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## 'EUPRHORIA', FRIENDSHIP AND WINE The Stuff that Built Another Europe<sup>1</sup>

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Since the beginnings of a European union in the 1950s, political scientists, economists, historians and others have tried to identify and explain the dynamics of European integration. From abstract processes such as functional spillover, where the integration of individual sectors sparks further integration elsewhere and technical pressures push for the integration of the entire economy (Haas, 1958), to far-fetched ideas of European integration as a means of rescuing the nation state (Milward, 1992), theorists have been full of imagination. More recently, they have come up with subtle but complicated two-, three-, and multi-level games, attempting to capture the complexity of European integration by an interplay of governments' domestic demands and supply determined by the outcomes of bargaining on the European Community (EC) (Moravcsik, 1993) and international (Patterson, 1997) levels, or as a mixture of regional, national and supranational inputs (e.g. Marks, 1992; Hooghe, 1996).

While not disputing the importance and merits of existing theories of European integration, this paper argues that nearly all fail to identify or account for a basic but very important driving force of the integration process in Europe: the phenomenon of governmental élites who, through their constant interaction, develop good relations and a collegial style of decision-making, which is lubricated by alcoholic beverages, 'Europhoria' and other stimulants, and induces them to take more far-reaching and integrative decisions. This process has

also, more soberly, been more termed "political spillover" (George, 1985), and suggests the one notable exception to a general ignorance of these factors among theorists. Neofunctionalism, the earliest and arguably most comprehensive attempt at conceptualising the evolving European polity, has taken these dynamics seriously. Political spillover, one of neofunctionalism's core assumptions, harks back to Ernst Haas and especially to Leon Lindberg (Haas, 1958, Lindberg, 1963, Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970), and describes the integrative pressures exerted by governmental and non-governmental élites. As Tranholm-Mikkelsen (1991: 5) puts it:

The idea is that such élites will undergo a learning process, developing the perception that their interests are better served by seeking supranational rather than national solutions. They will therefore refocus their activities, expectations and perhaps their loyalties to the new centre. Such reorientations will lead to calls for further integration, hence providing the process with political impetus.

While Ernst Haas, the pioneer of European integration theory-building, stressed the importance of interest groups and other non-governmental élites, Leon Lindberg, his disciple, particularly emphasised the role of governmental élites.<sup>2</sup> These élites will also be the focus of the present article. Lindberg underscored the fact that the establishment of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), and the rapid increase in the number of working groups and sub-committees, led to a complex system of "bureaucratic interpenetration" that brought thousands of national civil servants into frequent contact with each other and with European Commission officials (Lindberg, 1963; 50-93). This process, whereby "national bureaucrats are being reinforced in their disposition to take integrative decisions by their increasing involvement with each other in the various national administrations and the institutions of the Community", has been termed *engrenage* (Taylor, 1983: 9-10).

The same phenomenon has also been called "actor socialization" (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970: 119), "socialization process" (Scheinman and Feld, 1972: 122 and 134; Russell, 1975: 62), and "collegial style" (Russell, 1975).<sup>3</sup> As a result of the collegial style of decision-making, in which national bureaucrats "identify themselves completely with the procedures and codes within which their decisions are made, they consider themselves 'engaged' by the results even if they do not fully concur in them" (Haas, 1958: 522). This, according to Haas, can facilitate consensus and lead to the acceptance of and agreement on more integrative policies (Haas, 1958: 521-524).

Lindberg was the first analyst to point to the potential importance of the growing bureaucratic interpenetration in the Community. For the period between 1958 and 1960 he estimated that about 17,000 higher national civil servants participated annually in the European Economic Community (EEC) decision-making process (Lindberg, 1963: 58). Since Lindberg's first study of the EEC in 1963, the interaction of national bureaucrats in the Brussels machinery has continued to increase (Lodge, 1994; Wessels, 1996).<sup>4</sup> The increase of Community competencies, along with the proliferation of working groups, advisory, management and regulatory committees, has contributed to the enmeshing of civil servants at various levels and ranges of decision-making.

While there is consensus about the growth of bureaucratic interpenetration, it is far from clear what impact this may have on decision-making. Neofunctionalists have argued that national civil servants become 'Europeanized' as a result of their frequent interaction and socialisation, which then leads them to foster integrative policies and further penetrate national bureaucracies when they return to their capitals (Lindberg, 1963: 49-93). There are only few studies on the impact of actor socialisation on the decision-making process in the Community, and these date from the early and mid-1970s. Scheinman (1971), as well as Feld and Wildgen (1975), assert that the development of a European orientation on the part of national bureaucrats had been limited. As the main countervailing force, they identify organisational pressures,

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confirming Graham Allison's argument that 'where you stand depends on where you sit.'

