



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

“I do[...] give a damn ‘bout my reputation” (Jett, 1981): Explaining European Union Agencies’ Prioritization Strategies in Light of Organizational Reputation Concerns

Di Teodoro, Giulia

Citation

Di Teodoro, G. (2022). *“I do[...] give a damn ‘bout my reputation” (Jett, 1981): Explaining European Union Agencies’ Prioritization Strategies in Light of Organizational Reputation Concerns*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master thesis in the Leiden University Student Repository](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3484526>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Universiteit
Leiden

“I do[...] give a damn ‘bout my reputation” (Jett, 1981):
Explaining European Union Agencies’ Prioritization Strategies
in Light of Organizational Reputation Concerns

Name: Giulia Di Teodoro

Student number:

Master program: Public Administration,

International and European

Governance Track, Faculty of

Governance and Global Affairs

Supervisor: Dr. Dovilė Rimkutė

Second reader: Dr. Fabio Bulfone

Due date: 05.08.2022

Word count: 18175

To my parents, my family, and Suyash for constantly and unconditionally supporting me every step of the way.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Research Question	2
1.3 Structure of the Thesis.....	3
1.4 Relevance of the Study.....	4
2. Theoretical Framework.....	5
2.1 Organizational Reputation.....	5
2.2 The Sources of External Demands.....	7
2.3 The Content of External Demands.....	9
2.4 Media Attention on External Demands.....	12
3. Research Design.....	14
3.1 Case Selection.....	14
3.2 Operationalization.....	16
3.3 Method of Data Collection.....	18
3.3.1 Invitation to the Study.....	18
3.3.2 The Data Collection Process.....	19
3.3.3 The Collected Data.....	20
3.3.4 Some Notes about the Interviewees and the Interviews.....	20
3.4 Method of Data Analysis.....	21
3.5 Validity and Reliability.....	22
4. Results.....	23
4.1 Discrete Choices.....	23
4.2 The Sources of External Demands.....	25
4.2.1 The European Commission.....	26
4.2.2 The European Parliament.....	27
4.2.3 The General Public.....	28
4.2.4 National Agencies.....	30

4.2.5	Scientific Experts.....	30
4.2.6	Large Corporations or Private Actors.....	31
4.2.7	Sources of External Demands: Empirical Analysis.....	32
4.3	The Content of External Demands.....	33
4.3.1	Technical Conduct.....	33
4.3.2	Performative Conduct.....	34
4.3.3	Legal-Procedural Conduct.....	35
4.3.4	Moral Conduct.....	35
4.3.5	Content of External Demands: Empirical Analysis and Further Observations.....	36
4.4	Media Attention on External Demands.....	37
4.4.1	Media Attention on External Demands: Empirical Analysis.....	40
5.	Discussion.....	41
5.1	The Sources of External Demands.....	41
5.2	The Content of External Demands.....	43
5.3	Media Attention on External Demands.....	46
6.	Conclusion.....	48
6.1	Suggestions for Further Research.....	50
	Bibliography.....	51
	Appendix 1: Invitation to the Interview.....	58
	Appendix 2: Interview Template.....	61
	Appendix 3: Empirical Results – Tables.....	73
	Appendix 4: Relevant Quotes about the Sources of External Demands.....	83
	Appendix 5: Relevant Quotes about the Content of External Demands.....	95
	Appendix 6: Relevant Quotes about Media Attention on External Demands.....	106

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Organizational reputation is a concept that has been increasingly catching the attention of Public Administration scholarship in the past few decades (Carpenter, 2010b; Lange et al., 2011; Maor et al., 2012; Gilad et al., 2013; Bach et al., 2021). It entails that organizations and bureaucracies have their own reputation, which is shaped by external observers' beliefs about how said organizations behave (Carpenter, 2010a; Carpenter 2010b). It is in organizations' best interest to make sure that their reputation is and remains positive, as it can affect things such as their autonomy, authority, legitimacy, power, and trust (Hood, 2011; Wilson, 1989; Carpenter, 2001; Rourke, 1984; Maor & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2013; Gilad, 2008; Carpenter & Krause, 2011; Carpenter, 2010b; Bach et al., 2021; Rimkutè, 2020a). Whether reputation is positive or negative can also determine the organization's survival or demise (Bach et al., 2021).

Organizational reputation is an extremely delicate matter. In fact, any comment from external audiences or any change in how said audiences perceive an organization can threaten reputation (Carpenter, 2010a; Rimkutè, 2020a). As Warren Buffett once asserted, "[i]t takes twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it" (Lowenstein, 1995, p. 109). Organizational reputation is also delicate because of its complexity and volatility. Indeed, many scholars agree that reputation is comprised of multiple aspects or dimensions, but that these dimensions act and evolve independently of each other and can also be assessed by audiences independently of each other; organizations can therefore have a positive reputation concerning one dimension while falling short of another (Carpenter, 2010b; Bach et al., 2021; Gilad et al., 2015; Maor et al., 2012; Rimkutè, 2020a; Rimkutè & van der Voet, 2021). Bureaucrats need to balance all reputational dimensions in order to have a positive organizational reputation. Because organizational reputation is comprised of various dimensions, it is often said to be multidimensional (Rimkutè & van der Voet, 2021; Gilad et al., 2015; Maor et al., 2012; Bach et al., 2021).

Due to the impacts that reputation can have on organizations, concerns about organizational reputation can deeply affect how an organization's staff or bureaucrats act and how they prioritize tasks. As Carpenter (2010a), an organizational reputation scholar, put it: "when trying to account for a regulator's

behavior, *look at the audience, and look at the threats* [italics in the original]" (p. 832). Reputational threats often arrive to bureaucracies in the form of external demands from the audience, and because bureaucracies operate in highly complex environments, these external demands can be many, conflicting, and sometimes even simultaneous (Rimkutė & van der Voet, 2021). A few studies show that bureaucrats often have to prioritize among these external demands in light of considerations about their organizational reputation (Aleksavska et al., 2021; van der Veer, 2020).

So far, the concept of organizational reputation has been widely used by the academia as a lens to observe agencies from different empirical and theoretical angles (i.e. Busuioc & Rimkutė, 2019a; Busuioc & Rimkutė, 2019b; Gilad, 2008; Gilad et al., 2013; Maor et al., 2012; Rimkutė, 2020a; Rimkutė, 2020b; Van der Veer, 2020). However, reputation in relation to agencies has been mostly explored in the context of the United States and Israel, whereas the literature focusing on Europe and the European Union (EU) is still rather meagre (Carpenter, 2001, 2010b; Maor & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2013, 2015; Gilad et al., 2013; Rimkutė, 2020a; Maor et al., 2012). EU agencies have been mushrooming over the past thirty years, to the point that many observers have stipulated that the EU is undergoing a process of "agencification" (Rittberger & Wonka, 2011; Trondal, 2014), which has been associated with a move towards "regulatory capitalism" (Levi-Faur & Jordana, 2005). Even though EU agencies are different in the sense that they were created to fulfill different tasks and serve different purposes (Busuioc, 2013; Wonka & Rittberger, 2010), they are now at the core of the EU regulatory state (Rimkutė, 2020a). Similarly to other types of organizations and bureaucracies, EU agencies also possess their own organizational reputation and they take it into account when prioritizing external demands (Rimkutė, 2020a).

1.2 Research Question

In a recent study, Rimkutė and van der Voet (2021) investigate *how* EU agencies prioritize among various simultaneous external demands in light of reputational concerns. As it was already mentioned, other studies had investigated how EU agencies prioritize among external demands (Aleksavska et al., 2021; van der Veer, 2020), but Rimkutė and van der Voet (2021) assert that such studies fail to recognize that the external demands that EU agencies receive are *multidimensional* rather than unidimensional. In fact, they hold that these demands vary in terms of source (who makes the demands), content (what the

demands are about), and the media attention that demands receive. They argue that this distinction is pivotal because it affects how EU agencies prioritize external demands in light of reputational concerns (Rimkutė & van der Voet, 2021). However, Rimkutė and van der Voet's study solely focuses on how different types of source, content, and media attention influence EU agencies' prioritization, and it does not investigate the reasons that lead bureaucrats working for EU agencies to prioritize certain aspects of external demands (and ultimately certain demands) over others in light of reputational concerns. This seems to be a slight gap in the literature, since also Rimkutė (2020a) argues that "future research should focus on uncovering causal mechanisms behind the relationship between reputational threats and reputation-management strategies" (p. 403).

Therefore, the present thesis wishes to build on the work of Rimkutė and van der Voet (2021) and fill the existing gap in the literature by attempting to establish what reasons motivate bureaucrats' prioritization strategies when it comes to external demands and concerns about bureaucratic reputation. Hence, the main research question that will be addressed in the thesis is:

"What are the reasons dictating EU agencies' prioritization strategies for external demands in light of bureaucratic reputational concerns?"

The thesis will first formulate three theoretical expectations, one for each of the three components of external demands, namely source, content, and media attention. It will then attempt to assess the expectations in order to answer the research question.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The remainder of the present thesis is divided into five sections. Chapter two consists of the theoretical framework, which sets the theoretical foundation of the present study by exploring relevant concepts and discussing related literature. The theoretical framework also leads to the formulation of three theoretical expectations, with expectation number two being split into two sub-expectations. Chapter three illustrates the selected research design by discussing the case selection, the operationalization of relevant variables, the method of data collection, the method of data analysis, as well as the validity and reliability of the study. Chapter four thoroughly presents the results of the study.

First, it presents the discrete choices made by respondents to the study; then, it elaborates on the reasoning they provided for making certain choices. Chapter five discusses the findings and compares them with the theoretical expectations in order to assess them and ultimately provide an answer to the research question. Chapter six concludes and answers the research question. In chapter six, suggestions for further research are also presented.

1.4 Relevance of the Study

The present research is relevant to both the academia and the general public for a variety of reasons. In terms of academic relevance, the study will provide new insights to the discourse about organizational reputation by attempting to address an existing gap in the literature. In fact, by investigating about the reasons that lead bureaucrats to prioritize multidimensional demands in a certain way, the study will explore a domain that has somewhat been neglected in the literature. The thesis will also be academically relevant because it will apply the concept of organizational reputation to the context of Europe, which, as it was already mentioned, the literature has thus far only superficially investigated (Rimkutė, 2020a). The study is also relevant to the academia as it both applies existing theories about organizational reputation and it further investigates and applies the notion that the external demands that bureaucracies and organizations receive are multidimensional rather than unidimensional (Rimkutė & van der Voet, 2021).

As for the practical relevance, the study will provide empirical insights about how bureaucracies behave internally, why they prioritize demands in the way they do, and how they attempt to improve and maintain their own organizational reputation. This is particularly relevant given the importance of bureaucracies and the impacts they have on society (Kennedy, 2014; Olsen, 2006; Meier & Hill, 2009; Cornell, 2014). It was already mentioned that EU agencies are pivotal players within the EU regulatory system (Rimkutė, 2020a). By focusing on such agencies as a case study, the study will also provide relevant insights about such an important component of the European regulatory system.

2. Theoretical Framework

The present section will explore and elucidate the theories and concepts that are relevant in order to address the research question. Firstly, the concept of organizational reputation will be thoroughly presented and explained. Secondly, three main elements will be considered: the *origins* of external demands, so to say who makes said comments; the *content* of external demands; and the presence (or lack) of *media attention* on the external demands. These three aspects are the three main drivers of bureaucrats' prioritization strategies vis-à-vis reputational concerns identified by Rimkutė and van der Voet's (2021). After an analysis of these concepts as well as of the academic literature concerning them, a few theoretical expectations will be formulated.

2.1 Organizational Reputation

Reputation is an important concern for regulatory agencies and bureaucracies (Bach et al., 2021; Maor et al., 2012; Gilad et al., 2013). It arguably only exists in relation to external observers that scrutinize such agencies, who are known as audience or multiple audiences. In fact, organizational reputation can be defined as the relevant external audience(s)'s perceptions and beliefs about an agency's competence, capabilities, intentions, performance, mission, and history (Carpenter, 2010b; Carpenter & Krause, 2011). In the eyes of the audience, an agency's reputation can be strong (or good), evolving, or weak (Carpenter, 2010b; Bach et al., 2021; Gilad et al., 2013; Maor et al., 2012). Organizational reputation is divided into four major reputational dimension, which are *performative reputation*, *legal-procedural reputation*, *moral reputation*, and *technical reputation* (Carpenter, 2010b). These dimensions are further defined below in section 2.3. The concept of bureaucratic reputation challenges the notion proposed by previous scholarship that without tight political control from external bodies, bureaucrats would use their power to pursue their own interests (Gilad et al., 2013; Horn, 1995; Huber & Shipan, 2002; McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984; Wood & Waterman, 1991).

An agency's reputation is not fixed, but ever-changing and contested (Bach et al., 2021; Carpenter, 2010b). Any judgment, demand, or comment from the outside could possibly represent a so-called *reputational threat*, so to say a threat to the agency's reputation (Carpenter, 2010a; Rimkutė, 2020a). It is therefore in bureaucracies' interest to engage with such threats and neutralize them, as well as improving and preserving their overall reputation (Gilad et al., 2013).

Unfortunately for agencies and bureaucrats, there is no one simple, one-size-fits-all strategy to neutralize reputational threats and obtain a good and strong reputation (Carpenter and Krause, 2011). Furthermore, having a strong organizational reputation on all fronts which satisfies every single individual in the audience is a virtually impossible task to achieve (Carpenter and Krause, 2011). However, a positive reputation has numerous benefits for an agency, and therefore bureaucrats need to strive to ensure that their agency has a good reputation. Some among these benefits are increased autonomy, legitimacy, trust, and public support, and decreased threats and accusations from the outside (Hood, 2011; Wilson, 1989; Carpenter, 2001; Rourke, 1984; Maor & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2013; Gilad, 2008; Carpenter & Krause, 2011; Carpenter, 2010b; Bach et al., 2021; Rimkutė, 2020a). A positive reputation may also ensure an agency's very survival (Bach et al., 2021). Because EU agencies have to operate in a complex multilevel environment and work with a multitude of both national and supranational actors, it is especially important for them to have a positive reputation, and they have to be particularly wary when trying to improve and maintain it (Rittberger & Wonka, 2011; Pérez-Durán, 2019; Rimkutė, 2020a).

