; Rayner 2003). As such, their increasing involvement in the policy-making process would tend to come with a ‘promise [of] objectivity and transparency’ (Rayner 2003: 163). Still, as documented in a substantial philosophy of science literature discussing the ever closer connections between science and politics (e.g. Rutgers and Mentzel 1999; Weingart 1999), this is not always self-evident in practice. It clearly requires ‘the independence of the expert and the objectivity of his

contribution to the policy process' (Rutgers and Mentzel 1999: 148), which is not necessarily a priori given. This study, however, has a more positivist approach to such technocratization, and does not normatively gauge the consequences of 'technocracy' relative to, for example, prospects of majority rule and the rule of the elected (e.g. Papadopoulos 2013; Schmidt 2006; Vibert 2007) and European integration (e.g. Eriksen and Fossum 2012; Majone 2009).

In fact, we argue that the substantial and growing importance of experts and (academic) expert panels in the policy-making process raises important questions from a Representative Bureaucracy perspective (RB; Kennedy 2012; Meier and Capers 2013; Peters et al. 2013; Schröter and von Maravić 2014): Who are these external experts? And does it matter for the direction of public policy who they are? Since the vast majority of existing studies on bureaucratic representation focus on bureaucracies' *permanent* and internal staff (Kennedy 2012; Meier and Capers 2013), the external and non-permanent experts in governmental affairs have been overlooked. Our argument is that the increased reliance of experts and external expertise requires a fundamental re-assessment of how the representativeness of the public sector workforce and its policy decisions is evaluated.

This assertion rests on the fact that external experts are often recruited on short-term and time-limited contracts that only run as long as their specific expertise is required. Moreover, these contracts are often awarded outside the standard recruitment procedures. The implied recruitment flexibility can generate *either* an improvement of passive (or descriptive) representation within the bureaucracy (when such contracts are employed to bolster staff contingents or broader societal preferences that are under-represented in the permanent staff), *or* a deterioration of the bureaucracy's representativeness (when experts with unfavourable characteristics tend to be excluded in favour of those with more desirable

features). Such potential shifts in passive representativeness may be important because they have the potential to translate into an active (under)representation of possibly relevant interests and opinions (Kennedy 2012; Schröter and von Maravić 2014).¹

Our empirical assessment of these propositions concentrates on ‘external experts’ in the European Commission (Commission) – the so-called Seconded National Experts (SNEs).

These are recruited from member-state administrations into the Commission on temporary contracts (maximum six years), and are specifically recruited to provide expertise to the Commission in areas where this might be lacking in permanent staff. The data derive from Eurostat, official documents detailing the staff composition of the Commission, as well as a unique survey among its SNEs (N≈450). We employ these data to assess whether Commission SNEs reflect the characteristics and preferences of their constituent population; i.e. the EU-27 population.²

Overall, Commission SNEs, compared to the EU27 population, are significantly more likely to be male, have a degree in law, and come from the ‘new’ member states (i.e. those acceded in or after the 2004 accession round). Unsurprisingly given their status, they are also much more likely to hold a doctorate degree, and to have completed at least part of their education outside their home country. Taken together, these results suggest that the more flexible hiring procedures for SNEs do not appear to be bolster staff contingents that are under-represented among permanent staff. Even though these experts naturally are more likely to have had international education and hold a doctorate, this hiring flexibility rather

¹ Obviously, both forms of representation need not necessarily occur jointly or be causally connected. 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. We return to this discussion in more detail below.

² Following the recent accession of Croatia, the EU meanwhile has 28 members. This had not yet occurred at the time of our data collection, such that we treat the EU-27 population as the EU’s relevant constituent population.

seems to work against applicants with certain characteristics (i.e. such as citizenship of ‘old’ member states). This obviously need not imply that the Commission actively works to limit access to its administrative centre for experts with certain characteristics, but it does illustrate that the expertise brought in by the Commission might fail to suitably reflect the full diversity of preferences and opinions within its constituency. Still, one might wonder whether such passive representation really matters. Our data suggests that it may not. Indeed, and supporting previous research on representative bureaucracy, only the educational background variable – among all demographic variables – has a significant effect on active representation.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. In section 2, we briefly discuss the growing role of experts and expertise in public policy-making. Building on the foregoing RB literature, this section also indicates how this tendency might affect bureaucratic representativeness. Then, in section 3, we use a variety of datasets to unveil Commission SNEs’ representativeness relative to the EU27-population. Finally, section 4 concludes and discusses some avenues for further research.

