

European Commission, the Institution which brings Europe closer

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Abstract

This paper presents a brief story of the establishment and function of the European Commission. Why European Commission is considered the shortest way toward Europe? This material recalls the agreements concluded since the beginning of the creation of the European Commission, scope of cooperation among member countries aiming a single and economic and political unit which directs and develops the Continent. The role of Commission stands at the center of explanations regarding the nature of the path toward the European integration. Obviously the debate is made for EU. In case the Commission is seen as an autonomous actor, the argument that EU is an intergovernmental organization will be diminished. So far, the Commission has been at the center of critiques in the role as manager of the policies of the Community and finances. Meanwhile the policy of implementation is not having a rectilinear motion within the member countries. Any member country may sue another country for breach of the Commission's obligations. The Commission is still depending on the national governments and administrations, the achievement of the policy goals at an EU inclined to expansion, is difficult. This has made more difficult the job of the Commission. Another aspect being noticed is that EU can make an effective policy in the enterprising area, setting out some basic criteria for the efficiency of decisions taken and demonstrate capacities to correct the effects of failure. Also, the Commission role in managing the budget deficit should be obvious.

Keywords: Commission, member, implementation, autonomous, actors.

Introduction

Jean Monnet,¹ the creator and founder of the European institutions had a personal experience on the inefficiency of intergovernmental institutions and therefore was convinced that it should have functioned within the European Coal and Steel Community 1951 (coal and steel used to be a key sector), as an independent authority from the national governments of the member countries. Monnet's experience was connected to the executive, thus he focused on the creation of an independent institution which used to be the High Authority. The High Authority was the first supranational authority founded and as such carried either the risk of failure or the main merit for the functioning and implementation of this European initiative. Due to the difficulties faced at the beginning of this important institution, Jean Monnet managed by himself this big project. Monnet was assigned the first President for a 2-year period, but resigned prior to the termination of his mandate. Meanwhile the Treaty of the

¹ Jean Monnet was the deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations in 1939 and has been assigned as the English and French coordinator.

European Economic Community in Rome (EEC 1958) put the Commission in the position of a supranational institution which of course provided a big warranty of autonomy toward the member countries despite having little decisive power. The President of the Commission V. Hallstejn (Milo, 2002, 45) was assigned in Germany. In respect to the representatives of different groups of interest, the European integration in years 50' was initiated by the politicians, but in the "industrial" phase it was in fact initiated by the business leaders (Wisse Dekker). Years later, during the crisis solution of the Community which ended up with the "Luxembourg Accord", it has been approved among others the French proposal of seven points which regulated the relationships of the Commission with the governments of the member countries and thus, the Commission couldn't be a European "government". The Commission would have submitted proposals but it should have contacted the Permanent Representatives of the Committee in the European Union. The compromise achieved, opened the way to an ongoing development of the Community and the Commission started to run in July 6, 1967.

The Head of the Commission was substituted by the Belgium Commissioner Jean Ray (Milo, 2002, 78). But, in the 70-s no one could admit that the Community was doing well, or that the "Community" "was moving". After its expansion with 3 new members, the Community needed a well-known political figure in the member countries to lead the Commission. With this motto, in 1977 Roy Jenkins, member of the English government and also member of the Labor party was assigned the Head of the Commission. Jenkins was the first to be entitled after obtaining the entire College's approval, which helped him have an impact on the Commission's structure (Peterson, 2002, 75). A biography of Roy Jenkins, the President of the Commission from 1977 to 1980 ends with: *"The Presidency of the EEC Commission is an impossible work. It could merely called a work, indeed. The President has a great number of conflicts of responsibility, but no power (Dik, 2001, 45).* The Commission used to encourage the business groups for the development of a Pan-European network giving the privilege and access in the political process. In the midst of years 80', the business groups worked closely with the European Commission offices hopeful for the competition among the European companies through the establishment of a more liberal European community market. Viscount Etienne Davignon, the commissioner for the internal market during 1976-1984, grouped a great number of European companies of the information technology in 1981 and founded the commission Thorn-Davignon, treating proposals for technological programs and the European technical norms and discussed market liberalization as well. In 1983 Pehr Gyllenhammar (Volvo CEO) created the "round table" of the industrialists with a great number of the presidents of multinational corporations, some selected upon Davignon's suggestions. Upon approval of the Single European Act, the "round table" established the Watch Dog Committee to support the treaty's enforcement. Some affirm that the pressure from the business transnational groups was vital for the Single European Act ratification. The approval of the Single European Act intensified the Commission's power by means of the delegating procedures

of executive power.

