National binding renewable energy targets for 2020, but not for 2030 anymore: why the European Commission developed from a supporter to a brakeman

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ABSTRACT   While in 2007 the European Commission suggested a national binding target of 20 per cent for the renewable energy share of European Union (EU) energy consumption by 2020, its proposal of January 2014 for the follow-up period until 2030 is less ambitious: first, the suggested 27 per cent share of renewables is only slightly above the expected level of 24.4 per cent which would be achieved by the implementation of current policies; and second, the target is not legally obligatory for the member states. This article argues that the less-ambitious target is explained by changed context conditions for the EU's climate and renewable energy policy, whereas the abandonment of the legally binding force of the target for the member states is the result of the bargaining strategy employed by the energy commissioner. This illustration of a commissioner's individual influence has so far been neglected by the literature on the European Commission.

KEY WORDS   Agenda-setting; climate policy; European Commission; policy formulation; renewable energy

INTRODUCTION

In its renewable energy road map, published in January 2007, the European Commission suggested a 20 per cent reduction (compared to the 1990 levels) of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and a legally binding national 20 per cent share of renewable energy until 2020 (European Commission 2007a). These goals were subsequently accepted by the European Council in March, and paved the way for the renewable energy directive, which was adopted by the Council and the European Parliament in April 2009, and which set country specific mandatory national renewable energy targets for 2020 (2009/28/EC). This measure was considered as a proof of the European Unions's (EU) willingness to act as a directional leader in international climate change politics (Skovgaard 2013: 1141).

In January 2014, the European Commission presented its framework for climate and energy for the follow-up period until 2030, and suggested a 40 per cent reduction of GHG emissions by 2030, relative to emissions in 1990, and a share of renewable energy of 27 per cent. However, these targets are not legally binding for the member states. Instead, a government framework was recommended in order to deliver the 27 per cent target EU wide (European Commission 2014a). Supporters of more ambitious targets have criticized the Commission for giving in to the intense lobbying efforts of large energy providers and energy intensive industries, and have provided evidence for the feasibility of higher targets, citing scientific studies (Euractiv 2014d). The European Parliament 'regrets that the Commission's communication . . . is short-sighted and unambitious on a number of levels, specifically as regards the lack of national targets for renewable energy (European Parliament 2014).

By comparing the two policy formulation processes of 2005/06 and 2013/14, the article aims at explaining the policy change of the European Commission. The analytic framework combines insights gained by recent studies into the internal politics of the Commission with two additional factors offered by the policy-making literature: issue frames as negotiation resources; and the constraints set by the position constellation in the Council.

The main finding is that the less-ambitious target is explained by changed context conditions for the EU's climate and renewable energy policy, whereas the abandonment of the legally binding force of the target for the member states is the result of the bargaining strategy employed by the energy commissioner. In detail, the argumentative setting for an ambitious climate policy deteriorated owing to the EU's failed leadership strategy in the struggle against climate change during the United Nations (UN) climate conference in Copenhagen. Thus, a normative-charged justification of ambitious GHG reduction targets became more difficult, which in turn constrained the debate on the related level of renewable energy necessary to reach the climate goals. In addition, the supporters of renewables were in a defensive position owing to rising retail electricity prices, for which support schemes for renewable energy were partially responsible. Furthermore, the euro crisis and the emergence of new technologies such as fracking and carbon capture/storage have undermined arguments for an ambitious renewable energy policy. This contributed to a waning engagement of former supportive member states. In the absence of clear signals from the European Council, there have been efforts by Commission President José Manuel Barroso and his Secretariat General (SG) to depoliticize the policy formulation process, replacing the political argument of international leadership with the rather technocratic discourse of cost-effectiveness. Accordingly, the impact assessment found a 40 per cent GHG reduction goal to be the most cost-effective track towards meeting the 80–90 per cent reduction goals by 2050, a commitment given by the member states before the peak of the euro crisis, and under the assumption of global mitigation efforts. The impact assessment further states that a 27 per cent target for renewables represents the most cost-effective path to reaching the 40 per cent GHG

target. However, a small fraction of commissioners, led by Energy Commissioner Guenther Oettinger, was in favour of a less ambitious 35 per cent target, and was opposed to making the renewables target legally binding for the member states. As a consequence, Barroso suggested a compromise which retained a 40 per cent GHG reduction target, but abandoned the national binding character of the renewable energy target.

