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Volume 12

Washington University  
Undergraduate Research Digest

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Spring 2017

### Coding Political Preferences for Commissioners of the European Commission

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#### Recommended Citation

Mankoff, Bradley, "Coding Political Preferences for Commissioners of the European Commission" (2017).  
*Volume 12*. 129.

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# CODING POLITICAL PREFERENCES FOR COMMISSIONERS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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*Mentor: Matthew Gabel*

The European Commission is the body responsible for initiating all legislation in the EU. It is checked by the European Parliament and Council, but only it can initiate change. Political scientists refer to any actor similar to the Commission as the ‘agenda-setter,’ which they argue has immense sway over outcomes, especially relative to bodies like the Parliament that have no agenda-setting power.

Selected by the heads of state of the 28 EU member states, otherwise known as the European Council, the President of the European Commission receives a list of 27 politicians or technocrats, one nominated by each member state other than his or her own, and assigns each of them to a portfolio in the Commission. These portfolios serve a similar purpose to the various agencies in the Executive Branch of the United States Federal Government. The President is given no legal guidelines as to how he may assign portfolios, and the member state cabinets that nominate their country’s prospective commissioner are theoretically unsure as to which portfolio their nominee will ultimately be assigned. In reality, however, larger member states continually nominate bureaucrats specializing in economic or financial issues that qualify them for major posts involving agriculture, financial regulation, taxation, and other important issues.

The purpose of this research is to update Fabio Franchino’s 2009 research to include the three most recent Commissions in his data sample. Franchino introduces his paper by proclaiming that, “The share of portfolios that each Member State is assigned, through its Commissioners, is strongly related to its resources and voting power, as predicted by the proportionality norm and bargaining theory, respectively.”