

# Staff Reallocations and Employee Attitudes towards Organizational Aims: Evidence using Longitudinal Data from the European Commission\*

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## Abstract

Organizational reforms often involve substantial staff reallocations, creating both winners and losers within the same organization. We argue that allocating less (more) staff to a department signals a decrease (increase) in organizational support towards that department and its employees. We hypothesize that staff members respond to this signal by adjusting their support for key organizational aims and their plans to stay in the organization. We test these propositions using a two-wave survey conducted within the European Commission. Consistent with theoretical arguments, we find that staff (re)allocations trigger distinct reactions among winners and losers as well as across staff types.

*Keywords:* Social exchange, Turnover intention, Job demands-resources, European Commission.

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## Introduction

Public sector reform often involves the reorganization of staff or other resources across distinct departments and/or units. The rationalization of staff and resources was, for example, at the heart of the efficiency-inspired New Public Management movement of the 1980s (Mascarenhas 1993; Alonso et al. 2015; Pérez-López et al. 2015), and became commonplace again in the aftermath of the financial crises in the early 2000s (Raudla et al. 2015; Cepiku et al. 2016). Scholars at the intersection of public management and public administration have therefore long been interested in the drivers, implications and (un)intended effects of staff reorganizations – including, but not limited to, cutback management (e.g., Levine 1978, 1979; Esteve et al. 2017; Lee and Lee 2020; van der Voet 2021; Hansen et al. 2022). This article contributes to this literature by focusing on reforms that create winners and losers *within the same organization*. They are substantively different from reforms where everyone loses – e.g., broad-based cutbacks, outsourcing or contracting out – and thus require independent scrutiny into their implications.

Organizational reforms involving significant staff reallocations raise important questions about potential asymmetries in the reactions of winners and losers. Answering these questions matters not only because winning or losing tends to focus individuals' attention on different aspects of the situation at hand (Kassam et al. 2011; Kuehnhanss et al. 2017; George et al. 2020), but also because the balance of their distinct responses determines the overall reform impact at the organizational level (in terms of organizational performance, effectiveness or efficiency). Furthermore, while some studies investigate staff attitudes *toward* reforms (Gains and John 2010; Bauer 2012; Jacobsen 2015), the impact of reforms *on* staff attitudes remains poorly understood. This article aims to bridge these two research gaps. We ask: To what extent does the reallocation of staff within a public organization affect winners' and losers' support for key organizational aims, and their plans to stay in the organization?

From a theoretical perspective, we maintain that reallocations of staff and resources between departments may be interpreted by employees as a signal about organizational support for these departments and their staff. In contrast to a setting where everyone loses (such as broad-based cutbacks), staff and resource reallocations provide a signal of prioritization (Van der Voet and Van de Walle 2018). Building on insights from social exchange theory (Blau 1964), we hypothesize that employees respond to this signal – consciously or subconsciously – by adjusting their expressed support for key organizational aims as well as their intention to leave

the organization.<sup>1</sup> We thereby expect *positive* effects among reform *winners* (reflecting a reinforced dedication to the organization and its goals), but *negative* effects among reform *losers* (reflecting a degree of disillusion with the organization). As losses generally outweigh equivalent gains in employee perceptions (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Herzberg 2008; McGraw et al. 2010; Battaglio et al. 2019), we furthermore expect that any observed effects among reform *losers* are stronger than those among reform *winners*.

Our empirical analysis tests these propositions by combining a two-wave survey in the European Commission (2014/2018) with administrative budget data on the implementation of the 2015 reform of the Commission administration. A key feature of our multisource, longitudinal dataset is that it allows comparison of the *same* staff members before and after this reform. This enables analysing *within-employee* changes over time while accounting for (un)observed time-invariant confounding factors at the individual level. Our first dependent variable is operationalized in light of the Commission's well-established supranational identity (Hooghe 2005; Ellinas and Suleiman 2012), and measures staff members' support for supranational decision-making in the European Union (as preferred by the Commission). We find that reallocating staff across the Commission's administrative departments is associated with a statistically significant drop in support for the organization's supranational goals among losers, while winners display no significant increase in their position towards these goals. Our second dependent variable captures individuals' self-reported intention to leave the organization (Kiefer et al. 2015; Lee et al. 2021). Here, our results show that staff reallocations drive down intentions to leave among winners (particularly for managerial staff), but do not significantly affect exit intentions among losers. Overall, therefore, our analysis uncovers an important gain-loss asymmetry, which we argue has significant implications for the implementation of organizational reforms that involve substantial staff reallocations.

## **Review of previous literature**

Only a handful of studies have thus far addressed how public sector employees respond to the reorganization of staff and resources. This body of work focuses primarily on self-reported staff *perceptions* of cutbacks and downsizing interventions. Esteve et al. (2017), for instance,

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<sup>1</sup> Conceptually, we think of individuals' expressed support for key organizational aims as a reflection of affective organizational commitment, since such affective commitment is based on some degree of emotional attachment to the organization, its employees as well as its goals and values (Meyer and Allen 1997; Suzuki and Hur 2020). As such, it is distinct from normative commitment (which is based on feelings of obligation towards the organization) and continuance commitment (which is linked to a perception of prohibitively high costs of leaving the organization) (Meyer and Allen 1997; Suzuki and Hur 2020).

exploit a survey fielded in 2010 in 34 European countries, and find that perceived wage cuts and work demands display a negative relation to job satisfaction and work motivation. They also report that these negative effects can be mitigated by fostering value alignment between employees and their organization. In similar vein, Van der Voet and Vermeeren (2017) build on a survey fielded in 2013 in the Netherlands to show that self-reported experience with cutbacks is negatively related to self-reported measures of organizational commitment. This negative effect is mitigated when change management practices are perceived to be informed by communication, participation and attention to employees (thus qualifying the perceived ‘loss’). In related work, van der Voet (2021) employs an experimental research design to demonstrate that self-reported experience with cutbacks strengthens ‘resistance to organizational change’, but that this negative effect weakens when cutbacks are signalled to be fairly distributed across departments and employees within the organization.

Interestingly, some studies suggest that *announcing* cutbacks may already trigger employee responses. Using a quasi-experimental design, Conway et al. (2014) and Kiefer et al. (2015) show that announced cutbacks predict perceptions of psychological contract breach, which, in turn, undermine employees’ well-being, job satisfaction and engagement. These negative effects are moderated by perceptions of job insecurity and public sector commitment (Conway et al. 2014). In sharp contrast to the effect of perceived cutbacks, innovation-related changes are found to *boost* employee well-being, job satisfaction and engagement (Kiefer et al. 2015). The authors interpret this as suggestive evidence that some changes may be perceived as ‘gains’ by the affected employees, and therefore trigger positive reactions. Our analysis directly engages with this interpretation by comparing *actual* gains and losses (more details below).

Finally, Van der Voet and Van de Walle (2018) focus on top-level managers in the public sector. Using survey data from 2012 covering 12 European countries, they show that perceived cutbacks are associated with reduced job satisfaction among top-level managers – particularly when they perceive cutbacks to undermine their managerial autonomy. This finding suggests that leaders and subordinates may respond differently to staff and resource reorganizations, which we explore in more detail below.

## **Theoretical framework**

Social exchange theory conceptualizes the relationship between individuals and organizations as a psychological contract involving mutual obligations based on the notion of reciprocity (Blau 1964; Pandey 2010). This entails that individuals ‘respond positively to favourable

treatment received by others’ (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005, 774). According to Blau (1964, 5), any social exchange relationship between individuals and organizations arises due to such ‘expectations and value orientations in collectives’, and plays an important role for a range of employee attitudes and behaviours (Suzuki and Hur 2020).

Research in organizational and social psychology builds on these ideas to argue that employees’ support and (affective) commitment to their organization, its goals and objectives, reflect the outcome of such social exchange relationships. Eisenberger et al. (1986, 500) maintain that people want to feel supported by their organization, and develop ‘global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution’. Employees are thereby expected to reciprocate the support they perceive from their organization through their affective commitment to the organization and their efforts towards the achievement of its goals (Eisenberger et al. 1986; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005; Suzuki and Hur 2020). Empirical studies by and large confirm this reciprocal relationship. Employees perceiving high levels of support view their work as more important, expend more effort to reach organizational goals, are less likely to exit, and display stronger ‘internalization of the organization’s values and norms’ (Eisenberger et al. 1990, 57; for a review, see Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002).

A critical issue then becomes what determines employees’ perception of organizational support. In principle, there are several ways an organization can convey to employees that their role and contributions are valued – including, for example, job and working conditions, and leadership practices (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005; Pandey 2010). Building on insights from job demands-resources theory (Demerouti et al. 2001; Bakker and Demerouti 2017) and Warr’s (1987) ‘vitamin model’ of employee well-being, we maintain that staffing decisions constitute one important factor in this respect.<sup>2</sup> It is not only that fewer (more) staff and resources shrink (expand) work teams. Since job resources are ‘functional in achieving work goals’ (Demerouti et al. 2001, 501), staffing decisions also affect employees’ (perceived) role and contribution towards achieving organizational goals. Leadership decisions about the (re)allocation of staff across different units and tasks thus become key signals to both employees and external stakeholders about the importance the organization (and its leadership) gives to specific parts

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<sup>2</sup> Job demands-resources theory was originally developed to explain burnout, but has been extended to assess whether, when and how job demands and resources impact on various staff attitudes and behaviours (for a review, see Bakker and Demerouti 2017). Although this theory predominantly focuses on job demands and resources at the individual level, it can be extended to job demands and resources at the organizational level since these naturally have individual-level implications. Warr’s (1987) ‘vitamin model’ of employee well-being predicts that the provision (absence) of ‘vitamins’ – one of which relates to money and resources – impacts positively (negatively) upon staff well-being, engagement and productivity.

of the organization (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005; Pandey 2010). Furthermore, (re)allocation of staff across the organization may be a particularly strong signal because it is decided and implemented by the organization's leadership. This is important in social exchange settings since 'resources received from others are more highly valued if they are based on discretionary choice' (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002, 698; Eisenberger et al. 1990).

Following this line of argument, we contend that a decrease in staff resources works to undermine employee perceptions of organizational support, while the reverse occurs when staff resources increase. Employees then respond to staffing changes by adjusting their support for the organization's main goals as well as their intention to stay in the organization (since employees who believe that they are supported by their organization are less likely to leave; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). This leads to our first hypotheses:

*H1a: Exposure to positive (negative) shifts in staffing resources causes employees' self-reported support for organizational aims to increase (decline).*

*H1b: Exposure to positive (negative) shifts in staffing resources causes employees' self-reported intention to leave the organization to decline (increase).*

Even so, we maintain that the signal about up- or downward prioritization sent through staff reallocations can have a heterogeneous impact on distinct staff categories. Our line of argument builds on an organization theory approach to public administration, which maintains that features of the organizational environment – such as positions and tasks of individuals within the governmental apparatus – affect civil servants' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions (March and Olsen 1984; Egeberg 2004; Trondal et al. 2018). In our setting, a key distinction thereby exists between employee groups more or less directly involved in developing and implementing policy decisions. Individuals playing a more supportive role in the organization (such as assistant-level staff) will not see their tasks and position change when staff and resources are reallocated across policy areas. In contrast, a much more considerable impact will exist for individuals whose position is characterized by their contribution to the organization's policy aims (such as managers and policy administrators). As such, the latter group may take a resources-based signal about organizational priorities much more to heart, and we would expect stronger effects in line with H1a/b among managers and administrative staff compared to assistant-level staff.

