

# **Allocating Reports in the European Parliament:**

## **How parties influence committee work**

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**Abstract**

This paper analyses the allocation of reports and rapporteurships among party groups and national delegations in the 1989-99 European Parliament. The analysis is grounded upon a questionnaire to committee staff and a dataset that consists of all reports and rapporteurships in the third (1989-94) and fourth (1994-99) Parliament. We show that partisan interests drive the allocation process. Party groups compete hard over the reports in order to influence EU policies. The procedures for allocating committee chairs and seats (proportionality rule) and reports (points system based on groups' share of seats) can be interpreted as mechanisms for the party groups to control the committees in a situation where the former are relatively weak (compared to European national parliaments). In addition, national party delegations compete for reports inside each party group. As a result, the distribution of rapporteurships between national delegations is largely proportional to their size. However, the distribution patterns also indicate that the input of individual MEPs is a factor requiring further investigation.

## Introduction

Committees dominate decision-making in the European Parliament (EP). Plenary debates and legislative votes are always preceded by the committee stage, and with the exception of resolutions adopted at the end of topical and urgent debates, oral questions or question-time, plenary deliberation is based on committee reports drafted by individual MEPs. However, our knowledge of the EP committees remains limited, with studies so far focusing on the role of individual committees in the EU legislative process. This paper analyses the rules driving the allocation of reports in the third (1989-94) and fourth (1994-99) Parliament and the distribution of rapporteurships between party groups and national delegations. Our main research questions are: What rules govern the allocation of reports between and within committees? What role do party groups and national parties play in the allocation process? What is the resulting distribution of rapporteurships between party groups and national delegations?

The research questions are particularly important when considering the legislative powers of the Parliament. Under the co-operation procedure, introduced by the Single European Act in 1987, the EP proved effective in getting its amendments accepted by the Commission and the Council (Earnshaw & Judge 1997; Kreppel 1999; Tsebelis & Kalandrakis 1999). Similarly, studies of the Maastricht Treaty version of the co-decision procedure showed that the EP was successful in imposing its views vis-à-vis the Council (Earnshaw & Judge 1996; Scully 1997; Maurer 1999). To explain this success, scholars have often emphasized the interaction between party groups and committees (Bowler & Farrell 1995; Tsebelis 1995; Hix & Lord 1997; Raunio 1997; Lord 1998; Hix 1999: 74-98). More specifically, the rapporteurship system, with parliamentary resolutions based on reports drafted by individual members, is seen as crucial. Rapporteurs accumulate policy expertise

and mediate with the Commission and the Council, two factors essential for legislative influence (Bowler & Farrell 1995; Tsebelis 1995; Earnshaw & Judge 1997; Tsebelis & Kalandrakis 1999; Wurzel 1999). While representatives are formally equal, the rapporteurs are potentially highly influential in shaping European legislation. Committees and rapporteurs in particular are therefore “privileged groups” within the Parliament (Strøm 1998: 23). The key question for party groups is therefore their ability to control committee proceedings.

The next section introduces our research questions and data sources. In the third section we examine the principles governing the allocation of seats, chairs, and reports in the committees. Our analysis of the resulting distribution of rapporteurships during the third and fourth legislature is presented in the next two sections. We show that partisan interests drive report allocation. Party groups fight for the reports in order to influence the EU policy process. The procedures for allocating committee chairs and seats (proportionality rule), and reports (points system based on groups’ share of seats) can be interpreted as mechanisms for the party groups to control the committees in a situation where the former are relatively weak (compared to European national parliaments). As a result, correlations coefficients between the number of members in a group and the number of reports they produced are extremely high (over .99). Correlations coefficients between the size of national delegations and the number of reports they produce are also very high, revealing the allocation mechanisms between national parties inside party groups. In the final section we discuss the implications of the study, emphasizing the importance of internal organisational choices for EP’s legislative performance and suggesting avenues for further research.

## **Research design**

We are interested in two features of committee work: the principles or rules governing the allocation of reports and the resulting distribution of reports between party groups and national delegations. Our main research question is: Do partisan interests drive report allocation? We explore this first through a study of the formal and informal rules guiding the allocation of seats and reports in the committees. Apart from the standing orders of the parliament (The EP Rules of Procedure), we collected additional information through a questionnaire sent to the chairs and secretariats of all committees in April 1998 (see the appendix). Table 1 shows the name, year of establishment and membership of EP committees in 1989-99. The names used are those in force at the end of the 1994-99 legislature.

TABLE 1

Once the rules governing the allocation process are presented, we then scrutinise the actual distribution of reports. Data on reports were extracted from official publications: the *Official Journal of the European Communities* that publishes the proceedings of the plenaries and successive editions of the *List of Members* and the *Vademecum* published by EP. Reports and rapporteurships from the 1994 elections onwards are available at the Parliament's web site (<http://www.europarl.eu.int>). The reports and rapporteurships for 1994-1999 were double-checked using the *Official Journal* and EP's own data<sup>1</sup>. For 1989-1994 the three lists of reports<sup>2</sup> published in the *Liste des rapports de la troisième législature* were checked with each other.