There is a multiplicity of strategies that bureaucrats can adopt to favor and preserve their agency's reputation. For instance, they can be "selective and strategic in how they present themselves to different audiences" (Rimkutė, 2020a, p. 397), they can calibrate their communications to appease such audiences, highlight certain (reputational) aspects of their activities rather than others, and promote and nourish different reputational dimensions in different ways and to varying extents (Rimkutė, 2020a). The reputation-balancing strategies selected by an agency depend on a variety of elements specific to the agency itself, including whether its current reputation is strong, evolving, or weak (Carpenter, 2010b), what its overarching goals and mandates are, and on its *reputational uniqueness*, which is an agency's duty to carry out tasks and provide services that cannot be delivered by any other agency (Carpenter, 2001; Maor & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2015; Rimkutė, 2020a).

A bureaucracy's oversight and management of its organizational reputation can be considered successful when it can achieve balance among the four reputational dimensions (performative, legal-procedural, moral, and technical) in order to meet external expectations and neutralize reputational threats (Rimkutė,

2020a). All things considered, reputational concerns greatly influence bureaucrats' decisions, their decision-making, their practices, and their outputs (Gilad et al., 2013; Maor & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2013).

After having established what organizational reputation is and what it entails, let us discuss three pivotal elements that influence how bureaucrats strategize about their agency's reputation: the *source* of external demands, the *content* of such demands, and the *media attention* that these demands receive.

2.2 The Sources of External Demands

There are a variety of stakeholders and actors that are directly or indirectly affected by the work of EU agencies. Some among the primary actors that are mentioned in the literature for interacting with EU agencies are the European Parliament, the European Commission, (relevant) national agencies, corporations or private actors, scientific experts, and the general public (Carpenter & Krause, 2011; Pérez-Durán, 2019; Rimkutė and van der Voet, 2021). All these actors can potentially put forward demands or comments directed towards the EU agencies concerning their work and internal processes, and such demands can represent threats to the agencies' reputation (reputational threats). The literature suggests that *who* raises such negative judgments or demands can influence agencies' strategies in terms of prioritizing external demands.

Let us consider the main institutions of the EU that are relevant to EU agencies, namely the European Parliament and the European Commission. Various previous studies hypothesize and find that agencies tend to prioritize demands that originate from these actors over those coming from other actors (Rimkutė and van der Voet, 2021; Egeberg et al., 2014). However, the present study wishes to expand on previous literature by enquiring about the causal mechanisms behind EU agency bureaucrats' prioritization strategies in light of reputational concerns, and therefore some evidence about such causal mechanisms needs to be discussed.

Some definitions of the term "agency" propose that EU agencies are formally detached from the main bodies of the European Union, but they are still accountable to the latter to a considerable extent (Busuioc, 2012; Busuioc & Lodge, 2016; Pérez-Durán, 2019; Trondal, 2014). In fact, these institutions can be deemed as the political principals of EU agencies (from the principal-agent dynamic), or as their "political masters"

(Bryer, 2007, p. 481). As such, they can exert their power over EU agencies through “direct order, explicit or implicit pressure, or charismatic or coercive influence” (Bryer, 2007, p. 483). Bach et al. (2021) find that, in general, agencies are more likely to respond to powerful actors and to actors that are capable of exerting power over them. Additionally, it has to be noted that the vast majority of the funding that EU agencies receive comes from the political principals of the EU, which gives the latter further control over EU agencies (Cini & Borragán, 2009). This corroborates the idea that EU agencies are likely to prioritize demands from the major EU institutions. In addition, some argue that because such institutions comprise of representatives that are democratically elected, EU agencies can only serve the public interest by abiding by the directions that are given by elected representatives who democratically represent the public (Rimkutė & van der Voet, 2021; Wonka & Rittberger, 2010; Egeberg et al., 2014; Busuioc, 2012; Busuioc & Lodge, 2016). Democratic accountability is also decisive for how agencies in general prioritize (Saltzstein, 1992). Furthermore, since EU agencies are created by the EU with the aim of aiding the EU’s institutions, the very existence of EU agencies is arguably dependent on such institutions. Therefore, it can be expected that:

Expectation 1: when faced with multiple demands, EU agencies will tend to prioritize the demands originating from their political principal, meaning the European Parliament and the European Commission, because these are the political masters of EU agencies and because the former have the means to exert their power over the latter.

Alternatively, some other sources suggest that EU agencies might prioritize demands coming from the general public instead of those coming from political principals (Dahl & Shapiro, 2015). As it was already mentioned before, EU agencies are created to be arguably detached and independent from the main EU institutions (their principal) to some extent (Busuioc et al., 2011; Trondal, 2014; Pérez-Durán, 2019). Rimkutė (2020a) holds that “EU agencies are created to function as independent bodies that can support EU institutions with sound evidence that lead to effective results” (p. 389). In line with this idea, some scholars argue that EU agencies are free to act in the public’s interest directly without having to act through the EU institutions and in spite of the fact that bureaucrats are not democratically elected (Busuioc et al., 2011; Saltzstein, 1992; Burke & Cleary, 1989). However, there is little empirical evidence supporting the argument that agencies prioritize the public’s demands when faced with demands from different sources, and Rimkutė and van der Voet’s (2021) study found that this initial hypothesis was rejected by their data.

The European Commission, the European Parliament, and the general public are mentioned in the literature as the primary actors whose demands are (theoretically) addressed first by bureaucracies but, as it was already mentioned, there are other external actors that can come up with demands and therefore create reputational threats for agencies. For example, demands coming from experts who are specialized in the same topics as each specific agency might be relevant for bureaucracies due to the importance of expertise in public administration bodies such as EU agencies (Boswell, 2008; Christensen, 2015; Rimkutė, 2020a). However, both the literature and the empirical evidence suggesting that agencies might prioritize other sources of external demands over political principals and the public are too weak to formulate a theoretical expectation about them. By assessing expectation 1, it will be verified whether it is indeed true that political principals are prioritized because of the power they have over EU agencies or if other actors are prioritized, and in that case *why* they are prioritized.

After having considered the *source* of external demands, let us consider the *content* of such demands.

2.3 The Content of External Demands

As it was already mentioned above while discussing organizational reputation (section 2.1), it is generally accepted in the literature that there are four dimensions of reputation. Such dimensions are *performative reputation*, *procedural reputation*, *moral reputation*, and *technical reputation* (Carpenter, 2010b). *Performative reputation* has to do with the extent to which an agency is able to fulfill its purpose; *procedural reputation* (sometimes referred to also as “legal-procedural reputation”) entails the agency’s “compliance with rules and following due procedures” (Bach et al. 2021, p. 5); *moral reputation* has to do with whether an agency complies with ethical/moral expectations; and *technical reputation* is about the agency’s expertise and organizational capacity (Carpenter, 2010b). The technical and performative domains of an agency are sometimes said to be the *outputs* of an agency, whereas legal-procedural and moral domains are the *inputs* (Rimkutė, 2020a).

Most of the scholars that analyze these aspects in terms of agencies’ reputation and their responsiveness to external demands agree that agencies do not respond to the four dimensions in the same way, since some dimensions are considered more important or salient than others, especially in terms of the threat

they pose to agencies' reputation (Carpenter, 2010b; Bach et al., 2021; Gilad et al., 2015; Maor et al., 2012; Rimkutė and van der Voet, 2021). This notion is pivotal for the present discussion and it defies the argument proposed by other scholars that agencies respond in the same way to every type of external input (Noll, 1985). The idea that the four dimensions are not equally important when it comes to organizational reputation also implies that agencies may tend to prioritize certain dimensions more, at the expense of others. Yet again, prioritization strategies are driven by considerations about organizational reputation. For example, Maor et al. (2012) find that agencies tend to respond far less to demands concerning dimensions that are either deemed of secondary importance or in which the agency already has a strong reputation, since the reputational threats are expected to damage their reputation less; however, agencies respond more to demands concerning aspects in which their reputation is still weak or evolving because threats could have negative repercussions on reputation.

The literature also identifies patterns that most agencies tend to follow when choosing which dimensions to prioritize, and the same can be said about EU agencies as well. Bach et al. (2021) for instance, hold that procedural, performative, and technical are core elements of regulatory agencies, while moral reputation is only peripheral. Similarly, Busuioc and Rimkutė (2019b) argue that EU regulatory agencies first care for their technical reputation, then for their performative and legal-procedural reputations, and only lastly for their moral reputation. The discussion by Majone (1997) suggests that performative and procedural dimensions are central to regulatory agencies' reputation. Bryer (2007), on the other hand, suggests that also moral reputation is relevant for agencies in general, since bureaucrats are trusted to choose in an ethical and moral way and in the interest of the public rather than their own personal interest. Moral reputation is also very important for EU agencies specifically as well, since for them "moral scandals can chip away at, or even obliterate, the authority of an otherwise well-performing organisation" (Busuioc & Rimkutė, 2019b, p. 1259). However, Rimkutė's (2020a) study about EU agencies' prioritization strategies finds that, when faced with demands about the four dimensions, agencies prioritize the moral dimension the least out of the four dimensions. Hence, there seems to be proof that the moral dimension (and therefore moral reputation) is considered as less relevant by agencies and therefore it is prioritized less than the other dimensions. Legal-procedural reputation might also be considered of secondary importance by EU agencies because it is often considered "a means to safeguard, through process, their primary criterion for legitimation" (Busuioc & Rimkutė, 2019b, p. 1261), which are their technical and performative conducts.

Some studies show that agencies ultimately prioritize dimensions that have to do with their outputs, so technical and performative (Rimkutė, 2020a; Majone, 1999; Schampf, 1999). Again, the present study wishes to enquire about the causal mechanisms behind bureaucrats' prioritization strategies, and therefore some of the literature about possible causal mechanisms ought to be considered. For instance, Majone (1998) argues that agencies may prioritize their technical and performative reputations over the other two because such agencies draw legitimacy from the outputs and results they deliver, which, as it was already hinted at, is also the case in the context of EU agencies more specifically (Busuioc & Rimkutė, 2019b). Maor et al. (2012) hold that agencies will address threats to their core functions because these threats can hurt their reputation the most. Rimkutė (2020a) adds that in the case of EU agencies, such core functions are indeed the technical and performative domains, as well as agencies' *raison d'être*, and hence bureaucrats tend to prioritize these two dimensions. Therefore, in the context of the present study it can be expected that:

Expectation 2a: When faced with multiple simultaneous demands, EU agencies will tend to prioritize the demands concerning their performative and technical reputations because these represent the organizations' raison d'être and their core functions, and because agencies draw legitimacy from these two domains.

In turn, the following can also be expected:

Expectation 2b: When faced with multiple simultaneous demands, EU agencies will tend to prioritize the demands concerning their moral reputation and legal-procedural reputation less than other reputational dimensions because they are more peripheral dimensions and because they have less to do with organizations' raison d'être and their core functions, and because agencies draw less legitimacy from these domains.

Now that the sources and content of external demands have been discussed, let us turn to the role that media attention plays in bureaucrats' prioritization strategies in light of reputational concerns.

2.4 Media Attention on External Demands

Various sources indicate that media attention can also affect bureaucrats' responsiveness and their prioritization strategies when it comes to external demands (Erlich et al., 2021, Gilad et al., 2015; Maor et al., 2012; Salomonsen et al., 2021). Such media attention can manifest itself in different ways and through different channels, such as newspapers, social media platforms, and news channels (Evans, 2019). Media attention can play a role when it comes to organizational reputation because it can influence audiences' perception, opinions, and judgments about specific agencies by shedding light on certain issues related to agencies or on agencies' internal processes, affairs, and outputs (Erlich et al., 2021; Salomonsen et al., 2021). Because of this, media attention has the power of influencing how civil servants prioritize among external demands in order to preserve or improve their agency's organizational reputation. The nature of media attention can be good, neutral, or negative (Erlich et al., 2021). In particular, *negative* media attention is said to greatly influence responsiveness as it could negatively affect the bureaucracy's reputation. Erlich et al. (2021) for example find that, whereas positive and neutral media attention leads to reduced responsiveness, negative media attention can increase responsiveness, especially if the media attention focuses on failures of the bureaucracy. Various studies also find that high media attention, and negative media attention more specifically, represents a possible threat to organizational reputation and hence bureaucrats tend to address external demands that receive negative media attention more promptly than demands that do not receive such attention (Rimkutė & van der Voet, 2021; Gilad et al., 2015; Maor et al., 2012; Hood, 2011). Furthermore, addressing matters that receive initial negative media attention may prevent things from escalating and leading to further negative media attention in the future (Salomones et al., 2021). Because of the impact it can have on organizational reputation, media attention (especially negative) can possibly cause civil servants to change their prioritization strategy in favor of demands that receive negative media attention, even though in case said media attention was absent, they would have prioritized external demands differently.

The literature identifies a few possible strategies that bureaucrats can adopt when faced with demands that receive media attention. Some among these strategies are strategic silence, problem denial, problem admission, or even shifting the blame to somebody else (Gilad et al., 2015; Maor et al., 2012). However, some studies have found that agencies are more likely to engage with allegations that come with media attention in order to neutralize them rather than adopting strategic silence (Bach et al., 2021; Maor et al., 2013; Gilad et al., 2015; Rimkutė, 2020b). It can be speculated that media attention might also act in

agencies' favor, as if bureaucrats address demands adequately in the eyes of the audience, and hence media attention may contribute to helping bureaucrats improve their agency's reputation by providing a sort of spotlight.

In general, the literature seems to establish that demands that receive negative media attention are prioritized by bureaucrats because such demands might hurt their agency's organizational reputation. Therefore, it is expected that:

Expectation 3: When confronted with multiple simultaneous external demands, EU agencies will prioritize the demands that receive negative media attention, since the latter, if not promptly addressed, might have negative consequences for the agencies' reputation.

3. Research Design

The present chapter describes, explains, and justifies the choices made in terms of research design and methodology. Before discussing the research design itself, a few considerations about the type of research that the present thesis will focus on ought to be made. The thesis will be characterized by explanatory research. This will be necessary in order to establish the reasons behind civil servants' prioritization strategies when it comes to external demands (Neuman, 2014).

In the first section, the case selection will be described and justified. The second section will operationalize the key concepts into measurable indicators. The third section will discuss the selected methods of data collection, whereas section four will illustrate the methods of data analysis. Finally, section five will reflect on the validity and the reliability of the selected research design.

