cogitatio

Testing Staff Roles in the Danish Parliament

Stijn van Voorst 🔟

Department of Public Administration, Radboud University, The Netherlands

Correspondence: Stijn van Voorst (stijn.vanvoorst@ru.nl)

Abstract

Investments in parliamentary staff in many countries raise the question: What tasks do they perform in exchange for the public money with which they are paid? So far, academics have mainly described the work of such employees in individual legislatures and have studied them more sophisticatedly in the US and the European Parliament. However, theory-driven empirical comparisons between national parliamentary staff in Europe are mostly missing, especially regarding their partisan side. An exception is the conceptual model developed by Brandsma and Otjes (2024) in a study about all employees of the Dutch lower house. This article applies that tool to another case, the Danish parliament (*Folketing*), with the dual aims of finding patterns by comparing it to the Netherlands and assessing the comprehensiveness of the model. Interviews with almost all political parties and three managers of the non-partisan staff of the *Folketing* suggest that the categorization of Brandsma and Otjes (2024) mostly covers the tasks of their staff, but omits important subroles regarding international diplomacy.

Keywords

Danish parliament; legislatures; parliamentary staff; party staff; political parties

1. Introduction

Parliamentary staffs across the Western world have reported changes in their budgets and their number of employees during the last decade (Christiansen et al., 2023, pp. 5–7). For their non-partisan administrations, increases in such resources are often linked to growing challenges like transparency, digitalization (Christiansen et al., 2021, p. 78), Europeanization (Högenauer, 2023, p. 78), information overload (Jágr, 2022, p. 104), and citizens' requests (Otjes, 2022, p. 392). For partisan staff, a key argument for growth is strengthening the opposition, as it has limited access to information from ministries (Pedersen, 2023, p. 220).

For both types of employees, these developments raise the question of what tasks they fulfil in exchange for these increased investments of public money.

Many academics have written about the roles of such employees in the US Congress (e.g., Hertel-Fernandez et al., 2019; Yin, 2013) and European Parliament (e.g., Dobbels & Neuhold, 2013; Egeberg et al., 2013; Pegan, 2017). However, an international comparative perspective has mostly been limited to some developing democracies (Pelizzo, 2014), the German-speaking world (Laube et al., 2020), and the effects of bicameralism (Griglio & Lupo, 2021) or Europeanization (e.g., Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015). The handbook of Christiansen et al. (2023) compares the non-partisan administrations of parliaments on various dimensions, but pays little attention to employees of their political parties and individual politicians.

Unlike the aforementioned literature, Brandsma and Otjes (2024, pp. 539–542) present a conceptual model that covers politically relevant (sub)roles of all types of parliamentary staff. Thus, it allows for broad comparisons between the legislatures of various countries. The authors call for such research, as their own work focused on the lower house of the Dutch parliament only. The explicitly comparative aspirations of their model warrant an assessment of its comprehensiveness in different parliaments.

Therefore, this article applies the model of Brandsma and Otjes (2024) to the *Folketing* (Danish parliament). This is a suitable case to assess its comprehensiveness for various reasons. First, much data about the staff of the Folketing (n.d.) is available online, which can be used to prepare for and verify results from interviews. Second, since the late 19th century, the Danish parliament developed into a relatively strong institution containing 179 seats (Sieberer, 2011, pp. 746–747), controlled by (coalitions of) ideological parties elected via (partly) proportional representation (Persson, 2018, p. 105). This context is similar to the Netherlands, which allows for a detailed comparison with the results of Brandsma and Otjes (2024). The additional aim of that endeavour is to look for patterns in the functioning of parliamentary staff in Western European countries.

The next part of this text explains the model of roles of parliamentary staff of Brandsma and Otjes (2024) and other relevant literature. Section 3 discusses how this article's author collected information about that topic from the Danish parliament's online phonebook (Folketing, n.d.), interviews with three members of its non-partisan staff, and almost all of its political parties. Section 4 summarizes the results about these various types of employees. Section 5 draws conclusions and discusses how the model of Brandsma and Otjes (2024) could be improved by adding roles regarding parliamentary diplomacy.

2. Conceptual Model

As explained in the introduction, this article aims to study the staff of the *Folketing* to assess if the conceptual model of Brandsma and Otjes (2024, pp. 539–542) can indeed be applied comparatively. The main advantage of their matrix is that it includes tasks of all types of staff that support parliamentarians, including the neutral administration and committee employees, as well as professionals working for individual legislators and their parties (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, pp. 543–545). Also, the model provides a clear overview of their activities via both detailed subroles and more general categories. Furthermore, it only includes tasks that are relevant to political science. Thus, it excludes practical roles, like security and cleaning. It is visualized in Table 1 and further explained below.

Table 1. Parliamentary staff model as developed by Brandsma and Otjes (2024, pp. 539–542), with some changes to the "marketeer" role.

Main role	Subrole	Description
Adviser		
	Strategic adviser	Gives advice on strategies to gain support for policy proposals among citizens and politicians
	Policy adviser	Gives advice on which policy proposals to pursue
	Procedural adviser	Gives advice on which procedures inside of parliament to use
	Legal adviser	Gives advice on how to formulate legislative texts
Ghostwriter		
	Motions	Drafts the text for non-binding motions
	Amendments	Drafts the text for amendments to bills
	Written questions	Drafts the text for written questions
	Bills	Drafts the text for private member bills
	Speeches	Drafts the text for parliamentary speeches
	Op-eds	Drafts the text for contributions to newspapers
	Press releases	Drafts the text for press releases
	Inquiry reports	Drafts the text for parliamentary inquiry reports
Information broker		
	Experts	Obtains information from scientific experts
	Archive	Obtains information from the parliamentary archive
	Interest groups	Obtains information from interest groups
Marketeer		
	Journalists	Manages contacts with journalists
	Online	Produces and/or publishes material via digital media
	Citizens	Manages direct contacts with citizens regardless of constituency
	Constituents	Manages direct contacts specific to constituents
Compromise facilitator		
	Within parties	Negotiates within the political party
	Between parties	Negotiates with staff or legislators from other political parties

Source: Brandsma and Otjes (2024, pp. 539–542).

A first main role of parliamentary staff is *advising politicians* who lack certain knowledge (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, p. 540; Dobbels & Neuhold, 2013, p. 378)—*the advisers*. Four different types of such counsel can be identified.

