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**Breaking Down the Monolith: The European Commission as a Multi-  
Organisation:**

**EC Policy-Making in the Social Policy and IT Sectors**

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## **Abstract:**

The underlying theme of this paper is that to properly understand the process of European integration, it is vital to understand the dynamics of the European policy-making process and the crucial role of the European Commission within this process.

Until recently most theories of policy-making in the EC have focussed on the dominant role of national governments. However, this approach is unable to account for the continual increase in Community legislation where there has been national opposition to EC intervention. The Commission of the EC, acting within the many constraints upon it, has played an important role in shaping the environment in which policies are developed, in justifying a role for the EC, mobilising support for its action, and in selecting the types of policy intervention pursued by the EC.

The Commission, like all bureaucracies, is not a monolithic unit. It is made up of a multiplicity of Directorate-Generals, policy units and task forces, many of which consider their role to be quite discrete from that of the other units. Yet there has been little attempt to study the internal functioning of the various units within the Commission and the effects of the many, potentially conflictual, organisational cultures upon the policy-making process and ultimately upon the process of European integration.

In this paper the internal dynamics of the policy-making process within the European Commission in two directorates (DGV(Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs) and DGXIII (Telecommunications, Information Industries and Innovation)) are explored. The differences and similarities in the ways in which these DG's have succeeded in influencing their respective policy sectors, the various constraints upon them, and their relationships with important sectoral actors are examined. The importance of the language of justification is highlighted, and the extent to which this has altered over time in both policy areas as new "buzz words" come into fashion is examined.

It is argued that a vital characteristic of the Commission's ability to influence any policy sector is its ability to respond rapidly to any "windows of opportunity", ripe for EC intervention, or indeed to facilitate the appearance of these windows. The means required to achieve this end, and the degree of success they meet, vary, however, from sector to sector.

## Introduction

In this paper, at least one half of the central theme of this conference is addressed – namely, the uniting of empirical and policy research with revitalised theory, in the area of European Integration. It is argued that a crucial gap in the work of integration theorists is the neglect of the importance of the policy-making process itself, and of the influence of Community institutions within this process, in facilitating progress towards European integration. A result of this neglect has been a lack of detailed research into the internal functioning of individual EC institutions, and of their influence on the process of European integration.

Somewhat less emphasis is placed in the paper on the location of the research in the "post-1992 and Maastricht" period. Rather, it is suggested that, in many respects, the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty, simply represent the codification of (and occasionally the reinforcement of) trends and norms already established via the policy-making process. Concentrating on Treaty-based landmarks, it is suggested, leads to an over-emphasis on the dominant role of national governments in the integration process. This, in turn, leads to a neglect of the impact of the day to day work of policy-makers and bureaucrats in influencing the environment in which decisions on Treaty formulation and ratification are taken. As Allison argued, "different conceptual lenses lead analysts to different judgements about what is relevant and important" (1971: 253). For example, viewed from a traditional perspective, in which national governments are considered to be the dominant actors in Community policy-making, the pressing question of the moment must be whether the Maastricht Treaty will finally be ratified by the member states and thus whether its provisions will ultimately enter into force. Viewed from a different conceptual angle, which takes into account the institutional dimension of policy-making, a more salient question might be whether non-ratification would, in fact, make a significant difference to the actual policies promoted by the Commission, or whether ratification would simply make justification of these policies

simpler and their passage through the decision-making process somewhat quicker and smoother?

The main thesis of this paper is that the policy-making process, and the policies which emerge from this process, have in themselves a fundamental impact on the integration process. National governments retain the upper-hand in Community decision-making. However, as Allison noted, "treating national governments as if they were centrally coordinated, purposive individuals provides a useful shorthand for understanding problems of policy. But this simplification – like all simplifications – obscures as well as reveals. In particular, it obscures the persistently neglected fact of bureaucracy: the "maker" of government policy is not one calculating decisionmaker but is rather a conglomerate of large organisations and political actors" (Allison, 1971:3). The role of the Community institutions is a crucial element in explaining the way in which policy agendas are set, the shape in which proposals are presented for approval by national governments, the means by which policy intervention is justified, the type of policy instruments which are selected for policy implementation (see Cram & Richardson, forthcoming 1993) , and the way that support is mobilised for EC Action. In order to comprehend the dynamics of European integration, the activities of the European Commission, in particular, and the reinforcement of these activities by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), deserve critical attention.

