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Understanding the drivers of voluntary accountability by European Union agencies: look to the forum!

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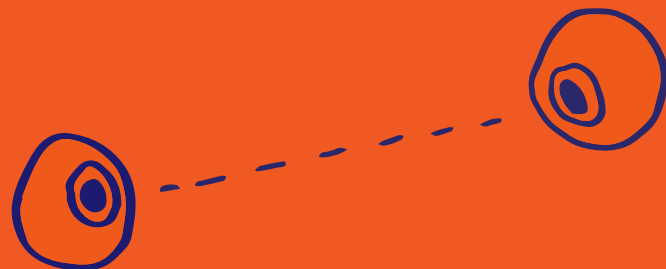
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Public agencies are increasingly explaining and justifying their conduct in ways that go beyond what is legally required. This rise of voluntary accountability in the public sector is noteworthy, especially in light of concerns about inadequate accountability safeguards in modern governance. The objective of this dissertation is to understand the motivations behind organisational accountability-seeking behaviour. Drawing from a reputational perspective on accountability, this dissertation investigates the following research question: What are the drivers of voluntary accountability? Based on a multi-method study of EU agencies, this dissertation shows that there is no “holy grail” of one dominant set of driving motivations behind voluntary accountability, although reputational considerations do emerge as a prominent force. While different mechanisms are at play, it is possible to better understand the drivers of voluntary accountability – both conceptually and in terms of motivations – by looking at the audience to whom account is rendered: the “forum” in accountability terminology. This dissertation finds that accountability-seeking motivations are intimately inter-linked to the relationship actors seek to cultivate and cannot be elucidated in abstract thereof. Hence, even though voluntary accountability by definition originates from the account-giver, the best advice to anyone seeking to understand voluntary accountability is to look to the forum!

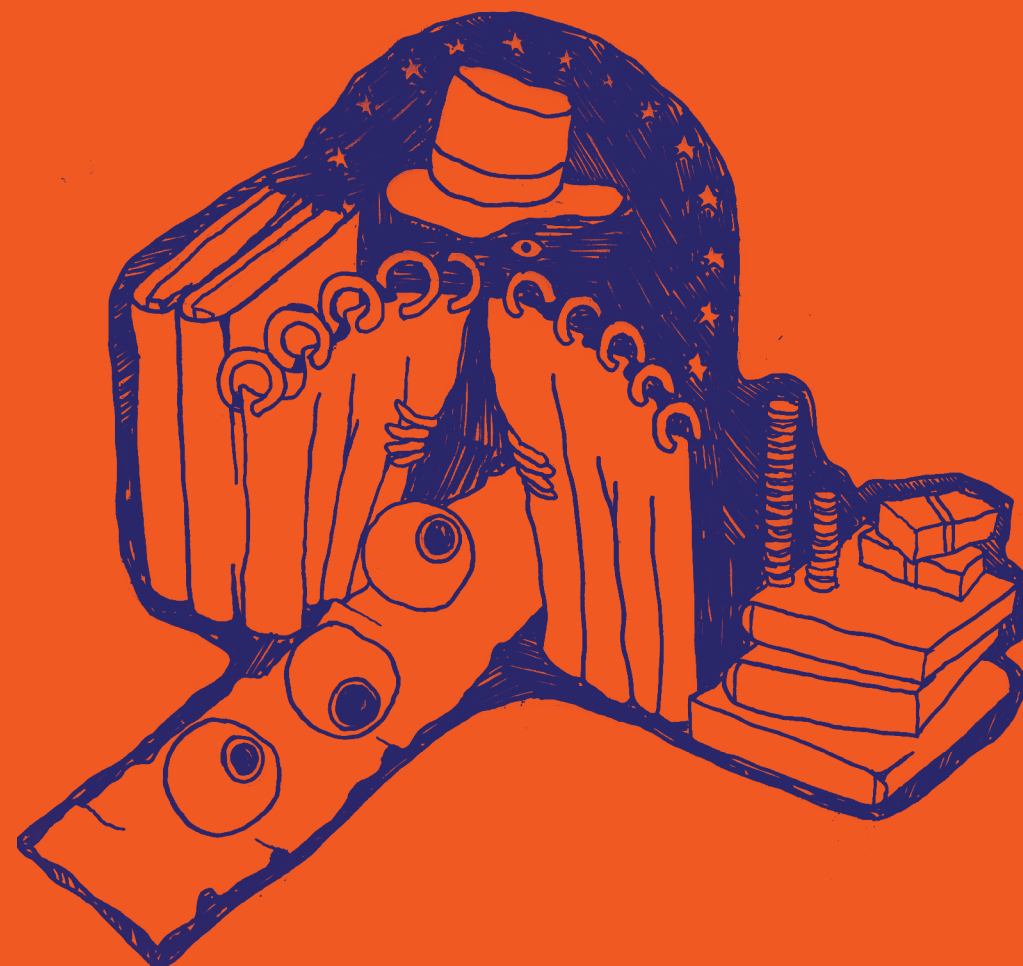


UNDERSTANDING THE DRIVERS OF VOLUNTARY ACCOUNTABILITY BY
EUROPEAN UNION AGENCIES: LOOK TO THE FORUM!

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