In their 1972 study, however, Scheinman and Feld also come to the conclusion that despite the balancing forces of the socialising effects, "even partial assimilation is likely to advance the European cause. Europe cannot advance without the cooperation of national governments; the depth of change over time, not the speed of change, should be a criterion of success" (Scheinman and Feld, 1972: 135). In the following two decades the European project advanced substantially, pointing to the need now to reopen the investigation into the impact of the socialisation process. The following analysis will emphasise this, even if, being restricted to a limited policy area, it can reach only tentative conclusions.<sup>5</sup> The article will focus in particular on national officials who deal with the Community's Common Commercial Policy, and their relations with the Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC).

### The Collegial Style

National civil servants at the working group level in the areas of European Union (EU) relations with Central and Eastern Europe and Common Commercial Policy unanimously state that their professional relations with each other are extremely good. Some of them have also developed strong personal relationships. This is not surprising given the frequency of their interaction. Those civil servants dealing with Central and Eastern Europe meet in the Central Europe Working Group, where most general matters concerning the CEEC, including Poland and Hungary Assistance for Restructuring Economies (PHARE), are discussed on a weekly basis. Almost all civil servants (depending on the structure of competencies within their administration) also attend the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Working Group once a week, where matters concerning Technical Assistance for the Community of Independent States (TACIS) are discussed.

The participants in the Central Europe Working Group from the various Permanent Representations also see each other

in the preparatory meetings for the Association Council and sit together in the biannual Association committees involving the ten associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, they come together when there are working group meetings of advisors to the ambassadors, which although normally infrequent and *ad hoc*, take place more frequently in the period before European Councils. Some civil servants also attend monthly PHARE management committee meetings. In busy periods, the core of national civil servants working on Central and Eastern Europe see each other at least every other working day. As one official put it, "sometimes I see my British and German colleagues more often than my wife."

Apart from these formal contacts, there are also informal ones. While all those interviewed admitted that such unofficial contact takes place, the extent of this contact seems to vary. The person whose country is in the Presidency – that is, the person who chairs the working groups – usually has frequent contact with his or her counterparts. One former chairman of the Central Europe Working Group said that "when the Danish Presidency was coming closer you often invited your national counterparts and their partners over for dinner to your house in order to strengthen your personal relationships, especially when someone was new or less integrated in the group." As his Belgian colleague remarked, "people sometimes call into your office at lunch break if there is a problem." Others mentioned that they frequently get together at the Commission cafeteria at *Rue de la Science* where they can chat in a relaxed atmosphere. "Such occasions give you the chance to find out on which issues your counterparts have no room for manoeuvre from their ministries."

Good professional relations often spill over into the personal and private sphere. For example, when a Commission official from Directorate General (DG) 1 was promoted and had to leave the Article 113 *ad hoc* Services Committee, one of his colleagues organised a party for him and invited all the national delegates on the Committee. The friendly atmosphere on the committee enabled the Portuguese delegation to issue, jokingly, a written reservation expressing their regret at the departure of

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the Commission official. The official himself must have felt true affection for his counterparts. At the end of his last meeting he sang a self-composed song about the Committee to everyone present.<sup>6</sup>

### Attitudes and Identities

Neofunctionalists have placed considerable emphasis on the role played by governmental élites in facilitating integration. In the long run, this process has been seen to be supported by a change of attitudes and expectations (Lindberg, 1963: 6; Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970: 269), or even by a change of loyalties (Haas, 1958: 16) to a new European centre. Despite the high level of cross-border bureaucratic interaction, it is doubtful that a change of loyalties has occurred, at least in the way suggested by Haas. There is some evidence, however, to suggest that a Europeanisation of national bureaucrats is in progress. As pointed out by Wurzel (1996), holding the Presidency fosters a subtle but important learning process about the European and various national dimensions of policy problems, which induces more "European thinking" among national officials and often results in "European compromises".

