

# Inter-Agency Analysis of EU Specialised Administrative Services: Insights from the Republic of Cyprus

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The Republic of Cyprus is a small EU member state whose domestic administrative structures replicate an enduring tradition of centralisation. This study employs three Europeanisation processes to investigate the influence of European integration on EU specialised administrative services and explain possible differentiations.

**Design:** This research employs two methodological tools: a literature review of domestic and international literature on Europeanisation and historical institutionalism, and a field study employing interviews and questionnaires with public servants working within these services.

**Findings:** The results suggest that while Cyprus's EU membership has played a significant role in the Europeanisation of domestic administrative structures, this process remains incomplete due to historical continuities from previous eras. These have an enduring impact on formal and informal institutions, diminishing the role of the examined services and constraining the behaviour of public servants.

**Academic contribution to the field:** This study offers a theoretical contribution by providing a comprehensive understanding of moderate Europeanisation effects on EU specialised structures within the Cypriot administrative framework. It also highlights the consequences of historical continuities manifested through formal and informal institutional constraints (endogenous characteristics, tangible factors, and conservative attitudes) and their adverse effects on the promotion of institutional and administrative change.

**Practical implications:** The research findings underscore the relevance for future studies. They are particularly pertinent in assessing the effects of European integration and administrative change in other EU member states sharing similar historical experiences with Cyprus, such as Greece and Malta.

**Originality/Significance/Value:** This study is innovative in its focus on specific administrative actors in Cyprus whose role has not been examined so far. It sheds light on tangible and intangible factors that may influence the promotion of institutional and administrative change.

*Keywords:* European Union, domestic administrative structures, Republic of Cyprus, Europeanisation, historical institutionalism.

*JEL:* D73

## 1 Introduction

This research will attempt to assess the impact of European Integration on the domestic administrative structures of one of the smallest southern member states of the European Union (EU): The Republic of Cyprus (Cyprus). The latter, due to both its small size and historical experience, has a strong tradition of centralism and a limited degree of administrative autonomy. Previous research has highlighted the ongoing effects of these severe hierarchical structures vis-à-vis specific parts of Cypriot administration, such as local government. It has been proven that the effects of Europeanisation were filtered by this tradition, prolonging central control over local government, and intensifying internal differentiations among municipalities (Kirlappos, 2017; 2021; 2023).

Against this background, this research focuses on EU specialised administrative services, to assess the impact of Europeanisation on domestic administrative structures in Cyprus. Since previous research has highlighted the crucial significance of historical continuities (Sepos, 2008; Kirlappos, 2021; 2023) in mediating the results of the process, this research will adopt a similar approach. Even though Cyprus's membership in the EU has played a significant role in fostering the Europeanisation of domestic administrative structures, this process is not complete due to historical continuities derived from the Ottoman and British colonial eras. This study is therefore important as it tries to examine how EU membership has affected the process of Europeanisation in Cyprus and emphasises the influence of historical continuities and formal and informal institutional restrictions in this process.

The research hypothesis of this study views the Europeanisation of Cyprus's domestic administrative structures as highly dependent on the island's deeply rooted centralist domestic tradition. This heritage is demonstrated through historical burdens that are articulated through formal institutional constraints that limit the role and capabilities of the various services, as well as through informal institutional preferences that foster conservative attitudes and opposition to change. For these reasons, although the overall course of Europeanisation is expected to have positive effects on the various services under

consideration, the historical continuities inherited from previous historical periods place limitations on the whole process.

Our specific research questions are as follows:

- What is the impact of the EU, on the specific Cypriot domestic administrative services in terms of processes, personnel, and structures?
- What is the influence of long-established formal and informal restrictions in the process?

The population of the current research included all eleven Ministries and the Parliament of Cyprus (House of Representatives) with a particular interest in their internal administrative structures that specialise on EU issues.<sup>1</sup> This research utilised two methodological tools: a literature review of the domestic and international literature and a field study (February-April, 2023) using semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires. The data derived from the field study were then analysed utilising both qualitative and quantitative analysis. For this reason, a total of 130 structured questionnaires were addressed to public servants that worked in these EU specialised domestic administrative services, with an average response rate of 40% (52 respondents). This enabled us to gather data from five key Ministries, such as those of Finance, Agriculture and Education and the House of Representatives to conduct an inter-agency analysis. Ten semi-structured interviews were also conducted providing additional data.

The examination of the influence of European Integration on Cypriot EU specialised administrative services utilised the various Europeanisation mechanisms associated with this process. The positive mechanism initiates change by requiring member states' conformity with European policy models and rules. The inconsistency between EU policies and rules and the internal institutional structures (goodness-of-fit) triggers pressure for change (Knill et al., 2009). On the other hand, soft Europeanisation focuses its attention to the role of ideas and actors in the procedure of change or resistance and to their expected and unintended outcomes (Eräranta and Kantola, 2016). Soft Europeanisation underlines the role of informal institutions in changing policy, as well as resisting change. Finally, more 'coercive' mechanisms (Leontitsis and Ladi, 2018) were developed to cope with the eurozone crisis and monitoring bail-out member states.<sup>2</sup>

This work uses all three Europeanisation processes (top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal) to examine the influence of European Integration on Cypriot EU specialised domestic services. The effects of Europeanisation per process were measured by focusing on specific aspects of change, recognised by

1 The Republic of Cyprus has a total of 11 Ministries and five Deputy Ministries at present (2023 July). The Deputy Ministries were not included in this research since most of them were established during the last three years and therefore are still lacking resources and capacities.

2 "Coordinative Europeanisation" has been proposed (Wolff and Ladi, 2020). This can be described as a bottom-up process where the EU members participate actively in the formulation of policies from the beginning to ensure the highest degree of implementation possible, as opposed to the 'coercive Europeanisation' (Leontitsis and Ladi, 2018) that had defined the eurozone crisis with restrictions and monitoring of member states by the EU bodies.

other empirical studies. To measure change, we employed Marshall's (2005) work that links the effects of top-down Europeanisation with the implementation of EU legislation and securing EU funding and changes to institutions, preferences, policies, and personnel. To measure change associated with the bottom-up process, we focused on the attempts to lobby EU institutions, while change deriving from horizontal Europeanization was measured via the participation to Pan-European networks. Particular attention was focused on the application of specific research indicators focusing on differences in resources, personnel, and structures (Blume and Voigt, 2011). This was the case since domestic factors play a substantial role in mediating the effects of Europeanisation (Börzel and Risse, 2003).

