



# Parties' transnational coordination in the EU after Lisbon: the Greens and beyond

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## ► To cite this version:

Yoav Shemer. Parties' transnational coordination in the EU after Lisbon: the Greens and beyond. Political science. Université de Strasbourg; Vrije universiteit (Amsterdam), 2017. English. NNT: 2017STRAG007 . tel-01613502

**HAL Id: tel-01613502**

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***École Doctorale 519 - Sciences Humaines et Sociales –  
Perspectives européennes***

***UMR 7363 / SAGE (Société, Acteurs, Gouvernement en Europe)***

Thèse présentée par

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soutenue le 19 mai 2017

pour obtenir le grade de docteur

de l'université de Strasbourg et de l'université libre d'Amsterdam (Pays-Bas)

Discipline: science politique

<p><b>La coordination transnationale des partis dans l'Union Européenne. Les Verts et au delà.</b></p>
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## Summary in English

This dissertation aims to answer the question of how political parties in the European Union (EU) coordinate beyond national borders with other parties of the same party 'family'. The main finding is that parties' transnational coordination in the EU is much confined to the European Parliament (EP) institutional setting.

The dissertation consists of a collection of four separate academic articles. The first article examines how national parties use the elections to the EP as a 'back door' to national politics. It is a case-study on how the French Greens used the 2009 EP elections as an opportunity to improve their position vis-à-vis their domestic rivals in French politics and to establish independent parliamentary groups in both France's national chambers in the aftermath of their success in the EP elections.

The second article analyses the potential development of Europarties as genuine transnational parties by an in-depth case-study of the Individual Supporters' Network of the European Green Party (EGP). The article illustrates the limited implementation of the EGP's individual membership scheme due to the national Green parties' reluctance to cooperate with it and to the lack of interest among individual party members.

The third article deals with the EP groups as diplomatic actors, studying the stances and activities of left-wing EP groups on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the EP groups have a certain potential to develop an independent diplomatic role, this potential is hindered by substantial disagreements between the national parties' delegations within the EP groups. In fact, when EP groups disagree on issues which are considered salient for voters 'at home', the national parties' transnational coordination in the EP is restricted to the lowest common denominator.

The fourth article provides a comparative overview of MEPs' formal participation rights in the national parliaments. This section is followed by an assessment of MEPs' participation in the work of the national parliament of the Member State in which they are elected, based on a unique survey conducted among MEPs, accounting for cross-national and cross-party variation of vertical interparliamentary coordination.

**Keywords:** European Union; Political parties; Europarties; Transnational party federations; European Parliament; National parliaments, Parliamentary diplomacy; Inter-Parliamentary cooperation.

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### List of Abbreviations

ACAA	Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance
AFET	European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
COSAC	Conference of the EU affairs committees of the national parliaments
EAC	European Affairs Committee
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEAS	European External Action Service
EELV	Europe Ecologie Les Verts
EFA	European Free Alliance
EGP	European Green Party
EL	European Left
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
EWM	Early Warning Mechanism
FN	Front National
ISN	Individual Supporters' Network
GUE/NGL	Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left
MEI	Mouvement Ecologique Indépendant
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MEPP	Middle East Peace Process
MP	Member of Parliament
MoDEM	Mouvement Démocratique
NI	Non-attached Members of the European Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NP	National Parliament
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PES	Party of European Socialists
PS	Parti Socialiste
S&D	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

## Acknowledgements

This PhD dissertation would not have been possible without the support of numerous institutions and individuals. First, I am particularly grateful to my two co-supervisors, Prof. Niilo Kauppi and Prof. Ben Crum, for their patience, full support and continuous guidance during the past few years. I consider myself lucky to have been able to benefit from their precious time and useful comments on previous bits and pieces of this dissertation, and I am very grateful for both of them to have accompanied me in the process.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the Gips-Schüle-Stiftung and the Wüstenrot-Stiftung for their joint fellowship program for young scholars of social sciences in the academic year 2014/2015, which enabled me a research stay at the Deutsch-Französisches Institut (DFI) in Ludwigsburg, Baden Württemberg. I especially thank Dr. Stefan Seidendorf and Prof. Frank Baasner of the DFI for their hospitality during this time.

I thank the French-Dutch Research network FRNL (Réseau franco-néerlandais / Nederlands-Frans Network) for the EOLE Mobility fund I obtained in the academic year 2013-2014, as well as the Doctoral School for Law, Political science and History at the University of Strasbourg (ED101) for its international mobility fund in the academic year 2012-2013, which enabled me to travel regularly between the Université de Strasbourg and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Special thanks are reserved to the Department of political Science and Public Administration at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam for the administrative assistance and support during my stays at the VU.

The financial support of the Doctoral School of Social Sciences at the University of Strasbourg (ED519) and the CNRS/University of Strasbourg Laboratory SAGE (Societies, Actors, Governments in Europe) (UMR 7363) I obtained between 2010 and 2016 enabled me to present my on-going research in various academic conferences and workshops across Europe. In addition, this dissertation received support from the Excellence Initiative of the University of Strasbourg, funded by the French Government's Future Investments program.

Finally, I am very grateful to Bart J. Bes for his hospitality in Amsterdam and for his assistance in the most 'number crunching' part of this dissertation, as well as for Avital Grünpeter for the English proof-reading. Last but not least, thanks to many good friends and members of the couch-surfing community across Europe who hosted me during my stays for academic conferences and fieldwork and made my research a truly European adventure.

## General Introduction

'The European Green Party is a federation of national parties. It is called a party because of the EU treaties.'<sup>1</sup>

This quotation from a prominent insider in the European Green Party (EGP) is very telling of the nature of these 'political parties at the European level' ('Europarties'), as they are referred to in EU law. While the European Commission tries to promote the development of 'truly transnational political parties'<sup>2</sup> through various legal and financial means,<sup>3</sup> it is revealing to observe how this top-down policy is perceived by the actors within the Europarties and how these actors understand the nature of the organisation they are part of.

Achieving a full understanding of the actors' perspective is not an easy task in political science. We must gain access to the political actors we are interested in: find a role to play in their political organisation; learn to know the people working there; gain their trust; closely observe the actors *in situ* over a certain period of time; and, to a certain extent, participate in their activities. Qualitative research methods such as ethnographic fieldwork enable us to obtain unique empirical data, such as the straightforward quote above, which is difficult to obtain through desk research or interviews. An informal discussion held just before lunch during a party meeting is a very different situation from a formal interview with a university researcher.

Over the last six years I have frequently met with Green Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), their personal assistants and the Greens' group staffers during the plenary weeks of the European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg. I have attended six EGP councils; have been an active member of the French Green party, Europe Ecologie Les Verts (EELV); served as the coordinator and blogger of the EGP's Individual Supporters' Network (ISN); and held 30 formal interviews and numerous informal conversations with Green MEPs, former MEPs and

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1 Juan Bernard, former Secretary General of the European Green Party, informal discussion, Lyon, 14 November 2015.

2 Press release of the European Commission of 12 September 2012, 'Commission proposal boosts European political parties' ability to represent EU citizens, strengthen democracy', [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-12-951\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-951_en.htm) (accessed 26 June 2016).

3 See EU regulation No. 2004/2003 of 4 November 2003 on the regulations governing political parties at European level and the rules regarding their funding, OJ L 297, 15.11.2013; EU regulation No. 1142/2014 of 22 October 2014 regarding the financing of European political parties, OJ L 317/28, 4.11.2014.



candidates in EP elections. This dissertation would not have been the same without my immersion in European party politics during these years.

The research question of this dissertation is if and how political parties in the EU coordinate beyond national borders with other parties of the same party 'family'. My main case-study is the European Greens which I consider it to be a critical case on this question. The first reason is the Greens' common historical background in Western Europe and their particular attachment to grassroots democracy (*Basisdemokratie*). Historically, Green parties emerged in several Western European countries around the same period, late 1970s, out of pan-European protest movements, notably anti-nuclear and feminist ones (Kitschelt 1986). Because of these common historical origins across Europe, Green parties still have a particular attachment to grassroots democracy as well as to transnational politics beyond the nation-state.

The second reason is the Greens' focus on environmental policies which are well developed at the EU-level of politics (Dezalay 2007). The environmental issue might be an emerging 'European issue', perceived by EU citizens as an issue which is better dealt with at the EU level than at the national one (see Curtice 1989; Franklin and Rüdig 1992; Carruba and Timpone 2005; Hobolt et al. 2008). The Greens build their political legitimacy around the emerging, post-materialist cleavage of economy vs. nature, and not on the traditional left/right cleavage. Arguably, 'only the Greens correspond to a real European cleavage – opposing the 'all market' to the ecology – in which they clearly occupy one of the two poles' (Seiler 2005: 539). The Greens' relative strength in the EP in comparison to their often limited access to power at the national level (Hines 2003; Bomberg and Carter 2006) makes this political family a critical case to study parties' transnational cooperation in the EU.

The first finding of my research is that political parties have only limited interest in genuine transnational coordination and generally use such coordination instrumentally, in order to gain certain benefits in domestic politics. Hence, parties' transnational coordination is often rather weak and used merely as a facade or a decorative element. This is particularly observable in the first two articles of this dissertation, on how parties use the elections to the EP as a 'back door' to national politics (article one) and their limited genuine engagement with the transnational party federation they are affiliated with (article two). The parties' weak effective transnational coordination across the EU is somehow different when we shift our focus to the political groups in the European Parliament (EP groups), in which the parties' delegations are in close coordination with the delegations of other parties of their political 'family'.

However, EP groups' consolidation (Bardi 2004a) and cohesion (see Hix et al. 2007) should not be overestimated since EP decision-making is generally insulated from national politics. In fact, whenever there are major disagreements between the parties' delegations within an EP group on issues that are salient to party voters and supporters 'at home', the transnational coordination is restricted to the lowest common denominator. Thus, each national party keeps its autonomy, following its own position at the national level. This is demonstrated in the study on how left-wing EP groups deal with the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (article three). Moreover, MEPs coordinate mainly with the national parliament of the EU member state in which they were elected and with their own national party 'at home' (see article four). Therefore, the overall picture is that the rather high level of transnational coordination remains confined to the EP institutional environment and thus has modest impact on the national party organisations at large.

After this brief overview of the dissertation's main findings, the rest of this general introduction is structured in three main sections. The first section deals with national political parties. I first provide a short state of the art on national parties and EU politics. I then discuss two different explanations for the parties' limited role at the EU-level of governance, one following a structural approach and the other a functional one, in regards to the specific nature of democratic representation in the EU.

The second section of the introduction is dedicated to Europarties, starting with a state of the art on their possible development from party federations to transnational parties. I then elaborate on the Europarties' historical background, the three faces of their organisational structure and the possibility of analysing Europarties as multilevel party organisations.

The third section focuses on the dissertation itself. I present my research questions and objectives, my sociological approach, data and methods and finally I provide a general outlook of the structure of the dissertation.

### **National political parties**

The party literature can be divided into two approaches: functional and structural (Schonfeld 1983; Gunther and Diamond 2001: 5). Scholars who perceive parties in functional terms are focused on what parties do, or do not do; on their main functions in society; and on their role in the political system (King 1969). These scholars focus on the parties' core function as mediators between the citizenry and the state's political institutions and on their relationship with civil

society (Schumpeter 1943; Manin 1995; Katz and Mair 1995). Parties have been attributed three key functions by scholars: vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking (Müller and Strom 1999). According to this functional definition, a political party is an organisation that mobilises citizens to vote for it in elections, selects its candidates to hold certain offices as a result of these elections, and coordinates the policies decided-upon by the offices it holds.

In contrast, scholars of the structural approach view parties primarily as organisations, structured settings in which human activity takes place. The main goal of these scholars is not to explain what parties do and why they matter in political life and in society at large, but rather to describe and explain the organisational life of the political parties themselves. In this approach we find the earlier pioneering works on the organisational dynamics of political parties by Moisei Ostrogorski (1902), Robert Michels (1911) or Maurice Duverger (1951), as well as later works on party professionalisation (Kirchheimer 1966; Panebianco 1988; for an overview see Gunther and Diamond 2003). In this dissertation I follow the structural approach to political parties, studying them as organisations. Hence, my focus is rather on the organisational aspect of parties' transnational coordination in the EU.

### **State of the art: national parties and the EU-level of politics**

How do political parties respond to the emergence of the EU in general, and to the rise of the EP in particular? Research on this question can be divided into three kinds of literature. Scholars either focus on the responses at the *national* level of politics, i.e. on national parties; at the *European* level of politics, i.e. on parties at the EU-level (political groups in the EP or the extra-parliamentary party federations); or on the *interactions* between these two levels of politics, studying how political parties link the national and the European level within the EU as a multilevel political system.

Scholars who focus on national parties study their possible Europeanisation, or how national parties treat EU affairs. Research on this question indicates that the Europeanisation of national political parties is rather limited (Mair 2000; Pogunkte et al. 2007; Ladrech 2002, 2007). A large gap remains between the party's 'EU-experts' and the rest of the party since national parties tend not to invest in EU politics. Studies on EP elections, for instance, illustrate that these elections are 'second-order national elections', focused on domestic issues within national political arenas (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998; Hix and Marsh 2007; Van der Brug and Van der Eijk 2007; Conti 2014; Hobolt 2014). In fact, national parties that invest highly in EP

elections actually use them as a 'back door' to national politics (Blombäck 2012; Shemer-Kunz 2013; Reungoat 2014) and are not genuinely interested in the EU level of politics.

A second way to study if and how parties respond to the emergence of the EU is to focus on the *European* level of politics - the Europarties. The academic debate on Europarties is often centered on the nature of these relatively new organisations in European politics and their possible future development. We can find extensive research on this topic, but it is mostly focused on the transnational political groups in the European Parliament (EP groups). Studies indicate that there is effective development of a transnational party system within the EP (Raunio 1997; Hix and Lord 1997; Bell and Lord 1998; Hix et al. 2007; Hanley 2008; Bressanelli 2013). However, these studies focus on Europarties' behaviour within the EP itself, and take little notice of their extra-parliamentary element, the European party federations.

However, the national and the EU-level of governance have become interconnected and interdependent. Therefore, it is not easy to distinguish, for instance, between 'national actors' and 'EU-actors' within political parties. The EU-level of politics is very much integrated in the existing national political systems, and it is therefore difficult to analyse it separately from the national level. In the words of Peter Mair:

It is increasingly difficult to separate out what is European and what is national. In other words, as European integration proceeds, it becomes more and more difficult to conceive of the member states as being on one side of some putative divide, with a distinct supranational Union sitting on the other. Instead, we usually see both together and at the same time. (Mair, 2007: 15)

Similar to the conclusion of Peter Mair, I consider that studies on the EU, and in particular on party politics in the EU, need to take into account both the EU-level and the national level, considering the specific nature of the EU as an emerging multilevel political system (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Bache and Flinders 2004). I limit myself in this dissertation to a two-level analysis that includes the EU-level and the national level, but not the sub-national level of EU governance involving regional developments (on that subject see Abels and Eppler 2016).

Hence, a third way to look at this question is to focus on the *interactions* between the national parties and their Brussels-based EU-experts (Raunio 2000, 2009; Auel and Benz 2006; Poguntke et al. 2007; Crum and Fossum 2009, 2013). Scholars who study vertical inter-parliamentary coordination in the EU have found that the parliamentarians' interactions are

mainly informal, using intra-party channels rather than the formal official institutional channels of coordination (Miklin and Crum 2011; Finke and Dannwolf 2013; Wonka and Rittberger 2014). These findings indicate the limits of a strict institutional approach and suggest that an actors' perspective may provide us with a deeper understanding of the actual practices and dynamics. My research builds upon this third way to tackle the puzzle of how parties behave in the EU institutional setting, focusing on the interactions between the EU-level and the national level within political parties.

### **A structural explanation for parties' limited Europeanisation**

Before addressing my research question on how parties coordinate beyond national borders, it is important to state that I view political parties not only as organisations but more particularly as *national* organisations (or institutions). Parties are closely linked to the national polities in which they emerged and developed, and in which they are closely embedded. In many ways, political norms and routines, including norms of appropriateness (March and Olsen 1989), were developed in Europe within the political institutions of the nation-state. National political institutions and institutional settings, in relation to which political parties were created and developed, are a powerful interpretative order within which political behaviour and practices can be comprehended and provided meaning and continuity (Pierson 2000). Once established in this national setting, political institutions are not only very important, they also have a strong tendency to persist, to develop a life of their own, and to resist change.

The analysis of political parties from a new institutional approach, as national institutions, with their routines, practices and norms of appropriateness, established over decades in separate national institutional environments, provides an explanation for the limited level of effective Europeanisation of parties (Ladrech 2007; Poguntke et al. 2007). One may argue that the political power has shifted in a substantial way to the EU-level of politics, leaving the national parties hollowed out of their former powers of policy-making (Mair 2013). However, political power is not only an objective matter, solely related to decision-making and policy outcomes, but it is also a subject of perception and meaning, a matter of legitimacy and language (Kauppi 2000; Kauppi and Rask Madsen 2008). Defining where the political power actually lays within a given polity is also a matter of norms and routines, a result of a process of socialisation (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Despite the power shift to the EU-level, the party elites, which were socialised in the established national polities, and work in an institutional environment that

offers continuity, at least in formal terms, remain focused on domestic politics, and thus continue to reproduce the general perception and belief that political power remains in the hands of national executives (Kauppi 2005, 2013a).

## **A functional explanation for parties' limited Europeanisation**

Like actors in other fields of socially specialised activity, political actors are in an intense on-going competition with other political actors in a relatively autonomous and closed arena of activity: a particular field within the wider society, 'a space of conflict and competition' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 17) with its own internal logics, mechanisms and rules (Bourdieu 1981, 2000). National political parties can be seen as collective actors or agents within national political fields, relatively closed spaces or arenas characterized by relations of domination and power struggles between various actors, competing over rare resources of various kinds. The key activities of parties in the different constituencies across the EU revolve around conflict with other national parties within the same political field, highlighting the differences between them (Offerlé, 2002). Hence, political representation is based on how professional party politicians emphasize the differences between them and their political rivals.

In the past, domestic political conflicts were essentially a confrontation between different ideologies and *Weltanschauungen*, or different *projets de société*, political preferences and aggregation of interests in society, which were traditionally around the frozen left/right cleavage (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) and represented by political parties that were clearly situated on that political cleavage. Today, the national political field may be better analysed in a less static way, as a dynamic political market, auto-regulated by mechanisms of supply and demand (Schumpeter 1943), in which politicians try to come out with the best product that answers the citizens-consumers' demands (Manin 1995). Voters today no longer feel that they belong to particular social groups, are less loyal to a particular party than in the past, and hence operate like a rather open and responsive audience to parties' offers.

The dynamic and interactive nature of democratic representation is well illustrated by the theatrical metaphor of political life, inspired by the works of Erving Goffman (1956) and his usage of the notion of stage and performance in explaining social behaviour. Democratic representation is not a static, objective reality, a mechanic result of elections and other formal procedures of the political system, but rather a dynamic set of relations between representatives and their audience (Manin 1995). Representatives constantly create and perform representative claims (Saward 2006), which are then modified by the reactions of the audience to these claims. These visible performances, as well as the reactions to them, are an important element of the relationship between the representatives and the represented.

The focus on democratic representation as a claim highlights the importance of its symbolic and aesthetic aspect and the important role of symbols and images in political life. The main activity of political actors as representatives is targeting a particular audience and creating and producing visible performances in which the form is often more important for the performance's success than its actual substance or content. Thus, 'political competition is drifting towards an opposition of form rather than of content.' (Mair 2013: 68). Moreover, a crucial element in democratic representation is not only the representative claim itself but the role of the audience that receives it. Representative claims always address a specific targeted audience. As any type of theatrical performance, they are rather meaningless if there is nobody there to see them: 'a representation, a political claim, is nothing if it is not heard, seen, or read by its intended audience' (Saward 2006: 16).

For parties and party politicians, the targeted audience is limited to the national audience. The performative claims of representation hardly target other citizens outside the national constituency. This is due to the electoral rules in Europe, including those of EP elections as second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980) and to the way parties use these elections in domestic politics, but also due to the nature of parties discussed earlier as national institutions with well-established routines and norms (March and Olsen 1989).

### **Democratic representations in the EU**

Unlike national polities in Europe, the EU emerging political system is highly fragmented and divided (Schmidt 2006). Therefore, while the EU may be studied as a regional state or a regional union of nation-states, it is nevertheless a particular kind of political system. However, too often, the EU is simply, and perhaps wrongly, compared to a national state and its mechanisms of democratic representation (Papadopoulos and Magnette 2010). Since the EU is different from the nation-states we are familiar with, research on EU democracy needs to take these differences into account. Scholars like Simon Hix (1994, 2008), for instance, tend to underestimate these differences, and study the EU political system with the same analytical tools and standards used in comparative politics, as if the EU were a fully developed polity.

While political power and decision-making has to a large extent been moved upwards to the EU-level, political life in Europe remains dominated by national parties and their state-based organisational structures. Political issues are debated in different national public arenas, following national actors' strategies and goals, in rather separate public spheres. Despite the



growing importance of the EU-level of politics, 'national conceptions of democratic power and authority, access and influence, vote and voice remain largely unchanged'. (Schmidt 2006: 2). Political will formation and legitimacy of decision-making is still largely confined to the various national arenas (Crum 2012). The EU political system has developed without the development of a corresponding pan-European public sphere (Habermas 2010), a common public arena in which the EU citizens and political leaders can politicize and debate common issues (Wiesner 2014).

Due to its high fragmentation, the EU is characterised by a political culture of consensus-oriented politics, compromise-seeking, inter-institutional checks and balances, a proportional system of political representation, and no government/opposition dynamics (Hix 1994, 1998). This political culture may be rather suitable for such a fragmented and divided society (Lijphart 1977). The role of politicisation and political conflict, partisan ideologies and opposition is particularly limited in the EU (Mair 2007, 2013). The consensual nature of the EU polity leaves rather little space for convincing representative claims-making by political parties.

In consolidated national polities, with the traditional political cleavage between left and right and government/opposition dynamics, the legitimacy of decision-making is primarily based on the representation of the citizenry, mainly through elections (Manin 1995; Mair 2013). However, in the EU polity, the legitimacy of decision-making is primarily based on non-partisan, technical and legal expertise (Georgakakis 2012; Vauchez 2013; Kauppi and Rask Madsen 2013).

This specific nature of democratic representation in the EU is obvious when looking more closely at the dynamics within the only directly elected EU-institution, the EP. The rise of the EP in the past decades and its effective empowerment has been thoroughly documented (Corbett et al. 2005; Rittberger 2005, 2012; Dinan 2014; Kohler 2014). The direct elections to the EP, held since 1979, provide MEPs a mandate to represent the citizens directly at the EU-level of politics (Pekonen 2011), at least in theory.

However, these are rather procedural, institutional developments. Despite its growing powers, the EP's institutional arena provides political parties and party politicians with limited opportunities to make visible and convincing representative claims vis-à-vis their national audience, be it the entire electorate or their party members, due to the particular working methods of the EP (Costa 2001, 2009).

First, within the EP institutional arena, MEPs are engaged in continuous bargaining for the largest consensus possible. MEPs of different parties and EP parliamentary groups work closely together, across party lines, in order to achieve the most broadly accepted compromise

within the EP, and thus have a clear and coherent voice vis-à-vis the European Commission and the Council of the EU. This process generally occurs in a non-conflictual, non-politicised manner, and through both formal and informal channels (Roger and Winzen 2015).

Second, the inter-institutional relations at the EU level are also dominated by a political culture of compromise-seeking and negotiations. The EP works closely together with the European Commission and the Council of the EU, and is rarely in visible conflict with them. This political process takes place, to a large extent, in the backstage of politics, in specialised committee meetings and inter-institutional negotiations held behind closed doors ('Triadialogue') on pieces of legislation and policies which are often of a very complex and technical nature (Costa 2001; Costa and Magnette 2003). This trend has become even stronger in recent years, with the more frequent usage of the trialogues' early agreements or 'fast-track' EU legislation (Bressanelli et al. 2016).

Hence, EU affairs are not easily translated into political performances that parties and elected politicians can effectively use in their communication with citizens or party members in the constituencies. It is difficult for EP actors - EP groups, delegations of national parties or individual MEPs - to make convincing and visible representative claims during the negotiations process in the EP or around its final outcomes. The final EU legislation is often a compromise and not a clear-cut win for either side, if sides could be identified in the first place, as the coalitions of support and opposition in the EP often change from one dossier to another (Costa 2001).

In view of the limited Europeanisation of national political parties, both from an institutional approach (parties as national institutions) and from a functional approach (parties as mediators with the citizenry), I now examine the potential development of political parties at the European level.

### **Europarties: from party federations to transnational parties?**

Much has been written in the past few decades about the need to develop transnational political parties in Europe (Marquand 1978; Nidermayer 1985; Leinen and Schönlaue 2003; Priestly 2010; Leinen and Pescher 2014). Such normative debates would benefit from a better empirical understanding of these emerging organisations and hence of their potential development.

The growing literature on Europarties' suggests that these organisations are to be analysed as emerging transnational political parties. While the parties we are familiar with are

confined to the national level, the literature suggests the development of a brand new form of parties. The main suggestion in Europarty literature is that these emerging 'parties beyond the nation-state' are still in an embryonic form, going through a long-term process of institutionalisation and professionalisation, as well as effective consolidation between the different national parties that compose them (Raunio 1997; Hix and Lord 1997; Bell and Lord 1998; Bardi 2002; Hix et al. 2007; Hanley 2008; Sozzi 2013; Bressanelli 2012, 2013, 2014).

The main argument is that Europarties slowly develop over time from loose and weak EU-level federations of national parties, 'parties of parties', into genuine political parties 'in their own right'. Scholars tend to highlight the growing organisational capacities of Europarties as well as the party functions they are slowly beginning to fulfil at the EU-level of politics. For instance, Edoardo Bressanelli (2013: 665) affirms that 'Europarties could actively and directly campaign for the EP elections on alternative policy platforms' and that they are 'well equipped, in policy and programmatic terms, to play up the high expectations that the Lisbon Treaty had placed upon them.'

The main weakness I find in the Europarty literature is its tendency to focus only on the EU-level; on the horizontal interactions of different parliamentary groups within the EP institutional arena (Bressanelli 2013; Bardi et al. 2010) or the comparison between different Europarties' extra-parliamentary organisations (Hertner 2011; Holmes and Lightfoot 2011; Gagatsek 2011; Leinen and Pescher, 2014). However, when Europarty scholars take into account the national level of politics as well, they acknowledge that the emerging organisations at the EU-level still suffer from some important weaknesses, mainly explained by their dependence upon the good will of the national parties that compose them (Külahci 2010; Van Hecke 2010; Bartolini 2012). I suggest to start a comprehensive analysis of Europarties by going back to their historical origins.

### **Historical Background of Europarties**

In June 1953 a small group of members of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) created the first three transnational parliamentary groups: the Christian-Democrat group, the Socialist group and the Group of Liberals and Associates (see Heidelberg 1961; Van Oudenhoove 1965; Nidermayer 1985). These first three 'Europarties' were rather weak transnational groups in a weak consultative assembly. At the time, the Assembly was composed of 78 members who were nominated by the Community's national parliaments, and

had a consultative role only. Despite the weak formal powers of the Assembly, some of its members used this institution as a political opportunity and invested in it. This was notably the case of the socialist group, which often publicly criticised the High Authority and used the assembly to deliver political speeches and draft critical resolutions (Van Oudenhove 1965: 58). The creation of the Europarties was part of some parliamentarians' overall investment in the emerging institution they were members of, alongside the creation of elaborate rules of procedure of the new Assembly and the establishment of specialized standing committees, similar to the organisational structure of national legislatures.

From 1953 onwards the development of the Europarties was a by-product of the institutional development of the Common Assembly itself, which soon called itself the 'European Parliament' (EP). This internal process of institutionalisation of the EP was accompanied by a formal and informal process of empowerment and recognition by the European governments (Rittberger 2003; Costa and Magnette 2003). In December 1974 the heads of governments of the European Community decided on direct elections to the EP, to take place no later than 1978 (these elections eventually took place in 1979). Around this time, in the mid-seventies, MEPs further institutionalised and formalised their rather informal transnational party networks into 'party federations' (or *Parteienbünde* in German). The social-democrats formally founded their European federation in 1974, while the conservatives and the liberal parties founded theirs in 1976.

This short history of the Europarties illustrates that the emergence of these organisations took place as part of the institutional development of the EP and was directly linked to the preparation for the first direct elections to the EP in the mid-seventies (see also Calossi 2014). However, outside the EP institutional setting, among the national parties across Europe, there was only limited interest in and engagement with the Europarties' activities and decision-making. In theory, with the introduction of direct elections to the EP, national parties in the European Community's member states should have had a growing interest to coordinate their activities. However, the actual development of these party federations in the first decade of their formal establishment, from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, was rather limited. Oskar Nidermayer (1985) concluded that as long as national parties are concentrated almost exclusively in national politics and do not show much interest in the activities of the European federations they are affiliated with, there will be no development towards more effective transnational coordination between parties or towards their eventual integration within a central organisation.

## Privileging Europarties as EP groups

As for the structural organisation of Europarties, I rely on the analytical framework of the three faces of the party organisation (Katz and Mair 1994): the-party-in-public-office, the-party-in-central-office and the-party-on-the-ground,<sup>4</sup> as it was already adapted to the study of Europarties by Luciano Bardi (1994). These three components are a useful tool to analyse the organisational structure of a political party. The 'party-in-public-office' is the party in government and in parliament; the 'party-in-central-office' is the party's central organisation; while the 'party-on-the-ground' consists of the party members and sections across the country. These three elements can be projected on Europarties: the 'Europarty-in-public-office' is then the Europarty's ministers in the Council of the EU, its heads of governments in the European Council and its affiliated commissioners as well as its parliamentary group in the EP (EP group); the 'Europarty-in-central-office' is the transnational party's extra-parliamentary wing; while the 'Europarty-on-the-ground' is the presence of national (or regional) parties at the different constituencies across Europe. I build upon these three faces of political parties in order to assess to what extent the Europarties' organisational structure may be defined as political parties.

The Europarty literature tends to focus on only one aspect of political parties' organisational structure - the party-in-public-office. Thus, the tendency to regard Europarties as emerging transnational political parties is driven by the rather limited focus on EU policy-making and on the EP institutional arena, which is only one face of the complex organisational structure of political parties. By focusing on the party-in-public-office face of Europarty organisation, Europarty scholars tend to leave the other two faces - the party-in-central-office and the party-on-the-ground - mostly in the dark.

Formally, EP political groups consist of at least 25 MEPs from at least one-quarter of the EU member states who are joined together according to their 'political affinities'.<sup>5</sup> Recognised EP groups are then provided with a secretariat with administrative facilities financed by the EP budget.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the chairs of EP groups' compose the EP's Conference of Presidents and

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4 In other terms, political parties may be analysed as a three-part structure: party-in-government (party-in-public-office); party-as-organisation (party-in-central-office); and the party-in-the-electorate (party-on-the-ground) (Aldrich 2006).

5 See rule 32 of the EP Rules of Procedure, on formation of political groups.

6 Rule 33 (1) of the EP Rules of Procedure, on activities and legal situation of the political groups.

have various rights regarding different procedures of the EP<sup>7</sup>. Policy congruence is the most important factor in parties' decision to join EP groups (McElroy and Benoit 2010; Bressanelli 2012, 2013, 2014). It is primarily this ideological convergence of the various like-minded parties within an EP group that explains the groups' high voting cohesion (Attinà 1990; Hix et al. 2007; Bardi et al. 2010). In fact, scholars who claim that Europarties are transforming into integrated political parties base their claim mainly on the policy congruence between parties within EP groups and on the high level of voting cohesion of these EP groups in plenary.

However, using EP voting cohesion as the main indicator to study parties' transnational coordination is problematic when we consider two elements: the process of negotiations within the EP groups between the delegations of different national parties, which leads to the lowest common denominator; and the insulation of this entire decision-making process of EP groups from the dynamics of domestic politics.

The first reason EP voting cohesion is not a satisfying indicator of the coherence of Europarties is that the eventual voting cohesion is a result of a long process of negotiations and compromise-seeking between the delegations of national parties within the EP group. In the case of external attention to EP decision-making, the common EP group positions are the result of intensive intra-group negotiations and compromises (Roger and Winzen 2015). These common EP group positions often reflect the lowest common denominator of the different delegations that compose the EP group (Priestly 2010). They are often rather vague and unclear statements, leaving aside issues on which there is no agreement: 'intra-group quasi-unanimity is usually guaranteed by long preparatory committee and party group sessions, which have the stated purpose of smoothing out most disagreements' (Bardi 1996: 104). This was already observable in the very first years of the Common Assembly, back in the 1950s:

'Such intra-party compromises were obtained at the group meeting, where the differences were as far as possible ironed out. It should also be pointed out that the divergences between the groups were tempered by the strong desire to avoid an open clash. Especially in the standing committees was there an urge to reconcile the conflicting political viewpoints on the basis of the lowest common denominator' (Van Oudenhove 1965: 49).

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7 EP groups' chairs have voting rights based on the number of members in each political group. See Rule 26 of the EP Rules of Procedure on the composition of the Conference of Presidents.

The second reason EP groups' voting cohesion is not satisfying empirical evidence for the level of coordination of the various national parties within Europarties is the limited visibility of these votes. Scholars do not pay much attention to the extent to which national parties tend to ignore the entire process of decision-making in the EP, as well as the voting behaviour of their delegations in the EP (Poguntke et al. 2007). The daily work of MEPs is largely insulated from that of the parties' national parliamentarians (Raunio 2002; Miklin and Crum 2011), and even more so from party members and the EU citizens (Costa 2009). national party organisations delegated to a large extent the day-to-day task of policy-making at the EU level to their EU-experts based in Brussels, and even to a small number of policy experts within the EP groups (Roger and Winzen 2015), who are only weakly controlled by national parties (Hix 2002; Raunio 2002). In the rather few cases in which national parties are interested in the voting behaviour of their EP delegations, national parties tend to have the final word over their MEP's vote (Hix 2002).

In fact, Luciano Bardi (2002) suggests that it is precisely this insulation from domestic political dynamics which enables the consolidation of the transnational groups in the EP. Even the EP group affiliation of national parties remains quite invisible outside the EP institutional arena. Delegations of national parties may even leave their EP group and join another one while 'the respective electorates remain uninformed and unaware of these new alliances, and are not asked to ratify them' (Bardi 1994: 335). All in all, the parties' transnational coordination within their EP groups remains rather technical in nature, and lacks visibility outside the EP.

Despite the long preparatory work within the EP groups and their insulation from domestic politics, there are still certain cases of open conflict between delegations of national parties and the EP group they are affiliated with. In these cases, MEPs tend to vote, even in the final roll-call plenary vote, according to their national party line, and not along the official line of their EP group (Hix 2002; Hix et al. 2007; Scully et al. 2012). However, this happens rather rarely.

To conclude this section, the study of Europarties primarily as EP groups allows scholars to evaluate positively these organisations' development over the past few decades of European integration. However, Europarties' development is an effect of the institutional development of the EP. Scholars' focus on EP voting cohesion somehow downplays the divisions within EP groups between different national parties' delegations. All in all, the empirical evidence on Europarties indicates that as EP groups they do matter in the EP, but not necessarily outside the EP institutional setting.



## **Europarties as multilevel party organisations?**

In comparison to EP groups, the extra-parliamentary component of Europarties has gained less scholarly attention (but see Delwit 1998; Dakowska 2002; Delwit et al. 2004; Gagatek 2009; Van Hecke 2010; Hertner 2011; Bartolini 2012; Von dem Berge and Poguntke 2012; Pridham, 2014; Timus and Lightfoot 2014). Scholars who study Europarties (mainly) as extra-parliamentary organisations highlight their structural weakness due to their dependency on the national parties that compose them. As extra-parliamentary organisations Europarties are rather loose federations or umbrella organisations of national parties, with little chances to develop into genuine transnational political parties in the near future.

However, considering the specific nature of the EU as a multilevel political system, we might consider Europarties as multilevel organisations, taking into account the complex dynamics of vertical interactions between the national parties and their affiliated Europarty (on the vertical integration of parties in federal states see Thorlakson 2009, 2011; Van Houten 2009). After all, since every party model is linked to a certain conception of democracy (Mair 2013), it may be possible that Europarties are genuine emerging political parties after all, but a different kind of parties, particular to the multilevel setting of the EU political system. This appears like a promising way to understand what Europarties are, what they do and how they are organised.

A comprehensive analysis of the Europarties' extra-parliamentary element should hence include both the EU-level and the national level. This alternative way of conceiving of Europarties is not confined to the EU-level or the EP institutional arena alone; this conception includes the other two faces of Europarties' organisational structure: the party-in-central-office, which are the extra-parliamentary Europarty, and the party-on-the-ground, which is the various national parties that compose it. Several Europarty scholars have raised this option in their analysis of these organisations. Let us examine three such propositions, by Luciano Bardi (1994), Steven Van Hecke (2010) and Thomas Jansen (1995).

Luciano Bardi (1994) has suggested that Europarties are composed of three components, situated at different levels of governance; two at the EU-level and one at the national level. According to Bardi's model, the EP groups are the Europarty-in-public-office and the EU-level extra-parliamentary federations are the Europarty-in-central-office, while the various national parties, active at the level of the constituencies, are the Europarties' party-on-the-ground. Bardi acknowledges that the main challenge of Europarties' development is the integration of these



three different components, and in particular the integration of the Europarty-on-the-ground, the national parties, with the two EU-level components.

While referring to the national level in his theory, Bardi does not empirically study the vertical interactions between the various elements of the Europarty, and remains focused on the EP groups' consolidation over time, and to a lesser extent, on the Europarties' extra-parliamentary federations. Bardi's empirical research consists of comparing the level of institutionalisation, professionalisation and cohesion across EP groups. Hence, while Bardi's theoretical model of Europarties is multilevel in nature, and includes the national level, the national parties that compose the Europarties are not part of his empirical analysis.