Moreover, as Scheinman and Feld found (1972: 133), a number of national diplomats sensed that through their work in Brussels they had developed a more "European" orientation than before, while still considering the defence of national positions to be their main task. As one civil servant put it, he did not view matters exclusively from a national perspective anymore and admitted that often when national positions are isolated, "I find myself more in agreement with my foreign counterparts [than with] my colleagues in Bonn." Interestingly, the most Europhoric civil servants tend to be the ones who have served longer in Brussels than their counterparts who have only joined their Permanent Representations or working groups recently. As one civil servant jokingly remarked, "perhaps it is only a question of time until we will all be contaminated with the European disease [sic]." If Dietrich von Kyaw, the German Permanent Representative, is to be trusted, he seems to have

caught the 'desease'. He stated that he was known in Bonn not as the *ständiger Vertreter* (Permanent Representative) but as the *ständiger Verräter* (permanent traitor) (*Financial Times*, 11/12 March 1995; see also Edwards 1996). The possibility cannot be dismissed that the level of *engrenage* may indeed be a function of the duration of the socialisation impact.

There is also some evidence that national bureaucrats do not identify only with their colleagues in their national administrations. Although "generally speaking" they still feel "professionally closer" to their national colleagues, "when national experts from their ministries come to the working group, they often lack the same understanding for the dynamics of the group." As one French bureaucrat said, "[c]ommunication is sometimes easier with my counterparts than [with] colleagues from Paris, who narrowly focus on their specific technical concerns." In terms of professional identity it was noticeable that civil servants were "fascinated" or "especially motivated" by the fact that working groups consist of fifteen different nationals with different administrative and problem-solving approaches.

Similar to the findings of Scheinmann and Feld (1972: 133), the present investigation supports the tentative conclusion that the members of the Central Europe Working Group consider themselves to be part of an "insider group" because of their "common effort to assist the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the period of economic and political transition and the future accession to the European Union." They also feel that together with their foreign counterparts they have "contributed to easing the different national positions held by the various bureaucracies and ministries of the Community in their pursuit of a common objective." In doing so some of them consider themselves intermediaries between their capitals and Brussels.

### The Collegial Style at Work

The above analysis suggests that bureaucratic interpenetration may have a substantial impact on decision-making within working groups. Good professional and personal

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relations, along with continuous and structured negotiations facilitate decision-making in a number of ways. First, they induce officials to arrive more easily and more quickly at common positions. The high level of professional and personal acquaintance has rendered superfluous the lengthy sounding out of national positions because the participants can usually talk more freely with one another. This is of relevance during meetings as well as other formal occasions. The identification of common ground and the convergence of hard-line positions frequently take place in informal settings. As one former participant of the Central Europe Working Group stated, "It is not a coincidence that there are so many restaurants in Brussels." The importance of the socialisation process is most obvious when new members come into the group. It usually takes some time for them to become integrated. Thus, at first it is more difficult to find out where their country stands, as they cannot be approached as straightforwardly and informally as long-serving members of the group. As a result, matters do not proceed as quickly and smoothly as normal.

During the meetings themselves a high degree of personal acquaintance among committee members also eases potential difficulties. One civil servant stated that he holds eye contact with his German and British colleagues who sit opposite him, and they sometimes signal who should speak on a certain point. Furthermore, some officials have stated that they can read the body language of their foreign counterparts. "This may tell you when a colleague is a bit stressed and really cannot go any further because his capital has given him certain instructions." It is interesting to note that personal relations can also work the other way. At the end of 1993, the negotiations of the new TACIS regulation did not move forward while a certain Commission official, with whom the national officials were well acquainted, was the main negotiator on behalf of the Commission. After he fell ill the negotiations moved much more swiftly. According to one former participant in the Central Europe Working Group, this was no coincidence. The Commission official was unpopular and his excessive personal

involvement with the matter disturbed the good atmosphere and the collegial style of decision-making.

Adding to the insights of the socialisation process, Helen Wallace has pointed out that the very bargaining structure in the EC also fosters consensus. Since negotiations are conducted recurrently on a fairly stable basis, coalition behaviour and special relationships among players may act as catalysts of movements (H. Wallace, 1990: 213-4). As one official remarked, "it is no rare occasion that I meet informally with my British and German colleagues some time before an important meeting for an exchange of views and positions." In line with his French counterpart, the British official noted that "after those informal sessions I can get back to London before the meeting and seek a more flexible mandate, if it is clear that we will be isolated with our position."

Wallace has also emphasised the importance of the continuity of negotiations. This seems to have been decisive in some of the decisions in the Central Europe Working Group. As one participant remarked, "much of the progress on the latest TACIS regulation would have been impossible had we not been locked into negotiations that were repetitive and tiring. After long bargains and endless official and informal sessions one usually does not realise to what extent one has gradually shifted away from one's original position." The latter statement, in view of the above account of collegial style of decision-making, also suggests that Haas' early concept of engagement has some relevance here. Haas pointed out that "if parties to a conference enjoy a specific and well-articulated sense of participation, if they identify themselves completely with the procedures and codes within which their decisions are made, they consider themselves completely 'engaged' by the results even if they do not fully concur in them" (Haas, 1958: 522).

