

**GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE AND FOR THE PEOPLE?
LEGISLATIVE SPECIALISATION AND PARTY REPRESENTATION
IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

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I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

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To my parents

Abstract

This thesis develops and tests a model of political representation based on the participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs. Political representation is determined by the institutional and party-political incentives that guide legislative behaviour at different stages of the policy process. Proportionality requirements, majority rule and intra-party politics affect whether MEPs engage in different legislative activities in the European Parliament and the extent to which they specialise in the policy areas that their national party stands for. The model can be adapted to a wide range of legislative activities and to different institutional environments.

At the decision-making stage, majority rule makes participation most attractive to MEPs from party groups that are pivotal under the majority thresholds required to pass legislation. In contrast, minority MEPs limit their participation to the policy areas that are salient to their national party. In other words, minority legislators are more responsive than majority MEPs.

In policy formulation, an auction system enforces a proportional allocation of committee reports, which favours the representation of a broad range of values and interests across the political spectrum. However, competition among party groups affects who gets the most desirable reports. Open rule enforces a distribution of salient reports in line with voting coalitions in the plenary and on the committee floor. Within party groups, the leadership distributes reports in an effort to maintain group cohesion. As a result, majority legislators who are loyal to their party groups are more responsive than other MEPs.

Finally, in parliamentary oversight at Question-Time, party groups do not have any gate-keeping powers. Also, national parties rather than party groups are

the primary actors in legislative-executive relations. MEPs without national party ties to the Commission attribute a greater role to overseeing the executive in a large range of policy areas than 'governing' MEPs. As a result, such 'opposition' MEPs are better represented at this stage of the policy process but they specialise less in salient policy areas.

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PART 1

CHAPTER 1 – THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

“Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people”

(Abraham Lincoln)

Through its directives and regulations, the European Union¹ has become the most important legislator in Europe. As Nugent (2003) points out, more than 60 percent of national legislation is now determined at the European level. Most significantly, perhaps, the formal powers of the European Parliament have increased immensely since the first direct European elections in 1979. Indeed, with the creation and expansion of the co-decision procedure, the Parliament has become an equal co-legislator with the Council of Ministers² on a wide range of issues (e.g. Hix, 2005).

This creeping ‘parliamentarization’ (Magnette, 2005; Rittberger, 2005) affects both the political representation of European citizens and the legitimacy of policymaking in the EU. With the increased influence of the European Parliament, the question which MEPs have access to which policy areas has taken on a significance that goes far beyond legislative organisation. As a result, there is a burgeoning literature on the democratic performance of the European Union and its member states (see Follesdal and Hix, 2005 for an overview). Much of this research has concluded that government of and for the people in the EU, and in the European Parliament in particular, works moderately well at best (e.g. Scharpf, 1999; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996;

¹ In order to avoid confusion, European Union and European Community are abbreviated as EU throughout this thesis.

² As opposed to the European Parliament, which represents all European citizens and is staffed with MEPs elected in pan-European elections, the Council of Ministers is composed of national government ministers, which represent the member states.

Carrubba, 2001; Bowler and Farrell, 1993; Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999; 2000; Thomassen and Schmitt 1997; Katz, 1997; 1999; Marsh and Wessels, 1997; Wessels, 1999; Norris and Franklin, 1997; Weiler, 1995; Hayward, 1995). Others contend that EU democracy does not fare badly considering the limited political competences of the EU and the system of checks and balances instituted by member state governments (e.g. Majone, 2000; Moravcsik, 2002).³

This thesis takes a different approach by investigating the conditions under which the legislative behaviour of representatives in the European Parliament reflects the political priorities of their national parties. What motivates a broad cross-section of MEPs from various national parties to participate in the EP (i.e. exercise government of the people) and to specialise in the policy areas that their party stands for in public (i.e. government for the people)? The model finds the answer to this question in the institutional and party-political incentive structure at different stages of the policy process in the European Parliament. The empirical part of the thesis quantifies the impact of these incentives on the participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs in policy formulation, decision-making and parliamentary oversight. To what extent do MEPs specialise in the policy areas that their national party stands for? And does the European Parliament represent the diversity of opinions among European citizens at all stages of the legislative policy process?

These questions have profound implications for the linkage between citizens and politics in Europe. As most existing research has shown, national parties are the primary connection between European citizens and the EU (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Hix, 2002; Jun, 2003). Other things equal, if the preferences

³ Much of this research does not so much praise the representational performance of European institutions as it raises doubts about the EU's claim to constitute a "government" in the traditional sense of the term.

of a wide range of parties are represented at all stages of the policy process, government of the people occurs, which should increase the legitimacy of the EP's legislative output. Similarly, government for the people takes place if MEPs specialise in policy areas that correspond to the publicly stated political priorities of their parties. Effective representation therefore requires "responsible parties" whose elected members act to put the political programme of the party into practice.

The model predicts the responsiveness of individual legislators and the representativeness of parliamentary business as a function of institutional and party-political incentives. With its focus on individual incentives at different stages of the policy process, the model can easily be adapted to other political systems or used to evaluate the impact of various parliamentary reform proposals on political representation. Finally, the findings also have important implications for the political direction that the European Union is going to take. What are the prospects for political representation in an increasingly federal 'United States of Europe'? Or is there, as some contend, a natural trade-off between policy-effectiveness in a fully federal Europe and the democratic accountability of parliamentary representation?

This chapter is organised in three parts. First, it provides a short overview of the concept of political representation as used by political scientists and practitioners throughout history. Second, it places the study in the context of the wider contemporary literature, points out differences in how representation is conceptualised across political systems and sets the stage for an alternative conception of political representation based on the legislative behaviour of

individual representatives. Finally, the chapter identifies the main research question of the study and provides an overview of the remainder of the thesis.

1. The Role of Political Representation in Historical Perspective: Legitimacy and Interest Articulation

This section provides a short overview of the historical evolution of views about political representation. It is only with at least a minimum of historical knowledge that we can understand the role of representation in contemporary political theory. For those well versed in political history the following discussion might seem rather crude. However, the point is not to provide a comprehensive account of political representation throughout history. Others have done that already (see for example Manin, 1997; Ankersmit, 2002). Rather, the aim of this section is to present a short outline of different conceptions of representation and set the context for the subsequent empirical study that forms the core of this thesis.⁴

The structure of the discussion reflects the idea that political innovation is a response to challenges to the status quo. According to this view, political thought and practice evolve when existing arrangements are under pressure. Conversely, the solutions that are eventually implemented are shaped by the particular problem that prompted them in the first place (Ankersmit, 2002).⁵ Such an argument of course, is highly functionalist, and not immune to criticism. However, it is useful to outline the historical meaning of representation according to the political roles it played at different points in time and in different political systems.

⁴ This section draws considerably on Eulau (1978) and Ankersmit (2002).

⁵ Along these lines, some have argued for instance that the nation-state is a product of societal "modernization" (Gellner, 1983).

Table 1.1 illustrates that political representation has fulfilled radically different, even contradictory, functions throughout history. Initially conceived to ease the threat to direct democracy as a result of ever growing populations, it is seen today as the only way to extend participation in political decision-making to all citizens. Despite this apparent contradiction, representation has always addressed the same two problems: a) the problem of political legitimacy and b) the problem of interest articulation. By comparing the solution to these problems we can trace the evolution of the concept of political representation across time and space.

TABLE 1.1. CHANGING VIEWS OF REPRESENTATION

Period	Place	Legitimacy	Interest Articulation	Function
Antiquity	Greece	Direct Democracy	Individual	Limit Direct Participation
Medieval	Europe	Impersonation	Abstract 'whole'	Limit Power of Monarchy
18 th Century	Anglo-Saxon	Trustee	Constituency	Act in Interest of Common Good
Restoration	Continental Europe	Delegation	Individual	Limit Social Division
Contemporary	Europe	Responsible Party	Party Voter	Act in Interest of Party Voter
Contemporary	Western Democracy	Responsiveness & Representativeness	Multiple	Ability to Respond to Constituents & Articulate Societal Preferences

Representation as a political term first appears in the democratic city-states of ancient Greece. This might seem surprising given that today we associate the Greek *polis* with direct democracy. While this is certainly true, historical scholarship has also established that a large share of public business in the Greek city-states was carried out via a range of public offices occupied by "representatives" of the *polis* (Larsen, 1955). Most administrative positions could only be exercised once in a lifetime and were distributed by lot, which assured

almost every citizen the right to occupy a public office of some kind at some point in his life (Dahl, 1989).

This conception of representation is of course entirely different from contemporary meanings of the term. Representation in the Greek sense is a means of *limiting* the participation of citizens in direct government (Eulau, 1978). It is designed to make direct democracy possible and does not carry any benefits outside of this function. Elected offices are simply an instance of limited direct citizen influence, which alone can be legitimate. In the political system of ancient Greece, legitimacy derives from the process of direct democracy where individuals articulate interests directly. Representation is a means to facilitate direct democracy by limiting citizen participation where necessary.

For ancient Greeks, interest articulation and the legitimisation of rule remained firmly rooted in the notion of direct democracy and political theory of the time simply failed to register any qualitative difference between direct and representative democracy. Incidentally, this misconception has stark consequences for the ability of the system to adjust to the challenges posed by an ever-growing population. Friedrich (1968) traces the decline of the *polis* to the failure of ancient Greeks to understand representation as a means of *extending* the power of government to larger populations.

In the early Anglo-Saxon medieval polity, representation assumes an entirely different function characterized by a particular conception of legitimacy. Here, representative institutions fulfil a dual role. First, they are of course a means of power for the monarch, designed to facilitate the conservation of peace and public administration while legitimising the authority of existing rule. Second, however, they also serve to check the power of the monarch against the interests

of Church and estates (Eulau, 1978). As Ankersmit (2002) points out, in the early United States and 17th century England, there was less competition about who should control the state as there was a united effort to check the power of the sovereign or president .

Apart from its role within the political system of the time, representation in the early Anglo-Saxon polity also features a peculiar notion of legitimacy based upon *impersonation*. The King represents his realm, the Pope stands for the whole of Christendom and the nobility for its estates. Each representative impersonates a particular political entity in the common quest for political consensus. However, as Eulau (1978) notes, a representational theory which only asks who represents each *whole* does not provide an instrument for dealing with competing claims to authority. In other words, the definition of representation as impersonation does not effectively address the problem of interest articulation and is therefore unable to establish a link between representatives and represented.

The understanding of representation as *delegation*, which comes about with the rise of the nominalist⁶ school of thought and the growing importance of the individual as a political actor, addresses this failure (Eulau, 1978). Indeed, nominalists realise that abstract concepts such as “Church” or “State” do not exist as such but are mere constructs made up of individuals with diverging interests. On the European continent, representation as delegation finds its application in parliamentary representative democracy as a means of avoiding another series of revolutions and ideological wars (Ankersmit, 2002). Rather than a consensus to check the power of the King as in the Anglo-Saxon context,

⁶ Nominalism (Latin *nominalis*, "of or pertaining to names") is the medieval scholastic doctrine stating that abstractions are without essential or substantive reality, and that only individual objects have real existence (<http://mb-soft.com/believe/txn/nominali.htm>).

representation in continental Europe is motivated by the search for compromise among diverse interests within society. Political representation in this sense is designed to ensure a policy of *juste milieu* or what Ankersmit (2002) calls a “principled-unprincipledness” in politics.

According to Ankersmit (2002), the difference between early conceptions of political representation in England and the rest of Europe still has repercussions today. Indeed, he argues that the political power of the monarch still survives in the two-party system that is prevalent in most contemporary Anglo-Saxon democracies. He sees the party in power as the successor of the absolute monarch who embodies the search for societal consensus. Similarly, the multi-party systems and coalition governments of most continental democracies can be traced to the search for societal compromise that characterized 19th century continental European politics.

Compared with our starting point in ancient Greece, the concept of representation has come full circle. Intended initially to limit the direct participation of citizens of the *polis*, representation now promotes the individual as a constraint on the power of the ruler. It is only under these premises that it makes sense to talk of representation in the contemporary sense: as a means of *extending* participation in political decision-making.⁷

This section has provided a brief overview of the evolution of political representation throughout history. From its very beginnings in the Greek city-state through to the present era, representation has provided different solutions to the dual problem of political legitimacy and interest articulation. The next section

⁷ Note that there are of course many other views of representation, which I do not mention at length. A formalistic view, for instance, simply contends that “a representative is someone authorized to act” while the represented remain responsible for that action as if they had done it themselves (Pitkin, 1967). Other approaches include descriptive and symbolic representation. See Pitkin (1967) for a comprehensive review.

focuses on contemporary conceptualisations of political representatives as delegates, trustees and responsible parties.

II. Modern Theories of Political Representation: Delegates, Trustees and Responsible Parties

This section outlines contemporary debates about the concept of political representation and how it works. The most prominent contemporary debate among theorists of political representation concerns the role of representatives as either delegates or trustees. Both trustee and delegate theory, either implicitly or explicitly, define representation as a 2-stage repeated game consisting of elections and legislative behaviour. However, the two theories differ on the role they attribute to each stage of the game. The distinction between delegates and trustees has important normative implications that affect the conception and measurement of representational performance for individual representatives and the political system as a whole.

In the following, I first elaborate on the behavioural distinction between delegates and trustees and specify the role of elections in each theory. Then, I introduce the Responsible Party Model (RPM) and the concept of system-level representation which adapts these theories to the political environment of European parliamentary democracies. Finally, I outline Pitkin's (1967) criticism of the delegate-trustee distinction and introduce the idea of "responsiveness" as an alternative conceptual tool to measure representational performance.

Legislative Behaviour: Delegates versus Trustees

As discussed in the previous section, the concepts of "delegation" and "nominalism" help elucidate the link between representative and represented. At

the same time, they create a new paradox, namely: how can legislators represent individual and common interests at the same time? Pre-nominalists had solved this problem by assuming that legislators represent homogenous *wholes* such as Church, state or nobility. Representation in this sense is governed by a search for societal consensus.

Nominalist theory, on the other hand, is vulnerable to the criticism that legislators only advocate selfish interests because it conceptualises the role of the representative as the agent in an individual principal-agent relationship. Even if this problem were solved, however, nominalists face the difficult challenge of mandate clarity. Indeed, even for willing legislators it is not always easy to determine what exactly the constituency's preferences are. Conflicting interests within the constituency leave politicians at a loss as to what their public mandate actually consists of. Conceiving representation as delegation surely runs the risk of polarising society and leaving the community as a whole worse off.

It is this paradox that "trustee theory" proposes to solve. In his speech before the Bristol assembly in 1774, its "father", Edmund Burke, resolves the nominalist conundrum by rejecting the all-encompassing delegate theory in favour of a new conception of the role of representatives. According to Burke, legislators could effectively choose to represent either local interests or the interests of the community as a whole and he argued forcefully in favour of the latter. Representatives should aim to cater to the community as a whole rather than to selfish individual interests.

However, as pointed out by nominalists, electorates are heterogeneous and characterized by diverging, and often diametrically opposed interests. As a consequence, Burke contends that representatives can only act in the interest of

the community if they reject all instruction from constituents and follow their own judgement. As Burke (1774, pg 448) writes to his Bristol electors,

“Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but Parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole – where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member, indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of Parliament”

Burke’s theory, of course, requires that the electorate trust the representative to act in the interest of the common good. Politics, according to him, is too complex and changes too rapidly for the public to act as an *ad hoc* source of legitimacy. In order for the representative to act responsibly and in the interest of all, he must be able to follow his own judgement and free will.

Though initially conceived in the 18th century, trustee theory has enjoyed continued popularity to this day among scholars and practitioners alike. Schumpeter (1942) claims, political action is the business of elected officials not that of voters. This means that they must refrain from instructing him what he is to do”. Similarly, Walter Lippman (1956) sees the duty of the citizen in filling the office - not in directing the office-holder. On a more topical note, British Prime Minister Tony Blair defends his decision to go to war with Iraq with his role as a trustee. As he says in an interview on March 1 2003, after massive anti-war demonstrations in London and across the world: “one thing I've learned in this job is you should always try to do the right thing, not the easy thing. Let the day-to-day judgments come and go: be prepared to be judged by history”.⁸

⁸ Jackie Ashley and Ewen MacAskill, 'History will be my judge', *Guardian* (March 1, 2003).

Proponents of delegate theory on the other hand continue to claim that legislators can only be representative if the preferences and interests of constituents inform their legislative behaviour. Dahl (1970, pg. 1) for instance finds that “a key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens”. Similarly, Luttbeg (1968) maintains that in a representative democracy government policy must reflect the preferences of the governed and the public interest. The delegate paradigm also pervades the ‘real world’ of politicians. As Dutch Prime Minister Balkenende admits after the referendum rejection of the draft European constitution in his country: “we have to listen seriously to the feelings of the Dutch people and - while recognising that we don't oppose Europe - accept that there are doubts about the entire process”.⁹

At the heart of the debate between delegate and trustee theories lies the notion of the elusive common “good”. Proponents of the trustee approach ultimately believe that an objective common “good” first of all exists and, second, can be achieved as long as there is a consensus to actively search for it. Advocates of delegate theory are more sceptical about the idea that some policy choices are objectively “good” for the community as a whole. They see politics not as a search for consensus but as a constant effort to compromise between clashing and ultimately irreconcilable societal interests.¹⁰ In any case, the distinction between delegates and trustees continues to inform most of the debate on the normative role of representatives.

⁹ Nicholas Watts, Luke Harding and Michael White, ‘Crisis talks as treaty nears collapse’, *Guardian* (June 3, 2005).

¹⁰ As Ankersmit (2002) notes, it is not surprising that trustee theory has its origins in the Anglo-Saxon systems while delegate theory emerged in continental Europe.

Elections: Selection versus Sanctioning

Apart from different conceptions of legislative behaviour, delegate and trustee theories also differ on the role they attribute to elections. In delegate theory, voters first select representatives among a pool of candidates with different policy preferences and personal backgrounds. Trustees, on the other hand, interpret elections as a way for voters to sanction incumbent politicians based on their past record. Both theories explain the electoral phenomenon with the language of accountability, but they make different assumptions about the electorate itself.

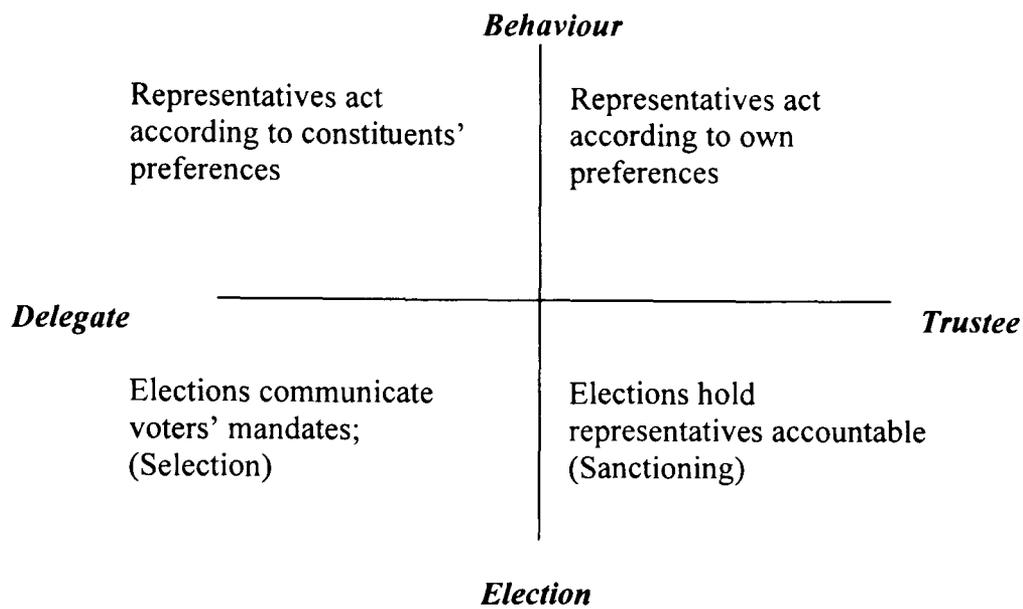
First, delegate theory assumes a forward-looking electorate. As Maravall (1999, pg. 155) notes, elections could act as a “prospective mechanism for the responsiveness of politicians”. Fearon (1999, pg. 82) makes this point very clear: “voters think about elections much more as opportunities to try to select good types than as sanctions to deter shirking by future incumbents”. According to him, this is so because unlike a policymaker’s past performance “variations in [good and bad] type are relevant to voters’ payoffs at the moment of choice” (Fearon, 1999, pg. 82). In other words, elections serve mainly as a means of communication between voters and representatives.

In trustee theory, the role of periodic elections is to hold representatives accountable for their actions *post hoc*. Elections prevent the legislator from straining too far from the interest of constituents and the electorate engages in retrospective voting to assess the past performance of representatives. Manin (1997) for instance equates representation with the “supreme moment” when the electorate is called on to judge the action of government.

Figure 1.1 summarizes the space of contestation defined by the two theories of representation.¹¹ Elections and legislative behaviour perform different functions under the delegate and trustee paradigms. In trustee theory, policymakers act according to their own free will in the interest of the 'common good'. Empirically, there should be a clear correspondence between the personal policy preferences of representatives and actual policy outcomes. Elections serve as a means of sanctioning representatives who have failed to live up to the expectations of the electorate post hoc. Delegates, on the other hand, behave in accordance with the preferences of their constituents. Representation occurs when legislators consistently adopt policy positions in line with constituents' demands. Elections serve primarily as a means of selecting candidates who promise to comply with constituency preferences. They are public statements of voters' preferences and a means of communication between voters and representatives.

¹¹ Research on political representation either explicitly or implicitly adopts a similar conception of political representation as the relationship between constituency, representative attitudes, elections and legislative behaviour. Miller and Stokes (1963) describe one of the most influential such models, which discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.

FIGURE 1.1. CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF REPRESENTATION: THE SPACE OF CONTESTATION



The discussion thus far has implicitly focused on individual legislators as the relevant actors. Certainly, it is in this spirit that delegate and trustee theories were initially conceived. However, the delegate-trustee framework is not necessarily limited to the level of individual legislators. Indeed, a purely individual-level theory is likely to be less applicable in systems with strong political parties than it would be, for instance, in the US (Krehbiel, 1993). In addition, representational performance can also be analysed at the institutional level. Indeed, it is often the representational performance of the political system as a whole, which is of most interest to practitioners and citizens alike.

Variations of the Delegate-Trustee Paradigm: The Responsible Party Model

Much research has concluded that the political systems of continental European democracies cannot easily be compared with the presidential two-party system in the United States (Thomassen, 1999). In many European countries, parties are significant political actors because they organise and finance election campaigns, adopt or reject legislation, and support or depose governments. As

Schmitt and Thomassen (1999) find, governments in parliamentary system depend on party discipline, which makes political parties - not individual members of parliament - the most relevant actors.

The Responsible Party Model adapts the framework in Figure 1.1 to party-centred systems without, however, eliminating the fundamental distinction between delegates and trustees or the two stages of the representational process. Specifically, the Responsible Party Model posits that representation occurs if a) several parties compete in elections on different political platforms, b) voters can and do choose the party whose platform is closest to their policy preferences, and c) parties follow up on their electoral promises.

Like individual-level theories, the model explicitly incorporates both stages of the representational process. It was originally intended to ensure a closer track between public preferences and policy outcomes in the delegate tradition (Kirkpatrick, 1971; Converse and Pierce 1986). Responsible parties ensure representation because their public mandate derives from their commitment to the political platform on the basis of which they are elected.

While the Responsible Party Model successfully incorporates parties as political actors, it also attributes significant communicative power to periodic elections and presupposes an unrealistic degree of information on the part of parties and voters alike. First of all, parties can only commit themselves to a policy position to the extent that they are able to anticipate issues that might arise during the legislature. If electoral platforms are vague and incomplete, however, parties function as trustees just like individual legislators do in the context of Burke's conception of representation. As Converse and Pierce (1986) themselves note, some decisions must be taken under conditions of such emergency or are so

technical that even most advocates of the delegate model accept the need for trustees.

Second, the model assumes that voters have perfect information about their own policy preferences and those of the parties that are up for election. Such an assumption clashes with Putnam's (1976) characterisation of election results as "notoriously uninformative". If voters' opinions are not very specific they can at best be interpreted as diffuse expectations rather than specific instructions (Hoffmann-Lange, 1991). In the context of the European Parliament, which is the subject of the empirical part of this thesis, a prolific literature has established that elections are but second-order contest, with low turnout, apathetic voters and vague political platforms (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Blondel et al., 1998).

These caveats do not question the applicability of the Responsible Party Model *per se*. On the contrary, despite Krehbiel's (1993) scepticism, most students of European parliamentary democracy confirm that legislative politics takes place primarily at the party level. However, they do invalidate the interpretation of the responsible party model as firmly rooted in the delegate tradition. With vague electoral platforms and badly informed voters, there is no reason why parties should not be able to act both as trustees and delegates, much like individual legislators.

The Responsible Party Model forms an important part in any discussion of contemporary theories of political representation. It does not, however, alter the fundamental dichotomy between delegates and trustees. Instead, it shifts the unit of analysis to the party level and introduces electoral programmes and voter information as constraints on the ability of parties to ignore public preferences. Parties choose their position along the delegate-trustee continuum based on

constraints defined by the specificity of their electoral platform and the level of information of their voters. In other words, the Responsible Party Model adapts the delegate-trustee dichotomy to the context of European parliamentary democracy. As a result, the model (or its adaptation to the European Parliament) is at the root of the analysis in this thesis (see Chapter 2)

Variations of the Delegate-Trustee Paradigm: System-Level Representation

In addition to the individual and party levels, representation can also be analysed at the level of the parliament, or even the political system, as a whole. Most definitions of the legislature consider representation a vital element of its institutional role in democratic political systems. As Norton (1990, pg. 1) concludes, legislatures are “constitutionally designated institutions for *giving assent* to binding measures of public policy, that assent being given *on behalf* of a political community that extends beyond the government elite responsible for formulating those measures” [emphasis added].

Norton’s definition illustrates the dual role that is common to all legislatures. ‘Giving assent’ refers to the influence Parliament has over the formulation and enactment of policy. The second part of the quote (‘on behalf of’) describes the representational function of legislatures. In other words, every assembly is part ‘legislature’ and part ‘parliament’. It is a lawmaking body responsible for formulating, developing and enacting policy and, at the same time, it is a place of deliberation, where elected representatives come together to discuss the impact of policy and act on behalf of the citizens they represent.

Despite different categorisations and levels of analysis, most studies adopt a similarly functional view. In their authoritative manual on *Comparing Legislatures*, Loewenberg and Patterson (1979) for instance claim that

legislatures assume three general functions: they ensure the linkage between citizens and government, foster the recruitment of political leaders and engage in - what they call - 'conflict management'. Similarly, Packenham (1970) sees the major functions of parliaments in legitimating the actions of government, socialising elites and exercising influence over policy outcomes. More recently, Copeland and Patterson (1994) distinguish between legitimation, linkage and decision-making. In the context of the EU, Judge and Earnshaw (2003) identify policy influence, linkage and legitimation as the primary functions of the European Parliament.

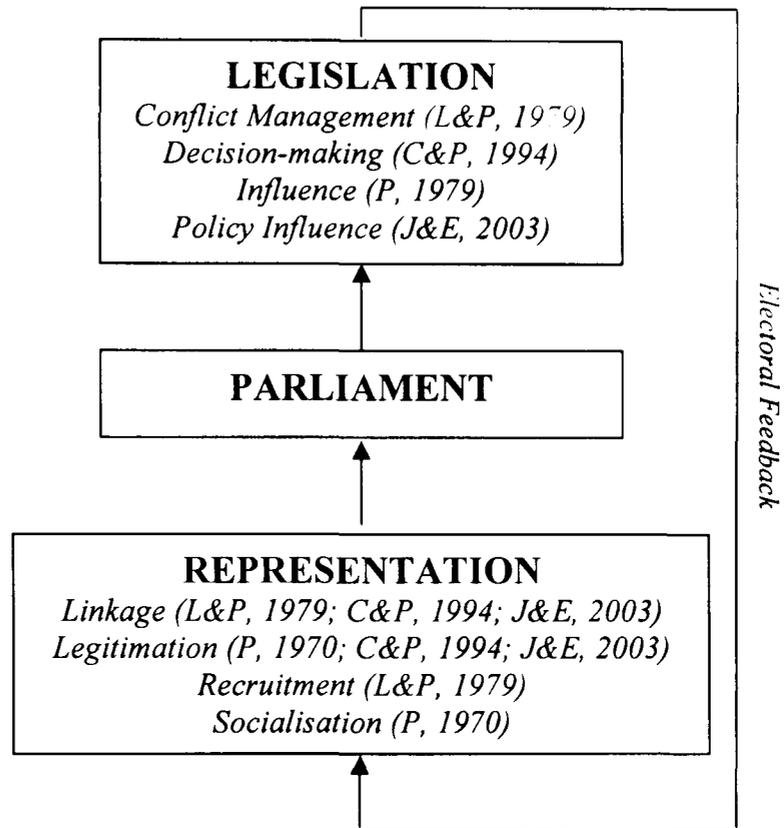
'Conflict management', (policy) 'influence' and 'decision-making' denote the power that the legislature has over policies and laws. For Loewenberg and Patterson, 'conflict management', measured as the number of bills introduced and enacted, captures the power of the legislature to impose its will on the government by developing and enacting policy. There are a variety of mechanisms through which legislatures can exercise policy power including appointing the government, introducing votes of no confidence, amending, proposing or deciding legislation or simply watching over the government's track record in the implementation of bills that have already been enacted. While there are large differences across countries and political systems, most legislatures have at least some influence over the legislation that the government wants to introduce as well as some budgetary and oversight powers.

However, there is more to Parliaments than merely 'giving assent' to matters of policy. As Packenham (1970, pg 536) notes, "even if [a legislature] had no decision making power whatsoever, the functions which it performs would be significant". Linkage, recruitment, legitimation, or 'socialisation' all form part of

what constitutes more broadly the representational function of parliament. In the words of Loewenberg and Patterson (1979, pg 167), “whatever else legislatures do, they connect the people to their government in special ways [...] Representation describes that special relationship”. Parliament links citizens to their leaders and the policies they make by acting on their behalf. In other words, parliament ensures that the electorate ‘owns’ both the government and the policies it produces.

Figure 1.2 illustrates the conventional conception of the dual role of legislatures in democratic political systems. In this hierarchical model, citizens choose representatives and, in a separate stage, legislators choose policies. The two roles are linked via periodic elections. As noted above, the delegate paradigm emphasises the role of elections as a selection mechanism that determines the composition of the legislature. Representation is reduced to a principal-agent relationship where the principal (citizens) chooses the agent (representative) that is closest to him in terms of policy (or some other measure of) preferences. The trustee model on the other hand sees elections primarily as a way to sanction representatives whose behaviour deviates from the preferences of the electorate. Under both paradigms, parliament lends legitimacy to the government by creating a hierarchical link between policy and citizens.

FIGURE 1.2. THE DUAL ROLE OF PARLIAMENT



Thus far, the discussion has centred on the evolution of different theoretical conceptions of political representation. However, the debate surrounding delegates and trustees has also sparked a large amount of empirical research that investigates representational performance at the level of individual legislators, parties and at the institutional level. The remainder of this section gives a short overview of this literature.

Empirical Assessments

By now it should come a little surprise that models based on delegates, trustees and responsible parties lead to different empirical evaluations of representational performance. Empirical assessments of delegate theory benefit from an abundance of public opinion surveys that propose to measure constituents' preferences (e.g. the Eurobarometer series or the US' National Election Studies). Elite surveys that gauge the preferences of representatives and their perception of constituency interests are harder to come by, although they do

exist (see for instance the European Parliament Research Group's recurring survey or the European Candidate Study). In some cases such elite surveys are replaced by direct measures of legislative behaviour in, most commonly, parliamentary votes (e.g. Hix's collection of European Parliament roll-call votes). Together, these data have sparked a large amount of empirical research from Miller and Stokes early analysis of the US Congress to complex cross-national studies across a wide range of political systems.¹²

At the level of individual legislators, Miller and Stokes' (1963) investigation into constituency influence in Congress is probably the most famous contribution to the empirical literature on the link between legislative behaviour and representation. The definition of representation as congruence, be it policy, issue or opinion congruence, at the core of their analysis, is common to most subsequent empirical studies. Miller and Stokes make use of previously unavailable data on constituency and representative preferences to examine whether and, if so, to what extent the roll-call behaviour of US Congressmen mirrors the opinion of their electoral districts. Using simple correlation, they find that constituents have a considerable amount of control over the behaviour of their representatives. However, representatives are often unsure about the exact nature of constituency preferences and constituents do not always have a clear notion of their representatives' policy positions. Further, they find that congruence between constituency and representative is closest to the delegate model on the issue of civil rights and closest to the trustee interpretation of representation on foreign affairs. On issues of social welfare, which are most

¹² See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of these data.

clearly governed by a left-right cleavage they find support for an ideological party split both within the electorate and among legislators.

A large number of subsequent studies have confirmed and amended Miller and Stokes' conclusions or tested their model in different political contexts. Achen (1977, 1978) criticises the use of correlation coefficients in studies of representation, develops various alternative measures of congruence, and tests them on the same type of data as Miller and Stokes. He finds that winners are less representative than losers and that there is no difference across issue dimensions. In a trilogy of articles on France, Germany and the United States, Brooks (1985, 1987, 1990) reports little overall congruence between actual policy outcomes and public opinion. Similarly, Converse and Pierce (1986), Fiorina (1974) and Powell (1982) measure representation as the fit or congruence between the policy positions of representatives and the preferences of their constituents.

At the party level, Stokes (1999) analyses party manifestos in Latin America to determine the level of commitment that parties show to their electoral programme. She finds that "mandates may be widely and severely violated. [...] When politicians viewed voters' preferences as erroneous and unstable, mandates were bad predictors of policy" (pg.126). Studies in the European context attribute the lack of congruence between public mandates and policy at the party level to coalition government and party weakness (Klingemann et al., 1994). In line with the trustee conception of representation, Stokes concludes that "sticking to mandates is not the only way politicians can represent citizens' interests, and that governments may have to violate mandates in order to represent [...] It matters little that citizens hold erroneous ex ante beliefs if they at least are capable of

making good ex-post judgements of incumbent governments by the end of the term” (pg 127). In support of responsible parties, Esaiasson (1999), in a study of four democracies, finds that party voters’ policy views are more in agreement with the collective of party representatives than with their own local representative. Pierce (1999) on the other hand contends that the responsible party model does not hold particularly well because voters do not cast their ballots for parties representing the political platform closest to their preferences. He finds some support on the “left-right super-issue” but little when issues are considered separately. Similar studies of issue congruence between parties and their voters in Europe include Barnes (1977) on Italy as well as Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996) and Holmberg (1989) on Sweden.

In addition to these country-level studies, the European Parliament has provided an interesting outlet for comparative research on party representation. With different electoral and party systems in each member state, the EP serves as a “natural experiment” for testing the validity of the responsible party model. In an early study, Dalton (1985) examines the congruence between party candidates for the European Parliament and their voters. He finds close correspondence in some areas, such as economic and security issues, and less correspondence in other areas, including foreign affairs. In an analysis of issue congruence in the 1994 elections, Schmitt and Thomassen (1999) find that correspondence is relatively high along the left-right spectrum but representatives are generally more pro-European on specific issues than their constituents.

Finally, not all studies have focused on individual legislators or parties. Recent scholarship also addresses the representational performance of entire political systems. Huber and Powell (1994) for instance find that proportional

systems lead to better congruence between the positions of the median legislator and the median voter and between the positions of the median member of the cabinet and the median voter than majoritarian systems. Wessels (1999) argues that proportional systems are more responsive to party voters while congruence with the policy position of the median voter is higher in majoritarian systems. He concludes that the electoral system and the number of parties with different policy platforms affect the representational performance of policymakers. Most famously, perhaps, Arend Lijphart (e.g. 1999) argues that so-called ‘consensus democracies’ outperform majoritarian systems on measures of political equality, women’s representation, participation in elections and proximity between government policies and voter preferences.

Some recent “systems studies” remain based on the principle of congruence but employ more sophisticated statistical measures to examine “dynamic representation” and the influence of the “public mood” on policy outcomes in the US context (Stimson, Mackuen and Erikson, 1995; Stimson, 1991). Dynamic representation introduces a time lag between public opinion and the responsiveness of different US institutions. Stimson, Mackuen and Erikson (1995) find that the political system in the United States works more or less in line with the founding fathers’ intentions. The level of overall responsiveness is high but there is a difference between House and Senate. As Stimson (1999) notes, the House is immensely sensitive to public opinion changes and adjusts its position continually and decisively, much in line with the delegate conception of representation. The Senate on the other hand behaves in line with the electoral connection. It is less able to anticipate public opinion changes but corrects its position as a result of elections as predicted by the trustee model. In the context

of the European Union, Carrubba (2001) also finds evidence that is consistent with the Stimson model.

As this short and incomplete survey of the literature has shown, delegates, trustees and responsible parties still dominate theoretical and empirical discussions of political representation.¹³ Progress in the field since Burke's fateful speech before the Bristol assembly in 1774 has consisted mainly of using ever more sophisticated statistical tools to measure similar things. Despite a notable degree of discontent with existing models of representation, few researchers have ventured beyond the theoretical status quo. However, as pointed out above, the delegate trustee framework also has significant shortcomings. The next section summarizes some of the problems with existing models and presents an alternative conception of representation based on the concept of responsiveness.

III. Beyond Delegates and Trustees: Access to Power and Responsiveness

In her 1967 work on the *Concept of Representation* Pitkin isolates strengths and weaknesses of the delegate-trustee dichotomy. First, trustee theory is vulnerable to the accusation that representatives merely “take care of

¹³ The discussion has ignored a substantial literature, which addresses non-electoral forms of representation, such as different forms of interest group pluralism, or corporatism (see for instance Schmitter and Streeck, 2001). Indeed, some scholars contend that parliamentary democracy and with it, electoral forms of representation, are on the decline (Anderson and Burns, 1996; Wessels and Katz, 1999). According to many, this move away from parties and towards a more functional form of political representation is even more forceful at the European level (Wessels and Katz, 1999;). The rise of a “democracy of organisations” at the expense of a “democracy of citizens” gradually hollows out the meaning of political representation as a source of democratic legitimacy (Anderson and Burns, 1996; Schmitter, 2000; Warren and Castiglione, 2004; Ryden, 1996). Despite the growing importance of interest groups and the proliferation of theoretical models of interest group behaviour, the vast majority of citizens associate political representation with the *electoral* relationship between them and their representatives. As a result, this thesis focuses exclusively on electoral forms of political representation.

constituents”, in which case representation loses its substantive meaning. This is likely to be the case in areas where the public simply does not have preferences or interests, such as highly technical fields that require expert knowledge. In these cases, delegate theory with its reliance on instruction from the public, however, does not offer a promising solution either. The populism inherent in delegate theory may also not be particularly desirable from a democratic point of view.

Second, trustee theory does not clarify why voters should reward politicians who act in the common good, however defined, by re-electing them. Instead, rational self-interested voters are more likely to choose politicians who promise them the greatest amount of specific benefits (as long as this promise is credible) without much regard to the well-being of society as a whole. Trustee theory becomes even more problematic if political choices are mere matters of taste. Choices based on taste are arbitrary and therefore, by definition, preclude trustees from representing others through their own independent policy decisions.

Third, delegate theory requires a clear understanding of the nature of the constituency to be represented. On many issues, however, constituents have conflicting interests that cannot easily be aggregated. Is the representative to respect the preferences of his territorial constituency, his political party or the public at large? How does the widespread practice of pork-barrel politics affect this equation? What about people who do not participate in the political process for various reasons?¹⁴ Finally, both delegate and trustee theory assume that representatives act consciously in someone’s interest, be it their own, the party or constituents at large. However, it is perfectly possible for representation to

¹⁴ There is indeed quite a bit of scholarship on the effects of participation (or the lack thereof) on the representational performance of a political system. See for instance Verba and Nie (1972) in the US or Blondel et al. (1998) in the context of European elections.

emerge from a political system in which policymakers are pursuing entirely different goals.

In sum, for Pitkin, it is the nature of the issues at stake, the political choices to be made, the constituency to be represented and the relative capacity of represented and representatives to develop and articulate clear preferences that determine a political system's representational performance. She summarizes these factors in the notion of "responsiveness". Delegate theory sees responsiveness as constant action in line with constituents' wishes and interests; for trustees responsiveness is rooted in their accountability to constituents, which in turn is ensured by periodic elections. Whereas delegates must follow constituents' lead, trustees can only be responsive if they act independently and base their behaviour on their own personal judgement.

Ultimately, however, responsiveness is a dual concept that incorporates elements of both trustee and delegate theory. Surely, government can only be representative if its subjects have control over policy. However, representation cannot simply mean a constant activity of responding. Instead, Pitkin (1967, pg. 233) argues, what is required is a "constant condition of responsiveness, of potential readiness to respond". The representational performance of a political system is not only determined by policy outcomes that are congruent with public preferences but also by the system's readiness to respond to public demand for action. According to this approach, *access* to power is equally or even more important than the actual exercise of power itself.

Eulau and Karps (1978) extend Pitkin's institutional argument to the level of individual legislators. Defining representation as 'access to power' rather than actual responses allows legislators to go beyond merely reacting to the demands

and preferences of constituents and requires them to take legislative initiative. Eulau and Karps (1978) distinguish between four components of representation: policy, service, allocation and symbolic responsiveness. Three of these components describe the relationship between the legislative behaviour of individual representatives and their constituents. Most studies of representation are limited to policy responsiveness, which refers to the connection between constituent policy preferences and the behaviour of the representative. Service and allocation responsiveness are the benefits that representatives obtain for particular constituents and their districts through non-legislative services or pork-barrel politics. Finally, symbolic responsiveness refers to the trust and confidence that constituents have in their representatives.

In sum, Eulau and Karps (1978) warn that theoretical knowledge on representation can only progress if responsiveness goes beyond simple congruence between citizen preferences and representatives to take into account access to power across a variety of legislative activities. By measuring responsiveness as legislative *participation and specialisation* in different policy areas and across different stages of the legislative process, this thesis goes beyond conventional definitions of representation within the delegate/trustee framework. The next section outlines the research question of this study and the rationale behind the focus on the European Parliament.

IV. Research Question of the Thesis

The main research question that the study proposes to answer is: under what conditions does representation occur in the European Parliament? In other words, the thesis identifies the incentives that determine the representativeness of legislative participation – or government of the people – and the responsive

specialisation of individual representatives – or government for the people - at different stages of the policy process. Together, representative participation and responsive specialisation define representational performance because they explain which MEPs have access to which policy areas. The empirical part of the thesis assesses the relative impact of different institutional and party-political incentives on the representational performance of MEPs from different party groups, national parties, member states and political persuasions. To what extent do institutional and party-political incentives explain differences in responsive specialisation across MEPs and in the representativeness of legislative business at different stages of the policy process?

Even though the theoretical model is applied to and tested on the European Parliament, the findings have a wide applicability across political systems. The model finds the essence of representation in explaining the responsive specialisation and participation decisions of individual legislators in particular policy areas rather than others. Government of the people occurs when a broad cross-section of legislators participate in parliamentary business; government for the people requires specialisation in the policy areas that each national party stands for in public. This is true as much at the European level as it is among EU member states or in non-European systems such as the United States or Latin America. In other words, the theoretical foundations upon which the model is built are not specific to the European Parliament but they can be applied across a wide range of political systems.

In addition, unlike most previous research, this thesis makes theoretical use of Pitkin's findings and incorporates them into an empirical analysis of representation and representational performance. Pitkin's notion of

responsiveness is at the root of the answer to the research question at the core of the thesis. Representation is defined as the ability (access) of individual legislators to address the publicly stated policy priorities of their national party. Instead of preference or policy congruence, the thesis argues that responsiveness is based on the extent to which an MEP *engages* in policy areas of different salience¹⁵, at different stages of the legislative process. Chapter 2 develops the theoretical link between legislative participation, specialisation and political representation in more detail.

Finally, the thesis departs from the existing framework to ask why and how representational performance differs among individual legislators. It is here where traditional conceptions of representation are most deficient. In delegate and trustee models, competitive elections determine the utility functions of individual legislators, which in turn define their legislative behaviour. However, not every representative faces the same political opportunity structure within the parliament. Institutional and party-political incentives for participation and specialisation in different policy areas may vary across representatives and across the stages of the legislative process, depending on applicable majority thresholds, partisan politics or institutional rules.

As a result, the thesis argues that it is imperative to examine the political opportunity structure within the legislature. As Converse and Pierce (1986) have noted in the context of the French political system, it is perfectly possible for a representative to base his legislative behaviour entirely on instructions from constituents yet fail to represent their preferences compared with other legislators. Conversely, it is also possible for legislators to ignore the demands of

¹⁵ Throughout the thesis, policy salience/importance/emphasis are used interchangeably. See Chapter 3 for a detailed definition and operationalisation of 'salience'.

their constituency and still perform rather well in terms of representational performance. What do legislators try to achieve in the EP? What legislative tools do they use to achieve their goals? How does the party-political and institutional context in which legislative participation and specialisation take place affect representational performance?

V. Focus on the European Parliament

The empirical and theoretical analyses in this thesis focus on the European Parliament. To some observers this may seem a strange choice. Indeed, there are quite a few attributes that set the European Parliament apart from other legislatures and may therefore undermine the generalisability of the theory and the empirical findings. However, instead of conceptualising the EP as a *sui generis* phenomenon, the ‘starting point of any assessment’ of representational performance should be a comparison with the characteristic features of legislatures in other political systems (Judge and Earnshaw, 2003). Also, there are several characteristics that make the European Parliament a particularly interesting institution to study.

First, there are significant doubts about the representational performance and legitimacy of the European Union. Unlike other federal systems, for instance, the assembly of European citizens (the EP) is less powerful than the assembly of states (Council of Ministers) in some policy areas while both institutions share equal legislative powers in other policy areas. As a result, many commentators including academics, practitioners, the media and citizens have repeatedly questioned the legitimacy of the European institutional infrastructure. However, some more recent research maintains that the EP functions very much like any

other domestic Parliament within the system of the European Union (Hix, 2001, 2002; Hix, Noury and Roland, 2002 ; Judge and Earnshaw, 2003).

Second, most scholars agree that within the institutional framework of the EU, the European Parliament comes closest to a representative institution. The representational function of the European Parliament is firmly inscribed in the Union's treaties. Article Two of the draft European Constitution explicitly states that, 'the European Parliament shall be composed of representatives of the Union's citizens'. As Rittberger (2005) confirms, policymakers in the member states continually 'project a model of representative government onto the EU polity' and the European Parliament plays the preponderant role in legitimising EU governance.

As a result, the representational performance of the European Parliament has been the object of a significant amount of political contestation. Concerns about the democratic nature of the EU have pushed member states to address the representational role of the EP (Pollack, 2003).¹⁶ Purported to represent all European citizens within the complex of the EU's institutional structure, the EP is seen by some as the potential solution to the democratic deficit. At the same time, the EP has been the focus of much criticism for being unrepresentative, unknown to the public and far too powerful.

Indeed, the EP has gradually increased its influence to become an equal legislator with the Council of Ministers in many areas. Concurrently, most national legislatures have lost influence compared with their executives.

¹⁶ Other researchers have challenged this explanation. Moravcsik and Nicolaidis (1999) for instance claim that the increase of the Parliament's powers at Amsterdam can be explained with the predominance of Social Democrats in Council and Parliament at the time. According to them it was relatively easy for the heads of state to delegate power to the EP because the majority in the EP was of the same political persuasion as the majority in the Council. Hix (2002) on the other hand maintains that Amsterdam merely reconciled the *de jure* and *de facto* powers of the EP in the Commission investiture procedure and in legislative decision-making.

According to Kreppel (2002), the EP is a 'transformative legislature' with a significant impact on EU policy and decision-making. After the treaty reforms of Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2000) the European Parliament now possesses almost all of the powers traditionally associated with national parliaments, although it is constrained in their application to a restricted number of policy areas. As Scully (2000, pg. 235) contends, "the European Parliament is now a serious player in EU law making".

Third, precisely because of the evolving nature of the European political system, representation at the European level is an important object of study. The European Union is currently undergoing a period of fundamental change. Enlargement to the East, the balance between European institutions, national institutions and the public, and the relationship among European institutions themselves constitute the core of the current constitutional debate. Politicians at the national and European levels continually make controversial decisions that alter the way politics is done in Europe. With the demise of national parliaments, it is important to understand how political representation at the European level works in order to safeguard the democratic procedures that are at the heart of European politics (Rittberger, 2005).

Finally, from an empirical perspective, focussing on the European Parliament allows extending the existing research programme on political representation to include a cross-national dimension. Most empirical scholarship on representation has focussed on political systems or policymakers within individual countries.¹⁷ While this limitation makes empirical sense, analysing representation in international organizations or federal-type systems (such as the European Union)

¹⁷ But see Chapter 2 for other studies that focus on the European Parliament.

substantially increases theoretical leverage because it incorporates a comparative element.

The European Union is a union of individual states with different political systems, cultural traditions and historical backgrounds. Country-level case studies fail to capture the importance of these differences. A study of representation in France tells us very little about the way representation works in Germany for instance. In addition to cultural and historical factors, the member states that make up the European Union also differ in the way they structure their relations with the European institutions. Apart from very broad co-ordination within the European party groups, most national parties in each member state carry out their own European election campaigns for instance. Only a study that cuts across these national differences can generate findings that apply across countries.

This section has presented the main research question that this thesis addresses and explained the focus on the European Parliament. Under what conditions does political representation occur? How does the representational performance of individual legislators differ? And how can it be explained as a function of the institutional and party-political opportunity structure that guides legislative behaviour at different stages of the policy process? The final section of this chapter gives a brief overview of the remainder of the thesis.

VI. Overview of the Thesis

The remainder of this chapter outlines how the thesis proposes to answer these questions. The thesis goes beyond the delegate-trustee framework by developing and operationalising Pitkin's (1967) concept of responsiveness as 'access to power'. The study models the link between legislative participation

and political representation in terms of a “competence logic” that defines how well legislators are able to act upon the political platform that their national party stands for.

Chapter 2 defines representation as a function of the legislative participation and specialisation decisions of individual policymakers. MEPs try to achieve a range of legislative goals within the party-political and institutional incentive structure at different stages of the policy process in the European Parliament. It is the interaction between individual goals and political/institutional incentives that determines responsiveness. Coalition dynamics across party groups, legislative-executive relations with the European Commission and party group gate-keeping power over the distribution of legislative spoils affect representational performance. Institutional rules, such as open rule in committee and plenary, proportionality requirements and majority thresholds also determine which MEPs can participate and which policy areas are most attractive to them. The chapter derives a set of hypotheses to be tested in the second part of the thesis.