These findings contribute to the literature on the Commission's internal decision-making by illustrating the considerable influence that a single commissioner is able to command, an aspect which has so far been neglected by the literature on the European Commission's internal dynamics. The case studies show that the margin of a commissioner's agency increases in absence of a commonly shared reform imperative and in the case of heterogeneous or ambivalent positions in the Council. Thus, these findings also make a more general contribution to the literature on EU decision-making, confirming the impact of ideational factors on policy outcomes (Béland 2009; Saurugger 2013; Skovgaard 2013), as well as the impact of key member states on the legislative position of the European Commission (Bocquillon and Dobbels 2014; Christiansen 2012: 235; Corona *et al.* 2012: 2–3).

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Factors shaping the Commission's policy formulation process, such as issue framing, the position constellation among key member states and structural advantages of the SG and the Commission President, are set out in the next section. Next, the research design is presented, followed by two sections comprising the two case studies. The article then concludes.

EXPLAINING POLICY FORMULATION PROCESSES IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The literature on the Commission 'has been principally concerned with estimating the Commission's relative influence in EU decision making'; moreover, 'analysis typically proceeds from the assumption that the Commission is a unitary player rather than an internally differentiated actor' (Kassim *et al.* 2013: 4). Despite a small number of studies which have opened the black box and offer insights regarding particular actors inside the Commission, such as the Commission President (Peterson 2004), the commissioners (Egeberg 2006; Wonka 2008) or the services (Bauer 2008), recent publications continue to highlight the lack of knowledge on how different preferences are aggregated to a common Commission proposal (Egeberg 2012: 947; Hartlapp *et al.* 2013: 426; Kassim *et al.* 2013: 4; Smith 2014: 56; Wille 2013: 4).

Aiming at closing this gap, Kassim *et al.* (2013) conducted an online survey among 1,900 Commission officials, complemented by approximately 200 face-to-face interviews. One key finding regarding the internal position finding process is that increasing presidentialization under Barroso has allowed him to control the policy agenda at all levels of the policy process (*ibid.*: 166–7]; for a similar assessment of the Barroso Presidencies, see Braun [2009: 435]

and Wille [2013: 62]). The key factor in this presidentialization is the close partnership with the SG, which consequently became transformed into an instrument of the Commission President, allowing him to extend his influence into the services (Kassim *et al.* 2013: 174–6). While previously the SG operated according to a narrow conception of its co-ordination role, with only limited involvement in the internal negotiation of policy, more recently it has taken on a more interventionist role under Barroso (*ibid.* [186, 194]; see also Wille [2013: 65]). The necessity of a presidential-style leadership, which involves 'reducing the room for manœuvre of individual Commissioners and the senior officials under them' (Wille 2013: 65) has been justified by Barroso as unavoidable if the Commission is to 'remain effective after enlargement' (Kassim *et al.* 2013: 166).

The enhanced role of the Commission President in the policy formulation process via the SG is also highlighted in Hartlapp *et al.*'s (2013) empirical study on the interest aggregation in the European Commission. Based on an analysis of 48 policy formulation processes in the Commission during 1999–2008, these researchers argue that the changes introduced by the Kinnock reforms have strengthened the role of the SG. Since the institutionalization of impact assessment steering groups, compulsory for all major legislative projects, the SG has the power to adjust in its own favour the number of participants in the agenda-setting process, and is thus able to determine the frames which are given a voice, so undermine the discretion of the lead Directorate General. Likewise, its mandatory consultation during the more formal inter-service consultation has provided the SG with a resource with which it can direct the contents of position formation. Furthermore, as chair of the weekly meetings of the *chef de cabinets*, the SG plays an important role as a bridge between the administrative and political level (*ibid.* [432]; see also Radaelli and Meuwese [2010]).