There are also other pressures toward consensus. As a result of the *corps d'esprit* and 'in-group' feeling discussed above, most working groups and committees take themselves very seriously. Along with the competition amongst the various groups and committees this creates a strong dynamic toward "achieving results". For example, the Article 113 Full Members

Committee,<sup>7</sup> which is attended by the directors of national foreign or economic ministries who deal with trade policy, likes to presume some autonomy from the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), which is composed of the fifteen national ambassadors to the EU. If an issue cannot be agreed upon by the Article 113 Full Members before going to the General Affairs Council, it is often taken up in COREPER. As one 113 Full Member pointed out: "we are the experts here. We must complete the work we are expected to do, or otherwise we will become the laughing stock of the Union. Once COREPER takes it up we will lose control over the dossier."

The way some meetings are organised can also contribute to consensus building and help to avoid stalemates. Full members of the Article 113 Committee, for instance, often continue their discussions informally during lunch. The 1997 discussions on a draft Council declaration on improved market access for the Least-Developed Countries (LDCs), for example, stalled after several hours of "shifting commas". Finally, the chairman moved on to another issue, concluding that the declaration would have to be taken up by the Ministers, unless there was a breakthrough during lunch. After the lunch break, the chairman announced that some unexpected progress had been made and the committee had managed to agree on a common text. As one director remarked, "[a]t luncheon, the atmosphere is more intimate, we are just amongst ourselves and can talk more openly about problems over a glass of wine...or two." As a more junior civil servant put it: "progress usually depends on the amount of wine they have. Some people need a few drinks to warm themselves up to certain issues."

Secondly, and more importantly, there is the question of whether the collegial style has also had an impact on the substance of decisions taken in the working groups. There are some grounds for believing that the decisions taken in the working group setting are of a different quality than those in less familiar and less structured negotiations. Wallace, in her analysis of multilateral negotiations in the Community, remarks that "habits of discourse and mutual familiarity facilitate productive discussion." In her view, this frequently leads to

expectations of reciprocity both in terms of the distribution of burdens as well as the allocation of benefits. In essence, she argues, there were more "positive-sum games as the means of upgrading common interests" in the late 1980s than the neofunctionalist critics anticipated (H. Wallace, 1990: 215, 224). In this analysis of the interaction of national officials in the Central Europe Working Group and the Article 113 Committee there is evidence for such a development.

Several officials have stated that it is common practice to make concessions to national counterparts in unrelated fields. This is either discussed explicitly or achieved implicitly during the course of negotiations. For example, one former Danish official reported that during the Danish Presidency his Spanish colleague, who had some technical reservations concerning legislation to be financed by PHARE, gave in on the issue because he knew that his Danish colleague was under pressure from Copenhagen to resolve the issue prior to the meeting of the European Council. The Danish official stated that there was no informal, explicit discussion about this. Rather, the reappearance of the issue on the agenda and the fact that he had helped his counterpart before in a different area but in a similar situation, enabled him to move beyond the 'lowest common denominator'. Similarly, one civil servant stated that during the negotiations on the latest TACIS regulation linkages were reached across several issues so that discussions and concessions could be made in several currencies simultaneously. In order to ensure that the negotiations would not end in a stalemate, to the detriment of the CEEC, one official made some concessions to his counterpart on the issue of transparency, while his colleague made an effort to soften his capital's position on an environmental matter. In both instances, professional identity and solidarity, along with the continuity and familiarity of the bargaining environment and the use of informal channels, paved the way for 'European' outcomes that would have been more difficult to attain otherwise.

It is also important to look at the relationship between Brussels-based civil servants and their ministries, as the increased European orientation among civil servants, together with their

professional loyalty, has a direct impact on national policy formation in national capitals.<sup>8</sup> Although officials have to act upon the policies shaped in London, Paris or Bonn, there is often room for manoeuvre, and officials usually have some latitude in choosing the means to attain certain policy ends. David Spence, in his study of the role of the British civil service in European lobbying, points out that British officials often have to persuade their colleagues in Whitehall that the boundaries of negotiability have been reached. According to Spence, that can occasionally be a more difficult undertaking than simply persuading other delegations to accept one's viewpoint (Spence, 1993: 49). The present investigation, however, has found that there are a number of ways in which this can be done. As interlocutors between Brussels and their capitals, officials in the Permanent Representations have a sounder knowledge of the various national positions. This is often recognised by governments which, according to an Italian diplomat in Brussels, "carefully consider...[diplomats' arguments] for the formulation and readjustment of the national position."

