Triage Bureaucracy

In an era of constant policy growth (known as policy accumulation), effective policy implementation is a growing challenge for democratic governance across the globe. *Triage Bureaucracy* explores how government agencies handle expanding portfolios of rules, programs, and regulations using "policy triage" – a set of strategies for balancing limited resources across increasing implementation demands. Drawing on case studies from six diverse European countries, the authors show how organizations' vulnerability to overburdening and their ability to compensate for overload determine why policy implementation succeeds in some cases while it fails in others. *Triage Bureaucracy* offers a deeper understanding of the organizational dynamics behind effective governance and, by placing bureaucratic actors at the center of the policy process, shows why policy growth often outpaces our ability to implement it – shedding light on the consequences of an ever-expanding policy state. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

CHRISTOPH KNILL is Chair of Empirical Theories of Politics at Ludwig Maximilian University Munich. His research focuses on comparative public policy and public administration, with a thematic focus on climate, environmental, social, morality, and higher education policies.

YVES STEINEBACH is Professor at the University of Oslo. His research is located at the intersection of public policy and public administration and focuses on the effectiveness of public policies and governing institutions at the national and international levels.

DIONYS ZINK is a research fellow at Ludwig Maximilian University Munich. His work centers on organizational theory, public administration, and comparative policy analysis. He examines administrative culture, bureaucratic routines, and organizations tasked with the implementation of environmental policy.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 08:07:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009665872

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 08:07:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009665872

Triage Bureaucracy

The Organizational Challenge of Implementing Growing Policy Stocks

CHRISTOPH KNILL
Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich

YVES STEINEBACH
University of Oslo

DIONYS ZINK
Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 08:07:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009665872

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009665827

DOI: 10.1017/9781009665872

© Christoph Knill, Yves Steinebach and Dionys Zink 2026

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception of the Creative Commons
version the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781009665872 under a
Creative Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC 4.0 which permits re-use, distribution
and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes providing appropriate
credit to the original work is given and any changes made are indicated. To view a
copy of this license visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009665872

First published 2026

Cover image by Lukas Rohrbach

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-009-66582-7 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-66585-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal,
56, 1°, 28003 Madrid, Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 12 Nov 2026 at 08:07:06, subject to the
Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009665872