



Participation in European Agencies: Keeping Promises in Institutional Practice
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KEEPING PROMISES IN INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE

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(Thesis summary)

Participation and European agencies have become two major and highly researched topics of European governance. However, they have never been comprehensively analysed together despite the fact that participation has become a pervasive feature of agencies and the way in which they conduct their work. This thesis opens the black box of participation in European agencies and provides a thorough analytical assessment of the extent, and the manner, to which European agencies have lived up to the central promises of participation.

In this research, the pertinence of involving interested parties, and the reason why some agencies are particularly keen on developing participatory structures even in the absence of legal provisions, rests on the idea that participation may fulfil one or more of the following central promises: (i) ensure better and more informed agency outcomes, (ii) promote inclusiveness and responsiveness of agency operation, (iii) advance compliance and implementation, and (iv) enhance transparency and monitoring of agency activities and help build trust. In line with these promises, the extent and impact of participation can be crucial to agencies' ability to perform effectively, as well as to their credibility. But does participation in European agencies deliver on its promises and, thus, contribute to effective policy-making and agency credibility or is it merely an exercise in window-dressing? The promises of participation are used as an evaluative yardstick against which participation in European agencies is assessed.

In this research the various participatory arrangements existing in European agencies are investigated at both *de jure* and *de facto* level. The analysis follows an innovative and interdisciplinary approach treading so far unexplored paths. By examining agencies' rules and practices of participation, this study combines a legal and political science approach. Furthermore, it also has a broader normative significance, as it provides a contextual evaluation of participation in European agencies and an assessment of whether the agency model is well-suited for consolidating participation at the EU level.