This line of argument is further reinforced by the fact that managerial staff members may perceive shifts in the balance of influence and prestige more keenly than non-managerial

staff members. This builds on Van der Voet and Van de Walle's (2018) finding that top-level managers are more responsive to financial reforms that impact upon their managerial autonomy. Hence, positive and negative signals in terms of staff and resources may be particularly influential among managers. This discussion leads to our second hypothesis:

*H2: Exposure to positive and negative shifts in staffing resources has a stronger impact upon employees more directly involved in developing and implementing policy decisions (i.e. managers and policy-administrators) compared to assistant-level employees.*

It is widely accepted, however, that gains and losses are rarely treated equally (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; McGraw et al. 2010, and references therein). Within public administration scholarship, voters, politicians and civil servants have been found to be more responsive to negative rather than positive performance information (James and John 2006; George et al. 2020; Carvalho et al. 2023). Similarly, Mas (2006) shows that US police officers' workplace behaviour suffers more when they fail to receive a requested pay increase (i.e. a perceived 'loss') than it improves when they do receive it (i.e. a perceived 'gain'). Such 'loss aversion' effects are particularly prevalent in situations that actively encourage individuals to make gain-loss comparisons (McGraw et al. 2010; Kuehnhanss et al. 2017). This condition is very likely to be met during organizational reforms since staff reallocations permit gains and losses to be scaled – and therefore compared – using the same units across organizational units (i.e. staff numbers). We therefore expect that staff reallocations are likely to trigger stronger negative responses among *losers* compared to the positive reactions among *winners*.

A similar asymmetric reaction to gains and losses is predicted by Herzberg's two-factor motivation theory (Herzberg et al. 1959; Herzberg 2008). Herzberg argues that 'hygiene factors' – such as people and money – generate dissatisfaction and lower organizational commitment when they are absent (or taken away), but do not have the reverse effect when they are present (or increased). Hence, losing staff resources would again be associated with negative effects on employees in the affected organizational units, while gaining staff resources may not have a commensurate positive impact. Reflecting this line of reasoning, our third hypothesis states that:

*H3: Exposure to negative shifts in staffing resources has a stronger impact upon employees than exposure to positive shifts.*

Note that H3 implicitly assumes a tipping point where (perceived) gains turn into losses. This is consistent with, for instance, Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) prospect theory as well as Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor motivation theory. The exact location of any such tipping point, however, remains an empirical question, and we return to this in our results discussion.

## **Method and data**

### **Context**

The European Commission occupies a central position in the European Union (EU). It has a quasi-monopoly over policy initiation, is responsible for policy implementation and enforcement, and manages the EU budget (Kassim et al. 2013). At the head of the Commission stands the Commission President, who is proposed by the European Council (i.e. the heads of state or government of EU countries) and is formally elected for a five-year term by the European Parliament (Kassim and Laffan 2019). The Commission currently employs approximately 32.000 staff members across its administrative departments (i.e. Directorates-General as well as other services). These administrative departments are primarily organized horizontally by policy area (Egeberg and Trondal 1999), with responsibility for health, justice, migration, food safety, research and so on.

Addressing the European Parliament as candidate Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker (2014) declared that his administration would aspire to 'a European Union that is bigger and more ambitious on big things, and smaller and more modest on small things'. Since the Commission is commonly perceived as a competence-maximiser, this statement of intent was significant. Juncker's election manifesto pledged to focus on ten policy priorities (including jobs, clean energy, and a digital single market; Kassim and Laffan 2019). The required reallocation of personnel among the responsible administrative services took place against broader commitments agreed in 2014 to enact year-on-year cost savings (Connolly and Kassim 2015), according to which staff numbers would be annually reduced by 1% on average from 2015, amounting to a 5% staff reduction over the Juncker Commission's five-year term.

In practice, Juncker's reform led some administrative units to experience substantial losses in human resources appropriations from 2015, whereas others recorded significant increases (European Commission 2014). Among the big winners were the Secretariat General (responsible for management and coordination of the Commission's decision-making



processes), and Directorates-General JUST (responsible for EU policy on justice, consumer rights and gender equality) and HOME (responsible for EU policy on internal security, the Schengen area and migration). The nature of these winners is consistent with a strengthening centralization of decision-making powers within the Commission (Kassim et al. 2017) as well as the rising importance of security and migration issues at an international level (Kaunert and Léonard 2019). Among the big losers were Directorates-General DEVCO (responsible for development cooperation policy), EAC (responsible for education, youth, sport and culture) and SANCO (responsible for health and food safety).

Juncker's reform offers an important research opportunity because it involves big winners, big losers, as well as largely unaffected groups, within the same organization. Hence, the characteristics of this reform are ideal to address our research question and hypotheses. Furthermore, the staff reallocations at the heart of the Juncker reform are a common feature of many large-scale public sector reforms (as mentioned in our introduction). As such, it represents a good case to learn more generally applicable lessons about such interventions. Finally, from a methodological perspective, it is important that the staff reallocations in Juncker's reform were decided at the highest levels of the Commission. Hence, they can be analyzed as an exogenous intervention from the perspective of the staff included in our sample. Yet, to avoid attribution and interpretation errors, we should reiterate that these staff reallocations were a direct reflection of shifts in emphasis on specific policy areas (see above). Staff and policy shifts thus went hand-in-hand, and present a joint signal of the Commission's interest and organizational support for a department and its staff. Since this signal is of prime theoretical interest, our results reflect the compound effect of up- or downward shifts in emphasis on certain policy areas *as reflected in the staff numbers we observe*.

## **Sample**

Our dataset derives from the combination of two surveys conducted among *all* Commission employees in March-April 2014 (N = 5545; response rate = 17.7%) and May-June 2018 (N = 6539; response rate = 15.4%). The first survey was implemented *before* the campaign leading up to Juncker's election (and thus prior to any signals about his policy priorities; see also below), while the second was fielded almost three years into Juncker's term in office. The same research team was responsible for both surveys, and there was significant overlap in the questionnaires fielded at the two time-points.

Since we aim to analyze how staff reallocations affect individual employees over time, it is important to observe the same individuals across both surveys. This task is complicated by the fact that stringent anonymity requirements did not allow individual identifiers to be included in the original datasets. Following the method described in Murdoch et al. (2019) and Geys (2023), we therefore matched individuals across survey waves using the broad set of socio-demographic characteristics available in the data. Specifically, we look for respondent profiles across both survey samples with the same year of birth, gender, nationality (in terms of primary nationality and presence of a second nationality), education (in terms of level and field), and year of entry in the Commission. We furthermore verify that these profiles display (near-)identical pre- and within-Commission career histories (in terms of career type as well as length). A final requirement is that respondents work in the same administrative unit at both points in time, since a change of department may introduce self-selection issues. This procedure reveals 679 unique respondent profiles that appear in both the 2014 and 2018 surveys, which constitutes just over 12% of the sample from the first survey wave.

Online Appendix Table A.1 shows descriptive statistics for our 679 respondents, which include 70 managerial staff, 403 administrators, and 157 assistant-level staff (the remainder are various types of contract and temporary agents). These 679 respondents are more likely to be male, non-managerial administrators with a law degree and less likely to have an economics degree in comparison to all survey respondents. At the initial observation point (i.e. the 2014 survey), they also report higher support for the Commission's supranational goals (our main dependent variable; see below) and are less likely to work in administrative units losing staff and resources during the reform. We will return to, and control for, these differences below. Unfortunately, we lack detailed information on the composition of the entire Commission staff across all background characteristics available in the surveys, but the survey samples closely reflect Commission staff in terms of age (average age: 46.5 years), gender (47.4% male) and staff type (6.1% cabinet and management, 37.2% non-managerial AD, and 27.7% AST).<sup>3</sup>

## Measures

***Dependent variables.*** Like other international organizations, the Commission attempts to create coherence and a sense of common purpose through a range of social control mechanisms (Wächter et al. 2006; Edwards et al. 2013). For example, its induction programme places great emphasis on supranational values, and intends to develop a culture where the European 'Project'

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<sup>3</sup> AD and AST refer to administrators and assistants respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).

is understood by staff as the Commission's key mission (Shore 2000; Hooghe 2005; Ellinas and Suleiman 2012). Staff support for the Commission's supranational aims and goals is thus of paramount importance to the organization. With that in mind, we define our first dependent variable in terms of the Commission's supranational goals. We operationalize this by combining respondents' answers to two statements: i) 'The College of Commissioners should become the government of the European Union', and ii) 'The member states – not the Commission or European Parliament – should be the central players in the European Union'. In both cases, respondents express their (lack of) support for these statements on a scale ranging from (1) 'strongly agree' to (5) 'strongly disagree'. The scale on the first proposition is reversed such that higher values indicate higher levels of self-reported support for a supranational power orientation in Europe (both statements display a positive pairwise correlation of 0.29;  $p < 0.001$ ). We average respondents' answers on both statements to obtain our dependent variable, henceforth termed 'Commission role in Europe' (for a graphical presentation, see Online Appendix Figure A.1).

Our second dependent variable captures employees' intention to leave the organization, and is based on the following statement: "I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years". Answer options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher numbers indicate higher intention to leave the organization (for a graphical presentation, see Online Appendix Figure A.1). Note that the three-year period mentioned in the statement coincides with the period between the start of Juncker's reforms in 2015 and the 2018 survey wave.

***Independent variable.*** Using information from the Commission's 2015 budget, we identify staff cuts or increases faced by each administrative unit during the first year of Juncker's reforms. These range between losing 16% and gaining 69% of staff allocations (with a standard deviation of 15.89%). The average equals circa 1% loss of staff, reflecting the Commission's 2014 commitment to a year-on-year staff reduction. We then define a variable – 'Staff treatment' – equal to the percentage change in staff resources in a respondent's administrative unit, which is employed as our main independent variable (for a graphical presentation, see Online Appendix Figure A.2). One might worry, however, that additional gains or losses in 2016 and 2017 may further affect staff members. Using information from the Commission's 2018 budget, we therefore also identify the total staff cuts or increases faced by each administrative unit between Juncker's election in 2015 and the second survey wave in 2018. These range between losing 22% and gaining 65% of staff allocations (with a standard

deviation of 19.19%). Reassuringly, these longer-term staff reallocations are very strongly positively correlated to the one-year shifts ( $r = 0.87$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

Using administrative data on staff reallocations offers two methodological benefits. First, it implies that our dependent and independent variables do *not* derive from the same source. As such, we avoid the potential for common-method bias present in work using reform perceptions (Podsakoff et al. 2003; Favero and Bullock 2015). Second, an individual's perception of reform (as used in previous work; e.g., Esteve et al. 2017; Van der Voet and Vermeeren 2017; Van der Voet and Van de Walle 2018) may not be exogenous to outcome variables of interest, which may involve a risk of spurious inferences. This risk is not present when using administrative data.

