Political Culture and Dynamics of the European Parliament, 1979-1989

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Summary

Based on original archive sources (unpublished European Parliament documents, official publications, organisation charts, press cuttings, etc.) and a series of interviews with the key actors, who provided first-hand testimony of the events in question, this study examines the changes that took place in the European Parliament following the first European elections in June 1979. While the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage was an important democratic event that brought to a close the initial period in which Parliament functioned as a chamber of delegates, it also profoundly altered its character, composition and internal culture.

This study is divided into three main parts. The first part examines how the elected European Parliament gradually transformed itself to become a new political player in the Community's institutional set-up. Becoming an elected assembly gave it a strong democratic legitimacy, which enhanced its power in relation to the European Commission and the Council of Ministers. Parliament was able to assert itself and become more autonomous. Changes in its internal organisation soon followed. As it developed as an institution, so its activities increased, necessitating a rise in the number of staff required to run the Administration. The entry into force of the Single European Act in 1987 reinforced this direction of travel by giving new powers to the European Parliament, in particular with regard to legislation on the completion of Europe's internal market. New directorates-general were established. New countries joining the European Community brought additional requirements in the area of translation and interpreting. A new relationship was established between officials in the Secretariat and the elected Members, who were often younger and, apart from rare exceptions, were not also sitting in their national parliament at the same time. The political groups also saw their influence and staff levels rise. Lastly, a new balance was established within Parliament's principal decision-making bodies – the Bureau, the Enlarged Bureau and the College of Quaestors. While it focuses primarily on Parliament's standing parliamentary committees and political groups, this study also looks closely at the intergroups (Crocodile Club, Kangaroo Group, etc.), which enabled MEPs to maintain informal contacts and exchanges with civil society on specific subjects but also brought the issue of relations with lobbyists into the spotlight.

The second part of the study describes how, in the 1980s, a new parliamentary culture emerged in an Assembly which had become more politicised. With the election, the total number of seats rose from 198 to 410. Parliament now reflected a broad range of socio-political profiles and ambitions, with younger Members, more women and more specialisation and expertise. At the same time, it was run increasingly by politicians who were focusing their political careers on Europe. Largely unknown to the general public, MEPs became key actors in Parliament and in European politics more broadly. However, it took time to learn how to operate effectively in the European Parliament, given its specific and changing procedures, and the technical nature of law-making required further professionalisation. Over and above Parliament's procedural rules (rules of conduct, organisation of sittings, voting procedures, speaking time, etc.) and internal practices, its Members gradually brought to their work in Strasbourg a new sense of Europeans working together, despite the fact that substantial differences continued to exist between the Member States' election procedures. Notwithstanding their political and national divisions, many MEPs began to view themselves as belonging to a 'transnational parliamentary elite'. That said, the elected European Parliament's higher profile also emerged from a number of political choices. For example, it became particularly involved in areas such as a 'social Europe', regional policy and spatial planning, transport policy, gender equality, environmental policy and the questions surrounding enlargement of the European Community.

The final part of the study examines the methods Parliament used to enhance its powers and increase its influence over the process of European integration. This, for its Members, was a way of closing the Community's much-criticised democratic deficit. In order to achieve this, the Assembly focused first on the rights it already enjoyed in relation to the budget. In particular, it sought to

increase the resources allocated to the common policies. Already by December 1979, Parliament moved to take on the Commission and the Council in a battle over the Community budget, before rejecting it in 1980 and plunging the Community into a deep political and financial crisis. But Parliament's fight was also over how best, pending a revision of the Treaties, to use its supervisory powers and consultation mechanisms in connection with the Commission's legislative proposals. However, it was primarily in the area of institutional reforms that Parliament's efforts were most apparent during the first two parliamentary terms. The aim of this constitutional activism was to make the Community's decision-making structures more effective. In the period under consideration, the high point was the adoption in February 1984 of the draft Treaty establishing the European Union, under the leadership of Altiero Spinelli. Next came the fight to relaunch the European integration project, in which Parliament's focus was on the preparation of the Single European Act. This study also examines the occasional tensions with national parliaments, and with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, caused by the increased powers of Parliament. Lastly, along with the initiatives it promoted between 1979 and 1989, Parliament also developed its information policy, in relation both to the press and to European citizens.

Contents

Introduction

The first elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage were undoubtedly a key event in the history of European integration. It was two French women, Louise Weiss and Simone Veil, who gave the speeches at the inauguration of the first session of this Parliament on 17 and 18 July 1979: the former as Parliament's oldest Member, the latter as the first President of a new Parliament elected by the people of Europe. These two women's speeches to the Assembly in Strasbourg were moving and, in many respects, historic moments. Louise Weiss, journalist, writer, feminist and politician, ended her speech with these words:

'Identity, natality, legality: Europe will only recover her aura by rekindling their flames – the flames of conscience, life and law. You, the elected representatives of Europe, have tinder in your hands.'[1]

The image of Europe as a beacon of conscience, life and rights was well chosen. These words recalled the need for Europeans to focus on their common identity, promote their birth rates, and uphold human rights. Louise Weiss said that the elected parliamentarians must embody 'the moral authority of Europeans', an authority that was the foundation upon which the future of Europe would be built.

The election of Simone Veil as President of the Assembly the following day was no less moving. This Jewish woman who had survived Auschwitz, a Liberal and a former Health Minister under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, responsible for the adoption in France of a law on the right to voluntary termination of pregnancy, took the floor to stress that the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage was a moment of history:

'For this is the first time in history, a history in which we have so frequently been divided, pitted one against the other, bent on mutual destruction, that the people of Europe have together elected their delegates to a common assembly representing, in this Chamber today, more than 260 million people. [...] Whatever our political beliefs, we are all aware that this historic step, the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage, has been taken at a crucial time for the people of the Community. All its Member States are faced with three great challenges: the challenge of peace, the challenge of freedom and the challenge of prosperity, and it seems clear that they can only be met through the European dimension.'[2]

Like Louise Weiss, she too stressed the need for peace and freedom in Europe, insisting that European integration was key to protecting these values. Given what she had lived through – her personal experience of the Second World War and the Nazi atrocities – Simone Veil's words resounded through the Strasbourg Chamber like none before. For all present, it was an unforgettable moment in this first term of the directly-elected European Parliament.

It was also a moment that marked the culmination of a struggle to give the European Community greater democratic legitimacy, as the idea of electing the European Parliament by universal suffrage had accompanied the process of European integration from its origin. From the start of the European project, the negotiators of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) insisted on a parliamentary assembly which, drawing its legitimacy from the national parliaments, would oversee the High Authority. Since its first

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[1]   European Parliament, debates: speech by Louise Weiss, 17.7.1979, p. 7.

[2]   European Parliament, debates: speech by Simone Veil, 18.7.1979, p. 23.

session (from 10 to 13 September 1952), that common assembly had been working to enhance its democratic legitimacy: the effort began with its decision in 1953 to establish political groups and allocate seats in the Chamber on the basis of the political affiliation rather than nationality of its Members. Prioritising membership of the political group over nationality was key to the spectacular development that the European assembly then underwent, as it encouraged a different type of parliamentary cooperation – transnational and inspired by European rather than national interests. In a similar vein was the Members' decision to reorganise their annual session as a permanent session split into part-sessions, particularly as it gave the Assembly more time and space to work.

The Treaty of Rome itself, in 1957, confirmed the need for the European institutional architecture to include a parliamentary body. The lobbying for a single assembly for the three Communities – the ECSC, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) – sought to strengthen the role of the assembly in relation to the other Community bodies. However, the institutional triangle established at the time contained a clear imbalance against the Parliamentary Assembly, with the bodies representing the States (Council of Ministers) and the Community interests (Commission) having more weight and power than the Assembly in Strasbourg.

The initial intergovernmental mechanism, even if it subsequently moved in the direction of supranationality with the gradual extension of qualified majority voting, undoubtedly strengthened the hand of the Member States, while those in favour of a federalist Europe were irked by General de Gaulle's European projects. In any event, those projects minimised the influence of the Parliamentary Assembly. But as the Community institutions were not set in stone, the Parliamentary Assembly was able to gradually assert itself as a European player.

As early as May 1960, a report by the European Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Political Affairs and Institutional Issues – drafted by the former French negotiator for the Treaty of Rome, Maurice Faure – called for the first time for the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage (a prospect which the Rome Treaties had left open). That report recommended a proportional voting system and regional constituencies. That same year the Assembly called for the merging of the individual executive bodies to create a single Commission for the ECSC, the EEC and the EAEC. In 1962, the European Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution unilaterally proclaiming itself the 'European Parliament'. Three years later, in 1965, as part of the reform of the common agricultural policy, the Hallstein Commission called for a reorganisation of the institutions to strengthen the role of the Commission and Parliament, which was also made necessary by the shift to qualified majority voting. However, these moves were thwarted by France's desire, under General de Gaulle, to avoid any drift towards federalism.

Although the climate was unfavourable for those who wished to increase the institutional weight of the European Parliament within the European Community, it did not prevent the Community from winning the initial battle by gaining non-compulsory budgetary powers and the right to reject the Community budget as a whole, through the Treaties of Luxembourg in 1970 and Brussels in 1975. This marked the start of the European Parliament's battle to increase its powers as soon as it was elected by universal suffrage.

At the Paris Summit in December 1974, the Heads of State and Government – at the initiative of the young French President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and the new German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt – proposed the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage. This was a first major breakthrough for Parliament. Moreover, the 1975 Tindemans report

recognised that election by universal suffrage would increase the powers and role of a Community-based Europe. It would give Parliament the legitimacy it had lacked to that point, which it could invoke to exert greater influence on the process of European integration. But while the report did not take a position on the legislative powers to be granted to the now elected Parliament, other political figures were already recognising its major role. As early as 1975, Altiero Spinelli wanted to give it a constituent role. In 1976, the idea was taken up in Brussels by Willy Brandt. The former German Chancellor said that Parliament had to be 'the voice of the Europe. […] It will therefore have to regard itself as Europe's permanent assembly.' For these leaders there was no doubt that a Parliament elected by universal suffrage would only accelerate the unification process in Europe and lead to a federal union. Others did not share their enthusiasm. While the French Communist leaders and the Gaullists opposed what they saw as a slippery slope,[3] it was a surprise to read this blistering attack from the pen of the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre: 'The election of a European Parliament by universal suffrage [...] is nothing other than a de facto abdication in the face of American strategy and pressure, an abdication which will lead directly to Europe becoming a German proconsulate.'

However, a counterweight to the progress made by the European Parliament was the establishment of the European Council (also provided for by the Paris Summit), which gave further weight to the Member States in the Community set-up. New battles lay ahead. The 1976 legislation laying down the arrangements for the European elections by universal suffrage marked a step towards the democratisation of the European Community.[4] Taking place every five years from 1979, the elections would be organised on a national basis. This was the framework within which the political forces would compete at the ballot box and the election procedures and constituencies would be drawn up. In other words, there would be no uniformity, either in terms of the date of the ballot, the size of the constituencies or the way in which candidates on national lists were selected to become MEPs. Nevertheless, the European elections offered the potential for a restructuring of political parties in a more European spirit and the opening up of a space for European political debate, as well as the prospect of new powers for Parliament. Parliament's new-found legitimacy enabled it to be more active in responding to citizens' requests, whether submitted by petitioners or interest groups or even through the press. It could stand up to the other institutions and realign the way it functioned, to make the European Community less technocratic and less distant from the aspirations of ordinary people. Could it become a true Parliament along the lines of national parliaments? Over the preceding decades it had gained political oversight over the Commission, then budgetary power in the 1970s. However, much remained to be done for it to become a parliament in the sense of a legislative and democratic oversight body. Following the vote in 1979, the first terms of the elected Parliament would be decisive; they would set the benchmark and show what could be achieved.[5] Would they succeed in 'parliamentarising' the European Community?

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[3] In an interview published in the French daily newspaper *Le Monde* on 2 July 1977, Michel Debré, a former Prime Minister under General de Gaulle, said: 'In view of the campaigns carried out in various Community countries calling for an abusive extension of the powers of the European Assembly, the absence of safeguards poses the most serious threats to the independence of France and the interests of the French people.'

[4] B. Rittberger, '"No integration without representation!" European integration, parliamentary democracy and two forgotten Communities', in *Journal of European Public Policy,* No 13, 2006, pp. 1211-1229.

[5] For a thought-provoking insight into these issues, see S. Kahn, 'Le Parlement européen est-il un ODHNI (objet démocratique et historique non identifié) ?', in *Histoire@Politique,* 2009/2, No 8, 14 p. Another long-term approach is taken in M. Abélès, 'Construction européenne, démocratie et historicité', in *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire,* 2013/1, No 117, pp. 57-68.

This historical study is not starting from scratch. A number of works have already been published on the subject of the European Parliament: for example, those by Martin Westlake (1994), Richard Corbett (1998 and 2007), Berthold Rittberger (2005), Yves Deloye (2008), Olivier Costa (2001 and 2011), David Judge and David Earnshaw (2008) and Yves Mény (2009), as well as the works of Antonin Cohen, Ana-Cristina L. Knudsen and Wolfgang Wessels. All these works do indeed have a political and legal dimension, but for the most part they are not based on primary sources or archives. There are also a number of studies by historians to draw on (for example, the 2007 joint work by Marie-Thérèse Bitsch, Wilfried Loch and Charles Barthel), which devote a number of passages to the European Parliament's role in European integration. The first attempt at a more complete study taking a historical approach was the work by Paula Scalingi (1980), and then more recently the work by Julian Priestley (2008). However, no comprehensive historical study has yet been devoted to the history of the European Parliament. Our study looking at the period 1979-1989 is based primarily on original sources: the European Parliament's historical archives, oral sources (interviews) and private collections (personal archives and those of political parties). Using these new and thus far little-used sources, we hope to bring a new approach to examining the features of a European Parliament elected by universal suffrage, by assessing those features in comparison with the Assembly as it was previously. The study highlights three major effects: election by universal suffrage gave the European Parliament legitimacy and consequently made it a key political player in the European integration process; by virtue of its new status, the European Parliament gradually adopted ways of operating and expressing itself which enabled a parliamentary culture to emerge that was different to that of the earlier Assembly and of the national parliaments; elected by the people of Europe, this Parliament now gave voice to Europe's citizens, and therefore had to assert itself against the other Community institutions.

1. PART ONE

The European Parliament elected by universal suffrage: a new institutional player?

From the outset, the organisational structures established to pursue European integration incorporated a parliamentary institution, but they were originally emanations of the States that had set up the organisations concerned. The power to appoint members was vested primarily in national parliaments, whether one considers the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly (where the situation still remains the same today), the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) or the European Parliamentary Assembly (later renamed the European Parliament). The election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage changed the relationship between the institution and the source of its legitimacy.[6] From that point, it directly represented the people of Europe, and – despite the persistence of electoral systems based on nationwide constituencies, and although disparate methods were used to choose its Members – Parliament de facto acquired a new political dimension. The greater autonomy of the Strasbourg Assembly, derived from its character as an elected body, was apparent from its politicisation. This translated into new organisational arrangements, which redefined the place of the Administration in relation to Members. It was also reflected in the growing role of political parties, whose organisation was Europeanised, leading to the emergence of transnational groupings.[7] Debate among the factions representing them became the focus of activity at Parliament, and the compromises reached between them were adopted as Parliament's position on European issues. Therefore, as in any parliamentary assembly, the evolution of the balance of power between the main political groupings determined the choices made, although, in view of the way in which the European Community functioned, efforts to arrive at compromises between opposing political viewpoints were more common than in national parliaments, partly also because there was no majority wedded to a particular political philosophy.

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[6] O. Costa and N. Brack, 'The Role of the European Parliament in Europe's Integration', in O. Costa, S. Stavridis and C. Dri (ed.), *Parliaments, Regional Integrations and Globalization. The role of international parliamentary institutions,* Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2013, pp. 45-69.

[7] A. Kreppel, *The European Parliament and Supranational Party System,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 91.

Chapter 1: A new organisation

The elected Parliament had more Members than its predecessors. It needed to reorganise itself substantially, as from now on it was no longer the Administration that took centre stage within the system but Members, whose new-found legitimacy prompted them, step by step, to decide and refine their working methods. It was Members who elected their own President, who organised Parliament's governing bodies and who made arrangements for the institution's management. The President, Bureau, Enlarged Bureau, Quaestors and Secretariat organised the various proceedings of the European Parliament, represented the institution and managed its Administration. Members, meanwhile, formed political groups and parliamentary committees, as in any democratic assembly. It was around these two types of internal body that their work as Members essentially revolved.

1.1 – Elections by direct universal suffrage[8]

The issue of elections by universal suffrage was not new. It had already been the subject of numerous discussions in the European Parliament, and a first convention for direct elections was proposed as early as 1960 by the Belgian Socialist Fernand Dehousse, albeit without success. Following the launch of the first proposal for a European Union at the Paris Summit in 1972, the issue soon returned to the agenda. In May 1973, the Bureau of the European Parliament instructed the Political Affairs Committee to draw up a report and appointed the Dutch Labour Party member Schelto Patijn as rapporteur. He drew up a new draft convention, which he presented in January 1975.[9] The European Parliament did its best to secure its acceptance, but it was not until 20 September 1976 that the Council signed the draft, paving the way for elections by direct universal suffrage.

Photo 1: On 14 January 1975, the European Parliament adopts a resolution backing the conclusions of a report presented by Schelto Patijn MEP, on behalf of the Political Affairs Committee, calling for its Members to be elected by direct universal suffrage.

From the summer of 1978, there was a growing discussion regarding the organisation of the elections: the date, the voting arrangements,

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[8]   On this subject, see 'Les élections directes pour le Parlement européen', in *Courrier hedomadaire du CRISP*, 1979/15, No 840-841, pp. 1-48.

[9]   European Parliament, Patijn report (doc. 368/74), 13.1.1975.

the political campaign and the counting of votes were all matters that concerned Members. They wanted to make the elections a major public event: 'Every week, or every fortnight, the people of Europe should be encouraged, before or after the TV news, to go to the polls to vote in the European elections from 7 to 10 June next year,' said a Dutch parliamentarian in 1978.[10] Establishing the principle of European elections was also about creating a new habit for voters in Europe: that of regular European elections, as this parliamentarian observed: 'This means that we are now deciding not only the date of the European elections in 1979, but also those of all the European elections that will take place later, during the next hundred years, so after 1979 there will be 1984, and after 1984, 1989'.[11] Some of them were already dreaming of a European public forum with a prime role for the media: 'On the evening of Sunday, 10 June, after polling in the European elections has closed, we can look forward to seeing a high-profile transnational TV programme in which the results will be announced simultaneously in all member countries'.[12] However, the fact is that the first European elections by universal suffrage did not galvanise the masses into rushing to the polling booths, even if, at the formal sitting in July 1979, parliamentarians proudly proclaimed: 'You have participated in historic elections, in which more than 100 million voters took part, from the Atlantic to the central plain of Europe and from the Baltic to the shores of the Mediterranean'.[13] The average turnout in 1979 was only 62.5%. So what accounted for this gap between the heady expectations and the actual outcome of the elections?

First of all, there was no harmonisation between the Member States of the European Community in terms of the way in which the elections were organised. Each Member State had organised the elections according to its national traditions. In these circumstances, it was difficult to raise the profile of the European Parliament. Thus, while most countries had opted for proportional representation, the British adhered to their traditional 'first past the post' system. The number of constituencies also varied considerably between countries (France, Denmark, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal each comprised a single constituency; in Belgium there were three electoral colleges; in Germany, the entire national territory was a single constituency; Italy had five constituencies, etc.); the age at which people became eligible to vote ranged from 18 to 25. In some countries, such as Luxembourg and Ireland, preferential voting was possible, while in most other countries list systems were used.[14] This diversity inevitably had an impact on the outcome of the elections. For example, in the United Kingdom, by winning 50% of the votes, the Conservatives managed to secure 60 of the 78 seats allocated to the country. In Germany and France, the 5% threshold below which no seat could be won eliminated small political groupings.

Another problem with the 1979 elections was the retention of the principle of the dual mandate authorised by the 1976 Brussels Act, which laid down the procedures for the holding of direct elections by universal suffrage. A large proportion of those elected to the European Parliament in 1979 were national MPs, who saw the post of MEP as a useful complement to their national role. In 1979, more than 30% of MEPs held dual mandates, although the proportion varied according to nationality: nearly 80% of Irish, Belgian and Luxembourgish MEPs held dual mandates, whereas the same was true of only 30% of German, Italian and French Members, and the figure for the Danes was just 20%. From this point of view, those

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[10]   European Parliament, debates, Berkouwer, 4.7.1978, p. 70.

[11]   European Parliament, debates, Patjin, 4.7.1978, p. 65.

[12]   European Parliament, debates, Patjin, 17.1.1979, p. 164.

[13]   European Parliament, debates, Lynch, 18.7.1979, p. 27.

[14]   O. Costa and F. Saint Martin, *Le Parlement européen*, Paris, La Documentation française, 2009, p. 14.

who came top of the class in Europe were the British and the Dutch, as only 11-12% of their countries' MEPs held dual mandates.[15] These percentages show that, although the European Parliament's election by universal suffrage gave the institution a new legitimacy, its Members themselves did not yet consider it equivalent to a national parliament in terms of reputation and prestige. It is true that the European Parliament had the advantage of being an international institution, but it was remote from domestic politics and from opportunities for a political career within a national political party. In addition, in some Member States the European Parliament had the reputation of being 'a travelling circus'.[16]

European voters did not regard the elections by universal suffrage as a major event. Despite the intensive election campaign that had been conducted, it was rather the involvement of a few high-profile politicians that caught the eye, such as Jacques Chirac or Michel Debré in France or Willy Brandt in Germany, or the star of the election campaign

Photo 2: In June 1979, following the first European elections the European Parliament becomes the first international assembly to be elected by direct universal suffrage.

of the Christian Social Union (CSU), Otto von Habsburg, the oldest son of the last Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary.[17]

The vagaries of this first political campaign and the results of the elections demonstrated that the European Parliament was engaged in a long-term process to gain new institutional powers and greater public recognition. Proof of this political struggle, which began with the elections by direct universal suffrage, can be seen in the fact that Ms Veil, 'in her [inaugural] speech, mentioned a European Parliament 20 times and an Assembly just 19 times'.[18] The French newspaper *Le Monde* reported on 20 July 1979: 'In using the word "Parliament", Ms Veil, who

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[15] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, Hachette, Paris, 1992, pp. 72-73.

[16] B. Wassenberg, *Les positions françaises et allemandes devant l'Union politique à partir de 1979,* Mémoire de Diplôme d'études approfondies, Strasbourg, 1992, p. 188.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 99.

[18] E. Gazzo, 'Politische Aspekte der ersten europäischen Direktwahl', in *Europa-Archiv 16,* 1979, p. 500.

aspires to act as President on behalf of the whole Assembly, has made it clear that she is among those who do not seek to restrict the role of the parliamentary institution'.[19]

Moreover, what could be more iconoclastic than electing a woman (Simone Veil) as President of a new institution? The new President was a symbolic choice from more than one point of view. Firstly, she was a woman in a political world made up of parliamentary assemblies that were dominated and presided over by men; second, she was also a survivor of the Holocaust. While France's President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing had supported her candidacy, the media also welcomed the 'reconciliation between France and Germany and between Europe's Christians and Jews' symbolised by Simone Veil's election to the highest office in the Strasbourg Parliament. This election then raised Parliament's profile, particularly bearing in mind that the inaugural speech to the newly-elected Assembly was itself given by another leading protagonist of European integration – and another woman –, Louise Weiss. These were undeniably eye-catching features of the new Parliament. But the new President and elected Members found themselves condemned to operate in something of a talking shop, given that they did not possess powers comparable to those of other elected parliaments. However, they were not prepared to accept that the European Parliament should remain so weak in perpetuity.

On the basis of the new composition of the European Parliament after its election, a power struggle began with the aim of increasing the prerogatives of the Assembly both within the Community's institutional architecture and in relation to the outside world, but also with the aim of gaining greater recognition from the people of Europe.[20]

***At the European Parliament, Members continued to push for more uniform electoral procedures. During the first parliamentary term (1979-1984), the Committee on Political Affairs tried to devise a system that would take account of the reality of the votes, while also drawing on territorial principles. The committee's French rapporteur, Jean Seitlinger, a Member of the Social Democratic Centre party (CDS), proposed two options: either a system similar to the one used by the Germans for the election of the Bundestag or votes within constituencies, each of which would elect its Member under a system of proportional representation, using lists.[21] In 1981, Parliament opted for the first solution, but backtracked when it realised the practical difficulty of applying the German system at Community level. Finally, proportional representation using regional constituencies was endorsed as the solution. However, this proposal was vetoed in the Council by the British. In 1984, it was then decided to maintain the status quo.[22]

Turnout in the second European elections (59%) was even lower than in 1979. European public opinion was in principle favourable towards Europe, but people were not inspired by the European election campaign, although political parties made efforts to select well-known individuals as candidates, in order to attract the attention of the public and the electorate.[23] According to the Secretary-General of the European Parliament, Enrico Vinci, this was essential in order for Parliament to become well known: 'It is very important for us to have politicians in this Parliament who are well known at national level. The presence of men such as Brandt in

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[19] *Le Monde,* 20.7.1979.

[20] W. Wessels, 'Die Europäische Direktwahl als Motor politischen Wandels', in *Europa-Archiv 24*, 1978, pp. 783-786.

[21] European Parliament, Seitlinger report (doc. 988/81), 10.2.1982.

[22] European Parliament, debates, 13.10.1984, p. 262.

[23] M. Libera, S. Schirmann and B. Wassenberg (ed.), *Abstentionnisme, euroscepticisme et anti-européisme dans les élections européennes de 1979 à nos jours,* Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016, 239 p.

the first few years, and of Giscard d'Estaing, Craxi and Colombo, promotes the influence of the institution'.[24]

The Parliament that was elected in 1984 continued to work towards a more uniform voting system. This time it mandated a German Member of the CSU, Reinhold Bocklet, to make proposals to this end. Presented to the Committee on Political Affairs in 1986, the Bocklet report called for the uniform application within the European Community of the system of proportional representation, but did not express any preference for either national or regional constituencies. However, the flimsy majority by which the committee approved these proposals prompted the European Parliament to set up an intergroup, which advocated a system of proportional representation based on regional constituencies. However, to avoid a debate which would have demonstrated the inability of the Twelve to resolve a major institutional problem, these proposals were never put to the vote in Parliament.[25] The Parliament of 1989 was therefore elected on the same basis as that of 1979.

During the second parliamentary term, the number of Members with dual mandates fell to 6%, most of them French or Italian. Thus the view seemed to be steadily gaining ground that Members of the European Parliament should not simultaneously be members of other parliaments. This was also indicative of the development of a genuine new profession of 'Member of the European Parliament', the contours of which began to emerge from 1979 onwards and which was further refined during the subsequent parliamentary terms.[26]

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[24]   M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.*, p. 91.

[25]   European Parliament, Bocklet report for the Political Affairs Committee on a proposal for a uniform electoral procedure for the election of Members of the European Parliament (doc. 1/85), 22.3.1985.

[26]   See Y. Deloye (dir.), *Dictionnaire des élections européennes,* Paris, Economica, 2005, 705 p.

1.2 – The President, the President's private office and the organisation of the Secretariat[27]

Photo 3: On 17 July 1979, Simone Veil is elected President of the European Parliament.

Following the election of Simone Veil as President of the European Parliament, the post of President evolved due to the growing legitimacy conferred by election by universal suffrage. The new President had certain prerogatives, and her successors gained more. She presided in the traditional manner over plenary sittings, as well as meetings of the Bureau and the Enlarged Bureau. She enforced compliance with the Rules of Procedure and directed all the institution's activities. Furthermore, her new-found legitimacy increased the importance of her representative functions. The Presidents of the European Parliament have traditionally represented it in relation with the other European institutions. After being elected, the President addresses the other institutions and, as was made clear at the 1985 Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), attends meetings of Ministers. After 1979, however, the post of President also acquired real international status. European Parliament Presidents were often received in third countries with the same honours as heads of state, and they succeeded in using their prestigious position to establish their authority within the institutional set-up of the Community. In addition, documents falling within the remit of the Strasbourg institution gained official force by dint of being signed by the President. In carrying out their many tasks, Presidents were assisted by their private offices, the Vice-Presidents and senior administrative bodies.

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[27]   Although their work does not directly cover the period studied, some interesting observations about the bodies managing the European Parliament may be found in O. Costa and F. Saint Martin, *Le Parlement européen, op.cit.,* in particular on pp. 70 et seq.

The most striking thing about the private office in the period 1979-1989 is the small size of its staff. The office of Piet Dankert comprised of nine members, and that of Pierre Pflimlin seven when he took office. He increased it to nine members in 1985. Lord Plumb had the same number. Former Dutch MEP Florus Wijsenbeek, who was Head of the President's private office in 1973, commented: 'I was the first one to hire a deputy. Nowadays the private office has around 100 staff, reflecting the delusions of grandeur prevailing at Parliament today'.[28]

Other characteristics can be identified which typified these various private offices in the period studied. The person in charge – the President's closest collaborator, therefore – was often a national of the same Member State as the President. Simone Veil was assisted by a French diplomat, François Scheer. Piet Dankert by Gerhard van den Berge. Pflimlin was an exception: the director of his private office was the Italian Enrico Vinci. However, Vinci remained in Luxembourg and Pflimlin also relied on a trusted adviser, Pascal Fontaine, whom he appointed head of his private office and whom he required to be based in Strasbourg. The teams working at the private office were likewise dominated by staff of the same nationality as the President: there were four Dutch nationals in a team of nine working for Piet Dankert; five French nationals in the first private office appointed by Pierre Pflimlin, then six French nationals out of a total of nine staff following the reorganisation of the office in 1985. Working in the private office often served as a launchpad for a political career: this was the case for François Bayrou, an adviser to Pierre Pflimlin from 1984 to 1986. But for others, accepting a post at the European Parliament could also be seen as a setback in their career. Thus when François Scheer, who had been working at the Community's Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper), learned that he was being appointed to the private office of Simone Veil at the European Parliament, he was disappointed, because the office was regarded as being insignificant in the world of diplomacy. Moreover, having had no previous parliamentary experience, he admitted: 'I did not want to go there'.[29] However, his period of employment in the private office did not subsequently prevent him from pursing a high-flying career at national level: he became Secretary-General at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs before being appointed France's Ambassador to Germany. Some private-office staff later progressed to plumb jobs in the European Parliament's Administration. Paul Collowald, Pflimlin's press officer, later ran the institution's press and communication service. François Brunagel later became Parliament's Head of Protocol. As for Enrico Vinci, in 1986 he became Secretary-General of the European Parliament. Indeed, he simultaneously managed both Pflimlin's private office, the Registry and the general services of the institution.[30]

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[28] Interview with Florus Wijsenbeek, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[29] Interview with François Scheer, Paris, 22 May 2018.

[30] In his interview with us, François Brunagel repeatedly stressed how small Presidents' private offices were, which was particularly true of the offices of Pflimlin and Plumb, to which he belonged. Information about staff numbers in the President's private offices and the composition of their staff can be found in the European Parliament's historical archives, where establishment plans can be found bearing the titles *Organisation des services du parlement européen, 1979, 1984, 1984 bis, 1985, 1985 bis, 1986'*. They also contain the corresponding information concerning the Secretariat and the Directorates-General.

Photo 4: Meeting of the Enlarged Bureau of the European Parliament in Strasbourg in the late 1980s.