Steven Van Hecke (2010) has proposed to study Europarties as multilevel organisations, distinguishing between three different levels of politics: the national level; the transnational level; and the supranational level. These three levels of governance correspond with three Europarty organisational elements and their presence in the different EU institutions. According to this analytical distinction, political parties are the organisations active at the national level, via their national governments and parliaments; party federations are active at the transnational level, via their representatives in the Council of Ministers and the European Council; while party groups are active at the supranational level, in institutions such as the European Commission and the EP. However, Van Hecke's model does not explicitly tell us how to empirically evaluate the level of integration of the Europarty at the national level with the other elements situated at the transnational or the supranational level. Moreover, the distinction between the various levels of politics is a rather analytical one, making empirical operationalisation difficult. While this model considers the EP itself as a supranational institution, it is composed of national politicians (Neunreiter 2005), elected in second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998), who conduct parliamentary activities primarily vis-à-vis their own national audience (Sozzi 2016).

Finally, Thomas Jansen (1995) simply compares Europarties to multilevel political parties in federal political systems, such as Germany or Spain. For example, in the case of Germany, individual party membership is only possible via a party structure in the citizens' regional constituency, the *Kreisverband* (KV). These members are then automatically considered party members in the higher levels of German politics, the state (*Länder*) and the federal (*Bund*) levels. Similarly, in France, although a unitary polity, political parties are organised in a federal structure, composed of relatively autonomous regional chapters, while the national level is merely a federation of the regional party chapters. From this perspective, most political parties in

Europe are, in fact, federal parties. In this sense, the multilevel organisational structure of Europarties may not be that different from the one of the national parties we are familiar with, only at a higher level of the political system. However, this narrow focus on organisational issues as simply technical matters underestimates the substantial difference between federal national polities such as Germany or Austria, and the EU system, which is a highly compound polity (Schmidt, 2006) (see previous section of this introduction). The main caveat of analysing Europarties as multilevel party organisations is the problematic application of conceptual tools developed in comparative studies of national polities to the very particular political system of the EU. The empirical evidence on the case of the Greens, provided in the first and second articles of this dissertation, suggest that national parties in the EU, while formally affiliated with a Europarty, are far more autonomous than subnational party chapters in federal states.

### **Objectives and research questions**

This dissertation aims at answering the question how and to which extent political parties in the EU coordinate transnationally, across national borders, with other parties of the same party 'family'. This question is related to the general debate on the EU's democratic legitimacy, and on the democratic qualities of the EU political system as a representative democracy. More specifically, the question of parties' transnational coordination in the EU may be seen as one indicator among others of the development of the EU political system into a genuine democratic polity. Parties' transnational coordination is inter-linked to a few other indicators in the direction of bypassing the nation-state: the emergence of a pan-European public sphere and a pan-European identity; the development of an active EU citizenry; and pan-EU mobilisation and contestation on EU politics (see Kauppi 2013a).

Such developments in European society may result in a certain shift in the focus of citizens and journalists from the domestic arena of politics to the EU level, and from their national governments and parliaments to EU institutions such as the European Commission, the EP, the European Central Bank, etc. In fact, parties' transnational coordination may not only serve as an indicator for such a process but even constitute a basic condition for the development of representative democracy beyond the nation-state in Europe.

Observing such a possible shift in democratic representation in Europe from the national level to the EU-level of politics naturally prompts us to examine the possible emergence of political parties and party politicians at the European level. Such politicians would be

accountable not merely to their national constituency 'at home' but to EU citizens as a whole. This question has led me to study in detail the emerging Europarties, both as EP groups and as extra-parliamentary transnational party federations, since these organisations obviously have a crucial role to play in the possible emergence of democratic representation beyond the European nation-state.

## **A sociological approach**

In this research I use a sociological approach to EU studies by which I mainly mean an actor-centered approach (for an overview of the sociological approaches to EU studies see Favell and Guiraudon 2009, 2011, Saurugger and Mérand 2010; Zimmermann and Favell 2011). Political actors (rather than institutions) are my main research object, taking into full consideration the role of actors' perspective, agency and strategies, how actors perceive and use the institutional setting in which they work.

The main actors I am interested in are political parties. While I am aware that every party organisation as such is also a field of domination and power struggle (Offerlé 2002), I chose not to pursue an analysis that drills down into intra-party conflicts between different currents and groups, or all the way down to the individual level, but to remain at the meso level of analysis. This is because the parties I study are already part of transnational organisations such as EP groups and the extra-parliamentary party federations, and a further zooming-in into the parties' structures and struggles would make it difficult to maintain the comparative perspective I chose to focus on, either across the EU within a Europarty or between a few Europarties.

This actor-centered approach puts a strong focus on the actors' practices and behavior, which allows to go beyond formal rules and legal provisions. Actors may seize certain formal arrangements they view as genuine opportunities while refrain from using others since they do not have the incentives to do so. For instance, I go beyond the legal provisions provided in the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU regulations on Europarties, the EP's rules of procedure or the transnational party federations' rulebooks. While I fully acknowledge that the legal framework has important consequences for the actors' possibilities and constraints, I focus rather on how actors make use, or not, of the institutional setting they work in and the organisation they are part of, on what they do in practice.

My theoretical framework is close to new-institutionalism (March and Olsen 1984, 1989; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Parsons 2000), which highlights the importance of institutions in

political life. Institutions play a vital role in structuring political life, in the construction and elaboration of meaning, and in the interpretation of events and reality. Political institutions are important instruments of interpretive order, through their contribution to the establishment, stability and continuity of routines, rules and norms: 'norms of appropriateness, rules, routines, and the elaboration of meaning are central features of politics' (March and Olsen, 1989: 171).

In addition, my theoretical framework is also inspired by constructivism and the sociology of knowledge (see Berger and Luckmann 1966, Goffman 1956). According to the constructivist approach, notions such as framing, meaning, socialisation and social constructions are the main elements that construct social life at all levels of interaction and action. However, I see constructivism as a complement of an actor-centered approach and not as a distinctive approach to study political life, detached from the actors' positions in the organisations they are part of or the resources they have at their disposal (for further discussion see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Kauppi 2005).

This dissertation is also an exercise in dialogue between the French school of political sociology (for an overview see Georgakakis 2008) and the mainstream English-speaking literature of political science (Kauppi 2013b). Rather than staying in the comfortable company and friendly environment of fellow French political sociologists, I decided to take the challenge to 'mainstream EU sociology' (Saurugger and Mérand, 2010). During the past six years, I presented my research to peers at various academic conferences and networks such as CES, ECPR, UACES, THESEUS, PADEMIA, etc. Quite often I found myself surrounded by 'number crunchers' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 31) who were often rather sceptic towards my qualitative methods and anecdotic story-telling, a standard writing-style in departments of political sociology in the French academy. During these years I was sometimes taken by the desire to 'dance in the ways expected by those who run the ball' (Ross 2011: 215). This will to be accepted and acknowledged, and to get my work published in mainstream English-speaking academic journals, very fortunately pushed me to consider more in-depth the legal institutional framework in which the actors are embedded as well as to conduct statistical analysis in order to be in a better position to generalize my findings.

## Methods and data

The starting point of this dissertation was an exercise I conducted together with three colleagues<sup>8</sup> during my Masters in EU studies at the University of Strasbourg. The research question was how French parties were preparing for the EP elections of 2009 and we chose the case of the French Greens. The research method we used was mainly interviews with French Green MEPs of the 2004-2009 term, with the party's candidates for the 2009 elections and with party officials. During certain interviews we found that the questions we prepared beforehand, based on the academic literature on EP elections and preliminary data collected on the internet, were quite irrelevant to the actors' own perceptions and practices. Notably, there was a gap between the official version of the European Green Party (EGP), which we found on the internet, and the reality on the ground from the actors' perspective. Here are two quotes from two different interviews conducted during the 2009 EP elections campaign in France. The first quote is from an interview with Eric Schultz, a local Green politician who was the French Greens' campaign director in the 2009 EP elections in the Grand Est region:

*Q: I know that last year the European Green Party's Council in Slovenia decided upon the main axes of the campaign.*

*A: Well, you know more than me!*

Another example is from an interview with MEP Marie-Helene Aubert, during which she burst out laughing when confronted with an element from her official EP candidate biography:

*Q: I saw you were co-founder of the European Green Party.*

*A: That's an exaggeration. The EGP was created in 2004 in Rome. I was there like many others. So, I don't know if I am co-founder (laugh) but yes, I was there at the moment it was created, that's all.*

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<sup>8</sup> See Pflugbeil, Antje, Elodie Spielmann, Yoav Shemer-Kunz and Alexis Walker, *Le parti Vert français et les élections européennes de 2009*, unpublished Masters thesis, University of Strasbourg. I thank my colleagues for allowing me to continue the research we have started together.

These situations reveal to what extent desk research that consists of merely consulting official documents needs to be cross-checked by fieldwork. This has led me to devote more attention to ethnographic fieldwork in my research methods.

In this dissertation I use a multi-method approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods (Guiraudon 2011). I have used a qualitative research strategy and intensive fieldwork, observing actors *in situ* over a relatively long period of time (for an overview of the usage of ethnography in EU studies see Adler-Nissen 2016). Many of the interviews I conducted were also part of ethnographic fieldwork observing the actors *in situ* (Beaud 1996). Using ethnographic fieldwork in EU studies, I follow previous works that have used such methods, notably the original work of Marc Abélès (1992) on the daily life in the EP, which observed MEPs as a strange multilingual nomad tribe, or George Ross' (1995) fieldwork within the European Commission of Jacques Delors. More recently, Amy Busby (2013) used ethnographic fieldwork while working as an intern of an MEP, a position which provided her with a privileged access to qualitative data otherwise hard to obtain by quantitative methods of research. The works of Willy Beauvallet (2007) and Sébastien Michon (2014) were also based to a large extent on ethnographic fieldwork in MEP offices.

By conducting fieldwork I was acquainted directly with the actors' own process of bricolage (Mérand 2011), how they see and use the institutional setting they work in and what they do in practice. I found ethnography to be useful for my research to get a grip on how national party politicians experiment with the EU-level of politics; and how MEPs or Europarty officials handle their dependence on the national parties in practice. This fieldwork was complemented by quantitative data I gathered through more classical research methods of political science such as surveys via a questionnaire and consultation of official documents.

The first article, analysing EP elections as a 'back door' to national politics, is an in-depth case-study, focusing on one national party only, the French Greens. The article is empirically based on ten semi-structured interviews with French Green Party's candidates for the 2009 EP elections, the party's MEPs, local party officials and electoral campaign staff; participant observations within the party's campaign team; and numerous informal discussion with party staff and members. This was complemented by an analysis of the French Greens' electoral results in national and in EP elections since 1979.

The second article, on the individual membership in Europarties, is an in-depth case study on the EGP. The article combines three different methods: ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and a survey conducted among Green parties in Europe on their attitudes towards the

EGP policy of individual membership and how they implement it in practice. The ethnographic fieldwork included participant observations *in situ* in the EGP, notably in six major EGP meetings<sup>9</sup>. In addition, between November 2011 and November 2013 I conducted participant observations within the EGP's Individual Supporters' Network (ISN). The observations included attending a few physical meetings, mainly in Brussels, a few Skype meetings, and taking part in informal email exchanges of the network. This ethnographic fieldwork at the EU-level of the Europarty organisation was coupled with participant observation as an active member of the French Green party, EELV. In addition, desk research conducted during the past six years included the analysis of numerous EGP documents: the EGP rulebook and EGP Council resolutions; the EU regulations on Europarties and Commission and EP communications on this topic.

The third article, on the diplomatic role of EP groups, is a cross-case study on the three left-wing EP groups, S&D, GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA, and their position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This article is empirically based on 20 in-depth interviews and numerous discussions with a variety of actors from these three EP groups: MEPs, parliamentary assistants, the groups' political advisors, as well as with officials of human rights NGOs based in Brussels and in Israel and the Palestinian territories. These sociological research methods were combined with the consultation of EP resolutions and EP groups' motions for resolutions, press releases, conferences, hearings and agendas of visits to Israel and the Palestinian territories between 2010 and 2015, in addition to activities of the relevant EP committees, delegations, and EP plenary debates on the issue.

Finally, the fourth article, on the role of MEPs in national parliaments, is an EU-wide comparative study, taking into account variations across EU member states and EP groups. The empirical analysis is based on data from COSAC<sup>10</sup> bi-annual reports, two surveys among parliamentary administrators in charge of EU affairs in national parliaments, and consultation of the Rules of Procedure of several national parliaments, in addition to the literature on the topic. These qualitative methods were combined with quantitative ones, building on an original dataset: I conducted a survey among all MEPs of the 7<sup>th</sup> legislative term (2009-2014) on their practices in the national parliament in the EU member state they were elected in. The survey's dataset (150

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9 The EGP congress in Paris (November 2011) and five EGP councils: in Athens (November 2012), Madrid (May 2013), Brussels (November 2013), Lyon (November 2015) and Utrecht (May 2016).

10 Conference of the committees of the national parliaments of the EU member states dealing with EU affairs.



out of 751 MEPs, 20% of the total population) was then processed and codified in a way that enabled a statistical, multivariate regression, analysis.<sup>11</sup>

## **Structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation consists of a collection of four separated academic articles, either already published, in print, or on their way to publication in the near future. The first two articles deal with parties' transnational coordination outside the legislative arena, while the last two articles deal with parties' cross-border coordination within the EP institutional setting or in the national parliaments across the EU.

The first article is on EP elections from the perspective of national parties, analysing how certain parties use these elections as a 'back door' to national politics. It is a case-study on how the French Greens used the 2009 EP elections as an opportunity to improve their position vis-à-vis their domestic rivals in French politics, notably the Social Democratic Party (PS) as well as rivals in the field of political ecology. In the aftermath of their success in the EP elections, the French Greens were able to establish independent parliamentary groups in both of France's parliamentary chambers and to obtain two ministries after the 2012 presidential elections. This article was published as chapter ten in the book *Practices of Inter-Parliamentary Coordination in International Politics: The European Union and beyond*, edited by Ben Crum and John-Erik Fossum, which came out in 2013 from ECPR Press.

The second article examines individual membership schemes of Europarties. The article illustrates these schemes' contradictions and limited implementation in practice, mainly explained by the lack of interest among national parties or even their reluctance to cooperate with the individual membership policy of the Europarty they are affiliated with. A second explanation is the lack of interest of individual party members in such an option. Hence, I show that Europarties' capacity to develop individual membership is limited in the actual institutional setting. This article was submitted to the journal *Acta Politica* and is currently under peer-review (updated August 2016).

The third article deals with EP groups as diplomatic actors, studying the stances and activities of left-wing EP groups with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The article shows that EP groups have a certain potential to develop an independent diplomatic role, notably

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<sup>11</sup> Bart J. Bes, PhD candidate at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, helped me with the multivariate regression analysis.



through close coordination with civil society actors in third countries, outside the EU. However, this potential is hampered by substantial disagreements between the national parties' delegations within the EP groups. In fact, the common diplomatic activities of certain EP groups tend to be restricted to the lowest common denominator or to be subject to opting-out by certain national delegations. The article is in print in a volume edited by Stelios Stavridis and Davor Jančić *Parliamentary Diplomacy in European and Global Governance*, forthcoming in 2016 in Brill publishers, in its series of Diplomatic Studies.

The fourth article of this dissertation examines the formal participation rights of MEPs in the national parliament of the EU in a comparative perspective, and proposes a distinction between two roles that MEPs play in the chambers, as national representatives at the EU-level and as external EU-experts. Furthermore, beyond the legal perspective, the article is an assessment of MEPs' practices in the national parliament of 'their' Member State and the variation of these, based on a multivariate regression analysis of a survey conducted among 150 MEPs. This article will be published in a special issue of *Politique européenne*, edited by Diane Fromage and Kolja Raube, *Member State Parliaments and the European Challenge(s)*.

The conclusion of the dissertation wraps up the main findings of these four articles and explores some avenues for further research on parties' transnational coordination in the EU.

## **Article One: The 'Back Door' to National Politics: The French Greens and the 2009 European Parliament Elections<sup>12</sup>**

### **Introduction**

The defining characteristic of the model of multi-level governance in the European Union (EU) is the shift of authority – from public to private actors and from the central state to sub-national authorities and supra-national institutions (Hooghe and Marks 2001). States no longer monopolise EU-level policy making, as authority is dispersed and shared by a large variety of actors at different levels. Democratic representation in the EU has also come to be dispersed across different sites, interconnected in various, formal and informal, ways in one ‘multi-level parliamentary field’ (Crum and Fossum 2009). Operating through this multi-level parliamentary field, national parliaments continue to play important roles in shaping and legitimising EU decision-making. This chapter demonstrates how the dynamics of multi-level democratic representation in Europe also re-enters decision-making at the national level by providing new political parties with access and influence.

As the different political arenas in Europe are interconnected, an actor’s access to power at the EU level of democratic representation may help it to access legislative and executive power at the national level. This does not happen directly through formal institutional arrangements, but rather indirectly through the mobilisation of political resources and the building of social relations with other actors in the field. It is the combined interactions and structures obtaining between the actors in the field that offer opportunities for new political parties. These interactions and structures are influenced by external changes in the institutional environment.

Specifically, European integration has changed the environment of national political actors. The EU as an emerging political field offers numerous resources, both material and immaterial, to political actors who connect to it (Kauppi 2005). Looking more closely at political parties, this environmental evolution does not impact all political parties in the same way. For the established, cartel parties (Katz and Mair 1995), it is not that crucial, since they already have numerous resources at the national level. However, for new and emerging parties, this environmental change can be very significant. Unlike cartel-parties, emerging parties suffer from

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<sup>12</sup> This article was published in Ben Crum and John Erik Fossum (2013) (eds) *Practices of Inter-Parliamentary Coordination in International Politics – The European Union and Beyond*. Colchester, ECPR Press: 161-174.

resource scarcity at the national level. These actors seek to break into the political system, seeking to put new issues on the social and political agenda. For these marginal actors on the national stage, the multilevel context of the EU provides new opportunities. The emergence of the EP and the introduction of direct elections to the EP in 1979, represent important changes in the political parties' environment. The peripheral position of the EP in national politics generally makes it less attractive to dominant political elites at the national level (see Beauvallet and Michon in this volume). But EP elections provide a significant political opportunity for some actors, whether national represented or not. Emerging political parties can use EP elections as a new entry point into politics, in a similar way as the sub-national level is used in federal settings (see Deschouwer 2000, 2003). EP elections in turn can have significant implications for these parties' role and power in the national political field. The ensuing change in the national power structure then affects not only the new parties but the political system as a whole.

EP elections trigger a more pluralist representation at the national level and a more open structure of competition among closed national political systems (Mair 2006). Indirectly, EP elections open up closed political systems, such as bipartisan systems. This change towards a more pluralist structure of competition allows emerging parties access to national parliaments and governments, thus provides them with effective influence on decision making at the national level. This is not happening through a formal, institutional change, but rather through how the addition of a new layer of governance encourages 'bottom-up' dynamics through reconfiguring actors' incentives, strategies and practices.

Political scientists have overlooked this usage of EP elections as a significant entry point to politics for emerging parties, as well as the implications of this on the nature of the national political system. Scholars studying the influence of the European integration process on political parties generally found that it has only limited effects (see Pogunkte and al. 2007, Ladrech 2010). EP elections have mostly been analysed as 'second-order national elections' (see Reif and Schmitt 1980, Marsh 1998, Hix and Marsh 2007). In this model, EP elections are considered second-order in contrast to the 'first-order' national elections.

Some scholars have however pointed out that EP elections have particular importance to new and small parties. For instance, Simon Hix and Christopher Lord observe that 'European elections have also influenced the entry of new parties to the field of serious political contestation. The 1984 election was crucial to the rise of the Front National (FN) in France' (Hix and Lord, 1997: 90). However, how the emerging parties' role in EP elections feeds back on

power relations within the national political system, and the nature of the national party system itself, remains under-researched.

This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of how EP elections open up closed political systems for emerging parties, taking the case of the Green party in France in the context of the 2009 EP elections. It is based upon a political sociology approach to European studies (see Kauppi 2005, Georgakakis 2008, Saurugger 2008, Mérand and Saurugger 2010, Favell and Guiraudon 2011, Zimmermann and Favell 2011). The sociological approach is useful in that it permits the analyst to take fully into account the actors' strategies and practices. The empirical data consist of 10 semi-structured interviews with candidates of the French Greens to the 2009 EP elections, the party's MEPs, local party officials and electoral campaign staff, participant observations within the party's campaign team, numerous informal discussions with party staff and members.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I provide an overview of the French Greens' limited political resources at the national level and its relative success in EP elections. In the second section I analyse how the party seized the 2009 EP elections as a political opportunity to recruit external candidates from civil society. The third section analyses how its success in the 2009 EP elections enabled the party to modify its power relations in national politics. I finish with some concluding remarks.

### **The French Greens: weak at national level, good scores in EP elections**

France's political system is relatively closed and immobile, characterised by centripetal tendencies (Kitschelt 1986). French politics is dominated by two established, bureaucratised parties, a 'circumscribed cartel of political actors' (Kitschelt 1986: 67). The conservative party, *Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle* (UMP), was in power from 1995 until 2012, when the *Parti Socialiste* (PS) came back to power. The French bi-partisan system leaves little place for emerging political forces, protest movements and 'outsiders'. The inaccessibility of the existing political structure drove the French anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s to support independent candidates to presidential elections as early as 1974, and to officially found the French Green party, *Les Verts*, in 1984.

The French Greens are a small political party, relatively marginalised in French politics. They are often considered as too utopian and not credible (see Sainteny, 1987, 1997, 2000). The French Greens often used elections more as a platform to spread their ideas than as a means to get to power and influence decision-making.

The French Greens suffered from weak results in national elections. In fact, the party had no Members of Parliament (MPs) in France's two national parliaments, the National Assembly and the Senate, until as late as 1997.<sup>13</sup> In 2009 the party still had only three MPs out of 577 in the National Assembly, and only five Senators out of 343. In both chambers the Green representatives were affiliated with the PS, as they were not numerous enough to establish a political group of their own. In presidential elections the French Greens' fortunes have been quite poor, between 1 to 5 per cent of the votes (see table 1.1).

**Table 1.1: Green candidates in presidential elections in France (1974-2012)**

Elections' year	Candidate	% of the votes	Number of votes
1974	René Dumont	1.32	337 800
1981	Brice Lalonde	3.88	1 126 254
1988	Antoine Waechter	3.78	1 149 897
1995	Dominique Voynet	3.32	1 010 738
2002	Noël Mamère	5.25	1 495 724
2007	Dominique Voynet	1.57	576 666
2012	Eva Joly	2.31	828 345

Source : <http://www.france-politique.fr>; <http://www.interieur.gouv.fr>

The French Greens gained a certain stability of around 3 per cent in the three consecutive presidential elections, of 1981, 1988 and 1995, and an historical 5 per cent in the 2002 elections. But their results in the 2007 presidential elections came at an historical low, with only 1.57 per cent of the votes.

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<sup>13</sup> At the 1997 parliamentary elections the Greens joined the left bloc (*la gauche plurielle*) led by the PS. This cooperation enabled the Greens to obtain 6 MPs as well as the ministry of environment (1997-2002).

While the French Green party thus scores quite poorly in national elections, it obtains relatively good scores in EP elections (see table 1.2). In fact, the party obtained its first MEPs as early as 1989, seven years before it obtained its first MPs.

**Table 1.2: Green lists in EP elections (1979-2009)**

Elections' year	List	% of the votes	Number of votes	MEPs
1979	Europe Ecologie	4.39	888,134	0
1984	Les Verts	3.37	680,080	0
1989	Les Verts	10.59	1, 922,945	9
1994	Les Verts	2.95	574,806	0
1999	Les Verts	9.72	1, 715,450	9
2004	Les Verts	7.41	1, 271,394	6
2009	Europe Ecologie	16.28	2, 803,759	14

Source : <http://www.france-politique.fr>; <http://www.interieur.gouv.fr>

Still, even in EP elections, the French Greens' results have been quite unstable over the years. This can be explained by the dispersion of votes among different ecological lists. In the very first EP elections in 1979, an independent green list, *Europe Ecologie*, led by Mrs Solange Fernex, obtained almost 5 per cent of the votes. Five years later, in the 1984 EP elections, the ecological electorate was split between two lists: the official list of the newly founded Green party and an independent list led by Mr Brice Lalonde, who was a candidate in the 1981 presidential elections, where he obtained 4 per cent of the votes. Each list obtained only 3 per cent of the votes and no MEPs. But in the EP elections of 1989 the French Greens, united under the leadership of Mr Antoine Waechter, obtained a historical success in a national vote: 10 per cent of the votes and nine MEPs. However, this success was also not durable, as the French Greens failed to win seats in the EP in the following 1994 elections. Waechter had left the Green party a short time before that and ran for the EP elections separately, leading the list *Génération*

*Ecologie*. Both ecological lists did not obtain any MEPs. In the 1999 EP elections the Green list was led by Mr Daniel Cohn-Bendit and again obtained 10 per cent of the votes and nine MEPs, the same results as ten years earlier. In the 2004 EP elections the Greens were once more facing a harsh competition on the ecological issue. For instance, an independent ecological list, CAP21, led by Mrs Corinne Lepage, a former Minister of the environment, obtained 3 per cent of the votes. In 2004 EP elections the greens obtained 7 per cent of the votes and six MEPs. The internal division within the political ecology movement was often a disadvantage for the French Greens. However, when united, the French Greens achieved good results in EP elections, around 10 per cent of the votes. This was not the case in national elections.

### **Why such a gap between different levels of elections?**

How can we explain these great differences, throughout the years, of the same political party between these two levels of elections? The particular success of Green parties in EP elections is often explained by their secondary importance in relation to national elections. According to the ‘second-order’ model (Reif and Schmitt 1980), voters feel that there is less at stake and thus allow themselves to vote according to conviction. After all, the EP election outcomes do not determine the executive body at the European level and the EP itself and its legislative activities are largely unknown to the public. Therefore, in EP elections, voters can follow convictions and can take risks that they would not take at national elections where elections determine choice of leaders. This is a possible explanation for the success of the French Greens in EP elections.

But there are alternative explanations for the success of Green parties in EP elections that have nothing to do with the notion of ‘second-order’. The first is the role of the environmental issue. Voters might actually vote for Green parties in EP elections because they are in favour of a common environmental policy at the European level (see Curtice 1989, Carruba and Timpone 2005, Hix and Marsh 2007, Hobolt, Spoon and Tilley 2008). The environmental issue might be an emerging ‘European issue’, perceived by the public as an issue which is better dealt with at the EU level than at the national one.

A second explanation for the success of the French Greens in EP elections is the electoral rule. The rule of EP elections in France is proportional representation (PR) in one round only, whereas the electoral rule generally used in France’s presidential or parliamentary elections is a majority vote in two rounds. The latter majority vote system tends to favour the big parties and gives little possibility for small parties to obtain MPs. In line with the second-order model, French citizens often vote tactically in national elections, relying on rational utility calculations

(*le vote utile*), to eliminate a specific opponent from the second round of elections. For instance, many Green voters tend to vote for the socialist candidates in majority elections in France but for Green ones in PR elections (Mayer and Perrineau 1992: 122-139).

Notably, in the first round of the presidential elections of 21 April 2002 Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of FN, the extreme right-wing party, moved up to the second round together with Jacques Chirac due to the large dispersion of votes among various left and centre candidates. French Green voters tend to vote for the socialist candidate in the first round of elections in order to prevent a second '21 of April', which became a reference to the political power of the extreme right in France. In fact, the French Socialists explicitly use this possibility in their call to vote for their candidate in the first round of presidential elections. This tendency does not exist in EP elections, as a Green local official explains:

'When people vote according to their convictions, we have good scores [...] in presidential elections part of the Green electorate did not vote according to their beliefs but in relation to the second round [...] I think there is a vote of conviction in European elections. That is why the Greens always had good scores in these elections.' (interview 9).<sup>14</sup>

A third explanation to the French Greens' success in EP elections is generally low turnout combined with relatively high Green voter participation. Green voters seem to participate more in EP elections than the rest of the population. Citizens who take part in these elections are relatively supportive of the European integration process (see Blondel, Sinnott and Svensson 1997). Green voters in France are mainly young, educated, middle-class, with a high proportion of higher education diplomas (see Boy 1994, Faucher-King 2005: 187). A Green MEP described the traditional Green electorate as 'Bobos' (interview 10). This population tends to be in favour of the EU. Another Green MEP said that the low turnout in EP elections is an advantage to the Greens 'because our electorate is relatively mobilised, pro-European, and will vote. However, the others [...] the people who are undecided, if they vote, they will vote more easily for the big parties' (interview 11). The high participation in EP elections among Green voters together with the low turnout in the general population gives an important advantage to the Greens.

Finally, the French Greens' success in EP elections can be explained by the low salience of the left/right cleavage. This traditional cleavage is less dominant in EP elections than in other

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14 All citations are translated from French by the author.



national elections in France. This dominance of the left/right cleavage in the French political debate tends to discredit the Greens. The Greens build their political legitimacy around the emerging, post-materialist cleavage of economy vs. nature: 'only the Greens correspond to a real European cleavage – opposing the 'all market' to the ecology – in which they clearly occupy one of the two poles' (Seiler 2005: 539). In EP elections there is enough room for new, emergent political issues to be raised. The Greens may therefore compete in these elections as legitimate political rivals. For all these reasons, the French Greens do relatively well in EP elections.

For the French Greens, EP elections are an important political opportunity to get good electoral results and to obtain seats in the EP. I will now demonstrate how the party seized the 2009 EP elections as a political opportunity to save the party in crisis and as an entry point to national politics.

### **Background of the 2009 EP elections**

In 2008, around a year before the EP elections, the French Greens were in a deep crisis. The party suffered from financial problems after the 2007 presidential campaign, which ended with catastrophic results – 1.57 per cent. They also suffered from lack of attractive national leadership and internal divisions. The divisions between different party currents were often visible to the public and contributed to the negative image of the party. At this point in time, after the 2007 presidential elections, two of the Greens' national leaders, Mr Yann Wehring, the party's national secretary, and Mr Jean-Luc Bennahmias, one of the Greens' MEPs since 2004, left the party in order to join the ranks of *Mouvement Démocratique* (MoDem), a centre party on the rise led by François Bayrou, who obtained 18 per cent of the votes in the 2007 presidential elections. In addition, the French Greens faced competition from renewed parties on the radical left, which also adopted environmental issues in their political agenda: the *Nouveau Parti Anti-capitaliste* (NPA) led by Olivier Besançon, who obtained 4 per cent of the votes in the 2007 presidential elections, and *Front de Gauche*, a new union between the French Communist party (PCF) and other small left parties and trade unions. Thus, one year before the EP elections, the general situation of the party looked quite gloomy.

However, in French civil society, Green issues were on the rise, receiving positive media coverage and legitimacy. This became particularly apparent in the *Grenelle de l'environnement*. In 2007, the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, launched a large-scale public dialogue between the government and ecological non-governmental organisations (NGOs), called the *Grenelle de l'environnement*. *Le Grenelle* was extensively covered by French national media, and was a

moment of both glory and disappointment for the participating NGOs. The dialogue provided civil society actors with national media coverage, public recognition and legitimacy, as they were negotiating directly with the French government about its future legislation and policy stance on issues of environment protection. In the beginning of their negotiations with the government, civil society actors were rather satisfied and enthusiastic with their political influence, as a Green MP explains:

During the “Grenelle” the NGOs’ were very satisfied. Some propositions were adopted by the “Grenelle”, there was a kind of derision among civil society, saying “we don’t need a political partner anymore, we can discuss directly with the government”. (interview 13)

However, these actors were soon disappointed, as they noticed that the French government did not implement the negotiated recommendations, which were pushed aside by the economic crisis of 2008. As a Green MEP elected in 2009 puts it:

All of those who participated were very enthusiastic, very motivated, they were much engaged in the *Grenelle de l’environnement* [...] and then, well, it was a disappointment, to see that finally all the nice speeches, the nice promises of the government, did not end up with either real concrete measures or strong decisions which are necessary. So these people were disappointed to see that the negotiations with the government did not bring fruits. I think that also explains why they came into politics. (interview 11)

During the negotiations and working groups in the *Grenelle* the idea of a new ecological political offer came about. It was a kind of bilateral ‘deal’ between some representatives and spokespersons of large environmental NGOs and the Green party in crisis. These individuals launched a professional political career using the organisational resources of the Green party: the Greens offered these personalities high positions on their list to the coming EP elections, thus guaranteeing them good chances to become MEPs. In return, the party highlighted these external candidates as the leaders of a brand new political organisation, *Europe Ecologie*.

### **The Greens’ strategy for the 2009 EP elections**

In the 2008 Summer University of the Greens in Toulouse, Daniel Cohn-Bendit proposed to ‘open up’ the party and to build a larger network of support. A Green local official comments:

Cohn-Bendit said we have to get out of the narrow framework of a party which failed in the presidential elections with the worst scores in ages [...] because Bové was a candidate, well, we were completely divided [...] so he said we have to bring together supporters beyond the Greens. (interview 12)

Indeed, to open up the party to new candidates and to attract new voters were the primary objectives of the 2009 EP elections’ campaign. The French Greens ran for these elections with a new strategy and under a new name, *Europe Ecologie*. The French Greens’ national leadership used the 2009 EP elections as an opportunity to launch a new political strategy. A key element of this strategy was the renovation of its political offer by recruitment of external candidates from civil society.

The list of *Europe Ecologie* for the 2009 EP elections was led by three national leaders: Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Eva Joly and José Bové. They were the best known candidates nationally, and became the symbols of political engagement and unity of the French ecologists. As a candidate to the EP explains: ‘Having strong personalities such as Cohn-Bendit, José Bové, Eva Joly, those are the most symbolic three, the most known in France, that goes a long way for many of our voters’ (interview 11). As a Green local official, who was coordinating the elections’ campaign in his city, explains (interview 9), the election result would largely depend on how the voters would perceive the three personalities leading the list, who have a national audience: Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Eva Joly and José Bové.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit is very familiar to the French public. Cohn-Bendit became famous for his role in the student revolt in Paris in May 1968 and was then expelled from France (*Dany le rouge*). Cohn-Bendit has a unique position, since he holds dual citizenship, both French and German, and constantly moves between these two national political arenas. He was a prominent leader of the German Greens and became vice-mayor of Frankfurt in 1989. He has been a Green MEP since 1994, and has in turns been elected to the EP in France or in Germany. Cohn-Bendit had led the list of the French Greens’ in the EP elections of 1999, which obtained 10 per cent of the votes. The personal charm and charisma of ‘Dany’ was a main factor of the French Greens’ success in the 1999 EP elections (see Boy 1999). Even though measuring the role of a leadership scientifically is a difficult task, Daniel Boy observes that ‘the oratory qualities of Cohn-Bendit,

his capacity to speak in an “ordinary” language or even his informal clothing presentation probably attracted young voters, perhaps beyond the borders of political ecology’ (Boy 1999: 677). As a local Green politician puts it, discussing the different candidates on the list to the EP elections: ‘in any case the voters do not know these people, so they will see Cohn-Bendit and they will vote’ (interview 12). French voters seem to approve ‘Dany’, a charismatic leader who brings innovative fresh spirit into the traditional French political scene and enjoys positive coverage in national television. Cohn-Bendit played a decisive role in the creation of the new list. He helped to convince the party politicians to share eligible positions with external candidates and contributed to the reconciliation of the Greens’ internal conflicts. He also helped convincing civil society personalities to join this political adventure under his leadership.

Eva Joly was positioned after Cohn-Bendit in the constituency of the Paris region. As a magistrate, she is known in France for her judgements in the famous trial of the ELF scandal (*l’affaire ELF*) and her strong engagement against corruption in the highest political circles and tax havens. Born in Oslo, Norway, she moved to Paris when she was 20 years old. Like Cohn-Bendit, Joly moves between different national political fields: she has been a special advisor to the Norwegian government (2002-2005) and to the Icelandic government from 2009, following the country’s financial collapse. Joly launched her professional political career in France by joining the *Europe Ecologie* list for the 2009 EP elections, and later became the Green candidate for the 2012 presidential elections, which illustrates her strong position in the party.

José Bové became France’s most famous farmer after his direct action against a McDonald’s restaurant in 1999 as a symbolic act of resistance against Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) and the food industry, for which he served some time in prison. Since this event he is often present in French national media, and is considered a charismatic spokesman of the developing alternative global movement (Bourad 2011). Bové is a spokesperson of a farmers’ NGO, *confédération paysanne*, and was a prominent figure in the campaign against the proposed European constitution in the 2005 referendum. However, his attempt to enter professional politics was unsuccessful so far: as an independent candidate in the 2007 presidential elections Bové obtained only 1 per cent of the votes. He was elected MEP in the 2009 EP elections.

Other civil society candidates were also positioned high on the list for the 2009 EP elections and were elected MEPs. MEP Yannick Jadot was the campaign director of *Greenpeace*, an economist who was engaged in international solidarity and north-south relations, especially towards the situation in Africa. MEP Sandrine Béliet was the director of *France Nature Environnement* (FNE), a national federation of French environmental NGOs. Before that, Béliet

had been the regional director of *Alsace Nature*, a large regional NGO. Béliet is a specialist of environmental law and took part in the legislation of the European directive 'Natura 2000'. MEP Jean-Paul Besset was the spokesperson of *Fondation Nicolas Hulot*, a famous NGO in France founded by Mr Nicolas Hulot, a former television star and known in France for his public engagement in environmental protection. Hulot announced his candidature as an independent ecological candidate in the 2007 presidential elections, but eventually did not run. Besset's presence on the list permitted the party to use the name of Nicolas Hulot in their electoral campaign even though Hulot himself officially kept his distance to the new list. These civil society candidates enabled the Greens to present *Europe Ecologie* to the French public as a political organisation with much larger scope than the original Green party, *Les Verts*.

In their communication strategy to the 2009 EP elections, the Greens highlighted the external candidates from civil society and their widely respected reputations in non-partisan activities. The Greens used the labels of the NGOs that these candidates came from, NGOs that seemed to enjoy legitimacy among the French public, such as *Greenpeace*, *Confédération paysanne*, *France Nature Environnement* or *Fondation Nicolas Hulot*.

In contrast, the party's own politicians were less visible in the electoral campaign strategy. The party politicians who were elected MEPs in the 2009 EP elections were relatively unknown at the national level and had only little experience in politics. Hélène Flautre was the only incumbent MEP, elected in 1999. Michèle Rivasi was the only former MP (1997-2002). The other elected MEPs among the party politicians - Pascal Canfin, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Catherine Grèze, Malika Benarab-Attou, and Karima Delli - had mostly been engaged in politics at the local level and were relatively unknown to the French public.