However, while the structural advantage of the SG and thus the Commission President is a necessary condition for influence, it is not a sufficient one. As Hartlapp *et al.* (2013: 433) concede, but do not address in the summary of their cases studies, further explanations are necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the Commission's legislative position. I suggest that, in addition to the structural advantages of the Commission President and the SG in steering the internal debate towards a preferred outcome, ideational factors as well as the constraints set by key member states have to be integrated into the analysis. Regarding the former, the extent to which SG and Commission President can exploit their structural advantages depends on the justification of their position. In order to legitimize a position, they have to frame it as an appropriate solution to a salient problem (Kingdon 1995: 173; Princen 2007: 30). The perceived salience of a problem depends on political and socioeconomic context factors Princen 2007: 30; (Skovgaard 2013: 1145), as well as on strategies used by actors to construct the salience of a problem (Béland 2009:704; Saurruger 2013). The appropriateness of a suggested policy generally depends, then, on the actors' ability to link a position to a commonly accepted reform imperative,

such as either established normative ideas or technical reasoning (Boswell 2008; Bulmer *et al.* 2007; Schimmelfennig 2003; Smith 2014: 58). As a consequence, the more the Commission President and the SG are able to link their position to a commonly accepted reform imperative, the less freedom of action individual Commissioners have to dissent from this position. The consensus orientation in the Commission (Egeberg 2006: 8) further decreases the likelihood that compromises made at administrative level can be fundamentally challenged by individual commissioners.

Regarding the constraints set by the European Parliament and the Council, the literature has underlined the latter in particular as a constraining factor in the policy formulation process of the European Commission. It has been argued that the more the discretion of the European Commission decreases, the greater the engagement of the state leaders themselves (Bocquillon and Dobbels 2014: 28; Skovgaard 2013: 1149), the stronger the unity of the states in their position (Elgström and Larsén 2010; Pollack 1997: 124–9), and the more clearly defined the instructions and deadlines of the Council conclusions formulated (Eggermont 2012: 104–18; Werts 2008: 53). However, I argue that these constraints may also be beneficial, as they strengthen the internal negotiation power of those Commission officials and commissioners who frame their position as being in line with the position of key member states. Conversely, the more heterogeneous or ambiguous the positions of the Council, and in particular of key member states, the greater the margin for interpretation and the freedom of action to campaign for an individual position. In the case of individual commissioners, those whose national government's position is less well defined, have greater freedom of action.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The two case studies are based on a triangulation of data collection, comprising the few studies on the 2020 GHG reduction negotiations (none of which however address renewable energy and energy efficiency targets), policy documents of the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament, public statements of the involved commissioners in press reports, and 10 semi-structured interviews. Interview selection was designed to incorporate a broad range of actors involved in the policy formulation processes in 2006 and 2013. Interviews were conducted with the following: a cabinet member of Energy Commissioner Oettinger; a cabinet member of Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard; an official of DG Energy; an official of DG Climate Action; an official of the Secretariat General, responsible for co-ordinating the drafting process in 2013; the director general of DG Transport and Energy, responsible for drafting the 2020 package; the director general of DG Climate Change, who was, as director of climate change and air of DG Environment, also involved in drafting the 2020 package; a member of the European Parliament; and finally, one representative of a renewable-energy-friendly non-governmental organization (NGO) and one of a renewable-energy-sceptical NGO. I refer to the

statements of the interviewees by naming them interview 1 to 10, which does not, however, correspond to order they have been listed above. The informants were asked to explain the position, arguments and strategies of the involved actors and which factors most influenced the policy formulation phase. Similarly, official documents and public statements were analysed in order to reveal the dominant frames and argumentative strategies.

THE 2020 TARGETS

Issue framing: directional leadership as reform imperative

The context conditions were favourable for the supporters of an ambitious climate and energy policy during the drafting period of the 2020 climate and energy package (interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7). The EU's international commitment to directional leadership in international climate change (van Schaik and Schunz 2012; Wurzel and Connelly 2011) allowed the supporters of ambitious targets to exercise normative pressure on the opponents (Vogler 2009). The EU had already agreed, at the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, to reduce GHG by 8 per cent compared to 1990 levels by 2012. However, slow progress and lack of action by the member states highlighted that the indicative nature of the targets was not able to trigger the desired results (Oberthür and Pallemaerts 2010: 124). As a consequence, from 2005, with the beginning of the debates about the new post Kyoto targets for the period after 2012 started, the EU was normatively entrapped by its previous commitment to act as a leader on the international stage (Skovgaard 2013: 1147).

In addition to this favourable normative context, interest-driven arguments also played into the hands of the proponents of an ambitious climate and energy policy. A report on the economics of climate change released for the British government in October 2006 by economist Nicolas Stern (2006) increased the public awareness about the economic impact of global warming. According to the report, without action the overall costs of climate change is expected to be equivalent to losing at least 5 per cent of global gross domestic product each year.