3.1 Case Selection

The present subsection discusses the choices made in terms of sample and population and why EU agencies were chosen over other types of agencies.

As anticipated before, the thesis will focus on EU agencies. The latter is therefore the population that the present study wishes to draw conclusions about. More specifically, the thesis will study the civil servants working for such agencies. According to Seawright and Gerring (2008), the selected case ought to represent the population from which it is drawn, as well as possessing variations that are significant to the ends of the study. Therefore, the specific case drawn from the relevant population is a subset of the whole EU agency population determined through self-selection. When respondents were invited to participate, they first took a survey, and later they indicated that they would be willing to take part in an interview on the topic of the survey. Because the participation of civil servants to the study is on a voluntary basis, the sample that the present study takes into account is convenient or self-selective (Toshkov, 2016). Even though the case was determined through the self-selection of participants, it still presents the variation needed for the present study.

Rimkutė (2020a) divides all agencies into categories, namely social-policy versus economic-policy and regulatory versus non-regulatory agencies. Whereas these distinctions are not directly observed in the present study, the sample is representative of these categories as well, as agencies from each category are fairly represented. It is also worthy to mention that the civil servants recruited for the study are not ordinary employees within EU agencies, but they are high ranking individuals in their respective departments and with many years of experience working for their agency, and therefore the best possible people to answer questions about the internal decision-making processes of EU agencies.

EU agencies were selected as the primary population for the present study for a variety of reasons. First of all, EU agencies are a case of agencies in the broad sense. Other types of agencies would be, for example, national or federal agencies. EU agencies were selected over other types of agencies because EU agencies have to operate at the international and multilevel governance level, they work for more than one political master (the main EU institutions), they have to deal with much more complexity than national or federal agencies, as well as receiving more multidimensional demands from the outside (Rimkutė, 2020a; Rimkutė and van der Voet, 2021; Olsen, 2017). They also have to operate within wider networks (both formal and informal) than national agencies (Rimkutė, 2020a). EU agencies' legitimacy, authority, regulatory powers, and independence are also often questioned and contested (Majone, 1999; Chiti, 2013). In addition, because EU agencies' decision-making capacities are restricted, they have to find other ways to exert their authority (Rimkutė and van der Voet, 2021). For instance, EU agencies are extremely attentive and cautious with regards to external audiences' wishes and demands because, if not addressed and resolved properly, these could have catastrophic consequences for said agencies, especially given their legitimacy issues (Busuioc & Rimkutė, 2019b; Rimkutė, 2020a). These features imply that EU agencies are extremely vigilant in terms of their own organizational reputation and how they handle external demands. Other than these reasons, an additional (and perhaps more practical) rationale for choosing EU agencies as the population under scrutiny is that the present thesis wishes to expand on the work of Rimkutė and van der Voet (2021), and therefore it makes sense to focus on the same type of agencies they analyzed.

3.2 Operationalization

In order to collect the data needed for the present study, the concept of organizational reputation needs to be operationalized first. Such operationalization was primarily drawn from the article by Rimkutė and van der Voet's (2021), since the present study wished to expand on the latter. Similarly to the study by Rimkutė and van der Voet's (2021), the theoretical framework has already identified three main dimensions, namely the *source* of external demands, the *content* of external demands, and the *media attention* that such demands receive. These three aspects can be considered as the main independent variables that the present study will observe, whereas the dependent variables are the prioritization strategies selected by bureaucrats and, more specifically to the purpose of the present study, the causes behind such prioritization strategies.

Each of the three dimensions mentioned above needs to be subdivided further. In terms of the *sources* of external demands, it was mentioned that there are several actors that interact with the EU agencies and that can therefore come up with demands. These actors are the European Parliament, the European Commission, (relevant) national agencies, corporations or private actors, scientific experts, and the general public (Carpenter & Krause, 2011; Pérez-Durán, 2019; Rimkutė and van der Voet, 2021). Table 1 visualizes these sources of external demands.

Table 1: the Sources of External Demands.

Who	European Parliament
	European Commission
	National agency
	Corporation, private actors
	Scientific expert
	General public

As for the *contents* of external demands, the operationalization will simply rely on the four dimensions of organizational reputation identified in the literature, which are performative reputation, legal-procedural

reputation, moral reputation, and technical reputation (Carpenter, 2010b). Yet again, Table 2 helps visualize the different contents of external demands.

Table 2: the Contents of External Demands.

Content	Technical conduct	... concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards.
	Performative conduct	... concerns about your organization's capacity to effectively accomplish its goals and mandated tasks.
	Legal-procedural conduct	...concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures.
	Moral conduct	...concerns about your organization's commitment to the highest ethical standards and moral values.

Lastly, the dimension of media attention will be quantified in terms of lack of media attention versus the presence of negative media attention.

Table 3: high versus low media attention

Visibility	High salience	This request has received much negative media attention.
	Low salience	This request has not received any media attention.

By operationalizing the independent variables in this way, the study will be able to address all the relevant elements identified in the theoretical framework and therefore optimally address the stipulated theoretical expectations.

3.3 Method of Data Collection

This section discusses the selected methods of data collection including the invitation to participate in the study, the data collection method itself and how the interviews were structured, as well as some notes about the collected data, the interviewees, and the interviews.

The research focuses on *qualitative data* rather than quantitative data, as the former is the type of data that was deemed most suitable to inquire about the reasoning according to which reputational concerns affect the prioritization strategies of civil servants when it comes to external demand. Such qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Such method of data collection was selected as it was deemed to be the method that would have allowed participants the most freedom in terms of providing answers and elaborating on their motivations for providing certain answers, in contrast with, for instance, a survey. It was also thought to be the method that would have best enabled to uncover the motivations, reasoning, justifications, and decision-making processes that bureaucrats give for their answers, as well showing how they process the information given and formulate a response. Therefore, such method of data collection was considered the most suitable method of data collection to answer the research question.

The data was collected in the context of Rimkutė and van der Voet's (2021) research, and it was collected jointly. Therefore, the questionnaire for the present research was incorporated into the interviews conducted by Rimkutė and van der Voet. The interviews were collected by the thesis supervisor of the present thesis and later made available to two master thesis students including the author of the present thesis. A total of sixteen interviews were collected. Each of the two master students transcribed eight interviews and could later use all sixteen transcription to the ends of their individual theses.

3.3.1 Invitation to the Study

Before the interviews began, civil servants working for 27 EU agencies were contacted via email and invited to participate in the project. The civil servants that expressed their interest in participating to the study were sent a more formal invitation on November 10th 2021, which also included an informed

consent form (see Appendix 1 for the formal invitation). In the invitation, the civil servants were provided with more details about the interview process, including background information, the scope of the overall study, duration of the study, and foreseen length of the interviews. The prospective participants were also ensured total anonymity, both individual and of the agency they work for, and that the interviews were going to be on a voluntary basis, and that therefore they could stop participating any time. Furthermore, they were informed that partaking in the study involved no type of risk on their part, and that the data collected was going to be used only for the purpose of the study and not divulged in any other way. Finally, they were informed that they were going to be asked permission to record the interviews. In the end, 16 civil servants out of the 27 agencies contacted agreed to be interviewed.

3.3.2 The Data Collection Process

The qualitative data collection process lasted from mid-November 2021 to mid-March 2022. On average, each interview was 91 minutes long. As it was already mentioned, the interviews were semi-structured: they were based on a set of questions, but also giving each respondent the chance to elaborate on any points they deemed relevant. After a general introduction, each interview was divided into two main parts.

In the first part, participants were shown (separate) tables displaying the six *sources* of external demands, the four *contents* of external demands, and the lack or presence of negative *media attention*. Participants were asked to rank each component of the three distinct tables from most important to least important in relation to their agency's organizational reputation.

The second part of the interview was designed according to the Experimental Vignette Methodology (EVM). EVM entails creating scenarios that highly resemble reality in which the researcher can manipulate the dependent variables; EVM is also known for allowing researchers to achieve "experimental realism" (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Therefore, in the second part of the interviews, each interviewee was presented with eight hypothetical but realistic scenarios. In each scenario they would have to imagine that their agency was confronted by two simultaneous demands, which differed in terms of both who put forward the demand (*source*) and content, and that the agency could only address one request at the time. Participants were asked which of the two demands their agency would address first in light of their organizational reputation. Each scenario was followed by another hypothetical situation

in which one of the two demands received much negative attention, whereas the other received no media attention. Respondents were asked whether the presence of negative media attention or lack thereof would make them change their previous answer. After each question, the participant were asked to elaborate on the reason behind their choice. At the end of the interview, each interviewee was given the chance to elaborate on any issue or matter that they deemed relevant. The template of the questions asked during the interviews can be found in Appendix 2.

3.3.3 The Collected Data

The qualitative data collected was of high quality, very extensive, about 25-30 pages of transcriptions per interview, and extremely rich of details on the part of the interviewees. The transcripts of the interviews will not be included among the appendices of the present thesis for two main reasons: firstly, because of confidentiality, and secondly, not to disclose any sensitive information that might have been revealed by the interviewees. This was done to ensure that the present thesis follows the protocol as well as the highest ethical standards. Some relevant quotes, however, are reported in Appendix 4, 5, and 6.

3.3.4 Some Notes about the Interviewees and the Interviews

As it was already hinted at in the case selection section, the sixteen interviewees were not ordinary EU agency employees, but rather high-ranking bureaucrats within the organization, often working side by side with the EU agency's director. Respondents have a very extensive knowledge about their organization as on average they have been working in their respective agencies for 9 years. They are either in managerial positions or in charge of primary tasks, which makes them suitable candidates for interviews on the topic. The sixteen interviewees represent a total of fourteen EU agencies, as there were two sets of two interviewees from the same EU agency. These fourteen agencies include 2 joint undertakings.

A note has to be made about interviewees 1 and 2. These were in fact pilot interviews to test which method of data collection would work best to the aims of the study, and therefore at first they did not follow the procedure of data collection already described in the present chapter. Once the final method of data collection was established, it was possible to have a follow-up interview with interviewee 1 but not with interviewee 2. For that reason, interview 2 will be left out of the results and analysis section, as it did not abide by the selected method of data collection.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

The present paragraph briefly discusses the selected method of data analysis. In terms of the latter, the data gathered will be analyzed through qualitative analysis. This was selected as it was deemed the best type of data analysis to analyze the lengthy interview transcripts and investigate the causal mechanisms behind bureaucrats' choices. In general, qualitative analysis can be defined as systematically looking for meaning in qualitative data (Hatch, 2002), or making sense of said data (Merriam, 2009). According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013) qualitative analysis implies identifying trends and patterns in the data, whereas interpreting data in the context of qualitative analysis means disclosing meaning from the data.

Therefore, in the present thesis the qualitative analysis will be in the form of a dual approach. Firstly, the rankings provided by interviewees as well as their discrete choices in the eight hypothetical scenarios created in the context of the Experimental Vignette Methodology will be quantified in order to uncover preliminary patterns. Secondly, the explanations provided by the interviewees will be scrutinized through a coding system that addresses the theoretical expectations formulated in the theoretical framework section. This will hopefully allow to identify relevant trends and patterns, as well as differences and similarities among the answers provided by the respondents, and ultimately allow to assess the theoretical expectations.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

Because of the reasons that have already been discussed in this chapter, the internal validity of the present study is rather strong. Every aspect of the research design was selected in order to ensure that theoretical conclusions of the best quality could be drawn from the present study. On the other hand, because the answers provided by respondents are highly context dependent, the external validity of the study is not as strong.

Additionally, the study has high ecological validity, which entails that its results are generalizable to real-life scenarios (Andrade, 2018). This is the case because the study relies on top-level bureaucrats who know exactly how decisions would be made by agencies if the hypothetical scenario presented to them in the study were to happen in real life. High ecological validity is also achieved due to the use of the Experimental Vignette Methodology, since the highly realistic scenarios increase the experimental realism of the study.

In terms of reliability, the Experimental Vignette Methodology from the present study and the conjoint analysis carried out in the context of Rimkutė and van der Voet's (2021) study cast the same results. Therefore, when it comes to EU agencies the results are consistent when the same questions are asked. However, the results can be different not because of the research design but because the answers provided by respondents are very much dependent on the context, and hence total reliability cannot be achieved.

4. Results

In this chapter, the qualitative results gathered through the interviews are systematically presented. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, the discrete choices made by the interviewees in terms of ranking the sources and contents of external demands, as well as the eight hypothetical scenarios, are presented. Since the present research wishes to investigate causal mechanisms, the second, third, and fourth sections show the causal mechanisms behind the choices made by respondents in the context of, respectively, sources of external demands, content of external demands, and negative media attention on external demands. These real-life decision making processes and justifications were provided by the bureaucrats in the form of lengthy verbal elucidations.

4.1 Discrete Choices

The present section displays the discrete choices made by the respondents to the study. The tables showing the results of the interviews in terms of discrete choices are reported in Appendix 3. As it was already mentioned in the research design section, after being introduced to the context and the purpose of the study, respondents were asked to rank the six sources of external demands from most to least important as a source of external demands and as a possible threat to organizational reputation. Table 4 in Appendix 3 displays the rankings provided by each respondent. The two actors that stand out as being ranked highest in terms of their importance are the European Commission and the European Parliament (chosen as most important by 86.7% of interviewees). The only two respondents who did not rank them as first and second are interviewee 4, who ranked them after corporations, national agencies, and the general public, and interviewee 5, who ranked them after general public. However, as it will be shown below in Table 7, when faced with simultaneous (hypothetical) demands, both interviewees prioritized the demands coming from the Commission and the Parliament over those from other sources of external demands. National agencies are also ranked rather high, being ranked right after the Commission and the Parliament by nine interviewees out of fifteen (or 60%), and by interviewee 4 even before them. The other sources of external demands are sort of mixed in terms of their ranking,

so it is harder to identify a clear pattern. The general public and scientific experts, for instance, were ranked last or second-last by, respectively, eight (or 53.3%) and ten (or 66.6%) respondents, whereas others ranked them much higher.

