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# **Civil servant unions and social construction of the European civil service : sociological perspectives on eurocrats identity**

Didier Georgakakis

Abstract : In the case of State, Scholars have demonstrated that senior officials' ability to embody general interest is the result of long-term social processes marked by the concomitant construction of the State and civil servants as a social group. Though the European civil servants' situation is different from that of State civil servants, their ability to maintain their central role and defend the European interest invites us to turn our enquiry to processes that realize them (in the double sens of Berger and Luckman) as a group whose objectivation is both strong and rooted into European institutional "realities". It is one of the aspects of this process that we would like to analyse by focusing on the unions of European civil servants. By examining the social process of *crossed unification* between the cause, the interest, and the group led by European civil servants unions, this sociological based approach would like to clarify the relation which unites the eurocrats body with the UE institutions.

Keywords : Civil servant unions, european civil service, eurocrats, identity, socialisation, institutionalisation of europe

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If the existence of a European civil service may seem closely linked with the institutionalization of Europe, one has to recognize that little is known about the processes that allowed its invention, its coherence as a body distinct from political authorities, and as a group incarnating the EU interests. Despite the recent renewal of studies on the identities of European civil servants<sup>i</sup>, scholars tend indeed to ignore the question of the unification processes that characterize this group and allowed for its constant adaptation to the extremely changing realities of Europe. Why, for instance, do European civil service values still persist despite such important transformations as the multiplication by thirty of the number of positions since the beginning of the 1960s, the increasing diversification of functions and jobs in political Europe, the successive enlargements of the European Union and the concomitant integration of new civil servants, or the increased competition of other European professionals such as casual workers, consultants or service providers external to the institutions?

These issues are topical within the framework of the integration of civil servants coming from new member-States. They also represent a stake in the current theoretical debate over the European Union. If the constructivist turn represented an important theoretical advance by pointing out the importance of socialization or value construction mechanisms (*JEPP*, 1999), this trend seems to abandon the deeper mechanisms of social group construction that could give them more sociological depth. As Pierre Bourdieu showed about the State, senior officials' ability to embody general interest and develop this very particular interest that is "disinterested interest" is the result of long-term social processes marked by the concomitant construction of the State and civil servants as a social group (Bourdieu, 1994). Though the European civil servants' situation is different from that of State civil servants, their ability to maintain their central role and defend the European interest invites us to turn our enquiry to processes that realize them (in the double sens of Berger and Luckman) as a group whose objectivation is both strong and rooted into European institutional "realities". It is one of the aspects of this process that we would like to analyse by focusing on the unions of European civil servants.

The civil servant unions have indeed a special place in the European institutions. According to exploratory interviews with senior officials, their existence is both regarded as "obvious" and without any effect on the European construction processes. One often hears: "they deal especially with salaries". This obviousness and this absence of an important role remain however to be questioned. Considering the very particular nature of the population which

constitutes the European institutions (a multicultural population formed largely by very well paid high level officials), it is not at all obvious that trade unions representing the personnel would exist and that thirty per cent of the personnel would belong to them. It is also far from obvious that these unions would be structured around politico-unionist tendencies (not national or sectional) and that their mobilization power would be such that the turnout at the polls for the personnel committee elections would be routinely higher than 60%. It is also surprising that strikes are followed by more than 90% of civil servants, as shown by the events resulting from the Liikanen reform of the European Commission (Georgakakis, 2002 a) Moreover, if it seems rather likely that unions have few effects on the production of specific policies, it is clear that like other unions, they take part in the diffusion of social and professional norms which contribute to the institutionalization of the European civil servant's role and even to its *enchantment*.<sup>ii</sup>

It can then be assumed that if the civil servant unions seem so "obvious", it is not because their existence is without effect, but rather because they have managed to form one body with the European institutions. They have crystallized the principles to which their agents claim to adhere: competence, independence and a civil service seen as the guarantor of the Community interest against Member States and the interference of lobbies.<sup>iii</sup> It is by examining the process of *crossed unification* between the cause, the interest, and the group (Offerlé, 1994), that we would like to clarify the relation which unites the body with the institutions. By analyzing in turn the institutionalization of the unions and their contribution to the shaping of the group, we thus hope to bring empirical elements to bear on some of the social processes (the construction of the role of servant of Europe, the objectivation of a European identity and the Community interest, etc.) which are (or have been) at the heart of the institutionalization of Europe.

### ***The European civil servant unions : History and Institutionalization***

Although they have not been much studied in the scholarly literature on Europe<sup>iv</sup>, the European civil servant unions are a good instrument with which to analyse the "process of symbolic unification which characterizes this group and (the) work of representation which comes with it" (Boltanski, 1982) They lead us to wonder about the conditions of this relative osmosis which links the civil servants with the European institutions, and particularly with the

Commission. This will be achieved not by postulating, in a speculative way, the existence of a community of beliefs which would unify the personnel and its leaders around supranational values<sup>v</sup>, but by analyzing the modalities of its construction through the historical structuring of these movements, the mobilizations and watchwords they generated, and finally their integration into the environment of the civil servants.

### **The creation of the *European* trade unions**

Today, the European civil servant unions (OSP in the indigenous language of the institutions) are very mixed. There is no unitary trade union and this situation is regarded as a danger by the majority of the federations' representatives. Six federations currently exist. Briefly, there is the *Union Syndicale* (US, of social democrat tendency, which represents 48 % of the votes during the elections of the Personnel Committee), *Renouveau et Démocratie* (R&D, to the left of the left, 15 %), the *Syndicat des Fonctionnaires Européens* (SFE, of social-Christian tendency, between 10 and 15%), the *Fédération de la fonction publique européenne* (FFPE, of liberal or autonomous tendency, between 10 and 15%), and more marginally, the *Association des fonctionnaires indépendants* (TAO/FI, independent as shown by its name, around 5%), and the *Syndicat des fonctionnaires internationaux et européens* (SFIE, a minority fraction of the social-Christian union, around 5%). This competitive landscape is the fruit of scissions dating back ten years (which we will come back to) between three trends which have been dominant for a long time: social democrat, social-Christian and liberal. Moreover, in interviews, all the representatives stress the fact that this is not a craft or branch unionism representing the various categories of personnel or the very different functions assumed by the European civil servants.

The *European* structuring of the civil servant unions is due to their particular history and the way in which it fitted into the history of the progressive structuring of the European institutions.<sup>vi</sup> In a first structure of the representation field, this history was initially, in the 50s and 60s, that of the heterogeneous mobilization of some civil servants on the various sites of the European institutions, in Luxembourg in particular, around the ECSC and Euratom. These mobilizations dealt with the defence of salaried employees of the European institutions: for instance, issues related to the working environment, such as creating a cafeteria for the

personnel or respecting a series of rights which had not yet been codified, such as fixing a framework for maternity leave.

These first mobilizations were generated by agents who were already union activists before joining the European institutions. It is in particular the case of Guido Fotr , of the future US, former union leader of the steel industry in Lorraine, or of Claude Brus, former union activist of the French railways in the case of the future SFE. Other representatives certainly tried to impose themselves, in a similar way, so we can guess that their past in union activism, particularly in the steel industry offered them a chance to assert themselves. Apart from their know-how in terms of mobilization, we must remember that the ninth seat of ECSC high authority Commissioner was then reserved to a unionist and was negotiated with the ICFTU and the ICCTU (International confederation of free or Christian trade union, according to the case), organizations both strongly associated with European integration (Cobdorelli – Braun, 1972, p. 125-128).