The President of Parliament was also assisted by the Vice-Presidents and by the governing bodies of the European Parliament. The Vice-Presidents, who deputised for the President when he or she was absent or otherwise engaged, were members of Parliament's Bureau, like the President. So were the Quaestors, who were elected by the Assembly. The President's powers ranged from establishing the institution's budget to its administrative organisation and the deployment of staff. The Quaestors were more particularly responsible for the 'well-being' of Members, as they dealt with 'administrative and financial tasks' directly concerning them. Within the Bureau, decisions were taken by majority vote, with the President having the casting vote. The Quaestors had only an advisory vote. A more important body was the Enlarged Bureau. Composed of the President and the chairs of the political groups, this body not only scheduled Parliament's work but also had political powers. It defined the sphere of competence of the committees and their composition, and played a part in defining relations with the other Community institutions as well as with third countries. Relations with the parliaments of the Member States were also debated within it. Last but not least, it adopted the agenda for plenary part-sessions. This meant that, in these two bodies (the Bureau and the Enlarged Bureau), the issue of balance was sensitive. Two types of balance were generally maintained: national representation and political representation. The President ensured that there was at least one Member from each Member State in the governing bodies, as well as a representative of each political outlook. So far as possible, efforts were also made to reach a consensus, rather than voting in cases where a national position or the position of a parliamentary group would be liable to find itself in the minority. This was a particularly sensitive issue at the bi-monthly meetings of the Enlarged Bureau, which received recommendations from an informal body, a conference of committee chairs. It put forward opinions about the plenary agenda and the work of the committees. The growing influence of the Enlarged Bureau during the first two parliamentary terms, and its usefulness in helping to ensure the smooth running of the institution, were recognised after the Maastricht Treaty, when the 1993 Rules of Procedure turned it into a Conference of Presidents, consisting solely of the President and the chairs of the political groups. These conferences enabled Parliament to avoid too much sectoralisation of its activities and competition between committees or directorates.[31] These various bodies provided interfaces, serving as tools to promote the overall coherence of the positions adopted by the Strasbourg institution. The election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage, and the enhancement and development of its powers, rendering it increasingly autonomous, made the role of the governing bodies around the President more powerful. They bore responsibility

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[31]   See O. Costa and F. Saint Martin, *Le Parlement européen, op.cit.,* p. 73.

for the institution's political and administrative coherence. They enabled the European Parliament to assert itself against the other Community institutions, raised its profile vis-à-vis both the Member States and third countries, and resulted in Parliament's organisation more closely resembling that of national parliaments. Ultimately, the growing powers of the central bodies guaranteed the Assembly's legitimacy.[32] But that was not without its problems, in particular because decision-making within these deliberative bodies was mostly consensual.[33] There was a risk that pluralism might fall by the wayside, despite being the prime precondition for a political assembly. By adopting or working towards common positions, Members ran the risk of not being listened to by the general public, who may have felt that the Assembly did not represent their views, and that the media too did not pay sufficient attention to those positions.

The 1979 elections changed the balance between politicians and administrators. Made up of national parliamentarians meeting occasionally, with basically just a consultative role to play, the Assembly traditionally relied heavily on the Administration, which maintained the continuity and, above all, the coherence of the institution. The Secretary-General was its cornerstone. The 1979 elections significantly altered this state of affairs. Parliament began to work on a continuous basis, and its members successfully seized their rightful prerogatives. Their way of working, their organisation, the need to understand the complexity of European issues, prompted them to seek an Administration that met these needs. For example, agreeing to work in all the official languages of the European Community required a large number of translators and interpreters. The dispersal of the places of work between Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg was another source of new administrative needs. In addition, Members needed information, analyses and studies on the European topics that they were required – and that they wished – to consider, and they expected the Administration to meet these needs too. The elected Parliament was also not prepared to accept that it should be endowed with fewer resources than the other Community institutions, particularly the European Commission. A larger administrative apparatus was therefore needed in order for the newly elected Parliament to function properly. It was also essential to organise it so that Members could carry out their duties as effectively as possible. The selection of the Secretary-General, the assignment of his or her duties and the organisation of the Secretariat were therefore vital aspects.[34]

Two Secretaries-General dominated the first two terms of the elected Parliament: Hans-Joachim Opitz (1979-1986), a German, and Enrico Vinci (from 1986), an Italian. What they had in common was a strong political base and careers ranging from activism and political office to administrative responsibilities, both at national and at European level. Attached directly to the Secretary-General was the private office and a few other units essential to his or her work. Taking as an example the Secretariat as it existed at the time of Hans-Joachim Opitz, his organisation was based on four individuals who made up his private office and five other people, two of whom were responsible for financial control and two for the secretariat of the College of Quaestors. The fifth person was in charge of security. In 1985, this team was expanded, with the addition of a methods and organisation service, comprising two officials.

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[32] N. Brack, O. Costa and C. Dri, 'Le Parlement européen à la recherche de l'efficacité législative. Une analyse des évolutions de son organisation', in *Cahiers de recherche politique de Bruges,* No 39, January 2015.

[33] P. Settembri, 'Is the European Parliament competitive or consensual…' "and why bother"?'. Presentation to the Federal Trust workshop 'The European Parliament and the European Political Space', London, 2006.

[34] On this subject, see also M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.,* particularly Chapter VI, 'Les coulisses du Parlement', p. 247.

Altogether, there were about 10 people in Enrico Vinci's team when he was Secretary-General, slightly more than were assigned to the President's private office. It should be added that this team was multinational, Opitz having French, Italian, Dutch, British and Belgian people around him, for example. Vinci's arrival did not result in any departure from this tradition: on the contrary, Spanish staff joined his team after 1986. The Secretariat performed a number of tasks. The Registry, logistics, expert advice for Members and external relations fell within its remit. In carrying out its tasks, it was assisted by the Directorates-General, of which there were five until 1986 and six thereafter.

1979-1986	From 1986 onwards
DG 1 – Registry and General Services	DG 1 – Registry
DG 2 – Committees and Delegations	DG 2 – Committees and Delegations
DG 3 – Information and Public Relations	DG 3 – Information and Public Relations
DG 4 – Administration, Personnel and Finance	DG 4 – Research
DG 5 – Research and Documentation	DG 5 – Personnel, Budget and Finance
	DG 6 – Administration

The amount of work being done by the Assembly was also reflected in the growth of its staff: the number of officials rose from 1 995 in the run-up to the 1979 elections to just over 3 300 at the end of the second parliamentary term. Admittedly, this increase was partly due to enlargements, because room had to be found for Greek, Spanish and Portuguese staff during this period. As early as 1983, the phenomenon of 'staff inflation' prompted the institution to adopt rules limiting increases in staff numbers. However, that was a lost cause, due to the expansion of Parliament's powers and the arrival of new members. These officials were mostly based in Luxembourg. They were independent of their countries of origin, and recruitment was not restricted to nationals of a particular Member State. In fact, the institution has always ensured that there is a fairly balanced distribution between the nationals of the various Member States.

The increase in the number of staff from 1979 onwards also had a generational impact. The older officials, most of whom had worked for the institution since the 1950s, were seen as pioneers, regarded by many in the same light as the founders of the European Community. Most of them shared common experience and a common belief in Europe. The new generation, although just as committed to the European cause, had in general got to know the institutions through traineeships or courses during their academic education. Their enthusiasm for Europe was allied to a more technocratic approach. This development led to a greater compartmentation of careers, as staff became less mobile between departments. Subject to linguistic constraints (half of the staff were now interpreters and translators) and geographical constraints (all staff, with a few exceptions, being expatriates), this Administration had to organise the complex functioning of the parliamentary institution.

It would be wrong to suppose, on those grounds, that it might turn into a stronger Administration, capable of exercising leadership over the institution. The Administration remained primarily at the service of Members, and the tasks it performed for political groups and parliamentary committees clearly proved that it possessed no real autonomy in relation

to Members. Members and the Administration were united by a common goal, which led them to work symbiotically: promoting the 'European cause' by means of parliamentary work. There was therefore no real discontinuity as a result of the election of Members by universal suffrage in relation to the pre-1979 Administration. One might have expected that, with the influx of novice Members, as well as the need to work in three different places and the need to supply expertise for the benefit of Members, the number of people employed in the Administration would grow. This possible turn of events was also suggested by Parliament's increasing prerogatives following its election, or by its desire to assert itself against the other European institutions. Although all these factors might *a priori* have been favourable to the creation of a larger body of administrators, opposing forces were also at work.

The Administration of the European Parliament was not always equipped to manage the mass of administrative procedures, which had doubled in step with the size of the institution. Moreover, many internal procedures could no longer function properly in a larger Parliament. The issue was not so much the growing number of working languages but rather the fact that parliamentary activity was becoming far more intense: with more amendments being tabled there was more translation work, and voting procedures – at least before the introduction of electronic voting – were not designed to cope with all these amendments in time. By way of example, when a general revision of the Rules of Procedure was undertaken, more than 2 000 amendments were translated before the plenary stage. This situation also created an additional workload for officials, who periodically responded by striking at Parliament's Luxembourg site. There, the difference between politicians and administrators was revealed: as François Scheer, Director of the private office, recalled later, during a staff trade union strike his team worked in an otherwise empty building: 'We were the only people working for the European Parliament in Luxembourg'.[35]

The Secretary-General was primarily answerable to the governing bodies: the President, Bureau, Quaestors and Enlarged Bureau. They wanted resources to be allocated to the administration of the political groups. From 1979, the secretariats of the political groups developed, and the men and women who were employed in them and thus placed at the disposal of representatives of the various political persuasions were therefore to some extent able to escape the hierarchical control of the Secretary-General. The same was sometimes also the case for staff made available to parliamentary committees. It was also necessary to arrive at an understanding with the parliamentary assistants, who were directly answerable to the elected representatives and were more able to easily evade Parliament's scrutiny. That, incidentally, at the outset raised the question of their status. The Administration's function of providing expertise depended to a large extent on the needs of Members, who guided thinking about this much more powerfully than the administrative hierarchy did. A factor which militated even more against the idea of an administrative bulwark was the Administration's division into directorates, which led to increasing specialisation of officials.

But there were other obstacles that contributed to the relative dependence of the Administration.[36] The appointment of its main officials had to meet two types of criterion: political and national. For the main administrative posts (Secretary-General, Directors-General) there was a concern to safeguard the balance between Parliament's main political

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[35] Interview with François Scheer, Paris, 22 May 2018.

[36] On the issue of the politicisation of the Secretariat and its relative weakness, see O. Costa, 'Administrer le Parlement européen: les paradoxes d'un Secrétariat général incontournable, mais faible', in *Politique européennes,* 2003/3, No 11, pp. 143-161.

philosophies, just as care had to be taken to ensure that important Member States were not offended by the way in which the institution's administrative establishment plan was drawn up. This had the effect of placing the Secretariat under the control of the political groups. The groups took decisions about its organisation, and the politicisation of the main appointments within the Administration weakened the coherence of the overall structure. But that also had advantages: this close contact between politicians and administrators promoted good teamwork, empowered officials and made the work efficient. It encouraged efforts to reach consensus, one of the characteristics of the Strasbourg institution. Given the constant evolution of Parliament's prerogatives, especially in the 1984-1987 period, when it was involved in the institutional changes made to the European Community, this proximity was often an asset. During the first two terms of the elected Parliament, it permitted the flexibility necessary to cope with constant changes and made the institution responsive. But could such dependence on the political groups continue in the long term without becoming a source of conflict? That was the challenge facing the elected Parliament: to find a way of achieving a kind of normalisation of the relationship between the Administration and Members.[37]

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[37] For a recent and thought-provoking article on this issue, see N. Brack and O. Costa, 'Le Parlement européen: tensions entre efficacité institutionnelle et démocratie', *Hérodote* 2017/1, No 164, pp.199-212.

Chapter 2: The role of European political parties

European parliamentary groups have existed since the time of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community.[38] On the eve of the first elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, the outgoing Assembly was made up of 63 Socialists, 52 Christian Democrats, 24 Liberals, 19 Progressive Democrats, 18 Conservatives, 17 Communists and three non-attached Members. Although the total number of Members rose to 410 following the 1979 elections, the proportion of seats won by each group remained roughly the same: 113 Socialists, 107 Christian Democrats, 64 Conservatives, 44 Communists, 40 Liberals and 22 Progressive Democrats.[39] A 'Group for the Technical Coordination and the Defence of Independent Groups and Members' was also formed, combining political groupings that did not have enough Members to form a political group proper. The Members concerned therefore enjoyed a number of material advantages, but did not share a political programme. It comprised 12 Members, including Italian Radicals, Belgian regionalists, Danish opponents of the common market and an Irish Independent. The 1984 elections did not herald any major change in the pecking order of Europe's political families, with the Socialists winning 130 seats, and the European People's Party (EPP) 110. The Progressive Democrats won 50 seats, the Communists 41, the Liberals 31, the European Democratic Alliance 29 and the European Right 16. There was one new development, however, with the creation of the Rainbow Group, which had 20 Members. Spain and Portugal's arrival in the Community in 1986 was a boost for the Socialists, whose number leapt from 130 to 165, with the Christian Democrats gaining just five additional seats. The group formerly known as the Technical Group of Independents changed its name to the Rainbow Group. It was made up of regionalists and Greens, with the Italian Radicals having left to sit with the non-attached Members, who, with the arrival of Centrists from Spain's *Centro democrático y social* (CDS) party, attempted to put together a technical group with other MEPs, including a number of Dutch Calvinists. This failed, however, when the Calvinists objected to the fact that the Italian Radicals in the European Parliament included a porn star.[40]

So what role did the parliamentary groups play, and to what extent were they involved in the emergence of a European political system from the early parliamentary terms onwards? A number of requirements needed to be met in order to form a parliamentary group: at least 12 MEPs from three different Member States were required, or 18 MEPs from two Member States, or 23 from one Member State.[41] A Member could not belong to more than one group. Groups enjoy a number of material and procedural advantages under Parliament's Rules of

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[38] S. Guerrieri, 'The start of European integration and the parliamentary dimension: the Common Assembly of the ECSC (1952-1958)', in *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, I, 2008, pp. 183-193. See also G. van Oudenhove, *The Political Parties in the European Parliament. The First Ten Years,* Leiden, Sijthoff, 1965.

[39] 'Les élections européennes 7-10 juin 1979', in *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, 1979/36, No 861, pp. 1-28.

[40] For information on the results of the European elections, see the following: 'Les élections directes pour le Parlement européen', in *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP,* 1979/15, No 840-841, pp. 1-48; 'Les élections européennes 7-10 juin 1979', in *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, 1979/36, No 861, pp. 1-28; F. de La Serre, M.-C. Smouts, G. Bibès and H. Ménudier, 'Convergences nationales, dimensions partisanes et affinités croisés', in *Revue française de science politique*, 29th year, No 6, 1979, pp. 1014-1046; X. Mabille and E. Lentzen, 'Le Parlement européen à la veille des élections de juin 1989', in *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, 1989/14, No 1239, pp. 1-47.

[41] M. Williams, 'The European Parliament: Political Groups, Minority Rights and the "Rationalisations" of Parliamentary Organisation'. A Research Note', in H. Döring (ed.), *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe,* New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995, pp. 391-404.

Procedure, including staff offices, funds, access to information, opportunities to disseminate information, and so on. These were all major boons in terms of being able to carry out parliamentary activities effectively. It also explains why MEPs who were unable to join groups with shared political affinities were often keen to form technical groups. One such group was formed in each of the parliamentary terms under discussion here: the Technical Group of Independents (CDI) from 1979 to 1984, and the Rainbow Group from 1984 to 1989. The number of Members in each group makes a lot of difference: funding, reports and speaking time are all allocated on the basis of the size of the group. Belonging to a group also made it easier for a Member to take on responsibilities at Parliament. The groups controlled everything from the Presidency of Parliament and the choice of committee chairs to the allocation of Members to the various committees. The President of Parliament was elected for a two-and-a-half-year term of office, and it was clear how the Socialist and Christian Democrat groups either took turns at holding the Presidency, or chose to support an external candidate, as was the case with Simone Veil.

At the beginning of the parliamentary term, the groups elected their chairs, who then represented them in the Conference of Presidents, and were thus involved in setting Parliament's agenda and organising its activities.[42]

2.1 – The Socialist family[43]

Political groups were essential for Parliament to work properly, and they changed European political life. The main groups developed a system of European parties within the European Parliament. In April 1974, the Socialists – the largest group during the first two parliamentary terms – founded the Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community (CSPEC). This was against the backdrop of a resurgent EEC, with the CSPEC buoyed by the arrival of the UK Labour Party and Danish Social Democrats.[44] It was not all peace and harmony, however: there was tension between Socialists who were critical of the European integration process and those in favour of it, and between those who either favoured the intergovernmental approach or tended more towards federalism. As a result of these differences, the CSPEC was unable to draw up a common manifesto for the Socialists at the first direct elections in 1979. Instead, it simply called on voters to turn out. The following year it gave the national parties more autonomy. The Socialist family was divided when it came to Europe, therefore, and needed quite some time to coalesce. Throughout the 1980s, summit meetings bringing together the heads of the national parties started to become a regular fixture. In 1987 it was decided to make this an official event that would be held twice a year before the meetings of the European Council. The agenda and aims of the meetings were therefore linked to those of the Communities. Working parties were set up within the CSPEC to address the various aspects involved in the Socialists' stances on the key European issues of the day. Conferences and working parties helped bring ideologies together, establish common working methods for European Socialists and intensify discussions between national

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[42] For information on all political groups see M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.,* Chapter IV, 'La politique au Parlement', pp. 148-196; and P. Delwit, E. Külahci and C. Van De Walle (eds), *Les fédérations européennes de partis. Organisation et influence,* Brussels, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2001, 254 p.

[43] G. Devin, 'L'Union des partis socialistes de la Communauté européenne. Le socialisme communautaire en quête d'identité', in *I Socialisti e l'Europa,* Milan, Franco Angeli, 1989, pp. 265-290; R. Ladresch, 'Les changements programmatiques dans le parti des socialistes européens (PSE)', in P. Delwit (ed.), *Où va la social-démocratie européenne?,* Brussels, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2004, pp. 53-61; G. Moschonas, 'Parti socialiste européen', in Y. Deloye (ed.), *Dictionnaire des élections européennes, op.cit.,* pp. 530-535.

[44] J. Fitzmaurice, *The Party Groups in the European Parliament,* Portsmouth, Saxon House, 1975.

parties on European issues. Coordination improved during the second parliamentary term, ultimately leading to the inception, during the third term, of the Party of European Socialists (PES) in 1992. This relative lack of unity on a range of issues weakened the Socialists at the European Parliament, despite the numerous offices they held within the institution. During the first two parliamentary terms, the Socialists held the Presidency just once: Dutch MEP Piet Dankert was President of Parliament from 1982 to 1984. It was not until the start of the third term of the elected Parliament in 1989 that another Socialist – Enrique Barón Crespo, a Spaniard – was elected President.[45] This had been a long time coming, as Mr Barón Crespo himself recalled: 'Rudi Arndt, a former mayor of Frankfurt who was chair of the group at the time [...], asked me, at a Socialist International meeting in Lima back in 1986, whether I'd be willing to stand for the Presidency of Parliament.'[46]

The splits in the Socialist ranks were largely the result of differences of opinion between the French and the Germans. Although they were present throughout the Community, with elected representatives in all 9, 10 and then 12 Member States, the Socialists were dominated by the Germans. Willy Brandt was President of the Socialist International for many years, and the SPD, via the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, was present throughout Europe and had significant financial clout. This had knock-on effects on the development of affiliated parties, including those in southern Europe. At the time, the French Socialist Party had just taken over the Elysée Palace, and relations between President François Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (SPD) were difficult, especially on the issue of a 'social Europe'. Movements within the French Socialist Party rallied around Jean-Pierre Chevènement's view that the focus should remain on a tradition of national independence. It was only during the second term of the elected Parliament that these differences faded, paving the way for a rapprochement between the French and the Germans over a pro-European project centred around the Single European Act.[47] These converging views led to discussions taking place with a view to the establishment of a genuine formation of European Socialists, even without the involvement of the UK's Labour Party, which was not keen to pursue an integrationist project. Gordon Adam, a former Labour MEP, said: 'I don't think the issues that caused division were really any different from the issues that caused division in the Parliament as a whole [...]. The proportional system of elections in the European Union does make for a very different sort of political context, and there is much more willingness to work together and try to find common ground [...].'[48]

2.2 – The Christian-Democrat family[49]

The Socialists' squabbles were undeniably helpful in boosting the fortunes of the second-largest political force in the Strasbourg Chamber: the European People's Party (EPP). On 29 April 1976, the Christian Democrats decided to create a federal grouping with a view to

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[45] S. Hix and C. Lord, *Political Parties in the European Union,* Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997.

[46] Interview with Enrique Barón Crespo, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[47] S. Hix, A.G. Noury and G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

[48] Interview with Gordon Adam, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[49] A. Leboucher-Sebbab, 'Le PPE dans les années 1970 et 1980: les mutations d'un parti démocrate-chrétien européen. Vers un pôle conservateur?', in *Parlement(s), Revue d'histoire politique,* 2004/1, No 1, pp. 79-89; T. Jansen, *Die Entstehung einer Europäischen Partei: Vorgeschichte, Gründung und Entwicklung der EVP,* Bonn, Europa Union Verlag, 1996.

coordinating the forthcoming election campaigns. The EPP saw itself as a federal party, and from the outset it campaigned for a political and federal Europe, with various Christian-Democrat interest groups gravitating around it. The chair of the EPP Group in the European Parliament was by default the vice-chair of the party, and the EPP's bureau was made up of national representatives of the Christian-Democrat groupings in the Member States of the European Community. The EPP was itself a member of the European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD), which brought together parties from across Europe, and the EUCD, like the EPP, had chosen Brussels as its base. These two factors brought about a degree of coherence. In keeping with the strategy and ideas of the European Communities' founding fathers, the Christian Democrats advocated the establishment of a federal Europe inspired by Christian views of society. Capitalism and market economics were important, of course, but there was also a focus on efforts to establish a fair social policy. At the helm of both the EPP and the parliamentary group were Germans and Italians who were or had been in power in their respective countries. These included Helmut Kohl and Giulio Andreotti. Elected representatives from Germany and Italy shared the top jobs. In 1977, Egon Klepsch was appointed group chair. He would go on to be a Vice-President of the European Parliament from 1982 to 1984, being replaced as group leader during that time by Paolo Barbi, an Italian. In 1984, Klepsch became group chair once again, holding onto the post until his election as President of the European Parliament in 1992. It would seem, however, that he was not a universally popular figure. According to Enrique Barón Crespo, 'Klepsch was once caught in the act of "playing the piano" during voting time. In other words, he was using both hands to vote in two seats at the same time. The British Members coined a new verb, "to Klepsch", and said that they wouldn't be voting for someone who did such dishonourable things'.[50]

While the EPP group in Parliament was chaired by Germans and Italians, the party itself was led by politicians from elsewhere: Leo Tindemans, from Belgium, was party leader from 1976 to 1985, the Dutchman Piet Bukman from 1985 to 1987, and Luxembourg's Jacques Santer from 1987 to 1990. With elections to the European Parliament now being held by universal suffrage, there was a desire for the EPP to move from being little more than a talking shop to providing a forum for dialogue among national groupings.[51] The EPP managed to convince voters of its new tack, highlighting the advantages of being part of a major European family. But it also had to persuade the other European Christian-Democrat organisations – the EUDC and the national parties – to get on board. The national parties, which were a vital source of funding, were initially very reticent, but gradually, throughout the 1980s, the various elements began to coalesce thanks to meetings of national leaders and the involvement of Christian-Democrat Members of the European Commission in the work of the EPP. In November 1983, for example, a summit meeting attended by five heads of government (Kohl, Martens, Lubbers, FitzGerald and Werner) was held in Brussels. Efforts were also made to prepare the party for the future by opening it up to non-Christian-Democrat groupings. The EPP was keen to gain a foothold in all the countries of the European Community. As a result, Ireland's Fine Gael joined in 1976, and later on Greece's New Democracy and Spain's People's Party were accepted as well. This desire to open up the EPP did not, however, extend to any groupings on the left of the political spectrum. And not everyone agreed with this development towards exclusively non-Socialist movements. Germany's CDU-CSU alliance was more right-wing than the Christian Democrats in the Benelux countries and Italy, and it played a major role in setting

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50   Interview with Enrique Barón Crespo, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

51   W. Kaiser, 'Europeanization of Christian Democracy? Negotiating Organization, Enlargement Policy and Allegiance in the European People's Party', in W. Kaiser and J.-H. Meyer (eds), *Societal Actors in European Integration. Polity-Building and Policy-Making (1958-1992)*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2013, pp. 15-37.

the EPP's trajectory as the influence of Italy's Christian Democrats waned during the 1980s. Since the middle of the 1970s the CDU-CSU had been involved in the establishment of the European Democrat Union (EDU), which also included Gaullists from France's Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) party, as well as British Conservatives.

2.3 – The Liberal family[52]

The Liberal family was also keen to join forces. Its aims were similar to those of the other political movements. In 1970, the Congress of the Liberal International came up with the idea of forming a grouping of European Liberals with a view to making thoroughgoing preparations for the forthcoming European elections. That grouping, the Federation of Liberal and Democrat Parties in Europe, came into being in March 1976.[53] From the outset the Federation was plagued by divisions between its right wing and its more progressive members. When it was founded, the Federation endorsed a charter to guide its political action. It was in favour of the European Communities becoming a European Union with a Constitution based on liberal values. The charter also mentioned the European Parliament: the Federation was keen for Parliament's powers to be enhanced. The Federation took the view that elections to the European Parliament had to take place under proportional representation, and that Parliament ought to have legislative powers on all matters relating to the European Community. The Commission would be accountable to Parliament. The charter combined this vision of a more integrated, more democratic Europe with respect for regional diversity. Expectations were high for the first direct elections. According to Florus Wijsenbeek from the Liberal Group, 'Bangemann hired a train [...] we went out campaigning all over the place – in the Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium [...]. We really thought it was the beginning of something, that we were going to come to power, and Europe would at last be democratic.' The result, however, came as a bit of a shock. 'What can you say? It was disappointing. The turnout for the first election wasn't brilliant, and it's been downhill ever since.'[54]

The Liberal group was also suffering as a result of the general weakness of Liberal parties across Europe. Its presence in two major countries – France and Italy – was limited, and elsewhere the Free Democratic Party (FDP) in Germany and the British Liberals were struggling in the polls. The FDP failed to reach the 5% threshold in 1984, and the British Liberals were finding it hard to gain ground under the first-past-the-post system. The main problem, however, was still the major divergences between the group's various components. Under the leadership of Liberals from the Benelux countries (Gaston Thorn from 1979 to 1981, Willy De Clercq from 1981 to 1985 and Colette Flesch from 1985 to 1990), the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Group (ELDR) was riven by internal strife. As a result, at the end of the second parliamentary term (1984-1989), some Liberals were leaning towards the EPP. The Liberals' power to attract voters was therefore on the decline throughout the period between 1979 and 1989, even though they were led by a number of eminent politicians such as Simone Veil, whom they managed to get elected as President of the European Parliament in 1979, and who then led the group from 1984 to 1989.

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[52] P. Delwit, 'Parti européen des Libéraux, Démocrates et Réformateurs (ELDR)', in Y. Deloye (ed.), *Dictionnaire des élections européennes, op.cit.*, pp. 521-524.

[53] T. Oppeland, 'Das Parteiensystem der Europäischen Union' in O. Nidermeier, R. Stöss and M. Haas (eds), *Die Parteiensysteme in Westeuropa,* Wiesbaden, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006, pp. 543-563.

[54] Interview with Florus Wijsenbeek, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

The Socialists, the Christian Democrats and the Liberals dominated the European Parliament and were – for the most part, even though they all had their own takes on how it should be done – in favour of the European integration process. They were also present in nearly all the Member States of the European Community. This was not the case for the European Progressive Democrats (EPD), the European Conservatives or the Communists. These generally involved parliamentarians from one or two national parties, which formed the core of the groups concerned. They were at times also fairly sceptical about European elections and European integration, and ultimately had to think long and hard about their strategies with regards to alliances within the European Parliament.

2.4 – Conservatives, Gaullists and Fianna Fáil

The EPD chiefly comprised Gaullists from France's RPR party and members of Ireland's Fianna Fáil. When it came to addressing the challenges of European integration, the EPD's members were split. Those divisions were also present within the political families at national level. Fianna Fáil was in favour of Europe, but there were opposing views within the RPR. The approach of some RPR members, such as Michel Debré, was centred around national sovereignty and Euroscepticism, inspired by the General De Gaulle who opposed the idea of the European Defence Community (EDC) and the Treaties of Rome; others followed the De Gaulle who later accepted the Treaties, and nothing but the Treaties – these were supporters of a Europe that was more of a confederation of states than a federal union. To address these divisions, the party's leaders had to find a compromise. The Gaullists' slogan for the 1979 elections appealed to both sides in calling 'For the defence of France's interests in Europe'.[55] Similar divisions could be seen among European Conservatives (chiefly the British Conservatives). The right wing was reticent about, if not downright opposed to, the European integration process. In the main, however, Conservatives were in favour. Both groups were quite clearly involved in a strategy designed to move closer towards, and build an alliance with, the EPP, with the creation of the European Democrat Union (involving the CDU, the RPR and the Conservatives) paving the way for the European right to come together as a major force. The only remaining question was when this would happen. It was incidentally precisely this kind of alliance that led to Lord Plumb, a British Conservative, becoming President of the European Parliament.

2.5 – The Communist family

The Communists gained more than 10% of the vote in three countries: Italy, France and Luxembourg. But the Italian (PCI) and French (PCF) Communist parties made up the lion's share of the group. Although the Communists in the West recognised the European Communities as an entity and were involved in the relevant institutions (e.g. the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee), the French and Italian groupings had differing views on Europe. The PCI clearly supported the European elections and the European process. What it objected to were the arrangements upon which that integration was based. The PCI voiced interesting ideas about a social Europe and the possible ways to achieve it if the right balance of power could be found. The PCF, however, was opposed to the Community, which it saw as a front for a Europe of multinational companies

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[55] C. Manigand, 'L'Europe des gaullistes. Essai sur la place des gaullistes au sein des assemblées européennes (1948-1979)', in *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire,* 2012/4, No 116, pp. 9-21; Y. Denéchère, 'Louise Weiss et quelques autres candidats et élues gaullistes au Parlement européen (1979-1989)', in *Histoire@Politique,* 2012/2, No 17, pp. 51-68.

in thrall to the USA. Unlike its Italian counterpart, the PCF could see no way to plot a course between Social Democracy and Soviet-style Socialism. Clearly, therefore, the prospects for a strategy of openness at European level were limited.

Chapter 3: Political developments[56]

3.1 – Towards greater political heterogeneity

A number of changes were made following the 1984 elections. The creation of the Rainbow Group saw a wave of ecologists and regionalists explode onto the European scene. These movements, which already had some members in the 1979 Assembly, were slowly growing in size. In the run-up to the 1979 European elections, the various branches of the ecological movements were somewhat disparate and lacked coordination. It was not until 1977 that the ecologists, in a more close-minded spirit, adopted a joint political platform on which they campaigned in the 1979 European elections. Following these elections, in July 1979 the Greens created a network linking their respective organisations, dubbed the *Platform of ecopolitical action for a peaceful change of Europe* (PEACE). However, the European Green Confederation (EGC) did not come about until 1983, at the initiative of British, Irish, Swedish, French and Belgian ecologists. Differences with the German Greens persisted. Nevertheless, 11 elected representatives managed to win seats in the European Parliament in 1984 (two Belgians, two Dutch and seven Germans). Along with the Italian regionalists, they formed the *Green Alternative European Link* (GRAEL) within the Rainbow Group. The ecologist MEP Frank Schwalba-Hoth recalled his early days at Parliament: 'Most of the German Greens were not committed federalists or strong pro-Europeans. It was the time of the Cold War and they were rather sceptical towards the model of a unified Europe. So it was logical to set up a Rainbow political group with three sub-groups: the GRAEL, which brought together the German, Belgian and Dutch ecologists and alternative left (notably the Italian far left); the Danish anti-EEC movement; and the regionalists (Basques, etc.)'.[57]

Finally, the Group of the European Right was formed, made up of elected representatives of the French *Front national* and the *Movimento Sociale italiano*.