Table 5 in Appendix 3 shows the rankings provided by interviewees concerning the content of external demands. As opposed to the rankings of the sources of external demands, the rankings provided by interviewees regarding the content of external demands are quite variegated. Whereas it was expected that demands about the technical and performative conduct were going to be prioritized over others, in practice the evidence pointing to these two as the most important was not so overwhelming. Technical conduct was ranked first by six interviewees (or 40%), second by four interviewees (or 26.6%), and last by one interviewee (or 6.6%). Performative conduct, on the other hand, was ranked first by only two interviewees (or 13.3%), second by five (or 33.3%), and last by four (or 26.6%). Before carrying out the interviews, it was also expected that demands on moral conduct were going to be prioritized the least. Whereas this was indeed the case for eight interviewees (or 53.3%), three interviewees (or 20%) deemed moral demands the most important out of all four types of content, and three others (or 20%) stated these were the second most important type of demands on content. Demands on legal-procedural conduct were a bit more in the middle, being ranked as first by four interviewees (or 26.6%), second by other three (or 20%), third by six (or 40%), and last by two (or 13.3%).

As a third question, interviewees were asked whether media attention influences their agency's prioritization strategy or not. Table 6 shows each interviewee's answer to this question. Thirteen interviewees out of fifteen (or 86.7%) confidently answered that negative media attention would indeed affect their agency's prioritization strategy. Two interviewees (or 13.3%), on the other hand, said that negative media attention would not affect their prioritization strategy. A consideration needs to be made about both of these two interviewees, however. Whereas interviewee 15 said that negative media attention "might raise some actions, but usually [it] should not impact what we do and how we proceed with our plans", and interviewee 12 replied to the question more vaguely by saying "I'm not so sure if it automatically receives higher priority", when it came to the eight practical scenarios, both of them changed some of their answers because of negative media attention, prioritizing the latter. The reasons behind such choice will be explored later in this chapter.

In the second half of the interviews, interviewees were presented with eight hypothetical but realistic scenarios. Table 7 in Appendix 3 shows which interviewees picked each option, whereas Table 8 shows the same results but in the form of percentages. For each of the hypothetical demands, the two tables show both the source and the content.

There are a few noteworthy points that were yielded from the eight scenarios. First of all, the European Commission and the European Parliament were overwhelmingly prioritized over the general public (see scenarios 1 and 3), being chosen over the latter by, respectively, 100% and 93.3% of the interviewees. The Commission was also prioritized over the Parliament by 93.3% of the interviewees (see scenario 2). In terms of the content of external demands, even though moral conduct was not very much prioritized in the initial ranking, it was given priority over legal-procedural conduct by 53.3% of interviewees (scenario 5). Whereas legal-procedural conduct was sort of in the middle in the ranking, it was prioritized by 66.6% of interviewees over technical conduct (scenario 6).

As for the negative media attention component the vast majority of the interviewees did change their option because of it, and if they had already chosen that option they stuck with it. Interestingly, even though in the first half of the interviews 86.7% of them said that media attention would influence their choice, some interviewees decided not to change their choices when negative media attention was added to certain scenarios. These were not only the two interviewees who had previously said that media would not influence their choices, namely interviewees 12 and 15. The reasons for this will be explored below.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the explanations provided by interviewees for their choices in order to identify the causal mechanisms behind their answers. Let us first focus on the sources of external demands.

4.2 The Sources of External Demands

As it was already mentioned, during each interview, after each question, interviewees were asked to elaborate on the reasons that led them to make certain choices rather than others in terms of the sources of external demands. A list of all relevant (qualitative) quotes from the interviews about such reasons can be found in Appendix 4. Let us start with the two sources that resulted as the most prioritized in the discrete choice section, namely the European Commission and the European Parliament

4.2.1 The European Commission

When asked to elaborate on their choices, the vast majority of the interviewees mentioned that the Commission is much more important than the Parliament for a variety of reasons, and it hence represents a larger reputational threat. First of all, various interviewees mentioned that the Commission is deemed highly important because agencies depend on it for funding (interviewees 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 14). The Commission might provide full funding (interviewee 8) or only a fraction of it (interviewee 6), but this still gives the Commission leverage over agencies. The only interviewee who said their agency does not depend on the Commission for money was interviewee 4, but even they deemed the Commission as the most important source of external demands for other reasons.

Another point raised by many respondents (interviewee 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, and 13) was that the Commission is highly involved in agencies' day-to-day activities, much more than the Parliament is, and hence it is very much aware of what they are doing and how they are doing it, which means that if it raises a question about agencies' conduct, they have specific reasons for doing so. The Parliament, on the other hand, is more distant and "overlooking the more general strategic lines" (interviewee 3). Interviewees 12, 13, and 14 also mentioned that if the Commission makes a demand, it is much more contextualized and supported by "much more substantial fact-based work" (interviewee 12) than the demands coming from the Parliament, because it is "most likely they [Commissioners] have been doing their homework before coming to us [with requests]" (interviewee 13). Therefore, the demands coming from the Commission are not random and they represent a much larger threat to the agency's reputation.

The Commission also gives agencies their political mandate (interviewee 11 and 16), it sets their rules and procedures (interviewee 1, 4, 11, and 12), tables proposals (interviewee 7), evaluates their performance and produces internal audits (interviewee 13 and 6), and it is either their governing body or part of their governing board (interviewee 8, 9, 10). For some agencies, the Commission is also their main customer or stakeholder as it is the recipient of their reports and deliverables (interviewee 8, 15, and 16). Due to all of these factors, some mention that they are also primarily accountable to the Commission (Interviewee 12 and 15). For instance, interviewee 15 explained that they would prioritize "the European Commissioner, due to the duty of accountability and [the duty] to comply with the rules [they set]." This argument about the rules and regulations seems to be another point raised by some in favor of the Commission. Both interviewees 4 and 12 mentioned that the Commission is important because it is the "guardian of the Treaties", and interviewee 11 called it the "guardian of the rules".

Interviewee 14 also shows the importance of the Commission by saying that “if the external evaluation [done by the Commission] doesn't run well, an agency might be shut down.” The Commission appears to be the ultimate “boss” of EU agencies (interviewee 8 and 11). A quote that somewhat summarizes the relationship between EU agencies and the Commission is the following:

“they [the Commission] are our bosses, our political masters. And while the agency remains technically independent, we are an EU agency working under the direction of the executive arm of the EU, which is the Commission.” (interviewee 11)

It is therefore possible to deduce that the Commission has many different formal and informal ways in which it exerts its power over agencies, making it a potentially threatening source of external demands.

4.2.2 The European Parliament

Even though the Parliament is not as closely involved in agencies' affairs as the Commission but rather distant (interviewee 3, 10, and 11), it also has direct ways in which it exerts power over agencies. Interviewee 9, for example, mentions that it is an “institution which can close the entire agency.” A few interviewees (4, 6, 8, and 10) state that the Parliament is also involved in setting agencies' budget and managing how they spend it. The only interviewee who prioritized the Parliament over the Commission during the scenarios (interviewee 8) mentioned exactly this as their primary motive. In the case of some agencies, the Parliament also drives the agenda (interviewee 6), and it has “a formal role in controlling the work of the agency, [for example by] approv[ing] the discharge of the [agency's] director” (interviewee 10). These examples, however, only seem to apply to some agencies rather than to all of them.

The fact that the Parliament is more distant than the Commission was seen by some respondents as a positive thing. Interviewee 11, for instance, said that “this is allowing the Parliament to have a more global perspective on things” and also make them consider the social and business dimensions rather than only the technical one. There are other elements, however, that make interviewees not prioritize the Parliament's demands over the Commission's. Interviewee 10 and 13 mention that the information the Parliament has is rarely first-hand and in many cases it comes from the Commission, whereas interviewee

12 says that the points made by the Parliament are not only less evidence-based (as it was already mentioned above), but their demands might also be influenced by, for example, “some industry letters received, or some conversations had”.

A few interviewees (1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 16) indicated that the Parliament is very important because it is the “voice” of the general public. Interviewees 7, 10, 12, and 16 also stress the fact that members of the Parliament are democratically elected as representatives of EU citizens, which gives them credibility as an advocate and defendant of people’s needs and interests. Because they are democratically elected, “[y]ou expect that [a member of the Parliament] is acting on behalf of a collective interest” (interviewee 10), and it “would be [...] democratically correct to prioritize [the] Parliament [over the public]” (interviewee 12). Interviewee 3 adds that because the Parliament is “a direct representation in the general sense of the general public, [...] it’s much more effective” to prioritize the former over the latter.

Another reason why some interviewees prioritize the Parliament over the public is because they expect demands from the former to be much more filtered, informed, and contextualized than those coming from the public (interviewee 11). Interviewees 12 and 15 also mention that agencies are directly accountable to the Parliament, not to the public.

Hence, it is possible to observe that even though EU agencies almost unanimously chose the European Commission as the most important actor when it comes to possible threats to their reputation, they also deem the European Parliament as a very important actor because it has both direct and indirect ways in which it exerts power over EU agencies.

4.2.3 The General Public

In the previous paragraph it was discussed why most of the interviewees prioritized the Parliament over the general public, but there were other considerations that they made about the general public itself. Some interviewees make the point that the general public is not even aware of their agency’s existence (interviewee 6), that the agencies might not be very visible to the public (interviewee 5), that the public might not be aware of agencies (interviewee 11), and that even if they are aware of agencies, they might not care that much about what they do (interviewee 1).

The interviewees also make a few arguments in terms of why the general public does not represent a very serious threat to the agencies' reputation. For example, their demands "might be based on the wrong perception" or on a mere personal opinion (interviewee 14), which "we don't know [...] upon what it's founded" (interviewee 4), and the demands might not be supported by sufficient or high-quality evidence (interviewee 1). The person making the demands might also be a "'Lone Wolf' or a misguided person" (interviewee 5), driven by "personal vendettas, biases, and so on" (interviewee 11). The general public sometime also contacts agencies about issues that are not entirely relevant (interviewee 3), and interviewee 15 adds that:

"The general public expects more from European authorities [*than they can do*] - so they don't understand the split of responsibilities between European and national authorities. And most of the time [...] they are asking things that [EU agencies] cannot do [...] because there's really no knowledge of what really the job of European institutions is, [*versus*] the national ones."

As it was already mentioned, interviewees hold that it is better to prioritize the Commission or the Parliament. This is also because considerations about accountability, since agencies are "accountable also to the man on the street, but very indirectly" (interviewee 12). As it was shown in the discrete choice section, none of the respondents prioritized the public over the Parliament, and the only person who prioritized the general public over the Commission (interviewee 6) did not provide a clear motive for this choice, unfortunately. Interviewee 12 summarizes why agencies prioritize the Commission and the Parliament over the public as follows:

"every public authority to some degree, of course, [is] accountable to the general public ultimately, but the general public elects [the European] Parliament, establishes institutions to help them run the statement and there the Commissioner has a specific role, and I think also rightfully deserves more attention than [the public] and more prioritization."

4.2.4 National Agencies

As for national agencies, scientific experts, and private actors, the reasons behind prioritization seem to depend on the role these actors play within each agency and in the context of agencies' mandates. Whereas interviewee 1 said that national agencies are disconnected from them and therefore not so important, others ranked them quite high in terms of importance. National agencies might be some of agencies' "strongest allies" (interviewee 3), their partners and "subcontractors" ("without them we can't do our business basically") (interviewee 4), their stakeholders (interviewee 7) and "the main beneficiaries of [their] activities" (interviewee 13). In some cases national agencies are also pivotal to agencies' work (interviewee 4) or even determine agencies' survival, since, at least in the case of interviewee 14, they have the power to extend the agency's mandate. National agencies might also be relevant in terms of EU agencies' reputation because "they have some public authority" (interviewee 7).

4.2.5 Scientific Experts

Like in the case of national agencies, interviewees prioritize scientific experts differently according to the role these play within their agency and to some extent to the agency's mandate, as for instance technical agencies. For example, interviewee 5 prioritized them the least "because usually they're a little bit more at a distance". On the other hand, other interviewees reported that scientific experts are very active and relevant within their agency's operations. For instance, interviewee 1 said that their "agenda is built by the scientific community"; interviewee 14 also deemed scientific experts as "a very important stakeholder for [our agency]."

The majority of the interviewees (such as number 6, 11, and 14) that prioritized scientific experts over the Commission on technical demands (scenario 4) said that it was because the Commission is not intrinsically scientific, and therefore scientific experts have more authority when it comes to technical demands. Interviewee 8 added that when scientific experts make demands about technical conduct they usually provide arguments and evidence, which corroborate their demands ("they do not just say 'look, you're wrong'. They have actually reasoned a position in which they argue why this is wrong. So, it is not just a simple sentence [*but a well-reasoned position they take*]."). Interviewee 7 also believes that the Commission's technical requests might be influenced by politics.

The nine interviewees that did not prioritize scientific experts over the Commission in scenario 4 also provide a number of reasons for this. Some of them (interviewee 4, 12, 16) seem to agree that there are many varying views and opinions in science and that therefore the opinion of only one scientist is not representative of the whole scientific community. For others (interviewee 5 and 13) it is in scientists' nature to be argumentative, and interviewee 3 adds that some of their opinions might even be biased. Interviewee 7 also believes that their points are arguable, disputable, and open to interpretation. All these reasons led interviewees to decide that scientific experts' demands are not extremely urgent or threatening for their agency's reputation.

4.2.6 Large Corporations or Private Actors

As shown in the discrete choice section, 53.3% of respondents prioritized large corporations or private actors over national agencies. Such respondents provided a few explanations for their choice. Interviewees 1, 3, and 6 mentioned that they get some of their funding from private actors, and these can therefore "impact [agencies'] budget and credibility" (interviewee 6). In some cases, private actors are also agencies' contractors (interviewee 9), their immediate customers (interviewee 11), or one of their pivotal stakeholders (interviewee 6). According to interviewee 15, they are also important because they "implement everything that [the agency] develop[s]." Private actors can also be very powerful, and they need to be treated with caution because they "don't speak [the same] language" as agencies and other sources of external demands, which can lead to problems such as "misunderstanding and overreaction or under-reaction" (interviewee 3).

The respondents who did not prioritize private actors did not mention many reasons related to the latter, but rather focused on reasons related to the sources they did pick. One of the reasons provided concerning private actors was that "large corporation [...] may have invested interest" when making certain requests (interviewee 4).