A few methodological problems should be spelled out. As we review a ten-year period we are confronted with certain practical difficulties caused by the changing nature of the EU and the Parliament. Reforms following German reunification and the 1995 enlargement brought major changes in seat distribution. German reunification increased the number of

seats for Germany from 81 to 99, plus the seat shares of all large and medium sized countries, for the 1994 elections, bringing the total number of seats from 518 to 567. The 1995 enlargement with Austria, Finland and Sweden led to a further increase to 626 seats, an increase of 20% in the total number of seats as compared to the 1989 situation. Secondly, the EP Rules of Procedure were revised, especially during the third legislature. This applied to the number, names and tasks of the committees, including the introduction of two new committees (Table 1). Thirdly, our analysis is complicated by membership changes during the legislatures. The high turnover between elections is relatively easy to accommodate, but shifts between party groups are more difficult to deal with. To handle these shifts as accurately as possible, we chose to keep the data on the two legislatures apart. Nevertheless, we felt it necessary to construct an overall data set for each legislature. To do so, we had to disregard shifts during each legislature in the computations (which does not mean that we disregard shifts and changes in our analysis of the figures).

### **Partisan interests and committee work**

Committees are established primarily in order to make parliaments more efficient. Committees provide arenas for specialization, thereby enhancing parliaments' ability to influence legislation and to hold the government accountable. The key aspect is information: investment in committee work makes MPs better informed and reduces the informational advantage of the executive (Mattson & Strøm 1995; Longley & Davidson eds. 1998; Norton ed. 1998). Research on committees has primarily focused on their internal structure and external powers, with particularly the choice of procedures attracting much attention (Evans 1999; Strøm 1998: 22). Most theories on committees stem from research on the U.S. Congress. In the Congress committees are central actors in processing bills, party discipline is

weak, and individual representatives enjoy more freedom of action than in legislatures operating in parliamentary systems of government.

Two dimensions are crucial in explaining committee influence: their formal autonomy from the parent chamber and the autonomy of committee members from their party groups. (Damgaard 1995; Mattson and Strøm 1995) Discussing the control of committee members by their party groups, Damgaard argued that party group leaders have three instruments for reducing committee autonomy: the appointment process, i.e. either the MPs themselves or the leadership's preferences are more important in nominating committee members; the degree to which committee members are constrained by their group leaders in committee behaviour; and whether the group leadership can apply sanctions against MPs. We argue in this section that in the European Parliament committee members are fairly autonomous from their party groups.

Before proceeding any further, three contextual factors affecting party group behaviour in the EP deserve attention. First, national parties control candidate selection. Despite rather impressive levels of group unity during voting (Attinà 1990; Hix & Lord 1997; Raunio 1997; Kreppel 2000; Hix 2001), the group leaders are therefore restricted in their ability to sanction troublesome representatives (Raunio 2000). Second, the EU has no real executive accountable to the Parliament. The priority of the EP is to exercise its legislative and informal powers as effectively as possibly. Therefore the U.S. Congress, embedded also in a separation-of-powers system, is in many ways a better point of comparison than European national legislatures. And third, coalition behaviour in the EP is mainly driven by the need to manufacture winning floor coalitions, with the Parliament needing an absolute majority of members behind its resolution to accept, amend or veto legislation, particularly under the latter stages of the co-decision and budgetary procedures. Table 2 shows the distribution of seats between party groups in the 1989-99 EP. The Party of European Socialists (PSE) and

the European People's Party (PPE) formed the core of the party system in both parliaments, holding roughly two-thirds of the seats.

TABLE 2

Committee assignments are decided in the first session of the newly elected Parliament and again at mid-term. The number and size of the committees are decided first, followed by the appointment of committee members and substitutes. According to the Rules of Procedure "Members of committees and temporary committees of inquiry shall be elected after nominations have been submitted by the political groups and the Non-attached Members. The Conference of Presidents shall submit proposals to Parliament. The composition of the committees shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament." (Rule 152) There are no restrictions on multiple memberships, but the majority of members are full members of one committee and substitutes in another one. Members may be highly active in the committee in which they are substitutes, especially when they did not get seats in their priority committees. Substitutes usually have full speaking and voting rights (when they replace a full member), and it is not uncommon for them to receive rapporteurships, especially if they are recognised as policy experts. This applies also to the period investigated here. In the Development and Cooperation Committee and Regional Policy Committee about a quarter of reports went to substitutes.

The appointment process can be classified as fairly consensual at the group level, with membership proportional to group size. This reflects the practice in Western European legislatures (Mattson & Strøm 1995). Previous research on committee appointments by Bowler and Farrell (1995: 227) in the 1989-1992 EP showed that "the share of committee places is proportional by both nationality and ideological bloc. Within these limits, set by



allocations along ideological or national lines, there is scope for the kinds of specialized membership and recruitment made in the US Congress”. This was also true for the whole 1989-99 period. In their analysis on the background factors explaining individual assignments to six committees, Bowler and Farrell (1995: 231-234) concluded that occupational or interest-group attachments were “the only consistently significant determinants driving committee membership.” Significantly, they also argued that such specialization is coordinated or even controlled by party groups through their control of committee and parliamentary leadership assignments (*ibid.*: 241).

Within committees are four positions of authority: chairman, vice-chairmen, party group coordinators, and rapporteurs (see Neuhold 2001). Committee chairs are highly influential positions. The committees elect their own chairs<sup>3</sup>, but in practice party groups decide the allocation of chairs and vice-chairs, with the d’Hondt method used for this purpose. Chair allocation is thus roughly proportional to group size, again reflecting the procedures found in most European parliaments (Mattson & Strøm 1995). Party group coordinators are responsible for coordinating the work of their groups in the committees. Together with the committee chairman, the coordinators negotiate the distribution of rapporteurships between the groups. Once a group has been assigned a report, the coordinator allocates it to a member of her group. However, the coordinator must take into account the wishes of the group leadership and the national parties, in addition to the wishes of the members themselves.