In this context, European civil servant unionism was built by transposing the patterns of union action such as they existed in France, Italy and Belgium in particular.<sup>vii</sup> In contrast to the vision of a sole trade union, the first "representatives" structured the movements around politico-unionist sympathies inherited from their national commitment and international networks (ICFTU, ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation)), except for the FFPE, more influenced by the model of the German civil servant union. Taking into account the small size of the concerned population, the practical need to be numerous and to mobilize around claims for the personnel soon led its representatives towards a "European" definition of their structure. Aiming at representing the personnel, and moreover a personnel which was coming from all over Europe, it was not very profitable to favour the emergence of sectional or national sub-components.

It should be added, and it is undoubtedly one of the differences with international organizations which are structured in a more clear-cut intergovernmental way, that this representation of the European personnel was closely in line with the supranational definition of personnel policy which existed within the ECSC and Euratom. Without recalling the optimistic remarks of Monnet's memoirs, who saw these institutions as the laboratory of "a new type of man" which generated the European spirit in and through common work, the structuring of these institutions in the form of "administrations de *mission*" and the rather

informal policy which aimed at integrating the personnel, favoured the break from national references. The remarks of Cesare Balladore Palliéri, head of the personnel division of the administration of the ECSC high authority were, from this point of view, clear. Regarding the vocational training that should be provided or not to the European civil servants to make them independent from national pressures, he claimed at a conference at the University of Saarbrücken, which gathered academics and experts for a discussion on the European civil service:

"Vocational training is not at stake. Anybody with an average level of education can sit for recruitment exams in international organizations (...). It is the rank and file that must be tested, and in my opinion they are the only ones who can decide which methods to choose. And if we try to understand what determines the rank and file, it is the will of integration, co-operation, fusion, if you want, our rites, that is to say: a religion. This religion has already got its priests. It has not spread yet, because it has not been born yet. I believe that the wish we should make — at least on a purely personal basis — is that in each one of our countries, all teaching, instead of focusing on the national feeling, focuses on the need for integration. I do not say in which form, nor how. The common feeling has also to be developed. Here is the basic point. If we manage to do something in this direction, conflicts of duties will not exist any more: they are in fact already so theoretical. These conflicts of duties only happen with bad international civil servants" (University of the Saar, 1956, p. 305)

From this point of view, one can guess that negotiations with political authorities and human resource managers of these institutions, and in particular the practical need to allay suspicion to obtain satisfaction on claims, contributed, beyond the personal beliefs of those who were involved in Europe, to the reinforcement of the trade unions' European "vocation" and to the development of their function of integrating the "good" civil servants, to echo the expression quoted above. This turn of phrase appears all the more marked since, as implied by the aforementioned extract, these first mobilizations form part of a context in which personnel policy was in complete transformation. In 1956, the initial choice of a personnel made up of contract employees coming from the Member States for three years was replaced by a personnel statutorily employed by the European institutions. At that time, an institutionalized space of representation was also created, with the first Personnel Committees of the ECSC.

The creation of the EEC, after the Treaty of Rome, did not make a great difference, except for the fact that to the Luxembourg site was added a Brussels site which would gain importance

with the fusion of the ECSC, Euratom and EEC Commissions in 1967. The emphasis, indeed, is on this date. The creation of the Commission of the Communities thus led to a restructuring of trade-union representation. The change in the dimensions of the Commission, in every sense of the word, made the interpersonal relations between the representatives and the represented more difficult. To give some figures: the Community personnel increased from 280 agents in 1953 to 680 in 1957 and reached 11,000 by 1967 (Pierre-Alexis Ferral, 2000, p. 414). This restructuring of trade-union representation was not made in one day, but these changes led the European civil servant unions to reinforce little by little their presence on the sites, to structure their formal organization and to carry out a much more intensive work of mobilization. In this operation, these organizations' representatives were supported by international organizations of trade unions (ICFTU, ETUC, etc), and even by the FGTB, which at the same time were losing their influence, and in particular the seat they had within the ECSC High Authority.<sup>viii</sup>

From this time, the trade unions developed a structure which is close to the one we currently know, apart from the scissions which would mark their history. They were thus led to equip themselves with federal (US or FFPE) or confederal structures which unified the representatives of various sites and various institutions. This grouping together was particularly clear on the left. The organizations merged into the *Syndicat Général du Personnel des Organisations Européennes (SGPOE)* which itself became the *Union Syndicale(US)* in 1973 and gave birth one year later to the *Union Syndicale fédérale*. The number of members grew quickly —there were 300 members in the SGPOE in 1970 and nearly 2000 in the US a few years later<sup>ix</sup>. The services offered by the trade unions widened with the increase in the number of their members and the successes they obtained through their collective mobilizations.

## **Defence of salaries, group representation and loyalty towards the Commission**

One could think that the trade unions' anchoring and their fusional relationship with the European institutions would deteriorate with these structural changes. However, everything leads us to believe that the search for representativity and the work of representatives to represent the group actually strengthened them, at least until recently.



At the time, the representativity of these trade unions in the formal sense was not in any doubt. The Commission used to consult the representatives in a rather free and open way, similar to its relation with lobbies in general (Mazey, Richardson, 1993). It is only today, and as a result of the social movements which punctuated the Commission reform, that the OSPs negotiate formal agreements with the personnel management of the Commission. Moreover, the legal recognition of the OSP's was established very gradually. They were mentioned as a possible way of representing the personnel to the Committee of the same name at the time of the adoption of the statute in 1972. Next, their recognition owed much to the Court of Justice. Rejected by the Council in 1974, the right to strike was recognized by the Court but the deduction issue was not strictly codified until very recently.<sup>x</sup> This means that since the 70s, it has been above all through mobilizations that the OSPs gained their position and representation in the Personnel Committee.

Although the history of the trade unions partly follows that of the institutional reorganizations, it did not happen smoothly. In their own way, the times of "social crisis" helped them to deploy their range of action, to fix their European and integrating watchwords. The main strike movements were thus about salaries and the contestation of "the method", i.e. the method of wage indexation. These struggles for the defence of salaries appear in a ritualized form every ten years or so. The first movements took place in 1972 and were an opportunity to experience at the same time the limits of the listening capacity of the Council and the successes of a strike by nearly all the personnel. The 1981 movements reflected a hardening in the range of action of the Council's civil servants over a period of 6 months and included a 10 day strike by the Commission's civil servants. A picket line was organized in front of the Council and it contributed to the solidarity of the civil servants of the various organizations. The 1992 movement created a stir among journalists with the civil servants marching through Brussels. The 2002 movement (we will come back to it later) fitted into the mobilization on the reform of the Commission. Each time, these movements were unitary and the representatives were rather strongly followed, as shown by the general personnel meetings which gathered several thousand civil servants.