4.2.7 Sources of External Demands: Empirical Analysis

So far, the qualitative data concerning the explanations for why EU agencies find certain sources of external demands more important or potentially threatening for their reputation than others was illustrated, but it is also necessary to infer relevant meaning from the presented evidence. As it was shown in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, the virtual majority of respondents find that the European Commission and the European Parliament are the most important actors for EU agencies, and also the ones that can potentially be the most threatening to EU agencies' organizational reputation. From the interviewees' quotes, it is evident that both of these sources of external demands possess both direct and indirect means through which they exert power on EU agencies, even though arguably to varying degrees since the Commission seems to have stronger ties to EU agencies than the Parliament.

The list of reasons for choosing the Commission and the Parliament over other sources of external demands provided by interviewees shows that there is a clear hierarchy between such institutions and EU agencies and there are a number of pivotal dependencies in place. These dependencies include (but are not limited to) the fact that the European Commission and the European Parliament often set and provide the budget for EU agencies, determine their mandate, and can set their agenda. The Commission is also highly involved in the agencies' activities, it tables proposals, sets the rules that EU agencies need to follow, evaluates their performance, and it is sometimes a primary customer or stakeholder for EU agencies. The Parliament, on the other hand, is highly relevant because it is the elected voice of the general public, and it represents the latter's wishes and demands. Both the Commission and the Parliament seem to have power of life and death over EU agencies, as their whole existence largely depends on the two institutions' judgment. All these factors make EU agencies highly dependent on the Commission and the Parliament, and they also make these two institutions highly threatening to EU agencies' reputation, so a demand coming from either the Commission or the Parliament can be highly damaging for their organizational reputation.

As for the general public, EU agencies seem to recognize that it is ultimately relevant but that it is more appropriate that their wishes and demands are filtered and democratically represented by the European Parliament. For this reason, the general public is not threatening per se when it comes to organizational reputation, but it rather strengthens the threat posed by the Parliament.

In terms of the other three sources of external demands (national agencies, scientific experts, and large corporations and private actors), the threat they represent for EU agencies seems to depend on the role

these play in relation to the latter, which highly varies per agency. It seems that the more they play a prominent role, the more of a threat they represent to the EU agency's reputation. It has to be noted that in the present study, the qualitative evidence suggested that the more of a reputational threat a source of external demand represents, the more it is prioritized by EU agencies. As it will be illustrated below, this seems to be the case for the contents of external demands and for media attention of external demands as well.

4.3 The Content of External Demands

As it was already shown in the discrete choice section, the results in terms of content of external demands are more variegated than those for sources, and this is also reflected in the reasons provided by interviewees. All the relevant (qualitative) quotes concerning the various types of content of external demands can be found in Appendix 5.

4.3.1 Technical Conduct

Many interviewees (number 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16) prioritized demands on technical conduct either above all others or over a few because they are technical agencies whose "core mandate is to provide information that is of high professional, technical, and scientific standards" (interviewee 10). Demands on technical conduct can affect these agencies' credibility (interviewee 5). Therefore, demands about technical conduct represent "a high risk for [these agencies]" (interviewee 14). For technical agencies that deal with delicate matters, "if [they] screw up [on technical conduct], it can cost lives" (interviewee 11). For agencies who are not technical per se like in the case of interviewee 8, technical conduct can still be deemed as the most important because it has to do with the methodology and the processes the agency has to follow.

As for the reasons why some interviewees did not prioritize technical demands, they are sometimes opposed to each other. Interviewee 3, for example, prioritized other types of content because technical conduct follows rules that are straightforward and indisputable, even if one does not agree with them.

Interviewee 15 similarly argued that technical conduct is based on hard evidence, and hence there is also not much room for argument. Interviewees 7 and 13, on the other hand, argued the opposite, saying that when it comes to technical conduct there is always room for debate, interpretation, and justification. The remainder of the interviewees who prioritized other types of content over technical focused on reasons related to either such other types of content or on the source of demands in their explanations, rather than elaborating on why technical demands were less urgent.

4.3.2 Performative Conduct

Similarly to what has just been discussed, there are also mixed feelings about performative conduct. A few interviewees agree that demands about performative conduct are very dangerous, if not the most dangerous. Interviewee 3 said that this was the case because they are very difficult to reply to, they are often about people's feelings, and because they can spread like wildfire. Interviewees 11 and 12 find that agencies' performative conduct is key because they need to properly carry out their tasks, and interviewee 14 adds that performative conduct issue come with very high risks. Interviewee 12 mentions another reason for why performance is important:

“it's not a surprise that performance and at technical expertise ranks highest [in the literature], because that's where you are pointed mostly by your sponsors, or your masters. [...] [A]gencies [...] act on behalf of somebody [...]. They don't mandate themselves to do what is necessarily the best thing now, so they were put on the track by somebody and [they] need to report back.”

Other interviewees, however, discard performative demands as less relevant. Interviewee 5 mentioned that agencies' principals impose rules that act as constraints but then expect agencies to work fast-paced. Interviewees 8 and 10 are not worried about the threat performative demands can pose because they have specific internal procedures to follow. Interviewee 13 said that, since performative demands are not harmful to the agency's reputation, they can be traded for more threatening requests such as moral and legal-procedural ones, plus there can be “a lot of excuses for a low performance”.

4.3.3 Legal-procedural Conduct

Yet again, there is a variety of opinions among respondents concerning the prioritization of legal-procedural demands. Even though for formal rules “there is a way to check”, interviewee 1 deems them as very important because if ignored they can create major difficulties, belittle the technical expertise of the agency (“if we are contested on the legal side, whatever we do on the technical side doesn’t matter”), and it can lead to the agency being contested, since it is spending public money. Legal issues can impact future agency activities (interviewee 3 and 6) and have negative consequences on agencies’ reputations (interviewees 13 and 15). They also need to be prioritized because they come with deadlines and can lead to negative legal consequences (interviewees 7, 15, and 16), they have to do with compliance and confidentiality (interviewee 16), they are more prosecutable than other types of conduct (interviewee 11), and because there is “no excuse for legal breaches” (interviewee 13). For interviewee 15, it is also important because the legal aspect is at the core of their mandate.

Some of the reasons why legal-procedural demands were not prioritized over others were that legal practices are based on set, straightforward laws that are indisputable even if one does not agree with them (interviewee 3 and 8), that “we [bureaucrats working for EU agencies] may commit some mistakes [...], we are humans” (interviewee 7), that they represent a low risk for agencies (interviewee 14), and that they are more of a formality which can wait (interviewee 12). For interviewee 10, legal-procedural rules are “sort of the means of getting to the other conditions under which we must [*function*]”, rather than having to do with said conditions.

4.3.4 Moral Conduct

Whereas it was expected that respondents would not prioritize moral conduct, some of them did, especially in the scenarios. Moral demands can be extremely damaging because it can make organizations seem untrustworthy (interviewee 5), it has to do with an agency’s independence and transparency (interviewee 16), its credibility, and because it can be bad for agencies’ reputation (interviewee 12). Agencies also need to prioritize moral conduct both to avoid and to deal with corruption and fraud accusations (interviewees 13 and 14).

The respondents who did not prioritize moral demands also provided reasons for this. Interviewee 3 believes that moral issues are more about the individual level rather than the organizational one, and a “gut feeling” instead of something more tangible, so they are not so dangerous for an agency. Interviewee 4 adds that it is about subjective opinions. Interviewee 14 provides a more articulated answer. They say that even though moral demands are important, they are not a threat because they have strict rules concerning their moral conduct as well as a record. Interviewee 9, on the other hand, provides a clear explanation for why they do not find demands about moral conduct to be very threatening:

“Moral conduct is really something [the agency] is not concerned about [...]. [T]hey [the agencies] basically see themselves as somebody who is doing the service that they are asked to do, and those who are asking them to do the service are the ones who are deciding whether or not it is moral.”

4.3.5 Content of External Demands: Empirical Analysis and Further Observations

Conversely to the case of the different sources of external demands, inferring meaning from the quotes on why interviewees prioritized certain types of contents of external demands over others is not so straightforward. This is because the trends and patterns are not so evident, and because respondents provided explanations for both why they prioritized each type of content and why they did not. Inferring meaning is also an arduous task because many of these explanations are conflicting.

It can be deduced that the reasons why demands on each type of content are or are not prioritized largely depend on each EU agency’s specific case and on which reputational dimension/s each EU agency deems to be more important.

A point of observation that ought to be mentioned is that in many cases, in the context of the eight hypothetical scenarios, the combination of source and content of a demands influences respondents’ choices. For instance, most of the interviewees who prioritized scientific experts over the European Commission when they both make technical demands (scenario 4) said that this was because the opinion of scientific experts matters especially in the technical sphere since it is their area of expertise

(interviewee 6 and 12). This was also the case for large corporations making legal demands for interviewee 8 (scenario 7) and for the general public making demands about moral conduct for interviewee 12 (scenario 5). It can also be the case that certain combinations of source and content of external demands are considered *less* important than others, as in the case of national agencies making technical demands for interviewee 4 (scenario 7).

Another noteworthy element is that, when asked to rank the types of content of external demands in terms of the threat they can pose to organizational reputation, two interviewees ranked the reputational dimension in which their respective agencies have a strong reputation as last. This was the case for interviewee 1 and technical conduct and for interviewee 14 and moral conduct (“the moral for me is the last one [in terms of prioritization] because we have a clean record”). In these cases, it seems that when EU agencies already possess a strong reputation in one specific reputational dimension, such dimension becomes less threatening to the agency’s reputation. This argument however is not very strong because it is supported by only two interviewees and even those two interviewees did not confirm this logic with the choices they made in the scenarios.

It also has to be noted that in many cases, the preliminary rankings of contents of external demands and their later prioritizations made in the context of the hypothetical scenarios do not fully match. For example, interviewee 14 first ranked legal-procedural conduct above moral conduct, but then in scenario 5 they prioritized the moral demand over the legal-procedural one. Similarly, interviewee 16 first ranked technical conduct as the most important reputational dimension, but then they prioritized the legal-procedural demand over the technical one in both scenario 5 and scenario 7. These discrepancies are most likely due to the fact that the initial rankings were more abstract, whereas the scenarios designed through the Experimental Vignette Methodology enabled to achieve higher realism. Hence, in said scenarios interviewees were able to make more realistic choices.

4.4 Media Attention on External Demands

As it was already hinted at in the discrete choice section, most of the respondents mentioned that negative media attention on external demands matters a lot to them and it would influence their

prioritization strategies, whereas a couple of them said that media does not influence them as much. However, the former did not always prioritize demands that received negative media attention, while the latter sometimes did. The present section discusses the causal mechanisms behind this. All relevant (qualitative) quotes about media attention can be found in Appendix 6.

In terms of the interviewees who did prioritize demands that received negative media attention, interviewees 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, and 15 openly mentioned that this was because negative media attention would hurt their agencies' reputations, since agencies want to be perceived in a good light, and interviewees 6 and 7 said that it is bad for the agency's image. Somewhat in line with the concept of reputation, interviewee 5 argued that their "only real tool is [their] credibility as an organization and [that negative media attention] is [...] a clear threat to the functioning of the authority [...], [so] that attention could be very harmful." They also need to address negative media attention properly because agencies are spending taxpayers' money, so they need to constantly show external observers that they are using such resources responsibly, that they are effective, and fulfilling their mandate (interviewee 7 and 10). If they do not do this properly and external observers' opinion of their utility changes, agencies could be shut down (interviewee 10), or at least they could suffer consequences concerning their budget (interviewee 8 and 12). When negative media attention is involved, allegations are made in which agencies are "guilty until proven innocent", so they need to address it quickly because "it's important that [agencies] are not perceived as hiding" from said allegations (interviewee 11). Agencies also need to address demands that come with negative media attention because "if you don't [...], you're more or less confirming it" (interviewee 4). Because of this, if not addressed promptly, issues imbued with negative media attention can escalate, pile up, and spiral out of control regardless of the facts, and media attention acts as an amplifier (interviewee 4, 5, 12, and 13).

Negative media attention is also politically sensitive (interviewee 9). A few interviewees (interviewee 1, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 15) mention that they would prioritize demands with negative media attention because the latter would also reflect negatively on either the main EU institutions or on the image of the EU as a whole. Because of this, the EU institutions themselves want agencies to prioritize demands that receive negative media attention (interviewee 1 and 10), or they would at least understand if agencies prioritized demands with negative media attention over a demand from the Commission or the Parliament (interviewee 15). If agencies do not address negative media attention promptly, there could be "negative consequences from the political governance bodies of the [agency]" (interviewee 9).

A few other minor reasons for prioritizing negative media attention provided by respondents are that these could negatively affect the overall field in which the agencies operate (interviewee 6), and that their future work will also be affected (interviewee 16). Interviewees 5 and 14 also said that agencies can use media attention to their advantage and to improve their reputation. Overall, interviewees who prioritize demands associated with negative media attention imply that such demands are not more important but simply more urgent to address (interviewee 1, 3, 9, 10, 13 and 16). In the case of respondents who do not change their answer when negative media attention is added since the latter is added to the option they had already chosen, respondents openly say or imply that the presence of negative media attention strengthens their choice.

Due to all of these reasons, for some agencies (interviewee 8 and 9) media attention is so important and sensitive that they have specific internal departments whose primary role is dealing with the media and with media attention.

The main reasoning provided by interviewees who did not prioritize demands that come with negative media attention, on the other hand, was less elaborated but much more unanimous: it is because either the source or the content of the demands that do not receive media attention (or both source and content) are much more important than the ones associated with the demands that receive media attention (interviewee 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, and 16). Therefore, the importance of the source or the content overpowers the urgency of media attention. Let us consider a practical example. In scenario 3, there are two demands equal in terms of content, the first comes from the Commission and the second comes from the public; the latter receives negative media attention. 5 interviewees (or 33.3% of the interviewees) still picked the demand from the Commission, even though it does not come with media attention, because they consider such source more important than the one that received media attention (the general public). The opposite may also be true, so to say that the source and/or content of a demand with media attention are *less* important than the source and/or content of a demand without media attention (interviewee 13).

Other than this main reason, a few interviewees added a couple of additional rationales for not prioritizing negative media attention. For example, even though at first interviewee 14 said that media attention is a serious threat to reputation and should therefore be prioritized, they later belittled its importance by saying the following:

“The media, we know that it wants to sell [...]. On the other hand, [...] regrettably, people have a tendency to forget very easily. So media... personally, it's not something that worries me too much because we will have all the proofs to show that there has not been any issue [...].”