The French Greens used the 2009 EP elections in order to 'open up' a party in decline. They used these elections as an opportunity to recruit external candidates from civil society, and thus to improve the party's public image. Through the EP elections, the French Greens modified the power relations in national politics: both with their ecological rivals and with the socialist party (PS).

### **Modifying the power relations in national politics**

The Greens' strategy in the 2009 EP elections has led to an electoral success. *Europe Ecologie* obtained 16.28 per cent of the votes in the 2009 EP elections, or nearly three million voters. This meant 14 MEPs, the same number of seats as the PS. Subsequently, in the 2010 regional elections, the Greens continued using their new strategy. *Europe Ecologie* obtained 12.18 per

cent of the votes in the first round, or nearly two and a half million votes.<sup>15</sup> The Greens doubled their power in the regional councils: They obtained 54 regional councillors, against only 24 in 2008 elections. *Les Verts*, officially founded in 1984, and *Europe Ecologie*, an *ad-hoc* list conceived to compete in the 2009 EP elections, were officially united to a ‘new’ party on November 2010, named *Europe Ecologie - Les Verts* (EELV). In fact, EELV is not a ‘new’ political party, but rather a transformation of an ‘old’ one (see Barnea and Rahat 2011). In the 2011 partial elections to the French Senate EELV obtained 11 Senators against only four incumbent Green Senators. These 11 MPs established an independent Green parliamentary group for the first time in French history.

The Greens’ success in the 2009 EP elections, and other elections that followed, modified their power relations with their rivals in national politics. The aim of the Greens’ strategy in the 2009 EP elections was to create a unified force of political ecology in France. According to one Green MEP, the aim of the EP elections was not the EP itself, but ‘to appear, to translate politically, in elections, the movement that manifested itself in society’ (interview 15). As this MEP puts it: ‘The European elections were the first step. The second step is the regional elections’ (interview 15).

The aim of the Greens’ strategy and strong investment in the 2009 EP elections was not the party’s particular interest in the European level of politics. The idea behind the new list for the EP elections was to launch a new party of political ecology which would be more attractive to voters than the Green party. A major difficulty of the French Greens throughout the years is the competition with other ecologists. Through their success in the 2009 EP elections, the French Greens brought rival ecologists to join the Greens. They have integrated other Green politicians, thus obtaining a kind of monopoly of legitimate representation of political ecology in French politics.

For instance, Mrs Corinne Lepage, a former Minister of the environment, created her own independent ecologist party, CAP21, but did not succeed in getting elected as an MEP in 2004. In the 2007 presidential elections she joined François Bayrou, the leader of MoDem, and was elected MEP in 2009 under the MoDem banner. However, Lepage left this party soon after the 2009 EP elections and joined *Europe Ecologie*. Another example is Antoine Waechter, a former leader of the Greens. Waechter had left the Greens in 1994 and created his own party, *Mouvement Ecologique Indépendant* (MEI). In the 1994 EP elections MEI competed with a

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15 See Ministère de l’Intérieur, ‘Résultat des élections Régionales 2010’ at: [http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sections/a\\_votre\\_service/resultats-elections/RG2010/FE.html](http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sections/a_votre_service/resultats-elections/RG2010/FE.html)

separate list, *Génération Ecologie*. Both this and the Green list failed to obtain the necessary 5 per cent for getting seats in the EP. In the 2009 EP elections, Waechter ran again separately with his independent party, MEI, but was not elected MEP. Waechter joined *Europe Ecologie* soon afterwards, becoming a regional counsellor in Alsace in the 2010 regional elections. Both Mrs Lepage of CAP21 and Mr Waechter of MEI were ancient rivals of the Greens. Both joined *Europe Ecologie* in the aftermath of the 2009 EP elections.

The main message to the French public was that the new political offer, *Europe Ecologie*, was larger than the Green party, and goes beyond the traditional left-right cleavage, as both Lepage and Waechter had criticised the Greens for being too much of a left party. A member of the campaign staff for both the European and the regional elections in the Alsace region comments:

In Alsace we have an old ecological movement but it is very divided: there was the MEI, *Les Verts*, *Génération Ecologie* [...] today through *Europe Ecologie* the big tendencies that had divided political ecology in Alsace are disappearing. *Les Verts*, MEI, maybe CAP21, are coming closer through *Europe Ecologie*. (interview 16)

Nicolas Hulot, a prominent figure of political ecology in France, who had kept his distance from the Greens before the EP elections, officially joined EELV in April 2011. He was a candidate for the party's presidency investiture, but lost the internal primaries to MEP Eva Joly.

Even more notably, the French Greens used the EP elections in order to modify the power relations with the *Parti Socialiste* (PS). Daniel Cohn-Bendit had declared that the 2009 EP elections and the first round of the 2010 regional elections were a kind of electoral test of the power of political ecology *vis-à-vis* the PS.<sup>16</sup> Cohn-Bendit repeated this message in his closing speech at a large public meeting a few days before the regional elections of 2010: 'After the European vote, with the regional elections, we have the possibility to deeply transform the political landscape in France'.<sup>17</sup>

The electoral results since 2009 EP elections served as a basis for the negotiations between the Greens and the Socialists. These negotiations were concluded in a signed agreement in November 2011 (see EELV-PS 2011). The two parties agreed on a common political

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<sup>16</sup> Television program 'à vous de juger', *France 2*, 17th September 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Participant observation, Strasbourg, 8th March 2010.



programme for the years 2012-2017 in case of a Socialist government. But the first practical aspect of this agreement was the division of constituencies between the two parties for the 2012 parliamentary elections. This was an attempt to regulate the two parties' competition: in 63 'reserved' constituencies, the PS stands behind the Greens' candidate, thus giving them a chance to win a seat in the National Assembly. This arrangement modified, *de facto*, the official electoral rule of majority vote in parliamentary elections in France. The division of the constituencies was a crucial factor in the Greens' chances to obtain MPs in the 2012 parliamentary elections, due to the electoral rule in these elections - majority vote in two rounds in 577 constituencies. In the 2012 parliamentary elections, the party's candidates obtained 5.46 per cent of the votes in the first round at national level, and moved up to the second round in 40 constituencies out of 557.<sup>18</sup> EELV obtained 18 MPs in the National Assembly, compared to only four incumbent MPs. For the first time in their history, the Greens have established an independent parliamentary group in the Bourbon Palace in Paris, as they passed the threshold of 15 MPs needed.

In addition, EELV obtained two ministries in the PS government, after François Hollande's victory in the 2012 presidential elections. Pascal Canfin, elected MEP in 2009, became minister in charge of development, while Céline Duflot, who had been heavily engaged in the 2009 EP elections as the Greens' general secretary, was nominated minister of territorial equality and housing.

## Conclusions

This chapter analysed EP elections as a 'back door' to politics for emerging parties, taking the case of the Green party in the bipartisan system of France. The French Greens suffer from weak political resources at the national level but this has not affected their standing in EP elections where they often obtain good results. As a result, EP elections are a political opportunity of primary importance for the party. The French Greens used the 2009 EP elections as an opportunity to save the party in crisis by adopting a new strategy, recruiting external candidates from civil society. This usage of the EP elections modified the party's power relations in the national politics in France, both with other Green politicians and with the Socialists.

Also in the aftermath of the EP elections, the PS, one of the two big parties in the French bipartisan system, made an *ad-hoc* bilateral arrangement with the Greens. This arrangement concerned both policy making at the national level and the electoral competition in the coming

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18 See Ministère de l'Intérieur, 'Les résultats des élections' at: <http://elections.interieur.gouv.fr/LG2012/FE.html>.



parliamentary elections. The actors' newly created institutional setting enabled the Greens to obtain representation in the national parliament and to establish an independent parliamentary group in both the Senate and the National Assembly. In general then the presence of the European Parliament facilitates the effective participation of a greater number of political parties in decision-making at the national level of politics. It not only offers a political platform at the supranational level but also provides emerging parties with a new venue to obtain influence at the national level.

This case-study demonstrates that the process of European integration has significant effects for relatively excluded parties at the national level. The direct elections to the EP provide an additional entry point to politics for emerging actors who seek to break into the national political system. Emerging parties, facing difficult institutional environments at the national level, seize the opportunity to break into the political system through EP elections. This chapter demonstrates the degree to which EP elections and national elections are *interconnected*. Success in EP elections has significant effects on the party's power structure in domestic politics. Without these elections, these actors might have disappeared as independent parties at the national level altogether.

Even more notably, EP elections as an additional entry-point to politics have effects beyond the emerging party in question. The chapter analysed how an emerging party's success in EP elections triggers a change in different actors' practices, including the most dominant ones nationally. Thus, indirectly, EP elections modify the nature of the political system as a whole. Success of emerging parties in EP elections gives momentum to a more pluralist representation and a more open structure of competition in relatively closed national political systems.

This is an indirect consequence of the multi-level character of the inter-parliamentary field in Europe. The EU level of democratic representation triggers a certain dynamics towards opening up bipartisan closed systems. In this more open multilevel political system, an emerging party can gain representation in the national parliament and the national government, and thus effectively influence decision-making at the national level. Hence, the multi-level parliamentary field does not only involve the inclusion of national parliaments in EU decision making. It also affects the inclusiveness of national decision-making and the opportunities for emerging parties to gain access to it. In the EU as a multi-level polity, states no longer monopolise EU-level policy making, but share their power with a variety of actors at different levels. In the same way, as part of a multi-level parliamentary field, even dominant political parties in closed national

political systems tend to lose their absolute monopoly, sharing their power with emerging political parties.

### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Niilo Kauppi (CNRS/University of Strasbourg, Centre for European Political Sociology) and Ben Crum (VU Amsterdam, department of Political science) for their very useful comments on previous drafts of this chapter.

## Article Two: Individual Membership in Europarties. Evidence from the European Greens<sup>19</sup>

### Introduction<sup>20</sup>

'Political parties at European level' (Europarties) are a recent phenomenon in European politics. This official category was introduced in 1992 by the Treaty of Maastricht, which stipulates: 'Political parties at the European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union.' (Treaty of the European Union (TEU) 1992, Article 138a). These organisations are offered an official legal status and a financial assistance since 2004 (European Commission 2003). Since 2008 Europarties are also strengthened by affiliated political foundations (Gagatek and Van Hecke 2014). According to the EU regulation concerning these organizations from 2014, 'truly transnational European political parties and their affiliated European political foundations have a key role to play in articulating the voices of citizens at European level by bridging the gap between politics at national level and at Union level'<sup>21</sup>, and therefore should be encouraged and assisted, notably by a strengthened legal status.

The development of Europarties and party politics dynamics at the EU-level is often considered a necessary development towards the democratisation of the EU political system in view of the shift of political power from the state-level to the EU level (Schmidt 2006; Follesdal and Hix 2006; Mair 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2008; Crum 2013). The traditional core function of political parties is narrowing the gap between ordinary citizens and the political institutions in a given polity (Manin 1995, Muller and Strom 1999). Hence, in theory, Europarties may be the 'missing link' or the mediators between citizens across the EU and politics at the EU-level (Bartolini 2005; Hix 2008; Bardi et al. 2010; Kūlahci and Lightfoot 2014).

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19 This article was submitted to *Acta Politica* on 3 June 2016 and is currently under evaluation (updated August 2016).

20 Previous versions of this article were presented in the Swedish Network for European Studies (SNES) conference, Brussels, 7-9 April 2014; PADEMIA (Parliamentary Democracy in Europe) annual conference, Brussels, 12-13 June 2014; THESEUS PhD workshop, Centre d'Etudes Européennes (CEE), Sciences-Po, Paris, 16-17 October 2014. I especially thank Jan Rovny, Olivier Rozenberg, Alfredo Joignant, Ben Crum and Niilo Kauppi for their useful comments on the previous versions of this chapter.

21 See Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations (2014), OJ L 317/1; See also the corresponding European Parliament resolution of 16 April 2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations and the EU.

How Europarties reach out to EU citizens? Given that in the elections to the European Parliament (EP) citizens are invited to choose between different national lists and not transnational ones, Europarties, unlike national parties, cannot ask EU citizens to vote for them. However, similar to national parties, Europarties can offer individual citizens across the EU some form of membership in the organisation (Speht 2005). How and to which extent Europarties develop schemes of individual membership? This article examines the development of individual membership schemes in Europarties by an in-depth case-study of the European Green Party (EGP), analysing its policy of individual membership via its Individual Supporters' Network (ISN). This research is based on a political sociology approach to EU studies (see Kauppi 2005; Saurugger 2008; Kauppi and Madsen, 2008; Mérand and Saurugger 2010; Rowell and Mangenot 2010; Zimmermann and Favell 2011; Georgakakis 2012). The focus of this sociological approach is less on the EU's formal institutional arrangements but rather on how actors actually use these arrangements in practice.

Empirically, the article is based on three different methods: ethnographic fieldwork, interviews and a survey, the combination of which provides me with unique data on the underline mechanisms of individual membership in Europarties. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the EGP between November 2011 to November 2013 using qualitative sociological methods. Participant observations *in situ* in the EGP were conducted, which involved major EGP meetings like the EGP congress in Paris (November 2011) and three consecutive EGP councils: in Athens (November 2012), Madrid (May 2013) and Brussels (November 2013). With particular regard to the topic of this article, participant observation also took place at several meetings of the coordination team of the ISN: a few physical meetings in Brussels and during the EGP councils as well as several on-line. In addition, participant observation was conducted during email correspondences of the ISN coordination team. As a complement to this EU-level perspective, I also participated at the French Greens' summer university in Marseille, in August 2013. These participant observations were complemented by 28 in-depth interviews with actors within the EGP, numerous informal discussions, and consultation of EGP official documents such as the statutes and EGP council resolutions related to the individual membership option. In addition to ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, I also conducted a survey among all Green parties in Europe that are members of the EGP, collecting data on their positions towards the EGP individual membership option in general as well as on their practices towards the ISN in particular. I have collected answers from 32 Green parties (out of a total of 45 EGP member

parties), a response rate of approximately 70% (for more information on the survey administration see the appendix of this article).

This article is structured as follows. First, I present the scientific debate on Europarties. The next section offers an introduction to European party membership in general and a short comparison of the major Europarties' schemes of individual membership. I then introduce the case of the EGP as a 'most-likely' case to evaluate the Europarties' capacity to link with citizens. The actual analysis then turns to the EGP scheme of individual membership, its emergence and its implementation in practice. Explanations of the limited success of the EGP's individual membership follow, before moving to some concluding remarks.

### **Europarties between optimistic and pessimistic approaches**

Current empirical research of Europarties mainly focus on their parliamentary component, the political groups in the EP (EP groups). Scholars testify of the EP groups' process of consolidation and institutionalisation over time (Raunio 1997; Hix and Lord 1997; Bell and Lord 1998; Bardi 2002; Hix et al. 2007; Hanley 2008; Sozzi 2013; Bressanelli 2014). However, this process is observable only within the institutional environment of the EP. The consolidation of the EP groups tells us little of the linkage function of Europarties since the day-to-day parliamentary activities of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are largely ignored by their national parties organizations (Poguntke et al. 2007; Miklin and Crum 2011), including the parties' national parliamentarians (Raunio 2002; Crum and Fossum 2013), not to speak of rank and file party members or ordinary citizens (Costa 2009; Priestly 2010; Gattermann and Vasilopoulou 2014). The extra-parliamentary component of Europarties, often referred to as the 'transnational party federations', has gained much less scholarly attention so far (but see Delwit et al. 2004; Gagatsek 2009; Van Hecke 2010; Hertner 2011; Bartolini 2012; Timus and Lightfoot 2014; Day 2014).

The debate on Europarties' extra-parliamentary component can be divided between optimistic and pessimistic approaches. Some scholars are optimistic, analysing Europarties as new transnational political parties in a long-term process of institutionalization, professionalisation and consolidation, slowly developing from loose and weak federations of national parties, 'parties of parties', into genuine political parties, fulfilling the different classical functions of political parties in an emerging transnational party system at the EU-level (See Bardi et al. 2010). Optimistic scholars tend to treat Europarties as a project in the making,

wondering if they are already 'fully developed' into 'parties in their own right' (Hertner 2011); are they already 'real parties' (Leinen and Pescher 2014) or 'truly transnational parties' (Day 2014). For instance, Luciano Bardi (1994, 1996, 2002, 2004) argues that Europarties are transnational political parties in an embryonic phase, *on their way* to becoming fully fledged parties. These scholars' approach is to analyse these organisations as new political parties, and not as alliances or federations of national parties, hence following their formal definition in the EU law.

While the optimistic approach to Europarties sees them in a process of steadily becoming fully fledged parties, the pessimistic approach to Europarties refers to these organisations merely as federations of national parties, loose umbrella organisations of parties of the same party 'family' (Van Hecke 2010). Even scholars who argue that the Europarties have significant influence on policy-making still consider them merely as umbrella organisations of national political parties (Johansson 2002). Scholars highlight these organisations' weaknesses and dependence on the institutional environment of the EP (Delwit et al. 2004; Bartolini 2012). For instance, Stefano Bartolini (2012: 326) highlights the artificial nature of Europarties as top-down constructions, 'the product of the institutional environment of the EU which have no hope of survival outside it'. According to this critical approach, 'the Council and the Commission offered support and institutional recognition of the Europarties in exchange for indirect popular legitimacy' (Bartolini 2012: 162). Other scholars of this approach also do not analyse these organisations as political parties in an embryonic phase but are rather interested in the organisations' process of institutionalisation and official recognition by the EU institutions (Johansson and Raunio 2005, Roa Bastos 2012) analysing how they use the label 'party', or 'party-like' features, as a mean of legitimisation (Delwit 1998).<sup>22</sup>

A certain longitudinal assumption is underpinning the scientific debate on Europarties' development, namely that they are eventually bound to become fully functioning parties in the future. This longitudinal assumption is also the main justification given by EU practitioners to their decisions to further strengthen these organizations through legal and financial arrangements despite their limited development so far (Leinen and Schönlaue 2003; Priestley 2010; Schmidt-Jevtic 2012; Leinen and Pescher 2014). The analysis of Europarties in terms of a longitudinal process gives us only limited insights into their actual practices, what they are already doing right now, and to which extent the Europarties' limited performance of party functions may be

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22 Interestingly, the current EGP logo from 2004 with the text 'European Green Party', is to be replaced in 2016 by a new logo, with the text 'European Greens'. Hence, the 'party' label is to be omitted in the new communication strategy. See EGP Technical Revision to the EGP Statutes, 'Proposed refreshed logo European Green Party', EGP Council, Glasgow, 2-4 December 2016.

changed by certain institutional reforms, strengthening them further legally and financially, and to which extent these organisations' difficulties are structural and are here to stay. The study of Europarties' schemes of individual membership, attempting to reach out directly to EU citizens, provides empirical evidence into the debate between optimistic and pessimistic approaches.

### **Individual membership in Europarties.**

The scientific literature affirms a strong decline in party membership in Western European democracies (Scarrow 2000; Mair and Van Biezen 2001; Whiteley 2011; Van Biezen et al. 2012). Today's professional parties may well continue to seek members, but these members' role in the parties is very different from the one in the 'mass party' model (Scarrow and Gezgor 2010). Enrolled members are not so crucial as in the past for the parties' organization and electoral success and their main function today is to provide their party with some symbolic popular legitimacy. Despite the general decline of party membership in Western democracies and the limited need of parties to establish mass membership, Europarties have introduced various initiatives to link directly with individual citizens (see table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Europarties and individual membership**

<b>EU-party</b>	<b>Name of members</b>	<b>Conditions to membership</b>	<b>Number of individuals</b>
EPP	Supporting members	Members of the EP group (MEPs)	217
PES	Activists	Members of national party only	60000
ALDE	Individual members	Open to all citizens	1900
EGP	Supporters	Members of national party only	1100
EL	Individual Members	Open to all citizens	120

Source: information from Europarties' officials, by email to the author, updated April 2015.

Due to the large variety of schemes of individual membership among Europarties and the lack of systematic research on this question it is unclear what these official policies actually mean in practice. For instance, the individual members of the European People's Party (EPP) are its EP group's 217 MEPs<sup>23</sup> (Dietz 2000). This individual membership policy of the largest Europarty to

<sup>23</sup> According to the statutes of the EPP, 'all members of the EPP group in the European Parliament elected on a list of a member party are also members ex officio of the association (hereinafter referred to as "individual members")'. See EPP statutes as approved by the EPP congress on 21 October 2015 in Madrid, article 5 on

date is a rather exclusive interpretation of the definition of individual membership in Europarties, very different in comparison to the individual membership policy of the second largest Europarty, the Party of European Socialists (PES). A rather vague provision in the PES' statutes indicates that 'all members of PES member parties are automatically members of the PES. Those who wish to be active in the PES can register as PES activists'.<sup>24</sup> There are currently almost 60,000 such 'PES activists' who may be organised in city groups across the EU.<sup>25</sup> However, empirical research on the PES activists scheme in practice indicates that the scope of their activity is small while the policy is inherent with tensions (see Hertner 2011, 2012, 2014; Kūlahci and Lighfoot 2014). For instance, the SPD leadership regards the PES activists with suspicion and does not integrate the PES activists into the party structure, worrying about parallel structures outside the party organisation, while the British Labour Party only tolerates a loose cooperation with the PES activists in the UK (Hertner 2011: 340). Moreover, the geographic spread of the PES activists is very uneven across EU countries, as the majority of the PES activists are from France, Romania, Sweden and Portugal (Hertner 2014).

An interesting case is the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party's individual members.<sup>26</sup> According to the ALDE Party statutes, individual members' delegates take part in the meetings of the organisation, have the right to voice their opinion and to vote. The creation in 2014 of a 'steering committee of individual members' of ALDE Party<sup>27</sup>, composed of five members who were elected in November 2015, as well as the specific provisions related to the exact numbers of delegates allocated to individual members in the Congress and the Council<sup>28</sup> indicate that the individual membership option in the case of ALDE party seems to have a certain existence in practice beyond just a vague formal provision in the organisation's statutes<sup>29</sup>. On the other hand, individual membership in the case of the Party of the European Left (EL) seems to exist on paper only. While the statutes of the EL includes a vague provision of

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admission and full members.

24 See PES statutes as adopted by the PES congress on 12 June 2015, article 18.

25 See 'the operating rules for PES activists' adopted by the PES Presidency on 18 February 2013.

26 See ALDE party statutes as amended on 21 November 2015, article 5.

27 See <http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/steering-committee-individual-members> (accessed 10 March 2016).

28 See ALDE party internal regulation as modified by the Party Council meeting in Budapest, 19 November 2015.



individual membership<sup>30</sup>, in practice the EL has only 120 individual members, coming from 24 different countries.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly to the case of ALDE party, the European Green Party (EGP) also has its own centralised structure, the Individual Supporters Network (ISN), which formally coordinates the EGP's approximately 1100 supporters across Europe. However, beyond these formal provisions and numbers, the reality is slightly different.

### **The case of the European Greens and its Individual Supporters Network**

The political family of the Greens may be considered a most likely case in order to study the ability of Europarties to link with citizens mainly due to the Greens' particular attachment to grassroots democracy (*Basisdemokratie*). Historically, Green parties emerged in several Western European countries around the same period, late 1970s, out of pan-European social and protest movements (Kitschelt 1986). Because of these historical origins, the Green parties are especially attached to grassroots democracy and have a strong linkage with civil society (Richardson and Rootes 1995; Frankland et al. 2008). Moreover, also due to the Greens' focus on environmental issues, which is particularly apt for the EU-level of governance, the Greens perform rather well in EP elections (Curtice 1989). As for the Greens' specific political agenda, across Western Europe, Green parties promote a new political cleavage, ecology/economy, or nature/market, which can be considered an emerging pan-European cleavage (Seiler 2005).

All these elements suggest that there are relatively good conditions to a possible development of a pan-European Green party organisation which tries to reach out to individual citizens across Europe, as is also illustrated in the following quote of EGP Co-Chair, MEP Reinhardt Bütikofer:

My idea of a strong EGP is not Brussels-focused, but is built on cooperation and networking. The European Union is a union of member states as well as a union of citizens. The EGP should work on both dimensions. In our European cooperation, we

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29 Arguably, the main function of the ALDE Party individual membership scheme is to provide a political platform for individuals in EU countries in which there is no liberal political party.

30 Statute of the EL, article 6, alinea 7.

31 Email from EL staff, March 12, 2015.

must not forget to provide political added value for Greens on the ground, in movements, in municipalities and in regions. This includes further developing the individual membership option, to offer European Green activists a greater scope for active involvement.<sup>32</sup>

The Greens' federal structure at the EU-level has gone through a similar process of institutionalisation and professionalisation as the other EU-level partisan organizations (Dietz 1997, 2000; Van De Walle 2001). The EGP was officially founded in February 2004. As such, it succeeded the European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP), founded in 1993, which was an institutionalisation of the European Green Coordination (EGC), founded ten years earlier. At the moment of writing, the EGP is composed of 45 member parties. Unlike other Europarties, EGP membership is not limited to EU countries only. As all Europarties, the EGP is financially dependent on the EP annual grants.<sup>33</sup>

The EGP's Individual Supporters Network (ISN) started as a tiny local, bottom-up cross-border initiative of a few Green activists living in the cross-border triangle region of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.<sup>34</sup> In January 2002 a few members of the Dutch Green party *GroenLinks* and a few members of the Green parties from Germany and Belgium had a joint meeting in the town of Heerlen, the Netherlands, close to the border. This small group of Green activists established the 'Heerlen Group', a cross-border coordination team, mainly from the Netherlands and the Aachen region of Germany. The main activities of this group were holding annual meetings. Later, this unofficial group got an official statute as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), which enabled it to obtain some financial resources for its activities, mainly through financial support from Dutch Green MEPs. The 'Heerlen Group' officially joined the EGP in 2009, becoming the EGP's 'Individual Supporters Network' (ISN). Since then, the organisation has obtained financial aid directly from the EGP budget and technical and administrative assistance from the EGP office in Brussels.

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32 EGP Co-Chair, Reinhardt Bütikofer, statement of motivation for re-election for a second mandate in the Lyon Council, November 2015.

33 The EP annual grants to the EGP have grown from around 0.5 million euros in 2005 to almost two million euros in 2014. In the EP, Green parties are in a joint parliamentary group together with regional parties of the European Free Alliance (EFA). Following the 2014 elections, Greens/EFA is composed of 50 MEPs from 17 EU countries and 25 different political parties.

34 Based on interviews 6, 7, 8 and 10. Also see: <http://isn.europeangreens.eu/about-us-2/about-us/history> (last accessed 26 January 2013).

The official recognition of individual members in the EGP rule book gives us a first impression of the importance these individual members have in the EGP organisational structure in comparison to membership of national parties. The EGP rule book, a 63-page document, begins with ten pages on membership of national parties (EGP 2011). In fact, the EGP has four different categories of membership for national parties: full members, candidate members, associate members and special members. The EGP rule book has detailed articles on national parties' membership criteria, members' rights and obligations according to the different categories, the procedure for admitting new members, possible sanctions, as well as a detailed table with membership fees and reimbursement guidelines for participation in EGP activities. A party's membership category has practical effects on the reimbursement rules applicable to it, for instance, to which extent the EGP covers the costs related to the party's delegates' participation in EGP councils (interview 9). On page 28 of the EGP rule book, under section 12, which deals with the EGP's working groups and networks, we find article 33, entitled 'The European Green Party and individuals', which stipulates:

33.1 The European Green Party has a delegated structure. Members are represented in the EGP through their delegates. The European Green Party therefore is not open for individual membership. However having outreach to green minded European citizens as one of its main legal objectives, individuals are welcome to participate within the EGP and, if they are members of an EGP Member Party, in the Individual Supporters Network.

33.2 Participation in the decision making process is exclusively held for Full Members of the European Green Party. Individuals who wish to participate in the decision making process can do this via the democratic representation of the Full Members in the European Green Party structures.

In the candid words of EGP co-chair, Reinhard Bütikofer, 'the ISN definition in the rulebook is so perfectly vague that it includes everything and nothing'.<sup>35</sup> Besides their general vagueness, there is clearly a tension in these provisions. On the one hand, the EGP is a federation of national parties, not open for individual membership. Individuals who wish to participate in the decision-making process of the EGP are invited to do so via their national parties' delegates of the federation. In principle, members of national parties have access to certain channels to be

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35 Participant observation, an ISN meeting in an EGP Council, Lyon, 13 November 2015.

involved in EU politics via their national party structures. For instance, party members can join their national parties' working groups on EU issues and thus be informed on the EU-level activities of their parties. Eventually, party members can become the official EGP delegates of their party and be directly involved in the EGP activities.

Nevertheless, the EGP leaves open the possibility for individuals to participate directly in the EGP via the ISN, which has some formal inroads into the EGP decision-making process. It is important to note that individual membership in the EGP is not open to all EU citizens but only to enrolled members of national parties which are EGP members. Thus, individual membership in the EGP is rather a secondary party membership, in addition to the primary membership in the national party.

### **The implementation of the EGP individual membership**

The first EGP Council after its official establishment in 2004 took place in Dublin following the EP elections, in November of that year. This Council adopted a resolution entitled 'supportership implementation':

An individual living in a European country where a member or observer party exists, can only become a supporter through that party. The admission criteria and practicalities regarding registration, collection of the supportership fee etc. shall be decided and managed by the respective national or regional party. [...] No more than every two months, but at least every six months, EGP member and observer parties shall provide the EGP secretariat with the data regarding the individual supporters. [...] The parties have to collect the fees and send this money plus the email address of each supporter to the EGP.<sup>36</sup>

According to this EGP resolution, individuals are to be enrolled in the EGP in two stages. First, national parties enrol the 'EGP supporters' among their members and administrate their contact details and annual fees. Then, the national parties are to transfer to the EGP the contact details of the 'EGP supporters' among their party members as well as their additional annual fees. After this

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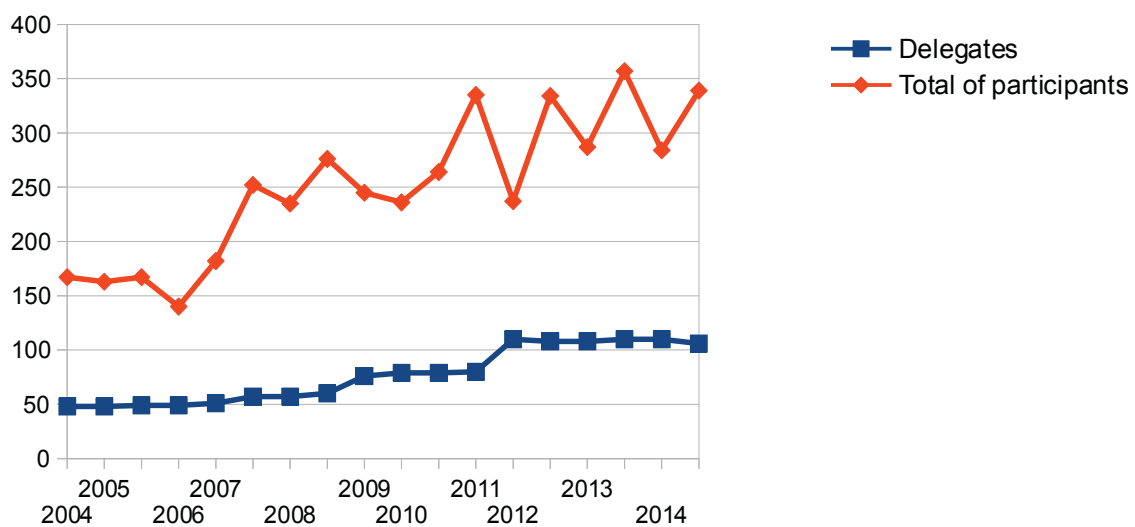
<sup>36</sup> <http://isn.europeangreens.eu/about-us-2/about-us/register-as-an-egp-supporter/supportership-implementation-resolution> (accessed 24 February 2014).

second stage, the ISN manages these individuals directly in a centralised manner with technical assistance from the EGP office.

Formally, the ISN central organisation has its own budget coming from the supporters' annual fees and possible additional funding from the EGP for specific activities. The ISN also has a transnational coordination team, composed of twelve members: eight individual supporters, three members nominated by the EGP committee, and one nominated by the EP group. The ISN has some agenda-setting powers in the EGP since it 'has the right to table resolutions and amendments in council on subjects of relevance to it' (EGP 2011: 28), but it does not have voting rights in the EGP councils.

However, since its creation in 2004 the development of the ISN remained limited in practice. Despite the formal agenda-setting powers of the ISN in EGP decision-making, in practice, the network never uses any of these formal rights. According to an EGP official, 'the ISN has a prominent place in the EGP rule book but a marginal one in Council and party members' (interview 16). In many respects, the EGP councils twice a year are the only moments in time where the EGP actually exists outside its office in Brussels. It is in the EGP councils that the main decisions on the EGP are officially approved by votes of the national parties' delegates. One way to evaluate the participation of individual citizens in the EGP is by looking at the turnout of EGP councils. A close observation of the number of participants of these EGP meetings gives us a good overview on how many individuals who are not parties' delegates actually take part in these meetings, notably in comparison to national parties' official delegates.

**Figure 2.1: Number of participants in EGP councils (2004-2014).**



(Based on the EGP Councils' participants lists)

In absolute numbers, the number of participants in EGP councils doubled between 2004 and 2014, from approximately 170 in 2004 to around 350 in 2014. The number of the parties' official delegates grew from 48 in 2004 to 106 in 2014. This entails that the number of participants who were not official party delegates more than doubled as well as it grew from around 120 in 2004 to approximately 300 in 2014. Once in five years, EGP meetings are congresses, which attract around 500 participants. The turnout in these events also show similar trend of steady growth. This indicates a growing interest in the EGP, also among individuals who are not the parties' official delegates. Nevertheless, a closer look at the participation lists indicate that very few of these individuals actually took part in the Council in the capacity of 'EGP individual supporters' or 'ISN members'. Rather, these individuals are part of their national party delegation but without being officially nominated as delegates, or they take part in the EGP council in another capacity, mostly as invited speaker, as staffers of the Green Group in the EP (GGEP), or as part of another organisation in the Green party 'family' such as the Green European Foundation (GEF), the Federation of the Young European Greens (FYEG), the Global Greens (GG), etc.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, while the ISN has annual meetings in different cities across Europe, there are often very few individuals attending these meetings besides the ISN team itself, which organizes the event, in addition to the invited speakers (interview 16). For instance, at the ISN annual meeting of 2010 in Amsterdam, there were around 50 participants, almost all of them Dutch (interview 20). A new ISN member from Germany, who came for the first time to an ISN activity, was surprised since he expected a bigger and a more international event. Instead, he found a small Dutch public with a few external speakers and organisers. According to a parliamentary assistant of a Green MEP, the ISN is not doing anything useful besides 'paying its members nice holidays in nice places in Europe' (interview 21). Leaving the ISN, this person explained his decision in these words: 'The main idea behind the ISN is to bring individuals closer to the EGP. [...] we have been addressing council members and people that are already involved in the Greens at the international level. In my perspective they are not our main group of people to address. [...] I will take a break from our structure in which I don't see much sense anymore' (interview 22).

The ISN also has difficulties to coordinate its already few activities with the national parties. For instance, in 2012 the ISN decided to organise its annual conference in Vienna,

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<sup>37</sup> The participant observations conducted in a few EGP councils indicate that the numbers of individuals and their official title which appear in the participation lists are relatively accurate data.

Austria, with the idea to attract Green activists from the neighbouring Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) countries (interview 28). However, during the preparation of the conference it was revealed that, despite previous oral understandings, the Viennese Greens decided not to cooperate with the ISN, not to let the ISN use their local in the city, 'the Greenhouse', as the conference venue, and were not ready to ask their party members to host participants coming to their city from CEE countries. Despite organisational efforts and a preparatory visit to Vienna of three ISN members in February 2012, the conference, which was originally scheduled to take place in April 2012, was first postponed, and was eventually cancelled all together. An EGP staff suggested that the Viennese Greens refused to cooperate since they see the ISN as a Brussels-based organization with substantive financial means which tries to use the local Greens in order to organize its own events (interview 28). Another ISN member explained the lack of willingness from the Austrian Greens by their own strength: 'the Greens in Vienna do not need the ISN to organise a conference. They are strong enough.' (interview 20).

The overall state of affairs is thus that the ISN activities in practice remain small in number and rather party-internal and elite-oriented. With almost no external activities, the ISN is mainly focused on internal meetings, internal documents and discussions - on the organisation's official name, goal, strategy, structure and some update of its website (interviews 7, 10, 19), a 'closed shop' of a few individuals (interview 16). Despite its low level of external activity, the ISN is still officially present in the EGP councils. For instance, during the EGP council in Lyon, in November 2015, the ISN had a meeting under the title 'Restart' with the participation of 16 people<sup>38</sup>, most of them parties' delegates and official representatives.

### **Explaining the ISN's limited success (I): The ambiguous interests of national parties**

Much of the limited effects of the EGP's policy of individual membership can be accounted for by the lack of interest of national parties. The integration of the 'Heerlen Group' into the EGP, becoming the ISN, was a difficult and long process, which took almost three years of discussions, mainly because of skepticism and reluctance from national parties to the idea to invite individuals inside the EGP structure. In the ISN's own words on the process:

Some EGP member parties turned out to have serious doubts about the idea, fearing that individuals might undermine their position within the EGP, or that political enemies

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<sup>38</sup> Participant observation, Lyon, 13 November 2015.

might join *en masse* through the European door and harm their position back home. Others were afraid that energy put into European action would sap forces needed for their own program. And yet others, the majority, were simply not interested or put the issue at the bottom of their priority list.<sup>39</sup>

The tension between a certain ambition to develop EGP individual membership and the reluctance of EGP member parties towards such an option is also clear in the following quote of the EGP Secretary General from 2009 to 2014, Jacqueline Cremers, which reveals the disagreements within the EGP on the idea of individual membership and the reluctance of national parties to adhere to this policy:

We have a delegate function as European Green party. That's good. We agreed to stay that way and we won't have individual members who adhere to the European Green party. So, there is a broad agreement among all of us. Maybe with the exception of me. Because I think we should have individual members. But the rest of the family agrees (Laughs). They are afraid of this individual network. (EGP secretary General, Jacqueline Cremers, cited in Heusquin, 2013: 94).

