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## Expertise in EU policy-making

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## **1 Introduction**

The role that expert knowledge plays in shaping public policy has gained increasing attention, both in academic and public debate. As societies have become increasingly complex, specialized and interdependent, the need for advanced expertise to address policy problems has increased (Haas 1992). This has also highlighted the place of expert knowledge in democracy. In a democracy, citizens not only have a right to be represented, heard and take part in writing their own laws; they also have a right to policies that are based on knowledge and facts (Mansbridge et al. 2012). How to balance government on democracy and on knowledge remains a longstanding and unsettled issue in politics (Lord 2021: 56). The role of expert knowledge in policy-making is multifaceted, and the embeddedness of expertise in the political order varies considerably between governance systems and levels. Moreover, the legitimacy of expertise in public policy-making is contested, as illustrated most recently by the distrust in science and experts among parts of the population during the coronavirus pandemic.

This chapter looks into the role of expertise in the European Union political order, focusing on the EU executive. Experts are linked to all types of institutions that constitute a political order, be it parliaments, courts, political parties and press/media. Yet, the by far most significant channel for including expert knowledge in public policy-making is the organized link between executive institutions and expertise and the way that experts are positioned within and outside executive bureaucracies. In the case of the European Union, this focuses the attention on the expertise inside the European Commission and the EU agencies, and on the institutional mechanisms that these European bodies rely on for expert knowledge, such as European Commission expert groups, stakeholder consultations, European networks of experts or commissioned evaluation studies.

In this chapter, we examine the specific organization of expert knowledge in the EU executive and the role of expertise in shaping European public policy, and how this can be seen as a reflection of the peculiar institutional context for political decision-making at the European level. We start by presenting key debates about the role of expert knowledge in society and politics, and about the specific significance of expertise in international and European governance. We then survey the internal and external mechanisms through which the EU executive incorporates expert knowledge in policy-making. We end by discussing avenues for future research on expertise and policy-making in the EU.

## **2 Expertise and governance**

*Knowledge society, knowledge economy and... knowledge democracy?*

The idea that governing should be enlightened by knowledge has been a recurring theme in political thought. In Europe, education has been essential for nation building and identity formation (Soysal & Strang 1989). State formation has implied developing a centralized school system to provide skills and competences for national labour markets and public institutions, as a means of socialization into national cultures and to instill common national language standards and value sets, the belief in rationality and enlightenment, supporting the idea of a cognitive societal pact (Hernes 2021). The post-war period has seen a formidable transition towards ‘the knowledge society’ or ‘the knowledge economy’. Scientific and formal knowledge has become central in the working of political, social and economic systems. During recent decades, knowledge production has grown exponentially, expanding dramatically the pool of specialized knowledge potentially of

relevance for the political system and for the economic system, for public policy and the public sphere. The sharp increase in the level of educational attainment is a major societal transformation.

While ‘knowledge economies’ and ‘knowledge society’ as terms have for a long time been part of the standard vocabulary ‘–knowledge democracy’ is much less of an established concept (In’t Veldt 2010), even though the knowledge-basis may be as important for democratic governance as it is for economic competitiveness and societal transformation (Christensen, Holst and Gornitzka 2017). Despite the centrality of knowledge surprisingly little systematic scholarly attention has been attributed to investigating the implications for politics and policy-making. For instance, national approaches to organizing and governing the production and use of knowledge have until recently not been modelled into the scholarship on welfare state development or varieties of capitalism (for example Busemeyer & Iversen, 2012; Esping-Andersen, 2009). Similarly, studies of Europeanization have paid little attention to how institutions that provide decision-makers with expert knowledge have become Europeanized (Christensen and Holst 2021: 8).

### *Knowledge regimes*

In order to discuss the main characteristics of the relationship between experts within a given governance system, we therefore draw on the recent work on ‘knowledge regimes’ (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). A knowledge regime can be understood as the range of organizations and institutions that produce and disseminate policy-relevant knowledge and how these organizations and institutions are governed. The concept directs our attention to “the organizational and institutional machinery that produces ideas, data, research and policy recommendations and other ideas that influence the public debate and policy development” (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014: 3). The notion of knowledge regimes points to the *multitude* of institutions involved in the provision

of policy-relevant knowledge and how these institutions *vary across polities*, making the concept useful for examining the specific characteristics of the linkages between expertise and executives in EU policy-making.