Finally, the challenge of climate change is coupled with the challenge of increased dependence on imports of fossil fuels, a fact which became more salient owing to the conflict over gas between Russia and Ukraine in 2006. The dispute began when Russia claimed that Ukraine had failed to pay for gas and was diverting Russian gas bound for the European Union away from pipelines that crossed its territory. The conflict escalated in January 2006, when Russia ceased gas deliveries, which also affected supplies to European countries.

Political context: strong engagement of political leaders

The drafting of the 2020 climate and energy package was constrained by clear political parameters of the European Council, and the personal engagement of

the political leaders of core member states. During its Presidency, the United Kingdom (UK) called for an ambitious GHG reduction target at European Council meeting in October 2005 (United Kingdom Government 2006), giving the Commission a mandate to reinforce EU action on energy and climate (Buchan 2009: 114). In March 2006, the Commission released a green paper calling for a competitive, sustainable and secure energy policy for Europe (European Commission 2006). The European Council subsequently approved the green paper at its spring summit on 26 March, and asked the Commission to put forward a renewable energy roadmap and to investigate the possibility of a 15 per cent target for renewable energy in 2015 (Council of the European Union 2006).

As the debate over the EU's reduction target for the post-2012 commitment period intensified in October 2006, the German government prepared for its Presidency in the first half of 2007 and underlined its preference for legally binding renewable energy targets. The German push for renewables is explained by the country's nuclear power phase-out. Furthermore, Chancellor Angela Merkel had an interest in an ambitious agreement, as she hosted the G8 summit in Heiligendamm in September 2007.

While the UK, France and many other countries (including Sweden, Spain, and the Netherlands) all supported a renewable energy goal in principle, making it legally binding was much more controversial. Tony Blair supported legally binding targets, as long as these were met in a 'realistic way', meaning that some member states would have to make more effort than others to meet the overall European objective (Financial Times 2007a). French President Jacques Chirac also backed plans for a legally binding target; with the condition that France's low carbon nuclear sector was taken into account when setting national targets for green power, thus reducing the burden for France (Financial Times 2007b).

The few countries, first and foremost Poland and Italy, but also the Czech Republic (Skovgaard 2013: 1147), in opposition to ambitious greenhouse reduction and renewable energy targets argued that setting unilateral high greenhouse gas reduction targets would lead to a significant loss of European competitiveness. A further call for a mandatory target for renewable energy was made by the European Parliament in a resolution on 14 December 2006. This called for a renewable target of 25 per cent in 2020 (together with mandatory sectoral targets).

Policy formulation: a fulfilling Commission

Commission President Barroso was in close contact with Merkel and a strong defender of her position inside the Commission, basically via the SG and his Secretary General, Catherine Day, who had expertise in this field, as she had previously served as Director General for Environment (interview 5). Barroso saw the issue as a potential motor for European integration, which was in crisis following the rejection of the European constitution at the French and

Dutch referendum, and also as way of strengthening both the role of Europe on the global stage and of the Commission on the European stage (Skovgaard 2013: 1147).

The German push for a national binding renewable energy goal was initially controversially discussed in the Directorate General Transport and Energy (DG TREN). While many supported the idea of using a binding target as a regulatory instrument, the proponents of market-based instruments argued that policy-makers should not decide the energy mix, and that it should be left to the market to find the most cost-effective way of lowering emissions (interviews 1, 6). They argued that the EU's Emission Trading System (ETS) would stipulate investments in renewable energy and energy savings, making additional targets obsolete. The ETS caps the permitted levels of GHG emissions by the sectors covered by the system. Within the cap, companies receive or buy emission allowances, which they can trade with one another as needed. The supporters of a renewable energy target argued that the ETS could not provide the necessary long-term transition on its own and that because some sectors, such as transport or buildings, were not covered by the ETS, this market mechanism cannot stipulate change in these sectors. Influenced by political pressure, the view finally prevailed that in addition to a GHG reduction goal, it was also necessary to set renewable energy and energy efficiency targets. The necessity for the binding character of a renewable energy target was also discussed at length. Again, Germany's insistence, and Barroso's support, silenced the sceptical voices (interviews 1, 6).