Hence, the vague and somewhat contradictory provisions on individual membership in the EGP and the limited implementation of the individual membership scheme in practice can be explained, to a large extent, by hesitations and concerns among national Green parties' towards the idea of individual membership of the EGP. As Luciano Bardi (2002) argued, Europarties are in potential competition with their national counterparts. An analysis of the findings of the survey among Green parties reveal the scope of this potential competition.

The Green parties' general attitudes towards the idea of individual membership in the EGP vary widely (see table 2). Half of the parties which took part in the survey express a clearly positive position towards the idea, while 40% of the parties express a generally positive opinion towards the idea in principle but immediately add some concerns or conditions in regards to this scheme and its implementation in practice. While only three Green parties express clear opposition in principle towards the very idea of individual membership in the EGP, two of these parties are particularly strong Green parties, the Swedish and the Austrian. Finally, officials of

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39 <http://isn.europeangreens.eu/about-us-2/about-us/history> (accessed 22 February 2014).



the relatively strong Green Party of England and Wales (GPEW) reply that the party does not have any elaborated position on this issue.

**Table 2.2: EGP member parties' appreciation of the ISN-scheme**

<b>Position</b>	<b>N (%)</b>
Outright positive	15 (47%)
Positive with caveat	13 (40%)
Negative	3 (10%)
No position	1 (3%)
Total	32 (100%)

The Green parties with clearly positive positions towards EGP individual membership mainly mention the possible benefits for their own national structures and for the EGP, arguing that the ISN may be an additional resource of volunteers for the EP elections' campaign. The parties which express a generally positive position but also express their reluctance mainly indicate that individual membership in the EGP risks to compete with their own party organisation over resources such as membership fees. Some parties also mentioned concern that the ISN may be a group of 'disgruntled former members of national political parties that bring their grievances from national to European level'. As for the parties which express opposition in principle to the idea of EGP individual membership policy, the Austrian Greens reply that they are very skeptical about the idea and do not see the possible advantages of this additional organisation while the Swedish Greens simply reply that 'the EGP should be a party of parties and not of individuals'.<sup>40</sup>

A large variety is found among Green parties' preferences towards the practicalities of the ISN-scheme (see table 3). While the slight majority of Green parties answer that EGP individual membership should be open to all citizens, a large minority of the parties answer that EGP membership should be conditioned by membership in one of the national parties. Some parties express concern of losing control over EGP individual members from their country. For instance, Austrian Greens are worried of possible 'conflicts concerning people having different viewpoints than the national parties'.

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<sup>40</sup> International secretary, *Miljöpartiet de Gröna*, Email exchange, 23 January 2015.

**Table 2.3: EGP member parties' preferences with regard to the ISN-scheme**

	<b>In favour</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>No position</b>	<b>Total</b>
Membership open to all citizens (including non-members of national parties)	18 (56%)	12 (37%)	2 (7%)	32 (100%)
Members should have participation rights in national candidate selection procedures for EP elections	12 (37%)	18 (56%)	2 (7%)	32 (100%)
Centralised membership structure	21 (65%)	9 (28%)	2 (7%)	32 (100%)
Active information policy on ISN	6 (19%)	26 (81%)	-	32 (100%)

As for the individual members' rights, the majority of Green parties does not esteem that EGP individual members should have any particular role in the selection process of their candidates to the EP elections, while a substantial minority of parties answer positively. When we look more closely at the parties' preferences we find that among the 12 Green parties which have seats in the EP, ten answer negatively on this issue. Notably, the two largest Green parties, the German and the French, oppose the idea. On the other hand, among the 20 Green parties which do not have any seat in the EP, ten parties answer positively, eight answer negatively and two more have no position. This result indicates that the well established Green parties are more reluctant to concede rights to EGP individual members than the weaker parties, which arguably do not have much to lose anyways.

With regard to the organisation of the individual membership scheme, the large majority of Green parties prefers a centralised membership structure under the EGP office, including members' annual fees and email contacts, while only nine parties prefer the organisational structure to remain at the national level. An interesting reply comes from the Luxembourg Greens, in favour of centralised organisation but highlight the need for a transparent flow of information from the member parties: 'Everything else will not work, as is shown by the actual situation in the Netherlands and in Germany where the ISN is applied but the EGP does not get any information and mostly no money either, and if EGP got part of the money in the past, it was

without any proof or numbers or names, contacts'<sup>41</sup>. This answer sheds light on the scope of technical and financial difficulties involved in the implementation of Europarties' individual membership scheme which every national party seems to implement in its own way and according to its own interests.

The survey's findings indicate that the generally positive position towards the ISN in principle, expressed by the parties' officials, is not necessarily accompanied by any meaningful attempt to actually implement this policy in practice, to endorse it or to advertise it among party members. In fact, national Green parties do not implement the EGP resolution from 2004 on the practical aspects of individual membership in the EGP and do not inform their party members on the ISN. While all 32 party representatives who took part in the survey (100% of respondents) answered that they know about the existence of EGP individual membership scheme, the ISN<sup>42</sup>, Green parties do not inform their party members of the ISN and do not give them the possibility to join it. In the survey, the large majority of the parties' officials replied that their party does not inform its members on the ISN.<sup>43</sup>

All in all, the positive position towards the ISN in principle, expressed by many Green parties' officials, is not accompanied by much genuine interest in seeing the ISN develop or by any genuine acceptance of the possibility that EGP individual members may have a say on the parties' selection procedures of candidates for EP elections. While the parties accept the idea of the individual membership option in principle, they express concerns about losing the control over their own flow of resources and individual party members. Indeed, a substantial number of national parties sees the EGP as an attempt to reach out to citizens, as a potential competition with their own organisational structures, and are not interested in the effective development of the ISN (interview 12). While some parties' representatives show a reluctance and even a certain

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41 EGP staffers confirmed in informal discussions that the EGP request to obtain from these national parties the contact lists of the 'EGP supporters' among their members were not successful.

42 However, some party members who were present in the EGP council in Lyon and answered the survey declared not being aware of the ISN.

43 In the survey, six (out of 32) of the parties' officials answered that they do inform their members about the ISN. It is plausible that these parties' officials were careful in their answers to the survey since they suspected the information they provided in their written replies may be eventually available to the EGP office. This is particularly plausible since the printed survey was handed out in during an EGP Council. Among the six parties which declared to inform their party members on the ISN five are small Green parties - from Italy, Greece, Romania, Serbia and Russia - which might be worried of critics from the EGP. However, German Greens also declared informing their members of the ISN. This may not be surprising, though, considering the party's usage in practice of the ISN as part of its own internal party structure, keeping the ISN members' fees and email addresses within the national party structure.

opposition to the idea, in general, though, national Green parties simply show a general lack of interest in the entire initiative and often have no particularly elaborated position on it. Some Green parties' officials explained in their responses to the survey that their party invests its limited resources in domestic politics and that the ISN is simply not a priority for them.

### **Explaining the ISN's limited success (II): Party members' lack of interest**

National parties' lack of interest vis-a-vis the individual membership policy of the Europarty they are affiliated with is only one part of the story. The second explanation for the limited development of the individual membership in Europarties is the actual lack of interest among party members. Even when the ISN manages to reach out directly to party members, they show little interest to enrol as EGP supporters. For instance, the ISN was present, together with the EGP, at the summer university of the French Greens, *Europe-Ecologie-Les-Verts* (EELV) in 2013. Many EELV members had never heard about the EGP before and did not understand what it means that a pan-European party exists in the first place.<sup>44</sup> EELV members who were aware of the existence of the EGP saw it as a federation of national parties, of which EELV is a full member, and did not see much sense in individual membership in such a federal structure as they considered themselves already members of the EGP via their national party. Other EELV members thought that the EGP is a brand new party in French politics. As one EGP staffer explains: 'this is nothing new with the people in France. It already happened to us a year ago and two years ago [at the EELV summer university]. They think it is a new French party which competes with EELV' (interview 13). During this summer university, the presentation of the EGP to EELV members, represented personally by EGP Secretary General, Jaqueline Cremers, took place at the same time as the main plenary of the summer university with speeches by the party's two ministers. The meeting of the EGP attracted only eight party members, all of them already knew about the EGP and were present in EGP councils in the past<sup>45</sup>.

In Spain, approximately 210 members of the Spanish Green party, EQUO, attended the EGP council in Madrid in May 2013, besides the parties' official delegates from all over Europe.<sup>46</sup> However, these rank and file party members mainly participated in the debates which were organised by EQUO on the most nationally salient issue of the financial crisis and youth

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44 Interviews 11, 12, 13, and participant observation, Marseille, 22-24 August 2013.

45 Participant observation, Marseille, 22 August, 2013. Of the eight individuals who were present in that meeting, at least said they are of foreign origin (Spain, Greece, Turkey) or were not living in France.

unemployment in Spain. The party members' interaction with the EGP was extremely incidental, and only one member of EQUO, a member of the party executive office, actually joined the ISN in the EGP council. This individual organised a workshop of the ISN at the EQUO summer university in Murcia in September 2013 in order to present the ISN to rank and file party members. The ISN had sent two Spanish-speaking individuals of Latin origin to this event, one from the Netherlands and one from Switzerland. The participants of the workshop had many basic questions on the EGP itself and how it functions, had difficulties to imagine concrete actions related to an organisation they were not familiar with, and no individuals joined the ISN following this event (interview 15). A former ISN member explains that the ISN mainly attracted 'desperate individuals who are isolated in their national party' (interview 10). This explanation resonates with some national parties' concerns discussed earlier in relation to opening the EGP to individual members.

At the time of writing, December 2016, the ISN is to be replaced by a virtual platform of activists called 'ACT'.<sup>47</sup> The party-like logic of individual members (called 'supporters'), paying membership fees, is to be replaced by individual registration to an online platform, becoming part of a network of activists, monitored by the EGP office. Similarly to the ISN provisions in the EGP rulebook, the EGP draft resolution on the ACT network is inherent with tensions between a centralised EGP instrument and member parties' control over it, stating that 'the EGP will develop a governance structure of the ACT network together with the member parties and the ISN coordinators'<sup>48</sup> and that 'the ACT network will not get involved in activities regarding issues of national or regional scope, nor will it get involved with activities in a member state unless member party concerned explicitly welcomes that'.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the Dutch Green party, Groenlinks, had tabled three amendments to the original draft of the EGP committee, requesting more party control over the future network.<sup>50</sup> One of these amendments aimed to restrict the network to party members only, explaining that 'it is undesirable that individual people can be a

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46 Based on official participation list of the EGP Council and participant observation, Madrid, 10-12 May, 2013.

47 Draft EGP resolution, 'Proposal for ACT Network', EGP Council, Glasgow, 2-4 December 2016.

48 Idem, page 2, lines 65-66.

49 Idem, page 1, lines 30-32.

50 Amendments submitted to Draft resolution "proposal for ACT network", EGP Council in Glasgow, 2-4 December 2016.

members of the network without being connected to one of the member parties.'<sup>51</sup> However, this amendment was not accepted.<sup>52</sup> A second amendment was to add to the draft resolution that 'the network is not intended as a tool for fundraising'. After negotiations in the EGP council in Glasgow, a more nuanced sentence was added, saying that 'the network should not crowd out fundraising and other activities by member parties.'<sup>53</sup> Finally, the third amendment of Groenlinks, requesting the EGP committee to present to the next Council 'a transparent structure of how the network is organised and how responsibilities are defined' was accepted as tabled.

## Conclusions

The transformation of Europarties from weak federal structures into genuine fully fledged political parties at the EU-level may have the potential to enhance EU democracy and to link citizens to EU politics. Arguably, the development of individual membership in the Europarty can be seen to entail its possible transformation from a loose federal structure of national parties towards a genuine transnational political party at the European level. This article examined empirically to what extent Europarties are able to develop individual membership by an in-depth analysis of the case of the EGP and its Individual Supporters' Network (ISN). I observed vague and contradictory provisions of EGP individual membership scheme as well as limited implementation of it in practice.

Two major explanations were identified to account for these findings. The main explanation is the lack of interest among national parties or even a certain reluctance to cooperate with their affiliated Europarty on the individual membership option, as was revealed by the parties' attitudes and practices. National parties have their own interests in retaining their monopoly on linkage with citizens. Since party membership is in decline in general, members become more difficult to obtain, to keep and to mobilise in campaigns. Yet, these fewer party members still offer political parties important resources, such as membership fees, volunteering time and symbolic legitimacy.

By trying to reach out directly to individual citizens across Europe, Europarties threaten to enter in direct competition with national parties over their own actual party members or

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51 Groenlinks, Explanation/Comment to amendment no. 1, Amendments submitted to Draft resolution "proposal for ACT network", EGP Council in Glasgow, 2-4 December 2016.

52 EGP resolution on ACT Network, as adopted, 25<sup>th</sup> EGP Council, Glasgow, 2-4 December 2016.

53 EGP resolution on ACT Network, as adopted, 25<sup>th</sup> EGP Council, Glasgow, 2-4 December 2016.

potential ones in civil society. Therefore, national parties have an institutional self-interest against the genuine development of individual membership in Europarties. Hence, the Europarties' attempts to develop individual membership are accompanied by tensions between the Europarty's central structure and the national parties affiliated with it. Since national parties are the gatekeepers of their affiliated Europarty, controlling its decision-making process via their official party delegates, they can water down the policy proposals on individual membership, drag their feet in the implementation phase of the formal policy decided upon or eventually ignore the policy all together. Furthermore, national parties may also make usage of their affiliated Europarty individual membership scheme as a means to obtain additional resources from its own members, with limited benefit for the Europarty's organisational structure. The conclusion is that, in order to establish an effective policy of individual membership, Europarties need to bypass their own federal structure and hence the national parties which compose them. This is quite unlikely to happen.

The second explanation for the limited development of Europarties' individual membership is the lack of interest among individual party members in such an option. Party members are busy with their own priorities in domestic politics and lack genuine knowledge of and interest in the organisation and activities of the Europarty their national party is affiliated with. As a consequence, Europarties' individual membership scheme seem to consist of a top-down offer without much demand for it at the bottom. As long as the national parties do not actively diffuse information on the Europarty they are affiliated with among their members, supporters and voters, these individuals have little chances to be informed on the political dynamics at the EU-level and to get interested in contributing to the Europarty organisation. Therefore, the two explanations of the limited development of individual membership in Europarties - the limited interest of national parties and the limited interest of individual party members - are interconnected. Hence, under the current conditions, it is difficult to see how individual membership in Europarties is to develop in practice, and even more difficult to regard it as a stepping-stone towards a genuinely self-standing party structure at the European level.



## List of interviews

Interviewee no.	Role	Place	Date
1	ISN member	Athens	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
2	MEP	Madrid	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2012
3	EGP staff	Madrid	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2012
4	Party delegate	Paris	11 <sup>th</sup> September 2011
5	MEP assistant	Strasbourg	14 <sup>th</sup> June 2013
6	ISN member	Brussels	22 <sup>th</sup> January 2012
7	ISN member	Strasbourg	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2013
8	ISN member	Brussels	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2013
9	EGP staff	Athens	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
10	EGP official	Brussels	21 <sup>th</sup> January 2012
11	EELV member	Marseille	23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2013
12	EGP staff	Marseille	23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2013
13	EGP staff	Marseille	24 <sup>th</sup> August 2013
14	EGP staff	Skype	9 <sup>th</sup> September 2013
15	ISN member	Skype	9 <sup>th</sup> September 2013
16	EGP official	Brussels	28 <sup>th</sup> June 2013
17	Party official	Brussels	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2013
18	EGP official	Brussels	21 <sup>th</sup> June 2012 ; 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2012
19	ISN member	Madrid	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2012
20	ISN members	Brussels	8 <sup>th</sup> March 2012
21	MEP assistant	Madrid	9 <sup>th</sup> May 2013
22	ISN member	Email exchange	11 <sup>th</sup> May 2013
23	ISN members	Brussels	28 <sup>th</sup> June 2013
24	ISN members	Email exchange	24 <sup>th</sup> July 2012
25	Party delegate	Brussels	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2013
26	Party members	Athens	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2013
27	ISN members	By telephone	17 <sup>th</sup> October 2013
28	EGP staff	Brussels	8 <sup>th</sup> March 2012

## Appendix 2.1: Administration of the survey among EGP member parties

The survey among Green parties was conducted in two parts. The first part of the survey was in January and February 2015, during which I sent personal emails containing seven questions (here at the bottom) to the Green parties' officials in charge of EU or international affairs, according to the list of personal contacts in the various EGP member parties which I had received from the EGP office in Brussels. These party officials were mainly the parties' international secretaries in charge of EU affaires or secretary generals. In the end of three relaunch rounds, representatives of 17 Green parties replied to this email survey. Green parties from northern Europe were somehow over-represented in the email survey. The lower level of response rate in other regions



of Europe may be explained by lack of resources of the small Green parties in many countries and by the lower relevance of the issue of the EGP individual membership for these parties, notably those outside the EU. In addition, the two largest Green parties in Europe, the German Greens and the French Greens, did not answer to the email survey.

Therefore, I conducted a second phase of data collection. During the EGP council in Lyon, France, in the weekend of 13 to 15 November 2015, I distributed a questionnaire containing the same questions which were previously sent by email, to which I obtained answers from official representatives of additional 15 Green parties. The respondents were again mainly the parties' international secretariats and EGP delegates who took part in the EGP council. All in all, the survey included 24 parties from EU countries as well as eight parties from countries outside the EU (Switzerland, Norway, Turkey, Serbia, Russia, Georgia, Moldova and Albania). Among the 24 Green parties from EU countries, the survey population includes thirteen Green parties from eleven Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK), six parties from CEE countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia) and five parties from Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Malta).

## Appendix 2.2: Response overview of the survey among EGP member parties

		Population	Sample	Missing Cases
Green parties in EU	Green parties in the European Parliament	17 (38%)	12 (70%): Austria Belgium (ecolo) Denmark Finland France Germany Luxembourg Spain (ICV) Spain (EQUO) Sweden UK (GPEW) Estonia	5 (30%): Belgium (Flanders) Hungary (LMP) NL (GL) Lithuania Croatia
	EU Green Parties not in the European Parliament	16 (35%)	12 (75%): Bulgaria Cyprus Greece Hungary (ZB) Ireland Italy Malta NL (Greonen) Poland Romania Slovenia UK (Scotland)	4 (25%): CZ Latvia Portugal Slovakia
Green parties outside EU		12 (27%)	8 (67%): Switzerland Norway Turkey Serbia Russia Georgia Moldova Albania	4 (33%): Andorra Azerbaijan Belarus Ukraine
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>45 (100%)</b>	<b>32 (70%)</b>	<b>13 (30%)</b>

### **Appendix 2.3: The questions included in the survey among EGP member parties**

1. Are you aware of the actual EGP individual membership policy, the Individual Supporters Network (ISN)?
2. What is the party's position towards this policy and organization?
3. Does your party inform party members of the ISN and gives them the possibility to join it?
4. Does your party support the idea of direct individual membership of the EGP?
5. Should EGP individual membership be conditioned by membership in one of the national parties which are EGP members, or be open to all citizens?
6. Should the organizational structure of the individual members of the EGP be centralized at the EU-level, including members' annual fees and Email contacts, or should these remain in the national parties?
7. Should EGP individual supporters across the EU take part in the selection process of the national parties' candidates to the European Parliament elections?

## Article Three: The Diplomatic Role of the European Parliament's Political Groups in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict<sup>54</sup>

### Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a highly salient and emblematic issue of international relations that regularly appears on the political agenda of the EU (Newman and Yacobi 2008; Del Sarto 2015; Voltolini 2016). The EU's approach towards this question has remained fairly consistent during the past few decades: the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to fully exercise their right to self-determination; support for a negotiated peace settlement in the Middle East on the basis of relevant United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions, mainly nos. 242 and 338; and the creation of an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable state of Palestine through negotiations in the framework of the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP).<sup>55</sup> However, there is a tension between the EU's normative political stance on this issue and its close trade relations with the state of Israel (Cronin 2011, Gordon and Pardo 2013).

As an international parliamentary institution (Cofelice and Stavridis 2014), the European Parliament (EP) is trying to have its own say on the question of Israel-Palestine. While the EP fully endorses the EU's general approach towards Palestinian statehood, it also pushes the Commission and the Council to play a more active role in the MEPP and take a more critical stance towards the Israeli Government's policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) (Gianniou 2015). Furthermore, in the past, the EP called to suspend the EU-Israel Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement due to violations of human rights and international law by the state of Israel<sup>56</sup> and delayed for two years the ratification of the EU-Israel Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance (ACAA) for industrial products (see Hessel and De Keyser 2013: 209-226). Furthermore, the EP called to implement the recommendations of the so-

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<sup>54</sup> The article is in print in a volume edited by Stelios Stavridis and Davor Jančić, *Parliamentary Diplomacy in European and Global Governance*, forthcoming, 2016 from Brill publishers.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, the Venice Declaration of 13 June 1980 of the nine member states of the European Community; the Berlin European Council conclusions of 25 March 1999; EU Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process of 15 June 2009; EU Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process of 20 July 2015.

<sup>56</sup> European Parliament resolution of 10 April 2002 on the Middle East (2002), OJ C 127E/584.

called ‘Goldstone report’ of the UN’s fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict of December 2008-January 2009,<sup>57</sup> which was led by a former South African judge Richard Goldstone.

These matters are regular subjects of debates in the EP’s Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), its Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) and the Committee on Development (DEVE). The EP also has two related permanent delegations: the Delegation for Relations with Israel (D-IL) and the Delegation for Relations with Palestine (DPLC).<sup>58</sup> In addition to the work done in the specialised committees, the situation in Israel-Palestine regularly arises as a subject of lively plenary debates and resolutions. For instance, during the years 2014 and 2015 alone, the EP adopted four resolutions on the topic.<sup>59</sup> The EP plenary debates on the issue often feature in statements of the EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini, who has invested a lot of work into the MEPP since she assumed office in November 2014.

Scholars have shown that the European Commission’s position on Israel-Palestine was influenced by the pressure coming from Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), who, in turn, were influenced by their national constituencies in the EU member states (Gordon and Pardo, 2015). For instance, the Commission’s guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli settlements in the OPT for EU grants, prizes and financial instruments,<sup>60</sup> issued in 2013, were actually an initiative of the EP that was later adopted by the Commission. Hence, this conflict is a topic that is particularly well-suited for evaluating the nature of parliamentary diplomacy at the EU level and the role of the EP as a diplomatic actor.

This chapter explores the distinctive nature of the European Parliament’s political groups (EP groups) as diplomatic actors. The lion’s share of the diplomatic activities conducted by EP groups is rather informal and is conducted through emails, telephone calls and meetings.

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57 European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2010 on implementation of the Goldstone recommendations on Israel/Palestine (2010), OJ C 349E/34.

58 Previously called the Delegation for Relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council (DPLC), the delegation changed its name in 2015 as a symbolic step in the aftermath of the EP Resolution of 17 December 2014 on recognition of Palestine statehood.

59 See European Parliament resolutions of 17 July 2014 on the escalation of violence between Israel and Palestine (2014), OJ C 167/24; of 18 September 2014 on Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU (2014), OJ C 184/70; of 17 December 2014 on recognition of Palestine statehood (2014), P8\_TA (2014)0103; of 10 September 2015 on the EU’s role in the Middle East peace process (2015). P8\_TA -PROV(2015)0318. The two most recent EP resolutions have not been published yet in the OJ due to technical problems (last checked in April 2016).

60 European Commission, Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (2013), OJ C 205/05.

Institutional procedures – such as producing minutes of meetings, follow-up or reporting – scarcely apply. Moreover, many of these activities are of an *ad hoc* nature, with limited continuity over time, and dependent on the personal contacts of a small number of individuals.

The informal nature of the EP groups' diplomacy poses two methodological challenges. First, collecting empirical data can be difficult, considering that many of these informal activities are ill-suited to traditional methods of analysis in diplomatic studies, often based on official documents and formal institutional procedures. The EP resolutions are only the last and the most visible stage in a long process of negotiations between EP groups as well as between delegations of national parties within EP groups. This entire process of negotiations is rather invisible to scholars of international relations.

Second, it is difficult to disentangle the EP groups' autonomous diplomatic activities from those conducted by formal EP institutional bodies, such as standing committees and delegations. Therefore, the chapter explores the nature of EP groups as diplomatic actors by relying on qualitative social science research methods, mainly in-depth interviews. The goal is to gather empirical evidence on the diplomacy of left-wing EP groups on the issue of Israel-Palestine: the Social Democrats (S&D), the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) and the far left Confederal Group of the European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). Left-wing EP groups have been selected because they are particularly engaged on this topic and because they do so in a way that challenges the conventional diplomatic channels of the EU. Between the years 2010 and 2015, I conducted 20 in-depth interviews and engaged in numerous discussions with a variety of actors from these three EP groups: MEPs, parliamentary assistants, the groups' political advisors, as well as with officials of human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs) based in Brussels and in Israel and the Palestinian territories. These sociological research methods were combined with the consultation of EP resolutions and EP groups' motions for resolutions, press releases, conferences, hearings and visits to Israel and the Palestinian territories during this time period, in addition to activities of the relevant EP committees, delegations, and EP plenary debates on the topic.

The chapter proceeds as follows. It first provides a short presentation of the relatively limited scholarly interest in the EP groups' role in EU external policy. It then analyzes the distinctive nature of EP groups as diplomatic actors, highlighting their relatively high level of coordination with civil society actors in third countries as well as their often substantive internal divisions on foreign policy. An empirical section provides evidence of the diplomatic actorness of the EP groups selected on the issue of Israel-Palestine. This is followed by the conclusion that

EP groups are emerging diplomatic actors that play a complementary role in EU external relations while maintaining close links with civil society actors beyond the EU.

### The Significance of the European Parliament's Political Groups in EU External Action

Over the past few decades, the EP has progressively been transformed from a consultative body into a powerful co-legislator in the EU's political system (Costa and Magnette 2003, Rittberger 2005, 2012). The EP has obtained new formal and informal powers, including in policy areas that used to be largely dominated by intergovernmental dynamics, and this process was further and significantly facilitated by informal empowerment (Crum 2006). The EP's growing influence in EU external relations has also been documented, especially in the area of international trade (Van den Putte et al. 2015; Meissner 2016). Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EP has acted not only as a veto player (Monar 2010), but also as an agenda setter and policy maker in EU external relations (Ripoll Servent 2014).

However, scholars tend to analyze the EP as a monolithic actor and underestimate the dynamics of party politics, particularly transnational dynamics between different EP groups, which are outlined in Table 3.1 (Bardi 1996; Raunio 1997; Bell and Lord 1998; Bressanelli 2013). The EP is not a unitary actor. Instead, it is becoming a 'real parliament', internally divided into political groups with different ideological lines, primarily along the left/right cleavage, similar to political dynamics observed in national parliaments (Hix et al. 2005).

**Table 3.1: EP groups by number of seats in the 2014-2019 legislature**

<b>Political Group</b>	<b>No. of MEPs</b>	<b>Full name of the political group</b>
EPP	217	European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
S&D	190	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
ECR	74	European Conservatives and Reformists
ALDE	70	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats
GUE/NGL	52	Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left
Greens/EFA	50	Greens/European Free Alliance
EFDD	45	Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy
ENF	39	Europe of Nations and Freedom
NI	14	Non-attached Members
<b>Total</b>	<b>751</b>	

Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu> (accessed 18 February 2016).

Research on voting patterns in roll call votes in the plenary indicate that EP groups are rather coherent actors despite their heterogeneous composition and the EU enlargement in 2004 (Bressanelli 2014a). In fact, the level of EP groups' incoherence in plenary votes is estimated at an average of only 5-10 per cent of all roll call votes (Hix 2013). Some scholars even claim that EP groups are genuine European political parties in the making within an emerging transnational party system at the EU level (Hix et al. 2003; Bardi et al. 2010). However, these groups are composed of delegations of national political parties, coming from various EU member states. The real scope for internal divisions within EP groups is not fully demonstrated by the studies of roll call votes (Priestly 2010), making it necessary to complement their results with those obtained through the use of other methods, such as detailed case studies and process tracing of specific policies (Külahci 2010).

The bulk of the EP groups' activity in the EU's international affairs takes place through inter-group negotiations aimed at influencing the overall institutional position of the EP towards the Council and the Commission. However, EP groups are not solely a part of the EP institutional environment; they are also developing autonomous diplomatic actorness in their own right. So far, EP groups have seldom been studied as diplomatic actors (but see Fiott 2015), so studying them from this perspective helps uncover the manner in which the diplomatic role of EP groups differs from that played by the EP as a whole.

### **The European Parliament's Political Groups as Diplomatic Actors**

Reflecting the nature of parliamentary diplomacy in general (Costa et al. 2013; Jančić 2015), EP groups are new international actors with independent actorness, which benefit from much leeway to conduct their own diplomatic activities. Although they are components of the EP's institutional environment, EP groups are bound neither by the positions taken by the EP nor by those taken by the EU executive – the European Council, the European External Action Service (EEAS), and the European Commission.

A first characteristic of EP groups as diplomatic actors is the scarcity of resources. Unlike states, EP groups do not have embassies and political personnel around the world but only a small pool of staffers based in Brussels, who are kept extremely busy with the day-to-day work of scrutiny of EU legislation, in addition to tasks related to the MEPs' constituencies (Busby 2013). Parliamentarians' international activities require heavy investment of all kinds of



resources, beginning with time, in order to obtain a sufficient level of expertise, information and knowledge (Crum and Fossum 2013). However, MEPs only have very few incentives to invest their already limited resources in costly diplomatic activities across borders, as these activities only marginally impact their chances of being re-elected or pursuing their political career at the national level (Neunreiter 2005).

EP groups compensate their resource scarcity by a relatively high level of coordination with civil society actors in third countries, such as human rights NGOs, advocacy networks, think tanks, social movements, academics, artists, intellectuals, etc. Coordinating with NGOs in third countries allows EP groups to obtain accurate information and expert knowledge on the situation on the ground in these countries, which are vital resources for the conduct of any sort of diplomatic activity. The overall result seems to be that EP groups are to a large extent dependent on the information provided to them by their contacts in third countries. The EP groups' dependence on information provided by third-country NGOs is similar to the overall dependence of the EU on NGOs as the primary sources of information for assessing the situation on the ground in third countries (Steinberg 2016; Voltolini 2016).

Another resource that civil society actors in third countries may offer EP groups is close coordination of approaches to contentious issues, the sharing of first-hand information and knowledge, and mutual support for joint action on matters of common concern (for a discussion on political legitimacy in EU politics from a sociological perspective see Kauppi 2005). When closely coordinated with civil society actors in third countries, EP groups may claim to be not only the representatives of EU citizens (Fiott 2011), but also those of a foreign country. EP groups transmit to the EU level claims from third-country civil society organisations, whereby the latter try to bypass their own national governments and challenge traditional state diplomacy (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Sikkink 2005). In fact, EP groups not only passively *receive* information from these civil society actors, they also actively *provide* them with resources of their own: international legitimacy and recognition, as well as information from Brussels on EU institutional developments, which is of utmost importance for NGOs' efforts to lobby the EU more efficiently.

The second characteristic of EP groups as diplomatic actors is their internal divisions. This relates to the fact that MEPs primarily render account to their national political parties (Navarro 2010) and not to a pan-European party organisation. In the EU's multilevel system of governance political will-formation still occurs mainly in the national political arena and not at the EU level (Crum 2012). EP groups are composed of delegations of national political parties,

which are deeply entrenched in domestic political spheres. Each national party tries to upload its policy preferences to its EP group with degrees of success varying mainly depending on the size of its delegation (Klüver and Rodon 2013). In foreign affairs in particular, there are often substantive differences between national parties affiliated with the same political group in the EP. As an EP group's policy advisor puts it, 'foreign policy is national policy'.<sup>61</sup>

As a result of these divisions within EP groups, there is some incoherence in the groups' diplomatic stances, reflecting internal compromises between different national delegations within these groups around the lowest common denominator. Also, informal EP delegations of national parties, as well as individual MEPs, tend to conduct their own diplomatic activities in parallel to those of their affiliated EP group, not necessarily following the EP group's official position. This may weaken the capacity of the EP group concerned to act as a coherent diplomatic actor. The EP groups' internal divisions on international politics thus prevent these emerging diplomatic actors from fulfilling their full potential as democratically elected representatives. All of these dynamics are illustrated below with empirical examples of the left-wing EP political groups' activism on the issue of Israel-Palestine.

### **Left-Wing European Parliament Groups' Activism on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

There is a very intensive activity of pro-Palestinian NGOs in Brussels, working with the European Parliament [...]. Some Israeli NGO, some Palestinian NGOs, some European NGOs, which work here directly, very intensively, especially with the left-wing parties here, and they always engage in activities in order to challenge Israel.<sup>62</sup>

This observation, made by an Israeli Embassy official, who spent a few years lobbying the EP, is an example of actors from third countries acknowledging the political divisions within the EP on international political issues. This Israeli diplomat did not simply complain about the intensive activities of pro-Palestinian NGOs in the EP in general; she clearly noticed the close ties of these NGOs with left-wing EP groups – S&D, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL – which are particularly active on the issue of Israel-Palestine. For example, both Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL are critical

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<sup>61</sup> Eduard Gaudot, Greens/EFA Strategic Unit, interview, 27 October 2015, Strasbourg (French. Translated by the author).

<sup>62</sup> Galit Peleg, Israeli Foreign Ministry official in charge of relations with the EP, interview, 18 January 2011, Strasbourg (Hebrew. Translated by the author).

of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. Yet while GUE/NGL's position is that this agreement should be suspended, the Greens claim it should merely be 'revisited'.

The next section provides empirical data on the diplomatic role of left-wing EP groups on the question of Israel-Palestine by conducting four case studies: the first two cases are directly concerned with the situation in the West Bank and Gaza, while the other two cases deal with issues beyond these territories. It follows a chronological order: the aftermath of the Gaza war in the summer of 2014, the recognition of Palestinian statehood in December 2014, the status of the Palestinian minority in Israel in September and October 2015, and the Israeli Knesset's 'NGO Transparency Act' of 11 July 2016.

### ***Case Study I: The Gaza War of Summer 2014***

#### *The Position of GUE/NGL*

After the Gaza war of July-August 2014, the EP expressed its condolences 'to all victims of the armed conflict and to their families, strongly condemned the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and urged the EU to participate effectively in the urgent humanitarian aid effort and in the reconstruction of Gaza'.<sup>63</sup> This resolution was adopted by a large majority of 447 MEPs with 143 voting against and 41 abstaining. The radical left EP group, GUE/NGL, which voted against the text, proposed its own resolution in which it called to establish a fact-finding mission to Gaza 'to witness first-hand the dimensions of the destruction, the needs of the population as regard humanitarian aid, water and electricity, and the situation of the hospitals, schools and infrastructure'.<sup>64</sup> However, the group's motion for resolution was overwhelmingly defeated in the EP plenary with only 55 MEPs voting in favour, 512 against and 71 abstaining. The group's separate amendment on the fact-finding mission to Gaza was also rejected in the plenary, so the mission never took place.

Instead, GUE/NGL sent its own fact-finding mission to Gaza on 4-7 September 2014 in the form of a relatively large delegation of 13 MEPs from six countries and eight national delegations. Since the Israeli Government refused to let the delegation enter the Gaza strip, they

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<sup>63</sup> See European Parliament resolution of 18 September 2014 on Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU, OJ C 184/85.

<sup>64</sup> GUE/NGL, Amendment 9, Motion for a resolution of 18 September 2014 on Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU.

were unable to assess the situation on the ground for themselves. However, the delegation members travelled to the West Bank and met with the director of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), Salvatore Lombardo, and visited the Palestinian Red Crescent headquarters in Ramallah and the Makassed Islamic hospital in East Jerusalem.

In addition to appraising the humanitarian situation in Gaza, GUE/NGL MEPs were received by the Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah and by Palestinian ministers and parliamentarians. These included Khalida Jarrar, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), who had refused to obey an Israeli expulsion order from Ramallah to Jericho and was later arrested by Israel. In East Jerusalem, the delegation also met with the family of the Palestinian 17-year-old Mohammed Abu Khdeir, who had been killed by Israeli civilians. Finally, GUE/NGL also had a ‘hugely constructive meeting’<sup>65</sup> with Omar Barghouti, the co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. GUE/NGL had relatively few meetings with Israeli parliamentarians. They met three MPs from three political parties: the Labour Party, currently the largest opposition party in the Knesset; Meretz, a small progressive party; and the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, which is an Arab-Jewish party. The delegation also sat down with representatives of several Israeli NGOs and activists: Rabbis for Human Rights, the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), Combatants for Peace, and Amira Haas, a journalist for the Israeli main broadsheet newspaper Ha’aretz. The list of meetings reflects GUE/NGL’s straightforward pro-Palestinian political agenda.

It is worth noting that the GUE/NGL delegation was not representative of the entire EP group. While the Irish *Sinn Féin* and the Spanish *Podemos* were over-represented with three MEPs each, the German *Die Linke* had no representative in the group’s delegation, arguably avoiding taking part in a delegation that has a clearly pro-Palestinian agenda. The visit also had a clear communication purpose: it was documented in press releases, a special booklet with numerous photos taken during the visit, as well as a special press conference in the EP on 9 September 2014, shortly after the delegation’s return to Brussels. GUE/NGL’s clear pro-Palestinian agenda and its emphasis on communication contrasts with the Greens’ visit to the Palestinian territories, which took place less than a year later.

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<sup>65</sup> The group’s visit was publicly reported in a special booklet that included photographs. See: ‘Israel-Palestine after the 2014 war in Gaza, GUE/NGL Delegation visit to Palestine 4-7 September 2014’, [http://www.guengl.eu/uploads/publications-documents/Palestine\\_booklet\\_web.pdf](http://www.guengl.eu/uploads/publications-documents/Palestine_booklet_web.pdf) (last accessed 25 April 2016).