Some people may find the wage claims of the European civil servants surprising, considering their high level of remuneration compared to the national civil servants working in their own country. This would be misjudging the social and political significance of these claims. What

is at stake in the wage negotiations is not only maintaining their purchasing power, but also guaranteeing (with its external indicator) the European civil servants' excellence and their capacity to keep at a distance the "administrators" of the Council. As a budgetary authority who decides on the wages, but also a "political" authority, the administrators are seen by many as a source of partisan unrest linked to the economic situation of the Member States and consequently incompatible with the idea of European construction. Moreover, if the wage adaptation method is decided in a context of the strong depreciation of the civil servants' purchasing power, the results of the negotiation not only concern its preservation. In particular, a "crisis" deduction was decided in 1981 and requalified as a "temporary contribution" in 1992, as a result of a calculation which would place them at least at the same level as the lobbyists<sup>xi</sup> and the national civil servants, members of the permanent representations in Brussels. That is to say, the two groups with whom the civil servants are in direct relation and from whom they really want to be distinguished.

These movements enable us to better understand the anchoring of the trade unions within the European institutions. First, they all contributed to giving a strong recognition to the OSP and their representatives. In addition to the notoriety and charisma effects generated by speeches at the general meetings, the negotiations on the wage adaptation method lent special credibility to the representatives who took part in it. It is rather significant, from this point of view, that both the US and the SFIE emphasize paternity over "the method" as the saying goes in the trade-union reviews: Ludwig Schubert for the US, Castermann for the SFIE.<sup>xii</sup> It is they who, owing to a list system which allows cross voting, nominally obtained the most votes at the Personnel Committees elections. These recognition effects were intensified because of the solidarities between the personnel of the various institutions in these movements. The long 1981 strike of the civil servants of the Council was supported by their Commission counterparts who in particular, took part in the organization of the picket lines. It was *collectively* that the mobilizations and the ensuing negotiations took place. The imagery of the mobilizations that one can recreate from the pictures taken during the mobilization strongly develops this dimension. Finally, the trade unions' watchwords were invented in these demonstrations and especially the slogan unanimously shared today by the various federations of a "competent, independent and permanent" civil service. Taken together, these three words have their meaning: competence is the asserted characteristic of the group; independence is the guarantee of competence, especially in relation to the states and the

economic groups; and permanence ensures independence, as explained by the former chairwoman of the *Union Syndicale* who invented them.

For a better understanding of the significance of these watchwords and the particular identity which they convey (commitment to Europe in a federal sense, demarcation from the Member States, etc.), we should examine the career of the main representatives, their commitment in the war or the post-war reconstruction, their appointment to the European institutions and the positions they finally occupied as civil servants, their material rewards (their career progression, the possibility of secondment) and symbolic rewards (especially their strong recognition) linked with their position as representatives.<sup>xiii</sup> "There were high level representatives (I was only A3, but Schubert was A2 then A1). We had this very strong relationship with the Directorates general. We arrived in the Directorates general and we were liked for what we were doing... In the Directorate general where we worked, we were appreciated, because we hadn't been taken for fools and anyway, we couldn't have been elected", recalls a former official of the *Union Syndicale*.<sup>xiv</sup> The fact remains that it is necessary, in the same movement, to study the specificities of the work of representation and show that the embodiment of the European and independent civil service was closely related to the various types of relationships in which the trade-union representatives were placed.

First of all, we will need to examine their relationship with partners of negotiation. It is important to stress here that these conflicts were directed towards the Council and the Member States' representatives, and not towards the Commission. Testimonies of former and present actors are, on this point, unequivocal: "Except recently, the Commission has always cooperated with the personnel", "We never went on strike against the Commission. The Commission always gave what is called in English a *helping hand* and always was the one that made suggestions to the Council (...) Where the Council holds things up, it is on the budgets, because people come from national administrations and there, the country representative can't say anything, he/she agrees to say nothing, and that's true with all the others, and the second is all that concerns the civil service administration. Well, here there are always the same ones, that is to say the budgetary ones (...), who only see the question under this angle, and as they are in a privileged situation, with the bonuses they don't have to declare in the higher levels of the administration...".<sup>xv</sup> The images of the mobilizations demonstrate this quite well. As far as they can reveal representations of power, we can note that power is embodied by the Council, in the shape of the cigar, with multiple heads, etc.

But trade-union representatives also depend equally on the people for whom they negotiate. It would be naive to make of the trade unions' European reference a mechanical product of the civil servants' common expectations. These expectations are very diverse and there is a kind of equilibrium between national and European attachments (Hoogue, 1997). But one can think that the federative values represent a 'Felicity's condition' in the exchange between the representatives and the group they represent (Goffman, 1983). It may be useful to remind ourselves here of two morphological characteristics of the European civil servants as a whole. First, the personnel is extremely heterogeneous. Beyond the national differences, the jobs, ranks and statutes are diverse. What is there in common between legislation formulation, negotiation, resources management, audit and control, secretarial work or research tasks, to keep with the functions defined by Ann Stevens? (Stevens, 2001 : 136) We must add to this the high number of researchers, particularly among union activists, in Ispra (Italy) or in other sites in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany or Great- Britain, but also of local agents in the Union sub-offices of the Member States, of casual workers, etc. Secondly, the personnel are mostly high level personnel with many social and cultural assets and it is well known that this does not favour union activism. The number of A grade personnel is much higher than in other administrations and the B grade personnel (many hold a postgraduate degree) and C grade personnel (trilingual secretaries) are also highly skilled. In addition, the commitment of A grades in the trade unions is a guarantee of their representativity in their relations with the Directorates general. This is not to say that the appeal to European "values" is more liable to mobilize A grades than C or D grades (they share them as well and with the same degree of ambivalence!), but these values correspond more clearly to the conditions of their daily tasks and in particular the idea that they embody Community interests which structures their negotiation stance with the outside as well as the conception and the implementation of the policies they are in charge of. It shows to what extent the values of the trade unions are maintained through their position as intermediaries between the institution and the personnel: being on the same wavelength with both, they reduce at the same time any possible dissonance.

### **The institutionalization of group representation**

These mobilizations and their resulting legitimate position as intermediaries led to the institutionalization the OSPs. Soon imitated by other institutions, the frame agreements

negotiated between the OSPs and the Commission in 1974 gave trade unions the opportunity to take part in a series of committees at the heart of the professional and more largely, the social environment of the civil service. They also conferred on the OSPs a legitimacy which made them the preferred contact of the Commission's political and administrative human resources managers, and consequently gave them a field of action which was "much wider than the statutes had planned" (Rogalla, 2002).

This participation certainly owes much to the connections they had with the Commissioners and General Directors in charge of human resources issues, or more directly with the President of the Commission, and all the more when they had been union activists themselves (and this was often the case). Many unionists thus make of Jacques Delors' term of office, and the first in particular, a kind of golden age of the relationship between the OSPs and the trade unions.<sup>xvi</sup> The policy of "social dialogue" and the possibilities of union action legitimation within the institutions it offered are exposed in a report of the SFE's magazine devoted to interviews between union leaders and the President of the Commission. "The trade-union organizations are expecting modern relationships with the College of Commissioners. These relationships should rest on a climate of respect and mutual trust. To this end, we must free ourselves from rigid bureaucratic gears and show much mental and intellectual flexibility. This common will must mainly help to create a real "esprit de corps" among the civil servants, motivated to achieve the Commission's objectives to build the Europe of the men and women who work in it, in a spirit of openness and service to the problems faced by the European civil society ".<sup>xvii</sup> It is within this framework that the increase in the number of trade unions' permanent staff and the possibility of time reductions for their representatives were negotiated. The report on Jacques Delors' book, *En sortir ou pas*, written with Philippe Alexandre, is very enthusiastic and the trade unionists bestowed a great deal of confidence on Delors because of his past as a union activist.<sup>xviii</sup> In the 1987 negotiations, Jacques Delors invited the trade-union representatives to negotiate pay agreements directly with the Council's representatives before supporting their plan through official procedures.

