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Presidential leadership styles and institutional capacity for climate policy integration in the European Commission

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ABSTRACT

Climate policy integration (CPI) is a key strategy for implementing climate policy action, spanning policy sectors and levels of governance. As a central agenda-setting actor in the EU, we argue that understanding the institutional capacity for CPI inside the European Commission is especially important for understanding the advancement of CPI in the EU overall. We focus on the inner workings of the Commission, and we ask: *what role does the leadership style of the Commission President play in advancing institutional capacity for implementing CPI?* We assess the institutional capacity for CPI in the Commission during the Barroso and Juncker Presidencies, which display characteristics of bottom-up and top-down leadership styles, respectively. While we do not find that one presidential leadership style is necessarily 'better' than the other at enhancing institutional capacities for CPI, we highlight important differences along four key factors, namely: (1) political commitment to overarching climate objectives and to the necessity of implementing CPI; (2) recognition of functional overlaps between policy objectives and compatible beliefs for implementing CPI among policy-makers; (3) an opportunity structure for innovative policy development and policy entrepreneurship; (4) and meaningful coordination and consultation mechanisms.

KEYWORDS

Climate policy integration;
European Commission
President; leadership styles;
institutional capacity

1. Introduction

Complex societal challenges, such as climate change, require integrated policy responses. Given the boundary-spanning nature of both the causes of and solutions to climate change, the integration of climate policy objectives across policy systems is key (Jochim & May, 2010). Global commitments under the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5–2°C can only be achieved if multiple policy areas, such as energy, transport, industry and agriculture, integrate climate objectives in a coherent manner. As outlined by Domorenok, Graziano, and Polverari (2021), advancing institutional capacity is necessary for such policy integration.

The European Union (EU) aims to play a leading global role in combating climate change (Bäckstrand & Elgström, 2013; Oberthür & Roche Kelly, 2008; Wurzel, Liefferink, & Torney, 2019). The EU leadership's credibility lies in its ability to implement effective

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climate policies internally. Climate policy integration (CPI) aims to address climate change across relevant policy areas that directly or indirectly contribute to the problem. Following Domorenok et al. (2021), we understand policy integration as aiming for coherence in policy goals, coordination in policy processes, and consistency across policy instruments. CPI includes process, output and outcome dimensions: institutional, decision-making rules leading to coherent policy outputs that lead to impactful outcomes, e.g. the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Adelle & Russel, 2013). The European Commission (hereafter: Commission) is especially important in advancing CPI in the EU, given its role as a key agenda-setter. The Commission drafts and proposes legislative measures (Egeberg, 2010).

We focus on the Commission's internal institutional capacity to advance CPI, asking: *what role does the leadership style of the Commission President play in advancing institutional capacity for implementing CPI?* We argue that the presidential leadership style may affect the Commission's capacity to activate key drivers of CPI. Our research focuses on policy formulation and development inside the Commission, taking a closer look at internal vertical interactions. We focus predominantly on the policy process. While the literature on CPI and policy coordination more broadly has investigated horizontal interaction within the Commission (Hartlapp, Metz, & Rauh, 2013; Selianko & Lenschow, 2015), research on vertical aspects, including the presidential leadership style and resulting potential changes to institutional capacity, is limited (Kassim, Connolly, Dehousse, Rozenberg, & Bendjaballah, 2017).

We address the research question as follows. First, we carry out a literature review on CPI in the EU and the Commission. We derive four key driving factors for CPI, which form the core of our empirical focus: (1) political commitment to overarching climate objectives and to the necessity of implementing CPI; (2) recognition of functional overlaps and compatible beliefs among policymakers; (3) an opportunity structure for innovative policy development and policy entrepreneurship; (4) and meaningful coordination and consultation mechanisms (Dupont, 2016; Jordan & Lenschow, 2008; Rietig, 2019; Svensson, 2019). In addition, we review literature on the development of the office of the Commission President and on the characteristics of leadership styles. We underline the turn to 'presidentialization' (Kassim et al., 2017) or a strengthening of the office of the President, from 2004 when José Manuel Barroso entered office. We also note the characteristics of two ideal types of institutional leadership styles that refer to preferences in organizational structure: bottom-up and top-down.

Second, in our empirical analysis, we analyze the leadership of the Barroso (2004–2014) and Jean-Claude Juncker (2014–2019) Presidencies for evidence of the four driving factors for CPI. We highlight the bottom-up characteristics of Barroso's Presidency and the top-down characteristics of Juncker's Presidency. We emphasize that both espouse the 'presidential' leadership style, although neither leadership style follows an ideal type, but rather they exist along a continuum between the end points of fully bottom-up and top-down characteristics.

Third, we discuss our findings, which highlight changes in the Commission's institutional capacity to activate the drivers of CPI under the different presidential leadership styles. Under Barroso's presidential leadership, which we suggest displays characteristics of bottom-up leadership, we find an opportunity structure for policy entrepreneurs from the Directorate-Generals (DG) and Cabinets to pursue their policy preferences. This

institutional context allowed for policy innovation on, and advancement of certain aspects of, CPI. Under Juncker's Presidency, which we suggest displays characteristics of top-down leadership, there was a declared political commitment to climate policy and CPI. Yet, implementation of CPI was patchy in practice. This could be owing to the hierarchical organizational structure adopted by Juncker that increased the number of gatekeepers, meaning that policy entrepreneurs had higher barriers to overcome in advancing innovative proposals.