Generally speaking, for the large groups that were also often found in national parliaments, European Parliament elections by direct universal suffrage had the advantage of creating a level of European coordination within existing international structures. International Socialist, Christian Democrat and Liberal movements, in addition to the Communist International, gave birth to European regionalism and the beginnings of European parties, of which the EPP was a pioneer. Solidarity within international groupings allowed for cooperation between European parties of the same family. At their core were powerful German foundations: Adenauer Stiftung, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Naumann Stiftung. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung promoted the electoral campaigns of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) in Spain, thereby helping to create ideological convergences with this Spanish sister party. Seen in terms of the classic left-right cleavage, the right dominated the first two terms of the elected Parliament, with 56% of the seats in 1979 and 51% in 1984. Election after election the Christian Democrats and Liberals lost seats while the Conservative right made gains. In 1984, the far

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[56]   A number of studies have been published on political groupings and their respective strengths:
T. Coosemans, 'Les partis politiques transnationaux et les groupes politiques dans l'Union européenne', in *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP, 2000/15*, No 16980-1681, pp. 1-71 and, by the same author, 'Les partis politiques européens', in *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, 2013/36, No 2201-2202, pp. 7-123. A number of more specific studies have been published: K. Cabrol, 'Les partis politiques britanniques et l'intégration européenne', in *Politiques européennes*, 2002/2, No 6, pp. 5-17; P. Delwit, 'Le parti travailliste face aux Communautés européennes (1979-1992). De l'autarcie à l'ouverture', in *Politiques européennes*, 2002/2, No 6, pp. 74-89; P. Perrineau, 'Élections européennes' in Y. Deloye (dir.), *Dictionnaire des élections européennes, op.cit.*, pp. 204-211.

[57]   Interview with Frank Schwalba-Hoth, Brussels, 3 July 2017.

right entered the European Parliament with 3.7% of the seats. Overall, the left was gaining, winning 41% of the seats in 1979 and 44% in 1984. Here too, distinct internal changes were becoming apparent. The Socialists made huge gains, with 27.5% of the seats in 1979 and 30% in 1984, whereas the Communists lost seats. The ecologists also made significant gains in 1984 compared with 1979. But was this traditional breakdown still meaningful? A number of developments in 1984 changed all this. The far right began to win seats, as did, predictably, the ecological movements. However, there was another cleavage – one which was not immediately clear – between those who were in favour of the European process and those who were more sceptical of it. This divide existed not only between far-right forces opposed to European integration and other new groupings; it also existed within the less extremist parties: Socialists, European Conservatives and Communists.

However, this splintering of political powers during the first two terms did not stop the two main powers – the Socialists on the one hand and the centre right, including the Christian Democrats, on the other – from dominating the Chamber.

3.2 – Intergroups

MEPs were also able to form intergroups, which brought together Members who shared common interests[58] and where matters could be discussed freely, often without being subject to the discipline of political groups or committees. Other matters were shrouded in parliamentary secrecy and discussed behind closed doors. It is clear that these intergroups gained strength after the first European elections, and one could be forgiven for wondering whether they had begun to compete with the parliamentary committees.

The Kangaroo Group lunches were the first example of an informal intergroup, formed around the principle of the abolition of European borders. Set up in 1979, the Kangaroo Group was also known as the *Movement for Free Movement within the European Community*. Founded by Basil de Ferranti, a British Conservative and President of the European Parliament's Economic and Social Committee, the group chose the kangaroo as its emblem for its ability to overcome obstacles without difficulty. German MEP Karl von Wogau (CDU) explained how the group was originally created: 'Ferranti and I were sitting in the Place Kléber in Strasbourg, eating sausages, when we had the idea of creating a borderless Europe. An image of a kangaroo with a small pouch but which jumped high appealed to us.'[59] Campaigning for the completion of the internal market, the Kangaroo Group quickly brought together MEPs from very diverse backgrounds – Socialists, Christian Democrats, Liberals, Gaullists – who met during the Strasbourg session for a monthly lunch. Political figures from various Member States were invited (including Helmut Kohl and Élisabeth Guigou) and representatives from the private sector, including entrepreneurs (notably Edzard Reuter, CEO of Daimler-Benz), to exchange ideas on how to advance free movement in the Community. According to Karl von Wogau, it was not always easy to convince representatives of major industries to support them. At their first meeting, Daimler's CEO thought for a moment, before asking, in his Swabian accent, '*Was koscht's?*' (How much is this going to cost?).[60] The Kangaroo Group was, first and foremost, a strong supporter of the removal of borders in the European Community, as they were

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[58]   L. Dutoit, 'L'influence au sein du Parlement européen : les intergroupes', in *Politique européenne*, 2003/1, No 9, pp. 132-142.

[59]   Interview with Karl von Wogau, Freiburg im Breisgau, 28 March 2018.

[60]   *Ibid*.

perceived as obstacles to the completion of the common market. For the intergroup's members these obstacles represented a 'joker worth billions' (*Milliarden-Joker*) since, in their view, they were the 'cost of non-Europe'.[61] The intergroup published a monthly newsletter setting out its activities. Through its permanent secretariat, it organised conferences and seminars. It also awarded a prize to the person who made the greatest contribution to bringing down borders in Europe, a prize that was awarded not only to high-profile politicians such as Jacques Delors and Helmut Kohl, but also to Lord Plumb, the European Parliament President from 1987 to 1989.

Photo 5: Members of the Kangaroo Group discussing 'Europe without borders' at a working lunch in Strasbourg in July 1986.

The first intergroup to be officially recognised, in 1980, was the Eurocities network, a grouping of local and regional elected representatives in the European Parliament. Chaired by Catherine Trautmann, Strasbourg's mayor at the time, its aim was to promote exchanges between European towns and cities.[62] What linked MEPs in this intergroup was their local mandate, their urban/regional roots and their attachment to the principle of a Europe of local and regional authorities. However, it was the Crocodile Club, formed in 1980 by Altiero Spinelli, that was the most active intergroup during the first term of the European Parliament. It brought together MEPs from a number of political groups who met regularly at the Strasbourg restaurant Au Crocodile to talk about the future of European integration. It started out with 60 or so MEPs, but by July 1981 its ranks had swollen to 180. In 1986 it was absorbed into the

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[61] See K. von Wogau, K. Löffler and D. Mitzka, *Der Milliarden-Joker. Offene Worte gegen geschlossene Grenzen in Europa*, Bonn, Europa-Union Verlag, 1987, p. 33.

[62] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 322.

Federalist intergroup.[63] Another example of a powerful intergroup that acted virtually as a lobby group within Parliament was the Animal Welfare Intergroup. In 1983 this intergroup, bringing together MEPs from various political groups, succeeded in having a report adopted banning the import of baby seal skins, which was then the subject of a Council directive.[64] The intergroup enjoyed undeniable success. It helped to protect endangered marine species and did much to improve breeding conditions. In order to achieve this, it targeted the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy. It also made its voice heard through written and oral questions to the European Commission. There is no doubt that its activities led to significant changes in this area, but militant activity in one direction sometimes led to militant activity in the other. And so its actions in taking up the fight against bullfighting, viewed as a 'cruel sport' by its members, led to the creation of another intergroup in 1985 – Hunting, Fisheries and Environment – to protect European traditions. A north-south divide once again emerged, with MEPs from the north more sensitive to animal welfare and those from the south more sensitive to traditions.

Other intergroups played the same role – albeit in a less high-profile fashion – to rally MEPs around a common cause for European integration and the formation of a stronger European family. Between 1979 and 1989, more than 50 intergroups were formed, covering a wide range of topics, including industry, tourism, federalism, regionalism and animal welfare.[65]

From 1986-87 onwards, they evolved thanks to the new powers conferred on the European Parliament by the Single European Act. With no internal regulations, the first two terms of the elected Parliament tended to adopt a laissez-faire attitude. Although the intergroups were not funded by the European Parliament, Parliament nevertheless provided them with interpreting services and made meeting rooms available to them. The intergroups' activities, therefore, while highly variable were generally characterised by a lack of formality and a strong focus on or specialisation in a well-defined area. Another characteristic of intergroups was that they went beyond their particular area of interest and across partisan lines. This helped them to advance their cause. However, if one looks at the topics the intergroups dealt with, and given that MEPs in a particular intergroup tended to be of the same political persuasion, ideological divides between intergroups were evident. Matters relating to ecology, consumer protection and taxes on capital were raised by the left, while the Hunting, Fisheries and Environment Intergroup mainly comprised right-wing MEPs. In fact, the interests defended by MEPs in the intergroups were sometimes the same as those of interest groups or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Synergies were then created and NGOs often provided material and logistical support. This meant that NGOs and interest groups had access to the European Parliament and could influence intergroups in a way that was favourable to their objectives. This is where citizens' associations that were fighting for the same cause became involved, often helping to organise meetings, provide logistical support to intergroup members and be on hand near the Chamber or in the public gallery during debates. As well as being partnerships which aimed to promote meetings between MEPs and MPs from other national assemblies, the European Parliament's intergroups were also general study groups set up to deal with specific challenges, and were concerned with achieving their objectives by forcing an agenda or having resolutions adopted. Following the first European elections, intergroups were formed to cover issues relating to health, social affairs and even culture. Through these

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63   On intergroups, see M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.*, pp. 321-330.

64   *Ibid.*, p. 325.

65   O. Costa and F. Saint Martin, *Le Parlement européen, op.cit.*, p. 41.

intergroups, MEPs addressed issues for the future and looked for ways to enhance the European angle. Intergroups also sometimes took the form of an association.

In most cases, an intergroup's success depended on its ability to convince others, which, in turn, depended on how well it had mastered procedures. There was a constant need to rally MEPs in plenary in order to propose amendments, request a referral back to a committee or postpone an agenda if necessary. And some parliamentary colleagues needed to be targeted more than others. Rapporteurs, committee or group chairs, influential MEPs, experts on issues of interest to the intergroup – all played their part in an intergroup's success and lent their external support. It was these MEPs who would set the agenda, distribute reports and write other documents. Other ways for an intergroup to exert its influence were to hold hearings with European Commissioners or approach the country holding the Community Presidency.

Certain interest groups, however, hardly ever needed to create intergroups. The Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE), the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), to name but a few, were able to influence decision-making through their presence on the Economic and Social Committee and their proximity to the European Commission. However, the European Parliament was still very influential in decisions made on behalf of NGOs or community-based groups, while other Community institutions were less visible in this regard.

Intergroups allowed MEPs to adopt new approaches to certain issues, which could then be taken up by Parliament to address the demands of European citizens. Protecting human rights, consumer rights or the environment – none of which were prioritised in the work of the other European institutions – gave greater visibility to the Strasbourg-based institution. Intergroups were useful for this purpose and for making the political parties more aware of the demands of society in the 1980s and gradually imposing their modus operandi. They therefore 'Europeanised' these problems and their approaches to solutions. As a result, the often minority views initially held by intergroups and their external supporters led to changes in public policies in many sectors. Intergroups were a way of bridging the geographical divide separating MEPs. Members from 9, then 10 and finally 12 Member States were able to go beyond national and partisan ideas and come together on matters that had become European. From the outset, an intergroup was therefore a structure in which different political traditions could coexist and a vehicle for the 'Europeanisation' of MEPs.

3.3 – Parliamentary committees

Although parliamentary groups are at the heart of political life in the European Parliament, parliamentary work itself is done in the parliamentary committees. Following the introduction of elections by universal suffrage, parliamentary activity became increasingly focused around the committees, as that was where the Community's legislative work was done. Until 1987, amendments and resolutions drafted by the European Parliament were mainly of a consultative nature, but after the introduction of the cooperation procedure with the Single European Act in 1987, Parliament's legislative power grew and both the Commission and the Council increasingly needed to take into account the work of the parliamentary committees. The importance of the committees was reflected in their rate of growth. By 1979, they numbered 15 already.[66] Then, that year, the ad hoc Committee on Women's Rights was set up,

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[66] See OJ C 203/35, 13.8.1979: Political affairs, agriculture, budget, monetary and economic affairs, energy and research and technology, external economic relations, legal affairs, social and employment affairs, regional

followed in 1981 by the Committee on Institutional Affairs, the Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe and the Committee of Inquiry into the Treatment of Toxic and Dangerous Substances, and in 1983 the special Temporary Committee responsible for drafting a report on economic recovery. In order to contain the number of committees and prevent them from multiplying exponentially, the European Parliament tended to set up subcommittees within existing committees, such as the Subcommittee on the Draft Uniform Electoral Procedure, the Subcommittee on Security and Disarmament and the Subcommittee on Human Rights within the Political Affairs Committee, the Subcommittee on Information within the Youth Committee and the Subcommittee on Fisheries within the Committee on Agriculture.[67] However, the number of committees was still increasing: in 1984 to 17 and then in 1987 to 18.[68] Legislative activity also continued to grow, particularly following the introduction of the cooperation procedure, which allowed for a second parliamentary reading. As such, between 1987 and the completion of the single market in 1992, the European Parliament proposed 2 734 amendments at first reading and 716 at second reading. Parliament also had a positive impact on EU legislation: the European Commission adopted 60% of the amendments proposed at first reading and 40% at second reading. This goes to show how, in the 1980s, the European Parliament became a true co-legislator within the European Community.[69] In so doing, following its clash with the Commission and the Council over the budget, the Assembly managed to be recognised as a Community institution with authority: 'While the impotence of the European Parliament was tolerable for appointed members, who were primarily national parliamentarians, it was no longer so for Members elected directly in 1979, most of whom had chosen to devote themselves exclusively to this new mandate.'[70] However, mobilising parliamentarians in favour of extending their competences also took the form of unilateral initiatives (the step-by-step policy), as any MEP could propose a resolution which fell within the remit of the committee.[71] These so-called non-legislative texts, based on own-initiative reports, became an increasingly important part of the parliamentary activity of the elected Parliament. They allowed MEPs to take a position on a subject that they could then use to influence their constituents. However, they also kept MEPs busy and allowed them to take a break from the committee's routine activity, which mainly involved reacting to documents from the Commission.[72] These own initiatives also became an opportunity to form a de facto alliance with officials of the European executive, as they could be used to introduce topics on which the Commission could then draw up proposals for directives. As Robert Moreland, a Member of the Energy Committee, put it: 'Energy was a top priority, so representatives of the Commission's directorates-general were there and took part. They were more than just observers; they talked and even offered to draft legislation [...]'.[73] Indeed, the 1980s saw an unprecedented proliferation of non-legislative texts: they almost doubled in number between 1980 and 1989 (from 197 to 341).[74] The work of the parliamentary

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policy, transport, environment and health, young people, education, information and sport, development and cooperation, budgetary control, regulation.

[67] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.*, p. 212.

[68] OJ L C 239/21, 10.9.1984; OJ L C-46/37, 23.2.1987; also the Committee on Institutional Affairs, the Committee on Women's Rights and the Committee on Petitions.

[69] O. Costa and F. Saint Martin, *Le Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] Rule 63 of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

[72] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.*, p. 235.

[73] Interview with Robert Moreland, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[74] European Commission (COM), 24th General Report on the Activities of the European Communities, 1990.

committees thus became the core work of the Members of the European Parliament and an opportunity for them to increase their expertise and build up a reputation within the institution. A very broad range of topics and legislation was covered, from highly technical guidelines on carbon dioxide emission standards for cars to proposals for institutional reform within the European Community. The prestige of the parliamentary committees also changed alongside developments within the Community itself. For example, whereas in 1979 the foremost parliamentary committee was agriculture – since more than 60% of Community spending was on Europe's common agricultural policy – in 1989 MEPs were more interested in being involved in committees that dealt with the environment or consumers. However, it was undeniably the Committee on Institutional Affairs, set up in 1981 to prepare for the creation of a European Union, which attracted Parliament's 'big stars', namely Marcelino Oreja, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Claude Cheysson, Emilio Colombo, Maurice Duverger and Biagio De Giovanni. According to Maurice Duverger, this committee was 'in some way the ideological committee of the European Parliament', as it was used by political heavyweights to discuss the future of Europe and the European idea.[75] In it, MEPs such as Fernand Herman, the Belgian author of an important report on the European institutions, were able to make a name for themselves.[76] But the more technical committees, such as the Committees on Agriculture, Social Affairs and Budgetary Affairs, or even the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, could also represent an added value for MEPs. Fernand Herman was a case in point: he decided to join the Economic Committee in 1989, where he specialised in telecommunications and was rapporteur for the 'Directive on the frequency bands to be designated for the coordinated introduction of digital European cordless telecommunications in the Community'.[77]

MEPs adopted one of two strategies in relation to their involvement in the work of the parliamentary committees, most of which was done in the Van Maerlant building in Brussels. They could either remain generalists and join prestigious committees, such as the Committee on Foreign Affairs or even the Political Affairs or Institutional Affairs Committees. For the most part, however, these positions were usually reserved for Members who had already held key posts in their respective governments, such as Giovanni Goria, who became Chair of the Committee on Political Affairs; Marcelino Oreja, Chair of the Committee on Institutional Affairs; and Willy De Clercq, Chair of the Committee for External Economic Relations. Alternatively, they could opt for technical expertise and build up knowledge in a specific area. Accordingly, Heinrich Aigner (CSU) became Chair of the Committee on Budgetary Control in 1979, where he remained until his death; Roberto Barzanti (PCI) – who was known in the field of communication through his involvement in 'Television without Frontiers' in the early 1980s – became Chair of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media in 1992; and Marie-Claude Vayssade (Unified Socialist Party) built up her technical know-how within the Committee on Rules in 1979 and then chaired the Legal Committee until 1989. This technical strategy, pursued in particular by young MEPs who joined the European Parliament in 1989, did prompt some ironic remarks. Jacques Delors noted that 'someone who is appointed only for their abilities is a cause for concern in politics'.[78] However, the ambitious young generation which joined Parliament from 1989 onwards did change habits: while the generalist approach meant that MEPs sometimes found it difficult to adapt to the technical and depoliticised work of the committees, which resulted in a high level of absenteeism – particularly among the French and Italians – young MEPs understood that, in order to make themselves indispensable,

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[75]   M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 214.

[76]   F. Herman, *My Country: Europe,* Liège, Éditions Espaces, 1989.

[77]   European Parliament, Herman report (doc. 352/90), 12.12.1990.

[78]   M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.*, p. 245.

they needed to be present and quickly become an expert on a particular file. Aside from these parliamentary strategies, which influenced the daily operations of the institution, the key posts in parliamentary committees were assigned according to the d'Hondt system, whereby the positions of chair and vice-chair of the various committees were allocated to the political groups on a proportional basis. Therefore, once again, MEPs' roles within the committees were mainly split between the Socialists and the Christian Democrats, who in turn ensured that each nationality was fairly represented. The allocation of committee chairs depended on the size of the political groups, which was to the detriment of smaller groups, such as the United Left, the Greens or the European Democrats, who received only one chair each in 1989, while the two main groups for the most part shared the committee chairs, with eight going to the Socialists and five to the Christian Democrats (the Liberals were given two). This situation highlighted the grip held by the main groups on the work of the committees, which was the result of 'partiocracy', even if it was mitigated by a points system whereby rapporteurs' responsibilities could be divided up more equitably within each parliamentary committee.[79]

The evolution of work in the parliamentary committees following the first European elections by universal suffrage was clear testimony to the empowerment of the European Parliament.[80] From a political player with a fairly secondary role in the Community set-up, and one used predominantly on a consultative basis, Parliament gradually acquired a more prominent role to become a key player in the decision-making process within the European Community.

[79] M. Kaeding, 'Rapporteurship allocation in the European Parliament', in *European Union Politics,* Vol. 5, No. 3, 2004, pp. 353-371.

[80] S. Bowler and D. M. Farrel, 'The organizing of the European Parliament: committees, specialization and coordination', in *British Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 25, No. 2, 1995, pp. 219-243.

2. PART TWO

Emergence of a European parliamentary culture

Politicisation of the European Parliament went hand in hand with the emergence of a European parliamentary culture.[81] Arrangements had to be established for regulating the work to be done. At the same time, the small, autonomous Administration that had supported the work of the unelected Assembly had to begin its own transformation. Direct election created new requirements. For instance, allowing all Members to work in their national languages inevitably made it necessary to recruit a host of interpreters and translators. Thus, election by universal suffrage meant an increase in staff and increasingly specialised job descriptions. The Administration then set about serving the newly elected representatives, with MEPs becoming Parliament's focal point. This new state of affairs determined the emerging relationship between the Presidency, the Assembly and its Administration.

We therefore need to take a look at the organisational arrangements for parliamentary work and gain a better insight into what, in detail, it involved. Complex interaction developed between the various layers and components of the Strasbourg Parliament, with the new logistical set-up determining its political decisions.[82] Accordingly, MEPs tackled a host of new areas – ranging from women's position in society to Social Europe, the regional question and Community enlargement – and no issue that might be of concern or interest to European citizens was off-limits to them.

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[81]   R. Scully, 'MEPs and the Building of a "Parliamentary Europe"', in *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 4, No 3, 1998, pp. 92-108.

[82]   S. Hix, A. Noury and G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament, op. cit.*

Chapter 1: Parliamentarians and their Administration

1.1 – MEPs: a number of approaches

The number of MEPs increased during the period under consideration: from 410 in July 1979 to 434 in 1981, following Greece's accession, and then to 518 in 1986, following the accession of Spain and Portugal.

Were MEPs a homogeneous group? No, certainly not, if voting age is anything to go by, which varied from one Member State to another: 18 in Germany and Denmark, 21 in the United Kingdom, 23 in France and as high as 25 in Italy and the Netherlands. That was not the only difference. Some MEPs represented individual constituencies, e.g. in the United Kingdom, while others were elected in a single national constituency and derived their legitimacy from a proportional voting system. As there was no standard electoral system, European Parliament elections from 1979 to 1989 were primarily national elections. Parties sought to dominate in their home countries, thus in a way nationalising European issues.

Did this result in differences between MEPs and national parliamentarians? The profiles of those elected in 1979 and 1984 were very similar to the traditional political profiles of office-holders in Community Member States. As dual mandates were permissible, a proportion of those elected in 1979 were national parliamentarians: 31 % of MEPs in the first parliamentary term held more than one office. There were differences between Member States, however: all Luxembourg's MEPs, for instance, fell into that category. This contrasted with the few United Kingdom MEPs who did (11 %). The full dual-mandate figures by Member State were as follows: Ireland: 80 %; Belgium: 79 %; Germany: 32 %; Italy: 31 %; France: 29.5 %; Denmark: 19 %; Netherlands: 12 %. There was a very clear decline in dual-mandate arrangements during the second parliamentary term (1984-1989). Indeed, some Member States (Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) had banned the practice by then. During the directly elected European Parliament's second term, 6 % of MEPs from the other Member States held more than one office. The European Parliament elected in 1989 contained only 34 dual-mandate MEPs, with two Member States in particular standing out: Italy with eighteen and France with seven. It had therefore become obvious that the office of MEP could not be regarded as an add-on to the office of national parliamentarian, with national political parties clearly realising that the sort of work that was required for the European Parliament was different from the work of national parliaments. That being so, political actors had to give thought to how the two types of parliamentary institution – European and national – could complement each other.

However, which candidates were selected – and, accordingly, which were elected – was a process controlled by national political parties. There was therefore no reason as to why their profile should differ from that of national politicians. Thus, the French Socialist Party list in 1979 reflected a balance between the various tendencies within the party. Care was also taken to make sure that regional differences were represented; and since the ballot was nationwide, it was thought necessary to promote key national figures. In 1979, much of what polarised the ballot and drew attention to it was the inclusion of leading politicians on electoral lists (e.g. Willy Brandt in Germany, and Jacques Chirac and Simone Veil in France), which was both annoying and gratifying, as Enrico Vinci, a former European Parliament Secretary-General, pointed out: 'It is very important for us to have politicians in this Parliament who are well known at national level.' Their presence 'promotes the influence of the institution'. At the same

time, however, in many instances, eminent figures were elected to the European Parliament after defeat at the polls in their home countries.

What then were the particular characteristics of MEPs? Many were apparatchiks; in addition, they mostly had an upper-middle-class or upper-class background; and nearly all of the few MEPs of working-class origins emerged from the trade union movement and had worked as paid union officials. Women were under-represented in many instances, except in the case of environmentalist parties in France, which introduced gender parity by alternating men and women candidates on their lists. It should be noted that, on occasion, a shortage of women candidates produced national selection procedures that came as a surprise. When, for example, Karl von Wogau first stood in the European elections in Freiburg Süd in Germany, he was the preferred candidate until his political party (the CDU) put pressure on him to withdraw in favour of a woman. When local voters voiced their support for him en masse, the regional press asked him in an interview whether he was ending female candidates' chances in Baden-Württemberg.[83]

It should also be pointed out that some MEPs elected in 1979 already had experience of the European Parliament. Of the United Kingdom's 64 representatives in the appointed European Parliament, for instance, 20 % decided to stand in the 1979 elections. The Conservative Party in particular encouraged its key figures with European experience to stand. Four of Denmark's Members of the unelected Assembly were also elected in 1979.[84]

Such cases can be drawn on to look at the question of MEPs' longevity in office. Some political parties wanted to introduce rotation arrangements for MEPs, signalling that parliamentary longevity would be brief. Accordingly, as far back as 1980 the Rassemblement pour la République encouraged some of its MEPs to resign and make way for those next on its list. In standing down, key political figures such as Jacques Chirac, Pierre Messmer and Michel Debré most certainly did not intend injecting new blood and methods; they sought, rather, to weaken the elected Parliament. In political set-ups such as the Greens, similar measures were taken on occasion in order to 'professionalise' the senior ranks. At all events, it was debatable what could be achieved through longevity in the European Parliament. Only 10% of those representing national parliaments in the pre-1979 Assembly came back to what had become an elected European Parliament. The proportion was much higher for the 1984 elections, however, the re-election rate being 56.4 %; at the 1989 ballot it was 50.2 %. The rates for Germany and the United Kingdom in particular were high: almost 65 % of British MEPs were re-elected in 1984 (and close to 70 % in 1989); in 1984 the re-election rate was high in Germany, too, at 72.5 %, subsequently falling to 53 % in 1989. Those rates were still well above the figures for France and Italy, with their rates falling from 43.6 % to 33.3 % and from 50 % to 27.2 % respectively. In both those countries, the approach to the nomination process was still very much in thrall to national party politics, whereas in the other two countries efforts were made to take a European approach to the process. A divide developed in this connection: at the 1984 and 1989 ballots, some countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) re-elected more than half their MEPs, a category to which Ireland, with re-election rates of 47 % and 52.3 % respectively, could also be added. There was a clear north-south divide with regard to parliamentary longevity in spite of the fact that MEPs derived their professionalism or leadership positions from their length of service. The stability resulting

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[83] Interview with Karl von Wogau, Freiburg im Breisgau, 28 March 2018.

[84] See, in this connection, the detailed study by A.-C. L. Knudsen, 'Modes de recrutement et de circulation des premiers membres britanniques et danois du Parlement européen', in *Cultures & Conflits,* 85-86, spring-summer 2012, pp. 61-79.

from MEPs' political longevity lent weight to the European Parliament and to its methods. Longevity also conferred authority on MEPs. Renaud Payre produced a sound case analysis covering seven MEPs who were elected in 1979 and continually re-elected up to and including 2004, also looking into the positions they held during the 2004-2009 term. Of the seven MEPs, five were German (Elmar Brok, Ingo Friedrich, Klaus Hänsch, Hans-Gert Pöttering and Karl von Wogau), one Danish (Jens Peter Bonde) and one French (Francis Wurtz). These key figures held office either as President or Vice-President of Parliament, or as a political group chair, a parliamentary committee chair or a Quaestor. This highlights the issue of MEPs becoming professional and developing their expertise.[85]

In connection to this, there were also other changes from which a number of conclusions can be drawn. Of the MEPs elected in 1979, 50 % had parliamentary experience at national level; but only 35 % did in the following term (1984-1989). In conjunction with the diminished involvement of seasoned national parliamentarians, there was an injection of new blood among MEPs and more women were returned: 16 % of MEPs elected in 1979 were women – 17.7 % in 1984 – the equivalent figure for the outgoing 1979 Parliament being, by contrast, barely 3 %. In conjunction with re-election rates that were high in some northern countries, but, at about one-third, by no means insignificant in southern countries either, this led to the emergence of a core group of European-issue professionals from across the political spectrum who were capable of driving the Strasbourg Parliament forward, harnessing its institutional resources to maximum effect.

1.2 – Women MEPs

For a long time after the Second World War, the extent of women's membership of national assemblies was insignificant. In that context, the European Parliament could arguably claim to have been a trailblazer. While the pre-1979 unelected Parliament was not immune to prevailing attitudes – in 1978, only 11 of the 198 appointed Members were women – election by universal suffrage was a game changer. For the first time ever in an assembly in Europe there were enough women representatives to be able to influence decisions: the first direct elections produced a Parliament in which 16.3 % of MEPs were women; there were 67 of them when Parliament was constituted on 17 July 1979. Their numbers rose continually: 17.7 % in 1984 (83 MEPs) and then 19.3 % in 1989 (100 MEPs). There were, however, disparities between Member States. Three countries unquestionably came out top in terms of women MEPs: Denmark, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Four countries sent somewhat fewer than the average number to Strasbourg: Belgium, Italy, the United Kingdom and Italy. France and Germany were in the middle, and there were few women MEPs from Greece, Portugal and Spain (8.3 %, 4 % and 10 % respectively).

During the elected European Parliament's first term, women were chiefly active on committees usually regarded in the public eye as falling within women's areas, making up 40 % of the members of the Committee on the Environment and Public Health, 32 % of the Committee on Youth, Culture and Education, and nearly 30 % of the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment. There were no women members of the Committee on Transport or the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs. The first term had its share of symbolic events, however: a Frenchwoman, Louise Weiss, chaired the inaugural sitting in July 1979,

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[85] G. Marrel and R. Payre, 'Des carrières au Parlement. Longévité des eurodéputés et institutionnalisation de l'arène parlementaire', in *Politique européenne*, 2006/1, No 18, pp. 69-104.

handing over to another woman, Simone Veil, after she was elected President of the European Parliament. From 1979 to 1984 there were three women Vice-Presidents. The position of women MEPs was consolidated step by step: at the outset of the term in 1979, only one parliamentary committee was chaired by a woman whilst five women were vice-chairs; in 1984, there were three chairwomen and thirteen vice-chairs. A number of strongholds were yet to be taken, however: no political groups were chaired by women during that period, though some were at times vice-chairs of groups or members of their bureaux. From 1984 onwards, however, women also made their entry into committees regarded as more of a male preserve: the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Budgets. Women MEPs also took on responsibility for drafting reports and making the case for them: between 1979 and 1984, 15 % of committee reports were written by women. No issue was off-limits to them: Mechthild von Alemann drafted a report on the siting of nuclear power plants, while Maria Fabrizia Baduel Glorioso focused on the closure of Consett steelworks.[86] A longer list could doubtless be produced; in any case, it shows that women MEPs took an interest in all European political issues and proves that they were just as politicised as their male colleagues.