Chapter 3 operationalises the theoretical concepts developed in chapter 2, presents the research design and discusses the data used to test the predictions of the model. The thesis is based on a unique dataset of legislative participation in the fifth European Parliament (1999-2004) including committee assignments, attendance at committee meetings, rapporteurships and parliamentary questions. Together, these data cover a wide range of legislative activities at different stages of the policy process.

Chapter 4 analyses the effect of selective attendance at committee meetings on political representation in the EP. MEPs attend committee meetings because they address policy areas that feature prominently political platform of their

national party. This is particularly the case for substitutes who are more likely to replace full members on the most salient policy areas than in less attractive committees. Also, majority rule makes committee attendance most attractive to MEPs from party groups that are pivotal under different majority thresholds. On the other hand, committee business is of less interest to minority MEPs with little say over policy decisions. In any case, selective attendance on the part of MEPs undermines the proportional committee composition that is enshrined in the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament.

Chapter 5 analyses the distribution of rapporteurships within parliamentary committees. Despite an auction system, which enforces a proportional allocation of reports, competition among party groups affects who gets the most salient reports. Again, open rule in committee and plenary enforces a political distribution of salient rapporteurships along the lines of voting coalitions in the plenary and on the committee floor. MEPs whose party groups hold the majority in the EP write the most salient reports. Minority legislators write reports in policy areas of less interest to their national party. Within party groups, the leadership distributes reports so as to maintain group cohesion. Rank-and-file MEPs from smaller national parties are involved in the most salient pieces of legislation. Preference outliers on the other hand must make do with less salient reports.

The last empirical chapter focuses on parliamentary questions at Question Time. Unlike for committee reports, party groups do not control access to parliamentary questions. Also, unlike the previous two chapters, national parties rather than party groups are the primary actors in legislative-executive relations.

MEPs without national party ties to the Commission attribute a greater role to overseeing the executive in a large range of policy areas than ‘governing’ MEPs.

Finally, Chapter 7 summarises the effect of party political and institutional incentives on representational performance at different stages of the policy process in the EP. The text synthesises the findings of the three empirical chapters and discusses the impact of the findings on several proposals for institutional reform in the EP under different ‘what-if’ scenarios. Finally, the chapter points out several ways in which the analysis could be extended, and the findings applied to, a larger time frame, a more comprehensive set of legislative tools or a broader range of party-political and institutional environments.

CHAPTER 2 – A THEORY OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

“Incentives are the cornerstone of modern life. And understanding them – or often, ferreting them out – is the key to solving just about any riddle, from violent crime to sports cheating to online dating” –*Levitt and Dubner (2005)*

The introductory quote best illustrates the paradigm upon which this thesis is built. As Chapter 1 has argued, in order to explain why some legislators represent their constituents whereas others do not, we must identify the incentives that explain their legislative participation and specialisation decisions in the EP. If responsiveness is defined in Pitkin’s (1967) sense as ‘*access to power*’, then the party-political and institutional incentive structure that governs participation and specialisation within the European Parliament is a major determinant of how government for and of the people work, both at the level of individual MEPs and for the institution as a whole.

This chapter develops a model of political representation based on the responsiveness of individual legislators at different stages of the legislative process and under different institutional and party-political arrangements. The model explains why MEPs might or might not participate at different stages of the policy process and why they might or might not discriminate between policy areas in an effort to put their national party’s policy platform into practice. The model has important implications for parliamentary reform in the EP, the link between policy and citizens in the EU and the assessment of political representation in other political systems.

Unlike much previous research, the thesis takes into account both the representativeness of parliamentary business (government of the people) and the

responsiveness of individual legislators (government for the people). First, by explaining differences in levels of *participation* among legislators, the thesis identifies the values, interests and constituencies that the European Parliament represents at different stages of the legislative process. Second, the thesis addresses the extent to which legislators *specialise* in policy areas that feature prominently in their party's political platform. There is an uneasy tension between representativeness and responsiveness, which calls into question research confined to only one of these two dimensions of political representation.

The model has profound implications for our understanding of how political representation works in the European Union and elsewhere. Contrary to the assumptions of most existing research, representational performance does not rely on the dichotomy between delegates and trustees as ideal-types. Rather, the quality of representation at the European level depends on the legislative behaviour of MEPs within the political and institutional context in which they operate. Unlike the vertical conception of the functions of parliaments presented in Chapter 1, the model developed here describes the relationship between legislation and representation as an horizontal decision between different legislative objectives by individual MEPs. As a result, the solution to the so-called democratic deficit in the European Union lies at least as much in creating individual-level incentives for MEPs to participate in the legislature and specialise in salient policy areas as it does in large-scale constitutional reform.

The chapter is organised into five parts. Section 1 outlines the distinction between representativeness and responsiveness¹, as defined by the two competing research programmes on direct and indirect representation. Section 2 introduces the notion of

¹ There may be some confusion over differential meanings of the term "responsiveness". Most research on political representation has defined the concept in terms of congruence (see Chapter 1). The model in this thesis is closer to Pitkin's understanding of responsiveness as "access to power".

representation as ‘access to power’² and states the main assumptions upon which the thesis is built. Section 3 derives a set of hypotheses about the relationship between political representation and inter- and intra-party politics at different stages of the legislative process. Section 4 moves away from the focus on individual MEPs to look at the representational performance of the European Parliament as a whole. Finally, the last section concludes with a summary of the main results and a brief overview of the rest of the thesis.

1. Measuring Representation: Representativeness v. Responsiveness

As Chapter 1 has shown, political representation is a 2-stage game involving competitive elections and legislative behaviour by individual representatives. At the electoral stage, the translation of votes into seats determines the composition and representativeness of the legislature. At the behavioural stage, the responsiveness of individual legislators affects whose interests are represented. If delegate and trustee models put forward rival conceptual definitions of representation, the distinction between elections and legislative behaviour is primarily one of empirical measurement. Where and when do we expect representation to occur?

The existing literature has addressed this question from two perspectives. First, ‘indirect representation’ occurs when voters select like-minded representatives in competitive elections in order to implement policies that are in their interest. In contrast, ‘direct’ representation refers to policy responsiveness in the legislative behaviour of sitting politicians (see Wlezien, 2004).

² See also the discussion of Pitkin’s definition of responsiveness in Chapter 1.

Indirect Representation: Representativeness and the Electoral Connection

Most students of representation in the EP have analysed what has variably been called indirect (Wlezien, 2004), descriptive/formalistic (Pitkin, 1967) or procedural (Powell, 2004) representation. This line of research asks how and to what extent the range of political opinions within the public is translated into parliamentary seats. Political representation occurs if there is a strong electoral connection between citizens and their representatives, which leads to a representative composition of the legislature.

The literature primarily revolves around the impact of electoral rules and parties on the correspondence between votes and seats. Investigating the role of parties, Duverger (1954) establishes that first-past-the-post electoral rules lead to two-party systems (Duverger's Law). As Powell (2004, pg 278) summarises in her comprehensive review of the literature, "different voting rules create incentives to reduce the number of parties to varying levels", thus affecting the representation of citizen preferences. Other major contributions include Rae's (1971) monograph on *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*, which establishes the importance of district magnitude for vote-seat translation and Lijphart's (e.g. 1994) influential cross-national comparisons, which identify the 'consensual' and 'majoritarian' features of different electoral systems. The competing visions of democracy inherent in proportional and majoritarian systems imply a trade-off between two desirable characteristics: the correspondence between votes and seats and the proportionality of legislative representation (Katz, 1997). Finally, Dalton (1985) analyses the correspondence between the political opinions of party elites and their voters in nine West European countries using survey instruments. He finds that public opinion is represented fairly well in some policy areas (such as economic and security issues)

but less well in others (e.g. foreign affairs). The efficiency of party linkages depends considerably on the clarity of party positions on different policy issues.

In the European Parliament, the literature on indirect representation has also been quite prolific. Indeed, the EP has served as a quasi-experiment allowing to investigate the impact of different electoral rules on vote-seat distribution in a single legislature. Like at the national level, the research programme has focused either on European elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Carrubba, 2001; Bowler and Farrell, 1993), representative role perceptions (Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999; 2000; Thomassen and Schmitt 1997; Katz, 1997; 1999; Marsh and Wessels, 1997; Wessels, 1999), or the social characteristics of representatives (Norris and Franklin, 1997). Most studies have concluded that representation in the EP works moderately well at best: the electoral connection is weaker than in domestic parliamentary systems, MEPs have different preferences on specific policy issues than their constituents and the Parliament is socially quite unrepresentative. Nevertheless, Schmitt and Thomassen (1999) conclude that a European system of political representation might be more feasible than is often suggested.

On the whole, the literature on indirect representation has made substantial headway in addressing the conditionality of political representation. By focusing on the correspondence between votes and seats, the research programme has successfully evaluated the impact of different electoral rules on representation. However, this research is vulnerable to the accusation that it over-simplifies the process by equating political preferences with votes cast at election time. If, as Duverger has shown, the range of party choices depends on the electoral system at hand, the correspondence between votes and preferences may also differ across countries (but see van der Eijk and Franklin, forthcoming for an elegant solution to this problem).

Similarly, research on indirect representation assumes that legislative behaviour is determined entirely by the social characteristics of representatives. The literature is unable to address the fact that different issues define different constituencies and might therefore require a different legislative composition for representation to occur. A large proportion of female representatives, for instance, does not automatically ensure effective representation for women in all policy areas. Indeed, because there is nothing in particular that makes women more or less conservative than men, the gender composition of the legislature is irrelevant when it comes to representation on ideologically divisive policy issues.

Thus, while the composition of the legislature can be an important source of legitimacy, political representation requires actual policy outcomes that are in the interest of the represented. This observation is corroborated by the large share of citizens who associate the work of the legislature primarily with its policy output (e.g. Wahlke, 1978). In order to investigate the conditions under which representation occurs, we need to take into account the link between legislative behaviour and citizen preferences. Studies of representation that focus exclusively on the composition of the legislature are inconclusive.

Direct Representation: Responsiveness and Legislative Behaviour

In response to these concerns, the research programme on 'direct' or -- in Pitkin's (1967) words -- 'substantive' representation investigates to what extent the political preferences of European citizens are reflected in the legislative behaviour of their representatives and in the policy outcomes they produce. Direct representation is more complex than simple vote-seat congruence because it can (at least theoretically) distinguish between a large range of legislative activities, at different stages of the policy process.

Nevertheless, almost all studies in the US and Europe have focussed exclusively on roll-call votes. The most influential piece of research remains Miller and Stokes (1963) article, which uses a public opinion survey to match constituency preferences with the voting behaviour of their representatives. Fenno (1978) qualifies the Miller and Stokes results by positing that legislators focus on multiple constituencies, including a territorial and a re-election constituency of fellow partisans within their district. Similarly, Wright (1989) concludes that senators from different parties in the same state cater to different constituencies. According to Kingdon (1973), representatives balance simultaneous pressures from, among others, their constituency and their own preferences when choosing which way to vote. Finally, in a more recent example, Levitt (1996) finds that US senators vote mostly according to their own ideology, while only 25 percent of their utility function can be ascribed to constituency preferences.

In the European Parliament, a large share of the literature on direct representation has focused on normative questions and the institutional set-up of the EU (Follesdal and Hix, 2005; Majone, 2000; Moravcsik, 2002; Scharpf, 1999). Empirical research is sparse, even though the EP is an ideal ‘laboratory’ to examine the correspondence between citizen preferences and legislative behaviour under different electoral arrangements. As Moravcsik and Sangiovanni (2002) point out, by measuring the impact of constituency preferences on policy and regulatory outcomes at the European level, we can determine EU responsiveness to underlying national moods.

Like in the US, the small number of empirical studies in Europe measure legislative responsiveness as congruence between the policy positions of representatives and represented, as evidenced in roll-call votes in the plenary. Hix (1999, 2001, 2002) for example uses roll-call votes to estimate the policy positions of

individual MEPs with the *Nominate* technique.³ He finds that MEPs are more responsive to their national parties than their European party groups, especially if national parties have the power to punish defectors. Moreover, party group cohesion has increased with the power of the European Parliament (Hix, Noury and Roland, 2002; forthcoming).

Roll-call voting is an attractive object of study because data are now easily available.⁴ Roll-calls however possess specific characteristics that set them apart from other types of parliamentary activity.⁵ First, voting is decidedly low-cost as it does not require the representative to be particularly involved in the issue at hand. All that is needed is for the MEP to be present during the voting session. As this thesis shows, however, legislators are guided by different incentives when deciding to participate and specialise in policy areas with different demands on their time and resources and with different benefits in terms of policy and responsiveness.

Second, voting is about deciding, not about legislating. It takes place *after* the substantive debate during which the policy proposal was developed but *before* it is implemented and, thus, cannot reflect the contribution MEPs might have made at these stages of the policy process. As this study argues, however, representation is not only about voting amendments and policy proposals up or down but also about actually developing legislation and monitoring its implementation. It is indeed wholly conceivable that a representative never decides ('votes') on any policy proposal but still does a good job representing his constituents in the formulation of these proposals. Conversely, two representatives with identical voting records might have

³ See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of *Nominate*.

⁴ See for instance <http://personal.lse.ac.uk/hix/HixNouryRolandEPdata.htm> for data on all roll-calls in the European Parliament since the first direct elections in 1979.

⁵ In addition to the theoretical concerns outlined below, recent research has pointed out that the focus on roll-call votes is also problematic from a more technical standpoint. Carrubba et al (2004) for instance find a considerable amount of selection bias in relation to roll-call votes in the European Parliament.

very different degrees of influence over which policy proposals are actually put to a vote. If representation is construed only as decision-making in accordance with constituency preferences, it disregards representatives' efforts to shape debates and develop policy in the interest of their constituents.

Despite these empirical concerns, scholarship on direct representation adopts a more convincing approach about when representation occurs and how to measure it. First, direct representation is more complex than simple vote-seat congruence because it can, in principle, distinguish between legislative behaviour in a large range of activities and at different stages of the policy process. Second, unlike indirect representation, which ignores the behavioural stage of the representational process, elections play an intervening role in studies of direct representation because they structure the behaviour of legislators. By focussing on the link between the legislative behaviour of MEPs in the European Parliament and the political platforms of their national parties, this thesis can examine the conditions under which representation occurs at different stages of the policy process and under different electoral rules.

The next section develops a model of political representation in the European Parliament to be tested in the remainder of the thesis. The section defines representation as responsive specialisation, states several assumptions about the preferences and representational foci of MEPs and derives a set of hypotheses to be tested in subsequent chapters. The representational performance of MEPs is a function of the party-political and institutional incentive structure for participation and specialisation at different stages of the legislative process.

II. Representation as Responsive Specialisation: Definition and Assumptions

II.a. Defining Representation as Responsive Specialisation

As the previous section has argued, representative government does not solely consist in the fact that every segment of the population has a seat in the legislature. Instead, what matters is what legislators actually *do* once they have been elected. Which MEPs have access to (i.e. are able to respond in) which policy areas? Because they cannot engage equally in all policy areas and at all stages of the legislative process, individual MEPs must decide to what extent they want to participate in the legislature and whether they want to specialise in particular policy areas. The outcome of these individual decisions is a particular division of labour that determines the representational performance of the assembly as a whole and each one of its members.

Most existing scholarship considers legislative specialisation a danger to the representative nature of parliamentary deliberation (e.g. Hall, 1996). In contrast, this thesis suggests that specialisation is an essential element of political representation. The need for specialisation manifests itself in different forms of legislative organisation and institutional arrangements, such as parliamentary committees for instance. Rather than deploring this division of labour, studies of political representation should ask under what conditions MEPs specialise in policy areas that are important to the representational process.

Measuring representation as a form of specialisation allows us to go beyond the policy positions and legislative decisions of representatives in roll-call votes to take into account that 'selective participation' grants MEPs access to power at different stages of the policy process. As Hall (1996) notes in his study of participation in the US Congress, the greater the intensity of a legislator's demand for participation in a particular policy area, the more he or she will specialise in that area. In contrast to

voting decisions, which can only be used to evaluate revealed preferences, such *revealed intensities* partly reflect the relative importance of particular policy areas to different legislators. As Hall (1996) points out, a good representative should not only adopt the “electorally correct” policy position but also invest herself in areas where that are of interest to her constituents, even if this means that she will not be able to get involved in less salient policy areas. Similarly, Schmitt and Thomassen (2000) point out in their study of the European Parliament that responsiveness should be measured based on issue salience, following - what they call - a ‘competence logic’. Specialisation in particular policy areas leads to greater influence over debates, deliberation and eventual policy outcomes in those areas. Representatives who focus on policy areas that form an important part of their party’s political platform are more responsive because they are better placed to put their party’s programme into practice.

The concept of responsive specialisation bridges the gap between the electoral and behavioural stages of the representational process by addressing both the representativeness of the legislature as a whole and the responsiveness of individual legislators at different stages of the policy process. First, the individual participation decisions of MEPs describe the representativeness of legislative deliberation. The range of members involved in legislative business determines the values, interests and constituencies that are represented in parliament. Second, legislative specialisation determines the responsiveness of individual legislators. The thesis contributes to both the research programmes on direct and indirect representation by explaining why and to what extent representatives gain access to policy areas that allow them to put their party’s political priorities into practice.

In addition, the model takes into account that legislative specialisation may vary at different stages of the policy process. In the European Parliament (as in most

legislatures), we can distinguish between at least three elements of legislative work: policymaking, decision-making and parliamentary oversight. Policymaking refers to the formulation of policy (bill drafting) by sub-groups of legislators, decision-making procedures in committee and plenary give every MEP the opportunity to express their opinion in the form of a vote, and oversight allows individual representatives to hold the executive accountable for its actions.⁶ At each stage, MEPs can choose, first, whether or not to participate and, second, whether or not to specialise in areas that are feature prominently in the political platform of their national party.

First, at the decision-making stage, policy proposals are debated, amended and adopted in committee before they are passed on to the plenary for final adoption. As pointed out before, most existing research has focused on the plenary stage where roll-call votes are easily available. However, as Westlake (1994) points out, the standing committees of the European Parliament are its 'legislative backbone'. Proposals from Commission and Council are immediately assigned to one or several committees where they are examined, amended and voted upon under open rule (Neuhold, 2001; Mamadouh and Raunio, 2003). Committee work is the most time-consuming activity for parliamentarians and defines the focus of their work (Corbett et al., 2003). Representation at the committee decision-making stage consists of participating in debates, introducing amendments and expressing opinions on proposed legislation in policy areas that are salient to the party. By attending committee meetings and participating in committee debates and votes, MEPs can

⁶ Apart from these legislative powers, the European Parliament also has substantial powers over the investiture and dismissal of the Commission and the implementation of the EU budget. While these non-legislative powers are not discussed in any detail due to space constraints, there is no reason that the model developed here could not be extended to incorporate a wider range of parliamentary activities.

exercise considerable policy influence and engage in policy areas that feature prominently in their party's political platform.

Second, actual policymaking is primarily the responsibility of committee rapporteurs. Most scholars agree that the production of legislative reports is one of the most important elements of parliamentary committee work (Mamadouh and Raunio, 2001; 2003; Kaeding, 2004; 2005; Corbett et al, 2003). Rapporteurships afford individual legislators significant influence over the formulation of policy proposals in the inter-institutional game with the Council and the Commission. At the same time, MEPs are responsive by signing up for and writing reports in policy areas that are important elements of their national party's political platform. As Benedetto (2005, pg. 67) notes, the distribution of reports among MEPs "allows us to conclude which parties and nationalities [...] have an impact on the content of European legislation". Thus, maybe more than other legislative activities, 'selective participation' in committee reports considerably affects the range of political opinions that are represented in a particular policy area.

Finally, oversight refers to the European Parliament's powers to scrutinise the activities of other European institutions, such as the Council and the Commission. Parliamentary questions, for instance, allow individual legislators – as opposed to parties or party groups – to bring up policy issues outside of their committee jurisdictions in the plenary (Bowler and Farrell, 1995; Raunio, 1997; Corbett et al. 2003). By questioning the executive on as wide a range of policy areas as possible, legislators can monitor the government and minimize the risk of unexpected or undesirable policy outcomes. At the same time, MEPs can be responsive by raising issues of particular concern to their national party or by questioning the executive in salient policy areas.

The conceptualisation of representation presented in this chapter allows us to consider all three stages of the legislative process. However, in order to explain their participation and specialisation decisions, the study must make several assumptions about the motivations of MEPs. The next two sections make these assumptions explicit, explain why they are necessary and examine to what extent they are justifiable.

Assumption One: The Preferences of Individual MEPs Determine Their Legislative Behaviour

At its most fundamental, the model in this thesis assumes that MEPs are rational actors whose behaviour can be explained as a function of their relative *individual preferences* for representation and legislation. A substantial literature assesses the motivations of MEPs to engage in the European Parliament. Individual legislative behaviour is influenced by both individual-level attributes (such as individual preferences and socio-political characteristics) as well as institutional factors (such as national/partisan recruitment, partisan organisation at different stages of the legislative process and country-specific attributes).

Empirical scholarship has found that institutional factors have an impact on the role perception and attitudes of MEPs. Beauvallet and Michon (2006b) point to the importance of national recruitment practices in determining parliamentary activity. They find that French MEPs for instance “have long been selected on the basis of national criteria which tend to disfavour those who are most committed to the European Parliament” (pg. 339). Similarly, Katz points out that there are large variations in MEP attitudes across countries, due to institutional differences such length of membership and national influence within the EU (Katz, 1999).

Given the preponderance of parties and high levels of institutionalisation in most European legislatures, the question arises whether the socio-political attributes and preferences of individual representatives have much power at all in explaining legislative behaviour. If partisan organisation, for instance, explains most legislative behaviour, individual preferences will matter only in relation to the party. Evidence that this may be case. First, some MEPs hold dual mandates in the European and national parliaments, though their number has decreased rapidly over the 1990s (Beauvallet and Michon, 2006a). These legislators are likely put less emphasis on individual participation in the EP. Others see the European Parliament as an opportunity for political “professionalisation”. These MEPs develop specialisms in areas that they are already familiar with or where they can acquire further political experience. Increasing professionalisation is reflected in the leadership structure within the EP. In 1998, 75% of MEPs in leadership positions had spent at least 10 years in the EP. As Beauvallet and Michon point out (2006a), the composition of the European Parliament and the background of legislators in leadership positions indicate the emergence of a professional political class that responds to a European career path and higher parliamentary institutionalisation.

Despite the importance of partisan factors for parliamentary careers, the vast majority of MEPs (74.7%) claim that they base their legislative decisions on their own opinions rather than on those of their national party or their voters (Katz, 1999). Furthermore, Katz finds that national factors become marginal, once individual attitudes of MEPs are taken into account. In the European Parliament, competing pressures between the preferences and priorities of national parties, European party groups and national delegations, entail that institutional “clues” for the legislative

behaviour of individual MEPs are even less straightforward than in most national legislatures.

These findings suggest that individual attributes may affect attitudes (and behaviour) within the EP to a greater extent than in national parliaments. According to Katz (1999), these results could suggest that, “since the European Parliament is not an example of party government, nor is there a European executive whose stability depends on its ability to command a parliamentary majority, party loyalty simply does not matter as much as it might in a “normal” European parliament” (pg 64). As he acknowledges, the extent to which personal preferences shape legislative behaviour in the European and in other parliaments will be conditional on a large number of factors. These could include legislative career prospects, the power of the legislature in different policy areas or the characteristics of the legislative activity at hand (e.g its relative importance in determining policy outcomes, its public visibility, etc). However, his findings do indicate that, “in forming their own judgements, MPs consider *strategy* as well as *preference*” (pg 64). In line with these results, this thesis assumes that, while strategic objectives (including national/European partisan and territorial characteristics) may play a role in determining legislative behaviour, individual preferences remain important factors in determining the specialisation and participation decisions of MEPs.

Assumption Two: MEPs Value Representation

While the model does not need to make any assumptions about the relative importance of representation, legislation or other legislative objectives, it does assume that, other things equal, MEPs prefer to be ‘good’ rather than ‘bad’ representatives. In

other words, the thesis requires that MEPs have (at least) a weak preference for policy areas that feature prominently in their national party's political programme.⁷

Table 2.1 examines whether this weak preference assumption is justifiable. Most MEPs have clearly defined ideas about their role as legislators and representatives. A survey carried out in 2000 asked individual MEPs to rank the importance of a range of six aspects of their work.⁸ Of course, these results must be interpreted with care. Most MEPs are seasoned politicians and they are likely to give strategic answers to questions that could be interpreted as assessments of the quality of their work. Very few MEPs who returned the questionnaire (about one third of the total) attributed only little importance to any of the six aspects and around 70 percent of legislators score a 5 or a 4 for the first four aspects. Rather than relying on opinion surveys, studies of the role of MEPs must therefore also take into account possible variation between these stated preferences and actual legislative behaviour.

Nevertheless, Table 2.1 shows that legislators attribute a very important role to both representation and legislation. The table confirms that MEPs value the representational aspect of their work. A plurality of MEPs attributes a score of 4 to the representation of social groups and the mediation of societal interests. Relative to all other aspects in the survey, the representation of individual interests is perceived as least important.⁹ However, the survey also shows that legislation remains the most important output of the legislature (see also Wahlke, 1978). Fully 57 percent of

⁷ Indeed, if this assumption is not fulfilled, political representation becomes arbitrary and it is impossible to trace the representational performance of individual MEPs to their behavioural choices in the legislature.

⁸ The survey had a good response rate of about 31% and constitutes a representative sample of all MEPs in the fifth Parliament (see Hix, 2002 for details).

⁹ Partly, this may be due to the perceived distance between individual citizens in EU member states and the European Parliament in Brussels. However, these answers also reflect the structure of the survey which divides the representational function of the EP into 3 separate categories. This illustrates one of the methodological problems associated with studies that rely on opinion surveys to assess policy preferences of constituents and MEPs. Finally, the apparent low importance of individual representation suggests that other political entities such as parties might play an intervening role in the representational self-assessment of MEPs in the European Parliament.

legislators attribute the highest score (5) to taking part in legislation. Parliamentary oversight is the second most important aspect of legislative work according to most MEPs. More than 45 percent of legislators attribute maximum importance to legislative scrutiny.

TABLE 2.1. RELATIVE PREFERENCES FOR POLICY AND REPRESENTATION AS SELF-REPORTED BY MEPS

<i>Importance (1=low-5=great)</i>	Legislation			Representation		
	<i>Take part in Legislation</i>	<i>Parliamentary Oversight</i>	<i>Develop Strategies</i>	<i>Represent Groups</i>	<i>Mediate Interests</i>	<i>Represent Individuals</i>
1	0%	0%	2%	1%	7%	19%
2	2%	4%	8%	7%	18%	18%
3	13%	16%	22%	23%	31%	27%
4	28%	34%	48%	40%	32%	19%
5	57%	45%	21%	29%	11%	17%
Overall Preference Index	4.4	4.17	3.81	3.89	3.19	2.97

Source: EPRG MEP Survey, 2000; Overall Preference Index is the importance of each aspect weighted by the percentage of MEPs in each row; see Hix (2002) for details about the representativeness of the survey.

Table 2.1 confirms that MEPs have at least a weak preference for representation. In other words, given the choice between a range of otherwise equivalent policy areas, MEPs will choose to specialise in the areas that yield the highest representational payoffs.

Assumption Three: National Parties are the Common Representational Focus of MEPs

The third assumption underlying the thesis is that MEPs share the same representational focus: their national party. As previous studies have shown, institutional environments affect the extent to which MEPs focus on providing constituency service (e.g. Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita, 2006) and how they define their primary constituency (Kingdon, 1973; Wright, 1989). As Chapter 1 has shown, “responsible parties” play a crucial role in the representational processes of

most European parliamentary democracies. In order to successfully identify the conditions under which MEPs represent their constituents, the thesis must clarify which group of people legislators understand that constituency to be.

In the European Parliament, the two most promising representational foci are territorial and ideological. The relative importance of these two foci is likely to differ across electoral systems. Hix (2004) and Farrell and Scully (2002) show that the domestic political systems in which MEPs compete for votes differ dramatically. In some member states, electoral districts are small, candidate selection is highly centralised and ballots for European elections are closed, which attributes substantial selection powers to the national party leadership (Hix, 2004). MEPs from these countries are likely to be particularly concerned with representing the preferences of their national parties. In other member states, selection procedures are more decentralised with open ballots and larger districts, which reduces candidate dependency on the party leadership (Hix, 2004). Representatives from these countries might prefer to focus on their territorial constituency (i.e. their country/electoral district).

In addition to this national cleavage, a second set of studies has noted the importance of party groups in structuring legislative behaviour in the EP and elsewhere (Hix, 2005; Hix et al. 1999). As Hix et al. (1999) point out, many MEPs want to be promoted to positions of authority and prestige within the European Parliament, such as particular rapporteurships, committee chairs, or vice-chairs. Legislators who have such career ambitions must cater to their party group leadership, which allocates most EP internal positions. On the other hand, Westlake (1994) finds that some MEPs are interested in positions outside the European Parliament upon expiration of their mandate, either within their national legislature, their party or

elsewhere. Again, these legislators are likely to adjust their legislative behaviour to accommodate their career goals. Just like electoral incentives may shift the representational focus more or less toward national parties, the career ambitions of MEPs affect the importance they attribute to their European party groups.

In sum, both territorial and ideological cleavages define the representational focus of MEPs in the European Parliament. It is at the level of national parties where the features of the domestic electoral system intersect with the political ideology of individual MEPs. In addition, most recent empirical research has found that ideological politics have gradually come to dominate legislative decision-making in the European Parliament (Hix et al., forthcoming; 2004; Kreppel and Hix, 2003; Jun, 2003; Hoyland, 2005; Whitaker, 2001; 2005). As Kreppel (2002) notes, party influence over electoral lists may give rise to a true ‘electoral connection’ between MEPs and their national parties, if not their home electorate. In an in-depth study of MEPs’ roll-call voting records over the full five terms of the European Parliament, Hix et al. (forthcoming; 2004), for instance, find that the legislative behaviour of MEPs is more closely aligned with their national party than with their European party group or their territorial constituency. Similarly, Jun (2003) notes that national parties are crucial in determining MEP behaviour in budgetary discharge votes. Finally, Whitaker (2001, 2005) concludes that national parties have increased their power over policy outcomes at the European level by assuming greater control over committee assignments and the direction of committee business as the powers of the EP increased.

In line with these findings, the empirical assessment of the model developed here focuses on national parties as an MEP’s primary representational focus. MEPs are responsive (i.e. they exercise government for the people) if they specialise in policy

areas that feature prominently in the political platform of their national party. Representative government (government of the people) occurs when a wide range of national party interests are represented in a particular activity. However, territorial cleavages remain a very important factor in EU politics that must be accounted for in any empirical analysis of representation in the EP. Ultimately, the question of the appropriate representational focus is an empirical one. Only an empirical analysis of the actual legislative behaviour of MEPs can provide insights about their real representational focus.

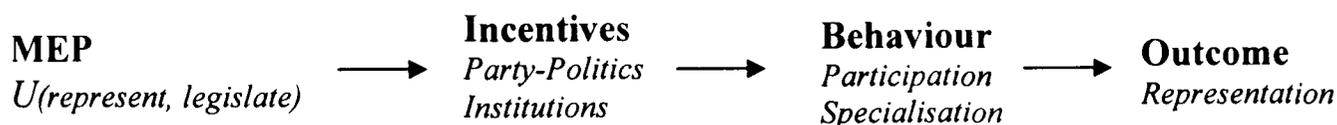
This section has made explicit the three main assumptions upon which this thesis is built. First, individual decisions matter in explaining legislative specialisation and participation. Second, representatives must hold at least a weak preference for policy areas that yield a representational payoff (i.e. that feature prominently on their national party's platform). Third, controlling for differences in electoral systems and individual career ambitions, MEPs define their primary representational focus as the national party to which they belong. Given these assumptions, the remainder of this chapter investigates the conditions under which responsive specialisation occurs.

III. Representational Performance as a Function of Party-Political and Institutional Incentives

The previous section has defined representation as a function of individual legislative participation and specialisation decisions and described the legislative objectives of MEPs. This section describes the institutional and party political environment in which legislative behaviour takes place. The model argues that the interaction of preferences for political representation and legislation with party-political and institutional incentives at different stages of the legislative process determines the representational performance of individual legislators.

Figure 2.1 illustrates this process. First, MEPs have certain preferences for political representation and legislation. The assumption is that MEPs make behaviour is based on individual preferences, that all MEPs have at least a weak preference for representation (i.e. representation is a ‘good’, not a ‘bad’) and that they share a common representational focus (i.e. national party voters). Second, party political and institutional incentives affect individual decisions to participate at different stages of the legislative process and to specialise in different policy areas. Finally, these decisions determine the representational performance of each individual legislator and, by aggregation, the representational performance of the EP as a whole. The remainder of this section describes the party-political and institutional incentives at all three stages of the legislative process in the European Parliament.

FIGURE 2.1. REPRESENTATION AS A FUNCTION OF PARTY-POLITICAL INSTITUTIONAL INCENTIVES



Party Political Incentives in the European Parliament

Comparative research has found that partisan politics are a major determinant of legislative behaviour (King, 1976; Andeweg and Nijzink, 1995). In his seminal contribution, King (1976) distinguishes between five modes of executive-legislative relations, most of which fall into the broader categories of inter- or intra-party politics. As a function of the legislative behaviour of individual representatives, political representation is conditional on intra- and inter-party politics at every stage of the policy process.

In most national systems, inter-party relations are dominated by majority rule. Indeed, in delegation theories of parliamentary democracy, the majority of MPs delegates executive authority to a government, which formulates and implements policy in the interest of its principal (e.g. Saalfeld, 2000). Approval of the parliamentary majority is required for most bills to pass through parliament. The government is accountable to the parliamentary majority and remains in place as long as it enjoys the support of the majority of MPs. In such a system, coalition dynamics play a major role in the participation and specialisation decisions of legislators. Where majority rule is the primary decision-making mechanism, parliamentary voting coalitions determine legislative behaviour and, therefore, political representation.

In the European Parliament, party politics involve both coalitions between EP party groups in legislative activities that fall under majority rule and national party ties with the Commission in legislative-executive relations. First, both policy-making and decision-making are governed by majority rule between party groups. As Hix et al. (forthcoming) and Scully (1997) confirm in two studies of roll-call votes, the legislative participation of MEPs depends on their ability to influence policy outcomes. They find that voting turnout differs substantially across party groups, depending on coalition dynamics. Larger party groups and those which tended to be on the winning side of most votes in the previous 6-month period participate 14%-16% more than groups which tended to side with the losing minority. Thus, like for national parliaments, voting coalitions between party groups determine the participation and specialisation decisions of MEPs and, therefore, their representational performance.

Second, however, the EP is different from an ideal-type parliamentary democracy in that the executive does not emanate directly from the parliamentary

majority. Instead, the nomination of Commissioners is in the hands of the governing parties in each member state.¹⁰ As a result, unlike most national parliaments, there is an additional dimension to inter-party politics in the EP. Ties between national party delegations in the EP and the European executive, the Commission, govern executive-legislative relations. As Jun (2003) concludes in a study of budgetary discharge votes, for instance, partisan ties with individual Commissioners affect an MEP's incentive to exercise parliamentary scrutiny. MEPs whose national parties are represented in the Commission are less likely to challenge its budget proposal than legislators without such ties. In legislative activities that are not governed by majority rule, partisan ties with the European Commission determine the participation and specialisation decisions of MEPs and, therefore, their representational performance.

Finally, intra-party politics characterise the interaction between legislators from different parties and their own party leadership. In the European Parliament and elsewhere, parties are composed of individual members with their own policy preferences, constituencies, and status within the party hierarchy. As Boucek (2002, pg.454) notes, "parties are not unitary actors but collections of individuals [...] with common but also divergent preferences and interests and with competing claims on party resources." Members of governing parties may be frustrated with the constraints under which the government operates, they may feel that the party's policy preferences are being betrayed or they may be concerned about their personal re-election prospects if the government drifts away from the policy preferences of their constituents (Saalfeld, 2000). Similarly, opposition parties also have to contend with different factions competing for the party leadership.

¹⁰ However, the EP has the right to reject the Commission as a whole and it holds hearings with individual commissioners. This procedure led to a major reshuffle of the Barroso Commission after the European Parliament refused to approve the nomination of Italian candidate Rocco Buttiglione as commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs.

The relatively loose nature of trans-national party group federations in the European Parliament may make intra-party group politics an even more significant determinant of legislative behaviour than in other legislatures. The party group leadership in the EP must ensure the cohesion of the group by balancing the claims of party elites and rank-and-file without endangering the 'brand name' of the group (Boucek, 2002).¹¹ In other words, cohesion is maintained by distributing the group's resources to give all members a stake in its efficient operation and by rewarding MEPs whose legislative behaviour is in line with group goals. The success of this strategy depends on the party group's gate-keeping power, or its ability to discriminate among its members in the allocation of legislative spoils.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the relationship between representation and legislative behaviour as discussed so far. Whether and to what extent MEPs participate or specialise in a particular policy area depends on coalition dynamics between party groups, national party ties to the executive and intra-party group politics. Participation and specialisation, in turn, determine legislative outcomes both in terms of representation (i.e. the responsiveness of MEPs and the representativeness of participation) and legislation (i.e. policymaking, decision-making and parliamentary oversight).¹²

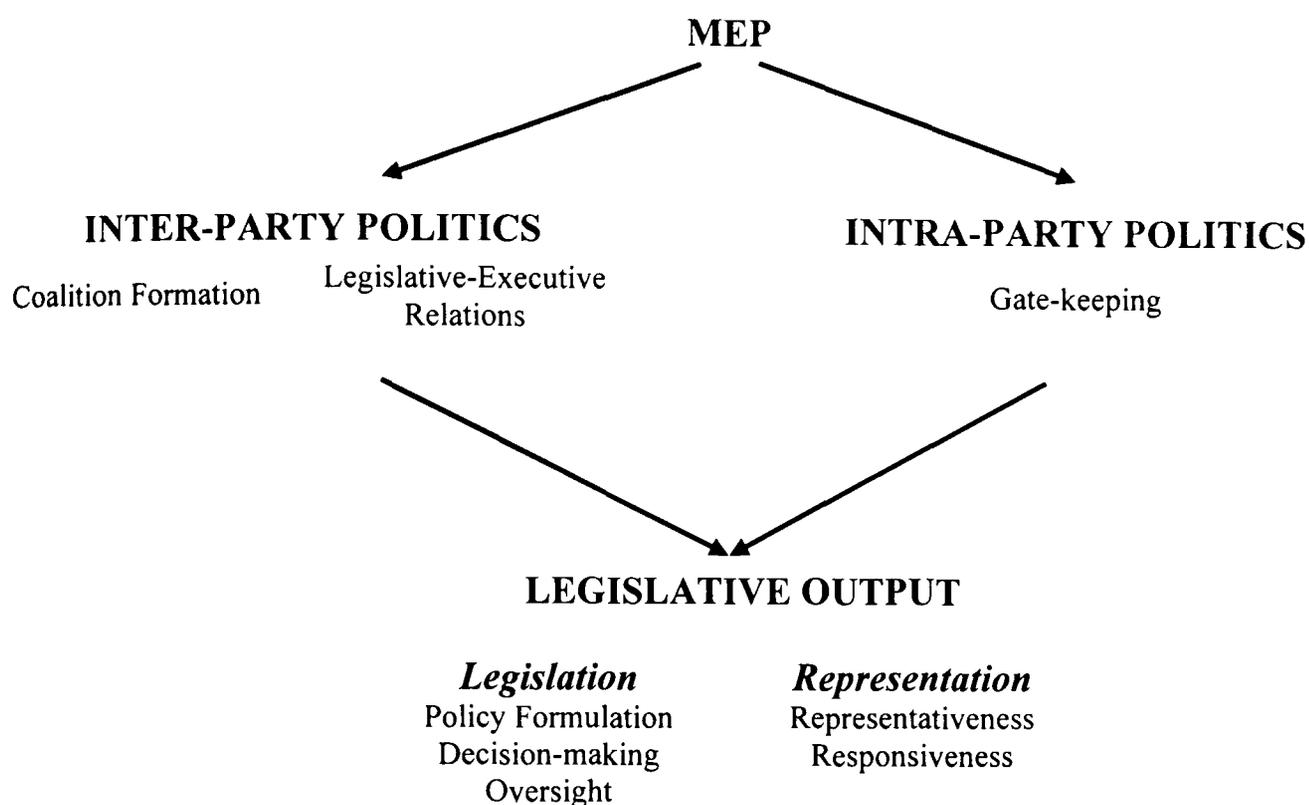
Note that this conception of how parliaments operate is very different from the hierarchical model presented in Chapter 1. Here, representatives adjust their legislative behaviour to attain their representational and legislative objectives. Institutional incentives, inter- and intra party politics define how MEPs participate and specialise in the European Parliament. The next section examines how

⁷ Cohesion in this context refers to the ability of the party group to rally around a common policy position and entice its members to support group goals in their legislative work.

¹² Note that scrutiny is listed as part of "legislation" in this categorisation. Even though oversight is not directly part of the law-making process as such, it is an essential step in the implementation of policy formulated and decided by the legislature.

institutional incentives affect the participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs at all three stages of the legislative process.

FIGURE 2.2. LEGISLATION AND REPRESENTATION AS A FUNCTION OF INTER- AND INTRA-PARTY POLITICS



Institutional Incentives at Different Stages of the Policy Process

Most legislative activities are governed by a set of rules laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament. Some of these rules are a result of European treaties over which the EP does not have much influence. Others are drawn up by the Parliament itself to facilitate its internal organization. This thesis examines three institutional rules in particular that create a strong incentive structure for participation and specialisation: proportionality requirements, open rule in committee and plenary and majority thresholds.

First, proportionality rules affect how legislative spoils are distributed across groups. Assignments to parliamentary committee for instance follow a proportional allocation mechanism. As the Rules of Procedure (Rule 152) stipulate, “the composition of the committees shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament”. Similarly, committee reports are delegated to party groups in relation to their size in the EP. Each time a committee takes on a report, a rapporteur is

nominated to draw up a draft text for approval by the committee. The details of the procedure for nominating rapporteurs vary, though all committees have instituted an auction system where every party group is allocated a number of points based on its delegation size.¹³ Committee coordinators fix the initial ‘price’ of each report and make bids on behalf of their group. If more than one group is interested in a particular report, the coordinators can raise their bids up to a certain maximum. Finally, group co-ordinators allocate the reports they have won to ‘their’ MEPs. By auctioning off reports according to party group size, the report allocation procedure enforces a proportional pattern of participation across party groups and impedes party group competition.

Second, incentives to participate and specialise at different stages of the legislative process are also affected by the institution of double “open rule” in committee and plenary. All reports that are presented to the committee or the plenary floor by their rapporteur are subject to open rule. Open rule gives the (simple or absolute) majority coalition the final say over the policy position of the Parliament and its committees and forces minority MEPs to seek the support of (at least parts) of the majority in order to get their reports or amendments adopted. As long as a party group (or a coalition of party groups) holds a majority of votes in committee and plenary, it can determine the content of policy by introducing amendments to, or participating in votes on, existing committee reports. Thus, in contrast to proportionality requirements in report allocation, open rule in committee decision-making creates a strong majoritarian element and fosters competition among party groups.

¹³ Note that bidding points must be spent on reports in the committee where they were issued originally. Indeed, if the points were transferable across committees, party groups would bid up reports in the most interesting committees rather than using them on policy areas that lack salience or where the EP does not have much power.

Finally, one additional institutional rule has a strong impact on incentives to participate and specialise in the EP. The legislative decision-making procedures in effect in the European Union stipulate the majority thresholds that must be fulfilled for the European Parliament to decide about the policy proposals before the plenary. Most decision-making in the EP requires a simple majority (50 percent plus 1 MEP) of all legislators that are present at the time of the vote. In other words, the number of MEPs required to adopt a proposal or amendment depends on the number of MEPs that attend each voting session. As some have argued, the legitimacy of decision-making under simple majority decision-making can be in doubt if attendance levels are very low (see also Chapter 4). Nevertheless, simple majorities are widely used in most parliaments across Europe and at the European level.

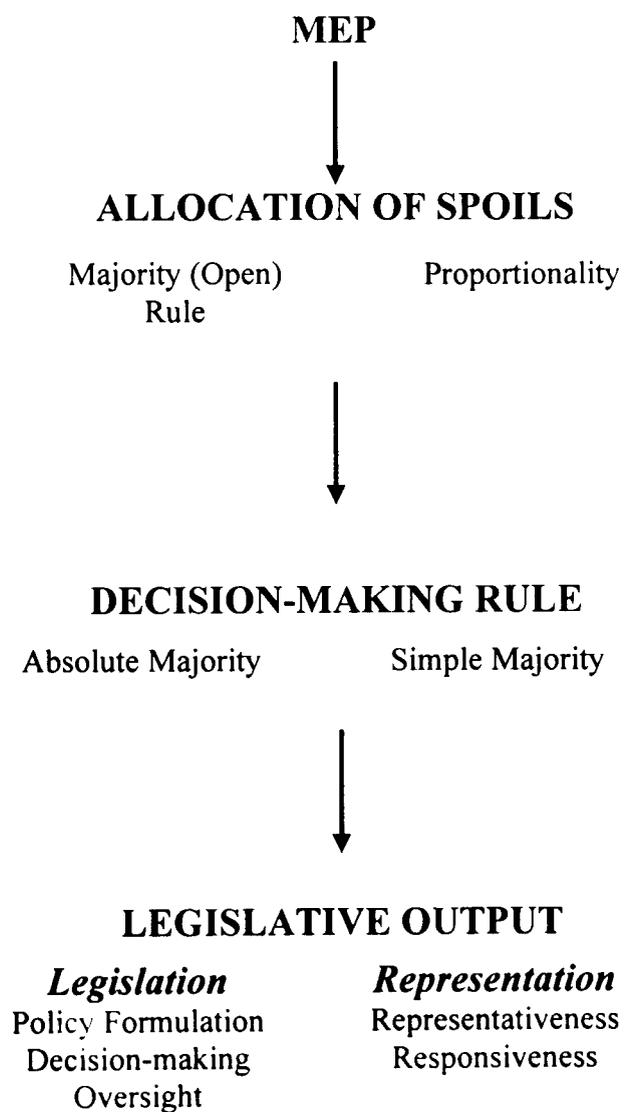
However, some votes in the European Parliament cannot be taken by simple majority. Notably, the co-decision procedure under which the European Parliament has most of its power and under which it acts as an equal co-legislator with the Council of Ministers requires an absolute majority of all legislators (whether they are present at the voting session or not). In comparison with simple majority, the number of MEPs required to make a decision under absolute majority does not change over time (unless the size of the European Parliament changes, which is usually the case after an EU enlargement). Several studies have analysed the effect of absolute majority requirements on participation at roll-call votes. As Hix et al. (forthcoming) find, participation across all groups is highest for co-decision votes, as a result of the greater policy importance of these votes and because of absolute majority requirements in the second reading. In an earlier article, Scully (1997) confirmed the positive relationship between the use of the co-decision procedure and turnout at roll-calls.

Of course, majority thresholds are an essential determinant of coalition dynamics across party groups in the European Parliament. Most recent research maintains that left-right policy preferences drive coalition formation (e.g. Hix et al., forthcoming). In the fifth European Parliament, the centre-right European People's party (EPP) and the liberal ELDR could coalesce to form a simple majority that excludes the second largest group (PES). As Hix et al. (forthcoming) confirm, the largest party group in the fifth Parliament, the conservative EPP, is more likely to coalesce with its closest partner along the left-right axis, the liberal ELDR, in order to form a winning majority than with the second largest group (PES). In other words, the relatively small liberal party group plays a pivotal role in votes taken under simple majority in the fifth European Parliament.

At the same time, however, the dominant coalition depends on the majority thresholds required under different decision-making procedures (Hix, 2001). Because of relatively low attendance figures in the European Parliament, the simple majority of EPP and ELDR is different from the absolute majority of all MEPs. Votes taken under absolute majority usually require the approval of the two largest party groups (EPP and PES), with the liberal ELDR either voting with this 'grand coalition' or against it (e.g. Bardi, 1994; Hix and Lord, 1997; Kreppel and Hix, 2003; Benedetto, 2005). Whereas, EPP and ELDR are the main coalition partners in non co-decision legislation where a simple majority is sufficient, EPP and PES coalesce on co-decision legislation, which requires an absolute majority of votes in the second reading of the plenary (Hix, 2001; see also Lane et al. 19995; Hosli, 1997; Nurmi, 1997; Corbett et al, 2005). In terms of party group coalitions, the use of absolute majority eliminates the pivotal role of the ELDR as coalition partner of the largest delegation (EPP).

Figure 2.3 summarises the effect of institutional incentives on representation and legislation in the European Parliament. Majority rule in committee and plenary and proportionality rules in committee assignments and report allocation affect how legislative spoils (i.e. influential and salient committees/reports) are allocated across party groups. The decision-making rule defines the size of the coalition required to make decisions about policy proposals before committee and plenary. Both the allocation of legislative spoils and the use of different decision-making rules determine the legislative participation and specialisation decisions of MEPs and therefore, their representational performance at different stages of the policy process.

FIGURE 2.3. LEGISLATION AND REPRESENTATION AS A FUNCTION OF INSTITUTIONAL INCENTIVES IN POLICY-MAKING AND DECISION-MAKING



This section has re-defined political representation as a function of party-political and institutional incentives at different stages of the policy process in the EP. In line with Pitkin (1967), representation refers to the ability of legislators to respond to their constituents (here: their national party) by participating in different legislative activities and specialising in policy areas are important to their party. The next section combines the findings in Figure 2.1-2.3 to derive a set of hypotheses about the impact of party-political and institutional incentives on political representation.

IV. Hypotheses

IV.a. Political Representation and Committee Decision-making

As the previous section has discussed, the ability to influence legislation is a result of coalition politics among party groups in legislative activities that fall under majority rule. By structuring policy incentives that determine participation and specialisation in the European Parliament, these coalition dynamics also affect the representational performance of individual legislators.