The leadership role of the DG TREN was constrained by the need to co-ordinate its position in the interdepartmental steering group, which drafted the impact assessment. Composed of 13 Directorates Generals and the Secretariat General, the group met seven times between April 2005 and November 2006. In the end, the impact assessment, published together with the Renewable Energy Roadmap, reads as a strong defence of ambitious and legal binding renewable energy targets. Two main justifications were given. First, the 20 per cent target is justified as the expression of the political will of the Council and the European Parliament (European Commission 2007b: 7). Second, it is argued that 20 per represents the best balance between cost and benefits. Regarding the benefits, it is argued that the additional renewable energy deployment needed to achieve the 20 per cent target will reduce annual CO_2 emissions in the range of 600–900 mega tonnes, saving between 150 and 200 billion euros, based on a price of 25 euros per tonne of CO_2. The contribution to the security of supply, by increasing the share of domestically produced energy, was cited as another benefit. Assuming that the 20 per cent target is achieved, the annual reduction in fuel imports has been calculated to be about 200 mega tonnes. The costs, in turn, are considered as feasible, in particular owing to the hidden costs of conventional energy (European Commission 2007b: 14–15). National mandatory targets were justified by the inappropriateness of indicative targets. Referring to examples of ineffective indicative targets, such as the one set in 1997 for a 12 per cent share of renewable energy in gross

inland consumption by 2010, the report concludes that the attainment of policy goals requires mandatory targets. Furthermore, it is argued that mandatory targets allow for greater certainty in planning and investment (European Commission 2007b: 24–5).

The responsible commissioners supported both the 20 per cent renewable energy target and the fact that it should be legally binding. Several interviewees stressed that neither Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs from Latvia nor the Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas from Greece would have had the political weight to deviate from the political pre-setting co-ordinated between Barroso and the member states (interviews 1, 5, 6, 10).

THE 2030 TARGETS

Issue framing: renewables on the defensive

Compared to the drafting period of the 2020 targets, the justification of an ambitious renewable energy policy became more difficult in 2013 owing to two main changes. First, the EU leadership norm had lost its effectiveness, a factor cited by all interviewees. After the failure of the EU to bring other nations to commit to similarly ambitious targets against climate change at the UN climate summit in Copenhagen in December 2009, sceptics could argue that the leadership strategy was ineffective (Skovgaard 2013: 1153). In addition, all interviewees stated that the euro crisis also negatively impacted on the political will to engage in ambitious targets. However, the normative pressure to lead the international effort against climate change did not completely dissolve. In 2009, the member states committed themselves to reduce GHG emissions by 80–95 per cent in 2050 (European Commission 2014b: 12). Another push for new GHG targets for the time period after 2020 emerged during the 2011 Durban UN climate conference, where there was agreement to begin negotiations on a new global agreement, applicable to all contracting parties for the period beyond 2020, to be finalized at the UN climate conference in Paris in 2015.

Second, increased electricity prices, partly caused by support schemes for renewables, were used as an argument against ambitious targets (Euractiv 2014e). However, the price report of the European Commission reveals a more nuanced picture: renewable energy taxes and levies constitute 6 per cent of the average EU household electricity price, and approximately 8 per cent of the industrial electricity price, before taking exemptions into account, whereby Spanish and German shares reach 15.5 and 16 per cent respectively of household electricity prices, in contrast to less than 1 per cent in Ireland, Poland and Sweden (European Commission 2014c: 8). The report is critical of the current situation, noting that the fall in wholesale electricity prices, caused by the feed in of renewable energy, has not yet translated into a reduction in the energy element of the retail prices of electricity. The report explains the gap in terms of weak price competition in a number of retail markets, which

allows suppliers to avoid passing on wholesale price reduction to retail prices (European Commission 2014c: 12).

An additional factor which brought the supporters of renewable energy to a defensive position was the rising attractiveness of new technologies, such as carbon capture and storage (CCS), and shale gas fracking. While almost non-existent 10 years ago, fracking has spread rapidly, in particular in the US. Whereas critical voices argue that Europe has only limited deposits, mainly concentrated in a limited number of countries such as Poland and Great Britain, supporters frame it as a form of green energy, and thus as an alternative to renewable energy in the pursuit of low carbon energy (Euractiv 2014a).