The presence of women MEPs was also conducive to raising the Strasbourg Parliament's awareness of the position of women in society in Europe. On 26 October 1979, they secured the setting up of an ad hoc Committee on Women's Rights, with a view to drawing up a report, in cooperation with the European Commission, on the situation of women in Europe and subsequently to launching a parliamentary debate on the issue. Yvette Roudy, a French MEP, was appointed committee chair on 13 December 1979; three women vice-chairs were appointed (Shelagh Roberts, Mechthild von Alemann and Vera Squarcialupi).[87] The proceedings of the committee were held in public from early 1980 onwards. On 11 February 1981, on the basis of its work, a resolution was adopted on the situation of women in the European Community.[88] Marking the end of the ad hoc committee's proceedings, the resolution contained a number of important points. Firstly, it tied the distribution of Community regional and social funds to the implementation of the equal-pay and equal-treatment directives, and requested the Commission to ensure compliance. The resolution also provided for specific measures to combat female unemployment, such as shorter daily working hours and gender

Photo 6: Yvette Roudy, Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights, visiting an exhibition entitled 'Femmes victimes de l'apartheid' with Simone Veil in Strasbourg in September 1980.

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[86] F.C. Dobre, 'Les députées de la première législature (1979-1984) du Parlement européen élues au suffrage universel direct', in *'Towards direct elections to the European Parliament'*, March 2009, pp. 78-87 (*Cardoc Journals, No 4*).

[87] European Parliament, *Situation of women in the European Community. Debates of the European Parliament*. Directorate-General for Research and Documentation, June 1981.

[88] European Parliament, resolution of 11 February 1981 on the situation of women in the European Community.

equality regarding continuing training and part-time working. Lastly, it stated that there should be proper social safeguards for women and the elderly. The resolution was intended to be implemented both by the Community institutions and by the Member States. In June 1981, in order to monitor implementation, the European Parliament set up a Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe. Its rapporteur was Marie-Claude Vayssade, who presented her report to the committee in February and March 1982. Before the committee was disbanded, MEPs placed the report on the agenda of Parliament for debate, and a draft resolution was presented on 5 January 1984 which set out a review of the situation of women in the European Community Member States and put forward measures to be taken to improve women's position in society at both European and national level. In one term, then, Parliament had laid the foundations for a sustainable gender-equality policy in the European Community.

1.3 – The Administration

The Administration of the European Parliament helps to make the institution operate smoothly. Officials and other servants in post can be divided into four categories: the first is made up of Administration officials working in the Secretariat's various directorates-general; a second comprises staff made available to the political groups and parliamentary committees; MEPs' assistants make up the third category and translators and interpreters the fourth. When the first European elections took place, much of the Administration was based in Luxembourg, which is the seat of the Secretariat; but, depending on the MEPs' activities, some Administration staff travelled between Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. In 1979, when the European Parliament was first elected by direct universal suffrage, the Administration had a staff of 1 995. What were its characteristic features? What impact did the election have on it?

The basic fact is that earlier parliamentary assemblies – the ECSC Common Assembly and the European Parliamentary Assembly – were consultative bodies that sat for only a few days a year and were made up of national parliamentarians with little involvement in the life of the European Community. During that initial phase, the Administration was able to develop relatively independently and become autonomous, with officials ensuring institutional continuity and cohesion. Officials were the central embodiment of the institution; national parliamentarians, being delegates to the Assembly, inevitably were disconnected from it. As, at the time, the European integration process was very much driven by economic integration, officials gradually built up expertise that made them essential for the Assembly to run smoothly, and its Members could rely on them completely. However, things started changing in 1979. Election by direct universal suffrage, followed by changes to Parliament's powers as a result of the Single European Act, gradually gave MEPs a more central role in that the proceedings of the institution, and how it operated, then became focused on them. Fewer dual mandates in the space of two elections meant that MEPs became more strongly attached to the Strasbourg Parliament, which expanded in line with successive European Community enlargements, with the European Parliament having control over its own budget at the time of the first direct elections. Over time, there were other developments: increased travel between the three cities; a need for additional translators and interpreters as a result of enlargements; a growing need for staff for the groups and committees, which increased in number with each passing term. A direct consequence of that was a rapid growth in staffing levels – 2 966 staff in 1984 and 3 482 in 1989, half of them employed in language services – though numbers were far less than the figure of 12 900 for officials and other servants at the European Commission during the same period.

The Administration was made up of different actors, the dominant figure in the hierarchy being the President of the European Parliament, who was assisted by the Bureau (President plus Vice-Presidents), the College of Quaestors and the Enlarged Bureau (Bureau plus political group chairs).

From 1979 onwards, a 'College of Quaestors' is elected to take charge of administrative and financial matters relating directly to Members and their working conditions.

Those authorities exercised the real power, setting policy and providing the necessary impetus. Parliamentary assistants – close associates of MEPs – had no precise status; and how they were recruited and remunerated depended on the MEP to whom they were attached. The political groups had a number of officials and other staff available to them to meet their operational needs; precisely how many depended on the size of the group concerned and its language requirements. Group secretariats gradually expanded in size (a little over 600 staff members were allocated to them under the 2003 budget settlement). Staff helped to coordinate their group, monitor committee work and lay down strategy; they also provided expert advice for MEPs. Strictly speaking, the European Parliament's Administration was the Secretariat, which comprised the various directorates-general and was headed up by the Secretary-General. Election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage and its new powers forced departments to change radically, become more professional and reorganise. A new organisational set-up was introduced: the Office of the Secretary-General, to which the Directorate for Data Processing and Telecommunications and the Legal Service were directly attached, plus six (subsequently seven) directorates-general. The Directorate-General for Sessional Services (DG I) handled parliamentary acts and the follow-up to part-sessions. The Directorate-General for Committees and Delegations (DG II) provided secretariat services for the parliamentary committees and delegations for relations with national parliaments. DG III handled Parliament's public relations, drawing in particular on the Information Offices set up

in each Member State capital, including relations with the press and other media; it also dealt with arrangements for visits to the European Parliament. The Directorate-General for Research (DG IV) provided expertise for MEPs, which they needed for their reports and resolutions, and for the Secretariat. Staff and payroll management and management of Parliament's budget were handled by DG V (Personnel, Budget and Finance) while general administration came under DG VI, that DG being responsible for all organisational matters relating to equipment and facilities in Parliament. The remaining directorate-general (DG VII) was in charge of translating, producing and distributing all Parliament's working and official documents.

In general, as a result of that reorganisation, the job of European Parliament officials became more technical and more specialised, making it more difficult to move from one DG to another; it also became more ponderous. As a result of the elected Parliament's expanding legislative business, in particular following on from the Single European Act, the work of the parliamentary committees had to be meticulously monitored. Accordingly, committee rapporteurs and chairs were supported by more and more staff (170 officials at the end of the second term). Those officials organised committee business in Brussels; they kept the minutes of meetings and had to be experts in each committee's area of responsibility; they also drafted resolutions and amendments tabled to reflect what MEPs wanted, and sometimes acted as mediators in helping to build majorities for them.

While the Administration was competent, had expert knowledge and was essential for the institution to function, could it be viewed as a powerful Administration able to influence the political line taken by the European Parliament? It should first be pointed out that the emergence of a powerful and homogeneous Administration was doubtless curbed by its multilingual and multinational nature. While, in theory, nationality was not a condition of employment – a quota scheme applied – it was clear in practice that Member States were attached to national representation within Parliament's Administration. That made sense not only from a European integration perspective – the symbolism of having each Member State represented in the European institutional set-up – but there was also a practical aspect in that MEPs had fellow nationals in the European Parliament who could guide them through the mysterious ways of the institution and how it was run. Accordingly, apart from the overrepresentation of Belgian and Luxembourg nationals, within the Administration there was a degree of balance between Member States. What being an 'official' involved, however, was a function of national cultures. In some countries, officials were customarily unbiased; in others, politicised public servants were the norm. That raised the question of the politicisation of the European Parliament's Administration, a matter that certainly needed to be examined.

In this respect, the first obvious fact to be flagged up is that politics was ever present in the institution. Many officials worked for groups and committees in which there was discussion of what strategy should be pursued, what compromises were necessary and where the balance of power lay. When providing expert opinions on particular matters, officials could not overlook the political stakes involved, meaning that there was always an overlap between providing expert assessments and acting politically. The appointment of the European Parliament's senior officials is something else to be taken into consideration. Firstly, as has been stated, there was concern that there should be balanced representation of the Member States. In 1979, the directorates-general were divided up among French, German, British, Dutch and Italian nationals; subsequently, in 1989, room was made for a Spanish senior official. With a view to taking on important posts, officials were sometimes tempted to draw closer to MEPs who were fellow nationals, since, in due course, they could well influence their promotion. That in itself was doubtless a form of indirect politicisation. There was also

partisanship, however, in the way in which appointments were made. Appointments were a matter for the Bureau, which reflected political strengths within Parliament, and in particular the influence of the Christian-Democrat and Socialist duopoly. During the elected Parliament's first two terms, appointments were determined by the interests of the two main political groups and their allies of convenience. The fact is that party politics was a factor right from the outset of the Community venture. The first senior officials of the Community institutions, and hence of the parliamentary assemblies, were usually recruited from among the circle of close associates of the 'fathers of Europe' or of assembly presidents or vice-presidents. Despite the subsequent prioritising of human and financial resources for the groups, the separation between the political world and the Administration was not completely watertight. A number of cases in point can be cited in that connection. The first Secretary-General of the elected Parliament returned in 1979 – German national Hans-Joachim Opitz – had been Secretary-General of the Christian-Democrat Group in the ECSC Common Assembly in the 1950s. Retiring in 1986, he was succeeded by Enrico Vinci, an Italian national, who did not lack experience either. He had previously been secretary to Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Gaetano Martino, a fellow Liberal Party member, and with him had witnessed the negotiations on the Treaties of Rome first hand. He therefore had a number of points in his favour: he had had a hand, early on, in the European integration process; he was a lawyer; moreover, he was a member of a political party associated with the EPP, which held the presidency of the European Parliament at the time. There were other instances of overlapping. Hans Apel, a German Social Democrat, first was Secretary – from 1958 onwards – of the Socialist Group in the European Parliamentary Assembly. In 1962 he became an official in the European

Photo 8: In 1986, Enrico Vinci (r) succeeds Hans-Joachim Opitz (l) as Secretary-General of the European Parliament. Pierre Pflimlin (c) has been its President for two years.

Parliament, where he dealt with economic and transport policy. In 1965 he was elected to the German Bundestag, for Hamburg, and for the next five years was also a member of the West German delegation to the European Parliament. In 1969 he was appointed Vice-Chair of the SPD Parliamentary Party and became Chair of the Transport, Post and Telecommunications Committee. Over the next 10 years, in the Federal Republic of Germany, he was State Secretary for European Affairs, Minister for Finance and then Minister for Defence before stepping back from involvement in politics in 1990. More examples could be given of European officials becoming MEPs. Candidates defeated in European elections returned to the European Parliament as political group secretaries. The groups had their own staff – almost 500 strong at the end of the 1984-1989 term – which further politicised the institution. That politicisation also had its benefits, however. It fostered a degree of efficiency, making for shorter communication channels. The benefit stemmed from trust between MEPs and officials and from their work together, on good terms, which was made possible by the affinity between

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particular administrative managers and particular MEPs, notably committee chairs and rapporteurs. Technical criteria could not therefore be the sole recruitment criteria. Membership of political networks made it possible to understand the strategic objectives of the parliamentarians being supported, to give thought, together with them, to the political content of proposals, reports and resolutions, and to tell the outside world what that content was.

Parliamentary assistants, whose links with MEPs were of course closer, also found themselves in this in-between space between the political world and the Administration. During the period under review, however, their status was not clear. Their assignment was normally temporary, and they were totally dependent on MEPs for their job and for what they were paid. There were a number of possible pathways to becoming an assistant. The most common was for young, recent graduates from, in some instances, institutes or academies specialising in European issues to come across such jobs when doing a traineeship in a European institution. That was a recruitment ground commonly drawn on by MEPs. During the period from 1979 to 1989, some MEPs recruited members of their families. Some delegations set up pools of assistants, which greatly facilitated work; that is what the Spanish Socialist delegation, for instance, did after Spain's accession to the European Community. Although the work lacked security, the pool arrangement was often a way for assistants to take on responsibilities in a group secretariat, or even set up as a consultant in Brussels, without changing their specialisation.

The new President of the European Parliament, Lord Plumb, meeting Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission, and Leo Tindemans, President of the Council, in Strasbourg in January 1987.

Chapter 2: Organising parliamentary work

2.1 – MEPs[89]

MEPs, unlike national parliamentarians, were 'foreigners'. They worked in Brussels or at Parliament's seat in Strasbourg, which meant that – unless they were Belgian or French – they had to travel a lot.[90] It also meant that, in those two cities, they only came across European officials. The unelected Parliament's discretionary powers, limited authority and small number of Members gave an air of secrecy to its comings and goings in Strasbourg. It made expatriation bearable. The Alsatian cuisine also contributed to the atmosphere. Following the 1979 election, everything changed. A European Parliament capable of meeting the expectations arising from its direct election had to be created. Simone Veil gave a good description of the scale of the task: 'There were no traditions, the rules of procedure were unusable, and there were no working methods; the administrative body was no longer suited to what we had become. The power of the officials who turned the cogs had to be transferred to the parliamentarians. Parliament was like a machine going through a difficult birth. I felt like I was mothering it, playing the part of foster mother'.[91] The changes to be introduced included the professionalisation of the role of Member, a task which was not completely straightforward. As their salaries came from their respective Member State's budget, the differences in resources between the MEPs were striking, even though their costs and allowances, including pay for their parliamentary assistants and secretariat, were covered by the Community budget. Given that they were forced to travel between Brussels, Strasbourg and their country of origin, Members' attendance rates were sometimes poor during the first parliamentary term. There are plenty of first-hand accounts of Members only turning up to meetings to sign the attendance register. The Single European Act changed the situation somewhat as the new powers given to the European Parliament required Members to form large majorities. Once they had arrived in Brussels or Strasbourg, Members had to get to grips with a growing number of reports, initially as complete strangers given that they did not know their colleagues from other countries. As a result, they formed immediate and clear links with Members from their own countries, often in their own national delegation. There they started to learn the job and became acquainted with agendas that made clear the diversity of the subjects they would be dealing with. Spanish Conservative MEP José María Gil-Robles noted that '[The national delegations] worked quite well. There was always some tension at the start when seats were being fought over; of course, negotiations were very intensive [...] but in the end it sorts itself out, you get used to negotiating and there were always some Members who were more skilled at that'.[92]

MEPs also had to get used to their programme being filled with activities that took place in several different places: a monthly plenary week in Strasbourg, two weeks of work in Brussels in their parliamentary committees and a parliamentary group week. At the weekend, they

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[89]   W. Beauvallet, *Profession : Eurodéputé. Les élus français au Parlement européen et l'institution d'une nouvelle figure politique et élective (1979-2004),* Thèse de Sciences Politiques, Université Robert Schuman, Strasbourg, 2007, 670 p. ; W. Beauvallet, 'Les eurodéputés : un métier politique sous tension', in *Savoir/Agir* 2009/1, No 7, pp. 55-64; W. Beauvallet and S. Michon, 'Des eurodéputés « experts » ? Sociologie d'une illusion bien fondée', in *Cultures & Conflits,* No 85-86, spring-summer 2012, pp. 123-138.

[90]   There are a number of European Parliament resolutions on the issue of the seat of the institutions, including a resolution of 7 July 1981, OJ C 234.

[91]   M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.,* p. 201.

[92]   Interview with José Maria Gil-Robles, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

usually went back to their countries of origin to host local socio-professional groups interested in European topics or to meet national politicians.

Members elected their President at the start of each term and again in the middle of the term. They then appointed the Vice-Presidents and Quaestors. To form the Bureau and ensure that all political allegiances were represented in it, Members voted using the d'Hondt system of proportional representation to ensure that all the European Parliament's political responsibilities were shared between political groups and national delegations, including committees, mandates and reports. Even resources were shared out proportionally. However, this approach was called into question by the two major groups – the EPP and the Socialists – who, during the elected Parliament's second term, decided to form a duopoly – including for the election of Parliament's President – and to introduce a rotation system for the allocation of institutionally important reports. The Presidency did not go to the Socialists in 1979 or the Christian Democrats in 1987, despite their dominance in the Assembly. In 1982 and 1986, the candidates who came second in the first round were elected. Therefore, the agreement came into effect at the start of the elected Parliament's third term, in 1989. Combined, the two groups comprised two-thirds of the Chamber, but they barely followed the proportionality rule. They not only worked together on all files relating to the functioning of Parliament, but also controlled the institution's key posts, monopolising the chairs of the most important committees while still applying the d'Hondt system. Committee work was a key task for Members. Twelve parliamentary committees were set up in 1979. The creation of sub-committees stopped committees growing excessively, even if it meant their competences had to be expanded. Some cross-disciplinary files had to pass through several committees to be adopted.

A parliamentary culture emerged over time. Certain incidents were used as an opportunity to impose stricter rules on parliamentary behaviour. In October 1988, Ian Paisley, leader of Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party, took the opportunity of a visit by Pope John Paul II to the European Parliament to interrupt his address and call him the 'Antichrist'. In a similar vein, far-right MEPs protested against their exclusion from interparliamentary delegations, sometimes violently, for example in 1989. Those incidents led Parliament to keep a closer eye on MEPs' interventions. The President obtained the power to call troublemakers to order and even expel them from the Chamber after a second warning. A vote of censure could be held to deal with troublemakers; if it passed, the Member concerned could be excluded from Parliament for up to five days. This marked the start of an increase in powers for Parliament's governing bodies, but it was the Maastricht Treaty which really introduced major changes in this area, although the seeds had been sown in 1979. From then on, work in plenary was monitored increasingly closely and speaking time was gradually reduced. At the request of a political group, questions to the Commission or the Council could be followed by a debate, the length of which – an hour during Parliament's first term – was shortened. Debates were eventually dropped altogether after the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty.

2.2 – A new political culture

Working at Parliament was a learning curve for all Members after the first elections by direct universal suffrage in 1979, regardless of their nationality or political affiliation.[93] Parliamentary

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[93]   For more on this, see W. Beauvallet, 'Institutionnalisation et professionnalisation de l'Europe politique, le cas des eurodéputés français', in *Politique européenne*, 2003/1, No 9, pp. 99-122.

life in Strasbourg was quite unusual: access and transport connections were not always easy. The French, Germans, Belgians and Luxembourgers were at somewhat of an advantage geographically, while others were at a disadvantage, for example, the Greeks, Portuguese, Spaniards and Danes. As a result, these latter nationalities often stayed longer in the Strasbourg bubble and in the building which Parliament shared at the time with the Council of Europe. Immersion into European political life often began with the learning of new customs in that idiosyncratic world and of codes and rituals during Strasbourg weeks.[94] On arrival, MEPs found metal trunks in their offices, containing all the documents, reports and information needed for the session. As Bernard Thareau remarked in 1981, there was 'paper, more paper and even more paper' – some 11.3 kg of documents.[95] It was one of the characteristics of Parliament life that took some getting used to. There were also everyday work rituals: breakfast at the bar opposite the Chamber, popping into the drivers' bar to tap into the rumour mill and the countless journeys between the parliamentary offices in the IPE4 building and the Chamber. Alain Bombard said: 'It is about 800 metres from my office to the Chamber; working on the basis that I do 10 such journeys a day, I must do at least 10 kilometres every day'.[96] Otto von Habsburg prided himself on the fact that, despite his age, he stayed in shape at Parliament: 'I don't do any sport, but I never take the lift: nothing beats going up and down the stairs during a session'.[97] Life at the European Parliament was a different world, one which brought together Members from different political groups and nationalities. From 1979 onwards, working conditions for MEPs were very good: they received a basic allowance plus travel and office management expenses. What is more, Parliament's Administration took care of MEPs in every respect: the institution revolved around them from then on.[98]

Support for European integration varied from one political party and nationality to another. Thus, for example, there were supporters of a European federation among the Italian Communists, but the Danish Social People's Party denounced the EU as a construction that worked against workers' interests.[99] The mainstream parties, the Socialists and the Christian Democrats, were generally pro-European, but again views differed, for example, between the British Labour Party, which was traditionally Eurosceptic, and the French Socialists and German Social Democrats (SPD), both of which were pro-European, but also between the French Gaullists and the German CDU. The Greens were quick to join the pro-European camp, while hard Eurosceptics entered Parliament in 1984: Jean-Marie Le Pen's *Front national*, Belgium's *Vlaams Blok* and the German far-right party of Franz Schönhuber, *Republikaner*. But the Parliament bubble in Strasbourg turned those parliamentarians who were otherwise harsh critics of European integration into masters of the European political arena and supporters of democratic political representation. Without doubt, the European Parliament's culture evolved with the changes in the institution itself between 1979 and 1989.

This process of Europeanisation could probably be best observed among the British, who were different to everyone else in that their national electoral system was a first-past-the-post procedure. This fostered a link between candidates (whether Socialist or Conservative) and their constituencies, which often resulted in MEPs staying in office for a long time. It was

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[94]   M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

[95]   *Ibid*., p. 208.

[96]   *Ibid*. ,p. 136.

[97]   *Ibid*.

[98]   Interview with François Brunagel, Strasbourg, 22 February 2018.

[99]   See G. Laprat, 'Les groupes politiques au Parlement européen : la dialectique de l'unité et de la diversité', in *Revue du Marché commun*, No 286, April 1986, pp. 220-230.

unusual for British parliamentarians to serve in the European Parliament for only one term. Between 1979 and 1989, a third of Members remained unchanged, which created stability in their role but also further integrated them into the European system. The British did not allow dual mandates: they carried out their parliamentary activity in Strasbourg on a full-time basis and the electoral system obliged them to maintain their ties with their constituency at all times. When they arrived in Strasbourg, the British did not know the European way of working very well but they soon learned about the atmosphere and settled in quite well. The Scottish Conservative MEP John Purvis spoke of a 'remarkable feeling of having been through war [and to be] sitting in that hemicycle with a Jewish President and Germans and Italians and Brits and Danes and Irish [...] whatever [...] all sitting in that Chamber'.[100] Being a Eurosceptic soon started to carry a stigma, as Purvis said: 'In the Parliament, in our group, there were a few unenthusiastic Europeans. They were slightly sceptic in those days. In those days, we were very pro-Europe [...], but we had two or three [sceptics] and it happened to be that all their names began with "H", so that's why we called them the "H-block" [after the colloquial name of a prison in Northern Ireland]'.[101] British Members became advocates of the European cause, as Robert Moreland, who became an MEP in 1979, confirmed: 'It was important for the European Parliament to have a stronger role as a democratic space. I certainly found a lot of resistance to that in the UK, particularly in the civil service [...]'.[102] Sometimes, their loyalty to the European cause ran counter to national positions, as Moreland explained: 'On bigger issues [that] the government was strong on [...] it was a very rare occasion [on which] we would say "OK, we will go along with you, the government". The interesting thing was [...] what party we should be in the European Parliament [with]. That was always approved or disapproved by the leader of the party in Westminster'.[103] Lord Balfe gave a good assessment of this process of Europeanisation for British MEPs: 'You couldn't get anything through on a national vote. You had to work within your political groups, and you had to work with your colleagues. There was a mixture of disdain, dislike, dismay about us back at home. So if we were to be effective, we had to work at a European level'.[104] Even the Labour Party began to show pro-European tendencies in the European Parliament. As Gordon Adam said, Labour was still quite anti-European: 'It wasn't the whole Labour Party, but in those days, there were about 18 members of the Labour group in the first European Parliament, very roughly speaking. There were six of us who worked together and, I believe, took a very positive view of our job.' The scepticism was even stronger in the second Parliament, elected in 1984: 'There was just a majority of people who were very anti in the Labour group'.[105] However, it was also when pro-European Socialists started entering Parliament. One notable example was Carole Tongue, elected in 1984, who had acquired in-depth knowledge of Europe through her work for the European Socialist Group before she became a Member herself. Lord Balfe stressed that in 1987 Lord Plumb became President of the European Parliament with the help of Labour MEPs: 'Henry [Plumb] won by about four votes and I got him the votes from the Socialist Group [...]. I went round and I said, "Look, if you want a British President, this is your chance".'[106] Particularly after its success in the 1989 elections, the Labour Party largely changed its attitude towards the

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[100] Interview with John Purvis, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[101] *Ibid.*

[102] Interview with Robert Moreland, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[103] *Ibid.*

[104] Interview with Lord Balfe, Brussels, 11 May 2017.

[105] Interview with Gordon Adam, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[106] Interview with Lord Balfe, Brussels, 11 May 2017.

European Parliament and its slogan from the first elections of 'Send us to Europe, so we can stop Europe from happening' was dropped.[107]

For other MEPs, membership of a European family came more naturally. Christian Democrat Ursula Braun-Moser believed that the European Parliament was 'an opportunity to study not only different languages but also different nationalities'. She pointed out, however, that Europeanisation was not a given, as everyone was reaching out to a 'domestic audience'.[108] After his election, Hans-Gert Pöttering saw the European Parliament as a 'political suggestion box'. The future president said: 'We were pacifist revolutionaries as far as the competences of the European Parliament were concerned,' but 'our objective was to extend the European Parliament's powers from the inside'.[109] The Dutch Liberal Florus Wijsenbeek, who had been part of the Vedel group[110] in the early 1970s, believed that 'the job was to come up with a new treaty on institutional development and Parliament's powers had to be included'. In his opinion, 'nothing ever came of it [...]. The unification process slowed down rather than speeding up and it was only after Altiero Spinelli and some friends took a new initiative [...], having met at Au Crocodile in Strasbourg – and that's how the name 'Crocodile Club' was decided – that Parliament's powers really began to develop'.[111] The ecologist Frank Schwalba-Hoth, who entered the European Parliament in 1984, saw his European mission in a different light: 'We considered our existence to be a positive culture shock for people at the time'. As members of the Green Group, they saw the situation as 'a challenge to the political culture: we arrived without ties, without suits [...]'. He was seeking to renew European society and come up with new visions for Europe: 'We fought for a Europe of regions. We had more female MEPs than other groups and we had the right to hire staff for work in parliamentary committees and we did that differently to the others. We hired people who did not strictly have European Community backgrounds and without following the breakdown of nationalities in our political group'.[112]

From the outset, Spanish parliamentarians were generally pro-European. Enrique Barón Crespo said: 'In the transition period, we were building democracy in Spain and at the same time, for all our political forces, membership of the European Community was important or a priority [...]. What was going on in Europe really interested us [the Spanish] because we felt isolated and slightly cut off from our continent and our history'.[113] In that context, a European career made sense: 'It was a very conscious choice, at the time journalists and commentators said that I would be like an elephant. I always told them it was true because elephants live for a long time. There are two reasons. One is that I had gone through a very good period after the end of the Franco regime, the constitution, the creation of a government. When I joined Parliament, it was a kind of kindergarten. And the other is that I thought the great challenge was to get involved in what was going on in Europe and so I felt it was really the time to do something new'. He also talked of the shared emotion when the Spanish and Portuguese joined the European Community. Of his first plenary session in January 1986, he said, 'I remember taking the floor on behalf of the Spanish Socialist Delegation but it was also

[107] M. Westlake, *A modern guide to the European Parliament*, London, Pinter, 1994, p. 94.

[108] Interview with Ursula Braun-Moser, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[109] Interview with Hans-Gert Pöttering, Bonn, 14 December 2017.

[110] The Vedel working group was set up in 1971 by the European Commission to examine all the implications of strengthening the European Parliament's institutional powers. It was chaired by George Vedel, Honorary Dean of the Paris Faculty of Law and Economics. His report was published on 25 March 1972.

[111] Interview with Florus Wijsenbeek, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[112] Interview with Frank Schwalba-Hoth, Brussels, 3 July 2017.

[113] Interview with Enrique Barón Crespo, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

somewhat on behalf of everyone who was very grateful to be there. We were very happy to be there and what was needed was to get to work'.[114] José Maria Gil-Robles (EPP), elected to the European Parliament in 1989 and its President between 1997 and 1999, also said that the Spanish were enthusiastic about European integration: 'The Spanish application was not too taxing for pro-Europeans in Spain. We supported everything we could, but there was no great need to because the government had been decided, the political forces had been decided, there was a national impetus, that is to say that the country felt that membership of the European Union was an inevitable consequence of returning to democracy. It would have been a huge disappointment not to have been admitted. Even 10 years of negotiations seemed very long'.[115]

Thus the Europeanisation of parliamentarians happened gradually from 1979 onwards. It was not just a parliamentary culture that was developing; the unique setting of the European Parliament in Strasbourg created something resembling a European family of parliamentarians, a family whose members, from different political groups and nationalities, formed not only political cleavages but also ties of the sort that were rarely seen in national parliaments.[116]

2.3 – The European family of parliamentarians in Strasbourg

Gradually, the European Parliament became not only the birthplace of a new 'profession' – that of MEP[117] – but also a genuine European family of Members who became close through their work on European integration. According to anthropologist Marc Abélès, there were three categories of parliamentarians in this European family: the 'aristocrats', such as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Leo Tindemans, Otto von Habsburg and Jean-Pierre Cot, who came to Strasbourg to take part in major debates on Europe and gave visibility to the Assembly; then there were the parliamentarians who found Strasbourg a pleasant halfway house while waiting to join or return to national political life. As Frenchman Pierre Bernard-Reymond, who joined the European Parliament in 1984 having missed out on a seat in the 1981 elections, said: 'So I came to Strasbourg but I hadn't lost all hope of playing a role in national politics again'. After he won a seat in the French parliamentary elections in 1986, he gave up his role as an MEP.[118] With the exception of the British, parliamentarians of that kind were very common during the first two parliamentary terms (1979-1989), but they began to disappear from 1987, as the European Parliament increased its power and the role of MEP became more of a profession in its own right.[119] Lastly, the third category of MEP was probably the most likely to be part of the united European family: those who joined the European Parliament to seize the opportunity to work intensively on European integration and advance issues that were important for Europe, but at the same time to gain recognition nationally and in their constituency. The Frenchman Jean-Pierre Raffarin, President of the Poitou-Charentes Region and elected to the European Parliament in 1989, explained: 'We are a kind of small operational

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[114] *Ibid.*

[115] Interview with José Maria Gil-Robles, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[116] R. Scully, *Becoming Europeans? Attitudes, behaviour and socialization in the European Parliament*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.

[117] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.*, p. 69.

[118] *Ibid.,* p. 89.

[119] M. Westlake, *A modern guide to the European Parliament, op.cit.*, p. 101.

commando unit; we come here to advance a number of issues. If you know how to use it, Parliament turns out to be a fantastic place; you can achieve a lot there.[120]

Ties between MEPs began to build as a result of the physical working conditions in Strasbourg. The seating arrangements for Members and political groups in the Chamber made it possible for them to get to know their neighbours. However, the arrangements sparked arguments from the start. For example, until 1979, the Liberals were on the right-hand side of the Chamber and the Conservatives were seated to their left, which displeased them. Simone Veil said that there was an arrangement with Conservatives who agreed to support her, a Liberal, in exchange for a position between the two groups in the Strasbourg Chamber.[121]

However, it was those seating coincidences that sometimes resulted in new links between Members. For example, during the 1979-1984 term, Lord Balfe, a member at the time of the British Labour Party,[122] was seated next to Altiero Spinelli, an Italian Communist. Balfe was a co-founder of the Crocodile Club, which produced a famous report on the European Union. Although he did not contribute intellectually to the adoption of that report, he played a tactical role in advising Spinelli on how to gain the votes for it to be adopted by Parliament. Lord Balfe turned to Spinelli and said: 'You've got to go round all of the [political] group leaders [...] and you've got to co-opt them, bring them on board, you've got to make them think it's part of their project'.[123] And Spinelli responded with 'we must learn from what went wrong', before he got his report adopted by 237 votes to 31 on 14 February 1984.[124] Likewise, the German Conservative Hans-Gert Pöttering said he had an 'excellent' relationship with his Communist neighbours when he joined Parliament in 1979 despite the fact that in West Germany, at the time, the Cold War era, politicians were advised not to have such ties.[125]

The European family also formed as a result of the development of intergroups, which brought together a broad range of parliamentarians around a common interest or issue. Altiero Spinelli's Crocodile Club and the Kangaroo Group were no doubt the best examples. At the Au Crocodile restaurant in Strasbourg they met to talk about the future of European integration. It was exactly that type of alliance between Members with different political affiliations and from different countries that resulted in the European Union project later advanced by Spinelli.[126] Through its regular lunches, the Kangaroo Group created the impression of a European family gathering around a table, with the Tuesday ritual in Strasbourg adding something very convivial to session weeks.[127]

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[120] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 316.

