

Public Entrepreneurs in the EU

Contact Person

Dr. Jaap Hoogenboezem

Supervising team

Prof. dr. Tannelie Blom (supervisor), Dr. Jaap Hoogenboezem (co-supervisor)

Research Theme

In the 1980s American public administration discovered the “public entrepreneur”, the non-elected civil servant who “may be defined as a person who creates or profoundly elaborates a public organization so as to alter greatly the existing pattern of scarce resources” (Lewis 1980: 9). Classical examples are J. Edgar Hoover, who single-handedly transformed a fairly innocent and powerless information agency (the Bureau Of Investigations) into a powerful law enforcement organization (the FBI), and admiral Hyman Rickover, the founder of the US nuclear submarine forces. Can people like Jean Monnet, Dirk Spierenburg, Jacques Delors or Javier Solana be seen as the ‘European counterparts’ of the Hoovers and Rickovers of American origin?

‘Supranationalism’, i.e. the assumption that the supranational institutions of the EU, and especially the European Commission, play a relatively independent and often decisive role in European decision making, has recently been defended by authors of a patently rationalist outlook, using arguments derived from transaction costs theory, rational choice institutionalism, negotiation theory, etc. (e.g. Pollack 2003; Beach 2005). What transpires from these approaches are the contours of a leadership model that may be instrumental in explaining under which conditions strategically placed administrative actors, like a Delors or Solana, may have a substantial influence on EU ‘constitutional’ politics and the overall direction of the Union’s policy program. The envisaged research project on ‘public entrepreneurs in the EU’ will have a theoretical as well as an empirical dimension. The former concerns the further development and articulation of leadership models; the empirical dimension concerns the concrete application of the leadership model on historical cases of un/successful attempts to display public entrepreneurship.