The importance of bureaucratic politics in Community policy-making has begun to be recognised (Peters, 1992), and there have been a few attempts to examine the influence of the Commission in particular policy sectors (Majone, 1989a; 1991; 1992a; 1992b, Cram, 1993, Edwards and Spence, forthcoming). There has, however, been little attempt to break down the image of the Commission as a monolithic unit, and to examine the internal dynamics of the policy process within the Commission itself. Yet, it has long been acknowledged that, when looked at closely, "an agency that appears to be a single organisation with a single will turns out to be

several suborganisations with different wills" (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973:92). Indeed, different Directorates-General within the Commission have developed very different working practices and have, on occasion, established quite opposing relationships with important sectoral actors. The relative influence which the Commission exerts on the policy process may differ in nature and in effect, from sector to sector, according, not least, to the range of other interests involved, to the structural instruments available to it, and to the extent to which its actions are supported or even extended by the activities of the Court of Justice.

The policies which ultimately emerge from the policy-making process, in turn, determine the environment in which future policies are promulgated. As Vickers (1965: 29) has argued, "policy-making assumes, expresses and helps to create a whole system of human values". More and more policies are emerging at EC level and various interests are increasingly being drawn into the Community policy process (Mazey and Richardson, 1993). Those involved in this process, and thus in constant interaction with one another and with the Commission, are increasingly likely to develop a shared set of assumptions and values, even a common set of aspirations and, most importantly perhaps, a common belief in the importance of the EC as a forum through which to press their demands. As demands are increasingly articulated and negotiated at the EC level, and as the number of bodies whose sole *raison d'être* is to press for European responses to national or sectoral problems continues to proliferate, it becomes more and more difficult to envisage a reversion to previous nation-state-centred behaviour patterns. Ironically, however, it is not only support for EC action which ensures the centrality of the EC in the minds of policy-makers and affected interests. As Galtung (1973: 25) argued, opposition to the EC in itself only reinforces its position as an important actor. The central importance of the EC in policy debates is likely to be strengthened further as opposing interests begin to organise on a trans-national basis

Some of the factors which have influenced the activities of two of the Directorates-General, within the European Commission, are examined here, that of DGV (Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs) and that of DGXIII (Telecommunications, Information Industry and Innovation)<sup>1</sup>. In both of these policy sectors, national governments have strongly opposed the extension of Community competence. Thus, traditional state-centred approaches to EC policy-making offer little insight into the reasons for the evident progress which has been made in these policy areas. In the area of social policy, national governments have traditionally opposed any attempt to upset the carefully established "truces" which have evolved at the national level. In Information and Communication Technology (IT), the policy of European governments has historically been one of protecting and promoting their national champions industries. Although the two policy areas have attracted very different constellations of influential actors (for or against EC action), in both areas European Community legislation is having an increasing impact. Observing the activities within different Directorates of the Commission may, moreover, enable us to gain a better insight into the way in which different bodies within the Commission can learn from one another and may transfer models of policy innovation from sector to sector, or adopt similar justificatory rationales, albeit in a modified form.

### **"Purposeful Opportunism" and the Commission as Policy Entrepreneur**

The expansionist tendency of bureaucracies generally has long been acknowledged (see Downs, 1967). Moreover, the European Commission is a bureaucracy with some special features which may reinforce this general tendency. Endowed with the sole right of initiative in the Community, equipped with a range of important structural powers, and the support of a Court of Justice which is also

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<sup>1</sup>Elsewhere I have examined in detail the work of both of these directorates and the impact they have had upon the policy process the areas of social policy (Cram, 1993) and ICT policy (Cram, Moon and Richardson, forthcoming). In this paper, therefore, I concentrate on the factors which have led to differences in the activities of the two DGs, rather than detailing their activities exhaustively.

integrationist in outlook, the Commission plays a vital role in Community policy-making. Yet, the Commission operates under a number of significant constraints. It may formally act only within the parameters allowed to it by its member states – where it has been empowered to do so, either on the basis of the Treaties or via Council decisions. For example, it could not possibly survive a clash with the major industrial interests of the Community without the firm support of its member states or where action is based on firm legal principles enforceable by the Court of Justice.