The Greens group in the EP sent a seven-member delegation to Israel and the Palestinian territories on 20-23 July 2015, a year after the war in Gaza. They planned this trip as an internal study tour designed to better understand the situation on the ground and to be better informed, with a view to working towards a more coherent common political position on the question of Israel-Palestine.<sup>66</sup> The Greens in the EP are bitterly divided on the issue, and there have been some heated debates in the group's meetings.<sup>67</sup> The main dividing line is between the German delegation and the rest of the group. The latter are very critical towards Israel and call for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement,<sup>68</sup> while the German Greens are very concerned with ensuring Israel's security because of Germany's history.<sup>69</sup> In fact, the main idea behind the Greens' visit was to try and bring German MEPs to the delegation as a way of convincing them to take a more critical stance towards the Israeli Government:

We have many problems of political coherence on the Israeli-Palestinian question, to say the least. And to follow up on the debate we had on the question of the recognition of Palestine, we decided to bring a group delegation, especially with Germans, and to change the debate's focus from security issues to ecological issues so that the Germans, who are the most complicated in the group on this question, can no longer use the argument of Israel's right to defend itself.<sup>70</sup>

The Greens' delegation started its visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories with a dinner with two former Israeli diplomats, Alon Liel, former Director General in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ilan Baruch, former Israeli ambassador to South Africa, who later became the Chair of the Policy Committee of the Israeli-Palestinian 'Peace NGOs Forum', a coalition of around 80 Israeli and Palestinian NGOs. The visit also included meetings with Palestinian

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<sup>66</sup> Greens/EFA MEP, interview by phone, 13 July 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Greens/EFA Parliamentary assistant, informal discussion, 5 October 2015, Strasbourg.

<sup>68</sup> Greens/EFA MEP, interview, 6 October 2015, Strasbourg.

<sup>69</sup> MEP Helga Trüpel (Greens/EFA, Germany), interview, 7 October 2015, Strasbourg.

<sup>70</sup> Parliamentary assistant of an MEP of the French Greens, 6 October 2015, Strasbourg.

Authority officials and with NGOs, such as Machsom Watch, Breaking the Silence, Peace Now, Mossawa Center, Al Haq, and Al-Shabaka—the Palestinian Policy Network. The Greens’ delegation also met with Israeli parliamentarians, notably from the Joint List, which is an electoral alliance of four parties in the Knesset which represent the Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the small progressive party Meretz.

The Greens’ visit had a special focus on environmental issues in the OPT. They met with representatives of the NGO EWASH (Emergency, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), visited the Jordan Valley in the West Bank to examine water issues, and exchanged views with members of the Arab Climate Youth Movement (ACYM) in Ramallah. Such a focus was not only because of the Greens’ inherent interest in environmental issues; it was considered conducive to convincing the German Greens, who usually refrain from openly criticising Israel’s policies in the West Bank on security grounds.<sup>71</sup> Also due to the Greens’ internal divisions on the issue, the group’s visit was considered an internal group activity and was not made public in any form. While some individual MEPs intensively reported on their visit to the Palestinian territories through their social media networks, others remained completely silent about it.<sup>72</sup> At the level of the EP group, there was no public trace of the group’s visit.

In general terms, the Greens in the EP work on the issue of Israel-Palestine in close contact with several Israeli NGOs, such as B’Tselem, Breaking the Silence, Peace Now, and Physicians for Human Rights–Israel (PHR-I); as well as with Palestinian NGOs, such as Al-Haq, Addameer, and Al-Shabaka,<sup>73</sup> which provide the EP group with detailed information on developments on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza, including human rights’ violations and the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israel. For instance, in a motion for a resolution tabled by Greens/EFA, the group explicitly referred to reports by the Israeli NGO Peace Now on the Israeli Government’s decision to confiscate Palestinian land in the West Bank.<sup>74</sup>

Within the Greens/EFA, the European Free Alliance (EFA) is a small EP group of seven MEPs only. Despite its limited size, the EFA also sent its own small delegation of three MEPs to

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71 MEP Tamas Meszerics (Greens/EFA, Hungary), Greens/EFA spokesperson on foreign affairs, interview, 7 October 2015, Strasbourg.

72 MEP Florent Marcellesi (Greens/EFA, Spain), interview, 5 October 2015, Strasbourg.

73 Greens/EFA policy advisor on human rights, interview, 5 October 2015, Strasbourg.

74 Greens/EFA Motion for a resolution of 16 September 2014 ‘on Israel-Palestine after the Gaza war and the role of the EU’, point P.

Israel and the Palestinian territories in June 2015.<sup>75</sup> They met with representatives of Israeli NGOs, mainly Peace Now and Breaking the Silence. The trip also included a dinner with the two aforesaid former Israeli diplomats, Alon Liel and Ilan Baruch. However, the EFA as a diplomatic actor suffers from a severe lack of resources. The EFA staffer in charge of the organisation of the visit to the Palestinian territories was not an expert on the issue. Nevertheless, the EFA members invested in the communication aspect of the visit, mainly by producing a short documentary film reporting on it.<sup>76</sup> According to EFA MEPs, their communication activities during the visit, above all through social media channels, were followed by numerous voters and sympathisers.

### *The Position of the Socialists & Democrats*

The S&D group was somewhat silent and vague on the issue of Israel-Palestine in the aftermath of the Gaza war of summer 2014. In fact, during the negotiations between groups on the EP resolutions during the Gaza war in July 2014 and, immediately afterwards, in September 2014, the S&D group's shadow rapporteur, MEP Victor Bostinaru (Romania), was reported straying from his group's stance and aligning himself with the pro-Israeli position advocated by right-wing EP groups.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, other S&D MEPs – notably MEPs of the UK Labour Party, including Richard Howitt, S&D coordinator in AFET – took part in a pro-Palestinian demonstration in front of the EP plenary session in Strasbourg on 16 July 2014, joining the MEPs from the GUE/NGL group and the Greens/EFA. It is thus very revealing that S&D press releases on this topic are co-signed by both MEPs Bostinaru and Howitt. The internal divisions within S&D therefore explain why the second largest EP group does not seem to be more engaged in diplomatic activities on this issue.

These divisions within S&D were partly due to the presence of political parties from Central and East European countries. For instance, on 23 October 2012 the EP gave its consent to the EU-Israel ACAA, with 379 MEPs voting in favour, 230 MEPs against and 41 abstaining (Gianniou 2015: 243). Among S&D, the voting cohesion was as low as 58 per cent, since many

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<sup>75</sup> Email exchange with the EFA advisor on foreign affairs, civil liberties, justice and home affairs, Elisabet Nebreda Vila, 8 October 2015.

<sup>76</sup> A joint interview with EFA MEPs Jill Evans (Wales, UK), Jordi Sebastià (Valencia, Spain) and Ernest Maragall (Catalunya, Spain), 7 October 2015, Strasbourg.

<sup>77</sup> Email exchanges with the Greens/EFA policy advisor, 17 September 2014; informal discussion with a Brussels-based pro-Palestinian NGO representative, by telephone, July 2014.



of the group's MEPs voted in favour of the agreement or abstained, thereby failing to align with the group's decision to reject ACAA on human rights and political grounds related to the MEPP (Hessel and De Keyser 2013). In fact, out of the 190 members of S&D, 46 MEPs were 'rebels': with 33 votes in favour and 13 abstentions. The defection votes came from the delegations from Romania, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Bulgaria.

### ***Case Study II: The Recognition of Palestinian Statehood***

On 17 December 2014 the EP adopted a resolution on recognition of Palestinian statehood with a large majority of 498 in favour, 88 against and 111 abstentions. By doing so, the EP followed a few other national parliaments in the EU, which, following the decision to this effect by the Swedish Parliament and Government, adopted non-binding resolutions urging their governments to recognize the state of Palestine: the UK House of Commons did so on 13 October 2014; the Irish Senate on 22 October 2014; the Spanish *Cortes Generales* on 18 November 2014; the French National Assembly on 2 December 2014; and the Portuguese Assembly on 12 December 2014. The final text adopted by the EP contained a rather weak wording, which was similar to the Spanish resolution: the EP 'supports in principle recognition of Palestinian statehood and the two state solution, and believes these should go hand in hand with the development of peace talks, which should be advanced'.<sup>78</sup>

While the official Israeli diplomats were strongly against the resolution, and tried to water it down as much as possible, a few former Israeli diplomats lobbied the EP in favour of an immediate and unconditional recognition of Palestinian statehood, working in close contact particularly with S&D and the Greens.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the staff of the Greens/EFA group repeatedly exchanged emails with these former Israeli diplomats, informing their Israeli counterparts in the civil society on the exact deadlines for submitting the resolution and the timing of the plenary vote.

In November 2014, three Israeli citizens – former diplomats Alon Liel and Ilan Baruch, together with Amiram Goldblum, a co-founder of the NGO Peace Now – had launched a public petition in favour of the recognition of Palestinian statehood, which was signed by 1,000 Israeli citizens, including former ministers and prominent Israeli intellectuals. The Israeli petition was

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<sup>78</sup> EP resolution of 17 December 2014 on recognition of Palestine statehood, point 1.

<sup>79</sup> Alon Liel, former Secretary-General of Israel's Foreign Ministry, interview, 10 December 2014, Hod Hasharon (Hebrew).



handed over to the EP at the crucial moment of discussing the motion for the recognition of Palestinian statehood. Representing the Israeli-Palestinian 'Peace NGO Forum', former Israeli ambassador Ilan Baruch even conducted a special diplomatic mission to Brussels,<sup>80</sup> where he met with MEPs and policy advisors, pushing for a strong motion for Palestinian statehood without any further conditions or linkages to peace negotiations.

These lobbying efforts were accompanied by an email campaign targeting key MEPs who were directly involved in the decision-making process within their EP group and in the negotiations with other EP groups on the resolution. A special focus was put on S&D and ALDE, two EP groups that were considered as undecided and divided on the question. It is interesting to note that the lobbying efforts focused on MEPs according to their EP group's affiliation instead of on nationality or national party affiliation. This shows that EP transnational political groups are considered key actors within the EP, including when it comes to EU international relations.

While the Israeli Government was strongly against the EP resolution on the recognition of Palestinian statehood, a small but internationally active opposition to the Israeli Government within Israel's civil society provided left-wing EP groups with political support, directly at odds with the lobbying efforts of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. In their justification of why the EP should recognise Palestine's statehood without delay, the Greens/EFA explicitly referred to similar calls being made in the Israeli civil society, noting that 'over 1,000 prominent Israeli public figures, including former ministers, parliamentarians and artists, have recently called on European parliamentarians to formally recognise the State of Palestine'<sup>81</sup> and that 'over 100 Israeli retired and reserve generals and senior security officials have signed a plea addressed to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu calling for a regional-based two-state diplomatic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict'.<sup>82</sup> These explicit references indicate the extent to which left-wing EP groups were coordinated with Israeli opposition NGOs on the issue of the recognition of Palestinian statehood.

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80 Ilan Baruch and Alon Liel, email exchange, 23 November 2014 (Hebrew).

81 Greens/EFA, Motion for a resolution of 17 December 2014 on recognition of Palestinian statehood, point I.

82 Idem, point H.

### *Case Study III: The Situation of the Palestinian Minority in Israel*

An interesting aspect of parliamentary diplomacy as parallel diplomacy is the opportunity for parliamentary actors to engage with representatives of national minorities in third countries, to receive direct information on their particular situation, and to provide these minority groups with international visibility and an access to politics at the international level bypassing their national government. During their visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories in July 2015, the EP Greens' delegation met with Jafar Farah, the director of 'Mossawa Center—the Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel', an NGO based in Haifa. Following this meeting, in September 2015, the Greens/EFA tabled a motion for a resolution proposing for the EP to 'take note of the efforts of the Palestinian Israelis to coalesce under the Joint List and to secure a strong outcome at the last legislative elections' and to 'call on the EEAS and the European Commission to significantly step up their support to and engagement with minorities in Israel and to support their efforts to achieve better political, economic and social participation'.<sup>83</sup>

S&D joined that position, stressing 'the potential of Arab citizens of Israel to play an important role in achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians, while noting the rise of the Joint Arab List as the third political force in the Knesset, with many votes also from Jewish Israeli citizens'.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, the final EP resolution of 10 September 2015 on the role of the EU in the MEPP – which was adopted with a majority of 525 votes in favour, 70 against and 31 abstentions – did not make any reference to the Arab community in Israel or to the Joint List in the Knesset.

On 14 October 2015, S&D and the Greens/EFA jointly invited Jafar Farah of the Mossawa Center to Brussels. The groups' MEPs and policy advisors discussed with him the possibility of strengthening cooperation with members of the Palestinian minority in Israel. After that meeting, S&D issued a call for enhancing the dialogue with this minority, emphasising that 'Arab citizens of Israel – with the Joint Arab List as the third political force in the Knesset – have a huge potential to play an important role in achieving peace in the Middle East'.<sup>85</sup> In particular, S&D encouraged the EP Delegation for Relations with Israel (D-IL) to include meetings with

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<sup>83</sup> Greens/EFA, Motion for a resolution of 7 September 2015, point 21.

<sup>84</sup> S&D, Motion for a resolution of 7 September 2015, point 12.

<sup>85</sup> 'S&D members aim to strengthen dialogue with the Palestinian Arab community in Israel, S&D press release, 13 October 2015.

representatives of the Joint List in the schedule of its upcoming visit to the country on 16-18 November 2015<sup>86</sup>, and announced its intention to invite Joint List leaders to Brussels. Greens/EFA also issued a press release after the meeting with Farah, calling on the EU to reach out to the Arab minority in Israel, which is ‘critical for a peaceful and democratic future for Israel and Palestine’, and urging the EU, particularly High Representative Mogherini and the EU special envoy to the MEPP Fernando Gentilini, ‘to stop ignoring the Arab community in Israel and to engage with them, notably the Joint List in the Israeli Knesset’.<sup>87</sup> Even though Farah mainly seeks to influence the position of the governments of the EU member states and the EEAS, and not particularly the EP, he nevertheless acknowledges that the EP is an important institution that the European Commission cannot simply ignore.<sup>88</sup> It seems that this NGO of the Arab minority in Israel is a trustful source of information for the Greens/EFA and S&D, while the latter two in turn represent important channels of international advocacy and an entry point to EU-level politics for this NGO.

#### ***Case Study IV: The Knesset's ‘NGO Transparency Act’***

On 11 July 2016 the Israeli Knesset adopted the ‘NGO Transparency Act’<sup>89</sup> which imposes particular transparency requirements on non-profit organisations that receive funding from foreign governments, while ignoring private donations coming from abroad. The act was heavily criticised as undemocratic since it discriminates against Israeli human rights and left-wing NGOs, which receive funding from foreign governments, whereas no such requirements apply to Israeli right-wing NGOs, which receive donations from private donors from outside Israel but not from foreign governments. According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), the sole purpose of the bill is to harass anyone who expresses strong opposition towards the government’s policy as it was especially designed to limit only those NGOs that the government

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86 The D-IL delegation indeed met with MP Aida Touma-Sliman (Joint List) on 17 November 2015 in Jerusalem.

87 ‘Greens/EFA group calls for greater EU engagement with the Arab Community in Israel’, press release, 21 October 2015.

88 Jafar Farah, director of the Mossawa Center, interview, 4 January 2016, Haifa.

89 ‘The Disclosure Obligations of Recipients of Support from Foreign Government Entities Act’ (Amendment) (Increased Transparency by Recipients of Support, when the Majority of their Funding is from Donations from Foreign Government Entities).

dislikes.<sup>90</sup> The controversial bill caused an international outcry,<sup>91</sup> including from the United States<sup>92</sup> and the EU<sup>93</sup>.

Left-wing EP groups closely followed the legislation process in the Knesset. In November 2015 GUE/NGL proposed discussing this Israeli bill during the human rights debate in the plenary session held that month.<sup>94</sup> However, the EP's Conference of Presidents did not adopt this proposal and the 'NGO Transparency Act' was not officially placed on the EP's agenda. Nevertheless, on 8 February 2016, on the very day when the bill was tabled for adoption in the Knesset in first reading<sup>95</sup>, the S&D group issued a press release expressing its deep concern about the bill.<sup>96</sup> These rather formal statements were not covered by the Israeli media and did not elicit any public reactions in the Knesset.

However, on the same day, Julie Ward, an S&D MEP from the UK Labour Party, sent an open letter to all 120 Members of the Knesset (MKs), signed by 50 MEPs (21 MEPs from the Greens/EFA, 18 from GUE/NGL, and only 11 from S&D, including four from the UK Labour Party). The letter called upon them to reject the bill: 'We urge the Israeli government and Members of the Knesset to refrain from legislative measures, or from support of campaigns of incitement that aim to stifle or silence civil society organisations, artists, and public discourse'.<sup>97</sup> MEPs often sign open letters on various issues, including on that of Israel-Palestine, but these

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90 See: <http://www.acri.org.il/en/2015/12/28/eagerness-to-silence-criticism-is-greater-than-support-for-democracy> (accessed 5 April 2016); <http://www.acri.org.il/en/2016/07/12/acris-response-to-the-passing-of-the-ngo-law/> (accessed 13 July 2016).

91 See for instance: Editorial, 'A Danger to Israeli democracy', *Washington Post*, 2 January 2016.

92 See US Embassy in Israel's press release of 11 January 2016, 'Ambassador Shapiro's Meeting with Justice Minister Shaked', <http://israel.usembassy.gov/press11012016.html> (accessed 18 April 2016); Barak Ravid, 'Ambassador Shapiro Tells Minister Shaked: U.S. Concerned by 'NGO Transparency Bill'', *Ha'aretz*, 11 January 2016.

93 'Statement by the Spokesperson on the passage of the new NGO law in the Israeli Knesset', EEAS press release, 12 July 2016.

94 'GUE/NGL criticises Parliament's refusal to discuss Israeli 'transparency law'', GUE/NGL press release, 19 November 2011.

95 The legislative process in the Knesset requires three readings. Any bill adopted at first reading still requires second and third reading to become an Act.

96 'S&D deeply concerned about the NGO bill discussed in the Israeli Knesset', press release, 9 February 2016.

97 'MEPs send an open letter on Israeli government NGO bill', [www.juliewardmep.eu](http://www.juliewardmep.eu) (accessed 14 February 2015).

letters are mainly aimed at the European Commission for the purpose of influencing EU policy. Yet this one was sent directly to Israeli parliamentarians and hence can be seen as an informal diplomatic action. Interestingly, this open letter was reported on by several Israeli newspapers as well as by national television, making the general impression that the EP as a whole was against the proposed Knesset legislation,<sup>98</sup> particularly thanks to comments that 'European parliamentarians urge MKs to vote against measure'.<sup>99</sup> The letter received harsh criticism in the Knesset. MP Nava Boker of the governing Likud Party, for instance, said:

I was astonished to receive the letter. It seems that these parliamentarians are confused, or they got used to activating their foreign agents here, but I am committed only to the People of Israel. The state of Israel is a sovereign state and we will not tolerate this blatant and audacious foreign intervention. The NGO bill is an excellent bill and the Europeans [had] better understand the hint: leave the state of Israel alone.<sup>100</sup>

As we can see, MEPs' informal diplomatic activities may receive media coverage in third countries and elicit strong reactions in their parliaments<sup>101</sup>. After the final approval of the act, S&D deeply deplored the adoption of the bill and declared: 'The European Socialists Democrats stand firm with the Israeli NGOs targeted by this bill'<sup>102</sup>.

## Conclusions

Political groups within parliaments are new international actors with a distinctive role. While these groups are a part of their parliaments' institutional structures and take part in their parliaments' various diplomatic activities, they also develop their own autonomous diplomatic

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98 Raphael Ahren, '50 European MPs slam NGO bill as 'inherently discriminatory'', *The Times of Israel*, 9 February, 2015.

99 Lahav Harkov, 'Controversial NGO transparency bill passes first vote, *Jerusalem Post*, 8 February 2015.

100MP Nava Boker (Likud), quoted in Gideon Alon, 'The Knesset approved the NGO bill in first reading', *Israel Hayom*, 9 February 2015 (Hebrew. Translated by the author).

101Four parliamentarians of the German-Israeli parliamentary friendship group in the Bundestag had sent a similar letter to Israeli parliamentarians, which was also largely reported in the Israeli mainstream media.

102'S&D condemns adoption of discriminatory NGO bill in Israeli Knesset'. S&D Press release, 12 July 2016.

channels. Parliamentary groups enjoy a great deal of autonomy when they act as diplomats in pursuit of their own political ideologies and policy preferences. Parliamentary groups are free to decide their own schedule for diplomatic visits and they can liaise directly with opposition parties in third countries and NGOs' representatives instead of with official state diplomats, thus nurturing parallel diplomatic relations in the form of non-governmental and less traditional diplomacy.

As this chapter illustrates, parliamentary groups foster a relatively high level of coordination with civil society actors in third countries, bypassing foreign governments as a way to compensate for the scarcity of the resources required to conduct autonomous foreign relations. Parliamentary actors' contacts with civil society actors abroad are rather informal, developed through face-to-face meetings and intensive email exchanges, often *ad hoc*, based on personal acquaintances and relationships of trust. Therefore, qualitative social science research methods, such as in-depth interviews, are necessary to understand the scope of these contacts, which constitute important sources of information and knowledge for parliamentary groups, which could have a bearing on political legitimacy of the action taken pursuant to such newly acquired data, helping to justify the parliaments' policy positions against official governmental stances.

Both state and non-state actors in third countries recognize the diplomatic role of political groups within parliaments and try to influence their positions. The former actors' lobbying efforts towards parliaments and parliamentary actors need to be analysed further, in particular the role of non-state actors in developing their own relations with foreign parliaments. Furthermore, parliamentary actors do not only passively receive information from civil society actors abroad, but they also actively provide the latter with information on the institutional developments in their polities, which is crucial for the latter actors to be able to lobby foreign parliaments and governments more efficiently. This aspect of the exchange of resources between parliamentary actors and foreign civil society organisations should be further explored in the future.

The chapter also reveals the lack of influence of the parliamentary groups' diplomacy on the parliament's position, let alone on the government's foreign policy. In light of this, further research on parliamentary diplomacy should strive to evaluate the actual influence of parliamentary actors' diplomatic activities beyond symbolic politics and rhetoric. One assumption would be that such activities do have a certain influence on the government positions, but a rather indirect one, which should be assessed from the perspective of a longer period of time, by pushing certain issues of international politics on the global agenda and by

framing these issues in ways that correspond to the preferences of the parliamentary actors engaged in international politics.

Finally, internal divisions within parliamentary groups on foreign policy issues prevent them from fulfilling their full potential as public diplomatic actors who can publicly express their criticism of the government's foreign policy and propose alternatives, combining their diplomatic action with a communicative function. Nevertheless, individual parliamentarians do not necessarily need their affiliated political groups to be behind them in order to conduct diplomacy. The highly informal nature of parliamentary diplomacy gives individual parliamentarians much flexibility to launch their own diplomatic initiatives and engage directly with parliamentarians and NGOs in foreign countries. Future research is needed on individual parliamentarians as autonomous diplomats and how their activities may contribute to the responsiveness and the accountability of parliamentary diplomacy.

## **Acknowledgements**

This chapter received support from the Excellence Initiative of the University of Strasbourg, funded by the French Government's Future Investments program. I would like to thank the book's editors for their useful comments on previous versions of this chapter. I sincerely thank all the office holders in Brussels and in Israel and the Palestinian territories who provided me with valuable information.



## Article Four: How Do National Parliaments Cooperate with Members of the European Parliament?<sup>103</sup>

### Introduction<sup>104</sup>

The Brexit vote in the United Kingdom referendum in June 2016 illustrates the depth of the legitimacy crisis from which the EU political system suffers. While the main remedy for this 'democratic deficit' has been to strengthen the European Parliament (EP) (Hix and Lord 1997; Costa 2001, Rittberger 2005, 2012; Costa and Rozenberg 2008), the dispersion of political power in the EU across different political institutions and various levels of governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Bache and Flinders 2004) entails that parliamentary scrutiny of EU decision-making is also dispersed across multiple representative institutions situated at different levels of governance (Kiiver 2007; Crum and Fossum 2009). Hence, genuine parliamentary control over EU decision-making entails not only the empowerment of the EP, but also the empowerment of national parliaments in their scrutiny of EU politics (Raunio and Hix 2000; Maurer and Wessels 2001; Auel and Benz 2006; O'Brennan and Raunio 2007; Crum and Fossum 2009;

Although the Treaty of Lisbon of 2009 provides national parliamentarians (MPs) with new institutional tools to participate in EU politics, notably the Early Warning Mechanism (EWM), there is a substantial gap between these formal arrangements and the extent to which MPs actually use them in practice (Raunio 2009, 2010; De Wilde 2012; Crum and Fossum 2013; De Ruiter 2013; Auel and Höing 2014). MPs are already busy with their own parliamentary agenda, and thus have to invest a substantive amount of resources in order to follow the different steps of the complex inter-institutional negotiations that take place at the EU level of governance between the Commission, the Council and the EP.

Hence, a few years into the post-Lisbon era, there is an intensive debate on how to improve national parliaments' use of the existing EU scrutiny instruments they have at their

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<sup>103</sup>The article will be published in 2017 in *Politique européenne*, in a special issue entitled *Member State Parliaments and the European Challenge(s)*, edited by Dr. Diane Fromage and Dr. Kolja Raube. Bart J. Bes, PhD candidate, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Department of Political Science, is the second author of this article due to his substantial contribution to the logistic regression analysis.

<sup>104</sup>Previous versions of this article were presented at CES Conference, Amsterdam, June 25-27, 2013, and two PADEMIA workshops: *Strengthening Parliaments through Institutional Engineering*, Sciences-Po, Paris, 3-4 December 2015; and *Member State Parliaments and the European Challenge(s)*, LUISS Guido Carli, Center for Parliamentary Studies, Rome, 8-9 July 2016. The article profited from the comments of different scholars, notably Ben Crum, Matti Wilberg, Pierre Schmitt, Diane Fromage, and Angela Tacea.



disposal and on which new instruments might be developed. These questions are treated by both academics (Auel et al. 2015; Heffler et al. 2015; Auel et al. 2015; Rozenberg and Heffler 2015; Jančić 2015a; Lupo and Fasone 2016) and practitioners in the national parliaments (House of Lords 2014; Folketing 2014; Tweede Kamer 2014; see also COSAC bi-annual reports).

While many of the national parliaments' recommendations on how to strengthen their involvement in EU decision-making require the agreement of the European Commission, and possibly a new inter-institutional agreement, national parliaments can already strengthen their cooperation with the EP. In fact, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) can provide a significant added-value to national parliaments and reinforce their capacity to scrutinize EU legislation. As Brussels-based 'full-time Europeans' (Pogunkte et al. 2007), MEPs can provide MPs with inside and up-to-date information on the negotiation process taking place at the EU level on a particular EU-issue under scrutiny.

National parliaments generally share this role conception of MEPs. According to the Dutch parliament, 'intensifying the discussions with MEPs who hold rapporteurships (or shadow rapporteurships) on European legislation can lead to better insights on both sides into the handling of the dossier concerned.' (Tweede Kamer 2014: 31). In a similar vein, the UK House of Lords states that 'national parliaments should be encouraged to contact the relevant rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs in the EP, who could provide informal briefings to MPs on the progress of trilogue negotiations' (House of Lords 2014: 33) and notes that communication between MPs and the EP 'is essential to share information, to debate policies, and to reach common understandings.' (idem, page 54). The Danish Folketing also argues that 'a better awareness by MPs of the EP's positions and arguments on specific legislative proposals would give the national parliaments a better possibility to influence their governments and thereby the Council' (Folketing 2014: 10) and therefore recommends that 'parliamentary committees from the national parliament gather more often in small groups with relevant MEPs in order to discuss specific subjects.' (idem).

This potential of cooperation notwithstanding, the relationship between the national parliaments and the EP is often dominated by dynamics of competition (Bergman 1997; Neunreiter 2005; Huff 2013; Herranz-Surralsés 2014; Cooper 2014, 2016; Raube and Wouters 2016). In addition, effective vertical interparliamentary cooperation is challenged by a structural division of labour between the different institutions, since national parliaments' primary function is scrutiny of their own national government's positions on EU matters (Raunio 2011). Moreover,

practical hurdles related to colliding parliamentary agendas and geographical distances make interparliamentary cooperation difficult in practice (Hix and Raunio 2000; Raunio 2009).

This article examines how and to what extent national parliaments use MEPs as sources of information on EU matters, combining legal and behavioural approaches. I propose a categorization of EU Member States according to the level of MEPs formal participation rights in the work of the national parliaments. I identify four activities: MEPs visits to the parliaments' premises; attendance at meetings of the European Affairs Committee (EAC); attendance at meetings of sectoral committees; and participation in plenary debates related to EU matters. In addition, two different roles that MEPs play in national parliaments are identified: (1) the role of national representatives at the EU-level, which means that MEPs enjoy special participation rights in the national parliament of the Member State in which they are elected; and (2) the role of external EU-experts, providing the national chambers with up-to-date information on EU affairs, notably in the form of hearings on a particular EU issue.

Regarding the question how often MEPs' attend EAC meetings, the main findings are that the more participation rights MEPs have in the national parliament of the EU Member State in which they are elected, the more often they attend EAC meetings in that parliament; that MEPs attend more often strong EACs rather than weak ones; that MEPs who are affiliated with political parties that are in government attend EAC meetings more often than MEPs whose parties are in opposition; that MEPs from larger political parties attend EAC meetings more often than MEPs from smaller political parties; and finally, that MEPs who are former MPs attend EAC meetings more often than MEPs who have not been MPs in their past political career.

So far, the literature on post-Lisbon interparliamentary cooperation has mainly referred to the formal institutional arrangements that were created and designed by specific legal provisions in the EU treaties (Hefftlar and Gattermann 2015; Fromage 2016). Moreover, scholars study mainly horizontal interparliamentary cooperation, between national parliaments of different Member States. These include mainly the EWM (Raunio 2010; Cooper 2012, 2013, 2015; Pintz 2015) and interparliamentary conferences (Kreiling 2013; Cooper 2014; Raube and Wouters 2016), in which the EP has a relatively small role to play. The focus of this article is rather on vertical interparliamentary cooperation, between MPs and MEPs. The legal provisions I refer to are only the ones decided upon by the national parliaments themselves in their Rules of Procedure. These legal provisions are then implemented, or not, according to the parliamentary actors' own incentives and resources.

The paper proceeds as follows. After presenting my research methods, I provide an overview of the formal participation rights of MEPs in the national parliaments and an analysis of the two roles MEPs play in national chambers - national representatives at the EU-level and external EU-experts. I then discuss possible cross-national and cross-party variations in MEP practices of participation in the work of national parliaments and develop the hypotheses about the actual involvement of MEPs in national parliaments. The following section provides the main findings of the survey on MEP activities in national parliaments, and the concluding section discusses the findings and future research avenues on the topic.

## Methods

A simple examination of the formal rules of the national parliaments in regards to MEPs, as recorded in the chambers' Rules of Procedure (also referred to as the Standing Orders) might be misleading. What is required is 'the combination of formal (i.e. written) rules and unwritten rules and practices that together constitute the *de facto* rules of the game' (Bergman 1997: 375). Hence, the comparison of MEPs' rights in national parliaments is empirically based on several sources, the combination of which provides a detailed picture of MEPs' rights in national parliaments across the EU.

First, I collected data on whether the national chamber's Rules of Procedure contain specific provisions in regards to MEPs. The first resource used for this purpose is the COSAC<sup>105</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> bi-annual report<sup>106</sup> of May 2016 and its annex, as well as consultation of the Rules of Procedure of several national parliaments, either in the original language or via official translations in English. This was complemented by a recent comparative study of how national parliaments deal with EU affairs in the framework of the Observatory of Parliaments After Lisbon (OPAL) research project (Hefftlar et al. 2015).

These two sources are cross-checked by two original surveys conducted among parliamentary clerks in charge of EU affairs in national parliaments. Clerks of the EACs of 20 out of 39 national parliaments, half of the survey population, replied to a short questionnaire on the legal provisions of MEPs participation rights in their chamber, which was sent to them by

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<sup>105</sup>Conference of the committees of the national parliaments of the EU Member States dealing with EU affairs.

<sup>106</sup>'Development in the EU Procedures and Practices Relevant to Parliamentary Scrutiny' and its annex. COSAC reports are based on the national parliaments' answers to the COSAC questionnaire and prepared by the COSAC permanent secretariat.

email in July 2016.<sup>107</sup> In addition, a second survey among EAC clerks was conducted in November 2016 on the practical aspects of MEP attendance in the committee meetings. EAC clerks of 24 out of 39 national parliaments, 60% of the survey population, replied to this survey.<sup>108</sup>

This formal information constitutes the relevant background against which the actual involvement of MEPs can be assessed. To this end, I conducted a survey among MEPs. In June 2012, I sent all MEPs of the 7th legislature (2009-2014), via their official email account, ten multiple-choice questions on their practices of coordination with 'their' national parliament.<sup>109</sup> I then re-contacted all the MEPs who did not answer the questionnaire two more times, between October 2012 and March 2013. With 150 returned surveys, the response rate is approximately 20% of the population of 754 MEPs.<sup>110</sup> The survey constitutes a unique database on MEPs' practices in the national parliaments of the EU Member States in which they were elected.

As for the survey representativeness across EU countries, MEPs from northern European countries are somewhat over-represented while MEPs from southern European countries as well as Central and Eastern European countries are slightly under-represented (see table 4.A1 in the appendix). As for the representativeness of the survey across EP groups, the response rate is 20% among members of the three largest EP groups of 2009-2014, the European People's Party (EPP), the group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), and the Alliance of

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107The 20 national chambers that responded to the survey: Austrian Bundestag, Austrian Bundesrat; Belgian Senate; Croatian Hrvatski sabor; Czech Senate; Danish Folketing; Dutch Tweede Kamer; Estonian Riigikogu; Finnish Eduskunta; German Bundestag; German Bundesrat; Hungarian National Assembly; Italian Camera dei Deputati; Italian Senato; Latvian Saeima, Romanian Senate; Slovak Národná Rada, Slovenian Državni zbor, UK House of Commons; UK House of Lords.

108The 24 national chambers that responded to the survey: Austrian Nationalrat and Bundesrat; Belgian Senate; Bulgarian National Assembly; Croatian Hrvatski sabor; Czech Senate; Danish Folketing; Estonian Riigikogu; German Bundesrat; Finnish Eduskunta; French Senate; Greek parliament; Hungarian national assembly; Italian chamber of deputies; Italian Senate, Latvian Saeima; Luxembourg chamber of deputies; Polish Sejm; Romanian Senate; Slovak parliament; Slovenian both chambers; Swedish Riksdag; UK House of Commons.

109In most national parliaments, specific participation rights are accorded only to MEPs elected in that Member State. Therefore, the survey conducted among MEPs treats only their attendance at EAC meetings in 'their' national parliament. Previous empirical research indicates that MEPs' involvement in national parliaments other than 'their own' is rare (Miklin and Crum 2011; Wonka and Rittberger 2014). Finally, the survey I conducted among EAC clerks across the EU on the practices of MEP attendance at EAC meetings largely confirms that the attendance of MEPs elected in other Member States is extremely occasional or inexistent in practice.

110This is a relatively high response rate in comparison to similar surveys conducted among parliamentarians. For instance, Wonka and Rittberger (2014) obtained a response rate of 16% among members of the German Bundestag while Miklin and Crum (2011) had a response rate of only 11% among MEPs.

Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). The response rate is higher among the EP group of Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) and the non-attached (NI), and lower among the EP groups of EFD, ECR and GUE/NGL (see table 4.A2 in the appendix).

### General overview of MEPs' participation rights in national parliaments

What are the formal possibilities of MEPs to participate in the work of the national parliament? We know that in a few EU Member States, such as Belgium, certain MEPs are full members of the EAC (Bergman 1997: 378), but until now there has been no systematic assessment of MEPs' role in the national parliaments across the EU. One can distinguish three types of activities MEPs may participate in at national parliaments: EAC meetings; sectoral committee meetings; and plenary debates on EU matters (see table 4.1).<sup>111</sup> There is a wide variety among national parliaments regarding the formal participation rights of MEPs in their activities.<sup>112</sup>

**Table 4.1: MEPs' participation rights in the work of national parliaments<sup>113</sup>**

NP activity	Participation rights	N	In %
EAC	Standing invitation	21	54
	On special invitation	11	28
	No provisions	7	18
	Total	39	100
Sectoral committees	Standing invitation	9	23
	On special invitation	8	21
	No provisions	22	56
	Total	39	100
Plenary debates on EU matters	Standing invitation	2	5
	On special invitation	4	10
	No provisions	33	85
	Total	39	100

Source: based on COSAC 3<sup>rd</sup> bi-annual report of May 2005 and complemented by the author.

<sup>111</sup> Meetings of MEPs with their national parliamentary political groups do not require formal provisions in the Rules of Procedure. In general, MEPs are in close coordination with their parliamentary political groups in the national parliament, often attending their meetings on a regular basis, while the precise methods of coordination vary.

<sup>112A</sup> descriptive information on the participation rights of MEPs in the national parliaments across the EU is provided in the appendix to this article.

<sup>113</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> COSAC bi-annual report of May 2005 includes information on 35 national parliaments and chambers of the EU, not including Romania (two chambers), Bulgaria and Croatia, which were not EU Member States at the time. These four chambers were added by the author on the basis of his own research. Both the Spanish Cortes Generales and the Irish House of Oireachtas are considered as unicameral in regards of the scrutiny of EU affairs.

Generally speaking, MEPs are more likely to have a right to attend EAC meetings than sectoral committee meetings. MEPs' have a standing invitation to attend the EAC meetings in the national parliament of the EU Member State in which they are elected in half of the parliamentary chambers of the EU; in a third of the chambers, MEPs attendance requires a special invitation, while in 21% of the parliaments there are no formal procedures for MEPs' attendance at EAC meetings. MEPs have no formal participation rights in sectoral committees in the majority of the national parliaments; in one out of four chambers, MEPs have a standing invitation to participate in sectoral committee meetings, while in one out of five a special invitation is required. MEPs are generally not allowed to participate in plenary debates on EU matters in 'their' national parliament, while some particular provisions exist in six chambers: the Bulgarian National Assembly; the national parliaments of Hungary and Lithuania; the National Council of Slovenia; the Dutch Tweede Kamer and the Austrian Nationalrat (See also Valentin 2016). I classified the EU Member States according to the level of MEP participation rights in the national parliaments (see table 4.2).<sup>114</sup> For a descriptive analysis of MEPs' rights by Member State see appendix 4.2.