2. On expertise in politics

2.1 A note on expertise

Science is much more than the mechanical production of data and analysis. Scientific knowledge grants access to constituting basic rules for cause and effect, distinguishing right from wrong, categorising social phenomena and advising about good and bad. As a result, science has become an institution in itself, loaded with authority and power. Moreover, scientific authority bestows its holder with legitimacy and a communicative platform that

reaches far beyond the narrow scientific discipline. It is, however, not any kind of knowledge that functions as the key to authority and power; only 'recognised knowledge' matters. Universities have traditionally been the places with a monopoly on such recognised knowledge (Djelic 2006; Drori et al. 2003; Drori and Meyer 2006; Maasen and Olsen 2007; Paradeise et al. 2009; Ramirez 2006; Savigny 2013; Weingart 1999). Today, political actors – public and private, national and international – seek to establish expert-based authority founded on the idea of evidence-based rulemaking. Apart from seeking *i)* rational-legal authority based on the idea of impersonal rulemaking, or *ii)* delegated authority based on the idea of accountable rulemaking, or *iii)* moral authority based on the idea of normative or principled rulemaking, the role of knowledge thus seems to have become central in how political actors engage in processes of authority building and in how they go about legitimizing it (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Maasen and Olsen 2007).

Science as the basis for authority was central to Max Weber, who considered rationalisation as one of the most important characteristics of the development of western society and capitalism (Wrong 1970). Other forms of authority – traditional or charismatic authority relying on religion, magic, supernatural phenomena or personal attributes – were seen as irrational, because they were essentially based on personal insight, emotions and feelings. Rationality, in contrast, is viewed as driven by reason and calculation. Yet, almost paradoxically, 'the increased use of scientific expertise by policy-makers has not increased the degree of certainty, in fact it becomes de-legitimizing' (Weingart 1999: 151). The reason is that the increasing use of expertise inflates the demand for such expertise, which drives the 'recruitment of expertise far beyond the realm of consensual knowledge (...) to the research frontier where knowledge claims are uncertain, contested and open to challenge' (Weingart 1999: 158). It might also push towards a 'politicisation' of science, where the

objectivity of the expert scientist is brought in doubt due to his/her involvement in public policy controversies (Brooks 1975).

Nevertheless, purely epistemic communities, to the extent that they exist (Haas 1992), in principle do not work under the shadow of politicians; they work under the shadow of the rules of the scientific community itself. Members of a scientific community are each other's judges – accountability is turned inwards (Haas 1990; 1992). Policy makers will not even consider actively, directly or indirectly, interfering in the work of an epistemic community. Apart from the normative consequences that such a complete isolation and protection from policy makers may entail, it is clear that an agency which has succeeded in attaining the status of (being part of) an epistemic community has acquired a considerable power base.

Temporary office holders in government – such as Commission SNEs - who evoke an *expert* logic are expected to enjoy behavioural discretion, and are influenced by external professional reference groups (Wilson 1989). They are assumed to prepare dossiers, argue and negotiate on the basis of their professional competences and to legitimate their authority on scientific competences (Haas 1992). Their behaviour is expected to be guided by considerations of scientific and professional correctness and the power of the better argument (Eriksen and Fossum 2000). Their role perceptions and loyalties are primarily directed towards their expertise and educational background as well as towards external professional networks. This is the 'expert official' who is institutionally independent of any constituencies and is a high-flying and mobile technocrat. Moreover, bureaucratic organizations infused with an epistemic logic are a challenge to institutional unity. Such institutions are characterized by being composed of loosely coupled experts with an 'outward' orientation. Epistemic organisations are typically porous and open institutions staffed

by actors from different external expert institutions such as domestic agencies, universities, research institutions etc. (Olsen 2007; Trondal 2013). The officials are driven by a so-called 'technical self-determination' (Pentland 1973: 74).