Firstly, parliamentary staff can provide *strategic advice* (Murphy, 2023, p. 90). This involves counselling about tactics to gain votes during election campaigns (Karlsen & Saglie, 2017, p. 1334; Pegan, 2017, p. 300), as well as about the most effective arguments to convince citizens or other actors inside or outside the legislature (Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 342). Secondly, it can provide *policy advice* (National Collaborating Centre for Health Public Policy, 2017, p. 9; Yin, 2013, p. 2304). This involves counselling about how to address specific issues (Fox & Hammond, 1975, p. 117). Thus, it concerns the content (or "substance") of ideas (Högenauer &

Neuhold, 2015, p. 342; Neuhold & Dobbels, 2015, p. 583; Pegan, 2017, p. 300). Based on interviews in Finland, Aula and Koskimaa (2024, p. 1036) conclude that the expertise of political parties' staff in different policy fields increases their parliamentary group's capacity. Karlsen and Saglie (2017, p. 1346) show that such employees are highly involved in developing policies. Thirdly, parliamentary staff can provide *procedural advice* (Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 340; Pegan, 2017, pp. 300–301). This involves counselling about the correct processes for policy making and other activities, for example, regarding the formal rights of legislators versus the executive (Neuhold & Dobbels, 2015, p. 583). Fourthly, parliamentary staff can provide *legal advice* (Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 1; Egeberg et al., 2013, p. 504; Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 340; Neuhold & Dobbels, 2015, p. 583; Pegan, 2017, pp. 300–301). This task differs from ghost-writing bills (see below) in that it concerns recommending a politician to formulate a law in a specific way rather than drafting it for them, although these roles can overlap.

Parliamentary work also involves a large number of texts. Since legislators often lack the time to produce all of those themselves, a main role for their staff is *(ghost)writing* them by producing drafts (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, pp. 539–540; Egeberg et al., 2013, p. 504)—*the ghostwriters*.

Most texts related to this task are for use within parliaments. These include motions (Blischke, 1981, p. 548; Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 342), amendments (Dobbels & Neuhold, 2013, p. 377; Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 338; Winzen, 2011, p. 37), questions (Blischke, 1981, p. 548; Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 346), bills (Blischke, 1981, p. 547; Dickin, 2016; Fox & Hammond, 1975, p. 118; National Collaborating Centre for Health Public Policy, 2017, p. 10), and speeches (Blischke, 1981, p. 548; Fox & Hammond, 1975, p. 118; Jones, 2006, p. 648). Other types of texts that parliamentary staff members may ghostwrite are aimed at the media. Those include press releases and editorials (Dickin, 2016), as well as articles in general (Fox & Hammond, 1975, p. 118). Staff members may also draft reports (Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 338), but these were excluded from this study when they merely summarized debates in committees. However, formal inquiry reports were included, as they can allow for substantive creativity.

A third main role of parliamentary staff is "*marketing*": promoting the legislators and/or their organization to citizens (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, pp. 540–541)—*the marketeer*. As Svallfors (2017, p. 556) concludes based on research in Sweden, employees in the political sector often sell ideas in public debates and to voters. In the Benelux, some of them are specifically hired as "communication experts" (Moens, 2021, p. 912). The text below describes four categories of such activities. This is one more than the three that Brandsma and Otjes (2024, p. 546) list, as the one which they label "citizens" and describe as "manages social media account" was split into two. The reason for that change is that, according to recent literature (e.g., Fitsilis & Costa, 2023, p. 112), producing and spreading texts and visualizations via social media and other digital channels is a task that requires specialized skills, thus making it a role that differs from more direct contact with voters.

Firstly, parliamentary staff can market politicians through various types of media (Fox & Hammond, 1975, p. 118; Jones, 2006, p. 648) by managing contacts with journalists (Fox & Hammond, 1975, p. 121). For example, it can leak information to such actors and/or answer their questions about press releases and other topics. Secondly, they can market politicians through their own online channels, including social media (Murphy, 2023, p. 96) via sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Dickin, 2016). Due to the trend of digitalization, such communication tools have become essential to reach large parts of society (Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 5; Fitsilis & Costa, 2023, p. 110; Moens, 2023, p. 770). Social media also helps non-partisan

parts of parliamentary administrations, like research services, to promote their work to potentially interested users (Rizzoni, 2023, p. 130). Thirdly, this category of staff members can have the role to directly (i.e., without media involvement) manage contacts with the general public (Blischke, 1981, p. 548). For example, they can answer questions or petitions from citizens across the country and give guided tours across their buildings (Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 10). Fourthly, in countries that hold elections via districts, staff members can manage more intensive contacts with voters from a politician's specific constituency (Fox & Hammond, 1975, p. 118; Jones, 2006, p. 648; Yin, 2013, p. 2303). For example, this can be done by setting up a local office which people can write to or visit to receive a direct answer to their concerns (Blischke, 1981, p. 550; Dickin, 2016). Such work is often essential to get re-elected (Hertel-Fernandez et al., 2019, p. 1).

Parliamentary staffs also gather, forward, and summarize information (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, pp. 541–542; Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 348; Selling & Svallfors, 2019, p. 989; Yin, 2013, p. 2303), which they can collect via their own research (Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 1; Dickin, 2016; National Collaborating Centre for Health Public Policy, 2017, p. 10; Pegan, 2017, pp. 300–301)—*the information broker*. Ways to share results of such work with politicians include short notes, papers, consultation documents, policy statements, in-person briefings, and PowerPoint presentations (Murphy, 2023, p. 92; National Collaborating Centre for Health Public Policy, 2017, p. 29). Parliamentary staff members can collect such information from several sources.

Firstly, they may do so from written or oral contact with scientific expertise (Egeberg et al., 2013, pp. 510–511; Fox & Hammond, 1975, p. 120). Such communication between parliamentary staff and academics provides opportunities to enhance knowledge and creates (in)formal communities worldwide (Murphy, 2023, p. 94; Rizzoni, 2023, p. 132). Secondly, parliamentary staff may collect information from archives (Blischke, 1981, pp. 538–540). Increasingly, it does so via digitally managed channels (Fitsilis & Costa, 2023, p. 108). In this study, "archive" is defined broadly to include all written records, policy files, and associated documents stored by legislatures. Thirdly, parliamentary staff may collect information via contacts with interest groups (Blischke, 1981, p. 548; Egeberg et al., 2013, pp. 510–511; Neuhold & Dobbels, 2015, p. 580; Yin, 2013, p. 2303) and other societal stakeholders (Dickin, 2016). Such organizations often contact legislators' employees for lobbying purposes (Fox & Hammond, 1975, p. 118; Hertel-Fernandez et al., 2019, p. 1; Jones, 2006, p. 648; Winzen, 2011, p. 36).