While the assignment of committee seats and chairs is controlled by party groups, the crucial difference in comparison with party groups in EU member state legislatures is that national parties within the groups, and not the group leadership, carry arguably most weight in allocating committee seats to individual MEPs. Moreover, the party groups have few if any sanctions available against MEPs whose committee behaviour deviates from group positions.

Therefore the EP groups are weaker than their counterparts in national parliaments and committee members enjoy much autonomy.

Committee work revolves around reports.<sup>4</sup> The Parliament produces two main types of reports: legislative and non-legislative reports (including budget reports). The legislative reports can be divided into four categories on the basis of the EU legislative procedures: assent, consultation, cooperation, and co-decision reports.<sup>5</sup> Lacking the formal right to initiate legislation or to rewrite bills, the Parliament produces own-initiative reports<sup>6</sup>. They are drafted following either a motion for resolution tabled by individual members (Rule 48)<sup>7</sup> or following a request by a committee. The Conference of Presidents, composed of group chairs with votes weighted according to group size, decides whether the committee is given the right to produce the report. These requests are quite often turned down, especially towards the end of the five-year legislative term, and as a part of the Parliament's attempt to manage its timetable in the face of increasing legislative workload.

A rapporteur is responsible for drafting a report on the issue handled in the committee.<sup>8</sup> When drafting the report, the rapporteur must be prepared to compromise in order to accommodate the views of the committee members. Such compromise building is necessary in order to facilitate the smooth passage of the report in the committee and later in the plenary. Moreover, when both PSE and PPE back the report, it is probably more acceptable to the Council and Commission, as both are primarily composed of social democrats and conservatives/Christian democrats. Kreppel (1999: 532) showed that in cooperation procedure legislation, internal EP unity at the committee stage correlated positively with Commission and Council adoption: "This suggests either that internal EP unity is an indicator of a general lack of controversy or that when the EP presents a unified front it is more able to influence EU policy." (See also Kreppel 2000.)

Party group coordinators keep their groups informed of the preparation of the report and negotiate with the rapporteur. The draft report is debated in the committee, with representative(s) of the Commission also commenting on the initial text. The draft report, together with amendments (tabled by any member), is then voted upon in the committee. Groups may debate the bill in their own meetings, but more usually the MEPs of the group seated in the committee convene to agree, if possible, on a common stand. Once adopted (by simple majority), the report is sent to the plenary. If the committee opinion is not unanimous, the losing minority can give a summary of its position. Before the plenary stage the groups decide their positions: what amendments to propose, and whether to support the report or not. National party delegations, especially the larger ones, often hold their own meetings prior to the group meetings. Finally, the report is presented by the rapporteur in the plenary and amendments tabled by the committee responsible, a political group or at least 32 members are voted upon.

The distribution of rapporteurships within committees is not regulated in the standing orders of the Parliament. Instead, party groups have developed a system based primarily on the rule of proportionality, with procedures that may differ between the committees. In 1998 the general system went as follows. Each group receives a quota of points out of the total point tally based on its share of seats in the committee. In the Budgets Committee the point totals were determined by the groups' share of seats in the Parliament. Party group coordinators and committee chairmen decide the value of each report to be produced by the committee, and coordinators identify their groups' priority reports and make bids on behalf of their groups in specific coordinators' meetings. To quote Ken Collins, the former chair of the Environment Committee: "it is a combination of a kind of auction and a kind of elaborate game of poker because the technique of the group spokesman is to spend the minimum points for his or her group, and to get the maximum number of reports" (Wurzel 1999: 12).

Average reports normally cost 3 or 2 points and opinions<sup>9</sup> 1 point. Sometimes the major reports are distributed well in advance. For example, in the Budgets Committee the key reports are allocated already at the start of the five-year legislative term. While some committees, such as the Research, Technological Development and Energy Committee, had an elaborate points system for various types of reports<sup>10</sup>, in some committees, such as the Budgetary Control, External Economic Relations, Petitions, and Rules of Procedure Committee, the allocations were largely consensual without resorting to a points system. Occasionally rapporteurship is divided between two or more members, but this is rather rare and mainly used in complex and politically important issues. Examples from the period under analysis included reports on the annual EU budget in the Budgets Committee and on the Intergovernmental Conferences in the Institutional Affairs Committee. Party groups often accommodate each other's wishes even if a group has already used up its points. Such behaviour is more common if the report is of minor importance. Smaller groups nevertheless complain occasionally about the dominance of PSE and PPE, as "big reports are outside their grasp"<sup>11</sup>.

