

ADMINISTRATIVE FUSION

TOWARDS A EUROPEAN “MEGA-ADMINISTRATION”?¹

Jarle Trondal

Agder University College – Centre for European Studies
and
ARENA – Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo

Contact address:
Agder University College
Servicebox 422
4604 Kristiansand
Norway
Phone: +47 38 14 15 61
Fax: +47 38 14 10 29
Email: jarle.trondal@hia.no

36 pages
ISSN:1503-4356
© Agder University College, 2007
Servicebox 422, 4604 Kristiansand

Design: Agder University College
Cover and binding: Agder University College
Typesetting and printing: Agder University College

ABSTRACT This study offers an organisation theory approach on administrative fusion. It is argued that the *differentiated* organisational constellation of the European Union contributes to a *differentiated* fusion of domestic core executive institutions. It is argued that the European Commission *mainly* activates the lower echelons of the domestic government hierarchies, notably professional experts within sector ministries and agencies. Furthermore, the European Commission arguably weakens domestic politico-administrative leadership, the Foreign Office and the Prime Ministers Office. Based on a rich body of survey data this analysis reveals that multi-level interaction of administrative systems between the European Commission and the Norwegian central administration occur largely outside the control of the domestic politico-administrative leadership, Prime Ministers Office and Foreign Office. This tendency is to some extent counterbalanced by the interlocking effect of national systems of co-ordination and politico-administrative control.

INTRODUCTION²

This study outlines two worlds of administrative fusion, Type I fusion and type II fusion. Whereas Type I fusion basically claims that European administrative systems are fused together into one European “mega-administration”, Type II fusion argues that administrative fusion in Europe is differentiated and considerably conditioned by existing administrative orders. Theoretically, Type II fusion is accounted for by an organisation theory. This approach basically argues that administrative fusion is organisationally contingent and administratively differentiated. The paper demonstrates that the formal organisation of the European Union (EU) considerably affect processes of administrative fusion. The data are drawn from the Norwegian central administration. Whereas the bulk of Europeanisation studies focus on EU member-states (Haverland 2006), this study analyses administration fusion in one non-member-state.

Due to the EEA agreement and several supplementary sector-agreements³, Norwegian decision-makers have become half-way members of the decision-making cycles of the European Commission (Commission). Despite having rejected full EU membership, Norway

is currently an associate member of the EU through various sectoral treaties and agreements with the Union on areas like Justice and Home Affairs, Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Internal Market, research and higher education, etc. The Norwegian participatory status in the EU resembles that of the EU member-states at the preparatory stage in the policy formulation stage, however not in EU policy decision-making and policy implementation stages. Norway remains a non-member of the Union with no political representation in the Commission, the Council of Ministers or the European Parliament. Arguably, the fairly weak politico-administrative ties between the EU and Norway render the Norwegian central administration a crucial laboratory for studying processes of administrative fusion. The EEA agreement makes the Norwegian civil service generally *less likely* to be fused with the EU than in the case of EU member-states.

Current literature pictures two complementary models of administrative fusion. The first model (Type I fusion) argues that territorial governance by nation-states is severely challenged and hollowed out by multilevel networks among civil servants in Europe (e.g. Featherstone and Radaelli 2003; Kohler-Koch 2003; Wessels, Maurer and Mittag 2003). This first model claims that administrative fusion basically weakens domestic executive coordination and control, and that this effect is “common to all”, contributing to general and significant trends towards Europeanisation of domestic core executives (Wessels, Maurer and Mittag 2003: 3-14). Type I fusion pictures the emergence of one European “mega-administration” (Wessels, Maurer and Mittag 2003: 441). The second fusion model (Type II fusion) claims that administrative fusion is a differential process considerably biased by existing administrative institutions, procedures and practices, and that processes of Europeanisation is varied, segmented and sectoral (Hèretier et al. 2001; Olsen 2007). Type II fusion advocates that administrative fusion is *differentiated* and mediated by existing

administrative orders, thereby contributing to varied and loosely coupled processes of fusion within European core executives (e.g. Laffan 2006). Type II fusion omits sweeping generalisations of administrative fusion and emphasises how the formal organisation of administrative systems condition administrative fusion across levels of governance. The *main rationale* of this study is to unpack the causal mechanisms underneath Type II fusion. This fusion model is accounted for by an organisation theory approach. According to this approach, the different formal organisation of EU institutions, notably the Commission and the Council of Ministers, accompany differentiated decision-making processes within domestic executive institutions. The *secondary aim* of this study is to illustrate the empirical validity of the Type II model by data drawn from the Norwegian central administration. The empirical analysis demonstrates that the Commission contributes to partly circumvent the domestic executive decision-making hierarchy in Norway.

Different yardsticks have been suggested in the literature to measure administrative fusion. Some scholars measure fusion by analysing the co-evolvement and convergence of institutional, organisational and constitutional traits of the EU and the national governments (e.g. Knill 2001; Olsen 2007; Trondal 2007). Other scholars measure administrative fusion by assessing processes of policy shaping, policy-making, policy implementation, and policy re-formulation at the domestic level of governance (e.g. Egeberg 2006; Rometsch and Wessels 1996). The dependent variable of this study is the *actual decision-making processes* unfolding within domestic central administrations generally, chiefly the degrees of hierarchical decision-making processes therein. Our yardstick of hierarchical decision-making is the extent to which the politico-administrative leadership ultimately controls the decision-making processes that unfurl within domestic government institutions. Hierarchical decision-making denotes that “the most important policy decisions [are] taken at the apex of a government

organisation ... and those lower down in the hierarchy merely ... carry them out” (Page 1992: 61). Processes of de-hierarchisation refer to the fact that important decisions are crafted autonomously by civil servants in the lower echelons of the government hierarchy. Decision-making behaviour refers to the web of contacts, co-ordination processes and priorities made by civil servants. A de-hierarchisation of decision-making behaviour thus denotes civil servants having few contacts with the politico-administrative leadership, receiving few priorities from this leadership, and/or co-ordinate more among fellow peers horizontally than with the leadership vertically.