Our article thus contributes to literature on both CPI in the EU context and to literature on the role of leadership styles in advancing institutional capacity for policy integration. We also contribute to literature investigating Commission Presidencies. The findings point to an important role for the Commission's leadership level in advancing institutional capacity for CPI, although further nuance in the results would require additional research and analysis. The article opens up future research avenues, including on the interaction among the four driving factors within an institutional setting, and new empirical work on Commission presidential leadership styles.

2. Climate policy integration and presidential leadership in the Commission

The Commission plays a unique role in the EU institutional system. It is a hybrid political and administrative institution, and one of its main roles is to propose new legislative measures for negotiation and adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU (Egeberg, 2010). This makes understanding policy formulation and decision-making within the Commission important for understanding CPI in the EU overall. Indeed, scholars agree that (the Commission's role in) the agenda-setting phase is an important determinant for EU policy outcomes (Hartlapp et al., 2013; Kassim et al., 2017), but there are few connections between assessments of CPI in the EU and broader literature on the internal institutional capacity of the Commission.

By reviewing research on CPI in the EU and in the Commission, and on presidential leadership styles, we outline a framework for our analysis of the institutional capacities for CPI under the different presidential leadership styles of Barroso and Juncker.

2.1. Climate policy integration in the EU and in the Commission

CPI, at its most basic, means integrating climate policy objectives across other policy goals, processes and instruments. Analyses of CPI in the EU have shown that it has had different degrees of success, depending on whether the emphasis of analysis is on CPI as a policy outcome (effective improvements in combating climate change in practice), policy process (coordination towards integrated responses to climate change) or policy output (decisions in other policy domains that take climate change into account), and depending on the policy focus (e.g. energy, agriculture, others) (Alons, 2017; Candel & Biesbroek, 2018; Dupont, 2016; Rietig, 2019).

For CPI to occur in practice, scholars have identified several driving factors that play out at different levels – systemic, organizational and individual (Domorenok et al., 2021) – and at different stages of the policy process. These driving factors include: (1) political commitment to overarching climate objectives and to the necessity of implementing CPI; (2) recognition of functional overlaps between policy objectives and

compatible beliefs for implementing CPI among policymakers; (3) an opportunity structure for innovative policy development and policy entrepreneurship; (4) and meaningful coordination and consultation mechanisms (Dupont, 2016; Jordan & Lenschow, 2008; Rietig, 2019; Svensson, 2019). Table 1 provides an overview. Following Domorenok et al. (2021), we differentiate between formal and informal measures for the respective driving factors occurring across levels of capacity.

The Commission’s record on enhancing institutional capacity along these four main factors for implementing CPI is patchy. Previous research has revealed the relative persistence of siloed policymaking, sometimes despite other favorable conditions, such as political commitment and a legal framework for policy integration under Article 11 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (Dupont, 2016; Dupont & Jordan, 2021; Selianko & Lenschow, 2015). But there is also evidence of changes in institutional capacity towards CPI, particularly in terms of coordination and consultation (Hartlapp et al., 2013; Jordan & Lenschow, 2010; Selianko & Lenschow, 2015). Examples include the development of impact assessment procedures, public consultation and obligatory cross-DG coordination processes (Kassim et al., 2017; Runhaar, 2016). The Commission has also produced policy outputs that have emphasized CPI, including the 2008 and 2016 proposals for integrated climate and energy packages (see Table 2). Nevertheless, research on the vertical coordination processes and the role of presidential leadership styles for advancing institutional capacities to drive CPI forward remains limited (Kassim et al., 2017).

Table 1. Institutional capacity for CPI in the Commission; adapted from Domorenok et al. (2021).

Driving factor	Level of capacity	Empirical measures	
		Formal	Informal
Political commitment to climate action and to CPI	Systemic and	organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal principles • Declared prioritization of climate and CPI • Policy programs and plans for CPI (President priorities, Commission work program ...)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles • Values • Policy paradigms 	Individual and	organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Inter-DG dialogue and coordination • Early inter-DG assessments
Recognition of overlaps and compatibility of beliefs			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness • Expert knowledge 	Organizational and individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-sectoral competencies and skills • Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Open’ culture • Networking skills • Expert knowledge
Policy innovation opportunity structure			
Meaningful coordination and consultation mechanisms	Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational charts • Routine coordination requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative and inclusive practices and routines

Table 2. Integrated climate and energy packages to 2020 and to 2030; own compilation.