After a group has won a report, it is distributed to one of its members seated in that committee. Committee chairs seldom get involved, leaving intra-group allocation to the groups. Interventions by committee chairs are mainly limited to taking part in the discussions concerning allocations. Within groups, national parties are in a predominant role, but policy expertise is also an asset. According to Corbett et al. (2000: 117-118), "if the suggested rapporteur is recognised as a specialist on the issue it is easier to get agreement on his or her nomination. Certain technical issues on which there is little political controversy but on which a committee member is a specialist are again and again referred to that same specialist, often for very few points." This suggests that the negotiations between groups include negotiations about the rapporteurs, particularly in the case of more important reports, with party group

coordinators normally having someone in mind as a rapporteur when bidding for the report. Although nationality as such plays no role in the allocation process,<sup>12</sup> the coordinators take the size of the national party delegations inside the group into consideration. Finally, an essential precondition for receiving a rapporteurship is the will to engage in such activity. No MEP is forced by the Rules of Procedure or by party groups' internal rules to produce a report during her tenure in the Parliament. If no member wants the report, but the committee has already agreed to produce it, then reports can be sold at zero points like in the Regional Policy Committee, the chairman can nominate herself as the rapporteur, or the committee can use the simplified procedure, i.e. the procedure without report (Rule 158).

The rapporteur system means that individual members, and not committee chairs, are the key persons in the passage of individual pieces of legislation. We have shown that the allocation process is driven by partisan interests, with the points system based on group size. But the picture is more complicated due to the position of national parties inside the transnational groups. Although expertise is a major consideration, national parties defend their positions in the allocation of reports within the groups. The next sections scrutinise the resulting distribution of the rapporteurships in two legislatures (1989-94, 1994-99). Considering the rules of the allocation process examined in this section, we can expect proportional distribution of rapporteurships among the party groups but also among the national delegations.

### **The distribution of rapporteurships between party groups**

The European Parliament produced over 4000 reports between 1989 and 1999, an average of 9 to 10 reports per each day of plenary session. There were less rapporteurships during the fourth (1984) than during the third legislature (2189), a decrease of 9%, with the average

number of rapporteurships per seat dropping from 4 to 3. The majority of rapporteurships pertain to legislative reports (57% during the third legislature to 54% in the fourth legislature).

The distribution of rapporteurships among party groups is reported in Tables 3a and 3b. The distribution is by and large proportional to group size. The overall disproportionality is about 9%, corresponding to about 180 rapporteurships that should be re-allocated to obtain exactly proportional distribution. Overall, PPE and PSE are the most over-represented. PPE is over-represented for all types of reports, while PSE is under-represented for consultation and assent reports in 1989-1994 and for all types of legislative reports in 1994-1999. In 1989-1994 the liberal ELDR and the conservative groups ED and RDE were also over-represented, while in 1994-1999 that applied to the Greens.

The proportional distribution among party groups should not hide the large differences between individual MEPs. During the third legislature as many as 174 MEPs (29%) did not draft any reports during their membership, while the most active representative (La Pergola (PSE, Italy), acquired no less than 43 rapporteurships and about a quarter of the MEPs drafted six or more rapporteurships (good for two-thirds of the production). In the 1994-99 Parliament the picture is less contrasted, with the top producing 21 reports and 'only' 19% of the MEPs not drafting any reports.

#### TABLES 3a AND 3b

The size of a group predicts extremely well its share of the reports. As shown in Table 5, correlations coefficients between the number of members in a group and the number of reports they produced are very high, generally over .950 with the noticeable exception of reports falling under the assent procedure<sup>13</sup> which scores lower (.927 for the third legislature

and .854 for the fourth legislature). Variation in size explains most of the variation in production between groups ( $r^2 = .985$  during the third legislature,  $r^2 = .980$  during the fourth legislature).

Although size is a good predictor, differences in output slightly alter the relative positions of the groups. Although smaller than GUE-NGL, the Greens had significantly more rapporteurships than the former in the fourth legislature. In the third legislature, the radical left GUE scored better than the Greens. The extreme right DR in 1989-94 and the non-attached members, largely representing extreme right-wing parties, in 1994-99 did not even gather one rapporteurship per seat. The meagre contribution of the extreme right results from two factors. The other groups adopted a negative, if not outright hostile, attitude towards the extreme-right, making it difficult for them to claim reports. Second, DR members were known for their overall lack of interest in EP's work and were opposed to a strong Parliament and further European integration. This applies to the non-attached members as well. Other small groups that were clearly anti-EU or at least strongly critical of integration - the Communist group (CG) during the third legislature, the Europe of the Nations (I-EDN) and the radical left (GUE-NGL) during the fourth legislature - are among the most under-represented ones. This applies also to the Rainbow Group (ARC) during the third legislature that consisted of regionalists favouring integration but also of representatives of the Danish anti-EC movement. By contrast, groups that are organised in an extra-parliamentary party organisation at the European level (PPE, PSE, ELDR and the Greens) are over-represented, especially the PPE, which has the oldest European party organisation (since 1976).

In conclusion, the observed distribution of rapporteurships clearly confirms that the allocation process follows partisan lines. Moreover, the distribution shows that the rules are designed to favour the two largest groups.

### **The distribution of rapporteurships between national delegations**

Tables 4a and 4b show the distribution of rapporteurships between national delegations for the third and fourth legislature. The distribution is less proportional than among party groups, and less proportional during the fourth legislature than in the third one. 12% and 15% of rapporteurships should be reallocated to obtain proportional distribution with the overall seat distribution among member states. This corresponds to 250 and 300 rapporteurships. The German, British and Dutch delegations are over-represented for almost all types of reports, and so were the Belgians in 1989-1994, and the Spanish, Irish and Luxembourgiens in 1994-1999.