The paper proceeds as follows. The next section outlines an organisation theory approach on Type II administrative fusion. The second section provides an empirical analysis on how the Commission impacts on degrees of hierarchical decision-making processes within the Norwegian central administration.

AN ORGANISATION THEORY APPROACH

Recent literature demonstrate the institutionalisation of multi-level interaction between EU institutions and domestic sector ministries and subordinated agencies (Beyers and Trondal 2004; Laffan 2006; Olsen 2007). The Commission and the Council have institutionalised arenas for direct and intimate interaction between the public administrations of the member-states and the Community institutions (Egeberg, Schaefer and Trondal 2003). The contribution of this study is to theorise how the organisational composition of the Commission contributes to fusion of domestic core executive bodies. Arguably, because the Westphalian territorial logic of state-by-state politics is transcended by politics by sector within the Commission, it tends to weaken the domestic Prime Ministers Office (PMO), the Foreign Office (FO) and the domestic politico-administrative leadership. Yet, the impact of

the Commission is also filtered and mediated by domestic institutions, rules, practices and traditions.

We have envisaged two distinct worlds of administrative fusion. First, a world of ‘system-wide fusion’ advocating that the EU contribute to a total and system-wide administrative fusion of the domestic central administration (Type I). Secondly, a world of ‘differentiated fusion’ claims that administrative fusion is considerably biased by the formal organisation of administrative systems – both at the EU-level and at the national level (Type II). This section theorises the second world of administrative fusion. Whereas the Europeanisation literature is characterised by an “overdose of explanatory variables” (Lehmkuhl 2006: 345), this study suggest organisational variables as key variables.

Type II administrative fusion departs from the assumption that formal organisational structures mobilise systematic biases in the decision-making behaviour of civil servants because formal organisations provide cognitive and normative shortcuts and categories that simplify and guide decision-makers’ behaviour and role enactment (Schattschneider 1975; Simon 1957). Organisations provide cognitive maps that simplify and categorise complex information, offer procedures for reducing transaction costs, give regulative norms that add cues for appropriate behaviour as well as physical boundaries and temporal rhythms that guide decision-makers’ perceptions of ir/relevance with respect to behavioural patterns (Barnett and Finnemore 1999; March and Olsen 1998). Government officials resemble the ‘administrative man’ faced with computational limitations with respect to the potential mass of problems, solutions and consequences present (Simon 1957). Owing to the bounded rationality of decision-makers, the horizontal specialisation of government organisations systematically reduces the attention of decision-makers into a limited number of relevant

considerations (Gulick 1937). Moreover, by carving the organisation into vertical hierarchies of rank and command the decision-making behaviour evoked by civil servants is guided by the political-administrative hierarchy through disciplination and control (Lægreid and Olsen 1978: 31). According to Wildavsky (1987: 6), “[h]ierarchy is institutionalized authority”. Public policy is thus the result of hierarchical imposition and horizontal departmentalisation of organisational structures where mutually exclusive groups of participants, problems, alternatives and solutions reside. This perspective also departs from an instrumental approach that sees political and administrative leaders as instruments which may be utilised to realize desired goals (Egeberg 2003).

One advantage of applying a general or ‘cosmopolitan’ approach like organisation theory is the possibilities of drawing general inferences from single-case studies (Kohler-Koch 2003: 7). An organisation theory perspective assumes that government officials are bounded rational faced with information overload, computational limitations and a complex web of roles to play. The role as a civil servant is ambiguous with a multifaceted and complex set of role-expectations embedded. The vertical and horizontal specialisation of public administration serves to systematically buffer the information and role expectations relevant for each civil servant, thereby simplifying their preference formation and ultimately choice of decision-making behaviour (Egeberg 2003; Thelen and Steimno 1992). The local rationality of civil servants is systematically aggregated by this buffer function into organisational rationality (Gulick 1937; Simon 1957). Consequently, the organisational selection of relevant information, premises for decision making and role enactment affects how civil servants think, feel and act.

According to the model of Type II fusion, networks of civil servants are organisationally embedded. Diffusion and learning of shared standards among groups of civil servants happen more often than not among civil servants who are embedded into hierarchies of executive institutions. The civil servants studied here have primary organisational embeddedness within domestic civil services and secondary affiliations in the Commission services. Still, civil servants constantly engage in transgovernmental networks that transcend the control of the ministerial leadership (Jönsson 2001: 205). Transgovernmental networks cut across territorial borders and involve domestic civil servants as autonomous, interdependent and interwoven partners (Marin and Mayntz 1991: 18). Transgovernmental networks may be normative networks providing norms of appropriate standards, and they may be epistemic networks with shared assumptions of causal relations (Haas 1992). Transgovernmental networks may be strongly institutionalised, providing the participants with shared preferences, identities and beliefs, and they may be loosely connected issue networks with few endogenous dynamics (Rhodes and Marsh 1992). Transgovernmental networks foster the emergence of complex, overlapping and interconnected webs of actors, problems and solutions that cross-cuts and challenges domestic governance (Kohler-Koch 2003: 12). Often based on informal and interpersonal actor-constellations, the frequency and intensity of contact among the network-members may cause a socialisation of the network participants (Börzel 1998: 259; Rhodes and Marsh 1992: 184). Networks of these kinds represent webs of partly co-ordinated government institutions and decision-makers, accompanying uneven and fragmented processes of administrative fusion (Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch 2004). These networks, however, are organisationally embedded into the Commission apparatus and also organisationally connected to domestic ministries and agencies. Hence, the effect of multilevel networking of civil servants is considerably affected by the organisational embeddedness of the network partners.