Hix et al. (forthcoming) present the most sophisticated model of the effect of coalition dynamics on legislative participation in EP roll-call votes to date (see also Scully, 1997). As Scully (1997) notes, the European Parliament presents a unique opportunity to analyse the specialisation decisions of legislators across policy areas where the Parliament has different degrees of power over outcomes. Both studies find that participation depends on policy incentives, which vary across political coalitions within the EP. MEPs who are likely to be on the ‘winning side’ have a greater incentive to participate in the formulation of policy and in its adoption.

However, their (as well as Scully’s) study is confined to roll-call votes even though voting sessions in the EP usually deal with a large number of policy areas at the same time. Once they have paid the costs of attending a voting session, there is

little point for MEPs to discriminate between different policy areas. Second, voting does not constitute a large drain on legislative resources. All that is required is for MEPs to be present at the voting session and to follow the instructions of their party groups. Again, specialisation in a limited number of policy areas does not make much sense in the context of roll-call votes. Finally, roll-calls only include a minority of all voting decisions in the EP (about one third). As Hix (2005) himself admits, if party groups decide strategically which votes they would like to have by roll-call, there is a potential problem of 'selection bias' in the sample. Indeed, Carrubba et al. (2004) find considerable bias across policy areas and party groups in roll-call votes for the fifth Parliament.

The framework laid out in the previous section allows us to predict the impact of party-political and institutional incentives at a different stage of the legislative process: decision-making on the committee floor. As pointed out before, committee decision-making is subject to majority (open) rule. In order for a particular bill to pass it must receive the support of a majority of committee and plenary members. Because MEPs from the majority coalition (whether this is a simple or an absolute majority) determine legislative outcomes, they have a greater policy incentive to participate in legislative activities that fall under majority rule. Stated differently, the range of values and interests represented in committee deliberations is biased in favour of the majority coalition in committee and plenary. Under open rule, majority MEPs¹⁴ are better represented than minority MEPs. This result should hold independently of the ideological composition of the majority coalition or its size.

¹⁴ The remainder of this text uses the terms "majority" and "minority" MEP to distinguish between legislators whose parties form part of the primary voting majority and those who do not respectively. The majority refers to the minimum connected winning coalition required under the prevailing majority threshold. The thesis therefore assumes that party groups prefer fewer coalition partners with close policy preferences rather than larger coalitions that cover a wider range of the policy spectrum. Note that this assumption contradicts Hix (2001) argument that EP coalitions are often built on an issue-by-issue basis. The impact of such ad hoc coalition formation is investigated briefly in Chapter 4.

Hypothesis 1a: MEPs from the majority coalition in the EP participate in a broader range of policy areas than minority MEPs in committee decision-making.

However, as we have seen in the previous section, in addition to being represented in a wide variety of policy areas, political representation also depends on the actual responsiveness of MEPs (i.e. their effort to put the political platform of their national party into practice). In committee decision-making, not all MEPs face the same incentive to *specialise* in policy areas that feature prominently among their national party's priorities.

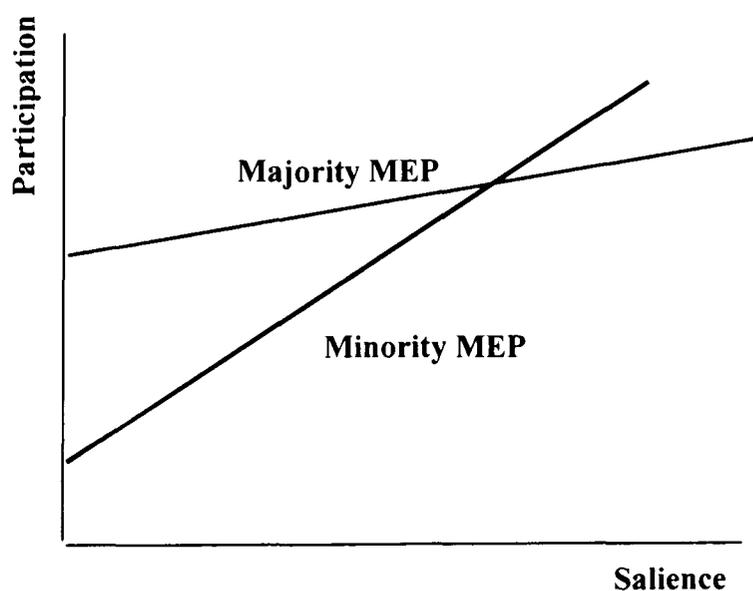
As noted above, MEPs from the majority coalition can affect committee decision-making and the content of policy. However, this influence over policy outcomes is contingent upon high levels of participation in a broad range of policy areas. If majority MEPs focus on the subset of the most salient policy areas, they forego some of their influence in areas where they did not participate. Minority MEPs on the other hand, do not have any power over committee decision-making because they do not have the support of a voting majority. As a result, they can choose to specialise in a smaller subset of policy areas without incurring a loss of influence in areas where they do not participate.

More formally, specialisation in a select number of policy areas that are most prominent in the national party's platform carries different opportunity costs for majority and minority MEPs. MEPs who are part of the majority coalition in the European Parliament must forego some of their influence over legislation if they choose to specialise in a restricted range of policy areas. On the other hand, specialisation does not carry this opportunity cost for minority legislators. As a result, minority MEPs are more likely to focus their efforts in the most salient policy areas.

Hypothesis 1b: MEPs from the minority coalition are more responsive than majority MEPs in committee decision-making.

Figure 2.4 illustrates the difference between majority and minority MEPs in committee decision-making for a single policy area. The two intercepts show the effect of majority (open) rule on levels of participation for all values of policy salience. In terms of representativeness, committee decision-making is biased in favour of the (simple or absolute) majority coalition. The two slopes show the difference in responsiveness across party groups. The larger the slope, the more the specialisation decisions of MEPs reflect the salience of the policy area in terms of their national party's political platform. Whereas minority groups specialise in salient policy areas, the majority coalition has an incentive to maintain similar levels of participation across all policy areas.

FIGURE 2.4. MAJORITY MEPs ARE BETTER REPRESENTED BUT LESS RESPONSIVE THAN MINORITY MEPs IN COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING



Note: For ease of interpretation, the figure shows the relationship between participation and salience as linear. The assumptions of the model only require a weakly positive association between participation and salience (Assumption 1, Chapter 2). The figure refers to a single policy area.

Chapter 4 in the empirical part of the thesis tests hypotheses 1a and 1b on data of committee attendance records. Membership in the majority coalition in the EP explains levels of participation in committee deliberation. Because majority MEPs

have a greater policy incentive to participate in committee decision-making. they are represented in a wider range of policy areas than their colleagues from minority groups. At the same time, however, majority MEPs are less responsive than their colleagues because they do not discriminate in favour of the most salient policy areas.

IV.b. Political Representation and Policy Formulation

Like decision-making, policy making in the European Parliament is also subject to majority rule. Other things equal, participation and specialisation at this stage of the policy process should therefore be similar to committee decision-making. However, as discussed above, the difference between policy formulation via committee reports and decision-making on the committee floor lies in the report allocation procedure. All party groups, independently of their majority or minority status are represented equally at this stage of the policy process.

However, similar levels of participation do not necessarily mean that all party groups write equally desirable committee reports. Not all MEPs have the same incentives to *specialise* at the policy formulation stage. Instead, the bidding system allows majority MEPs to win the most desirable reports because they have the largest number of bidding points and because they can threaten to reject reports written by minority MEPs in committee and plenary. In other words, because majority MEPs can choose which reports will pass at the decision-making stage in committee and plenary, they can discriminate in favour of the most desirable policy areas.

Time and effort required to write a report are the same across all policy areas and for all MEPs.¹⁵ However, specialisation in the most desirable (i.e. salient) policy areas carries different benefits for minority and majority MEPs. Whereas majority MEPs

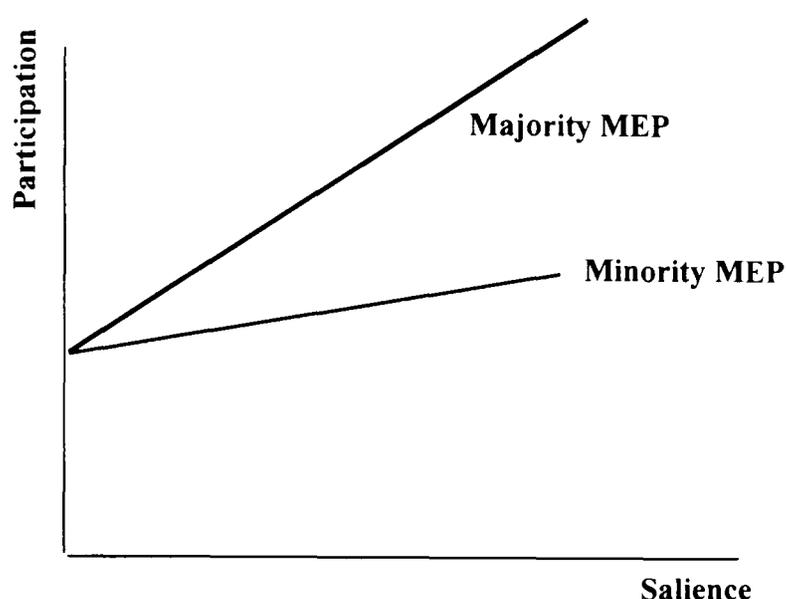
¹⁵ Of course, some reports, namely those that fall under the most influential co-decision procedure, might require a greater time investment than some smaller own initiative reports. The empirical analysis in Chapter 5 controls for these differences.

can influence policy outcomes in the most salient areas, this is not the case for minority MEPs who do not hold the required majority in committee and plenary. In contrast to hypothesis 1.b, the proportionality rules governing report allocation produce the opposite effect at the policy formulation stage. Here majority MEPs are favoured when it comes to specialisation in policy areas that are most important in terms of their national party's political platform. The auctioning system, coupled with open rule in committee and plenary, implies that majority MEPs are more responsive in policy formulation than their peers.

Hypothesis 2: In policy formulation, MEPs from the minority coalition are less responsive than majority MEPs.

Figure 2.5 illustrates the difference between majority and minority MEPs in policy formulation. The two intercepts are the same for both majority and minority party groups. In terms of representativeness, policy formulation is not biased in favour of any party group or coalition, irrespective of the majority thresholds at the decision-making stage. The two slopes show the difference in responsiveness for majority and minority MEPs. Whereas majority groups discriminate in favour of the most salient policy areas, the minority only has access to less desirable reports.

FIGURE 2.5. MAJORITY MEPS ARE MORE RESPONSIVE THAN MINORITY MEPS IN POLICY FORMULATION



Note: For ease of interpretation, the figure shows the relationship between participation and salience as linear. The assumptions of the model only require a weakly positive association between participation and salience (Chapter 2, Assumption 1). The figure refers to a single policy area.

Chapter 5 empirically tests hypothesis 2 for committee report allocation in the European Parliament. Unlike decision-making, there are only small differences in levels of participation across party groups. At the same time, the report allocation procedure implies that majority MEPs specialise in the policy areas that feature most prominently in their national party's platform. As a result, MEPs from the majority groups are more responsive at this stage of the legislative process than their peers.

IV.c. Political Representation and Parliamentary Oversight

The previous two sections have focused on legislative activities that are governed by coalition dynamics among party groups. In the case of committee work, majority rule creates an incentive structure that encourages participation and specialisation along the lines of party group coalitions. However, parliamentary questions at Question-Time in the EP, for instance, are not subject to majority rule. There is therefore no reason to expect that questioning will follow coalition dynamics across party groups. Instead, as we have seen above, legislative-executive relations are subject to a government-opposition dynamic that pits national party delegations

against one another on the basis of their representation in the executive. Like for policy formulation and decision-making, the institutional and party-political incentive structure that guides the participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs determines their representational performance in legislative activities that are not subject to majority rule.

As Table 2.1 has indicated, in addition to taking part in legislation, MEPs also value oversight of the executive (i.e. the Commission). Indeed, scrutiny via *inter alia* questions ensures that the chain of accountability between legislature and executive remains intact. By requesting information from the Commission and publicising its policies in as many areas as possible, legislators in the European Parliament can draw attention to potential misgivings and minimise the risk of executive agency drift. Of course, the value of formal scrutiny varies across MEPs. MEPs who face a high risk that the Commission will not act in accordance with their preferences are more likely to monitor the executive than legislators whose policy preferences are very close to the Commission. In other words, oversight incentives depend on the composition of the executive and the partisan affiliation of each representative.

First, the farther an MEP's preferences are from the executive, the greater the incentive to oversee the executive in that area. Effective oversight requires participation in all policy areas where the executive deviates from the policy preferences of the legislator. As a result, MEPs with preferences that are far from the Commission are better represented in legislative oversight than their peers. Taking partisan affiliation as a proxy for political preferences, this should mean that MPs from 'opposition' parties¹⁶, which are not represented in the Commission, must use formal channels, such as parliamentary questions, to express their misgivings about

¹⁶ The remainder of the text uses the terms "governing" and "opposition" party/MEP to distinguish between parties/MEPs that are represented in the Commission and those that are not respectively.

the executive. ‘Governing’ MEPs on the other hand can use more informal and less public channels to monitor their peers. As a result, these representatives are less likely to have recourse to parliamentary questions. Thus, ‘governing’ MEPs are less well represented in formal parliamentary oversight than ‘opposition’ legislators.¹⁷

Hypothesis 3.a: ‘Opposition’ MEPs are better represented in parliamentary oversight than their peers from ‘governing’ parties.

Second, incentives to *specialise* in particular policy areas at the oversight stage also depend on the partisan affiliation of MEPs. Like for committee decision-making, where responsiveness carries an opportunity cost for majority MEPs, specialisation in parliamentary oversight is costly for ‘opposition’ parties. In order to hold the executive effectively accountable for its actions, ‘opposition’ MEPs must engage in oversight across a large range of policy issues. For them, focussing on the smaller number of salient policy areas requires foregoing some of their oversight powers. In other words, there is a trade-off between parliamentary oversight and responsiveness for ‘opposition’ MEPs. For ‘governing’ MEPs, however, who are less interested in legislative oversight, this trade-off is less marked. As a result, ‘opposition’ MEPs are less responsive than legislators with direct partisan ties to the executive.

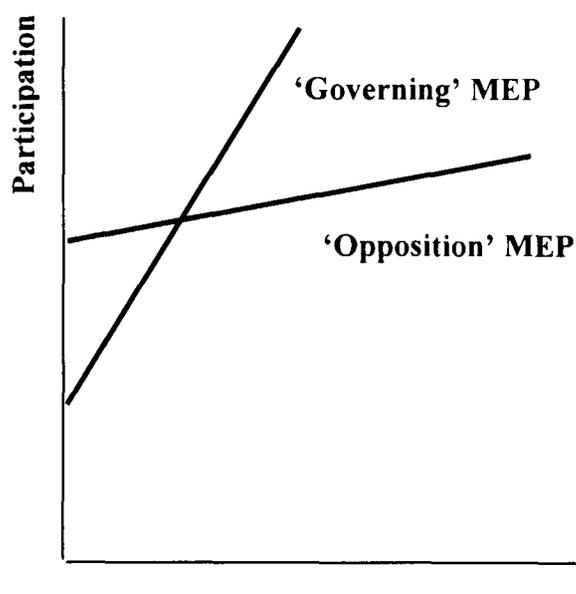
Hypothesis 3b: ‘Opposition’ parties are less responsive in parliamentary oversight than their peers.

Figure 2.6 illustrates the effect of oversight incentives on representation for ‘governing’ MEPs (i.e. with direct partisan ties to the Commission) and for ‘opposition’ MEPs (i.e. without such ties). ‘Opposition’ parties engage more in oversight activities than other MEPs. However, ‘governing’ MEPs are more

¹⁷ Other reasons for lower activity levels among governing MEPs might include that critical questions to the Commission might affect the MEP’s career prospects in the national party or within the EP.

responsive because they do not have to formally monitor the executive in less salient policy areas.

FIGURE 2.6. 'GOVERNING' MEPs ARE LESS WELL REPRESENTED BUT MORE RESPONSIVE THAN 'OPPOSITION' MEPs IN LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT



Note: For ease of interpretation, the figure shows the relationship between participation and salience as linear. The assumptions of the model only require a weakly positive association between participation and salience (Chapter 2, Assumption 1) The figure refers to a single policy area.

Chapter 6 tests these hypotheses for the case of parliamentary questions at Question-Time in the European Parliament. MEPs from national parties that are not represented in the Commission participate more at Question-Time than their peers whose delegations form part of the EU executive. On the other hand, representatives whose national parties do form part of the Commission specialise in those policy areas that feature most prominently in their party's political programme.

IV.d. Political Representation and Intra-Party Group Politics in the EP

Hypotheses 1-3 predict MEP decisions to participate and specialise in the legislature based on inter-party competition and institutional incentives at the committee decision-making, policy formulation and parliamentary oversight stages. However, representatives also face intra-party group constraints that structure their ability to act. Where party groups have gate-keeping power over the distribution of resources to their members, political representation is a reflection of these intra-party

politics. Indeed, if legislators do not have access to some policy areas at some stages of the policy process, this restricts their ability to be responsive.

As in most legislatures that are dominated by political parties, MEPs are not entirely the masters of their own destiny. The role of party groups in the EP varies across the different stages of the policy process. In some legislative activities, such as policymaking via committee reports, party groups can act as ‘gatekeepers’ with sole power to decide which representatives are allowed to participate and which policy areas they can specialise in. In these activities, the party group leadership ensures cohesion by allocating its resources and by rewarding and sanctioning its members to compel them to toe the party line. Thus, where party groups assume a gate-keeping role, intra-group relations partly determine who is represented in which policy areas. Other legislative activities, however, such as parliamentary questions, are open to all MEPs regardless of party affiliation. In these activities, representational performance is not affected by intra-party group politics.

There are two ways in which party groups can affect the representational performance of their members in activities where they have gate-keeping power. First, parties ensure cohesion by influencing the behaviour of their members through ‘distribution of resources’ (Weingast and Marshall, 1988). As Hix (2002) points out, it is the larger national parties in the European Parliament that essentially run the party groups. Within parliamentary committees, numerous interviews with practitioners have confirmed that committee chairmanships are among the most influential office positions (Whitaker, 2001; 2005). In return for such influence, MEPs from larger national parties and those holding prestigious parliamentary offices assume responsibility for some of the less interesting policy areas (Corbett et al. 2003). By contrast, rank and file MEPs from smaller national parties have little power

over the policy direction and the internal workings of their group. Instead, as Kaeding (2005) has shown at the level of the member states, they use their limited resources to focus on the small range of policy areas that are of particular salience to them.

Second, the leadership can also reward loyal MEPs with policy preferences that are representative of the group as a whole. Even though legislators, on average, are likely to have more in common with their fellow party members than with the members of other parties (otherwise they would switch parties), this is not the case on all issues all the time. On any specific issue, individual members may disagree with and defect from the policy position of their party group. By screening its members before allocating important legislative tasks, the party group leadership can identify rebel backbenchers and reward representatives who toe (or at least are likely to toe) the party line.

Thus, in legislative activities where party groups can act as gatekeepers, intra-party group relations affect who can participate and specialise in which policy areas. Whereas influential legislators participate in a broad range of policy areas, rank-and-file MEPs from smaller national parties prefer to specialise in the most salient policy areas. Preference outliers on the other hand do not have access to the most desirable policy areas.

Hypothesis 4: Where the party group leadership acts as a gate-keeper, intra-group relations affect the representational performance of MEPs.

Chapter 5 tests the impact of party group gate-keeping on representation. The distribution of committee reports among MEPs within each party group is determined by the relations between individual MEPs and their party group leadership. As a result, preference outliers do not have access to the most coveted reports. MEPs from smaller national delegations within each group focus on the reports that are most

salient to their national party. Intra-party group relations do not have any impact on representation in committee debates (Chapter 4) or parliamentary questions (Chapter 6) where party groups do not hold gate-keeping power.

This section has developed a set of hypotheses about the link between party-political and institutional incentives at different stages of the legislative policy process in the European Parliament to be tested in subsequent chapters. The next section leaves the individual level to examine the implications of the model for institutional representation. How does the European Parliament as a whole perform in terms of political representation? What is the likely impact of various proposals for institutional reform?

V. Institutional Representation Revisited

This chapter has developed a model of representational performance at the level of individual MEPs. Representatives participate selectively depending on the attractiveness of the policy areas under their jurisdiction. Even though the discussion in this chapter has centred on individual legislators, the model has several implications for representation at the level of the European Parliament as a whole. If representation is defined as specialisation in particular policy areas, the values and interests represented in the EP are likely to deviate substantially from the rules of proportionality that govern much parliamentary business. If, in turn, proportionality cannot be taken for granted, this may have important implications for the democratic legitimacy of the European Parliament (government of the people) and policy outcomes at the European level.

First, the good news is that representation can occur even when the electoral connection is relatively weak. The model shows that political representation occurs, even though MEPs do not care as much about responsiveness as they do about

engaging in policy, scrutinising the executive or attaining prestigious offices, be it at the European level or at home. Indeed, as Table 2.1 (and previous research on other legislatures) shows, an absolute preference requirement for representation would be difficult to fulfil. Taking part in policy remains the most important legislative task according to most representatives across the range of electoral systems that are in effect in European elections. However, as long as MEPs prefer to specialise in salient policy areas rather than non-salient ones, they can be responsive without having to forfeit their other legislative goals. Surely, if the European Parliament, with its notoriously weak electoral connection satisfies this weak preference requirement, it should present no particular difficulty for other, more mature legislatures, such as the US House of Representatives or national parliaments across Europe.

Second, the model shows that institutional rules have a large impact on political representation. In policy formulation and decision-making, the incentives that encourage legislative participation and specialisation in the most salient areas are structured by prevailing majority thresholds. MEPs who form part of a coalition that can command an effective majority in committee or plenary have a greater incentive to participate but a lower incentive to discriminate between policy areas than their peers with little chance of affecting policy outcomes. In parliamentary oversight, partisan ties to the executive affect the representational performance of MEPs. As the empirical chapters will confirm, particular institutional arrangements, such as double open rule in committee and plenary, majority thresholds, proportionality requirements and party group gate-keeping affect political representation at different stages of the legislative process.

Third, the model provides substantial clues about the expected impact of future parliamentary reforms on the representation of European citizens. Reducing

majority thresholds, for instance, should discourage a larger share of 'minority' MEPs to participate in legislation over which they don't have any policy influence. At the same time, however, lower thresholds could also increase the number of possible voting coalitions, and thereby widen responsiveness to a larger range of MEPs at the fringes of the political spectrum.

Similarly, instituting an electoral system that emphasises ideological (party) over territorial (country/constituency) attributes compounds the majoritarian nature of legislative deliberation in the EP. In John Stuart Mill's sense of political representation as representative deliberation (government of the people), such reforms undermine the democratic legitimacy of European policy. On the other hand, they may also bring European policy closer to citizens by encouraging a division of labour in line with the policy platforms of national parties (government for the people).

Analogously, greater powers for the relatively fractionalised European party groups could force a larger number of MEPs who do not toe the party group line to the sidelines. By shutting out dissenting opinion and distributing party resources in favour of certain MEPs, party groups can play a significant negative role in terms of political representation. On the other hand, party discipline ensures that EP policymaking and decision-making remain predictable and, at least to some extent, consistent over time. Also, in the longer term, persistent attempts by the party group leadership to sideline preference outliers would encourage a partisan realignment which could affect predominant coalition patterns.

Fourth, some observers have suggested combating the democratic deficit by reinforcing the link between the European Commission and the EP, for instance, via direct election of the Commission President or nomination from among the members of the European Parliament (Hix, 1997). Clearly, such a reform would drastically

increase the incentive for MEPs to monitor the Commission. While this would constitute a great leap towards a federal organisation of the European Union, it might also become a pyrrhic victory for the EP in terms of the responsiveness of its members. Given the hypothesised negative relationship between oversight and representation, tying up valuable parliamentary resources in oversight of the Commission might not contribute to a truly responsive Parliament.

While most of the empirical analysis in Chapters 4-6 focuses on the level of individual MEPs, Chapter 7 will consider the important institutional considerations raised in this section in more detail and in light of the empirical findings of the thesis. The next section concludes this chapter with a short summary of the model to be tested in the empirical part of the thesis.

VI. Conclusion

This chapter has re-defined the notion of political representation as responsive legislative specialisation and modelled the conditions under which individual MEPs represent their national parties. By defining responsiveness in terms of a ‘competence logic’, the thesis makes the theoretical leap to a conceptualisation of representation as access to power which determines a legislator’s *ability to respond* in Pitkin’s (1967) sense. The concept of political representation is only meaningful if it implies that legislators engage in policy areas that feature more or less highly among the priorities of their national party.

Defining representation as responsive specialisation allows for a more comprehensive theory of political representation that includes a wide range of legislative activities at all stages of the policy process. Responsiveness is more than a set of policy positions as evidenced in roll-call votes or a set of proposals adopted by the legislature. Who is represented where depends on the selective participation of

individual legislators in different policy areas and at different stages of the legislative process. Representation is a political objective that structures the participation and specialisation of individual legislators. While the theory is tested empirically on data from the European Parliament, it can easily be adapted to allow for a comparative analysis of representation across a variety of parliamentary democracies.

The model illustrates the uneasy tension between the two dimensions of political representation: institutional representativeness or “government of the people” and individual responsiveness or “government for the people”. As Hall (1996) concludes in his study of the US House of Representatives, representativeness in legislative deliberations is impeded by the responsiveness of elected officials to their constituency. Unlike existing research, which has addressed these dimensions separately, this thesis explains the conditions under which political representation occurs, both as a result of representative participation across the political spectrum and as a result of responsive specialisation by a select group of MEPs.

Before embarking on major institutional reforms in response to a perceived democracy deficit it is important to be clear about what the role of the European Parliament should be. If the answer to this question lies in the representative deliberation of European issues (i.e. indirect representation), reforms must reduce the power of party groups, raise majority thresholds and reduce policy and oversight powers. If, on the other hand, the role of the EP lies in responsive policy-making for a European Union governed by majoritarian principles, the opposite conclusions are more appropriate.

The next chapter presents the research design and data used to test the hypotheses developed above. In the empirical part of the thesis, Chapter 4 analyses responsive specialisation in committee decision-making. Do MEPs specialise in committees that

feature prominently in their national party's political programme? What is the effect of policy incentives on legislative participation and the representativeness of committee deliberations? Chapter 5 discusses the role of party group control in determining responsiveness at the policy formulation stage. How do party groups affect representativeness? The last empirical chapter examines the trade-off between parliamentary oversight and responsiveness at the EP's Question-Time. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with a synthesis of the findings, a comparative analysis of political representation across all three stages of the legislative process and an assessment of the implications of the findings for parliamentary reform in the European Union.

CHAPTER 3 – DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The previous chapter has presented a theory of political representation in the European Parliament and developed a set of hypotheses to be tested in the empirical part of the thesis (Chapters 4-6). This chapter discusses the research design, presents the data and the statistical tools to test these hypotheses. Section 1 introduces the debate between quantitative and qualitative research designs and explains the focus on quantitative methods in this thesis. In a nutshell, it is the nature of the research question that lends itself to a quantitative design, complemented with qualitative evidence when appropriate. Section 2 presents the operationalisation of the theoretical concepts required to test the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2. The thesis operationalises policy salience as a function of national party manifestos, which increases reliability and validity compared with measurements that rely on public opinion surveys or content analyses of media coverage. Finally, section 3 presents the statistical tools that are used to analyse the data. The multi-level nature of the data calls for hierarchical random effects modelling. The section discusses the advantages and risks of this increasingly popular statistical tool compared with standard OLS regressions with fixed effects.

1. Quantitative versus Qualitative Research Designs

The debate between quantitative and qualitative methods plays a major role in social science methodology courses in most universities. Still today, much of this discussion is based on the assumption that these two styles of research are irreconcilable. Proponents of the quantitative tradition stress its “scientific” nature, its ability to draw on a large number of cases over several time frames, its abstraction from particular cases to search for causal explanations and its emphasis on generalisation and replicability (King et al, 1994). On the other hand, supporters of

qualitative research underline the importance of using a wide range of approaches to study complex social phenomena inductively (e.g. Mertens, 1998). Qualitative research often focuses on a single or a limited number of key events, such as the outbreak of a particular revolution or civil war, which are studied in full detail. Explanatory power arises not as a result of abstraction and generalisation but out of in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon under study (King et al, 1994).

More recently, however, several scholars have questioned the strict quantitative-qualitative dichotomy. Indeed, according to King et al. (1994) both approaches rely on the same logic of inference and both can be equally scientific and systematic. Rather than limiting oneself to just one of the tools available to social scientific inquiry, they suggest a choice based on the type of data to be analysed, the kind of hypotheses to be tested and the conclusions to be drawn. Instead of applying a particular method to fit all types of data and all sorts of research questions, academic scholarship should choose its tools depending on the problem it proposes to analyse. Ragin et al. (1996, pg. 750) make a similar case in their defence of qualitative designs to address certain research situations where “theories are underdeveloped and concepts are vague”. As they argue, where the demands of quantitative methods cannot be met, many researchers prefer to use a qualitative design rather than alter their research questions (Ragin et al, 1996). Finally, Creswell (2003) finds that quantitative designs are best suited for testing theory and hypotheses whereas qualitative designs focus on developing theory and “generating knowledge” (quoted in Kabeba, 2005).

This thesis proposes to study patterns and trends in the political behaviour of representatives in the European Parliament. Which MEPs are more or less responsive to their constituents at different stages of the policy process? What is the effect of

partisan alignment and the institutional context in the EP on legislative participation and specialisation? Such an analysis, where comparable numeric data are easily available, lends itself to a quantitative approach. On the other hand, if the thesis were more interested in how MEPs from different parties understand their role as representatives or how institutional variables affect the normative role perceptions of legislators and their connection to the electorate, a qualitative approach might be more suitable.

While the quantitative approach has a number of advantages for the types of questions that this thesis addresses, it should be complemented with qualitative evidence where appropriate. Indeed, as Bauer and Gaskell (2000) conclude, “adequate coverage of social events requires a multitude of methods and data: methodological pluralism arises as a methodological necessity” (pg. 4). Much recent methodological work contends that a “mixed strategy”, combining the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches ensures the largest possible explanatory leverage (e.g. Creswell, 2003). In any case, the quantitative approach in this thesis requires well-defined variables and (where necessary) proxies to ensure that its conclusions remain applicable to the complex political “reality” that describes the connection between legislative behaviour and party preferences in the European Parliament and in other legislatures. The next section discusses the measurement of several of the concepts that are required to test the hypotheses derived in the previous chapter.

II. Variable Measurement

Chapter 2 has introduced a large number of (more or less) abstract concepts that may affect political representation in the European Parliament, including policy salience, legislative participation and specialisation, party group affiliation and

national party representation in the European Commission. This section explains how these concepts have been translated into variables that can be analysed systematically.

II.a. Measuring Policy Saliency

Among all the variables in this thesis, the measurement of saliency is both one of the most important and one of the most contested. A large number of previous studies have tried to measure public preferences or the relative importance of different policy areas to constituents. All of these operationalisations have a number of advantages and drawbacks. Before going into detail about the choice of measurement used to test the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2, it may be helpful to outline these alternatives and compare them to the measurement chosen for the empirical assessment in this thesis.

Public Opinion Surveys

Most existing research measures saliency based on public opinion surveys. Respondents are presented either with a pre-defined list of policy areas (Niemi and Bartels, 1985), which they have to rank in order of importance or they are asked to state the “most important problem” (MIP) facing their country/constituency (e.g. Repass, 1971; Miller, Miller, Raine, and Browne, 1976; Burden and Sanberg, 2003; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; MacKuen and Coombs, 1981; Jones, 1994; McCombs and Zhu, 1995; McCombs, 1999; Soroka, 2002; McDonald, Budge, and Pennings, 2004). Both of these approaches have several, widely recognised, drawbacks.

First, it is not clear that people always mean what they say in response to a public opinion survey. There is a wide range of reasons why survey responses might not reflect public opinion, such as cognitive problems related to the ordering or wording of the questions, lack of effort on the respondent’s part, the respondent’s desire to

look good before the interviewer and the possibility that the respondent does not have a fully formed opinion about the policy area at stake.

Second, surveys might not actually measure policy salience. For instance, respondents may simply make erroneous assessments about the issues they consider to be salient (see e.g. Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2001; Dahlberg, Mork and Agren, 2004).¹ While survey questions based on pre-defined lists solve some of these problems, they also eliminate one of the biggest advantages of the MIP design: the open-ended nature of the question. Also, as Wlezien (2003) argues, measuring salience based on responses to MIP confuses the *importance* of a policy area with the respondent's perception of the area as problematic. For instance, he finds little relationship between responses to MIP and responsiveness in the area of defence policy. Whereas assessments of the most important problem vary dramatically over time, the actual salience of defence as a policy issue remains stable.

Media Coverage

In response to some of the weaknesses of public opinion surveys, several scholars have chosen to measure policy salience by analysing mass media coverage of different policy areas without asking respondents their opinions directly (Weissert, 1991; Epstein and Segal, 2000; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Hobolt, 2004). Content analysis of newspaper articles (or other media) can indeed give a good picture of the political debate in a country and distinguish the issues that make it to the forefront of politics from those that do not elicit much public interest.

However, it is not clear that measures based on media coverage constitute an effective response to Wlezien's criticism of public opinion surveys. Arguably, as

¹ In response to the criticism of public opinion surveys, some studies rely on expert evaluations of party policy positions (Castles and Mair, 1984; Huber and Inglehart, 1995; Ray, 1999; Marks et al, forthcoming). In addition to some of the problems with public opinion surveys, these expert opinions often suffer from a lack of reliability and validity (Budge, 2001). But see Whitefield et al.(forthcoming) for a defence of expert valuations as a measure of party positions.

Wlezien (2003) notes, the economy is always reasonably salient even though media coverage of economic issues will vary substantially depending on economic performance. Thus, rather than the salience (or importance) of economic issues, mass media provide just another measure of the ‘most important problem’ of the moment. Much like the public opinion surveys discussed above, media coverage is directed at the very short term and varies substantially over time.

Party Manifestos

As the discussion above has shown, there are three main weaknesses in existing measurements of salience: first, they confound the *importance* of particular policy areas with the public’s perception of them as *problematic*; second, they might not accurately represent public attitudes and third, they are likely to vary a lot in the short-term in response to outside events. In response to these criticisms, this thesis proposes a different operationalisation of salience based on national party manifestos.

The use of party manifestos is based upon the theoretical framework provided by “saliency theory”. Saliency theory contends that parties define their policy preferences by emphasizing certain policy areas and ignoring others (e.g. prioritising welfare over defence or vice-versa). In other words, they define their policy positions based on salient issue identification. As Budge et al. (1987; pg. 391) contend, “parties compete by accentuating issues on which they have an undoubted advantage, rather than by putting forward contrasting policies on the same issues”. In other words, parties identify issues that are salient to their potential electorate and then emphasize those in electoral competition.

The empirical analysis in this thesis rests on the assumption that party manifestos are an accurate reflection of what the party stands for in public. According to saliency theory, manifestos are authoritative statements of the party’s intended policy focus for a full legislative term. They provide an indication about the policy areas that the

elected representatives of the party intend to focus (*specialise*) on, once elected and they are comparable across member states. Using party manifestos makes it possible to include almost all MEPs in the fifth Parliament without having to rely on expert assessments or public opinion surveys. This gives rise to an unprecedented dataset covering 13 policy areas across 80 national party delegations. Most media, public opinion or expert surveys do not come close to such comprehensive coverage.

In addition, the operationalisation assumes that national parties in the European Parliament behave as “responsible parties”.² Parties are widely acknowledged to be an indispensable feature of Western democracy and an essential intermediary between constituents and policy outcomes. The responsible party model stipulates that parties formulate clear policy proposals at election time, that they are elected based upon these proposals and that they attempt to put their proposals into action once they are elected. In the empirical analysis in this thesis, national party manifestos are assumed to reflect each party’s policy priorities. Under these conditions, political representation occurs when elected party representatives act upon the policy priorities they have emphasised in their manifesto.³

Once these assumptions are acknowledged, the operationalisation of salience based on party manifestos provides a good solution to some of the problems with existing salience measures. First, manifestos are less short-term oriented than public opinion surveys or media coverage. Indeed, they form the basis of voting decisions at election time, which convey a mandate to representatives over an entire legislative term (4-5 years in most countries, 5 in the case of the European Parliament). According to McDonald et al (2004), manifestos even reflect entrenched ideological

² See Chapter 1 for further details on the Responsible Party Model in various Western political systems including the European Parliament.

³ In this sense, the manifesto can be interpreted as the mandate of the party’s elected members. Of course, manifestos do not provide a comprehensive list of all policy positions that the party will advocate over the course of the legislature.

differences between parties, which go beyond a single electoral period. Second, manifestos avoid the confusion between the perception of a policy area as *important* or *problematic*. Party manifestos highlight the party's policy priorities on a wide range of issues. Irrespective of outside events, issues that are permanently salient, such as the economy, foreign and social policy will always receive some coverage in a party's manifesto (single issue parties may be a partial exception here). The extent of coverage will vary, however, with the relative emphasis (i.e. salience) that the party wants to place on each issue. Finally, the manifesto-based measure retains some of the advantages of open-ended public opinion surveys (such as MIP) because manifestos are drawn up by party officials rather than the researchers themselves.

Of course, however, party manifestos are not a perfect measure of salience. Critics may question the stipulations of saliency theory or the application of the responsible party model in the European Parliament. First, the manifesto dataset has been criticised for its interpretation of party policy positions (Laver, Benoit and Garry 2003; but see Klingemann et al. 1994 for a more positive assessment). This thesis focuses not on policy *positions* but on *salience*. An area is salient if it is prominent in the manifesto, independently of the actual policy position that the party advocates.⁴ Because the manifesto dataset is based on word counts, it is perhaps better suited to measure salience of and emphasis on particular policy areas as opposed to policy positions, which refer to the directionality (left v/ right, pro- v. anti-environment) of the policies that the party advocates.

Secondly, as Laver (2001) points out, manifestos strictly speaking measure stated policy positions rather than the actual ideal positions of political actors. Large differences between the content of party manifestos and the ideal positions of the

⁴ See Arnold and Pennings (2005) for a similar operationalisation of salience based on party manifesto data.

party's elected members could affect the legislative behaviour of representatives in the European Parliament. The empirical analysis in Chapter 4-6 incorporates a comprehensive set of control variables to account for discrepancies between the stated priorities set out in party manifestos and the actual priorities of MEPs, including individual policy preferences, nationality and various features of the electoral system.

Third, some critics may argue that the requirements of the responsible party model do not hold in the EP. A large number of studies have found that voters do not always vote for the party that best represents their preferences for strategic reasons (or because they do not turn out for the vote). If this is the case, manifestos might not be an accurate description of the mandates of representatives. As Schmitt and Thomassen (1999) have found however, the basic requirements of the responsible party model (party cohesion and distinctiveness) are in place in the European Parliament except for issues dealing with the future development of the European Union itself. The empirical analysis in this thesis is concerned not with the project for European unification but with actual policy-making within the European Parliament across a wide range of policy areas that are traditionally associated with national politics (see below for a list of the policy areas included in this analysis).

Finally, there seems to be a disconnect between the use of national party manifestos developed for national elections and legislative behaviour in the European Parliament. However, this disconnect makes little difference in practice because European elections are second-order contests that take place in the shadow of more important national elections (e.g. Reif and Schmitt, 1980). A large share of European election manifestos deal with issues of a purely European nature and lay out the

party's general attitudes towards Europe.⁵ Voters derive their opinions about what different parties stand for and which parties are closest to their preferences on a wider range of policy areas from the national political arena. Finally, even if there is a discrepancy between policy priorities at the supranational (EU) and domestic levels, a sophisticated empirical analysis can, at least partly, control for some of these differences by incorporating a range of controls for individual MEPs, member states, European party groups and electoral systems.

Given their advantages over other measures in terms of validity and reliability, the empirical analysis in this thesis operationalises salience based on national party manifestos. National party positions for most major European parties are available on the data-CD accompanying Budge et al.'s (2001) cross-country study of party manifestos. Salience for thirteen policy areas is constructed as the percent of each party manifesto dedicated to each policy area, irrespective of the policy position the party advocates. For example, if a particular national party advocates both the expansion of some aspects of the welfare state and the limitation of other aspects, the percentage of the manifesto devoted to the welfare state is the sum of the percentages devoted to each policy position.

The policy areas used in the empirical analysis are defined to overlap with the committee jurisdictions in the European Parliament. No saliency data were available for the committees on petitions, legal affairs and the two budgetary committees (Budget and Budgetary Control). Table 3.1 lists the thirteen policy areas for which a value for salience could be constructed and their abbreviation as used throughout the text. The coding frame used to match party positions with these policy areas is in

⁵ In 2004 for instance European green parties combined their efforts to develop a pan-European election manifesto that does not so much specify policy priorities across a wider range of areas as it sets out the common denominator among all European green parties represented in the European Parliament.

Appendix A. Appendix B lists all 80 national party delegations included in the empirical analysis and the salience of each policy area for each party. Finally Appendix C presents correlations between the salience of the different policy across all MEPs included in the dataset.

TABLE 3.1. DEFINITION OF POLICY AREAS IN THE EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

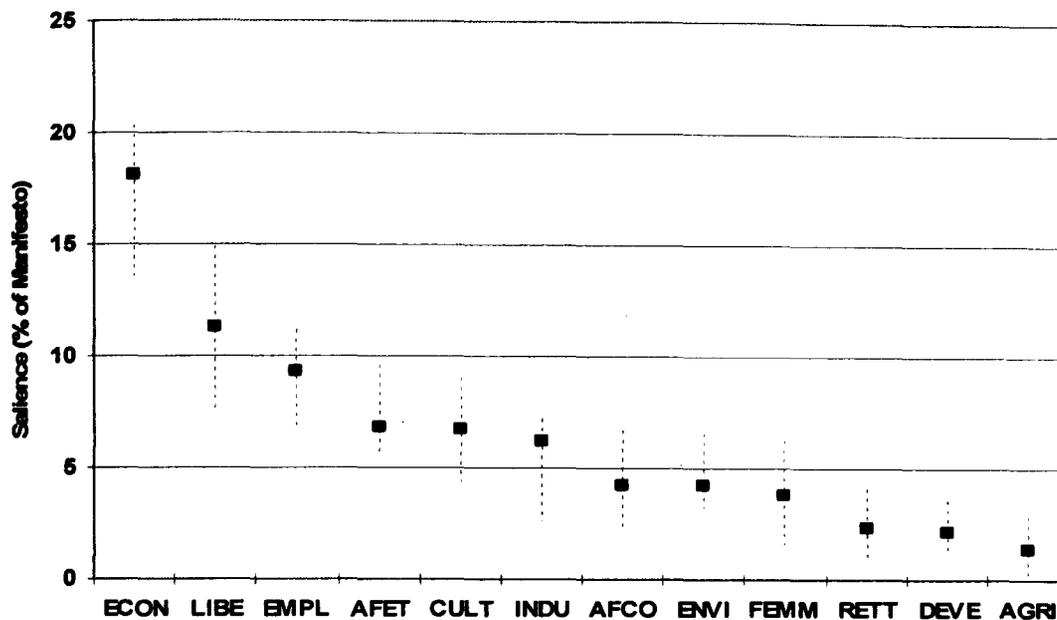
Abbreviation	Policy Issues
AFCO	Constitutional Affairs
AFET	Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy
AGRI	Agriculture and Rural Development
CULT	Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport
DEVE	Development and cooperation
ECON	Economics and Monetary Affairs
EMPL	Employment and Social Affairs
ENVI	Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy
FEMM	Women's rights and Equal Opportunities
INDU	External Trade, Research and Energy
LIBE	Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs
PESC	Fisheries
RETT	Regional policy, transport and Tourism

Note: Abbreviations are the same as those used in the European Parliament's committee structure (1999-2004)

Figure 3.1 provides a descriptive test of the validity of the salience variable used in this thesis. The figure plots the median salience and the inter-quartile range of each policy area to illustrate its relative popularity and the skewness of the distribution across all MEPs.⁶ The y-axis represents the percentage of national party manifestos dedicated to each policy area. Unsurprisingly, Economics and Monetary Affairs (ECON) turns out to be the most salient policy area, with a median of more than 17%, followed by justice and home affairs (LIBE) and social affairs and employment (EMPL). Agriculture and fisheries (AGRI), development (DEVE) and regional affairs, transport and tourism (RETT) feature least prominently in the party manifestos. The dashed vertical lines indicate the distance between the first and third quartiles to illustrate the extent of variation in the salience distribution of each policy area. With the exception of ECON and LIBE, which are by far the most popular, no clear hierarchy emerges.

⁶ Figure 3.1 includes all MEPs for whom data were available in order to reflect the size of each national party delegation in the EP.

FIGURE 3.1. MEDIAN SALIENCE OF 13 DIFFERENT POLICY AREAS



Note: Unit of analysis MEP; markers denote the median salience of the policy area across all MEPs; High-Low lines indicate 1st and 3rd quartiles. Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

As mentioned above, saliency theory assumes that party manifestos reflect the emphasis each party places on a range of policy areas irrespective of the actual policy position that it advocates. However, this is not to say that there should be no correlation between the direction of the policy that parties advocate in a particular area and the emphasis that they place on that area. This can easily be illustrated by way of an example. Assume there are two parties (A and B) with contrasting policy positions on the issue of taxation. Whereas party A is in favour of higher taxes in order to fund social welfare programmes, party B would like to reduce tax burdens in order to boost the economy. In this situation, it is likely that party A will focus on the social programmes it intends to fund out of tax revenues whereas party B will discuss the positive effect of its proposed tax cuts on the economy. As a result, there are differences in the content of both party manifestos and in the mandates of each party's representatives. In most European party systems, the policy position of party A corresponds to a typical centre-left party whereas the position of party B is more

closely associated with the centre-right. In other words, for this policy area there is a correlation between salience (emphasis in the party manifesto) and party location on the left-right spectrum.

In order to test whether there is a systematic correlation between salience and party policy positions, Table 3.2 presents the results of thirteen OLS regressions with salience (party level) as a dependent variable and the left-right position of individual MEPs (*Nominate* – see below for details), their preference extremity along the left-right spectrum (*Nominate squared*) and their nationality as explanatory variables. Even though salience is measured at the party level, individual MEPs are the unit of analysis in these regressions in order to examine the effect of an individual's position on the left-right spectrum on issue salience. If saliency theory is correct, we should see differences in the policy emphasis of MEPs at different locations of the left-right spectrum. More specifically, according to saliency theory, parties should emphasise those policy areas where they have an electoral advantage over their competitors.⁷

The results in Table 3.2 are consistent with this prediction. In all policy areas, the left-right position of party members (*Nominate*) or the extremity of their preferences (*Nominate squared*) help explain the emphasis that parties place on each policy area in their manifestos. A positive coefficient on the *Nominate* variable in Table 3.2 signifies that parties on the right of the political spectrum place greater emphasis on the area at hand, a negative score indicates a policy area that is more salient to parties on the left of the policy spectrum. A positive coefficient on *Nominate squared* indicates that parties on the fringes of the political spectrum emphasises the policy

⁷ Note the disconnect between saliency, measured at the party level and *Nominate* policy positions measured at the level of individual MEPs. For ease of interpretation, Table 3.2 ignores the multi-level nature of the dataset and controls for differences in national party size with an appropriate variable (*Party Size*). However, this problem is addressed in the main empirical analysis in Chapters 4-6 by way of a random effects specification. This methodology is described in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

area more than centrist parties. The opposite is true for policy areas with a negative coefficient for *Nominate squared*.

As Table 3.2 shows, substantively, the effect of an MEP's left-right policy preferences is highest for Economics and Monetary Affairs (ECON), a policy area that is traditionally associated with parties on the right of the policy spectrum. At the other end of the spectrum, parties on the left are much more concerned with Women's Affairs and Equality of Opportunities (FEMM) than their competitors on the right. There is a similar (though substantively smaller) left-wing bias on foreign affairs (AFET), employment and social affairs (EMPL), the environment (ENVI) and development (DEVE). As many would agree, these are policy areas that are traditionally associated with the left in most European countries.⁸

Figure 3.2 illustrates the results from Table 3.2 graphically for a selection of policy areas. First, for justice and home affairs (LIBE) and social affairs and employment (EMPL), the relationship between policy preferences and salience is linear. Whereas parties on the left of the policy spectrum tend to emphasize social affairs compared with parties further to the right, the opposite is true for justice and home affairs. The economy (ECON) is by far the most salient policy area for almost all parties, except for the left-wing fringe. Parties on the right emphasise economic issues more than their rivals on the left, though there is little difference between centre-right and extreme-right parties. In contrast, environmental issues are, on the whole, favoured by parties on the centre-left of the spectrum compared with their rivals on the centre-right. Fringe parties emphasize environmental issues more than their competitors in the centre. This is perhaps less surprising on the left (where many Green parties tend to be located) than on the right.

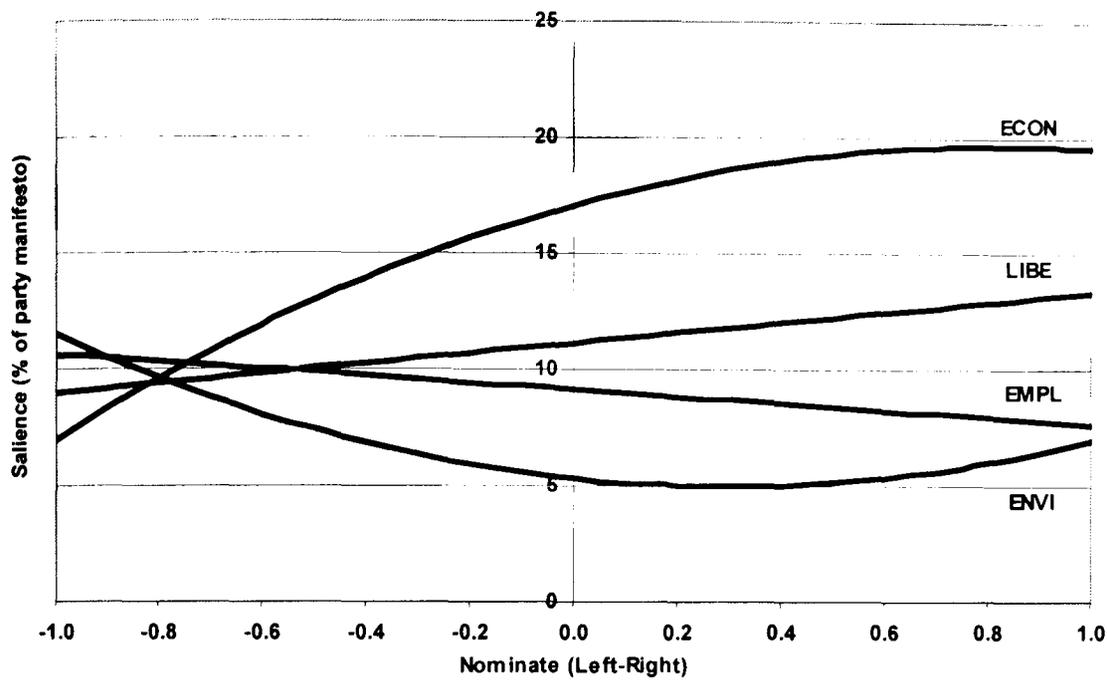
⁸ Note that in most European countries, so-called green parties whose obvious policy focus is the environment (ENVI) are located on the left of the policy spectrum (see also Rohrschneider, 1993).