[121] *Ibid.*, p.108.

[122] Lord Balfe joined the British Conservatives in 2002.

[123] Interview with Lord Balfe, Brussels, 11 May 2017.

[124] European Parliament, debates, 14.2.1984, no 1, 309/28, point: European Union.

[125] Interview with Hans-Gert Pöttering, Bonn, 14 December 2017.

[126] European Parliament, resolution on the guidelines regarding the reform of the Treaty establishing the European Union, 6.7.1982.

[127] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.*, p. 336.

However, this European family was not always united, as evidenced by the difficulties that the intergroup on animal welfare encountered when trying to reach an agreement on some subjects. The denunciation of bullfighting in 1989, ahead of the Barcelona Olympic Games, was opposed by some Spanish Members (particularly Antonio Navarro, who set up an opposing intergroup). On matters concerning the protection and transport of livestock, they met opposition from Members who supported farmers' interests. The more radical German Greens put forward full-scale livestock welfare programmes and faced opposition from Members representing the interests of hunters in France and the UK.[128] Thus the development of a European family of parliamentarians could not conceal the diversity or plurality of the political and national cultures that clashed every day at the European Parliament. In other words, there were limits to the concept of the European family, not least because at the European Parliament a connection with the public – which could bring national parliamentarians together – was still lacking.

To make itself more visible, Parliament began to be much more active in a number of areas of European Community policy.[129]

Barbara Castle MEP examines a hunting trap while visiting an exhibition on animal welfare in July 1988.

[128] European Community (EC), Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, Compendium of legislative texts on animal welfare adopted by the European Economic Community and the Council of Europe, September 1989.

[129] D. Dinan, *Europe Recast. A History of the European Union*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2008, pp. 12-15.

Chapter 3: The European Parliament's political choices

The European Parliament's higher profile hinged on a number of political choices. By the 1970s, the range of European policies had already grown considerably beyond the traditional fields of agriculture and competition. The Community agenda was broadened to encompass new policy areas, such as regional and social policy.[130] The Parliament elected by universal suffrage in 1979 took advantage of this broadening of European policies to become more involved in these areas but also added others to its political agenda, such as the fight for gender equality and environmental policy. Lastly, the Members of the European Parliament also committed to the process of EU enlargement, a crucial area of intervention for the future of the European Community.

3.1 – The European Parliament and a social Europe[131]

The European Parliament deliberated regularly on a social Europe. Following the failure of the Chandernagor memorandum put forward by the French Government after François Mitterrand's election as President of France in 1981, European trade unions grew alarmed at the lack of a social dimension in the single market project. This was also the weakness of the Single European Act. With this in mind, in March 1989 when it adopted a report by Fernando Gomes – a Portuguese Socialist – on the social dimension of the internal market, Parliament called on the Commission to draw up a white paper as a social counterbalance to Lord Cockfield's white paper on the single market.[132] The report was also intended to remind the Commission of its obligations, in particular to draw up a Social Charter as it had undertaken to do. The Gomes report was adopted by 238 votes (109 Socialists, 60 Christian Democrats, 15 Spanish Conservatives, 14 Liberals, 5 Gaullists, 20 Communists, 9 from the Rainbow Group and 6 non-attached), to 34 (a Luxembourgish Christian Democrat and 33 British Conservatives) with 9 abstentions (a German Christian Democrat, a British Conservative, 6 French Gaullists and a Danish member of the Rainbow Group). This overwhelming majority paved the way for the adoption of the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights in Strasbourg in December 1989. However, this merely reaffirmed principles which already existed in most Member States and did not constitute a major step towards a harmonisation and communitarisation of social policy. Moreover, the Parliament elected in June 1989 considered it far less ambitious than the Gomes report, which was its point of reference.

This, however, was not the sole reservation expressed by Parliament over the Single European Act. A resolution adopted in July 1986 clearly showed that Parliament was concerned at the scant progress towards a European Union which that Act represented, despite the increased powers obtained. While it was determined to make use of these powers to ensure compliance with the expectations of the Luxembourg conference, Parliament also called on national parliaments to include a declaration regretting that the Single European Act did not create a European Union and pointed to the democratic deficit of the Community project. In its view, only the elected European Parliament enjoyed democratic legitimacy. That said, the European Union would be the only entity able to respond to European challenges such as unemployment, the technology gap, environmental protection or monetary cooperation. The

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[130] W. Kaiser and J.-H. Meyer, 'Non-state actors in European integration in the 1970s. Towards a Polity of Transnational Contestation', in *Comparitiv. Special issue,* No 20, 2010, pp. 7-104.

[131] T. Cosemans, 'Le Parlement européen et la politique sociale de l'Union européenne', in *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, 2001/3, No 1718, pp. 5-52.

[132] European Parliament, Gomes report (doc. A3-399/88), 23 February 1988.

European Union would also have to guarantee economic convergence among the Member States. The European Parliament had a major role to play in the process to establish the European Union.[133]

3.2 – The European Parliament and the regional question

Regional policy came about following groundbreaking deliberations. Parliament took an active interest in the contribution of the regions to the European project and in the European Community's regional policy.[134] In April 1984, following the first Conference of the Regions held in Strasbourg in January 1984, the European Parliament reaffirmed its views on the contribution of the regions to the process of European integration.[135] It saw a clear link between strengthening regional and local self-government and a more united Europe with effective powers. It considered that local and regional authorities ought to have the right to participate in defining and implementing Community policies. To that end, it called on the Member States to move towards a broad decentralisation and to grant fiscal and budgetary powers to regional authorities, which should also be given the opportunity to participate in cultural, spatial planning and environmental policies. They had a major role to play in education and training. Beyond these considerations, Parliament felt that it was at the borders where Europe had to be built, and that the Member States should encourage cross-border cooperation by means of an initiative to be managed by the regions on either side of a given border, regions which often shared a common geography or culture. Last but not least, there was a need for regions and local authorities to be able to maintain direct relations with Community institutions, though this depended on the Council and the European Commission. In its discussions, Parliament emphasised the pioneering role of certain organisations: the International Union of Cities and Local Governments (IULA), founded in 1913 in Ghent, and the Council of European Municipalities (CEM) founded in Geneva in 1951. In light of the front gradually being formed by the various associations bringing together local and regional authorities (after 1979, through the Liaison Office of European Regional Organisations, notably including the Association of European Border Regions and the Association of Alpine Regions), the European Parliament felt that these structures should be given a proper role. It was up to the Council of Europe and the European Community to take initiatives in this regard and to set a course. The former had to strengthen the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. However, it fell to the elected European Parliament to convene a new conference during its second parliamentary term and to ensure that its Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning maintained permanent relations with local and regional representative bodies. The other institutions, in particular the European Commission, had a duty to engage in a similar dialogue.

Taking stock of regional policy in 1988, the European Parliament formulated a series of new proposals.[136] It noted a relative failure of Community regional policy, which had not managed to ensure a rapprochement of the regions within the Community. Most importantly, the

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[133] It adopted many resolutions on the Single European Act regretting that it did not go far enough, for example: European Parliament, Resolution on the European Union and the Single European Act, OJ C 120, 20.5.1985.

[134] O. Costa, 'Le Parlement européen et le local : organisation des hommes et des intérêts', in *Politique européenne*, 2000/1, No 1, pp. 134-137 and, by the same author, 'L'Europe par les régions au Parlement de Strasbourg', in *Critique internationale,* Vol. 5, 1999, pp. 14-21.

[135] European Parliament, Resolution on the role of Regions, 13.4.1984, OJ C 127, 14.5.1984.

[136] European Parliament, Resolution on Community regional policy, 18.11.1988, OJ C 326, 19.12.1988.

disparities between regions had not diminished in the years since the first enlargement. On the contrary, more recent accessions had increased them. In the mid-1980s, 20 % of the European Community's population lived in regions whose development was lagging behind. This was the result of insufficient economic integration and, at the same time, a lack of ambition in Community policies and intervention instruments. The resources allocated to Community structural funds were clearly inadequate: they represented a mere 0.12 % of the Community's GDP. In addition, Community aid was spread over too large an area. In the main, appropriations were allocated to too many projects, which explains both why it was not possible to examine their effectiveness and objectives in sufficient detail and how aid was dispersed at the expense of dynamism. Given the developments in the European Community in the mid-1980s, there was a risk of this trend being exacerbated unless appropriate measures were taken. Developments in European integration (the single market and monetary cooperation) made further progress towards economic and social cohesion necessary, in particular a broader and more comprehensive approach to regional policy and cohesion strategy, which – because it would require further investments – had to include both a better allocation of resources and a redistribution of the benefits arising from the single market and common policies. In the view of the European Parliament, a general economic policy focused on growth and job creation was one of the preconditions for the implementation of a policy of convergence and reduction of regional disparities.

To this end, Community regional policy had to be amended. Several proposals caught the attention of the Strasbourg Assembly. The regional dimension had to be incorporated in all common policies. Of course, regional policy instruments also needed to be revised and improved by means of a monitoring and control system and foresight management making use of appropriate assessment criteria. Above all, Parliament sought to democratise and Europeanise regional policy. As far as Parliament was concerned, regionalisation was a factor for economic cohesion and development in the Community, for the democratisation of Community integration and a way of giving value to cultural differences. It was therefore in a regional context that European spatial planning had to operate if inequalities between the regions were to be reduced. Community programmes therefore had to be defined and cross-border initiatives launched, and Member States encouraged to pursue further decentralisation. It was important for the regions also to form part of the European identity. Parliament stated that it: 'Considers it essential for the European cultural identity that the specific regional characteristics existing within each Member State be given scope for expression, by making the most of their specific characteristics and thus respecting the interests, aspirations and historical, linguistic and cultural heritage of each region; and by facilitating transfrontier or interregional linguistic and cultural cooperation in the case of common historical, linguistic and cultural heritages which extend beyond existing administrative divisions'. Here again, Parliament was attempting to act as a conduit in order to convey the public's real expectations to the other Community institutions. This would require a reform of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as Parliament had been calling for since 1984.[137] It could still assert itself by means of a step-by-step approach, but how effective was this likely to be?

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[137] See also EC, Joint statement by the Council, the Commission and Parliament at the conciliation on the reform of the European Regional Development Fund, 19.6.1984, OJ C 72, 18.3.1985.

3.3 – The European Parliament and women

Since the 1970s, the European Parliament had consistently taken a keen interest in the issue of gender equality. As early as 1975, directives had been drawn up on the equal treatment of men and women in areas such as wages, access to employment, vocational training and social security, as well as on improved health conditions for pregnant women at work. Despite these efforts, the outcome of the 1979 European elections was not encouraging – only 16 % of the elected representatives were women, even if one of them, the Frenchwoman Simone Veil, was appointed the first President of the elected Parliament. During the election campaign, there were protests over the representation of women in Europe. For example, in the French Socialist Party, women complained that the number of elected female representatives was not commensurate with the number of women in the party: '30 % of the activists were women', noted Martine Buron, but 'we got only 15 % of the seats' won by the party in the first elections by universal suffrage.[138] In fact, only the Greens adopted a gender parity rule, alternating systematically between men and women on their electoral lists. It was therefore not surprising that the European Parliament elected by universal suffrage should seek to address the problem of gender equality as of its first term. Thus, in 1979, an ad hoc Committee on Women's Rights was set up, becoming a standing committee in 1984.[139] The committee's first battle was behind the scenes, recalled Ursula Braun-Moser: 'Were we even entitled to set up a committee on women's rights? We were denounced as feminists. We had to talk about equal opportunities instead of women's rights'.[140] The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality was responsible for the promotion and protection of women's rights in the European Community and in third countries. Other competences were the equal opportunities policy and the elimination of all forms of discrimination based on gender. In the same period, the European Parliament set up two committees of inquiry: one in 1979 on women's affairs and the other in 1981 on the situation of women in Europe. The latter took a Parliament resolution of 11 February 1981 as the basis of its work to monitor the position of women in the Member States. John Purvis, a British MEP who had been a substitute member during the first parliamentary term, described the committee as quite exceptional.[141]

The committee of inquiry was active until 1984, focusing its attention on 18 different topics.[142] In 1984, the committee presented investigative reports on issues as numerous and varied as equal pay, social security, women's status in Greece, working-time reduction and reorganisation, vocational training for women in Europe, the introduction of new technologies and their effect on employment for women, the position of women with respect to the review of the European Social Fund, women and health, migrant women, problems encountered by self-employed women, the situation of women in the European Community institutions, women in the third world, information policy and women, maternity, parental leave and pre-school facilities, taxation, the problems of women in less-favoured regions, education of girls

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[138] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.*, p. 77.

[139] *Europäisches Parlament, Der Aufbau eines Parlamentes : 50 Jahre Geschichte des Europäischen Parlamentes 1958-2008,* Luxembourg, Publications Office, 2009, p. 265.

[140] Interview with Ursula Braun-Moser, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[141] Interview with John Purvis, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[142] European Parliament, Committee of Inquiry on the situation of women in Europe, Notice to Members, Working method of the Committee, PE1 P2 272/COMO ENQ1. 1981-010

in the European Community and the place of women in the decision-making centres.[143] Taking stock, it presented its findings in plenary, showing a rather mixed picture. 'The resolution of 11 February was the point of reference for the Community's action as regards women, even though Parliament's vote was far from being implemented in full,' noted the rapporteur, Maria Lisa Cinciari Rodano. 'The Committee [...] had demonstrated that it was fully engaged, drawing up an action programme, new directives, numerous studies, setting up a Committee on equal opportunities, the action to implement the existing directives'.[144] However, she felt that 'the needs of the mass of women in such a difficult and dangerous period were not yet being met'. The rapporteur accused the Council of being slow to act and unable to take decisions on issues concerning women. It had even failed to adopt a directive on part-time work. As for the general situation of women, 'de facto equality' had not been 'fully achieved in any country' and there was 'a need for flexible and better targeted instruments'. Nevertheless, in the Committee's opinion, women had become 'one of the most interesting social groups for furthering the integration of the Community'. The debate in the European Parliament was extremely heated, and while the women in the committee recognised that, with 16 % women Members, Parliament had more women Members than any other chamber, with the exception of that of Denmark, they denounced the fact that men far outnumbered women in the governments of the Member States and in the European Commission: 'In the governments, out of a total of 198 ministers, only 16 are women, i.e. 8.5 % of the overall figure. Out of 222 secretaries and under-secretaries of state, only 16 are women, that is 7.1 % of the total. As for the Commission, although we have repeatedly asked it to include women among its number, it remains a completely male body'.[145] This debate showed that the European Parliament was still only at the very beginning of a long struggle for equal opportunities for men and women in Europe and in the Community institutions.

3.4 – The European Parliament and environmental policy

Another area of intervention which rapidly became a priority for the European Parliament between 1979 and 1989 was environmental policy. The demand for seats on its Committee on the Environment was proof of this: while in 1979 the Committee on Agriculture was the most in-demand committee, in 1989 it was the Committee on the Environment. Between 1984 and 1989, the latter grew considerably – from 36 members to 50.[146] There were two main reasons for this growing interest in environmental issues. Firstly, it was due to the Greens entering the European Parliament in 1984[147] and their subsequent success in the 1989 European elections (25 Members from five countries, thus allowing them to form their own parliamentary group).[148] Secondly, with the entry into force of the Single European Act in 1987, the European Community extended its competences in environmental matters. But, most importantly, the European Parliament gained new powers of cooperation, so that it could significantly influence environmental policies.[149]

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[143] European Parliament, Rodano report, Committee of Inquiry into the situation of women in Europe (doc. 1-1229/83/C), 5.1.1984.

[144] European Parliament, debates 17.1.1984, p. 31

[145] European Parliament, debates 17.1.1984, p. 55

[146] M. Abélès, *op.cit.,* p. 215.

[147] Seven German *Grüne*, a Belgian *Écolo* and a Dutch member of the *Groen Progressif Akkoord*.

[148] Germany, France, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands. See J.-L. Bennahmias and A. Roche, *Des Verts de toutes les couleurs. Histoire et sociologie du mouvement écolo,* Albin Michel, Paris, 1992, p. 92.

[149] M. Westlake, *op.cit.,* p. 211.

However, Parliament's desire to assert itself by promoting an environmental policy did not begin with its election by universal suffrage. This had in fact been a strategy that had been pursued well in advance of the 1979 European Parliament elections.[150] For instance, in 1973 the Committee on Public Health and Social Affairs became the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy, thus placing protection of the environment – an issue of increasing concern to the general public – front and centre.[151] Starting in 1973, the Committee drew up an action programme for the environment, which served as a reference for European policy. It was also behind the EEC Directive on the protection of migratory birds adopted in April 1979, i.e. before the European elections.[152] In response to a petition from the Dutch group *Stichting Mondial Alternatief*, the MEP Hans Edgar Jahn drew up a report in 1975 calling for EU legislation on this issue.[153]

As far as the European Parliament was concerned, environmental policy could be pursued at European level in three different ways: firstly, by establishing links with European voters, then by influencing European policy and, lastly, by increasing its legitimacy. All three became increasingly important between 1979 and 1989. The connection with the electorate was primarily established through close links with lobby groups (e.g. NGOs such as the *Eurogroup for Animal Welfare* and *Greenpeace*) which urged the committee to push for progress on certain issues. Thus, from the early 1980s, the Committee on the Environment issued numerous reports seeking to improve the conditions in which animals were reared and to eradicate the mistreatment of animals destined for human consumption (in particular the force-feeding of geese and the use of hormones).[154] Members also spoke out against methods such as ripping frogs' legs off while they were still alive, calling for a ban on EU imports from India, where 300 million frogs were slaughtered in 1986 for commercial purposes. The strategy of the Green Group in the European Parliament was also to draw attention to environmental problems by increasing the number of speeches in plenary, tabling urgent motions for resolution and submitting oral questions on issues relating to energy, pollution, waste treatment and the protection of animal and plant species. In this respect, Antoine Waechter, a French MEP said that the ecologists were working to influence policy-making, seeking to incorporate environmental considerations in other policies.[155] In this period, the European Parliament's impact on environmental policy was also reflected in Community rules on the rearing of calves and the directive on laying hens and battery cages.[156]

The European Parliament's political quest for greater legitimacy was particularly reflected in the Committee's proactive approach to asserting its legislative powers in environmental matters.[157] This resulted in a number of disputes with the European Commission and with the

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[150] J.-H. Meyer, Green Activism. The European Parliament's Environmental Committee promoting a European Environmental Policy in the 1970s, in *Journal of European Integration History,* No 1, vol. 17, 2011, pp. 73-87.

[151] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[152] EC, Council Directive 79/409, 2.4.1979.

[153] European Parliament, Jahn report (doc. 449/74), 7.2.1975.

[154] Notably on subjects such as the living conditions of laying hens, kept animals or farmed trout. See M. Abélès, *op.cit.*, p. 326.

[155] M. Abélès, *op.cit.*, p. 179.

[156] EC, Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, Compendium of legislative texts on animal welfare adopted by the European Economic Community and the Council of Europe, *op.cit.*

[157] D. Judge, '"Predestined to save the Earth". The Environmental Committee of the European Parliament', in D. Judge (ed.), *A green dimension for the European Community. Political Issues and Processes,* London, Frank Cass, 1993, pp. 186-212.

Council over the rules concerning the application of the cooperation procedure, which were sometimes taken to court. One of the European Parliament's victories in this period was, for example, to push through stricter emissions standards for small cars. Faced with Parliament's resistance, the Council ended up accepting stricter rules for fear that they would not be able to legislate at all.[158]

Thus, through its resolute engagement, the European Parliament not only succeeded in establishing itself as the defender of the interests of an important political current of thought but also as a true European co-legislator.

3.5 – The European Parliament and enlargement

Photo 11: The first session of the European Parliament with the new Spanish and Portuguese Members is held on 13 January 1986.
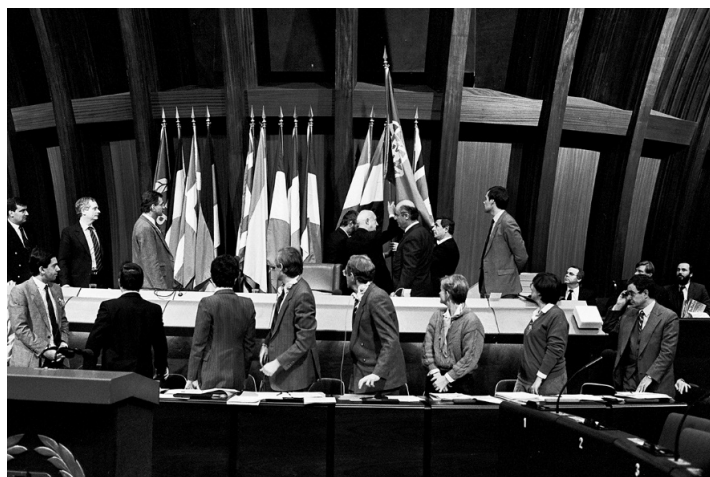
The issue of the enlargement of the European Community was without doubt a matter of permanent interest to the Strasbourg Parliament. Like the unelected Assembly before it, after 1979, Parliament expressed its support on a number of occasions for an enlargement of the European Communities to include countries in southern Europe.[159] To begin with, the European Parliament recalled the principles previously invoked in this regard – the fact that Greece, Spain and Portugal were European by nature and that they now respected fundamental freedoms and democratic principles, all of which supported these countries' membership applications, which dated back to the second half of the 1970s. In consequence, the European Parliament called for the negotiations with these countries to be pursued separately in order to allow their full accession as quickly as possible. Parliament felt that this enlargement would serve to consolidate the Community, provided that provision be made for a transitional period in order to cope with not only the political and institutional, but, above all, the economic and social difficulties it could entail. The European Parliament, however, also wanted the candidate countries to direct their policies and legislation towards greater convergence with the European Community. It obviously wished to be involved in the negotiations and advocated direct institutional contacts with the parliaments of the candidate countries. Moreover, it encouraged its Members to engage with their counterparts in these countries and to pay due attention to the issue of enlargement.

The Socialist Group, for example, took up this issue in 1980 and discussed the possible impact of an enlargement to the South on its own interests. A report drawn up for the members of

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[158]   M. Westlake, *op.cit*., p. 212.

[159]   European Parliament, resolution on the prospects of enlargement of the Community, 18.1.1979, OJ, No C 39, 12.2.1979, pp. 47-49.

the group illustrated the issues at stake.[160] It also highlighted, however, the ideological differences between the large political families as regards the modalities of enlargement. For the Socialists, the provision of effective aid to the countries of southern Europe constituted an essential element of European policy. Moreover, the German Socialists had already proposed a solidarity programme for the benefit of southern Europe. This programme was intended, in particular, to put an end to the immigration of Mediterranean workers to the countries of the North by creating employment opportunities in their own countries. There was thus a need to support industrial development in the Mediterranean area, this being equally necessary to stabilise the economy of the European Community. The report also included a warning that the accession of the three candidate countries lent even greater urgency to the Community's major political problem, i.e. the growing disparity between rich and poor, and further reinforced the role of the Community's poorer countries, provided they showed solidarity. The Community would not cope with enlargement and survive unless enlargement served the interests of European policy. The European Socialists believed that enlargement gave them the mandate to lead the Community in this direction. How could the risks be best addressed? The Socialists thought that funds had to be made available to the candidate states to finance regional development programmes in each of them. Such a boost to the economies of the South would also benefit the industries in the developed countries of the Community. After all, did the Christian Democrats not share this view by advocating a Marshall Plan for the south of Europe, an idea that had long been argued for by the SPD? The Socialists, however, saw a conflict between these ambitious aims and the monetarism that prevailed. The real issue, therefore, was not so much enlargement itself, since the three candidate countries had virtually no legitimate alternative to accession to the Community, but rather the reform of the Community. The crisis of the European Community as a defective system of agricultural management exemplified this. Other areas were also in need of reform, notably the functioning of institutions and political cooperation. Enlargement was thus conceived as a means of deepening the European Community. But would other EU institutions show any interest in this? In any event, the Socialist Group drew attention to the risk of the European Parliament being sidelined in the negotiations: what mattered above all was to ensure that the negotiation of the terms of accession was not left to the secret diplomacy of bureaucracies. Parliament, for its part, saw a weakness in this situation, which was the lack of engagement in these issues by national workers' organisations, which were not always aware of the importance of all that was at stake at European level.

The position of Parliament as a whole was not far removed from the position of the Socialist Group. In a resolution of 9 July 1982, Parliament also took the view that the enlargement of the Community to include Spain and Portugal should be accompanied by a deepening of the Community.[161] The central passage read as follows: 'The European Parliament, concerned at the fact that the accession of two new members could well aggravate the crisis in the Community's decision-making process and widen the gap between the developed regions and the less favoured regions unless the EEC strengthens its own structure as enlargement goes ahead, and accordingly urging the Commission to do its utmost to improve the decision-making process as approved by Parliament in its resolution of 6 July 1982 on reform of the

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[160] Historical archives of the EU in Florence (FLOR), memo to the members of the Working Group on Regional Issues, 24.9.1980, official documents of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, GSPE – 69, 27.5.1980-13.10.1980.

[161] European Parliament, Resolution on the negotiations with Spain and Portugal of 9 July 1982, OJ C 238, 13.9.1982, p. 93.

Treaties and achievement of European Union [...] asks the Commission [...] to say what proposals it will bring forward to ensure that enlargement strengthens the Community particularly as regards the common policies and financial instruments needed to preserve Community solidarity, so that enlargement, far from leading to the EEC degenerating into a mere free trade area, makes the Community even stronger'. It also asked the Commission to provide it with a progress report on the accession negotiations and to discuss the matter by no later than October 1982.

On 17 November 1982, Parliament expressed its support for Spain and Portugal to join the Community swiftly, by no later than 1 January 1984.[162] It assessed the opportunities which such an enlargement constituted for the European Community. Not only would it ensure political stability in the south of Europe, but it was also an opportunity for the joint development of the south and the north of Europe. It also offered Europe other new opportunities. The first was that of successfully moving towards communitarisation and federalisation thanks to enlargement. There was a need to reform the institutional working methods of the Communities, to opt for a Community budgetary policy, to look at the issue of own resources, to reform the CAP, to rethink European political cooperation, to reflect on the shape of a social Europe and to give greater consideration to European spatial planning. All of these needs would render the European framework of the early 1980s obsolete. The second opportunity that such an enlargement would provide was an opening-up towards the Spanish and Portuguese speaking worlds. A global policy towards Latin America would thus become a possibility and development policy in Africa would be rendered more comprehensive. In short, Europe would more easily wield greater influence in international affairs. One thing led to another, not only to a policy in favour of enlargement, but also to the constant insistence by Parliament that enlargement constituted a means of deepening Europe or bringing about its communitarisation and would hence be a significant step towards a federal Europe. Since the first enlargement of the Community in 1973, the European Parliament had never considered the enlargement and deepening of the Community to be mutually exclusive, but rather to be two sides of the same coin, that coin being the construction of a European Union. Its subsequent resolutions on the enlargement of the Community to include Spain and Portugal repeatedly recalled this, in particular the resolution of May 1985, in which it expressed its regret at the lack of democratic consolidation in the accession negotiations.[163]

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[162] European Parliament, Resolution on the enlargement of the Community to include Spain and Portugal, 17.11.1982, OJ C 334, 20.12.1982, pp. 54-60.

[163] European Parliament, Resolution embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the conclusion of negotiations with Spain and Portugal, 8.5.1985, OJ C 141, 10.6.1985, pp. 130-131.

3. PART THREE

A new place in the Community's institutional architecture

For a long time, Parliament was the poor relation when it came to the power interplay among the European Community's institutions.[164] This was explicitly acknowledged in the report by Commissioner Andriessen published in the wake of the first elections by universal suffrage.[165] The Commissioner did want the Strasbourg Assembly to have more power and to see a better balance of power between the Community institutions, but he also banked on strengthening the powers of a Commission that would be able to rely more dependably on Parliament. The European Parliament's place in the institutional architecture ought therefore to be assessed in terms of the interplay with the European Council, the Council of Ministers and the Commission, rather than in terms of an extension – or otherwise – of its own powers.[166] In looking to assert itself, Parliament pondered that institutional role throughout the two parliamentary terms under consideration. It was seeking to establish its legitimacy vis-à-vis the other players in the European decision-making system (the European Council, the Council of Ministers and the Commission). In the circumstances, the Members adopted a multifaceted strategy. This centred on condemning the anti-democratic nature of 'technocratic' institutions, on stubbornly ensuring that their proposals were taken into account and on exploiting the opportunities available under the Treaties. However, the European Parliament also based its action on its democratic legitimacy and on what it considered to be the interests of the people of Europe, in fields that did not automatically form part of its competencies under the Treaties. It was by combining these approaches that it hoped to help bring the necessary democracy to the Community system.

Photo 12: The President of the European Parliament, Pierre Pflimlin, meeting Irish Senator Jim Dooge, chair of the committee of experts responsible for drafting proposals to reform the Community institutions, in Strasbourg in 1985.

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[164] For a good overview of the relations between the European institutions, see M.-T. Bitsch and W. Loth (ed.), 'L'expérience politique et institutionnelle des Communautés européennes' in G. Bossuat, É. Bussière, R. Frank, W. Loth and A. Varsori (ed.), *L'expérience européenne. 50 years of construction of Europe (1957-2007). Des historiens en dialogue',* Brussels, Bruylant, 2010, pp. 139-169. See also M.-T. Bitsch, 'L'évolution institutionnelle de l'Union européenne (1957-2007). Une fédéralisation impossible?' in A. Liebich and B. Germond (ed.), *Construire l'Europe. Mélanges en hommage à Pierre du Bois,* Paris, PUF, 2008, pp. 127-144.

[165] Andriessen report on Relations between the Institutions of the Community, COM (81) 581 final, Brussels, 7.10.1981, 18 p.

[166] See O. Costa and P. Magnette, 'Idéologies et changement institutionnel dans l'Union européenne. Pourquoi les gouvernements ont-ils constamment renforcé le Parlement européen?' in *Politique européenne,* 2003/1, No 9, pp. 49 -75.

Budgetary and institutional matters gave Parliament another angle of attack when vying for position with the other Community institutions. Its victories on the budget earned it a position on a par with the national parliaments, while by dint of its action on institutional matters it acquired new powers through the Single European Act.[167] It also worked its way into the sphere of 'sovereign' affairs by becoming involved in the common foreign policy and in human rights and pursuing parliamentary diplomacy by extending invitations, arranging visits by its President and networking with other European organisations. Like the other Community institutions, Parliament began to manage relations with lobby groups. All this enhanced the visibility of the Strasbourg Assembly, which in the space of two parliamentary terms managed symbolically to take centre stage in European politics.

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[167] B. Rittberger, 'The creation and empowerment of the European Parliament', in *Journal of Common Market Studies,* No 41, 2003, pp. 203-225.

Chapter 1: A European Parliament in search of power[168]

The immediate issue for the new European Parliament was to enhance its powers and its role within the Community's institutional architecture. Elected as it now was by direct universal suffrage, it was keen to have its say in shaping that Community. It did this in three distinct ways: by asserting its role through the use of its powers over the budget; by using the Rules of Procedure to amend the Treaties step by step and by seeking – through the Spinelli Plan – to moot a constitution for the European Community.