This recognition came with the formal institutionalization of the role and function of the European trade unions. If the trade unions did not take part in a process of joint management, they nonetheless played an active part in various committees. Within the Commission, the frame agreements led to create a series of institutions in which the trade-union representatives were present. First, there was the Personnel Committee which is competent in particular on all

the issues that related to the application of the staff regulations of officials. But the representatives also sit on a series of commissions which closely contribute to the social and professional life of the European organizations and have an advisory role. On the local level, there are the joint welfare Committee (Comité paritaire des actions sociales, COPAS ), the Committee on social credits, the Committee on health and safety at work, the Local Committee on Training and the Joint Committee on restaurants and the staff shop. On the central level, there are the Promotion Committees, the Joint Committee, the Disciplinary Board, the Joint Committee of Evaluation, the Joint Committee on Staff Reports, the Joint Committee of Classification, and the Joint Building Loans Committee. These committees admittedly do not have the same weight, nor represent the same interests. Some are of greater importance and their image is moreover strongly enhanced in the views expressed by the OSPs' representatives, in particular those related to promotion or discipline.

Last but not least, the institutionalization of the trade unions is related to the Personnel elections which appoint the members of these various committees. These elections are important in the life of the institutions. It is the occasion for the trade unions to count themselves, to show their force to the institutions and to obtain material resources for their activity. Moreover, they are frequent, as they take place every 3 years within the various institutions and also on the various sites of the local personnel committees. It shows how much the mobilizations they induce are at the heart of the activity of federal structures. However that may be, these Personnel Committee elections help to better understand trade union influence. First of all, the turnout at the polls of two thirds of the personnel reveals the anchoring of the trade unions as a whole. This rate of participation represents a statutorily fixed minimum, below which elections must be rerun; this has however has never occurred, according to the representatives interviewed. Electoral mobilization therefore does not appear to be a problem. With a list system which allows for cross voting, the elections favour the figures that distinguish themselves and seem to lead to an effect of relative permanence of the elected representatives. With regard to the balance of power, it can be noted that splits sometimes generate changes in this apparent stability. It is the case in particular of the *R&D* breakthrough, which got around 15 % of the votes in recent years. It is less the case of the TAO/FI and of the SFIE which remain minorities, around 5 %. The SFE and FFPE, which obtain between 10 and 15 % of the suffrages, are now fighting for third place, behind the US which is by far the majority union in spite of the scission (around 50%).

This demonstrates that the trade unions do exist within the institutions: they have their organizations, their figures (inventors and representatives), their important dates, their preferred authorities, their means of mobilization, their activists and members, and, at the Commission and among the personnel as a whole, an emotional, technical and electoral legitimacy to intervene on issues that concern the civil service, its status and its role.

### ***The representation field and the shaping of the group***

By analysing the institutionalization of the civil servant unions and their relative weight within the European institutions, we can better determine their contribution to the definition of the European civil service. This suggests that the OSPs' contribution is rooted in time and in their continual presence in the environment of the civil servants at work and in their daily lives. The trade unions also form important transnational solidarity and friendship networks, considering the multicultural characteristics of the group. This participation is all the more appreciable since, for a long time, the national networks had been constituted in a much more formal way. The latter were for a long time characterized by the weakness of national civil servant associations and the feeble role of permanent representations to the European civil service, except to push the career of agents to the highest levels.<sup>xix</sup> At the same time, personnel policy has for a long time avoided any policy that would be likely to compete with the trade-union activity in the search for group cohesion.<sup>xx</sup> The first discussions on management and internal communication were introduced in the 90s and the trade-union mobilizations were used for a time as a model. Trade unionists in particular took the responsibility of the production of the *Commission en direct*, the civil servants' weekly magazine created by the DG X in the middle of the 90s.<sup>xxi</sup>

The contribution of the OSPs to group definition and to the relative permanence of its identity appears even more clearly when we focus the analysis on the by-products of the "space of representation" within which trade-union activity takes place. Without being specific to the subject discussed here, the OSPs' institutionalization goes hand in hand with the production of resources (offices, creation of permanent positions, room for manoeuvre brought by the attendance at such or such committee, symbolic and material remunerations of the representatives<sup>xxii</sup>) which ensure that competition for representativity and elections of the representatives at the committees stimulate a constant involvement in group mobilization. The

dynamics generated by this competition allows the adjustment of the trade unions' watchwords to the sociological transformations of the group and in particular to the regular integration of new personnel following successive EU enlargements. The work of mobilization of the trade unions is therefore a useful instrument to analyse their contribution to the production of the group they represent, in particular from the angle of the construction of its symbolic frontiers, the homogenisation of its members in a common whole or the contribution to its legal objectivation.

### **Mobilization of the group and unification process of its symbolic frontiers**

Even if unions have gained acceptance, their position is not necessarily definitive. In n°3 of the *Panoptique* magazine, Michele (sic) Ottati, SFIE's chairman at the Brussels Commission, points out that "however much you sow, few plants grow," before asking: "why do the majority of our colleagues adopt a passive attitude, while at the same time taking advantage of the trade unions' work and easily criticizing as soon as the results do not fit their expectations?"<sup>xxiii</sup> This issue is not specific to this particular situation. The representatives are aware that "mobilizing a high-ranked group is not easy," to quote the words of a US representative<sup>xxiv</sup>. The more general processes of deunionization in Europe is often the subject of reports in trade union magazines and the spectre of a breakdown of the legitimacy of group representation structures is regularly expressed.

The OSPs' mobilization instruments are, in this respect, good indicators of their contribution to the definition of the group they represent. Their participation in the definition of the symbolic contours can be seen first in the trade unions' commitment to give information to the totality of the personnel. This commitment is shown by the number of leaflets distributed, the diffusion among the members of a mailing list which competes with the Commission's Intranet, or the magazines which activists prepare which have adopted, over time, a more Newsmagazine layout. Even if it is difficult to study precisely the conditions in which these magazines are read, evidence suggests that they enjoy at the very least "floating attention". These magazines are widely distributed, 20 000 copies for each of the US and the SFE magazines, in a field in which there are few equivalents in the Newsmagazine press.

The very existence of these magazines is evidence of the trade union's contribution to the creation of a collective body: "as you know, we belong to the *Syndicat des fonctionnaires*



*internationaux et européens*, the *SFIE*. Have we weighed up the exact consequences of our choice of trade union? Do we realize the importance of belonging to an “international and European” trade union? Do we know that “SFIE” does not mean Brussels or Luxembourg or Strasbourg or Paris or Geneva or Florence, but Brussels and Luxembourg and Strasbourg and, and...? Do we know that “SFIE” does not mean Commission or Council or Court of Justice or CERN, but Commission and Council and, and,... because our trade union does not express a local and limited philosophy, but supports the fundamental interests of all the civil servants. The magazine you’ve got in your hands will be the instrument of this union: it will be a common source of information for every section of the SFIE and will lead to a better understanding of the life of each section and institution,” writes the SFIE representative in the n°0 of the *Panoptique* magazine. But the content of these magazines is even more enlightening, particularly because it alternates between union leaders’ editorials, reports on trade union activity, reminders of the leaflets handed out during the elections, practical information given to the personnel, or information related to life outside the workplace.