A final main role that parliamentary staff can fulfil is facilitating compromise (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, p. 542; Dobbels & Neuhold, 2013, p. 382; Egeberg et al., 2013, p. 504; Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 339; Jones, 2006, p. 648; Neuhold & Dobbels, 2015, p. 582)—*the compromise facilitator*. For example, it can conceive and negotiate legislative solutions in cases of gridlock (Yin, 2013, p. 2304). Though staff members sometimes have no access to politicians' meetings, they are usually well-informed about them anyway (Blischke, 1981, p. 546) and can thus also support them behind the scenes. The text below describes two subroles regarding facilitating compromises.

Firstly, staff members can fulfil this task within political parties. For example, they can coordinate between legislators to increase the chances that their proposals are in line with the interests of their organization (Pegan, 2017, p. 301), especially when it is unclear who is responsible for an issue at the edge of two parliamentarians' portfolios. Secondly, staff members can facilitate compromises between parties. For example, they can suggest ways to reach consensus in committees (Winzen, 2011, pp. 36–37) or in the plenary, especially in systems where no single group has the majority (Pegan, 2017, p. 301).

3. Methods

3.1. Written Sources and Interviews

The online phonebook of the Folketing (n.d.) shows how many employees work for each unit of its (non)-partisan staff. It also lists their job titles. Almost all political parties publish similar information on their own websites (e.g., Social Democrats, n.d.).

However, such sources have limitations for this research. Firstly, the job titles that they list might not fully reveal what tasks employees perform. Secondly, such online information can be outdated. Thirdly, it lists individuals who are irrelevant to this study, as in Denmark, staff which only works for a political party's headquarters can also have an official e-mail from the legislature (Folketing, n.d.). Fourthly, this digital information includes non-political and temporary employees, which could often be recognized by job titles like "student," "intern," or "office clerk," but not always. Such staff without (semi)permanent contracts had to be excluded from this research, as it changed so quickly that the researcher could not provide up-to-date information about it (for example, the number of interns listed in the phonebook for a party would often be doubled or halved when checked throughout 2024).

Due to these limitations, the online lists were mainly used to prepare for 15 in-depth interviews. During these conversations, the researcher mostly asked the respondents (whose selection is explained in Section 3.2) which employees in their unit or party fulfilled which roles from the conceptual model. For example, the interviewer could ask: "Do any employees of your party manage its contacts with constituents/voters? If so, what are their job titles?" In the minority of cases where a respondent's answer deviated from information from the aforementioned phonebook or websites, the interviewer asked why, to which the usual answer was that specific staff had been hired or fired since the online information was last updated. Follow-up questions to learn more about specific employees were also common.

After the last interview, the researcher inserted all permanent employees who support the *Folketing's* political work into an Excel file. He coded them as 0 for each task that they do not perform and as 1 for each task that they perform. Table 3 in the next section was compiled based on this Excel file. That document is also published as a Supplementary File to this article.

Potential problems with interviews are that respondents sometimes overstate their importance or suffer from faded memories (Beach & Pedersen, 2013, p. 135). However, this study's focus on current numbers of employees and their factual roles mitigated these risks. Moreover, triangulation was used: the phonebook of the Folketing (n.d.) verified much information provided by the interviews, excluding employees who were recently hired/fired.

3.2. Selection of Respondents and Interview Arrangements

The quality of the 15 interviews was also increased by selecting appropriate respondents (see Table 2). Specifically, 80% of these conversations took place with three (deputy) heads of units in the neutral staff and nine heads of staff of the party groups (often officially called head of secretariat, organization, or office). Since these employees bear final responsibility for dividing tasks between their colleagues, they have the

best overview of how many people fulfil which roles in their part of the *Folketing*. For the neutral staff, the three aforementioned interviews took place with the Communication Unit, Library, and International Secretariat. Their heads could describe the other units in sufficient detail, and when needed, the researcher asked extensive follow-up questions about them via e-mail.

For three parties (representing the remaining 20% of the respondents), the head of their staff in parliament rejected or did not reply to repeated interview requests. In these cases, the conversation instead took place with a political adviser or assistant who had worked for their organization in the *Folketing* for years.

Only three parties represented in the *Folketing* in August 2024 did not participate at all. Two of those, the populist Danish People's Party and Denmark Democrats, informed the author that they had no time for research. That reply was in line with the experience of Brandsma and Otjes (2024, pp. 545–546) with the three groups on the right-wing end of the Dutch political spectrum. Another party, Forward (*Siumut*), did not reply to e-mails, probably because its sole representative defected soon afterwards. Since it is no longer part of the Danish parliament, and it only had four permanent staff members in 2024 (Folketing, n.d.), its non-response probably does not significantly affect the results.

Table 2. Overview of respondents.

Respondent type	Interview type	Number of respondents
(Deputy) Head of staff of a political party in parliament	Seven via Microsoft Teams; two via e-mail with extensive follow-up questions	9
Political adviser/assistant	All via Microsoft Teams	3
Head of unit in neutral staff (Communication Unit, Library, and International Secretariat)	All via Microsoft Teams	3

The interviews took place between April and December 2024, mostly via Microsoft Teams. Two parties were only willing to answer via e-mail exchanges, in which they also answered extensive follow-up questions. The interviews usually lasted an hour. However, some were shorter, particularly for the small staffs of parties with just one parliamentarian.

4. Results

Table 3 shows how many permanent employees of the *Folketing* fulfil each role described in the conceptual model. It is based on the Excel file explained in the previous section.

This research excludes temporary staff, as their numbers change too quickly to be of long-term academic value. Repeated checks of the phonebook of the Folketing (n.d.) during 2024 suggested that the number of students plus interns varied between one and 20 per political party, somewhat in proportion to its number of seats. The 15 interviews revealed that the only role from Table 3 that such temporary employees often fulfil is that of marketeer, as they frequently answer basic questions from citizens and manage (social) media. Thus, these numbers are the main ones that are lowered by this choice.

