

# **Committees and Party Cohesion in the European Parliament**

Gail McElroy, University of Rochester

[gmce@troi.cc.rochester.edu](mailto:gmce@troi.cc.rochester.edu)

## **EPRG Working Paper, No. 8**

Presented at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 30, San Francisco, California.

**Abstract:**

How do political parties enforce party discipline and promote cohesiveness in newly emerging legislatures? Parliamentary democracy and party discipline are conventionally viewed as synonymous. Political parties in established parliamentary democracies typically exhibit such high levels of unity that the question of how and why such discipline arises has, until recently, received little attention. But in emerging legislatures the process of transforming rudimentary party organisations into disciplined parties is not inevitable. This paper will examine if the Political Groups in the European Parliament (EP) attempt to enforce party discipline?<sup>1</sup> More specifically, the paper asks the question are MEPS who consistently vote against the party punished in terms of their committee assignments?

---

<sup>1</sup> The term “Political Groups” is used interchangeably with political parties throughout this paper, in keeping with the nomenclature of the European Union.

Perhaps [the] biggest obstacle -one of the Parliament's biggest failings- is indiscipline among the Political Groups.... Although the groups have coalesced a bit over the years, so that there are now only four that really count, they will never be able to exert real control over members until they correspond to and fight elections as genuine European-wide parties. Such a change could take decades.

The Economist, January 11<sup>th</sup> 1997.

## **Introduction:**

How do political parties enforce party discipline and promote cohesiveness in newly emerging legislatures? Parliamentary democracy and party discipline are conventionally viewed as synonymous. Political parties in established parliamentary democracies typically exhibit such high levels of unity that the question of how and why such discipline arises has, until recently, received little attention (Bowler, Farrell, Katz 1999). But in emerging legislatures the process of transforming rudimentary party organisations into disciplined parties is not inevitable. This paper will examine if the Political Groups in the European Parliament (EP) attempt to enforce party discipline?<sup>2</sup> More specifically, the paper asks the question are MEPS who consistently vote against the party punished in terms of their committee assignments?

This paper has three principle objectives. First, the paper aims to extend our understanding of the internal organisation of the EP. Despite evidence (Corbett, Jacobs, Shackleton 1994; Judge and Earnshaw 1995; Terrenoir 1994) that committees play an important role in the legislative process in the European Parliament, our knowledge of the committee system is almost negligible. This paper hopes to address this deficit in some small way. Second, the paper will demonstrate that the main Political Groups in the European Parliament were in the process of successfully institutionalising much earlier than heretofore thought. Conventional wisdom, as captured in the opening quote, holds that the parties in the EP are ineffectual and weak. The analysis in this paper hopes to undermine this view of the political groups. Third, the paper aims to contribute to the literature on party development and party organisation more generally.

The literature on political parties and party discipline suggests that cohesive voting blocs are central to the functioning of any legislature. No single causal story can

---

<sup>2</sup> The term "Political Groups" is used interchangeably with political parties throughout this paper, in keeping with the nomenclature of the European Union.

account for the rise of these unified parties. Explanations fall broadly into two categories. The first looks towards the incentives created by the need to win elections (Duverger 1954; Ostrogorski 1902) while the second examines incentives internal to the legislature itself (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Holmes 1987). In the context of the EP, the Political Groups must look within the legislature for sources of unity. Bowler, Farrell and Katz (1999:209) have commented that “the usual range of incentives and inducements open to parties to help shape action en bloc seem to be lacking” in the EP. First and foremost, the institutional imperatives that typically operate in parliamentary democracies are lacking. Normally, the need to keep a governing party in power acts as a powerful incentive for maintaining a majority-voting bloc. But within the EP there is no executive resting on the support of a majority party.<sup>3</sup> Second, the Political Groups cannot sanction rebel members through the electoral process. Controlling access to the ballot is one of the primary methods of ensuring party discipline in parliamentary democracies. If a party can control the nomination process, it can monitor the cohesion of the party through the selection and de-selection of ‘problem’ candidates (Gallagher and Marsh 1988). However, the Political Groups in the EP have no control over the nomination process. National parties in each of the fifteen member states control access to the ballot. Finally, the supply of political goods, to which the political groups have access, is highly constrained. Most notably, the Political Groups do not have funds at their disposal to finance members’ election campaigns. Election campaigns are funded according to the national election laws.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, the political groups in the European Parliament fare poorly, in terms of cohesion and discipline, when compared with their counterparts in the national legislatures of Europe. Nonetheless, levels of cohesion have been rising in each subsequent Parliament (Hix and Lord 1997; Attina 1990; Quanjel and Wolters 1993). Given the highly constrained environment in which the Political Groups operate how has this been achieved?