2.2 Experts and Representative Bureaucracy

The theory of Representative Bureaucracy (RB) assumes that the socio-demographic make-up of the 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). In other words, the 'diversity of public sector workforce' (Peters *et al.* 2013: 7) is presumed to impact on how public sector organisations perform, how they are internally controlled, how legitimate they are perceived to be, and how they relate to the constituent populations (Selden 1997; Andrews *et al.* 2005; Stevens 2009; Schröter and von Maravić 2014). This reflects the key notion that what civil servants bring with them into the organization is of significance to their conduct (Hooghe 2005; 2012).

From a normative viewpoint, this implies 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). That is, a more representative bureaucracy takes into account a wider variety of ideas and opinions, which is beneficial for public policies as it makes those policies more representative of underlying preferences and opinions in the society at large. In line with such a normative viewpoint, a more representative bureaucracy has been linked to improved overall administrative performance (e.g. Kingsley 2003),

increased worker loyalty and job satisfaction (e.g. Choi 2009) and higher legitimacy and accountability of the bureaucratic organisation (e.g. Selden and Selden 2001). From a more political perspective, however, RB can also play an imperative 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 policy programs (Pitts *et al.* 2010; Peters *et al.* 2013).

Importantly, from such a RB perspective, technocratization and the increasing reliance on external expertise in public policy-making (see above) raises important questions about experts' representativeness. The reason is that such experts are generally appointed to provide a specific type of information or knowledge. This makes that their appointments are almost by definition short-term, and occur largely outside the standard recruitment procedures for permanent bureaucratic staff. Clearly, such recruitment flexibility may be employed – whether consciously or subconsciously – to bolster staff contingents that are under-represented in the permanent staff. If so, this is likely to generate an improvement in passive (or descriptive) representation within the bureaucracy. Nonetheless, when experts with unfavourable characteristics – or policy opinions – become excluded in favour of those with more desirable features, this recruitment flexibility may also induce a deterioration of the bureaucracy's representativeness. The latter is not an unrealistic scenario. Several observers indeed argue that it has 'become commonplace that the adversarial parties (...) engage scientific experts to present evidence which supports their respective views' (Weingart 1999: 156; see also Brooks 1975). Consequently, the selection of external experts by policy-makers may be partly determined by the evidence they bring to the table.

The final key question, however, is whether experts' passive representativeness really matters: i.e. are individuals with higher expertise levels also more likely to perceive themselves as 'independent experts' in their day-to-day decision-making, and act in accordance with the prescripts of such an epistemic role. According to the idea of individual pre-socialization outside organizations, officials may be 'pre-packed' already before entering the organization (Pfeffer 1982: 277; Selden 1997). Individual pre-socialization outside organizations is important to account for because most studies of elite socialization do not systematically control for the effect of pre-socialization and self-selection (Beyers 2005, 2010; Hooghe 2005). This article uses the following demographic factors as proxies of individual pre-socialization: age (in years), gender, educational background (fields of study, place of study, and level of graduation), and country of origin. Finally, seniority is applied as a control variable, such as to account for the idea that organizational re-socialization inside an organization to some extent may modify the effect of individual pre-socialization outside the organization.

First, on gender, studies suggest that female officials in the Commission have a somewhat different belief structure than male officials – for example with respect to their general 'supranational orientation' (Kassim et al. 2013: 111; Trondal et al. 2014). Our question is whether the gender of experts leads to different emphasis on their expert role. Next, previous studies shows no age effect as regards Commission officials' general beliefs (Kassim et al. 2013). Thus, the age variable is applied in this study without any clear predefined prediction. Then, the educational background of office holders has shown a very strong effect in previous studies. One question is thereby whether place of study matters. One might indeed hypothesize that having an international educational background may be conducive to evoking an expert role. The reason is that one's education then is not tied to

one particular environment, but rather was obtained in a more diffuse array of settings. This, in turn, may induce a focus on the content – or expertise – of the study. A second, education-related prediction is that length of prior education might matter – measured by the level of graduation. We expect that individuals with a doctorate are more strongly expert oriented than those without a doctorate. Finally, it may be expected that different fields of study make one more or less oriented towards the expert role. The so-called ‘hard’ sciences are often assumed to be generally more paradigmatically developed than the ‘soft’ sciences. Conceptualised as a continuum, ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ disciplines are characterised by degrees of paradigmatic status and consensus (Becher 1989; Braxton and Hargens 1996; Smeby 2000). Thus, officials with an educational background in more ‘hard’ sciences – such as physics, biology - may be more expert oriented than officials educated in relatively more ‘soft’ sciences – such as economics or political science.