**Table 4.2: MEP participation rights in the national parliament by Member State**

Score <sup>115</sup>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Member State	Cyprus Denmark Finland Romania Spain Sweden UK	Estonia France Portugal	Greece Ireland Italy Latvia Malta	Belgium Croatia Czech Rep. Germany Slovakia	Luxembourg Poland Slovenia	Austria <sup>116</sup> Bulgaria Netherlands Lithuania	Hungary

There is a certain pattern along geographical regions in Europe. In general, national parliaments in both northern and southern Europe tend to offer relatively weak participation rights to 'their'

<sup>114</sup>In general, MEPs' formal rights in the national parliaments are similar in both chambers in bicameral systems.

<sup>115</sup>MEPs' rights in the national parliaments of the EU Members States are is evaluated according to the MEPs' rights to take part in the three parliamentary activities mentioned earlier: EAC meetings; sectoral committees meetings debating EU issues; and plenary debates on EU issues. For each of these is activities, a score was given from 0 to 2: 0=no rights; 1=on invitation only; 2=standing invitation. Each EU Member State was given an overall score from 0 (no rights at all) to 6 (standing invitation to all three activities).

<sup>116</sup>The Austrian Nationalrat allows MEPs to take the floor in plenary debates on EU matters only since 2015. This modification was not included in the multivariate regression analysis since the survey among MEPs was conducted in 2012 and 2013.

MEPs in comparison to national chambers in Central and Eastern Europe. The length of EU membership seems to play a minor role in regards to MEPs' rights in national parliaments, as we find a large variation among the six founding members of the European Community, as well as among the EU Member States of the Eastern enlargement of 2004 and 2007.

In addition to the evaluation of the level of MEPs' participation rights in the EU national chambers, it is also possible to analyse in a more qualitative manner what kind of role MEPs play in the national parliaments: national representatives at the EU-level or external EU-experts. National parliaments view the role of MEPs as national representatives at the EU level of politics in the majority of EU Member States. Typically, MEPs who are elected in that Member State have a standing invitation to attend and speak in EAC meetings; they often have particular rights to participate in the sectoral committees; and in some cases also in plenary debates on EU matters. Moreover, MEPs' participation in such plenary debates is often organised by the MEPs' affiliated parliamentary party groups. The ideal-type in this category is Hungary's National Assembly, where Hungarian MEPs enjoy various participation rights, including taking the floor in plenary debates on EU matters. Both Belgium and Luxembourg are close to the Hungarian ideal-type, as MEPs elected in these countries serve as members of the EAC. Austrian MEPs also have relatively developed participation rights in the national chambers of Austria, in which they participate via their affiliated parliamentary party groups.

On the other hand, in a few EU Member States national parliaments view the role of MEPs, not necessarily the ones elected in that state, as external EU-experts. Typically in these parliaments, MEPs have no participation rights in the EAC or their attendance requires a special invitation. MEPs' participation at EAC meetings of these chambers takes the form of hearings, in which the EAC invites MEPs as external experts to provide the parliamentarians with information on a particular EU topic. Such committee hearings with MEPs do not necessarily require any special provisions in the parliament's Rules of Procedure, in which MEPs in general are not mentioned. The ideal-type in this category is the Finnish Eduskunta, known for its scepticism on the added-value of interparliamentary cooperation (Raunio 2015). Other EU Member States in which the national parliament views the role of MEPs as EU-experts are Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Estonia.

Studying the legal provisions of MEP participation in national parliaments is crucial, but not sufficient. As a matter of fact, in both the surveys conducted among EAC clerks, many of them indicated that while MEPs are formally invited to all EAC meetings, they seldom attend them in practice. EAC staffers also referred to the low attendance rate of the chambers' regular



joint meetings with MEPs. That is why the rest of the article deals with MEPs' actual behaviour in 'their' national parliament.

### **Towards hypotheses on MEPs' practices in national parliaments**

EAC meetings, which are held on a regular basis, are the main parliamentary arena in which the chamber takes its decisions concerning scrutiny of EU affairs. I consider the physical attendance of MEPs at EAC meetings as a primary indicator of their active participation in the work of the chamber on EU matters. Scholars often use the actors' physical attendance as an important indicator in assessing their engagement with a parliamentary institution (Crum 2006) or an interparliamentary forum (Wagner 2013; Raube and Wouters 2016).

The first hypothesis is related to MEPs' formal participation rights in the national parliament in the Member State in which they were elected. I expect to find a higher frequency of MEPs' attendance at EAC meetings among MEPs who enjoy considerable participation rights in 'their' national parliament, making usage of the chamber's Rules of Procedure (see table 4.2). Hence, I expect that

*H1: The more participation rights MEPs have in the national parliament of the EU Member State in which they were elected, the more often they attend EAC meetings in that parliament.*

Based on the literature on national parliaments' activities on EU affairs, I have developed additional hypotheses on the variations of MEPs attendance at EAC meetings. The next hypothesis concerns the national parliaments' strength with regards to the scrutiny of EU affairs. Following Thomas Winzen (2012), the level of parliamentary scrutiny powers with regards to EU politics refers to an overall evaluation of the parliament's strength in three different dimensions of parliamentary control of EU politics: access to information; processing of information; and mandating the government.

Scholars often analyse tools of interparliamentary cooperation, such as the EWM or interparliamentary conferences, as a 'weapon of the weak', an alternative means of empowerment that weak parliaments or parliamentary actors may use as an opportunity to compensate for their structural disadvantages in the domestic arena, notably in order to acquire information independently from the executive (Holzhacker 2002; Wagner 2013; Wonka and Rittberger 2014;



Hefftlar and Gattermann 2015; Strelkov 2015). EU scrutiny activities are hence often seen as a mean to compensate for power asymmetry, either between the executive and the legislative branch or between the governmental coalition and the parliamentary opposition. Hence, I expect to find that:

*H2: The weaker the EAC, the more often MEPs attend its meetings.*

The next two hypotheses concern variation among political parties, building further on the compensation assumption. Parties' parliamentary groups are the main parliamentary actors who actually use the legal powers and institutional arrangements of EU scrutiny mechanisms (Holzhacker 2002; Strelkov 2015). In practice, interparliamentary cooperation runs primarily through informal party channels (Miklin and Crum 2011; Crum and Fossum 2013) as MPs often contact their own party's MEPs to obtain policy-relevant information on EU politics (Wonka and Rittberger 2014). MPs who belong to parties in the government coalition use their direct informal channels to the Council of the EU through their ministers, and hence tend to use the formal channels of parliamentary scrutiny of the government's EU policies less often (Holzhacker 2002; Finke and Dannwolf 2013). Moreover, being in office, they have little incentives to criticize their governments' policies in public, such as via the EAC. On the other hand, MPs of opposition parties often express frustration about their lack of information on EU matters, and hence may be more inclined than the ones in office to coordinate with their party's MEPs. In addition, opposition parties have more incentives to use formal channels as the EAC to criticize the government positions at the EU level. My expectation is that:

*H3: MEPs of opposition parties attend EAC meetings more frequently than MEPs of parties in office.*

The third source of variation I expect to find is related to the parties' size. Small political parties tend to use the EP as a 'back door' to national politics, using EP elections (Blombäck 2012; Shemer-Kunz 2013) and the EP institutional arena (Reungoat 2014, 2015) as a means to strengthen their position in national politics. Following this idea, relatively small parties in the national parliament may use their MEPs more often than well-established parties. I therefore expect MEPs of national parties with a smaller seat share in the national legislature to be more

engaged in vertical interparliamentary cooperation than MEPs from parties with a larger seat share in the chamber:

*H4: The smaller the seat share a party has in a national parliament, the more often its MEPs attend EAC meetings.*

## Findings

The analysis of the survey is presented in three parts. I first present some general results of the entire survey population (N=150). I then provide some descriptive analysis of variations in MEP practices across national delegations as well as across EP political groups. Finally, the results of a logistic regression analysis are presented.

### *General results*

The survey's overall findings support the focus in the literature on EACs as the main channel of interparliamentary cooperation in the EU, and the importance of political parties as the main channel of such activities. The overall findings also reveal large variations among MEPs' practices.

**Table 4.3: MEPs' practices in national parliaments: general overview**

Visits	N	%	Activity when visiting	N	%
Once a week	7	5	EAC meeting	70	47
Every two weeks	30	20	Other committees	41	27
Once a month	29	20	Plenary debates	13	9
1-4 times a year	62	40	Meetings with party colleagues	116	77
Less frequently	22	15	Meetings with journalists	33	22
Total	150	100		117 <sup>117</sup>	-

According to the survey's findings, 45% of MEPs visit 'their' national parliament at least once a month, while 55% visit it one to four times a year or less frequently. There is a large variation in the practices of MEPs: while 20% of MEPs declare that they visit the national parliament at least twice a month, and 5% as often as once a week, 15% of MEPs say they visit the parliament of

<sup>117</sup>Total numbers of MEPs' activities when visiting national parliament is above 100 since MEPs could choose more than one answer to this question.

their national constituency less than once a year. While geographical distances are often seen as a factor which hinders interparliamentary cooperation (Hix and Raunio 2000; Raunio 2009), there is no empirical evidence that MEPs whose national parliament is physically closer to Brussels visit it more often.

I made a distinction between two types of activities MEPs can engage in when visiting the national parliament - formal and informal ones. I then defined three types of formal parliamentary activities MEPs may attend: EAC meetings; meetings of sectoral committees; and plenary debates on EU matters. The majority of MEPs declared attending at least one of these formal parliamentary activities while visiting 'their' parliament, although a substantive minority of MEPs did not attend any of these formal parliamentary activities while visiting the chamber's premises.

In general, MEPs who visit 'their' national parliament often tend to attend a lot more formal parliamentary activities than MEPs who rarely visit 'their' national parliament. Of the formal activities MEPs take part in, attending EAC meetings is the most frequent one: 46% of MEPs declared attending EAC meetings when visiting, against only 27% of MEPs who declared attending meetings of sectoral committees. Only 9% of MEPs declared attending plenary sessions on EU matters in the national parliament in the EU Member State in which they were elected.

Besides the formal activities in the parliament, I also identified two informal activities MEPs might engage in when they visit 'their' national parliament: meet party colleagues and meet with journalists. Meeting party colleagues is the most frequent activity of MEPs during their visits in the parliament's premises. In fact, 34% of MEPs *only* meet party colleagues while there, *without* taking part in any formal parliamentary activity, while 43% of MEPs combine both formal parliamentary activities and meeting party colleagues. This finding resonates with the centrality of informal party channels in interparliamentary cooperation (Crum and Fossum 2013). Meeting with journalists is not a common activity for MEPs while in the national parliament of the Member State in which they were elected. A few MEPs mentioned other activities they take part in when in the premises of 'their' national parliament, such as meeting their staff members, who are based there, or speaking in conferences or seminars.

#### *Descriptive analysis by EU Member States<sup>118</sup>*

<sup>118</sup>For the descriptive analysis of the variations in MEPs' participation in the work of national parliaments across EU Member States, I used only part of the database; the 15 EU countries from which at least four MEPs answered the questionnaire (see table 4.A1 in the appendix). Hence, after leaving 18 questionnaires out of this

We observe large variations across EU Member States with respect to MEPs' frequency of visits to 'their' national parliament. For instance, all Danish MEPs who took part in the survey stated that they visit the Folketing at least once a month and reported that they attend EAC meetings. On the other hand, Swedish MEPs reported a low frequency of visits to the parliament, and both French and British MEPs reported that they do not visit 'their' national parliament very often.

We also find a north-south division, in line with previous findings on the geographical variation in the engagement of Member States' parliaments in EU scrutiny (Raunio 2011: 311). In general, MEPs from northern European countries visit 'their' national parliament more often than MEPs from southern European countries such as Spain, Italy or Portugal. What is more, the large majority of Italian MEPs and half of the Spanish ones declared that they only meet party colleagues when visiting 'their' national chambers, and do not participate in any formal parliamentary activity. Among MEPs of Central and Eastern Europe countries, MEPs' attendance rates at EAC meetings are relatively high.

#### *Descriptive analysis by EP group<sup>119</sup>*

In general, MEPs from the largest EP groups, which are affiliated with larger parties in the national parliaments, are more engaged in 'their' national parliaments than MEPs who belong to smaller EP groups, which are affiliated with relatively small parties in the national parliaments (see table 4.4). MEPs of smaller parties visit 'their' national parliament slightly less often than MEPs from larger parties, and their attendance at EAC or sectoral committee meetings during their visits is less regular.

Nevertheless, these numbers should be taken with a grain of salt. As the large variation across EU countries suggests, there is a large variation between national parties' delegations *within* EP groups. For instance, taking the case of the EP group of the Greens/EFA, the German Greens' delegation in the EP coordinates rather well with the Green parliamentary group in the Bundestag, while the coordination of the French Green MEPs with their party colleagues in the

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analysis, we remain with a population of 132 MEPs. These essentially include the 17 biggest EU Member States (with the most MEPs) except Romania, but including Luxembourg.

119Five EP groups are included in this descriptive analysis: EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and NI (n=134). Among other EP groups, I do not have sufficient data to present any meaningful results (see table 4.A2).

national chambers in Paris is a 'catastrophe',<sup>120</sup> characterised by intra-party conflictual relations of competition rather than coordination.<sup>121</sup>

**Table 4.4: MEPs' practices in national parliaments by EP group (in %)**

EP Group	N	Visit NP at least monthly			Attend EAC meeting			Attend sectoral committee meeting		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
EPP	48	44	56	100	58	42	100	38	62	100
S&D	37	49	51	100	49	51	100	35	65	100
ALDE	17	50	50	100	50	50	100	19	81	100
G/EFA	25	40	60	100	36	64	100	12	88	100
NI	7	29	71	100	14	86	100	0	100	100

#### *Logistic regression analysis<sup>122</sup>*

In this section, we test the hypotheses in a multivariate setting. Since the dependent variable, i.e. 'attendance in the EAC' is dichotomous, we perform a logistic regression analysis. The analysis is weighted for the number of MEPs per nationality so that the observations of MEPs from EU Member States that are underrepresented in the sample are increased in the sample, whereas observations of MEPs from Member States that are overrepresented in the sample are decreased in proportion to the number of MEPs from the corresponding delegation in the EP.

Besides the four main independent variables underlining the four hypotheses, four additional control variables were added to the logistic regression model: one at the level of the political party, i.e. party positioning on the EU (Pro/Anti EU), and three at the level of the individual MEP, i.e. age, gender, and whether the MEP is a former MP or not.

<sup>120</sup>Greens/EFA deputy secretary general, interview, 29 September 2014, by phone.

<sup>121</sup>Greens/EFA staff, advisor on constitutional affairs, interview, 13 May 2014, by phone.

<sup>122</sup>Bart J. Bes, PhD candidate, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Department of Political Science, had conducted the logistic regression analysis and is therefore the second author of the paper for publication.

**Table 4.5: Logistic regression model of MEPs attendance at EAC meetings**

	<i>r</i>	<i>Partial r</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>Exp (B)</i>
H1: MEPs rights in national parliaments	.26***	.24***	.33 (.12)***	1.38
H2: Strength of the EAC	.14*	.22**	1.11 (.45)**	3.02
H3: Party in government	.10 <i>ns</i>	.06 <i>ns</i>	.26 (.45) <i>ns</i>	1.3
H4: Party seat share in national parliament	.18**	.18**	.03 (.01)**	1.03
<b>Controls</b>				
Pro/Anti EU	.17*	.05 <i>ns</i>	.10 (.16) <i>ns</i>	1.1
Age	.02 <i>ns</i>	.01 <i>ns</i>	.00 (.02) <i>ns</i>	1
Gender	-.09 <i>ns</i>	-.12 <i>ns</i>	-.60 (.43) <i>ns</i>	0.55
Former MP	.15*	.20**	1.11 (.48)**	3.03
Constant			-4.53 (1.66)***	0.01
$\chi^2 = 29.676$ (d.f. = 8).				
Log likelihood = 145.615				
$R^2_{\text{Nagelkerke}} = .28$				
1.11 N = 150				

*Note:* The model predicts 70.9% of the cases correctly. The analysis is weighed for the number of MEPs per nationality. \*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .10$ .

The analysis offers a number of findings. There is a positive correlation between the rights of MEPs in 'their' national parliament and their attendance at EAC meetings ( $r = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ), even when all other variables are held constant (partial  $r = .24$ ,  $p < .01$ ). On the basis of the logistic regression analysis, H1 is confirmed: the more participation rights MEPs have in 'their' national parliaments, the more they attend EAC meetings (Beta = .33,  $p < .01$ ).

In contrast to our hypothesized direction (H2), there is a positive correlation ( $r = .14$ ,  $p < .10$ ) between the strength of the EAC and the attendance of MEPs at their EACs, even when controlled for the rest of the model (partial  $r = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The logistic regression confirms this positive association and pinpoints the causal direction: the stronger the EAC, the more often MEPs will attend EAC meetings (Beta = 1.11,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests that the MEPs attendance at EAC meetings is not a 'weapon of the weak' but rather a 'weapon of the strong'.

While the correlations and logistic regression coefficient suggest that MEPs of political parties that are part of a government tend to visit their EAC more often than MEPs of political parties that are in the opposition (H3), no significant relationships are found (Beta = .26, *ns*).

This means that H3, expecting that MEPs from opposition parties would visit their EAC more often than MEPs of parties that are in government, is falsified.

The findings for H4 further confirms the ‘weapon of the strong’ finding as marked by the findings for H2. The positive correlation ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ) and partial correlation ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ) are confirmed by the logistic regression. In contrast to our compensation hypothesis, MEPs from larger political parties actually attend EACs more often than MEPs from smaller political parties (Beta = .03,  $p < .05$ ). The results from H3 and H4 seem to suggest that MEPs who actually stand a chance of influencing their national parliaments' position on EU affairs are more prone to attend EAC meetings, the opposite to our compensation assumption.

Finally, one control variable is interesting to note. MEPs who have been MPs are more prone to attend EAC meetings than MEPs who have not served as MPs before (Beta = 1.11,  $p < .05$ ). In fact, the survey results show that MEPs who are former MPs also tend to visit their national parliament more often than MEPs who did not serve as MPs in the past. Among the 41 former MPs who took part in the survey, only one MEP declared that he visits the premises of his former working place less than once a year, in comparison to 20% of the 107 MEPs that have not been MPs before and took part in the survey. Similarly, 37% of former MPs declared visiting their national parliament more often than once a month, against only 21% of those who have no experience in the national parliament.

## Conclusions

MEPs can play a crucial role in vertical interparliamentary cooperation, compensating for national parliamentarians' lack of interest or resources to effectively engage in EU scrutiny. MEPs can reduce the investment MPs must make in order to have an effective influence in shaping EU legislation and policies and hence reinforce their capacity to scrutinize EU decision-making, notably by providing national parliamentarians with inside information on the state of inter-institutional negotiations in Brussels on specific EU dossiers. The question remains to what extent national parliaments actually make effective use of MEPs.

There is a considerable variation across the EU in the level of MEPs' participation rights in the work of the national parliament in the EU Member State in which they are elected. There is also a correlation between the level of MEPs' rights in 'their' national parliament and the frequency of their attendance at meetings of the European Affairs Committee (EAC). Empirics

indicate that the more participation rights MEPs have in 'their' national parliament, the more often they attend EAC meetings in that parliament.

However, neither national parliaments nor MEPs actually use these legal provisions to their full potential. Hence, more participation rights for MEPs in national parliaments do not automatically translate into more MEP engagement vis-à-vis 'their' national parliament in practice. This may explain why, while around the time of the entry into force of the Lisbon treaty in 2009, many national parliaments in the EU introduced new articles to their rules of procedure to deal with the subsidiarity checks of EU legislation, these modifications did not include a change in MEPs' rights in the chambers.

Moreover, national parliaments may also have strategic reasons to deliberately limit the access of MEPs to their proceedings in order to prevent the participation of MEPs who belong to outsider parties, which have a very small seat share in the national parliament but a substantive representation in the EP. MEPs of the Front National in France, among them the party leader, Marine Le Pen, are a case in point,<sup>123</sup> as well as MEPs of the British National Party (BNP) in the United Kingdom (Huff and Smith 2015: 324).

While scholars often analyze tools of interparliamentary cooperation as an alternative means of empowerment that relatively weak parliamentary actors use as an opportunity to compensate for their structural disadvantages in the domestic arena, notably to acquire information independently from the executive, this compensation mechanism does not work the same way in vertical interparliamentary cooperation, which is actually a 'weapon of the strong' rather than a 'weapon of the weak'. In fact, MEPs who are affiliated with political parties that are in government attend EAC meetings more often than MEPs whose parties are in opposition. Moreover, MEPs of larger parties are more engaged in EU scrutiny activities of the national parliaments than MEPs of smaller parties.

A possible explanation is that most national parliaments view the role of MEPs as 'their' national representatives at the EU-level, and hence tend to engage with MEPs who belong to the majority coalition. However, it seems that national parliaments would be better off using MEPs as experts on particular EU issues rather than as their representatives at the EU-level. National parliaments' effective usage of MEPs would be to invite rapporteurs or shadow rapporteurs, also elected in other EU Member States, to a hearing at the EAC or a sectoral committee, rather than the actual practice among national parliaments of standing invitations to 'their' MEPs to attend

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<sup>123</sup>I thank Olivier Rozenberg for his comment on this aspect.



EAC meetings. Rapporteurs and shadows can provide national parliaments with up-to-date information on the state of the on-going negotiations in the inter-institutional trilogues, and hence enable them to try and influence the outcome of these negotiations.

In line with this idea, national parliaments can benefit from cooperating on a regular basis with MEPs from other Member States, when these are rapporteurs or shadows. Although we lack systematic comparative data on MEPs' attendance at meetings of EACs in EU Members States in which they are not elected, the survey among EAC clerks indicated that national parliaments almost never invite MEPs from other Member States, except on very rare occasions.

Further research is needed in order to provide us with a more detailed understanding of the EACs' internal procedures and practices across the EU in a comparative perspective. This is particularly needed since EACs greatly differ from one parliament to another (Bergman 1997; Auel et al. 2015: 299). Moreover, while MEPs' attendance rates at meetings of sectoral committees is lower than their attendance at EAC meetings, future research on how national parliaments view and use MEPs should pay particular attention to the variation across the EU in the trend towards the mainstreaming of EU issues (Gattermann et al. 2013) and to the question which sectoral committees invite MEPs to their meetings. It will also be interesting to study more closely the possible evolution of MEPs' speaking rights and practices in plenary debates on EU matters in the Member State in which they are elected. Finally, the role of MEPs in subnational parliaments with legislative rights should also be examined in the future.

## Appendix 4.1 – survey database

**Table 4.A1: Survey's database among MEPs by EU Member States**

EU member state	EP 2009-2014	In survey (N)	Response rate (in %)
Germany	99	22	22
France	74	17	23
UK	73	12	16
Poland	51	10	20
Italy	73	9	13
Netherlands	26	9	35
Spain	54	8	15
Belgium	22	7	32
Austria	19	7	37
Portugal	22	6	27
Sweden	20	6	25
Hungary	22	5	23
Bulgaria	18	5	28
Denmark	13	5	38
Luxembourg	6	4	67
Romania	33	3	9
Greece	22	3	14
Slovakia	13	3	23
Finland	13	2	15
Czech Republic	22	2	9
Estonia	6	2	33
Ireland	12	1	8
Slovenia	8	1	12
Cyprus	6	1	17
Malta	6	0	0
Latvia	9	0	0
Lithuania	12	0	0
Total	754	150	20

**Table 4.A2 : Survey's database among MEPs by EP groups affiliation**

EP group	EP 2009-2014	In survey (N)	Reply rate in %
EPP	270	48	18
S&D	190	37	20
ALDE	85	17	20
Greens/EFA	59	25	43
Non-attached	27	7	26
EFD	36	6	17
ECR	53	5	9
GUE/NGL	34	5	15
Total	754	150	20

## Appendix 4.2: MEPs' participation rights in national parliaments of the EU (in alphabetical order)

### Austria

Austrian MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC meetings in both of Austria's national chambers, the Nationalrat<sup>124</sup> and the upper chamber, the Bundesrat,<sup>125</sup> in an advisory capacity. Moreover, the Nationalrat positions and decisions on EU-issues are ought to be sent not only to the Bundesrat president and to all members of the Nationalrat, but also to the Austrian MEPs,<sup>126</sup> and similar provisions on informing the Austrian MEPs on the EAC decisions exist in the Bundesrat.<sup>127</sup> Austrian MEPs may also have speaking rights in the sectoral committees and in the plenary sessions of the Bundesrat, but on invitation only and according to a special procedure.<sup>128</sup> Notably, since May 2015, Austrian MEPs also have some speaking rights in the Nationalrat plenary debates on EU matters<sup>129</sup> or on the conclusion of international agreements with consequences on EU treaties,<sup>130</sup> and they have an advisory vote. Austrian MEPs are integrated in the chambers' parliamentary party groups (*Klubs*), which may invite Austrian MEPs to take the

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124'Die in Österreich gewählten Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments sind berechtigt, bei den Verhandlungen des Hauptausschusses in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union mit beratender Stimme anwesend zu sein', Geschäftsordnung des Nationalrates, Art. 31C (9); for MEPs' speaking rights see Art. 31C (11).

125'Jeder Bundesrat sowie die in Österreich gewählten Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlamentes sind vorbehaltlich sind [...] bei den Verhandlungen des EU-Ausschuss über Vorhaben im Rahmen des Europäischen Union mit beratender Stimme anwesend zu sein.' Geschäftsordnung des Bundesrates Österreich, Article 13b, al. 4.

126'Wenn der Hauptausschuss nichts anderes beschliesst, sind Stellungnahmen und Beschlüsse weiters an den Präsidenten des Bundesrates, alle Mitglieder des Nationalrates sowie die österreichischen Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlament zu verteilen'. Geschäftsordnung des Nationalrates, Art 31d (4).

127'Wenn der EU-Ausschuss nichts anderes beschliesst, sind Stellungnahmen, begründete Stellungnahmen und Mitteilungen weiters an alle Mitglieder des Bundesrates, den Präsidenten des Nationalrates, die Landtage, die Landeshauptmänner sowie an die in Österreich gewählten Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments zu verteilen.' Geschäftsordnung des Bundesrates Österreich, Article 13b, al. 9.

128'Der Präsident kann nach Beratung in der Präsidialkonferenz den in Österreich gewählten Mitgliedern des Europäischen Parlaments [...] bei allen Verhandlungen des Bundesrates und seiner Ausschüsse, die der Erörterung von EU-Themen dienen, ein Rederecht einräumen sowie Dauer und Form der Ausübung des Rederechts festlegen.' Geschäftsordnung des Bundesrates Österreich, Article 38b.

129'[...] kann jeder Klub ein in Österreich gewähltes Mitglied des Europäischen Parlaments namhaft machen, das an den Verhandlungen mit beratender Stimme teilnimmt, sofern er dies spätestens 48 Stunden vor der Debatte – Samstag, Sonntage und gesetzliche Feiertage nicht eingerechnet – schriftlich ankündigt. [...] Jedes Mitglied des Europäischen Parlaments darf sich einmal mit einer Redezeit von maximal fünf Minuten zum Wort melden. Diese wird nicht auf die Gesamtredezeit des verlangenden Klubs angerechnet. [...] Geschäftsordnung des Nationalrates, Art 74b (6).

floor in plenary debates on EU matters for five minutes maximum, if a written notice has been given at least 48 hours before the debate. In practice, however, Austrian MEPs attend EAC meetings only rarely due to conflicting schedules (Miklin 2015: 398).

## Belgium

In both the *Chambre des représentants* and the *Sénat*, Belgian MEPs are members of the EAC. In fact, the Belgian federal EAC, called the Federal Advisory Committee (*le comité d'avis fédéral*), is composed of 30 parliamentarians – ten MPs of the *Chambre*<sup>131</sup>, ten Senators<sup>132</sup>, and ten Belgian MEPs. The committee's first vice-chair is a senator while the second vice-chair is an MEP. While MEPs have exactly the same speaking and voting rights as the Deputies and Senators, their participation 'is relatively limited, since they have other institutional opportunities, most notably at the EU level, to be informed on EU issues, which are often more efficient than a committee of their national parliament. Moreover, it is often practically difficult for Belgian MEPs to participate in the meetings, since they often coincide with meetings of the European Parliament' (Delreux and Randour 2015: 155). In addition, Belgian MEPs can take part in sectoral committees in the *Chambre des représentants* by special invitation, take part in the debate and have an advisory vote, following a specific procedure.<sup>133</sup> The president of the *Chambre* is immediately informed on this request. Even when the committee chair authorises the MEP's participation, the committee may still decide the opposite.<sup>134</sup> In the Belgian Senate, Belgian MEPs can also attend meetings of the standing committees, but as regular audience, without speaking or voting rights.<sup>135</sup> Belgian MEPs have no right to speak in the Senate's plenary.

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<sup>130</sup>Geschäftsordnung des Nationalrates, Article 76 (5).

<sup>131</sup>Règlement de la Chambre des représentants, Article 68, 'le comité d'avis sur les questions européennes de la Chambre des représentants'.

<sup>132</sup>Règlement du Sénat de Belgique, Art. 78.

<sup>133</sup>Règlement de la Chambre des représentants, Article 34. Belgian MEPs' participation requires an authorisation beforehand by the sectoral committee chair, following a request which has to reach the committee chair at least the day before the meeting, mentioning the main question in the debate on which the MEP would like to have the floor. Belgian MEPs do not need a special invitation to participate in committee for foreign affairs, but their participation may also be refused by the committee.

<sup>134</sup>An eventual debate on the committee's decision on the MEP request takes part in closed doors without the presence of the MEP in question; The number of speakers is limited to four and the speaking time is ten minutes per person.

## **Bulgaria**

MEPs elected in Bulgaria 'may take part in the meetings of the Parliamentary Committees with an advisory vote' (article 21, RoP). In addition, Bulgarian MEPs 'may participate in a non-voting capacity' (article 125 RoP) in certain plenary sessions of the Bulgarian National Assembly dealing with EU matters, which are hearings with the Bulgarian Prime Minister, held either before a session of the European Council (article 122 RoP) or on the occasion of the government's report at the beginning of each six-month period of the presidency of the Council of the EU (article 124 RoP). In practice, though, Bulgaria's MEPs rarely visit the Bulgarian National Assembly (Kanev 2015: 455).

## **Croatia**

Croatian MEPs' have a standing invitation to the meetings of the EAC<sup>136</sup> in the Hrvatski sabor. They may be allowed to speak if the Chairman of the Committee so decides, but they cannot participate in voting or any other decision making procedures. However, Croatian MEPs only occasionally participate in the EAC sessions due to colliding agendas between the two parliamentary institutions.<sup>137</sup> This practical problem led to an informal agreement that EAC meetings will be held mostly on Fridays in order to facilitate the participation of MEPs (Butković 2015: 467). In addition, on special invitation, Croatian MEPs may attend the parliament's sectoral committees meetings<sup>138</sup> and may be invited to speak, but they cannot vote or participate in the decision-making.

## **Cyprus**

Cypriot MEPs have no right to attend the EAC meetings of the Cyprus' House of Representatives unless invited to do so (Emilianides et al. 2015: 483).

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135Clerk at the legislative service – EU affairs, Belgian Senate, email to the author, 14 July 2016.

136Standing Orders of the Croatian parliament, Article 66, paragraph 3.

137Advisor to the EAC, Croatian parliament, email to the author, 13 July 2016.

138'Working bodies of Parliament may invite MEPs from the Republic of Croatia to meetings', Standing Orders of the Croatian parliament, Article 57, paragraph 2.

## Czech Republic

Czech MEPs can participate in EAC meetings in both Czech parliaments, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, in an advisory function, but do not have voting rights.<sup>139</sup> However, MEPs rarely use these rights because of the conflict of schedules between the EP and the national chambers.<sup>140</sup> MEPs have no special rights to speak in the plenary. Apart from that, there are bi-annual joint meetings of the EACs of both Czech chambers with the Czech MEPs, but these meetings are mainly used for networking and are not well attended. As for discussing in detail specific policy issues, 'any political coordination between the Czech parliamentarians and MEPs is informal, for example, a Czech MEP contacting a committee chair' (Hrabálek and Strelkov 2015: 504).

## Denmark

In the Danish Parliament, MEPs have no formal rights in the *Folketing* rules of procedure. However, regular monthly meetings are held between the EAC members and Danish MEPs to discuss matters concerning EU legislation, and the permanent representatives of the *Folketing* in Brussels help organise these meetings.<sup>141</sup> In general, the *Folketing* cooperates with the Danish MEPs on an individual political party basis, and current European issues of common interest are discussed at these informal meetings.<sup>142</sup> Danish MEPs have only rare contacts with MPs working in the sectoral committees, usually as a result of personal relations (Chrisensen 2015: 283). In addition, MEPs are sometimes invited to participate in public meeting or conferences, organised by the EAC or the sectoral committees.

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<sup>139</sup>The Standing Rules of the Czech Senate, section 119c: 'Members of the European Parliament elected in the Czech Republic may attend meetings of the EAC, and they shall be entitled to an advisory vote; they may express their opinion on the matter under consideration and submit proposals thereon'. Czech MEPs have also special rights in the Senate's committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security.

<sup>140</sup>Clerk, EU unit, Senate of the Czech Republic, email to the author, 13 July 2016.

<sup>141</sup>Assistant to the EAC, Folketing International Department, email to the author, 14 July 2016.

<sup>142</sup>See information on the Danish EAC website:

[http://www.thedanishparliament.dk/Committees\\_and\\_delegations/Committees/EUU.aspx](http://www.thedanishparliament.dk/Committees_and_delegations/Committees/EUU.aspx) (accessed 11 July 2016).

## Estonia

Estonian MEPs hold only irregular meetings with MPs of the *Riigikogu*. Committees' chairmen can invite external experts to participate in the meetings, including MEPs. In practice, the EAC and the Foreign Affairs Committee occasionally invite MEPs to their meetings to discuss their work and to hear their views on their area of expertise.<sup>143</sup> The Estonian parliament seems to appreciate personal visits of Commissioners and other officials of EU institutions, but does not especially see the need to intensify its relations with the EP (Ehin 2015: 524).

## Finland

Finnish MEPs are not allowed to attend the meetings of the EAC in the Finnish *Eduskunta*. If MEPs are invited to attend EAC meetings, they are invited as experts. While the EAC committee organises joint meetings of Finnish MPs and MEPs twice a year, the participation on both sides is rather poor. All in all, the Finnish parliament is focused on scrutinizing the government and is rather skeptical about interparliamentary cooperation and networking (Raunio 2015: 415). The Eduskunta's EAC and its standing committees make only limited usage of MEPs' expertise since it does not see them as particularly essential channels for information or influence. However, Finnish MEPs are in regular and close contact with their respective parliamentary party groups, with which they meet frequently, providing them with information on EU issues.<sup>144</sup>

## France

The Rules of procedure of France's Assemblée Nationale stipulate that the EAC can invite French MEPs to its meetings in an advisory role.<sup>145</sup> In practice, the French EAC closely cooperates with French MEPs. Since 2010, the joint EAC of the Assemblée Nationale and the Sénat organizes three to four meetings per year with the French MEPs, during the week of external activities at the EP, with the participation of 10 to 15 MEPs (Thomas and Tacea 2015: 185).

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<sup>143</sup>Consultant of the EAC in the Estonian parliament, email to the author, 13 July 2016.

<sup>144</sup>Director of EU Secretariat, Finnish parliament, email to the author, 13 July 2016.

<sup>145</sup>'La commission des affaires européennes peut inviter à participer à ses travaux, avec voix consultatives, les membres français du Parlement européen'. Rules of procedure of France's *Assemblée Nationale*, Chapitre IX, Article 151-1, alinea 6.

## Germany

German MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC of the Bundestag. Moreover, 16 German MEPs are entitled to attend as representatives (*Vertreter*), to participate in the EAC deliberations, to take positions and even to propose which issues should be deliberated upon, but they have no voting rights.<sup>146</sup> 'In practice, however, MEPs do not frequently take the opportunity to participate in EAC sessions.' (Höing 2015: 196) These German MEPs are appointed by the President of the Bundestag based on the proposal of the parliamentary party groups (*Fraktionen*), which includes the party from which they have been elected to the EP. All MEPs (hence not only those elected in Germany) require a special invitation to attend the sectoral committees when these discuss EU matters.<sup>147</sup> MEPs have no right to speak in plenary debates in the German Bundestag. German MEPs are not mentioned in the Rules of Procedure of Germany's upper chamber, the Bundesrat. The chamber's EU committee and sectoral committees may invite MEPs for an exchange of opinions, but this happens on an irregular basis and quite seldom.<sup>148</sup>

## Greece

Greek MEPs have a standing invitation to EAC meetings, but these are rather infrequent and are not well attended in general (Sotiropoulos 2015).

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<sup>146</sup>Geschäftsordnung des Deutschen Bundestages, Art 93b (8): 'Zu den Sitzungen des Ausschusses für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union erhalten deutsche Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments Zutritt; weitere deutsche Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments sind als Vertreter zur Teilnahme berechtigt. Die mitwirkungsberechtigten Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments werden vom Präsidenten des Deutschen Bundestages auf Vorschlag der Fraktionen des Bundestages, aus deren Parteien deutsche Mitglieder in das Europäische Parlament gewählt worden sind, bis zur Neuwahl des Europäischen Parlaments, längstens bis zum Ende der Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages berufen. Die berufenen Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments sind befugt, die Beratung von Verhandlungsgegenständen anzuregen sowie während der Beratungen des Ausschusses für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union Auskünfte zu erteilen und Stellung zu nehmen'.

<sup>147</sup>Geschäftsordnung des Deutschen Bundestages, Art. 93a (5): 'Die Ausschüsse können Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments sowie Mitglieder des Rates und der Kommission der Europäischen Union oder deren Beauftragte zu ihren Beratungen in Europaangelegenheiten hinzuziehen. Sie können Unionsdokumente gemeinsam mit Ausschüssen des Europäischen Parlaments gleicher Zuständigkeit beraten'.

<sup>148</sup>Clerk, German Bundesrat, Committee for Foreign Affairs, Europe and Defence, email to the author, 18 July 2016.