TABLE 3.2. OLS REGRESSIONS BY POLICY AREA, DEPENDENT VARIABLE: SALIENCE; UNIT OF ANALYSIS: MEP

	LIBE		AFET		ECON		INDU		EMPL		ENVI		AGRI/PESC		RETT		DEVE		AFCO		FEMM		CULT	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
Nominate	2.18†	0.49	-1.84†	0.45	6.31†	0.68	0.84†	0.24	-1.49†	0.34	-2.28†	0.54	0.57†	0.15	1.77†	0.27	-1.37†	0.16	-0.48*	0.24	-4.66†	0.32	0.75	0.43
Nominate (squared)	1.14	0.86	-0.56	0.78	-3.81†	1.19	-2.20†	0.41	0.13	0.60	3.92†	0.94	-1.28†	0.27	-0.44	0.48	-1.12†	0.28	3.55†	0.41	-0.24	0.55	-4.31†	0.75
Country																								
AT	-0.86	1.16	-0.67	1.05	11.26†	1.60	-1.34*	0.56	1.33	0.81	-2.87*	1.27	-0.12	0.36	-5.98†	0.64	-1.44†	0.38	-0.42	0.56	3.49†	0.75	-8.39†	1.01
BE	2.99*	1.17	-1.87	1.06	-6.84†	1.62	-1.40*	0.57	4.17†	0.82	-2.04	1.29	1.21†	0.36	-1.51*	0.65	-1.48†	0.38	-1.20*	0.57	-4.10†	0.76	-0.43	1.02
GE	-5.18†	0.72	0.12	0.66	-1.87	1.00	-2.47†	0.35	-2.56†	0.50	3.39†	0.79	2.32†	0.22	-2.18†	0.40	0.64†	0.23	2.19†	0.35	-0.61	0.47	-1.31	0.63
SP	-2.56†	0.74	-0.04	0.67	-1.86	1.02	5.29†	0.36	2.84†	0.52	-0.08	0.81	1.35†	0.23	-1.37†	0.41	0.27	0.24	-0.77*	0.36	-3.38†	0.48	1.40*	0.64
FR	3.61†	0.89	1.85*	0.80	-5.82†	1.22	-2.82†	0.43	-0.85	0.62	2.78†	0.97	2.19†	0.27	-3.53†	0.49	-2.26†	0.29	5.00†	0.43	3.86†	0.57	-1.56*	0.77
GR	-4.37†	1.09	3.67†	0.99	-2.16	1.51	-0.71	0.53	-0.70	0.76	2.06	1.20	3.60†	0.34	-0.83	0.61	-0.85*	0.35	1.86†	0.53	-2.53†	0.71	10.95†	0.95
IT	1.55	0.81	0.36	0.73	1.63	1.12	-0.99*	0.39	0.97	0.56	-0.86	0.89	0.73†	0.25	-1.00*	0.45	-2.18†	0.26	-2.13†	0.39	-2.69†	0.52	-0.48	0.70
DK	-4.30†	1.50	-4.77†	1.36	10.65†	2.08	-3.03†	0.73	0.06	1.05	-3.14	1.65	0.24	0.47	-5.04†	0.83	-1.69†	0.49	-1.30	0.73	-4.14†	0.97	-5.34†	1.31
L	-7.28†	1.83	-2.42	1.66	-2.14	2.53	4.24†	0.89	6.97†	1.28	2.78	2.01	1.45*	0.57	-5.21†	1.02	1.15	0.59	-0.04	0.88	-3.96†	1.19	2.95	1.59
NL	0.45	1.13	-0.22	1.02	-7.93†	1.56	1.68†	0.55	7.10†	0.79	1.79	1.24	1.15†	0.35	-4.44†	0.63	0.33	0.37	-0.23	0.55	-0.26	0.73	-1.22	0.98
FI	-11.45†	1.36	-3.57†	1.23	6.55†	1.88	-3.88†	0.66	6.20†	0.95	4.94†	1.49	1.56†	0.42	-6.49†	0.75	-1.61†	0.44	0.75	0.66	9.06†	0.88	-2.21	1.18
PT	-4.03†	1.11	0.99	1.00	1.99	1.53	3.95†	0.54	3.17†	0.77	0.08	1.22	2.79†	0.34	-3.34†	0.62	-1.04†	0.36	0.06	0.54	-0.61	0.72	-0.36	0.96
SW	-5.36†	1.26	-0.56	1.14	6.47†	1.75	-3.28†	0.61	5.80†	0.88	0.96	1.38	0.04	0.39	-3.38†	0.70	0.18	0.41	0.77	0.61	3.32†	0.82	-1.31	1.10
IR	-1.27	1.37	-4.16†	1.24	0.27	1.89	-0.14	0.66	0.32	0.95	2.88	1.50	3.07†	0.42	-1.66*	0.76	-2.44†	0.44	-0.66	0.66	0.78	0.88	-2.98*	1.19
Other																								
Party Size	-0.02	0.03	-0.04	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.05†	0.01	0.06†	0.02	-0.07*	0.03	0.01	0.01	-0.08†	0.01	-0.02*	0.01	0.07†	0.01	-0.01	0.02	-0.13†	0.02
Constant	12.89†	0.93	8.57†	0.84	18.01†	1.28	5.52†	0.45	6.92†	0.65	4.91†	1.02	0.44†	0.29	6.72†	0.51	3.61†	0.30	2.09†	0.45	5.19†	0.60	10.83†	0.81
Adj R-sq	0.44		0.21		0.50		0.69		0.42		0.26		0.46		0.37		0.45		0.65		0.67		0.55	
N	495		495		495		495		495		495		495		495		495		495		495		495	

Note: † significant at 0.01 level, * significant at 0.05 level; AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Innovation; LIBE = Citizens' Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

FIGURE 3.2. LEFT-RIGHT POLICY POSITION AND SALIENCE (SELECTED POLICY AREAS)



Notes: unit of analysis: MEP; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs;

Figure 3.2 and the results in Table 3.2 on which it is based are consistent with the prediction that parties make rational choices about which policy areas to emphasise in their manifestos. The consistency of the results across all thirteen policy areas in Table 3.2 suggests that measuring salience based on party manifesto data does indeed make empirical sense. However, the significance of the country dummies in each of the regressions suggests that, in addition to party affiliation, nationality also has a significant impact on policy salience. Any empirical analysis built on the manifesto dataset must therefore account for at least two data levels: the national level and the individual level. Section 3 in this chapter explains how the analysis in this thesis proposes to address the hierarchical nature of the data.

This section has explained how salience is operationalised in the empirical analysis in this thesis and it has presented a number of tests to verify its validity. However, the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2 also require appropriate measurements for a series of other important variables, including legislative

participation and specialisation at different stages of the policy process. Because most of these variables are directly observable (in contrast to salience), their operationalisation is more straightforward. The remainder of this section describes the measurement of legislative participation and specialisation at different stages of the policy process and of all other variables required for the empirical analyses in Chapters 4-6.

II.b. Measuring Legislative Participation and Specialisation

As discussed in Chapter 2, policy formulation in the European Parliament takes place when individual legislators draft committee reports in particular policy areas. Committee decision-making occurs during committee meetings throughout the course of the legislature. Finally, individual legislators can engage in parliamentary oversight by tabling questions to Commission and Council at Question-Time. This section explains how legislative participation and specialisation in these three policy areas have been operationalised.

Existing Research on Policy formulation, Decision-making and Oversight

Table 3.3 lists the three stages of the policy process, the legislative activity associated with each stage and the characteristics of each activity in terms of the independent variables of the study. While there has been extensive research on roll-call votes both in the European Parliament and in other domestic legislatures, the three legislative activities discussed in this thesis have remained largely understudied.

First, theories of committee participation and their empirical evaluation have been confined to the US House of Representatives (e.g. Hall, 1996), with only few very recent applications to the EP. There are to date no empirical studies of participation at committee meetings in the European Parliament. In other words, committee decision-making in the EP has been completely ignored by academic scholarship. All

scholarship on parliamentary decision-making in the EP to date has been confined to roll-call votes. By analysing the effect of participation and specialisation within committees, the thesis contributes to our understanding not only of political representation but also of the processes at work at this stage of the legislative process.

In contrast, several studies have analysed report allocation in the European Parliament (Hoyland, 2006; Mamadou and Raunio, 2003; Kaeding, 2005, 2004). However, most of this literature focuses on comparing the number of reports that MEPs sign up for and it treats all committee reports as equally desirable, with the exception of some more recent pieces that distinguish between co-decision and non co-decision reports (e.g. Hoyland, 2006). Because they ignore qualitative differences between committee reports (such as their salience), these studies do not help us understand the responsiveness of individual rapporteurs to their national party.

Finally, there are very few studies of parliamentary questioning in the EP (e.g. Bowler and Farrell, 1995; Raunio, 1997). Virtually all of the existing research focuses on the British House of Commons, with the exception of one largely descriptive cross-national study, which covers several parliaments across Europe (Wiberg, 1995). While Raunio (1997) distinguishes several features of questions, including their topic and target audience, his study focuses on describing legislative participation and specialisation in written questioning and does not consider the implications of these decisions for political representation.

TABLE 3.3. CASE SELECTION AND VARIATION IN INDEPENDENT VARIABLES ACROSS STAGES OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Legislative Stage	Activity	Inter-Party Politics		Intra-Party Politics
		<i>Majority Rule</i>	<i>Legislative/Executive Relations</i>	<i>Party Group Gate-keeping</i>
Policy Formulation	Committee Reports	YES	NO	YES
Decision-making	Committee Attendance	YES	NO	NO
Parliamentary Oversight	Parliamentary Questions	NO	YES	NO

Variation on the Independent Variables

Apart from a relative lack of existing studies on these three legislative activities, committee reports, attendance and parliamentary questions also offer interesting variation on the main independent variables identified in Chapter 2. This variation allows us to make assessments of the relative importance of coalition politics, legislative-executive relations and party group gatekeeping on political representation across the three stages of the legislative process.

First, as discussed in Chapter 2, party groups do not have control over who puts which oral questions before Council and Commission. The level and content of questions is entirely up to individual MEPs. At the same time, party groups have substantial influence over report allocation. While individual MEPs can express their preferences and encourage their group to bid on certain reports, the final allocation of legislative spoils lies with the party group leadership (such as the group co-ordinator within each committee). Finally, once committee positions have been assigned, party groups have no gate-keeping power over the participation and specialisation decisions of their members within their committees.

Second, there is variation across the stages of the legislative process in inter-party politics as well. Whereas committee decision-making and report drafting are governed primarily by majority rule and coalition formation across party groups, parliamentary questioning is dominated by legislative-executive relations between individual MEPs.

their national parties and the European Commission. Again, holding other independent variables constant, this variation enables comparisons of the relative importance of these different aspects of inter-party politics on the political representation of European citizens.

The scarcity of academic scholarship (on all legislatures) that goes beyond roll-call voting is surprising, especially given the relative ease of access to the relevant data for the European Parliament. Indeed, in comparison with many national assemblies, the European Parliament is a relatively open legislature that is concerned with its perceived transparency and openness to the public. As a result, most of the data for this study (e.g. basic data on rapporteurships, details of questions at each plenary session and attendance at committee meetings) are publicly available from the Parliament's website www.europarl.eu.int. The remainder of this section describes these data in more detail, explains how they have been collected and coded and how they are used in the empirical analysis in Chapters 4-6.

Policy Formulation: Committee Reports

Data on policy formulation in Chapter 5 include all reports in thirteen EP committees between September 1, 1999 and January 1, 2002.¹ The analysis assumes that all reports are allocated at a single point in time at the beginning of the fifth legislature. Without altering the substance of the conclusions of the analysis, this assumption greatly simplifies the analysis.² There are few theoretical indications that report allocation differs substantially between parliaments or over the course of a single legislature. As the party group leadership acquires better information about the policy preferences of its rank-and-file members, report allocation may increasingly reflect the expertise and background of individual MEPs. As a result, intra-party

¹ I would like to thank Bjorn Hoyland for sharing these data.

² Note that the same assumption underlies the dataset in Hausemer (forthcoming 2006) and it is implicit in the vast majority of existing research on EP reports. For an exception, see Hoyland (2006).

group politics may play a smaller role in the second half of each parliamentary term. Hoyland (2006) finds evidence for a government-opposition dynamic between Council and EP. National parties that are represented in the Council write more co-decision reports than 'opposition' MEPs. Since the composition of the Council may vary over the course of the legislature, such a dynamic may entail variation in EP report allocation over time. However, as Hoyland (2006) acknowledges, this effect is eclipsed by the importance of the party groups. PES representatives are "more active than governing parties as co-decision rapporteurs" (pg. 30). Nevertheless, a larger dataset over the full parliamentary term could help to evaluate the impact of information updates and national party competition on report allocation.

However, several exogenous factors, including committee reforms between legislatures, mid-term turnover and EU enlargement, could obfuscate the conclusions of a study over a longer period of time. First, the 1999 committee reform reduced the number of committees from 20 in the fourth Parliament to 17 in the fifth EP. This was raised back to 20 in 2004 when subcommittees were introduced to ease pressure on further enlargement of the committee system (McElroy, 2006). Since the jurisdictions of the committees were altered with every reform, comparisons across parliamentary terms are difficult.

In addition, committee positions are assigned at the beginning of each legislature for 2.5 years. About 30 percent of MEPs are re-assigned in the second half of each legislature (McElroy, 2006). Limiting the study to 2.5 years allows us to treat the entire period of analysis as a single point in time, in contrast to a complex time-series analysis over several half terms. Empirically, almost half (45%) of all reports written in the fifth Parliament were undertaken in the first 2.5 years of the legislative term.

As a result of these concerns and after a careful consideration of the costs and benefits of extending the timeframe of the analysis, the thesis is limited to the first half of the fifth Parliament. Each observation in the dataset corresponds to one report. There were 1,096 reports in the first 2.5 years of the fifth Parliament of which 904 were written in the thirteen committees included in the analysis. Due to lack of data on salience, 82 observations had to be excluded, which leaves a total of 822 reports. Table 3.4 presents descriptive statistics of the dependent variable used in the empirical analysis in Chapter 5.

TABLE 3.4. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLE IN POLICY FORMULATION (COMMITTEE REPORTS)

Variable	Observation	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Report Salience	822	7.07	6.57	0	54.58

Table 3.5 shows a breakdown of the dataset by policy area. Most reports (133) were written in the environment committee whereas the committee on women's rights and equal opportunities (FEMM) only produced 16 pieces of legislation in the 2.5-year period under analysis. As discussed in the previous section, reports on economics and monetary union (ECON) were on average most salient compared with a very low average salience for agriculture reports.

TABLE 3.5. NUMBER OF REPORTS AND AVERAGE SALIENCE ACROSS POLICY AREAS

Policy Area	Average Salience (% of manifesto)	Number of Reports
ECON	18.51	91
LIBE	9.4	98
EMPL	9	57
AFET	7.8	68
INDU	5.83	90
ENVI	5.6	133
CULT	5.49	31
AFCO	4.46	27
FEMM	3.43	16
RETT	3.13	77
PESC	2.65	53
DEVE	2.41	24
AGRI	1.83	57
Total	7.07	822

Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

Decision-Making: Committee Attendance

Data on committee attendance were collected from meeting minutes available on the European Parliament's website. Committee members are coded as either present (1) or absent (0). The resulting dependent variable in Chapter 4 (*Attendance*) is the percentage of committee meetings that each MEP attended. The study is limited to the first half of the fifth European Parliament for similar reasons to those cited for committee reports in the previous section. There is one attendance record for every committee member.³ MEPs who joined more than one committee, appear as one observation for each committee of which they are a full member or a substitute. The Petitions committee was excluded from the analysis because attendance records were not available for that committee on the EP's website. This leads to a total of 1,068

³ Note that this is different from the chapter on policy formulation and the chapter on parliamentary oversight where the units of analysis are committee reports and questions respectively. In comparison, participation and specialisation in committee meetings is measured at a higher level of aggregation.

observations. Table 3.6 presents descriptive statistics of the dependent variable used in the empirical analysis in Chapter 4.

TABLE 3.6. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF LEGISLATIVE PARTICIPATION AND SPECIALISATION IN COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING (ATTENDANCE)

Variable	Observations (N)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Committee Attendance	1,068	0.44	0.31	0	1

Table 3.7 shows a breakdown of the dataset by policy area. The largest committee under analysis is foreign affairs (AFET) with 120 members whereas the committee on fisheries (PESC) only has 40 members that are included in the dataset. Average attendance was highest in the committee on constitutional affairs (AFCO) with 52% and lowest in the committee on women's rights and equal opportunities (FEMM) with a mean of 36.8% of committee members.

TABLE 3.7. NUMBER OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND AVERAGE ATTENDANCE ACROSS POLICY AREAS

Policy Area	Attendance (%)	Observations
AFCO	52	56
AGRI	51	72
RETT	51	108
ENVI	49	107
ECON	46	83
PESC	46	40
LIBE	45	80
CULT	41	62
EMPL	41	104
AFET	40	120
DEVE	39	64
INDU	39	110
FEMM	37	62
Total	44	1068

Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

Oversight: Parliamentary Questions

Finally, the chapter on parliamentary oversight covers questions at Question-Time for the entire five-year term of the fifth Parliament (1999-2004).⁴ During that period 4,209 questions were tabled, 2,719 of which to the Commission and the rest to the Council. The analysis is confined to questions addressed to the Commission, as it is the only European institution with an exclusively 'executive' role. Also, as Corbett et al. (2003) have noted, questions to the Commission are generally considered to be 'more useful' than those addressed to the Council.

Each observation in the dataset represents one question and is characterised by attributes pertaining to the question itself (e.g. date, topic, etc.), its author (e.g. name, party affiliation, nominate score, etc.) and his constituency (e.g. country, salience of topic). The topic of each question was ascertained from the subject line detailing the policy issue that the question addresses. Every question was coded as pertaining to one of the 14 policy areas for which salience data are available. If the subject was unclear or touched on more than one policy area, the full question was analysed to determine the primary topic. Questions pertaining to the budget, legal, inter-institutional affairs or enlargement were excluded from the dataset because no salience data were available for these policy areas. Table 3.8 presents descriptive statistics for the dependent variable used in the empirical analysis in Chapter 6.

TABLE 3.8. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF LEGISLATIVE PARTICIPATION AND SPECIALISATION IN PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT (QUESTIONS)

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Question Salience	1,666	5.09	6.54	0	54.58

Table 3.9 shows a breakdown of the dataset by policy area. The largest number of questions was tabled on the environment (ENVI) followed by foreign affairs (AFET).

⁴ Because the concerns with mid-term turnover and committee reform do not apply for parliamentary questions, the dataset covers the entire 5-year term of the fifth European Parliament.

Over the same time period, there were only 23 questions by MEPs on issues dealing with women's rights or equal opportunities. Average salience was highest on economics (ECON) and, more surprisingly, on the environment (ENVI), which suggests that MEPs whose parties emphasise environmental issues were particularly active at this stage of the legislative process.

TABLE 3.9. NUMBER OF PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS AND AVERAGE SALIENCE ACROSS POLICY AREAS

Policy Area	Average Salience (% of manifesto)	Number of Questions
ECON	54.58	46
ENVI	44.24	376
AFET	38.85	278
CULT	30.55	100
LIBE	20.38	92
EMPL	19.53	153
FEMM	17.76	23
AFCO	14.58	32
RETT	14.12	77
INDU	12.34	61
AGRI	7.73	119
DEVE	5.57	49
PESC	4.48	56
Total	54.58	1,666

Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

This section has provided an overview of how the empirical chapters operationalise legislative participation. There are wide variations in participation across MEPs and across the three stages of the legislative process under analysis. In addition, as predicted in Chapter 2, there is considerable variation in the average salience of each policy area at different stages of the legislative process.

Aside from measuring legislative participation and specialisation at different stages of the policy process in the European Parliament, the empirical analysis requires the collection of a substantial number of explanatory variables. Most of these variables are described in more detail below.

II.c. Other Variables

Policy Influence

First, the empirical analysis requires controls for the influence of the European Parliament in the policy area where MEPs formulate policy and decide on existing proposals. Due to the layout of the two datasets, two different measures of policy influence are required. However, in both cases the influence of the European Parliament is measured as a function of the legislative decision-making procedure that is used. As noted in the previous Chapter, the European Parliament acts as an equal co-legislator with the European Council on legislation that falls under the co-decision procedure. The EP has substantially less influence in other decision-making procedures.

At the policy formulation stage (Chapter 5), influence is measured using a dummy variable, which assumes the value 1 if the report at hand falls under the co-decision procedure and the value 0 if it does not. Because the units of analysis at the decision-making and oversight stages are different, this variable cannot be used in Chapters 4 and 6. Instead, a committee's policy influence is measured as the percentage of its reports that fall under the co-decision procedure. The higher this percentage the more power the European Parliament has in the policy areas under the jurisdiction of the committee.

Left-Right Policy Positions

Hypotheses 1 and 2 relate to the partisan affiliation of MEPs. MEPs who are members of the same party are likely to have policy preferences that are closer to one another than to members of other parties.⁵ In order to verify that the estimated party

⁵ Indeed, if a legislator's preferences are consistently closer to a party other than their own, they are likely to swap allegiance. In the national context, there is ample evidence of MPs crossing the floor or setting up their own parties. In the context of the European Parliament, party switching is somewhat more complicated. However, there are many examples where entire national party delegations decided to leave their party group, either to set up a new group (e.g. the creation of the centrist ALDE in the 6th EP), merge with another group (e.g. Forza Europa's accession to the Conservative EPP-ED) or to join

effect is due to partisan affiliation rather than individual policy preferences, all chapters control for the individual policy positions of MEPs along the left right spectrum.

These distance measures are based on *Nominate* scores for the period July 1999-January 2002, which are available online.⁶ *Nominate* uses MEP roll call voting records to determine ideal points for individual legislators across three dimensions (see Hix, 2001 for further details about *Nominate* methodology). The first dimension is usually interpreted as reflecting a left-right cleavage whereas the interpretation of the other two dimensions is less clear-cut (see for instance Hix et al., forthcoming). The left-right position for each party group (national party/plenary) is constructed as the median *Nominate* score of all group (national party/plenary) members. Finally, policy distance from the party group (national party/plenary) is the squared difference of an MEP's individual *Nominate* score and the *Nominate* score for his or her party group (national party/plenary).

Other Variables

Several additional variables at the individual, party and country levels are included in the analysis. First, *party size* is the number of MEPs for each national party included in the analysis. Party group affiliation in the three largest groups is coded as a dummy variable, which assumes the value of 1 for MEPs who are members of the EPP, ELDR or PES respectively and 0 for other legislators. Though MEPs from all party groups are included in the analysis, the empirical tests in Chapter 2 focus on the three largest groups, which are most influential in the European Parliament and have a much more developed party structure than the smaller groups at the fringes of the political spectrum.

an existing group (e.g. UK Tory leader David Cameron's proposal to leave the Christian Democratic EPP for the anti-European UEN).

⁶ See <http://personal.lse.ac.uk/hix/HixNouryRolandEPdata.HTM>.

Chapter 6 requires a set of variables that describe legislative-executive relations between MEPs, their national parties and the European Commission. MEPs from national party delegations that are directly represented in the European Commission are coded as having their 'own' commissioner (*Party has 'Own' Commissioner=1*) compared with MEPs without direct Commission representation (*Party has 'Own' Commissioner=0*). If an MEP from a national party with a commissioner enquires about 'their' portfolio, the question is treated as a question to their own commissioner (*Question to 'Own' Commissioner=1*) compared to questions that do not fall within the jurisdiction of the party's commissioner (*Question to 'Own' Commissioner=0*). Finally, *Question w/in Committee Jurisdiction* is coded 1 for questions that fall within the jurisdiction of the author's own committee portfolio.

Chair/Vice-Chair and *Substitute* are dummy variables that measure an MEP's office status within his committee.⁷ The appropriate variables are coded 1 if an MEP is either a committee chair, vice-chair or substitute and 0 if he/she is not. *Incumbency* is also a dummy variable coded 1 for MEPs who were re-elected in 1999 and 0 for freshmen. Number of questions, reports and committees joined are continuous variables that evaluate the level of participation for each MEP at each stage of the policy process.

Finally, all models reported in Chapters 4-6 control for differences across national electoral systems. Previous research has found that the size of electoral districts and leadership control over representatives determine the importance of 'cultivating a personal vote' (Carey and Shugart 1995). MEPs elected under open lists in a decentralised candidate selection process have a greater incentive to get the vote out

⁷ Of course, committee rank can also be defined as a continuous variable ranging from the lowest rank (substitute) to the highest (chair). However, such a specification complicates the interpretation of the regression coefficients. Also it does not, on the whole, make a significant difference to the empirical results. Indeed, in the absence of any empirical distinction, chapters 4 and 5 combine the two primary committee leadership positions (chair and vice-chair) into a single dummy variable.

than MEPs whose re-selection depends primarily on the party leadership.⁸ The effect of district magnitude is more ambiguous and may work in favour or against personal vote-seeking (Carey and Shugart, 1995). Data on ballot structure, candidate selection and the size of electoral districts are taken from Farrell and Scully (2002) and Hix (2004). District magnitude is a continuous variable whereas ballot and candidate selection are coded 0 for open/decentralised systems, 0.5 for order/mixed systems and 1 for closed/centralised systems respectively.

III. Model Estimation for Hierarchical Data: A Random Effects Specification

As the discussion above has shown already, the datasets used to test the hypotheses in Chapter 2 feature different units of analysis, dependent and explanatory variables at different data levels. Committee reports are the primary unit of analysis at the policy formulation stage, parliamentary questions are analysed at the oversight stage and individual committee members form the unit of analysis at the decision-making stage of the policy process. More importantly, all datasets include variation at the level of individual MEPs, national party delegations, party groups and countries. Some of these different levels of data are nested within one another: individual representatives are affiliated with national parties, which are elected in the different member states that make up the European Union. In other words, there is a hierarchy between the different data levels.

Such hierarchical datasets present several challenges for traditional statistical analysis. Specifically, they give rise to ‘nested sources of variability’, which are differences in the variation of the dependent variable across and within levels of the data (see e.g. Snijders and Bosker, 2004 for more detail). In other words, hierarchical data distinguish between variation at the level of the primary unit of analysis and one

⁸ I thank Rick Whitaker for this observation.

(or several) additional levels that provide the ‘context’ within which this variation takes place. For instance, nationality might be an important factor in explaining legislative behaviour measured at the level of individual MEPs. Ignoring the layered nature of the data and the possible clustering it engenders at different levels may omit an important explanatory element and undermine the accuracy of the model’s estimation (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002).

However, once the challenges of nested variability are resolved, multi-level analyses are particularly rewarding because they allow for inferences about the relative impact of the explanatory variables at each data level and they provide an estimation of the ‘residual variability’ for each level, with potentially interesting interpretations.

Most statistical research in the social sciences uses ordinary least squares (OLS) estimations with dummy and interaction variables to account for contextual variation at different levels of data. As Steenbergen and Jones (2002) point out, however, such dummy variable or interactive models have important weaknesses. On one hand, dummy variables can account for data clustering at different levels but they do not provide much explanatory leverage.⁹ On the other hand, interactive models, which allow predictions about the relative effect of different explanatory variables across data levels, do not provide a satisfactory solution to the problems associated with data clustering.

More fundamentally, in some instances it can prove very impractical (and even technically impossible) to account for all contextual variation with dummy and interaction variables. In the case of the datasets described in this chapter, for instance, it is virtually impossible to incorporate a dummy variable for every MEP who engages

⁹ A similar caveat applies to models with so-called “robust standard errors”. While these models adjust the standard errors to take into account data clusters, they do not allow for substantive interpretation of these hierarchical multi-level effects.

in parliamentary questioning or for every committee member who writes one or more reports in a particular committee. Because we cannot account for data clustering at the level of individual MEPs or committee members, using OLS in these cases requires the assumption that all observations are independent from one another at the individual level. Clearly, this assumption is not justified in the case of committee members who write more than one report over the period of analysis (in a single or in different committees) or for MEPs who table several questions over the course of the legislature (in a single or several different policy areas). Ordinary least squares (OLS) is not an appropriate modelling technique for hierarchical data where the independence assumption does not hold and where the use of dummy variables is impractical.

Due to these weaknesses, this thesis adopts an alternative estimation technique, which has enjoyed growing popularity in political (and other social) sciences: multi-level modelling with hierarchical random effects. Multi-level modelling with random effects relaxes the assumption of traditional OLS specification that the covariance between individual observations equals 0 (i.e. it relaxes the assumption that all observations are independent from one another). Indeed, to get back to our previous example, if MEPs from the same countries exhibit similar patterns of legislative participation and specialisation in the EP (e.g. as a result of a particular political culture), then this covariance is not zero.

By using a random effects specification, we can estimate a model that explains patterns of representation in the European Parliament at the individual level while taking into account the ‘contextual’ effects of nationality. Formally, the basic multi-level model is easily derived from the standard OLS model. Let the response Y_{ij} be the

representational performance of MEP i , from country j . X_{ij} is an explanatory variable of interest. The model we would like to estimate is:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_1 X_{ij} + e_{ij} \quad (1.0)$$

(Where): $\beta_{0j} = \beta_0 + u_{0j} \quad (1.1)$

(By Substitution): $Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ij} + e_{ij} + u_{0j} \quad (2.0)$

Equation (2.0) describes a hierarchical model with a single random effect for nationality. The first part of the model resembles the standard OLS technique with its fixed parameters β_0 and β_1 . The second part of the model, which contains the error terms, is different from ordinary least squares however. u_{0j} represents random variation at the country level (level two) whereas e_{ij} is the error term associated with the individual (level one). For each observation, the model allows the regression error to vary depending on the individual and the country that he or she is from.

Using equation 2.0, we can compare the representational performance of individual MEPs within their country and across all member states represented in the European Parliament. The covariance between individuals from the same country is not assumed to be zero. However, the model still assumes that the covariance between individuals from different countries (u_j, u_k), the covariance between error terms of individuals from different countries (e_{ij}, e_{ik}) and the covariance between a country effect and an individual in a different party (u_j, e_{ik}) is zero.

The empirical chapters in this thesis use a random effects specification similar to that in equation (2.0). Of course, with a larger number of explanatory variables, the equations needed to test the hypotheses derived in Chapter 2 are more complex. In addition, some of these estimations will include more than one random effect to account for possible data clustering at multiple levels. However, these extensions do not fundamentally alter the workings of the basic model presented in equation (2.0).

The next section summarizes the discussion in this chapter and the hypotheses to be tested in the remainder of the thesis.

IV. Summary

This chapter has presented the research design and data to be used in the empirical part of this thesis and it has introduced the statistical tools that allow us to test the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2. The thesis adopts a quantitative design because its research questions are more suitable for statistical analysis than for a qualitative approach. Nevertheless, qualitative evidence will be used when appropriate to corroborate the quantitative results or refine interpretation of the findings.

Most of the data for the analysis are easily available online from the European Parliament's website which makes it possible for future researchers to replicate and build on this study. Defining salience as a function of national party manifestos overcomes problems of reliability and validity that affect studies based on public opinion surveys (such as MIP or closed ended questions) and content analysis of media coverage. In addition, measuring issue salience based on national party manifestos does not rely on a dataset that is specific to the European Parliament, which facilitates further study on other legislatures or different (or even multiple) time frames.

Finally, the chapter introduces an increasingly popular technique for addressing the multi-level nature of the datasets to be analysed in this thesis. Instead of the more common ordinary least squares regressions (OLS) with fixed effects, a hierarchical model with random effects is used. Statistically, using a random effects specification makes sense because all three datasets in this study are organised around multiple levels, including individual MEPs, their partisan affiliation and nationality.

Interpretation of the estimated random effects allows us to assess the differential effect of the explanatory variables on political representation at various data levels.

This chapter concludes the first part of the thesis. Chapter 1 has charted the evolution of political representation across time and derived an alternative conceptualisation based on the idea of responsiveness. Chapter 2 has developed a model of political representation as a function of institutional and party-political incentives at different stages of the legislative process. Finally, this chapter has operationalised the concepts in Chapter 2 and set the stage for a sophisticated empirical analysis.

The second part proceeds with the empirical analysis to test the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 focuses on committee decision-making to examine which MEPs participate and specialise in which committee meetings. Chapter 5 analyses political representation in policy formulation via committee reports. Chapter 6 moves away from the committee structure in the European Parliament to discuss how MEPs oversee the Commission and represent their constituents at Question-Time. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with a summary of the findings and a discussion of their implications for democracy in the European Parliament and in other legislatures.

APPENDIX 3.A. PARTY MANIFESTO CODING FRAME

Policy Code (from Budge et al)	Description	Policy Area
101	Foreign Relations: Positive	AFET
102	Foreign Relations: Negative	AFET
103	Anti-imperialism	AFET
104	Military: Positive	AFET
105	Military: Negative	AFET
106	Peace	AFET
107	Internationalism: Positive	AFET, DEVE
108	European Community: Positive	AFCO
109	Internationalism: Negative	AFET, DEVE
110	European Community: Negative	AFCO
201	Freedom & Human Rights	AFET, DEVE
202	Democracy	LIBE
203	Constitutionalism: Positive	LIBE
204	Constitutionalism: Negative	LIBE
301	Decentralisation	RETT
302	Centralisation	RETT
304	Political Corruption	LIBE
401	Free Enterprise	ECON
402	Incentives	ECON
403	Market Regulation	ECON
404	Economic Planning	ECON
405	Corporatism	ECON
406	Protectionism: Positive	ECON, INDU
407	Protectionism: Negative	ECON, INDU
410	Productivity	ECON
411	Technology & Infrastructure	INDU
412	Controlled Economy	ECON
413	Nationalization	ECON
414	Economic Orthodoxy	ECON
501	Environmental Protection	ENVI
502	Culture	CULT
503	Social Justice	EMPL
504	Welfare State Expansion	EMPL
505	Welfare State Limitation	EMPL
506	Education Expansion	CULT
507	Education Limitation	CULT
605	Law & Order	LIBE
606	Social Harmony	EMPL
607	Multiculturalism: Positive	EMPL
608	Multiculturalism: Negative	EMPL
703	Agriculture & Farmers	AGRI

Note: See pp. 222-8 in Budge et al., (2001) for more detailed descriptions of these variables. Saliency is the percent total of each party manifesto dedicated to one of the 13 policy areas in the study, irrespective of the policy position that the party advocates. Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESCE = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

APPENDIX 3.B. SALIENCE OF ALL 13 POLICY AREAS BY NATIONAL PARTY

PARTY	AFET	LIBE	ECON	INDU	EMPL	ENVI	AGRI	PESC	RETT	CULT	DEVE	AFCO	FEMM
AGALEV	10.8	15.0	11.3	6.8	10.8	0.5	1.3	1.3	1.3	11.0	2.4	2.6	0.8
AN	12.7	9.6	23.5	7.8	2.4	0.0	3.6	3.6	5.4	9.0	3.6	0.0	1.2
CCD	1.9	13.0	14.8	0.0	9.3	3.7	0.0	0.0	25.9	7.4	0.0	3.7	0.0
CD&V	5.6	16.2	11.7	4.1	11.5	0.2	1.0	1.0	6.1	5.7	2.3	3.0	1.8
CDA	8.8	13.7	6.9	5.1	19.3	6.9	1.7	1.7	1.2	7.3	4.6	2.7	3.8
CDS-PP	6.7	12.5	14.0	5.9	10.1	5.5	4.1	4.1	1.3	10.1	0.1	6.7	5.3
CDU	6.0	7.4	18.1	6.5	7.0	4.2	3.7	3.7	2.3	1.4	2.3	9.8	1.4
CON	4.4	14.9	22.6	6.2	6.6	2.0	0.6	0.6	4.2	4.6	1.0	6.7	1.4
CP	2.5	5.0	25.6	1.7	9.1	11.6	1.2	1.2	14.5	7.9	1.2	4.1	8.3
CSU	6.0	7.4	18.1	6.5	7.0	4.2	3.7	3.7	2.3	1.4	2.3	9.8	1.4
D66	8.7	14.1	10.9	7.4	10.5	8.2	0.6	0.6	2.5	13.6	5.0	2.3	2.7
DC	0.0	6.6	16.4	9.8	4.9	0.0	3.3	3.3	13.1	8.2	0.0	4.9	1.6
DG	5.1	3.8	6.8	6.4	12.1	24.5	0.8	0.8	1.4	8.5	2.9	0.6	1.2
DIKKI	16.9	14.9	9.1	2.2	7.5	0.7	7.1	7.1	2.7	14.9	1.9	4.4	8.1
DP	4.6	4.8	18.2	11.1	14.8	7.3	3.1	3.1	0.2	9.8	2.1	9.6	0.6
DS	5.6	12.1	21.5	4.7	9.3	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.9	15.9	0.0	1.9	5.6
EA	16.7	8.5	13.6	5.9	6.6	3.5	0.0	0.0	16.9	0.0	7.3	7.1	2.8
ECOLO	5.1	9.6	4.4	2.0	9.9	8.1	1.1	1.1	9.8	6.2	2.7	1.5	1.0
FDL	8.7	17.0	12.2	4.4	10.5	3.3	1.6	1.6	2.1	13.0	1.0	1.7	1.3
FF	4.0	10.6	19.7	6.6	7.4	7.4	4.5	4.5	4.5	7.1	0.9	1.7	5.4
FG	1.3	11.3	21.6	5.2	9.3	6.6	2.8	2.8	5.0	6.7	0.0	2.4	3.6
FI	11.1	22.2	20.4	1.9	11.1	3.7	0.0	0.0	3.7	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
FN	13.3	22.7	14.7	5.3	1.3	8.0	4.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0
FP	13.1	9.5	19.0	1.2	4.8	6.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	6.0	3.6	3.6	7.1
FPO	8.7	28.9	25.5	0.7	4.7	2.7	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	6.0
FV	0.9	6.0	11.5	9.2	3.7	44.2	5.1	5.1	0.9	3.2	0.0	0.9	0.0
GL	12.3	12.0	2.8	1.4	12.8	10.3	0.0	0.0	1.4	4.6	5.5	2.2	13.3
GP-I	8.3	12.9	4.9	1.9	6.1	14.2	2.1	2.1	4.9	4.7	2.1	4.2	7.2
GRUNE	17.0	3.0	8.5	1.5	6.5	14.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	7.0	7.0	8.5	5.0
GRUNE-A	14.5	17.1	17.1	1.7	5.1	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.9	10.3	12.0
IU	7.3	13.1	13.6	7.1	7.1	6.1	0.5	0.5	3.5	10.1	1.4	1.6	4.1
KD	2.4	10.8	21.6	0.0	18.6	10.8	0.0	0.0	1.2	10.2	1.8	0.6	7.8
KESK	7.3	0.0	31.7	0.0	14.6	22.0	2.4	2.4	0.0	0.0	2.4	7.3	4.9
KF	1.8	17.7	18.6	3.5	6.2	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	9.7	0.0	0.9	0.0
KKE	38.8	20.4	6.2	1.6	9.1	0.0	1.1	1.1	0.4	2.8	2.8	8.0	4.8
KOK	2.9	2.3	31.0	5.3	9.9	3.5	2.9	2.9	0.0	11.1	0.6	2.3	12.9
LAB	7.8	11.4	15.9	7.2	9.3	3.4	0.1	0.1	5.4	5.9	3.0	3.7	5.4
LAB-I	8.2	17.4	15.6	3.8	3.7	6.1	0.9	0.9	3.4	6.7	2.1	2.2	16.4
LD	9.9	12.7	17.2	5.1	11.2	8.0	1.4	1.4	4.5	8.2	4.1	5.4	6.5
LN	9.5	12.3	14.9	6.3	6.3	8.0	3.0	3.0	13.8	10.4	0.7	5.9	1.5
MP	6.3	9.0	37.1	3.9	0.0	3.0	0.3	0.3	0.6	16.8	0.6	9.3	4.8
ND	1.2	2.7	19.4	3.7	1.9	14.9	0.0	0.0	7.5	30.5	0.5	5.4	0.4
OVP	1.3	1.3	54.6	6.7	10.4	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	1.3	0.4	0.8
PASOK	12.6	8.6	13.7	7.1	11.0	4.0	7.7	7.7	4.6	15.6	4.5	4.7	3.9
PCF	8.6	12.9	20.0	0.0	11.4	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.0	4.3	0.0	4.3	14.3
PCS	10.6	8.8	18.8	5.4	12.5	2.6	1.2	1.2	1.4	12.3	9.6	2.6	2.2
PDS	8.1	16.7	2.0	1.1	8.3	5.9	1.6	1.6	1.6	7.0	2.0	6.5	11.7
PNV	7.1	4.7	18.5	11.1	9.4	4.7	1.9	1.9	11.2	5.1	3.9	9.1	1.5
POSL	2.8	3.8	12.8	13.9	16.5	6.9	1.8	1.8	1.2	16.4	1.7	1.1	1.5

PP	5.5	12.2	18.2	12.2	11.5	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.7	8.4	1.1	4.0	0.9
PPI	0.0	6.6	16.4	9.8	4.9	0.0	3.3	3.3	13.1	8.2	0.0	4.9	1.6
PRC	6.1	7.4	13.5	7.4	15.3	2.5	0.0	0.0	1.2	6.1	4.3	4.9	5.5
PRL	8.7	17.0	12.2	4.4	10.5	3.3	1.6	1.6	2.1	13.0	1.0	1.7	1.3
PS	9.8	16.8	11.2	2.8	4.9	4.2	3.5	3.5	0.0	9.8	0.7	11.9	11.9
PS-b	7.0	19.3	7.5	2.6	16.3	4.2	0.6	0.6	1.9	7.3	2.9	1.9	4.5
PSOE	9.2	7.4	13.6	11.6	11.9	4.4	0.8	0.8	3.3	8.2	5.6	3.6	2.2
PvDA	6.8	10.3	9.7	10.1	13.7	9.4	0.1	0.1	2.0	10.3	4.5	2.7	6.8
PS-P	8.8	8.5	18.6	8.9	10.9	4.6	2.7	2.7	4.2	8.0	2.6	1.9	5.1
PSC	5.4	13.9	13.5	2.4	11.4	2.8	1.0	1.0	3.0	8.1	2.2	2.1	5.4
PSD	9.7	8.5	23.0	11.5	10.5	4.5	3.6	3.6	0.9	9.1	2.1	4.3	3.1
PvdA	6.8	10.3	9.7	10.1	13.7	9.4	0.1	0.1	2.0	10.3	4.5	2.7	6.8
RI-DINI	5.9	23.5	17.6	0.0	11.8	2.9	0.0	0.0	2.9	2.9	0.0	2.9	0.0
RPR	13.1	18.0	11.5	3.3	8.2	3.3	1.6	1.6	4.9	9.8	1.6	4.9	8.2
SAP	8.2	5.1	22.3	3.1	19.5	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	9.0	4.3	4.7	10.9
SD	2.3	0.5	6.5	0.9	12.4	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.5	8.8	1.8	1.8	2.3
SDP	2.0	0.0	21.6	0.0	11.8	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.8	2.0	2.0	31.4
SF	10.2	7.2	9.9	4.7	11.3	7.0	0.1	0.1	1.8	5.7	6.1	4.2	6.5
SFP	8.8	5.2	11.9	0.5	15.0	4.7	4.1	4.1	0.0	4.1	2.6	2.6	11.4
SKL	10.3	3.7	3.7	0.0	9.3	14.0	0.9	0.9	0.0	4.7	3.7	1.9	4.7
SP	4.5	17.3	4.9	1.2	17.2	4.2	0.4	0.4	2.8	4.3	0.7	2.0	5.4
SPD	5.6	6.1	18.3	2.6	6.1	7.8	2.4	2.4	0.0	4.4	3.7	5.9	6.3
SPO	11.2	9.3	8.1	4.6	10.8	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3	4.2	4.2	17.8
UDF	13.1	18.0	11.5	3.3	8.2	3.3	1.6	1.6	4.9	9.8	1.6	4.9	8.2
V	6.3	10.4	0.0	0.0	10.4	25.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.0	2.1	14.6	12.5
VAS	0.0	4.3	10.6	0.0	27.7	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.1	0.0	0.0	14.9
VB	5.3	10.3	4.6	2.3	11.4	9.9	1.0	1.0	10.9	6.9	3.1	1.6	0.8
V-DK	3.8	11.5	45.5	2.4	3.8	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.4	0.5	1.4	1.0	0.5
VLD	6.9	20.2	10.1	3.7	9.0	4.3	2.7	2.7	1.6	14.4	1.1	1.6	1.6
V-SWE	10.3	5.7	17.8	0.0	12.4	15.7	0.0	0.0	2.7	3.6	6.9	3.3	14.2
VVD	5.8	14.5	17.1	12.5	8.0	4.8	2.4	2.4	1.9	9.7	1.3	4.4	1.5

Note: Salience is measured as the percent of each party's manifesto devoted to each policy area. Row totals may exceed 100 as some issues are coded into more than one policy areas; Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

APPENDIX 3.C. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SALIENCY OF DIFFERENT POLICY AREAS

	AFET	LIBE	ECON	INDU	EMPL	AGRI	ENVI	PESC	RETT	DEVE	CULT	AFCO	FEMM
AFET	1												
LIBE	0.356	1											
ECON	-0.334	-0.193	1										
INDU	-0.151	-0.200	0.120	1									
EMPL	0.043	-0.043	-0.210	0.089	1								
AGRI	0.052	-0.151	-0.023	0.260	-0.236	1							
ENVI	-0.095	-0.268	-0.316	-0.264	-0.008	-0.029	1						
PESC	0.052	-0.151	-0.023	0.260	-0.236	1	-0.029	1					
RETT	-0.104	0.042	-0.063	0.183	-0.137	-0.056	-0.075	-0.056	1				
DEVE	0.324	-0.435	-0.273	0.124	0.286	-0.035	0.134	-0.035	-0.083	1			
CULT	-0.086	-0.143	-0.123	0.165	0.025	0.016	-0.008	0.016	0.181	-0.038	1		
AFCO	-0.008	-0.188	-0.236	-0.096	-0.306	0.278	0.232	0.278	-0.124	0.040	-0.207	1	
FEMM	0.146	-0.085	-0.292	-0.455	0.148	-0.138	0.176	-0.138	-0.316	0.153	0.046	0.165	1

Note: N=80; correlations higher than 0.200 are italicised; Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

PART 2

CHAPTER 4 – POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING

Many observers to the European Parliament have complained about the low attendance at its plenary sessions. Even some MEPs are dissatisfied with the attendance of their peers. As one internal report finds, participation at plenary in 2001 was only 49% with some countries represented on average with less than 30% of their MEPs. Also, 27.8% of legislators did not partake in roll-call voting at all.¹ In response to such embarrassingly low attendance, the European Parliament introduced an “attendance allowance” payable to all MEPs who sign in on the day of a plenary meeting. This fee is of course a regular object of ridicule for the European media. Conscious of its public image, the Socialist party group PES even expelled Austrian MEP Hans-Peter Martin for accusing his colleagues of abusing the system by signing in just to turn around and get on the next plane home.²

Apart from public perceptions, attendance at plenary, committee meetings and other legislative business also has important implications from a democratic perspective. As Chapter 2 has noted, political representation is a function of representative participation and responsive specialisation, which in turn are conditioned by party-political and institutional incentives. First, only legislators who participate actively in committee business can put their party’s policy priorities into practice. If attendance at committee meetings is consistently biased in favour of MEPs from some parties or party groups, this could have serious consequences for the

¹ Johansson, Jan, Jonas Sjöstedt, Jonas and Berivan Öngörur. Voting Procedure in the European Parliament 2001: An empirical analysis, EP document, DV\472933, 30.05.2002, (vguengl.org/medialibrary/files/1_472933ENv2.pdf)

² See Hans and the Cookie Jar, Guardian, April 8, 2004, (<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/eu/comment/0,9236,1188262,00.html>)

democratic foundations of the European Parliament. Unrepresentative attendance could affect the content of committee decisions, steer parliamentary debate in a direction that it would not otherwise have taken or shut out dissenting opinion in committee deliberations.

Second, however, defining representation as responsive specialisation also implies that patchy attendance records are not equally detrimental to the representational performance of all legislators. There are several reasons why legislators might choose not to attend all parliamentary business all the time. Rather than *levels* of participation, it is the *quality* of an MEP's engagement at different stages of the policy process that determines responsiveness. Because MEPs specialise in policy areas that help them fulfil their legislative objectives, responsiveness should be explained by examining the incentive structure that determines why MEPs engage in certain policy areas rather than others. What are the representational consequences of this selective participation at the committee stage?

This chapter analyses the implications of MEP decisions to participate in committee decision-making and specialise in certain policy areas for political representation in the European Parliament. As Chapter 2 has shown, political representation requires both representative committee deliberation as well as responsive legislative participation. In order to evaluate the representational performance of the European Parliament and its legislators in committee decision-making, we must therefore take into account both the participation and the specialisation decisions of individual MEPs. By comparing the committee work of MEPs to initial committee composition, we can draw conclusions about the impact of selective participation on the political representation of national parties at this stage of the policy process.

The chapter is organised into five parts. The next section briefly introduces the committee structure of the European Parliament and demonstrates the effect of the assignment procedure on committee composition and representativeness. Section 2 goes beyond assignments to explain participation within committees and the representativeness of committee deliberation in the EP. Section 3 addresses the second dimension of representation, responsiveness, by analysing legislative specialisation in policy areas that feature prominently in each party's political programme. Section 4 specifies a multivariate test of some of the hypotheses on the representativeness of committee deliberations and the responsiveness of committee members developed in Chapter 2. Finally, Section 5 synthesises the findings and evaluates their impact on political representation in committee decision-making in the European Parliament.