---

<sup>3</sup> Admittedly, the EP can censure the Commission, the EU executive body. But this power is more akin to the House of Congress’ ability to impeach a president than a traditional vote of no confidence. To date no such motion of censure has been adopted by the EP, although the Commission did resign under threat of censure in March 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Though under the Nice Treaty (Article 191) there is the possibility that such funding will be introduced.

Cox and McCubbins (1993) have made a forceful argument in the case of the US House of Representatives that parties can encourage party discipline through the institutions of the legislature itself. Through the use of patronage, in particular the committee system, parties can create incentives for members to vote in unison. This process operates on two levels. First, party renegades can be punished through the patronage system by being denied “plum positions”. Cox and McCubbins find that transfers to highly coveted committees are awarded disproportionately to party loyalists. Second, parties that act in unison have an advantage over divided parties in that they can gain control of the institution itself and the rules that define it. This paper will examine whether or not the Political Groups in the European Parliament have taken advantage of the internal organisation, in particular the committee system, to encourage tighter party discipline. Specifically, the paper asks the question is there a relationship between an MEP’s loyalty to his party and the value of his committee assignment? Not all committees are created equal in the EP, there are high and low demand committees and this paper examines if the political groups have taken advantage of this fact.

Given the highly constrained environment in which the political groups in the EP operate, if party institutionalisation is to occur it will happen inside the legislature itself. If the political groups use the committee system to promote cohesion and overcome the problems of party discipline there is evidence of institutionalisation. In this paper the analysis focuses on the Third Parliament for a very particular reason. This was the first Parliament in which the EP had legislative powers under the co-operation procedure introduced by the Single European Act. By choosing to examine this period rather than the period after the more powerful **co-decision** (1993) procedure was introduced, I hope to demonstrate that the political groups, from quite early in the history of the elected Assembly, attempted to use the (limited) institutions at their disposal to build strong organisations. In doing so I hope to undermine the general skepticism about party politics at the EU level. Eventually I will extend this analysis to the fourth and fifth Parliamentary sessions.

This paper is divided into six parts. First, I begin with a brief introduction to the committee system of the European Parliament. Second, the theoretical model is defined.

Third, several different rank orderings of committees are derived and discussed. Fourth, the data and key variables are explained, in particular the measure of party loyalty is described in some detail. Fifth, the empirical results are presented and discussed. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of possible extensions of the current work and the significance of the findings.

### **The Committee System and Assignment Process in the EP:**

The European Parliament has a committee system that is exceptionally well developed when compared with its counterparts in the national legislatures of Western Europe. Committees have played a central role in the EP from the outset. The Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, the antecedent of the modern Parliament, recognised that committees would help alleviate the problems inherent in co-ordinating work in an Assembly which was scheduled to meet in plenary only a handful of times a year. To this end, it created seven committees to conduct Assembly business in January of 1953 (European Parliament 1982). The establishment of the European Parliament after the entry into force of the Treaty of Rome (1957) brought substantial change to the number, names and prestige of committees, in an effort to reflect the wider areas of responsibility of the European Economic Community. But it was in the immediate aftermath of the first direct elections that the committee system was significantly expanded. Table 1 displays the expansion of the committee system since 1979. At the same time as the membership of the Parliament expanded from 200 to 410 members, the number of standing committees was expanded from twelve to fifteen. In 1981 two further committees were added and one more was added in 1987, 1992 and 1994.<sup>5</sup> By the end of the fourth parliamentary period (June 1999) there were a total of twenty standing committees in place.<sup>6</sup> As is apparent from Table 1 some MEPs serve in a full capacity on more than one committee.<sup>7</sup> The average number of committee assignments rose steadily from 1979 through 1994. However, the second committee

---

<sup>5</sup> There have been calls to expand the number of committees with each enlargement of the Parliament (in 1979 there were only 410 MEPs but by 1999 this number had expanded to 626). The creation of sub-committees and temporary committees has somewhat alleviated the pressure for further enlargement of the system.