### **Empirical strategy**

Our empirical strategy relies on comparison over time (pre- versus post-reform) of employees confronted with distinct staff reallocation treatments (e.g., 'losers' versus 'winners'). More specifically, with  $i$  representing individual respondents and  $t$  designating time, our model is:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta_1 \text{Wave2018}_t + \beta_2 \text{Wave2018}_t * \text{Staff treatment}_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Where  $Y_{it}$  reflects our dependent variables as described above.  $\text{Wave2018}_t$  is 1 for responses in the 2018 survey (0 for responses in 2014), and  $\text{Staff treatment}_i$  captures the one-year staff reallocation discussed in the previous section (we use the 2015-2018 reallocations in a robustness check). The interaction between these two variables represents our central variable of interest to test hypotheses H1a and H1b. Its coefficient ( $\beta_2$ ) captures whether individuals experiencing a particular shift in staff (re)allocations develop *differently* between the first and second survey compared to individuals experiencing no change in staff allocations (which constitute the reference group). In other words,  $\text{Staff treatment}_i$  corresponds to the intensity of the imposed treatment (from -16% to +69%) and a value of 0 relates to staff members facing no staff reallocations.

We extend the empirical model with a full set of respondent fixed effects ( $\alpha_i$ ). These capture all time-invariant aspects of respondents (including gender, birth-year, career history, administrative unit, and so on), and imply that we derive inferences from variation over time *within the same respondent*. As such, our specification directly controls for pre-existing level differences across the control and treatment groups (such as in respondents' initial attitudes;

see above).<sup>4</sup> We also accommodate general time trends via  $Wave2018_t$ . This indicator variable is important since the election of Juncker in itself may impact our respondents. Yet, as this election happens for all individuals at the same time, its effects are captured by  $Wave2018_t$ . Hence, our empirical specification enables the estimation of staff reallocation treatment effects while controlling for any potential effects deriving from the election itself (Wooldridge 2010; Wang and Kim 2023). Finally, since individuals are grouped in administrative units receiving the same treatment, their answers are unlikely to be independent. We therefore cluster standard errors at the administrative unit level.

Our baseline regression model imposes a linear relation between staff reallocations and our outcome variables. There may be two limitations to this approach. On the one hand, it might make our findings sensitive to outliers with extremely large shifts in either direction (e.g., in small administrative units). On the other hand, the relationship of interest could be non-linear (e.g., different for ‘winners’ versus ‘losers’; hypothesis H2). To address the former, we exclude outliers with staff reallocations more than two standard deviations from the mean (i.e. changes in excess of +/- 30%; we also use different thresholds below). To address the latter, we replicate the analysis after allocating all administrative units to three distinct groups: namely, big winners (more than 5% or 10% extra staff), big losers (more than 5% or 10% fewer staff), and the rest. This allows more direct assessment of potential heterogeneous effects among winners versus losers, while simultaneously mitigating the potential influence of outliers (without dropping these from the analysis).

Despite the strengths of our multisource, longitudinal data and the analytical power afforded by our *within-individual* pre-test/post-test research design, two further issues require discussion. First, it could be thought that anticipation effects regarding Juncker’s election complicate our inferences. However, our survey was fielded well before the campaign leading up to his election. Juncker’s key speech to the European Parliament setting out his policy priorities, for instance, took place in July 2014, whereas our data collection ended almost three months beforehand in April 2014. Anticipation effects are therefore unlikely to be a major concern. Furthermore, it would *not* be enough for our respondents to anticipate Juncker’s election, *or* even their organizational unit’s position among the winners or losers of any victory by Juncker.

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<sup>4</sup> As *Staff treatment<sub>i</sub>* is a time-invariant variable reflecting whether an individual was ‘treated’ with a specific shift in staff resources, it is perfectly collinear with the individual fixed effects. As such, it is not included in the estimation equation on its own. Note also that our specification does not include controls at the level of administrative units. Because individuals in our sample do not change affiliation between survey waves, our individual fixed effects are perfectly collinear with administrative unit effects. Hence, they capture time-invariant aspects of *both* the individual *and* her administrative unit.

Since we exploit variation in the *extent* of staff re-allocations across organizational units, respondents would have to correctly anticipate the *size* of the gain or loss of their organizational unit relative to other parts of the organization. This appears highly unrealistic for the vast majority of respondents in our sample.

Second, our dataset is constrained to two time points, which implies that we cannot verify whether individuals were on parallel pre-treatment trends. This would be important to give a causal interpretation to our estimand of interest ( $\beta_2$ ). Still, using information from the Commission's 2013 budget, we can assess whether administrative units gaining/losing under Juncker's reform were on similar budgetary trajectories *prior to* this reform. This turns out to be the case. The pairwise correlation between staff reallocations in the pre-reform (2012-2014) and post-reform (2015-2018) periods is small and statistically insignificant ( $r = -0.038$ ;  $p=0.82$ ). Furthermore, a Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank test indicates that the three treatment groups (i.e. big winners, big losers, and the rest) do *not* display significantly different staff reallocation trajectories in the 2012-2014 pre-reform period ( $\text{Chi}^2 = 1.574$ ;  $p=0.455$ ). Furthermore, we also verify whether respondents in winning and losing administrative units are similar on the outcome variables of interest at the initial point of measurement (i.e. 2014), which one would expect if the staff reallocation treatment was truly 'random'. Online Appendix Table A.2 confirms that this is the case.

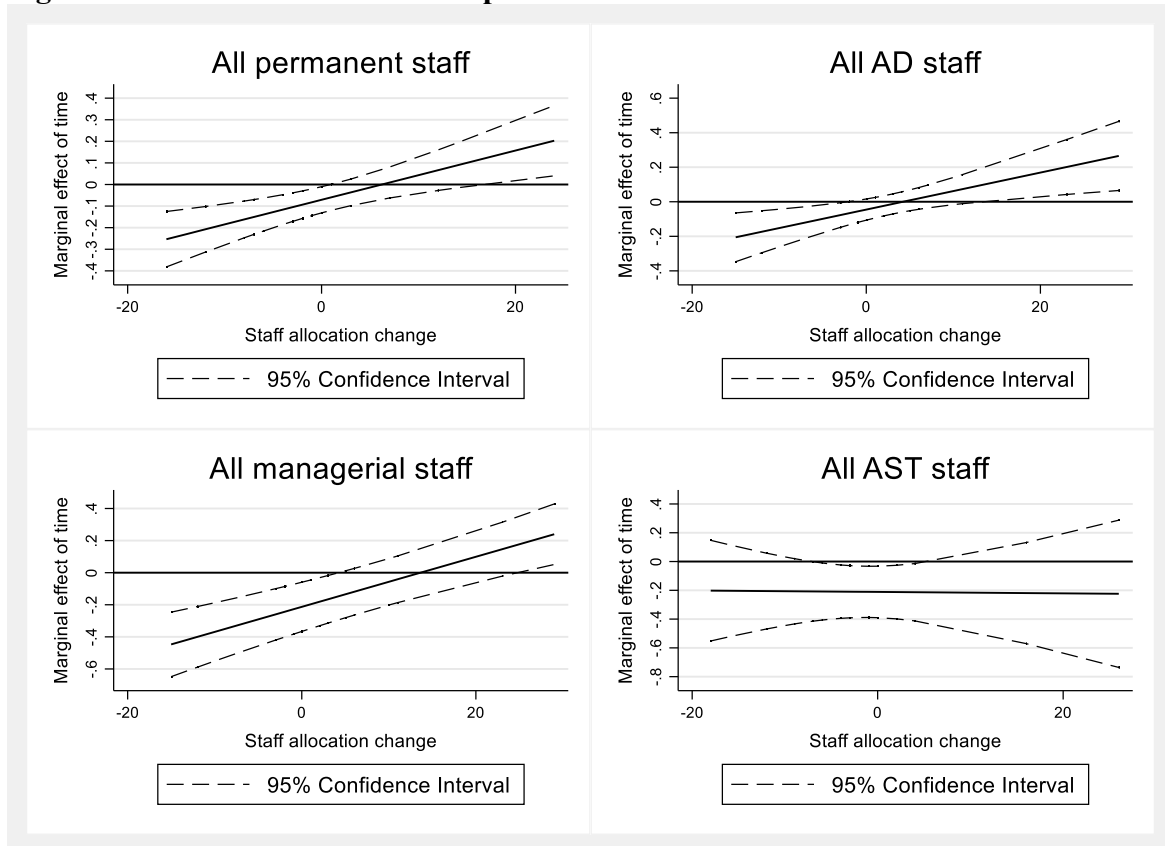
## Results

### Support for key organizational aims

Our findings with respect to hypothesis H1a are summarized in Figure 1, which consists of four panels. The top-left panel includes all permanent staff members appearing across both surveys for which we have all relevant information ( $N=628$ ). In light of hypothesis H2, the remaining three panels estimate the model on subsamples covering all managerial and non-managerial administrators (top-right panel;  $N=472$ ), only managerial staff (bottom-left panel;  $N=70$ ) and only assistant-level staff (bottom-right panel;  $N=166$ ). In all cases, we report how individual employees' support for the Commission's supranational goals changes over time (on the Y axis) depending on the shift in staff reallocations experienced by their administrative unit during the first year of the Juncker reforms (on the X axis). In terms of our regression equation, this equals the sum of coefficients  $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_2$  evaluated at different levels of staff reallocations. We also

report the 95% confidence interval around this point estimate (taking into account the covariance of both variables).<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1: Commission role in Europe**



Notes: The dependent variable represents respondents’ support for the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’), such that higher numbers indicate endorsement of a supranational power orientation in Europe. Main independent variable is the percentage change in staff allocation between 2014 and 2015 interacted with a time dummy (*Wave2018*). All models exclude administrative units gaining/losing more than 30% in staff allocations (i.e. circa two standard deviations from the mean value). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistants, respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).

The findings in the top-left panel of Figure 1 show that a reduction in staff allocations is linked to a statistically significant decline over time in employees’ support for the Commission’s supranational goals and aims. The upward-sloping regression line indicates, however, that this negative relationship weakens when staff losses become less severe. In fact, the estimated marginal effect loses statistical significance at the 95% confidence level once staff reallocations exceed 1%, and turns positive for increases in staff allocations in excess of 6%. The pattern of

<sup>5</sup> We estimate linear regression models for ease of interpretation. As this ignores the ordinal character of our dependent variables, we also estimated fixed effects ordered logit models via the `feologit` command in Stata (Baetschmann et al. 2020). While this leaves our main inferences unaffected, any minor exceptions are highlighted in the discussion below.

these results is consistent with hypothesis H1a. That is, exposure to positive (negative) shifts in staffing resources increases (undermines) employees' self-reported support for organizational aims.<sup>6</sup>

The remaining panels in Figure 1 show that these observations are replicated similarly for the subsample of administrators (AD) as well as managerial staff. Interestingly, no similar pattern is observed for assistant-level staff (AST). It is tempting to interpret this difference as arising from the more direct involvement of administrators and managerial staff in the policy development process: i.e. they stand at the coalface of the shift in resources reflecting changing policy priorities (Van der Voet and Van de Walle 2018). From this perspective, our findings suggest that staff reallocations may be particularly influential among employees most directly engaged in developing and implementing the decisions that support the organization's key aims and goals (consistent with hypothesis H2).