## Hungary

Hungarian MEPs have various participation rights in the Hungarian National Assembly, in the EAC, in sectoral committees and also in plenary debates. However, while Hungarian MEPs are often present at EAC meetings when key EU issues are on the agenda,<sup>149</sup> their overall participation is rare (Ilonszki 2015: 542). It is rather the Hungarian national parties that mobilize their respective members in Brussels, while Hungary's MEPs try to ensure some presence in national politics. Moreover, while MEPs' participation in meetings of their political groups in the national parliament does not require official provisions, there are also formal regulations that provide Hungarian MEPs with office space in the parliament premises, as well as staffers. Moreover, Hungarian MEPs are members of a consultative body called 'the Forum of MEPs', which is a legally recognised. What is more, Hungarian MEPs have speaking rights in the Assembly's plenary debates related to EU matters. In fact, MEPs from Hungary may attend the debates in the Assembly and speak at any time of the sitting, since they are considered as 'persons having a consultative capacity'.<sup>150</sup> Alternatively, MEPs from Hungary may request to take the floor in EU-related plenary debates through the leader of their affiliated parliamentary group.<sup>151</sup> This formal provision is used in practice. For instance, during the plenary debate of 26 February 2015 on the EU-US negotiations of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), four Hungarian MEPs took the floor.<sup>152</sup>

## Ireland

Irish MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC of the Oireachtas and may take part in its proceedings, but it is rare they avail of these rights in practice (Barrett 2015: 295).

## Italy

In Italy, both the EAC and the sectoral committees of both the Italian *Camera dei Deputati* and the *Senato della Repubblica* may invite MEPs, not exclusively those elected in Italy, to provide

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<sup>149</sup>Clerk, EAC, Hungarian National Assembly, email to the author, 15 July 2016.

<sup>150</sup>See Act XXXVI of 2012 in the National Assembly: section 39 (1).

<sup>151</sup>Rules of Procedure of the Hungarian National Assembly, section 35 (2)

<sup>152</sup>MEPs Zoltán Balczó (Jobbik, Non-attached members), István Ujhelyi (MSSP, S&D), Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (Fidezs, EPP) and Benedek Jávör (Együtt, Greens/EFA). See <http://www.parlament.hu/hu/ep-kepviselek-felszolalasai-a-plenaris-ulesen> (accessed 15 July 2016).

information on aspects concerning the powers and activities of the EU institutions.<sup>153</sup> This special invitation requires the agreement of the President of the Chamber. It is a usual practice in the Italian Chamber of Deputies to organise hearings or video-conferences with MEPs, of different nationalities, on particular draft legislation examined by the EP and other EU matters.<sup>154</sup> In practice, EAC and sectoral committees in Italy organise around the same number of hearings with MEPs as they do with Commissioners (Cavatorto 2015: 215). In the Italian Senate MEPs' participation is somewhat irregular.<sup>155</sup> In the Italian Senato, each of the standing committees may, in relations to the matters falling within its remit, invite MEPs (not necessarily Italian) to provide information on aspects relating to the powers and activities of the EU institutions. An authorisation of the President of the Senate is required.<sup>156</sup> MEPs have no speaking rights in the plenary debates.

### **Latvia**

Latvian MEPs do not have any particular status in the EAC of the Latvian parliament, the Saeima, besides a possible special invitation, as the EAC chair can allow MEPs to participate in EAC discussions. In practice, Latvian MEPs rarely attend EAC meetings despite an agreement that MEPs elected in Latvia would attend at least one EAC meeting per parliamentary session (Ikstens 2015: 553).

### **Lithuania**

Lithuanian MEPs have a standing invitation to both EACs and sectoral committees and may even participate in plenary debates in the Seimas. While MEPs of Lithuania sometimes indeed participate in the EAC meetings in Vilnius, it is not a frequent practice, and Lithuanian MPs also consult MEPs only rarely (Vilpišauskas 2015: 572).

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<sup>153</sup>Le Commissioni, in rapporto a questioni di loro competenza, previa intesa con il Presidente della Camera, possono invitare membri del Parlamento europeo a fornire informazioni sugli aspetti attinenti alle attribuzioni e all'attività delle istituzioni dell'Unione europea.' Regolamento della Camera dei Deputati, Art. 127-ter; The Italian Senate's Rules of Procedure includes a very similar article 144-quater.

<sup>154</sup>Clerk, Relations office with the EU, Camera dei Deputati, email to the author, 14 July 2016.

<sup>155</sup>Clerk, research service, Italian Senate, email to the author, 15 July 2016.

<sup>156</sup>Article 144-ter of the Italian Senate's Rules of Procedure.

## **Luxembourg**

Luxembourg MEPs have a standing invitation to all EAC meetings of the *Chambre des Députés* and also to sectoral committees' meetings when these deal with European issues.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, after every EP plenary session, an exchange of views with the MEPs is the main point in the committee's meeting agenda.<sup>158</sup> Luxembourg's MEPs regularly attend EAC meetings, especially when ministers attend the meetings as well (Spreitzer 2015: 237).

## **Malta**

Maltese MEPs have a standing invitation to participate in the EAC of the House of Representatives of Malta but with no voting rights (Pace 2015: 581).

## **Netherlands**

Dutch MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC meetings and the sectoral committees of the Tweede Kamer with the aim of informing the House about specific EU matters.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, Dutch MEPs can also take the floor in plenary sessions on EU matters, but are not allowed to debate with the ministers nor vote.<sup>160</sup> Dutch MEPs are invited to speak in the annual plenary debate on the State of the Union. For instance, several Dutch MEPs from different parliamentary party groups took the floor in the plenary session of 2 April 2015. In the Dutch second chamber, Eerste Kamer, there are only irregular meetings with MEPs, which have no participation rights in the EAC. Dutch MEPs and MPs are also in contact on an informal basis and along party lines (Högenauer, 2015: 262).

## **Poland**

Polish MEPs can attend all the committee meetings of Polish Sejm and have the right to participate in the discussions.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, the Sejm EAC invites Polish MEPs to be the

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<sup>157</sup>'Les membres luxembourgeois du Parlement Européen peuvent être invités à assister aux réunions des commissions lorsque celles-ci traitent des dossiers européens'. (Règlement de la Chambre des députés, Article 168, al. 3)

<sup>158</sup>25<sup>th</sup> COSAC bi-annual report, annexe, p. 419.

<sup>159</sup>Article 55 of the Tweede Kamer's Rules of Procedure.

<sup>160</sup>Clerk of the EAC, Dutch Tweede Kamer, email to the author, 27 July 2016.

rapporteurs on the most significant EU matters. Nevertheless, the overall degree of contacts between the Polish parliaments and the EP remain modest (Barcz and Pudło 2015: 608).

## **Portugal**

MEPs elected in Portugal may be invited to participate in its works of the EAC of the Portuguese Assembly and they frequently do so, mainly as rapporteurs for salient EU matters, giving MPs inside information from Brussels (Jančić 2015b: 378). Less formal intensive contacts with Portuguese MEPs also exist, notably in the form of video-conferences.

## **Romania**

Romanian MEPs are not mentioned in the Rules of Procedure and can attend EAC meetings only on a special invitation.<sup>162</sup> There are no official contacts or coordination between the Romanian parliament and the EP in general 'mostly due to the difficulties in finding a common schedule, but also because there is some competition between the two' (Tacea 2015: 625).

## **Slovakia**

Slovak MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC of the Slovak National Council in an advisory capacity,<sup>163</sup> without voting rights. In practice, MEPs attend EAC meetings on an irregular basis and not very often.<sup>164</sup> Hence, Slovak MEPs rarely use in practice their formal rights in the Slovak EAC (Figulová 2015: 641). In addition, Slovak MEPs can also attend meetings of the sectoral committees on special invitation only and have no speaking rights in plenary sessions.

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<sup>161</sup>25<sup>th</sup> COSAC bi-annual report, Annexe, page. 453.

<sup>162</sup>Staff of the EAC of the Romanian Senate, email to the author, 11 August 2016.

<sup>163</sup>'Members of the European Parliament elected in the territory of the Slovak Republic under a special law may participate in a meetings of the Committee for European Affairs and may speak on the matters discussed.' Rules of Procedure of the Slovak National Council, 58a, article 7.

<sup>164</sup>Clerk, department of EU affairs, Slovak parliament, email to the author, 15 July 2016.

## **Slovenia**

Slovenian MEPs have a standing invitation to attend EAC as well as sectoral meetings of the Slovenian National Assembly, Državni zbor, and to participate in the debates.<sup>165</sup> However, in practice, MEPs' attendance is very poor<sup>166</sup> despite the fact that EAC meetings are on Friday in order to facilitate their presence. Slovenian MPs complain on MEPs' lack of attendance while the latter find little point in taking part in 'rubber-stamping' by the EAC (Kajnc Lange: 654). MEPs have no right to participate in the plenary. Slovenian MEPs have only informal contacts in the Slovenian second chamber, *Državni svet* but they can take the floor in plenary debates if allowed. The Slovenian MEPs' lack of cooperation with their EAC of the Slovenian National Assembly leads to mutual complaints and allegations between MEPs and MPs.

## **Spain**

Spanish MEPs' contacts with the Cortes Generales are limited, often concentrated on partisan contacts (Kölling and Molina 2015: 359).

## **Sweden**

Swedish MEPs are not allowed to participate in parliamentary work of the Riksdag and do not seem to play any particular role there (Hageland 2015). While MEPs can be invited to attend committee meetings after a special decision by the committee in question, this occurs very rarely. Hence, contacts between Riksdag members and MEPs mainly take place through the parliamentary party groups.

## **United Kingdom**

In the UK's both chambers, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, MEPs have no formal rights to participate in the parliamentary work. The only regular interparliamentary links are informal meetings twice a year of the two chambers' EACs together with the UK MEPs.<sup>167</sup> These tripartite meetings are chaired in rotation between the House of Commons, House of

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<sup>165</sup>'Meetings of the competent committee may also be attended by Members of the European Parliament from the Republic of Slovenia, who may also participate in the debate'. Rules of Procedure of Slovenia's National Assembly, Article 154e, al. 3.

<sup>166</sup>Clerk, secretary of the EAC, Slovenian Državni zbor, email to the author, 16 November 2016.

<sup>167</sup>See the House of Commons' publication, *The European Scrutiny System in the House of Commons*, 2015, p. 27.

Lords and the UK MEPs and are used as an 'opportunity for an exchange of views'.<sup>168</sup> EAC members also regularly travel to Brussels to take evidence from EU stakeholders, including MEPs, and MEPs also travel to Westminster to give evidence before the parliaments upon request.<sup>169</sup> In practice, however, British MEPs do not even have passes granting them access to the House of Commons since the far-right British National Party obtained seats in the EP in 2009, and UK MEPs complain that they are rarely or never invited to Westminster (Huff and Smith 2015: 324).

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<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/european-scrutiny/European-Scrutiny-Committee-Guide-May15.pdf> (accessed 11 July 2016).

168UK House of Commons, clerk of the European Scrutiny committee, email to the author, 13 November 2016.

169UK House of Lords' permanent representative in the EU, email to the author, 11 July 2016.

## **General Conclusion**

The main finding of this dissertation is the rather limited level of effective coordination between national parties that belong to the same party 'family' in the EU. This finding is explained by the parties' general lack of attention to the EU-level of politics and the limited genuine interest party politicians have in EU politics. This is particularly striking in regards to the transnational party federations.

What do these findings entail with respect to the normative debate on the EU's democratic legitimacy and the quality of the democratic representation at the EU level of governance? Mainly, these findings illustrate the wide gap between the legal framework of the Europarties and the reality observed. The 1992 Maastricht treaty announced that 'political parties at European level contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union.' (Article 10 (4), TEU). However, neither this formal acknowledgement of the Europarties' democratic function in the EU, nor the legal and organisational developments since 2004 tell us much about the reality of these organisations, their function of linkage with citizens across the EU or their visibility and political relevance at the constituency level. In fact, the findings suggest that Europarties' effective contribution to 'forming European political awareness' is rather modest. Legal arrangements are not sufficient to transform the EU into a genuine democratic polity and for bringing citizens closer to the EU institutions. No conceivable remedies can successfully address the major problem of the EU's remoteness from its citizens if these remedies remain confined to the EU level of governance.

## **Outside the European Parliament**

National parties may coordinate activities outside the EP institutional setting, notably the EP elections campaign every five years. However, as the case-study on how the French Greens used the 2009 EP elections illustrates, an effective coordination between national parties and other parties or the extra-parliamentary wing of their Europarty was not observed. National parties are fully autonomous to determine their own electoral strategies in the EP campaign, according to their own strategic goals, which are determined primarily at the national level of politics.

In addition, the transnational party federations try to reach out directly to citizens across the EU by establishing individual membership schemes, in order to develop certain autonomous resources and organisational capacities. As the in-depth case study on the EGP illustrates, these

attempts are hampered by the national parties' lack of interest or even reluctance to implement the Europarties' decisions and policies as well as the lack of interest among party members.

My conclusion from these two case-studies is that the Europarties' extra-parliamentary wings, the transnational party federations, have limited potential to develop into genuine transnational party organisations in the current EU institutional setting. Hence, as pessimistic Europarty scholars had already suggested (Delwit et al. 2001; Bartolini 2012), my findings confirm that these organisations are merely loose umbrella organisations at the EU-level. It is therefore rather problematic to study them as the party-in-central-office element of a transnational party organisation.

The Europarties we study today are, in fact, political groups in the EP, which have developed since the 1950s within the EP arena, largely confined to the EU institutional setting. The institutional recognition of these organisations as 'political parties' first appeared in the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, following demands from the EP groups themselves, notably the two largest ones, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats (Johansson and Raunio 2005; Roa Bastos 2012). Notably since the 2004 Europarties regulations, the European Commission and the EP develop policies to empower the Europarties through legal and financial means. The idea behind these policies is that such organisations provide the EU with popular democratic legitimacy, notably by mobilizing citizens in EP elections. Europarties, despite their often relatively resourceful member organisations across the EU, are still financially dependent on the EP annual grants. The actual discussions in the EP on how to better control these grants<sup>170</sup> seem like a text-book case on how legislators decide upon the rules of the game in which they are the most interested players (Katz and Mair 1995).

Scholars who study Europarties tend to follow the provisions in EU law, looking at Europarties as political parties. However, empirics suggest that the extra-parliamentary wings of the EP groups are merely Brussels-based NGOs, with only a handful of staffers, with their offices just outside the EP premises, heavily financed by the EP itself (see Calossi 2014). In fact, the organisational life of these NGOs more resembles EU interest-groups than political parties. The claim of these small umbrella organisations to be 'political parties at the European level' is highly questionable.

An alternative to study Europarties as political parties may be to study these organisations as EU interest-groups, comparing their organisational structures, notably

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<sup>170</sup>See Palmeri, Tara (2016) 'Top MEPs seek to starve fringe parties of funding', *Politico*, 7 June 2016. The article reveals a new report drawn up by the EP Secretary General, Klaus Welle, on the misuse of Europarties' funding.



financially speaking, to other interest-groups which are heavily financed and politically supported by the European Commission<sup>171</sup>. In this case, Europarties may be analysed as umbrella interest-groups, while the member organisations are the ones who, in principle, set the lobbying agenda. Arguably, the hypothesis is that parties lobby the EU institutions and EU governments on legislation and policies relevant to their own party organisations, mainly the legal and financial framework of EP elections and referendums related to EU matters. Such a research avenue would still keep the focus on the existing organisations which are officially recognised by EU law and the top-down policies which assist them legally, financially and politically. As such, it would be in line with the pessimistic approach towards the possible emergence of parties at the European level.

A possible optimistic alternative would be to consider that 'political parties at the European level' may eventually emerge but outside the EP institutional setting, in bottom-up dynamics in European civil society. In this case, such new European parties would not be part of the actual parties' cartel (Mair 1994; Katz and Mair 1995) but a genuinely new organisation with its own autonomous financial resources and support in civil society, possibly by individual party members across Europe. In this case, the three-faces of party organisation may not be the best model to use, but rather the literature on how new parties emerge and on the new models of parties.

### **Within the European Parliament**

While Europarties seem to be unable to effectively perform a representative role at the EU level of politics, they do fulfil a certain procedural (or institutional) function of political parties (Bartolini and Mair 2001) at the EU level of politics, notably in the organisation and maintenance of the EP offices. Europarties as EP groups have a crucial role in the organisation of the EP, its committees, decision-making process and voting behaviour of MEPs. In fact, the main reason why national parties in the EU do coordinate transnationally intensively and on a daily basis is that their delegations in the EP are organised within transnational parliamentary groups together with other parties from different member states.

Taking into account their crucial function in the EP, Europarties may be analysed as networks of legislators (Slaughter 2004) by which these actors reach out beyond national borders, encounter their foreign counterparts and create various horizontal and vertical networks.

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<sup>171</sup>The works of Justin Greenwood on this topic may be a promising research avenue.

Since Europarties are composed of representatives who are directly elected by the EU citizens, these European networks of legislators are well positioned to embrace the voice of the people at the international level (See Slaughter 2004: 104-130).

However, as I have shown in the third article of this dissertation, when EP groups try to reach a common policy position and assume a role in a sensitive policy issue on which they have substantial disagreements, this possibility is largely dependent on the political will of the national parties affiliated with the EP group. Moreover, despite their empowerment in the past few decades, Europarties still suffer from resource scarcity, especially when compared to well-established national parties in large EU member states. Hence, while Europarties may have a particular normative role at the European and the international level (Šabič 2013), we still face a major problem how to measure the impact or influence of these organisations and therefore to assess their over-all relevance in European politics beyond their procedural function in the EP institutional arena.

EP group affiliation seem rather irrelevant when explaining variation in MEPs' practices in their national parliaments, which is linked to the EU Member State in which they were elected, as I have demonstrated in the fourth article of the dissertation. The large variation of MEPs' practices in their national parliaments across the EU is explained, by and large, by the variation in the national parliaments' MEPs' participation rights in the chambers.

The main weakness of the Europarties is that national parties' delegations in the EP enjoy almost exclusive autonomy and are free to opt-out of their EP group's decisions. The potential role of EP groups as genuine political actors, relevant and visible also outside the EP arena, is challenged by disagreements between national delegations within these groups. In case of conflict over salient policy issues between an EP group and a national delegation affiliated with it, MEPs generally choose to vote according to the national party's position and not along the political line of their affiliated EP group (Hix 2002; Scully et al. 2012; Roger and Winzen 2015).

These so-called 'internal' divisions within EP groups are, in fact, *international* divisions between different national parties of the same party 'family'. Therefore, the so-called 'transnational' or 'supranational' EP groups are, in fact, *international* organisations, in which the national parties, via their delegations in the EP, play a crucial role. It is therefore problematic to study Europarties' parliamentary components, the EP groups, as autonomous actors, as transnational or supranational organisations, beyond their international structure. EP groups are composed of national party delegations and remain largely dominated by these national

components. Therefore, similar to transnational party federations, EP groups should also be analysed as umbrella organisations or an alliance of various parliamentary groups.

Future research on the parliamentary groups in the EP (EP groups) will benefit from taking some critical distance from the comparative politics approach (Bowler and McElroy 2015), which became rather dominant in the study of these parliamentary groups since the late 1990s (Hix 1994, 1998). An international relations approach, which takes into account the predominant role of the national delegations in the EP and the decisive role of domestic politics in their resources, norms of appropriateness and practices, may actually fit the reality of the EP groups better than analysing them as parliamentary groups similar to the ones observable in national legislatures.

Research on EP groups should examine more closely the question how they coordinate with the parliamentary party groups of the same political 'family' in the national parliaments across the EU. The question is not only how do parties' delegations of the same 'family' reach common policy positions in the EP institutional setting, but also what impact these common positions have outside the EP arena, on the national parties across the EU. Thus, the focus is not on organisational units but on cross-level dynamics between national parliamentary party groups and their affiliated EP groups.

One way to analyse these dynamics is as two-level games, based on Robert Putnam's model of international negotiations (1988). Putnam's model highlights the entanglement between the political bargaining processes taking place simultaneously in the international and domestic arenas. When adapted to the EU, Putnam's original two-level game model has been expanded to consider three arenas (Patterson 1997; Collinson 1999; Frennhoff 2007; Reslow and Vink 2015): the international arena (level I) between the Commission and a third country or an international organisation; the intra-EU arena (level II) of negotiations between the representatives of the EU member states in the Council, including negotiations between and within the principal EU institutions; and the domestic/national dynamics (level III) within the EU member states, including domestic or sectoral interest groups. In these adaptations of Putnam's model to the EU, the EP has received only limited attention, merely as one of the elements of intra-EU dynamics at level II.

Within EP groups, I observe the logic of two-level games, in which negotiations take place simultaneously in two rather distinct arenas of party politics: the international arena of the EP group (level I) and the domestic arena of the national parties (level II). In this model, MEPs and staff of the national parties' delegations are the chief negotiators, being the main link

between these two arenas. These negotiations are international in nature since they occur between national party organisations via their delegates. Moreover, the outcome of these negotiations is mainly determined by the national delegations' size within the EP group (Klüver and Rodon 2013).

The logic of the two-level games played by EP groups entails that domestic dynamics determine the stances of the national parties on given EU issues (level II). In turn, the national party tries to upload its position to the international arena, via bargaining with other delegations in the EP group it is affiliated with (level I). The two-level games model in international negotiations requires finding a balance between domestic demands and the chief negotiators' capacity to compromise at the international arena. In other words, the chief negotiator in the international arena seeks to reach an agreement that will be accepted at the national level. Once an agreement has been reached in the international negotiations, a phase of formal or informal ratification follows. In practice, the need to ratify the agreement at the national level already produces significant anticipation effects during the international negotiations (Putnam 1988: 436) as well as prior consultations and bargaining at the domestic level in order to determine the chief negotiators' positions at the international arena.

Putnam's model may be a useful analytical tool to better comprehend the vertical dynamics between EP groups and their affiliated parties. Using such a model turns the focus of research from the EP arena itself to incorporate also the national level of politics, taking into account how the delegations face domestic demands and pressures from the party's constituents and interest-groups. A possible operationalisation of this model in empirical research may be a detailed case-study on a particularly salient policy issue in a comparative perspective, providing an in-depth analysis of the 'win-set' of a few parties' delegations in the EP in regards to their constituency, and how these delegations negotiate the EP groups' common positions.

## **Concluding remarks**

In the introduction I presented the current state of the art, first on national parties in the EU and then on Europarties. EU scholars, such as myself, are very much focused on the EU level of politics and its institutional development. We follow closely this fascinating moving target in Brussels, and very often tend to see the EU as an emerging polity. However, a comprehensive understanding of the transnational coordination of parties in the EU should strive to go beyond this dichotomy between national parties and the Europarty organisational structures. Future

research should tackle the question to what extent national parties cooperate with their affiliated Europarty. We need to incorporate in our research strategy both levels of governance and the vertical interactions that occur between the Europarties and their national components.

In the introduction to this dissertation I reflected on two challenges I identified in conducting this research: mainstreaming political sociology in the field of EU studies and taking into account both the EU-level and the national level of politics. The latter is an on-going challenge I still face, both conceptually and empirically; how to study a political system composed of 28 different member states, with their different institutional settings, historical contexts and political cultures. As for the former challenge, mainstreaming political sociology in the field of EU studies, this is not a simple missionary task of diffusing the sociological approaches among the mainstream literature. The challenge as I see it now is rather how to build bridges between sociological and institutional approaches in EU studies, which complement one another, and how to take into full consideration in the research both the EU law with its formal institutional procedures and the actors' usages or non-usages of these legal provisions.

## Introduction générale en français

« Le Parti Vert Européen est une fédération de partis nationaux. Il s'appelle parti à cause des traités de l'UE ».<sup>172</sup>

Cette citation d'un initié de premier plan du Parti Vert Européen (PVE) est révélatrice de la nature de ces « partis politiques européens », « europartis », ou « partis politiques au niveau européen » comme ils sont nommés dans le droit communautaire. Alors que la Commission européenne tente de promouvoir le développement de « parties politiques véritablement transnationale »<sup>173</sup> par divers moyens juridiques et financiers,<sup>174</sup> il est révélateur d'observer comment cette politique d'en haut vers le bas est perçue par les acteurs au sein des europartis et comment ces acteurs comprennent la nature de l'organisation dont ils font partie.

Arriver à avoir une bonne compréhension du point de vue des acteurs n'est pas une tâche facile en science politique. Cela nécessite un point d'accès aux acteurs politiques qui nous intéressent : trouver un rôle à jouer dans leur organisation politique, apprendre à connaître les individus qui y travaillent, gagner leur confiance, observer de près les acteurs *in situ* sur un certain laps de temps et, dans une certaine mesure, participer à leurs activités. Ce sont les méthodes de recherche qualitatives, telles que le travail de terrain ethnographique, qui nous permettent d'obtenir des données empiriques telles que la citation franche ci-dessus, ce qui est difficile à obtenir par des entretiens classiques ou une recherche sur internet. Une discussion informelle juste avant le déjeuner au cours d'une réunion du parti est une situation fort différente d'un entretien formel avec un chercheur universitaire.

Au cours des six dernières années, j'ai souvent rencontré des eurodéputés du groupe des Verts, leurs assistants personnels ainsi que l'équipe du groupe des Verts pendant les plénières du Parlement européen (PE) à Strasbourg. J'ai assisté à six congrès du PVE ; j'étais membre actif d'Europe Écologie Les Verts (EELV) ; j'ai été coordinateur du réseau des sympathisants

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<sup>172</sup>Juan Bernard, ex-secrétaire Général du Party Vert Europeen (PVE), discussion informelle, Lyon, 14 novembre 2015.

<sup>173</sup>Communiqué de presse de la Commission Européenne du 12 septembre 2012, 'Commission proposal boosts European political parties' ability to represent EU citizens, strengthen democracy', [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-12-951\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-951_en.htm) (accès le 26 Juin 2016).

<sup>174</sup>Voir EU regulation No. 2004/2003 of 4 November 2003 on the regulations governing political parties at European level and the rules regarding their funding, OJ L 297, 15.11.2013; EU regulation No. 1142/2014 of 22 October 2014 regarding the financing of European political parties, OJ L 317/28, 4.11.2014.

individuels du PVE ; j'ai réalisé 30 entretiens formels et de nombreuses discussions informelles avec des eurodéputés Verts, ex-députés et des candidats aux élections européennes. Cette thèse n'aurait pas été la même sans cette immersion dans la politique partisane européenne au cours de ces années.

La question de recherche de cette thèse est à quel point et comment les partis politiques dans l'UE se coordonnent-ils au-delà de frontières nationales avec d'autres partis de la même « famille » politique. Mon étude de cas principale sont les Verts européens que je considère comme un cas exemplaire sur cette question. La première raison est l'histoire commune des Verts en Europe occidentale et leur attachement particulier à la démocratie de base (*grassroots democracy* ou *Basisdemokratie* en allemand). Historiquement, les partis Verts ont émergé dans plusieurs pays d'Europe occidentale vers la même période, la fin des années 1970, issus des mouvements pan-européens de protestation tels que les mouvements féministe et anti-nucléaire (Kitschelt, 1986). En raison de ces origines historiques partagées à travers l'Europe, les partis Verts ont encore un attachement particulier à la démocratie de base ainsi qu'à la politique transnationale au-delà de l'État-nation.

La deuxième raison d'exemplarité de ce cas d'étude est que les Verts se focalisent sur les politiques environnementales qui sont bien développées au niveau européen (Dezalay, 2007). La question environnementale pourrait être un enjeu politique européen, perçu par les citoyens de l'UE comme un enjeu qui est mieux traité au niveau européen qu'au niveau national (voir Curtice, 1989 ; Franklin et Rudig, 1992 ; Carruba et Timpone, 2005 ; Hobolt et al., 2008). Les Verts épuisent leur légitimité politique autour de l'émergence du clivage post-matérialiste économie vs. nature, et non pas sur le clivage traditionnel gauche / droite. Nous pouvons dire que « seuls les Verts correspondent à un vrai clivage européen, opposant le « tout marché » à l'écologie, dans lequel ils occupent clairement l'un des deux pôles » (Seiler, 2005 : 539). De surcroît, la force politique relativement élevée des Verts au PE par rapport à leur accès souvent limité au pouvoir national (Hines, 2003 ; Bomberg et Carter, 2006) contribue à ce que cette famille politique est un cas exemplaire pour l'étude de la coopération transnationale des partis dans l'UE.

La première conclusion de cette recherche est que les partis politiques n'ont qu'un intérêt limité pour une véritable coordination transnationale, et qu'ils utilisent une telle coordination d'une manière instrumentale, afin d'obtenir certains avantages dans la sphère politique nationale. Par conséquent, la coordination transnationale des partis est souvent faible, utilisée plutôt comme façade ou élément décoratif. Ceci est particulièrement observable dans les deux premiers articles

de cette thèse, qui montre la façon dont les parties utilisent les élections européennes comme une « entrée par la petite porte » à la politique nationale (premier article de la thèse) et leurs engagements modestes avec la fédération transnationale dont ils font partie (deuxième article de la thèse). Cette faible coordination transnationale des partis dans l'UE est quelque peu différent lorsque nous portons notre regard sur les groupes politiques du Parlement européen (groupes du PE) dans lequel les délégations des parties nationales sont en coordination étroite avec les délégations d'autres parties de la même « famille » politique.

Cependant, la consolidation et la cohésion des groupes du PE (voir Bardi, 2004a ; Hix et al., 2007) ne devraient pas être surestimées car la prise de décision au PE est généralement déconnecté de la politique au niveau national. En fait, lors des importants désaccords entre les délégations nationales au sein d'un groupe parlementaire au PE sur des questions qui sont considérées comme importantes pour les électeurs et les sympathisants partisans « à domicile », la coordination transnationale est restreinte au plus petit dénominateur commun. Ainsi, chaque parti national conserve son autonomie, suivant sa propre position au niveau national. Ce point est démontré par l'étude sur la façon dont les groupes de gauche du PE se positionne sur le conflit israélo-palestinien (troisième article de la thèse). En outre, les députés européens se coordonnent principalement avec le parlement national de l'État membre de l'UE dans lequel ils ont été élus au PE, et avec leur propre parti national (quatrième article de la thèse). Par conséquent, le tableau d'ensemble est que le niveau élevé de coordination transnationale au PE reste confinée à l'environnement institutionnel de cette institution et, par conséquent, n'ayant qu'un impact modeste sur les partis nationaux en général.

Après ce bref aperçu des conclusions principales de la thèse, le reste de cette introduction générale se structure en trois sections. La première section traite des partis politiques nationaux. Je donne d'abord une brève présentation des travaux sur les partis nationaux et le système politique européen. Ensuite, j'expose deux explications différentes du rôle limité des partis au niveau européen de la politique en ce qui concerne la nature spécifique de la représentation démocratique dans l'UE, une selon une approche structurelle, l'autre selon une approche fonctionnelle. La deuxième section de l'introduction est consacrée aux europartis, en commençant par un état de l'art sur le développement des fédérations des partis vers des véritables partis politiques transnationaux. J'élabore ensuite sur le contexte historique des europartis, les trois faces de leur structure organisationnelle et la possibilité d'analyser les europartis en tant qu'organisations à multi-niveaux. La troisième section porte sur la thèse elle-même. Je présente mes questions de recherche et les objectifs de cette étude, mon approche



sociologique, les données et les méthodes utilisés avant de présenter enfin un aperçu général de la structure de la thèse.

## **Les partis politiques nationaux**

La littérature sur les partis politiques peut être divisée en deux approches : fonctionnelle et structurelle (Schonfeld, 1983 ; Gunther et Diamond, 2001 : 5). Les chercheurs qui perçoivent les parties en termes fonctionnels se focalisent sur ce que les partis font (ou ne font pas), sur leurs fonctions principales dans la société et sur leur rôle dans le système politique (King, 1969). Ces chercheurs mettent l'accent sur la fonction de base des parties en tant que médiateurs entre les citoyens et les institutions politiques de l'État et sur leur relation avec la société civile (Schumpeter, 1943 ; Manin, 1995 ; Katz et Mair, 1995). Les chercheurs ont attribués trois fonctions clés aux partis : la recherche des voix aux élections, la recherche des postes, et la recherche d'influence sur la politique publique (Müller et Strom, 1999). Selon cette définition fonctionnelle, un parti politique est une organisation qui mobilise les citoyens à voter pour elle aux élections, sélectionne ses candidats afin d'occuper certaines fonctions à la suite de ces élections, et coordonne les politiques publiques décidées par ces représentants au sein des institutions politiques.

En revanche, les chercheurs issus d'une approche structurelle des partis politiques les analysent principalement en tant qu'organisations, en tant que lieu structuré au sein duquel a lieu une certaine activité humaine. L'objectif principal de ces chercheurs n'est pas d'expliquer ce que les parties font et pourquoi ils sont importants dans la vie politique et dans la société en général, mais plutôt de décrire et d'expliquer la vie organisationnelle des partis politiques eux-mêmes. Dans cette approche, nous trouvons les travaux pionniers sur la dynamique organisationnelle des partis politiques par Moisei Ostrogorski (1902), Robert Michels (1911) ou Maurice Duverger (1951), ainsi que les travaux plus tardifs sur la professionnalisation des partis (Kirchheimer, 1966 ; Panebianco, 1988 ; pour un aperçu voir Gunther and Diamond, 2003). Dans cette thèse, je m'inscris dans l'approche structurelle sur les partis politiques, en me focalisant sur leur structure organisationnelle plutôt que d'étudier leurs fonctions. Par conséquent, je me concentre plutôt sur l'aspect organisationnel de la coordination transnationale des parties dans l'UE.

## **Etat de l'art : les partis nationaux et le niveau européen**

Comment les partis politiques répondent à l'émergence de l'Union européenne en général, et à la montée du PE en particulier ? Les recherches sur cette question peuvent être divisées en trois types de littérature. Les chercheurs se concentrent soit sur le niveau national, à savoir sur les partis nationaux ; sur le niveau européen de la politique, à savoir les parties au niveau de l'UE (les groupes politiques au PE ou les fédérations extra-parlementaires de partis) ; ou bien sur les interactions entre ces deux niveaux de pouvoir, en étudiant la façon dont les partis politiques relient le niveau national et le niveau européen dans un système politique à multi-niveaux.

Les chercheurs qui se concentrent sur les partis nationaux étudient leur possible européanisation, ou comment les partis nationaux traitent les affaires européennes. Les recherches sur cette question indiquent que l'européanisation des partis politiques nationaux est plutôt limitée (Mair, 2000 ; Pogunkte et al., 2007 ; Ladrech, 2002, 2007). Un écart important subsiste entre les experts de l'UE au sein des partis et le reste de l'organisation puisque les partis nationaux ont tendance à ne pas investir dans la politique européenne. Les études sur les élections européennes, par exemple, montrent que ces élections sont des « élections nationales de second ordre », portées sur les questions nationales au sein des arènes politiques nationales (Reif et Schmitt, 1980 ; Marsh, 1998 ; Hix et Marsh, 2007 ; Van der Brug et Van der Eijk, 2007 ; Conti, 2014 ; Hobolt, 2014). En fait, les partis nationaux qui investissent fortement dans les élections européennes les utilisent comme une « porte arrière » au niveau national de pouvoir (Blombäck, 2012 ; Shemer-Kunz, 2013 ; Reungoat, 2014) et ne sont pas réellement intéressés par le niveau européen en soi.

Une deuxième façon d'étudier si et comment les partis répondent à l'émergence de l'UE est de se concentrer sur le niveau européen de pouvoir - les europartis. Le débat académique sur les europartis est souvent centré sur la nature de ces organisations relativement nouvelles et de leur éventuel développement futur. Nous pouvons trouver des recherches approfondies sur ce sujet, mais celles-ci sont principalement axées sur les groupes politiques transnationaux au PE (groupes du PE). Ces études indiquent qu'il existe un développement réel d'un système transnational de partis au sein du PE (Raunio, 1997 ; Hix et Lord, 1997 ; Bell et Lord, 1998 ; Hix et al 2007 ; Hanley, 2008 ; Bressanelli, 2013). Toutefois, ces études se concentrent sur le comportement des europartis au sein du PE uniquement, et ne font rarement attention à leurs éléments extra-parlementaires, les fédérations européennes de partis.

Cependant, les niveaux national et européen de pouvoir sont devenus interconnectés et

interdépendants. Par conséquent, il est difficile de distinguer, par exemple, entre les « acteurs nationaux » et les « acteurs européens » au sein des partis politiques. Le niveau européen de pouvoir est désormais intégré dans les systèmes politiques nationaux existants, il est donc difficile de l'analyser séparément du niveau national. Comme le présente Peter Mair :

« Il est de plus en plus difficile de séparer ce qui est européen de ce qui est national. En d'autres termes, à fur et à mesure de l'avancement de l'intégration européenne, il devient de plus en plus difficile de concevoir les Etats membres distinctement de l'Union supranationale. Au lieu de cela, on les voit tous les deux ensemble et en même temps. » (Mair, 2007 : 15, traduction par l'auteur).

A l'instar de Peter Mair, je considère que les études sur l'UE, et en particulier sur les partis politiques dans l'UE, doivent tenir compte à la fois du niveau européen et du niveau national en même temps, compte tenu de la nature spécifique de l'UE en tant que système politique à multi-niveaux (Hooghe et Marks, 2001 ; Bache et Flinders, 2004). Je me limite dans cette thèse à une analyse à deux niveaux qui comprend le niveau de l'UE et le niveau national, mais pas le niveau sous-national de pouvoir, impliquant des développements régionaux (à ce sujet voir Abels et Eppler, 2016)

Par conséquent, une troisième façon de regarder cette question est de se concentrer sur les interactions entre les partis nationaux et leurs experts de l'UE basés à Bruxelles (Raunio, 2000, 2009 ; Auel et Benz, 2006 ; Poguntke et al., 2007 ; Crum et Fossum, 2009, 2013). Les chercheurs qui étudient la coordination inter-parlementaire verticale dans l'UE ont constaté que les interactions des parlementaires sont principalement informelles, au sein de partis plutôt que dans de forums institutionnels officiels (Miklin et Crum, 2011 ; Finke et Dannwolf, 2013 ; Wonka et Rittberger, 2014). Ces résultats indiquent les limites d'une approche institutionnelle stricte et suggèrent que la perspective des acteurs peut nous fournir une meilleure compréhension des pratiques et de la dynamique réelle. Ma recherche se fonde sur cette troisième façon d'aborder la question de comment les parties se comportent dans le cadre institutionnel de l'UE, en mettant l'accent sur les interactions entre le niveau de l'UE et le niveau national au sein des partis politiques.