#### **TABLES 4a AND 4b**

The size of a national delegation predicts well its share of the reports. Correlation coefficients between the number of members in a national delegation and the number of reports they produced (see Table 5) are high, between .712 and .908, with the noticeable exception of reports falling under the assent procedure which score much lower (.488 for the third legislature and .568 for the four legislature). Variation in size explains most of the variation in production between national delegations ( $r^2 = .791$  during the third legislature,  $r^2 = .794$  during the fourth legislature). This results from the bargaining power of national party delegations in the allocation process inside the parliamentary groups.

Nevertheless, the distribution of rapporteurships shows striking dissimilarities. Our data reveal how the real input of a national delegation compares to its size. With the same number of representatives, the British delegation held almost twice (1,8) as many rapporteurships than the French one, and the Belgian delegation held more than twice as many rapporteurships



than the Greek or the Portuguese ones. Activism even affects the rank order of the delegations. The Spanish delegation (with 60 seats in the third legislature, 64 in the fourth) produced more reports than the French and the Italian ones (with each 81 seats in the third legislature and 87 in the fourth). During the 1994-99 legislature the Dutch delegation (with 31 seats) produced more reports than the French<sup>14</sup> or the Italians. The Irish delegation did better than the Danish one (with one seat less) and even as well as the Portuguese one in 1994-99 (with 10 seats less). Among the new delegations, the Finns held as many rapporteurships as the Swedes (with six seats less) and more than the Austrians (with five seats less). Clearly the input of the individual MEPs themselves (including both their willingness to produce reports and their perceived expertise) is a crucial factor.

## TABLE 5

In conclusion, the observed distribution patterns confirm that the allocation process within groups reflects the strong position of national party delegations. However, the resulting distribution does not necessarily favour the largest national delegations as two of the largest national delegations score poorly and some smaller national delegations are very active indeed. Therefore we conclude that while national parties matter, transnational partisan interests are more important in explaining the distribution of reports.

## Discussion

The starting point of this paper was straightforward: while committees and particularly rapporteurs are often recognised as important in the Parliament, scholarly understanding of what goes on inside the committees remains limited. Effective committees are essential for

the Parliament both in terms of legislative influence and controlling the executive. Through investment in committee work, the Parliament can reduce the informational advantage of the Commission and the Council. In this way, the committee system benefits the whole chamber. However, this strategy of delegation has its costs. Committees and rapporteurs acquire policy-specific expertise that enables them to dominate or at least significantly shape parliamentary decision-making.

The procedures for allocating committee chairs and seats and reports can be interpreted as mechanisms for the party groups to control the committees in a situation where the former are relatively weak, at least when compared to European national parliaments (see also Bowler & Farrell 1995). Nevertheless, further research is needed in order to establish the extent of party group influence in committees. The three instruments identified by Damgaard (1995) available to party group leaders for controlling committee members – whose preferences dominate in nominating committee members, the autonomy of committee members vis-à-vis their groups, the use of sanctions by group leaders against MEPs – remain largely unexplored.

We examined the distribution of reports and rapporteurships in the 1989-99 Parliament. The size of a group predicts well its share of the reports. Correlations coefficients between the number of members in a group and the number of reports they produced were very high, generally over .950. This shows that party group interests drive the allocation of reports. Party groups are, within certain limits, willing to make trade-offs and to cede reports to smaller groups, but on the whole they fight for the reports in order to influence the EU policy process. Numerically speaking, smaller groups do get their share of the cake, but the auction-like points system means that only PSE and PPE can normally afford the most expensive reports. Smaller groups may well be pivotal players in coalition formation, and may well have power

beyond their pure numerical strength (Nurmi 1997), but the distribution of reports is bound to frustrate ambitious MEPs in small or medium-sized groups.

The distribution of rapporteurships between national delegations produced interesting results. On the one hand, the correlation between report production and size indicates that national party delegations fight for the reports inside the groups. On the other hand, some delegations are particularly active while others are not. For example, in 1994-99 the Dutch delegation (31 seats) produced more reports than the French or the Italians (87 seats each)! Scattered distribution over several groups, with weak presence in PSE and PPE, may explain the low activity of the French and Italians. However, we assume that cultural factors also play a role. For example, among the over-represented nationalities are the Dutch, the Irish and the British, all known for their fluency in English, whereas less linguistically proficient delegations, such as the Greek and Portuguese MEPs, undoubtedly suffer from communication problems (Mamadouh 1999). An additional factor probably explaining the low productivity of the French and the Italians is their propensity to hold simultaneously offices at the local, regional, or national level in their home countries. A study of the distribution of rapporteurships among individuals would improve our understanding of these factors.

The European Parliament is a powerful policy-influencing legislature. It participates in producing laws that bind nearly 400 million citizens in the fifteen EU member states. Therefore the distribution of rapporteurships between party groups and national delegations is also important in terms of representation. As Hall (1987: 105) argued in his discussion on committee participation in the Congress: "The range of members involved will directly affect the capacities of Congress as a representative body: who participates (in what ways, to what extent) will determine which values, interests or geographic constituencies are represented at this crucial stage of the legislative process. Such patterns, in turn, will shape the policy

decisions that emerge (or fail to emerge) from the committee rooms.” (see Hall 1996: 239-254) It is not only assignments that count but who gets involved in the committees. This implies the need for further analysis both between and particularly within national delegations. We do not claim there to be a direct relationship between the activity of a national delegation and the legitimacy of Parliament’s policy output in that country, but such concerns are important for the EP whose own legitimacy is still very fragile. Last but not least, while the Treaty of Nice will lead to a redistribution of EP seats among the member states, awareness of the factors explaining differential involvement of national delegations in parliamentary work is important in addition to purely arithmetic calculations.