Interviewee 15 also deems media attention as not worthy of being dealt with immediately because often times it relates to elements that the agency is still developing and for which the agency needs to follow specific internal procedures and timelines, regardless of the media attention it receives. They only give it priority when there is some perceived parity between the two options, such as between the Commission and the Parliament in scenario 2.

4.4.1 Media Attention on External Demands: Empirical Analysis

An overview of the qualitative data concerning media attention on external demands yields a clear result: EU agencies are highly aware that negative media attention can be very harmful for their organizational reputation and they therefore tend to prioritize whenever possible. They know that if they do not address it promptly, negative media attention can have negative if not catastrophic consequences for EU agencies, and it can even reflect negatively on the major EU institutions or on the EU as a whole. Some of these consequences are (but are not limited to) loss of credibility, budgetary repercussions, and harm to organizational reputation and image. Media attention does not make a particular request more important but rather more urgent.

Most of the interviewees who do not prioritize media attention do so not because they think that negative media attention is not harmful to their organizational reputation, but because they deem the source or content of external demands (or both) that lacks media attention to represent a larger threat to their reputation. Interviewees also provided another couple of reasons for prioritizing or not prioritizing negative media attention, but the abovementioned reasons seem to be the two main rationales.

5. Discussion

In the present chapter, the empirical findings from the studies are further discussed. The results are also compared with the theoretical expectations formulated in the theoretical framework in order to assess them.

5.1 The Sources of External Demands

To reiterate, the first theoretical expectation formulated in the theoretical framework, the one about the sources of external demands, was the following:

Expectation 1: when faced with multiple demands, EU agencies will tend to prioritize the demands originating from their political principal, meaning the European Parliament and the European Commission, because these are the political masters of EU agencies and because the former have the means to exert their power over the latter.

Such theoretical expectation resonates fully with the results of the study. First of all, as shown in the discrete choice section (section 4.1) and in Appendix 3, the vast majority of respondents prioritized the Commission and the Parliament both in the initial ranking (86.7%) and in the scenarios. In terms of the reasoning for such choice, the theoretical framework had proposed that the major EU institutions pose the largest potential threat to EU agencies because the former are their political masters, they provide funding to the agencies, they are democratically elected, and because EU agencies are accountable to them and they are created to serve the main EU institutions. All these reasons were confirmed by the results and openly mentioned by respondents.

While it is true that both of them were deemed as the most important (and therefore the most threatening and the most prioritized) sources of external demands for EU agencies, respondents make a clear distinction between the two. In fact, 93.3% of respondents prioritized the Commission over the Parliament because the former has many more and much stronger means to exert power over EU agencies

than the Parliament. For example, the Commission provides funding to most of EU agencies, it is more closely involved in EU agencies' day-to-day activities, and more aware of their operations. The Commission also gives EU agencies their political mandate, it sets their rules and procedures, it tables proposals, evaluates their performance, produces internal audits, and it is either their governing body or part of their governing board. The Parliament, on the other hand, has less formal ties to EU agencies, but it is important nonetheless. In the case of a couple interviewees, the Parliament has power over the agency's budget and it has "a formal role in controlling the work of the agency" (interviewee 10). The primary reason why respondents deem the Parliament as important, however, was clearly that it democratically represents the will of the general public, and it is the "voice" of the people.

From all the different explanations provided by the interviewees, it is evident that there is a clear hierarchy between the Commission and the Parliament (at the top) and EU agencies (at the bottom), and that the latter are highly dependent on the two EU institutions. The study shows that, because of the important role that the European Commission and the European Parliament play in the context of EU agencies, they are also the most important (and possibly threatening) sources of external demands for EU agencies' organizational reputation, and they are therefore the most prioritized.

Even though some scholars hypothesized that EU agencies might prioritize the general public over all other sources of demands, this was rarely the case in practice. EU agencies recognize that the general public is ultimately important, but they prefer to serve the public's interest through the EU institutions, especially the Parliament. The public was also not highly prioritized because it is often distant from, unaware of, or uninterested by EU agencies. The public's demands might also be biased or based on the wrong perception and/or facts. For these reasons, the general public does not pose a particularly urgent threat to EU agencies' reputation.

As for the other sources of external demands (national agencies, scientific experts, and large corporations or private actors), the reasons for prioritizing (or not prioritizing) them are highly dependent on the role that these sources play within each EU agency. Each of the three sources might be distant and irrelevant, or rather highly involved in an agency's operations, its stakeholder, beneficiary, ally, partner, or subcontractor. Scientific experts were also considered relevant by some because of the technical expertise they provide. All in all, the reputational threat that each of the remaining sources of external demands (national agencies, scientific experts, and large corporations or private actors) depends on the specific case of each EU agency. For that reason, one of these three sources might be highly relevant for an EU agency, and therefore threatening and prioritized, while not relevant for another (and therefore not

prioritized). This is an argument that somewhat complements the previous literature on the topic, since there is little academic evidence on how and why organizations and agencies prioritize among these actors when it comes to external demands.

In conclusion, expectation 1 was supported by the data, with the addition that the Commission has more formal power over EU agencies than the Parliament and it is hence prioritized more. In addition to the points made in expectation 1, the general public is ultimately important but its interests are usually represented by the EU institutions (and the European Parliament more specifically), and it does not represent a serious reputational threat in and of itself, and it is therefore seldom prioritized. In addition, the reasons why the other sources of external demands are or are not prioritized depend on the relationship between these sources and each specific EU agency and the role such sources play within the latter's operations.

5.2 The Content of External Demands

In terms of the content of external demands, two theoretical sub-expectations were formulated in the theoretical framework namely:

Expectation 2a: When faced with multiple simultaneous demands, EU agencies will tend to prioritize the demands concerning their performative and technical reputations because these represent the organizations' raison d'être and their core functions, and because agencies draw legitimacy from these two domains.

Expectation 2b: When faced with multiple simultaneous demands, EU agencies will tend to prioritize the demands concerning their moral reputation and legal-procedural reputation less than other reputational dimensions because they are more peripheral dimensions and because they have less to do with organizations' raison d'être and their core functions, and because agencies draw less legitimacy from these domains.

As it was already mentioned both in the discrete choice section (section 4.1) and in the results section for the contents of external demands (section 4.3), the results in terms of content are quite variegated and it is difficult to discern a clear patterns. In the discrete choice section (section 4.1) it was shown that the results in terms of prioritization are somewhat mixed, and there are no one or two types of content that are prioritized by the majority of respondents. All in all, it seems that both expectation 2a and expectation 2b are not reflected in the results of the study.

Let us start by considering expectation 2a. In the first rankings, technical conduct was ranked quite high, being ranked first by six interviewees (or 40%), second by four (or 26.6%), and last by only one (or 6.6%). However, when asked to prioritize between a technical demand and a legal-procedural one, 66.6% of respondents prioritized the legal-procedural demand. In terms of the reasoning behind prioritization, all the interviewees that did prioritize technical demands over others provided the reasoning proposed by expectation 2a, namely that they are technical agencies who are supposed to deliver solid technical data and services. Therefore, they confirmed that technical conduct is prioritized because it is part of agencies' *raison d'être* and because agencies draw legitimacy from it (expectation 2a). This, however, was only the case for about half of the respondents (eight in fifteen or 53.3% of the total). Other respondents, including some among the 66.6% who prioritized legal-procedural conduct over technical in scenario 6, did not prioritize technical demands, saying that this was because technical conduct is based on rules that are either indisputable or open to interpretation.

In terms of performative conduct, it was not prioritized by many, being ranked as first by two interviewees (or 13.3%) and as second by five (or 33.3%). Furthermore, not many of the reasons provided by interviewees for prioritizing performative conduct closely resonate with expectation 2a. The only explanation that comes close is that EU agencies need to properly carry out their tasks, but this was only mentioned by two respondents (interviewee 11 and 12). Some interviewees still recognized performative demands as threatening to organizational reputation but for other reasons, namely that they are dangerous, can spread like wildfire, and can entail high risks for an agency. Others, however, do not prioritize performative demands, and belittle the danger they pose by explaining that rules about performance are just an obstacle, that these rules are clear and indisputable, or that performative demands are not that harmful for an organization.

Therefore, the only point of expectation 2a that was confirmed by the results is that some (not all) EU agencies prioritize technical demands because technical conduct is part of such agencies' *raison d'être* and a source of legitimacy.

Let us move to expectation 2b. In terms of legal-procedural conduct, it was ranked first by four interviewees (or 26.6%), second by three (or 20%), third by six (or 40%), and last by two (or 13.3%). It was also prioritized over technical demands by 66.6% of respondents. Therefore, it is not entirely true that legal-procedural demands are prioritized less as stated in expectation 2b. An explanation for prioritizing legal-procedural conduct provided by an interviewee (15) which fully contradicts expectation 2b is that legal-procedural conduct is at the core of the agency's mandate. Other reasons for prioritizing legal-procedural demands were that it can hurt reputation, create difficulties such as belittling the technical expertise of the agency, impact agencies' future, and have negative legal consequences. Some other interviewees, however, did prioritize legal-procedural conduct less, because it is based on straightforward rules, it is more of a formality, and it represents a low risk for agencies. A point that resonates with expectation 2b, as well as with an argument by Busuioc and Rimkutė (2019b) presented in the theoretical framework, is that legal-procedural conduct is not prioritized because it is "sort of the means of getting to the other conditions under which we must [function]" (interviewee 10). This point confirms that legal-procedural conduct is prioritized less because it is not part of EU agencies' *raison d'être*, but it was mentioned by one respondent only.

As for moral conduct, it was indeed ranked as last by 8 interviewees (53.3%), but it was also ranked first by three interviewees (20%) and second by other three (20%). It was also prioritized over legal-procedural demands by 53.3% of respondents (scenario 5). Therefore, it is not true that moral conduct is prioritized less as stipulated by expectation 2b, or even prioritized the least, as it was suggested by many scholars (see theoretical framework). Whereas it might be true that moral conduct is not part of the core mandate of EU agencies, the latter still find moral demands highly threatening because they can make an agency seem untrustworthy, as well as affecting its independency, transparency, and credibility. They are also taken extremely seriously when it comes to accusations of corruption or fraud. When moral demands are not prioritized it is because moral conduct is more about the individual level rather than the agency level, it is a more subjective sensation, or because if there are moral issues they are to blame on the ones who give mandate to EU agencies (the EU institutions) rather than the agencies themselves.

In conclusion, neither expectation 2a nor expectation 2b is fully confirmed by the study. The results show that technical and performative conducts are not always prioritized, and the reasons behind prioritization are not always about EU agencies' *raison d'être*. When technical conduct is prioritized, however, it is generally because of this. Expectation 2b is also rejected because it is not true that legal-procedural and moral conducts are prioritized less. In fact, they are sometimes even prioritized above

technical and performative conducts. While it might be true that they are less tied to EU agencies' *raison d'être*, they are sometimes prioritized because they too can harm EU agencies' organizational reputation.

5.3 Media Attention on External Demands

Lastly, the third theoretical expectation, the one about media attention, was the following:

Expectation 3: When confronted with multiple simultaneous external demands, EU agencies will prioritize the demands that receive negative media attention, since the latter, if not promptly addressed, might have negative consequences for the agencies' reputation.

Such expectation is confirmed by the results of the study. The vast majority of respondents (86.7%) say that negative media attention influences EU agencies' prioritization strategies, and many interviewees prioritize demands that receive negative media attention. Virtually all of them recognize that this is because negative media attention can severely hurt EU agencies' reputation. It can hurt their image, affect their credibility and their budget. EU agencies need to show that they are using resources properly, and they also need to address negative media attention in order not to confirm accusations and to prevent accusations from piling up and getting out of control. EU agencies also have to address negative media attention because if they are seen as not behaving properly, this could reflect on the reputation of EU institutions and on the EU as a whole. Interviewees also add that negative media attention does not make demands more important but more urgent to address.

However, the results of the study also uncovered a pivotal point that complements expectation 3. In fact, EU agencies prioritize demands that receive negative media attention *unless the demands that do not receive media attention come from a source or are about a type of conduct that is deemed more important or more threatening*. This point was repeatedly made by nine interviewees (60% of the total). In those cases, the importance of the source and/or content of external demands overrules the urgency of negative media attention.

In conclusion, expectation 3 is confirmed by the study, with the addition that EU agencies might choose not to prioritize negative media attention when the demands that do not receive it come from

more important (or more threatening) sources or are about more important (or more threatening) reputational dimensions.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present thesis has attempted to address and answer the following research question: what are the reasons dictating EU agencies' prioritization strategies for external demands in light of bureaucratic reputational concerns? The study confirmed the academic argument discussed at the beginning of the present thesis that concerns about organizational reputation greatly influence how bureaucrats prioritize among various external demands. Based on the literature about the topic, the thesis focused on three factors, namely the *sources* of external demands, the *content* of external demands, and the *media attention* that external demands receive.

Due to previous scholarly arguments on the sources of external demands, it was expected that, when faced with multiple simultaneous demands, EU agencies would prioritize demands originating from their political principal, meaning the European Parliament and the European Commission, because these are the political masters of EU agencies and because the former have the means to exert their power over the latter (expectation 1). The study found that this was indeed the case. The Commission and the Parliament possess various formal and informal means through which they can exert their power over EU agencies, which makes them the most threatening sources of external demands and hence the most prioritized. This argument, however, turned out to be skewed in favor of the Commission, since it has more means to exert its formal power over EU agencies than the Parliament. The Parliament, however, is also a threatening (and therefore prioritized) source of external demands because it democratically represents the will and the interests of the general public. EU agencies recognize that the general public is an ultimately important actor, but they generally prefer to address its needs through the Parliament. The general public is therefore not perceived as a threatening source of demands in and of itself and it is hence seldom prioritized.

As for scientific experts, (relevant) national agencies, and large corporations or private actors, the reasons why they are or are not prioritized by EU agencies depend on the relationship that each of these have with each specific EU agency. This means that one of these sources could be highly threatening for one EU agency (and therefore prioritized), while not threatening for another (and therefore not prioritized). This point contributes to the discourse on the topic as the literature on how and why EU agencies prioritize among these three sources of external demand is still incomplete.