CPI policy proposal	Objectives	Legislative measures
<i>Climate and energy package to 2020</i> Proposed January 2008, agreed December 2008 Barroso I Presidency	Reduce GHG emissions by 20% 2020 compared to 1990 levels; Increase RE share in final energy consumption to 20% by 2020; Improve EE by 20% by 2020, compared to business-as-usual projections by 2020.	Emissions Trading Directive (revision) (2009/29/EC) Effort Sharing Decision (406/2009/EC) Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC) Carbon Capture and Storage Directive (2009/31/EC)
<i>Climate and energy framework to 2030: "Clean Energy for all European"</i> Proposed November 2016, fully adopted by 2019 Juncker Presidency	Reduce GHG emissions by at least 40% by 2030; Increase share of RE in energy consumption to at least 32% by 2030; Improve EE by at least 32.5% by 2030.	Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (2018/1999) Emissions Trading Directive (revision) (2018/410) Effort sharing Regulation (2018/842) Regulation on Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (2018/841) Renewable Energy Directive (recast) (2018/2001) Energy Efficiency Directive (revision) (2018/2002) Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (revision) (2018/844) Electricity Market Regulation (recast) (2019/943) Electricity Market Directive (recast) (2019/944) Regulation on Risk Preparedness (2019/941) Regulation on the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (recast) (2019/942)

GHG = greenhouse gas; RE = renewable energy; EE = energy efficiency.

2.2. The changing role of the Commission President

Given the Commission's hybrid role, its President is therefore both a political leader, in particular towards other EU institutions and international partners, and an administrative leader, steering the internal functioning of the Commission (Kassim et al., 2017; Nugent & Rhinard, 2015). The multi-functional role of the President has meant that different individuals holding the post have shaped the role in different ways, but over time the President has taken on more power and responsibility. Explanations for the change lie in both the institutional set-up and the personal traits of the President. On the one hand, literature highlights the interaction of changes in internal and external resources and constraints to explain the range of Commission president leadership styles, including Treaty reform and administrative capacities in support of the Presidency (Kassim et al., 2017). On the other hand, personal attributes and priorities of the leader can determine the leadership style adopted (*ibid.*; Nugent & Rhinard, 2015).

Over time, the internal/external resources, constraints and personal attributes and ambitions have led to what scholars identified as a trend towards 'presidentialization' (Kassim, 2017; Nugent & Rhinard, 2015), whereby the role of the President is increasingly powerful and more distinguishable from the roles of other Commissioners. Presidentialization refers to several developments that include changes to the external (through an increasing public role) and internal (through tighter authority over the College of Commissioners, for example) roles of the President (Nugent & Rhinard, 2015).

From the perspective of institutional capacity for CPI, the Commission as an institution operates at the systemic level within the EU system, with the President playing a driving role at the internal organizational and individual level in choosing whether or not to steer the Commission towards cross-sectoral policy strategies (Domorenok et al., 2021). The President holds responsibility for managing the institution's organizational structure and its capacity for coordination. And the President can enhance institutional capacity as an individual leader with knowledge and competencies for CPI and by promoting such skills in employees. The style of presidential leadership, therefore, may affect the Commission's institutional capacity to activate the drivers of CPI (see Table 1).

2.3. Presidential leadership styles for CPI inside the Commission

In broader administrative understandings of leadership, we can differentiate between a 'top-down' hierarchical leadership style and a 'bottom-up' inclusive leadership style that grants a high level of autonomy to staff (Locke, 2003). Top-down and bottom-up leadership styles imply certain choices or preferences in organizational set-up (e.g. hierarchical or flat organization). At the same time, we recognize that the President's leadership style is shaped by the institutional structure of the position of the President (positional leadership) and the individual President's agency to lead (behavioral leadership) (Müller, 2020). Therefore, the top-down and the bottom-up leadership styles should be seen as two end points along a scale, whereby in empirical practice leadership styles exist at a point along this continuum.

A *top-down leadership* style relies on a hierarchical organizational structure. It is based on a unitary and centralized command structure where agenda-setting and decision-making power are concentrated at the highest level. Lower levels follow the direction set by the top executive, who creates the vision, promotes change and motivates employees (Locke, 2003). Such a leadership style may not stimulate innovative policy development and policy entrepreneurship at lower levels as the focus is on following orders and implementing detailed guidance from the President's office. However, it may promote a higher degree of responsibility and commitment towards CPI, depending on the priorities of the President. We would expect to find an organizational structure that ensures checks on the alignment of activities at lower levels with the overarching vision of the President.

A *bottom-up leadership* style focuses on granting autonomy to individual employees. We would expect such a leadership style to facilitate a supportive organizational architecture that allows opportunities for innovative policy development and policy entrepreneurship, with skilled and motivated policy entrepreneurs taking advantage of windows of opportunity to build coalitions of like-minded individuals to advance a policy idea (Braun, 2009; Mintrom, 2013). Central challenges include barriers to overcoming different or conflicting underlying interests or beliefs between Directorate Generals or Commissioner's Cabinets and a potential lack of commitment at the highest level (Rietig, 2019). A lack of commitment at the highest level could result in innovative policy proposals failing to attract sufficient political support or conflicting with other initiatives originating elsewhere in the Commission.

Analytically, we draw inspiration from these ideal types of leadership styles to understand the role of the leadership style of the Commission President in advancing CPI along the four driving factors outlined in Table 1.