1.1 – The battle over the budget

For the first European Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage, the battle for greater power as an institution was always going to centre on the budget. Since no changes had been made to the Treaties to grant Parliament decision-making powers and thus legitimise the holding of elections by universal suffrage, the institution had to harness the powers that it did have to assert its position vis-à-vis the European Commission and the Council.[169] The fact that Parliament had to grant its assent for the budget gave it leverage to influence the Community's institutional set-up. One of the very first things it did following the first direct elections in June 1979 was to reject the European Community budget in its entirety and thereby plunge Europe into a political and potentially a financial crisis.[170]

On its inauguration in 1979, the elected European Parliament was not bereft of all power as an institution. It could reject the European Commission as a whole, and although it had no powers of codecision, the Council had to consult it on all legislative initiatives. Indeed, from such time as the European Community had its own resources and intended to use them, parliamentary supervision and scrutiny became a necessity. Parliament had enjoyed those prerogatives even before it was elected by universal suffrage, through an agreement signed in Luxembourg in 1970. Its budgetary powers were then confirmed in Brussels in 1975, while the Budget Act of 1977 gave the European Parliament powers on a par with those of a national parliament. From that point onwards it had the final say on non-compulsory expenditure, and could increase such expenditure beyond the amounts proposed by the Commission. In the case of compulsory expenditure – notably on the CAP – it was the ministers who held the decision-making power, but Parliament was nevertheless able to propose changes that could only be rejected by a qualified majority of Member States. Hence, in 1979, the European Parliament was not actually the toothless animal it was often claimed to be.[171]

Parliament set down a marker for its powers and asserted its newly-found democratic legitimacy when it rejected the Community budget by a very large majority in December 1979. The key figures in the battle over the budget were the German Socialist Erwin Lange (SPD), Chair of the Committee on Budgets, and Parliament's Dutch rapporteur Piet Dankert (*Partij van*

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[168] F. Massart-Piérard, 'Le Parlement européen. L'irrésistible mouvement de conquête des pouvoirs', in *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, 2009/4, Vol. 16, pp. 545-557.

[169] O. Costa, 'Les relations entre la Commission et le Parlement au prisme du parlementarisme', in *Politique européenne*, 2002/1, No 5, pp. 25-42.

[170] J. Priestley, *Six Battles that Shaped Europe's Parliament,* London, John Harper Publishing, 2008, p. 6.

[171] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Photo 13: On 13 December 1984, the European Parliament rejects the Community's draft budget for 1985.

de Arbeid).[172] After four years chairing that committee, Lange had the requisite experience and expertise in budget matters, while the young Piet Dankert had chosen the Committee on Budgets as it occupied a central role and would enable him to develop a network of contacts with the Commission. Dankert was one of a new generation of MEPs honing their expertise in this specific European policy area and trying to master all the procedures and establish contacts beyond the sphere of strictly national groupings, and hence to render themselves indispensable and harness the powers and competences of the European Parliament as they saw fit.[173] The part that Dankert played in this initial battle over the budget earned him strong support from the other Members and made him the obvious choice for President in 1982. Lord Balfe recalled that a third player was also important – Heinrich Aigner (CSU), Vice-Chair of the Committee on Budgets and subsequently Chair of the Committee on Budgetary Control – and that 'between them they had the Socialist and Christian Democrat votes, and that was what mattered'. Lord Balfe was himself a member of the Budget Committee in 1979. As he later said: 'I was associated with the rejection of the budget in 1979, which was done to demonstrate that the new Parliament had power. There was no particular reason to reject the budget [...] but we wanted to demonstrate that we were there'.[174]

One of the European Parliament's main criticisms was the excessive expenditure on the common agricultural policy, a point vehemently made by Dankert in his explanatory memorandum at the first reading stage of the 1980 budget.[175] However, while advancing reasoned arguments against the Community budget per se, Dankert also attacked the institutions. He condemned the Council for seeking to deprive Parliament of its powers over the Community budget and the Commission for its lack of strategic vision for that budget. This 'frontal attack' was not purely aimed at rejecting the budget in itself, but was also a means of expressing the 'institutional patriotism' of the European Parliament.[176] Neither the Commission nor the Council took these criticisms seriously and they made no attempt to scale back the excessive expenditure on the CAP in their budgetary proposals. Dankert was furious, saying that if Parliament accepted a situation in which it had no influence over agricultural

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[172] European Parliament, Dankert report (doc. 1-197/80), 22.5.1980.

[173] M. Westlake, *A Modern Guide to the European Parliament*, *op.cit.,* p. 130.

[174] Interview with Lord Balfe, Brussels, 11 May 2017.

[175] European Parliament resolution 60.000/def., 1980, explanatory statement by Piet Dankert.

[176] J. Priestley, *Six Battles that Shaped Europe's Parliament*, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

expenditure, then the elections would have been in vain'.[177] At that stage – the autumn of 1979 – the Community budget could not be rejected outright, so instead Dankert set out on 5 November a list of technical amendments designed to reduce Community expenditure on agriculture. His proposals were debated in Strasbourg on 5-7 November 1979. At that time only Altiero Spinelli raised the possibility of rejecting the budget. The vote on Dankert's resolution on 7 November 1979 gave reason to hope that a solution could be found at the second reading of the budget. In its explanatory statement, Parliament made clear that it was aware of the economic and financial difficulties facing the Member States and, for that reason, was exercising considerable restraint in its tabling of amendments. It added that in view of this it hoped to be able to close the budgetary procedure for 1980 by adopting the draft budget at second reading.[178] The Council, meeting on 23 November 1979, was hostile to Parliament's demands and eventually voted by a qualified majority to reject all the changes it had requested in respect of expenditure on agriculture. It was at this point that the Committee on Budgets decided, at its meeting on 5 December 1979, that it could not recommend that Parliament adopt the budget for 1980. The motion for rejection was adopted by the committee with 28 votes in favour, 2 against and 4 abstentions, and with the support of almost all the Christian Democrats, Socialists and Conservatives and the Italian left. Even the Liberals, initially completely opposed to rejecting the budget, had started to change their stance. With this threat of a rejection clearly expressed, Lange and Dankert hoped they could negotiate a solution with the Council prior to the final vote on 13 December. However, the talks between Parliament and the Council were fruitless. In the end, the budget was rejected by 288 votes to 64. As Lord Balfe put it: 'The budget was rejected. The Irish Presidency didn't really understand what was happening [...] Christopher Tugendhat, the UK Budget Commissioner, didn't take the matter seriously; he didn't really realise what Parliament was doing'.[179]

In the end, it took six months to settle the budget crisis and for the European Community budget for 1980 to be adopted. It was signed by Simone Veil on 27 June 1980. This was the first of the European Parliament's major battles, and showed that it was able to punch its weight in the institutional arena. It also cemented Parliament's central role in budgetary matters. Parliament took to the field again to reject a supplementary budget in 1982 and to reject the whole Community budget in 1984.[180] The main architect of this first tussle for power between the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council had been Piet Dankert. The speeches he made in November and December 1979 contained what are now legendary attacks, with his adroitness owing much to his knowledge of how the budget worked and his skills as a negotiator. The Committee on Budgets was measured in its response. It did not simply reject all the proposals on agricultural expenditure out of hand, but adopted a selective approach. It suggested budgetary priorities, voted in favour of increases in certain areas of expenditure and proposed cuts in others. Its final proposal was a halfway house between the Commission proposal and the Council proposal. Its credo was that the budget proposed should be one that could be funded using Community resources. This tempered but firm stance helped increase Parliament's credibility and highlight the Council's weaknesses. The European Parliament had thus made intelligent use of its powers over the budget to stake its place within the Community's institutional set-up.

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[177] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[178] European Parliament resolution of 7.11.1979, paragraph 38.

[179] Interview with Lord Balfe, Brussels, 11 May 2017.

[180] M. Westlake, *A Modern Guide to the European Parliament, op.cit.*, p. 130.

However, the 1979 'budget revolt' also gave the governments of the Community's Member States the chance to remind Parliament of its place. The new draft budget, established in early 1980, was further from what Parliament wanted than the budget proposed at first reading. This tussle for power was a stark reminder that Parliament's decision-making powers were limited. In the circumstances it was difficult for it to exercise its supervisory powers and serve as an intermediary between what (as far as one knew) the public wanted and the Community's executive bodies, but it could in any case serve as a useful counterweight within the democratic system.

1.2 – Amending the Rules of Procedure

Parliament turned its attention to furthering its powers by amending the Rules of Procedure. Sticking to its step-by-step approach to achieving its goals, it began by attacking the undemocratic and inefficient way in which European business was being conducted, which it said was technocratic, functionalist and intergovernmental. Following this opening salvo it was given the chance to express its opinion on the draft decisions and proposals for directives which the Commission presented to the Council.

However, its contributions to key aspects of Community and international policies and its proposals on the functioning of the Community institutions did little to alter the situation. At best, this simply highlighted the fact that Parliament was the junior partner in relations with the other Community institutions. However, what it did do was whet the appetites of some Members, who were not prepared to exercise mandates that carried no power. So Parliament launched a campaign to amend the rules on the functioning of the institutions without a revision of the Treaties.

It was the German Social Democrat MEP Klaus Hänsch who initially recommended that a step-by-step approach be adopted to acquiring more power. His 1981 report stated that pending revision of the Treaties, every possibility for increasing Parliament's influence over the Community decision-making process should be exploited to the full.[181] Hänsch felt that this should be done by extending the concertation procedure to all major pieces of legislation (until then it had applied solely to the budget). Parliament's case was helped by the Court of Justice in Luxembourg, which in its landmark Isoglucose judgment of 1980 annulled a legislative act which the Council had adopted before receiving the opinion of the European Parliament.[182] In doing so, the Court established a genuine 'constitutional charter for parliamentary consultation' that granted the European Parliament the right to turn to the Court when the other European institutions had failed to consult it. Hans-Gert Pöttering recalled that 'the Court decided at that point that a Council decision was not valid if there had been no consultation of Parliament. In doing so, the Court was demonstrating what has always been its pro-democracy and pro-parliament attitude'.[183] The judgment indirectly enabled Parliament to negotiate on texts proposed by the Commission and, by deciding not to adopt a resolution in support of a proposal, to exert sufficient pressure for its wishes to be taken into account. In practice, the European Parliament interpreted the Court's judgment in a very broad

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[181] European Parliament report drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Institutional Affairs on the substance of the preliminary draft Treaty establishing the European Union (PE1 AP RP/INST.1981 A1-0575/83 0010).

[182] Court of Justice of the European Communities (CJEC), judgment of 29 October 1980, SA Roquette Frères v Council of the European Communities, Case 138/79.

[183] Interview with Hans-Gert Pöttering, Bonn, 14 December 2017.

manner when pursuing its step-by-step approach to asserting its political position, and the other institutions did not contest its interpretation of that judgment.[184]

Parliament also used the Isoglucose ruling to justify an increase in its consultative powers as part of a review of the rules, which marked another stage in its step-by-step policy. This review of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure was adopted in March 1981.[185] The rules were completely overhauled in a way that strengthened the legislative tools at its disposal. Indeed, Parliament now had a direct vote on Commission proposals and amendments to them, and could demand an opinion on amendments before a legislative procedure was formally closed. This new procedure gave the European Parliament room for manoeuvre in cases where it disagreed with the Commission's position, by allowing Parliament time to refer a proposal to committee for consideration.

1.3 – Revision of the European Treaties

The step-by-step approach was not to everyone's liking though. Some Members felt that Parliament's role should be reinforced by means of a fundamental shift in the institutional balance. One such Member was Altiero Spinelli, one of the authors of the famous 'Ventotene Manifesto' and a former European Commissioner.[186] He thought that Members should take a constituent initiative. On 21 May 1980, he told fellow MEPs in Strasbourg: 'We should ask ourselves why the Community seems paralysed and has gradually grown unable to adopt decisions [...] we should have the courage to admit that if we are missing something now it is the right institutional tools with which to turn common aspirations and sentiments into joint political action'. At a parliamentary sitting in Luxembourg on 27 June 1980, Spinelli proposed that a working group on institutional reform be set up. 'Parliament must take the initiative on a major debate on the European institutional crisis before it is too late,' he said. The same day, he pointed his colleagues to a letter in which he suggested that deep-seated reform of the Community system be considered with the aim of creating a political union of a federal nature. 'I am convinced', he wrote in the letter, 'that Parliament must launch a broad debate on the Community's institutional crisis, appoint an ad hoc working group to prepare the requisite proposal for institutional reforms, and debate and vote on this, giving it the precise outline of a draft Treaty amending and incorporating the existing Treaties and formally proposing its adoption by the Community's national parliaments'. He then invited all Members who felt the same to 'participate in meetings where we will be studying the best ways to involve the Parliament in this kind of action'. Eight Members replied to Spinelli, who met them on 9 July 1980 at the Au Crocodile restaurant in Strasbourg. The reasons for what was – to say the least – a low turnout warranted an explanation.

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[184] M. Westlake, *A Modern Guide to the European Parliament*, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

[185] N. Brack, O. Costa and C. Dri, 'Le Parlement européen à la recherche de l'efficacité législative. Une analyse des évolutions de son organisation', *op.cit,* p. 12.

[186] M. Neri-Gualdesi, 'L'action d'Altiero Spinelli en tant que commissaire et parlementaire européen (1970-1986)', in M.-T. Bitsch, W. Loth and R. Poidevin (ed.), *Institutions européennes et identités européennes,* Brussels, Bruylant, 1998, pp. 381-400. See also D. Preda, 'L'action de Spinelli au Parlement européen et le projet de traité d'Union européenne (1979-1984)', in W. Loth (ed.), *La gouvernance supranationale dans la construction européenne,* Brussels, Bruylant, 2005, pp. 185-203.

Photo 14: On 14 February 1984, the European Parliament adopts a draft Treaty establishing the European Union (the 'Spinelli Project').
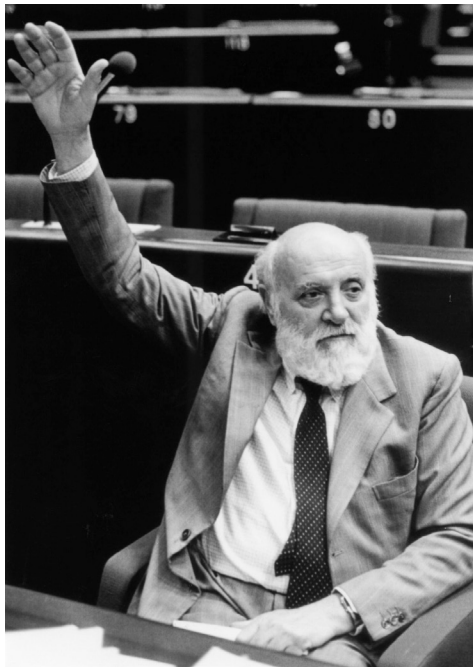
Spinelli's initiative was initially met with a guarded response from Parliament's political groups. The European People's Party considered it a threat to the Committee on Political Affairs, which was chaired by one of its members, the Italian Mariano Rumor. This committee was also responsible for institutional matters, and the EPP thought it might be sidelined by Spinelli's initiative. The French and German Socialists, for their part, were not interested in institutional issues. This 'orchestrated failure to act' – as Spinelli labelled it – did not last long though, and in September 1980 a majority of MEPs from the various groups fell in with the 'Spinelli Plan'. The work they went on to do culminated in the adoption on 9 July 1981 of a resolution setting up a Committee on Institutional Affairs, which was entrusted with drafting the reforms to the Treaties.[187] The committee was formally established on 21 January 1982. Its chair, Mauro Ferri, was assisted by three vice-chairs: two were Dutch – the Christian Democrat Sjouke Jonker and the Liberal Hans Nord – and one an Italian Radical, Marco Pannella. Spinelli was appointed rapporteur-coordinator for the committee, which immediately went to work on the proposals for the reform of the Community Treaties.[188] The committee organised numerous hearings, beginning in 1982. Once Parliament had approved the broad guidelines for the committee's work – on 6 July 1982 – it was carried out by six rapporteurs coordinated by Spinelli. Each rapporteur was responsible for one aspect of the draft reform: Karel De Gucht, a Belgian Liberal, was entrusted with looking into the legal structure of the future European Union; Ortensio Zecchino, an Italian Christian Democrat was responsible for the institutional aspects, while Jacques Moreau, a French Socialist, handled economic and monetary policy and his German Christian Democrat colleague Gero Pfenning social policy. Derek Prag, a British Conservative, was to deal with the issues relating to international relations. Lastly, Michel Junot, a French Gaullist – later replaced by Hans-Joachim Seeler, a German Social Democrat – was given responsibility for the issue of the Community's finances. The committee's work took over a year. It adopted the draft Treaty on 5 July 1983, and Parliament as a whole did the same in September 1983.

The first European Parliament definitively adopted the draft Treaty establishing the European Union on 14 February 1984, just prior to the second European elections in June 1984.[189] It did so by a very large majority: 238 votes in favour and 31 against, with 43 abstentions. The other

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[187] European Parliament resolution of 9 July 1981 requesting Parliament's Committee on Institutional Affairs to draw up a preliminary draft treaty establishing the European Union.

[188] Other documents relating to Altiero Spinelli's work include, chronologically: FLOR, letter from Altiero Spinelli to Simone Veil on institutional reforms, 3.1.1981, correspondence with Simone Veil, AS – 'Crocodile Club' AS 37, part. 01, pp. 17 -20; European Parliament debates, speech by Altiero Spinelli, 19.11.1981, see OJEC No 1-221, 19.11.1981; European Parliament debates, speech by Altiero Spinelli, 14.10.1982, see OJEC No 1-289, 14.10.1982; FLOR, Altiero Spinelli's aide-mémoire, 5.3.1985, dépôts DEP, Emanuele Gazzo, EG.EG 64.

[189] European Parliament resolution of 19 March 1984 on the draft Treaty establishing the European Union.

institutions could no longer ignore Parliament's demands – in adopting this decision Parliament was seeking to be considered a fully-fledged institution. It viewed itself as the institution shielding Europe from what it saw as unbridled collusion between bureaucrats, technocrats and diplomats.[190] The European Parliament in Strasbourg, elected by universal suffrage, had to become the driving political force in the process of unifying Europe. This draft constituent treaty, which would make Parliament the conduit for the federalisation of Europe, conferred upon it powers of codecision with the Council of Ministers in the legislative and budgetary fields. At the same time it strengthened the European Commission, whose composition was to be approved by Parliament. The report which Spinelli drew up – after being appointed Chair of the Committee on Institutional Affairs in 1984 following his re-election – made Parliament the 'alter ego' of the other institutions.[191] In order to lend their venture even greater weight, the Members thought it should be submitted to the national parliaments for ratification. Would their message be heard? One might have thought so, judging by what François Mitterrand, President of the European Council at the time, said in the Chamber in Strasbourg: 'France is willing to consider and defend your proposal as it shares in its spirit'.[192] Those hopes were dashed a few weeks later, however, at the Fontainebleau European Summit of June 1984.

The European Council rewrote the text of the proposal and the Member States regained control over the process of institutional change. Nor did Parliament's initiative have a direct impact at the level of the national parliaments, none of which – bar the Italian Parliament, which pronounced itself in favour of Parliament's constituent initiative – chose to consider Spinelli's proposal. The Dooge Committee set up in the wake of the Fontainebleau Summit was entrusted with the task of assessing potential changes to the European institutions. In its final report it was careful to stress that the Member States should have the final say in the matter, while also suggesting that their governments should be 'guided by the spirit and the method underlying the draft Treaty adopted by the European Parliament'.[193] But Parliament hoped to secure a role akin to co-drafter of the new Treaty. Under constant pressure from Parliament, the governments agreed to open negotiations on a revision of the Treaties and the Single European Act. When the Milan European Council of June 1985 decided to convene an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) to this end, Spinelli claimed that Parliament should have a right of codecision in constituent matters. Along with Pierre Pflimlin he took part in the IGC's information meetings with the European Parliament delegation. It was his hope that the Community's Parliament would be involved in the IGC as a partner rather than as an advisory body. In other words, Spinelli felt that the final draft ought to be approved by two institutions – the one that represented the Member States and the one that represented the public. The Member States insisted, however, that Parliament as an institution did not have the powers to help draft a treaty between sovereign states. The battle at IGC level was therefore lost.[194]

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[190] European Parliament debates on the European Union, 14.2.1984, 1-309, pp. 26-58 et 72-110.

[191] European Parliament, Spinelli report (OJEC, C-77), 19.3.1984.

[192] On 23 May 1984, the French President François Mitterrand, who was also President-in-Office of the European Council, speaking at the European Parliament, proposed that a conference be organised to consider the draft Treaty establishing the European Union, See *Bulletin des Communautés européennes*, No 5, 1984, Vol. 17, pp. 133-138.

[193] European Parliament, report from the ad hoc Committee on Institutional Affairs to the Brussels European Council of 29 and 30 March 1985 in Bulletin of the European Communities, March 1985, No 3.

[194] L. Guittard, 'L'union politique de l'Europe dans la première moitié des années 1980, 1979-1986', in *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin,* 2007/1, No 25, pp. 55-69; see the following European Parliament resolutions: resolution on the outcome of the Milan European Council, 9.7.1985, OJ C 229, 9.9.1985; resolution on the proceedings of

The Single European Act nonetheless included some improvements for the European Parliament.[195] It would now be involved in the legislative process at all stages of the drafting of texts. Under a cooperation procedure, an absolute majority of Members could reject or amend Council decisions. In the first case, the Council could only override Parliament's challenge by adopting the text unanimously. Were Parliament to amend a text, the Council could adopt it by a qualified majority, with the backing of the Commission. Otherwise, unanimity was required. This procedure requiring an absolute majority (known as the Single Act procedure) applied only to decisions relating to completion of the single market. Lastly, Parliament could issue an opinion on accession applications and association agreements. While it did not meet all the expectations expressed in the 1984 resolution, the Single Act nevertheless reinforced the European Parliament's position in the institutional set-up. It would now be able to make its voice heard more clearly, even if the procedure for doing so remained complex. It also made the Members more sure of themselves, as Lord Balfe later observed: 'We gradually became more confident, particularly after the Single European Act. We suddenly became an assertive Parliament. We were able to demand as opposed to ask'.[196]

However, the Parliament elected in 1984 considered the improvements made through the Single European Act to be insufficient. In a resolution adopted on 17 June 1987, it encouraged the Members to make full use of the opportunities afforded by the Single Act and to work on preparing proposals for the transition to the European Union.[197] In doing so, Parliament was affirming itself in its role of democratic supervision over the other institutions and as a constituent body. It staked those claims again in 1988. On 16 May that year, buoyed by a proposal from the Italian Chamber of Deputies, the European Parliament again looked at increasing its powers and called for a European States-General to be convened.[198] A month later, on 16 June, it proposed that a public consultation be held on a European political union. On 17 June, it adopted resolutions on the cost of non-Europe, on its democratic deficit and on the arrangements for consulting the European public on the transition to a European Union.[199] The idea was to gain acceptance of the fact that a lack of European integration came at a cost to Europe's citizens not just financially but also in terms of keeping a check on decisions from which they were becoming increasingly removed.

On 16 February 1989, almost exactly five years after adopting the Spinelli Plan, Parliament went back on the offensive. Noting that there were still limits to what it could do despite the Single European Act (incomplete powers of codecision; growth of comitology, which involved national officials in the decision-making process; its minor role in the appointment and investiture of the Commission), it set out its strategy for establishing the European Union. In the resolution it adopted that day, it stated: 'With the backing of the mandate given by the voters in the June 1989 elections, it intends to draw up comprehensive proposals based in the main on its draft Treaty adopted on 14 February 1984 to give the European Union the

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the IGC on the European Union, 23.10.1985, OJ C 343, 31.12.1985; resolution winding up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission on the European Council meeting of 2 and 3 December 1985 in Luxembourg, 11.12.1985, OJEC, No C-352, 31.12.1985, pp. 60-61; see also European Parliament debates, speech by Jacques Santer, 11.12.1985, OJEC No 2-333, 11.12.1985, pp. 131-136.

[195] See F. Dehousse, 'La réforme de l'Europe (2)', in *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP,* 1987/12, No 1157, pp. 1-35; particularly from page 25 onwards ('Le rôle du Parlement européen').

[196] Interview with Lord Balfe, Brussels, 11 May 2017.

[197] European Parliament resolution of 17 June 1987 on the Single Act.

[198] European Parliament debates, 16.5.1987.

[199] European Parliament resolution of 17 June 1988 on the Institutional Consequences of the Cost of Non-Europe.

necessary institutional basis, in the form of a draft which will meet Europe's needs'.[200] It also stated: 'To prepare the revision of the Community institutions properly by ensuring the awareness and consent of the people of Europe, it is essential to focus the next European election campaign on this issue'.[201] The political parties were invited to explicitly state their views on this reform as part of that upcoming campaign. Hence, on the eve of the 1989 elections, Parliament had once again confirmed its desire to be a constituent parliament – and not just that, but also a player in the process of the democratisation and federalisation of Europe. Jacques Delors himself acknowledged the vital role to be played by Parliament in the Community's institutional development and in implementing the Single Act. He stressed and paid tribute to Parliament's 'bolder approach' to extracting the European Community from the impasse in which it found itself.[202]

The President of the Commission saw the draft Treaty on European Union of February 1984 as decisive. It had been kept alive thanks to pressure from Parliament, so when the opportunity presented itself again in 1985 the single market project could be matched by the appropriate institutional changes. These would result in Parliament acquiring greater powers, which was probably why Jacques Delors declared himself a supporter of this Treaty on several occasions.

Photo 15: On 14 January 1985, in his first speech as President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors addresses the European Parliament and calls for the completion of the single market.

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[200] European Parliament resolution of 16 February 1989 on the strategy for achieving European Union.

[201] *Ibid.*

[202] *Bulletin des Communautés européennes*. 1989, Supplement 1/89. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Delors' speech to the European Parliament on 17 January 1989.

Chapter 2: External relations

The European Parliament elected by universal suffrage forged closer external relations with two groups: on the one hand, with representatives of the private sector and civil society (firms, associations, etc.) who had dealings with parliamentarians as lobbyists, and, on the other, with counterpart institutions, in particular the national parliaments of the Member States of the European Community, but also European assemblies, first and foremost that of the Council of Europe. The democratic legitimacy of the elected Parliament also provided MEPs with grounds to become involved in external policy – European Political Cooperation (EPC) – and thus make the European Parliament's voice heard on the international stage.

2.1 – Parliamentarians and their links with lobbyists[203]

The lobbyists accredited with the European Parliament fell into a number of different categories. Some represented private and economic interests; others acted more as advocates for civic and social causes. By virtue of their longer history and their very early involvement in European matters (which went back as far as the European Coal and Steel Community), the former were far more numerous. Most of the latter appeared in the wake of the first elections to the European Parliament by universal suffrage and gained in influence as the 1980s went on. Some lobbyists seemed to have a foot in more than one camp: for example, were the Union of Industrial and Employers Confederations of Europe (UNICE) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) social partners of the European Community or lobbyists? It is difficult to say one way or the other. The number of lobbyists increased even further following the adoption of the Single European Act. Europe thus offered lobbyists, in particular those representing economic and private interests, an opportunity to exert influence in new ways. The European Parliament was part of that process and became a new focus of their work. The parliamentary committees and political groups frequently invited lobbyists to hearings, as experts or stakeholders. The setting-up of intergroups also led to more frequent meetings between parliamentarians and private individuals and organisations sharing the same concerns. The fact that the European Parliament became an elected body undeniably contributed to the rise of non-economic lobbyists. A number of factors – such as certain procedures (cooperation or codecision), the more relaxed working methods of the European Parliament's political groups in comparison to those of their counterparts in the national parliaments, and MEPs' resolve to exercise greater political influence and assert themselves vis-à-vis the Council and the Commission – meant that lobbyists had a more attentive audience. Through its close links with groups of this kind, the European Parliament not only fostered the Europeanisation of lobbying, but also tapped into the concerns of some voters whose views were represented by these non-governmental organisations or groups. Unwittingly, it turned lobbying into a channel through which to gain access to the centre of power which the Strasbourg body represented. Lobbyists provided it with expertise, information and causes to pursue.

Some groups which had initially operated at national level became European and began to lobby the European Parliament, seeing it as the body best able to respond to their calls. Movements campaigning for women's rights and the rights of cross-border workers turned

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203   H. Michel, 'Groupes d'intérêt', in Y. Deloye (dir.), *Dictionnaire des élections européennes*, *op.cit.*, pp. 346-351; by the same author, 'Lobbying', in Y. Deloye (dir.), op. cit., pp. 434-438.

more and more to the European Parliament as their advocate, with the backing of women MEPs and MEPs from border regions.

The work of the Kangaroo Club illustrates this two-way process very well.[204] Starting as an intergroup, it gradually developed into a powerful lobby. At regular lunches, industrialists and politicians would address the group. The successor to the founder, Basil de Ferranti, was the German Social Democrat, Dieter Rogalla. A former European Commission official, he had been an MEP since 1981. In order to publicise his ideas and political beliefs, he made a journey by bicycle, beginning in 1982, which involved crossing the borders between all the countries of the European Community.[205] The aim of this high-profile stunt was to popularise the idea of a Europe without borders and to push Parliament to monitor more closely the Commission's efforts to bring about this liberalisation. To further his campaign, the German MEP to set up a European Association of Air Travellers, because in his view European airspace was not yet sufficiently open. Kangaroo Club, Association of Air Travellers, intergroup, MEP: the example of Dieter Rogalla shows very clearly this two-way process at work in the corridors of the European Parliament.

Photo 16: In April and May 1985, Dieter Rogalla MEP, vice-chair of the Kangaroo Group, cycles through the countries of the European Community to draw attention to the need to remove obstacles to freedom of movement in Europe.

A further example of this two-way process can be seen in the links which formed between public campaigns on controversial issues and the work of parliamentary intergroups. The Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, set up in 1980, brought together animal protection associations from a number of European countries. It coordinated the campaigns run by the national associations and provided advocacy at European level. One of its aims was to secure improvements in EU laws in this area. In 1983, the eurogroup pledged its support to the intergroup on animal welfare which had just been set up. The eurogroup organised meetings of the intergroup, took the minutes and published a Eurobulletin which kept MEPs and the members of the eurogroup informed about all the action taken by the European institutions in the area of animal welfare. The eurogroup also helped the MEPs in

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[204] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, pp. 330 et seq.

[205] Re-elected in 1984, Dieter Rogalla chaired the Committee on the Verification of Credentials until 1987. During the period to 1989, he was a member of the Committee on Economic Affairs (from 1984 to1987), of the Committee on Energy and Research (from 1981 to 1984 and again from 1987 to 1989), of the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions (from 1984 to 1987) and of the Delegation for Relations with Canada (from 1983 to 1987).

the intergroup draft their resolutions. The intergroup's success was thus partly due to this very close interaction with a lobby group.

MEPs were constantly confronted with the reality of lobbying. Drafting reports, preparing directives: these and other aspects of their work brought them face to face with specific private interests, i.e. with social issues which were the focus of the activities of associations and non-governmental organisations. How was this two-way process perceived? Lobbyists saw their role as being to inform parliamentarians and provide them with expertise on matters with which they were not necessarily very familiar. MEPs gained an insight into the implications of the directives on which they were working and the decisions they were being asked to take. For the former MEP Ursula Braun-Moser, this did not pose a problem because 'lobbying was something new […]. I didn't see it as a bad thing because I was neutral and I didn't have to do what the lobbyists were suggesting'.[206] Others grudgingly admitted that there was a need to 'get the message across' on behalf of firms in an industry or people affected by competition in a sector. There was unanimous agreement on the importance of building a lasting relationship of trust with parliamentarians if lobbying was to be effective and worthwhile. Among parliamentarians there was a mix of views. Some national traditions were more in tune with the activities of lobbyists than others. For example, the British and Scandinavians regarded lobbying as part and parcel of parliamentary life; people in southern Europe, including the French, were more sceptical of this system. It is clear, therefore, that some parliamentarians took the view that lobbyists could make a real contribution to their political work, in the same way as assistants and civil servants, by using their expertise to provide background material. On that basis, parliamentarians acted as mediators between private interests, and their decisions served to bring them closer to the public. For others, lobbying had nothing to do with representative democracy. The interaction between MEPs and lobbies did have one political consequence, however: it fostered the emergence of 'coherent' coalitions. Conservative, Christian Democrat and Liberal parties were more likely to defend the interests of business, whereas Socialist parties and left-wing movements tended to be on the side of labour. As for the Greens, their focus was the environment and consumers. All these relationships between MEPs and lobby groups were governed by an implicit code of good conduct until, in July 1989, a Dutch Socialist MEP, Alman Metten, tabled a written question which highlighted the need for formal rules.