Campbell and Pedersen emphasize a particular set of knowledge-producers, namely the ‘policy research organizations’ occupying the space between the academic sphere and the political-administrative system (e.g. think tanks, applied research institutes). However, the knowledge regime concept can safely be extended to also encompass the role of knowledge institutions (e.g. universities) and executive bureaucracies in the production of expertise for policy-making (Christensen and Holst 2021). Knowledge shapes world-views, organizations, participatory patterns and problem-solving capacity in executive bureaucracies, and having a sound knowledge basis is a prerequisite for policy quality – and the ‘quality of government’ more broadly – as well as for political support and legitimacy (Rothstein, 2011). Fukuyama (2014) argues that historically state capacity is built on professional technical expertise. State bureaucracies may have the will and loyalty to carry out collective decisions or the principal’s wishes, but they may not be able to do so if they lack relevant knowledge, competence and technical ability (Fukuyama 2014: 509).

In other words, it is crucial to understand both what expert capacities executives possess in-house and the entire landscape of knowledge-producing institutions that executives draw on for research and advice. Key dimensions of a knowledge regime are thus how education and research are organized and financed, to what extent expertise is located within executive institutions versus provided by outside bodies (Craft and Howlett 2013) and the degree of executive control over expert bodies and policy research (Hesstvedt and Christensen 2021), and to what extent the production of policy knowledge is open to interest groups and citizens.

### *Knowledge in international and European governance*

That expert knowledge plays a crucially important role in policy-making at the international level was firmly established by Peter M. Haas in his seminal article on epistemic communities (Haas 1992). International governance often involves profound uncertainty and complex interdependencies, giving rise to a need among decision-makers for expert knowledge to interpret problems, define state interests and outline relevant policy solutions. The rapidly growing literature on international organizations as bureaucracies similarly sees expertise as one of the most important sources of the influence, autonomy and authority of international bureaucracies (Barnett and Finnemore 1999; Littoz-Monnet 2017). International organizations are particularly influential when they draw on independent expert sources to provide information that is scarce and valuable to their member states, which provides them with leeway for action and autonomy from states and other international actors.

Expertise is also often seen to play a crucial role in the EU governance system, partly driven by generic features of international policy-making but also due to specific characteristics of the EU. One important rationale is that the EU mostly engages in regulatory policy-making, in which technical expertise is a crucial resource (Majone 1996, Radaelli 1999). Moreover, the EU's direct democratic legitimacy is limited, giving rise to the EU's much-discussed democratic deficit. This has led to a focus on expert knowledge as an alternative way to achieve legitimacy, and to a priority of output above input legitimacy (Scharpf 1999). In terms of institutional context, the role of expertise has also been shaped by the emerging EU executive order, with the European Commission political leadership and administration, the growth of semi-independent EU-level agencies and elaborate EU committee governance (Trondal 2010). This peculiar executive order

sets the EU apart from other international organizations on the one hand and from national institutional structures on the other hand.

However, like other IOs, the EU does not dispose over its own education and research institutions. This is a defining characteristic of the EU knowledge regime. Education systems are a national prerogative with national funding and legislation. The EU does not have a regulatory role to play in governing knowledge institutions, with the exception of mutual recognition of professional degrees. European school systems are nationally sensitive and national differences in structure constitute a case of what Scharpf (2003) refers to as “legitimate national diversity”. Nonetheless, growing funds allocated by the EU since the 1980s to educational cooperation, such as the establishment of the ERASMUS mobility program (Chou and Gornitzka 2018), has been an important element of the EU’s emerging knowledge regime. The same goes for research institutions in Europe, where there is considerable international and transnational cooperation. The framework programs have expanded in scope and size and made a strong impact on European science. The main bulk of the framework programs increasingly expected research to contribute to major societal challenges and be tightly coupled to the EU’s policy issues, as well. Still, the EU executive relies heavily on national knowledge systems and expertise within member state knowledge institutions or professional capacity within member state administrations. As we will see, this is a fundamental feature of many of the mechanisms for including knowledge in EU policy-making.

At the same time, we do see the contours of an EU knowledge regime proper in the expansion of technical expertise within the EU administration, in the development of multiple institutional mechanisms for generating policy research and expert advice to support policy-making in the European Commission, and in the growing field of consultancies and think tanks



supplying policy-relevant knowledge to European policy-makers. In the following sections, we discuss the different institutions of the EU knowledge regime in turn.