## **Appendix**

The questionnaire contained the following eight open-ended questions.

1. The committees operate a points system in allocating rapporteurships to party groups. How does this system function in your committee? How much do reports “cost”?
2. Is the committee leadership (Chairman and Vice-Chairmen) involved in the appointment of rapporteurships to particular members within the groups or is this done by the groups alone?
3. Is there a policy to allocate reports proportionally according to nationality?
4. MEPs can not be forced to be rapporteurs. Has it ever been difficult to find a rapporteur in your committee?
5. Do substitute members ever act as rapporteurs in your committee? If yes, how common is this practice?
6. To what extent is the committee secretariat involved in drafting reports?

7. The Conference of Presidents is the body responsible for granting the right to draft own-initiative reports. Is it common for the Conference of Presidents to turn down such a request from your committee?

8. Smaller party groups have often complained about the dominant position of PSE and PPE. Have the smaller groups ever voiced similar concerns in connection with decision-making and the allocation of reports in your committee?”

The questionnaire was sent to the chairs and secretariats of all committees in April 1998. 12 out of 20 committees replied: Budgetary Control, Budgets, Development and Cooperation, Employment and Social Affairs, Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, External Economic Relations, Foreign Affairs, Institutional Affairs, Petitions, Regional Policy, Research, Technological Development and Energy, and Rules of Procedure Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors are grateful to Olli Aaltonen for his invaluable help in data analysis of the 1994-1999 period. Our data slightly differ from those published in Corbett et al. (2000: 116) because we use different sources and classifications (their figures are based on information provided by committee secretariats).

<sup>2</sup> Reports were listed by rapporteur in the first list, by parliamentary committee in the second and chronologically in the third.

<sup>3</sup> For a list of committee chairs since the 1979 elections, see Corbett et al. (2000: 126-129).

<sup>4</sup> Information in the remainder of this section is based on replies to the questionnaire carried out in 1998 (see the appendix).

<sup>5</sup> For more detailed information on the processing of legislation inside the Parliament, see Corbett et al. (2000: 105-232).

<sup>6</sup> These are produced independently of the other institutions. They may be related to forthcoming or proposed EU legislation, but are not formally a part of the legislative procedures.

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<sup>7</sup> In practice, party groups usually table the resolution proposals.

<sup>8</sup> According to Bowler and Farrell (1995: 242) rapporteurs are also used in Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, sometimes in the German Bundestag and in France. The Anglo-American legislatures have no equivalent positions.

<sup>9</sup> An opinion is an advice to the committee drafting the report. Opinions are not included in our figures.

<sup>10</sup> According to our survey, the cost of reports in the Research, Technological Development and Energy Committee was in 1998: simple consultation procedure 2, RTD-specific programs 2, “follow on”-reports 2 (if same group) or 3 (if other group), important consultation procedure 3, own-initiative 3, cooperation or co-decision 3, RTD-framework programme 4.

<sup>11</sup> The quote is from one of the responses to the questionnaire.

<sup>12</sup> When asked “is there a tendency within a political group that if a certain dossier is particularly important for a certain country, then an MEP from that country will stand up and say: ‘I want this dossier!’”, Ken Collins replied: “Usually not in fact. Sometimes in the Environment Committee the opposite is actually the case. We would sometimes take the view that if it was that important to a country then that is precisely why we should not allow this” (Wurzel 1999: 13).

<sup>13</sup> The deviant figures obtained for the assent reports are partly caused by the small number of such reports. However, it is striking that their distribution among both national delegations and groups is much different than for other reports.

<sup>14</sup> This applies also to other positions of authority inside the committees. The French often held the same number or even less chairmanships than the Spaniards and the Dutch.

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**Table 1. Committees of the European Parliament, 1989-1999.**

Number	Name of the committee	Established	1989 seats	1992 seats	1994 seats	1997 seats
C1	Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence Policy	1953	56	56	53	65
C2	Agriculture and Rural Development	1958	47	45	46	46
C3	Budgets	1958	32	30	34	40
C4	Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy	1958	52	49	51	60
C5	Research, Technological Development and Energy	1958	34	31	29	31
C6	External Economic Relations	1961	29	25	25	25
C7	Legal Affairs and Citizens' Rights	1958	34	30	25	27
C8	Employment and Social Affairs	1953	41	36	43	45
C9	Regional Policy	1973	38	35	37	44
C10	Transport and Tourism	1953	30	30	35	40
C11	Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection	1973	51	50	44	50
C12	Culture, Youth, Education and the Media	1961	31	30	36	40
C13	Development and Cooperation	1958	43	40	36	38
C14	Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs	1992	-	30	32	34
C15	Budgetary Control	1979	28	25	24	28
C16	Institutional Affairs	1981	38	37	40	40
C17	Fisheries	1994	-	-	23	26
C18	Rules of Procedure, the Verification of Credentials and Immunities	1987	27	25	23	25
C19	Women's Rights	1979	33	30	36	40
C20	Petitions	1987	25	25	27	30
	Total number of MEPs		518	518	567	626
	Total number of committee seats		669	659	699	774
	Committee seats per MEP		1.29	1.27	1.23	1.24

Sources: European Parliament: *List of Members; Official Journal of the European Communities*.