## Une explication structurelle de l'eupéanisation limitée des parties

Avant d'aborder la question de recherche sur la façon dont les parties se coordonnent au-delà des frontières nationales, il est important de préciser que je considère les partis politiques non seulement en tant qu'organisations mais plus particulièrement en tant qu'organisations *nationales* (ou institutions). Les partis politiques sont étroitement liés aux systèmes politiques nationaux dans lesquels ils ont émergé et se sont développés au cours des années, et dans lesquels ils sont profondément intégrés. À bien des égards, les normes et les routines politiques (March et Olsen, 1989) ont été développées en Europe au sein des institutions politiques de l'État-nation. Les partis politiques ont été créés et se sont développés par rapport aux institutions politiques nationales et leurs cadres. Ces cadres institutionnels nationaux sont un ordre d'interprétation important qui nous aide à comprendre le comportement et les pratiques politiques des partis nationaux, leur sens et leur continuité (Pierson, 2000). Une fois mises en place dans ce cadre national, les institutions politiques ne sont pas seulement très importantes, elles ont également une forte tendance à persister, à développer une vie propre et à résister au changement.

L'analyse des partis politiques par une approche institutionnelle, en tant qu'institutions nationales, avec leurs routines, leurs pratiques et leurs normes, établies depuis des décennies dans des environnements institutionnels nationaux distincts, fournit une explication pour le niveau limité de l'eupéanisation de partis (Ladrech, 2007 ; Poguntke et al., 2007). Il est fort possible que le pouvoir politique en Europe s'est transféré d'une manière significative du niveau national vers le niveau de l'UE, en laissant les partis nationaux évidés de leurs anciens pouvoirs de décision politique (Mair, 2013). Cependant, le pouvoir politique est non seulement une affaire objective, uniquement liée à la prise de décision politique, mais il est également question de perception, de légitimité et de langage utilisé (Kauppi, 2000 ; Kauppi et Rask Madsen, 2008). La définition de où se trouve le pouvoir politique dans un système politique donné est aussi une question de normes et de routines, le résultat d'un processus de socialisation (Berger et Luckmann, 1966). Malgré le changement de pouvoir au niveau de l'UE, les élites de partis politiques, qui ont été socialisés dans les systèmes politiques nationaux, et qui travaillent dans un environnement institutionnel qui offre la continuité, au moins formellement, restent focalisés sur la politique nationale, et donc continuent à reproduire la perception générale et l'opinion que le pouvoir politique reste dans les mains des dirigeants nationaux (Kauppi, 2005, 2013a).

## Une explication fonctionnelle pour l'eupéanisation limitée des partis

Comme les acteurs d'autres domaines d'activité sociale spécialisée, les acteurs politiques sont dans une compétition intense et continue avec d'autres acteurs politiques dans une arène d'activité relativement autonome et fermée sur elle-même : un champ particulier au sein de la société dans son ensemble, « un espace de conflit et de concurrence » (Bourdieu et Wacquant, 1992 : 17) avec ses propres logiques internes, des mécanismes et des règles (Bourdieu, 1981, 2000). Les partis politiques nationaux peuvent être considérés comme des acteurs collectifs ou des agents au sein des champs politiques nationaux, des espaces relativement fermés, caractérisés par des rapports de domination et de luttes de pouvoir entre les différents acteurs, en concurrence sur différents types de ressources. Les activités principales des parties dans les différentes circonscriptions à travers l'UE tournent autour de ses conflits avec d'autres partis nationaux au sein du même champ politique national, mettant en évidence les différences entre eux (Offerle, 2002). Par conséquent, la représentation politique est basée sur la façon dont les politiciens professionnels insistent sur les différences entre eux et leurs rivaux politiques.

Dans le passé, les conflits politiques étaient essentiellement une confrontation entre différentes idéologies (projets de société ou *Weltanschauungen*), relativement stables, et se sont structurés traditionnellement autour du clivage gauche / droite (Lipset et Rokkan, 1967). Ces conflits ont été représentés sur la scène politique par des partis qui ont été clairement situés sur ce clivage. Or, aujourd'hui, le champ politique national est moins statique, analysé plutôt comme un marché dynamique, auto-régulé par des mécanismes de l'offre et de la demande (Schumpeter, 1943), dans lequel les politiciens tentent de trouver le produit le mieux adapté aux demandes des citoyens-consommateurs (Manin, 1995). Les électeurs d'aujourd'hui n'ont plus un fort sentiment d'appartenance à des groupes sociaux particuliers, et ils sont moins fidèles à un parti en particulier comme ce fut le cas dans le passé. Les citoyens fonctionnent donc comme un public, ouvert et réceptif aux différentes offres des partis politiques.

La nature dynamique et interactive de la représentation démocratique est bien illustrée par la métaphore théâtrale de la vie politique, inspirée par les œuvres d'Erving Goffman (1956) et son utilisation de la notion de scène et de performance afin d'expliquer le comportement social. Ainsi, la représentation démocratique n'est pas une réalité statique et objective, un résultat mécanique des élections et d'autres procédures formelles du système institutionnel, mais plutôt un ensemble dynamique de relations et d'interactions entre les représentants et leur public (Manin, 1995). Les représentants créent et exécutent constamment les revendications

représentatives, « representative claims » (Saward, 2006), qui sont ensuite modifiées par les réactions du public à ces revendications. Ces performances visibles, ainsi que les réactions à elles parmi les spectateurs, sont un élément important dans les relations entre les représentants et les représentés.

L'accent mis sur la représentation démocratique comme revendication souligne l'importance de son aspect symbolique et esthétique et le rôle clés des symboles et des images dans la vie politique. L'activité principale des représentants politiques consiste à viser un public particulier, puis créer et produire des performances visibles dans lesquelles la forme est souvent plus importante que le contenu. Ainsi, « la concurrence politique est à la dérive vers une opposition de forme plutôt que de contenu ». (Mair, 2013 : 68). En outre, un élément crucial dans la représentation démocratique est non seulement la revendication représentative elle-même mais le public qui le reçoit. Les revendications représentatives s'adressent toujours à un public ciblé. Comme tout type de représentations théâtrales, elles n'ont pas vraiment de sens s'il n'y a personne pour les voir : « une représentation, une revendication politique, est rien si elle n'est pas entendue, vue ou lue par son public cible » (Saward, 2006 : 16 ).

Pour les partis et les politiciens, le public ciblé est limité au public national. Les revendications représentatives produites ne visent rarement des citoyens en dehors de la circonscription nationale. Cela est dû aux règles électorales en Europe, y compris celles des élections européennes en tant qu'élections nationales de second ordre (Reif et Schmitt 1980) et à la façon dont les partis font usage de ces élections dans la politique nationale (Shemer-Kunz, 2013), mais aussi en raison de la nature des partis, analysée ci-dessus comme institutions nationales avec ses routines et ses normes bien établies (Mair et Olsen, 1989).

## **Représentation démocratique dans l'UE**

Contrairement aux systèmes politiques nationaux en Europe, le système politique émergent de l'UE est très fragmenté et divisé (Schmidt 2006). Par conséquent, alors que l'UE peut être étudié comme un État régional ou une union régionale des États-nations, il est néanmoins un système politique très particulier. Cependant, trop souvent, et peut-être à tort, l'UE est simplement analysé par rapport à un État national et ses mécanismes de représentation démocratique (Papadopoulos et Magnette, 2010). Parce que l'UE est un système politique différent de celui des États-nations que nous connaissons, la recherche sur la démocratie au niveau de l'UE doit prendre en compte ces différences. Des chercheurs tels que Simon Hix (1994, 2008), par exemple, ont tendance à

sous-estimer ces différences, et ainsi à étudier le système politique de l'UE avec les mêmes outils d'analyse et les mêmes critères d'évaluation que ceux utilisés en politique comparée.

Alors que le pouvoir politique a dans une large mesure été déplacé vers le niveau européen de pouvoir, la vie politique en Europe reste dominée par les partis nationaux et leurs structures organisationnelles basées sur le cadre national. Les enjeux politiques sont débattus dans différents espaces publics nationaux, suivant les stratégies et les objectifs des acteurs nationaux, dans les sphères publiques distinctes. En dépit de l'importance croissante de l'UE comme un lieu de pouvoir politique, « les conceptions nationales sur le pouvoir démocratique, l'autorité, l'accès et l'influence, le vote et la voix, restent largement inchangées. » (Schmidt 2006 : 2). La formation de la volonté politique et la légitimité de la prise de décision restent largement limitées aux différentes arènes nationales (Crum, 2012). Le système politique de l'UE s'est développé sans développement d'une sphère publique européenne (Habermas, 2010), un espace public commun dans lequel les citoyens de l'UE et les dirigeants politiques peuvent politiser et débattre des enjeux politiques communs (Wiesner 2014).

En raison de sa forte fragmentation, le système politique de l'UE est caractérisé par une culture politique de consensus, axée sur la recherche de compromis, des contrôles inter-institutionnels et l'équilibre du système. C'est un système proportionnel de représentation politique, sans une vraie dynamique de gouvernement / opposition comme nous la connaissons au niveau national tel le modèle de Westminster (Hix 1994, 1998). Cette culture politique est peut être appropriée pour une société fragmentée et divisée (Lijphart 1977). Le rôle de la politisation et des conflits politiques, des idéologies partisans et de l'opposition est particulièrement limité dans l'UE (Mair, 2007, 2013). Le caractère consensuel du système politique de l'UE laisse au final assez peu de place pour des revendications représentatives convaincantes de la part des partis politiques.

Dans des systèmes politiques nationaux bien établis, avec le clivage politique traditionnel entre la gauche et la droite ainsi qu'une dynamique politique entre le gouvernement et l'opposition, la légitimité de la prise de décision est d'abord basée sur la représentation des citoyens, établie principalement par le biais des élections (Manin, 1995 ; Mair, 2013). Cependant, dans le système politique de l'UE, la légitimité de la prise de décision est principalement basée sur une ressource non partisane, à savoir l'expertise technique et juridique (Georgakakis, 2012 ; Vauchez, 2013 ; Kauppi et Rask Madsen, 2013).

La spécificité de la représentation démocratique dans l'UE est évidente lorsque l'on regarde de plus près la dynamique au sein du Parlement européen (PE), la seule institution de



l'UE directement élue par les citoyens. La montée en puissance du PE au cours des dernières décennies a été bien documentée (Corbett et al., 2005 ; Rittberger, 2005, 2012 ; Dinan, 2014 ; Kohler, 2014). L'introduction d'élections directes au PE depuis 1979 signifie que les eurodéputés ont pour mandat de représenter les citoyens directement au niveau de l'UE (Pekonen 2011), au moins en théorie.

Cependant, les élections directes au PE ne sont qu'une évolution institutionnelle et procédurale. En dépit de ses nouveaux pouvoirs depuis le traité de Lisbonne, le PE et son arène institutionnelle offrent aux partis politiques et aux politiciens qui s'y trouvent une possibilité limitée de faire des revendications représentatives visibles et convaincantes vis-à-vis de leur public national, que ce soit l'ensemble des électeurs ou des membres de leur parti, et cela en raison des méthodes de travail particulières du PE (Costa, 2001, 2009).

Tout d'abord, au sein de l'arène institutionnelle du PE, les eurodéputés sont engagés en permanence dans des négociations pour arriver au consensus le plus large possible au sein de l'assemblée. Les élus de différents groupes parlementaires au PE travaillent en collaboration étroite afin d'atteindre le compromis le plus largement accepté, et ainsi avoir une voix claire et cohérente vis-à-vis de la Commission européenne et du Conseil de l'UE. Ce processus se produit généralement d'une manière non conflictuelle, non politisée, et via des canaux formels et informels (Roger et Winzen, 2015).

Deuxièmement, les relations inter-institutionnelles au niveau de l'UE sont également dominées par une culture politique de compromis, la recherche du consensus et des négociations. Le PE travaille en collaboration étroite avec la Commission européenne et le Conseil de l'UE, et il est rarement en conflit visible avec eux. Ce processus politique a lieu, dans une large mesure, dans les coulisses de la politique, pendant les réunions des commissions spécialisées et les négociations inter-institutionnelles tenues à huit clos ( « trilogues » ) sur des projets législatifs qui sont souvent d'une nature très complexe et technique (Costa, 2001; Costa et Magnette, 2003). Cette tendance est devenue encore plus forte ses dernières années, avec l'utilisation plus fréquente des trilogues et des accords précoces ou « fast-track » de la législation européenne (Bressanelli et al., 2016).

Par conséquent, les affaires européennes ne sont pas facilement converties en performances politiques que les partis et les politiciens élus peuvent utiliser efficacement dans leur communication avec les citoyens ou les membres du parti dans les circonscriptions. Il est difficile pour les acteurs du PE - groupes politiques du PE, les délégations des partis nationaux ou les eurodéputés individuels - de faire des revendications politiques convaincantes et visibles



pendant le processus de négociation du PE ou autour de ses résultats finals. La législation finale de l'UE est souvent un compromis et non pas une victoire nette pour une des parties, si des parties en compétition ont pu être identifiées en premier lieu, étant donné que les alliances politiques au sein du PE changent souvent d'un dossier à un autre (Costa, 2001).

Compte tenu de l'eupéanisation limitée des partis politiques nationaux, analysée par une approche institutionnelle (les partis comme institutions nationales) ainsi que par une approche fonctionnelle (les partis comme médiateurs avec les citoyens), j'examine maintenant le potentiel de développement des partis politiques au niveau européen.

### **Les europartis : des fédérations de partis vers des partis transnationaux ?**

Beaucoup a été écrit au cours des dernières décennies sur la nécessité de développer des partis politiques transnationaux en Europe (Marquand, 1978 ; Nidermayer, 1985 ; Leinen et Schönlau, 2003 ; Priestly, 2010 ; Leinen et Pescher, 2014). Ces débats normatifs bénéficieraient d'une meilleure compréhension empirique de ces organisations émergentes et ainsi de leur potentiel de développement.

La littérature sur les europartis suggère que ces organisations peuvent être analysées comme des partis politiques transnationaux émergents. Bien que les partis que nous connaissons sont confinés au niveau national, la littérature suggère le développement d'une toute nouvelle forme de partis politiques. La principale suggestion dans la littérature sur les europarties est que ces « partis au-delà de l'État-nation » sont encore dans une forme embryonnaire, dans un processus de long terme d'institutionnalisation et de professionnalisation ainsi que d'une consolidation entre les différents partis nationaux qui les composent (Raunio, 1997 ; Hix et Lord, 1997 ; Bell et Lord, 1998 ; Bardi, 2002 ; Hix et al., 2007 ; Hanley, 2008 ; Sozzi, 2013 ; Bressanelli, 2012, 2013, 2014).

L'argument principal est que les europartis se développent lentement au fil du temps à partir de faibles fédérations européennes de partis nationaux, de « partis des parties », vers des véritables partis politiques à part entière. Les chercheurs ont tendance à mettre en évidence les capacités organisationnelles croissantes des europartis ainsi que les fonctions du parti qu'ils commencent à remplir au niveau européen. Par exemple, Edoardo Bressanelli (2013 : 665) affirme que « les europartis pourraient directement et activement faire campagne pour les élections du Parlement européen sur les plates-formes politiques alternatives » et qu'ils sont « bien équipés, en termes de programmes politiques, à justifier les attentes élevées que le traité de

Lisbonne avait placé sur eux. »

La principale faiblesse de cette littérature est sa tendance à se concentrer uniquement sur le niveau de l'UE, sur les interactions horizontales de différents groupes parlementaires au sein de l'arène institutionnelle du PE (Bressanelli, 2013 ; Bardi et al 2010) ou sur la comparaison entre les différentes organisations extra-parlementaires de ces europartis (Gagatek 2011 ; Hertner 2011 ; Holmes et Lightfoot 2011 ; Leinen et Pescher, 2014). Toutefois, lorsque les chercheurs prennent en compte aussi le niveau national de la politique, ils reconnaissent que les organisations émergentes au niveau européen souffrent de certaines faiblesses importantes, expliquées principalement par leur dépendance à l'égard de la bonne volonté des partis nationaux qui les composent (Külahci, 2010 ; Van Hecke, 2010 ; Bartolini, 2012). Je propose de commencer avec une analyse des europartis en remontant à leurs origines historiques.

### **Les origines historiques des europartis**

En juin 1953, un petit groupe de membres de l'Assemblée commune de la Communauté Européenne du Charbon et de l'Acier (CECA) a créé les trois premiers groupes parlementaires transnationaux : le groupe démocrate-chrétien, le groupe socialiste et le groupe des libéraux et associés (voir Heidelberg, 1961 ; Van Oudenhove, 1965 ; Nidermayer, 1985). Ces trois premiers europartis étaient plutôt des groupes transnationaux faibles dans une assemblée consultative faible. A l'époque, l'Assemblée a été composée de 78 membres, nommés par les parlements nationaux de la Communauté, ayant un rôle consultatif seulement. Malgré les faibles pouvoirs officiels de l'Assemblée, certains de ses membres ont utilisé cette institution comme une opportunité politique. Ce fut notamment le cas du groupe socialiste, qui a souvent critiqué publiquement la Haute Autorité et utilisé l'Assemblée afin de prononcer des discours politiques et voter des projets de résolutions (Van Oudenhove, 1965 : 58). La création des europartis faisait partie de l'investissement global de certains parlementaires dans l'institution émergente dont ils étaient membres, parallèlement à la création des règlements de la nouvelle Assemblée et la création de commissions permanentes spécialisées, à l'instar de la structure organisationnelle des parlements nationaux.

A partir de 1953, le développement des europartis était un sous-produit de l'évolution institutionnelle de l'Assemblée de la CECA elle-même, qui s'appellera bientôt « Parlement européen » (PE). Ce processus interne d'institutionnalisation du PE a été accompagné d'un processus formel et informel de reconnaissance par les gouvernements européens (Rittberger,

2003 ; Costa et Magnette, 2003). En Décembre 1974, les chefs des gouvernement de la Communauté européenne ont décidé d'instaurer des élections directes au PE, qui auront lieu en 1978 au plus tard (ces élections ont finalement eu lieu en juin 1979). Autour de cette période, au milieu des années 1970s, les eurodéputés ont institutionnalisé et formalisé davantage leurs réseaux politiques transnationaux, plutôt informels, en « fédérations de partis » (ou *Parteienbünde* en allemand). Les sociaux-démocrates ont fondé officiellement leur fédération européenne en 1974 alors que les partis conservateurs et les libéraux ont fondé les leurs en 1976.

Cette courte histoire des europartis montre que l'émergence de ces organisations a eu lieu dans le cadre du développement institutionnel du Parlement européen et a été directement liée à la préparation des premières élections directes à cette institution au milieu des années 1970s (voir aussi Calossi, 2014). Cependant, en dehors du cadre institutionnel du PE, parmi les partis nationaux à travers l'Europe, il n'y avait qu'un intérêt limité et un engagement modeste aux activités des europartis. En théorie, avec l'introduction des élections directes au PE, les partis nationaux dans les États membres de la Communauté européenne devraient avoir eu un intérêt croissant à coordonner leurs activités. Cependant, le développement réel de ces fédérations européennes des partis dans la première décennie suite à leur création officielle, depuis le milieu des années 1970 au milieu des années 1980, était plutôt limité. Oskar Nidermayer (1985) a conclu que tant que les partis nationaux sont focalisés presque exclusivement sur la politique nationale, en n'ayant que peu d'intérêt aux activités des fédérations européennes auxquelles ils sont affiliés, il n'y aura pas de développement significatif vers une coordination transnationale plus étroite entre les partis ou leur éventuelle intégration au sein d'une organisation centrale.

### **Analyse des europartis en tant que groupes du PE**

Quant à l'organisation structurelle des europartis, je me base sur le cadre d'analyse de trois facettes de l'organisation du parti (Katz et Mair 1994) : le *party-in-public-office*, le *party-in-central-office* et le *party-on-the-ground*, comme cela a déjà été adapté afin d'analyser les europartis par Luciano Bardi (1994).<sup>175</sup> Ces trois composantes sont un outil heuristique afin d'analyser la structure organisationnelle d'un parti politique. Le *parti-in-public-office* est le parti au gouvernement et au parlement ; le *party-in-central-office* est le bureau central du parti ; tandis que le *party-on-the-ground* se compose des adhérents du parti et de ses sections à travers les

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<sup>175</sup>Dit autrement, un parti politique peut être analysé comme une structure de trois composantes : party-in-government (party-in-public-office); party-as-organisation (party-in-central-office); and the party-in-the-electorate (party-on-the-ground) (Aldrich, 2006).

circonscriptions. Ces trois éléments peuvent être projetés sur les europartis : le *Europarty-in-public-office* est alors composé des ministres d'une « famille politique » européenne au sein du Conseil de l'UE, de ses chefs de gouvernements au sein du Conseil européen et de ses commissaires affiliés, ainsi que de son groupe parlementaire au PE ; le *Europarty-in-central-office* est l'aile extra-parlementaire du parti transnational ; tandis que le *Europarty-on-the-ground* est la présence des partis nationaux (ou régionaux) dans les différentes circonscriptions à travers l'Europe. Je me base sur ces trois facettes des partis politiques afin d'évaluer dans quelle mesure la structure organisationnelle des europartis peut être définie comme celle d'un parti politique.

La littérature sur les europarties a tendance à se concentrer sur un seul aspect de la structure organisationnelle des partis politiques, à savoir le *party-in-public-office*. Ainsi, la tendance à considérer les europartis comme des partis politiques transnationaux émergents est liée à la focalisation sur le processus décisionnel au niveau européen et sur l'arène institutionnelle du PE. En se concentrant sur la facette *party-in-public-office* de l'organisation des europarties, les chercheurs ont tendance à laisser les deux autres facettes - le *party-in-central-office* et le *party-on-the-ground* – plutôt dans l'ombre.

Formellement, les groupes politiques du PE sont constitués d'au moins 25 eurodéputés venant d'au moins un quart des États membres de l'UE qui sont reliés entre eux en fonction de leurs « affinités politiques ».<sup>176</sup> Des groupes du PE reconnus en tant que tels sont ensuite pourvu d'un secrétariat avec des facilités administratives financées par le budget du PE.<sup>177</sup> En outre, les présidents des groupes du PE composent la Conférence des Présidents du PE et ont des droits divers concernant les procédures du PE.<sup>178</sup> La congruence politique est le facteur le plus important dans la décision des partis à se joindre à un groupe politique au PE (McElroy et Benoit, 2010 ; Bressanelli, 2012, 2013, 2014). C'est principalement cette convergence idéologique des différents partis, partageant les mêmes idées au sein d'un groupe du PE, qui explique la forte cohésion de vote de ces groupes (Attinà, 1990 ; Hix et al., 2007 ; Bardi et al., 2010). En fait, les chercheurs qui prétendent que les europartis se transforment en partis politiques transnationaux fondent leur argument principalement sur la convergence idéologique entre les partis nationaux au sein des groupes du PE et sur le niveau élevé de la cohésion des

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<sup>176</sup>Voir rule 32, of the EP Rules of Procedure, on formation of political groups.

<sup>177</sup>Voir rule 33 (1) of the EP Rules of Procedure.

<sup>178</sup>Les présidents de groupes ont un droit de vote basé sur le nombre de membres de leur groupe. Voir Rule 26 of the EP Rules of Procedure on the composition of the Conference of Presidents.

votes de ces groupes du PE en plénière.

Cependant, en utilisant la cohésion des votes du PE comme l'indicateur principal pour évaluer la coordination transnationale des partis est problématique si on considère deux éléments: le processus de négociation au sein des groupes du PE entre les délégations des différents partis nationaux, ce qui conduit au plus petit dénominateur commun, et l'isolation de tout ce processus de prise de décision de la dynamique de la politique nationale.

La première raison pourquoi la cohésion de vote du PE n'est pas un indicateur satisfaisant de la cohérence des europartis est que cette cohésion de vote est le résultat d'un long processus de négociations et d'une recherche du compromis entre les divers délégations des partis nationaux au sein du groupe du PE. Dans le cas où une décision au PE attire de l'attention externe, les positions communes du groupe du PE sont le résultat de négociations intenses à l'intérieur du groupe (Roger et Winzen, 2015). Ces positions communes des groupes du PE reflètent souvent le plus petit dénominateur commun des différentes délégations qui composent le groupe (Priestly, 2010). Ce sont souvent des déclarations du principe relativement vagues, laissant de côté les questions sur lesquelles il n'y a pas d'accord: « La quasi-unanimité est habituellement garantie par de longues séances préparatoires [...] qui ont le but déclaré de lisser la plupart des désaccords » (Bardi, 1996 : 104). C'était déjà observable dans les premières années de l'Assemblée Commune, dans les années 1950 (Van Oudenhove 1965 : 49).

La deuxième raison pourquoi la cohésion de vote des groupes du PE n'est pas une donnée empiriques satisfaisante afin de montrer le niveau de coordination entre les différents partis nationaux au sein des europartis est la visibilité limitée de ces votes. Les chercheurs ne paient pas assez d'attention à telle mesure les partis nationaux ont tendance à ignorer l'ensemble du processus de prise de décision au sein du PE, ainsi que le comportement de vote de leurs délégations au PE (Poguntke et al., 2007). Le travail quotidien des eurodéputés est en grande partie isolé de celui des parlementaires nationaux des partis (Raunio, 2002 ; Miklin et Crum, 2011), et encore plus de adhérents du parti et les citoyens de l'UE (Costa, 2009). Les partis nationaux délèguent dans une large mesure la prise de décision au niveau de l'UE à leurs experts de l'UE, basés à Bruxelles, et même à un tout petit nombre d'experts au sein des groupes (Roger et Winzen, 2015), qui sont à peine contrôlés par les partis nationaux (Hix, 2002 ; Raunio, 2002). Dans les cas relativement rares où les partis nationaux sont intéressés par le comportement de vote de leurs délégations au Parlement européen, les partis nationaux ont tendance à avoir le dernier mot sur le vote de leurs eurodéputés (Hix, 2002).

En effet, Luciano Bardi (2002) suggère que ce précisément cette isolation de la

dynamique politique nationale qui permet la consolidation des groupes transnationaux au sein du PE. Même l'adhésion d'un parti national à un groupe du PE est plutôt invisible en dehors de la sphère institutionnelle du PE. Les délégations au PE des partis nationaux peuvent même quitter un groupe politique du PE et rejoindre un autre tandis que « les électeurs respectifs restent non informés de ces nouvelles alliances, et ne sont pas invités à les ratifier » (Bardi, 1994 : 335). Dans l'ensemble, la coordination transnationale des parties au sein de leurs groupes du PE reste plutôt de nature technique, et n'a que peu de visibilité à l'extérieur du PE.

Malgré le long travail préparatoire au sein des groupes du PE et leur isolation de la politique nationale, il y a encore certains cas de conflit ouvert entre les délégations des partis nationaux et le groupe du PE auquel ils sont affiliés. Dans ces cas, les eurodéputés ont tendance à voter, même en plénière, en fonction de la ligne de leur parti national, et non pas selon la ligne officielle de leur groupe au PE (Hix, 2002 ; Hix et al., 2007 ; Scully et al., 2012). Toutefois, cela se produit rarement.

Pour conclure cette section, l'étude des europartis principalement en tant que groupes politiques du PE permet des chercheurs d'évaluer positivement le développement de ces organisations au cours des dernières décennies d'intégration européenne. Cependant, le développement des europartis est un effet direct de l'évolution institutionnelle du PE. La focalisation des chercheurs sur le comportement de votes au PE minimise en quelque sorte les divisions au sein des groupes du PE entre les différentes délégations des partis nationaux. Dans l'ensemble, les données empiriques sur les europartis indiquent que les groupes politiques du PE ont une importance au sein du PE, mais pas forcément en dehors de ce cadre institutionnel.

### **Les europartis comme partis politiques à multi-niveaux ?**

En comparaison avec les groupes du PE, la composante extra-parlementaire des europartis a obtenu moins d'attention parmi les chercheurs (mais voir Delwit, 1998 ; Dakowska, 2002 ; Delwit et al., 2004 ; Gagatsek, 2009 ; Van Hecke, 2010 ; Hertner, 2011 ; Bartolini, 2012 ; Von dem Berge et Poguntke, 2012 ; Pridham, 2014 ; Timus et Lightfoot, 2014). Les chercheurs qui étudient les europartis principalement comme des organisations extra-parlementaires mettent en évidence leur faiblesse structurelle en raison de leur dépendance à l'égard des partis nationaux qui les composent. En tant qu'organisations extra-parlementaires, les europartis sont des fédérations plutôt faibles, des organes de coordination des différents partis nationaux, avec peu de chances de se développer en véritables partis politiques transnationaux dans un futur proche.

Toutefois, compte tenu de la nature spécifique de l'UE en tant que système politique à multi-niveaux, nous pourrions envisager les europartis en tant qu'organisations à multi-niveaux, en tenant compte de la dynamique complexe des interactions verticales entre les partis nationaux et l'europarti avec lequel ils sont affiliés (sur l'intégration verticale des partis dans les États fédéraux voir Thorlakson, 2009, 2011 ; Van Houten, 2009). Après tout, puisque chaque modèle de parti politique est lié à une certaine conception de la démocratie (Mair, 2013), il est possible que les europartis sont tout de même de véritables partis politiques émergents, mais un autre type d'un parti, adapté au système politique de l'UE. Cela apparaît comme une voie prometteuse pour comprendre ce que sont les europartis, ce qu'ils font et comment ils sont organisés.

Une analyse complète de l'élément extra-parlementaire des europartis devrait donc inclure à la fois le niveau de l'UE et le niveau national. Cette façon alternative de concevoir les europartis ne se limite pas au niveau de l'UE ou seulement à l'arène institutionnelle du EP. Cette conception inclut les deux autres facettes de la structure organisationnelle des europartis : le *party-in-central-office*, qui est l'europarti extra-parlementaire, et le *party-on-the-ground*, qui est des différents partis nationaux. Plusieurs chercheurs ont soulevé cette option dans leur analyse. Examinons trois de ces propositions, par Luciano Bardi (1994), Steven Van Hecke (2010) et Thomas Jansen (1995).

Luciano Bardi (1994) a suggéré que les europartis sont composés de trois éléments, situés à différents niveaux de gouvernance, deux au niveau de l'UE et l'autre au niveau national. Selon le modèle de Bardi, le groupe du PE sont l'*Europarty-in-public-office*, sa fédération extra-parlementaire est l'*Europarty-in-central-office*, tandis que les différents partis nationaux, actifs dans les circonscriptions, sont l'*Europarty-on-the-ground*. Bardi reconnaît que le défi principal du développement des europartis est l'intégration de ces trois composantes, et en particulier l'intégration des partis nationaux, l'*Europarty-on-the-ground*, avec les deux composantes au niveau de l'UE.

Tout en se référant au niveau national dans sa théorie, Bardi n'étudie pas empiriquement les interactions verticales entre les différents éléments des europartis, en restant concentré sur les groupes au PE et leur consolidation au fil du temps et, dans une moindre mesure, sur les fédérations européennes extra-parlementaires. La recherche empirique de Bardi consiste à comparer le niveau d'institutionnalisation, de la professionnalisation et de la cohésion entre les groupes parlementaires du PE. Ainsi, alors que le modèle théorique de Bardi sur les europartis est à multi-niveaux, donc y compris le niveau national, les partis nationaux ne font pas partie pour autant dans son analyse empirique.



Steven Van Hecke (2010) a proposé d'étudier les europartis en tant qu'organisations à multi-niveaux, en distinguant trois différents niveaux de gouvernance : le niveau national; le niveau transnational ; et le niveau supranational. Ces trois niveaux de gouvernance correspondent à trois éléments organisationnels des europartis et leur présence dans les différentes institutions de l'UE. Selon cette distinction analytique, les partis politiques sont des organisations actives au niveau national, par l'intermédiaire de gouvernements et parlements nationaux ; les fédérations européennes de partis sont actives au niveau transnational, par l'intermédiaire de leurs représentants au sein du Conseil des ministres et le Conseil européen ; tandis que les groupes de partis sont actifs au niveau supranational, dans des institutions telles que la Commission européenne et le Parlement européen. Cependant, le modèle de Van Hecke ne nous dit pas explicitement comment évaluer empiriquement le niveau d'intégration de l'euparti au niveau national avec les autres éléments situés au niveau transnational ou supranational. En outre, la distinction entre les différents niveaux de politique n'est qu'un cadre d'analyse théorique, mais son opérationnalisation empirique nous semble difficile. Bien que ce modèle considère le Parlement européen lui-même comme une institution supranationale, cette chambre est composée de politiciens nationaux (Neunreiter, 2005), qui sont élus lors des élections nationales de second ordre (Reif et Schmitt, 1980 ; Marsh, 1998), et qui, par conséquent, mènent des activités parlementaires principalement vis-à-vis leur propre public national (Sozzi, 2016).

Enfin, Thomas Jansen (1995) compare simplement les europartis aux partis politiques à multi-niveaux connus dans les systèmes politiques fédéraux, comme en Allemagne ou en Espagne. Par exemple, dans le cas allemand, l'adhésion d'un citoyen allemand à un parti politique n'est possible que via la structure organisationnelle du parti dans la circonscription régionale, le *Kreisverband* (KV). Les adhérents du parti sont alors considérés automatiquement comme adhérents du parti dans les niveaux supérieurs de la politique allemande, l'État régional (*Länder*) et au niveau fédéral (*Bund*). De même, en France, pourtant un système politique unitaire et centralisé, les partis politiques sont organisés dans une structure fédérale, composée de chapitres régionaux relativement autonomes, tandis que le niveau national est simplement une fédération de ces chapitres régionaux.

De ce point de vue, la plupart des partis politiques en Europe sont, en fait, les partis politiques à multi-niveaux. En ce sens, la structure organisationnelle à multi-niveaux des europartis n'est pas si différente que celle des partis nationaux que nous connaissons en Europe, mais à un niveau politique plus élevé. Cependant, cette focalisation étroite sur les questions d'organisation structurelle comme simplement des questions techniques sous-estime la différence



de fond entre les systèmes politiques nationaux fédéraux comme l'Allemagne ou l'Autriche, et le système de l'UE, qui est un régime politique particulièrement fragmenté (Schmidt, 2006) (voir la section précédente de cette introduction). La principale mise en garde de l'analyse des europartis comme des organisations partisane à multi-niveaux est la l'application problématique des outils conceptuels qui sont développés dans les études comparatives sur les système politiques nationaux au système politique très particulier de l'UE. Les données empiriques sur le cas des partis Verts européens, analysés dans les premier et deuxième articles de cette thèse, suggèrent que les partis nationaux dans l'UE, alors qu'ils sont formellement affilié au Parti Vert Européen (PVE), sont beaucoup plus autonomes que les chapitres régionaux d'un parti politique dans les États fédéraux.

### **Objectifs et questions de recherche**

Cette thèse vise à répondre à la question de savoir comment et dans quelle mesure les partis politiques dans l'UE se coordonnent-ils d'une manière transnationale, au-delà des frontières nationales, avec d'autres partis d'une même « famille spirituelle » européenne. Cette question est liée au débat général sur la légitimité démocratique de l'UE et sur le système politique de l'UE en tant que démocratie représentative. Plus précisément, la question de la coordination transnationale des partis dans l'UE peut être considérée comme un indicateur, parmi d'autres, de l'évolution du système politique de l'UE en un véritable régime démocratique. La coordination transnationale des partis est fortement lié à quelques autres indicateurs dans le même sens de contourner le monopole de l'État-nation comme le seul cadre possible pour la démocratie représentative : l'émergence d'une sphère publique européenne et une identité européenne ; le développement d'une citoyenneté européenne active ; et la mobilisation et la contestation européenne sur les enjeux politiques de l'UE (voir Kauppi, 2013a).

Telles évolutions dans la société européenne, pour l'instant relativement modestes, peuvent entraîner un certain changement d'orientation des citoyens et des journalistes de la scène politique nationale vers le niveau de l'UE, et de leurs gouvernements et parlements nationaux aux institutions européennes telles que la Commission européenne, le Parlement européen, la Banque Centrale Européenne, etc. En effet, la coordination transnationale des partis peut non seulement servir comme un indicateur pour un tel processus, mais même constituer une condition *sine qua non* pour le développement de la démocratie représentative au-delà de l'État-nation en Europe.

L'observation d'un tel changement possible dans la représentation démocratique en

Europe à partir du niveau national vers le niveau européen de la politique nous incite naturellement à examiner l'émergence possible des partis politiques au niveau européen et les politiciens investis à ce niveau de pouvoir. Ces politiciens seraient responsables non seulement vis-à-vis leur circonscription nationale « à domicile », mais vis-à-vis de citoyens de l'UE dans son ensemble. Cette question m'a amené à étudier en détail les europartis, à la fois en tant que groupes politiques au PE et ses ailles extra-parlementaire, les fédérations européennes transnationaux de partis, puisque ces organisations relativement nouvelles ont évidemment un rôle crucial à jouer dans l'émergence possible d'une représentation démocratique au-delà de l'État-nation européen.

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# **La coordination transnationale des partis dans l'Union Européenne.**

## **Les Verts et au delà.**

### **Résumé**

Comment de partis politiques dans l'Union Européenne se coordonnent-ils au sein de la même 'famille' politique ? Cette question est traitée sur quatre différentes dimensions: les élections directes au parlement européen ; le développement des fédérations européennes de partis ; les activités diplomatiques des groupes parlementaires au parlement européen ; la coordination interparlementaire verticale. Le résultat principal de cette thèse est que les partis politiques dans l'UE n'ont qu'un intérêt limité à une coordination transnationale avec d'autres partis issus de la même famille politique et utilisent cette coordination plutôt afin d'obtenir de ressources au niveau national. La coordination transnationales de partis reste confiné au sein du parlement européen et son environnement institutionnel Bruxellois avec une influence limitée sur les organisations nationales de partis.

### **Abstract**

How political parties in the European Union coordinate beyond national borders with other parties of the same party 'family'? I examine this question from four different dimensions: the direct elections to the European Parliament; the development of transnational party federations; diplomatic activities of the European Parliament's political groups vis-à-vis third countries; and vertical intra-parliamentary coordination. The main finding is that political parties in the EU have only limited interest in genuine transnational coordination, and generally use such coordination instrumentally, in order to gain certain resources in domestic politics. Parties' transnational coordination in the EU remains confined to the European Parliament institutional setting and thus has limited impact on the national party organisations at large.