Organisational dynamics are triggered when organisational borders are criss-crossed in every-day decision-making (Egeberg 2006). Several studies have revealed how the organisational borders between domestic administrative systems and the EU institutions are increasingly bypassed and weakened (e.g. Kohler-Koch 2003). The EU institutions and domestic government apparatuses interact in day-to-day policy-making through a complex web of EU committees, the system of seconded civil servants, through embassies, as well as multilevel networks of civil servants (Egeberg, Schaefer and Trondal 2003; Lewis 2000; Trondal 2004a; Van Schendelen and Scully 2003). Suggestively, civil service systems that recurrently interact tend to become increasingly similar in organisational terms, with respect to the decision-making processes unfolding, as well as the public policy crafted (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Wessels 1998). Assuming that formal organisations focus the attention of bounded rational actors, domestic executive institutions with intimate contact towards EU institutions are likely to become *systematically* penetrated with respect to their every-day decision-making processes.

Consequently, the administrative fusion of domestic core-executive institutions and the Commission is likely to be systematically affected by the way the Commission is formally organised. The Commission has been pictured as constantly ripped between national interests, concerns, roles and loyalties and overarching community interests, concerns, roles and loyalties (Christiansen 1997). This tension is not only challenged during large-scale intergovernmental conferences where the constitutional fabric is negotiated (Moravcsik 1998), but also during day-to-day decision-making processes within the Commission (Haas 1958). The Commission has the Treaty obligations of initiating and implementing Community policy. According to the classical administration school of Luther Gulick (1937),

organisations may be horizontally specialised according to four generic principles: purpose, process, territory and clientele. The horizontal principles of purpose and process are observed in most domestic sector ministries and agencies as well as in the Commission Directorate Generals (DGs) (Egeberg 2006; Peters 1995: 147). Organisationally, the Commission is a vertically pillarised system of government mainly specialised by *purpose* and with fairly weak organisational capabilities for horizontal co-ordination at the top through Presidential command (Dimitrakopoulos and Kassim 2005). This principle of horizontal specialisation is evident in most Commission DGs, like the DG Trade, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, DG Education and Culture, DG Environment, DG Development, etc. These DGs are organised according to the main purpose to be served and the policy area to be governed. A second principle of horizontal specialisation in the Commission is the principle of the major *process* utilised (Gulick 1937). This principle of horizontal specialisation are seen in DG Personnel and Administration, DG Budget, DG Translation, DG Interpretation, etc. Arguably, civil servants who frequently interact within administrative systems organised by purpose and process are assumed to evoke decision-making behaviour that reflects their sectoral portfolios and professional skills, respectively. These civil servants are likely to perceive themselves as Weberian civil servants abiding rules and established practices within their portfolios as well as independent and neutral expertise, respectively. These officials are less likely to act on fixed mandates issued by the politico-administrative leadership or to negotiate on the basis of fixed national mandates written by the domestic FO and PMO. They are more likely to act on the basis of rules and roles provided by their administrative unit as well as on the basis of professional standards.

Arguably, the horizontal principles of purpose and process within the Commission apparatus will encourage the horizontal *disintegration* of domestic sectoral ministries and a weakening

role for domestic co-ordinating ministries like the FO and the PMO. Figure 1 illustrates, simplified, that intimate interaction between domestic sector ministries and the Commission contributes to turn the domestic pyramidal hierarchy of governance upside-down. Arguably, intensive multilevel interaction between the Commission and domestic executive institutions will activate the lower echelons of the domestic government hierarchies, notably sector experts within sector ministries and agencies. As argued by Egeberg (2006), the Commission is likely to establish direct links towards domestic agencies, largely bypassing the domestic government. Hence, multilevel sector integration between the Commission and domestic executive institutions will tend to weaken the domestic politico-administrative leadership, the FO and the PMO.

[Figure 1 about here]

Organisational properties conducive to sectoral integration of domestic executive institutions also exist in the Commission. First, the Commission is headed by a political College which is increasingly marked by party politisation (MacMullen 1997). Secondly, the Commission is staffed with civil servants from the member-states that partly serve as an enduring territorial component within the Commission (Egeberg 2006). Finally, the Commission has delegated power from the Council in areas of Pillar I, often supported by comitology committees. Past research clearly demonstrates that comitology committees are indeed intergovernmental committees dominated by member-state preferences rather than community preferences (Egeberg, Schaefer and Trondal 2003).

DATA AND METHOD

This study benefits from a multitude of data streams. The first data set is a comprehensive study by the Audit General of Norway (2005) on the EU/EEA decision-making processes within the Norwegian central administration. This data set includes interview data with key informants in selected Norwegian ministries as well as at the Norwegian Delegation to the EU. Secondly, this data set covers a survey study among all Norwegian ministries⁴ and relevant subordinated agencies (N = 510). The response rate in this survey is 80 percent. This data set also covers official and unofficial documents from the Norwegian FO, the Ministry of Environment (ME), the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (MPE) (Audit General of Norway 2005: 10). Among the documents covered are 535 dossiers and 356 so-called 'problemnotes' from the issue specific co-ordination committees of ME, MTI and MPE. This collection of data was collected from October 2003 to January 2005.