To focus the analysis on the SFE *Panoptique* magazine<sup>xxv</sup>, group construction is based on the definition of its functions and historical mission: “there can be no real European construction without a strong, independent and competent European civil service. We never saw in history any successful political unification without a specific executive body to hold it. For about fifty years, the European civil servants have been the kingpin of this unification, through their competence and their exclusive dedication to the common interest.”<sup>xxvi</sup> These statements are recurrent, and all the more emphatic in the backdrop of reform projects or campaigns against “eurocracy” in the national press.<sup>xxvii</sup> This reassertion of values is coupled with a shaping of the group’s memory. The mention of the founding fathers or more particularly of those who worked towards the creation of a European civil service is frequent, and all the more since that at the same time, it reminds European leaders the path to follow in tense situations.

To mention only one example, the *Panoptique* magazine prints Walter Hallstein’s initial speech, in which he defines the European civil service’s originality: “a ‘corps de garde’” which dares build the unity of Europe on the basis of reason and law and animated by a creative will<sup>xxviii</sup>; and a bit later on, a quotation of his book: “We are still rereading the text of a precursor, Walter Hallstein, one of the fathers of Europe, who wrote in 1967, about the European civil servants who were already attacked: “the aim of those who joined the European institutions was to cultivate virgin lands, to do pioneer work, not to do routine

work, in other words, to make something fundamental for the future of Europe.” It is again of this message we would like to remind those who are unfamiliar and who don’t understand the spirit of the European community.”

These definitions of the group cannot be dissociated from work seeking to draw group boundaries, in particular with regard to the politicians or those (casual workers or external consultants) who are the direct rivals of the civil servants. Despite the good relations with Delors, the SFIE Chairman wrote in the very first issues: “Our civil service is becoming politicized. It still remains a tendency, but it is dangerous for the citizens and for Europe. The Article 11<sup>th</sup> of the civil servants’ status seems to be ignored in the highest levels of the Commission.”<sup>xxxix</sup> He then added, “Too many policies and decisions are taken according to national interests, as evidenced by the geographical and political distribution of some positions in the Directorates General. In addition to this, there is the increasing use of privatization for tasks attributed to the personnel of the Commission (...). All this leads us to state that the whole personnel must be watchful and must cooperate with us to try and generate a “depoliticization” process of the European civil service, to gain more rigour, objectivity and non-national and partisan actions.” Several years later, the tone of an article entitled “the godfathers” is even more vigorous in the denunciation of “the contracts”, “the parachute candidates” and the fact that political parties place people.<sup>xxx</sup>

The drawing of symbolic borders with regard to political engagement is also tied to discourse focusing on the sociological contours of the group. If the magazines contain information related to trade-union activities, reform projects or practical services for professional life, most of their pages are dedicated to travel, exhibitions, book or video releases, or even to gastronomy with the column called “La bonne vie”, offering a monthly list of a half dozen bars and restaurants in and around Brussels.<sup>xxxi</sup> As the trade unions journals were turning into magazines at the end of the 80s, advertisements were added to these pages. True instruments of the civil servants “stylization of life”, these pages are above all about life in Brussels. Several articles and interviews of district burgermasters are thus dedicated to the town, its transportation or its districts and are directly linked with the district where civil servants live or could live, as suggested by the advertisements of financial companies which accompany them. But they also deal with cultural life, which is often a way to renew the common culture of the group. The leisure selection (exhibitions, nightlife or readings) often favours European

subjects or subjects which are likely to revive the memory of the group and its multicultural values.

To give some examples, one can cite the case of an “exhibition not to be missed. The “Belle époque”, time of universal exhibitions 1851-1913”. The comment is the following: “this exhibition is a perfect synthesis of the different sides of Europe’s historic and cultural past from 1851 to 1913. It is chaired by *two personalities* involved in the *European Union* construction, *Antoinette Spaak*, Minister without portfolio and daughter of Paul Henry Spaak, a key actor of the European construction, and *Karel Van Miert*, former Vice-President of the European Construction, well known for his commitments on behalf of Europe [Note:emphasis in original]”. It is as well the case for less cultural activities, but which promote the multicultural dimension, like the nightclub “le Sud”: “People don’t only meet for lunch, and some, among the youngest, will surely want to see their friends and fellow countrymen late at night in other places than in brasseries... And yet Brussels has got, in addition to a multiplicity of restaurants, numerous bars, clubs and discotheques. Among these, one owes its fame to its’ relaxed and cosmopolite atmosphere and famous home-made vodkas, even if nothing here reminds us of distant Russia. (...) The place is called “le Sud”. Dance and good mood are required, although the languages spoken here will remind you every corner of Europe and elsewhere, or maybe indeed because of these cultural differences. You won’t be surprised to hear Spanish, Italian or Portuguese, or of not understanding a word of the conversations because of the various origins of the customers”<sup>xxxii</sup>.

Apart from these magazines, the trade unions mobilize people in more personal ways by providing services to their members. These services can vary. They depend on the positions acquired in the committees, which are important tools to keep or integrate new members, such as those related to promotion, career assessment or discipline. Graduated according to the degree of general interest of the cause to be defended, the legal assistance offered by the trade unions in case of appeal at the Court of first instance, is “an additional assurance”<sup>xxxiii</sup> for the trade-unions to keep their members. The services also include preparation for exams for trade unions members. This activity concerns more particularly old trade union structures (US, SFE, FFPE) whose members have already been members of promotion boards. Indeed, by definition, the preparation does not concern the most famous recruitment exam for European civil servants, the ex A8 external exam, which had to choose between over 30 000 candidates in 1999. But it concerns all other exams, which take place every year: recruitment exams for external employees, with, for example in 2002 the C grade external exam on “financial

management” in April, or the recruitment of a French or German speaking typist secretary in June; or internal promotion exams for 350 agents in 2002<sup>xxxiv</sup>. We could also add the work related to the civil servants’ social life (organization of holiday camps in Belgium, Spain and Italy), the notarial and medical assistance or the relationships they have with the teachers of the European school in which their children are educated.

As one can see, if these services are means for the OSPs to keep their membership rate around 30 %, according to current data<sup>xxxv</sup>, they are also a way to determine objective situations through which the values of the representatives can be diffused, whether through the content of the training courses,<sup>xxxvi</sup> or through the learning of the right legal form and the good behaviour from the disciplinary boards, to mention only these examples.

### **Internal competition and integration process of the group**

Following these common forms of mobilization, we must stress the specific impact of internal competition that animates the space of trade union representation. Rivalries between trade unions lead them to widen their offer by sticking close to the claims of the very diverse segments of the European civil service. Far from being abstract, the work of definition to which the trade unions contribute is accompanied by more sectional claims. These demands revolve around the defence of particular categories of personnel such as the D grades who are threatened with disappearance because of the reform of statutes, or specific jobs like drivers or restaurant personnel. They focus on local and concrete issues such as, in Brussels, the defence of the cafeterias and the preservation standards regarding food quality or the reimbursement of transportation costs. These are not trivial claims, as their importance in the trade union propaganda material suggests. They are key elements in the mobilization of the group, the search for coherence among its different members, their rallying under common banners and the transformation of sectional issues into collective issues.