Figure 1 also indicates that very large gains in staff resources (in excess of approximately 16% to 22% depending on the respondent sample) may be associated with a statistically significant *increase* in employees' support for the Commission's supranational goals. Nonetheless, this observation disappears when using fixed effects ordered logit models (Online Appendix Figure A.3) or when extending the data on staff reallocations to the 2015-18 period (Online Appendix Figure A.4). Hence, we must conclude that while a *reduction* of staff allocations significantly decreases employee support for the supranational aims of the Commission, an *increase* in staff allocations has at best weak positive effects. In line with H2, it thus appears that losing staff is perceived as worse than gaining staff.

### **Intentions to leave the organization**

In Figure 2, we turn our attention to the impact of staff reallocations on employee intentions to leave the organization (H1b; see also Levine 1978, 1979; Kiefer et al. 2015; Lee et al. 2021). This figure has the same set-up as Figure 1, except that the Y axis now reports how individual employees' intention to leave the European Commission changes over time, depending on the

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<sup>6</sup> Note that any positive sentiments experienced by winners could be tempered by regret over other colleagues within the organization losing out or by feelings of apprehension regarding further reforms in the future. Our results are therefore best viewed as capturing the overall effect of these various psychological processes (which, unfortunately, are impossible to differentiate using observational data). Even so, our main findings suggest that any such tempering thoughts do not fully offset the pleasure linked to being part of a 'winning' organizational unit. We are grateful to an anonymous referee for pointing this out.



shift in staff reallocations experienced by their administrative unit during the first year of the Juncker reforms (on the X axis).

**Figure 2: Intention to leave**



Notes: The dependent variable reflects respondents’ answer to the following statement: “I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years” (ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). Higher numbers thus indicate higher intention to leave. Main independent variable is percentage change in staff allocation between 2014 and 2015 interacted with a time dummy (*Wave2018*). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistant-level staff, respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).

The results in Figure 2 illustrate that the extent of staff reallocations has no statistically significant association with changes in individual employees’ intentions to leave the organization, *except for managerial staff*. For managers, intentions to leave weakly rise with decreasing staff resources, but statistically significantly fall with rising staff resources – in line with H1b and H2. Hence, managers who experience a (large) increase in resources are less likely than other managers to be actively thinking about outside options. The tipping point from a positive to a negative marginal effect is located at -2% staff reallocations, and the negative coefficient estimate becomes statistically significant at the 95% confidence level for increases in staff allocations in excess of roughly 8%. A very similar set of observations arises when

using fixed effects ordered logit models (Online Appendix Figure A.5) or when extending the data on staff reallocations to the 2015-18 period (Online Appendix Figure A.6).

The fact that we only observe statistically significant effects among managerial staff is particularly interesting. It may reflect that this staff category perceives shifts in the balance of influence and prestige more keenly than non-managerial staff members. This would be consistent with Van der Voet and Van de Walle's (2018) observation that top-level managers are more responsive to financial reforms that impact upon their (perceived) managerial autonomy. Nonetheless, Figure 2 also highlights that gaining appears more important from a statistical significance perspective than losing (as the confidence intervals encompass 0 throughout the entire loss region in the bottom-left diagram of Figure 2). This could imply that a positive organizational environment may be particularly useful to reconfirm to managers that they want to stay in the European Commission, and thereby undermine any temptation to actively think about outside options.

### **Further robustness checks**

We verified the robustness of our findings to two potential concerns. First, our analysis utilises a linear specification for the main independent variable, which might lead extreme observations to have a disproportionate influence on our slope parameters. Although this concern is mitigated by excluding large outliers, auxiliary results in Online Appendix B show that our main inferences are robust to specifying different cutoffs to exclude outliers as well as a non-linear specification of the main treatment variable. Second, one might worry that mobility levels diverge across administrative units in a way that is correlated with Juncker's reform programme. Online Appendix Figure B.4 suggest this may not have a large effect on our findings by illustrating that our results arise similarly when each administrative unit is dropped one by one from the sample.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

In this article, we investigated the impact of *both* positive *and* negative staff reallocations on employees using a major reform of the European Commission in 2015. To a literature replete with examples of the unanticipated effects of administrative reform or organisational change (e.g., Hood and Peters 2004; Durant 2008; Hur et al. 2019), our study adds understanding about how a shift in resources as part of a major organisational reorientation can be counter-productive by creating hidden costs. Our results indicate that Commission employees respond

to staff reallocations by adjusting their self-reported support for key organizational goals – downwards if they are among the losers and (weakly) upwards if they are among the winners. In similar vein, managerial staff report significantly reduced intentions to leave the organization when faced with an increase in staff allocations, but (weakly) increase them if among the losers.

Our empirical setting and dependent variables add two novel dimensions to existing scholarship. First, documenting significant negative effects of reductions in employee numbers for an international administration generalizes findings previously documented at the national level. This is an important extension given the increasing role of international organizations in policy- and decision-making (Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009; Costa and Jorgensen 2012). Second, assessing the impact of staff reallocations on how employees position themselves relative to key organizational goals extends the range of impacts beyond those uncovered thus far; namely, employee well-being, job satisfaction, work motivation, and organizational commitment. This further develops our understanding of the individual-level implications of staff and resource reallocations, and adds to a more holistic understanding of public sector reform processes.

Our findings from the European Commission are likely to be generalizable to other international organizations – such as the main administrative bodies of ASEAN, MERCOSUR, the African Union, ECOWAS, or the UN, WTO and OECD secretariats. Each of these share key characteristics with the Commission in terms of staff composition (including international heterogeneity and division between policy administrators and assistant-level staff) and organizational structure (with administrative units organized horizontally by policy area; Trondal 2011, 2016; Gänzle et al. 2018; Kwasi Tiekou et al. 2022). It is important to highlight, however, that the external validity of our findings to other sectors, settings and types of organizations should be treated with due caution. After all, our analysis is constrained to one supranational setting where employees have very different characteristics and task structures than, for instance, street-level bureaucrats directly interacting with citizens during the implementation of public policies. Furthermore, Lazarova et al.'s (2010) examination of expatriate work maintains that international organizations often take more responsibility for their employees than a national administration, and that the boundaries between home and work life become fuzzier (thus enhancing the salience of the expatriate's identity as an employee). It follows that resource reallocations signalling up- or downward prioritization might have a stronger impact in international organizations. Hence, generalization of our findings and the

specification of the scope conditions of our theoretical arguments must await corroboration from studies in other settings and sectors. This requires long-term data collection efforts in a variety of different contexts, but such (considerable) investments will pay off by allowing a much more comprehensive understanding of the topic and by preventing inappropriate ‘one-size-fits-all’ thinking (e.g., Hood 1995; Barro and Lee 2005; Shaw 2013; George 2021).

Our finding that a shift in resources can undermine the organizational support of staff has practical significance not only for the European Commission, but also for how public institutions more broadly approach organizational reforms involving staff reallocations. The first practical implication is that the reallocation of staff across departments to underpin particular policy aims is not risk-free. Although it may create more dedicated staff who deepen their support for organizational goals and reduce intentions to leave among the beneficiaries, it does so at the cost of some degree of disillusion and reduced commitment levels among those losing out. Buying small gains at the cost of larger losses could be detrimental to attaining the overall goals of the organization. A careful balancing act thus is required to manage reforms that strengthen some priorities but weaken others. Second, since downgrading a department can have unintended negative consequences (Hood and Peters 2004; Durant 2008; Hur et al. 2019), an effective communications strategy to deal with these implications is imperative. Even if employees are sympathetic to the general goals of the reform, communication strategies that aim to pre-empt, mitigate or contain negative effects among those working in the departments most negatively impacted by the reform is essential. The experience of the Juncker Commission shows that strong messaging is imperative to limit the disruption of common purpose or demoralization of staff who stand to be most adversely affected, even in a setting where staff support the overall aims of the political leadership and identify strongly with the mission of the organization. Third, van der Voet (2021) shows that negative effects of cutbacks are mitigated when these decisions are perceived to be fairly and equitably distributed across departments. Such perceptions of organizational fairness may be particularly hard to ensure when there are winners as well as losers of a reform. This further reinforces the need for an effective communications strategy whereby organizations explain or ‘frame’ reform programmes in terms that are aligned with organizational goals (which staff may share or be socialized to share).

Finally, our study opens up avenues for further research. Our theoretical argument combines insights from several strands of public administration and organizational/social psychology scholarship, but our dataset unfortunately does not contain direct measures of the underlying

mechanisms described in our theoretical framework. While we find robust evidence for the impact of staff reallocations on our outcome variables of interest, our data do not allow us to make any inferences about the exact nature of the underlying mechanisms. We also lack information about potential mediator and/or moderator variables (such as, for instance, the availability of outside options, the extent of individuals' prior organizational socialization, or perceptions of reform (un)fairness). Both these aspects should be explored in future research in order to gain deeper insights into possible ways to mitigate the negative impact on 'losers' and heighten the positive impact on 'winners'. Finally, our data cover 'only' two time points. Although this is an improvement over purely cross-sectional studies, it precludes an in-depth analysis of temporal dynamics. Hence, explicit verification of the development and persistence of the observed effects over time remains an important avenue for further research.