This article linked Europeanisation with a Historical Institutional approach, focusing on history as a key element. This approach has been applied to assess the role of institutions in influencing EU integration (Abels et al., 2021). It constitutes an appropriate framework for this research, since it demonstrates the significance of initial institutional choices that trigger restrictions (Balint et al., 2008), cultivating specific historical institutional legacies (Hay, 2002). This work applied Historical Institutionalism to understand how formal and informal institutional rules, i.e., legal, institutional and resource limitations and the prevalence of conservative approaches between public servants, disable or enable the effects of Europeanisation. The importance of this work lies in its attempt to partially cover a key gap in the literature of Europeanisation that concerns one of the smallest southern EU member states: Cyprus. While there has been increasing literature on the influence of European Integration on Cypriot domestic policies and structures (Agapiou-Josephides, 2005; Sepos, 2008; Kirlappos, 2021), a clear gap remains on researching these challenges vis-à-vis Cypriot EU specialised administrative services.

This work covers a portion of this gap while proposing a theoretical contribution and a broad understanding of the moderate Europeanisation effects on these structures. It also highlights the consequences of historical continuities manifested via formal and informal institutional restrictions (endogenous characteristics, tangible factors and conservative attitudes) and their negative impact on the promotion of institutional change. The implications of these research results highlight the possible relevance of these findings for future research studies. In fact, these findings could be significant when assessing the effects of European integration in other EU member states with similar historical experiences to Cyprus, i.e., Greece and Malta.

## **2 Analytical frameworks**

### **2.1 Europeanisation**

Europeanisation was first characterised by Ladrech (1994) as a top-down transfer of EU legislation and practices to the domestic structures of EU member states. Having voluntarily ceded competencies to a supranational entity, member states have found themselves in a process of adaptation to

EU norms, policy instruments, and “ways of doing things,” which has resulted in various scenarios of convergence, divergence, and norm contestation depending on domestic settings, actors, and policy domains (Abels et al., 2021). Here, European integration is the independent variable from which Europeanisation flows, and the changes brought about are the dependent variable.

Over the years, research on Europeanisation has developed, including a broader range of topics, from foreign policy issues like the current conflict in Ukraine (De Gruyter, 2023) or the reaction to COVID-19 (Cachia, 2021) to education policy (Robert, 2010) and gender equality at the municipal level (Kirlappos, 2023). As a result, new methodologies and study processes emerged, such as the bottom-up and horizontal approaches. The former involves the efforts of the member states to influence policy formation at the EU level by uploading preferences to reduce adaptation costs, while the latter emphasises the efforts of the states to share information and best practices among each other (Howell, 2004). In other words, European integration was also treated as a dependent variable, with domestic field change acting as the independent variable (Hix and Goetz, 2000). This highlighted Europeanisation’s interactive character (Howell, 2004). According to the bottom-up approach of Europeanisation, member states tend to “upload” or “shape” the institutions, policies, and politics of the EU. By making its preferences known, a member state may increase the likelihood that an EU policy, political process, or institution will be tailored to its requirements (Börzel and Panke, 2010). The upload or export of national policies to the European level is an efficient method of maximising the advantages and reducing the costs of European policies.

The third type, horizontal Europeanisation, is less clear and far more indirect. This is based on interactions deriving from networks, where participants exchange best practices among them. Therefore, it is possible for practices, policies, and norms to be transferred horizontally across member states while they are transferred vertically inside the EU (from the EU to the states or vice versa) (Howell, 2004). Previous empirical research has made it obvious that reactions from member states rely on the unique internal configurations of those nations. Adaptation to the same European criteria is mediated by several elements and differs from country to country, which results in dramatic differences in Europeanisation procedures across the EU (Bursens and Deforche, 2008). Börzel (2005) emphasises the significance of domestic mediating factors in this setting, such as institutional veto points and/or supporting facilitating formal institutions at a domestic level. Schmidt (2002) recognises several additional domestic mediating factors in her effort to explain the varying impacts of Europeanisation on national economic policy. These include but are not limited to, economic precarity, the strength of political institutions, policy preferences, and political legacies. The progress of Europeanisation may be significantly impacted by corruption in certain governments. It may result in a loss of faith in authorities and institutions, which would make it difficult to put EU laws and regulations into effect. Furthermore, corruption may result in a lack of accountability and transparency, which can make it difficult to monitor and execute EU laws and regulations (Mungiu-Pippidi and

Toth, 2022). On the other hand, endogenous limitations reveal the extremely crucial role of the central state structures which act as gatekeepers (Pollack, 1995). The governments of the Member States prevent the various services from operating autonomously and at their own discretion in promoting their policies and demands in the EU.

According to Pollack (1995) the state firmly controls the uploading efforts, preventing efforts for more active involvement to ensure that national interests are first served. Domestic adaptation is more possible when norm entrepreneurs are present (actors who often lead social movements and create new norms (Wunderlich, 2019). They activate other domestic actors by convincing them to alter their identities and interests considering new European norms and regulations. Cooperative informal structures help local players adopt European standards and ideas (Bursens and Deforche, 2008).

This work also attempts to classify the possible influences of Europeanisation on the EU specialised administrative services in Cyprus. For this reason, various typologies will be utilised. Due to the influence of mediating factors, changes occur in the following ways: limited change through absorption, where member states adopt the required structures and policies without significantly altering their current structures; moderate change through accommodation of existing structures; and significant change through the complete transformation of existing structures and policies (Börzel and Risse, 2003). Radaelli also stresses that complete transformation and absorption are potential effects of Europeanisation. Finally, he adds two more outcomes: inertia when nothing changes, and retrenchment, where it may be feasible to lessen the impact of Europeanisation (2000, 2004).

## 2.2 Europeanisation and Public Administration

An important transformation in the study of Europeanisation's effects on public administration is clear during the last two decades. Initially, Europeanisation was utilised in attempt to trace and compare the effects of European integration on the structures between the Nordic States (Lægreid et al., 2002). On the other hand, Europeanisation was perceived as a facilitator of good democratic practices among the eastern EU members (Ágh, 2013), transforming public administration systems (Bátora and Klimovský, 2022). Europeanisation has also been associated with increasing participatory democracy on the civil service (Peters, 2023).