Section 4.1 discusses the non-partisan (plenary and committee) staff. The findings about these employees are mostly in line with those of Pedersen (2023, pp. 212–218). The political staff (of parties and individual legislators) is discussed afterwards in Section 4.2. Unless stated otherwise, the information is based on the interviews described in the previous section.

Table 3. Number of employees per subrole and staff type in the Danish parliament.

Main role	Subrole	Non-partisan (plenary and committee) staff	Political (party and personal) staff	Total
Adviser				
	Strategic adviser	0 (0%)	75 (100%)	75
	Policy adviser	0 (0%)	100 (100%)	100
	Procedural adviser	49 (40.8%)	71 (59.2%)	120
	Legal adviser	47 (36.4%)	82 (63.6%)	129
Ghostwriter				
	Motions	53 (37.9%)	87 (62.1%)	140
	Amendments	53 (46.1%)	62 (53.9%)	115
	Written questions	53 (37.6%)	88 (62.4%)	141
	Bills	47 (43.1%)	62 (56.9%)	109
	Speeches	16 (15.2%)	89 (84.8%)	105
	Op-eds	0 (0%)	62 (100%)	62
	Press releases	2 (4.4%)	43 (95.6%)	45
	Inquiry reports	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0
Information broker				
	Experts	33 (26.6%)	91 (73.4%)	124
	Archive	13 (12.5%)	91 (87.5%)	104
	Interest groups	23 (20.2%)	91 (79.8%)	114
Marketeer				
	Journalists	2 (4.8%)	40 (95.2%)	42
	Online	10 (16.7%)	50 (83.3%)	60
	Citizens	24 (27.0%)	65 (73.0%)	89
	Constituents	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0
Compromise facilitator				
	Within parties	0 (0%)	61 (100%)	61
	Between parties	0 (0%)	88 (100%)	88
Total		*111*	*194*	*305*

Notes: The table excludes three political parties that did not participate in the interviews (described in Section 3.2) and temporary contracts and jobs that do not support political work; data are based on the Supplementary File (described in Section 3.1); percentages belong to rows.

4.1. Non-Partisan Staff Employed by the Folketing

Gianniti and Di Cesare (2023, p. 43) explain that the Danish parliament's speaker, following approval by its Committee on the Rules of Procedure, appoints a secretary-general to head its staff. They also describe that

this process differs from systems in which the legislature as a whole selects the manager of its employees. The secretary-general of the Danish parliament may not have a political background (Gianniti & Di Cesare, 2023, p. 43). They have two deputies, one of whom is also the speaker's clerk (Gianniti & Di Cesare, 2023, p. 46). The interview with the Communication Unit verifies that these three employees and three advisers working for them mainly offer procedural advice and manage the rest of the non-partisan parliamentary administration. That staff is described in detail below.

Speaker's Unit: According to two respondents from the neutral staff, the Speaker's Unit of the Danish parliament employs not just the aforementioned managers, but also two press advisers. They (ghost)write press releases and manage other contacts with journalists. The Speaker's Unit also contains three protocol advisers and their head, who advise on procedures for foreign visits.

Library: Interviews with the Danish parliament's Communication Unit and Library revealed that the latter employs 15 people who support political work: 12 librarians, two advisers, and a manager. With two exceptions, all of them are information brokers, as they provide data from archives and scientific texts; they sometimes summarize the former, but not the latter. Also, with two exceptions, this staff answers citizens' questions about non-partisan and domestic parliamentary matters. In comparison, the Dutch parliament has more employees (including librarians) to manage its archives, but without the additional roles of their Danish counterparts (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, p. 549).

Legal Service Secretariat: According to the interview with the Communication Unit, the Legal Service Secretariat employs nine people who support political work: eight advisers and their head. They counsel parliamentarians about plenary sessions' procedures and coordinate bill readings during those meetings with ministries, committees, and (when relevant) leaders of citizens' initiatives. These tasks are similar to those of the Bureau Legislation of the Dutch parliament described by Brandsma and Otjes (2024, p. 548). However, while that unit also ghostwrites amendments, in Denmark, that task belongs to the committee staff instead of the Legal Service Secretariat.

Communication Unit: The interview with the Communication Unit reveals that it employs staff who manage the non-partisan social media of the *Folketing*: three graphic designers, one photographer, and three communication advisers. It also includes about five advisers who (part-time) give guided tours in parliament. Furthermore, the Communication Unit employs three "coordinators" who manage the television channel that broadcasts the legislature's meetings. All three of these types of staff are coded as marketeers in Table 3, the latter two for citizens.

Committee Secretariat: Each committee in the Danish parliament is supported by at least a secretary and an assistant (Pedersen, 2023, p. 212). According to two interviews with the neutral staff, these assistants fulfil practical tasks, like booking trips, so they are excluded from the numbers in Table 3. However, the same respondents stated that the 20 committee secretaries and 14 advisers in their unit have several politically relevant roles. First, they advise politicians about procedures and the technical formulation of legislation. Second, they (ghost)write motions, questions, amendments, and bills. However, the latter is only relevant in the rare cases when the Danish parliament uses its right of initiative (Pedersen, 2020, p. 91). Third, the committee secretaries are information brokers, as they invite (scientific) experts and societal actors to hearings and organize excursions to them. Pedersen (2023, p. 216) explains how all this help is especially

useful for parliamentarians who are new and/or opposition members, as they have less experience and information from ministries.

International Secretariat: The interview with the International Secretariat revealed that it employs three committee secretaries and ten advisers. They support the Foreign Affairs Committee and European Affairs Committee of the *Folketing* in all the same ways that their counterparts do for domestic affairs. Additionally, they write speeches for parliamentarians for audiences outside the legislature.