While the European Commission is often characterised, by opponents of its activities, as a monstrous bureaucracy with ever lengthening tentacles, the Commission is, in fact, relatively small and is not well resourced. That the Commission would be able to ride roughshod over the interests of its opponents, (which invariably include at least one member state) or manage to impose its own priorities in an impositional style, appears unlikely. Indeed, the Commission has encountered serious difficulties in the past when it has tried to adopt an overly impositional approach. Requiring the support of its member states for most actions, and lacking the range of traditional instruments which national governments have traditionally employed as incentives or as sanctions against interests, the Commission has learned to make adept use of its crucial functional role in the policy-making process. It has learned to respond to opportunities for action as they present themselves, and even to facilitate the emergence of these opportunities. Much of the activity of the European Commission might well be interpreted as an attempt to gradually expand the scope of Community competence without alienating national governments or powerful sectoral interests. The Commission, acting as what can be described as a "purposeful opportunist" (Klein & O'Higgins, 1985:227), has employed a variety of techniques aimed at expanding the scope of Community competence, and the extent of its own scope for action. This has taken place even where the justification for EC intervention has been extremely tenuous. How this opportunism has manifested itself has necessarily, however, varied from sector to sector.

## **The European Commission as a Multi-Organisation**

Hood and Dunsire (1981:13) have noted that "bureaucracy is only monolithic when seen from afar...each [department] has its own type of internal configuration, not quite like any other; its own tasks, its own style, even perhaps its own 'ways of thinking'." While there are a variety of ways in which the Commission might influence the policy process, the constraints upon, and opportunities for, Commission action vary between policy sectors. In the areas of both social policy and IT, the Commission has been forced to tread carefully.

In the early stages of the Community, for example, despite the weak legal basis for action in the social field, the Commission took a broad interpretation of its role in the field of social policy. This was soon to be curtailed. The "head on" approach of the Commission, and national governments' fear of the threat to their sovereignty, led, in the 1960's to total impasse between the Member States and the Commission (Holloway, 1981: 55). The Commission, reluctant to clash with the Council again, has since adopted a notably more circumspect approach in the social field. Lacking the political authority to provide effective leadership, without the support of the member states, and learning from this past experience, the Commission has increasingly learned to expand its powers through the manipulation of its skills as a bureaucracy. In the social field, the Commission has learned to make use of "the incremental development of marginal, relatively innocuous measures in order to establish precedent and competence"(Spicker, 1991: 9).

Commission attempts to create a Community IT sector have been equally fraught with difficulties. Apart from nuclear power, covered by the Euratom Treaty, and coal and steel, covered by the Treaty of Paris, there was no specific legal basis for Community intervention in advanced technologies, prior to the Single European Act (SEA, 1986). This did not mean, of course, that no Commission action was taken.



Indeed, to a large extent the provisions introduced in the SEA were simply making *de facto* what was already *de jure* (Sharp, 1990:101). Policies implemented in this field, prior to the SEA, had to be carried out on the basis of Article 235 of the Treaty of Rome. This catch-all article, providing for additional Community powers where they have not been specifically laid out in the founding Treaties, requires unanimity in the Council of Ministers. Given that the Commission could operate only where there was consensus in the Council of Ministers, and given the strength of national protectionism in this area, the "stop-go" nature of EC activity in the IT sector is perhaps not surprising (Sharp, 1990:102). The Commission, nevertheless, attempted from the outset to pursue an active approach to the development of the Community IT policy sector. Already, by the late 1960s and early 1970s however, the top down, and somewhat heavy handed, approach by the Commission to the development of Community policy was provoking opposition. In an ever worsening economic climate, and in an area in which there was no consensus that there was even a role for the EC, the Commission's approach merely had the effect of reinforcing member states' opposition to Community activity in the IT sector