The adoption of a more targeted approach by the EU vis-à-vis public administration marked a shift from a conditionality logic that was primarily demonstrated between 2001 and 2010. The EU became a facilitator of administrative reforms by providing on-the-ground support and enabling public services management development in and by EU Member States between 2011 and 2021. This shift was a positive step for further European integration according to Ongaro (2022) since the EU adopted a (much) less coercive and (much) more enabling and supporting role to create the conditions for the Member States to develop stronger and more sustainable economic growth.

Thus, the EU started supporting the development of specific and localised administrative capacities as well as overall and comprehensive reforms of public administration (Ibid). Some administrative reforms where the European Commission is providing significant assistance are: The reform of the interior sector in Latvia, the implementation of the digital strategy in Italy, and the anti-corruption training programme in (European Commission, 2023).

### **2.3 Historical Neo-Institutionalism**

The historical neo-institutional approach constitutes the second analytical and theoretical approach utilised by this work. This approach points out that history matters and considers institutions to be able to influence and shape behaviors, political processes, tactics, and preferences (Lecours, 2011). According to Pierson (2000), actions and decisions made in the past have a significant impact on current and future choices. The historical neo-institutional approach has been commonly used to assess how EU integration is shaped by institutions through the roles of institutional paths (history), discourses, and actors. This makes the traditional “domestic interests vs. bureaucratic expansion” opposition much more complicated (Abels et al., 2021). Historical Institutionalism has been employed by researchers to study specific aspects of the EU throughout the years, with a particular focus on its impact of the domestic administrative structures and policies of its member-states (Kallberg and Lakomaa, 2016; Schimmelfennig, 2018; Schimmelfennig et al., 2023). It has also been utilised to analyse the eurozone crisis (Dellmuth, Lundgren, & Tallberg, 2020; Ural, 2021). Additionally, this approach was utilised to highlight ongoing formal and informal institutional restrictions that reduce Europeanisation and gender equality in Cyprus (Kirlappos, 2023).

The historical neo-institutional approach employs the following analytical terms: path dependence, increased returns, and critical junctures. The first analytical term was created to demonstrate how choices made in the past still have an impact on choices made in the future, hence limiting the alternatives. The substantial costs of switching routes are seen as disproportionate to the benefits, as stated by Pierson (2000). Therefore, it is impractical to change paths due to the higher returns from remaining on the current path. The third term is the result of political scientists’ attempts to dissect the factors that contribute to institutional changes. Political and economic crises, for instance, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine in 2022 may be a catalyst for change. Significant institutional changes are more likely to occur during these times, followed by extended periods of institutional stability (lock in) (Prado and Trebicok, 2009). Thus, critical junctures may set nations and institutions on courses that are difficult to alter later.

This approach represents an appropriate framework for this research since it focuses on historical legacies (Hay, 2002), and the initial institutional choices that produce specific restrictive characteristics (Balint et al., 2008). It attempts to explain the means in which historical burdens affect institutions themselves, which results in either accelerating or delaying institutional

change (Minto and Mergaert, 2018). This work applied this approach to comprehend the conditions under which formal and informal institutional rules, i.e., limitations in legal and institutional frameworks, resources and responsibilities and the prevalence of conservative approaches block or facilitate the effects of Europeanisation.

### **3 Public administration in Cyprus: A brief historical background**

#### **3.1 The Ottoman period**

Following their takeover of the island, the Ottomans created government structures, which were marked by increased centralization and oppression. Central administration was handled by a Council of State (Divan) that merged the executive, legislative, administrative, military, and economic branches of government (Kyrris, 1996). This went hand in hand with harsh hierarchical monitoring and administrative control according to Mariti (1791) who described the process via which taxation was imposed. According to his reports, when the governor wanted to impose taxes on the Orthodox, he addressed the Dragoman and the Archbishop, who communicated with his bishops to check that they would take the necessary steps to avoid illegalities and fraud.

There was some degree of self-government, due to the millet system (Glogg, 2003) since each community was governed by its own religious authorities. Yet, non-Muslims were in essence second class “citizens”. The fact that the testimonies of Christians were not taken into account when the accused was a Muslim, indicates the illiberal structures in this area of administration as well (Georgiou, 2012). It is also worth mentioning that while Turkish judges could be bought with bribes, the ecclesiastical courts were more rigid (Chatzidemetriou, 2005). Corruption also prevailed in the ranks of the magistracy and was commensurate with the gifts received by the officials.

The occupation of Cyprus by the Ottomans established a path with illiberal historical legacies (Hay, 2002). In this context, the initial institutional choices (Balint et al., 2008), reflected a relationship between rulers and subjects, thus establishing formal and informal institutional constraints. As will be demonstrated, these historical continuities have since been manifested in the administration of the island in the form of specific institutional legacies, i.e., centralisation and strict hierarchical control. Therefore, this background has created restrictive practices and a deep-rooted conservative culture which notably limits initiative.

#### **3.2 The British colonial period**

The British attempted to limit the outdated Ottoman administrative procedures during their colonial rule (1878–1960), which initiated some modernisation (Papageorgiou, 1996). As for the administrative system, the British occupation contributed to its reorganisation (Pantelidou and Chatzikosti, 2007), by



adopting an even more hierarchical organisational structure (Georgiou, 2012). There was an attempt to reduce corruption in all areas of government that was not entirely successful (Giorgallides, 1979). At the same time, the British appointed an Auditor General and started progressively implementing the English legal system. Gradually, many Cypriots were recruited into the Civil Service, increasing their involvement in public administration (Georgiou, 2012).

However, this restricted modernisation was aiming to foster the colonial regime's interests rather than the ones of the Cypriots (Vasileiou, 2019). Despite changes in the central system of Cyprus during the British rule, this was based on the pre-existing Ottoman structures and adapted to the needs of the British (Blondy, 2002). Referring to the British government, this was purely colonial, without any genuine participation of the native population in proportion to its numerical composition (Chrysostomides and Rakounas, 1994; Tornaritis, 1977; Chatzidemetriou, 2005). Tzermias (2004) stresses that the Legislative Council was structured in a way that assured a majority of its members supported the colonial administration's bills<sup>3</sup>. In this context, the British instrumentalised the competition between the two communities of Cyprus, as it was demonstrated by their decision to include Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots into separate electoral catalogues. While the island had more freedom under British authority than it had under Ottoman rule, the initial institutional choices (Balint et al., 2008) of the British in essence adopted the illiberal and undemocratic features of the path. These historical continuities and formal and informal institutional constraints have been included in the administration of the island, especially since the British further promoted hierarchical organisational structures. Again, this background has founded restrictive practices and a deep-rooted conservative culture which notably limits initiative.