Finally, country of origin measures experts’ patterns of national pre-socialisation. One might expect that experts originating from new and ‘un-socialized’ member states give more priority to national concerns whereas the expert role has been more internalized among their colleagues from earlier accession countries. Experts originating from old EU member states may be expected to have learned the ‘expert game’ more than their junior fellows. In contrast, experts originating from more recent member-states are likely to be less pre-socialized into a European state of mind – which is particularly expert-oriented in Commission DGs (Ban 2013).

3. Empirical analysis

3.1. Case selection and datasets

Our empirical analysis relies on data concerning Commission SNEs, which derive from 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 2008, 2013; Stevens 2009).

Information about the socio-demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, age, educational background and nationality) of the population in the EU27 was obtained from Eurostat.

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).³ For SNEs, we supplement the limited official information available 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 to 450 respondents. It is important to note that the distribution of the SNEs in our final survey sample across Directorate-Generals (DGs) compares to that observed for *all* Commission SNEs in 2011. 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 The year of analysis – 2011 – is determined by the year in which our survey among the Commission’s SNEs took place (see below).

3.2. Results

To assess the passive or descriptive representativeness of Commission SNEs, Table 1 presents the composition in terms of gender, education, age and geographical origin of the European population (EU27), the Commission’s total staff, and its SNEs. While the first three socio-demographic characteristics are commonly included in RB studies (Kennedy 2012: 10), the last characteristic (i.e. geographical origin) arguably becomes a more important dimension of representation for international bureaucrats (Egeberg 2006; Gravier 2008, 2013; Trondal *et al.* 2008). Table 1 documents geographical origin of officials by wave of enlargement (which reflects a country’s EU membership seniority): countries in the original EU6 (Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Italy, France and Germany) vs. EU15 (EU6 plus Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Ireland, United Kingdom and Greece).

Table 1: Representation by Gender, Education, Age and Geographical origin (per cent)

	EU27	All staff	SNEs
Women	52	52	40
Social Science	28 ^a	na	37
Law	5 ^a	na	16
Study Abroad	3 ^b	na	19
PhD	1 ^c	na	20
19-40 years	44	32	41
40-50 years	23	37	30
50-60 years	21	27	18
60-65 years	11	4	11
EU6	47	51	30
EU15	85	80	62

^a Share of tertiary graduates with a degree in a particular field of education

^b Students studying in other EU27, EEA or candidate country, as percentage of total student population

^c Estimate based on tertiary education graduates as percent of population in EU27 (23.7% in 2011) and the share of tertiary graduates finishing a doctorate (2.6% in 2004).

na is ‘not available’.

Sources: Eurostat; OECD; European Commission (2011a, 2011b, 2011c); Authors’ survey among Commission SNEs.

Looking first at standard demographic characteristics generally included in RB studies, table 1 indicates that the gender composition of the total Commission workforce (52% female)

very closely resembles that of the overall European population (52% female). Women are, however, substantially under-represented among SNEs (40% female). The same is also true among the Commission's permanent AD-level staff (40% female), which automatically implies that they are strongly over-represented in Assistant (AST) level positions that deal with assistant and secretarial tasks (65% female; not reported in table 1). This gender division – which is in line with recent observations regarding the Commission's persistent 'macho-culture' (Ban 2013) – creates a significant potential for under-representation of female viewpoints in the Commission's policy work and expert input. The age distribution of the Commission's permanent staff witnesses an under-representation of both relatively young and old working-age individuals, and is clustered strongly in the 40-60 age range (who are strongly over-represented compared to the EU27-population). The age distribution among SNEs to some extent corrects for both deviations. Yet, this correction is imperfect as SNEs themselves at best approach the age distribution of the EU27-population.