Whereas the bulk of Europeanisation studies mostly rely on case studies and less on quantitative survey studies (Haverland 2006), this study rely overly on survey data. The second data set consists of two large-scale surveys among Norwegian civil servants in 1996 and 2006. The total number of responses in the 1996 survey was 1479 at the ministerial level and 1024 at the agency level. The response rate was 72 percent at the ministerial level and 64 percent at the agency level. The total number of responses in the 2006 survey is 1848 at the ministerial level and XX at the agency level. The response rate in the 2006 survey is 67 percent at the ministerial level and XX at the agency level. The surveys at the ministerial level were sent to all civil servants with a minimum of one year in office with a higher education. The surveys at the agency level were sent to a random selection of every third official with at least one year in office and who has higher education. Together, these surveys contain represent the most thorough screening of the Norwegian central administration over time.

ADMINISTRATIVE FUSION IN NORWAY

Norway is a unitary state with an organised parliamentary democracy and a fairly stable central administrative system. The government of Norway applies ministerial rule and administrative monism accompanying a fairly close relationship between the minister, his Cabinet, and subordinated agencies (Lægreid and Pedersen 1999). In this system, “the ministers are always accountable for the actions of a directorate” (Jacobsson, Lægreid and Pedersen 2004: 16). There are currently seventeen Norwegian ministries employing approximately 4000 civil servants. The average Norwegian ministry contains 235 civil servants. The Norwegian FO is by far the largest with 659 officials (St.prp. nr. 1 (2004-2005)). Directorates beneath the ministry level enjoy substantial *de facto* autonomy and are central in uploading and downloading EU policy.

10 years ago referendums were held in Norway on the question of EU membership. 52 percent voted in favour of rejecting EU membership. Consequently, Norway has experienced more than 10 years of administrative interaction vis-a-vis the EU institutions, mainly the Commission. In 1996 approximately 50 per cent of Norwegian civil servants reported being affected by the EU and/or the EEA agreement. In 2006 63 percent of Norwegian ministry-level officials report the same. An even stronger indicator of fusion is the fact that in 2006 60 percent of those officials who report being affected by the EU, EEA and/or Schengen within their own portfolio report that laws and rules are practiced that origin from EU decisions. Hence, the every-day rules and laws used within the Norwegian central administration are to a considerable extent of EU origin.

Table 1 pictures the contact patterns between the Commission and its committee system⁵ and the Norwegian civil service.

[Table 1 about here]

The EEA agreement and the several sectoral agreements between the EU and Norway (notably the Schengen agreement) provide Norwegian civil servants with privileged access to the Commission preparatory decision-making stage. Table 1 illustrates that about one third of Norwegian civil servants at the ministry level report having contacts towards the Commission. Moreover, the vast majority of Norwegian officials report that they have to initiate such contacts themselves. Hence, this is more of a one-way traffic from the Norwegian central administration towards the Commission than visa versa. These contacts include everything from email to face-to-face encounters. Most of these contacts are targeted at the unit level within the Commission. The 1996 and 2006 surveys show a significant inverted correlation between positional level in the Norwegian civil service and the frequency of contacts towards the Commission. Both at the ministry level and at the agency level at both points in time, the frequency of contact and meetings in the Commission (and in the committees) is higher among officials in medium and lower level positions than among executive officers in top positions. Hence, after 10 years of close relationship between the Norwegian central administration and the Commission we see evidence of a de-hierarchisation of every-day decision-making processes within the latter. Norwegian government officials attending EU committees are typically professional experts with fairly loose ties towards the domestic politico-administrative leadership (cf. Figure 1 above) (Statskonsult 1999:6: 27). Yet, when attending Commission expert committees, these officials tend to perceive their role as that of a national representative in addition to the role as independent expert and a supranational

agent (Trondal 2004b). Notably, Norwegian government officials participating in the Commission expert committees attend with *ambiguous mandates*. They generally receive few clear instructions and signals from the politico-administrative leadership (Statskonsult 1999:6:44). According to one Norwegian civil servant, “the EEA work does not get the necessary daily attention from the top management” (Statskonsult 2002:5: 19 – authors’ translation).

Moreover, Table 1 reveals that the frequency of administrative contacts across levels of government is fairly stable from 1996 to 2006. At the level of preparatory committees and comitology committees, Table 1 shows that Norwegian civil servants attend the preparatory committees more frequently than the comitology committees. Also here we see a pattern of stability over time. Hence, administrative fusion as measured in Table 1 is a stable feature over time between the Norwegian central administration and the Commission and its committee system. Table 1 also indicate that administrative fusion is stronger at the ministry level in Norway than at the agency level. However, other studies clearly demonstrate that Norwegian agencies are deeply embedded in EU-networks, notably in networks organised by EU-level agencies (Egeberg 2006).

Comparative studies indicate that Norwegian civil servants are less internationally oriented and less active participants within EU institutions than Danish, Finish and Swedish government officials (Jacobsson, Lægreid and Pedersen 2004). However, the Norwegian central administration, with the exception of the FO, witnesses a remarkable stable level of participation in the Commission expert committees over time (see Table 1 above). Norwegian ministries and agencies attended 252 committees in 1994, 200 committees in 1995, 207 committees in 1996, 211 committees in 1997, and 200 committees in 1999 (Egeberg and Trondal 1999: 138; Statskonsult 2001:15). (**Oppdater med data fra Ulf**)!! Yet, at present a

minority of Norwegian top civil servants belong to the core segment of very active EU committee participants (Jacobsson, Lægreid and Pedersen 2004: 51).