### **3.3 The Republic of Cyprus**

The Republic of Cyprus was established in August 1960 as a result of the Zurich-London agreements. It is a small island located in the south-eastern Mediterranean whose domestic administrative structures reproduce an enduring tradition of centralisation (Hendriks et al., 2011). According to the latest census (2021) the population of Cyprus was 923,272 (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 2021) that counted for 0.2% of the overall EU population (Trading Economics, 2023). Cyprus is considered a high-income country with nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of approximately 30 billion USD and per Capita GDP of 31,114 USD in 2022 (CEIC Data, 2023). Nevertheless, due to the island nature of the country, several restrictions, especially in resources are obvious.

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<sup>3</sup> Decisions were taken by majority vote, combined with the 'winning' vote of the High Commissioner and the tendency of Turkish Cypriots to side with the colonial government meant that there was almost always a clear majority against the Greek Cypriots and in favour of the colonial government (Panteli, 2000). On the other hand, the practice of giving secondary authority to sections of Cypriot society was tried and tested throughout the Empire according to Katsiaounis (2008).

A number of internal and external abnormalities contributed to the establishment of the political problem of Cyprus (Tzermias, 2004). Initially, the Constitution was quite complicated since it constituted a compromise between third countries (Richter, 2010). Therefore, it included several bottlenecks that casted a heavy shadow on Cyprus and its effective political and administrative operation. The bicomunal conflicts of 1963 led to the withdrawal of Turkish Cypriots from their posts in the government, the House of Representatives, the civil service, and the judiciary. The coup by the Greek junta in July 1974 against President Makarios and the subsequent Turkish invasion dramatically affected the political and administrative structures of the island. These events led to the Turkish military occupation of over 37% of Cyprus's territory, which continues to this day (European Committee of the Regions, 2023). This situation contributed to a prevailing sense that Cyprus is in an interim stage, due to the pending resolution of the dispute. In this context, Hatzimihail, 2013 indicates that the prevalence of this perception has been postponing major reforms in Cyprus. Due to its history of strong centralisation of political and administrative power, Varnava and Yakinthou (2012) use Loughlin's typology<sup>4</sup> to categorise Cyprus in the Southern European state tradition. In terms of its involvement in the economy and society, the state tradition of Southern Europe reflects the fundamental ideas of the Napoleonic model, which is unmistakably interventionist. Sotiropoulos (2018) asserts that a state based on the Napoleonic model is centralised and hierarchical. Due to over a century of British colonial rule, Cyprus has assimilated Anglo-Saxon administrative heritage and culture. Within this framework, Cyprus has operated as a unitary state, mainly following the UK's system. Because of this, a significant part of Cypriot law is founded on the UK legal framework from that era (Mallouppas et al., 2018). In the years that followed Cyprus's independence, an inflexible, hierarchical administrative culture with an abundance of regulations, laws, and red tape arose, making civil servants less autonomous, flexible, and proactive (Ibid).

The accession of Cyprus in the EU in 2004 has constituted a critical juncture in the history of the island, triggering a modernising process of institutional adaptation and change in the overall administrative, political, and financial system (Agapiou–Josephides, 2005). This has also been challenging, up to an extent, the long-established centralist domestic tradition of Cyprus, improving the civil service in a wide range of subjects, such as transparency, human resource management and introducing e-government (Georgiou, 2012). In this context, several steps were taken by Cyprus to modernise its civil service that were funded by the EU. The Institute for Public Administration (Ireland) had a crucial role in this process producing functional reviews for a number of Ministries, such as those of Education and Health, that contained common European principles of good administration and public governance.<sup>5</sup> Yet so far (2023), this process has been met with resistance in some cases due to a

4 Loughlin and Peters introduced their classification in 1997, proposing the typologies of Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, French and Scandinavian state traditions. This later included the following typologies: the British Isles, the Rhinelandic states, the Nordic states, the Southern European states and the New Democracies (Hendriks et al., 2011).

5 This includes principles such as responsiveness, efficiency and transparency, rule of law, ethical conduct, innovation and openness to change, and accountability (Council of Europe, 2024).

strong rationale against constitutional amendments, due to its relevance to state building in Cyprus (Kombos and Shaelou, 2019). Therefore observed change has not been associated with changing established conservative attitudes, along with reducing the effects of formal and informal institutional restrictions. The following part will present and analyse the findings, underlying the way in which the institutional legacies of centralisation, and strict hierarchical control restrict change, filtering the results of Europeanisation.

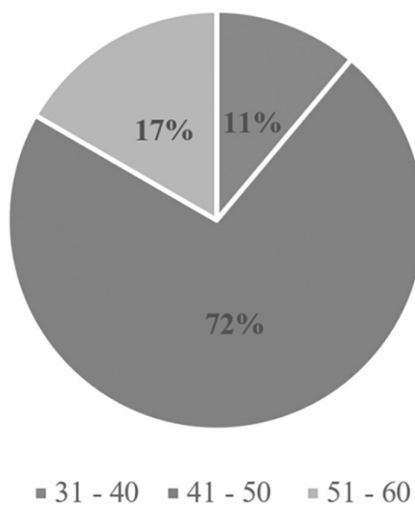
## **4 Presenting and analysing the findings**

This research is designed in such a way to investigate the impact of the EU, via the three processes of Europeanisation on domestic administrative structures of a southern EU member state: the Republic of Cyprus. The findings provided by our Structured questionnaires (2023) and Semi-structured interviews (2023) allowed us to analyse on an inter-agency basis the specialised administrative structures of five Ministries and the House of Representatives. As it will be further analysed, the strong institutional legacies of centralization and strict hierarchical control continue to produce formal and informal restrictions, mediating the effects of Europeanisation.

### **4.1 Profile of public servants**

Our findings demonstrate interesting information regarding the profile of the respondents. Most employees are women (52%), while men follow with 48%. Figure 1 indicates data regarding the age profile of the members of our sample. In this context, 72% are between 41 - 50 years old, 17% are between 51 - 60 years old while only 11% are between 31 - 40 years old (Structured questionnaires, 2023).