The International Secretariat's high number of advisers per committee, which it supports, results from its role in giving parliamentarians independent information (Sousa, 2008, p. 440), which two respondents from the neutral staff explain to be needed to hold the government accountable for its positions in the Council of Ministers and towards other EU institutions. This large staff is in line with the hypothesis that relatively Eurosceptic countries like Denmark have strong European Affairs Committees (Raunio, 2009, p. 321). Also, these employees are needed to communicate with other committees with substantive policy expertise (Högenauer, 2023, p. 79; Pedersen, 2023, pp. 218–219). Furthermore, the interview with the International Secretariat reveals that it employs a liaison officer in Brussels and six delegation secretaries. They give procedural advice and collect information about the EU and interparliamentary organizations. Delegation secretaries also ghost-write questions, speeches, and (amendments to) resolutions that Danish parliamentarians submit to these international institutions and prepare agendas, plus possible compromises for their meetings. According to the same respondent, the International Secretariat also contains an EU Information Centre, which employs three people who answer citizens' questions about that international organization and three others who provide information about it through various channels, including social media. Table 3 includes them under the third and second marketeer roles, respectively.

Some other tasks of the aforementioned employees do not fully fit into the model of Brandsma and Otjes (2024). The discussion at the end of this article explains that in detail.

Other Non-Partisan Staff: Because of this article's aforementioned focus on staff that support political work, other parts of the non-partisan Danish parliamentary administration are excluded from the numbers in Table 3. These include the *Folketingstidende*, which produces minutes, and units which fulfil other practical tasks like ICT, human resource management, finances, security, building maintenance, and cleaning. Brandsma and Otjes (2024, p. 547) included such staff in their table summarizing the Dutch parliament (though without attaching them to specific roles), which explains why that institution appears relatively large in their work.

4.2. Staff Employed by Parties With Multiple Seats

Political parties are crucial actors in the *Folketing* (Pedersen, 2020, p. 88). The last detailed academic analyses of their resources to hire employees are based on numbers from 2017 (Pedersen, 2020, p. 96, 2023, p. 211). During that year, the Danish state gave each party in the *Folketing* the equivalent of about $63,000 per month, plus about $10,000 per seat. This was 69% more than in 2007, while the budget for non-partisan units only grew by 18% during that decade. After these changes, the parties' collective staff was 274 full-time equivalent (fte) in 2017, which was about 1,5 fte per politician. When adding all other staff, on average, 4 employees supported each parliamentarian (Pedersen, 2020, p. 96). While the budget for non-partisan staff was three times as large as subsidies for parties in 2007, it was only twice as large in 2017

(Pedersen, 2023, p. 211). The text below describes how the partisan employees support political work in exchange for these increased investments.

Political Advisers: According to the nine interviews with parties with multiple seats in the *Folketing*, political advisers (*politisk konsulenter*) fulfil most of the roles listed in Table 3 for their parliamentary group. Firstly, they advise about policy proposals and usually strategies and parliamentary procedures, the latter with much help from non-partisan staff. Secondly, they (ghost)write questions, motions, speeches, and usually amendments. Thirdly, they collect information via various sources, including archives, (events with) scientific experts, and interest groups. Fourthly, they answer citizens' questions, especially when they are too complex for students or interns, and politicians have no time for them. These findings are similar to what Brandsma and Otjes (2024, p. 550) found about the Dutch policy advisers (*beleidsmedewerkers*).

The aforementioned nine respondents also explain that almost all Danish political advisers occasionally facilitate consensus in their party and between parties, mostly by preparing agendas and possible compromises for meetings with these aims, though they might not be present during these conversations, and it is almost always politicians who lead negotiations. However, even in this limited form, these tasks appear more common than in the Netherlands (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, p. 547).

The same nine interviews revealed that most Danish political advisers also consider it their task to write drafts of bills and/or offer substantive advice about laws if parliamentarians want to propose those, but rarely do so in practice, because their government introduces most legislation. This is in line with Pedersen's (2020, p. 91) claim that the number of times that the *Folketing* uses its right of initiative is low and has decreased over time. According to two respondents who worked for the ruling coalition, they leave legislative work to the ministries even more often than opposition parties do.

According to the interviews with the nine parties, their number of political advisers varies between six and 17. Their division of tasks is usually based on policy fields. For example, one political adviser tends to fulfil all aforementioned roles for education-related topics and another for all matters concerning transport. One of them is usually called the head adviser or head of politics, and also manages the team.

The respondents from the Red-Green Alliance, The Alternative, and the Liberal Alliance revealed that in their parliamentary groups, a smaller number of advisers counsel about strategy. For the Liberal Alliance, that task is performed by a specialized "values" unit that also handles speechwriting. The Conservative People's Party's leader has their own special adviser for strategies and interparty negotiations and their own speechwriter, while their colleagues mostly draft these texts themselves. Furthermore, some parties have a political adviser in Brussels; the Social Democrats also employ a part-time one for the Nordic Council.

Press Advisers and Heads of Press: According to the nine interviews with parties with multiple seats in the *Folketing*, they employ between one and seven press advisers (*pressekonsulenter*), who are usually led by a head of press (*pressechef*). This staff handles contacts with journalists and drafts press releases and op-eds, with input from colleagues when needed. In one party, an adviser also gives media training to politicians. Some small press units have more support from students and interns.

Brandsma and Otjes (2024, pp. 550–551) found that in the Dutch parliament, the employees who fulfil the press-related roles are usually called spokespersons (*woordvoerders*) and also perform other activities, like

producing online material and offering strategic advice. In the *Folketing*, these tasks mostly belong to the other types of staff described above and below. Thus, the Danish parliament seems to have a higher degree of specialization in the support of its political parties.

Digital Marketeers: According to the nine interviews with parties with multiple seats in the *Folketing*, the staff that promotes their parliamentarians' work via social/digital media (sometimes supported by printed material) varies between two and eight people. Typically, it is about evenly split between employees who produce and/or publish texts and those who support them visually via videos, graphs, pictures, and the like. These groups tend to have a shared manager. Unlike the political and press advisers, their official job titles vary greatly. These staff members often belong to the (sub)unit of their party in parliament that also contains its press advisers. However, only The Alternative party reports that all those employees handle both traditional media and digital marketing. The others mostly separate these roles.

Party Secretaries, Heads of Secretariat, and Campaign Staff: The phonebook of the Folketing (n.d.) lists a party secretary and campaign staff for most political parties. They mainly support these organizations outside of parliament, so Table 3 only includes them when a respondent reported that they also advise politicians in the legislature. Specifically, the party secretaries of the Moderates, Liberals, and Conservative People's Party give such counsel about general strategies and some core policies. Meanwhile, the whole campaign unit of the Social Democrats and heads of campaign and communication of The Alternative party advise about tactics to convince citizens. Similarly, the head of secretariat that most parties hire is solely included in Table 3 for the Liberal Alliance, as only that organization reported that this employee gives strategic counsel. For other parties, that person mainly seems to manage staff that does not directly support political work.

