

The Core Institutions of the EU: the Commission

EU Integration after Lisbon

- ▶ Slides finally online: <http://www.kai-arzheimer.com/Political-Integration-EU/>
- ▶ Next Wednesday: “BA-Forum” for Bachelor students

EU Institutions

The Commission

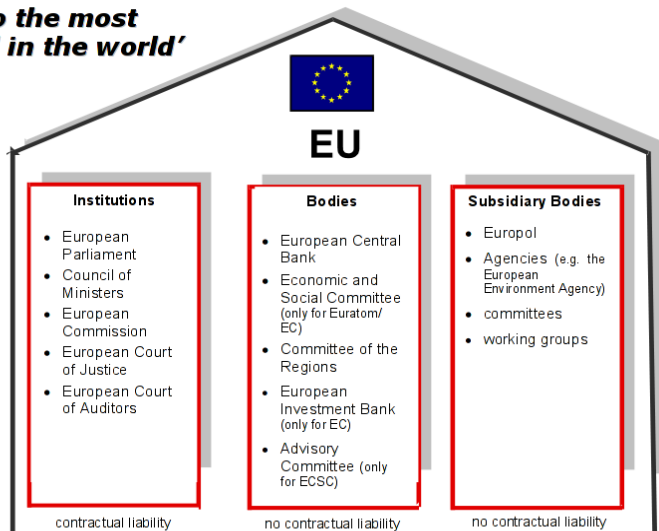
Structure

Tasks & Powers

Problems

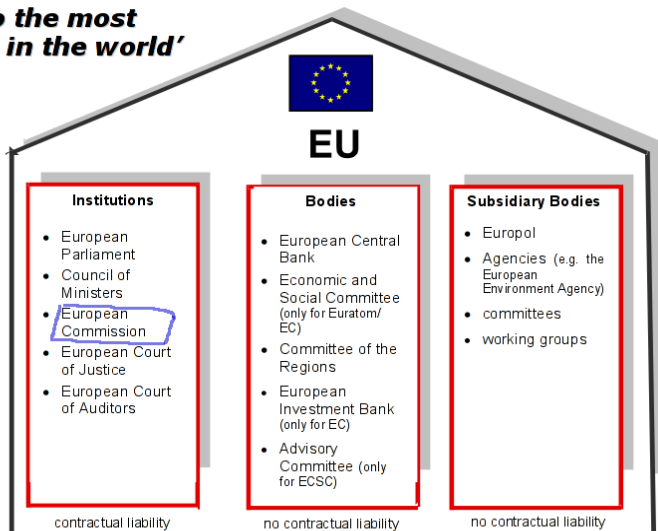
The big picture: EU institutions

'The EU institutions belong to the most powerful in the world'

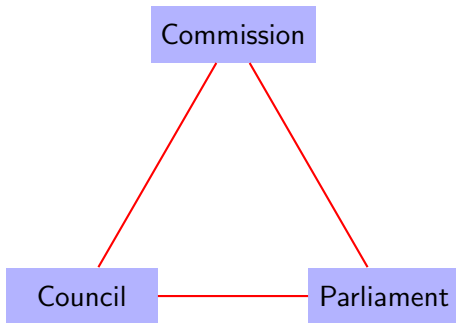


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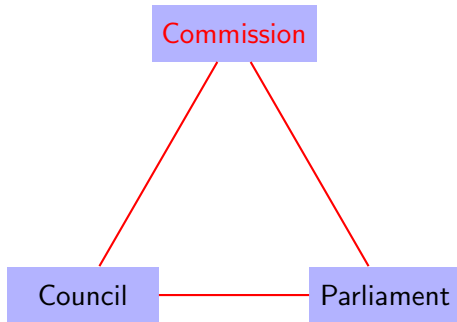
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The institutional triangle at the EU's core



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Why study institutions?

- ▶ Institutionalism – a *very* traditional approach to Political Science
- ▶ Roots: Aristotle
- ▶ So: why? → “New Institutionalism” (March & Olsen 1998)
- ▶ Central claim: “Institutions matter”

What are the main claims of institutional approaches?