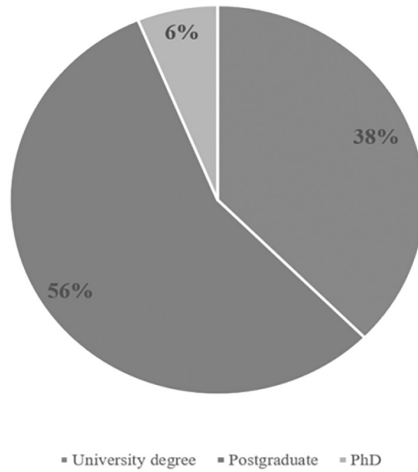
Figure 1. Age groups of the members of the sample.



Source: Structured questionnaires 2023.

The findings of the structured questionnaires reveal the high education level of the members of the sample. According to Figure 2, 56% of the sample holds a master’s degree, 38% a university degree and 6% a PhD. Our findings also reveal excellent knowledge of computers with 61% and very good knowledge (39%).

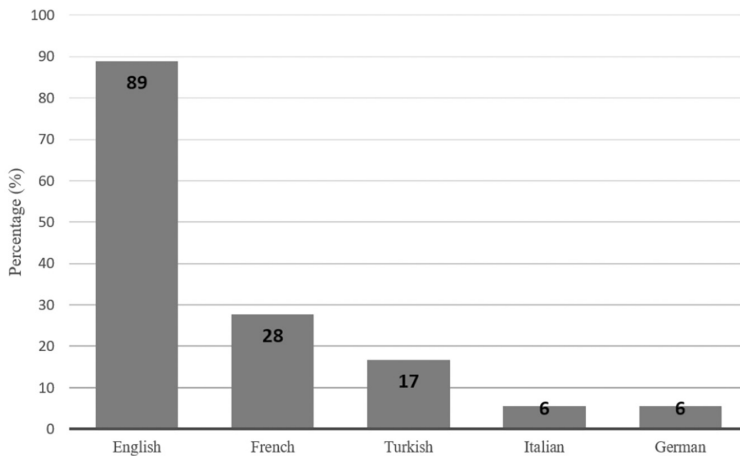
Figure 2. Education Level.



Source: Structured questionnaires 2023.

As seen in Figure 3, all the public servants of our sample speak at least one foreign language. Most of them use English as their second language (89%). The second most spoken language is French with 28%. The least spoken languages include Turkish with 17%, as well as Italian and German with 6% respectively (Structured questionnaires, 2023).

Figure 3. Foreign Languages.



Source: Structured questionnaires 2023.

## 4.2 Profile of the EU specialised services

As shown in Table 1, there is a direct association between the budget of the institutions included in our sample and the actual size of personnel in each service.

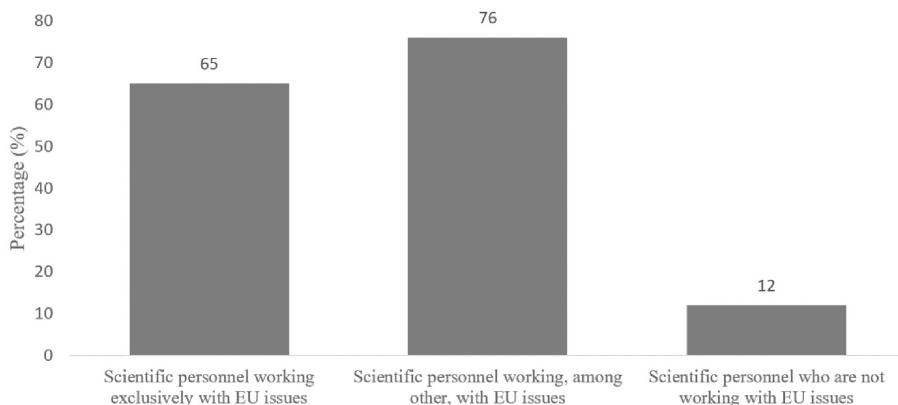
**Table 1. Correlation between budget and personnel.**

Budget (millions €)	Total number of personnel (%)	Number of Scientific Personnel (%)	Scientific personnel working exclusively on European issues (%)
0 - 0.5	3	4	0
0.5 - 1	6	3	0
1 - 5	12	10	11
> 5	78	83	89

Source: The returned structured questionnaires 2023.

Moreover, as the budget increases so does the number of total personnel, suggesting a parallel link between them. Furthermore, larger departments with higher budgets tend to demonstrate greater numbers of specialised personnel dealing with European issues. This can be explained by the greater responsibilities they have since they tend to demonstrate greater interactions with the EU. This seems to be verified by the literature, especially concerning local public administration (De Rooij, 2002). Figure 4 demonstrates the percentage of the personnel dealing with EU issues. In this context, 65% of the services in our sample have personnel that works exclusively with European affairs, while 76% have scientific personnel working, among other, on European affairs. It should be noted that a mere 12% of the services in our sample do not have scientific personnel working on European affairs. These were institutions with the smaller budgets (Structured questionnaires, 2023).

**Figure 4. Percentage of Scientific personnel dealing with EU issues.**



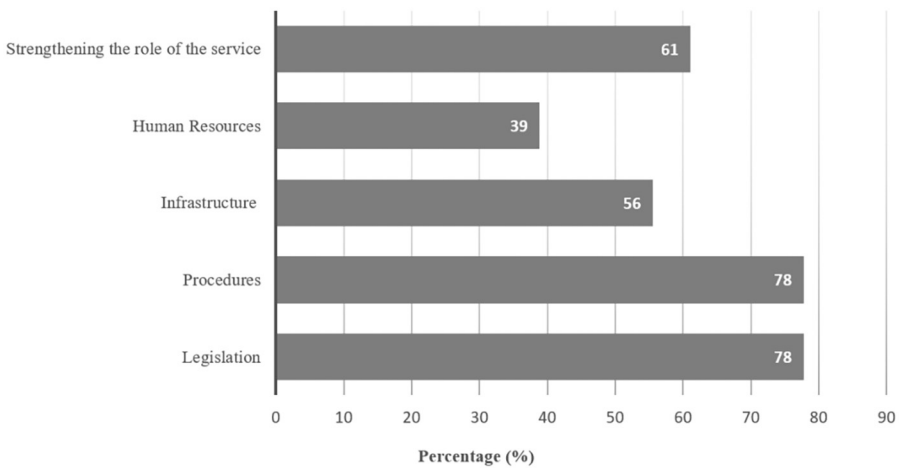
Source: Structured questionnaires 2023.