Personal Assistants: Except for some party leaders, almost all members of the *Folketing* share a personal assistant with colleagues, which limits these employees' capacity to provide research and advice (Högenauer, 2023, p. 83). The interviews with the nine parties with multiple seats verify that such staff mostly handle calendar management and other practical work, which is apolitical in nature and thus excluded from the numbers in Table 3. Personal assistants can provide more substantive support when a politician asks them to (like dealing with constituents, see Section 4.4), but this was impossible to map without the ability to interview them all.

The interviews revealed only two parties that structurally deviate from the pattern described above. Firstly, the Moderates have their seven personal assistants frequently write drafts of speeches and op-eds, provided that their politicians want them. This is one of the reasons why that party functioned with only three political advisers when this article was written. Secondly, the Conservative People's Party has a political assistant who actively collects information from various sources for its political leader.

4.3. Staff Employed by Parties With One Seat

The four parties that differ most from the analyzed patterns are those representing the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Article 28 of the Danish constitution gives both of these autonomous territories exactly two seats in the *Folketing* (Gad, 2020, p. 30). Since their citizens tend to elect different parties, four of those deliver a single parliamentarian.

Each of these four parties with one seat has a staff of four to six people. Those include about two to three permanent members: a head of secretariat, an adviser, and sometimes a translator. They are supported by about two to three students or interns (Folketing, n.d.).

Some roles of staff of larger parties are irrelevant for these four smallest ones. Firstly, although representatives of Greenland and the Faroe Islands have the same formal rights as their colleagues, their territories are sovereign on all topics besides the military, the police, the constitution, the supreme court, security, citizenship, and currency (Gad, 2020, pp. 30–31). The interviews with these parties show that they therefore focus only on that small subset of issues, which involve relatively stable legal frameworks. Thus, advising about or drafting (amendments to) bills is rarely or never required of their staff. Secondly, since they support just one politician, these employees are never compromise facilitators within their party.

The interviews with the small parties also revealed that their heads of secretariat need relatively little time for human resource management, so they can fulfil many substantive roles as well. Furthermore, these respondents highlight that in their small teams, tasks are divided relatively fluidly. Thus, their politician and each of their staff members can be involved in most tasks listed in Table 3, as long as they are relevant to their parties.

4.4. Tasks Not Applicable to Any Danish Parliamentary Staff

Table 3 shows that no Danish parliamentary staff drafts formal inquiry reports. The reason for that is that their institution has never formed committees for that purpose, even though it has the right to do so since 1953, according to Article 51 of its country's constitution. Pavy (2020, p. 10) explains that since 1999, such inquiries are instead mostly led by judges, with substantive support from their own staff. However, the author also describes that the *Folketing* can initiate such processes via resolutions and decide what consequences their findings have for ministers. Almost all of the 15 respondents explained that the neutral staff (Legal Service Secretariat) can facilitate these procedures in a practical sense, but does not ghost-write the reports. This situation differs from the Netherlands, where the parliament heads formal inquiries itself and thus involves some of its staff in producing associated files (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, p. 547).

Table 3 also shows that no Danish parliamentary staff member has the role of marketeer towards constituents. That result is identical to the Netherlands (Brandsma & Otjes, 2024, p. 551), but unlike that country, Denmark has electoral districts. However, their number is quite low (10), and compensatory seats ensure proportional results (Elklit, 2020, p. 58). Thus, in the words of an interviewed political adviser, "the focus is more on parties than on individual politicians, and parliamentarians are generally not tied to a single constituency." He explained that some politicians ask their assistants to help them build a strong local profile, but that, in general, citizens are treated the same in their contact with representatives, regardless of their district. No other respondent mentioned constituency work as a role.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This article applied the model of the roles of parliamentary staff of Brandsma and Otjes (2024) to the Danish *Folketing*. By doing so, it both assessed the comprehensiveness of that categorization and provided a detailed comparison between the tasks of employees of two Western European legislatures: the Danish and Dutch ones. Unlike much previous research, it paid equal attention to non-partisan and political staff.

The detailed comparison between the countries suggests that the staff of political parties in parliaments primarily divides its tasks by policy field. For example, one Danish political adviser or Dutch policy adviser typically fulfils the majority of roles from the conceptual model for all matters concerning education, while another does so for all issues regarding transport, etc. However, in both countries, this division of tasks does not apply to the minority of roles concerning traditional media (ghost-writing press releases, ghost-writing op-eds, and marketing to journalists) or digital marketing. For Dutch parties, spokespersons fulfil most of those tasks, whereas Danish parties usually delegate them to various kinds of specialized employees. Unlike the political staff, the non-partisan administrations of both parliaments are divided into units where each fulfils one or a few of the roles from the conceptual model (a "functional" task division).

Furthermore, the results support the expectation of Brandsma and Otjes (2024, p. 539) that not every role is (equally) relevant to each parliament. For example, staff members rarely market a specific parliamentarian in their constituency in Denmark and never in the Netherlands, due to their proportional electoral systems. Similarly, although the Danish legislature is one of the strongest in Europe regarding activities like committee oversight (Pedersen, 2023, p. 211; Sieberer, 2011, pp. 746–747), the interviews showed that the rights of initiative and inquiry, which article 41 and 51 of the constitution give, are respectively rarely and never used by its members, which limits the role of its staff in ghost-writing bills and investigation reports. Thus, a political system can reduce the number of tasks that parliamentary employees fulfil.

Regarding the comprehensiveness of the model of Brandsma and Otjes (2024), this article showed that it covers most roles of Danish parliamentary staff. The interviews occasionally revealed a task of a single staff member that did not fit into it, like giving politicians media training (which is usually done by external actors), but these were too incidental to add. The only tasks with broader relevance that were missing related to parliamentary diplomacy: contact with foreign actors, especially other legislatures (Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 10; Murphy, 2023, p. 90).