Few Norwegian government officials are accustomed to a written procedure for co-ordinating EU dossiers. Inter-ministerial co-ordination processes are often conducted *post hoc* to the EU committee meetings, marginally involving the politico-administrative leadership (Jacobsson, Lægreid and Pedersen 2004: 39; Sætereng 2001). Table 2 measures the degrees of intra- and inter-ministerial co-ordination of EU affairs within the Norwegian central administration over the 10 years period studied.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 demonstrates that the co-ordination of EU dossiers within the Norwegian central administration is strongly sectoral. We see an equal frequency of *intra*-ministerial co-ordination and *inter*-ministerial patterns of co-ordination, and this observation is fairly stable over the 10 year period studied. We also see that the Government co-ordination committee is only marginally activated, however, more so over the 10 years period. In sum, the co-ordination of Norwegian EU affairs, as seen from the frequency of attendance in the domestic co-ordination apparatus, is strongly reflecting the sectoral logic embedded in the Commission and only marginally geared towards creating a common “national position” at the Government level. Moreover, these co-ordination processes are less formalised and routinised than intended by the Norwegian PMO and FO. As seen below, the formal co-ordination apparatus for EU/EEA dossiers is activated less frequently than officially intended by the Norwegian PMO (Audit General of Norway 2005). This domestic co-ordination apparatus is more active *post hoc* when implementing EU regulations than *ex ante* in the agenda setting

phase of the Commission expert committee meetings (Statskonsult 1999:6 and 2002:5: 37). However, ministries heavily affected by EU dossiers and strongly involved in EU committee meetings seem to have better co-ordination capacities than those ministries less involved in EU affairs (Statskonsult 2001:15: 15). Finally, the ministry-level seems better co-ordinated than the agency-level, and officials in top rank positions (typically Heads of Unit) are more adequately mandated than officials in lower rank positions (Statskonsult 2001:15: 16; Trondal 2004b).

Table 3 shows in which phase of the EU decision-making cycle the Norwegian issue specific co-ordination committees are activated – in the pre-pipeline preparation phase, in the decision-shaping phase, or in the decision-making phase. Table 3 refers to the experiences of the Norwegian Ministry of Environment (ME), the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (MPE). Table 3 builds on in-depth analyses of 535 dossiers handled by the issue specific co-ordination committees of ME, MTI and MPE.

[Table 3 about here]

Table 3 clearly testifies that the Norwegian inter-ministerial co-ordination apparatus is mainly operating *after* the preparation phase within the Commission. 89 per cent of the EU regulations dealt with by these co-ordination committees are situated in the decision-shaping and decision-making phase within the EU apparatus. Hence, Table 3 shows clearly that EU/EEA co-ordination processes within the Norwegian central administration are rarely directed towards the agenda setting processes within the Commission. Moreover, minutes from these issue specific co-ordination committees reveals that these committees seldom discuss how Norwegian interests should be “uploaded” to the Commission decision-making

process (Audit General of Norway 2005: 29). As predicted by the organisation theory approach outlined, the Commission tends to weaken inter-ministerial co-ordination within domestic core-executive institutions.

The co-ordination of EU dossiers within the Norwegian central administration is intended to be based on written documentation (so called ‘problem notes’), written by the issue specific co-ordination committees. Table 4 demonstrates in which phase of the EU decision-making cycle these problem notes are actually written – in the pre-pipeline preparation phase, in the decision-shaping phase, or in the decision-making phase. Table 4 refers to the experiences of the ME, MTI and MPE. Table 4 is empirically based on in-depth analyses of 356 problem notes handled by the issue specific co-ordination committees of ME, MTI and MPE.

[Table 4 about here]

Table 4 demonstrates that inter-ministerial co-ordination through a written procedure, like the problem note system, is rarely used in the Norwegian central administration in order to influence the preparation phase within the Commission. Whereas 5 percent of the problem notes are written at the preparation phase in the Commission, 90 percent of the problem notes are written after the Commission has finished this phase, and where the Norwegian central administration have formal rights of access (EEA agreement Art. 99 to 101). As predicted by Figure 1, the Commission contributes to weaken inter-ministerial co-ordination within the Norwegian central administration.

The declining role of European FOs vis-à-vis domestic sector ministries is a long-term trend in EU-27 (Wessels, Maurer and Mittag 2003). In Norway, East (1984: 127) reported in the

1980s that officials in the Norwegian FO tended to be more concerned with *intra*-ministerial co-ordination than with *inter*-ministerial co-ordination, and that the Norwegian FO is better prepared to co-ordinate inter-ministerially on bilateral issues that went beyond Europe. By contrast, the international activities of Norwegian agencies' are typically oriented towards the European hemisphere (Underdal 1987: 182). Hence, the Commission seems to merely *accelerate* an ongoing weakening of the Norwegian FO (Neumann and Leira 2005). EU dossiers handled by the Commission are highly technical, requiring specialised knowledge to disentangle and influence successfully. As typical generalists in foreign affairs and diplomatic encounters, most Norwegian FO officials lack the professional capabilities available to sector-experts in the sector ministries and agencies to substantially and instrumentally handle EU dossiers (Claes 2003: 92). These observations support the organisation theory approach outlined above: The Commission seems to reduce the role of the Norwegian FO to that of a "post-box" between the Norwegian sector ministries and agencies, and the Commission (Trondal 1999).

Officials at the Norwegian Delegation to the EU have more direct contact with Norwegian sector ministries than preferred by the Norwegian FO (Statskonsult 2002:5: 18). Also, Norwegian ministers are only loosely coupled to negotiations within Council meetings (Statskonsult 2002:5). Moreover, Norwegian MPs are less actively involved in EU/EEA affairs than the MPs of most EU member-states. The Norwegian Parliamentary EEA committee have few meetings, handle few EU dossiers instrumentally, and have weak administrative resources to control the Norwegian central administration on EU dossiers (Melsæther and Sverdrup 2004; Sørensen 2004). The Norwegian Parliamentary EEA committee may not issue mandates to the Government on EU/EEA dossiers. Notably, some Norwegian political parties have better access to the European Parliament through their

European party federations than the Norwegian Parliament as an institution (Nordby and Veggeland 1999: 89; Statskonsult 2002:5).