1. Representation and the Committee Assignment Procedure in the European Parliament

This section describes the composition of parliamentary committees as a result of the assignment procedure in EP and evaluates incentives for individual legislators to specialise in some committees rather than in others. By setting the rules for committee composition and structuring incentives for legislative specialisation, the assignment procedure has important implications for political representation at the decision-making stage in the European Parliament.

The number, size and responsibilities of the different committees are decided immediately after the election of a new Parliament. After each European election, committee positions are distributed among the party groups in proportion to the number of seats they hold in the Parliament. Party groups then ask their MEPs to submit requests and assign available positions based on those requests. However, these assignments are substantially constrained by the EP's own internal rules of

procedure. Most importantly, Rule 152 mandates that “the composition of the committees shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament”. Thus, the number of positions available to each party group is limited by the size of their delegation. Committee requests that would undermine this proportionality requirement cannot be granted. In line with Krehbiel’s (1991) informational theory of committee government, such proportionality rules favour heterogeneous committees and should, therefore, produce policy outcomes that reflect the preferences of the legislature as a whole. As Raunio (1997) finds, for instance, heterogeneous committees produce reports that cut across party cleavages and foster oversized majorities in the plenary. Assuming that all committee members participate equally, the proportionality requirement in the assignment procedure clearly favours representative committees that mirror the divisions within the plenary and European society as a whole.

However, there is no reason to assume that all MEPs will participate equally in all the committees to which they have been assigned. Indeed, attendance is not even limited to actual committee members only. As Rule 183 of the Rules of Procedure stipulates, “unless a committee decides otherwise, members may attend meetings of committees to which they do not belong but may not take part in their deliberations”. Also, even if most legislators stick to their assignments, the average MEP joins two committees, which leaves at least some room to choose which policy area to participate in. If there are large variations in the attractiveness of different committees in the EP, these should reflect upon patterns of participation. Both policy influence and salience should play a role in committee specialisation.

First, as pointed out before, the European Parliament is a developing legislature with different levels of influence in different policy areas. The amount of legislative

power that accrues to the Parliament is largely a function of different decision-making procedures. It is widely recognised that the EP has most of its power in areas governed by the co-decision procedure where it is an equal co-legislator with the Council of Ministers (see for instance Crombez, 1997). It has much less power over policy issues that fall under the co-operation or consultation procedures. As a result, similarly to what has been found on roll call votes (Scully, 1997; Hix et al. forthcoming), participation in committees with a high percentage of co-decision legislation may be more desirable to MEPs than participation in committees without much effect on policy.

Second, the salience of the policy areas that fall under the jurisdiction of each committee also affects incentives for MEPs to participate and specialise. As Hall (1996) finds in the context of the US House of Representatives, specialisation in line with constituency concerns is common. Certainly, if as Chapter 2 has shown, political representation is one of the main legislative objectives of MEPs, assignments to jurisdictions that feature prominently in the party's electoral manifesto should be more desirable than other posts.

Finally, differences in committee size define the scarcity of positions in each policy area. As Corbett et al (2003) note, it is not always possible for the groups to accommodate their members' committee requests because some committees are over-subscribed while others are less popular. The introduction of substitute positions alleviates the problem of over-subscription by effectively doubling committee size. At little disadvantage compared with full members, substitute positions are a safety mechanism for those who are unhappy with their primary assignments (Corbett et al, 2003). Nevertheless, not all MEPs can get into their preferred committee and the party group leadership usually has to make some difficult choices.

TABLE 4.1 PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BY ATTRACTIVENESS OF ASSIGNMENT (1999-2002)

COMMITTEE	CHAIR	MEMBERS (A)	INFLUENCE (B)	SALIENCE (C)	ATTRACTIVENESS Rank [(B*C)/A]
ECON	RANDZIO-PLATH Christa	45	28	15.62	1
ENVI	JACKSON Caroline	60	59	6.39	2
CULT	GARGANI Giuseppe	35	26	7.76	3
EMPL	ROCARD Michel	55	31	9.87	4
RETT	HATZIDAKIS Konstantinos	59	54	3.44	5
INDU	WESTENDORP Y CABEZA Carlos	60	26	4.66	6
FEMM	THEORIN Maj Britt	40	14	5.37	7
DEVE	MIRANDA Joaquim	34	22	2.32	8
AFCO	NAPOLETANO Pasqualina	30	11	3.94	9
LIBE	WATSON Graham	43	3	10.97	10
AGRI	BARINGDORF Friedrich-Wilhelm	38	8	1.57	11
AFET	BROK Elmar	65	1	7.66	12
PESC	VARELA Daniel	20	0	1.57	13
BUDG	WYNN Terence	45	47	n.a	-
JURI	PALACIO Ana	35	49	n.a	-
PETI	GEMELLI Vitaliano	30	0	n.a	-
CONT	THEATO Dietmut	21	1	n.a	-

Note: Members is the total number of committee positions excluding substitutes; Influence is the percentage of committee legislation that fell under the co-decision procedure in the first half of the fifth Parliament (1999-2002); Saliency is the (non-weighted) average saliency of each committee across all national parties included in the study; Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

Table 4.1 lists the seventeen committees of the fifth Parliament (1999-2004) in descending order of attractiveness. The ranking is based on the committee's salience, its policy influence and the number of available positions. According to this measure, the most attractive committees deal with economics and monetary affairs, followed by the influential environment committee, culture and employment and social affairs. Of the 13 committees for which salience data could be computed, fisheries, agriculture and foreign affairs score lowest.

The ranking differs substantially from other studies, which do not take salience into account (e.g. McElroy, 2001). Partly, this is due the relative crudeness of the measurement in Table 4.1. Nevertheless, the ranking does illustrate how variation in terms of policy influence and committee salience could affect incentives for legislative participation and specialisation across policy areas. Clearly, if salience, policy influence and committee size affect participation, the most attractive seats are likely to induce greater specialisation than less attractive ones.

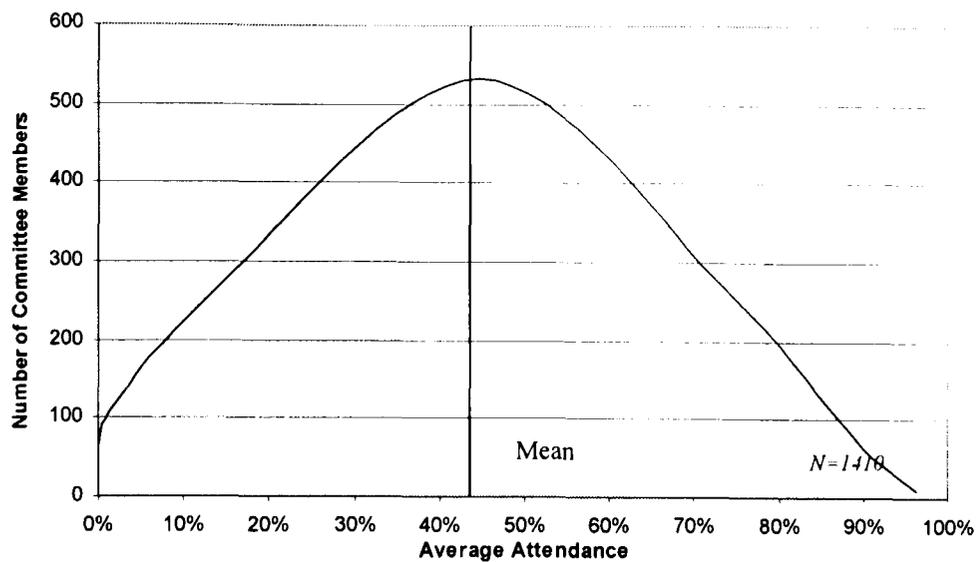
As Chapter 2 has shown, such differences in legislative participation have a substantial effect on the representativeness of legislative deliberation and the responsiveness of individual MEPs. While the distribution of posts may predict heterogeneous committees that reflect a wide range of societal interests, it is important to take into account the extent to which these posts are actually used by MEPs. Rather than committee assignments per se, legislative participation and specialisation *within* committees determine the values and interests that the European Parliament represents. Given the distribution of committee posts, what induces some MEPs to participate more than others? What is the effect of differential levels of committee participation on political representation in Europe?

II. Representativeness and Legislative Participation by MEPs

Representative committee deliberations require participation from a broad range of committee members. If some members consistently abstain from participation in committee work, this can affect the range of values and interests that are represented in the policy areas under the jurisdiction of the committee. Figure 4.1 describes distribution of average attendance figures across committee members. The figure shows, first of all, that there is considerable variation in attendance across the full range of possible values along the X-axis (0-100%), which indicates that legislators make individual choices about how many of their committee meetings to attend and which policy areas to focus on. As predicted in Chapter 2, MEPs participate in some policy areas but not others, with potential implications for the representative nature of committee deliberation. The picture in Figure 4.1 confirms the need to identify the incentives that lead to such radical differences in participation.

Second, average attendance is more or less normally distributed around its mean (44%), with most MEPs attending slightly less than half of their meetings. These numbers resemble those cited earlier on participation in plenary sessions and they raise similar concerns about the democratic legitimacy of committee decision-making. If less than half of all legislators participate in decision-making, policy outcomes at the European level could deviate substantially from the preferences of the electorate. Even more worryingly, a large share of committee members boast attendance figures that are close to zero. Indeed, $\frac{1}{4}$ committee members only attended 14 percent of their committee meetings. A substantial number of MEPs seems uninterested in, at least some of, the committees to which they have been assigned.

FIGURE 4.1. DISTRIBUTION OF AVERAGE ATTENDANCE ACROSS COMMITTEE MEMBERS



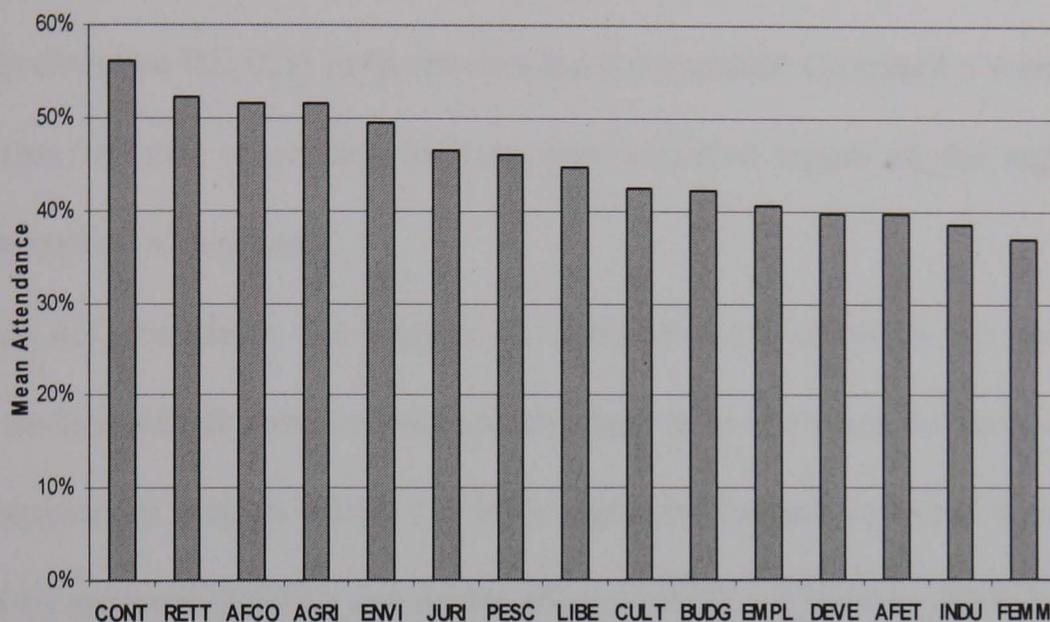
Note: Unit of analysis: committee member; the figure shows the number of committee members for each level of average attendance (frequency distribution).

In order to evaluate the impact of such voluntary abstention on political representation, we have to determine, first, which MEPs decide to opt out of committee work and, second, whether there are differences across policy areas. Figure 4.2 shows variation in average attendance across all seventeen parliamentary committees. The budgetary control committee (CONT) has the highest average attendance, followed by the committee on regions, transport and tourism (RETT), constitutional affairs (AFCO) and agriculture (AGRI). The regional committee is one of the larger committees and quite influential though it is not among the most coveted assignments in Table 4.1 (see also McElroy, 2001).

All remaining committees have attendance figures below 50%, which means that, on average, their members attend less than half of all meetings. At the low end of the spectrum, women's rights (FEMM), trade, research and energy (INDU), development (DEVE) and foreign affairs (AFET) have average attendance records that do not exceed 40%. The least attended committee (FEMM) is small and generally considered not very attractive in terms of salience or policy influence. However, trade, research and energy (INDU) is one of the larger and most influential groupings in the

European Parliament. Similarly, a seat on the foreign affairs committee (AFET), though not influential or particularly salient is often considered to carry a lot of prestige (e.g. Corbett et al, 2005).

FIGURE 4.2. MEAN ATTENDANCE BY COMMITTEE (1999-2002)



Abbreviations: Unit of analysis: committee member; AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

There does not seem to be an obvious explanation for variation in attendance across policy areas. There is no clear hierarchy in terms of committee attractiveness to MEPs. Average attendance is contained between 56 and 38 percent with most committees around the mid-40 mark. Comparing the results in Figure 4.2 with the committee ranking in Table 4.1, neither average salience, policy influence, size, nor all three indicators combined seem to explain mean attendance. The generally low variation in figure 4.2 could indicate that every committee is attractive to a core group of members who participate more extensively than their peers. Such a pattern would, of course, raise grave concerns about the representativeness of committee deliberations.

However, this interpretation of Figure 4.2 hinges on the assumption that there is little variation in participation across meetings within each committee. Indeed, so far,

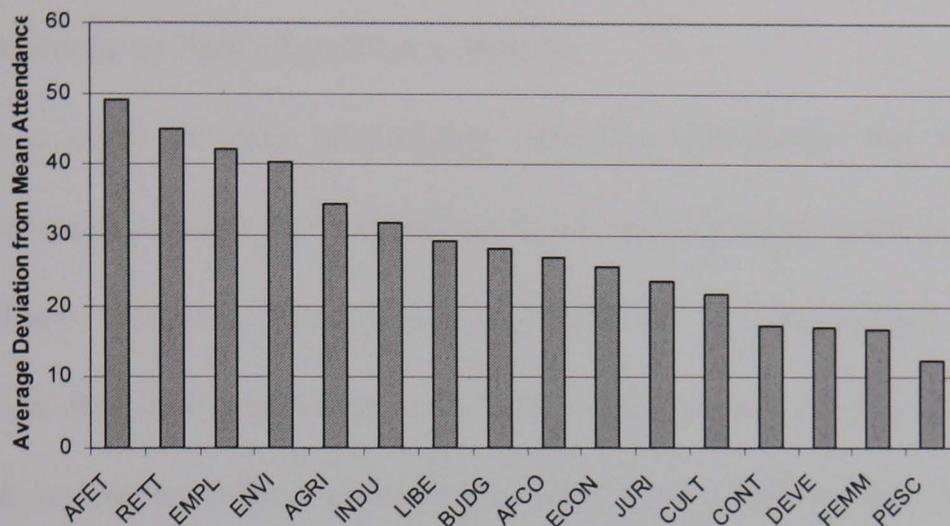
the discussion has assumed that all meetings of a particular committee are equally important. Of course, depending on the precise matter to be discussed, some meetings may be of much greater relevance to a large range of members within a particular committee than others. For instance, it is likely that some debates on the controversial chemicals directive REACH in the environment committee exercised a wider draw on the members of that committee than an own-initiative report on the regulation of animal transport in Denmark.

Figure 4.3 completes the picture of committee participation by showing the average deviation of attendance between meetings from the mean for each committee. The committee on foreign affairs (AFET) boasts the highest variation in attendance, followed by regional (RETT) and social affairs (EMPL). Fisheries (PESC), women's rights (FEMM), development (DEVE) and budgetary control (CONT) have much lower variation. A large average deviation indicates that a large number of MEPs attend the most interesting meetings but decide to miss out on other debates that are of less interest to them. Lower variation, on the other hand, suggests substantial specialisation in particular policy areas on the part of a minority and near-exclusion of the majority of committee members.

There is a somewhat larger difference in within-committee variation than in mean attendance across committees. However, the ranking primarily reflects differences in committee size, with the largest committees showing the largest deviations from mean attendance. Committees with clearly defined jurisdictions, such as fisheries, have generally lower variation in attendance than those that cover several policy areas, such as foreign affairs, human rights, common security and defence policy (AFET) or regional policy, transport and tourism (RETT). This explanation does not, however,

account for the substantial difference in variation between the two most narrowly defined committees: agriculture and fisheries.

FIGURE 4.3. AVERAGE VARIATION IN ATTENDANCE WITHIN COMMITTEES



Note: Unit of analysis: committee member; Bars show the average deviation from mean attendance within each committee: $\frac{1}{n} \sum |x - \bar{x}|$; Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

The analysis in this section has shown that individual committee members choose how much they want to participate in each committee despite proportionality rules in committee composition. While proportionality rules may determine how the parliamentary leadership distributes legislative benefits, the heterogeneity of committee assignments is undermined by the selective participation decisions of individual MEPs. By choosing which policy areas to become most involved in, MEPs directly affect the representativeness of committee deliberation in the European Parliament. Clearly, further examination is needed to distinguish the motivation for individual MEPs to specialise in some policy areas but not in others.

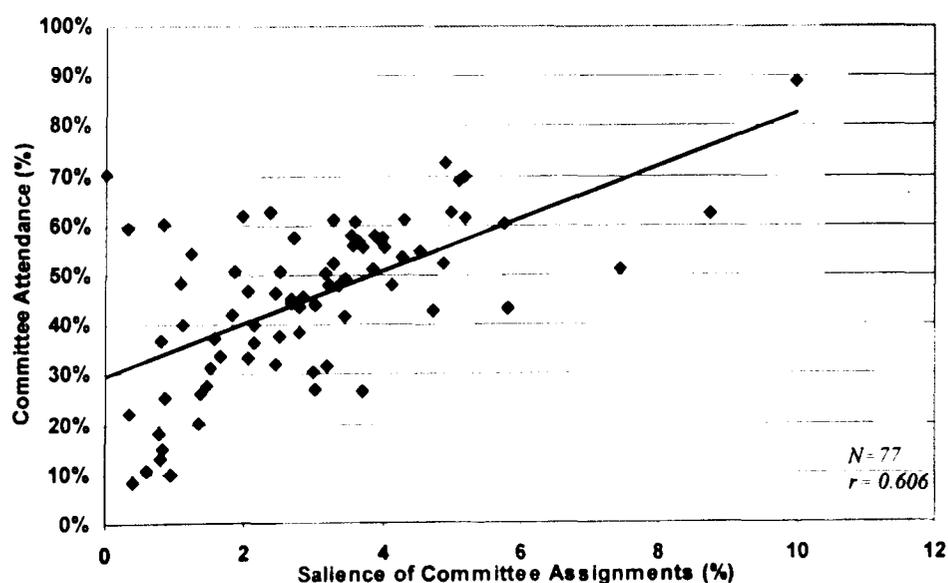
III. Responsiveness and Legislative Specialisation in EP Committees

Chapter 2 assumes that MEPs specialise in certain policy areas in the European Parliament in order to address their national party's policy priorities. Figure 4.4 changes units of analysis to take a more direct look at the relationship between the

salience of different committees as measured in party manifestos and attendance at the level of national party delegations in the European Parliament. For each national party included in the analysis, the graph plots the average attendance of its members against the average salience of their committee positions.

There is a clear positive relationship between attendance and salience. The correlation between salience and attendance at the national party level is 0.6, which is quite significant. National parties whose MEPs sit in committees that feature prominently in electoral manifestos have better attendance records than parties that did not gain access to salient committees. Attendance varies from its theoretical minimum (0) to almost 90%, with most parties attending 30%-60% of their committee meetings. The figure indicates that legislators specialise in particular policy areas in order to respond to the priorities set out in their party's manifesto. Given a set of assignments, MEPs target their legislative participation to those policy areas that are most important in terms of their party mandate. Legislators who were not assigned any salient positions scale back their engagement and focus on other legislative activities at different stages of the policy process.

FIGURE 4.4. AVERAGE COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE AND SALIENCE OF COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS, BY NATIONAL PARTY



Note: Unit of analysis: national party

Of course, Figure 4.4 is slightly misleading in that it does not take into account the size of each national party. Instead, every national party is represented by one observation, independently of the size of its delegation in the EP. The party with the highest salience and attendance record in the dataset, for instance, is the Basque nationalist PNV, which only has a single representative in the EP. Omitting the PNV in Figure 4.4 strengthens the association substantially. A more sophisticated multivariate analysis is required to take into account factors such as party size that may distort the correlation between salience and attendance.

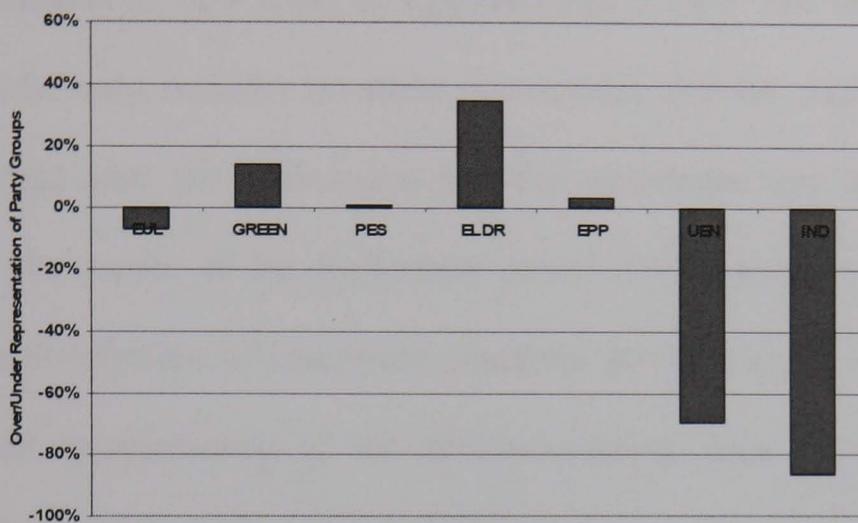
Finally, Figure 4.5 switches units of analysis once again to take a closer look at the impact of committee specialisation on the representational performance of party groups. The bars compare the average responsiveness of an MEP from each party group to the average responsiveness of all MEPs. If legislative participation were not affected by partisan factors, the proportional committee assignment procedure should ensure that MEPs from all groups are equally responsive. Instead, the figure shows that responsiveness varies substantially across party groups.

First, the two party groups that are closest on the left-right spectrum and form a simple majority in the Parliament (EPP and ELDR) are over-represented in salient committee meetings. Indeed, the pivotal group (ELDR) on most votes is over-represented by more than 30% in meetings that are salient to its national parties. While the EPP is slightly more over-represented than the PES, the difference does not appear to be very significant.³ In contrast, party groups on the extreme left and right are least active in the most salient areas. With the exception of the Greens, which

³ However, the picture may become clearer once we account for the different majority thresholds required for co-decision and non-codecision legislation. Because co-decision legislation requires an absolute (rather than a simple) majority in the second reading in the plenary, voting coalitions in the EP vary considerably across procedures (Hix, 2001). A multivariate analysis (see next section) is required to address this problem.

focus on the environment committee, representation at the committee stage seems to follow party group coalition patterns along the left-right spectrum in the EP.

FIGURE 4.5. PARTY GROUP SPECIALISATION AND RESPONSIVENESS



Note: Unit of analysis: committee member; bars represent the percent difference between the average salience of a committee meeting attended by an MEP from each party group and the mean salience of all committee meetings. Abbreviations: EUL = Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left; GREEN = The Green Group in the European Parliament; PES = Group of the Party of European Socialists; ELDR = Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party; EPP = Group of the European People's Party; UEN = Union for a Europe of Nations; IND = Group of Independents for a Europe of Nations

Figure 4.5 supports the hypothesis that explains committee attendance with coalition dynamics. Open rule gives MEPs from the majority coalition a veto over the policy direction of the committee's legislative output. This creates a majoritarian dynamic that is further compounded by open rule in the plenary. With little influence over policy, MEPs on both extremes of the political spectrum (such as UEN and EUL) have little incentive to attend and participate in their committee meetings. In contrast, the liberal party group (ELDR) is the most important coalition partner for the largest group (EPP). As such, liberal MEPs have a disproportionate impact on policy because they determine whether amendments to reports are carried and whether the committee drifts to the left in an ELDR-PES-GREEN alliance or to the right with an ELDR-EPP coalition. As a result, MEPs from this most pivotal party group have a large policy incentive to participate in their committee meetings.

IV. Political Representation in EP Committees: A Multivariate Analysis

While the descriptive results in Figures 4.1-4.5 support some of the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2, they must be interpreted with care. The tables and figures presented thus far only consider bivariate associations without controlling for other factors that might alter the relationship between attendance and salience, such as differences in the power of the Parliament across policy areas, national electoral systems or the distribution of committee positions across party groups. In order to explain political representation at the decision-making stage in the EP, a more sophisticated multivariate analysis is required.

Table 4.2 shows the results of three multivariate regressions with committee attendance as the dependent variable and country and individual-level random effects.⁴ Model (1) includes all thirteen committees under study. Because differences in policy influence and the institutional rules that govern decision-making across committees could affect the specialisation decisions of MEPs, model (2) is limited to the least influential committees where less than 1 in 4 reports fell under the co-decision procedure whereas model (3) includes only committees with more than 25% co-decision reports.⁵

As explained in Chapter 3, the random effect specification in Table 4.2 is suited for multi-level data that covers individual MEPs from different countries. This suggestion is confirmed by the second to last row in Table 4.2, which shows the probability that there is no statistically significant difference between the random-effects regression result and an OLS regression with the same independent variables which does not take into account the multi-level nature of the data. Nevertheless, the

⁴ See Chapter 3 for a detailed explanation of random effects models.

⁵ The 25% threshold was chosen because it splits the dataset in two more or less equal halves.

results are very similar across a range of different specifications of the model, including ordinary least squares (OLS) with fixed country effects.

TABLE 4.2. MULTIVARIATE REGRESSION WITH RANDOM INDIVIDUAL AND COUNTRY EFFECTS , DEPENDENT: COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE

	(1): All Committees		(2): Low Policy Influence		(3): High Policy Influence	
	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>Std .Err</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>Std .Err</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>Std .Err</i>
<i>Responsiveness</i>						
Salience	0.013**	0.002	0.021**	0.005	0.012**	0.003
PES*Salience	0.019**	0.004	0.023**	0.008	0.014**	0.005
Substitute * Salience	0.032**	0.004	0.035**	0.008	0.030**	0.005
<i>Policy Incentives</i>						
Co-decision	0.105**	0.036	-	-	-	-
PES	0.080*	0.033	0.061	0.049	0.100*	0.044
EPP	0.099**	0.030	0.116**	0.042	0.081*	0.040
ELDR	0.157**	0.042	0.138*	0.062	0.177**	0.055
<i>Electoral System</i>						
Ballot	0.009	0.045	0.026	0.057	-0.007	0.056
Candidate	0.035	0.065	0.008	0.081	0.086	0.084
District	-0.001	0.001	-0.001	0.001	-0.001	0.001
<i>Other Controls</i>						
Distance from median MEP	0.215**	0.046	0.205**	0.067	0.233**	0.060
Distance from Party Group	0.040	0.098	-0.191	0.137	0.237	0.132
Chair/Vice-Chair	0.004	0.024	-0.028	0.033	0.029	0.034
Substitute	-0.384**	0.017	-0.364**	0.028	-0.394**	0.024
Party Size	0.000	0.001	-0.001	0.002	0.001	0.001
Incumbent	-0.021	0.015	-0.050*	0.022	0.007	0.020
Number of Committees	-0.017	0.014	-0.010	0.019	-0.012	0.019
Constant	0.477**	0.069	0.504**	0.090	0.425**	0.090
<i>Random Effects</i>						
Country	0.058**	0.015	0.068**	0.022	0.069**	.019
MEP	0.072**	0.014	0.088**	0.024	0.086**	.023
Residual	0.191**	0.006	0.182**	.012	0.185**	0.011
N	887		404		483	
Prob >chi2	<0.001		<0.001		<0.001	
Log Rest. Likelihood	87.46		19.50		26.82	

*Notes: * significant at 0.05 level, ** significant at 0.01 level; unit of analysis: individual committee members; See Chapter 3 for details on random effects methodology; low policy influence refers to committees with less than 25% codecision legislation; high policy influence refers to committee with more than 25% codecision legislation; estimates for Country, MEP and Residual are the respective estimated standard deviations of the country, MEP and residual random effects; Prob >chi2 shows the probability of no difference between the random effects specification shown here and an OLS specification without random or fixed effects for country and MEP.*

First of all, in both models, the main effect of salience is positive and highly significant. In model (1) a 1 percent rise in a committee's salience raises attendance records by 1.3 percent. The salience variable remains statistically significant at the 1%

level in all three models though, substantively, it is more than three times as important in the least influential committees than in the most influential ones. Clearly, in committees where the European Parliament does not have much power over policy outcomes, salience is a larger incentive for specialisation than in committees that induce specialisation also because of their leverage over policy outcomes. Nevertheless, in both cases, the results confirm the bivariate picture in Figure 4.4. MEPs specialise in committees that are important in terms of their representational mandate, even once other incentives, such as policy influence and electoral incentives are taken into account.

Secondly, the models include two interactive terms that determine whether the relationship between salience and committee attendance is different for different sub-groups of legislators. Are there some MEPs who specialise more in policy areas that feature prominently in their party's political programme (i.e. are more responsive) than others? Chapter 2 suggests that minority MEPs should be more responsive in committee decision-making because they can focus their efforts on the most salient areas without losing their policy influence in other areas.

First, *PES*Salience* investigates the relationship between party group affiliation and responsiveness. Compared to all other party groups, MEPs from the largest 'minority' group, the PES, tend to direct their committee participation to a greater extent to salient policy areas than MEPs from other party groups. Indeed, in the first model, the relationship between salience and attendance is more than twice as strong for Socialists than for all other groups. Unlike EPP and ELDR, whose MEPs have a strong policy incentive to participate in all areas because their groups command a simple majority on the committee floor, PES representatives focus more on

representation. As models (2) and (3) show, the difference in responsiveness across party groups is particularly marked in the less influential committees.

The second interactive term, *Substitute*Salience* examines the effect of committee rank on responsiveness. In all three models, substitutes are considerably more responsive than full committee members. The positive association between attendance and salience is almost three times as large as for full committee members. Just like 'minority' MEPs with little influence over policy outcomes, substitutes are more selective in their committee participation than other legislators. Responsiveness to the public priorities of their national party motivates the participation of substitutes to a greater extent than that of rank and file committee members. This result is consistent with the hypothesis that substitute positions are used to accommodate the committee requests of MEPs who did not get into their preferred committees as full members (Corbett et al, 2003).

The relationship between salience and attendance defines the strength of an MEP's responsiveness. However, apart from such responsive specialisation on the part of individual legislators, the participation of MEPs also affects the range of values and the interests of European citizens the European Parliament represents in committee deliberations. By altering the composition of committee meetings, differences in policy incentives determine the range of interests that are represented on the committee floor.

First, in line with the findings of previous research on roll-call votes, MEPs participate more in policy areas where they have an impact from a policy perspective (Scully, 1997; Hix et al., forthcoming). As pointed out before, the European Parliament has most of its power over policy in areas governed by the co-decision procedure. If MEPs are interested in swaying actual policy outcomes in their favour,

they will participate more in these policy areas. Table 4.2 confirms that representation across all political formations is higher in policy areas where the Parliament has significant decision-making powers.

The results quantify the effect of institutional power on participation in different policy areas. In model (1), a 1% increase in the share of legislation that falls under the co-decision procedure in each committee raises the average participation rate across all MEPs by 10%, which is a substantively very important effect. However, because it affects all political formations equally, institutional power does not alter the ideological composition of committee meetings. Meetings that address policy areas where the EP plays only a consultative role are less well attended on average but their composition is not less representative of the plenary from an ideological perspective.

Second, party group affiliation affects policy incentives for participation at the committee stage. Open rule in committee and plenary enforces a ‘tyranny of the majority’ and reduces the incentive for minority MEPs to participate in their committees. As model (1) demonstrates, members of the ‘majority’ groups and, more specifically, the pivotal group within the majority, have better attendance scores than their peers from ‘minority’ groups. EPP and ELDR attend a larger share of their committee meetings than representatives of any other party group. Compared with these ‘majority’ groups, the largest ‘minority’ formation (PES) has a lower level of attendance in model (1). In Figure 4.6 different attendance levels across party groups are reflected in the intercepts. The ELDR has the highest level of attendance irrespective of the salience of the policy area, followed by the EPP and the PES.

Models (2) and (3) also distinguish between committees with large and small shares of co-decision legislation. As in model (1), the ELDR is most likely to participate in its meetings in all types of committees. However, the share of co-

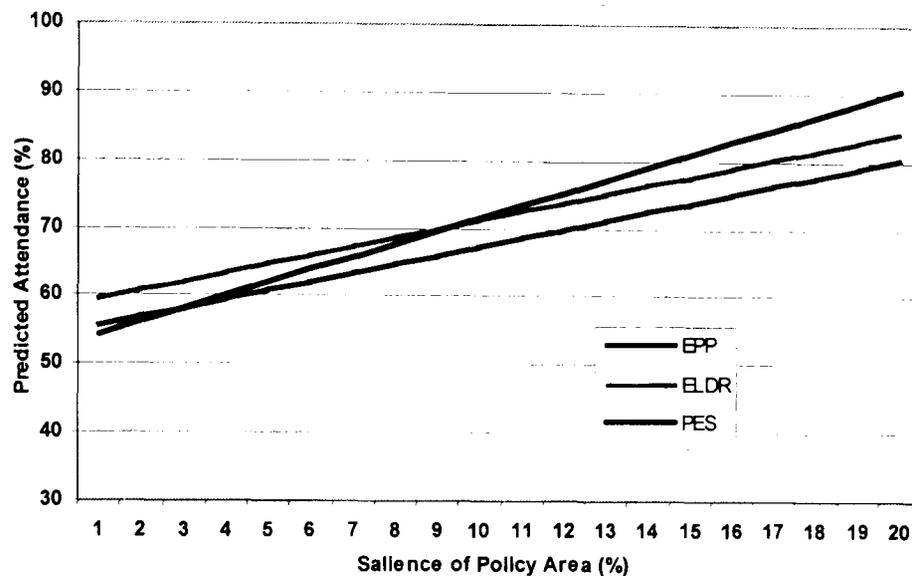
decision legislation does seem to affect the attendance patterns of the two largest groups PES and EPP. While the PES does not form part of the simple majority in most non co-decision legislation, it can form part of the winning coalition under co-decision.

As pointed out above, most of the time, the Parliament decides by simple majority of those present at the time of the vote. However, in the last stage of the co-decision procedure, the EP holds a veto right over legislation only if an absolute majority of legislators opposes the bill under consideration. Due to generally low attendance at plenary sessions, an absolute majority can only be achieved if the two largest groups EPP and PES vote together. As a result, under co-decision, PES, EPP and ELDR, all have a policy incentive to participate in committee decision-making. Whereas the PES is less represented in policy areas governed by simple majority voting, there is no statistically significant difference in the attendance patterns of EPP and PES under co-decision, where an absolute majority is required. Clearly, the institutional rules that govern decision-making in the European Union have a considerable effect on the representativeness of committee deliberation in the European Parliament.

Figure 4.6 illustrates the predicted effect of policy salience on attendance at committee meetings for the three largest party groups. The 'majority' groups, EPP and ELDR, have strong policy incentives to attend all committees irrespective of their salience because they determine committee decision-making under open rule. The minority Socialists on the other hand focus their participation on policy areas that feature prominently in their manifestos because they have little effect over actual policy outcomes in most areas. As a result, the slope of the relationship between salience and attendance is steeper for PES MEPs than it is for the simple majority coalition of EPP and ELDR. The extent to which representatives adjust their

legislative participation in response to constituency concerns depends on their party group affiliation. Figure 4.6 illustrates that the responsiveness of individual MEPs is a direct function of party group coalition dynamics in the European Parliament.

FIGURE 4.6 PREDICTED EFFECT OF POLICY SALIENCE ON COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE



Note: based on the results in model (1); Abbreviations: EPP = European People's Party; ELDR = European Liberals, Democrats and Reform Party; PES = Party of European Socialists

Third, individual policy preferences affect legislative participation decisions. In all three models in Table 4.2, preference outliers have better attendance records than MEPs who are close to the median of the committee and plenary floors, once partisan factors are taken into account. The models predict that the most extreme MEPs (*Nominate_Squared=1*) attend more than 20% more committee meetings than their colleagues. Indeed, the committee floor is one of the only opportunities for MEPs to voice their opinions freely without endangering the cohesion of the group by defecting in roll-call votes. In other words, MEPs who defect from their party groups in eventual plenary votes are likely to make their position known already at the committee stage.⁶

⁶ Note that this observation also questions the representative nature of roll-call votes as a sub-sample of all plenary votes. Because likely defectors bring up their opinions at the committee stage, the party group leadership is likely to be well aware of the positions of its members. It will use this information to make strategic decisions about whether or not to request a roll-call.

Once the partisan effect created by open rule and majority thresholds is taken into account, preference outliers engage more in all policy areas than their more moderate peers. In terms of representativeness, MEPs from the political fringes are over-represented in committee deliberations. While institutional rules make sure that committee decision-making reflects the partisan balance of power in the EP, deliberations remain heterogeneous due to the active participation of the most extreme representatives. In both cases, moderate MEPs from ‘minority’ groups (i.e. PES representatives) are most disadvantaged on the committee floor.

Finally, the estimations in Table 4.2 also control for several variables that can affect legislative specialisation decisions or distort the relative importance of responsiveness and policy incentives. Substitutes have much lower attendance records than full members. As Corbett et al (2003) observe, substitutes can attend committee meetings but are allowed to vote only if they have been designated beforehand to replace an absent full member. In comparison, full members can attend committee meetings, participate in deliberations, bid for committee reports, introduce amendments and vote on existing legislation. In model (1), substitutes attend fully 38% fewer committee meetings than their peers. All models also control for the possible effects of incumbency, party size and the number of committees that each MEP has joined. None of these variables assume statistical significance.

At the country level, differences in electoral systems do not seem to affect attendance records. District magnitude does not assume statistical significance, which confirms existing research that has deplored the weak electoral connection in the EP. Similarly, concerns for reselection by the national party do not affect the participation of MEPs at the committee stage. The coefficients on ballot structure and candidate selection are not significant in any of the models, which seems to question Kreppel’s

(2002) emphasis on reselection as an important factor in EU legislative politics. However, re-selection may play a much more prominent role in legislative activities over which national parties have more direct control, such as report allocation for instance (see Chapter 5).

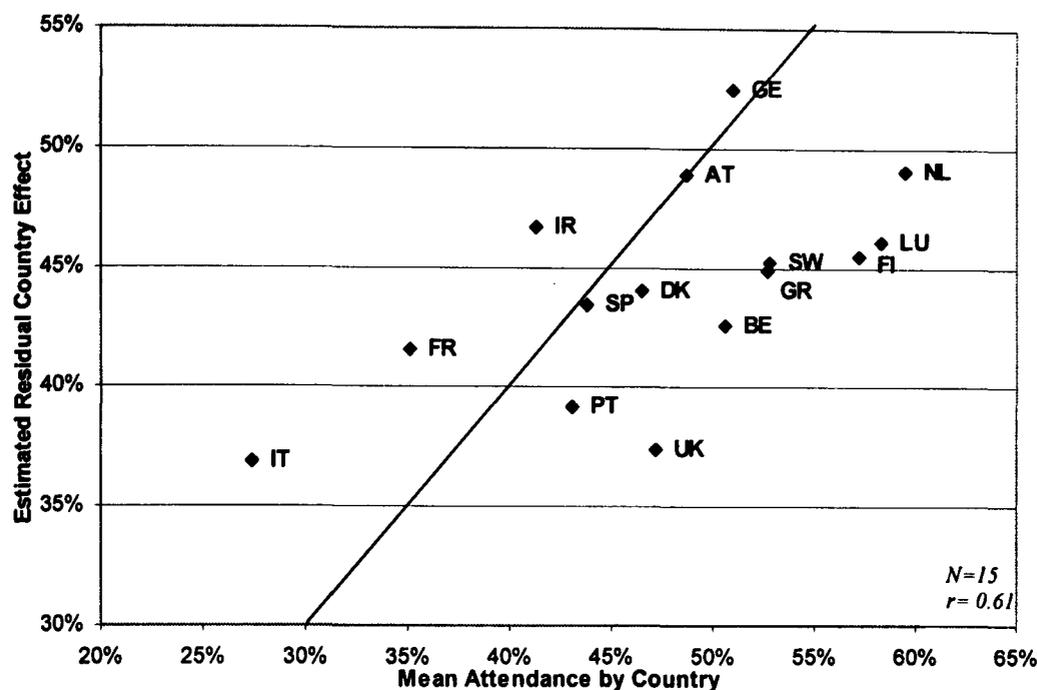
While the models are unequivocal about the lack of influence of electoral rules for MEP behaviour, they do not include any other country-level variation. One advantage of random effects regressions is that they produce residual estimates akin to the fixed effects in OLS for each level in the data without requiring the use of dummy variables.⁷ These random effects account for variation in committee attendance across countries that is not covered by the independent variables in the model. By comparing estimated random effects to the country's mean attendance, we can evaluate the explanatory power of the model for each country.

Figure 4.7 plots each country's mean attendance (x-axis) against the residual country effect estimated in model 1. If the model did not explain any cross-country variation in attendance, both series should be perfectly correlated and all observations should lie on the 45-degree line that is represented in the figure.⁸ The farther an observation is from the 45-degree line, the greater the explanatory power of the model for that country. In other words, the distance between each observation and the 45-degree line measures the extent to which a country's MEPs respond to institutional and party-political incentives in their decisions to participate in EP committees. For countries that lie above the line, the residual country effect for participation in committee decision-making increases once party-political and institutional incentives are taken into account whereas the opposite is true for countries that lie below the 45-degree line.

⁷ See Chapter 3 for further details.

⁸ Note that there is not a 45-degree inclination in the Figure because the two axes are scaled differently.

FIGURE 4.7. IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL AND PARTY-POLITICAL INCENTIVES ON COUNTRY LEVEL DIFFERENCES IN COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE



Notes: The graph plots the estimated residual effect for each country (based on model 1) against mean country attendance. The closer a country falls to the 45 degree line, the lower the impact of the institutional and party-political incentives in model (1) on the committee attendance of representatives from that country. Abbreviations: AT = Austria; BE = Belgium; DK = Denmark; FI = Finland; FR = France; GE = Germany; GR = Greece; IT = Italy; IR = Ireland; LU = Luxembourg; NL = Netherlands; PT = Portugal; SP = Spain; SW = Sweden; UK = United Kingdom;

First of all, there remains a fair amount of cross-country variation in estimated participation even once the incentive structure within the EP is taken into account. However, the difference in the scale of the two axes shows that the model has reduced this 'unexplained' variation from about a 35% range in attendance (25-60%) to about a 20% range (35-55%). Stated differently, the correlation between mean attendance and estimated mean attendance at the country level is 0.61, which indicates that the model explains about 39% ($1-0.61$) of all cross-country variation in committee attendance.⁹ The model makes a clear contribution to explaining observed differences in committee attendance across member states.

Apart from the rather vague notion of 'political culture', there does not seem to be an immediate explanation for why MEPs from some countries are better represented in committees than their peers, once the incentive structure within the EP is taken into

⁹ Note that this number does not represent the overall explanatory power of the model. It refers purely to the country level of the data and measures the difference between mean attendance and estimated mean attendance, once the independent variables in the model are taken into account. Also, this figure is based on only 15 observations (1 per country) and should therefore be interpreted with care.

account. German MEPs have the highest unexplained attendance followed by the Dutch and Austrians. Italy, the UK and Portugal on the other hand attend the fewest meetings. Generally, Mediterranean countries fall into the bottom half of the figure, which indicates a possible North-South divide in terms of representation at the committee level in the European Parliament. With the UK also in the bottom half of the figure, cross-country variation could also be a reflection of public attitudes towards the usefulness of legislative politics or the general trustworthiness of the European Parliament. In any case, if committee decision-making has an impact on policy outcomes at the European level, these countries are likely to be most disadvantaged by community policy.

III. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the empirical analysis in this chapter show how the participation and specialisation decisions of MEPs affect their responsiveness and the representative nature of committee deliberations. First, specialisation in salient policy areas determines responsiveness. Similar to what Hall (1996) finds in his study of the US Congress, MEPs direct their attention to salient policy areas. This is particularly true for legislators with little incentive to participate in a broad range of policy areas, such as MEPs from the main ‘minority’ group PES or committee substitutes. The results support hypothesis 1b in Chapter 2, which predicts that minority groups are more responsive. MEPs from the largest ‘minority’ group focus their resources on those areas that feature prominently in the manifesto. Such responsiveness is most beneficial to MEPs with lower incentives to engage in a broad range of policy areas where they might have power over outcomes.

Second, the representativeness of committee decision-making depends on incentives for participation in different policy areas. Even though EP power over

policy induces MEPs to attend their committee meetings, this ‘co-decision effect’ is less marked than in previous studies on roll-call votes (Hix et al, forthcoming; Scully, 1997). Partisan affiliation, which conditions who has an impact over policy under different majority thresholds, encourages some MEPs to engage extensively at the committee stage whereas others prefer to save their time and energy for other aspects of parliamentary business. The results support hypothesis 1a in Chapter 2, which identifies influence over policy as a key incentive for participation in the EP.

In sum, the analysis shows that participation and specialisation in salient policy areas differ across MEPs. Whereas participation across a broad range of policy areas is particularly attractive to MEPs from the majority groups who have considerable influence over policy outcomes and committee decisions, responsive specialisation is most attractive to MEPs from the largest ‘minority’ group who can focus their efforts on fewer policy areas without endangering their majority on the committee floor. In other words, whereas the ‘majority’ coalition is best represented across a large range of policy areas, ‘minority’ groups are likely to be most responsive.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the empirical analysis in this chapter. Most importantly, perhaps, the impact of committees cannot be evaluated if the legislative participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs are ignored. Party-political and institutional incentives structure the behaviour of rational legislators. The main task for studies of political representation consists of identifying the incentives that guide legislative participation and specialisation. Such an analysis makes it possible to evaluate the impact of different institutional environments on the responsiveness of individual legislators and the representative nature of parliamentary business. In the case of committee decision-making in the European Parliament, for instance, the proportionality enforced by the rules of procedure is undermined by

party-political incentives, open rule and majority thresholds. Party group coalition dynamics determine the range of values and interests that the European Parliament represents and the strength of the connection between representatives and their parties.

Second, instead of the “great legislative trade-off” between representation and governance described by Shepsle (1988) in the context of the US House of Representatives, there is a more complex interaction between the dual roles of parliament. Shepsle posits that “at some point” an increase in representation will require a decrease in the ability of the legislature to govern effectively. In the European Parliament, Neuhold (2001) takes up a similar idea by highlighting the “tension” between the increasing specialisation of policymaking in committees and the need for MEPs to stay in touch with their constituents. According to this vertical conception of the dual role of parliaments, policymaking and representation are separate and incompatible goals that require representatives to make difficult choices about the relative importance of each for their legislative work.

In direct contrast, this chapter has shown that specialisation is one way for MEPs to actually be responsive. How else, but through effective policymaking can legislators act as good representatives? The relationship between policy and representation is not vertical from citizens over legislators to policy, as most previous research has assumed, but horizontal: MEPs are responsive because they make policy in line with their national party’s political programme. Legislative participation and specialisation are integral parts of the process of political representation. Both policy outcomes and representational performance depend on the participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs, which in turn are shaped by institutional and party-political incentives in the European Parliament.

Third, however, the chapter has unveiled a tension between two inherently conflicting facets of political representation itself: the representativeness of parliamentary deliberation and the responsiveness of legislators to national party concerns. Government of the people requires the *participation* of MEPs from across the political spectrum in a broad range of policy areas. Government for the people on the other hand requires *specialisation* in a limited number of particularly salient policy areas. As the chapter has demonstrated, this ‘great legislative trade-off’ between representativeness and responsiveness is largely a matter of institutional design and the incentive structure it creates.

Fourth, the chapter provides considerable evidence for the distributional approach to committee government developed in the US (see Shepsle and Weingast, 1994 for a comprehensive review). The distributional approach focuses on assignments to explain committees as a means of increasing the re-election prospects of their members (Shepsle and Weingast, 1987). Legislators try to gain control over certain policy issues by setting up and joining relevant committees. Membership is governed by self-selection and committees tend to be homogeneous and staffed with high demanders and preference outliers. The empirical results in this chapter extend the logic behind self-selection to the study of committee participation rather than mere assignments. The findings show that MEPs specialise in their committees in response to the political priorities defined by their national parties. Preference outliers are better represented than MEPs who are close to the median on the committee/plenary floor.

In contrast the evidence for Krehbiel’s (1991) informational theory of committee government is less conclusive in the EP. According to this view, committees are created and staffed to help the legislature make decisions and increase its leverage over the executive. By bringing together members with an interest or background in

specific policy areas, committees foster legislative specialisation and increase the power of the legislature over government. They are likely to be heterogeneous and mirror the preference structure of the entire parliament. While Krehbiel's assessment fits well with the proportionality rules that govern the committee assignment procedure, it finds little support in the analysis of legislative participation and specialisation decisions in this chapter. Clearly, committee participation varies substantially across MEPs depending on the party-political and institutional incentives that they face. A heterogeneous committee composition does not entail representative committee decision-making. Unequal participation rates undermine the informational quality of committee decision-making and the credibility of the committee as a representative of the plenary.

Finally, the results corroborate theories of coalition formation along ideological lines in the European Parliament (e.g. Hix et al., forthcoming). There are large differences in the legislative behaviour of MEPs from different party groups. Open rule in committee and plenary enforces majoritarian decision-making at the committee stage in the EP. As a result, MEPs from the majority groups can amend reports and influence parliamentary deliberation, under simple majority. On the other hand, 'minority' MEPs have lower policy incentives and participate less than their peers. The chapter has tested the effect of such policy incentives for two sets of institutional decision-making rules. While a simple majority of EPP and ELDR is most active on the committee floor for legislation that does not fall under the co-decision procedure, the co-operation of EPP, PES and ELDR is required for co-decision legislation, which mandates an absolute majority in the second reading in the plenary.