The Council of Ministers could delegate executive competences to the Commission, as well.

When Delors was assigned the President of the Commission in 1985, he undertook the wide initiative to regenerate the European Commission. According to his calculations, the reforms were necessary: a) in the decision-making institutions of the Community, b) monetary policy, c) political cooperation and defense cooperation, before deciding to go back to EC origin and thus create a unique internal market. Like Jean Monnet, Delors (*Jacques Delors was the head of the European Commission from January 1st, 1985 for two consecutive mandates. At the time he was chairing the European Commission, he reached to strengthen many of his competences by taking or proposing measures which changed several policies theretofore like policies in the structure of expenditures etc.*) identified the scopes and scheduled them. He tried to realize his program from 1988 to 1992, which program was now irreversible. It was said that Delors used the institutional power of the president as a platform by which would come out a connection between the procedural improvements proposed by the Parliament and liberalization of internal market advocated by Brussels-based business groups. According to this viewpoint, this encouraged Cockfield to elaborate the internal market agenda in the White Paper and then exaggerated the sense of economic decline to secure the approval of European heads of government (Moravcsik, 1991, 45). Thus, in 1992 the term "leadership" came from outside of the national structure.... it came from the Commission.

After Delors left, the Commission started to feel the "identity" crisis. The new Commissioner Jacques Santer was not a worthy successor of Delors. Delors' heritage began to threaten Brussels in both political sides where each required more from the member countries and the Commission which wanted more power in the matter, of collective nature and those of quick action.

After Santer Commission 1999, the new President of the Commission was assigned Romano Prodi. The new President could achieved to strengthen his power and influence more than any other president of the European Commission. At one side he was encouraged by the crisis of Santer commission 1994 - 1999. In fact, Prodi since the day of his assignment took the approval that the commissioners would resign unless required for the benefit of EU. Despite this, Prodi was obliged to deny the voices for the possible dismissal from the Commission to commit himself to the internal elections in Italy. The only Italian who was the President of the Commission before Prodi, Franco Maria Malafatti, did the same during the depression period in 1972. The role of Commission stands at the center of explanations regarding the nature of the path toward the European integration. Obviously the debate is made for EU. In case the Commission is seen as an autonomous actor, the argument that EU is an intergovernmental organization will be diminished. So far, the Commission has been at the center of critiques in the role as manager of the policies of the

Community and finances. Meanwhile the policy of implementation is not having a rectilinear motion within the member countries. Any member country may sue another country for breach of the Commission's obligations. The latter has the right to be expressed over the case within 3 months, after this the case goes automatically to the Court. The implementation of all the financial instruments is subject of change from the Court of Audit (*article 226, former article 169*). Whereas the Commission is still depending on the national governments and administrations, the achievement of the policy goals at an EU inclined to expansion, is difficult. This has made more difficult the job of the Commission. Another aspect being noticed is that EU can make an effective policy in the enterprising area, setting out some basic criteria for the efficiency of decisions taken and demonstrate capacities to correct the effects of failure. Also, the Commission role in managing the budget deficit should be obvious.

Countries like Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Great Britain had respectively 2 representatives each in the European Commission.

* In case of member of the Commission does not comply with the norms provided by the treaty, whether during the mandate or beyond it, and commit a serious error, the Council or Commission may go to the Court of Justice and ask for its dismissal and if the mandate is over may ask the removal of pension rights and other benefits. The appointed Commission members shall hold office four years and their mandate is renewable. In case of absence for reasons provided by the treaty the replacement process is the same as the assignment process.

* The Commission is directed by an internal autonomous regulation but also restricted by the treaties. The treaty of 1965 set out 2 restrictions including:

I/ a. Assignment of the president

I/ b. Vice presidents who are 6, are selected from the member countries.

II. Adoption of decisions taken by the majority.

Presidents of European Commission		Representing Country;
Walter Hallstein	1958 - 1967	(Germany)
Jean Rey	1967- 1970	(Belgium)
Franco Maria Malfati	1970 - 1972	(Italy)
Sicco Mansholt	1972 - 1973	(Netherlands)
Francois Xavier Ortoli	1973 - 1977	(France)
Roy Jenkins	1977-1981	(Great Britain)
Gaston Thorn	1981- 1985	(Luxembourg)
Jacques Delors ²⁴	1985- 1995	(France)
Jacques Santer	1995- 1999	(Luxembourg)
Romano Prodi	1999- 2004	(Italy)
Jose Manuel Barroso	2004- 2009	(Portugal)

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