Furthermore, Spence noted that since issues are constantly changing, departments may request the British Permanent Representation to sound out other delegations in order to prepare for discussions in Whitehall. In addition, one German official admitted that when the experts from his capital have not been present at a meeting, he can always say that he tried everything but had to use the full scope of his mandate in order not to arrive at a stalemate. The same person went on to say that when reporting back to his capital he can always omit a piece of information or highlight something that may not have been as important during the discussion. He also revealed not just that his reports are sent to the relevant department in the ministry, but also that he is free to circulate his reports more widely across the different ministries and his country's Permanent Representations in the CEEC. He reported that there have been occasions when staff of embassies in Central and Eastern Europe called Bonn and argued his case either consciously or unconsciously. Officials in the Permanent

Representations of countries that assume the Presidency seem be able to induce in home-based colleagues a more co-operative attitude to Community negotiations. As Wallace has found, "occasionally chairmen seize on the fact that they are under pressure to identify with the Community interest in order to carry their own governments along with decisions on which they might otherwise have expressed reservations (1985: 17). Similar processes have also been identified by Edwards (1985).

### Conclusions

As the above analysis indicates, so far no dramatic shift of loyalties, in the Hessian sense, or change of expectations, *à la* Lindberg, appears to have occurred. National civil servants simply seem to have taken on a more European orientation, which may be viewed as a first step in those other directions. It is also interesting to note that the more Europhoric officials have usually served in Brussels longer than their less enthusiastic counterparts. If the level of *engrenage* is a function of the duration of the socialisation impact, then there may indeed be a learning process such as that suggested by the neofunctionalists. This could have more far-reaching implications: because national civil servants usually return to their capitals after a few years, their Europhoria could then spill over into national administrations and foster the process of Europeanisation in the capitals of the member states. Such a development may be reinforced by the common practice of temporarily employing a significant number of *stagiaires* and junior civil servants in the Permanent Representations. The *stagiaires* and junior civil servants, according to one official, usually return to their capital more enthusiastic about Europe than before their departure, even though they spend only a short period of time there. Between 1,200 and 1,500 *stagiaires* pass through the European Commission every year, many of whom later seek employment in their national administrations. Furthermore, about ten percent of A-level staff in the Commission are civil servants seconded for a three year period from the governments of member states.

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Aside from the long-term attitudes and their implications, therefore, one can identify a more important variable inherent in the concept of political spillover: the collegial style or socialisation process of national officials. Good professional and personal relations, *corps d'esprit* and in-group feeling – facilitated by the very bargaining infrastructure that characterises EU decision-making, by pro-integrative learning processes and, perhaps to a lesser extent, by the right kind of drink – induces not only common positions but also more integrative outcomes. In that sense, Europhoria, friendship and wine are part of the stuff that built another Europe.



## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> This analysis does not focus on the top governmental élites, such as heads of government or ministers, but on civil servants of lower, medium and also higher levels of national bureaucracies. The medium and lower levels of EU decision-making (where national bureaucrats operate) have become increasingly important in recent years. It has been estimated that eighty to ninety percent of final texts of legislation or action are decided at the professional diplomatic level (Wessels, 1990; *Financial Times*, 12.03.1995).

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter, these terms will be used interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> For example the number of Council working groups grew from just over thirty in 1960 (Lindberg, 1963: 58) to 268 in 1994 (Wessels, 1996: 173); implementation committees increased from ten in 1960 to 276 in 1990 (Wessels, 1996: 188); and expert groups from 127 in 1960 (Lindberg, 1963: 57) to about 600 in 1990 (Wessels, 1996: 176). Moreover, Wessels estimates that in 1990 one quarter of all German higher civil servants participated directly in the different European fora.

<sup>5</sup> This analysis indicates the preliminary results of more extensive research which is still in progress.

<sup>6</sup> The song was called "Prendre le 113 sur le main" (Taking the [Committee] 113 by the hand). The last two lines went: "j'ai passé une partie de ma vie, entre la compagnie des amis" (I spent a part of my life, in the company of friends).

<sup>7</sup> There is also an Article 113 Committee of Deputies where more junior national civil servants discuss and assist the Commission in shaping the Common Commercial Policy of the Union.

<sup>8</sup> The members of the Article 113 Full Members Committee, who are based in their capitals, have, due to their seniority, a more direct influence on national positions. They also tend to have more room for manoeuvre in the negotiations and do not always need to contact their capitals before moving ahead.

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