3. Methodology

In our empirical analysis, we seek evidence for each of the driving forces in the Commission during different Presidency tenures to establish whether different leadership styles affect the institutional capacity for CPI. Evidence for each factor builds on the outline of empirical measures for institutional capacity for policy integration presented in [Table 1](#) and adapted from Domorenok et al. (2021) including the existence of: overarching policy programs, inter-departmental coordination, cross-sectoral policy plans, and commitment to developing intersectoral linkages.

We drew data from multiple sources, including literature, official documents, speeches and semi-structured interviews. We analyzed over 50 policy documents (green/white papers, communications from the Commission, Council and European Council conclusions, European Parliament documents, and the legislative documents listed in [Table 2](#)) and over 20 speeches from Commission Presidents, Commissioners and other relevant actors. We further analyzed 63 semi-structured elite interviews carried out by the authors between 2011 and 2020. The interviewees were representatives of the Commission [EC] (Cabinets and DGs for Agriculture, Climate Action, Energy, Environment, Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, and the Joint Research Centre), member states [MS] (including Austria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK), environmental NGOs, and staff and Members of the European Parliament [EP]. The interview questions focused on leadership styles, experiences of capacity for CPI, and leadership influence on CPI in the policymaking process inside the Commission towards key Directives and strategies (see [Table 2](#)). Given our interest in assessing different leadership styles since the turn to ‘presidentialization’, and given the limited availability of elite interviewees from the Santer and Prodi Commissions of the late 1990s and early 2000s, our analysis focuses on the Barroso and Juncker Commissions.

4. Leadership styles and CPI: From the Barroso to the Juncker Commissions

In assessing whether Commission President leadership styles affect institutional capacity for CPI in the Commission, we focus on the Barroso and Juncker Presidencies. While their leadership styles are not ideal-types, we identify the Barroso Commission as one that displays certain characteristics of a *bottom-up leadership* style, particularly with regard to organizational set-up, while the Juncker Commission displays characteristics of a *top-down leadership* style. These Presidencies are both characterized by the turn to ‘presidentialization’ (see above; Kassim et al., 2017). For each President, we outline, first, the characteristics of their leadership style. Next, we analyze data from literature, documents and interviews to establish whether there is evidence of the four driving factors for CPI (see [Table 1](#)).

4.1. Bottom-up leadership style in the 2004–2014 Barroso Commission

The Barroso Commission was, like the Commissions under previous leadership, characterized by an openness to bottom-up leadership across levels. Kassim et al. (2017) pinpoint 2004 as the start of the turn to presidentialization, when Barroso took office.

They characterize Barroso as engaging in ‘presidential policy leadership’, although his style evolved over the course of his two terms. Characteristics of this leadership style include a conception of the Presidency as requiring a strong personal leadership role and responsibility or co-responsibility for major project development, supported by a flat hierarchy of the College of Commissioners. Under presidential policy leadership, the President takes the lead in setting policy priorities inside the Commission. Barroso also laid a high emphasis on ‘better regulation’, meaning that fewer legislative measures were pursued during his tenure, and some proposals were even withdrawn (Kassim & Bocquillon, 2019; Kassim et al., 2017). Barroso implemented organizational reforms that strengthened his office (e.g. by turning the Commission’s Secretariat General into a personal service of the President), but he kept a flat hierarchical structure while also trying to implement oversight (through coordination mechanisms and impact assessment) to ensure policy development inside the Commission aligned with policy priorities. Barroso’s leadership can be characterized as closer to a bottom-up leadership style than top-down, but with some oversight institutionalized through certain reforms. We find that this leadership style adopted by Barroso left room for bottom-up leadership to be exercised across a number of CPI policymaking processes by policy entrepreneurs, pointing to the central relevance of an opportunistic structure for innovative policy development. The opportunity structure under Barroso’s Presidency emerged once a political commitment to the overarching objectives was signaled, providing leeway to policy entrepreneurs at different levels of hierarchy to implement CPI.

4.1.1. Evidence of institutional capacity for CPI

The biofuels controversy within the development of the 2008 Renewable Energy Directive (RED) (Rietig, 2018; see Table 2) illustrates the importance of compatible beliefs, the scope for disagreements between DGs/Cabinets and the limits of coordination and consultation mechanisms. The integration of climate objectives into energy and transport policy put the Renewable Energy Unit in DG Energy in charge of drafting the RED legal text with the components of electricity, biofuels and heating/cooling. The policy officer in charge of the biofuels targets developed a high level of expertise in the preparatory phase (EC 1; Sharman & Holmes, 2010). This allowed the policy officer to emerge as a central policy entrepreneur in the internal negotiations within the Commission, especially with DG Environment, and in particular in swaying the Council to request the Commission to develop a proposal for a directive with a 10% biofuels target (EC 2; EC 3).