With respect to educational background, we naturally observe a very strong over-representation among SNEs for education measures reflecting specific forms of expertise (i.e. having studied outside one's home country or holding a doctorate). Just over 19% of all SNEs have completed at least part of their education outside their home country, and no less than 20% obtained a doctorate. The equivalent numbers in the EU27 population are 3% and 1%, respectively.⁴ Moreover, while social scientists (including economics and political science) are slightly over-represented relative to the share of tertiary graduates with such a degree in the European population, lawyers are very significantly over-represented within the Commission's expert staff (16% versus 5% in the EU27) – and not under-represented as

⁴ Note that the EU27 figures exclude individuals studying in, for instance, the United States, Canada or Asian countries. Nevertheless, since intra-EU study-related travel is more common than extra-EU travel, this is unlikely to have a significant influence on our results.

suggested in a recent study (Kassim et al. 2013: 40). While legal expertise is obviously highly valued for drafting official documents and delimiting discussions within the boundaries of EU law, the ensuing under-representation of hard science experts creates a significant potential for under-representation of certain expertise.

Finally, compared to the share of the EU27-population living in EU6 (47%) and EU15 (85%) countries, the Commission AD-level staff appears to face an under-representation of employees from these 'old' member states (which is more pronounced where it concerns the EU15). This same conclusion holds even more strongly among SNEs employed in the Commission. The latter suggests that the Commission is using such temporary positions to incorporate officials from countries that acceded in or after the 2004 accession round (see also Ban 2013).⁵

Table 1 only looks at the Commission *as a whole*. Yet, the results thus obtained need not play out similarly across all different sections of this large and diverse bureaucracy (Kennedy 2012; Meier and Capers 2013; Schröter and von Maravić 2014). Research in organisation theory indeed indicates that decision-making logics vary substantially across policy areas (Egeberg 2012a). Within the EU, for instance, it is easy to imagine that bureaucrats have less leeway for personal initiative in sensitive policy areas (such as agriculture, regional policy, or development aid) compared to less sensitive areas (such as research and innovation or mobility and transport). Different policy areas represented in the Commission 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 2013). Consequently, and following recent suggestions to 'bring institutional variety back

⁵ This was possibly to avoid an explosion of its permanent staff numbers.

into diversity research' (Schröter and von Maravić 2014: 4), Table 2 depicts the representativeness of SNEs across seven sets of DGs covering distinct policy areas (previously differentiated by Murdoch and Trondal (2013)).⁶

Table 2: Representativeness of Commission SNEs by policy area (N≈452) (per cent)

	EU27	Market	External Relations	Social Regulation	Supply	Provision	Research	Central
Women	52	38	46	46	34	39	31	53
Social Science	28^a	48	51	30	26	32	50	35
Law	5^a	20	11	21	16	4	0	35
Study Abroad	3^b	20	23	19	14	28	15	25
PhD	1^c	18	17	24	18	8	31	10
19-40 years	44	56	35	40	33	52	35	45
40-50 years	23	30	32	29	31	12	33	40
50-60 years	21	7	22	20	21	20	20	10
60-65 years	11	7	11	11	15	16	11	5
EU6	47	38	28	25	32	16	33	40
EU15	85	72	71	61	63	48	54	70

^a Share of tertiary graduates with a degree in a particular field of education

^b Students studying in other EU27, EEA or candidate country, as percentage of total student population

^c Estimate based on tertiary education graduates as percent of population in EU27 (23.7% in 2011) and the share of tertiary graduates finishing a doctorate (2.6% in 2004).

Note: '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.

Source: Authors' survey among Commission SNEs.

As expected, the representation of different population groups varies across policy areas.

This holds first of all in terms of educational background: that is, we observe substantial

over-representation of social scientists in DGs occupied with External Relations and

Research, while lawyers cluster in Central DGs and SNEs with a doctorate are, unsurprisingly,

⁶ We lack similarly differentiated data about Commission's permanent staff, such that the analysis here necessarily relies on our sample of SNEs. 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).

strongly represented in Research DGs. The same can also be observed with respect to SNEs' age distribution (i.e. younger SNEs are over-represented in Market and Provision DGs, and older SNEs in Supply and Provision DGs) and gender (i.e. female SNEs face stronger under-representation in Market-, Supply-, and Research-related DGs, but are representative of the EU27-population in DGs linked to the Commission administration ('Central')). Although the latter could in part reflect that these DGs provide more 'female' occupations (as also observed via the higher share of women in 'female' Assistant positions),⁷ it could also suggest that the administrative DGs in the Commission may have a stricter enforcement of gender-equality standards. These DGs may be more directly involved in setting up and maintaining administrative procedures such as non-discriminatory hiring arrangements.