Political context: ambivalent signals from the Council

In comparison to the drafting period of the 2020 targets, the signals from the Council for the Commission were less clear in 2013 (interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10). While the UK (UK Government 2013) and France (Euractiv 2013a) both supported a 40 per cent GHG reduction goal by 2030, they were less enthusiastic about national binding renewable energy targets. In particular, the UK's support for renewable energy declined for two main reasons. In contrast to the Blair government, David Cameron's government has brought a renaissance of nuclear energy and even intends a feed-in tariff law in order to trigger investment in reactors. Furthermore, the newly discovered potential of shale gas also reduced the UK's willingness to accept binding renewable energy targets. Consequently, the UK was in favour of a single target for GHG reduction, and allowing states full flexibility on how to meet this target (Euractiv 2014f).

Germany, a strong supporter of ambitious and binding targets for renewable energy in 2007, was in 2013 partially paralysed by the diverging views of the economics and environment ministries. While Economics Minister Philipp Rösler was a rigid brakeman, Environment Minister Peter Altmeier supported more ambitious climate and energy targets (interviews 1, 5). Furthermore, Germany's influence was weakened during the decisive weeks of the drafting process in autumn 2013, when the parties were focussed on the negotiation of the coalition treaty for the newly established government. It was not until December that the new Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel was able to demand robust renewable energy targets in a letter, which was also signed by his counterparts in France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland and Portugal (Euractiv 2014f).

Finally, French President François Hollande is said to be caught between, on the one hand, his electoral promises in the aftermath of the Fukushima tragedy to reduce the share of nuclear energy by a third in the next 20 years, implying the decommissioning of 20 out of 58 reactors, and, on the other, the influence of the nuclear lobby in France (*BBC News Magazine* 2014). While the current French obligation to reach a share of 23 per cent of renewable energy by 2020 can in principle be reached without a reduction of nuclear electricity

production, an increase of its national renewable energy target would automatically decrease the share of nuclear power in the national energy mix. Despite the sensitivity of the issue, Hollande finally supported Gabriel's demand for robust renewable energy targets (Euractiv 2014f).

This lapse in leadership from the core member states, who had previously been strongly in favour of ambitious renewable energy targets, encouraged the countries who had reluctantly accepted the 20–20–20 targets in 2007 to proclaim their opposition (interviews 1, 3, 4). In addition, the European Parliament sent out ambivalent messages: while a non-binding resolution in favour of a renewables share greater than 30 per cent only passed with a narrow margin (339–336, with 19 abstentions) in May 2013 (Euractiv 2013c), a few months later, on 9 January 2014, a joint meeting of the Parliament's environment and industry committees voted in favour of three binding energy and climate targets in 2030, 40 per cent respectively for energy savings improvement and GHG reduction, along with a 30 per cent market share for renewables.

Policy formulation: a discordant Commission

As the argumentative setting and the position constellation among the member states became more ambivalent than it had been in 2007, the Commission gained greater discretion in the policy formulation process. Commission President Barroso's strategy was to draft a package in conformity with the goals of the Energy Roadmap 2050, and thus tried to establish cost-effectiveness as the central reform imperative (interview 1). The Energy Roadmap 2050 had been developed by the Commission in 2011 in response to the member states' commitment to reducing GHG emissions between 80 and 95 per cent by 2050 compared to 1990 levels (European Commission 2011). It sets out the most cost-effective pathway for reaching this goal – reductions of the order of 40 per cent by 2030 and 60 per cent by 2040. For renewables, the policy scenarios in the Energy Roadmap 2050 indicate that a share of around 30 per cent is the most cost-effective way to reach the 40 per cent GHG reduction in 2030. With regard to the national binding character of renewable energy targets, the Roadmap makes no recommendation. Barroso supported a continuation of the established policy of national binding targets; as such a policy allows the Commission greater control over the policies in the member states than indicative targets (interview 1).

Both lead DG's, DG Energy and DG Climate Action, compromised heterogeneous positions. In DG Energy, one faction was in favour of higher renewable energy share than just the one necessary to reach the 40 per cent GHG reduction in a cost-effective way. Like many environmentalist groups, they emphasized that a higher share of renewables would bring advantages such as the positive impact on energy security and job growth. DG Energy was also inconsistent regarding the national binding character of a renewable energy target (interviews 1, 3, 4). In DG Climate Action, a strong faction supported the UK's request for a single GHG reduction goal. It has been stated that this faction wanted to

ensure that emission cuts were delivered by the ETS – the central focus of their careers – rather than by a structure in which the ETS was combined with renewables and efficiency targets (interview 8).