### 4.3 European Union

#### 4.3.1 Top-Down process of Europeanisation

We begin the presentation of our findings by focusing on the top-down process of Europeanisation. It should be noted that the results of this process were relatively greater than those of the rest. Our findings reveal a significant number of changes vis-à-vis the services of our sample that were attributed to the EU. Generally, these effects were positively evaluated by the respondents, since they reported (61%) that the EU has been strengthening the role of their institutions (Structured questionnaires, 2023). According to Figure 5, changes in legislation and ways of doing things-procedures-were the most common ones with 78% respectively. These were followed by changes in infrastructure (56%), such as setting up new departments, and changes in human resources (39%), such as hiring people with degrees in EU studies or training personnel on these issues.

Figure 5. Changes attributed to the EU.



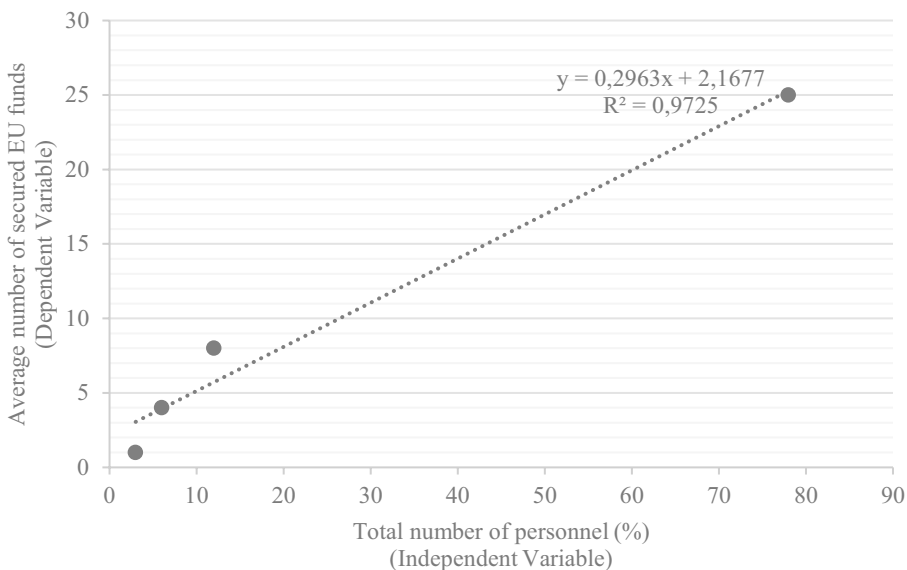
Source: Structured questionnaires 2023.

The respondents indicated the benefits associated with this top-down Europeanisation process, verifying the findings of Börzel (2005), Börzel and Risse (2012) and Heichlinger et al. (2018). In this context, securing EU funding and participating in projects was the most important effect with 57% (Structured questionnaires, 2023). This was described as an important motivation for active participation that largely promoted administrative reform (Ibid).<sup>6</sup> Other benefits included modernisation, improvement of operations and staff training with 40% respectively.

<sup>6</sup> Heichlinger, A. et al. (2018) point out that the main target of EU support has been the central government regardless of the type of government structure in place, such as unitary, decentralised, or regionalised. They indicate that for the ESF 2007-2013, 90% of the funding went to national level beneficiaries (Ministries, central agencies etc.).

A possible explanation for these findings is offered by the differentiated capacities between the institutions of our sample, since only 45% have the infrastructure to attract European funds (Structured questionnaires, 2023). Quantitative analysis verifies the positive relation between the average number of secured EU funds and the total number of personnel. Secured EU funds are positively affected by an increase in number of total personnel. As is shown in Figure 6, two out of four of the observations are on the line of the equation, while the last two are just off (Structured questionnaires, 2023). In order to strengthen our results, we set the hypothesis that the independent variable (total number of personnel) does not affect the dependent variable (average number of secured EU funds). Then, we test the confidence level at 0.05 by calculating the P-value. If the P has a value greater than 0.05 the hypothesis is accepted. Otherwise, if the P has a value lower than 0.05 the hypothesis is rejected. In our case we calculate the P-value at 0.013 so the hypothesis is rejected. This result indicates a strong correlation between the total number of personnel and the average number of secured EU funds.

Figure 6. Linear Regression: Secured EU Funds and Total Number of Personnel



Source: Structured questionnaires 2023.

At the same time, great differentiations in terms of their specialised personnel and available budgets were obvious that typically function as indicators of higher accomplishment (Blume and Voigt, 2011). The findings also indicate the relation between, institutional capacity, i.e., the establishment of infrastructure and institutional capability, i.e., the ability to use them in an effective manner, since both requirements need to be met, as it was noted by Graziano and Vink (2006). For these reasons, the services of our sample were not as successful as expected in securing EU projects (55%) (Structured questionnaires, 2023). Besides tangible factors, other non-tangible ones have

been highlighted by research as having obstructive effects vis-à-vis Europeanisation and Cyprus. The prevailing perception of Cyprus being in an interim stage, due to the pending resolution of the dispute has been indicated as a decelerating factor (Hatzimihail, 2013). Domestic traditions, according to Callanan (2012), tend to be quite resilient when facing common obligations deriving from the EU that result in differentiations. In this context, domestic intervening factors, such as state traditions, patterns of policy making and norms, seem to mediate and filter Europeanisation, by defining the strategy to respond to these pressures, especially in other centralists states, such as Greece (Hlepas, 2020). In the case of Cyprus, the Constitution has been a factor that has hindered modernising effects of the EU (Kombos and Shaelou, 2019). In this context, formal institutional constraints and strong path dependencies were noticed that greatly reduced the role and capacity of the various services of our sample. Indication shows that there was limited room to maneuver, since the members of our sample were obliged to secure official permission for almost everything (70%) (Structured questionnaires, 2023). Apart from formal institutional constraints, informal institutional preferences were noticed in the form of conservative attitudes that restricted public servants from questioning the role of higher administrative structures. In this context, bureaucratic resistance to change was observed in an attempt to avoid adjustment pressure (Semi-structured interviews, 2023). This was driven by the process's effects on the stakeholders' organisational identities and their desire to avoid having "outsiders" dictate to them what to do (van Dijk and van Dick, 2009).