2.2 – The European Parliament and the national parliaments

The election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage conferred greater legitimacy on that body by establishing a direct link between it and EU citizens. At the same time, this new relationship did not in any way diminish the importance of the link between the European Parliament and the national parliaments, which was just as crucial a source of democratic legitimacy for the European Community. Whereas before the tendency had been to see the two levels, European and national, as completely separate, in the 1980s MEPs gradually came to acknowledge a kind of 'shared legitimacy' with their national counterparts.[207]

In fact, interparliamentary cooperation had already begun to take shape in the 1960s, in the form of the Conference of the Presidents of the European Parliament and the National Parliaments. In 1963, the President of the European Parliament, Gaetano Martino, took the step of inviting the presidents, spokespersons and secretaries-general of the national

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[206] Interview with Ursula Braun-Moser, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[207] M. Westlake, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

parliaments of the European Community to a special conference. This idea was taken up again in 1975 and became a regular event.[208] It was decided that a Conference of the Presidents of the European Parliament and the National Parliaments of the European Community and an Enlarged Conference of the Presidents of the European Parliament and the National Parliaments of the Council of Europe would be held in alternate years.[209] A host of recommendations and declarations on Community legislation and policies were adopted at these conferences. Although they had no formal institutional status or real decision-making powers, the conferences did constitute an embryonic form of interparliamentary cooperation. That cooperation was placed on a firmer footing in May 1989, in Madrid, when the Conference of Presidents decided to convene a meeting between the European Parliament and all the national parliamentary committees with responsibility for Community affairs. The first conference of this kind was held in Paris in November 1989, and a decision was taken to hold similar meetings twice a year and to give them the name 'Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees'.[210] This new form of interparliamentary cooperation built on the established practice of ad hoc bilateral meetings between the specialist parliamentary committees of the European Parliament and the national parliaments, and was developed further following the entry into force of the Single European Act. From 1987 onwards, the European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs held many meetings with its counterpart committees in the national parliaments to discuss the implications of the single market project.

In the late 1980s, two further steps were taken to forge closer links between the European Parliament and the national parliaments. The European Parliament acknowledged the principle of shared legitimacy in three significant resolutions: the first, adopted on 16 May 1988, proposed that as part of the process of adopting a new Treaty on European Union 'European Assizes attended by Members of the parliaments of the 12 Member States of the European Community and the European Parliament' should be convened in July 1989 'to elect the President of the Council and the President of the European Commission'.[211] The second resolution, adopted on 16 June 1988, called on the Council to 'confer on the European Parliament the task of preparing a draft Treaty on the Union to be submitted to the national parliaments for ratification,' thereby acknowledging the need to involve the national parliaments in the Treaty revision process.[212] One year later, in a resolution adopted on 26 May 1989, the European Parliament went as far as to propose the setting-up of a 'European Congress' comprising Members of the European Parliament and an equivalent number of Members of the national parliaments.[213] According to the resolution, the Congress would elect the President of the European Commission from a list submitted by the Council and following a debate in plenary. The idea of holding European Assizes was taken up by François Mitterrand in October 1989 when he addressed the European Parliament and proposed that 'Assizes on the future of the European Community' should be held involving the European Parliament and delegations from the national parliaments. On 23 November 1989, the European Parliament incorporated that idea into its own proposal on the holding of Assizes; the meeting took place

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[208] P. Scalangi, *The European Parliament. The Three-Decade Search for a United Europe*, London, Greenwood Press, 1980, p. 68.

[209] See below the section on relations with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe..

[210] M. Westlake, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

[211] European Parliament resolution of 16 May 1988 on the European Assizes.

[212] European Parliament resolution of 16 June 1988 on the Union Treaty.

[213] European Parliament resolution of 26 May 1989 on the European Assizes.

in 1990, and was attended by 173 national parliamentarians and 53 MEPs. The final declaration, adopted by a large majority, called for a Treaty revision procedure which provided for prior ratification by the European Parliament and the national parliaments. In that connection, the parliamentarians emphasised that 'Europe cannot be built solely on the basis of discussions at governmental and diplomatic level; instead, the parliaments of the European Community must be fully involved in determining the general approach to be taken'.[214]

In reality, the efforts the European Parliament made during this period to strengthen links with the national parliaments essentially amounted to statements of intent. The resolutions bore no immediate fruit; progress came only with the revisions made by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Although the role played by the national parliaments did not initially change, the European Parliament's resolutions highlighted the theoretical scope for giving them a greater say in the Community institutional system.

However, Parliament's efforts to bring about closer interparliamentary cooperation should not disguise the spirit of competition inherent in relations between parliamentary institutions, a kind of 'natural rivalry'[215] which emerges even more clearly in any assessment of relations between the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

2.3 – Relations with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Until the 1970s, relations between the European Parliament and the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe (later renamed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – PACE) were no more than rudimentary. They were marked from the start by mutual mistrust and interparliamentary rivalry.[216]

The Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe was the first European assembly established at the urging of pro-Europeans, who saw the institution as the starting point for a future European Federation. But when, on 9 May 1950, Robert Schuman announced the plan to create a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the proposal to set up a new assembly of the Six was not well received by the parliamentarians in Strasbourg, and in particular those from countries outside the Six, including the British.[217] When the ECSC came into being, in 1952, the British tried to force through a plan drawn up by their Foreign Minister, Anthony Eden, which sought to make the Assembly of the Six a subsidiary assembly of the Council of Europe. The Eden plan was greeted with dismay by the Six, who saw it as a move to impose scrutiny of their parliamentary work by the Consultative Assembly in Strasbourg. The relationship between the two assemblies was thus one clearly marked by rivalry from the outset.[218] In 1952, however, the protocol annexed to the ECSC Treaty on relations with the Council of Europe did provide for exchanges of information and the possibility of

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[214] By 154 votes to 3, see European Community, *Bulletin* du 30 November 1990.

[215] R. Morgan, 'The European Parliament and the National Parliaments', in *European Parliament,* 1992.

[216] See B. Wassenberg, 'Les relations entre le Conseil de l'Europe et l'Union européenne. Entre concurrence et coopération de 1949 à nos jours', in F. Berrod and B. Wassenberg (dir.), *Les relations entre le Conseil de l'Europe et l'Union européenne. Complémentarité ou concurrence ?*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2016, pp. 17-29.

[217] B. Wassenberg, *Histoire du Conseil de l'Europe (1949-2009)*, Brussels, PIE-Peter Lang, 2012, p. 69.

[218] A. Ongono Pomme, 'La tentative de mise en place d'un système de "liaison" entre le Conseil de l'Europe et l'Europe des Six mise en perspective à travers le projet de la Communauté politique européenne: un échec (1952-1954)', in F. Berrod and B. Wassenberg (dir.), *op.cit.,* pp. 53-75.

parliamentarians being members of both the Consultative Assembly and the Joint Assembly.[219]

Cooperation between the parliamentary assemblies remained rudimentary, however. On the one hand, the Assembly of the Six feared being lumped together with the 'great assembly' in Strasbourg; on the other, the parliamentarians of the Council of Europe were keen to prevent a proliferation of European assemblies and, when the Treaties of Rome were drawn up, persuaded the Six to create just one Joint Assembly for the three Communities (ECSC, EEC, Euratom).[220]

In the period prior to the first elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, however, relations between the latter and the PACE offered encouraging signs. Admittedly, the risk of competition was ever present. In 1962, for example, the European Parliamentary Assembly had taken the unilateral step of naming itself 'European Parliament', a clear statement of its resolve to consolidate its position in the European institutional architecture. The parliamentarians of the Council of Europe gave their response in July 1974, when the Standing Committee adopted a resolution stipulating that the 'Consultative' Assembly would henceforth be termed the 'Parliamentary' Assembly, in an effort to raise its standing.[221] The principle that parliamentarians should be members of both European assemblies, in order to foster coherence between them, was honoured only in part. The proportion of dual members was only 51.3% in September 1952 and fell steadily after that. However, when the new Council of Europe Chamber was inaugurated in Strasbourg in 1977, the geographical union between the two assemblies was established and maintained until a new building was constructed for the European Parliament in Strasbourg and inaugurated in 1999.[222] For many years, therefore, the parliamentarians of the European Community and those of the Council of Europe shared a workplace, although they did not attend each other's sessions. Many eminent figures did move from one assembly to the other, however: Pierre Pflimlin was President of the PACE, and subsequently of the European Parliament; Marcelino Oreja was a Member of the European Parliament and became Secretary-General of the Council of Europe in 1984; Emilio Colombo was a Member of the European Parliament and headed a committee set up in 1985 to consider relations between the Council of Europe and the European Community; these are just a few examples. It was easier to forge links if members had experience of both assemblies. François Brunagel, a member of President Pflimlin's private office from 1985 to 1987, confirmed this: 'I didn't need to persuade President Pflimlin to go to the Council of Europe'. It was much more difficult to convince Pflimlin's successor, Lord Plumb (1987-1989) to do the same: 'He didn't see the point. What purpose does the Council of Europe serve? It was only when I reminded him that it was Winston Churchill who had first put forward the idea of a Council of Europe that he agreed to go to the Strasbourg Assembly.'[223]

Relations between the two assemblies deteriorated following the first European Parliament elections by direct universal suffrage. In the early 1970s, Parliament was still endeavouring to build a network between the members of the two parliamentary bodies. In March 1973, the

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[219] Council of Europe (COE), Directorate for Information, 'La moitié des membres de l'Assemblée charbon-acier sont membres de l'Assemblée consultative du Conseil de l'Europe', 2.9.1952.

[220] A. De Smet, 'Le Conseil de l'Europe et la rationalisation des activités parlementaires', in M.-T. Bitsch (dir.), *Jalons pour une histoire du Conseil de l'Europe,* Berne, Peter Lang, 1997, p. 233.

[221] P. Silk (dir.), *Parliamentary Assembly, Practice and procedure*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2008, p. 36.

[222] M. Kolb, *The European Union and the Council of Europe*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2013, p. 37.

[223] Interview with François Brunagel, Strasbourg, 22 February 2018.

presidents of the parliaments of the Member States of the European Community held their first conference in Paris and invited the President of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, Giuseppe Vedovato, to attend. The aim was to study problems linked to representative parliamentary democracy.[224] The following year, on 7 May 1974, on the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Council of Europe, it was Giuseppe Vedovato who invited the presidents of all the parliaments of the member countries of the Council of Europe (including, therefore, the Member States of the European Community) to a round table on the crisis in parliamentary democracy. When, in 1975, the presidents of the parliaments of the European Community met in Rome, a meeting attended by the new President of the PACE, Karl Czernetz, a decision was taken to hold regular conferences involving the presidents of the parliaments of the Member States of the European Community and of the Council of Europe. Until 1981, conferences were held almost every year: in Bonn in 1976, in Vienna in 1977, in The Hague in 1978 and in Madrid in 1980. The aim of these 'high-level' parliamentary meetings was to address issues relating to cooperation between the national parliaments and the European assemblies or the role of the national parliaments in the European integration process, but also more specific problems inherent in a democratic system, such as scrutiny of the executive by parliament, the fight against corruption and anti-terrorism measures.[225] The mere fact of bringing the two European assemblies together to discuss topics such as these lessened for a time the rivalry between the Council of Europe and the European Community.

But the European Parliament elections by direct universal suffrage changed everything. Starting in 1976, when, at the Brussels European Council, Leo Tindemans presented his report on a future 'European Union' which would confer 'legislative power on the European Parliament', the PACE began to feel threatened.[226] It responded by holding a debate on European policy at its October 1977 session. The parliamentarians were convinced that the election of the Parliament of the Nine by universal suffrage might diminish the influence of their Parliamentary Assembly or even jeopardise its existence as a purely consultative assembly whose members were appointed only indirectly by the national parliaments of the Member States. In the recommendation which the Parliamentary Assembly adopted after the debate, its members called in particular for closer relations with the European Community as a means of preserving unity among all the European parliamentary democracies.[227] The PACE thus found itself on the defensive vis-à-vis the European Parliament. What it could do was assert its responsibilities in the area of the protection of human rights and, in this way, its role vis-à-vis the European Community. The idea that the protection of human rights should be the purview of the Council of Europe led, in October 1978, to the proposal that the European Community should accede to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). On 27 April 1979, Parliament adopted a resolution advocating that the Community as a body should accede to the ECtHR. The European Commission published a memorandum on the same subject which endorsed that view.[228] At the same time, however, the European Parliament continued to deal with human rights issues itself: from 1980 onwards, its Political Affairs Committee regularly submitted reports on the human rights situation in Europe and around the world.[229] When, in

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[224] B. Haller, *Une Assemblée au service de l'Europe. L'Assemblée parlementaire du Conseil de l'Europe (1949-1989)*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2006, p. 154.

[225] B. Wassenberg, *Histoire du Conseil de l'Europe (1949-2009), op.cit.*, p. 273

[226] M.-T. Bitsch, *Histoire de la construction européenne,* Brussels, Éditions Complexe, 1999, p. 199.

[227] COE, Parliamentary Assembly, recommendation 821, 1977.

[228] European Parliament resolution of 27 April 1979.

[229] See, for example, the European Parliament reports on human rights in Poland (doc.1-219/80), 1980-1981, and on human rights violations in Guatemala (doc. 1-835/80), 1980-1981.

1979, the Council of Europe set up a committee of experts on women's rights, the European Parliament responded by establishing a parliamentary committee on the same subject. The rivalry between the two institutions was overt, therefore, and made even more pronounced by the resolve of the new elected European Parliament to set itself ever more clearly apart from the Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg. This was reflected, in 1981, by the decision to end the practice of holding joint parliamentary conferences. The European Parliament changed the organisational arrangements for these conferences in such a way as to create a clear divide between the activities of the two assemblies once again.[230] The European Parliament decided to hold conferences on specifically Community-related issues, to be attended only by the presidents of the parliaments of the Member States of the European Community, whilst the Council of Europe continued to organise, every two years, 'enlarged' conferences bringing together the presidents of the parliaments of its member countries and representatives of countries with observer status and international assemblies.[231] Despite this rivalry between the two assemblies, however, the desire to generate synergies did sometimes make itself felt. In 1983, for example, the European Parliament adopted the flag created by the Council of Europe in 1955 with the idea that it should become the joint emblem of the two European organisations. In June 1985, the European Council approved that step and a similar one concerning the European anthem. François Brunagel recalled the force of the words which Pierre Pflimlin addressed to the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors: 'Mr President, we can't have two flags, because we don't have two Europes, don't you agree?'[232] At the Council of Ministers meeting of 21 and 22 April 1986, the European Community officially adopted the two symbols of European unification. From then on, therefore, the two European organisations shared the same symbols, which had originally been devised by the Council of Europe.[233]

However, the period after 1979 saw the European Parliament gradually gain in standing vis-à-vis the PACE. As the latter was not elected by universal suffrage, there was now a clear difference between the two European assemblies: the Members of the European Parliament had a single mandate, at Community level, whilst the parliamentarians in the Parliamentary Assembly were delegates from their national parliaments, where they exercised their principal mandate. The European Parliament thus enjoyed a greater degree of democratic legitimacy than the PACE, a fact of which MEPs became increasingly aware.

2.4 – The European Parliament and European Political Cooperation

MEPs also used the legitimacy provided by election by universal suffrage as a justification for intervening in areas which previously had fallen more within the purview of the Council and the Member States. For example, they expressed their views on the arrangements for European Political Cooperation (EPC) launched by the Heads of State and Government at The Hague in December 1969. The aim was to organise formal consultations among the latter on

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[230] See B. Wassenberg, *Histoire du Conseil de l'Europe (1949-2009)*, *op.cit.*, p. 273

[231] *Ibid.*

[232] Interview with François Brunagel, Strasbourg, 22 February 2018.

[233] To mark the 50th anniversary of its establishment in 1999, however, the Council of Europe decided to introduce a specific logo (an E) on the European flag to distinguish it from the EU.

major international political issues. The leaders of the Six had also set their sights on the harmonisation of standpoints and joint measures, wherever possible. These ideas gradually took shape through the Luxembourg report (1970) and at the two meetings in Copenhagen (the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Nine on 23 July 1973 and the Summit of the Heads of State and Government in December 1973). At the first meeting of the European Council, in March 1975, the Heads of State and Government took charge of this process. It was at these meetings that political cooperation arrangements were drawn up, the objectives were set and proposed joint measures sketched out. This cooperation was mainly a matter for the European Council and the Foreign Ministers Council. Representatives of the Commission attended the quarterly meetings of the Foreign Ministers Council held in the context of EPC. Lastly, the minister chairing the Council (six-monthly rotation) held meetings with the European Parliament's Political Affairs Committee. In 1978, through the Blumenfeld report, the European Parliament tried to alter this situation, but without success. That report called, for example, for the defence ministers to be involved in EPC and for links to be established in the context of EPC with the North Atlantic Council and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

The new legitimacy conferred by universal suffrage prompted the European Parliament, from 1980 onwards, to address once again the issue of European Political Cooperation. Its Political Affairs Committee highlighted the disagreements which arose between the Member States of the European Community at sessions and meetings of the United Nations. It called, for example, for the European Parliament to be involved in decision-making prior to each session, and in particular for it to be given the possibility of outlining to the Council its position on matters being considered by the United Nations. The subjects discussed in New York and Geneva were many and varied of course: from development to disarmament, from security to international conflict resolution. For the European Parliament, setting out its position amounted to expressing its views on all international political issues of relevance to the Community. The European Parliament's involvement was a necessity, as the Political Affairs Committee made clear in spring 1981: 'The shortcomings of EPC will have been apparent for some time'.[234] The committee went on to list those shortcomings: the inability of the Nine to respond to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, the inability to grasp the issues at stake in and the implications of the Iranian revolution, the duplicity displayed by some Member States in their dealings with the Eastern bloc, etc. In June 1981, in an important report drawn up by the British MEP Diana Elles, the Political Affairs Committee identified 'two radical steps' which were needed to make EPC effective: change the philosophy underpinning external policy, and give that policy a new institutional structure.

On the first point, the Political Affairs Committee saw a need to move on from the coordination of national foreign policies to a common foreign policy 'at least in certain mutually agreed areas'.[235] Without moves in that direction, the Community's external policy would always remain reactive. The European Community would never be in a position to take initiatives itself. Coordinated approaches were therefore needed on sensitive issues, such as relations with the Soviet bloc and the United States or the Middle East question. Even if the (by now) Ten were to reach agreement on these issues, they would never be able to respond effectively, let alone take initiatives of their own 'in the absence of a suitable infrastructure, in the form of

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[234] European Parliament - Sitting documents 1981-1982, 30.6.1981, Document 1-335/81. [s.l.]. Report drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Political Affairs on European Political Cooperation and the role of the European Parliament (25 June 1981), Chapter 6: The shortcomings of EPC, p. 10.

[235] *Ibid.*

some kind of standing secretariat'.[236] This latter idea cropped up repeatedly in the report: the ability of the Member State holding the Council Presidency to organise a united and effective response quickly in a crisis was severely hampered by the lack of a suitable institutional mechanism. In order to improve the effectiveness of EPC, there were general measures which could be taken in the short term, and more specific decisions which would determine the long-term approach. The former included making the European Council more accountable to Parliament. The President-in-Office of the European Council would be required to come to Parliament in person once during his or her term in order to set out the Council's conclusions, give reasons for the decisions taken and explain how the other institutions would be involved. A debate would ensue and Parliament would outline its own positions, which the European Council would be required to take into account. Parliament's strategy was clear: increase the European Council's accountability vis-à-vis Parliament, as regards both Community affairs and EPC. In that way, indirectly, the powers of the Strasbourg institution would be enhanced and its profile raised. At the same time, EPC would be developed into a common policy. Parliament saw this as its prerogative. Here again, a passage from the Elles report is telling: 'Directly elected representatives owe a responsibility to their electorate on all matters including the activities of the Community, both internal and external, and more particularly on those matters over which there is, or seems to be, no democratic scrutiny. Closer cooperation between the Foreign Ministers of the Ten and the Parliament is urgently needed. It should be recognised that in the former delegated Parliament, members had the opportunity to question Foreign Ministers in their national Parliaments and to debate foreign policy issues. In the directly elected Parliament, not only are these opportunities not available to the large majority of members, but in the Parliament there is so far very little opportunity for members to discuss fully foreign policy matters and they get very inadequate results in the answers they receive to their questions on foreign policy issues'. In the short term, in addition to the hearing of the President-in-Office of the Council, there was a need to improve the arrangements for the colloquy bringing together the foreign minister chairing the Council and the European Parliament's Political Affairs Committee. It was essential that four such colloquies should be held each year, so that it could be made clear how the foreign ministers had taken account of the foreign policy guidelines put forward by MEPs and a discussion held between the members of the Political Affairs Committee and the minister. These were measures which could be taken immediately to make the European executive accountable to MEPs.

Even more important were the proposals to improve the EPC infrastructure. The Elles report called for the establishment of a permanent EPC secretariat to act as a bridge between the European Community and the intergovernmental structure of EPC, making cooperation more coherent and more efficient and deliberately creating a link between EPC and the Community institutions.[237] The secretariat, and not the President-in-Office of the Foreign Affairs Council, would coordinate the external policy of the Ten. There would be coherence, continuity and permanence. The secretariat 'should have the responsibility of preparing and following up meetings of the Foreign Ministers, the Political Directors and EPC working parties and would prepare, according to political instructions received, agendas, convocations, minutes and other working documents. It should also be responsible for keeping all the records and

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[236] *Ibid.*

[237] European Parliament, report drawn up by the Political Affairs Committee on European political cooperation and the role of the European Parliament, 25.6.1981 (doc. No 1-335/81), 30.6.1981., pp. 9 -57. The report included a very detailed history of EPC. For more detailed information, see M. Gainar, *Aux origines de la diplomatie européenne. Les Neuf et la Coopération politique européenne de 1973 à 1980,* Brussels, PIE-Peter Lang, 2012, 642 p.

archives of EPC meetings'. Ultimately, it would enable the Community to speak with one voice. This example illustrates very well Parliament's objectives and the means it employed to achieve them. The aim was to communitarise intergovernmental policies by emphasising the democratic legitimacy conferred by universal suffrage and to make the bodies responsible for these policies accountable to the European Parliament, enabling it to be involved in drawing up these policies. But the European Parliament also wanted to be given the power to make proposals. However, its vision for EPC showed just how much progress still needed to be made if the European Community was to have an international role, with all that that implied.[238] The same was true of other policy sectors. This was brought home strongly once again in the wake of the Milan European Council (June 1985), when Parliament adopted a resolution commenting on the decision taken at that meeting to keep EPC on an intergovernmental footing. The resolution of 9 July 1985 supported the strengthening of EPC, but rejected the proposed arrangements on the grounds that drawing up a specific treaty and establishing an ad hoc secretariat would accentuate the intergovernmental nature of EPC, which might create friction with the European institutions.

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[238] See also European Parliament, debates on European political cooperation, 18.11.1981, OJEC, No 1-277, 18.11.1981, pp. 133-137 and pp. 139-141.

Chapter 3: Heightened visibility

In asserting its powers vis-à-vis the other institutions and positioning itself as the legitimate protector of Europe's people, the European Parliament did not overlook its task of symbolically occupying the political space, which sometimes entailed coming into conflict with European citizens.[239]

3.1 – Symbolically occupying the political space

Aside from certain flashpoints, such as the refusal to adopt the Community budget in 1979, Parliament began to acquire visibility and legitimacy through a series of initiatives that were symbolic in nature but which put it on the political map at several levels. Election by direct universal suffrage and its immediate effects had wide-ranging consequences. The MEPs hammered home the point that this was a Parliament underpinned by universal suffrage. Every opportunity was used to stress that the legitimacy that this bestowed upon its Parliament meant the European Community was no longer an 'artificial construction'. Their new-found legitimacy led MEPs to demand powers in areas that the Treaties did not afford them. This was particularly true of their desire to influence international politics. Mariano Rumor, an Italian Christian Democrat and former prime minister of his country, believed that the elections gave Parliament 'the responsibility to take an active role in preparing and running the Madrid meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe'.[240] He was not alone in holding this ambition. Some Members made claims to a legitimacy that went beyond the bounds of the Europe of the Nine, then the Ten. Egon Klepsch, a German Christian Democrat, believed, for example, that not only the citizens of the European Community but also those under Soviet control in Eastern Europe expected the European Parliament to take an unambiguous stance on security and cooperation in Europe. It was their contention that the European Parliament had to speak on behalf of all Europeans.

But aside from the countless speeches heard in the House on these issues, Parliament also gained visibility via visits and meetings. Analysis of President Simone Veil's official trips, for example, reveals that the overriding aim was to increase the institution's visibility. François Scheer indeed stated: 'She had become Mrs Europe, taking the voice of Europe to the continent's capitals and beyond'.[241] She thus headed a delegation to the USA in January 1980, as part of a series of meetings between European and American parliamentarians. Ms Veil was also received as a guest by President Jimmy Carter during this visit. She stressed on that occasion 'the emotion I feel as first president of a directly elected European institution in being today [...] in this the capital of a nation which over the past two centuries has not ceased to defend and embody democracy'.[242] That same year Ms Veil travelled to China at the head of a delegation from the European Parliament. It was the first visit to China by a delegation of this institution. Aside from events marking the friendship between Beijing and the European Parliament, this meeting enabled Parliament to assert the European Community's ambitions on the international stage, as well as to gain legitimacy by acting as its spokesperson. Other

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[239] For further details, see A. E. Gfeller, 'Réinventer l'institution parlementaire européenne. Simone Veil et les premiers élus au suffrage universel direct', in *Cultures & Conflits*, No 85-86, spring-summer, 2012, pp. 81-98.

[240] Quoted by A. É. Gfeller, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[241] Interview with François Scheer, Paris, 22 May 2018.

[242] Quoted by A. É. Gfeller, *op. cit.*, p. 86 et seq.

trips, to Egypt and Israel, followed in the same vein, enabling the European Parliament's delegations 'to express the democratic voice of Europe's citizens'.[243] Visits by leading international personalities also helped to put the European Parliament on the political map. One such occasion was the arrival of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, hero of peace with Israel, in February 1981. This enabled Parliament to act as the European Community's standard bearer on the international stage. Simone Veil took up this mantle by welcoming the Egyptian head of state to Luxembourg, stating that the European Parliament 'feels honoured that you have chosen to address all the peoples of Europe today, through their democratically elected representatives, informing them of your hopes and also of the part they are playing in creating an area of peace in the Middle East'.[244] This visit came in the wake of the Venice Declaration of 1980. Could a President of the Commission have got away with saying as much in a public forum? At any rate, when they did countries would sometimes take offence.

Photo 17: Egyptian President Anwar Sadat addressing Members of the European Parliament in Luxembourg on 10 February 1981.

Ms Veil also invited Margaret Thatcher, then President-in-Office of the European Council, to address the European Parliament in the autumn of 1981. The invitation extended to the 'Iron Lady' actually served several purposes. Given her well-known opinions on Europe, her visit to the Strasbourg Parliament would prompt discussion on the prospects and models for European integration, a debate likely to strengthen the European Parliament's image as a hub for democratic exchanges on the future of Europe. It thus symbolically placed the European Parliament on the same footing as the Council. These events were, of course, widely covered in the media. They also provided a foretaste of important journeys and visits to come. So it was that, on 30 June 1983, Helmut Kohl told Members: 'The European Parliament has the important and vital task of raising our citizens' European consciousness. To do so, it needs authority and its voice must be heard.'[245] Few lawyers could have made a better case. A year later, on 24 May 1984, François Mitterrand stood before the Strasbourg Parliament and stressed its importance once more: 'Believe me when I say it is an honour to address an Assembly representing 270 million men and women who will soon, each in their own country, be called upon to repeat the fundamental act of a democracy: the election of a Parliament'.[246] Two resounding expressions of legitimacy from sitting Council presidents within the space of a year! The Stuttgart Summit in June 1983 decided to formalise the exercise in democracy represented by the President-in-Office of the Council appearing before the House. A mandatory minimum of one such visit was imposed, in tribute to the symbolic authority of the European Parliament.

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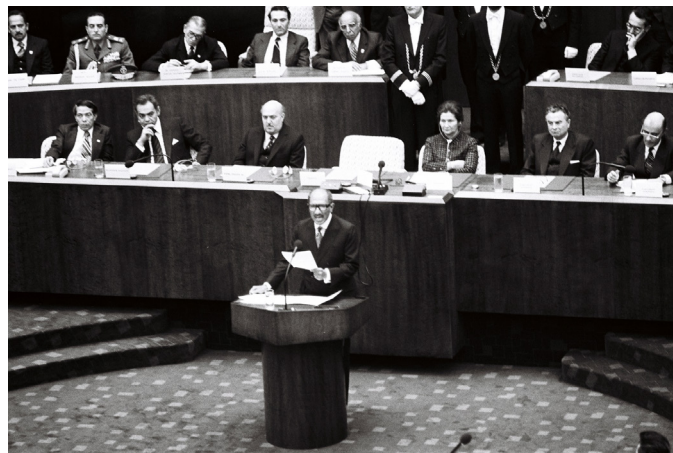
[243] *Ibid*

[244] *Ibid*

[245] European Parliament, report by Helmut Kohl to the European Parliament, 30.6.1983, see Official Journal, No 1-301, 30.6.1983, pp. 18-24.

[246] European Parliament, debates, speech by François Mitterrand, 24.5.1984.

This also meant further progress in its ambition for greater power, particularly scrutiny over the executive branch.