"If anything, the Commission's tactics backfired. Mistrust of its motives meant that few important EC collaborative projects outside of energy R&D were launched until the 1980s." (Peterson, 1991:275)

Notwithstanding the constraints upon Commission action, however, a significant volume of EC policy has emerged in the areas of both social policy and IT policy. In both policy areas, the Commission has been well prepared, through its support of research, R&D and small-scale catalytic programmes, to identify common European problems and to produce timely proposals for European Community solutions. The activities of the Commission in the areas of social policy and IT policy have been characterised above all by very different relationships with important sectoral actors and by the different characteristics of the policy sectors themselves. To

some extent it could be argued that the role of the Commission in IT policy has been largely one of massaging the direction of cooperation between industry, which, although ongoing, might otherwise have taken on a more global, rather than European, character. In the area of social policy, on the other hand, an important feature of the Commission's activity has been that of creating a constituency of support for Community action, by enticing groups to cooperate, where there is little evidence that cooperation would have emerged of its own volition, even at European level. Thus, in IT, there are strong technological and market forces at work which are forcing actors to collaborate. In social policy these mega-trends seem to be absent.

### **IT Policy: Dangling the Carrot**

EC IT policy has been characterised by the almost symbiotic relationship between officials in DGXIII and the powerful IT industries. However, national governments have not been keen to relinquish their control over "national champion" industries although they have recognised the need for a new strategic approach in this area. An important element of the Commission's activities in the IT field has thus been its ability to capitalise on the fluidity and inherent instability of the IT environment, on the inability of national governments to devise new solutions to the old problem of European competitiveness, and on the problems which large and competitive industries experience in trying to sustain collective action (Olson, 1971). Global pressures on the ICT environment, might have encouraged those IT firms which perceived a "logic in cooperation" to collaborate mainly on a global scale, rather than at EC level. Thus, as rational actors, firms might have been expected to seek strategic and tactical alliances which best serve their technological, market, and R&D requirements, irrespective of national or regional boundaries. These alliances would have included trans-European collaboration in any case, but the Commission has managed, to some extent, to "massage" the direction which this cooperation has taken. For example, prior to the main thrust of EC policy, a number of firms had begun to collaborate in the area of R&D, but cooperation with extra-EC firms was far

more common than intra-EC collaboration (Mytelka and Delapierre, 1987:241). By justifying its intervention in terms of bolstering the competitive position of European industry vis-a-vis Japan and the US, the Commission has also succeeded in selling intra-EC collaboration even to reluctant EC governments. Defending and promoting European industry was, therefore, the EC equivalent of what national governments had been doing at the level of the nation state. The policy instruments were, therefore, relatively familiar, and acting collectively, in the European interest, was a legitimising concept.

Part of the Commission's role has been to attempt to co-ordinate and rationalise (or, in reality, to massage) the developing cooperative tendencies between firms. Cooperative action, even where all parties are convinced of its benefits, is inherently problematic. Without the leadership function (see Frohlich, Oppenheimer and Young (1971) and Young (1991), collective action can be patchy and unpredictable. The European Commission, acting as an entrepreneurial policy initiator, has to a large extent played the role of catalyst to collective action in the ICT sector. Rather than let a pure market in cooperation emerge, the Commission has tried to give this process some direction and coherence (Cram et al, forthcoming).

A good example of the Commission's ability to massage the IT environment has been the ESPRIT programme. (European Strategic Programme for Research and Development in Information Technology). In encouraging cooperation between EC companies, the Commission's role was substantial - and not only in financial terms (participants in ESPRIT receive 50% subsidies for collaborative R&D ventures from the EC ). Aware that EC firms had already accepted that cooperation was necessary but that the facilitating infrastructure was lacking in Europe, the Commission brought together the twelve leading IT companies in the EC to form a 'European Round Table'<sup>2</sup>. Importantly, until the first formal proposal was presented to the Council of

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<sup>2</sup>ICL, GEC and Plessey of the UK; Thomson, Bull and CGE from France; AEG, Nixdorf and Siemens from Germany; Olivetti and STET from Italy; and Phillips from the Netherlands.