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## **Online Appendix**

**to**

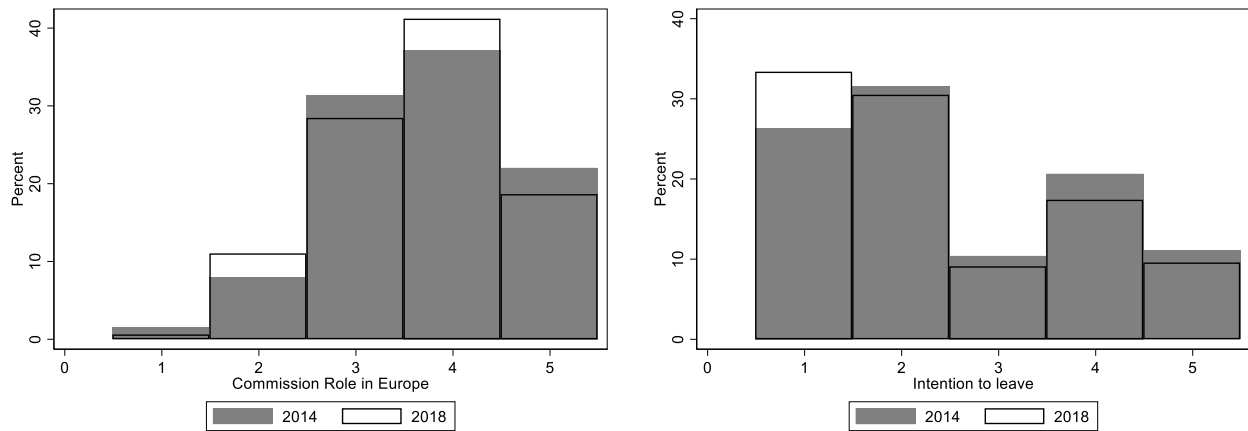
**Staff Reallocations and Employee Attitudes towards Organizational Aims:  
Evidence using Longitudinal Data from the European Commission**

**Appendix A: Descriptive Statistics and Robustness Checks**

**Appendix B: Robustness and Validity Checks**

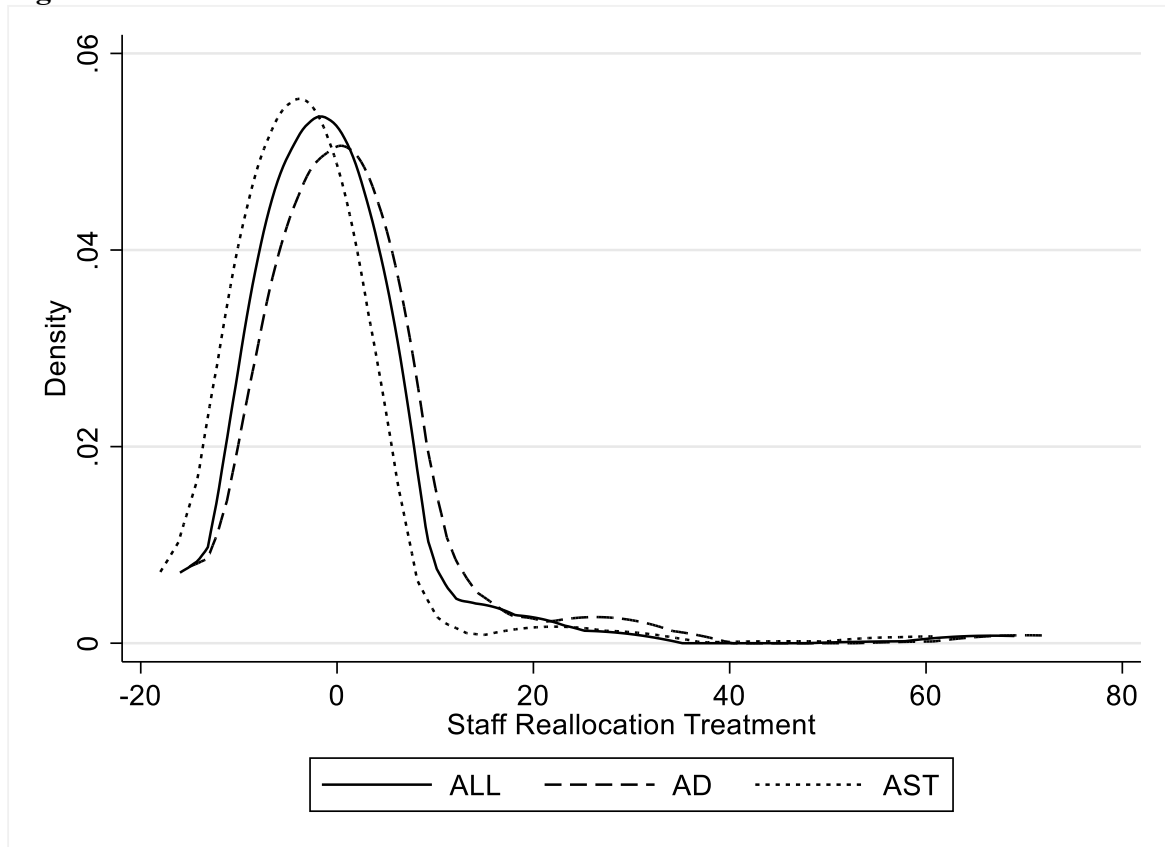
## Appendix A: Descriptive Statistics and Robustness Checks

**Figure A.1: Distribution of dependent variables across both surveys**



Notes: The left-hand figure depicts the distribution of respondents' views about the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 ('Strongly disagree') to 5 ('Strongly agree'). The right-hand figure reflects respondents' answer to the following statement: "I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years". Answers are recorded on a scale from 1 ('Strongly disagree') to 5 ('Strongly agree'). Higher numbers thus indicate stronger support for the Commission's supranational aims, and higher intention to leave the organization. The dark-grey bars reflect the distribution of responses in 2014, whereas the white bars show the distribution of responses in 2018.

**Figure A.2: Distribution of staff reallocation treatment**



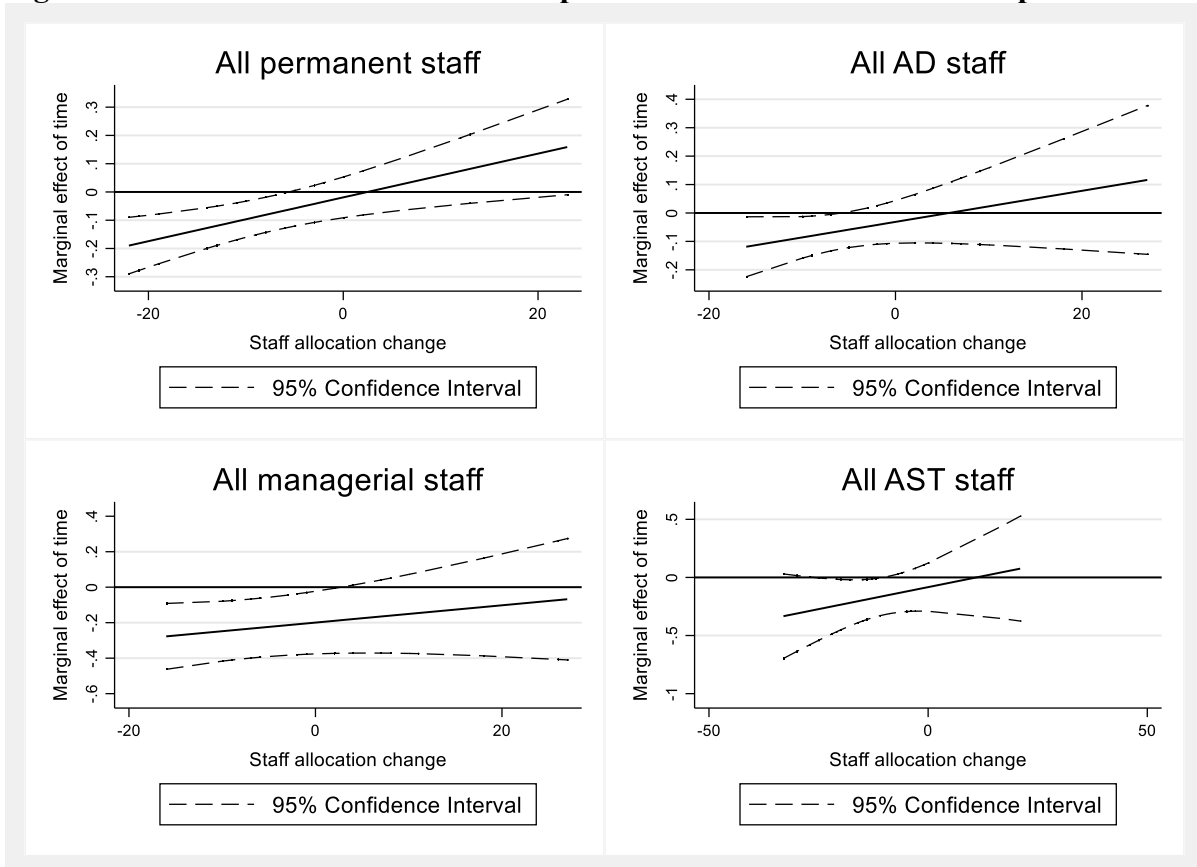
Note: The figure depicts the distribution of the percentage change in staff allocations between 2014 and 2015 across all Commission administrative units. Separate lines are displayed for changes across all staff categories (full black line), for administrators (dashed line) and for assistant-level staff (dotted line). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistant-level staff, respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).

**Figure A.3: Fixed effects ordered logit models - Commission role in Europe**



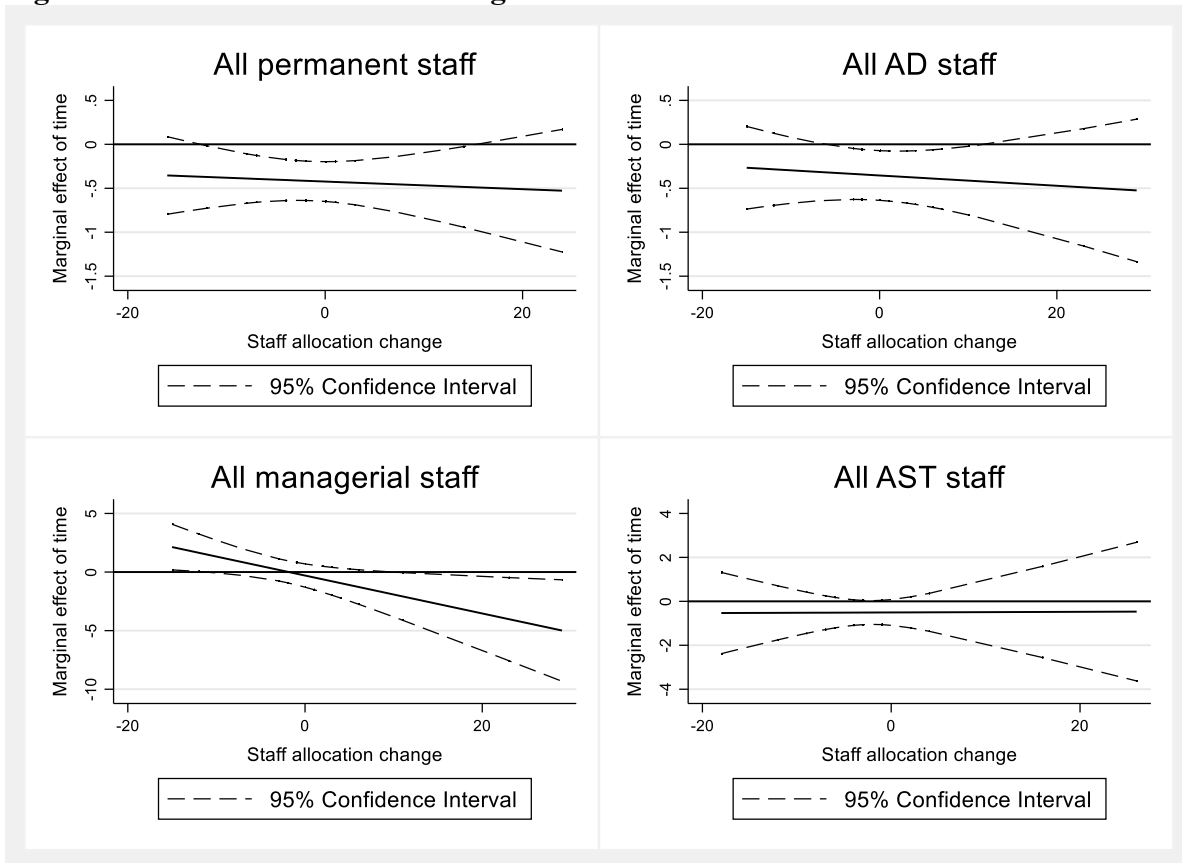
Notes: The dependent variable is 'Commission role in Europe', which represents respondents' support for the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 ('Strongly disagree') to 5 ('Strongly agree'), such that higher numbers indicate endorsement of a supranational power orientation in Europe. Main independent variable is percentage change in staff allocation between 2014 and 2015 interacted with a time dummy. All models exclude administrative unit gaining more than 30% of staff allocations (i.e. circa two standard deviations from the mean value). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistant-level staff, respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).