<sup>6</sup> This number was reduced to seventeen in the current Parliament. Attempts by the Party of European Socialists to reduce the number of standing committees further have, thus far, failed.

assignment is almost always on a “neutral committee.” These tend to be weak, non-legislative committees and are considered neutral because membership does not come at the cost of a position on another committee.<sup>8</sup>

#### TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Have the main parties attempted to dominate the committee system? Seats on committees are assigned proportionately to party strength, “the composition of the committees shall as far as possible reflect the composition of Parliament” (Rules of Procedure 152:1). Table 2 examines the party strength to seat ratio on committees mid-way through the Fourth Parliament (1994-1999) to see how closely this prescription is followed. As expected the ratio closely approximates partisan strength. A majority of committees lie within one seat of perfect proportionality. Nonetheless, four committees have a seat margin of greater than one seat for the largest Political Group, the Party of European Socialists (PES). The second largest party, the European People’s Party (EPP) also has a one-seat margin on four committees and a two-seat advantage on the Foreign Affairs Committee.<sup>9</sup> There is clearly some flexibility on the proportionality rule; it is not strictly applied.<sup>10</sup> Surprisingly, there appears to be greater flexibility on this matter in the EP than there is in the United States Congress.<sup>11</sup> As we will see below, these committees on which the large political groups are over represented tend to be power committees.

#### TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

---

<sup>7</sup> In the 1994 parliamentary session, 452 of the 567 MEPs (80 percent) were full members on only one committee.

<sup>8</sup> Neutral committees include Women’s Rights, Fisheries and Budgetary Control. These committees tend to be neutral from one Parliament to the next, though Institutional Affairs was “deneutralised” in 1994.

<sup>9</sup> The PES and EPP are underrepresented (by more than one seat) on two committees each. Interestingly, they both have fewer representatives than they are entitled to on Regional Policy.

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, in the current Parliament (5<sup>th</sup>) the PES has a plurality of members on the Development Committee. This is in spite of the fact that the EPP is the plurality party in the Parliament. The Development Committee actually has a majority of MEPs from left wing parties, despite a right-wing majority in the Parliament. As such the Development Committee significantly deviates from the principle outlined in the Rules of Procedure that committees should be microcosms of Parliament as a whole. Thanks to Jürgen Zimmerling MEP, for pointing out this anomaly.

<sup>11</sup> See Krehbiel (1993) for similar work on Congress.

That the Political Groups recognised the potential of the committee system as early as the first directly elected legislature is witnessed by changes in the rules governing the committees. For instance, in 1981, the position of substitute was formalised and control of the position was transferred to the Political Group.<sup>12</sup> Prior to this “any member of a committee [could] arrange for his place to be taken at meetings by another Member of Parliament of his choice” (Chapter X Rule 40:3 1978). The process was radically overhauled in the first directly elected parliament. Control over substitutes was removed from the individual MEP and transferred to the Political Groups; “The political group may appoint a number of permanent substitutes for each committee equal to the number of full members representing them on the committee. (Chapter XII Rule 93:1 1981). In addition, in the First Parliament requests for particular committees could be directly submitted to the Bureau but by the Second Parliament members had to be nominated by their political groups (Chapter XII Rule 110:1 1987).<sup>13</sup> These changes would seem to suggest that the Political Groups recognised the committee system as a potential supply of incentives and patronage for otherwise highly constrained parties. One former British MEP from the European People’s Party (EPP) nicely captured the link between the development of the committee system and the Political Groups when he commented that,

“The creation of new committees is always linked to key moments and these events have always been linked to the development of the Political Group system, the development of new committees is linked to the need for new jobs.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Theoretical Framework: Party loyalty and the value of committee assignments.**

Our understanding of committee assignments is undoubtedly most fully developed in the case of the US Congress. But there is little consensus, even here, on the role of parties in the assignment process. Theories of the process can be broadly divided in to two categories. The self-selection model (Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Weingast

---

<sup>12</sup> The norm is for an MEP to be a member of one committee and a substitute on another. Substitute positions are clearly less desirable than full memberships. As a substitute an MEP can only participate in committee activities in the place of an absent colleague, that is, a member of his or her political group.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, substitutes are unlikely to receive the much-coveted *rapporteurships*.