- ▶ Many varieties: historic, rational-choice, sociological ...
- ▶ Institutions ...
 - ▶ create loyalties/identities → shift in preferences
 - ▶ “behave” as if they were actors
 - ▶ (and their members) have own interests → difficult to control
 - ▶ are all about *norms*
 - ▶ are difficult to change →
- ▶ Path dependency
- ▶ So we're back to the study of institutions, but with a twist

New institutionalism and the EU

- ▶ EU institutions interesting because EU is “sui generis and polycentric” (Peterson & Shackleton)
- ▶ Central claim: Institutions (as opposed to member states) playing a leading role in integration process
- ▶ Institutions (Commission, EP, (ECJ))
 - ▶ Information advantages and global networks
 - ▶ Clear priorities w respect to integration (vs. governments)

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 - ▶ Information advantages and global networks
 - ▶ Clear priorities w respect to integration (vs. governments)
 - ▶ But also: fraud, nepotism, lack of accountability, mismanagement, weakness . . .
- ▶ EU institutions (relatively) new, evolving, experimental
- ▶ Commission a fairly unique institution

The European Commission: overview

EU Institutions

The Commission

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<http://ec.europa.eu>

Commission: public image

- ▶ Appearance in the news
 - ▶ Supranational government?
 - ▶ Hyper-bureaucracy?
 - ▶ EU power centre?
- ▶ Scandals
 - ▶ Fraud (lack of control)
 - ▶ Nepotism (jobs for friends and family)
 - ▶ Incompetence/symbolic politics (multi-lingualism)
- ▶ Global trade
 - ▶ “Trade-wars”, WTO
 - ▶ Subsidies and regulation (Microsoft)
- ▶ Media
 - ▶ Roaming fees
 - ▶ Body scanners & Air freight security



Basic structure: split

- ▶ Political Arm
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 - ▶ 20,000-25,000 staff

The President

- ▶ Most prominent figure
 - ▶ Hallstein first president (58-67)
 - ▶ Jenkins only president from UK (77-80)
 - ▶ Delors most active (85-94)
- ▶ Appointment
 - ▶ Renewable five-year term
 - ▶ Nominated (QMV) by EC (EP elections), approved by parliament
 - ▶ States and EC nominate commissioners, college approved by EP
- ▶ Tasks
 - ▶ Political guidance and representation
 - ▶ Shapes portfolios, allocates commissioners
 - ▶ Head of EU administration

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- ▶ After Lisbon: High Rep ... as First VP (+ six other VPs)

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Current portfolios

Agriculture and Rural Development	Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy	Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration
Climate Action	Environment	Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship
Competition	Financial Programming and Budget	Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Development	Health and Consumer Policy	Regional Policy
Digital Agenda	High Representative	Research, Innovation and Science
Economic and Monetary Affairs	Home Affairs	Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-Fraud
Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth	Industry and Entrepreneurship	Trade
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	Internal Market and Services	Transport
Energy	International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response	

Responsibilities and powers

- ▶ Legislative functions
 - ▶ Development (sole right of initiative)
 - ▶ Commission legislation (administrative) → “Comitology” (240+)
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 - ▶ Commission regulation (competition)
- ▶ Executive functions
 - ▶ Implementation of policies/supervision
 - ▶ Agenda setting, “guardian”, “conscience”
 - ▶ Mediator
 - ▶ Management (budget)
 - ▶ External representation (trade, candidates)

Questions ...

1. Civil Service or European Government?
2. Facilitating structure or autonomous actor?



- ▶ “Government” /autonomous actor
 - ▶ Task of promoting integration
 - ▶ Central to EU system, well connected (many friends), resources
 - ▶ Legislative and executive powers + partial control over agenda
 - ▶ Role during treaty re-negotiations



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- ▶ “Civil Service” /structure
 - ▶ ~~Unelected/not directly accountable to EP~~
 - ▶ Executive/legislative powers limited (technical decisions vs. 1st pillar vs. CFSP/JHA)
 - ▶ No power to raise taxes, no control over police or army
 - ▶ Loser of treaty revisions, (EP) and national governments have final say (if they insist)

Implementation

- ▶ Most day-to-day implementation done by member state executives/agencies
- ▶ Implementation problems increased in the 1990s
- ▶ Disparities in implementation records of member states → calls for more effective enforcement

More problems

Concerns over ...

- ▶ Inefficiency: hierarchy, over-centralisation, problems of co-ordination, anarchy
- ▶ Mismanagement and fraud: waste, Greece, nepotism (Santer commission resigned in 1999)
- ▶ Overload: strain of managing/monitoring the Eastern enlargement
- ▶ Lack of political clout: Santer, Prodi, Barroso much weaker than Delors, Council and EP rising

Class questions

- ▶ What kind of institution (actor/facilitator . . .) is the Commission?
- ▶ In what sense has the Commission served as the motor of European integration?
- ▶ What factors inhibit it from playing this role today?