In terms of the reasons behind the prioritization of the content of external demands, it was expected that EU agencies prioritize technical and performative demands because these dimensions have to do with EU agencies' *raison d'être* and because EU agencies draw legitimacy from them (expectation 2a). Similarly, it was expected that EU agencies would prioritize moral and legal-procedural demands less because these two dimensions are more peripheral and because they are not tied to EU agencies' *raison d'être* (expectation 2b). These expectations were not confirmed by the data, since technical and performative demands were not generally prioritized more and moral and legal-procedural demands were not always prioritized less. The EU agencies that prioritize technical demands do indeed mention that this is because the technical dimension has to do with their mandate, but the same cannot be said for performative demands. These were rather prioritized because EU agencies are supposed to properly carry out their tasks, and because, if not addressed, they can lead to negative consequences for agencies, including reputational damage.

Even though the legal-procedural dimension and the moral dimension might be indeed less tied to EU agencies' *raison d'être* (especially the moral dimension), they are in many instances also prioritized because they too can negatively affect EU agencies' reputation and have overall negative consequences on EU agencies.

Lastly, the literature suggested that EU agencies might prioritize demands that receive negative media attention because this, if not promptly addressed, might have negative consequences for the agencies' reputation (expectation 3). The data confirmed this argument, but it also showed that EU agencies might not prioritize demands that receive negative media attention when the demands that do not receive it come from more threatening source or are about more threatening types of content than the demands that receive negative media attention. In those cases, negative media attention becomes of secondary importance.

The present study and its findings possibly provide a relevant contribution to the discourses about organizational reputation because they fill an existing gap in the literature, namely about the reasons behind EU agency bureaucrats' prioritization strategy in light of concerns about organizational reputation. It is also relevant because it expands on the academic application of the concept of organizational reputation to the EU context which, as it was already argued, has only been addressed by scholars to a limited extent.

6.1 Suggestions for Further Research

The thesis sheds light on possible pathways and topics for further research. Future studies could for instance apply a similar theoretical framework and research design to the context of national agencies, in order to compare and contrast the reasons behind bureaucrats' prioritization strategies at the EU level and at the national level. Another possibility could be to carry out a more in-depth study on one EU agency only. Future studies could also attempt to achieve higher external validity by carrying out a conjoint experiment about the same topic and the same case study.

In the case selection section (section 3.1) it was argued that agencies are divided into social-policy versus economic-policy agencies and regulatory versus non-regulatory agencies (Rimkutė, 2020a), and that while this distinction was acknowledged in the study and the sample fairly represented all these categories, the distinction was not directly observed nor taken into account in the present study. Further research could include this distinction in order to determine whether it influences the results or not.

Lastly, some results of the present study suggested that the combination of the source and content of external demands might matter in terms of EU agencies' prioritization strategy (see section 4.3.5). However, the evidence supporting this notion was not strong enough to lead to meaningful conclusions about it. Future studies might attempt to investigate different combinations of sources of external demands and contents of external demands in the context of EU agencies in order to determine whether they affect prioritization strategies in light of organizational reputation concerns.

Bibliography

- Aguinis, H., & Bradley, K. J. (2014). Best Practice Recommendations for Designing and Implementing Experimental Vignette Methodology Studies. *Organizational Research Methods*, 17(4), 351–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428114547952>
- Aleksovska, M., Schillemans, T., & Grimmelikhuijsen, S. (2021). Management of Multiple Accountabilities Through Setting Priorities: Evidence from a Cross-National Conjoint Experiment. *Public Administration Review*, n/a(n/a). <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13357>
- Andrade, C. (2018). Internal, External, and Ecological Validity in Research Design, Conduct, and Evaluation. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 40(5), 498–499. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijpsym.ijpsym_334_18
- Bach, T., Jugl, M., Köhler, D., & Wegrich, K. (2021). Regulatory agencies, reputational threats, and communicative responses. *Regulation & Governance*, n/a(n/a). <https://doi.org/10.1111/rego.12421>
- Boswell, C. (2008). The political functions of expert knowledge: Knowledge and legitimation in European Union Immigration Policy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15(4), 471–488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760801996634>
- Bryer, T. A. (2007). Toward a Relevant Agenda for a Responsive Public Administration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 17(3), 479–500. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mul010>
- Burke, J. P., & Cleary, R. E. (1989). Reconciling Public Administration and Democracy: The Role of the Responsible Administrator. *Public Administration Review*, 49(2), 180–186. <https://doi.org/10.2307/977340>

- Busuioc M. & Rimkutė D. (2019a), Meeting expectations in the EU regulatory state? Regulatory communications amid conflicting institutional demands, *Journal of European Public Policy* 27(4): 547- 568.
- Busuioc, E. M., & Lodge, M. (2016). The Reputational Basis of Public Accountability. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 29(2), 247–263.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12161>
- Busuioc, M. (2012). European agencies and their boards: Promises and pitfalls of accountability beyond design. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 19(5), 719–736.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2011.646785>
- Busuioc, M. (2013). *European agencies: Law and practices of accountability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Busuioc, M., & Rimkutė, D. (2019b). The Promise of Bureaucratic Reputation Approaches for the EU Regulatory State. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(8), 1256–1269.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1679227>
- Busuioc, M., Groenleer, M., & Trondal, J. (2011). *The Agency Phenomenon in the European Union. Emergence, Institutionalisation and Everyday Decision-Making*. Manchester University Press.
- Carpenter, D. (2001). *The forging of bureaucratic autonomy: Reputations, networks, and policy innovation in executive agencies* (pp. 1862–1928). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Carpenter, D. (2010a). Institutional Strangulation: Bureaucratic Politics and Financial Reform in the Obama Administration. *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(3), 825–846.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592710002070>
- Carpenter, D. (2010b). *Reputation and Power: Organizational Image and Pharmaceutical Regulation at the FDA* (1st edition). Princeton University Press.

- Carpenter, D., & Krause, G. A. (2012). Reputation and public administration. *Public Administration Review*, 72(1), 26–32.
- Chiti, E. (2013). European agencies' rulemaking: Powers, procedures and assessment. *European Law Journal*, 19(1), 93–110. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12015>
- Christensen, J. (2015). Recruitment and Expertise in the European Commission. *West European Politics*, 38(3), 649–678. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2014.982353>
- Cini, M., & Borragán, N. P.-S. (2009). *European Union Politics* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Cornell, A. (2014). Why bureaucratic stability matters for the implementation of democratic governance programs. *Governance*, 27(2), 191-214.
- Dahl, R. A., & Shapiro, I. (2015). *On Democracy* (Second edition). Yale University Press.
- Egeberg, M., Trondal, J., & Vestlund, N. M. (2014). The quest for order: unravelling the relationship between the European Commission and European Union agencies. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(5), 609–629. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2014.976587>
- Erlich, A., Berliner, D., Palmer-Rubin, B., & Bagozzi, B. E. (2021). Media Attention and Bureaucratic Responsiveness. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, muab001. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muab001>
- Evans, D. S. (2019). Attention Platforms, the Value of Content, and Public Policy. *Review of Industrial Organization*, 54(4), 775–792. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11151-019-09681-x>
- Gilad, S. (2008). Exchange without capture: The UK financial ombudsman service's struggle for accepted domain. *Public Administration*, 86(4), 907–924.

- Gilad, S., Maor, M., & Bloom, P. B.-N. (2013). Organizational Reputation, the Content of Public Allegations, and Regulatory Communication. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 25(2), 451–478. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mut041>
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings*. State University of New York Press.
- Hood, C. (2011). *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy, and Self-Preservation in Government* (Illustrated edition). Princeton University Press.
- Horn, M. J. (1995). *The political economy of public administration: institutional choice in the public sector, political economy of institutions and decisions*. Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Huber, J. D., & Shipan, C. R. (2011). *Deliberate discretion? The Institutional Foundations of bureaucratic autonomy*. Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Jett, J. (1981). Bad Reputation [Recorded by Joan Jett & The Blackhearts]. On *Bad Reputation* [Album]. Boardwalk Records.
- Kennedy, B. (2014). Unraveling representative bureaucracy: A systematic analysis of the literature. *Administration & Society*, 46(4), 395-421.
- Lange, D., Lee, P. M., & Dai, Y. (2011). Organizational Reputation: A Review. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 153–184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310390963>
- Levi-Faur, D., & Jordana, J. (2005). The rise of regulatory capitalism: The global diffusion of a new order. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 598(1), 200–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716204273623>
- Lowenstein, R. (1995). *Buffett: The Making of an American Capitalist*. Random House.

- Majone, G. (1997). From the positive to the regulatory state: Causes and consequences of changes in the mode of governance. *Journal of Public Policy*, 17(2), 139–167. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0143814x00003524>
- Majone, G. (1998). Europe's 'democratic deficit': The question of standards. *European Law Journal*, 4(1), 5–28.
- Majone, G. (1999). The regulatory state and its legitimacy problems. *West European Politics*, 22(1), 1–24.
- Maor, M., & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, R. (2013). The effect of salient reputational threats on the pace of FDA Enforcement. *Governance*, 26(1), 31–61. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0491.2012.01601.x>
- Maor, M., & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, R. (2015). Responsive change: Agency output response to reputational threats. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 26(1), 31–44.
- Maor, M., Gilad, S., & Bloom, P. B.-N. (2012). Organizational Reputation, Regulatory Talk, and Strategic Silence. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 23(3), 581–608. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mus047>
- McCubbins, M. D., & Schwartz, T. (1984). Congressional oversight overlooked: Police patrols versus fire alarms. *American Journal of Political Science*, 28(1), 165–179. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2110792>
- Meier, K. J., & Hill, G. C. (2009). Bureaucracy in the twenty-first century. In E. Ferlie, L. E. Lynn Jr, & C. Pollitt (Ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Public Management*. Oxford University Press.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Noll, R. G. (1985). Government regulatory behavior: A multidisciplinary survey and synthesis. *Regulatory Policy and the Social Sciences*, 9–64. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520313651-004>

- Olsen, J. P. (2006). Maybe it is time to rediscover bureaucracy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 16(1), 1-24.
- Olsen, J. P. (2017). *Democratic Accountability, Political Order, and Change: Exploring Accountability Processes in an Era of European Transformation* (1st edition). Oxford University Press.
- Pérez-Durán, I. (2019). Political and stakeholder's ties in European Union Agencies. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1375545>
- Rimkutė, D. (2020a). Building organizational reputation in the European regulatory state: An analysis of EU agencies' communications. *Governance*, 33(2), 385–406. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12438>
- Rimkutė, D. (2020b). Strategic silence or regulatory talk? Regulatory agency responses to public allegations amidst the glyphosate controversy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(11), 1636–1656. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1817130>
- Rimkutė, D. and van der Voet, J. (2021). When do bureaucrats respond to external demands? A theoretical framework and empirical test of bureaucratic responsiveness. *ECPR General Conference paper, 1 – 3 September 2021*.
- Rittberger, B., & Wonka, A. (2011). Introduction: agency governance in the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 18(6), 780–789. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2011.593356>
- Rourke, F. E. (1984). *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Public Policy*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Salomonsen, H. H., Boye, S., & Boon, J. (2021). Caught up or Protected by the Past? How Reputational Histories Matter for Agencies' Media Reputations. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, muaa056. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa056>

- Saltzstein, G. H. (1992). Bureaucratic Responsiveness: Conceptual Issues and Current Research. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 2(1), 63–88. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a037112>
- Savin-Baden, M., & Major, C. H. (2013). *Qualitative Research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Scharpf, F. W. (1999). *Governing in Europe: Effective and democratic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 294–308. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907313077>
- Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research Design in Political Science*. Macmillan Education.
- Trondal, J. (2014). Agencification. *Public Administration Review*, 74(4), 545–549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12252>
- van der Veer, R. A. (2020). Audience Heterogeneity, Costly Signaling, and Threat Prioritization: Bureaucratic Reputation-Building in the EU. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 31(1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaa030>
- Wilson, James Q. (1989). *Bureaucracy: What government agencies do and why they do it*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wonka, A., & Rittberger, B. (2010). Credibility, Complexity and Uncertainty: Explaining the Institutional Independence of 29 EU Agencies. *West European Politics*, 33(4), 730–752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402381003794597>
- Wood, D. B., & Waterman, R. W. (1991). The dynamics of political control of the bureaucracy. *American Political Science Review*, 85(3), 801–828. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1963851>

Appendix 1: Invitation to the Interview

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for contributing to the study on EU agency responsiveness by filling in a survey conducted by Dr. Dovilė Rimkutė and Dr. Joris van der Voet. Your responses helped us obtain invaluable empirical data.

In the survey, you have indicated that you would be willing to give an interview on the topic of the survey. You also provided us with your e-mail address. We hope that you are still willing and available to contribute to this study.

If yes, we would like to set a date and time for an interview. Our interview data collection stage starts on the 15th of November and end on the 17th of December 2021. Please let us know what your availability is, and we will arrange an interview accordingly.

Below you will find a description of our study and its process.

What is the study about?

Public officials must operate in complex environments in which they are expected to be responsive to a large number of heterogeneous external demands. The challenge to address these demands is widely acknowledged in the literature. However, there is theoretical ambivalence about which external demands are prioritized by public officials, and a dearth of empirical evidence exists. Crucially, empirical research on responsiveness does not adequately address the multiplicity and multidimensionality of demands: public officials must prioritize between simultaneous demands that vary not only on the source (which actor is exercising the demand?), but also on their content (which aspects of organizational conduct is targeted?), as well as the context in which demands are exercised (does the demand receive broader visibility?). To that end, our research question is: how do the source, content, and visibility of external demands shape public officials' prioritization decisions?

We conduct a mixed method study consisting of a discrete choice experiment (N=1556) and semi-structured interviews (in progress) with public officials at EU-level agencies. The discrete choice experiment presents public officials with diverse sets of demands and asks them to select which demands

should be prioritized for a response. In this way, this method is thus ideally suited to inform responsiveness to simultaneous demands (i.e. multiplicity) that vary on multiple aspects (i.e. multidimensionality).

Who will be interviewed?

We will conduct interviews with approx. 30 public officials working at EU agencies who filled in the survey and agreed to take part in an interview on the topic of the survey.

How long will the interview take?

60 – 90 minutes depending on your availability.

When will the interview data be collected?

We will collect interview data in November-December 2021.

Is my participation voluntary?

Yes. You can stop taking part in the study at any point, without justifying your decision.

Will my answers remain anonymous?