As new scientific evidence emerged on the questionable climate benefits of food-crop based first-generation biofuels after the political objectives on biofuels had been decided, a controversy around the 10% biofuels/renewable energies in transport target ensued within and beyond the Commission (Sharman & Holmes, 2010). The environment-focused coalition led by DG Environment emphasized the need to revise the 10% target based on the new scientific evidence and the underlying belief that environmental implications should be prioritized over the remaining economic and energy security benefits of first-generation biofuels. Economic and energy security priorities were highlighted by, and aligned with, the underlying beliefs and policy priorities of the economic development-focused coalition led by DG Energy (Rietig, 2019). The new scientific evidence resulted in changed policy beliefs among the environment-focused coalition,

which had previously supported all types of renewable energy because these were all seen as benefitting climate action (EC 6). As a consequence, the previously aligned policy beliefs of both coalitions diverged, which resulted in immediate policy conflict and the adoption of a de-facto 10% target for first-generation biofuels as well as a difficult and incremental reform process to limit the share of first-generation biofuels in the 2010s (Rietig, 2019).

It was possible for individuals within the Renewable Energy Unit to act as policy entrepreneurs with regards to the details of the RED, thus displaying a very high level of political acumen and influence in the policymaking process, because they were acting within the political commitment to overarching climate objectives. Commission President Barroso was overall supportive of renewable energy policies and understood the importance of showcasing European leadership by adopting the 2008/09 European Climate and Energy Package ahead of the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change negotiations (EC 4; EC 6; EC 7; see Table 2). A drawback of the bottom-up leadership style was, however, that once policy beliefs among different DGs compete, conflict emerges within the Commission with limited mediation through the Presidency. This was the case when the new scientific evidence on the problematic climate impacts of food-crop-based biofuels resulted in a beliefs-based debate around prioritizing climate action by limiting food-crop-based biofuels favored by DG Environment/Climate Action or prioritizing economic development through supporting the expansion of food-crop-based biofuels favored by DG Energy. This conflict resulted in policy lock-in that required a long and incremental reform process (Rietig, 2019).

Within Barroso's bottom-up leadership style, policy entrepreneurs were key to achieving CPI and avoiding backsliding. The 2008 mini-reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), termed 'Health Check', demonstrates the consequences if strong policy entrepreneurship is absent. It made a step backwards compared to the achievements of the previous greening reform, championed by the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Franz Fischler (Pirzio-Biroli, 2008), by abolishing the requirement for farmers to set 10% of their arable land aside as ecological areas. Issues were re-framed, catering to the agricultural industry's traditional interests of maintaining subsidies and limiting greening to voluntary measures (EC 8; EC 9; EC 10; MS 1; MS 2). However, without a committed Commissioner and explicit Presidential political commitment to help sustain momentum during the political decision-making in the College of Commissioners and Council, the political opposition exploited the opportunity to roll back some of the previous greening achievements. "The Commissioner had a business-as-usual agenda, (...) just trying to preserve the system (...), her agenda was "don't rock the boat, keep the subsidies flowing, do some cosmetics on the side"" (Environmental NGO 1). This 'step backwards' illustrates the importance of committed policy entrepreneurs at the Commissioner level to translate a policy proposal into a policy outcome. The subsequent 2012/13 'Ciolos' CAP reform achieved some modest progress on greening due to policymakers' perception of, and actual changes in, public demand for climate action, and the strong belief among the Commissioner and Head of Cabinet for Agriculture and Rural development that the CAP needs to adapt to maintain its relevance and funding levels (EC 11).

In parallel to the 2012/13 CAP reform, Cabinet/DG Climate Action introduced the proposal to dedicate 20% of the EU 2014–2020 budget to mainstreaming (CPI measures).

They formed a group of policy entrepreneurs consisting of the Commissioner for Climate Action, three key members of her cabinet and six police officers/heads of unit at DG Climate Action. In particular, one policy officer worked steadily on climate mainstreaming over several years. Once the opportunity of using the EU budget as a vehicle for stronger climate mainstreaming was spotted, this policy officer convinced key actors in the DGs' and Cabinets' hierarchy to exploit this opportunity and frame climate change as a policy problem that can be addressed by dedicating 20% of the EU's budget to activities co-beneficial for climate action (EC 12; EC 13; EC 14; EC 16; EC 17). The Commissioner for Climate Action used her political acumen and position in the College to get climate mainstreaming adopted as a Commission proposal. This group commanded expertise-based credibility allowing them to minimize opposition to their proposal, although they did not play a leading role in the negotiations with the Parliament and Council themselves (EC15; EC 16, EC 18, EC 19; MS 5). In the case of the EU budget, this proved sufficient as the climate mainstreaming proposal was widely ignored in the Council discussions, given pressing economic concerns. Overall, the integration of the 20% mainstreaming objective into the EU budget was possible because of the dedication and action of policy entrepreneurs who acted within Barroso's overall support and political commitment for climate action by exploiting the existing window of opportunity of a new EU budget. The policy entrepreneurs involved in the CAP reform and climate mainstreaming in the EU budget both framed their proposals with a 'public money for public goods' narrative and created the public appearance of coordinated efforts within the Commission, although there was no strong exchange about the legislative proposals (EC 13; EC 15; EC 20).