By implication, representation at the committee stage is the result of political competition along an ideological left-right cleavage rather than along territorial

divisions (see also Hix et al. forthcoming). Voters who share the policy preferences of the majority groups in the EP are better represented in committee deliberations than those who support the smaller ‘minority’ groups. Given their strong policy incentive, MEPs from the ‘majority’ coalition (EPP and ELDR) are less selective in their involvement in committee business than their peers from the ‘minority’. In contrast, the main minority group (PES) is more responsive because it can focus on salient policy areas, rather than having to participate in as broad a range of policy areas as possible.

In sum, this chapter has shown that political representation in parliamentary committees is determined by institutional and party-political incentives. Unlike previous research, the results paint a picture of the European Parliament as distinctly non-consensual, where rational legislators make choices about how best to allocate their time and resources among myriad legislative activities and policy areas. The institutional rules and the party-political environment in which legislative participation and specialisation take place affect whose values are represented on the committee floor. All MEPs are interested in engaging in salient policy areas. However, open rule favours the participation of MEPs from the larger party groups who command a simple majority in the plenary and are therefore most influential over the actual policy content of committee decisions. Finally, lack of party group control over the participation decisions of its members precludes the leadership from sanctioning MEPs who voice their dissent with their group’s position on the committee floor.

Studies of political representation must go beyond describing the composition of the legislature to identify the incentives that motivate legislative participation and specialisation in the EP and to evaluate their impact on the representativeness of

parliamentary business and the responsiveness of individual legislators. Of course, not all legislative activities are set within the same institutional context or impose the same structure of opportunities and constraints on individual MEPs. The next chapter analyses political representation in one of the most important committee activities in the European Parliament: the allocation of rapporteurships over which the party group leadership has substantial gate-keeping power.

CHAPTER 5 – POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND POLICY FORMULATION¹

This chapter analyses the effect of legislative participation and specialisation on political representation in policy formulation at the European level. The distribution of committee reports, maybe more than any other legislative activity, determines whose values and interests are represented in policy outcomes at the European level. Though deprived of formal agenda-setting power due to open rule in committee and plenary, rapporteurs can exploit their informational advantage vis-à-vis other MEPs, represent the position of committee and the Parliament as a whole in public, and interact with lobbyists and other interest groups to develop policy proposals that are closer to their preferences than the committee and plenary floor median would suggest. This chapter evaluates the impact of the incentive structure that governs committee report allocation on political representation in EP policymaking.

As Chapter 2 suggests, political representation is a direct function of individual participation and specialisation in line with party-political priorities. The representativeness of parliamentary business depends on the range of legislators that *participate* at each stage of the policy process. Given their important role in policy formulation, committee reports that are consistently biased in favour of MEPs from some parties or party groups could undermine the democratic legitimacy of EP policymaking. The representativeness of policymaking in European Parliament is especially important given the political bias in committee decision-making identified in Chapter 4.

¹ Note: An earlier (condensed) version of this chapter will appear in *European Union Politics* Vol. 7, Issue 4 (2006)

However, representation is not necessarily best served by a strictly proportional allocation of reports. Like for committee decision-making (see Chapter 4), there are various reasons why legislators might choose to opt out of active policy making in some of their committees. Responsiveness requires that MEPs specialise in policy areas that feature prominently in the manifesto that sets out their party's political priorities. The *quality* of an MEP's engagement determines their individual responsiveness.

This chapter assesses political representation at the policy formulation stage in the European Parliament. Which MEPs sign up for committee reports in the EP? And, given their membership in different parliamentary committees, which MEPs are most responsive? First, the report allocation procedure enforces a proportional distribution of reports among party groups. As a result, unlike for committee decision-making, there should only be small differences in levels of participation across party groups. Nevertheless, like for decision-making, specialisation in the most salient reports follows coalition dynamics in the EP. Due to open rule in committee and plenary, majority MEPs are privileged in the competition for the most salient reports both under co-decision and in other decision-making procedures. Finally, unlike committee decision-making, the gate-keeping role of party groups allows their leadership to allocate reports among individual MEPs. As a result, the distribution of the most desirable reports follows a logic of group cohesion.

The chapter is organised into 4 parts. The first section briefly describes the procedure for report allocation and the incentive structure it creates for participation and specialisation in policy formulation in the European Parliament. Section 2 presents evidence to illustrate the breadth of participation in committee reports and the representativeness of policy formulation in the EP. Section 3 focuses on legislative

specialisation to determine which MEPs are most in line with the policy priorities that their national party stands for in public. Finally, Section 4 synthesises the findings and evaluates their impact on political representation at the policymaking stage in the European Parliament.

1. Committee Reports in the European Parliament

Topics for reports are either forwarded from the Council or the Commission under the different decision-making procedures or they arise at the initiative of an individual MEP. Bills forwarded to the Parliament by Commission or Council under the co-decision, co-operation, consultation or assent procedures are assigned to one of the parliamentary committees for consideration. So-called own-initiative reports may address an entirely new policy area, a Commission communication on which the Parliament has not been consulted or a motion for a resolution tabled by an MEP in the plenary (Corbett et al., 2003).

In order to limit committee workload, MEPs must have prior approval before undertaking an own-initiative report. In 1994, quotas were introduced to reduce committee workload to two own-initiative reports at any one point in time. Nevertheless, the workload of the Parliament has increased substantially in the past decade in tandem with its policy influence (Corbett et al. 2003). As Table 5.1 illustrates, the number of reports has risen by 20% over the 10-year period from 1994-2004. One in five reports in the fifth Parliament fell under the co-decision procedure, where the European Parliament acts as a co-legislator with the Council of Ministers (Tsebelis and Garrett, 2000; Crombez, 2001). Most reports in the fifth Parliament are written in the environment committee followed by justice and home affairs. In the previous legislature, economics and environment were vastly more prolific than other committees.

TABLE 5.1. NUMBER AND TYPE OF REPORTS BY COMMITTEE (4TH AND 5TH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS)

1994-1999			1999-2004		
<i>Committee</i>	<i>Total Number of Reports</i>	<i>Number of Co-decision Reports</i>	<i>Committee</i>	<i>Total Number of Reports</i>	<i>Number of Co-decision Reports</i>
Economic	288	73	ENVI	263	152
Environment	207	86	LIBE	254	19
Transport	165	27	JURI	229	82
Ext Econ Rel	129	1	INDU	219	50
Foreign Affairs	127	0	ECON	190	35
Legal Affairs	117	45	ECON	176	3
Agriculture	115	3	AFET	153	2
Energy & Research	113	17	AGRI	147	15
Fisheries	112	0	RETT	147	78
Budgets	104	2	BUDG	144	10
Employment	99	12	PESC	133	0
Civil Liberties	97	4	EMPL	109	30
Budgetary Control	84	2	DEVE	73	18
Culture	75	30	AFCO	56	3
Development	73	4	CULT	51	25
Regional Policy	70	2	FEMM	45	8
Rules of Procedure	35	0	PETI	23	0
Women's Rights	32	2			
Institutional Affairs	24	0			
Petitions	12	0			
TOTAL	2,078	310	TOTAL	2,412	530
Share of Co-decision Reports		15%	Share of Co-decision Reports		22%

Sources: Corbett et al, 2003; www.europarl.eu.int; Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; BUDG = Budgets; CONT = Budgetary Control; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PETI = Petitions; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

As Chapter 2 has mentioned, reports are auctioned off to the party groups within each committee according to the size of each party group delegation. Group co-ordinators then allocate the reports they have won to 'their' MEPs. As a result, subject to their personalities, "co-ordinators have the potential to dominate committee activities and usurp the position of chair" (Whitaker, 2001, pg. 81). The bidding system favours a proportional allocation of reports among party groups according to the size of their delegation in each committee. Indeed, Benedetto (2005) explains the

distribution of reports among party groups and member states as part of an “institutionalised consensus” (pg. 85) within the EP. Mamadouh and Raunio (2001) find that intra-party group allocation is largely proportional to the size of national parties whereas “partisan interests drive the allocation process” (pg. 2) across groups. As a result, report allocation, unlike participation in committee meetings (Chapter 4), is quite representative of the plenary floor.

Once nominated, the rapporteur is in charge of researching, writing and defending his text in the committee where it is voted upon by all members under open rule. Armed with committee approval, the rapporteur then presents his text in the plenary where he defends it on behalf of the committee, again under open rule. Finally, rapporteurs follow up on the evolution of the report throughout the decision-making procedures, make recommendations for a possible 2nd reading and, under the co-decision procedure, take part in the Conciliation Committee on behalf of the European Parliament.

Despite their prominent and prestigious role, individual rapporteurs have no formal power over the content of their reports. As discussed in the previous chapter, open rule ensures that reports do not stray far from the median MEP in the legislature, regardless of the party affiliation or policy preferences of the rapporteur. If a draft report deviates from their preferences, the majority pivots in committee and plenary can reject and/or amend it at will. The committee even has the right to withdraw its confidence in the rapporteur, though this does not happen very often. The incentive to delay or reject legislation that does not conform with the preferences of the majority pivot is of course strongest for the most salient reports. Thus, from a policy perspective, majority MEPs have a greater incentive to sign up for the most desirable reports than the minority groups.

However, the rapporteur may accumulate substantial informal power over the contents of some reports. Indeed, as Mamadouh and Raunio (2003) point out, by accumulating policy expertise, building consensus among party groups and negotiating with the Council and the Commission, individual rapporteurs can acquire considerable leverage over policy outcomes at the European level. However, this informal power is likely to be most significant in policy areas that are highly technical and of little salience to the majority of MEPs. Indeed, on the most salient reports, the party groups that did not obtain the report often nominate a shadow rapporteur who is in charge of following the development of the report. The institution of shadow rapporteurs weakens the informal power of the main rapporteurs in the most salient policy areas by reducing their informational advantage over the rest of the committee and plenary. Again, there is little incentive for minority MEPs to sign up for the most desirable reports where they have little power over policy outcomes.

The discussion illustrates that the desirability of a report to different MEPs depends crucially on its salience and on the majority status of their party group within committee and plenary. Because the power of rapporteurs to affect policy outcomes is minimal, especially in the most salient policy areas, majority MEPs have a stronger incentive to bid on those reports than legislators from minority groups. As Benedetto (2005) recognises, the selection of rapporteurs determines the range of political opinions that are represented in the policy positions of the European Parliament. Similarly, Mamadouh and Raunio (2001) call for research on the effect of committee report allocation on EP legitimacy.

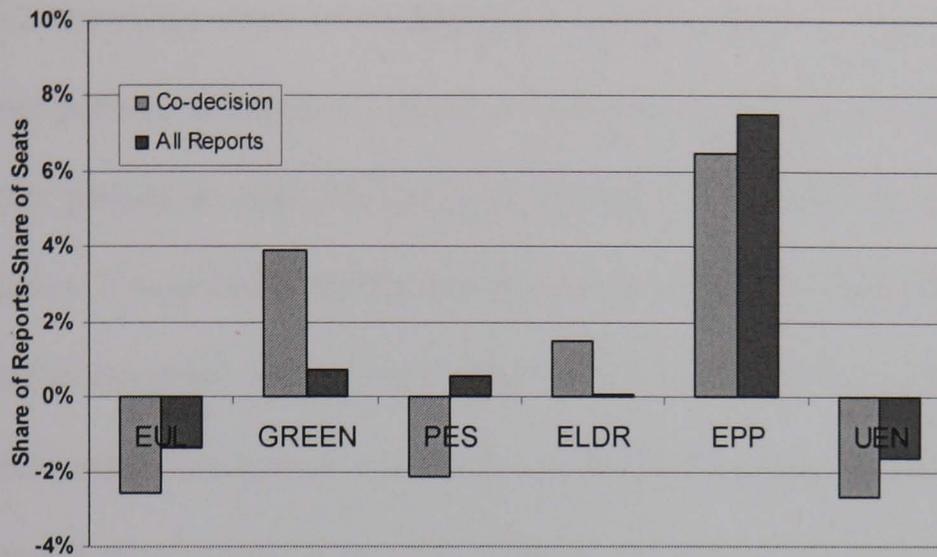
Despite these calls, no study to date systematically investigates the consequences of report allocation for political representation in the European Parliament. The next

section examines the consequences of legislative participation and specialisation for representativeness and responsiveness in committee report allocation.

II. Representativeness and Participation in Committee Reports

Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of co-decision and other reports among party groups within the European Parliament. The auction system within each committee should ensure that every party group gets a fair share of reports. The figure confirms that there are no large deviations from proportionality in the number of reports that each party group receives. While the largest party group (EPP) is over-represented in both types of reports, the difference between its share of reports and seats is less than 8 percentage points. The only other group with a significant deviation from proportionality is the Greens, which are almost 4% over-represented on co-decision reports. However, this is likely to be due to their focus on the relatively influential environment committee. None of the other groups deviate by more than 2.5 points from their share of seats in the EP. Thus, as far as party group representation is concerned, the report allocation procedure produces a fairly representative picture of participation in policy formulation in the European Parliament.

FIGURE 5.1. SHARE OF REPORTS MINUS SHARE OF SEATS BY PARTY GROUP AND TYPE OF REPORT



Note: EDD/IND excluded due to lack of data; Abbreviations: EUL = Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left; GREEN = The Green Group in the European Parliament; PES = Group of the Party of European Socialists; ELDR = Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party; EPP = Group of the European People's Party; UEN = Union for a Europe of Nations; IND = Group of Independents for a Europe of Nations

However, the auction system does not stipulate how the groups themselves distribute the reports that they have obtained among their own members. As Kaeding (2004; 2005) finds, in the environment committee in the fourth Parliament, the group of rapporteurs does not mirror the composition of legislature. Rather, rapporteurs tend to be (relatively pro-European) experts in the policy area that the report addresses. In a further analysis over several committees, Kaeding (2005) confirms that the 'world of committee reports' is characterized by disproportionality. Rapporteurs tend to be high demanders in the policy area that their report addresses.

Thus, a proportional allocation of legislative spoils does not imply that all MEPs participate equally in committee reports. Intra-party group politics determine which MEPs participate most in a broad range of committees and which legislators scale back their engagement or focus their efforts on specific policy areas. Large member states for instance are likely to be involved in all policy areas, merely by virtue of the

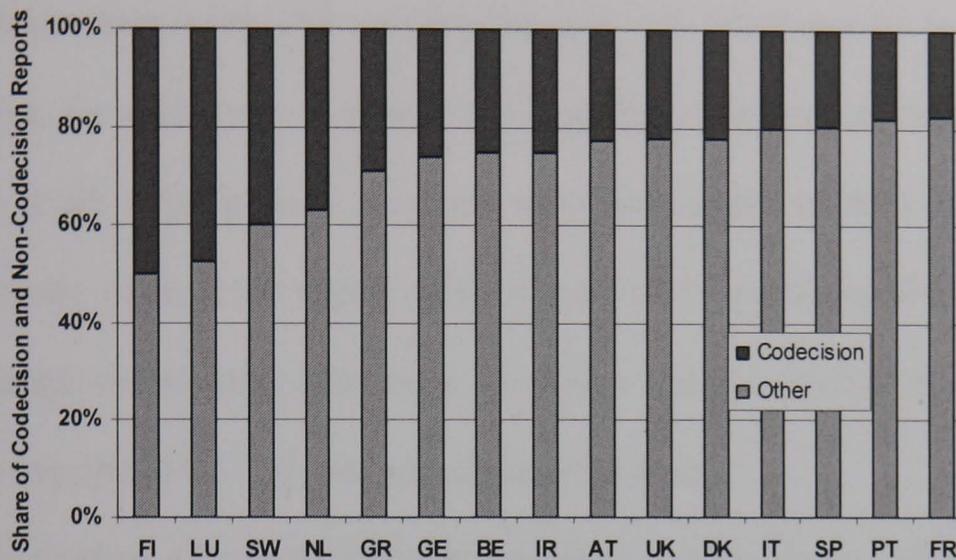
number of MEPs that they have. Smaller countries on the other hand focus on the restricted range of issues that are of most importance to them.

Figure 5.2 shows the share of co-decision and non-codecision reports by country. As pointed out before, co-decision reports are generally much more attractive because it is under this procedure that the European Parliament has most power over actual policy outcomes. Co-decision reports are also more prestigious because they require the rapporteur to negotiate extensively with the Council, including in the elaboration of a joint text in the conciliation committee at the 2nd reading. Finally, co-decision reports are much more scarce than other reports, which include non legislative own initiative reports.²

The figure shows that there are wide discrepancies in report allocation across countries. Among Finnish and Luxembourg MEPs, half of all reports fall under the co-decision procedure compared with less than 20 percent in the Mediterranean countries (except Greece). In general, there is a clear North-South divide in the allocation of co-decision and other reports, which may reflect the relative emphasis of Northern member states on environmental policy, most of which falls under the co-decision procedure.

² On the other hand, non co-decision reports arguably allow a larger amount of discretion and agenda-setting power to individual rapporteurs.

FIGURE 5.2. SHARE OF CODECISION AND OTHER REPORTS BY COUNTRY



Abbreviations: AT = Austria; BE = Belgium; DK = Denmark; FI = Finland; FR = France; GE = Germany; GR = Greece; IT = Italy; IR = Ireland; LU = Luxembourg; NL = Netherlands; PT = Portugal; SP = Spain; SW = Sweden; UK = United Kingdom

Figure 5.2 indicates that influence over policymaking at the European level is not distributed equally among MEPs. If co-decision reports are more influential and, on average, more desirable than reports that are written under a different decision-making procedure, the distribution in Figure 5.2 has strong implications for territorial representation in the European Parliament. Like committee decision-making in Chapter 4, the legislative performance of MEPs from different countries varies substantially. Partly, this may explain public scepticism about the effectiveness of the EP and the democratic performance of the European Union more generally. At the same time, the domestic political culture may affect the participation levels of MEPs. Countries with influential national parliaments may be more inclined to value and engage in parliamentary debate at the European level.

The distribution in Figure 5.2 qualifies previous research that has explained report allocation as essentially consensual (Benedetto, 2005). Instead, the results confirm Kaeding's (2005) claim that member states have different political strategies for legislative participation and specialisation. Table 5.2 corroborates the conclusion that

report allocation is not equal among legislators. The table shows how many committee members are represented at different levels of participation. In the period under analysis there were 233 co-decision and 904 other reports to be allocated. Nevertheless, for each type of report, the majority of committee members did not participate at all. Among those members who participated in their committee, 109 wrote only one co-decision report. Only a few MEPs participated in more than 2 reports, though one member, Finland's Pia Noora Kauppi, undertook a staggering 6 co-decision reports in the 2.5-year period under analysis.

The distribution of non co-decision reports is slightly more even, with 427 (or about 1/3) committee members engaged in at least one such report. All 7 MEPs who were involved in more than 7 non co-decision reports each were chairs of their respective committees, including environment (Jackson), foreign affairs (Brok) and fisheries (Varela). Thus, despite proportional report allocation among party groups, a wide range of interests is not represented in policy formulation at the European level.

TABLE 5.2. LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN COMMITTEE REPORTS BY TYPE OF REPORT

Level of Participation	Frequency	
	<i>Codecision Reports</i>	<i>Other Reports</i>
0	1,140	889
1 Report	109	239
2 Reports	37	106
3 Reports	17	38
4 Reports	6	20
5 Reports	6	13
6 Reports	1	4
7+ Reports	0	7
<i>Average Participation (Reports per MEP)</i>	<i>0.18</i>	<i>0.69</i>

Note: Cell Entries show the number of committee members for each level of participation and for each type of report. Total Number of Co-decision Reports: 233; Total number of other Reports: 904; Total Number of committee members: 1,316

Table 5.2 illustrates that there are large disparities in participation across committee members. Despite an allocation procedure that emphasises proportionality across party groups, most MEPs are not represented in policy formulation in the

European Parliament. Even though report writing is one of the most prestigious tasks in the EP, the overwhelming majority of legislators do not write any reports.

Some of this non-participation is voluntary. For instance, preference outliers within the majority party groups cannot influence the content of reports due to open rule in committee and plenary. As a result, these MEPs might prefer to participate at a different stage of the policy process where they can voice their opinions instead. On the other hand, it is the party group leadership (in the form of the committee coordinator) that allocates reports to individual members. As a result, intra group politics are likely to play a role in the decision as to which MEPs are allocated which reports. If some MEPs are consistently excluded from policy formulation, this restricts the range of values and interests that the European Parliament represents and affects the content of European policy and the quality of committee deliberation.

Table 5.3 reinforces the impression that auctioning committee reports according to party group size does not ensure representativeness in the formulation of European policy. The overwhelming majority (185) of MEPs who were engaged in more than one report made all their contributions in a single policy area. 85 wrote more than half of their reports in one area, and only 59 MEPs wrote less than half of all reports in one policy area. Thus, even among those MEPs who do participate in policy formulation, the vast majority focus on a single policy area.

The specialisation that is apparent in Table 5.3 could indicate that MEPs choose to participate in committee reports only if they already have expertise in the field. Indeed, existing expertise can lower the costs of gathering the information required and formulating a particularly technical report. In addition, party groups may prefer to delegate the task of policy formulation to their most competent members. In any case, most rapporteurs are highly specialised in a single policy area, which suggests that

policy formulation is dominated by a restricted range of values and interests in the European Parliament.

TABLE 5.3. POLICY SPECIALISATION AMONG COMMITTEE RAPPORTEURS

Share of Committee Reports on a Single Policy Area	Frequency
	<i>Number of MEPs</i>
100%	185
50%	131
0-50%	59

Note: Cell Entries show the number of MEPs for each level of policy specialisation

While Figure 5.1 has shown that the auction system does allocate every party group its fair share of committee reports, this does not mean that all MEPs are equally able to participate in policy formulation. Intra-group allocation may differ widely from pure proportionality, especially when differences in the types of reports that are available are taken into account. The distribution of reports in Tables 5.2 and 5.3 questions the effectiveness of proportional allocation rules in ensuring a fair representation of all sections of European society.

The analysis so far has shown that report allocation within party groups is anything but proportional. Some MEPs write multiple reports in policy areas over which the European Parliament has substantial amounts of power whereas others abstain entirely from this stage of the policy process. Because the party group leadership plays a gate-keeping role in the allocation of reports among its members, intra-group politics are likely to affect the participation and specialisation of MEPs in policy formulation.

Such disproportionality can have a significant effect on the representativeness of committee deliberations and endanger the representational performance of the European Parliament as a whole. However, the impact of the legislative specialisation that is apparent in the figures and tables presented thus far depends on the relationship between report allocation and policy salience. In addition to studying levels of

participation, it is imperative to examine how legislative specialisation in particular policy areas affects the responsiveness of individual MEPs. In other words, which MEPs specialise most in salient policy areas?

III. Responsiveness and Specialisation in Policy Formulation

The previous section has shown that participation in committee reports is ideologically quite representative due to the auction system that is in place within each committee. However, there are also stark discrepancies in levels of participation across MEPs and across member states. Chapter 2 predicts that differences in participation within each party group reflect the group leadership's concern with maintaining cohesion. In addition, the chapter distinguishes between reports of different desirability. Whereas the bidding system in each committee ensures that the number of available reports is distributed proportionally to each group's size within the EP, it does not account for differences in the *quality* of these reports.

Hypothesis 2 in chapter 2 suggests that the allocation of the most desirable reports should vary systematically across party groups to reflect coalition patterns within the European Parliament. Due to open rule the majority coalition in committee and plenary can threaten to reject any reports written by a minority MEP. The threat of a committee or plenary veto reduces the incentive for MEPs from minority groups to engage in the most coveted policy areas. As a result, majority groups obtain the most desirable committee reports whereas minority legislators must content themselves with the 'leftovers'.

Differences in patterns of representation between policy formulation and decision-making are explained by differences in institutional incentives. The auctioning system ensures minority MEPs a certain level of participation in all committees. Combined with open rule, proportional allocation provides an incentive for the majority coalition

to use its power obtain the most desirable rapporteurships because it can veto reports that deviate from its preferences. Contrary to committee decision-making where minority MEPs have an incentive to discriminate between policy areas, the opposite is the case at the policy formulation stage. The majority coalition is more responsive than the minority because it focuses on the most salient policy areas.

Table 5.4 summarises the output of two random effects regressions with report salience as the dependent variable. In order to control for differences in the policy power of the European Parliament and institutional decision-making rules, regression (1) includes only co-decision reports whereas model (2) covers all committee reports. An MEP's ability to write reports depends in large part on the number of committees that he has joined as well as his background and expertise. Therefore, both regressions incorporate random individual effects.³ The regressions also control for differences across electoral systems and the rapporteur's rank within the committee responsible for each report, both of which might affect the incentive to sign up for salient reports.

³ Incorporating a random country effect did not change the results for co-decision reports. Unfortunately, this specification did not lead to any solution for non-co-decision reports. Inclusion of country dummies also did not change the results significantly. For ease of interpretation Table 5.4 is limited to a single individual random effect.

TABLE 5.4. RANDOM EFFECTS REGRESSION – DEPENDENT: REPORT SALIENCE

	Co-decision Reports		Other Reports	
	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
<i>Inter Party Group</i>				
EPP	6.235***	2.350	0.629	1.473
PES	4.571**	2.157	0.143	1.369
ELDR	3.826	2.636	3.630**	1.791
<i>Intra Party Group</i>				
Distance from Party Group	-16.431***	6.271	-2.463	6.362
Size	-0.193***	0.064	0.002	0.040
<i>Individual</i>				
Chair/Vice-Chair	-1.061	1.385	-2.608**	1.025
Substitute	1.313	0.934	-0.112	0.443
Incumbent	0.348	1.242	0.932	0.811
Number of Reports	0.726***	0.203	0.763***	0.145
<i>Electoral System</i>				
Ballot	4.371**	2.203	-1.577	1.377
Candidate	-5.019	3.248	4.323	2.276
District	-0.031	0.027	0.017	0.015
Constant	7.062**	2.800	1.580	2.120
<i>Random Effects</i>				
Individual	6.406**	0.480	6.390**	0.308
Residual	1.843**	0.150	2.298**	0.092
N	212		610	
Prob>chi2	<0.001		<0.001	
Log Rest. Likelihood	-598.387		-1742.75	

*Notes: ***: significant at 0.01 level, ** significant at 0.05 level; unit of analysis: committee reports; a specification with country and individual random effects did not lead to a solution; See Chapter 3 for details on random effects methodology; Estimates for Country, MEP and Residual are the respective estimated standard deviations of the country, MEP and residual random effects; Prob >chi2 shows the probability of no difference between the random effects specification shown here and an OLS specification without random or fixed effects for country and MEP.*

The findings confirm that the allocation of salient committee reports is a result of committee decision-making rules. First, model (1) shows that when an absolute majority of MEPs is required to pass legislation (as is the case under co-decision), the two largest party groups (PES and EPP) obtain the most salient reports, whereas the liberal ELDR's output does not differ from that of the smaller party groups. Substantively, EPP reports are 6.2% more salient than those of minority MEPs, whereas the PES is involved in policy areas that are almost 4.6% more salient. Second, however, in model (2) the ELDR writes reports that are 3.6% more salient

than all other party groups reports. Indeed, reports that do not fall under the co-decision procedure require a simple majority to pass in the plenary, which makes the ELDR pivotal for both EPP and PES.

Open rule in committee and plenary reduce the incentive for groups that are part of the minority in the EP to sign up for committee reports. Similarly to participation in committee decision-making (Chapter 4), if there were no auctioning system to enforce a proportional allocation of reports, MEPs from minority groups in the EP would reduce their participation in policy formulation and focus their efforts on other stages of the policy process. While the auctioning system makes participation more representative of the plenary floor, it does not eliminate the majoritarian effect of open rule. Indeed, MEPs from the simple and absolute majority coalition in each committee obtain the most desirable non-codecision and codecision reports respectively. In other words, due to open rule in committee and plenary, majority MEPs are more responsive than their peers.

Committee reports in salient policy areas are less attractive to MEPs who do not form part of the majority coalition because they will be outvoted in the committee and in the plenary. The further a party group is located from the largest delegation in the ideological (left-right) policy space, the less likely it is that its MEPs have access to salient reports. The legislative output of each party group depends on its value, in terms of policy preferences, as a coalition partner to the largest group. In other words, an MEP's ability to represent the policy priorities of his national party is determined not only by the size of his party group (as would be the case under a strictly proportional allocation procedure) but also by coalition patterns along the left-right spectrum.

Apart from competition across party groups, Table 5.4 also shows considerable evidence for the effects of intra-party group politics on responsiveness. Because party groups have gate-keeping power over policy formulation, the allocation of the most desirable committee reports reflects the agenda of the party group leadership.

First, on co-decision reports, preference outliers are less responsive than MEPs who toe the party line. Every 0.1 increase in an MEP's policy distance from his party group leads to a 1.6% drop in report salience. Because the leadership is concerned about protecting the brand name of the party group and maintaining its credibility, legislators who often defect from their group in roll-call votes are less likely to be assigned salient reports than their colleagues. The leadership screens candidates *ex ante* to make sure their reports reflect the opinion of the group as a whole. In addition, party leaders use their power to allocate reports *ex post* to reward MEPs who have toed the party line and to sanction defectors. Rebel MEPs are less likely to be assigned salient reports and, therefore, are less responsive than legislators whose policy preferences are in line with the rest of the party group.

Second, MEPs from smaller national parties write more salient co-decision reports than legislators from larger parties. As Kaeding (2005) has found, MEPs from smaller member states (and national party delegations) focus their participation on the most salient policy areas. MEPs from the larger parties on the other hand must participate in a wider range of policy areas, including some that feature less prominently in their manifestos. The party group leadership supports this self-selection on the part of the smaller national parties in order to give every MEP a stake in the operation of the group as a whole. The effect of national party size is only significant for the more important reports under the co-decision procedure.

Third, the committee leadership writes less salient non-codecision reports than regular committee members. There is no statistically significant difference between the responsiveness of full members and that of substitute committee members. For most reports, especially under co-decision, there is sufficient demand among the committee's rank and file. However, as Corbett et al (2003) explain, it is part of the duty of committee chairs to assume responsibility for reports that none of the rank-and-file members want to take on. In contrast, regular committee members and substitutes focus their legislative participation on the most salient policy areas, especially when the report is of less importance from a policy perspective.

Finally, neither the electoral system variables nor incumbency are consistently significant in both estimations, which confirms much previous research that has questioned the value of seniority and re-election incentives in the European Parliament (e.g. Bowler and Farrell, 1995). Like for committee decision-making none of the variables that describe the domestic political system seem to structure participation or specialisation in the European Parliament.

The results in Table 5.4 demonstrate the importance of left-right coalition dynamics and intra-party group politics for political representation in the development of policy at the European level. Report allocation differs from committee attendance in that it distributes legislative spoils (salient reports) through a bidding system based on the size of each party group. This system encourages the (simple or absolute) majority coalition to specialise in the most salient reports and induces high levels of responsiveness within the parliamentary majority. In contrast, in committee decision-making, majority MEPs are less likely to specialise in order to maintain their majority in a broad range of policy areas. Here, the majority coalition boasts lower levels of responsiveness than the minority in committee decision-making (see Chapter 4). In

addition, rank-and-file preference outliers and MEPs from large national delegations are disadvantaged in the allocation of salient reports within their party groups.

Table 5.4 distinguishes only between co-decision and other reports. However, Hix (2001) finds that voting coalitions in the plenary differ not only as a result of institutional rules but also across policy areas along ideological lines. He finds that EPP and ELDR vote against the PES on most expenditure and social policies, PES and ELDR form a coalition against the EPP on issues related to justice and home affairs and the environment, and all three party groups tend to agree on votes related to foreign affairs and international trade (Hix, 2001).

In order to verify whether the partisan effect on responsiveness identified in Table 5.4 holds when we distinguish between different types of policy areas, Table 5.5 produces the results of an OLS regression (with robust standard errors) that analyses the effect of different voting coalitions on responsiveness at the policy formulation stage.⁴ Due to the low number of reports in each policy area, the regressions include only party group dummies and a control dummy to distinguish between co-decision and other reports. The interaction between ELDR and co-decision accounts for the ELDR's reduced role in policy areas that are governed by an absolute majority requirement in the plenary.

⁴ Unfortunately, a random effects specification similar to Table 5.4 did not lead to a solution for all three policy areas.

TABLE 5.5. IMPACT OF VOTING COALITIONS IN THE PLENARY ON RESPONSIVENESS, OLS REGRESSION WITH ROBUST STANDARD ERRORS, DEPENDENT: REPORT SALIENCE

	Trade & Foreign Affairs <i>INDU & AFET</i>		Expenditure Policies <i>EMPL, AGRI, PESC, RETT</i>		Environment, Justice & Home Affairs <i>ENVI & LIBE</i>	
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Robust SE</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Robust SE</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Robust SE</i>
EPP	0.751	1.220	2.33	1.251	-	-
PES	0.039	1.284	-	-	-0.285	0.577
ELDR	3.232	1.714	9.024***	4.335	5.183***	0.580
Co-decision	-0.729	0.772	-1.580	1.379	-1.240	0.662
ELDR* Codecision	0.510	2.210	-10.546***	5.098	-5.099***	1.022
Constant	6.113***	1.201	9.941***	0.838	7.479***	0.535
N	158		225		231	
R-Squared	0.06		0.06		0.09	

*Note: OLS Regression with robust standard errors; *** significant at 0.01 level; ** significant at 0.05 level; AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism*

Note first of all that the R-squares for all three estimations are very low. The party group effects do not, by themselves, explain a large amount of variation in the responsiveness of MEPs when these three policy areas are considered separately. Second, in models (2) and (3), the interaction between co-decision and ELDR is negative. As expected, liberal MEPs obtain less salient reports in policy areas where their group does not play a pivotal role. The coefficient is not significant for trade and foreign affairs partly because there are only very few co-decision reports in these areas.

However, the point of these OLS regressions is not to explain as much variation in report salience as possible. Rather, we would like to examine the extent to which differences across these three policy areas mirror voting coalitions in the plenary. First, neither of the three party group dummies is significant on issues related to trade and foreign affairs where the major party groups tend to vote together in the plenary. Without major disagreements over policy between the party groups in this area, there is no partisan effect on the distribution of salient reports. Second, the liberal ELDR

writes the most salient reports in models (2) and (3). In both of these areas the ELDR is the pivotal coalition partner for either the EPP on expenditure policy or the PES on environment and social affairs.

These results confirm Hix' (2001) finding that there are different voting coalitions in different policy areas along ideological lines. Where the ELDR is pivotal (expenditure policies, environment, justice and home affairs), it manages to obtain the most salient reports. Where it is not pivotal (co-decision reports and foreign affairs & trade), this partisan effect disappears. Voting coalitions in the plenary affect responsiveness on report allocation because they shift incentives for certain party groups to sign up for the most salient reports.

The findings of both random effects and ordinary least squares regressions indicate that representation is determined by institutional and party-political incentives. Clearly, coalition patterns in the European Parliament have stark consequences for the range of values and interests that are represented at the policy-formulation stage. The distribution of salient reports reflects the need for EPP and ELDR to co-operate on non-co-decision reports and for EPP and PES to coalesce under co-decision to maintain a majority in committee and plenary. Minority MEPs, on the other hand, write less salient reports because they are unlikely to be able to move policy outcomes away from the median legislator due to double open rule in committee and plenary.

Like the previous chapter on committee decision-making, the findings also confirm recent research on roll-call votes, which has identified left-right politics as the predominant cleavage in the EP (Hix et al., forthcoming). Committee report allocation is only proportional as long as all reports are considered of equal relevance to all MEPs. When differences in the desirability of committee reports are taken into

account a picture of intense competition along the left-right spectrum emerges that contradicts the conceptions of a consensual legislature that have been applied to the European Parliament (e.g. Benedetto, 2005).

IV. Political Representation in Parliamentary Committees: Policy Formulation v. Decision-making

The results in the previous section and the findings in Chapter 4 demonstrate the importance of left-right coalition dynamics and intra-party group politics for political representation at the European level. By structuring incentives for participation and specialisation across party groups, open rule and the report allocation procedure affect which values and interests are represented at the European level. Majority MEPs are more responsive than the minority in policy formulation, but less so in committee decision-making. Moreover, whereas participation in policy formulation mirrors the composition of the plenary, committee decision-making is dominated by majority MEPs.

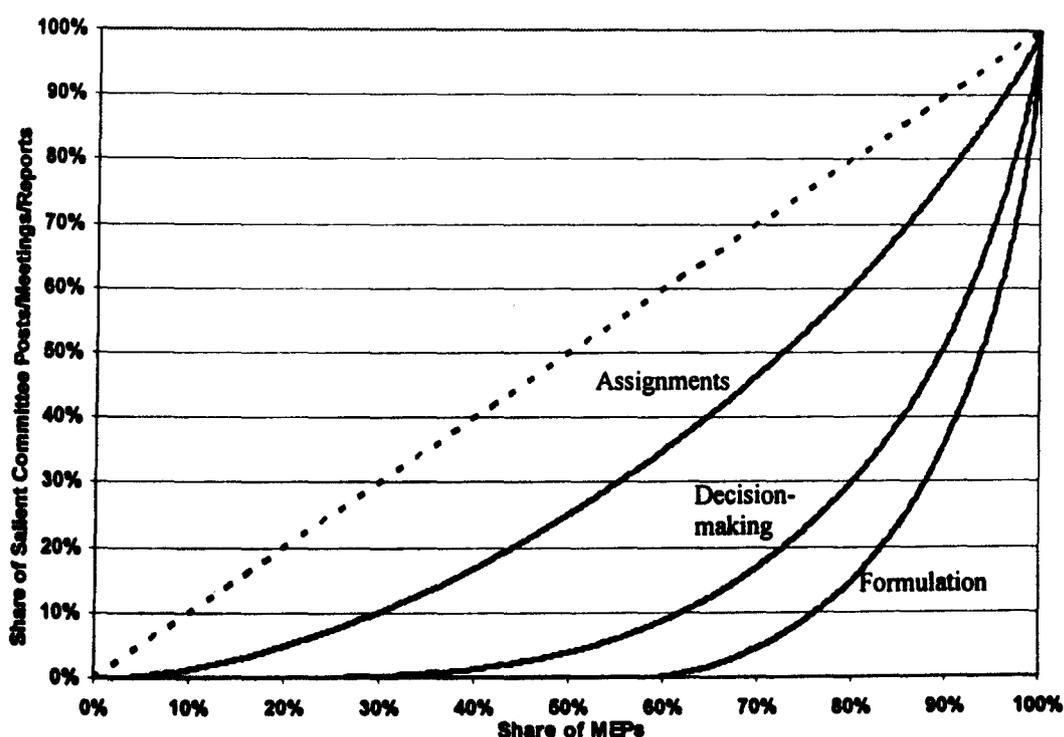
But how can the Parliament's representational performance in decision-making and policy formulation be compared? First, we can compare the distribution of salient tasks at these two stages of the policy process. Does the fairer representation of all party groups at the formulation stage lead to a wider representation of citizen concerns? Or do majoritarian specialisation in the most desirable policy areas and intra-party group politics undo the egalitarian effect of the auctioning system for committee reports?

Figure 5.3 compares the Lorenz curves for responsiveness in policy formulation and decision-making to the distribution of committee assignments. These curves take into account both participation and legislative specialisation to evaluate how representational performance is distributed across committee members. The dotted line represents a situation of perfect equality where all committee members represent

their constituents equally well. The Gini coefficients for each of the three distributions give a quantitative interpretation to the inequality described by the Lorenz curves. The Gini coefficient measures the area between the (dotted) line of perfect equality and the distribution in question. A Gini coefficient of 1 denotes perfect inequality with one committee member reaping all the spoils (i.e. an L-shaped distribution), a coefficient of 0 indicates perfect equality among legislators (i.e. a straight line).

The figure clearly shows the impact of political competition across party groups on representation. Despite the proportional auctioning system, policy formulation is by far the most unequal of the three activities. Salient reports are distributed very unequally, compared with attendance at salient meetings and assignments to committee posts that address salient policy areas. The Gini coefficients provide further evidence to support the picture in Figure 5.4 with $G=0.81$ for policy formulation, 0.69 for decision-making and only 0.35 for committee assignments, which are governed by proportionality rules.

FIGURE 5.3. INEQUALITY OF REPRESENTATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN POLICY FORMULATION, DECISION-MAKING AND COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS



Note: The figure plots the cumulative share of salient tasks against the cumulative share of MEPs involved for each stage of the policy process (Lorenz curves). Under perfect equality, all MEPs are involved in equally salient tasks (45 degree line). Thus, the further a distribution falls below this 45 degree line, the more unequal it is.

In sum, Figure 5.4 shows that there is a move away from equality in political representation between committee assignments, decision-making and policy formulation. Representation in policy formulation is the most unequal stage of the policy process. Political competition for the most desirable legislative tasks, fostered by majoritarian institutions and party group gate-keeping, undermine the proportionality rules inherent in the auctioning system. The results question the effectiveness of these rules in enhancing the representativeness of parliamentary deliberation and the responsiveness of individual MEPs. Instead, the representation of a wide range of interests can only be ensured by providing individual MEPs and their party groups with an institutional or party-political incentive to participate in the EP and to specialise in areas that allow them to put their party's stated policy priorities into practice.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has examined the consequences of committee report allocation for political representation in the European Parliament. In line with the hypotheses in Chapter 2, the analysis demonstrates that the legislative participation and specialisation of individual representatives have important consequences for representation. Institutional and party-political incentives condition how much MEPs participate in policy formulation and which policy areas they specialise in. These patterns, in turn, determine whose political opinions are represented in the parliamentary debates that the legislature engages in and the policy positions it adopts.

Both inter- and intra party group dynamics determine an individual legislator's ability to be responsive. First, party groups compete for reports on the basis of their delegation size. As a result, participation in policy formulation is ideologically much more representative than participation in committee decision-making examined in

Chapter 4. This finding confirms existing research, which has stressed the proportional nature of policymaking in the European Parliament (Benedetto, 2005; Mamadou and Raunio, 2003).

However, while there is little scope for ideological competition in the number of reports awarded to each party group, there are large differences in the characteristics of these reports. Under simple and absolute majority rule, specialisation in the most salient reports favours the majority coalition in the European Parliament because it can push its reports through committee and plenary. Minority MEPs, on the other hand, have little policy incentive to spend time and resources on reports that will be amended or vetoed in plenary and committee anyway (hypothesis 2).

Finally, the party group leadership distributes its reports among its members in an attempt to maximize cohesion. As a result, there are significant discrepancies in levels of participation across member states. Moreover, MEPs from large national delegations, the committee leadership and preference outliers within each party group are less responsive than their party group colleagues, especially in the areas where the European Parliament is most influential over policy outcomes.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the results in this chapter. First, any assessment of legislative politics in the European Parliament must take into account the salience of different policy areas. Most studies of committee reports in the EP have focussed on *levels* of participation in different policy areas (Kaeding, 2004; 2005; Hoyland, 2006; Mamadouh and Raunio, 2003; Hix et al., forthcoming; Raunio, 1997). The results presented here, however, show that participation and specialisation depend significantly on the Parliament's influence and the salience of different policy areas as captured in party manifestos. Studies of representation are only meaningful if

they define the desirability of different legislative tasks in terms of both policy influence and salience.

Second, the model explains disproportionalities in the allocation of salient reports across party groups in terms of the incentive structure created by institutional rules and party-political competition within the parliament. Chapters 4 and 5 have shown that there is considerable inequality in the representational performance of individual committee members at all stages of the policy process. Despite a proportional auctioning system, these inequalities are more marked in policy formulation where the parliamentary majority has a strong incentive to specialise in the areas that feature prominently in their party's manifesto. In contrast, inequality is lower in committee decision-making, which encourages minority groups to focus on the most salient areas. While proportionality rules may restrict the dominance of majority rule within the EP, they do not reduce representational bias because they fail to address the incentive structure that encourages legislators to participate in and discriminate between different policy areas.

Third, the analysis also provides insights into the internal workings of EP party groups. The findings confirm Kreppel's (2002) conclusion that there are considerable constraints in the way the party group leadership allocates its resources. Disproportionalities in the allocation of committee reports within party groups are a result of the leadership's concern with maintaining cohesion. As Kaeding (2005) notes, MEPs from some member states focus their resources on a limited number of policy areas of interest to them whereas others are represented in a much wider range of areas. In order to maintain cohesion, group co-ordinators allow loyal rank-and-file members and MEPs from smaller national parties to sign up for the reports that are

most salient to them. These results can be interpreted as a sign of weakness for the party groups, which are forced to use their legislative resources to maintain cohesion.

The results described in this chapter also have a number of implications for future parliamentary reform. In line with recent studies, the distribution of legislative spoils is based on the closeness of left-right policy preferences across party groups (e.g. Hix et al., forthcoming). This inter-party group competition is likely to increase in importance as the European Parliament acquires further political influence (see Hix et al., forthcoming for a similar interpretation in his analysis of roll-call votes over time). Similarly, a switch from open to closed rule in committee and plenary would strengthen the role of the rapporteur and increase competition for salient reports between the majority coalition and other party groups in the EP. At the same time, this simple reform would reduce the majoritarian advantage in policy formulation and allow rapporteurs from minority parties to have a stronger influence on policy outcomes.

Alternatively, higher majority thresholds in committee and plenary would increase the responsiveness of centrist party groups on both sides of the policy spectrum. However, widening the range of MEPs that can affect policy outcomes could also increase cohesion problems within a parliamentary majority that is made up of several party groups. Lower cohesion in turn would further weaken the party groups, which are already under pressure as the European Union continues to enlarge and becomes politically more heterogeneous.

The empirical results presented in this chapter confirm the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2. As for committee decision-making, the interaction between policy influence and representation is not a straight-forward trade-off. Instead representation occurs when MEPs specialise in policy areas that feature prominently in their party

manifestos. These specialisation decisions depend, among other things, on the policy influence of the EP in that particular area and the party-political constellation in plenary and committee. A proportional allocation mechanism coupled with open rule in committee and plenary strongly affects which MEPs write the most salient parliamentary reports. Second, intra-group allocation of committee reports follows a logic of cohesion. The party group leadership uses its power over report allocation to reward loyal MEPs and give a stake to all its members in the operation of the group.

Chapters 4 and 5 have focused on policy making and decision-making within parliamentary committees in the EP. Of course, not all legislative work takes place within committees. The next chapter discusses representational performance in parliamentary oversight outside the committee structure via questions at Question-Time.

CHAPTER 6 – POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

Chapters 4 and 5 have analysed political representation in policy formulation and committee decision-making.¹ However, in addition to committee work, one of the most important tasks of the EP since its inception consists of scrutinising the functioning and policy outputs of other European institutions, such as Commission and the Council of Ministers. As Rittberger (2005) notes, the oversight powers of the EP have increased in tandem with growing concerns among member state governments about the European Union's democratic deficit. Similarly, Hix (1997) argues that nomination of the Commission President by the European Parliament might help reduce the democratic deficit by increasing the oversight powers of MEPs. In any case, as the only directly elected supranational institution, the European Parliament's oversight fulfils an important role in the democratic process of the European Union.

There are various ways in which the European Parliament can exercise scrutiny. First, over time the EP has acquired substantial powers over the appointment and dismissal of the Commission, though they have remained short of direct election of the executive by MEPs (Hix, 2002; 1997; 1996; Magnette, 2001; 2000; Westlake, 1998). Second, the Parliament also plays a pivotal role in overseeing the implementation of the EU budget (Jun, 2003). Finally, the EP has the power to question Council and Commission on existing policy via a range of questioning procedures (Raunio, 1997; Corbett et al., 2003). By forcing the executive to assume

¹ Note: An earlier (condensed) version of this chapter is currently under review with the *Journal of Legislative Studies*

responsibility for its actions across all policy areas, MEPs can act as the ‘voice of their constituents’ and thereby lend legitimacy to the policy process.

This chapter examines selective participation (government of the people) and specialisation (government for the people) in parliamentary questions in the European Parliament. Compared with other scrutiny instruments, questions are relatively free from party group control and allow individual legislators to decide which policy areas are debated on the plenary floor. Additionally, questions take place outside the committee structure of the EP. As a result, unlike policy formulation and decision-making, incentives to scrutinise are not governed by majority rule but by legislative-executive relations. As Chapter 2 predicts, rather than party group coalition dynamics, it is national party ties to the executive that determine incentives to hold the Commission accountable for its actions.

The chapter is organised into five parts. The first section discusses existing research on parliamentary questions in the British House of Commons and the European Parliament. Section 2 examines MEP participation at Question-Time to explain whose interests and values are represented in parliamentary oversight. Section 3 addresses legislative specialisation in parliamentary questions: how responsive are MEPs at the oversight stage in the EP? Section 4 compares the distribution of representational performance at the oversight stage in the European Parliament to the committee assignments, that were at the heart of the previous two chapters. What are the differences, if any, between political representation at the committee stage and in parliamentary oversight? The final section concludes with a summary of the results and a discussion of their implications for democracy in the European Union.

1. Existing Research on Parliamentary Questions

Parliamentary questions have received surprisingly little attention in the academic literature. Few studies of legislative politics mention questions and even fewer authors incorporate them in a systematic theoretical and empirical analysis. Most research deals with the British House of Commons (Chester and Bowring, 1962; Franklin and Norton, 1993; Judge, 1974) or, more recently, a cross-section of national political systems (Wiberg, 1995). Nevertheless questions are a well-developed legislative tool that fulfils a wide range of important parliamentary functions in democracies across Europe.

The UK House of Commons

Most research on parliamentary questions analyses the functions that questions assume within the legislature and the wider political system. In the UK, questioning has a long tradition, elicits extensive media coverage and is firmly entrenched in the political process. In an extension of Chester and Bowring's (1962) early study, Franklin and Norton's (1993) seminal work on MPs in the British House of Commons distinguishes between the seven uses listed in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1. FUNCTIONS OF PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Function	Questions perform this function		
	<i>Well</i>	<i>So-So</i>	<i>Poorly</i>
<i>Representation</i>			
Taking up Constituency Interests	50%	38%	13%
Publicizing Backbench MPs & Their Concerns	63%	19%	9%
<i>Scrutiny</i>			
Attacking/Defending Workings of Govt Depts	45%	45%	9%
Holding Ministers Accountable	32%	42%	35%
<i>Information</i>			
Getting Information on Policy, Work of Govt	50%	22%	28%
Getting Hard-to-Obtain Information	32%	26%	38%
<i>Policy Influence</i>			
Influencing Govt Policy & Actions	38%	13%	47%

Adapted from Franklin and Norton (1993); Data based on a survey of MPs in the UK House of Commons

As Table 6.1 illustrates, legislators use questions to elicit information from the executive, check ministers, hold them accountable for their actions and, more generally, raise the public stature of MPs. These uses square well with the role of the legislature as the central link in a chain of delegation that connects citizens to their government. First, by publicizing the concerns of constituents and backbenchers, questions link voters to their representatives in the legislature. Second, questions also help reduce agency drift in the delegation of executive powers by monitoring government departments and facilitating their accountability. Finally, questions can be used to collect information about the government and its actions and to partake in actual policymaking.