### **3 Expertise in the European Commission and EU agencies**

#### *The European Commission*

We first examine the EU executive's in-house expert capacities. Starting with the European Commission, the literature presents two seemingly contradictory images of the position of expert knowledge within the Commission bureaucracy.

On the one hand, it is frequently claimed that the Commission is a technocratic and expert-driven organization. For instance, Radaelli asserts that the Commission's engagement in regulatory policy has made knowledge the key resource in the organization, and that the Commission "recognizes expertise as the sole basis for authority and power" (Radaelli 1999, 758). Boswell similarly argues that the legitimacy of the Commission is based on expertise: "the institutional structure of the Commission [implies] a strong propensity to value knowledge as a source of legitimation" (Boswell 2008, 472).

Many works about the Commission describe its officials as "well-educated", "highly trained" and having "a reputation for technical expertise" (Ellinas and Suleiman 2012, 25–26, 52; Kassim et al. 2013, 39). In a large survey of Commission officials, Kassim and colleagues find that 70 per cent of officials have a postgraduate degree (i.e. a Master's degree or higher). Most officials have their highest educational degree in economics or business (29 per cent), followed by technical and natural sciences (26 per cent), law (24 per cent), political and social sciences (15 per cent) and arts and humanities (5 per cent) (Kassim et al. 2013, 39-41). Some Commission

departments have a strong concentration of a particular type of expertise, such as the Legal Service (92 per cent have legal education) and DG Economic and Financial Affairs (87 per cent have training in economics/business). The Commission also has an in-house research department, the Joint Research Centre (JRC). The JRC is composed mostly of researchers from the hard sciences and carries out research in fields such as innovation, energy and transport, and nuclear safety. The JRC is also responsible for promoting the use of knowledge in policy formulation within the European Commission (Topp et al. 2018).

The higher education of Commission civil servants thus constitutes one important link between universities and the EU executive, which can serve as a conveyor belt for knowledge and policy ideas from academia. Moreover, through the system of nationally seconded experts the Commission “borrows” on a temporary basis the expertise of member states professionals, most often drawn from corresponding departments in national ministries or agencies. These seconded officials mostly act according to their role as experts and organizational affiliation within the Commission rather than as national representatives (Trondal 2010: 100-101).

On the other hand, various studies challenge the view of the Commission as an expert-driven organization. In a comparative study, Trondal and colleagues find that expert roles are much less prominent in the European Commission than in the secretariats of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In the Commission, hierarchy trumps expertise and officials “do not identify with their scholarly discipline” (Trondal et al. 2010, 167). Other studies point to the increasing predominance of generalist skills over specialized expertise within the organization. Not only have new staff mobility rules in the Commission requiring senior civil servants to regularly change positions made generalists more attractive than specialized experts for recruitment (Ban 2010, 18) and for

promotion to senior positions (Wille 2013, 129). The open recruitment competitions to the EU bureaucracy (the *concours*) have also put increasing emphasis on generalist skills, e.g. the ability to analyze, communicate and work in a multicultural environment, over specialist credentials such as advanced academic degrees (Christensen 2015). These recruitment and staff policies may not only make it more difficult for candidates with specialist expertise to be selected and promoted; they may also lead Commission civil servants to put less emphasis on their academic knowledge relative to other competences when carrying out their tasks. This de-emphasizing of specialist expertise can partly be attributed to the recurring need to recruit officials from new member states into the Commission, which has entailed a greater emphasis on the ability of staff to fit into the organization than on their expert knowledge (Christensen et al. 2017).

A perspective that can possibly reconcile these two competing images is that the Commission has become more of a political secretariat, focused on its ‘core tasks’ of policy formulation (Trondal 2010, 129) and reliant on other bodies for technical expertise. This would imply a lower demand for specialized experts in-house and a growing interest in all-round administrators who are more attuned to the political aspects of the policy process. Technical tasks and expert functions are increasingly carried out outside the permanent Commission bureaucracy, most notably in EU agencies but also through European Commission expert groups and other expert advice mechanisms. We now turn to these other institutions in the EU knowledge regime.