This verified Ágh (2013) who noted the key role of national administrative tradition in relation to coping with the pressure of Europeanisation. Thus, regarding Cyprus, the prevalent administrative tradition of Southern Europe, with its centralized and hierarchical nature has been limiting the initiative and flexibility of public servants while also mediating the effects of Europeanisation. Besides internal factors, external influences also affected the capacities of the institutions of our sample, triggering reductions in their overall role. External factors included the financial and health crises that had major impacts on the services in our sample. Our findings reveal that these crises triggered restrictions on recruitment (85%), as well as restrictions on staff training (60%). Constraints on funding followed with 50%, while infrastructure constraints were the least important effects with 17% (Structured questionnaires, 2023).

#### 4.3.2 Horizontal process of Europeanisation

We shift our attention to the effects deriving from the horizontal process of Europeanisation. In general, there was wide recognition (75%) of the increasing opportunities to develop bilateral relations with public administration from other EU countries and that of EU institutions (Semi-structured interviews, 2023), confirming similar findings (Nemec, 2016). The members of our sample (45%) indicated this process as the second most important procedure of Europeanisation (Structured questionnaires, 2023). It was pointed out that



the participation in the horizontal processes of Europeanisation was contributing, to some extent, to the reduction of the sustained formal institutional constraints (Structured questionnaires, 2023). This also seemed to cut down the influence of informal institutional preferences, by giving an additional role to public administration via European networks, promoting initiative (Semi-structured interviews, 2023).

In particular, the benefits of these contacts were mostly gaining knowledge, sharing experiences, know-how and best practices through interaction and cooperation with other EU states and their respective services. In addition, 57% of the respondents reported that participation contributes to indirect learning, change and the introduction of good practices (Structured questionnaires, 2023). Similar findings were derived from other Mediterranean EU member states, such as Greece, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain where indirect learning and socialization led to the adoption of new ideas and the promotion of Europeanisation's effects (Giannakourou, 2005).

On a more specific level, several benefits were highlighted by the interviews. The most common one had to do with getting new knowledge on the proper application of the requirements of the EU Regulatory Framework in each institution's areas of competence. This was indicated as an important means to reflect the national priorities of Cyprus during the design of the various procedures (Semi-structured interviews, 2023). Economic and social gains from these interactions were also emphasised. All the above led to modernisation and a better application of European regulations and legislation (Ibid). Regarding the European Affairs Service in the House of Representatives, the interaction with corresponding services of other parliaments as well as with EU institutions led to the acquisition of knowledge and exchange of experiences/ best practices on how to handle and use incoming information regarding EU legislation and policies, as well as effective methods of examination of EU issues by national parliaments (Structured questionnaires, 2023).

#### 4.3.3 Bottom-up process of Europeanisation

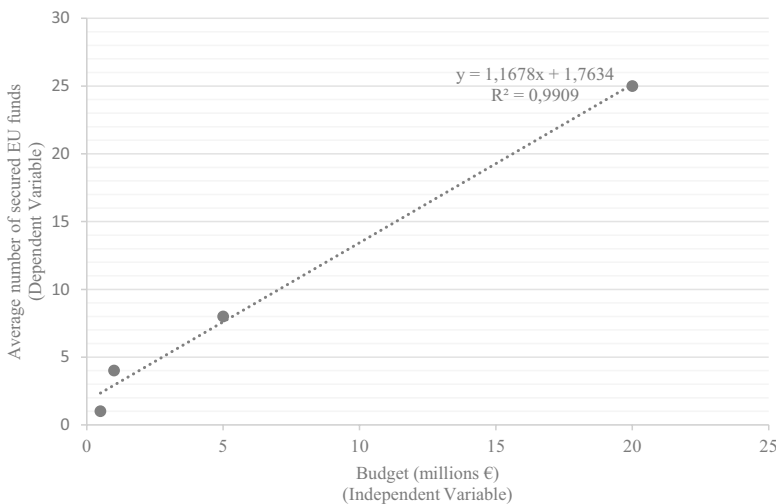
The most restricted effects of Europeanisation were observed in the bottom-up process, ranging from absorption to inertia. Generally, this process had to do with the role of internal factors, including the available resources and the existence of multiple institutional veto points within the institutions under examination. Our findings indicate that the efforts by the members of our sample to upload local preferences were very limited. Only 20% of the services in our sample tried to upload their policies and preferences to the EU. These had both the largest budgets and number of personnel. Quantitative analysis verifies the positive relationship between the average number of secured EU funds and the available budget. In this context, secured EU funds are positively affected by an increase in the budget. As is shown in Figure 7, three out of four of the observations are on the line of the equation, while the fourth one is just off (Structured questionnaires, 2023). Again, in order to strengthen our results, we set the hypothesis that the independent variable (budget) does not affect the dependent variable (average number of secured

EU funds) and we test the confidence level at 0.05 by calculating the P-value. In this case the P gets the value of 0.0045 so the hypothesis is rejected. This result indicates a very strong correlation between the budget and the average number of secured EU funds.

Prominent examples included the Ministry of Finance, which due to its role in the design and implementation of the Memorandum and the Cyprus Recovery Plan was better networked with the EU level. This gave it the chance to inform the European Commission of certain specific characteristics/national priorities of Cyprus, which were considered in the design of the various procedures (Semi-structured interviews, 2023).

Additional restrictive factors included understaffing, making it difficult or impossible to participate in European programmes and committees (Structured questionnaires, 2023). However, more comprehensive efforts to actively involve the remaining organisations in EU institutions were limited, due to the presence of multiple institutional veto points within the services under examination that demonstrated the very limited adaptation to the challenges of bottom-up Europeanisation. Our findings indicate that these multiple institutional veto points are placed in higher-level hierarchical structures and try to preserve their positions and interests, thus, inhibiting domestic adaptation, as it was noted by Haverland and H  ritier (cited in B  rzel, 2003). This confirmed the importance of endogenous constraints and the extremely critical role of central state structures that filter demands, preventing different agencies from operating autonomously within the bottom-up process of Europeanisation (Pollack, 1995). In the case of Cyprus these tendencies were related to its Southern European state heritage of strong intervention and dominance over society (Varnava and Yakinthou 2012; Hendriks et al., 2011; Sotiropoulos, 2018).