Hence, the Commission indeed weakens the politico-administrative hierarchy within the Norwegian core executive (and Parliament). The Commission seems to contribute to a sectoral de-coupling, de-politicisation and fragmentation of the Norwegian central administration “whereby ‘micro-decisions’ tend to be de-coupled from the overall policy purpose and strategy” (Jacobsson, Læg Reid and Pedersen 2004; Underdal 1987: 170). EU dossiers are largely integrated into the day-to-day decision-making routines of Norwegian sector ministries, agencies, divisions and units (Egeberg and Trondal 1997: 342). Hence, the Norwegian central administration displays more horizontal *fragmentation* than co-ordination between ministries, and more horizontal fragmentation *between* ministries than within them. The Norwegian case indicates that 10 years of intimate relationship between sector ministries and the Commission has strengthened trends towards horizontal inter-ministerial fragmentation. Secondly, 10 years of administrative fusion between Norwegian sector ministries and the Commission has accompanied a weakening of hierarchical decision-making processes within the Norwegian central government apparatus (cf. Figure 1).

CONCLUSIONS

10 years after Norway integrated into the EU we see a profound and differentiated administrative fusion of the Norwegian central administration (Type II fusion). Noticeable impacts are revealed on the every-day decision-making processes unfolding within the Norwegian central administration. This study demonstrates that the decision-making processes within the Norwegian central administration are strongly sector-penetrated by the Commission, accompanying a de-hierarchisation of the every-day executive decision-making

processes (cf. Figure 1). The Commission fosters a rift between domestic Government responsibility and domestic Government control over the decision-making processes unfolding within the Norwegian core executive. Multilevel networks between the Commission and subordinated agencies have supported tendencies towards a de-hierarchisation of executive politics within the government machinery, contributing to the emergence of double-hatted domestic agencies (Egeberg 2006). These observations are fairly stable over a 10 period time, and indeed support the organisation theory approach outlined in this study and illustrated in Figure 1. The Commission tends to activate the lower echelons of the domestic government hierarchies, notably sector experts within sector agencies and sector ministries. The Commission fosters a weakening of the domestic politico-administrative leadership, the FO and the PMO. Henceforth, the empirical observations indicate that the actual decision-making processes that unfold within domestic government institutions are indeed conditioned by the Commission structure, as indicated in Figure 1.

The administrative fusion between the Commission and the Norwegian central administration, however, is absorbed differently within different segments of the Norwegian government apparatus (see also Olsen 2007: 240). This study reveals a stronger de-hierarchisation of decision-making processes at the agency-level than at the ministry-level in both countries. When agency and ministry officials attend *the same* Commission expert committees, ministry officials tend to be more strongly co-ordinated from the politico-administrative leadership than agency officials; and officials from the FO tend to be more strongly mandated than officials from the sector ministries. EU dossiers are largely organised into existing ministerial structures and procedures. These observations indicate that despite 10 years of administrative fusion between the Commission and the Norwegian central administration, domestic government structures and procedures leave strong imprints on decision-making processes

within the Norwegian central administration. Hence, this study also reveals how the “EU effect” is mediated and filtered by existing administrative structures, cultures and traditions embedded in domestic government institutions. Hence, we see processes of differentiated fusion that is considerably biased by the formal organisation of the administrative systems involved.

FIGURE AND TABLES

Figure 1: A Model of differentiated administrative fusion (Type II fusion)

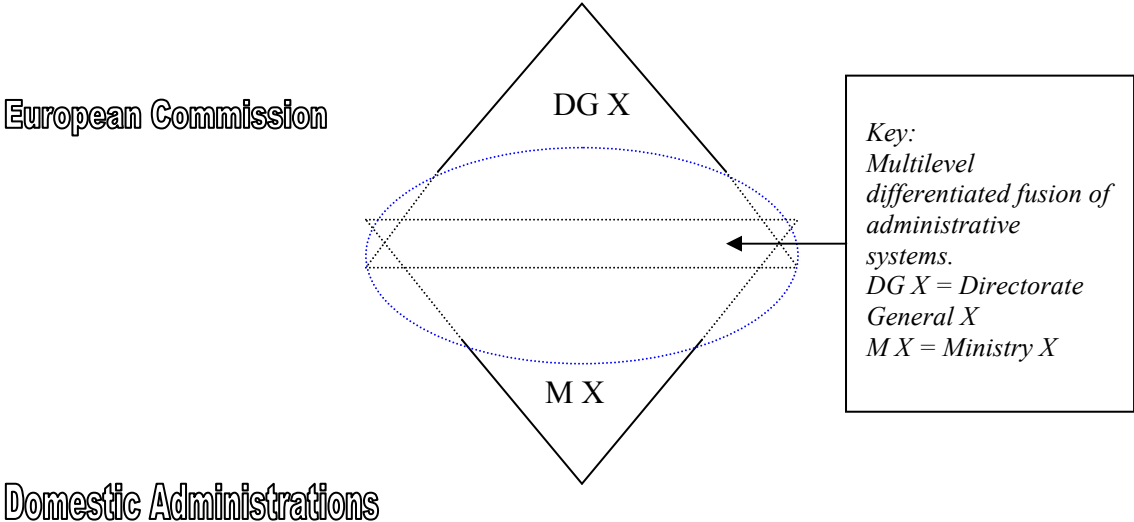


Table 1: Percent of civil servants how had the following contacts and meetings during the last year. (Norwegian ministry and agency officials in 1996 and 2006)

	Ministry officials		Agency officials	
	1996	2006	1996	2006
- Contacts with the Commission*	28	30	10	
- Participated in Commission expert committee(s)**	14	15	8	
- Participated in comitology committee(s)	2	4	1	
Mean N	1170	1299	767	

* This variable combine values 1, 2 and 3 on the following four-point scale: Almost every week or more (value 1), almost every month (value 2), sometimes (value 3), never (value 4).