The integrative effect of these internal competitions can be seen in the splits which affected the field of representation at the turn of the 1990s. The SFIE went through two successive splits. At the end of the 80s, a majority of SFIE representatives split to create the SFE which kept for itself most of the resources and the Christian reference. It was then affected by another split at the same time as the FFPE. This contributed to the creation of the TAO/FI.

Within the US, a scission occurred with the R&D which is today the second largest trade union. One might think that these splits would have caused rifts in union representation. In fact, they may have led to a dilution of mobilization and to break the unity which has until now characterised most trade unions struggles. But they have also lead to a widening of gamut of trade unions which enable them, despite, or rather because of the competition between them, to better respond to various demands of this heterogeneous group, and then to adapt to the transformations related to the rise of membership, the diversity of their functions, the decline of their profession or the threats and objective constraints (peer group, various assessments) brought by reform projects proposed by the Commission.

These splits led to the widening of the range, both objective and subjective, of the political leanings represented by the trade unions. The way the trade unions politically qualify themselves is indeed a good indicator of this. Their political spectrum has in effect broadened: R&D is far left, US is centre left, SFE is between centre left and centre right, and the others are more right wing, to mention the more common designations. The effect of the broadening of the trade unions' offer is all the stronger as they relate to the struggles between these organizations, these political designations are far from being established, as shown by the interviews with representatives and non-unionized civil servants. There is also an opposition between professional organisations such as the FFPE and TAO/FI and trade unions organizations. There are also distinctions between "political" and "independent", "liberal", "reformist" or "protesting", "majority" and "minority", "old" and "new", "populist" and "serious", "middle-class", "weak" or "dynamic" organisations. These categorizations contribute, in a positive or negative way, to widen the range of possible identifications. When representatives or informants try to describe the European civil servant unions, they produce similar effects. It is the case when they want to define their main leanings. While the SFIE can be quite unanimously qualified as "Social Christian", it is less clear for the US, which is either defined as "Social communist", "Social Democrat", "Socialist", or "left and centre wing." It is even more difficult when it comes to relate them to national trade unions: for instance, the US is at the same time described as an equivalent to the French CFDT (most of the time) but also to the "CGT before the split with FO", to the "German DGB with or without the Christian leaning, it depends", and to the "Belgian FGTB, more or less"

These vague categorisations induced by the multicultural dimension of the institutions infer that there are other forms of identification that can be more directly in line with the structure

of the European institutions. It is the case for national categorisations which mark the reputation of the trade unions: R&D is often known to recruit Italians, Greeks and Belgians, or more generally among the upholders of a Southern Europe opposed to the neoliberal spirit of Northern Europe, or to refer to other debates which structure representations of cleavages in Europe, between the Europe of the founding member states, old or loyal to the European project, and the newcomers (who are “dynamic” or betray Europe according to the points of view). Similarly, the TAO/FI is known for having been created under the influence of British civil servants who wanted to forge an independent trade-unionism. It is also the characteristic of the FFPE which is under a more German or Nordic influence. Sectional divisions are superimposed to the national identities. As shown by the statistics of the Commission, the national distribution of the categories of civil servants is heterogeneous. The number of Italians and Belgians is high in C and D grade, hence possible equivalence between nationalities and grade; these seem to be categories in which R&D seems to have gained ground. In addition, the particular place – and these are major issues for the OSPs – of the personnel of research centres in Ipra’s (Italy) or elsewhere, or the local agents who are known to be of interest for the US etc, have to be considered.

If these marks and stigmata play a role in the differentiation of the offer of trade union representativity, they are also significant in the reality of trade union practices. It would take too long to go back to the leaders’ identity and social characteristics presented in the electoral roll<sup>xxxvii</sup>. Suffice to say that they only partially reflect these cleavages. The search for representativity pushes towards a subtle balance between nationalities, grade and even the DG they belong to. On the other hand, we can insist on the effects of this positioning on the competition model that the trade unions put forward. It is again a good indicator of the impact of internal competition on the trade unions’ differential credit and of their ability to mobilise different “clienteles”.

In this respect, the opposition due to the split between R&D and the US is exemplary. R&D claims a combative and moral posture which plays on an opposition to what defines the US, known to be reformist and consequently “inclined to dishonest compromises”. In their magazine, with its suggestive name, *Le Renard Déchaîné* (the Wild Fox), and their leaflets, R&D representatives denounce, with a kind of acid sense of humour attractive to senior officials, the political appointments of the US, and pointed out Romano Prodi’s hypocrisy when he said he would depoliticize recruitments (see the box below). There are also strong denunciations of the redeployment of senior officials in sectors directly linked with their

activity, in opposition with the commitments made by Neil Kinnock in the White Paper. The transparency that is supposed to drive reform projects is each time returned to the sender with biting irony. For example, a R&D leaflet entitled “Reconversions fructueuses à la Commission” (successful redeployments at the Commission) said: “after the Principal Private Secretary of M. Kinnock, who took off to *British Airways* in 2000, after having helped his boss to manage the transport sector in the Santer Commission, it is the turn of the former General Director of the Environment to take up the direction of *British Nuclear Fuels*”<sup>xxxviii</sup>. R&D recruits agents who can represent this moral position, which took a particular turn in the business field. The name of Paul Van Buitenen, civil servant known for having divulged case files on fraud and nepotism scandals that led to the Commission’s resignation in March 1999, was on R&D’s lists.<sup>xxxix</sup>

In the US, on the contrary, the emphasis is put on competence and expertise. This is due to its history, and more particularly to the success brought by its recognised involvement in the definition of the “wage adaptation method”, more often qualified by the single term of “the method”, as a reference to Descartes. Reason, membership of the negotiation group, search for “constructive” and “technically viable” solutions are part of what the US representatives place emphasis on and is constitutive of the credit they receive- a credit acknowledged by rivals. Method, creativity combined with technique and a sense of compromise – these are values more generally attributed to the European civil servants as a whole. The contents of the US magazine, *Agora*, is a good indicator of this, as well as the way the format of the interviews which are often lengthy, detailed and supported by documents or diagrams, where union representatives outline what has been negotiated in the focus groups that punctuated reforms.

Here we can also observe that these distinctive positionings have real effects in the definition of their relation to their employer, in this case the Commission, and in the opening of different stances. Scissions hardened the relationship and widened the range of the union postures. The departure from the US of Franco Ianello, the R&D founder, was said to be due to the “temporary contribution” resulting from the compromise on the revision of the adaptation method in 1992. A similar mechanism can be observed for the last “reform package” presented in spring 2001 to the Council. Only the US and the SFE, according to the negotiation tradition they wanted to preserve, signed the agreements. Beyond the reasons of the disagreement, it is rather clear that it is on this position that the elections of the last 2002 quarter were played out. All these stances contributed to the salience of the stakes which form the basis of the relations between the group and its representatives.

## **From mobilizations over staff regulations to the objectivation of the group**

Mobilization in defence of the group and its status in particular are not to be seen as a kind of immanent function of the trade unions. They are also challenges in which, at the same time as standing together, the organisations size each other up, test their mobilization capacity and put their credibility on the line in the prospect of future elections. From this point of view, the intensification of the competition between trade unions, which resulted from the scissions, help us to understand that social crises have not lost their vivacity, at the risk of appearing, in some instances, less turned towards the Council than towards the Commission. It could be thought that the presence of the trade unions and their values are withering away and are giving way to a strengthened personnel policy. On the contrary, mobilization is increasing and at the same time leads to the reaffirmation of these values and working methods during the social conflicts and the processes of “dramaturgic accentuation” they generate (Georgakakis, 2002), and therefore to the statutory objectivation of the group. This aspect will be emphasized here.