3.3. Does expertise matter?

In this section, we turn to the question whether 'passive' representation turns into 'active' representation. This is studied by examining Commission SNEs' role perceptions as obtained from our survey. The key question here is whether SNEs with higher expertise levels are also more likely to perceive themselves as independent experts in their day-to-day decision-making, and act in accordance with the prescripts of such an epistemic role. This is often expected from 'administrators who perceive their role as that of an advocate or representative of minority interests' (Selden 1997: 140), but has not been directly tested for experts. It is important to observe here that we operationalize active representation by SNEs' role perceptions (i.e. the extent to which they feel they perceive themselves as

⁷ Job typology may indeed give rise to 'gendered' expectations concerning the performance, ability or 'fit' of job candidates for specific jobs. This may lead recruiters to have a preference for women over men (and vice versa) for certain types of jobs (Heilman, 1995; Watts, 2009), but may also affect applicants since gender stereotypes are known to have important self-fulfilling effects (Harris and Rosenthal, 1985; Miller and Turnbull 1986).

independent experts in their daily work) rather than actual policy decisions or outcomes. 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 analysis relies on the following simple regression model (with subscript i referring to SNEs).

$$\text{ExpertRole}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Gender}_i + \beta_2 \text{Age}_i + \beta_3 \text{EduType}_i + \beta_4 \text{StudyAbroad}_i + \beta_5 \text{PhD}_i + \beta_6 \text{EU6}_i + \beta_7 \text{EU15}_i + \beta_8 \text{SNEyear}_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Where 'ExpertRole' is based on the question: 'In your daily work, to what extent do you feel you act as an independent expert?'. It is coded using a six-point scale from 'fully' (coded as 0) to 'not at all' (coded as 5), which requires estimating an ordered logit model. We also cluster standard errors by either DG or country of origin to account for the fact that answers from SNEs within one DG (or from the same home country) may not be fully independent from one another.

The key explanatory variables are SNEs' age (in years), gender (1 if male), educational background ('EduType'; separate indicator variables for a degree in economics, political science or law), whether or not the SNE studied abroad (1 if yes) or obtained a doctorate (1 if yes), and SNEs' country of origin (separate indicator variables for EU6 and EU15). We also

include the number of years (s)he has been working in the Commission, as exclusion of this variable may have a confounding effect of our estimate of the effect of SNEs' age. SNEs' seniority in the Commission is thus applied as a control variable, suggesting that organizational re-socialization inside the Commission to some extent may modify the effect of individual pre-socialization outside the Commission. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Estimation results

	<i>ExpertRole</i> (cluster by DG)	<i>ExpertRole</i> (cluster by country)
Male (dummy)	-0.289 * (-1.83)	-0.281 (-1.61)
Age (years)	0.004 (0.43)	0.004 (0.53)
PhD	-0.628 ** (-2.48)	-0.641 *** (-3.50)
StudyAbroad	0.201 (0.96)	0.227 (0.97)
Economist (dummy)	0.530 ** (2.44)	0.512 ** (2.38)
Political Science (dummy)	0.490 (1.46)	0.475 * (1.89)
Lawyer (dummy)	0.173 (0.60)	0.158 (0.72)
EU6 (dummy)	-0.002 (-0.01)	-0.017 (-0.07)
EU15 (dummy)	-0.015 (-0.06)	-0.018 (-0.06)
SNE-year 2 (dummy)	0.275 (0.80)	0.280 (0.91)
SNE-year 3 (dummy)	-0.041 (-0.14)	-0.036 (-0.14)
SNE-year 4 (dummy)	-0.232 (-0.80)	-0.209 (-0.64)
SNE-year 5 (dummy)	-0.528 * (-1.89)	-0.526 * (-1.93)
Wald chi ²	48.25 ***	68.78 **
N	408	409

Note: t statistics based on standard errors corrected for clustering at DG- or country-level between brackets, *** significant at 1%, ** at 5% and * at 10%. The dependent variable uses the question: 'In your daily work, to what extent do you feel you act as an independent expert?', coded using a six-point scale from 'fully' (coded as 0) to 'not at all' (coded as 5).