Ministers in May 1982, Commission efforts completely bypassed national governments (Sandholtz, 1992a:15).

Inspired by Japanese success in incorporating private enterprise into public policy making, (e.g. through the Very Large Scale Integration (VLSI) programme), Etienne Davignon, then European Commissioner for Industry, invited the heads of the 'Big Twelve' companies to draw up a set of proposals for new collaborative projects. The first initiative came from Davignon in 1979 and by 1983 the pilot phase of ESPRIT, a pre-competitive research programme, was already underway. ESPRIT put into action the proposals generated by the leaders of European industry. The most important client groups had been identified, mobilised and had played a leading role in designing the policies. Whatever the actual effects of ESPRIT, it has been important to establish a major project in an area where there was no established legal competence for Community intervention. The ESPRIT programme has now entered its third phase and has formed the prototype for innumerable subsequent EC programmes in the ICT field. As a model policy innovation it has proved potent. Arguably too, it was the consensus generated over the ESPRIT initiative which allowed the Commission to successfully introduce the idea of a Framework Programme as a medium term planning device for R&D programmes. The 1st Framework Programme (1984-1987), adopted in July 1983, was a means of giving a conceptual structure to the various R&D programmes which were emerging (Findlay, 1992: 296). There have since been two further Framework Programmes (1987-1991) and (1990-1994) and the fourth is now in the planning stage. As is often the case, programmes develop a life of their own.

From the Commission's perspective, it can at least demonstrate that the ESPRIT initiative has been success, insofar as industrial partners now cooperate regularly at EC level. To a large extent a European R&D Community can be said to have developed. From the perspective of industry, too, proposals for project support continue to exceed available funds, (if public funds are available, industry might as

well have it, especially if it can design the programme). However, support for ESPRIT has begun to dwindle amongst the big twelve, as the non-tariff barriers in Europe have continued to fall. Indeed, the Dekker report, evaluating EC activity in ICT and drawn up with considerable industrial input, advocates the ending of ESPRIT in its present form. Nevertheless, there is no suggestion from industry that Community R & D should come to an end altogether. Industry has always advocated a shift towards more market-oriented research with an emphasis upon research applications. It has long urged both national governments and the Commission to speed up their efforts to bring Community R&D closer to the market. Once again, however, the Commission has responded to the prevailing environment – this time by appealing to the needs of Small and Medium size Enterprises (SMEs), now as politically salient as was IT in the 1980s. Given the dwindling interest of the major IT companies in anything other than receiving subsidies via ESPRIT, the close involvement of a wider range of participants is arguably a vital means of maintaining a constituency of support for EC based R&D. Similarly, DGXIII has begun to appeal to the large industrial users of IT products who have gradually emerged as a significant organised interest in the sector. As Kay (1990: 267) has argued, "ESPRIT acts against the natural tendency for collaboration to diminish in a completed market." While the Commission could not have operated in the face of overt opposition from industry or from national governments, by acting as "innovator of selective incentives" (Olson, 1971), the Commission has, therefore, managed to gently influence the direction in which IT policy has developed in the Community (Cram et al, forthcoming).

It is easy to argue that the firms have simply gone where the money is. However, the spill-over effects of drawing powerful industrial interests into the policy process at the EC level have important implications for the extension of EC activities in the IT field. Industry has been an important force in promoting the Single market programme and in encouraging the reduction of non-tariff barriers in throughout the EC. As the "deregulatory" thrust of the SEM continues, it increasingly generates

regulatory vacuums in areas which then require "re-regulation" at the EC level. Having established precedent for Commission intervention in the IT field, having developed a coherent overview of the sector, and having convinced industry and national governments of the logic of EC level collaboration - it becomes much easier to justify the introduction of minimum standards in IT at EC level.