**Table 2. Party groups in the European Parliament, 1989-1999.**

Party group	1989	%	1992	%	1993	%	1994	%	1995	%	1997	%	1999	
S/PSE	180	34.7	180	34.7	198	38.2	198	34.9	217	34.7	214	34.2	214	34.2
PPE	121	23.4	128	24.7	162	31.3	157	27.7	171	27.3	181	28.9	201	32.1
ELDR	49	9.5	45	8.7	46	8.9	43	7.6	52	8.3	43	6.9	42	6.7
ED	34	6.6	34	6.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
V	30	5.8	27	5.2	28	5.4	23	4.1	28	4.5	28	4.5	27	4.3
GUE	28	5.4	29	5.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RDE	20	3.9	21	4.1	20	3.9	26	4.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
DR	17	3.3	14	2.7	14	2.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CG / GUE-NGL	14	2.7	13	2.5	13	2.5	28	4.9	33	5.3	33	5.3	34	5.4
ARC	13	2.5	15	2.9	16	3.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	4.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
ARE	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	3.4	19	3.0	20	3.2	21	3.4
EDN / I-EDN	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	3.4	19	3.0	18	2.9	15	2.4
UPE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	56	8.9	56	8.9	34	5.4
NA	12	2.3	12	2.3	21	4.1	27	4.8	31	5.0	33	5.3	38	6.1
Total	518	100.1	518	100.0	518	100.1	567	100.2	626	100.0	626	100.1	626	100.0

Party group abbreviations: ARC = Rainbow Group (1989-1994), ARE = European Radical Alliance (1994-1999), CG = The Left Unity Group (1989-1994, see GUE-NGL), DR = European Right (1989-1994), ED = European Democratic Group (1989-1992, joined PPE), EDN = Europe of Nations (see I-EDN) (1994-1999), ELDR = European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party, FE = Forza Europa (1994-1995, see UPE), GUE = European United Left (1989-92), GUE-NGL = Confederal Group of the European United Left (since 1994; since 1995 the group included the sub-group Nordic Green Left), I-EDN = Group of Independents for a Europe of Nations (1994-1999, first EDN), NA = Non-attached, PPE = European People's Party, S/PSE = Party of European Socialists, RDE = European Democratic Alliance (until July 1995, see UPE), UPE = Union for Europe (1995-1999), V = The Green Group.

Dates: 1989 = after the third Euroelections; 1992 = mid-term of the third legislature; 1993 = situation in January 1993 following the mergers between PPE and ED in May 1992 and between GUE and PSE in January 1993; 1994 = after the fourth Euroelections; 1995 = situation in October 1995 after the latest EU enlargement (January 1995) and the establishment of the UPE (by merging of RDE and FE in July 1995); 1997 = mid-term of the fourth legislature; 1999 = end of the fourth legislature.

Table 3a. Rapporteuships by party group, 1989-1994.

Party group	seats 1989		1994-99 non-legislative		1989-94 consultation procedure		1989-94 assent procedure		1989-94 cooperation procedure		1989-94 co-decision procedure		1989-94 total	
	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	Abs	%	abs	%	abs	%
S/PSE	180	34.7	340	36.1	213	32.9	10	33.3	193	42.0	45	41.7	801	36.6
PPE	121	23.4	227	24.1	195	30.1	10	33.3	135	29.3	32	29.6	599	27.4
LDR/ELDR	49	9.5	108	11.5	70	10.8	2	6.7	27	5.9	5	4.6	212	9.7
ED	34	6.6	70	7.4	50	7.7	5	16.7	54	11.7	16	14.8	195	8.9
V	30	5.8	62	6.6	36	5.6	1	3.3	7	1.5	1	0.9	107	4.9
GUE	28	5.4	64	6.8	34	5.2	2	6.7	16	3.5	1	0.9	117	5.3
RDE	20	3.9	37	3.9	25	3.9	0	0	21	4.6	6	5.6	89	4.1
DR	17	3.3	8	0.8	7	1.1	0	0	3	0.7	0	0	15	0.7
CG /GUE-NGL	14	2.7	9	0.9	8	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0.9
ARC	13	2.5	12	1.3	7	1.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	0.9
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ARE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
I-EDN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UPE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NA	12	2.3	7	0.7	3	4.6	0	0	4	0.9	2	1.8	15	0.7
Total	518	100.1	943	43.1	648	29.6	30	1.4	460	21.0	108	4.9	2189	100%

Table 3b. Rapporteuships by party group, 1994-1999.