Beyond the physical groupings (GA, demonstrations, etc) and creative stirring effects that can qualify strike movements, the latter contribute afterwards to strengthen "de facto solidarities", to use this famous expression, among the various categories of personnel. When she recalls one of her best memories, a former trade union representative tells us: "we must render the services for which we are here, including helping people to get better positions, but considering that the training was never financed, we did it ourselves. I remember that we established a reimbursement per day of strike. The Belgian model was aligned with the reimbursement of the FGTB, but for our personnel we did not want to make any difference between high grades and others. But with the occasional exception, well paid people asked to have their share transferred to the training budget. This is what was done. I find this important from a collective point of view, from the point of view of citizen trust".

The reform process of the European Commission initiated by Erkki Liikanen and then Neil Kinnock gives us an idea of the trade unions' role in the objectivation of the group.<sup>x1</sup> The process is still under way and discussed within the trade-union organizations. The US and the SFE only (forming a majority together) signed the agreements which are currently being negotiated with the Council. The trade unions are continuously keeping up the pressure in light of a conflict which would result from a possible refusal of the Council. The fact remains that these blocking manoeuvres and the trade unions' part in the negotiations are key elements



in the legal and economic definition of the group. Apart from the definition of the philosophy of the civil service it involves, the reform deals, with the redefinition of status, the objective conditions of career and promotion, and even of salaries, even if this last aspect has finally been postponed so as not to confuse the debate or to cut the ground under the trade union mobilization, according to the viewpoint. The main points of the reforms dealt with the conditions of entry in the European civil service and its formal structure, as shown by the proposal to reduce the four A, B, C, D grades into two bodies (administrators and assistants), or the internal promotions and assessment issues which have direct effects on the more or less important politicization of the positions.<sup>xli</sup>

The trade unions' contribution to the definition of the group's objective frontiers can be observed in the pressures they applied. Whether it was the Erkki Liikanen or Neil Kinnock project, everything points to the fact that negotiation on status would have been extremely different without the trade unions' intervention. As an evidence of the role they intend to play in these issues, the Commission's attempts at getting round the OSPs generated their mobilization, even before the fundamental questions had been addressed. The Caston-Smidt report was produced "in secrecy", Liikanen "lied"<sup>xlii</sup>, when claiming to be unaware of this report, and the part played by the consultants or the direct consultation procedures through Intranet broke the relationship of trust between the Commission and the OSPs. From this point of view, we can think that the success of the collective mobilizations organized by the OSPs reinforced their role. The trade unions succeeded twice in thwarting the reform projects spurred by the commissioners in charge of the issue. In the spring of 1998, the massive strike against the Liikanen project mobilized 90 % of the personnel. The college of commissioners was then led to step back and to appoint the Williamson consultative group before the negotiations were temporarily given up because of the resignation of the Commission. With regard to the Kinnock plan, the trade unions did not resort to strike but to other means of pressure. Several strike notices punctuated the reform and led Kinnock to change his method. The Commission reform became such a significant political stake that it was one of the key aspects of the Prodi Commission programme. It is then in a rather personal and media-friendly way, that at the beginning Niel Kinnock picked up the issue. And this, at the risk of "verging on propaganda", denounced the trade unions<sup>xliii</sup>. The consulting firms thus took a more important part in the production of the White Paper than the trade unions, even if the latter were finally consulted after the first version.<sup>xliv</sup> But the strike notices, the threat of freezing the participation in the various committees which administrate the life of the

institutions, or the relations engaged with other partners (like the Cabinet of the President of the Commission or of the President of the Council) made it possible for the trade unions to reenter a game from which they had been temporarily excluded.

The negotiations are another indicator of the trade unions' contribution to the objectivation of the group. Following the mobilizations which have been discussed, the trade unions negotiated the last renewal of staff regulation, and this in two stages of the procedures. First of all, they contributed to drawing up the document which is regarded by many as the "bible" of the reform and, beyond that, as the best possible compromise with regard to personnel policy: the Williamson report, from the name of the former secretary-general of the Commission under J. Delors and chairman of the 'think tank ' appointed after the strike of the spring of 1998. As a good indicator of the trade unions' weight, the mandate of this group consisted in thinking about the conditions of a "permanent and competent independent civil service". To put it differently, the definition of the situation was a direct product of the slogan invented by the trade unions a few years earlier. One could think that this reference would be without effect and that the appointment of this group would serve to calm the social game more than to introduce a real dialogue with the trade unions. Was this a product of the legendary compromise culture? It does not seem so. The Williamson report was thus the product of twenty days of negotiation between the end of June and the beginning of November 1998. The trade-unions seemed to have sent their best negotiators, a majority of them being high senior officials, including A1 grades like Ludwig Schubert, well versed in this type of exercise. The eighty-six page document which resulted from these discussions covered a variety of questions. Among the recommendations, one can remark the safeguarding of the unity of civil service status, the preservation of the examination system, the will to limit the recourse to external employees, the intensification of training, the refusal to introduce financial incentives (*merit-pay*), the framing of the concept of inadequacy, as well as a whole series of measures related to the calculation of pensions or the reimbursement of expenses.

This report could have gone unheeded. The White Paper on the reform, it has been said, had been written on very different grounds. Nonetheless, the Williamson report was again put on the agenda in the second group, the Ersboell group, named after the former secretary-general of the Council who chaired it. In this case again, the discussions took place in conditions close to the ones that prevailed during the preparations for the Williamson report, a long and

thorough dialogue with the representatives of the OSPs. It is from this group that emerged the transformation of the grades into two bodies, administrator and assistant, the tidying up of the statutes, the determination of the career progression procedure. Before the Concil decision — the "second round", according to the expression taken from a union leaflet<sup>xlv</sup> — the compromise signed by the majority OSPs (US and SFE) implies – and it has been an opportunity to recreate this interlinked relation between the Commission and its personnel – that the Commission must withdraw the project if it departs too much from the negotiated agreements.

By coming back to the social aspects of group definition, but also to the search of coherence and objectivation to which the trade unions contribute, we can thus better understand the European civil service's central position. It goes without saying that the latter is not only the product of the trade-unions' work, but the mobilization on which it is based indisputably contribute to give to it its reality and force. This occurs through the definition of its legal contours and the various resources linked to it, with the self-image of the civil servants, of the collective body they represent beyond institutional and sectional cleavages and, consequently, the possibilities they share. But it is also the case with the representatives with whom the people who are in relation with them, and who depend partly on them, must reckon: the other European professionals with whom they collaborate in the public policy processes and, more generally, the European political leaders, whether members of the College and permanently in relation with them or more occasionally members of the Council. We understand better how their identity feeds into the construction of the standards which structure European policies as a whole and give them their relative cohesion. It contributes more directly to give a meaning to the European institutions and to their objectivation in bodies, in the theoretical sense of the European civil service as a group, and in the practical sense of the incorporated practices of its members. By coming back to the circular links between the cause, the interest and the groups which carry them, we hope to have sociologically contributed to the theoretical debate on Europe, between the excessively positivist and state-centred concept of interest of rationalist theory and the stimulating concept of values of the new constructivist approaches to Europe<sup>xlvi</sup>.