However, questions are not equally well suited for all of these functions. As Table 6.1 shows, a large majority of MPs in the British House of Commons agree that questions are a good representational tool (Franklin and Norton, 1993). 50% acknowledge their use in taking up constituency interests and fully 63% believe they help publicise the concerns of backbenchers by prompting the government on salient policy issues. This is especially true when questions elicit a lot of media interest, such as is the case at Prime Minister's Questions in the British House of Commons.

The second most popular function for parliamentary questions is oversight both of the executive as a whole and of individual government officials. Fully 90% of respondents in the House of Commons affirm questions are useful to attack or defend government departments while 74% believe they can hold individual ministers accountable. In the only cross-national analysis of its kind, Wiberg (1995) emphasises the crucial role of parliamentary questions in overseeing the executive. He finds that while parliaments do not have much impact on the content and initiation of

legislation, they do exercise “control by communication” via various forms of parliamentary questioning.

Third, a large majority of MPs think questions play an important role in keeping them informed about the actions of the executive. To some extent, this informational role simply facilitates parliamentary oversight. Indeed, effective scrutiny requires that the legislature be able to request information from the government about its activities. In practice, however, information that requires extensive research on the part of the executive is confined to written questions (Franklin and Norton, 1993). Raunio (1996) notes that written questions are most useful for detailed information, some of which may require background research. In most parliaments, including the EP, requests for statistical information and background research are explicitly banned from the oral question procedure (Rule 109, Annex II).

Finally, MPs are well aware that questions afford them only minimal influence over actual policymaking. 47% of MPs in the House of Commons think questions perform this role poorly, the highest percentage of any category in Table 6.1. Nevertheless, 38% of UK representatives attribute at least some policy role to questioning. Any investigation into the motivation for tabling questions must take this policy role into account.

On the whole, however, Franklin and Norton’s analysis of the UK House of Commons shows that most legislators find questions useful primarily in terms of representation and oversight. The public visibility, easy access and issue specificity of parliamentary questions make them particularly suitable for political representation and parliamentary oversight of the executive. Legislators choose to ask questions in particular policy areas rather than others in an attempt to bring up issues of concern to their constituents or in order to hold the executive accountable for its actions.

Questions in the European Parliament

If there is little academic research at the level of national parliaments, we know next to nothing about questions in the European Parliament. There are three questioning procedures in the EP, including one for written questions, oral questions with debate and Question Time. Written questions can be tabled by any member and are usually published within six weeks together with their answers in the *Official Journal*. Oral questions can only be tabled by committees, political groups or at least 32 members. Replies are followed by a debate and may lead to the adoption of a resolution.

Finally, Question-Time was introduced in 1973 and modelled after PMQ in the British House of Commons. It is held at every part-session at a time designated by the Conference of Presidents. Each MEP may ask one question per month to Council and Commission. Questions are submitted in writing to the President, who rules on their admissibility and the order in which they are taken, at least one week before they are asked. Admitted questions are distributed to all MEPs and forwarded to Council and Commission. MEPs whose questions cannot be asked at the scheduled part-session because of time constraints can postpone their questions or request a reply in writing. As Cohen (1979) notes, this means that MEPs actually receive a better and more reliable “service” from Community institutions than MPs in the UK House of Commons.

That parliamentary questions are useful, at least in the perception of those legislators who participate at Question-Time, is underlined by the prominent coverage they receive on the personal websites of MEPs where they inform constituents about

their parliamentary work.² Liberal Democrat MEP Baroness Ludford, for instance, complains about the UK's Europe Minister Douglas Alexander 'dodging' questions put to him at Question-Time with the Council of Ministers. As she points out, 'I will just have to tell my constituents that [...] you can't get a straight answer out of New Labour'. Similarly, conservative spokesman for health John Bowis cites extensively from the questions he tabled on his homepage. Finally, Labour spokesman for employment Claude Moraes includes a detailed description of his questions to Commission and Council in his newsletter, which is sent directly to his UK constituency.

Nevertheless, we know very little about the motivations of MEPs for tabling questions in particular policy areas. First, in a very early study, Cohen (1979) looks at the development of and use of Question Time before the first direct elections in 1979. He finds that British MEPs tend to make disproportional use of the procedure but expects direct elections to bring about wide-ranging changes. Second, in a study of the third parliament (1989-1994), Raunio (1996) finds little evidence of party group or national specialisation. MEPs appear to use parliamentary questions for much the same reasons as members of national legislatures. Also, a large number of questions deal with matters of concern to local constituents as opposed to a pan-European citizenry. The example of Baroness Ludford above corroborates the suspicion that questions in the European Parliament often are addressed to a national party-political audience rather than to all European citizens. However, there is some evidence that MEPs prefer to table questions about issues within the jurisdiction of the committees in which they sit (Raunio, 1996). Third, Bowler and Farrell (1995) detect similar

² The examples cited here refer to the UK where the practise of informing constituents via personal homepages is most developed. However, many MEPs from other countries also use personal websites to stay in touch with domestic constituents.

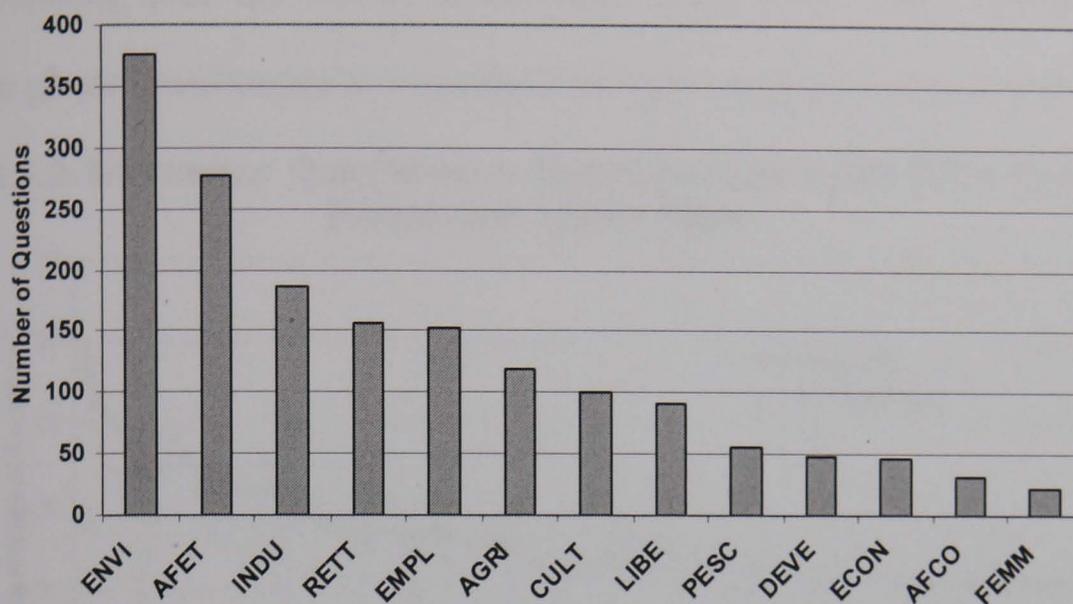
evidence of legislative specialisation in their study of oral questions in three committees.

This chapter presents empirical evidence to demonstrate which values and interests are represented and how responsive MEPs are to the stated policy priorities of their national parties in parliamentary oversight. The next section focuses on the legislative participation decisions of MEPs at Question-Time. Which MEPs are most active in scrutinising the Commission? How does this affect political representation at this stage of the policy process?

II. Representativeness and Legislative Participation at Question-Time

As Corbett et al (2005) point out, parliamentary questions have become more and more popular over time. More than 4,200 questions were brought before Commission and Council at Question-Time in the fifth Parliament. Figure 6.1 shows the number of questions to the Commission in 13 policy areas over the full five-year term of the Parliament (1999-2004). Environment was by far the most popular topic, followed by questions on foreign affairs and industry. Regional affairs, employment and agriculture still elicited more than 100 questions between 1999 and 2004. Questions on economics and the monetary union, constitutional affairs and women's rights were least abundant.

FIGURE 6.1. PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION BY POLICY AREA



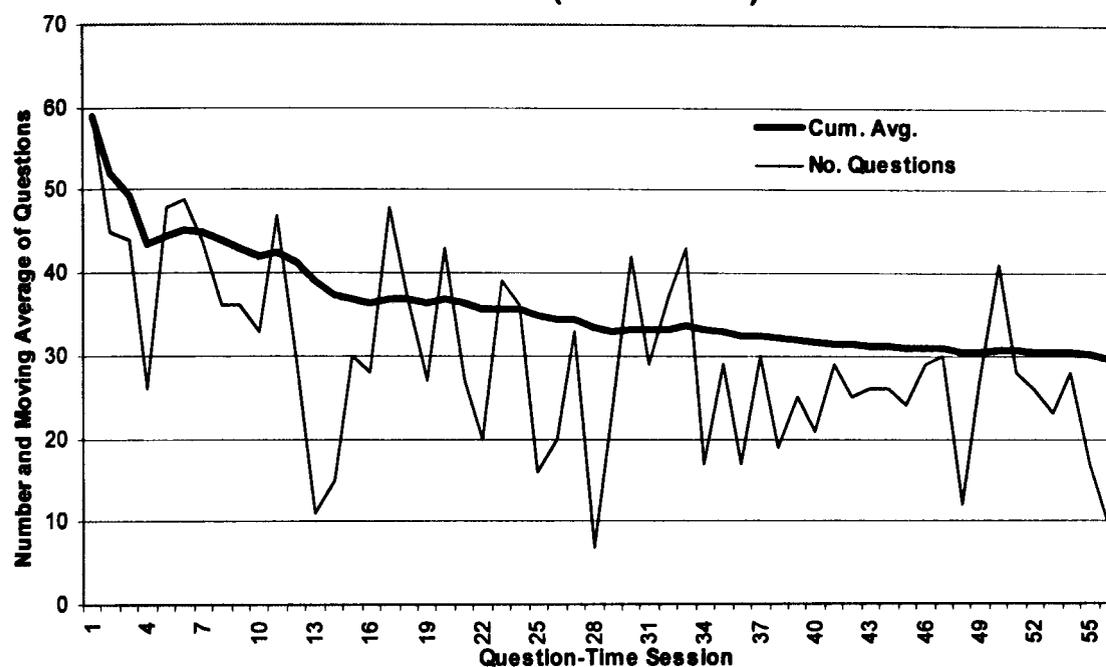
Notes: $N = 1,666$; Abbreviations: AFET = Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; AGRI = Agriculture and Rural Development; CULT = Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport; DEVE = Development and cooperation; ECON = Economics and Monetary Affairs; EMPL = Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI = Environment, Public health and Consumer Policy; FEMM = Women's rights and Equal Opportunities; INDU = External Trade, Research and Energy; LIBE = Citizen's Freedom and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs; PESC = Fisheries; RETT = Regional policy, transport and tourism

Figure 6.2 shows the evolution of questioning over the period under analysis together with their cumulative average. There were 56 Question-Time sessions during the fifth European Parliament (1999-2004). The thick line, which represents the cumulative average of questions, shows a gradual decline in questioning from a peak of just below 60 in the first session to an overall average of around 30 for the full legislative term. The thin line, which records the actual number of questions at each session is characterised by a large number of peaks and troughs reflecting seasonal variation in legislative activity throughout the year. The first parliamentary session in early autumn, for instance, tends to be less popular for questioning than winter and spring when EP business is in full swing.

In addition, the cumulative average shows that the proximity of European elections does not spur activity at Question-Time. Instead, the gradual decline in questioning might reflect the accumulation of other legislative tasks over time. Whereas MEPs have only few committee responsibilities by the time of the first

Question-Time session, they become more and more active in policy formulation and decision-making over the course of the term. As a result, some representatives substitute greater involvement in committees for lower activity at Question-Time.

FIGURE 6.2. NUMBER OF QUESTIONS AT QUESTION-TIME IN THE FIFTH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (1999-2004)



Note: N=1666, No. Questions is the total number of questions at each Question-Time session in the fifth European Parliament; Cum. Avg is the cumulative average of questions per Question-Time session

Table 6.2 shows participation at Question-Time in the fifth European Parliament at the individual level. More than half of all MEPs (323) did not table any questions over the full five-year period under investigation. A large number of legislators participated between 1 and 5 times and 21 representatives were responsible for 30 or more questions each. The record is detained by the Greek communist MEP Alexandros Alavanos and his Spanish socialist colleague María Izquierdo-Rojo, who tabled 48 questions each to the Commission.

TABLE 6.2. DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTIONS AT QUESTION-TIME ACROSS MEPs (1999-2004)

Number of Questions	Frequency (Number of MEPs)
0	323
1-5	188
6-10	45
11-15	24
16-20	18
21-25	7
26-30	4
30+	21
<i>Average Number of Questions per MEP</i>	2.6

Note: Cell Entries show the number of committee members for each level of participation and for each type of report. Total Number of Questions; 1666; Total Number of MEPs: 630

Participation at Question-Time is highly selective, with some MEPs engaging extensively whereas half the legislature opts out completely. This distribution confirms previous research where the sample of questions under study is similarly skewed (e.g. Raunio, 1997). As predicted by Hall (1996), the representational consequences of such an uneven distribution could be stark. If MEPs address policy issues that are of concern exclusively to *their* constituents, the political opinions of up to 50% of European citizens are not represented at all compared with a small minority whose values and interests dominate parliamentary oversight.

So far we have established that, despite ease of access and relatively low opportunity costs, a large number of MEPs choose not to exercise their right to participate at Question-Time. This may reflect a belief that parliamentary questions are of limited usefulness given the low awareness of plenary sessions in the European Parliament within the general public. However, other legislators make extensive use of questioning as a representational and oversight tool. Whatever the reasons for different participation levels, the range of opinions voiced at Question-Time and the interests expressed in parliamentary oversight of the Commission do not reflect the composition of the European Parliament as a whole.

Chapter 2 hypothesises that oversight is particularly valuable to MEPs with a high risk of agency loss from the Commission's behaviour as an executive agency. The risk of agency loss is highest for MEPs without direct representation in the Commission via their national parties. In contrast, legislators whose parties have their 'own' commissioner are likely to be closer to the Commission in terms of policy preferences and they dispose over alternative, less formal, ways to influence the executive and express discontent with its policies. As a result, Chapter 2 predicts that 'opposition' MEPs without direct partisan ties to individual commissioners are more likely to use Question-Time as an oversight tool than their peers.

Table 6.3 confirms this prediction. MEPs whose national parties were not represented in the Commission tabled a total of 1,453 questions compared with only 1,117 by legislators with direct ties to the executive.³ In other words, there is a 30 percent difference in participation between MEPs from 'governing' parties and representatives from 'opposition' parties. Although the terms 'government' and 'opposition' are less applicable in the EP, the distribution in Table 6.3 corresponds to similar findings on the connection between questioning and legislative-executive relations in national political systems (Chester and Bowring, 1962; Franklin and Norton, 1993).

³ Note that these numbers cover all questions to the Commission, irrespective of policy area. Much of the rest of the analysis in this chapter is based on the restricted sample for which data on issue salience were available (see Chapter 3 for a description of this dataset).

TABLE 6.3. NUMBER OF QUESTIONS AND NATIONAL PARTY TIES TO THE COMMISSION

National Party Ties to the European Commission	Number of Questions
Governing Parties	1,117
Opposition Parties	1,453
Total	2,570

Note: includes all questions and all MEPs. Governing parties include all MEPs from all parties that sit in the Commission; Opposition parties include all MEP from all parties that do not sit in the Commission

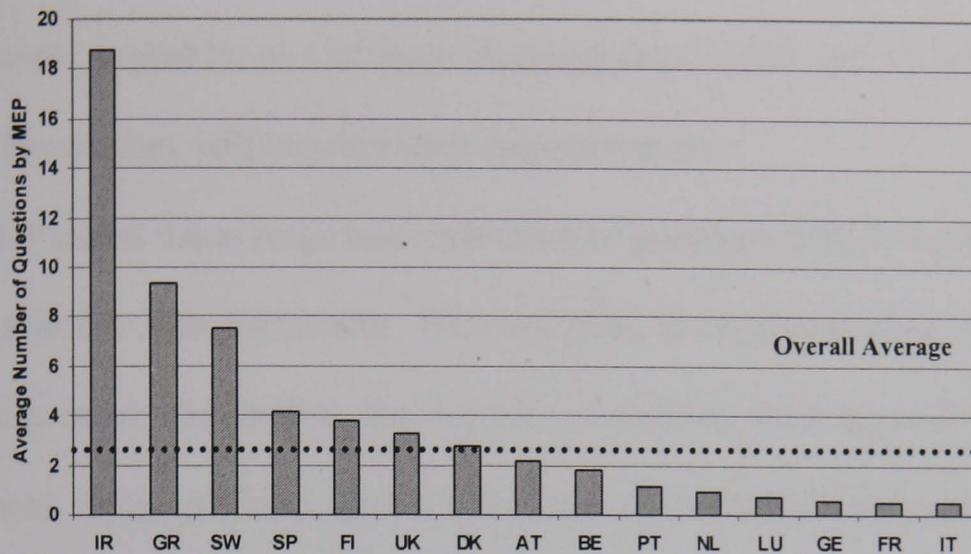
Finally, Figure 6.3 analyses questioning activity at the national level. Cross-country research has shown that parliamentary questions play a much more important role in some countries than in others. For instance, it is no coincidence that academic studies of questions have focused on the British House of Commons (Franklin and Norton, 1993) and the Nordic states (Wiberg, 1994). In these systems, parliamentary questions are regularly covered by the media and they are much more visible to the general public than in other EU member states.

Figure 6.3 suggests that domestic political culture may also have something to do with levels of participation at Question-Time in the EP. However, a word of caution is required: for small member states, average figures are not always meaningful because they are based on a small number of legislators and questions. For instance, 25% of Greek legislators did not participate at all at Question-Time over the course of the fifth Parliament. Nevertheless, Greece has one of the highest average participation rates because seven of its MEPs tabled more than 30 questions to the Commission each. In comparison, the effect of such extremely active MEPs is much smaller in the larger member states. Despite this caveat, MEPs from Anglo-Saxon (UK and Ireland) and Nordic states (Sweden, Denmark, Finland), on the whole, ask more questions than their colleagues from continental Europe, with the notable exceptions of Greece and (to a lesser extent) Spain. Irish legislators are by far the most active with an average of

18 questions per MEP for the full fifth term of the EP. This compares with less than 2 questions per MEP for the 6 founding members of the European Union (France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux) and Portugal.

Nevertheless, it is unclear from Figure 6.3 which national attributes explain these differences. The six founding members of the EU include some of the most pro-European publics in the Union. Since one of the main functions of questioning is the ability for backbenchers to voice their dissatisfaction with the executive, these countries may actively choose to refrain from participating at Question-Time. Arguably, with little to criticise the strongly pro-European Commission for, MEPs from the founding members may simply opt out of parliamentary oversight irrespective of their direct partisan ties with the executive. In contrast, the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic member states are often seen to be much more eurosceptic, with strong anti-European parties, such as the Danish/Swedish June movement or Britain's UKIP. In countries where European integration itself is contested, oversight of the supranational executive may assume greater importance. If participation at Question-Time reflects a more general concern with parliamentary oversight, Figure 6.3 suggests that there is a stark bias against the pro-European founding member states at this stage of the policy process.

FIGURE 6.3. AVERAGE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS PER MEP (BY COUNTRY)



Abbreviations: AT = Austria; BE = Belgium; DK = Denmark; FI = Finland; FR = France; GE = Germany; GR = Greece; IT = Italy; IR = Ireland; LU = Luxembourg; NL = Netherlands; PT = Portugal; SP = Spain; SW = Sweden; UK = United Kingdom;

This section has shown the distribution of questions across time, individual MEPs and member states to describe differences in the *level* of participation in parliamentary oversight. Oversight is biased territorially and at the partisan and individual levels. As a result, the values and interests that are expressed at this stage of the policy process are not representative of the European Parliament as a whole.

However, as Chapter 2 has shown, levels of participation by themselves do not fully determine the quality of political representation. The next section takes a closer look at legislative specialisation at the oversight stage of the policy process. To what extent do MEPs specialise in overseeing the Commission in some policy areas but not in others? How does the apparent lack of representativeness at Question-Time affect responsiveness?

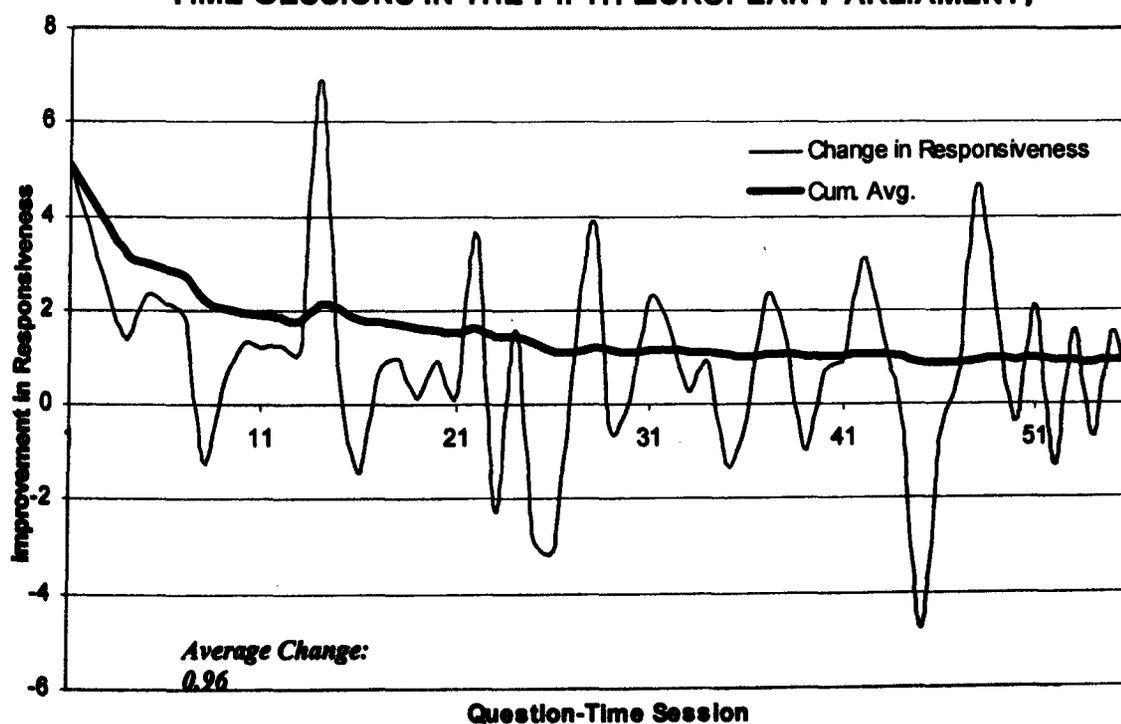
III. Legislative Specialisation and Responsiveness

The theory developed in chapter 2 assumes that MEPs hold at least a weak preference for responsive specialisation at Question-Time. In other words, controlling for other legislative objectives, such as effective oversight, representatives prefer to table questions in salient policy areas to other areas. One indication of the strength of

this preference might lie in the evolution of responsiveness over the course of the legislative term. Arguably, as European elections draw closer and as MEPs become more experienced, they will improve their responsiveness.

Figure 6.4 shows the average responsiveness of questions tabled at each Question-time session in the fifth Parliament. Whereas there are some sessions where MEPs were less responsive than before, the majority of sessions show a positive change in responsiveness. Responsiveness grows over time as MEPs become more acquainted with parliamentary procedures and as they come closer to the next European elections. However, the average increase in responsiveness declines steadily over time until the cumulative average reaches a mere 0.96 percent at the end of the legislature just before the 2004 EP elections. In other words, there was a marginal improvement in responsiveness over the course of the legislative term. Responsiveness grows at a declining rate over the course of the term, with no discernible spike before European elections.

FIGURE 6.4. CHANGE IN AVERAGE RESPONSIVENESS OVER TIME (ALL QUESTION-TIME SESSIONS IN THE FIFTH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT)



Note: N=1666. No. Change in Responsiveness is the average change in MEP responsiveness between two sessions of Question-Time. Cum. Avg. is the cumulative average of these values over the course of the legislature.

However, as Chapter 2 has shown, political representation is not the only motivation for participating and specialising at Question-Time. Indeed, the theory predicts a trade-off between responsiveness and oversight in parliamentary questions. On one hand, responsiveness requires MEPs to table questions in policy areas that feature prominently in their manifestos. On the other hand, effective oversight requires that legislators hold the executive responsible in the wide range of policy areas where they face a risk of agency loss.

As a result, MEPs with a large incentive to monitor the executive are less responsive than legislators without such an incentive. The trade-off between representation and oversight depends on the partisan ties between MEPs and the Commission. Legislators whose national parties sit in the Commission are likely to have closer policy preferences and better access to the executive. As a result, Chapter 2 predicts that MEPs from 'governing' parties are more responsive than MEPs from 'opposition' parties.

In order to provide a first test of this prediction, Table 6.4 shows the average responsiveness of MEPs with direct access to the Commission via their national parties and legislators without such partisan ties. As the table shows, controlling for questions on the environment, MEPs who do not sit in the Commission are less responsive than MEPs whose national parties do have a commissioner. However, the relationship is reversed for questions on the environment. Here, MEPs whose parties do not sit in the Commission are *more* responsive than their peers with direct access to the European executive. MEPs with access to the Commission table more questions on the environment than the salience of this policy area would predict.

TABLE 6.4. AVERAGE RESPONSIVENESS AND PARTISAN TIES TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

	All Policy Areas (except <i>Environment</i>)	Environment
	<i>Avg. Responsiveness</i>	<i>Avg. Responsiveness</i>
'Governing' Parties	7.30 (0.25)	3.99 (0.14)
'Opposition' Parties	6.21 (0.28)	8.52 (0.57)
<i>Difference in Means</i>	<i>1.09*</i>	<i>-4.52*</i>

*Note: standard errors in parentheses; * significant at 0.01 level;*

Thus, there is only mixed support for the hypothesis in Chapter 2 that direct access to the Commission reduces the incentive to scrutinise the executive and allows representatives to focus on salient policy areas. The difference between environmental questions and all other policy areas is striking. Several alternative (though not rival) explanations can be tested in a more sophisticated multi-variate analysis.

First, it is of course possible that MEPs who do not sit in the Commission are affiliated with parties that care more about the environment than MEPs with direct access to the Commission. Most green parties for instance (except for the German greens who formed part of the German government in 1999 and are therefore represented in the Commission) do not have access to the Commission and they presumably serve a constituency that is environmentally aware.

In addition, environmental issues are different from other policy areas at the European level because it is here where the European Parliament and the Commission have been most influential in shaping policy outcomes. As a result, all MEPs, irrespective of their partisan ties to the Commission and the salience of the policy area at home, may want to be involved in environmental policy.

In order to test these hypotheses, Table 6.5 shows the result of a logistic regression with random individual effects and a binary dependent, which assumes the

value 1 for environmental questions and the value 0 otherwise. The regression explains the likelihood of tabling a question on the environment as a function of the explanatory variables. The results show that MEPs from the Swedish Socialist party, who are party colleagues of the environment Commissioner Margot Wallstrom are more likely to raise environmental issues at Question-Time. For MEPs from other national parties, Commission access does not have a main effect. However, there is a negative interaction between partisan ties to the Commission and the salience of environmental issues. In other words, unlike 'opposition' MEPs, legislators with partisan ties to the Commission table more questions on the environment than the salience of the policy area would predict. Finally, there is no relationship between party group membership and the likelihood of tabling a question on the environment. This may come as a surprise, especially because the Green party group serves an environmentally particularly conscious constituency.

In any case, the results in Table 6.5 confirm that environmental questions are governed by different factors than questions in other policy areas. Further research is required to investigate the reasons behind environmental questioning. Most of the multivariate analysis in this Chapter however excludes questions on the environment. The bi-variate results in Table 6.4 support the prediction in Chapter 2 that 'governing' MEPs (with partisan ties to the Commission) are more responsive at Question-Time than 'opposition' legislators on non-environmental issues.

TABLE 6.5. RANDOM EFFECTS LOGISTIC REGRESSION, DEPENDENT: ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTION (1), OTHER QUESTION (0)

	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>
Salience	-0.009	0.021
<i>Commission Access</i>		
Party sits in Commission	0.598	0.657
Party holds Commission's Environment Portfolio†	-1.683***	0.773
<i>Interaction: Party sits in Commission x Salience</i>	-0.302 **	0.154
<i>Individual Variables</i>		
Member of Environment Committee	1.375***	0.233
Distance from Median MEP	-0.020	0.973
<i>Party Group Dummies</i>		
PES	0.437	0.395
ELDR	0.401	0.456
GREEN	-0.043	0.693
EUL	-0.398	0.589
UEN	1.108	0.736
IND	-0.430	1.453
Constant	-1.693***	0.365
<i>Random Effects Coefficients</i>		
/lnsig2u	-0.067	0.289
sigma_u	0.967	0.140
rho	0.221	0.050
Log likelihood	-771.019	
Prob >= chibar2	<0.001	
N	1,633	

Notes: *** significant at 0.01 level, ** significant at 0.05 level, reference categories: UK and EPP;

† The environment commissioner in the Prodi Commission (1999-2004) was Swedish Social Democrat Margot Wallstrom
Coefficients measure the likelihood of tabling a question on the environment; unit of analysis: Questions;
See Chapter 3 for details on random effects methodology; sigma_u is the estimated standard deviation of the random effect for individual MEPs; rho is the intraclass correlation coefficient; Prob > chi2 shows the probability of no difference between the random effects specification shown here and an OLS specification without random or fixed effects.

The regression results in Table 6.5 show that Swedish Social Democrats are less likely than other MEPs to question their party's own commissioner. However, the table does not tell us anything about the *quality* of the questions that MEPs address to their own Commissioner. It is indeed possible that questions to an MEP's own commissioner follow a different logic than those to other commissioners. In order to investigate this possibility, Table 6.6 investigates the use of planted questions at Question-Time. As Wiberg (1996) points out, the practice of planting friendly questions in order to highlight a positive aspect of the government's work is a

widespread “everyday open secret in all parliaments” (pg. 196). Referring to the British House of Commons, this observation is confirmed by the *Economist* newspaper, which notes that ‘the price of putting down a question is, after all, more like half a pint of bitter in the members’ bar’ (Bagehot, 1994 [quoted in Wiberg, 1996, pg. 196]). Similarly, in the European Parliament, some Commissioners may plant ‘suitable’ questions among MEPs from their own national party in order to raise particular issues or call public attention to their work.

Of course, it is difficult to identify which questions are planted by individual commissioners and which questions are ‘legitimate’ inquiries about a commissioner’s brief. Table 6.6 shows the difference in responsiveness of questions tabled to commissioners by members of their own national party and those tabled by members of other parties. If there is a significant difference in responsiveness, this suggests that MEPs have different motivations for questioning their ‘own’ commissioners than they do for other members of the executive. The table suggests that this is not the case. Questions to an MEP’s own commissioner are somewhat less responsive than questions to commissioners from other parties but this difference is not statistically significant. The lack of a significant difference suggests that we can treat questions to an MEP’s own commissioner similarly to all other questions. There is no discernible effect of question ‘planting’ by commissioners among members of their own national parties to highlight their work.

TABLE 6.6. AVERAGE RESPONSIVENESS OF 'PLANTED' AND OTHER QUESTIONS

	<i>Average Responsiveness</i>
Question to Own Commissioner[†]	6.10 (0.79)
Question to Different Commissioner^{††}	7.37 (0.26)
<i>Difference in Means</i>	<i>1.27 (0.83)</i>

*Notes: The table includes only MEPs with partisan ties to the Commission, Questions on the environment are excluded; standard errors in parentheses
† N= 670; †† N = 65*

Finally, Table 6.7 examines to what extent committee assignments affect behaviour at Question-Time. Previous research has found mixed evidence for legislative specialisation in the use of questions even though legislators are free to choose the topics of their inquiry. Judge (1974) for instance finds that MPs in the British House of Commons focus their interventions on a small subset of policy areas. Similarly, in the European Parliament, Bowler and Farrell (1995) contend that agriculture committee members tend to ask questions about agriculture but not about the environment or regional affairs, whereas members of the environment and regional committees tend to query most about their respective committee jurisdictions. Raunio (1997) on the other hand finds somewhat less conclusive evidence for committee specialisation in his study of written questions in the European Parliament.

In any case, if committee specialisation occurs, MEPs who sit on the most salient committees should represent their party's political platform better than MEPs who are members of less salient committees. Alternatively, an explanation for the lack of specialisation is that MEPs use questions to address policy areas over which their committees do not have jurisdiction, either because they are dissatisfied with their assignments or because they are concerned about limiting their legislative participation to the narrow range of policy areas that are covered by their committees.

In either case, the quality of an MEP's committee assignments can have a positive or a negative effect on responsiveness at Question-Time.

Table 6.7 shows that about 30 percent of all non-environmental questions at Question-Time address a policy area that falls within the author's committee jurisdiction. The remaining two thirds of questions deal with areas outside the questioner's committees. While non-committee questions are on average marginally more salient than questions that deal with the author's own committee work, the difference is not statistically significant at the 10% level. A more sophisticated multi-variate analysis is required to evaluate the impact of committee specialisation on political representation at Question-Time. For the moment, however, there is not enough evidence to support an interpretation of questions as an alternative for MEPs who are dissatisfied with their influence over policy formulation (Chapter 5) and decision-making (Chapter 4).

TABLE 6.7. SALIENCE AND NUMBER OF QUESTIONS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE COMMITTEE JURISDICTION OF THE QUESTIONER

	<i>Average Salience</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Question About Own Committee	6.57 (0.34)	399
Question About Different Committee	6.91 (0.22)	492
<i>Difference</i>	<i>0.34</i> <i>(0.41)</i>	93

**** Note:** Environmental questions excluded; standard errors in parentheses

The bi-variate analysis in Tables 6.4-6.7 has shown that, with the exception of questions on the environment, MEPs with direct access to the Commission via their national parties are more responsive than their peers. This remains true when they table questions that are addressed to their 'own' commissioner or that deal with their own committee portfolios. Neither the planting of questions by an MEP's 'own' commissioner nor committee specialisation have a statistically significant effect on

responsiveness. While the bivariate analysis has shown substantial evidence of the impact of national party ties on legislative behaviour and responsiveness at Question-Time, the tables cannot provide any insights about their relative (statistical and substantive) significance against alternative explanations such as question planting and committee specialisation.

In order to address this problem, Table 6.8 summarizes the results of three multivariate regressions with random effects for countries and individual MEPs and with question salience as a dependent variable.⁴ The models explain the responsiveness of questioners as a function of legislative-executive relations, party group membership, the committee organisation of the EP and a range of individual level control variables. The regression coefficients indicate the effect of a one-unit change in each explanatory variable on question salience. Chapter 2 predicts that the questioning behaviour of MEPs is conditioned by their access to the Commission, rather than party group coalition dynamics as in the case of committee decision-making and policy formulation. Committee specialisation and the use of planted questions may act as intervening variables. The results support these predictions.

⁴ See Chapter 3 for details about random effects methodology. Questions on the environment are excluded from the analysis.

TABLE 6.8. RANDOM EFFECTS REGRESSION; DEPENDENT: QUESTION SALIENCE

	Model 1		Model 2: (1) + Specialisation		Model 3: (2) + Party Groups	
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>
<i>Access to Commission</i>						
Party has 'Own' Commissioner	1.285*	0.709	1.413**	0.613	1.590**	0.734
<i>Question Planting</i>						
Question to 'Own' Commissioner	-	-	-1.512	1.168	-1.345	1.184
<i>Committee Specialisation</i>						
Question w/in Committee Jurisdiction	-	-	-0.566	0.400	-0.552	0.400
Committee Influence	-	-	-2.256***	0.862	-2.353***	0.872
<i>Policy Specialisation</i>						
Responsiveness of Previous Question	-	-	0.151***	0.027	0.149***	0.027
Number of Policy Areas Questioned	-	-	0.110	0.089	0.129	0.093
<i>Party Group Dummies</i>						
EPP	-	-	-	-	-1.043	0.817
PES	-	-	-	-	-0.961	1.053
ELDR	-	-	-	-	-0.384	1.478
<i>Other Control Variables</i>						
Question-Time Session	-0.027*	0.014	-0.032**	0.014	-0.031**	0.014
Distance from median MEP	-0.576	1.376	-0.291	1.200	-0.967	1.705
Incumbent	0.216	0.586	0.378	0.511	0.434	0.514
Number of Questions in the Same Policy Area	0.010***	0.004	0.008**	0.004	0.008**	0.004
Constant	6.132***	1.069	5.681***	1.464	6.186***	1.600
<i>Random Effects</i>						
Country	2.912	0.745	2.697	0.668	2.842	0.702
MEP	2.691	0.332	1.876	0.383	1.875	0.395
Residual	5.901	0.128	5.946	0.131	5.946	0.131
Prob>chi(2)	<0.001		<0.001		<0.001	
Log Restricted Likelihood	-4,135.638		-4,119.068		-4,115.648	
N	1,268		1,268		1,268	

Notes: *** significant at 0.01 level, ** significant at 0.05 level, * significant at 0.1 level

First of all, the Commission membership dummy has the expected (positive) sign and it is statistically significant in all three estimations (at the 0.05 level in models 2 and 3, at the 0.1 level in model 1). MEPs with direct representation in the Commission via their national party are more responsive than their peers whose parties do not sit in the Commission. This conclusion does not change whether the model includes only individual level control variables (model 1) or whether it also includes committee and other specialisation variables (model 2) and party group dummies (model 3).⁵ Substantively, in the fully specified model (3), an MEP whose national party is represented in the Commission tables questions that are on average 1.59% more salient than MEPs who are not represented in the Commission. Compared with an overall average responsiveness of 6.8%, the effect of direct partisan access to the executive is highly significant.

The positive effect of Commission representation supports the hypothesis in Chapter 2, which explains responsiveness at Question-Time with the author's national party affiliation. MEPs without partisan ties to the Commission face a higher risk of agency loss and more difficult access to individual members of the Commission. As a result, they have a strong incentive to rely on parliamentary questions as a tool to monitor the executive in a broad range of policy areas as opposed to specialising in salient areas. The results support Jun's (2003) observation that national party ties to individual Commissioners influence an MEP's attitude towards the EU executive.

Second, models (2) and (3) quantify the impact of so-called planted questions from MEPs to their own commissioners. In models (2) and (3) the coefficient on *Question to 'Own' Commissioner* is negative as expected. However, controlling for all other independent variables in models (2) and (3), the variable does not assume

⁵ On the contrary, including these controls marginally strengthens the results.

statistical significance.⁶ Thus, in confirmation of the bivariate results in Table 6.6, MEPs who tabled questions to their own commissioners are equally responsive as other MEPs. In terms of political representation, the use of planted questions does not significantly affect responsiveness.

Third, models (2) and (3) also incorporate several variables to account for the possibility of committee specialisation at Question-Time. Table 6.7 suggested that specialisation in policy areas that fall under the questioner's committee jurisdiction could be detrimental to responsiveness, though the difference in mean responsiveness between questions dealing with the author's committee portfolio and all other questions was not significant. Effective representation requires specialisation in salient policy areas, irrespective of committee assignments. However, the multivariate analysis shows that MEPs who table question in areas that fall within their committee jurisdiction are not less responsive than their peers. The coefficient on *question within committee jurisdiction* is negative in both estimations but it does not assume statistical significance at the 0.1 level. Thus, committee specialisation does not appear to make a significant difference in terms of responsiveness.

However, a second measure of committee specialisation does show a statistically significant effect. Indeed, MEPs who sit in the most influential committees (i.e. those with a large percentage of co-decision legislation) are less responsive at Question-Time than their colleagues whose committees are less powerful in terms of policy outcomes. This result is consistent with the interpretation that legislators with a strong committee portfolio are likely to focus on the policy formulation and decision-making stages of the legislative process, where they can affect the content of policy before it

⁶ Of course, like in Table 6.5 the multi-variate analysis cannot positively identify which questions are planted by commissioners or the national party leadership and which questions reflect a 'real' concern with the Commission's handling of a particular policy area. The short discussion here assumes that commissioners are most likely to plant questions with MEPs from their own national party.

is adopted by the European Parliament. In contrast, MEPs with less influential committee positions are more responsive at Question-Time. Thus, models (2) and (3) suggest that there is a close interaction between the three different stages of the policy process. Substantively, each 10% rise in the share of co-decision legislation within an MEP's committee portfolio lowers responsiveness by more than 2%. The quality of an MEP's committee assignments considerably affects responsiveness at the parliamentary oversight stage of the legislative process.

Fourth, models (2) and (3) incorporate two additional variables that measure the effect of specialisation in particular policy areas outside of committees. Even MEPs who do not specialise in their committees, could have a particular interest in a small number of policy areas in which they have special expertise for instance. Just like committee specialisation, this could affect responsiveness depending on the salience of the policy area where the MEP has expertise. The results in Table 6.8 show that the number of policy areas questioned does not affect responsiveness. MEPs who only table questions on a small number of policy areas are no less responsive than their peers.

However, there is a statistically and substantively very strong relationship between the responsiveness of consecutive questions by the same MEP. Indeed, in models (2) and (3), the salience of the previous question is the single best predictor of the salience of the next question by the same MEP. Thus, there are some MEPs who consistently table questions in the most salient policy areas, even once the number of policy areas questioned and committee specialisation are taken into account. Clearly, as the bivariate analysis has already indicated, there are large differences in the representational performance of MEPs at the oversight stage of the legislative process.

In sum, the relationship between specialisation and the representational quality of questions is complex. Committee specialisation might be a small part of the answer but it does not fully explain representational performance at Question-Time. Instead, Table 6.8 suggests that it is the quality of an MEP's committee portfolio that determines which questions he or she asks. More generally, the quality of committee assignments determines how legislators engage at different stages of the policy process. Additionally, however, some MEPs consistently table salient questions while others do not, even once committee specialisation is taken into account. Further research on parliamentary questions in the EP should try to model committee effects on questions more thoroughly by, for instance, examining the relationship between questions and different leadership positions within committees (such as substitute, full member, vice chair, and chair).

Finally, as expected, none of the party group dummies have any effect on responsiveness (model 3). This is in stark contrast to Chapters 4 and 5 where party groups played a major role in the legislative participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs. The lack of significance of the three party group dummies in model (3) corroborates the prediction that legislative-executive relations in the European Parliament are subject to a different dynamic than committee work. Whereas policy formulation and decision-making in committees are governed by majority rule, which fosters coalition formation among European party groups, parliamentary oversight is determined by partisan ties to the executive at the level of national parties. As noted in Chapter 2, this distinction between majority rule and legislative-executive relations makes the European Parliament a unique natural laboratory to investigate incentives for MEPs to participate and specialise at different stages of the policy process.

Finally, a series of additional control variables included in the regression deserve mentioning. First, the lack of significance of *distance to median MEP* emphasises that it is *access* to the Commission via the national party, rather than individual policy preferences, that governs legislative-executive relations in the EP. The negative coefficient on *Question-Time session* confirms the counterintuitive effect of European elections (illustrated in Figure 6.4), with lower responsiveness at the end than at the beginning of the legislature. In a similar vein, there is no difference in the responsiveness of incumbents and freshmen at Question-Time. Both of these results may be less surprising in view of the weak electoral connection that links MEPs to their constituents in the EP. However, the positive coefficient on *number of questions in the same policy area* indicates that salient policy areas are the most popular question-topics for MEPs. In other words, legislators do make a conscious effort to put the political platforms of their parties into practice but they do not adjust their behaviour in response to electoral stimuli.

IV. Political Representation in Committees and in Parliamentary Oversight

The results presented thus far suggest that there is a considerable amount of variation in the representational performance of MEPs at the parliamentary oversight stage. Representation at Question-Time is highly unequal and it varies primarily along national party lines. Except for questions on the environment, MEPs whose national parties are represented in the executive are more responsive than those who are not. The effect of committee specialisation on responsiveness is more complex. Legislators with highly desirable assignments are less responsive than MEPs who sit on less attractive committees. On the whole, the analysis has shown that access to the European Commission via the national party's own commissioner is a more powerful explanation of representational performance at this stage of the policy process than

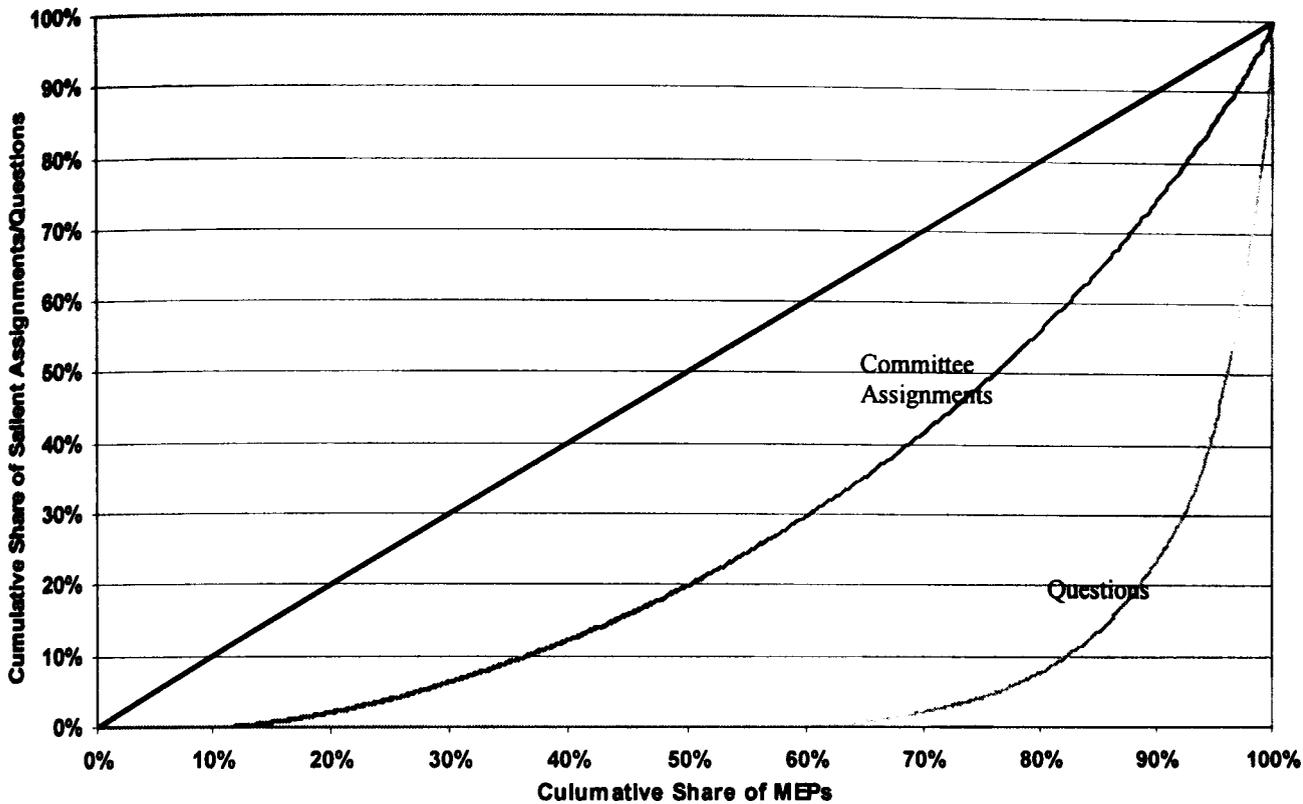
alternative explanations such as committee specialisation, individual policy preferences or planted questions by commissioners among their national party's MEPs.

Thus, political representation is distributed very differently at the oversight stage, where access to the Commission is the key determinant of MEP behaviour, and in policy formulation and decision-making, where behavioural incentives are governed by prevailing majority thresholds and party group membership. The representational scores used in this analysis are a composite measure of legislative participation and specialisation in salient policy areas and they are not directly observable. As a result, the impact of differences in incentives on representational outcomes is difficult to evaluate in absolute terms.

Instead, by comparing the distribution of representational performance at different stages of the policy process (e.g. using Gini coefficients), we can compare the impact on representation of the behavioural incentives that govern parliamentary oversight and committee work. As mentioned in Chapter 5 already, a Gini coefficient of 1 denotes perfect inequality with one committee member reaping all the spoils, a coefficient of 0 indicates perfect equality among legislators. For committee assignments and questions, the Gini coefficients are 0.42 and 0.86 respectively, which indicates that salient questions are twice as unequally distributed among MEPs as salient committee posts.

Figure 6.5 graphically illustrates the effect of incentives at the committee and oversight stages on the distribution of representational performance across MEPs. Each Gini coefficient corresponds to the area between the 45 degree line of perfect equality and the distribution in question. The figure confirms that questions are distributed much more unequally than committee posts.

FIGURE 6.5. INEQUALITY OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT AND IN COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS



Note: The figure plots the cumulative share of salient tasks against the cumulative share of MEPs involved at each stage of the policy process (Lorenz curves). Under perfect equality, all MEPs are involved in equally salient tasks ((45 degree line), The further a distribution falls below this 45degree line, the more unequal it is.

As noted in chapters 4 and 5, committee posts are allocated to the party groups in proportion to their size in the plenary. It is therefore not surprising that representational performance should be less equal at Question-Time than in committees. Whereas almost all MEPs are members of at least one committee, the majority of MEPs do not participate at all at Question-Time. Nevertheless, with questions not subject to party group gate-keeping and relatively easy to access compared with other legislative activities, the magnitude of the difference in inequality is surprising.

The analysis in this chapter has shown that the incentive structure that governs legislative-executive relations accounts for differences both in participation and specialisation at Question-Time. Perhaps the most important insight from the empirical analysis of parliamentary oversight in this chapter is the importance of

behavioural incentives for the study of political representation in the European Parliament (and elsewhere).

V. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has quantified the consequences of the selective participation and specialisation decisions of MEPs for the political representation of European citizens in parliamentary oversight. Parliamentary questions provide a unique insight into the opportunities and constraints that structure these decisions. Unlike policy formulation and decision-making in committees, participation at Question-Time is not governed by majority rule and subject to only minimal national party and party group control.