As in drafting period of the 2020 package, the agenda-setting power of the lead DG's was constrained by the involvement of numerous representatives from other DG's and services in the impact assessment steering group, co-ordinated by the SG, which aimed to enforce cost-effectiveness as guiding line for the drafting of the impact assessment and the interpretation of its results (interviews 1, 2, 3, 4). Compared to the impact assessment of 2007, the new document was more comprehensive and sent messages of greater ambivalence, reflecting the different priorities of the involved actors and the less clear signals from the member states. While the earlier document basically analysed the budgetary, macroeconomic and environmental impacts of a pre-set 20 per cent share of renewable energy, the new impact assessment shifted the perspective and took different levels of GHG reduction goals as starting point (35, 40 and 45 per cent). Indeed, the findings confirmed those of the Energy Roadmap, namely that a 40 per cent GHG reduction target by 2030 represents the most cost-effective track towards meeting the EU's 2050 GHG goal of reducing GHG emissions by 80–95 per cent compared to 1990. It also states that 'while that 2050 target could in principle be reached also with a 35 percent GHG target for 2030, ... it would come with additional costs over the entire time period up to 2050, while having lower costs in a 2030 perspective' (European Commission 2014b: 15). However, the arguments in favour of a 40 per cent GHG goal are qualified by the statement that 'keeping in mind that the EU's agreed 2050 GHG target can only be met through international climate action, it leaves the question open if the EU's initial contribution to an international agreement should be lower' (*ibid.*).

With regard to renewables, the impact assessment found that a share of 27 per cent represents the most cost-effective option for reaching the 40 per cent GHG reduction, as a higher share would increase costs (European Commission 2014b: 8). The impact assessment makes clear, however, that higher energy system costs also come with additional benefits, related, for instance, to energy security, health and air pollution reduction (interviews 1, 7, 10). The assessment is ambivalent as to whether national binding targets for renewables should be set. On the one hand, it is argued that setting one general EU-wide target, with no national targets, 'potentially could lead to development of renewables where the resources are most abundant, and thereby in theory improving EU-wide cost EU efficiency'. On the other hand, it is considered, that 'if member states do not have specific targets, they would have less incentive to mitigate administrative barriers and facilitate uptake through grid developments and necessary licensing' (European Commission 2014b: 13-14).

As a consequence, the impact assessment left more room for political weighting than the one of 2006 (interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8). This facilitated Energy Commissioner Oettinger's rejection of the impact assessment's recommendation of a 40 per cent GHG reduction goal and his support of a 35 percent

GHG reduction target, which is, however, only slightly above the level which would be reached by the implementation of already adopted policies, namely a GHG reduction of 32 per cent and a share of 24.4 per cent renewables. He justified his position with the need for a global commitment rather than unilateral action to combat climate change (Euractiv 2014c).

With regard to renewables, Oettinger did not ascribe them a separate value, but considered them as one of several possible means for fulfilling greenhouse gas reduction targets (Euractiv 2012, 2013b). While some officers in Oettinger's cabinet were in favour of making a renewables target binding on member states (interview 1, 3), he justified his opposition with the argument that the EU should not interfere in the national energy mix of individual countries, and also highlighted the danger of renewable energy policy leading to higher electricity prices, and thus jeopardizing EU competitiveness (Euractiv 2014b).

All interviewees considered that his position could be explained by his more pronounced business orientation compared to his precursor, Piebalgs. One interviewee explained Oettinger's position with reference to the challenges for the car industry, pointing out that a 40 per cent GHG reduction goal would imply a significant reduction of vehicle CO_2 emissions by 2030, which is particularly problematic for the German car industry, whose vehicles are generally heavier, with higher CO_2 emissions compared to European competitors. As former minister-president of Baden-Wurttemberg, the state in south-western Germany, where Mercedes and Porsche are produced, Oettinger has close ties to the motor industry (interviews 4, 9). Another explanation offered by the interviewees was the interest constellation in the Council. As several member states voiced increasing concern regarding ambitious climate goals, Oettinger gained confidence in defying the normative entrapment attempts of the SG and Commission President Barroso, who tried to frame the 40 per cent GHG reduction goal as a commitment already indirectly made by the member states by their declaration of intent to a reduce GHG emissions by 80–95 per cent by 2050 (interviews 1, 3, 4).