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<sup>i</sup>. On "the plural identity" of civil servants, cf. in particular Marc Abéles, Irene Bellier, Maryon Mac Donald (1993), Lisbet Hoogue, 1997 ; Thomas Christiansen, 1997 On the Brusselization of civil servants, cf. Chris

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Shore, 2000, p. 152. Thomas Christiansen, 2001. On a more general level, Ann Stevens (with Andley Stevens), 2001.

<sup>ii</sup>. On this last point, to compare, cf. Damamme, 1991.

<sup>iii</sup>. On the pertinence of these representations, even among the civil servants known to be the most politicized like the civil servants of grade A1 and A2, Hoogue, 1997.

<sup>iv</sup>. Two pages of presentation are devoted to them in the chapter on personnel policy in the undoubtedly most complete book on the administration of Europe to date, Stevens, 2001 : 58-60. One allusion only can be found in David Spence, 1997. Cf. also, Bodiguel, 1994, p. 194.

<sup>v</sup>. On the criticism, in my opinion rather grounded, of an idealistic drift of some constructivist or neo-institutionalist works, cf. Andrew Moravcsik, in *JEPP*, 1999.

<sup>vi</sup>. To compare, cf. the neo-institutional history of the European federations of parties, Paul Magnette, 2001.

<sup>vii</sup>. The Germans were present among the first unionists but their trade-union model appears more specific compared to the possible convergence of others.

<sup>viii</sup>. On the trade unions' pressure at the time of the merger of the executives and their failure to obtain the appointment of a commissioner, cf. " Le syndicalisme en Europe ", *Les dossiers de l'institut de la FSU*, n°1, février 1998.

<sup>ix</sup>. Interviews, August 2002.

<sup>x</sup>. It is on the basis of a research in archives on the precedents in the matter that the deductions were decided.

<sup>xi</sup>. The high wages date from the ECSC, at a time when it was necessary to draw civil servants to this uncertain institution and to keep the salaries at the level of the ones paid by the big coal and steel companies.

<sup>xii</sup>. In addition, both were economists in the DG II.

<sup>xiii</sup>. This work is in progress.

<sup>xiv</sup>. Interview, July 2002.

<sup>xv</sup>. The SFE chairman and the former US chairwoman successively, interviews July 2002.

<sup>xvi</sup>. One can surmise that these relations had something to do in the charisma effects from which J Delors benefited within the institutions. On this charisma and other elements which compose it, cf. Drake, 2000.

<sup>xvii</sup>. *Panoptique* n° 1, p. 5.

<sup>xviii</sup>. If the extracts come from *Panoptique* the magazine of the Christian social trade union, the interviews with the US representatives are, in substance, congruent.

<sup>xix</sup>. Is it possible to deduce the trade unions have a weak interest in this issue, compared with the national networks, as David Spence has suggested? Spence, 1997.

<sup>xx</sup>. On this point, cf. the work of the former General Director of the DG IX, Richard Hay, 1989.

<sup>xxi</sup>. On this point, cf our paper, " Les portraits de fonctionnaires dans la *Commission en direct* ", paper presented at the workshop on the European institutions, led by Eve Fouilleux and Cécile Robert, Congrès de l'Association Française de Science Politique, Rennes, Septembre 1999

<sup>xxii</sup>. In addition to the recognition effects, the promotion of representatives and the accelerating effect of political activism are thus the subject of heated discussions between the trade unions.

<sup>xxiii</sup>. *Panoptique* n° 3, 1986

<sup>xxiv</sup>. Interview, July 2002

<sup>xxv</sup>. Until now, we only could study the US magazine from 1998.

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<sup>xxvi</sup>. *Panoptique*, n° 60, 19...

<sup>xxvii</sup>. It is particularly the case in 1990, when the extremist Flemish committee made a poster campaign on the Rond Point Schuman. On this point, see Chris Shore, *Building Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 169. On the often paradoxical aspects of the eurocrat figure, cf. also Georgakakis, 1999 p. 109-128

<sup>xxviii</sup>. *Panoptique*. n°27, December 1991

<sup>xxix</sup>. For this reference and the next one, *Ibid.* n°5, 1987

<sup>xxx</sup>. *Ibid.* n° 32, 1992.

<sup>xxxi</sup>. This is less the case for *Agora*, the US magazine, but it also publishes a special guide on good places to go and on cultural and social life in Brussels.

<sup>xxxii</sup>. *Panoptique* n° 69, p. 26.

<sup>xxxiii</sup>. The expression is from Michel Ottati, *Panoptique* n° 3, *op. cit.* we heard it again in several interviews.

<sup>xxxiv</sup>. B grade to A grade : 90 posts, C to B 155 posts, revalorization from D to C, according to *Panoptique*, n°70, p. 8.

<sup>xxxv</sup>. Because of the double effect of the processes aimed at representing the whole group and the current negotiations on trade union representativity, I have been unable to obtain figures apart from the total numbers, not to mention a breakdown by grade or nationality.

<sup>xxxvi</sup>. All this is nevertheless not automatic. On the various definitions of educational transactions, Offerlé, 1991.

<sup>xxxvii</sup>. The personality of Franco Ianello, a former member of US, “charismatic” for some and “populist” for others, A grade civil servant and Italian communist, seems to be one of the causes of the split with the US and R&D relative success.

<sup>xxxviii</sup>. May 31<sup>st</sup> 2002

<sup>xxxix</sup>. It is actually the case, even though in his book, Paul Van Buitenen calls himself a Christian, which is not the predominant leaning in the R&D. Van Buitenen, 2000. On Paul Van Buitenen and the fight against corruption, see also our papers, Georgakakis, 2000, 2001 et 2004.

<sup>xl</sup>. We could also use other consultations like the one which prevailed in the good behaviour code for example.

<sup>xli</sup>. On this point, cf. also Michelle Cini, "Leadership and Culture: the Commission President and Commission Reform 1995-2000 ", Working paper, Loughborough, Workshop, June 23, 2000, and the discussions of the first morning of the colloquium led by Philippe Bezès and Veronique Dimier, *Rôles et pouvoirs des hauts fonctionnaires dans les réformes néo-managériales en Europe Acteurs et/ou enjeux des réformes*, CURAPP, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme de Paris, 14 juin 2002, in particular Hussein Kassim, “How about 'European Commission reform: conception and process?’”, and Roger Lévy, “Modernising and Decentralizing EU Programme Management: Implications for Higher Officials in the European Commission ”.

<sup>xlii</sup> Interviews, June 2002. On this point, cf. more generally our presentation at the above mentioned round table, “ De Liikanen à Kinnock : réforme de la Commission, nouveau management public, et construction des identités politiques européennes ”.

<sup>xliii</sup>. Union Syndicale, *Document de travail sur le document consultatif du 18 janvier*, Bruxelles, 7 mars 2000.

<sup>xliv</sup>. *Agora*, March 2001.

<sup>xlv</sup>. “Conseil: second round”, *US leaflet*, May 31, 2002.

<sup>xlvi</sup>. About those questions, *European Union Politics* 2, June 2001 and Jupille, Caporaso, and Checkel, 2002.