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 described many employees of the *Folketing* who assist such international interactions: the protocol advisers and their head in the Speaker's Unit, the committee secretaries, advisers, delegation secretaries, and EU liaison officer in the International Secretariat, political advisers located in Brussels for some parties and a part-time adviser for the Nordic Council of the Social Democrats. That overview might be incomplete, as this task was not systematically asked for due to its absence from the conceptual model. Pedersen (2023, p. 218) mentions that these employees support networks in the EU, UN, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe, NATO, Nordic Council, Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, and (passively) Union for the Mediterranean. Murphy (2023, p. 97) estimates that between 40 and 73 of such interparliamentary institutions exist worldwide, all supported by national staff. Thus, employees from other legislatures also fulfil diplomatic roles (Murphy, 2023, pp. 98–99).

Parts of these international activities fit into the model of Brandsma and Otjes (2024, p. 546). For example, Murphy (2023, p. 92) states that parliamentary staffers can be advisers to diplomatic missions. The interviews revealed that in the *Folketing*, indeed, delegation secretaries and others counsel politicians about norms of international organizations. Thus, such employees are what Brandsma and Otjes (2024, p. 546) call procedural advisers. Similarly, the delegation secretaries' and advisers' roles in drafting speeches to and questions for international organizations fit directly into the conceptual model, whereas (amendments to) international resolutions are comparable to motions at the national level.

However, parliamentary diplomacy also includes collecting information about, for example, best practices and opportunities abroad (Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 10). Staff members regularly present such facts to legislators during briefings and conferences that they organize before interparliamentary meetings (Murphy, 2023, p. 92; Pedersen, 2023, p. 218). Committee secretaries also filter communication sent by the EU for relevant issues (Högenauer, 2023, p. 85; Pedersen, 2023, pp. 217–218). The information involved in all these activities mostly comes from international organizations (Högenauer & Neuhold, 2015, p. 336), parliamentarians from other countries and their staff (Murphy, 2023, pp. 93–94). Thus, it does not fit into the categories of scientific experts, archive, and interest groups from Brandsma and Otjes (2024, p. 546). Therefore, it seems useful to add a subrole called "diplomatic" under the main one, information broker.

Parliamentary diplomacy also involves (formal) meetings with foreign actors (Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 5). For example, liaison officers from most member states congregate every week in Brussels with each other and EU officials to discuss topics like subsidiarity concerns (Murphy, 2023, p. 93). During such contacts, the Danish representative promotes his country's "reasoned opinions" (Högenauer, 2023, p. 84). Staff members also support visits of and meetings between parliamentarians (Murphy, 2023, p. 92), for example (according to the interviews) by preparing agendas for and attending meetings. These activities include what Brandsma and Otjes (2024, p. 542) call compromise facilitating. However, since the actors involved (partly) represent a country or international organization rather than themselves or their party during such meetings, these activities do not fit into the subroles "within party" and "between parties." Thus, adding a new category called "international" under the heading of compromise facilitator seems useful.

Table 4 contains the model when updated with both diplomatic subroles. Future research could assess if this expanded version contains all politically relevant tasks, regarding the international dimension and otherwise. It seems especially interesting to study how well it fits in countries with systems that differ greatly from Denmark and the Netherlands. For example, presidential democracies with single-member districts, like the United States, give a much greater role to assistants hired by individual parliamentarians and a smaller one to non-partisan staff (Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 6). It would be interesting to see if such differences cause changes in the proportion of employees who fulfil specific tasks. For example, the attention that constituents require could leave less room for other activities. The model of Brandsma and Otjes (2024), as updated in this article, could contribute to interesting research about such comparative hypotheses.

Table 4. The expanded model of Brandsma and Otjes (2024), based on the results of this article.

Main role	Subrole	Description
Adviser		
	Strategic adviser	Gives advice on strategies to gain support for policy proposals among citizens and politicians
	Policy adviser	Gives advice on which policy proposals to pursue
	Procedural adviser	Gives advice on which procedures inside of parliament to use
	Legal adviser	Gives advice on how to formulate legislative texts
Ghostwriter		
	Motions	Drafts the text for non-binding motions
	Amendments	Drafts the text for amendments to bills
	Written questions	Drafts the text for written questions
	Bills	Drafts the text for private member bills
	Speeches	Drafts the text for parliamentary speeches
	Op-eds	Drafts the text for contributions to newspapers
	Press releases	Drafts the text for press releases
	Inquiry reports	Drafts the text for parliamentary inquiry reports
Information broker		
	Experts	Obtains information from scientific experts
	Archive	Obtains information from the parliamentary archive
	Interest groups	Obtains information from interest groups
	Diplomacy	Obtains information from representatives of other countries or international organizations
Marketeer		
	Journalists	Manages contacts with journalists
	Online	Produces and/or publishes material via digital media
	Citizens	Manages direct contacts with citizens regardless of constituency
	Constituents	Manages direct contacts specific to constituents
Compromise facilitator		
	Within parties	Negotiates within the political party
	Between parties	Negotiates with staff or legislators from other political parties
	International	Negotiates with representatives of other countries or international organizations

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

References

Aula, V., & Koskimaa, V. (2024). The imperative of expertise: Why and how the professionalisation of policymaking transforms political parties? *Party Politics*, *30*(6), 1028–1039. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688231190048

Beach, D., & Pedersen, R. B. (2013). *Process-tracing methods: foundations and guidelines*. Michigan University Press.

Blischke, W. (1981). Political staffs in the German Bundestag. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *6*(4), 533–558.

Brandsma, G. J., & Otjes, S. (2024). Gauging the roles of parliamentary staff. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *77*(3), 537–557. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsae001

Christiansen, T., Griglio, E., & Lupo, N. (2021). Making representative democracy work: The role of parliamentary administrations in the European Union. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, *27*(4), 477–493.

Christiansen, T., Griglio, E., & Lupo, N. (2023). Introduction: A global perspective on the role of parliamentary administrations. In T. Christiansen, E. Griglio & N. Lupo (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of parliamentary administrations* (pp. 1–16). Routledge.

Dickin, D. (2016). Organizing the halls of power: Federal political staffers and members of parliament's offices. *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, *39*(2), 9–16.

Dobbels, M., & Neuhold, C. (2013). The roles bureaucrats play: The input of European Parliament (EP) administrators into the ordinary legislative procedure: A case study approach. *Journal of European Integration*, *35*(4), 375–390.