4.2. Top-down leadership style in the 2014–2019 Juncker Commission

President Jean-Claude Juncker shifted to what can be largely categorized as a top-down leadership style, with a clear centralization of political leadership within the Commission (Kassim, 2017). When Juncker campaigned under the *Spitzenkandidat* procedure (in which the Commission President appointment was linked to the European Parliament elections, based on Article 17.7 of the Treaty on European Union), he espoused a vision of a 'political Commission' (Dawson, 2019; Kassim & Laffan, 2019). This was to set his Presidency apart from previous Commissions, whose Presidents had tended to downplay its political aspects (Kassim & Laffan, 2019; Tömmel, 2020). Kassim and Bocquillon (2019) referred to Juncker as espousing a 'programmatic presidential style', with strong political leadership, and with the President defining priorities.

Juncker implemented internal organizational reform to enact his vision of a political Commission (Bürgin, 2018a, 2020b; Kassim, 2017; Kassim et al., 2017). He highlighted ten priorities that were to guide all Commission activity. Juncker defined and developed the priorities for his Presidential term. He created a multi-layered, hierarchical organizational structure to oversee implementation of these priorities. He appointed five Vice-Presidents, who managed the priority teams, composed of several commissioners, and ensured that new initiatives were aligned with the priorities. Only initiatives that were assessed and recommended by one of the Vice-Presidents or by the First Vice-President (Frans Timmermans) would be considered. One of the ten priority areas called for 'a resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy' (see Table 3).

4.2.1. Evidence of institutional capacity for CPI

First, during Juncker's Presidency, the priority-setting already showed some degree of presidential political commitment to CPI, and an understanding of functional overlaps between climate change and a range of other policy areas (Domorenok et al., 2021; Dupont, 2016; see Tables 1 & 3). Political commitment was declared by assigning the climate issue to one of the ten priorities, but sustaining this commitment was challenging. Over the course of Juncker's Presidency, the EU faced several crises or turbulent situations (post-2008/2009 economic and euro crisis, migration crisis, and Brexit referendum), diverting political attention away from climate action (Dupont, Oberthür, & Biedenkopf, 2018; Skovgaard, 2014). An examination of the annual State of the European Union speeches delivered by Juncker to the Parliament shows limited but regular interest in advancing climate action, although he provided limited declaratory evidence in these speeches of an understanding of the integrated nature (or functional policy overlaps) of the challenge. From 2015 to 2017, Juncker's mentions of climate change focused on the EU's aim for global leadership in international climate governance. In his 2018 speech, he added words on the feasibility of the EU's internal climate and energy targets for 2030 (see Table 2), although still framed in the context of the EU taking responsibility globally and providing global climate leadership (Juncker, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018).

Second, in implementing the declared political commitment, questions were raised about Juncker's choice of Commissioner to oversee the climate and energy portfolios, particularly regarding the candidate's knowledge of the functional overlaps of his portfolios, his competencies, and his interests in the climate aspect of his role (see Table 3). Commissioner Cañete faced tough questioning in Parliament about his energy focus, commitment to tackling climate change and connections to the oil industry (Euractiv, 2014). His nomination was seen by some MEPs as an indication that the energy aspect took precedence. The Energy Union (European Commission, 2015) was a central part of the priority that included improving energy efficiency and renewable energy among five key objectives, but concrete climate or climate-integrated policy proposals took time to materialize (see Table 2).

Third, when it came to demonstrating political commitment by making integrated policy proposals, Juncker's record varied over the course of his tenure. Dealing with the

Table 3. Priority team connected to the goal of a 'resilient energy union with a forward-looking climate change policy', Juncker Presidency 2014–2019.

Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič			
<i>Directly connected policy portfolios</i>		<i>Indirectly connected policy portfolios</i>	
<i>Commissioner</i>	<i>Portfolio</i>	<i>Commissioner</i>	<i>Portfolio</i>
Miguel Arias Cañete	Climate action & energy	Věra Jourová	Justice, consumers & gender equality
Karmenu Vella	Environment, maritime affairs & fisheries	Pierre Moscovici	Economic & financial affairs, taxation & customs
Violeta Bulc	Transport	Marianne Thyssen	Employment, social affairs, skills & labour mobility
Phil Hogan	Agriculture & rural development	Margrethe Vestager	Competition
Johannes Hahn	European Neighbourhood Policy & enlargement negotiations	Cecilia Malmström	Trade
Carlos Moedas	Research, science & innovation	Mariya Gabriel	Digital economy & society

recovery from the euro crisis and the height of the migration crisis in 2015 left limited attention for climate change, especially in his first 2 years. Juncker also pursued a 'Better Regulation' agenda that aimed at identifying unnecessary or redundant EU policies. This agenda threatened certain established environmental policies, which revealed a lack of commitment or clear understanding of functional overlaps in practice, and which also partly explains the slow development of climate policy proposals in Juncker's early years (Burns & Tobin, 2020; Gravey & Jordan, 2019).