**Figure A.4: Staff reallocation 2015-2018 period - Commission role in Europe**



Notes: The dependent variable is ‘Commission role in Europe’, which represents respondents’ support for the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’), such that higher numbers indicate endorsement of a supranational power orientation in Europe. Main independent variable is percentage change in staff allocation between 2014 and 2018 interacted with a time dummy. All models exclude administrative unit gaining more than 30% of staff allocations (i.e. circa two standard deviations from the mean value). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistant-level staff, respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).

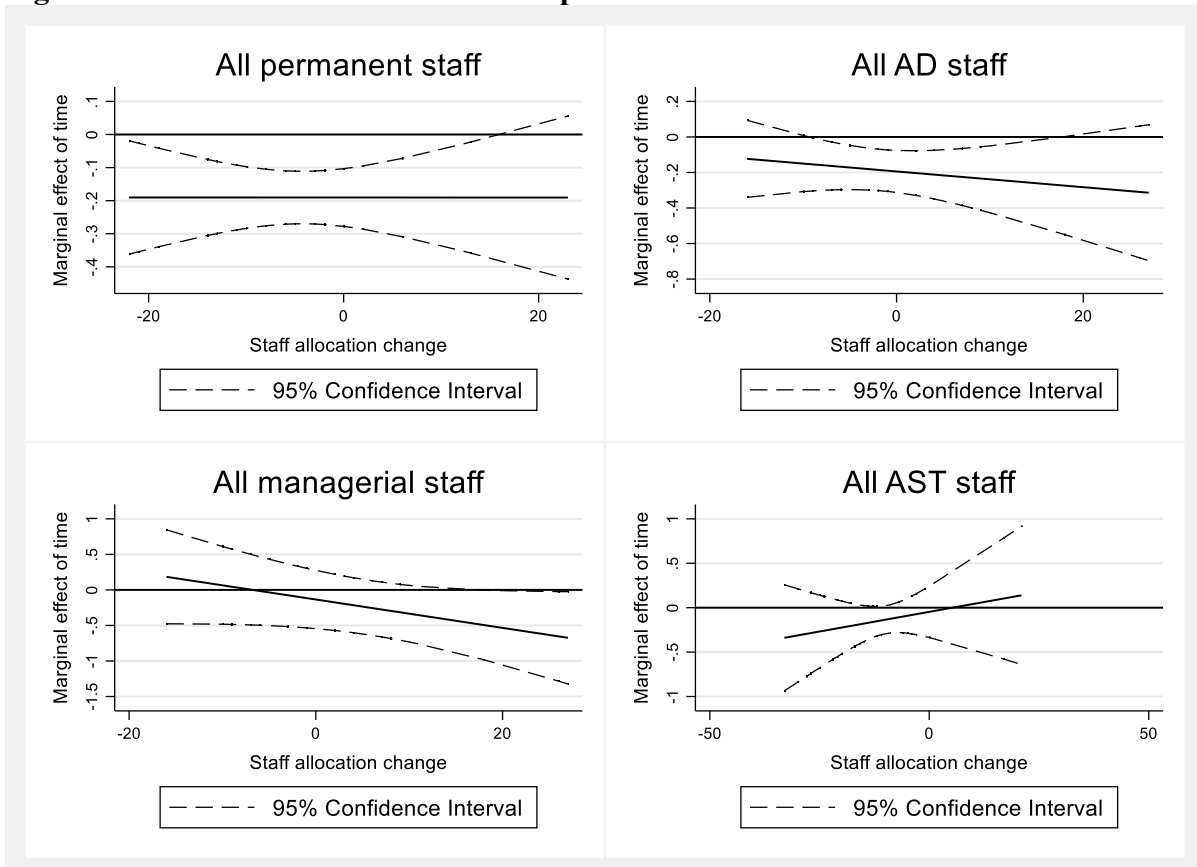
**Figure A.5: Fixed effects ordered logit models – Intention to leave**



Notes: The dependent variable reflects respondents’ answer to the following statement: “I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years” (ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). Higher numbers thus indicate higher intention to leave. Main independent variable is percentage change in staff allocation between 2014 and 2015 interacted with a time dummy. All models exclude administrative unit gaining more than 30% of staff allocations (i.e. circa two, respectively) (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).



**Figure A.6: Staff reallocation 2015-2018 period – Intention to leave**



Notes: The dependent variable reflects respondents' answer to the following statement: "I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years" (ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). Higher numbers thus indicate higher intention to leave. Main independent variable is percentage change in staff allocation between 2014 and 2018 interacted with a time dummy. All models exclude administrative unit gaining more than 30% of staff allocations (i.e. circa two standard deviations from the mean value). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistant-level staff, respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).

**Table A.1: Descriptive statistics and representativeness of matched sample**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Variable	Full sample 2014 & 2018	Non-matched sample in 2014	Perfect Matches in 2014	T-test on difference (2) versus (3)
Commission role in Europe	3.383 (1 – 5)	3.407	3.513	2.714 ***
Intention to leave	2.664 (1 – 5)	2.800	2.585	3.622 ***
Resource SAME (5%; ALL staff)	0.728 (0 – 1)	0.726	0.754	1.544
Resource LOSS (5%; ALL staff)	0.177 (0 – 1)	0.189	0.143	2.919 ***
Resource SAME (5%; AD staff)	0.686 (0 – 1)	0.691	0.701	0.532
Resource LOSS (5%; AD staff)	0.155 (0 – 1)	0.177	0.137	2.549 **
Resource SAME (5%; AST staff)	0.533 (0 – 1)	0.522	0.538	0.738
Resource LOSS (5%; AST staff)	0.410 (0 – 1)	0.435	0.418	0.796
Male	0.511 (0 – 1)	0.492	0.614	5.959 ***
Year of birth	1968.946 (1953 – 1991)	1968.427	1967.579	2.486 **
Year in Commission	2002.300 (1960 – 2014)	2001.875	2001.452	1.197
Cabinet and management	0.092 (0 – 1)	0.075	0.088	1.196
Non-managerial AD	0.460 (0 – 1)	0.392	0.586	9.633 ***
AST	0.264 (0 – 1)	0.322	0.243	4.150 ***
Economics degree	0.139 (0 – 1)	0.263	0.203	3.327 ***
Law degree	0.139 (0 – 1)	0.105	0.163	4.485 ***
Politics degree	0.153 (0 – 1)	0.119	0.130	0.771
N	10507	4309	679	

Note: “*Commission role in Europe*” represents respondents’ views about the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’). “*Intention to leave*” reflects respondents’ answer to the following statement: “I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years”. Answers are recorded on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’). Resource SAME/LOSS relates to respondents working in administrative units neither gaining nor losing 5% or more in staff allocations (‘SAME’), or working in administrative units losing 5% or more in staff allocations (‘LOSS’). Column (1) includes the entire sample of Commission administrative staff covered by both survey waves. Columns (2) and (3) focus on the 2014 survey, and provides separate results for respondents we can (column (3)) and cannot (column (2)) perfectly match in the 2018 wave. Column (4) contains the results of a t-test evaluating whether the respondents in column (3) differ along a number of background characteristics from the respondents in column (2). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistant-level staff, respectively.

**Table A.2: Balancing check by treatment intensity**

	All staff (1)	Managers (2)	Administrators (3)	Assistant (4)
Commission role in Europe	0.350	0.238	0.167	0.184
Intention to leave	0.933	0.376	0.827	0.580
Male	0.645	0.690	0.050 **	0.117
Year of birth	0.089 *	0.653	0.011 **	0.671
Year in Commission	0.232	0.930	0.793	0.591
Country of birth	0.594	0.712	0.278	0.452
Multiple nationalities	0.578	0.140	0.566	0.419
Education level	0.871	0.146	0.135	0.668
N	~617	~60	~454	~163

Note: The table reports p-values for Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank tests evaluating whether respondents treated with varying levels of staff reallocations between 2014 and 2015 differ with respect to our main dependent variables as well as a number of background characteristics at the initial point of measurement (i.e. 2014). ‘*Commission role in Europe*’ represents respondents’ views about the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’), such that higher numbers indicate endorsement of a supranational power orientation in Europe. ‘*Intention to leave*’ reflects respondents’ answer to the following statement: “I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years” (ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). Higher numbers thus indicate higher intention to leave the organization. For the purpose of this test, we split respondents into roughly seven equal-sized groups in terms of the level of staff reallocations (to avoid biased results due to very small groups with specific levels of staff reallocations). The ~ in the bottom row indicates that the exact number of observations varies slightly across variables due to non-response.

## Appendix B: Further Robustness and Validity Checks

Our analysis thus far utilises a linear specification for the main independent variable. This might lead extreme observations to have a disproportionate influence on the estimated slope parameters. Although this concern is mitigated by excluding large outliers from the analysis, we also ran auxiliary analyses further to address it.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, we differentiate three groups of administrative units: those gaining  $x\%$  or more in staff allocations, those losing  $x\%$  or more in staff allocations, and the remaining administrative units. The value of  $x$  is set to 5% (covering 12 out of 43 administrative units; reported in Table B.1) or to 10% (covering 8 out of 43 administrative units; reported in Table B.2). The results in Tables B.1 and B.2 are presented across two panels, where Panel I looks at Commission staff's expressed support for key organizational aims, and Panel II assess their intention to leave the organization.

Both panels present qualitatively similar results to those reported in Figures 1 and 2 in the main text. Column (1) in Panel I of Table B.1 illustrates that self-reported support for the Commission's supranational goals significantly declines in administrative units where staff allocations either stayed stable or fell by 5% or more – relative to respondents in administrative units gaining 5% or more in staff allocations. As before, this overall effect is driven by the subsamples of managerial (column 2) and administrator staff (column 3). Panel II in Table B.1 confirms that only managerial staff respond significantly to staff reallocations in terms of their intentions to leave the organization – becoming less likely to leave when gaining resources ( $-0.700$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), but more likely to consider outside options when losing resources ( $-0.700 + 1.367 = 0.667$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Table B.2 provides similar findings for the 10% cutoff, while Figure B.3 indicates similar results when performing difference-in-means t-tests on the raw data. Overall, these findings show that extreme observations are *not* driving our main results, and that there is a gain-loss asymmetry in employees' reactions to staff reallocations.