### *EU regulatory agencies*

Recent decades have seen the creation of a large number of EU agencies with regulatory tasks in fields such as medicines, food safety, chemicals and environmental regulation. The explicit justification for the establishment of EU regulatory agencies is that they provide independent

expertise, which allows them to deliver effective solutions to shared problems (Majone 1996; Busuioac and Rimkute 2020). EU regulatory agencies usually have specialized and technical tasks. For instance, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) is in charge of assessing the safety and effectiveness of vaccines in the EU, among other things, and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is responsible for controlling that foodstuffs do not contain chemicals that are harmful to people's health. The work of these regulatory agencies thus involves detailed technical research and assessments requiring specialized knowledge in medicine, chemistry, engineering, biology, economics, and so on. Through the work of EU agencies, scientific knowledge can have considerable influence on EU decisions and national policy, as illustrated for instance by the role played by EMA's scientific evaluation of vaccines in shaping vaccine policies in the EU countries. In other words, EU regulatory agencies have become key institutions in the EU knowledge regime.

In addition to their in-house expertise, EU agencies can draw on the expertise located in national regulatory agencies. Through the creation of EU agencies and European networks of regulatory agencies, national agencies have become integrated into a 'European executive order' and increasingly oriented towards EU agencies and peer agencies in other European countries, and towards the European Commission as a principal (Trondal 2010; Egeberg and Trondal 2016). This has led to the formation of epistemic communities of staff in national and European agencies, who share a professional background and sector-specific expertise (Vestlund 2017). European agency networks have thus stimulated the pooling of knowledge and information resources and a division of labor between different national agencies and the relevant EU agency. This illustrates one of the most important characteristics of the EU knowledge regime, namely the pooling of expertise capacities from member state institutions.

#### **4 Mechanisms for external expert advice to the EU executive**

The Commission and EU agencies are multinational administrations working with limited in-house resources and with knowledge-intensive tasks. This means that they rely on external expertise from a wide range of sources. We examine some of the external mechanisms the EU executive relies on to generate research, analysis and expert advice to support policy-making.

##### *Expert groups<sup>i</sup>*

The use of expert groups is a main organized system through which the executives' administrations open the policy process to expert knowledge of various kinds. The Commission has developed a wide range of such groups and they are an important element of the EU knowledge regime. This system is a key way in which the European administrative system extends beyond the Commission, and in how it incorporates outside actors in developing, monitoring, and implementing European policies. The limited administrative resources available at the EU level can be compensated by establishing and drawing on groups and committees where participants are employed elsewhere and serve as committee members on a temporary and often informal basis.

The composition of expert groups tells us what type of expertise the Commission or EU agencies seek. Who participates in this part of the EU knowledge regime? Expert groups in their main constellation seek the expertise of their sectoral counterparts at the national level, i.e. national civil servants are the main group of participants. National administrations/competent authorities in the member states are a repository of technical/professional expertise in highly specialized areas. Expert groups are a flexible way of tapping into this pool of specialized, expert knowledge. In fact, a study of the over 1200 expert groups that the Commission DGs organized at

the turn of the century, showed that over 80 per cent of the groups included member state civil servants (Gornitzka and Sverdrup 2011). Such organized interaction among national officials is not merely a question of tapping information and knowledge. It is important for sounding out proposals among the member states, creating ownership of proposals and helping the Commission's proposals through the EU decision-making process. Several of these expert groups are also channels for feedback on the domestic implementation of EU policy.

In addition to the omnipresence of national civil servants, academics and scientists are frequently invited into expert groups to act in their "own personal capacity". Scientists are involved in about one out of three expert groups under the European Commission, but they are rarely the only participants in such groups, i.e. there are relatively few "pure science groups" (Gornitzka and Sverdrup 2011). Scientists/academics take part in committee work together with other types of actors, primarily when societal actors are involved and to a lesser extent when national officials take part. Access for scientists is more likely in the early stage of policy formulation. This organized nexus between the European executive and scientists underlines the European executive as epistemic, scientized space, where scientists and academics contribute to shaping the content of policy proposals more than being part of monitoring the implementation of policy.

Expert groups also house non-state "stakeholders" – i.e. different types of civil society organizations, and business and other societal actors. Stakeholders are present both in the European Commission's groups and in committees connected to EU agencies. This is a two-way transmission belt for both interests, knowledge and information (Bouwen, 2002; Broscheid and Coen, 2007). Some studies have also suggested that stakeholder organizations are undergoing a process of expertization, since access to venues such as expert groups and influence within

committees relies on mustering specialized, technical knowledge in order to be heard and be credible (Gornitzka and Krick 2018).