### **EC Social Policy: Creating a New Constituency**

In the area of social policy, there has been consistent opposition by employers and industry to any extension of Community competence. (However, more recently multi-national companies have increasingly come to perceive the potential benefits of supra-national legislation in avoiding the upward spiralling of consistently higher national standards, (Majone, 1989a). This, combined with the almost inevitable veto, in recent years, by the UK government of the vast majority of social policy proposals, has left DGIV with only limited room for manoeuvre. Unable to take on powerful industrial actors and national governments, head on, much of the work of DGIV has been aimed at mobilising a constituency of support and creating precedent for future action.

Poverty research, for example, has been an area in which the Commission has very skilfully deployed this role. Through the encouragement of research in the field of poverty, the setting up of national observatories, and the establishment of the EC Poverty Programme, the EC has become an important source of information and forum for debate on the issue of poverty. This may not seem to be a major achievement, but when it is considered that there is no agreement as to what the Community role ought to be in social matters, managing to create a central role for the Community in this type of research is not insignificant. The Commission has since sought to justify its interest in the area of social protection on the grounds that the Commission has already established a role for itself in this field through its actions in

the Poverty Programme. In a Commission report (COM(91) 511 final) the Commission argues that::

"Solidarity with the disadvantaged sections of the population is primarily a matter for the Member States.

*However, since the mid-1970's, the Community has become involved in these matters too.* The two Poverty programmes 1975-1980 and 1984-1988 were joined by the Council Decision of 18 July 1989 establishing a new Community programme for the economic and social integration of the least privileged (1989-1994)."(p.13, my emphasis)

While the agenda may have altered little, officials in DGV are constantly trying to find new means of justifying old initiatives.

An important power which the Commission wields is the power to select the type of instrument to be used for the achievement of its objectives (Cram and Richardson, forthcoming 1993). Thus the Commission may propose the instrument likely to engender least opposition from member states or from industry. In areas in which it proves impossible to get a policy accepted, the Commission thus proposes a programme. Despite, the reluctance of national governments to endorse the development of a full-scale social policy at EC level, DGV has proved rather successful at leveraging funds out of national sources for EC social programmes. Programmes are generally small-scale and funding is always by a combination of national and Community sources. Providing a sum of money for which states have to compete is a useful means of getting a programme through without too much wrangling over the justification of the Commission's motives or grounds for action. As Heclo (1978, pp.92-93) noted of a similar process in the US context, "...in spending for health, manpower, transportation and so on, the federal government has sidestepped the tremendously difficult task of creating a broad national consensus for its own administered activities. It has done so by counting on third parties to crave the funds which the national government makes available to serve its purposes."

Many of the programmes are targeted at vulnerable groups in society, perhaps already disaffected from their national governments and perceiving the EC as an alternative arena of power (Mazey and Richardson, 1993). Showing interest in these groups is an important way of mobilising citizen support for the Community while requiring minimal expenditure (Cram and Richardson, 1992). This has, for example, been suggested as an explanation of the continued Commission interest in the poverty programme, despite the fact that evaluations of its effectiveness in combating poverty have at best been inconclusive.

"The European authorities have jumped on this wagon in order to play a leading role in Europe in at least one aspect of social policy, which would appeal strongly to public opinion." (Langendonck, 1990, p.22)

Programmes focussed upon young people or students similarly perform an important mobilising function. Promoting notions of a common European heritage and introducing a European dimension to the educational environment may have a significant influence upon those participating in these programmes. Certainly the Commission appears to be aware of the importance of this integrationist function of social policies. In looking, for example, at the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS), the Commission noted its significant contribution "to the construction of Europe and the European educational Community" (Social Europe, 1989, p.iii). Examining the future prospects for a "people's Europe", it has been observed that "a people's Europe will spring up once we are all fully aware of the roots, values and options for the future which we have in common. Culture and education now need to be tackled..." (Fontaine, 1990, p.33)

While Community social programmes are indeed small scale, and their effectiveness may be limited, they should not be discounted as insignificant. These



programmes contribute to the important bureaucratic function of information gathering through which the Commission may increase the expertise of the Community in particular areas. Further, the social programmes bring an increasing number of policy areas into the Commission's remit while, at the same time, promoting a set of practices considered conducive to the development of a European Union.