Egeberg, M., Gornitzka, A., Trondal, J., & Johannessen, M. (2013). Parliament staff unpacking the behaviour of officials in the European Parliament. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *20*(4), 495–514.

Elklit, J. (2020). The electoral system: Fair and well-functioning. In P. M. Christiansen, J. Elklit, & P. Nedergaard (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of Danish politics* (pp. 56–75). Oxford University Press.

Fitsilis, F., & Costa, O. (2023). Parliamentary administration facing the digital challenge. In T. Christiansen, E. Griglio, & N. Lupo (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of parliamentary administrations* (pp. 105–120). Routledge.

Folketing. (n.d.). *Phonebook*. https://www.ft.dk/kontakt/telefonbog?sortColumn=firstName&sortOrder=desc&totalNumberOfRecords=1051&pageSize=200

Fox, H., & Hammond, S. (1975). The growth of congressional staffs. *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, *32*(1), 112–124.

Gad, U. P. (2020). Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Denmark: Unity or community? In P. M. Christiansen, J. Elklit, & P. Nedergaard (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of Danish politics* (pp. 28–45). Oxford University Press.

Gianniti, L., & Di Cesare, R. (2023). The internal administrative structure and the relationship with the speaker. In T. Christiansen, E. Griglio, & N. Lupo (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of parliamentary administrations* (pp. 38–51). Routledge.

Griglio, E., & Lupo, N. (2021). Parliamentary administrations in the bicameral systems of Europe: Joint or divided? *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *27*(4), 513–534. https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2021.1953268

Hertel-Fernandez, A., Mildenberger, M., & Stokes, L. C. (2019). Legislative staff and representation in Congress. *American Political Science Review*, *113*(1), 1–18.

Högenauer, A.-L. (2023). The Europeanization of parliamentary administrations. In T. Christiansen, E. Griglio, & N. Lupo (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of parliamentary administrations* (pp. 75–87). Routledge.

Högenauer, A.-L., & Neuhold, C. (2015). National parliaments after Lisbon: Administrations on the rise? *West European Politics*, *38*(2), 335–354.

Jágr, D. (2022). Parliamentary research services as expert resource of lawmakers: The Czech way. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, *28*(1), 93–121.

Jones, K. (2006). One step at a time: Australian parliamentarians, professionalism and the need for staff. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *59*(4), 638–653.

Karlsen, R., & Saglie, J. (2017). Party bureaucrats, independent professionals, or politicians? A study of party employees. *West European Politics*, *40*(6), 1331–1351. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2017.1290403

Laube, S., Schank, J., & Scheffer, T. (2020). Constitutive invisibility: Exploring the work of staff advisers in political position-making. *Social Studies of Science*, *50*(2), 292–316.

Moens, P. (2021). Professional activists? Party activism among political staffers in parliamentary democracies. *Party Politics*, *28*(5), 903–915. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211027317

Moens, P. (2023). Knowledge is power: The staffing advantage of parliamentary and ministerial offices. *Government and Opposition*, *58*(4), 765–788. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2022.2

Murphy, J. (2023). Parliamentary diplomacy. In T. Christiansen, E. Griglio, & N. Lupo (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of parliamentary administrations* (pp. 88–104). Routledge.

National Collaborating Centre for Health Public Policy. (2017). *The advisers of policy makers: Who are they, how do they handle scientific knowledge and what can we learn about how to share such knowledge with them?* https://www.ncchpp.ca/docs/2017_PC-KS_ConseillersAdvisors_EN.pdf

Neuhold, C., & Dobbels, M. (2015). Paper keepers or policy shapers? The conditions under which EP officials impact on the EU policy process. *Comparative European Politics*, *13*(5), 577–595.

Otjes, S. (2022). What explains the size of parliamentary staff? *West European Politics*, *46*(2), 374–400.

Pavy, E. (2020). *Committees of inquiry in national parliaments*. European Parliament. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2020)649524

Pedersen, H. H. (2020). The parliament (Folketinget): Powerful, professional, and trusted? In P. M. Christiansen, J. Elklit, & P. Nedergaard (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of Danish politics* (pp. 88–106). Oxford University Press.

Pedersen, H. H. (2023). Denmark's parliamentary administration. In T. Christiansen, E. Griglio & N. Lupo (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of parliamentary administrations* (pp. 211–221). Routledge.

Pegan, A. (2017). The role of personal parliamentary assistants in the European Parliament. *West European Politics*, *40*(2), 295–315.

Pelizzo, R. (2014). An international comparative study of the sources of parliamentary information and support for legislators. *Journal of the South African Legislative Sector*, *1*(1), 97–108.

Persson, T. (2018). The parliaments of the Scandinavian countries. In P. Nedergaard & A. Wivel (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of Scandinavian politics* (pp. 103–113). Routledge.

Raunio, T. (2009). National parliaments and European integration: What we know and agenda for future research. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *15*(4), 317—334.

Rizzoni, G. (2023). Parliamentary administrations and the provision of scientific expertise. In T. Christiansen, E. Griglio, & N. Lupo (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of parliamentary administrations* (pp. 121–134). Routledge.

Selling, N., & Svallfors, S. (2019). The lure of power: Career paths and considerations among policy professionals in Sweden. *Politics & Policy*, *47*(5), 984–1012. https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12325

Sieberer, U. (2011). The institutional power of Western European parliaments: A multidimensional analysis. *West European Politics*, *34*(4), 731–754.

Social Democrats. (n.d.). *Employees.* https://www.socialdemokratiet.dk/om-os/organisation/medarbejdere/aia

Sousa, M. M. (2008). Learning in Denmark? The case of Danish parliamentary control over European Union policy. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *31*(4), 428–447.

Svallfors, S. (2017). "Most MPs are not all that sharp." Political employees and representative democracy. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *40*(7), 548–558. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2016.1157693

Winzen, T. (2011). Technical or political? An exploration of the work of officials in the committees of the European Parliament. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, *17*(1), 27–44.

Yin, G. (2013). Legislative gridlock and nonpartisan staff. *Notre Dame Law Review*, *88*, 2287–2321.

About the Author

Stijn van Voorst is an assistant professor in public administration at Radboud University. He studies evaluations of EU policies and parliamentary staff.