First and most significantly, the empirical analysis in this chapter shows that the representational performance of MEPs can be explained as a function of the incentive structure that governs parliamentary oversight. In confirmation of Chapters 4 and 5, behavioural incentives affect whether MEPs participate and where they specialise at Question-Time. These individual decisions in turn determine how European citizens are represented in parliamentary oversight in the European Union. Because Question-Time is subject to a different incentive structure (little party control, no majority thresholds) than parliamentary committee work, this result constitutes a significant validation of the theory developed in Chapter 3.

Second, the findings are consistent with the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2. With the exception of environmental issues, legislative specialisation in particular policy areas at Question-Time is a function of partisan ties to the Commission. Representatives whose parties form part of the executive use questions primarily as a representational tool in the most salient policy areas. However, for MEPs from 'opposition' parties, questions also serve to monitor the Commission and minimise the risk of agency drift. As a result, legislators from 'governing' parties are more

responsive (hypothesis 3b) but less well represented (hypothesis 3a) than their peers who do not have partisan ties to the executive. Unlike in Chapters 4 and 5 where majority thresholds and party group affiliation were key, legislative behaviour (and therefore representation) at Question-Time is determined by each MEP's access to the executive, the European Commission.

Third, the selectivity of participation at Question-Time has a considerable impact on representational performance. Whereas half of all MEPs do not participate at all in questioning, some legislators are very active at this stage of the policy process. In comparison with committee assignments, representation at the oversight stage is much more unequal. Like in most national parliaments, the 'opposition' (i.e. without partisan ties to the Commission) participates more at Question-Time than 'governing' parties (i.e. with partisan ties to the Commission) because it has a greater incentive to hold the executive accountable for its actions (see e.g. Franklin and Norton, 1993 on the British House of Commons).

Finally, the results also qualify some recent findings in the context of the European Parliament that emphasise the role of committee specialisation in parliamentary questioning (Bowler and Farrell, 1995; Raunio, 1996). Neither the bivariate nor the multivariate analyses have found a significant difference in the responsiveness of questions that address an MEP's own committee portfolio and other questions. However, there is strong evidence that the quality of an MEP's committee portfolio affects representational performance. MEPs who sit in the most influential committees are less responsive than representatives with less interesting committee positions.⁷

⁷ In this context, further research could attempt to trace the representational performance of the most and the least influential MEPs across all three stages of the policy process. A negative relationship between influence over policy outcomes and representational performance is consistent with the stated preference of MEPs for taking part in legislation over political representation (see Chapter 2)

On one hand, the results reported here may seem disquieting from the perspective of political representation in parliamentary oversight. Despite relative ease of access and low opportunity costs for questioners from across the political spectrum, only a limited range of values and interests on the plenary floor are represented at Question-Time. Wide discrepancies in representational performance across MEPs suggest that the interests of some sections of European society are better represented at Question-Time than others. These findings raise considerable doubts about the ability of the European Parliament to fulfil its representational role at the stage of parliamentary oversight.

On the other hand, the findings explain differences in participation and responsive specialisation in terms of the incentive structure that governs parliamentary oversight activities. If the incentives for participation and specialisation at Question-Time are different from those at other stages of the policy process, the representational bias in one legislative activity can be corrected by a similar bias of equal magnitude elsewhere. In other words, constituencies that are excluded from policy formulation and decision-making may in turn be over-represented in parliamentary oversight and vice versa.

There is considerable evidence that this is indeed the case. As noted above, the European Parliament is unique in the division between its internal and external organisation. Whereas national party ties to the Commission govern legislative-executive relations, coalition dynamics amongst party groups are most important under majority rule in committee and plenary. As a result of this sharp distinction between external and internal incentives, political representation at Question-Time is dominated by different constituencies than other stages of the policy process

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the internal organisation of the EP is largely in the hands of trans-national party groups. Party groups decide over the allocation of most leadership positions in Parliament, including rapporteurships and committee positions. Majority rule encourages wide voting coalitions across party groups. As Kreppel (2002) contends, the gradual increase in EP power has strengthened the party groups due to their role within the committee system. As a result, the participation and specialisation decisions of MEPs within committees follow the party group logic identified in Chapters 4 and 5.

At the same time, *national* parties are the primary actors in the Parliament's external relations with both the constituents it represents and its executive agency, the European Commission. As this chapter has shown, in stark contrast to parliamentary committees, there is no relationship between party group affiliation and responsiveness at Question-Time. Instead, Hix (1997) and Jun (2005) confirm that the legislative behaviour of MEPs vis-à-vis the Commission reflects the importance of national parties relative to party groups and territorial units (e.g. regions, electoral districts or countries). As a result, participation and specialisation in legislative-executive relations follow national party lines. 'Governing' parties with direct national party ties to the executive are most responsive to their voters at this stage of the policy process while 'opposition' parties are represented in a wider range of policy areas.

With different constituencies represented at different stages of the policy process, the overall balance of representation in the European Parliament may be preserved despite the biases identified in Chapters 4-6. Chapter 7 completes the analysis with a summary of the results of the thesis and an appraisal of the overall representational performance of the Parliament as an institution across all three stages of the policy

process. The chapter also discusses the implications of this thesis for future studies of representation and legislative behaviour in the wider context of the European Union and in other legislatures. Finally, the chapter concludes with a number of questions that the thesis has raised and which should be addressed in future research.

CHAPTER 7 – POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has shown that political representation in the European Parliament is a function of party-political and institutional incentives at different stages of the policy process. The legislative participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs, which affect their responsiveness and the representativeness of parliamentary business in policy formulation, decision-making and oversight, are determined by majority thresholds, inter and intra-party group politics and access to the European executive, the Commission.

This chapter recapitulates the main findings of the thesis, compares the results of the three empirical chapters and discusses how the theoretical model can inform institutional reform within and outside the European Parliament. The first section provides a brief summary of the main argument of the thesis. Section 2 compares patterns of representation across the three stages of the policy process. Section 3 takes a closer look at the implications of these findings for institutional reform in the European Parliament and Section 4 goes beyond the present study to discuss possible avenues for future research.

1. Summary of the Main Findings

Three main findings emanate from the empirical tests of the model developed in Chapter 2. First, all empirical chapters confirm that political representation in the EP is a result of the party-political and institutional environment in which it takes place. Second, the thesis has established that representation in the European Parliament is unequal across MEPs, member states, party groups and the three different stages of

the policy process. Finally, the study has discovered a tension between the representativeness of parliamentary deliberation (government of the people) and the responsiveness of individual MEPs (government for the people). Finally,

Main Finding 1: Representation in the European Parliament is a Function of Legislative Participation and Specialisation

The first and most significant finding of the thesis is that political representation in the European Parliament is a result of the institutional and party-political incentive structure that governs legislative behaviour at each stage of the policy process in the EP. Representation depends less on the composition of the plenary itself (as suggested by studies of descriptive representation) than it does on the legislative participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs at different stages of the legislative process. These decisions, in turn, are shaped by the institutional environment in which parliamentary business takes place and by the party political affiliation of legislators. On the institutional side, the study has shown that proportionality rules in the report allocation procedure, open rule in committee and plenary, and majority thresholds across policy areas define how MEPs engage in policy formulation and decision-making within their committees. From a party political perspective, the thesis emphasises the role of party group competition, intra-party group politics and national party representation in the European Commission.

First, the bidding system instituted to distribute committee reports among party groups ensures that all groups have the chance to participate fairly in policy formulation. With reports allocated according to the size of each group's delegation, there is little room for larger party groups to monopolise access to this stage of the policy process. As a result of the proportional nature of the report allocation procedure, the range of values and interests represented at the policy formulation

stage in the European Parliament reflects the diversity of opinion within the European public.

However, as we have seen in Chapter 2, there is more than one dimension to political representation. While proportional report allocation enforces a representative allocation of committee reports across party groups, the responsiveness of individual MEPs may still vary. The findings show that open rule in committee and plenary create differential incentives for MEPs from majority and minority party groups to sign up for the most desirable (i.e. most salient) reports. There is little policy incentive for minority groups to bid on the most salient reports because the majority coalition in committee and plenary can threaten to amend or reject any proposals that deviate from its preferences at the decision-making stage of the legislative process. Differences in decision-making power across party groups due to open rule create different incentives for MEPs to be responsive at the policy formulation stage.

Of course, the effect of institutional incentives (such as proportional report allocation or open rule in committee and plenary) also depends on how MEPs interact with one another on the committee and plenary floor. The findings in this thesis confirm studies that emphasise national parties and party groups as core determinants of legislative behaviour in the European Parliament. First, Chapters 4 and 5 have presented clear evidence for party group competition along the left-right spectrum. While coalition size depends to some extent on applicable majority thresholds, party groups form minimum winning coalitions to push legislation through committee. In the fifth Parliament, a simple majority coalition comprises the largest delegation, the conservative European People's Party (EPP), and the liberals (ELDR) whereas an absolute majority requires participation of the second largest delegation, the Party of European Socialists (PES). Both at the policy formulation and decision-making

stages, the findings have shown the importance of these coalitions in shaping the legislative participation and specialisation decisions of MEPs.

Second, in addition to inter-party group dynamics, there is also substantial evidence for intra-group politics whenever the party group leadership disposes over gate-keeping power. At the policy formulation stage, party groups distribute the reports they have won among their members, which allows the leadership to reward loyal MEPs, sanction defectors and ensure the cohesion of its delegation. As a result, preference outliers within the group write less desirable reports than their party group colleagues. In addition, MEPs from smaller national delegations, which have otherwise little influence over the operation of the party group, are trusted with the most salient reports. Of course, all of these findings depend crucially on the ability of the party group leadership to allocate resources to its members. As a result, there is no evidence of intra-group politics at the decision-making stage or in parliamentary oversight, where party groups have no gate-keeping power.¹

However, party groups are not the only entities within the EP that structure the behaviour of individual MEPs. Indeed, the study has shown the importance of national parties for the representativeness of parliamentary oversight and the responsiveness of MEPs at Question-Time. MEPs whose national parties are represented in the Commission have lower incentives to monitor the executive via formal and public questioning than their peers from 'opposition' parties. As a result, these MEPs participate less at Question-Time and they are more responsive. The study is consistent with research highlighting the role of national parties in granting budgetary discharge to the Commission (Jun, 2005). Unlike policy formulation and

¹ Of course the groups do have some indirect power over committee decision-making via the committee assignment procedure and mid-term committee turnover (McElroy 2001). However, these powers are very blunt compared with the influence of the leadership over report allocation.

committee decision-making, party groups are of little importance in parliamentary oversight.

Finding 1 shows that party-political and institutional incentives affect which values and interests are represented at different stage of the political process in the European Parliament and which MEPs are most responsive. The second main finding relates to the *distribution* of representational performance across national parties, party groups and political persuasions.

Main Finding 2: Representational Performance Varies Across MEPs, Party Groups and National Parties

Despite proportionality rules enshrined in the committee assignment procedure, participation, specialisation and representational performance *within* each committee varies across MEPs, parties and party groups. In addition, the results show that the gate-keeping power of the party group leadership and intense competition for the most desirable committee reports mean that representation is more unequal in policy formulation than in decision-making. Outside the committee structure, participation and specialisation are also distributed very unequally. Whereas a large number of MEPs do not participate at all in parliamentary oversight, other legislators centre most of their legislative work on questioning the executive.

In order to evaluate the overall impact of inequalities in representational performance, we must investigate whether and to what extent MEPs who do engage at different stages of the policy process represent different sections of the political spectrum. If the same section of the population is over-represented throughout the legislative process, this could have serious consequences for the legitimacy of parliamentary business in the European Union. If, on the other hand, the values and interests that are prominent in policy formulation, decision-making and oversight

differ substantially, this will mitigate inequality in representational performance at each separate stage of the policy process.

The theory developed and tested in this thesis has shown that different sections of the public are represented at different stages of the policy process. At the policy formulation stage, committee reports are distributed proportionally to party group size using an auction system. As a result, MEPs from all major party groups are represented in a broad range of policy areas. However, provided there is a high degree of party group cohesion and discipline, representatives from party groups that hold a majority in committee and plenary use their power over policy outcomes in the EP to specialise in the most salient areas. As a result, they are more responsive than their peers from groups that do not hold a voting majority in committee or plenary.

At the committee decision-making stage, there is no auctioning system to enforce proportional legislative participation. Instead, majority MEPs are over-represented in committee meetings because low attendance levels endanger their majority. In fact, a lack of discipline and cohesion on the part of majority MEPs could substantially alter incentives at the policy formulation stage. At the same time, minority MEPs at this stage of the process are more likely to focus on the most salient meetings. In other words, in the absence of any incentives to participate in a broad range of policy areas, minority MEPs are more responsive than other legislators in committee decision-making.

Finally, the parliamentary oversight stage presents a very different set of institutional and party-political incentives than committee work. Whereas committees revolve primarily around party groups, parliamentary oversight links national party delegations in the European Parliament to the European executive, the Commission. MEPs from national parties that have their 'own' commissioner have direct access to

the Commission and lower incentives to scrutinise the executive via formal and public questioning. As a result, 'governing' parties participate less at Question-Time than their peers. At the same time, they use questions not as a monitoring but as a representational tool. For these MEPs, questions are a quick and cost-effective way to bring salient issues onto the legislative agenda. Representatives from 'opposition' parties without a commissioner are less in tune with the executive in terms of policy preferences and they do not have as many access points to the Commission as their colleagues from 'governing' parties. As a result, these MEPs are more likely to use parliamentary questioning as monitoring tool and to voice their opposition when the Commission deviates from their preferences.

In sum, the study of these three legislative activities has uncovered substantial inequality in representational performance across MEPs, national parties, party groups and countries. Whether such inequality is bad from a democratic point of view depends in large part on normative perspectives about the role of the European Parliament in the legislative process of the European Union and in European politics more generally.

At the same time, the analysis has also demonstrated that different constituencies are represented at different stages of the policy process. The study has shown that while representational performance is unequal, so is the 'mobility' of MEPs across the different stages of the legislative process. Just as an income distribution in economics, the effect of such mobility is to mitigate the negative impact of inequality. Table 7.1 (further on in this Chapter) provides a glimpse of the potential effect of representational mobility across different stages of the legislative process. A full-blown analysis of the impact of representational mobility could be an interesting avenue for future research. How unequal is representational performance given high

levels of mobility across time and legislative activities? How does this compare to other legislatures? Is there evidence for a trade-off between the static concept of equality and the dynamic concept of mobility across different stages of the policy process? The research design in this thesis provides a good starting point for further research in this direction.

Finally, the third main finding of the thesis relates to the interaction between the two dimensions of political representation. As Chapter 2 explains, “government for the people” and “government of the people” place different demands on the legislative behaviour of MEPs. Representativeness – or “government of the people” - is the result of broad legislative participation across the political spectrum; responsiveness – or “government for the people” - is a function of legislative specialisation in particular policy areas rather than others. Whereas legislative participation affects whose values and interests are represented at each stage of the policy process, specialisation determines how responsive legislators are.

Main Finding 3: There is a Trade-off Between Representative Deliberation and Responsiveness

There are substantial differences in representativeness and responsiveness across all three stages of the policy process. In policy formulation, the bidding system among party groups entails that all party groups get a (more or less) fair share of reports according to the size of their delegation. Differences in levels of participation across groups are primarily due to differences in the number of seats that each group holds within the EP. Thus, an analysis of this first dimension of representation (i.e. “government of the people”) suggests that the range of values and interests represented at the policy formulation stage reflects the composition of the plenary and the diversity of opinion within European society.

However, the same cannot be said of legislative specialisation at this stage of the policy process. Institutional and party-political incentives govern MEP decisions to participate in some policy areas rather than others. Majority MEPs are in a favoured position compared to their peers from the minority groups because they can use the threat of amendment and rejection in committee and plenary to secure the most desirable (i.e. salient) reports. As a result, MEPs from the majority groups specialise in drafting policy in the most salient areas whereas their minority peers must content themselves with less salient (and probably also less controversial and more technical) areas. In other words, “government for the people” is biased towards the majority groups at the policy formulation stage.

Thus, an analysis of both dimensions of political representation including the participation *and* specialisation decisions of MEPs leads to a much more qualified conclusion about representational performance than studies confined to only one aspect of political representation. Despite proportional report allocation, only a small sub-section of European society is represented in the most salient policy areas. Clearly, a good understanding of how representation works in the European Parliament requires a thorough analysis of both the level of *participation* and legislative *specialisation* at each stage of the policy process.

In committee decision-making, the institutional incentive structure is quite different. In the absence of proportionality rules, it is the institutional and party-political incentive structure that determines to what extent legislators participate. Because open rule gives MEPs from the majority groups substantial leverage over policy outcomes, they have a large incentive to participate in a broad range of policy areas. MEPs from minority groups on the other hand do not have the same influence over outcomes because they do not have the (simple or absolute) majority of votes

required in committee and plenary to amend or reject the legislation before them. As a result, these representatives are more reluctant to attend committee meetings in all policy areas.² Unlike at the policy formulation stage, where it is enforced by institutional rules, the representativeness of committee deliberation is determined to a large extent by party political competition and the balance of power within the EP. In other words, at the committee decision-making stage, “government of the people” is biased in favour of majority groups.

However, while majority MEPs have the upper hand with regards to participation in a broad range of policy areas, it is minority MEPs who are most responsive in committee decision-making. Put differently, “government for the people” is biased in favour of minority groups at this stage of the policy process. Indeed, with little incentive to mark their presence across the full range of policy areas in which committee deliberations are held, MEPs from the minority groups can focus on a smaller number of meetings where they can be most responsive. The lack of power over policy outcomes under open rule in committee reduces the workload of minority representatives and allows them to concentrate their efforts on raising the concerns of those they represent at the decision-making stage. Again, analyses of legislative participation and specialisation lead to opposite conclusions about the workings of political representation in the EP.

Finally, in parliamentary oversight, national parties rather than the trans-national European party groups are the operative unit. Here too, party-political incentives shape the legislative participation and specialisation of MEPs. Instead of voting

² Note that this finding also shows the connection between participation in policy formulation (i.e. the drafting of committee reports) and decision-making (i.e. their passage through committee and plenary). It is not the case, as some may have speculated, that MEPs routinely attend only those meetings where the proposals of their own party members are discussed. Neither do legislators focus their participation in decision-making on the proposals of rival groups. A simple analysis of the incentive structure within EP committees as carried out in this study shows that such behaviour would be irrational from the perspective of individual MEPs.

majorities within the plenary, however, government for and of the people at the oversight stage of the policy process is tied to legislative-executive relations between national parties and their representatives in the Commission.

Legislators from national parties without their 'own' commissioner face a higher risk of agency loss from delegating executive powers to the European Commission than their colleagues whose national parties are directly represented in the Commission. As a result, these MEPs are more likely to participate in parliamentary oversight via inter alia questions at Question-Time. In terms of representativeness, 'opposition' legislators dominate questioning activity in the European Parliament.

However, a closer analysis of the actual policy areas about which MEPs from different national parties inquire, reveals that there are differences in the legislative specialisation of representatives from 'opposition' and 'governing' parties as well. 'Opposition' MEPs have an incentive use Question-Time primarily as a monitoring tool to ensure that Commission does not stray too far from their preferences or to raise concern about possible abuses of its executive mandate. Effective oversight requires monitoring of a wide range of policy areas even where in low priority areas where there is little interest from the national party. 'Governing' MEPs do not have the same incentive to keep a check on the Commission via formal questioning procedures. Instead, they can use their questions either to positively highlight the work of 'their' party's commissioner or to raise issues that feature prominently on the political priority list of their national party. As a result, 'governing' legislators are more responsive than their peers without national party ties to the European Commission.

All three empirical chapters have shown a tension between the two dimensions of political representation: the representativeness of legislative activity at each stage of the policy process and the responsiveness of individual MEPs. The thesis shows that,

in order to draw valid conclusions about the workings of political representation in the European Parliament, it is not sufficient to investigate only the *levels of participation* (“government of the people”) across MEPs (or groups of MEPs). Instead, a comprehensive assessment of representation also requires a thorough analysis of *responsive legislative specialisation* (“government for the people”).

This section has summarised the main findings of the thesis. The results confirm the predictions of the theory developed in Chapter 2. Political representation in the European Parliament is a result of institutional and party-political incentives in policy formulation, committee decision-making and parliamentary oversight. There is substantial inequality in the political representation of European citizens. Representational performance differs across individual representatives, their parties, party groups and across member states. Finally, the thesis has uncovered a tension between representative participation and responsive specialisation at all three stages of the legislative process. The next section goes beyond the empirical chapters to compare overall representational performance across the different stages of the policy process.

II. Comparative Assessment of Representational Performance

As Chapters 1 and 2 have discussed, a large body of literature criticises the democratic credentials of the European Union and its Parliament. Part of this debate is based on different normative conceptions of the European Union and the role of the European Parliament within the institutional set-up of the EU. Instead, this thesis has addressed the question of how representation in the EU works, and how it can be improved given public opinion towards European integration and the relative importance of different policy areas as well as the (historical) institutional set-up of

the European Union. This section compares the overall representational performance of MEPs and across EU member states.

Chapters 4-6 have analysed representational performance separately for each stage of the policy process. However, the thesis also allows for a comparative assessment of the overall performance of different MEPs, member states and party groups *across* all stages of the legislative process. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 present an overall ranking of member states and individual MEPs respectively, according to their overall representational performance, taking into account both participation and responsive specialisation

First, table 7.1 ranks member states in terms of the representational performance of an average MEP from each country in all three stages of the legislative process. Each score takes into account both differences in levels of participation and responsiveness.³ The scores are standardized to allow for easy comparison across countries and across the three stages of the policy process. A score of zero represents the average representational performance across all countries for a particular legislative activity, a positive score reflects above-average performance and a negative score means below-average representational performance. In the overall ranking, Ireland performs best followed by Greece, Sweden, the Netherlands and Finland. At the bottom end of the table, MEPs from Italy, France, Germany and Belgium are least in line with the political platforms of their national parties.

With the exception of the Netherlands, the six founding nations of the European Union (France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries) are at the very bottom of the ranking! This is despite the fact that these countries generally have the most pro-European publics. Table 7.1 thus raises considerable doubts about the causal link

³ The scores represent the sum of the salience of each report/question/committee meeting for each MEP.

between political representation in the European Parliament and positive public opinion towards the European Union as a whole. Effective representation does not seem to lead to positive attitudes towards the European Union or vice versa.

Of course this ranking does not tell us anything about the behaviour of MEPs from different countries in other European institutions. It could well be, for instance, that some countries question the effectiveness of the European Parliament as a law-making body and prefer to concentrate their efforts on the Council of Ministers. This would make particular sense for MEPs from the smaller countries, which tend to be over-represented (and therefore have disproportionate influence over policy) in the Council. Nevertheless, this interpretation does not explain the neat division between the six founding fathers of the European Union and the newer member states. The Table raises questions about the impact of enlargement on political representation. Does the negative relationship between length of membership and representation hold for the most recent expansion to Eastern Europe? Similarly, the results qualify social constructivist explanations of legislative behaviour and attitudes, which contend that length of membership in a particular institution should lead to greater identification with that institution.⁴

Second, the Table also shows that there is a substantial correlation between representational performance at different stages of the legislative process at the level of individual member states. Indeed, the seven countries at the bottom of the table perform below average at all stages of the process, whereas Greece and Sweden (ranked second and third respectively) can boast three positive scores. Only six countries (Ireland, the Netherlands, Finland, Austria, Spain and the UK) have both positive (above average) and negative (below average) scores. The consistency of the

⁴ Several empirical studies within the constructivist tradition confirm this finding (e.g. Franklin and Scarrow, 1999; Kerr, 1973)

scores across member states signifies that MEPs from some countries are clearly less interested in political representation in the European Parliament across all stages of the legislative process. It is not the case that some countries prefer to focus their efforts on only one stage of the legislative process

TABLE 7.1 COMPARATIVE RANKING OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL PERFORMANCE FOR AN AVERAGE MEP FROM EACH MEMBER STATE

Rank	Country	Policy Formulation (A)	Decision-Making (B)	Parliamentary Oversight (C)	Total Score (A+B+C)
1	Ireland	3.22	-0.78	2.71	5.16
2	Greece	0.94	1.38	1.44	3.77
3	Sweden	0.40	1.79	1.17	3.36
4	Netherlands	-0.48	1.52	-0.62	0.43
5	Finland	0.04	0.58	-0.33	0.29
6	Spain	0.14	-0.17	-0.05	-0.08
7	Austria	-0.31	0.25	-0.06	-0.11
8	United Kingdom	-0.17	0.10	-0.22	-0.29
9	Denmark	-0.25	-0.31	-0.12	-0.69
10	Portugal	-0.56	-0.12	-0.63	-1.31
11	Luxembourg	-0.57	-0.10	-0.71	-1.38
12	Belgium	-0.39	-0.82	-0.48	-1.69
13	Germany	-0.63	-0.39	-0.75	-1.76
14	France	-0.70	-1.13	-0.64	-2.47
15	Italy	-0.68	-1.82	-0.72	-3.22
<i>Min</i>	-	-0.70	-1.82	-0.72	5.16
<i>Max</i>	-	3.22	1.79	2.71	-3.22

Note: Scores are standardised averages of representational performance for each member state

The difficulty to interpret the ranking in Table 7.1 could of course have yet an entirely different explanation. Indeed, the predictions of the theory and the empirical results in Chapters 4-6 do not suggest that the nationality of MEPs should play a significant role in their representational performance. Instead, the thesis has shown that there are considerable institutional and party-political incentives for MEPs to participate and specialise in different policy areas and at different stages of the legislative process. If anything, we should expect differences in representational performance across individual MEPs, national parties and party groups.

Table 7.2 lists the ten MEPs who performed best in terms of representation at each stage of the legislative process. Though it does of course not constitute a rigorous test of the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2, the ranking is nevertheless in tune with the results of the empirical chapters. First, in policy formulation and decision-making, the vast majority of the top performers come from the two largest party groups (EPP and PES). Fully half of the MEPs with the best representational scores in policy formulation are conservative MEPs from the European People's Party. As discussed in Chapter 5, open rule in committee and plenary allows members of the EPP to win the most desirable reports. While proportionality rules guarantee similar levels of participation across party groups, members of the minority party groups must content themselves with formulating policy in less salient areas.

Second, representation at the decision-making stage is also dominated by majority legislators with 6 listings for EPP and ELDR in Table 7.2. Indeed, as pointed out in Chapter 5, open rule gives a strong incentive to these MEPs to attend their committee meetings across all policy areas on a regular basis. Three entries in the Table go to the largest minority group PES, whose legislators have a strong incentive to focus on the policy areas that are most salient at this stage of the legislative process. The table illustrates the importance of both participation and specialisation for political representation as it has been defined in this thesis.

Finally, the third column looks very different from the previous two. With only a combined 4 entries for EPP and PES, parliamentary oversight is dominated by MEPs from the smaller groups on the left (EUL) and right (UEN) of the political spectrum. As expected, these MEPs are not represented in the European Commission and have a strong incentive to participate in parliamentary questioning. Indeed, only two MEPs in Table 7.2 (Rubig and Izquierdo) are affiliated with national parties that

are members of the Commission. All other legislators come from 'opposition' parties without direct Commission representation. The ranking suggests that it is the level of participation at Question Time rather than responsive specialisation which drives overall representational performance at this stage of the policy process.

TABLE 7.2. TOP 10 MEPs WITH BEST REPRESENTATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN POLICY FORMULATION, DECISION-MAKING AND PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

	POLICY FORMULATION	COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING	PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT
1	POSSELT Bernd (EPP - Germany)	KARAS Othmar (EPP - Austria)	RÜBIG Paul (EPP - Germany)
2	IZQUIERDO ROJO María (PES - Spain)	KAUPPI Pii-Noora (EPP - Finland)	SJÖSTEDT Jonas (EUL - Sweden)
3	KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU Rodi (EPP - Greece)	KONRAD Christoph (EPP - Germany)	TRAKATELLIS Antonios (EPP - Greece)
4	DOYLE Avril (EPP - Ireland)	VAN LANCKER Anne (PES - Belgium)	KORAKAS Efstratios (EUL - Greece)
5	DE ROSSA Proinsias (PES - Ireland)	KORAKAS Efstratios (EUL - Greece)	CROWLEY Brian (UEN - Ireland)
6	HYLAND Liam (UEN - Ireland)	MARQUES Sérgio (EPP - Spain)	IZQUIERDO ROJO María (PES - Spain)
7	ORTUONDO LARREA Josu (GREEN - Spain)	KATIFORIS Giorgos (PES - Greece)	FITZSIMONS James (UEN - Ireland)
8	FITZSIMONS James (UEN - Ireland)	EVANS Jonathan (EPP - United Kingdom)	NEWTON DUNN Bill (ELDR - United Kingdom)
9	HATZIDAKIS Konstantinos (EPP - Greece)	PESÄLÄ Mikko (ELDR - Finland)	HATZIDAKIS Konstantinos (EPP - Greece)
10	TRAKATELLIS Antonios (EPP - Greece)	TORRES MARQUES Helena (PES - Spain)	ANDREWS Niall (UEN - Ireland)

In addition to providing a tool for comparison of representational performance across MEPs, countries and party groups at each stage of the policy process, the thesis also indicates the likely impact of various institutional reform proposals for parliamentary democracy in the European Union. The remainder of this section

discusses several what-if scenarios to assess the impact of institutional reform on political representation in the European Parliament.

Implications for Institutional Reform in the European Parliament

Amongst the most critical observers of democracy in Europe are the proponents of a European-level parliamentary democracy, who tend to compare the workings of democracy and political representation in the European Parliament to the national context. In relation to democratic criteria developed nationally, the European Parliament invariably performs less than satisfactorily. As a result, some of the most federalist (and pro-European) scholars have come to the conclusion that European democracy still has a long way to go. Often, they see the only solution in a greater federalisation of the Union, lower member state influence in the organisation of the European Parliament, the nomination of the European Commission and the legislative process. In other words, according to European federalists, only a profound institutional reform combined with large-scale change in public and elite attitudes towards the European Union can save European parliamentary democracy from its present predicament. On the other hand, scholars with a more sceptical view towards a federal Europe see less urgency in such wide reaching reforms. Instead, they question the feasibility of federalising Europe, doubt the importance attributed to political representation at the European level and argue in favour of the status quo or even scaling back the growing influence of the European Parliament in the legislative process in the EU.

This thesis breaks with the impasse that normative differences between federalists and their opponents have created. Instead, the thesis re-defines political representation as a multi-dimensional concept that is not tied to a particular normative vision of how European democracy should work. The thesis has drawn an empirical picture of the

current state of affairs in terms of political representation in the EP and identified the conditions under which representation occurs. This approach allows us to assess the workings of the existing institutional set-up, predict the impact of different reform proposals and improve the nature of political representation in the European Union without requiring a massive attitude change on the part of the European public or the creation of an ideal-type parliamentary democracy at the European level against the will of most European citizens.

So what is the impact of institutional reform on representation? By analysing variation in representational performance under a number of different what-if scenarios, the model in this thesis can predict whose values and interests will be represented best under several alternative reform proposals. For instance, one reform could propose to eliminate open rule in committee and plenary. As we have seen, open rule allows majority MEPs to amend or reject bills in committee and plenary until they conform to the preferences of the majority on the plenary floor. Open rule stacks the cards significantly in favour of the majority party groups, which have a policy incentive to participate in committee decision-making and in policy-formulation in the most desirable areas. Minority MEPs on the other hand sign up for less salient reports but they focus their contribution in committee decision-making on the most salient areas. In sum, open rule has opposite effects on representation at the formulation and decision-making stages of the legislative process.

What would be the effect of a reform from open to closed rule in committee and plenary?⁵ First and most obviously, such a proposal would considerably increase the policy incentive for MEPs to sign up for rapporteurships, especially in the most salient areas. Without open rule, the rapporteurs alone would decide the content of

⁵ Under closed rule, the rapporteur can present a take-it-or-leave-it proposal to committee and plenary without possibility of amendment, which would lend individual rapporteurs substantial agenda-setting power.

their reports, which would make participation in policy formulation one of the most influential tasks in the EP.

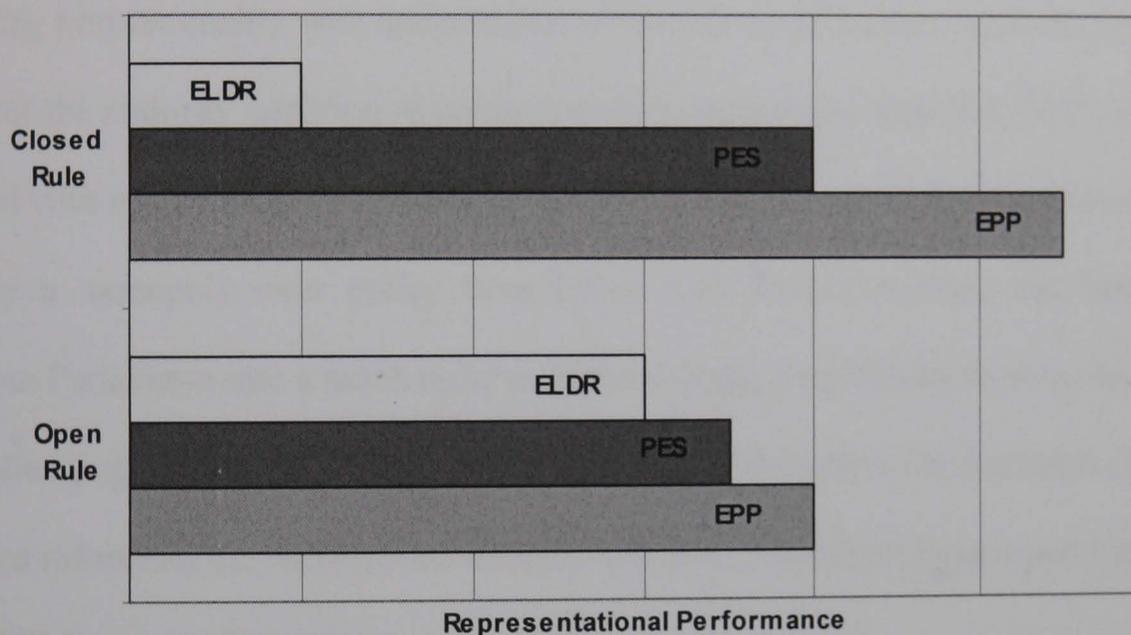
Secondly, increasing the role of the rapporteur would reduce the power of the committee floor and eliminate the incentive to participate in committee decision-making, except on the closest votes, where a take-it-or-leave-it proposal from the rapporteur could run the risk of being rejected. In other words, closed rule would transfer a large amount of influence from the decision-making to the policy formulation stage in committee.

Third, such a shift in the relative importance of the two stages of the legislative process would further increase the gate-keeping powers of party groups. As reports become more desirable, MEPs will try to please the party leadership, which has the power to allocate reports among its members. A change from open to closed rule would make party groups even more cohesive than they are at present.

Finally, eliminating the committee majority's power to amend reports would reduce differences in incentives for majority and minority groups at the policy formulation stage. Under open rule, minority groups write less desirable reports because they have no policy incentive to bid against the majority groups for the most salient reports. A switch to closed rule would give all groups equal incentives to bid on the most desirable reports. To the extent that there is significant overlap in constituency preferences across party groups, this would increase the likelihood of 'bidding wars' among the group co-ordinators in committee. As a result, the average price of a report would increase and many of the smaller groups (including the ELDR which assumes a pivotal role in the present arrangements) would be 'priced out' of policy formulation in the most salient areas.

Thus, changing committee decision-making from open to closed rule would have a profound impact on the institutional incentive structure at the policy formulation and decision-making stages of the policy process. As the thesis has shown, changes in incentives affect the legislative participation and specialisation decisions of MEPs and therefore the political representation of European citizens. Figure 7.1 shows the predicted impact of a switch from open to closed rule on the representational performance of the three largest party groups (EPP, PES and ELDR).

FIGURE 7.1 REPRESENTATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN POLICY FORMULATION FOR THE THREE LARGEST PARTY GROUPS UNDER OPEN AND CLOSED RULE



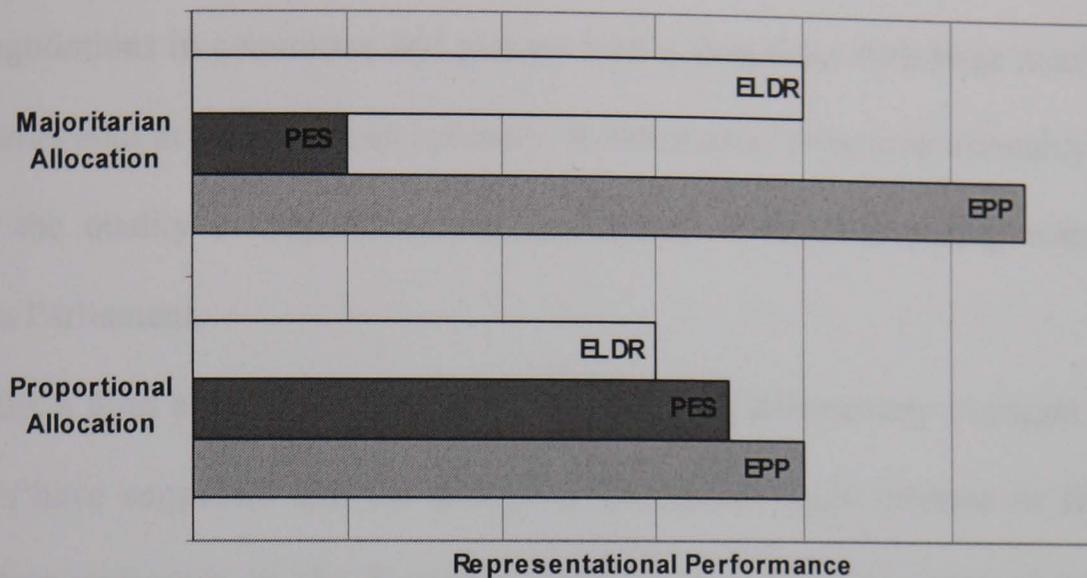
Note: The figure shows the change in representational performance associated with a switch from open to closed rule in committee and plenary for each party group, holding all other variables constant.

A switch to closed rule would have the most adverse impact on the ELDR, which now plays a pivotal role in committee decision-making. In contrast, the switch would give the largest groups (EPP and PES) a virtual monopoly on legislation in almost all salient areas. Closed rule would cement the grand coalition between conservatives and socialists to the detriment of party group competition along the left-right spectrum. As many would argue, this could also adversely affect the range of choices that European citizens have at election time.

A second potential reform proposal would be to replace the proportional element at the policy formulation stage with a more majoritarian report allocation procedure. In terms of Ankersmit's (2002) distinction between the Anglo-Saxon and the continental European conceptions of political representation (see Chapter 1), this would constitute a significant move away from the consensual quest for a *juste milieu* towards a more adversarial political style.

As Chapter 5 has shown, the proportional allocation procedure at present guarantees a significant level of involvement in policy formulation to all party groups. Replacing proportionality with majoritarian allocation would further stack the cards in favour of the majority coalition in committee and plenary (see also Hix, 2005; 2006). Coupled with open rule, such an arrangement would grant a disciplined parliamentary majority a monopoly over policy formulation and decision-making and turn the European Parliament into a much more politicised body, very similar to some national assemblies (e.g. the House of Commons). Figure 7.2 illustrates the predicted impact of such a reform on the representational performance of the three largest party groups in the fifth European Parliament.

FIGURE 7.2. REPRESENTATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN POLICY FORMULATION FOR THE THREE LARGEST PARTY GROUPS UNDER PROPORTIONAL AND MAJORITARIAN REPORT ALLOCATION



Note: The figure shows the change in representational performance associated with a switch from proportional to majoritarian report allocation for each party group, holding all other variables constant.

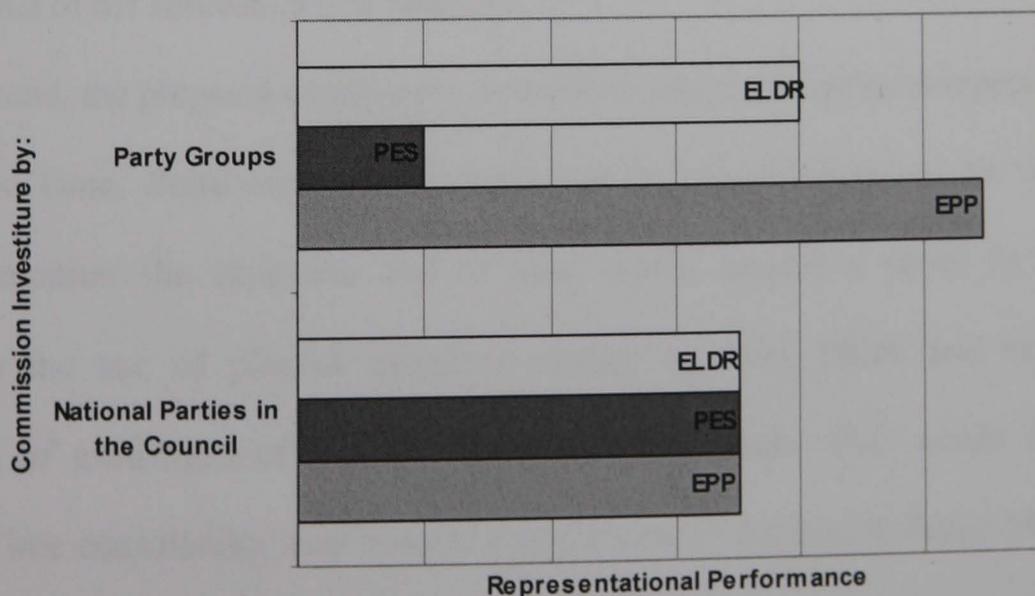
As noted in Chapter 5, proportionality requirements in policy formulation ensure a much wider representation of constituency interests (government of the people) than the majority thresholds in the EP would predict. As Figure 7.2 shows, proportional allocation has the most adverse effect on the majority coalition of EPP and ELDR, which have to delegate a large number of reports to minority parties and to the fringes of the political spectrum. In contrast, the largest minority party group (PES) benefits most from proportional allocation.

In addition to the allocation of committee reports itself, a switch to a majoritarian system could induce significant changes in the internal organisation of the European Parliament and in the quality of policy outcomes. Indeed, if policy formulation followed purely majoritarian principles, this would reduce incentives for smaller party groups to stay in business. With no decision-making influence and little chance of significant involvement in policy formulation, smaller groups would have a strong incentive to merge with other party groups or form larger voting blocks that could orchestrate a credible opposition to the parliamentary majority. At the same time,

proportional report allocation also affects the coherence of policy outcomes at the European level. With a lot of different interests represented at the policy formulation stage, negotiations in committee and plenary take a long time, with large numbers of amendments both in committee and plenary. A move away from proportionality might increase the quality of legislation and the speed of decision-making within the European Parliament.

Finally, a third possible reform proposal relates to parliamentary oversight. Some observers have suggested that the European Parliament could increase its leverage over policy outcomes at the European level if it had greater powers over the investiture of the executive, the European Commission. At present, national parties in the Council of Ministers nominate the Commission and the European Parliament only has a right to approve or reject the body as a whole in a take it or leave it vote. Figure 7.3 shows the impact on representational performance of a reform that would attribute a greater role in executive investiture to party groups.⁶

FIGURE 7.3. REPRESENTATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT UNDER DIFFERENT COMMISSION INVESTITURE PROCEDURES



Note: The figure shows the change in representational performance associated with a switch from a Commission investiture procedure dominated by the national governing parties to a procedure dominated by party groups in the European Parliament, holding all other variables constant.

⁶ This discussion does not investigate the issue of how to bring about greater parliamentary involvement in the Commission investiture procedure (see Hix (1997) for a discussion of several such proposals with very different effects on the behavioural incentives of individual MEPs).

First of all, such a reform would significantly weaken the link between executive and national party delegations in the European Parliament in favour of the trans-national party groups, which are already the primary players in policy formulation and decision-making. Increased investiture powers for the EP would eliminate one of the most striking ‘abnormalities’ in the European Parliament: the difference between legislative-executive relations and party group coalition formation. On the positive side, this would lend additional coherence to European policy and the legislative behaviour of MEPs. On the downside, however, it would also remove one of the main sources of representational ‘mobility’ across the different stages of the legislative process. As the findings have shown, there is considerable inequality in the representational performance of MEPs, national parties, party groups and countries. This inequality is mitigated by the fact that different legislators have different representational performance records at different stages of the legislative process. Unifying legislative-executive relations and coalition formation in the EP would eliminate one of the sources of this mobility.

Second, the proposal would have a profound impact on political representation at Question-Time. Politicising the Commission increases incentives for minority MEPs to monitor the executive and to raise public questions about its actions, encourages the use of planted questions among majority MEPs and raises the occurrence of exchanges of a purely party-political nature. This would liven up Question-Time considerably and bring it a step closer to the British Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQ) after which it was originally modelled. At the same time, a politically charged Question-Time presents few incentives for minority MEPs to raise issues of concern to their constituents. In Figure 7.3. the main minority group (PES)

suffers from a reform that increases the role of party groups in Commission investiture whereas the majority groups EPP and ELDR benefit. Last but not least, the reform proposal would constitute a large step towards the creation of a Europe with a much more federal institutional set-up, for which there is little support at the present time.

This section has discussed a number of reform proposals in the EP and their likely effect on the political representation of European citizens. The theory in Chapter 2 can help inform political decision-makers about the impact of different reform proposals on legislative incentives at all three stages of the policy process, the representativeness of legislative business in the EP and the responsiveness of MEPs. The next (and final) section goes beyond the European Parliament to identify a number of avenues for future research and possible extensions of the theory developed here.

III. Beyond the European Parliament: Avenues for Future Research

The theory developed in this thesis has generated a number of predictions about the link between political representation and legislative behaviour in the European Parliament. As such, it helps us understand the way political representation in the European Parliament works and how it can be improved by altering the institutional and party-political incentives in which legislative behaviour takes place throughout the policy process. This section discusses opportunities for further research to go beyond the model described here.

First, extensions of the thesis could provide a better understanding of the linkages between different stages of the policy process and across time. There are indications that legislative behaviour may have changed significantly over time as a result of

gradual accretion of powers in the EP. As Kreppel (2002) notes in her study of the evolution of institutional reform in the EP, for example:

“when the EP was without direct legislative power and unable to effectively influence policy outcomes, the party groups had little need or desire to exert strict control over their membership” (quoted in Scully, 2005).

As the chapter on policy formulation has shown, party group gate-keeping is a significant explanatory factor in the legislative participation and specialisation decisions of MEPs. Growing cohesion should have decreased the incentive for minority groups to use their bidding points in committee on the most salient reports. Other things constant, lower competition for salient reports should have decreased the number of “bidding wars” over time and the average “price” of reports. However, this evolution might be partially occluded by the simultaneous increase in political competition along the left-right spectrum at all stages of the legislative process in the European Parliament. By incorporating a larger time frame, further research could trace the development of the power of party groups over their members and its effect on political representation at different stages of the legislative process.

Second, future research could compare the definition and operationalisation of political representation in this thesis with the results of existing studies on the EP. How does the legislative behaviour of MEPs compare with their understanding of their own roles within the Parliament? A large number of studies have investigated the attitudes and role perceptions of legislators (e.g. Scully, 2005; Taggart and Bale, 2005). Further research in this direction could establish a link between the, thus far, separate research programmes on representational role perceptions and legislative behaviour. By combining the results of these studies with the findings presented here,

we can investigate to what extent the stated opinions of MEPs about different policy areas reflect their legislative participation and specialisation at different stages of the policy process. In addition, such comparisons might lead to recommendations for improving the structure of existing survey instruments such as the *EPRG* MEP survey.

Finally, the model of political representation developed here can easily be extended to a large number of different institutional and party-political contexts in Europe and elsewhere. The availability of party manifesto data across time, electoral settings and countries facilitates a comparative study of political representation akin to the proliferation of roll-call voting studies, which have greatly improved our knowledge of legislative politics across the world. Such a cross-country or time series study would help us understand why elected representatives do what they do once elected, which institutional and party-political incentives inform their behaviour and how they interact with their electorate at different stages of the legislative process.

This thesis has demonstrated that political representation is a direct function of the legislative participation and specialisation decisions of individual representatives. These decisions, in turn, are determined by the party-political and institutional incentives at different stages of the policy process. As one of the interviewees in Scully's study on institutional socialisation in the EP explains, people adapt to what they see as a rational course of action (Scully, 2005).

To some, including some legislators themselves, this conclusion may perhaps come as a disappointment. To euro-sceptics, the seeming irrationality of MEP behaviour confirmed the idea that the European Parliament is an ineffective, pro-European talking shop where vast sums of money are wasted on politicians who, in some cases, don't even bother showing up for their plenary sessions or committee meetings. To europhiles, on the other hand, it may come as a surprise that MEPs

engage and specialise in the EP less out of idealism and enthusiasm for the European project than for their own political benefit. Finally, the findings also contradict the conclusions of some academic research that advances different motivations for legislative behaviour, such as institutional socialisation.

For the vast majority of people, however, the conclusion that political representation can be modelled as a result of rational legislative behaviour is good news. Over time, the European Parliament has gradually increased its role as the European Union's legislative branch. As pointed out in the introduction to this thesis, this parliamentarization of the EU is in sharp contrast with the relative loss of influence of national legislatures. In a recent study, Rittberger (2005) goes even further to see the parliamentarization of the EU as a response to the de-parliamentarization of that is happening in most industrial societies. In this context, if parliamentary democracy is to survive, the European Parliament must become an effective vehicle for democratic representation.

The findings in this thesis confirm that, given the right incentive structure, democratic representation at the supranational level is perfectly possible. The thesis demonstrates that the requirements for effective democratic representation are significantly lower than some may have thought. As Norris (1999, pg. 86) points out, "the process of recruitment, determining who becomes an MEP, is likely to shape the decision-making and legitimation functions of the European Parliament". The study of legislative behaviour in this thesis suggests that there is at least one additional source of legitimacy in legislative politics: even with a weak electoral connection (as in the European Parliament), rational legislators remain tied to the institutional and party-political incentives that govern legislative activities at different stages of the policy process. Government for and of the people is determined by the incentives that

structure the participation and specialisation decisions of individual MEPs. The objective for scientific research must be to identify the conditions for effective political representation, and help create an institutional and party-political environment that aligns the incentives of individual legislators and their parties with the interests of constituents.

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