### **Conclusions: Policy-making and the Integration Process**

"Those who become engaged in a course of decision-making soon become aware that each decision is conditioned not only by the concrete situation in which it is taken but also by the sequence of past decisions; and that their new decisions in their turn will influence future decisions not only by their effect on the history of event but also by the precedents which they set and the changes which they make in the way decision-makers in the future will see, interpret and respond to event...

...judgement and decision, though mental activities of individuals, are also part of a social process. They are taken within and depend on a net of communication, which is meaningful only through a vast, partly organised accumulation of largely shared assumptions and expectations, a structure constantly being developed and changed by the activities which it mediates." (Vickers, 1965:15)

Ultimately, the European Commission, like all bureaucracies aims to extend the scope of its powers. It has been argued that the way in which the Commission seeks to achieve this end can be characterised as "purposeful opportunism". The Commission has learned that head-on clashes with powerful interests often result in little more than total impasse. Thus, the Commission has learned to steer clear of highly controversial policy initiatives which, although indicative of its long term aims, will simply become embroiled in political controversy and grind to a halt.

While the political impetus for action may have to come from national governments in the forum, for example, of the European Council, in fact, much of the movement towards integration has resulted from gradual bureaucratic pressure from the Commission. As Peters (1992:23) suggests,

“...day by day, drafting regulation after regulation, the Commission and its Eurocrats have been constructing a public policy foundation for the integration envisaged by those political acts. Likewise, their seemingly incremental and bureaucratic activities interpret and ramify the meanings of political actions and may at times push integration even further than intended (or would be possible) by the more politicized Council.”

In both the IT and the social policy field, we have seen that the European Commission has had some impact upon the environment in which policies are developed and in mobilising support for future activities. Yet the way in which this has been achieved and the means employed have been quite different in the two policy sectors. In IT, the Commission has, to a large extent, simply attempted to hop onto the cooperative bandwagon of globalisation in the industry, while in social policy, faced with the opposition of powerful industrial actors and national governments, the Commission has, from the outset, had to actively seek out and encourage new sources of support for Community action.

Early integration theories, less focussed on the dominant role of national governments, have recently enjoyed a resurgence of interest. Notions of spill-over, and the transfer of loyalty to supra-national institutions (Haas, 1958), have to some extent come back into favour in the integration field. Even the importance of increasing levels of intra-EC transactions (Deutsch, 1968), in fostering some kind of progress towards creating a common sense of Europeanness, has, with the passage of time, come to seem less far-fetched. By examining the influence of two different Directorates of the European Commission upon the EC policy-process, the aim of this paper has been to emphasise the important role which the Community institutions

have to play in influencing these processes. As Heclo and Wildavsky (1974:362) have argued, "developing a strategy means placing a bet that current actions will prove right because they move the future in the larger directions intended rather than the smaller ones which are not." Thus, the current, often apparently innocuous, initiatives emerging from the Commission must be viewed in terms of their potential long term implications on the integration process.

If there has been an increasing level of intra-Community, rather than purely global, collaboration in the IT industry, this has not occurred completely free of Commission involvement. Likewise, social programmes, and the appearance of supporting social progress, despite fierce opposition from some quarters, play an important role in legitimising the activities of the Community and in mobilising public support. These might be interpreted as small but important steps in encouraging some transfer of popular loyalty towards the European Community. The steps might seem small, and EC participation may be dismissed as ineffectual and purely symbolic. However, the importance of symbolism and rhetoric in the policy-process have long been acknowledged (Edelman, 1971, Majone, 1989b)). Each time the Commission presents a new policy proposal, suggests the use of a particular policy instrument, or introduces a new justification for EC intervention, it both affects the environment in which future decisions are taken, and ensures its own place at the negotiating table in future debates in that policy area.

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