Party group	seats 1994		1994-99 non-legislative		1994-99 consultation procedure		1994-99 assent procedure		1994-99 cooperation procedure		1994-99 co-decision procedure		1994-99 total	
	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%
S/PSE	198	34.9	373	40.7	174	34.6	11	22.0	63	33.0	107	33.1	728	36.7
PPE	157	27.7	297	32.4	174	34.6	15	30.0	48	25.1	140	43.3	674	34.0
LDR/ELDR	43	7.6	74	8.1	45	8.9	4	8.0	11	5.8	12	3.7	146	7.4
ED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
V	23	4.1	40	4.4	19	3.8	4	8.0	14	7.3	23	7.1	100	5.0
GUE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RDE (see UPE)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CG /GUE-NGL	28	4.9	36	3.9	18	3.6	6	10.0	7	3.7	1	0.3	68	3.4
ARC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FE (see UPE)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ARE	19	3.4	21	2.3	21	4.2	3	12.0	9	4.7	3	0.9	57	2.9
I-EDN	19	3.4	1	0.1	9	1.8	0	0	8	8.9	4	1.2	22	1.1
RDE/FE/UPE	53	9.3	74	8.1	38	7.6	7	14.0	21	11.0	29	9.0	169	8.5
NA	27	4.8	1	0.1	5	1.0	0	0	10	5.2	4	1.2	20	1.0
Total	567	100.2	917	46.2	503	25.4	50	2.5	191	9.6	323	16.3	1984	100.0

Table 4a. Rapporteuships by national delegation, 1989-1994.

Member State	seats 1989		1994-99 non-legislative		1989-94 consultation procedure		1989-94 assent procedure		1989-94 cooperation procedure		1989-94 co-decision procedure		1989-94 total	
	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%
Germany	81	15.6	159	16.9	98	15.1	4	13.3	93	20.2	26	24.1	380	17.4
UK	81	15.6	176	18.7	109	16.8	3	10.0	100	21.7	28	25.9	416	19.0
France	81	15.6	104	11.0	75	11.6	0	0	35	7.6	13	12.0	227	10.4
Italy	81	15.6	117	12.4	56	8.6	11	36.7	63	13.7	6	5.6	253	11.6
Spain	60	11.6	115	12.2	94	14.5	3	10.0	35	7.6	6	5.6	253	11.6
NL	25	4.8	84	8.9	58	9.0	1	3.3	42	9.1	14	13.0	199	9.1
Belgium	24	4.6	69	7.3	53	8.2	4	13.3	31	6.7	2	1.9	159	7.3
Greece	24	4.6	32	3.4	28	4.3	0	0	24	5.2	5	4.6	89	4.1
Portugal	24	4.6	40	4.2	33	5.1	0	0	11	2.4	3	2.8	87	4.0
Denmark	16	3.1	18	1.9	10	1.5	4	13.3	16	3.5	2	1.9	50	2.3
Ireland	15	2.9	15	1.6	32	4.9	0	0	7	1.5	1	0.9	55	2.5
Luxembourg	6	1.2	14	1.5	2	0.3	0	0	3	6.5	2	1.9	21	1.0
Sweden	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Austria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	518	99.8	943	43.1	648	29.6	30	1.4	460	21.0	108	4.9	2189	100%

Table 4b. Rapporteurships by national delegation, 1994-1999.

Member State	seats 1995		1994-99 non-legislative		1994-99 consultation procedure		1994-99 assent procedure		1994-99 cooperation procedure		1994-99 co-decision procedure		1994-99 total	
	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%
Germany	99	15.8	172	18.8	113	22.5	10	20.0	31	16.2	89	27.6	415	20.9
UK	87	13.9	152	16.6	77	15.3	3	6.0	40	20.9	58	18.0	330	16.6
France	87	13.9	76	8.3	45	8.9	7	14.0	18	9.4	40	12.4	186	9.4
Italy	87	13.9	87	9.5	53	10.5	3	6.0	17	8.9	23	7.1	183	9.2
Spain	64	10.2	124	13.5	70	13.9	5	10.0	16	8.4	30	9.3	245	12.3
NL	31	5.0	88	9.6	44	8.7	0	0	22	11.5	35	10.8	189	9.5
Belgium	25	4.0	42	4.6	15	3.0	5	10.0	4	2.1	11	3.4	77	3.9
Greece	25	4.0	30	3.3	14	2.8	9	18.0	9	4.7	5	1.5	67	3.4
Portugal	25	4.0	27	2.9	19	3.8	1	2.0	5	2.6	1	0.3	53	2.7
Denmark	16	2.6	19	2.1	7	1.4	1	2.0	1	0.5	11	3.4	39	2.0
Ireland	15	2.4	23	2.5	17	3.4	2	4.0	8	4.2	3	0.9	53	2.7
Luxembourg	6	1.0	15	1.6	7	1.4	0	0	1	0.5	4	1.2	27	1.4
Sweden	22	3.5	25	2.7	8	1.6	0	0	6	3.1	2	0.6	41	2.1
Austria	21	3.4	17	1.9	10	2.0	1	2.0	7	3.7	4	1.2	39	2.0
Finland	16	2.6	20	2.2	4	0.8	3	6.0	6	3.1	8	2.5	41	2.1
Total	626	100.2	917	46.2	503	25.4	50	2.5	191	9.6	323	16.3	1984	100.0

**Table 5. Correlation coefficients, size of party groups and national delegations and rapporteurships.**

Number of rapporteurship	Third legislature			Fourth legislature		
	Size Party groups N = 11	Size National delegations N = 12	Size Party groups N = 9	Size Party groups N = 9	Size National delegations N = 15	
Total r'ships	.993**	.889**	.990**	.991**	.891**	
Non-legislative	.993**	.908**	.995**	.880**	.880**	
Consultation	.978**	.843**	.982**	.892**	.892**	
Assent	.927**	.488	.854**	.568*	.568*	
Cooperation	.981**	.821**	.990**	.828*	.828*	
Codecision	.961**	.712**	.939**	.842**	.842**	

\*\* Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)