



# Selection, appointment and redeployment of senior Commission officials

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## Abstract

After the fall of the Santer Commission in 1999, the new college undertook an in-depth internal administrative reform under the political leadership of Romano Prodi and Neil Kinnock. One big chapter of this reform dealt with senior personnel policy. New procedures were implemented, merit was upgraded as the main criteria for senior appointments, and compulsory redeployment was introduced.

Against this background, the research was conducted in order to assess the extent to which these new measures have changed the way senior appointments take place inside the Commission, particularly in terms of influence coming from national governments. By assessing several hundred appointments and redeployments of director generals, deputy director generals and directors - and through interviews with 37 top Commission officials - the thesis revealed what substantive and systemic changes have progressively taken place since the early years of the Prodi Commission, as compared to the pre-reform situation (i.e. Santer Commission).

Principal-agent theory was used to frame the research and derive the main hypotheses on the possible development in the relation between EU member states and the Commission.

Among the main overall findings of the research, the empirical assessment revealed that 1) the role played by nationality in senior Commission appointments has undoubtedly decreased with the implementation of the reform; 2) the role of member states in senior appointments has changed little from Santer to Prodi, due to the complementary finding that this role was already rather limited prior to the reform (a finding which runs against the mainstream literature on this issue); 3) mobility was a senior management tool that certainly helped the Commission to bring forward change to the administrative culture, but did not come to represent a tool used to resist member states' pressures; and 4) unfit candidates have no longer a chance to be promoted to the upper echelons of the Commission administration.



**Alessandro Fusacchia (1978)** is a member of the G8 Sherpa Office at the Italian Prime Minister's office, set up to draft and negotiate the Leaders' Declaration of the 2009 G8 Summit in La Maddalena.

Alessandro previously worked as a ghost-writer for the former Italian Minister for European Affairs and International Trade, Emma Bonino, and the former President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, including for Prodi's book on his 5-year tenure in Brussels. He also worked at the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization in Geneva.

In February 2009, Alessandro obtained a PhD in Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute in Florence. He currently teaches EU external relations for a master's degree at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris, and he has contributed articles to national and international journals on EU affairs, international trade and politics.

Alessandro is the President of *Rete per l'Eccellenza Nazionale (RENA)*, an Italian dynamic and independent association which aims to put together young Italian professionals and researchers that live both in Italy and abroad, and are committed to improve the state of Italy by sharing new ideas and innovative proposals for local public policies.

*Niente di personale*, his first piece of narrative, was published (with Davide Rubini) in Belgium in early December 2008. Alessandro loves reading, travelling and starting up new projects.