Figure 7. Linear Regression: Secured EU Funds and Number of Scientific Personnel



Source: Structured questionnaires 2023.

In this context, historical continuities and strong path dependencies sustained established formal institutional constraints, by obliging the members of our sample to secure official permission for almost everything (70%), prolonging central control (Structured questionnaires, 2023). Similar findings from other EU member states, such as Spain, verify the tremendous importance of central government structures, acting as a mediator between the EU and domestic administrative structures, guiding the process (Baraibar and Arregui, 2022). Even though Cyprus's membership in the EU has played a significant role in fostering the Europeanisation of domestic administrative structures, this process is still not complete because of historical continuities derived from the Ottoman and British colonial eras. These according to Sepos (2008) have been influencing Cyprus's social, political and financial advancement, mediating the effects of Europeanisation (Kirlappos, 2017; 2021; 2023). Another factor that has been postponing legal, institutional and political reform has been the tendency of being in an interim stage, due to the pending resolution of the political problem (Hatzimihail, 2013). This heritage goes hand-in-hand with strong path dependencies and historical burdens that are articulated through formal institutional constraints that limit the role and capabilities of the various services, as well as through informal institutional preferences that foster conservative attitudes and opposition to change. In fact, two decades of EU membership have not managed to significantly challenge this tradition.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper investigates the impact the EU on specific domestic administrative services of Cyprus that constitutes a highly centralised EU member state. Previous research has highlighted the ongoing effects of these severe hierarchical structures vis-à-vis specific parts of Cypriot administration. It has been proven that the effects of Europeanisation were filtered by this tradition, prolonging central control over local government (Kirlappos 2017; 2021; 2023).

In this context, the current research focused on internal institutions whose role remained uninvestigated to this day, those that are specifically assigned with the mission to deal with EU issues. For this reason, we have directed our attention to specialised services in the domestic administrative structures of Cyprus to access the impact of Europeanisation almost twenty years after the accession of Cyprus to the EU.

Regarding our first research question, our findings indicate that the results of Europeanisation were at best moderate with important differentiations per process. The effects of the top-down process of Europeanisation were relatively greater than those of the rest. Our findings revealed several changes vis-à-vis the services of our sample that were attributed to the EU. These included changes in legislation and procedures, securing EU funding and projects and promoting administrative reform. Other changes included modernisation, improvement of operations and staff training. Our findings also highlighted the role of differentiations in size, budgets, and specialised personnel between the institutions of our sample. These factors mediated

the results of top-down Europeanisation favouring those institutions that had them in greater quantities, further increasing inequalities between them.

Our findings indicate that the effects of the process of horizontal Europeanisation were the second most important. The benefits of these contacts included mostly gaining knowledge, sharing experiences, know-how and best practices through interaction and cooperation with other public administrations from other EU member states and that of the EU. All the above led to a better application of European regulations and legislation and provided an alternative means to the established formal and informal institutional constraints, by giving them an additional role via European networks.

The bottom-up process of Europeanisation had the most limited effects ranging from absorption to inertia. Generally, only a very small percentage of the services of our sample developed very limited initiatives in this process. These demonstrated some of the largest budgets and numbers of personnel. Because of this, relations with other EU agencies were unable to develop. Our findings reaffirmed the significance of endogenous constraints and the essential role of central state structures that filter demands, preventing various agencies from acting independently within the bottom-up process of Europeanisation.

To answer the second question, it should be stated that even though Cyprus's membership in the EU has played a significant role in improving domestic administrative structures, this process is still incomplete because of historical continuities resulting from the Ottoman and British colonial eras. These continue to have a long-lasting impact on both formal and informal institutions.

The occupation of Cyprus by the Ottomans and later the British established a restrictive path with illiberal procedures, creating a relationship between ruler and vassal. In this context, historical continuities established formal and informal institutional constraints that can be traced in endogenous characteristics, tangible factors and conservative attitudes. These factors in combination with the administrative tradition of Southern Europe further exacerbated the centralized and hierarchical nature of the administration of the island. Therefore, this background of over-centralisation has created restrictive practices and a deep-rooted conservative culture among public servants significantly limiting initiative, autonomy and flexibility, while also mediating the effects of Europeanisation. Our findings revealed formal institutional constraints and strong path dependencies as well as historical burdens that greatly reduced the role and capacity of the various services. In this context, it was indicated by the members of the sample that there was limited room to maneuver, since they were obliged to have clearance for everything. Besides the crucial role of formal institutional constraints, informal institutional preferences were equally important. In this context, conservative attitudes as well as the mentality of Cyprus being at an interim stage were putting obstacles to any attempt for change.

For these reasons, although the overall course of Europeanisation has produced some positive effects on the various services under consideration, the historical continuities inherited from previous historical periods place limitations on the whole process, mediating the effects of Europeanisation.

**Disclosure statement**

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## Annex: Indicative questions derived from the structured questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews

### A. Structured questionnaire

1. Have you noticed any changes in your service that can be attributed to the EU? If so, please indicate the most significant changes in your opinion.
  - Legislation
  - Procedures
  - Infrastructure (e.g., new departments)
  - Human resources
  - Strengthening the role of the service/department
  - All the above
  
2. Is there an infrastructure to attract European funds in your service/department?
  - YES (Creation date: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - NO
  
3. Has your service/department secured EU founded programs?
  - YES (Number: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - NO
  
4. In the case of participation in European programmes, what do you consider to have been the greatest benefits for your service/department?
  - Raising funding
  - Exchange of experience and cooperation with other European services/ departments
  - Modernisation and improvement of operations
  - Staff training
  
5. Has your service developed contacts with services in other EU countries and/ or EU institutions? If so, what were the benefits of these contacts?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. What have been the major impacts of the two recent crises (financial and health) on your service/department?
  - Restrictions on recruitment
  - Restrictions on funding
  - Infrastructure constraints (e.g., abolition of departments)
  - Restrictions on staff training
  - Reduction in the role of the service/department
  - All the above

7. Comments/ suggestions:

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**B. Semi-structured interviews**

1. Based on your experience what were the most important difficulties in terms of promoting change and administrative reform?
2. Has your service developed contacts with counterparts from other EU countries? What were the benefits of these interactions?
3. Has your service developed contacts with EU institutions? What were the benefits of these interactions?
4. What was the role of factors, such as centralisation and hierarchical control, in the process of change and administrative reform?