A series of exceptional visits at the end of the 1984-1988 parliamentary term gave the European Parliament greater lustre. In June 1988, the Dalai Lama evoked the situation in Tibet and stressed the benefits of the European model and the European Community. He hoped that this model would inspire the Chinese Government to enter into dialogue with China's various component parts, including Tibet. The European Parliament had arrived as a fully-fledged player on the international political stage. On 11 October 1988, Pope John Paul II appeared before the Members to present a comprehensive vision of the European project: 'The empires of the past have all failed when they tried to establish their dominance by force or political assimilation. Your Europe will be one of free association of all its peoples and of the pooling of the many riches of its diversity. Other nations will certainly be able to join those that are represented here today. As the Supreme Pastor of the universal Church, myself a native of Eastern Europe and knowing the aspirations of the Slavic peoples, the other "lung" of our common European homeland, my wish is that Europe, willingly giving itself free institutions, may one day reach the full dimensions that geography and, even more, history have given it. How could I not hope for this, since the culture inspired by the Christian faith has so profoundly marked the history of all the peoples of Europe, Greek and Latin, Germanic and Slavic, despite all the vicissitudes and beyond all social systems and ideologies? The European nations are all distinguished in their history by their openness to the world and the vital exchanges they have established with the peoples of other continents. It is unimaginable for a united Europe to close itself up in its egoism. Speaking with one single voice, joining forces, it will be able, even more than in the past, to dedicate new resources and energies to the great task of the development of countries in the Third World, especially those that have traditional bonds with Europe. The Convention of Lomé, which paved the way for an institutionalised cooperation between the members of your Assembly and the representatives of sixty-six countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, is an excellent example in this regard. European cooperation will be all the more credible and fruitful if it is pursued, without any ulterior motives of domination, with the intention of aiding poor countries to take charge of their own destinies.' The Holy Father concluded by calling for MEPs to pursue the European project further: 'Mr President, delegates, in responding to your invitation to address your illustrious Assembly, I kept before my eyes the millions of European men and women whom you represent. It is to you that they have entrusted the great task of maintaining and developing the human values, both cultural and spiritual, that belong to Europe's heritage and that will be the best safeguard of its identity, liberty and progress. I pray that God will inspire you and strengthen you in this great undertaking.'[247]

Successive Presidents of the Commission have also habitually addressed the Strasbourg Chamber, a sure sign of their interest in Parliament as an institution. This has come to constitute a kind of unofficial democratic 'inauguration' of their mandate, although they nominally report to the heads of state or government. Certain presidents of this, the EU's executive branch, have felt at home in the Chamber thanks to their being former Members. Gaston Thorn's words during his first appearance before Parliament as President of the Commission revealed the solemnity of the occasion: 'Each of you will understand how difficult it is for me to conceal the emotion I feel on entering this Chamber, being as I was a Member of this Assembly for ten years, elected with you in June 1979 and having visited four times as

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[247] Speech by Pope John Paul II, 11.10.1988, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II,* vol. XI, 3, Rome, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, pp. 1171-1179.

President of the Council and with my eyes drawn to so many familiar faces'.[248] Jacques Delors, also a former MEP, afforded Parliament the same importance in his inauguration speech.[249] The Commission, he said, 'wishes to respond to the calls and hopes of all those in this Parliament who keep the flame of the European ideal alight. It wishes to respond to them by taking full account of Parliament's resolutions, opinions and work and by helping make the essential leap forward to broaden our perspectives and shore up our action'. These two inauguration speeches were further music to the ears of Simone Veil and Pierre Pflimlin, affording as they did greater visibility to the European Parliament and the stamp of legitimacy conferred by the Commission Presidents, on taking office, addressing the elected Members.

Human rights then became an increasingly important policy field for Parliament. For its Members, speaking out and taking action in this area would prove a sure way to gain in credibility and visibility. As early as 1979, action was taken to put pressure on the Argentinian

Photo 18: On 11 June 1986, representatives of the European Parliament (Pierre Pflimlin), the Council (Hans van den Broek) and the European Commission (Jacques Delors) sign a joint declaration in Strasbourg condemning all forms of racism and xenophobia.

military junta and then on the Turkish army, which seized power in a coup d'état in 1980.[250] While this was not the first time Parliament had taken such steps, they became a much more common occurrence once it became a directly elected body. Statistics compiled by Janne Majaniemi show that from 1958 to 1979, the European Parliament passed 22 resolutions on human rights; between 1979 and 1984, it adopted 145. Notably, this spike in activity came in the wake of events in the Eastern bloc (Poland, dissent, etc.). The Communist bloc was indeed

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[248] P. Ludlow, *Relations avec le Parlement européen*, in É. Bussière, V. Dujardin, M. Dumoulin, P. Ludlow, J.-W. Brouwer and P. Tilly (dir.), *La Commission européenne (1973-1986). Histoire et mémoires d'une institution*, Luxembourg, Publications Office, 2014, pp. 235-246.

[249] *Ibid.*

[250] European Parliament, report of the Political Affairs Committee on the human rights situation in Turkey, rapporteur: R. Balfe, PE 98.572 (doc. A 2 – 117/85 A), 1985, 47 p.

the main focus of MEPs' efforts to assert fundamental freedoms. Citizens' right to petition Parliament further enhanced the institution's visibility, enabling them as it did to air grievances which would have been unlikely to reach the ears of the Commission or Council. Five hundred and twenty-six petitions were submitted during Parliament's first term as a directly elected body; the second term alone saw 1 956. For MEPs, this was clearly a way of reaching out to the public.

3.2 – Reaching out to the public

Parliament exhibited a growing tendency to focus on policies that were close to citizens.[251] That focus began to fall on specific areas of interest: the environment, human rights, culture, education, social affairs and consumer protection. Parliament wished to be a lightning rod for the public's concerns. This ambition also led it to criticise the approaches taken by the other institutions. Parliament spoke out against the Council for being overly concerned by national interests and the Commission for being too closely linked to the Council and ready to kowtow to powerful cross-border lobby groups. MEPs thus become avid readers of Eurobarometer opinion polls, supposedly a reflection of sentiment among Europe's citizens. Certain initiatives helped Parliament gain further legitimacy with citizens. But there were also obstacles to this: from MEPs' low visibility compared to their national colleagues to the weak media coverage of Parliament's work and debates, everything conspired to make the relationship between Members and their constituents a remote one. In response, MEPs embedded themselves in networks and groups helping shape policy at European level. They made progress with non-governmental organisations and representatives of public interest groups and associations in a number of areas. This approach gave rise to the intergroups that brought together MEPs from diverse political backgrounds to work on specific issues. Certain intergroups advocated federalist integration and others sector-specific interests, while some focused on major societal issues. They were a meeting place for political stakeholders, citizens' associations and pressure groups, and enabled links to be forged that helped Parliament fulfil its duty towards society and other institutions.

The fact that MEPs were elected on a national basis coloured their relationship with citizens as voters. From the very first election by universal suffrage, electoral campaigns have principally served as the backdrop for domestic political debates.[252] Following the most recent elections, who among us had heard of the Members of the European Parliament, with the exception of frontline leaders entering the institution? Or even their MEP? They were even less familiar in the period following 1984, when the number of Members holding dual mandates decreased. MEPs owed less to the public than to the party that had supported them, placed them on their lists and could maintain or remove their support on a whim. National considerations were thus an ever-present concern. They would prove particularly strong in France. In Belgium, where voters could change the order of Members on lists, however, politicians had a more personal relationship with voters. A Walloon Member explained: 'If I want to be re-elected in my constituency, I have to keep in touch with people'. The same principle applied in Ireland, where candidates could run as private individuals. As a rule, MEPs sought to maintain a local

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[251] A. É. Gfeller, W. Loth and M. Schulz, *Democratizing Europe, Reaching out to the Citizen? The Transforming Powers of the European Parliament*, in *Journal of European Integration History,* No 1, vol.17, 2011, pp. 5-13.

[252] See B. Wassenberg, *La campagne pour les élections européennes de 1979 en France et en Allemagne : l'image de l'Europe,* in M.-T. Bitsch, W. Loth and C. Barthel (dir.), *Cultures politiques, opinions publiques et intégration européenne,* Brussels, Bruylant, 2007, pp. 263-284.

presence. They did so via their parties' local associations and contact with social and professional organisations interested in European issues. Some MEPs took part in local activities and debates, in particular with agricultural trade unions in their home countries. They thus began to lead 'double lives', shared between Brussels and their constituencies. For British Members, this duality was more pronounced than for some of their colleagues as it was an integral part of their duties as representatives of a given territorial constituency. British MEPs returned to the UK every weekend and held regular surgeries with constituents and meetings with their parties' local committees. This local visibility was a prerequisite for their election. But despite their efforts on the ground, the same refrain was heard everywhere: they were less visible than national parliamentarians.

How to gain visibility? Could MEPs be intermediaries liaising between their constituencies, their country and the Community? Their knowledge of European affairs could indeed be an asset for them at national or even regional level. Some authors distinguish between several types of MEPs over the 1979-1989 period.

In the 1980s, the European Parliament acquires the equipment needed to implement its communication policy.

Firstly, extraordinary personalities, famous from previous roles and who were fixtures at major debates. Willy Brandt was one such figure in 1979.[253] We could also cite Altiero Spinelli, Mariano Rumor, Simone Veil and many others. They had the merit of ensuring the institution's visibility among citizens. A second category was Members who had come to the end of their careers at national level and found a new lease of life in Strasbourg. Hans-Gert Pöttering made this rather irreverent quip about them: '*Hast du einen Opa, schick ihn nach Europa*' (If you have a grandfather, send him to Europe).[254] Certain younger politicians, sometimes after being voted out in national elections, also fell into this category. Lastly, the most populous category was Members who found fertile ground at the European Parliament for advancing issues close to their hearts. Such Members were generally effective in advocating for their regions or particular sectors or issues.

Although citizens had had the right of petition since the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community was formally established, the European Parliament did not set up a Committee on Petitions until 1987. Indeed, the European Community was widely criticised for the democratic deficit and its lack of proximity to citizens.[255] Parliament's direct election by

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[253] See his speeches at the European Parliament, particularly that of 18.11.1981, Official Journal No 1-227, 18.11.1981.

[254] Interview with Hans-Gert Pöttering, Bonn, 14 December 2017.

[255] See R. Rohrschneider, 'The democracy deficit and mass support for an EU-wide government', in *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(2), 2002, pp. 463-75; R. Blondel, R. Sinnot and P. Svensson, *People and Parliament in the European Union. Participation, Democracy, and Legitimacy,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998.

universal suffrage was supposed to remedy this problem both by increasing its legitimacy and encouraging it to forge closer links with Europe's electorate. As the body representing democracy in the EEC, the European Parliament had, therefore, a particular vocation to communicate with the public.

For MEPs, however, keeping in touch with a European electorate numbering 346 million in 1979 was no simple task. This contact was maintained increasingly via lobbying and the courting of MEPs by pressure groups to convey messages and offer their expertise in Parliament's documents, reports and resolutions.[256] But this did not amount to a direct relationship between MEPs and Europe's citizenry. Several factors stood in the way, even after the 1979 elections by universal suffrage.

Firstly, the 1979, 1984 and 1989 election campaigns were not contested on issues pertaining to European affairs. They were conducted at national level in each of the Member States and candidates were obliged to tailor their message to the national rather than European agenda.[257] The electoral campaigns thus did nothing to make the European Parliament more visible to the public. MEPs were, therefore, neither well known nor much liked among Europe's citizens.[258] Secondly, the arrangements for the European elections were not necessarily conducive to a close relationship between candidates and voters. With the exception of the United Kingdom, the Member States elected MEPs by proportional representation, which meant that it was the party lists rather than the ballot cast by the individual voter that mattered most.[259] In the United Kingdom, each Member represented a given constituency and had to be present on the ground. They received letters from voters each day, held briefings on European regulations and maintained contacts with local associations and groups, just like a Member of the national parliament. Except that, as many British Members of the European Parliament complained, MEPs were neither as influential nor as recognisable as their national counterparts in Westminster. 'Members of the House of Commons sometimes looked at MEPs with a touch of condescension.'[260] Some other Member States, despite the proportional electoral system, had their own subtle national particularities: while in France, proportional representation at the national level placed a considerable distance between Members and citizens, in Belgium and Ireland the possibility of preferential votes meant MEPs had to maintain closer contact with their constituencies. 'I regularly hold constituent surgeries,' said one Belgian MEP.[261] Even in Germany, with its mixed electoral system, MEPs stressed the need for proximity to their local voters: 'Even if we are not local politicians, we maintain a local office and liaise with party bodies,' confirmed a German Social Democrat, adding however that his activities in Germany accounted for only 15 % to 20 % of his working time.[262] For the most part then, Strasbourg was far removed from local voters. MEPs were likely to feel this remoteness, even alienation from their electorate. However, over Parliament's successive terms, MEPs'

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[256] O. Costa and F. Saint Martin, Le Parlement européen, op.cit., p. 116.

[257] See B. Wassenberg, *Les positions françaises et allemandes devant l'Union politique à partir de 1979, op.cit.*

[258] M. Rambour, 'Les oppositions à l'Europe sont-elles structurées politiquement ?' , in M. Libera, S. Schirmann and B. Wassenberg (dir.), *Abstentionnisme, euroscepticisme et anti-européisme dans les élections européennes de 1979 à nos jours,* Stuttgart, Steiner Verlag, 2016, p. 93.

[259] A.-C. L. Knudsen, 'The European Parliament and Political Careers at the Nexus of European Integration and Transnational History', in J. Laursen (dir.), *The Institutions and Dynamics of the European Community (1979-83)*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, 2014, pp. 76-97.

[260] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen, op.cit.*, p. 313.

[261] *Ibid.,* p. 306.

[262] *Ibid.*

efforts to foster closer links with citizens became increasingly evident. In France, for instance, French MEPs were well aware during the second European electoral campaign in 1984 that Parliament remained little known and distant and they wished to address this shortcoming. Nicole Fontaine, a candidate for the Centre of Social Democrats (CDS), proposed keeping her party members regularly apprised of European affairs and holding meetings on Europe for associations and schools.[263] Again in France, MEPs sought out contacts with the farming sector since a significant proportion of the electorate was directly affected by the common agricultural policy. 'It makes sense for me to pass on information to those it affects most,' said Bernard Thareau, Socialist coordinator on Parliament's Agriculture Committee during his time as an MEP from 1981 to 1989. MEPs thus gradually became a kind of intermediary liaising between the local level and Brussels.[264] In their area of expertise in the European Parliament, they had to advocate for their national voters while informing them of decisions taken and developments in legislation at European level. In practice this meant, for instance, defending their region's interests when European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) resources were shared out. But it also entailed explaining the rules and arrangements governing European funds to local and regional authorities so that they could apply to the European Community for such funding.[265]

Lastly, the greatest obstacle to links between citizens and their MEPs was undoubtedly the highly peculiar climate that reigned in Strasbourg: a closed circle with its own rules and a technical, multilingual modus operandi. The European Parliament's documents on such issues as cigarette advertising, CO_2 emission levels or car exhaust standards did indeed concern people's daily lives but, increasingly after the adoption of the Single European Act in 1987, these texts were drowned in a morass of highly technical regulations that citizens often found impenetrable. This technical way of doing things made it hard for the Members themselves. Gordon Adam recalled: 'The ESPRIT programme was their key project for the '81 budget [...] but it required a lot of [money].'[266] How could Parliament hope to communicate effectively with the European public on a given standard for harmonising legislation so as to implement free movement rules in the single market? An MEP familiar with the world of Strasbourg explained this paradox as follows: 'Before we used to focus on major issues such as human rights or global security [...] now we're sucked into the whirlpool of the internal market'.[267] John Purvis recalled: 'The European Parliament had powers of codecision on single market legislation, but single market legislation could mean anything or everything, it could be applied to any area. It was a major leap forward.'[268]

The difficulties in communicating simply and directly with voters also stemmed from the economic focus of the European Community's priorities over the 1979-1989 period. From 1987 onwards, the aim was to complete the internal economic market, to institute a policy of economic and social cohesion and to deal with innovation, research and transport. As Ursula Braun-Moser confirmed: 'Between 1984 and 1989, I sat on the Transport Committee. We dealt with liberalising air traffic, telecommunications, postal services and rail transport. There were

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[263] *Ibid.,* p. 308.

[264] O. Costa and F. Saint Martin, *Le Parlement européen*, op.cit., p. 125.

[265] F. Marx, *EG-Regionalpolitik, Fortschritt und Stagnation im Spannungsfeld von Integrationsziel und nationalstaatlichen Interessen*, Aachen, Heredot, 1992.

[266] Interview with Gordon Adam, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[267] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 353.

[268] Interview with John Purvis, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

countless initiatives on liberalisation, including for the banking sector [...]'.[269] Other areas more likely to interest the European public, such as education or culture, were not a major concern at the time. José María Gil-Robles, elected to the European Parliament in 1989, explained: 'The budget for culture was derisory [...] we tried to have a European culture but the Member States jealously guarded culture for themselves so obviously it never got beyond rhetoric'.[270]

With a view to bridging this widening gap between MEPs and their voters, the European Parliament decided to begin welcoming visitors to Strasbourg. In session weeks, over a hundred groups (from associations, secondary schools universities, etc.) could attend its debates. An administrative department organised these visits by groups of European citizens, with an official on hand to greet them in an information meeting. Groups could sit in the gallery for an hour during debates and were then invited for lunch at the restaurant in Parliament's green room. With a view to fostering links between citizens and MEPs, the latter could invite two groups of visitors per year at Parliament's expense. Visits from politicians or members of local associations helped MEPs fulfil their role as intermediaries between the European and local levels: they answered questions both on the functioning of the European Parliament in general and on more specific issues such as the seat of Parliament, arrangements for allocating European subsidies and how European legislation was drafted. Parliament's Administration stressed that the aim of these measures was above all to reach 'multiplier groups' able to pass on information on the European Parliament at national level.[271] But in truth, many visitor groups were there on a day out and were not necessarily fervent defenders of the European idea.

Moreover, while MEPs' daily work became ever more technical, the same applied to Parliament's debates. Visitors had few opportunities to attend major debates on topical global issues or see anything spectacular happen in the Strasbourg Chamber. 'There's a perpetual logjam here,' Members themselves complained. Debates were bogged down by 'a host of technical issues' because the texts submitted to the European Parliament were increasingly legislative in nature: 'What really matters is obscured by minutiae. We end up squabbling over mere details,' admitted one MEP.[272] There were some exceptions, however. In the first term following 1979, for example, the Italian Radical Member Marco Pannella would regularly take

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[269]   Interview with Ursula Braun-Moser, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[270]   Interview with José Maria Gil-Robles, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[271]   M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 355.

[272]   *Ibid.*, p. 352.

the floor to comment on a topical issue or inveigh against the control exerted by the major parties over the agenda for Strasbourg part-sessions.[273] He took advantage of the three minutes' speaking time allotted to Members for points of order to put on a real show, rising from his seat among the other non-attached Members to hold court. These humorous breaks with the routine order of sessions in Strasbourg were appreciated by some and deplored as unbearable by others. But for visitors from the general public they provided an amusing little pantomime. A further noteworthy event was Pope John Paul II's visit in 1988 and the diplomatic incident caused by the Reverend Ian Paisley from Northern Ireland. Chained to his seat, Mr Paisley brandished a red sign saying 'Pope John Paul II – Antichrist', before being expelled by President Plumb and removed, together with his seat, by security staff.[274] The stunt had been orchestrated. President Plumb had indeed warned the Pope beforehand, but explained that under the Rules of Procedure he could only exclude the Northern Irish MP after three successive calls to order. The Pope, listening to him, had apparently replied 'you are the boss'

Photo 20: Pope John Paul II addressing the European Parliament on 11 October 1988.

and consented to the procedure.[275] Of course, given the huge media coverage, the event also served to raise Parliament's profile with the general public.

It also showed that Parliament's relationship with Europe's people necessarily required a press and media relations policy, or even the development of a genuine communication policy.

3.3 – Communication policy

The lack of visibility and the communication deficit on Parliament's work did not go unnoticed by the Administration.[276] Parliament's communication policy was implemented piecemeal from the first elections by universal suffrage in 1979. MEPs sometimes found this a bitter pill

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[273] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[274] 'Jean-Paul II à Strasbourg en 1988 : un tout autre voyage mais de communes préoccupations', www.la-croix.com (2.3.2018).

[275] Interview with François Brunagel, Strasbourg, 22 February 2018.

[276] É. Dacheux, 'Rapprocher l'Europe des citoyens, une nécessité ? Analyse critique de la politique de communication des institutions européennes', in *Recherches en communication,* No 18, 2002.

to swallow.[277] Most felt it was sufficient to work with Parliament's press service, which issued press releases to inform people of the most important business conducted in part-sessions.[278] Those in charge of information at Parliament, however, were aware that this was not enough to make a splash with the public. From 1983 to 1990, the budget of the Directorate-General for Information and Public Relations (DG 3), responsible for communication, gradually doubled.[279] These funds were used to develop communications tools for the offices in Strasbourg and Brussels. More than half were set aside for welcoming visitors. But Parliament also began to develop targeted communication activities (conferences, promotional events in Strasbourg, brochures, posters, etc.). Many more 'traditional' MEPs believed these modern forms of communication had no place in a parliamentary body dealing with public affairs and condemned them as inappropriate and pointless.[280] But Parliament's Administration was well aware of the need to develop a genuine communication policy.

Photo 21: US President Ronald Reagan's visit to Strasbourg in May 1985 focuses media and public attention on the activities of the European Parliament.

The need for a communication policy was particularly acute owing to the weakness or even absence of pan-European media outlets and the lack of interest among national journalists in the European Parliament's political activities. For MEPs, getting their message across was not always easy. Karl von Wogau recalled: 'It took 17 years for the local newspaper in Freiburg, the *Badische Zeitung*, to finally publish an article on my work in Strasbourg [...]. When I asked why, they explained: "Our readers are not interested in Europe".'[281] Parliament was, however, developing strategies to attract journalists from the mainstream media to Strasbourg and Brussels. Information offices had been opened in the capitals of each Member State and DG 3 (Information and Public Relations) was introducing new communication tools such as *The Tribune of Europe*, published monthly in each of the official languages of the European Community to inform citizens about parliamentary business. A briefing paper on parliamentary committees and an info-memo on the work undertaken in Brussels were also distributed free of charge. In addition, accredited journalists were also free to view all plenary sessions in Strasbourg from a special gallery in the Chamber.[282]

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[277] See European Parliament, Oostlander report on the information policy of the European Community (1993) and Resolution on the information policy of the Community (1993).

[278] Interview with François Brunagel, Strasbourg, 22 February 2018.

[279] Between 6 and 13 million ecu, see M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 253.

[280] Interview with François Brunagel, Strasbourg, 22 February 2018.

[281] Interview with Karl von Wogau, Freiburg im Breisgau, 28 March 2018.

[282] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 356.

Despite all these efforts, relatively few media representatives attended Strasbourg part-sessions until 1989. Journalists specialising in European affairs and based in Brussels often loathed making the journey to Strasbourg. Despite the very warm welcome provided by the European Parliament (in particular the payment of travel expenses and subsistence allowances), the European Community's parliamentary activity did not seem to attract the press. The picture varied from country to country, with more German, Spanish, British and Greek media in attendance, while the Belgians, French and Dutch seemed less interested. Overall, a European public sphere able to attract the attention of journalists was lacking. Despite the numerous materials provided by the political groups (the Socialist Group's *Agenda*, the Green Group's *Bulletin Europe* and the European Democratic Alliance's *Letter from Europe*) for the information of journalists, press coverage of the European Parliament's activity remained scant. And coverage in the audio-visual media was rarer still. Major public television channels in the Member States seldom reported on sessions of the European Parliament. They would only pay attention when a major political figure, such as the Pope or a head of state (such as Ronald Reagan in 1985) came to visit.[283] Often only the BBC and France's TV5 produced regular programmes on the Strasbourg Parliament.

However, the absence of coverage was principally attributable to the subject matter itself. Given its increasingly technical nature, especially after the adoption of the Single European Act in 1987, parliamentary work in Strasbourg was not conducive to reports for the general public. How could readers or listeners be informed about the European Parliament's many thousands of reports, resolutions, amendments and other texts without being bored? Only a few specialised media, particularly in the agricultural sector, could manage this. As the Greek MEP Georgios Anastassopoulos, a former journalist himself, explained: 'Sometimes it would take an entire essay to report on our work, and a great one at that'.[284] Lastly, given the lack of power of the European Parliament – not yet a true legislator (with the European Commission as the initiator of directives and the Council as the final decision-making body) – the media's lack of interest in the Community's democratic institution was probably no great surprise.

For communication with the media and with citizens to be effective, a new European political culture of information would need to be developed that paid due account to the European Parliament's role as the democratic body with legitimacy conferred by the European people. This entailed inhabiting a cross-border European public space. But developing such a culture took time. Progress was made, however, in the wake of the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and the gradual realisation that there was a European democratic deficit.

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[283] 'L'Europe à Strasbourg : ils y étaient presque tous (et toutes)', www.tchapp.alsace (2.3.2018).

[284] M. Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen*, *op.cit.*, p. 362.

CONCLUSION

'I saw the profound change which the European Parliament underwent. When I arrived there, it had no legislative power. When I left the Presidency, after the Maastricht Treaty, it had legislative power, it had the right to elect the President of the European Commission and it represented European citizens'.[285]

These words of Enrique Barón Crespo, who was elected President of the European Parliament in 1989, reflect the evolution of the Community's parliamentary institution since the first European elections in 1979. The following 10 years were a period of empowerment for the European Parliament; it acquired and then consolidated a key position in the Community's institutional architecture, alongside the European Commission and the Council. The European Parliament became a catalyst for European integration and a driving force in, and guarantor of, the democratisation of the Community. It also became an instrument of European identification and a tool for strengthening European identity.

But it was not the European elections as such which gave this new impetus to the European Parliament. In 1979, the general public were still largely unfamiliar with the European Parliament. Moreover, the electoral arrangements in the Community's Member States were not harmonised, and the campaigns centred mainly on issues of national interest. However, 1979 was a turning point. The election of Parliament by direct universal suffrage provided the foundation for consolidating what had already been achieved. MEPs themselves felt that the election would give them more powers, greater recognition and a status similar to that enjoyed by the other two main Community institutions. With their new democratic legitimacy, MEPs could now stand up to the Commission and the Member States.

Without question, it was the election of Simone Veil as President which marked the beginning of the process of the parliamentary institution gaining new powers. On 18 July 1979, in her moving inaugural address, she said: 'For this is the first time in history, a history in which we have so frequently been divided, pitted one against the other, bent on mutual destruction, that the people of Europe have together elected their delegates to a common assembly representing [...] today, more than 260 million people'. She added: 'Let there be no doubt, these elections form a milestone on the path of Europe, the most important since the signing of the Treaties'.[286] Indeed, Parliament's political roles would soon be enhanced, and become further reaching, with its President and Members being the main beneficiaries of this process as they acquired greater visibility, legitimacy and expertise, increasingly asserting themselves against the other Community institutions and functions. This undeniably fostered the European Parliament's empowerment.

However, this process did not begin immediately with an increase in the European Parliament's powers. Indeed, it was first of all by using its existing powers that the parliamentarians gradually began to stand up to the Commission and the Council. They immediately asserted their new institutional strength by rejecting the Community budget for 1980 following a struggle to make clear the difference between an Assembly which was essentially consultative and a Parliament that was now elected by direct universal suffrage and accountable to voters. In the following year, 1981, MEPs set up an institutional committee that quickly became Parliament's 'ideological heart' and a focus for the creators of the European

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[285] Interview with Enrique Barón Crespo, Brussels, 30 May 2017.

[286] European Parliament, debates 18.7.1979: Presidency of Simone Veil, p. 23.

Union – led by the Italian Altiero Spinelli – who wanted to see the European Parliament's legislative powers strengthened. However, it was not until 1987, via the Single European Act, that this long struggle led to the introduction of the cooperation procedure, which gave Parliament the right to introduce legislative amendments at second reading.

This assertiveness was also gradually taking place within the European Parliament itself, because of its work and the way in which the 'profession' of MEP was taking shape. Until 1979, the European Parliament was widely regarded as a pleasant place to end a political career for national parliamentarians who no longer held key positions in their own countries. It was still often seen as an annex, a place to meet colleagues from other countries, take advantage of a rewarding international environment and enjoy eating out in Strasbourg, without having to exercise any legislative responsibilities. However, the new generation of Members who entered Parliament from 1979 onwards began to dispel this image of a 'travelling circus'. While the practice of holding dual national and European mandates still persisted in the first parliamentary term, from 1984 onwards MEPs began to consider their role in Strasbourg as a job in its own right. They put a lot of effort into their work in the parliamentary committees, acquiring expertise in Parliament's procedures and producing countless reports, resolutions and amendments. The European Parliament became the ideal institution for proposing new policy initiatives. Whether on the single market, institutional reforms or political union projects, every time it was in the parliamentary body that the initial ideas were put forward. Karl von Wogau, who followed European politics in the institution over a thirty-year period from 1979 to 2009, described the European Parliament as the 'perfect vehicle for launching innovations,' almost certainly because, in comparison with the Commission or the Council, Parliament had more latitude to 'think outside the Community's traditional administrative framework'.[287]

Over the course of the elected Parliament's first two terms, politics within the institution began more and more to resemble the activities of a national parliament. The two main political groups – the Socialists and the Christian Democrats – organised in transnational European families, dominated the political business of Parliament, with the European People's Party in the ascendancy until 1989, before the Party of European Socialists came to power at the June 1989 elections. However, from 1984 onwards proportional representation meant that new political forces, such as the Greens and far-right political parties like the French *Front national*, were able to use the European Parliament as a platform. The European Parliament thus became a forum for a pluralist debate on Europe, reflecting the democracy of the European integration process.

It was also thanks to key figures that the European Parliament gained greater visibility, most notably its Presidents: Simone Veil, Piet Dankert, Pierre Pflimlin, Lord Plumb and Enrique Barón Crespo, all committed Europeans who, whether Socialist or Christian Democrat, worked to enhance Parliament's position in the Community's institutional set-up. But they also wanted to see progress towards European integration: instead of a left-right politicisation, they preferred what Barón Crespo, President of the institution in 1989, referred to as the 'majorities of the Single Act'. Other political figures also raised the profile of the European Parliament thanks to their national or international stature, such as Otto von Habsburg, Jacques Chirac, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Jean-Pierre Cot, Altiero Spinelli and Emilio Colombo. While they were not necessarily the people who invested most into Parliament's day-to-day technical work, they helped to raise its public profile.

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[287] Interview with Karl von Wogau, Freiburg im Breisgau, 28 March 2018.

Nevertheless, in relation to Europe's citizens, Parliament's 'balance sheet' between 1979 and 1989 was less impressive. Within the European Community, Parliament had forged its position; with the Single European Act it had obtained increased legislative powers. MEPs had gradually developed a European parliamentary culture and the European Parliament had become a Community institution reflecting the political plurality of the Community's Member States. However, despite all their efforts to maintain a direct link with the electorate, MEPs had still not succeeded in convincing European citizens of the usefulness of the parliamentary body, a situation which stemmed from the many obstacles that resulted from the national approaches still at play in the elected European Parliament, particularly since MEPs' careers depended to a large extent on their links with their local electorate and their national political party. The challenge of the European elections thus remained rooted in the landscape of the Member States, in their culture and their political agenda. There is no doubt that this remains the case today, despite the major efforts undertaken by the EU institutions and the European Parliament's Administration to increase the visibility of elected representatives and their work through an increasingly far-reaching and active communication policy. But the weakness of the link between Europe's citizens and their Parliament also stems from the lack of a genuine European media and a European public space in which this communication policy could be expressed. Indeed, in the period under consideration and beyond, European elections were no more than a secondary interest for citizens. The turnout at the European elections is telling: 62.5% in 1979, 59% in 1984 and 57.2% in 1989. It is true that, unlike today, in the 1980s there was still general approval among the European public: Eurobarometer surveys showed an overall positive attitude towards European integration. However, that favourable attitude failed to mobilise the European electorate in favour of the European Parliament. More often than not, the institution continued to be viewed as a talking shop, an assembly without power, remote from citizens' concerns. The links between parliamentarians and lobby groups did not replace links with citizens. In referenda in 1992 at which the Danes initially rejected the Maastricht Treaty and the French delivered a *'petit oui'* (51%), the distance between Europe and its citizens was laid bare by the statistics. There was no hiding the fact that, despite the introduction of elections by direct universal suffrage, the European Parliament had not succeeded in mobilising European voters, let alone in convincing citizens of the democratic legitimacy of the parliamentary institution.

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The election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage in 1979 was a groundbreaking democratic event in that it profoundly changed the character, composition and functioning of the Assembly and its political influence in the institutional set-up of the European Community. The impact of this change extended to areas as diverse as the organisation of parliamentary business, the workings of parliamentary committees and intergroups, increased budgetary powers, the socio-professional profile of MEPs, the role of political groups, relations between MEPs and the Administration, changes in the Secretariat's establishment plan, relations with lobbyists, communication policy, the Assembly's activities in the context of the European Community's values and interinstitutional relations.