Stakeholder committees are also appearing in connection with the rise of EU agencies. A study of EU agency stakeholder bodies concludes that stakeholder bodies are established because they are legally mandatory, although voluntary set-ups are also common (Busuioc and Jevnaker 2020). Their actual composition is not strictly regulated, but reflects more the preferences of the “mother” EU agency. With the establishment of such structures, EU agencies have been opened up to societal and interest group input. Yet, as with Commission’s expert group system, this set of stakeholder groups is heterogeneous, both in function, form and composition (Busuioc and Jevnaker 2020: 10-11). These aspects of the committee system bring to the fore the neo-corporatist element in the EU knowledge regime.

As concerns the use of policy advice from expert groups and committees, the results are mixed. Rimkutė and Haverland (2015) find that scientific contributors to expert committees think that the EU executive predominantly uses scientific expertise in an instrumental mode. Other studies have pointed to the use of expert advice as political ammunition. Littoz-Monnet (2020) argues that Ethics committees are used politically under the guise of technical content and in so doing other voices are excluded from the decision making process. Chalmers (2015) makes the case for expert groups being captured by strong business interests. Metz (2015: 17) concludes her study of Commission expert groups by pointing to the dual motivation that shape how the Commission uses such expertise: DGs use expert groups to find technically *and* politically efficient proposals. The latter implies a search for policies that are politically feasible. In other words, the role of policy advice generated by committee work at the EU level is diverse and as yet our understanding of the conditions under which these multiple roles are activated, remains immature.

### *Stakeholder consultations*

Beyond expert groups and committees, the Commission and the EU agencies gather information and knowledge from stakeholders through other mechanisms such as public consultations and individual meetings. These mechanisms of course allow interest groups and other participants to voice their preferences but also serve as conduits for policy-relevant knowledge and information (Arras and Braun 2018). Expertise serves as ‘access goods’ for interest groups, which can be exchanged for access to policy-makers and potentially policy influence (Bouwen 2004). For instance, it has been shown that interest groups that have a higher capacity to provide policy expertise and technical information have greater access to Commission officials through individual meetings (Albareda 2020).

### *European networks of experts*

Another mechanism the Commission uses to generate expert information and analysis is to establish and fund European networks of experts. Networks of experts have been set up on topics such as gender and discrimination policy, labor law, social protection and inclusion, social security coordination and free movement of workers (e.g. European Commission 2021). These networks are usually composed of national experts from each member state, who are often academics but can also be national civil servants, and coordinated by consultancy firms and/or universities. The networks deliver expertise to the Commission by providing regular updates about national legal or policy developments, by writing larger reports on defined topics and by offering *ad hoc* analytical support when the Commission needs urgent advice, for instance regarding the compatibility of a new national policy measure with EU law. This mechanism thus offers the Commission access to



highly specialized expertise that it does not possess in-house and that allows it to monitor national developments as a basis for EU-level policy initiatives and infringement procedures.

### *Commissioned evaluation studies*

Furthermore, the EU bureaucracy commissions a large number of external studies to appraise policy options and to evaluate existing programs, which are usually carried out by private consultancies or academics/research institutes. On the one hand, the Commission is obliged to provide impact assessments (IAs) of the policies it proposes. Impact assessments appraise the effects of a policy for different sectors of the economy, for the environment, etc. The Commission's has a well-institutionalized system of impact assessments (Radaelli and Meuwese 2010). Often, the Commission asks consultancies to conduct *ex ante* evaluation studies of policy options as a basis for its impact assessments (De Francesco 2018). On the other hand, the Commission is required to evaluate *ex post* the effects of its programs. As much as 80 per cent of these evaluations are contracted out, fostering an evaluation industry of private consultancies and public research institutes (Højlund 2015).

Commissioning analyses from private consultancies raises questions about the independence of the expertise delivered. Unlike external academic advisers, consultants are not committed to scientific norms of independence and objectivity but rather see themselves as providing services to a client. Relying on consultants rather than academics for expert input therefore makes it easier for the Commission to control what kind of advice it receives, since they as client can steer the process and make sure the report steers clear of sensitive topics and policy options not favored by the Commission (e.g. De Francesco 2018).