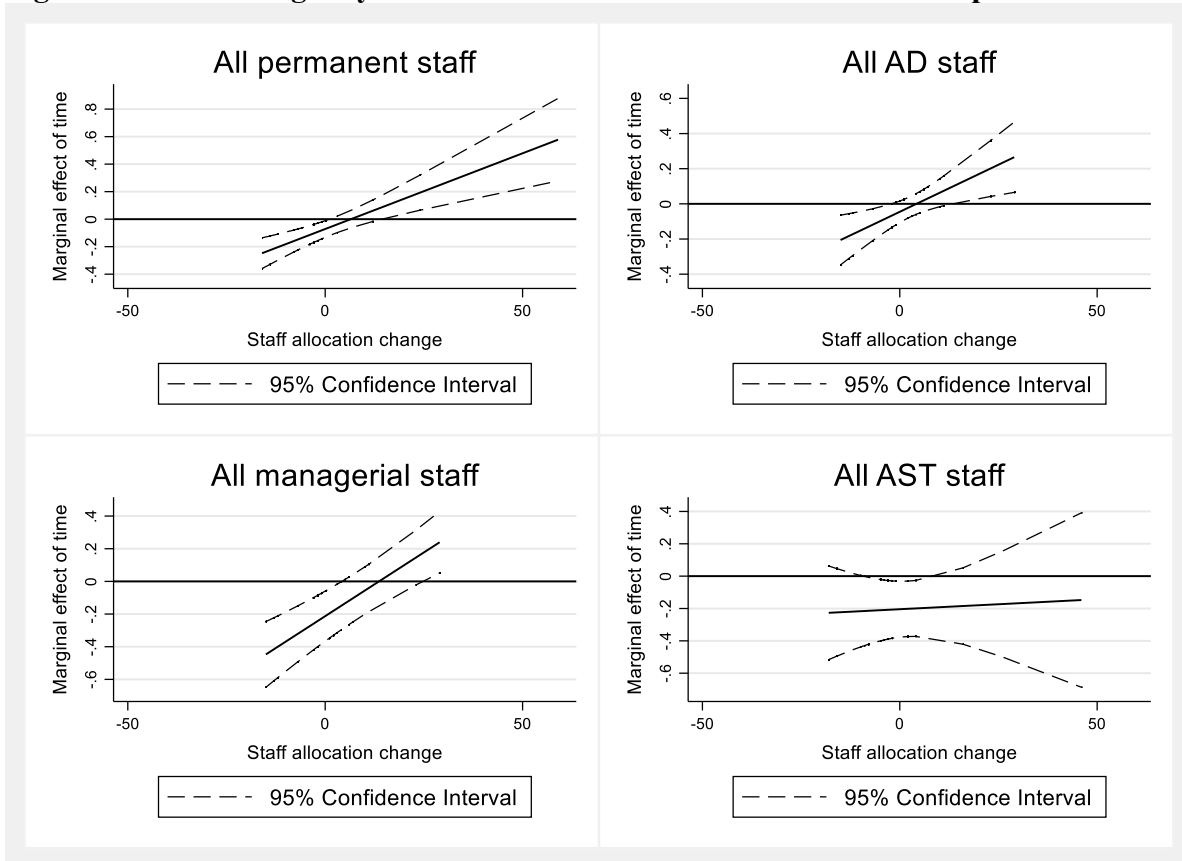
A second potential concern arises from the restriction of our sample to employees that did *not* move between administrative units between both survey waves (see above). These employees might not be a random sample from the overall population of Commission staff. For instance, one could imagine that mobility levels diverge across administrative units, particularly if people working in administrative units outside Juncker's top ten policy areas are less likely to

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<sup>7</sup> Online Appendix Figures B.1 and B.2 verify the robustness of the results in Figures 1 and 2 in the main text when only excluding outliers with staff reallocations in excess of three standard deviations from the mean (i.e. changes exceeding  $\pm 60\%$ ).

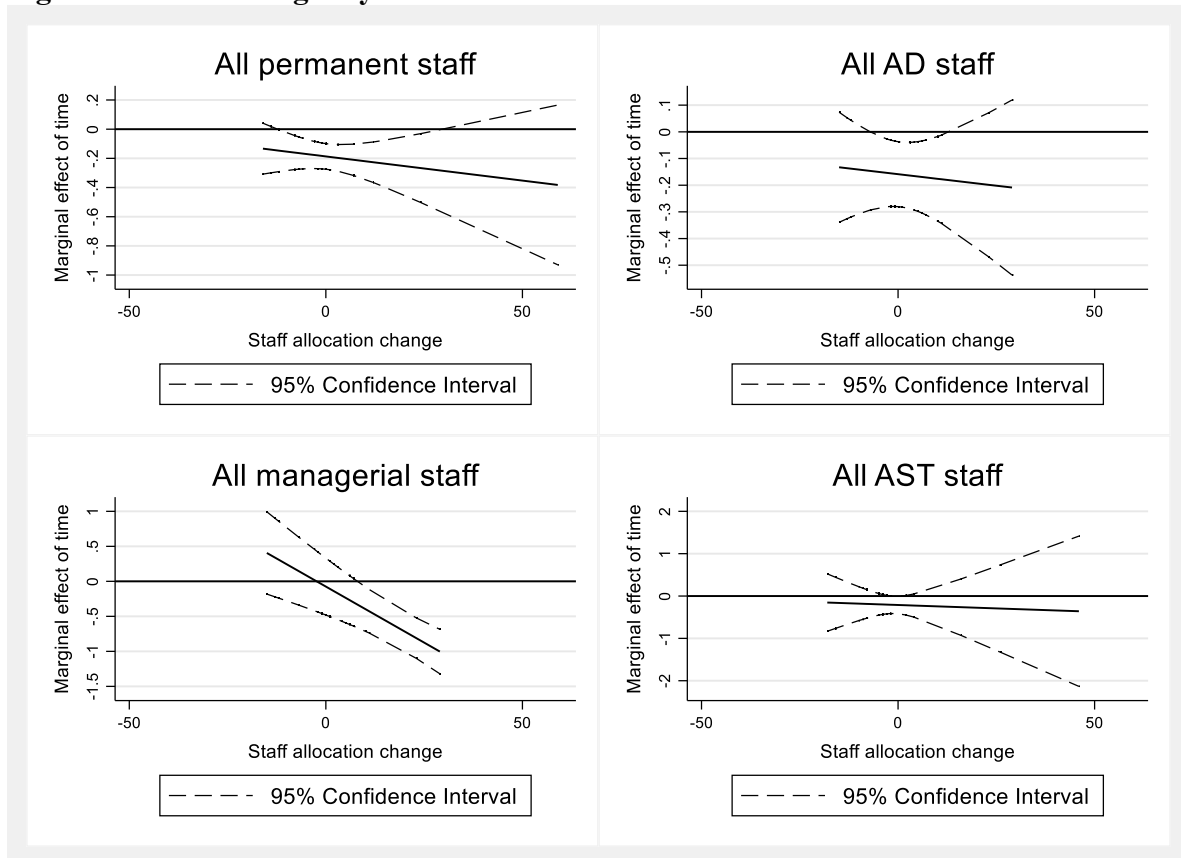
stay. Although this does not affect our ability to identify the local average treatment effect of staff reallocations *conditional on* employees staying within the same administrative unit between survey waves, it could bias our findings towards zero. That is, assuming that people who actually moved (and thus are not captured in our data) would also have had a higher intention to leave before their move, our *conditional* local average treatment effect would under-estimate the true effect of staff reallocations. Even so, Figure B.4 illustrates that our results arise similarly when each administrative unit is dropped one by one from the sample. This offers suggestive evidence that differences in mobility across administrative units may not have a large effect on our findings.

**Figure B.1: Excluding only extreme outliers - Commission role in Europe**



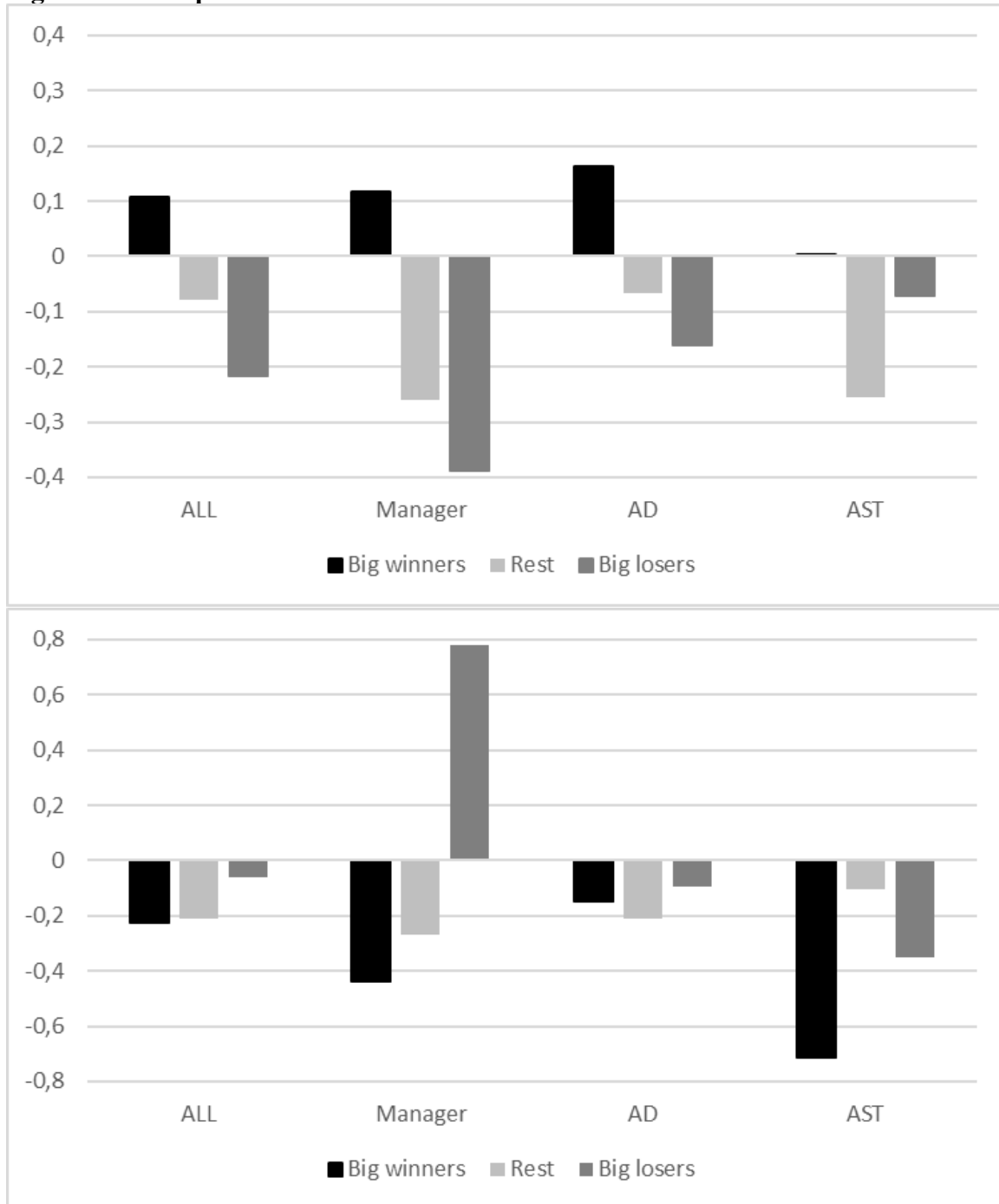
Notes: The dependent variable is ‘Commission role in Europe’, which represents respondents’ support for the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’), such that higher numbers indicate endorsement of a supranational power orientation in Europe. Main independent variable is percentage change in staff allocation between 2014 and 2015 interacted with a time dummy. All models exclude administrative unit gaining more than 60% of staff allocations (i.e. more than three standard deviations from the mean value). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistant-level staff, respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).