Yes. We assure complete anonymity. Your name and organizational affiliation will only be known to the principal investigator (PI) of the study (Dr. Rimkutė) who will conduct all interviews. Your responses will be anonymised by the PI before proceeding to the data analysis stage. In our academic outputs resulting from this study, we will not mention any information that could reveal your identity or your organizational affiliation. We will refer to you as an EU agency official without giving any further information (e.g., agency affiliation, position, nationality, gender).

What are potential risks?

Participation in this study does not create any risk to participants or their organizations. The study follows the highest ethical standards.

What will my data be used for?

The interview data will be used for academic research and scientific publications. We are also expected to disseminate our scientific outputs to broader audiences (e.g., general public, practitioners) to increase the impact of your academic activities.

What is the process of the interview?

1. We ask you to reply to this email and indicate a couple of dates and time slots for an interview.
2. We ask you to give us a consent to use your interview data. Please copy/paste the following text in your response to this email:

I participate in the study voluntarily. I was informed about the nature, scope, importance of the study, and any possible side effects. I give my permission to the principal investigators of this study to process my input and use my input for scientific outputs.

3. We will conduct an interview using MS Teams or any online tools of your preference.
3. Before the interview starts, we will ask for your permission to record the interview. If permission is not given, the PI will take notes of your responses.
4. Provided you give a permission to record the interview, we will send you a transcript to confirm if you agree with the transcription. Changes in your responses are possible.
5. We will send you an academic article that results from your participation in this study before publication.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the PI.

Dr. Dovilė Rimkutė, Assistant Professor, Leiden University

E-mail: [email address] / Phone: [phone number]

Appendix 2: Interview Template

Research Puzzle

Public officials must carry out their mandates in vibrant environments:

- Multidimensional external demands (different source, content, and context)
- The challenge to reconcile the multiplicity of external demands

We know relatively little of:

- How public officials' prioritization decisions are shaped by the necessity to simultaneously address multidimensional demands (i.e., demands originating from a diverse set of actors, containing different contents, and varying degrees of visibility)

Semi-structured questions

Question 1

External demands and criticism may contain different content. They may target different aspects of your organizations conduct:

Content	Technical conduct	... concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards.
	Performative conduct	... concerns about your organization's capacity to effectively accomplish its goals and mandated tasks.
	Legal-procedural conduct	...concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures.
	Moral conduct	...concerns about your organization's commitment to the highest ethical standards and moral values.

Which of those demands do you consider as the most important? Why? Could you rank them from the most important to address immediately to the least important?

Question 2

External demands and criticism may originate from different actors:

Who	European Parliament
	European Commission
	National agency
	Corporation, private actors
	Scientific expert
	General public

Which of those actors do you consider as the most important? Why? Could you rank them from the most important to address immediately to the least important?

Question 3

External demands and criticism may attract diverse media attention. Does the following has influence on your prioritization decisions?

Visibility	High salience	This request has received much negative media attention.
	Low salience	This request has not received any media attention.

Question 4

(1/8a) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A member of the European Parliament ...	The general public ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's commitment to the highest ethical standards and moral values. (Moral conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's commitment to the highest ethical standards and moral values. (Moral conduct)

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

(1/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A member of the European Parliament ...	The general public ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's commitment to the highest ethical standards and moral values. (Moral conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's commitment to the highest ethical standards and moral values. (Moral conduct)
Visibility	This request has not received any media attention.	This request has received much negative media attention.

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

Question 5

(2/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A European Commissioner ...	A member of the European Parliament ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's capacity to effectively accomplish its goals and mandated tasks. (Performative conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's capacity to effectively accomplish its goals and mandated tasks. (Performative conduct)

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

(2/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A European Commissioner ...	A member of the European Parliament ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's capacity to effectively accomplish its goals and mandated tasks. (Performative conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's capacity to effectively accomplish its goals and mandated tasks. (Performative conduct)
Visibility	This request has not received any media attention.	This request has received much negative media attention.

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

Question 6

(3/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A European Commissioner ...	The general public ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

(3/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A European Commissioner ...	The general public ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your	... has expressed serious concerns about your

	organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)	organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)
Visibility	This request has not received any media attention.	This request has received much negative media attention.

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

Question 7

(4/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A European Commissioner ...	A scientific expert working at a research institute ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

(4/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A European Commissioner ...	A scientific expert working at a research institute ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)
Visibility	This request has not received any media attention.	This request has received much negative media attention.

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

Question 8

(5/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	The general public ...	The general public ...

Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's commitment to the highest ethical standards and moral values. (Moral conduct)
----------------	---	---

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

(5/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	The general public ...	The general public ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's commitment to the highest ethical standards and moral values. (Moral conduct)
Visibility	This request has not received any media attention.	This request has received much negative media attention.

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

Question 9

(6/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A European Commissioner ...	A European Commissioner ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

(6/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A European Commissioner ...	A European Commissioner ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)

Visibility	This request has received much negative media attention.	This request has not received any media attention.
-------------------	---	---

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

Question 10

(7/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A large corporation ...	A director of a relevant national agency ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

(7/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A large corporation ...	A director of a relevant national agency ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)
Visibility	This request has received much negative media attention.	This request has not received any media attention.

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

Question 11

(8/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A scientific expert working at a research institute ...	A director of a relevant national agency ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

(8/8b) Imagine that your organization faces the following two simultaneous requests:

	Request 1	Request 2
Who	A scientific expert working at a research institute ...	A director of a relevant national agency ...
Content	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's adherence to the highest professional, technical or scientific standards. (Technical conduct)	... has expressed serious concerns about your organization's compliance with formal rules and legal procedures. (Legal-procedural conduct)
Visibility	This request has received much negative media attention.	This request has not received any media attention.

In your opinion, which request should your organization prioritize for a response (e.g. provision of an explanation, justification, clarification)?

- Request 1
- Request 2

Why is that the case?

Appendix 3: Empirical Results – Tables

Table 4: Ranking of sources of external demands in terms of their importance as potential reputational threats.

Interviewee Number	Ranking of sources of external demands
Interviewee 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. Corporations or private actors 4. National agencies 5. Scientific experts 6. General public
Interviewee 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. National agencies 4. Corporations or private actors 5. Scientific experts 6. General public
Interviewee 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corporations or private actors 2. National agencies 3. General public 4. European Commission 5. European Parliament 6. Scientific experts <i>[not mentioned]</i>
Interviewee 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General public 2. European Parliament 3. European Commission 4. National agencies 5. Corporations or private actors 6. Scientific experts
Interviewee 6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. General public 4. Corporations or private actors 5. National agencies 6. Scientific experts <i>[not mentioned]</i>
Interviewee 7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. National agencies 4. Corporations or private actors 5. Scientific experts 6. General Public <i>[not mentioned]</i>
Interviewee 8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Scientific experts 4. National agencies 5. Corporations or private actors 6. General Public <i>[not mentioned]</i>
Interviewee 9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. National agencies 4. Scientific experts 5. General public 6. Corporations or private actors
Interviewee 10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. Scientific experts 4. National agencies 5. General Public 6. Corporations or private actors
Interviewee 11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. National agencies 4. Corporations or private actors 5. Scientific experts 6. General Public
Interviewee 12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. General public <p><i>[They did not mention the others]</i></p>
Interviewee 13	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. National agencies 4. General public 5. Scientific experts 6. Corporations or private actors <i>[not mentioned]</i>
Interviewee 14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. National agencies 4. General public 5. Scientific experts 6. Corporations or private actors <i>[not mentioned]</i>
Interviewee 15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission 2. European Parliament 3. National agencies 4. Corporations or private actors 5. General public 6. Scientific experts
Interviewee 16	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Commission

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. European Parliament 3. National agencies <p><i>[They did not mention the others]</i></p>
--	--

Table 5: Ranking of contents of external demands in terms of their importance as potential reputational threats.

Interviewee number	Ranking of contents of external demands
Interviewee 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moral conduct 2. Legal-procedural conduct 3. Performative conduct 4. Technical conduct
Interviewee 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performative conduct 2. Technical conduct 3. Legal-procedural conduct 4. Moral conduct
Interviewee 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical conduct 2. Legal-procedural conduct 3. Performative conduct 4. Moral conduct
Interviewee 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moral conduct 2. Technical conduct 3. Legal-procedural conduct 4. Performative conduct
Interviewee 6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal-procedural conduct 2. Performative conduct 3. Technical conduct 4. Moral conduct
Interviewee 7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal-procedural conduct 2. Performative conduct 3. Technical conduct 4. Moral conduct
Interviewee 8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical conduct 2. Moral conduct 3. Performative conduct 4. Legal-procedural conduct
Interviewee 9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal-procedural conduct 2. Performative conduct 3. Technical conduct 4. Moral conduct
Interviewee 10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical conduct 2. Moral conduct 3. Legal-procedural conduct 4. Performative conduct

Interviewee 11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical conduct 2. Performative conduct 3. Moral conduct 4. Legal-procedural conduct
Interviewee 12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performative conduct 2. Technical conduct 3. Legal-procedural conduct 4. Moral conduct
Interviewee 13	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moral conduct 2. Legal-procedural conduct 3. Technical conduct 4. Performative conduct
Interviewee 14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical conduct 2. Performative conduct 3. Legal-procedural conduct 4. Moral conduct
Interviewee 15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal-procedural conduct 2. Technical conduct 3. Performative conduct 4. Moral conduct
Interviewee 16	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical conduct 2. Moral conduct 3. Legal-procedural conduct 4. Performative conduct

Table 6: the relevance of negative media attention for bureaucrats' prioritization strategies.

	Yes	No
Question: "Does the presence of negative media attention influence your agency's prioritization strategy?"	Interviewee number: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16. (or 86.7%)	Interviewee number: 12, 15. (or 13.3%)

Table 7: discrete choices in the eight hypothetical scenarios.

	Option 1	Option 2
Scenario 1	European Parliament Moral conduct Interviewee number:	General public Moral conduct Interviewee number: none

	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16.	
(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change: 3, 13, 14, and 15.	Interviewees who changed because of media: 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 16.
<u>Scenario 2</u>	European Commission Performative conduct Interviewee number: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16.	European Parliament Performative conduct Interviewee number: 8.
(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change: 3, 6, 12, and 14.	Interviewees who changed because of media: 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 16. Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 8.
<u>Scenario 3</u>	European Commission Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16.	General public Legal-Procedural conduct Interviewee number: 6.
(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change: 1, 3, 12, 14, and 15.	Interviewees who changed because of media: 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 16. Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 6
<u>Scenario 4</u>	European Commission Technical conduct Interviewee number: 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 16.	Scientific experts Technical conduct Interviewee number: 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, and 15.

(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change: 4, 7, 12, and 13.	Interviewees who changed because of media: 1, 5, 9, 10, and 16. Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, and 15.
Scenario 5	General public Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 15, and 16.	General public Moral conduct Interviewee number: 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, and 14.
(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change: 4 and 6.	Interviewees who changed because of media: 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, and 14. Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 8, 9, 11, 15, and 16.
Scenario 6	European Commission Technical conduct Interviewee number: 5, 10, 11, 12, and 14	European Commission Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 15, and 16.
(Negative media attention added to option 1)	Interviewees who changed because of media: 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, and 16. Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 5, 10, 11, 12, and 14.	Interviewees who did not change: 1 and 15.
Scenario 7	Corporation or private actor Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 1, 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, 15, and 16.	National agency Technical conduct Interviewee number: 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 14.

(Negative media attention added to option 1)	Interviewees who changed because of media: 5, 7, 8, and 12. 4: both, it depends. Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 1, 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, 15, and 16.	Interviewees who did not change: 11 and 14. 4: both, it depends.
Scenario 8	Scientific expert Technical conduct Interviewee number: 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, and 14.	National agency Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, and 16.
(Negative media attention added to option 1)	Interviewees who changed because of media: 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, and 14. Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 7, 9, 10, and 13.	Interviewees who did not change: 4, 12, 15, and 16.

Table 8: discrete choices in the eight hypothetical scenarios expressed in percentages.

	Option 1	Option 2
Scenario 1	European Parliament Moral conduct Chosen by: 100%	General public Moral conduct Chosen by: 0%
(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change: 26.6%	Interviewees who changed because of media: 73.3%
Scenario 2	European Commission Performative conduct Chosen by: 93.3%	European Parliament Performative conduct Chosen by: 6.6%

(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change: 26.6%	Interviewees who changed because of media: 66.6% Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 6.6%
Scenario 3	European Commission Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 93.3%	General public Legal-Procedural conduct Interviewee number: 6.6%
(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change: 33.3%	Interviewees who changed because of media: 60% Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 6.6%
Scenario 4	European Commission Technical conduct Interviewee number: 60%	Scientific experts Technical conduct Interviewee number: 40%
(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change: 26.6%	Interviewees who changed because of media: 33.3% Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 40%
Scenario 5	General public Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 46.6%	General public Moral conduct Interviewee number: 53.3%
(Negative media attention added to option 2)	Interviewees who did not change:	Interviewees who changed because of media:

	13.3%	53.3% Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 33.3%
Scenario 6	European Commission Technical conduct Interviewee number: 33.3%	European Commission Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 66.6%
(Negative media attention added to option 1)	Interviewees who changed because of media: 53.3% Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 33.3%	Interviewees who did not change: 13.3%
Scenario 7	Corporation or private actor Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 53.3%	National agency Technical conduct Interviewee number: 46.6%
(Negative media attention added to option 1)	Interviewees who changed because of media: 33.3% ⁽¹⁾ Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 53.3%	Interviewees who did not change: 20%
Scenario 8	Scientific expert Technical conduct Interviewee number: 46.6%	National agency Legal-procedural conduct Interviewee number: 53.3%

¹ In scenario 7 part two, interviewee number 4 chose both options, so they are in both the percentage of interviewees that changed their answer because of media (33.3%) and the ones that did not change (20%).

<p>(Negative media attention added to option 1)</p>	<p>Interviewees who changed because of media: 46.6%</p> <p>Interviewees who did not change because they had already chosen this option: 26.6%</p>	<p>Interviewees who did not change: 26.6%</p>
---	---	---

Appendix 4: Relevant Quotes about the Sources of External Demands

[Omitted]

Appendix 5: Relevant Quotes about the Content of External Demands

[Omitted]

Appendix 6: Relevant Quotes about Media Attention on External Demands

[Omitted]