Table 3 indicates that passive representation – through individual re-socialization outside the Commission – has only modest effects on active representation. Supporting previous research on representative bureaucracy, it is only the educational background variable – among all demographic variables – that has a significant effect on active representation: First, we see that SNEs with a doctorate are much *more* likely to invoke their role as an independent expert. Thus, the length of pre-socialization inside university organizations make officials more expert oriented. Secondly, SNEs with degrees in economics and political science are *less* likely to state that they act as an independent expert in their daily work in the Commission (compared to law and ‘other’ degrees). This suggests that degrees in ‘soft’ rather than ‘hard’ sciences indeed lead to lower expert orientations. Other demographic variables such as age, place of education and country of origin have no explanatory power. Finally, also supporting previous research, organizational re-socialization *inside* organizations affects the role perceptions of office holders. We see that SNEs’ self-perception as an independent expert tends to strengthen with the number of years in the Commission. Though not reported to preserve space, these results are robust to the inclusion of direct controls for working in specific DGs, which implies that individuals’ characteristics are driving the above results rather than the DGs SNEs work in within the Commission (see above). Evidently, these varying behavioural role perceptions can have important policy-related implications. Indeed, it suggests that the passive under-representation of experts with certain characteristics *may* induce a lack of active representation of certain concerns in Commission policy-making.

4. Conclusion

In terms of a number of basic socio-demographic background characteristics, Commission SNEs can barely be called passively representative of the overall EU27-population. SNEs, as is likewise the case for AD-level staff, are significantly more likely to be male officials with a degree in law from the 'new' member states that acceded in or after the 2004 accession round. The only exception is experts' age, since the age distribution among Commission's SNEs appears a substantially closer match to that of the EU27 population than the age distribution among Commission's permanent AD-level staff. Yet, the data also suggests that passive representation – through individual re-socialization outside the Commission – has only modest effects on active representation. Supporting previous research on representative bureaucracy, it is only the educational background variable – among all demographic variables – that has a significant effect on active representation. Also supporting previous research, organizational re-socialization *inside* organizations affects the role perceptions of office holders (e.g. Egeberg et al. 2014). We see that SNEs' self-perception as an independent expert tends to strengthen with the number of years in the Commission.

Future research on representative bureaucracies should study in more detail the conditions under which passive representation translates into (a potential for) active representation. Based on our findings, and in line with recent work on the European Parliament (Egeberg et al. 2014), pre-socialization outside organizations appears to matter less than organizational re-socialization inside organizations as well as the dynamics of organizational rule-following. That is, a study of European Parliament officials suggests that individual processes of pre-socialization outside the EP reveal non-significance. What matters is whether officials are employed by the EP secretariat or by the political groups ('organizational affiliation') and

their length of service in EU institutions ('organizational socialization') (Egeberg et al. 2014).

Also, a review of the literature on the role of nationality in Commission decision-making concludes that Commission officials' national background seems to play a minor role.

However, nationality matters somewhat more regarding commissioners' behaviour, but makes up only one of several components of their highly compound role (Egeberg 2012b). In short, the passive-active representation dichotomy remains contested, and deserved more in-depth analyses in future research.

Finally, it should be noted that demographic variables have been argued to matter more under certain conditions: if the organizational structure of a group is loose and supplies few relevant premises for behaviour; if the actor participates in a fairly stable group with clearly stated goals; if this group is perceived as important; if membership is durable; if the group and the values and identities it represents is generally accepted in society; if there is a clear connection between what the group does and the life of the group members, and if group belonging is conceived and an important reason for recruitment to the group (Lægreid and Olsen 1978: 28-9). Future research should thus examine whether expertise (passive representation) might affect decision-making behaviour (active representation) under such conditions.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests

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