In contrast to Oettinger, Climate Commissioner Hedegaard was in favour of a 40 per cent greenhouse gas reduction goal and national binding renewable energy targets. For her, renewable energy is of value in itself, rather than simply a means in the GHG reduction equation. This is reflected in statements in which she describes as a myth the EU's climate policy being responsible for increasing electricity prices. She rather sees the monopoly of some energy companies, and the as yet underdeveloped internal market for energy, as cost drivers (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 2014). It was reported that her background from Denmark, where renewable energy is well established and no nuclear electricity is produced, influenced her positive approach towards more ambitious and national binding renewable energy goals (interview 1). However, her team were not in total agreement over the extent to which Hedegaard should advocate high and national binding targets for renewable energy. In the end, the view prevailed that, as her portfolio is on climate change, enforcing an

ambitious GHG reduction target is more important for her reputation as climate commissioner than winning support for national binding renewable energy targets (interview 1, 3).

As a consequence, all interviewees stressed that the crucial dividing line in the Commission in the last days before the publication of the new energy and climate framework was between the respective supporters of the 35 and the 40 percent GHG reduction goal. Encouraged by the strong stance of Oettinger, some other Commissioners (Industry Commissioner Tajani, for instance) also maintained their opposition against the 40 per cent goal. In the end, Barroso suggested a compromise agreement that retained the 40 per cent GHG reduction goal in exchange for the abandonment of the national binding renewable energy targets. Without Oettinger's insistence on 35 per cent, the final Commission's proposal would have very probably included mandatory renewable energy targets for the member states (interview 1, 3, 8). This represents a significant policy shift, as the EU-wide target of 27 per cent risks being unenforceable without individual national targets.

CONCLUSION

This study compared the drafting process of the 2020 renewable energy targets conducted in 2005/6 with the corresponding process for the 2030 targets in 2013/14. The findings contribute to the literature on intra-Commission dynamics. Indeed, they confirm the trend towards a presidentialization of the Commission (Kassim *et al.* 2013; Wille 2013) by illustrating the influence of the Commission President via the SG, which played a crucial role in interservice co-ordination and the drafting of impact assessments, thus undermining the discretion of the lead DGs (Hartlapp *et al.* 2013). The comparison between the2005/06 and the 2013/14 policy drafting processes, however, also point to two context factors which mitigate the Commission President's structural advantages in steering the internal position finding process towards his preferred outcome. First, in contrast to the first drafting period, in 2013/14, Barroso and his SG were not able to justify their position with reference to a commonly shared value-based reform imperative, owing to the loss of the effectiveness of the EU's directional leadership norm after the failure of the UN climate summit in Copenhagen in 2009. The attempt by Barroso and the SG to replace this previous reform imperative with the evidence-based logic of a cost-effectiveness frame was only partially successful, owing to the mixed messages sent by the impact assessment, which allowed for different interpretations and political weighting by energy Commissioner Oettinger. Second, a much more heterogeneous position constellation in the Council in the 2013/14 drafting period compared to the 2005/6 period meant that Barroso and his SG could not effectively justify their position with reference to the political will of the Council. The heterogeneity in the Council facilitated Oettinger's promotion of a position that deviated from that of the Barroso and his SG. Thus, the case studies illustrate the influence that an individual Commissioner can hold

in the internal position-finding process, a factor which has so far received inadequate attention in the literature.

These findings are relevant to general EU policy-making in general in two respects. First, regarding issue framing, they highlight that evidence-based arguments are less effective at generating normative pressure than value-based arguments, and thus provide support for studies which have shown that scientific approaches neither resolve value controversies (Sarewitz 2004), nor have significant direct impact on policy decisions (Nutley and Webb 2000: 14; Sharman and Holmes 2010). Second, regarding the inter-institutional power balance between the Commission and the Council, the case studies confirm the constraining weight of a strong coalition of state leaders in the European Council on the policy formulation process in the European Commission (Bocquillon and Dobbels 2014; Skovgaard 2013), reflected in the fulfilling role of the Commission in the 2020 framework. In contrast, the discretion level of the Commission President, but also the individual commissioners, increases in absence of strong signals from the Council in favour of a certain policy, as it was the case during the drafting of the 2030 framework.

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