With the climate negotiations in Paris in December 2015, momentum for climate action started to build in the EU, but the Commission was not in the driving seat. In preparation for the Paris conference, the European Council adopted a target to reduce GHG emissions by 40% by 2030 (European Council, 2014), asking the Commission to begin preparations for policy proposals. The Commission, however, published its proposals for a climate and energy framework towards 2030 only after the Paris Agreement had been adopted (see Table 2). Even then, the policy proposals were seen as incremental steps forward that were hardly in line with the Paris Agreement, which set a global framework for action to limit global temperature increase to 1.5–2°C (Kulovesi & Oberthür, 2020). Furthermore, the objectives on renewable energy and energy efficiency were increased from the European Council's pre-Paris suggestions of 27% (European Council, 2014) to 32% and 32.5% during the negotiations between the Parliament and the Council. The Commission first followed the European Council position rather than pushed for more ambitious climate action through its agenda-setting power.

From about 2018, also coinciding with the rise of protests, such as Fridays for Future, there is more evidence of political commitment to climate action and CPI and also of compatible underlying policymaker beliefs (on the importance of CPI) and recognition of overlaps. The Commission launched a communication in 2018 that set out a long-term climate strategy, with the central goal of climate neutrality by 2050 (European Commission, 2018). This communication referred explicitly to the Paris Agreement goals, and to the latest scientific knowledge, to call for increased EU climate ambition and to approach the issue in a more systematic and integrated manner. While the communication proposed no changes to the 2030 framework and attached no concrete policy proposals, it helped set the discussion on the 2050 climate neutrality goal in motion (EC 21).

The organizational restructuring implemented at the beginning of Juncker's Presidency provides some evidence for the third and fourth driving factors (see Table 1). The restructuring created a focus on ten overarching priorities, including climate action, and required coordination across a range of policy portfolios. Coordination mechanisms were put in place or further developed, bringing together Commission officials at early stages of policy development (EC 22). In practice, these were at first insufficient for advancing CPI (EC 22; EP 1; EP 2), and the quality of the exchanges inside these coordination mechanisms remained questionable (EC 21; EP 2). But these mechanisms nevertheless helped develop new habits of internal consultation (EC 21; 22). By the end of Juncker's Presidency, these new habits were well-enough established that officials in the new von der Leyen Commission found themselves equipped to elaborate the overarching European Green Deal framework (Bloomfield & Steward, 2020; EC 22; European Commission, 2019).

But the hierarchical and centralized structures provided few incentives for innovative policy development by policy entrepreneurs at lower levels (Bürgin, 2018b; EC 21). Policy entrepreneurs had to overcome high barriers before their proposal could be considered. There were three main types of overlapping barriers. First, there were content-based barriers. Policy entrepreneurs were obliged to align their proposals with at least one of the priorities. Their agenda-setting ability was thus hampered, as unaligned proposals did not pass the many gatekeepers (heads of unit, Commissioners, Vice-Presidents, and First Vice-President Timmermans) (EC 21). Second, the threshold for network-building was raised. Entrepreneurs are often skilled at building coalitions or connecting to networks (Braun, 2009). However, in this organizational setting, entrepreneurs had to build a network internally across a very wide range of DGs, and across several hierarchical levels. They had to convince a higher number of actors, including the ‘right’ actors, or gatekeepers. Third, and as a consequence, entrepreneurs needed to demonstrate especially high degrees of political skill. Politically savvy policy entrepreneurs were therefore more likely to advance their proposals, while other creative or innovative integrating proposals that lacked a politically well-connected proponent, were more quickly set aside (EC 21).

5. Discussion

We set out to investigate whether or how different presidential leadership styles in the Commission advance internal institutional capacities for CPI. In particular, we focused on the leadership styles of Barroso, from 2004 to 2014, and of Juncker, from 2014 to 2019. Both Presidents have been characterized as providing a presidential leadership style, but they each have their own characteristics. Barroso retained a fairly flat hierarchical structure, albeit with strengthened services for the President through the Secretariat-General, while he also aimed for some Presidential oversight of policy development inside the Commission. Juncker implemented organizational reform that created new hierarchical layers that were intended to deliver on his promise of a political Commission. Policy development pursued 10 key priorities developed and overseen by the President’s office. This reform added new gatekeepers for internal policy development. As such, Barroso’s Presidency is characterized as more in line with a bottom-up leadership style while Juncker’s Presidency can be characterized as more in line with a top-down leadership style.

We find that the institutional capacity for CPI changed under the different leadership styles. We found variation in the institutional capacities for CPI as analyzed from the perspective of the four driving factors derived from literature and applied in our analysis: (1) political commitment to overarching climate objectives and to the necessity of implementing CPI; (2) recognition of functional overlaps and compatible beliefs among policymakers; (3) an opportunity structure for innovative policy development and policy entrepreneurship; (4) and meaningful coordination and consultation mechanisms.