** This variable and the next variable combine values 1 and 2 on the following three-point scale: Several times (value 1), one time (value 2), never (value 3). These two variables cover those officials who report being affected by the EU, EEA and/or Schengen within their own portfolio.

Table 2: Percent of civil servants who participated in the following domestic co-ordination units during the last year*

	1996	2006
- Intra-ministerial co-ordination committees	25	24
- Inter-ministerial issue specific co-ordination committees	22	25
- The Government co-ordination committee	8	13
Mean N	1038	1057

** This table combines values 1 and 2 on the following three-point scale: Several times (value 1), one time (value 2), never (value 3). This Table covers those officials who report being affected by the EU, EEA and/or Schengen within their own portfolio.*

Table 3: Percent of EU regulations dealt with by the inter-ministerial issue specific coordination committees of the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, by EU decision-making phase (percent).

	<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Decision-shaping</i>	<i>Decision-making</i>	<i>Total</i>
Responsible ministry:	<i>phase</i>	<i>phase</i>	<i>phase</i>	
<i>ME (215 dossiers)</i>	14	49	36	100
<i>MTI (269 dossiers)</i>	7	19	74	100
<i>MPE (51 dossiers)</i>	16	45	39	100
<i>SUM (535 dossiers)</i>	11	34	56	100

Source: Audit General of Norway 2005:28.

Table 4: Percent of ‘problem notes’ written by the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, by EU decision-making phase (percent).

	<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Decision-shaping</i>	<i>Decision-making</i>	<i>Total</i>
Responsible ministry:	<i>phase</i>	<i>phase</i>	<i>phase</i>	
<i>ME (112 problem notes)</i>	13	40	46	100
<i>MTI (227 problem notes)</i>	1	26	73	100
<i>MPE (17 problem notes)</i>	6	59	35	100
<i>SUM (356 problem notes)</i>	5	32	63	100

Source: Audit General of Norway 2005:31.

REFERENCES

- Audit General of Norway (2005) *Forvaltningens samordning og tilrettelegging av norsk deltakelse i utformingen av EØS-relevant regelverk i EU*. Oslo.
- Barnett, M. and M. Finnemore (1999) 'The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations', *International Organization*, Vol. 53: 699-733.
- Beyers, J. and J. Trondal 2004. 'How Nation-States 'hit' Europe. Ambiguity and Representation in the European Union', *West European Politics*, Vol. 27: 919-942.
- Börzel, T. (1998) 'Organizing Babylon – on the Different Conceptions of Policy Networks', *Public Administration* (special issue), Vol. 76, No. 2: 253-272.
- Christiansen, T. (1997) 'Tensions of European governance: politicized bureaucracy and multiple accountability in the European Commission', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 4, No. 1: 73-90.
- Claes, D.H. (2003) 'EØS-avtalen – mellom diplomati og demokrati', *Internasjonal Politikk*, Vol. 61: 275-302.
- Dimitrakopoulos, D.G. and H. Kassim (2005) 'The European Commission and the Debate on the Future of Europe', paper presented at the CONNEX workshop, 27-28 May, Oslo.
- East, M.A. (1984) 'Coordinating Foreign Policy: The Changing Role of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry', *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. XIX: 121-134.
- Egeberg, M. (2003) 'How Bureaucratic Structure Matters: An Organizational Perspective', in B.G. Peters and J. Pierre (eds.) *Handbook of Public Administration*. London: SAGE Publications

- Egeberg, M. (ed.) (2006) *The Multilevel Union Administration: The Transformation of Executive Politics in Europe*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Egeberg, M., G.F. Schaefer and J. Trondal (2003) 'The Many Faces of EU Committee Governance', *West European Politics*, Vol. 26: 19-40.
- Egeberg, M. and J. Trondal (1997) 'Innenrikspolitikken og den offentlige politikens internasjonalisering', in T. Christensen and M. Egeberg (eds.) *Forvaltningspolitikk*. Oslo: TANO Aschehoug.
- Egeberg, M. and J. Trondal (1999) 'Differentiated integration in Europe: the case of the EEA country Norway', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 37: 133-142.
- Featherstone, K. and C.M. Radaelli (eds.) (2003) *The Politics of Europeanization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gulick, L. (1937) 'Notes on The Theory of Organizations. With Special References to Government in the United States', in L. Gulick and L. Urwick (eds.) *Papers on the Science of Administration*. New York: Institute of Public Administration: Columbia University.
- Haas, E. (1958) *The Uniting of Europe*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Haas, P. (1992) 'Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination', *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1: 1-35.
- Haverland, M. (2006) 'Methodology', in P. Graziano and M.P. Vink (eds.) *Europeanization. New Research Agendas*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hèretier, A. et al. (2001) *Differential Europe. The European Union Impact on National Policymaking*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Jachtenfuchs, M. and B. Kohler-Koch (2004) 'Governance and Institutional Development', in A. Wiener and T. Dietz (eds.) *European Integration Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jacobsson, B., P. Lægreid and O.K. Pedersen (2004) *Europeanization and Transnational States. Comparing Nordic central governments*. London: Routledge.

Jönsson, C. (2001) 'Internationell och internationaliserad förvaltning', in B. Rothstein (ed.) *Politik som organisation. Förvaltningspolitikens grundproblem*. Stockholm: SNS Förlag.