**Figure B.2: Excluding only extreme outliers – Intention to leave**



Notes: The dependent variable reflects respondents’ answer to the following statement: “I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years” (ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). Higher numbers thus indicate higher intention to leave. Main independent variable is percentage change in staff allocation between 2014 and 2015 interacted with a time dummy. All models exclude administrative unit gaining more than 60% of staff allocations (i.e. more than three standard deviations from the mean value). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistant-level staff, respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).

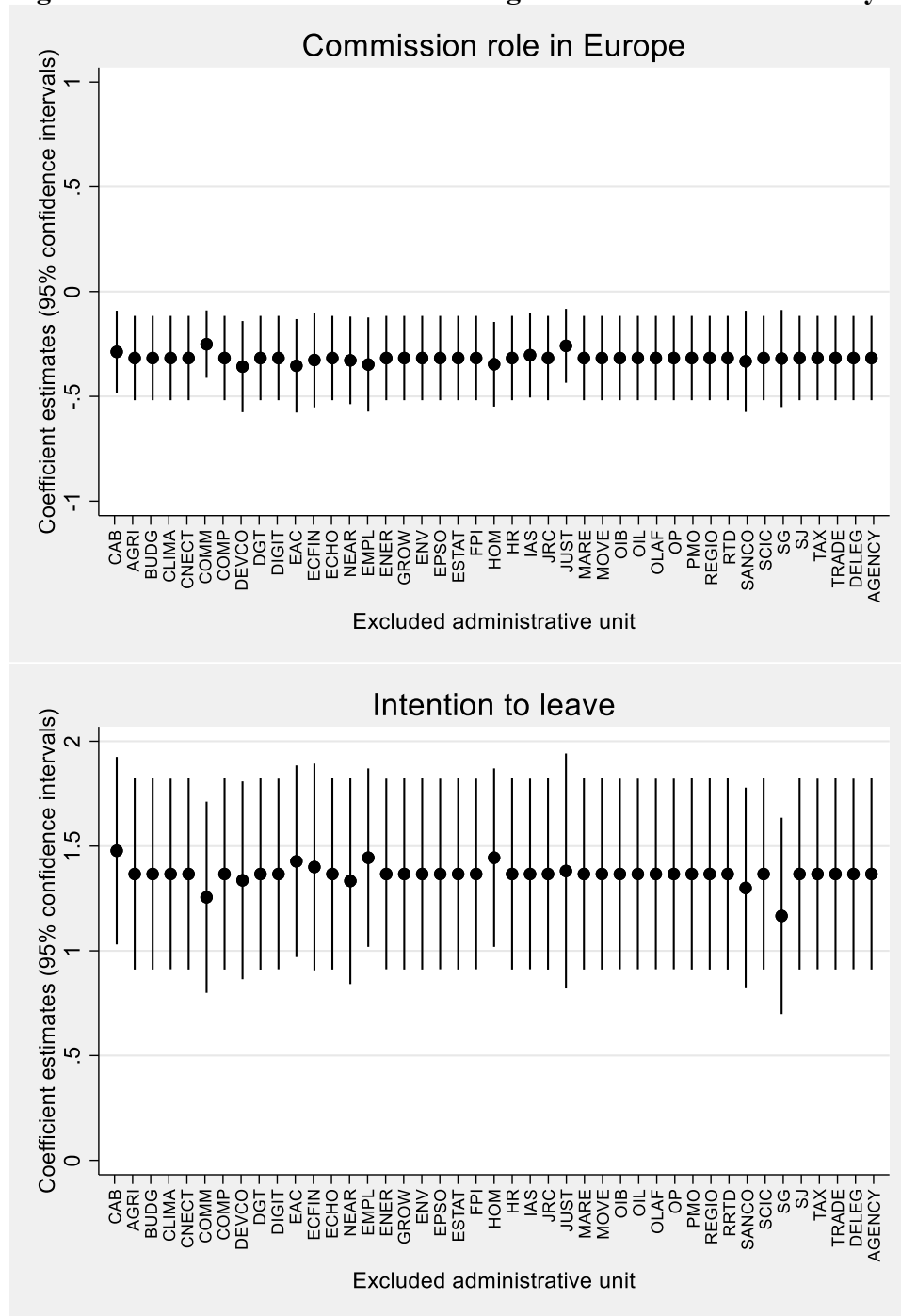
**Figure B.3: Graphical illustration of difference-in-means t-tests**



Note: The dependent variable in the top panel is ‘*Commission role in Europe*’, which represents respondents’ views about the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’). The dependent variable in the bottom panel reflects respondents’ answer to the following statement: “I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years” (ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). In both panels, we report on three groups of respondents. The first work in administrative units gaining 5% or more in staff allocations (‘Big winners’), the second work in administrative units neither gaining nor losing 5% or more in staff allocations (‘Rest’), and the third work in administrative units losing 5% or more in staff allocations (‘Big losers’). AD and AST refer to administrators and assistant-level staff, respectively (see [https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply\\_en](https://epso.europa.eu/how-to-apply_en)).



**Figure B.4: Robustness check excluding administrative units one by one**



Note: The top panel of the figure displays coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals from re-estimating column 1 in the top panel of Table 1. The bottom panel of the figure displays coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals from re-estimating column 2 in the bottom panel of Table 1. In both cases, we drop administrative units one by one. The dependent variable in the top panel is ‘*Commission role in Europe*’, which represents respondents’ views about the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’). The dependent variable in the bottom panel reflects respondents’ answer to the following statement: “I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years” (ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). The main independent variable displayed in the figure is the interaction between *Wave2018* and *Resource LOSS*, which equals 1 for respondents in an administrative unit losing 5% or more in staff allocations. The reference category are respondents in an administrative unit gaining 5% or more in staff allocations. All models include a full set of individual fixed effects.

**Table B.1: Differentiating winners and losers (5% cut-off)**

	All staff (1)	Managers (2)	Administrators (3)	Assistant (4)
<i>Panel I: Commission role in Europe</i>				
Wave2018	0.100 (0.99)	0.050 (0.49)	0.152 (1.50)	-0.083 (-0.24)
Resource SAME * Wave2018	-0.184 * (1.71)	-0.185 (-1.24)	-0.213 * (-1.93)	-0.173 (-0.48)
Resource LOSS * Wave2018	-0.317 ** (-2.29)	-0.550 *** (-3.92)	-0.294 ** (-2.04)	-0.031 (-0.08)
N	1221	130	917	304
R <sup>2</sup>	0.018	0.134	0.013	0.055
<i>Panel II: Intentions to leave</i>				
Wave2018	-0.211 * (-1.92)	-0.700 *** (-4.28)	-0.150 (-0.95)	-0.667 (-1.03)
Resource SAME * Wave2018	0.006 (0.05)	0.388 (1.22)	-0.036 (-0.21)	0.561 (0.85)
Resource LOSS * Wave2018	0.150 (0.94)	1.367 *** (6.14)	0.090 (0.42)	0.333 (0.48)
N	1152	124	864	288
R <sup>2</sup>	0.021	0.144	0.016	0.040

Note: The dependent variable in Panel I is ‘*Commission role in Europe*’, which represents respondents’ views about the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’). The dependent variable in Panel II reflects respondents’ answer to the following statement: ‘I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years’ (ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). ‘*Resource SAME*’ is an indicator variable equal to 1 for respondents in an administrative unit neither gaining nor losing 5% or more in staff allocations. ‘*Resource LOSS*’ is an indicator variable equal to 1 for respondents in an administrative unit losing 5% or more in staff allocations. The reference category thus are respondents in an administrative unit gaining 5% or more in staff allocations. All models include a full set of individual fixed effects. t-values based on standard errors clustered at the administrative unit level between brackets. \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1.

**Table B.2: Differentiating winners and losers (10% cut-off)**

	All staff (1)	Managers (2)	Administrators (3)	Assistant (4)
<i>Panel I: Support for key organizational aims</i>				
Wave2018	0.131 (1.16)	0.056 (0.50)	0.160 (1.38)	-0.083 (-0.24)
Resource SAME * Wave2018	-0.230 * (-1.93)	-0.279 * (-1.87)	-0.228 * (1.84)	-0.101 (-0.81)
Resource LOSS * Wave2018	-0.227 (-1.31)	-0.306 ** (-2.13)	-0.191 (-1.21)	-0.488 (-0.29)
N	1221	130	917	304
R <sup>2</sup>	0.015	0.089	0.010	0.058
<i>Panel II: Intention to leave</i>				
Wave2018	-0.171 (-1.17)	-0.778 *** (-5.45)	-0.114 (-0.59)	-0.667 (-1.03)
Resource SAME * Wave2018	-0.017 (-0.11)	0.656 ** (2.31)	-0.061 (-0.30)	0.479 (0.73)
Resource LOSS * Wave2018	-0.029 (-0.14)	1.528 *** (5.46)	-0.033 (-0.14)	0.500 (0.40)
N	1152	124	864	288
R <sup>2</sup>	0.019	0.089	0.015	0.033

Note: The dependent variable in Panel I is ‘*Commission role in Europe*’, which represents respondents’ views about the College of Commissioners – rather than the Member States or European Parliament – being the key player in the EU. After recoding, answers are on a scale from 1 (‘Strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘Strongly agree’). The dependent variable in Panel II reflects respondents’ answer to the following statement: “I have seriously considered applying for a job outside the Commission in the last three years” (ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)). ‘*Resource SAME*’ is an indicator variable equal to 1 for respondents in an administrative unit neither gaining nor losing 10% or more in staff allocations. ‘*Resource LOSS*’ is an indicator variable equal to 1 for respondents in an administrative unit losing 10% or more in staff allocations. The reference category thus are respondents in an administrative unit gaining 10% or more in staff allocations. All models include a full set of individual fixed effects. t-values based on standard errors clustered at the administrative unit level between brackets. \*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \* p<0.1.