Barroso offered overarching political commitment to climate objectives and to the necessity of implementing CPI to then allow policy entrepreneurs from the DGs and Cabinets to lead on implementation. Barroso was generally supportive of the overall policy-making direction within the wider strategic priorities of exercising EU leadership

in global climate change negotiations, especially leading up to the 2009 UN Climate Change summit in Copenhagen. Interviewees pointed towards general support, i.e. no objections, from Barroso with regards to the 2008 Renewable Energy Directive, greening the CAP and mainstreaming in the EU budget. Within these conducive framework conditions, policy entrepreneurs who possessed expert knowledge and the necessary political acumen had far-reaching autonomy in developing policy proposals, getting these adopted as the Commission's position and negotiating on behalf of the Commission with other EU institutions. This also meant that for CPI to progress, the presence of dedicated, expert policy entrepreneurs was crucial, as the example of the 2008 CAP Health Check highlights. The effectiveness of this institutional capacity for CPI is, however, limited as policy entrepreneurs had to 'fight every step along the way' to develop their ideas into adopted policy proposals. They encountered challenges with regards to other departments' opposition to integrating climate policy into 'their' policy areas (Koch & Lindenthal, 2011), conflicting beliefs and policy priorities, as evident, for example, in the biofuels controversy (Sharman & Holmes, 2010), and with regards to 'flying under the radar' of political and public attention, as in the case of the 2014–2020 EU budget.

Under Juncker's more top-down leadership style we see some political commitment; some recognition of functional overlaps; some developments in terms of coordination and consultation; and an organizational structure that hindered policy entrepreneurship from lower levels. There were variations over Juncker's term, with more evidence of political commitment and recognition of functional overlaps, together with compatible beliefs on action for climate, in the second half of his Presidency (from around 2018).

We highlight three main findings with regards to institutional capacity for CPI under Juncker. First, political commitment to climate action is present at least in a declaratory sense, but this is only variably translated into commitment for, or an awareness of, the necessity of CPI. Climate policy was elevated to the highest political level. It was pursued through a priority focus that further integrated the energy and climate portfolios under one Commissioner and connected directly with the portfolios of five other Commissioners (see Table 3). However, this finding needs to be nuanced by the change in broader commitment to climate action in the EU as Juncker's Presidency entered its final 2 years, which provided an opportunity for the Commission to advance on climate action. Second, Juncker's priority-setting exercise and organizational reform required coordination and consultation across DGs, aligned policy proposals with main priorities (which included climate action), but stifled opportunities for innovative policy proposals from individual policy entrepreneurs. This was owing to the many gatekeepers and higher thresholds for networking for policy entrepreneurs to thrive. Third, these new habits of coordination, combined with heightened political commitment and new recognition of overlaps, set the stage for enhanced institutional capacity in the Commission overall. This helped later in the development of the European Green Deal, an integrated overarching policy framework approach pursued by Juncker's successor, President Ursula von der Leyen (Bloomfield & Steward, 2020; Dupont, Oberthür, & von Homeyer, 2020; European Commission, 2019).

Taking both the Barroso and Juncker Presidencies together, we see that the presidential leadership style plays a role in advancing institutional capacity for CPI, but that the interaction among the factors remains unclear from our analysis. At

a minimum, evidence of some political commitment to climate action and to CPI, as well as recognition of functional overlaps and compatible policymaker beliefs allowed for CPI under both Presidencies. Under Barroso's bottom-up leadership, opportunities for policy entrepreneurship were key for advancing CPI. Under Juncker's top-down leadership, the inclusion of climate action in an overarching priority provided direction. But, over the course of the Juncker Presidency, the depth of political commitment to climate action and CPI was variable and the quality of interactions in the coordination mechanisms remained questionable, while under the Barroso Presidency, with policy entrepreneurs advancing CPI, the incompatibility of beliefs among policymakers at times hampered CPI. Therefore, it is unclear if the lack of policy entrepreneurial opportunities to advance CPI under the Juncker Presidency was offset by climate action being embedded in an overarching policy priority, for example. What seems likely, however, is that had climate action not been embedded in an overarching policy priority, Juncker's top-down leadership style would likely have not improved institutional capacities for CPI compared to Barroso, and could have rather dismantled some climate policy and CPI (Gravey & Jordan, 2019).

6. Conclusion

Our research shows that to understand CPI in the EU in general, it is important to investigate institutional capacity in the Commission, as a key EU agenda-setter. In particular, while much literature has focussed on horizontal coordination efforts across DGs to advance CPI, we suggest that a deeper investigation of the vertical dimension of institutional capacity for CPI is also necessary. Our paper contributes to filling this gap by focusing on the role of different presidential leadership styles for institutional capacity for CPI in the Commission.

While we do not come to a clear finding that one presidential leadership style is 'better' than the other to enhance institutional capacities for CPI, we have been able to highlight differences along four key factors that can form the basis for more detailed investigation, with new empirical data. At the time of writing in 2021, opportunities to gather rich, comparative data on institutional capacities for CPI in the Commission have grown. The Commission's European Green Deal, published under President von der Leyen (European Commission, 2019), demonstrates (at least on paper) top-level political commitment to CPI and outlines an integrative policy program that aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. The EU's declared response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that this commitment can be maintained, even in the face of crisis (Dupont et al., 2020). While much still remains to be seen in terms of implementation, our analysis suggests that von der Leyen's presidential leadership style will need to maintain high levels of political commitment, but will also need to foster an internal Commission environment that allows for CPI in practice, through enhanced institutional capacities for openness and awareness, strong and meaningful coordination, and opportunities for knowledgeable policy entrepreneurs to pursue potentially innovative integrative proposals. Avenues for future research include assessing how the von der Leyen Commission fares, thus adding rich empirical data, and elucidating the interaction among factors for CPI.

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