Knill, C. (2001) *The Europeanisation of National Administrations. Patterns of Institutional Change and Persistence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kohler-Koch, B. (ed.) (2003) *Linking EU and National Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laffan, B. (2006) 'Core Executives', in P. Graziano and M.P. Vink (eds.) *Europeanization. New Research Agendas*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lehmkuhl, D. (2006) 'Some Promises and Pitfalls of Europeanization Research', in P. Graziano and M.P. Vink (eds.) *Europeanization. New Research Agendas*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lewis, J. (2000) 'The methods of community in EU decision-making and administrative rivalry in the Council's infrastructure', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 7: 261-289.

Lægreid, P. and O.K. Pedersen (eds.) (1999) *Fra opbygning til ombygning i staten. Organisationsforandringer i tre nordiske lande*. Copenhagen: Jurist- og Økonomforbundets Forlag.

Lægreid, P. and J.P. Olsen (1978) *Byråkrati og beslutninger*. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.

- MacMullen, A. (1997) 'European Commissioners 1952-1995: National Routes to a European Elite', in N. Nugent (ed.) *At the Heart of the Union. Studies of the European Commission*. London: MacMillan.
- March, J.G. and J.P. Olsen (1998) 'The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders', *International Organization*, Vol. 52: 943-969.
- Marin, B. and R. Mayntz (eds.) (1991) *Policy Networks. Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Considerations*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.
- Melsæther, J.K. and U. Sverdrup (2004) 'The parliamentary challenge in the EU and the EEA: an increasing gap', ARENA working paper, No. 17.
- Moravcsik, A. (1998) *The Choice for Europe. Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Neumann, I.B. and H. Leira (2005) *Aktiv og avventende. Utenriktjenestens liv 1905-2005*. Oslo: Pax Forlag.
- Nordby, T. and F. Veggeland (1999) 'Lovgivningsmyndighetens suspensjon. Stortingets rolle under EØS-avtalen', *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, Vol. 40: 87-109.
- Olsen, J.P. (2007) *Europe in Search of Political Order. An institutional perspective on unity/diversity, citizens/their helpers, democratic design/historical drift, and the co-existence of orders*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Page, E.C. (1992) *Political Authority and Bureaucratic Power. A Comparative Analysis*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Peters, B.G. (1995) *The Politics of Bureaucracy*. Fourth Edition. London: Longman.

- Powell, W.W. and P.J. DiMaggio (eds.) (1991) *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rhodes, R.A.W and D. March (1992) 'New directions in the study of policy networks', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 21: 181-205.
- Rometsch, D. and W. Wessels (eds.) (1996) *The European Union and member states. Towards institutional fusion?* Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Schattschneider, E.E. (1975) *The Semisovereign People*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.
- Simon, H. (1957) *Administrative Behavior*. Second Edition. New York: Macmillan.
- St.prp. nr. 1 (2004-2005) *Den kongelige proposisjon om statsbudsjettet medregnet folketrygden for budsjettermin 1. januar – 31. desember 2005*. Norway: Ministry of Finance.
- Statskonsult (1999:6) *Norsk deltakelse i EU-komiteer*. Oslo.
- Statskonsult (2001:15) *Norsk innflytelse gjennom EU-komiteer*. Oslo.
- Statskonsult (2002:5) *EØS-arbeidet i norsk forvaltning*. Oslo.
- Sætereng, T.R. (2001) *Et felles nasjonalt standpunkt? En studie av rammenotatordningens effekter på koordineringen av EU/EØS-saker i norsk sentralforvaltning*. LOS Report, No. 4.
- Sørensen, H. (2004) *Parliamentary organization and decision-making. The EEA agreement in the Norwegian Parliament*. Master Thesis, Agder University College, Norway.
- Thelen, K. and S. Steinmo (1992) 'Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics', in S. Steinmo, K. Thelen and F. Longstreth (eds.) *Structuring Politics. Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Trondal, J. (1999) 'Europeisering av sentraladministrative organer. Om tilknytningsformer til EU og departementale koordineringsformer', *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift*, Vol. 15: 40-74.

Trondal, J. (2004a) 'Political Dynamics of the Parallel Administration of the European Commission', in A. Smith (ed.) *Policies and the European Commission. Actors, Interdependences, Legitimacy*. London: Routledge.

Trondal, J. (2004b) 'An Institutional Perspective on EU Committee Governance', in B. Reinalda and B. Verbeek (eds.) *Decision Making within International Organizations*. London: Routledge.

Trondal, J. (2007) 'The Public Administration Turn in Integration Research', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (forthcoming).

Underdal, A. (1987) 'What's Left for the MFA? Foreign Policy and the Management of External Relations in Norway', *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. XXII: 169-192.

Van Schendelen, M.P.C.M. and R. Scully (eds.) (2003) *The Unseen Hand. Unelected EU Legislators*. London: Frank Cass.

Wessels, W. (1998) 'Comitology: fusion in action. Politico-administrative trends in the EU system', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 5: 209-234.

Wessels, W., A. Maurer and J. Mittag (eds.) (2003) *Fifteen into One? The European Union and its member states*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Wildavsky, A. (1987) 'Choosing Preferences by constructing Institutions: A cultural theory of preference formation', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81, No. 1: 3-21.

NOTES

¹ The term “mega-administration” is taken from Wessels, Maurer and Mittag (2003: 441).

² This paper is financially supported by the Audit General of Norway and the Norwegian Research Council (“DISC – Dynamics of International Executive Institutions) and ARENA, Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo.

³ The European Economic Area (EEA).

⁴ Except the Norwegian Ministry of Defence.

⁵ A caveat should be included here. It is too simplistic to mention comitology committees as Commission committees. These committees origin from Council decisions and are functionally Council committees by the fact that they control the Commissions’ use of delegated powers. Still, it is the Commission who chair these committees. Hence, it is fair to say that the comitology committees are organisationally located somewhere between the Commission and the Council.