### *Think tanks*

A final source of external expertise in EU policy-making is think tanks. Think tanks are organizations that seek to influence the policy-making process based on expertise and analysis (Rich 2004). Compared to other expertise providers, think tanks are typically more oriented towards current policy debates and more accessible publications and events aimed at policy-makers and other professionals. And they typically bundle and package insights from research rather than carrying out extensive research on their own. In the EU, a plethora of think tanks have sprung up to provide the EU institutions with politically relevant advice (Kelstrup 2018). In particular, the deepening of European integration in the 1980s led to the formation of a community of think tanks in Brussels offering EU policy-makers specialist knowledge and policy ideas, including think tanks such as the Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the European Policy Centre (EPC). While some think tanks resemble research institutes and provide knowledge-based advice, other think tanks rather use knowledge to promote ideological or partisan goals, which inevitably raises questions about the objectivity and independence of the expertise offered.

## **5 Conclusion and future research**

This chapter has provided an overview of how expert knowledge is incorporated into European public policy-making through the EU executive. The peculiar organization of the nexus between expertise and policy-making in the EU can be seen as the result of a fundamental tension faced by the Union. On the one hand, the complexity and interdependence of the issues addressed by EU policies and the regulatory character of EU policy-making give rise to an almost boundless need for advanced expert knowledge. This is compounded by the fact that the EU given its limited direct

democratic legitimacy relies predominantly on its output legitimacy – that is, effective solutions based on expertise. On the other hand, the EU has limited capacities to generate expert knowledge on its own. The EU does not dispose over its own education and research institutions, like national governments do. And the European Commission has severely limited in-house expert resources.

For the EU executive, the answer to this conundrum has been to develop a series of institutional mechanisms for ‘borrowing expertise’ from member state administrations and national scientific experts. This is visible across the EU knowledge regime, from the seconded national experts who work temporarily in the Commission and the many member state administrators who are involved in Commission expert groups, via how EU agencies tap into the technical knowledge of national agencies through European agency networks, to European networks of experts where academics from each member state offer analysis of national policy or legal developments.

Importantly, these mechanisms for drawing on expertise are not ephemeral; they have become a regular and integral part of policy-making in the EU. Put differently, these mechanisms have become *institutionalized* over time, contributing to the formation of an EU knowledge regime proper. Through this process, experts from member state administrations, research institutions and NGOs have become increasingly tied into EU policy-making, with allegiances and attention gradually shifting from the national towards the European level. This Europeanization dynamic has been well described in the work on the emerging EU executive order, where for instance national agency officials are increasingly oriented towards EU agencies and the European Commission (Egeberg and Trondal 2016). Yet, it is also visible for national experts who participate in European Commission expert groups or networks of experts, or even for academics who are

increasingly oriented towards research funding from the EU's Framework Program for research and innovation, and with it The European Research Council (Christensen and Holst 2021).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the EU's knowledge regime is not merely a technical or scientific problem-solving instrument. Several of these institutional mechanisms also contribute to resolving political and inter-institutional conflicts, as well as to building legitimacy for EU policy-making. For instance, the extensive involvement of member state administrators in European Commission expert groups helps the Commission gather information about member state positions and to bring member states on board with new policy initiatives (Gornitzka and Sverdrup 2011). Expert groups may also be used strategically to give the impression that Commission proposals are based on independent expert advice (Littoz-Monnet 2020).

While existing studies offer valuable insights, research on expertise in EU policy-making remains a scattered collection of studies rather than a coherent body of literature. Thinking about the multiple institutional mechanisms for generating research and expert advice for policy-making as a knowledge regime can offer some order to this important line of research, and points to some important questions for future research. First, how does the peculiar *organization* of the EU's knowledge regime affect the role conceptions and behavior of the scientists, administrators and stakeholders involved, and how does it condition the impact of expert knowledge on policy-making and the content of EU policies? Second, to what extent and how do political leaders and EU bureaucrats *control* commissioned research and expert advice, and how does this vary across institutional mechanisms and across departments (cf. Hesstvedt and Christensen 2021)? Third, and most fundamentally, who holds the *greatest power and influence* in this system – Commission bureaucrats who order and choose between expert advice, the experts who provide specialized

knowledge, the interest groups whom policy-makers rely on for information, or rather member states as the ultimate sources of research and analysis capacities?

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<sup>i</sup> The following paragraphs build on summaries in Gornitzka and Sverdrup 2008; 2011; 2015