<sup>13</sup> The Bureau is the regulatory body that is responsible for Parliament's administrative, organisational and staff matters.



and Marshall 1988) views the committee system as an institution that serves the re-election needs of party members. In this view, members maximise on the basis of constituent interests and party leaders largely comply with member requests. The norms of seniority and property rights serve to limit leadership discretion and reduce intra-party competition for key committee positions. In this model, parties are not key players in the assignment process. An alternative view of the process, argued by Cox and McCubbins (1993), posits that political parties, in particular majority parties, are legislative cartels that organise the legislature in such a fashion as to control policy outcomes. With regard to committee assignments, this theory argues that the party leadership is central to the process. They find evidence to suggest that party loyalty is a critical determinant of transfers to exclusive and semi-exclusive committees.

Very little is written on the committee selection process outside of Congress. In the European Parliament committee membership is established during the first part-session following elections and again half way through the five-year term of Parliament.<sup>15</sup> Table 3 reports the number of committee transfers for the major parties in the last three parliaments. Most noticeable is the high rate of transfers among committees in the EP. Usually more than a third of MEPs change committees. Is there something systematic about these high turnover rates? Are there high demand and low demand committees? We must recall that the European Parliament is an institution in the process of defining itself and that institutional reform to the powers of the Parliament occur frequently and rapidly. Why would an MEP apply for one committee over another? How do political groups decide between two members for one committee seat?

#### TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

We expect that party leadership will monitor the voting behaviour of key players in the legislative process. The Committee Chairmen and members of powerful committees play a key role in the legislative process in the EP, as such leadership should want them to conform closely to the leadership's policy position. The committee system

---

<sup>14</sup> Personal Interview with George (Ben) Patterson, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2000. Mr. Patterson served in the European Parliament from 1974 through 1994 and is currently Principal Administrator of the Economic and Budgetary (DG4) Affairs Committees.

<sup>15</sup> Thus, we are currently in the ninth committee period since the date of the first direct elections.

of the EP is critical to the legislative process and members and party leaders recognise this. A former vice-chairman of the Party of European Socialists encapsulated the importance of the committee system when he commented that,

“Ninety-five percent of legislation is fixed in committee. Often I get letters asking me to vote in such a way on an issue in plenary but I invariably tell them that it is too late at this stage, they need to request this type of vote at the committee stage, all the deals and compromises are achieved in committee and if one wants to truly influence the process one must get in at this stage.”<sup>16</sup>

By influencing the committee assignment process the leadership can shape legislation through the most powerful committees. In addition, by punishing renegade members the party can attempt to enforce party discipline, thereby making a stronger unit and increasing control over the legislature itself.

Key to this analysis is the fact that the party leadership of the Political Groups controls the assignment process. I will use this fact to test the hypothesis that the parties use the assignment process to punish those who rebel against the party. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between a member's behaviour and his committee assignment. This could be for several reasons. First, the self-selection model of the committee assignment process may be a more fitting description of the mechanism by which seats are assigned in the EP (Bowler and Farrell 1995). Second, the Political Groups may not be parties in the traditional sense, but rather just loose groupings with no central authority. This literature, in particular on the first two Parliaments, is replete with commentaries bemoaning the weakness of the Political Groups (Nugent 1989; Andeweg 1995).

*H1: The Party leadership of the Political Groups in the European Parliament use selective incentives (attractive committee assignments) to reward party loyalists and punish those who defect.*

## **What is a valuable committee assignment?**

---

<sup>16</sup> Personal interview, November 11, 2000.

Predictions about what assignment a particular MEP will prefer must in part be dictated by the personal policy preferences of any given individual.<sup>17</sup> Individual MEPs will presumably have particular policy interests reflected in their committee preferences, but it is maintained here that whatever the motivational mix of an MEP, he will strictly prefer to be on a committee with legislative powers as opposed to one with only consultation powers. In the European Parliament not all committees are created equal. The major difference is between legislative and non-legislative committees. Some committees are key players in the legislative process whilst others are merely opinion committees and have no direct impact on policy output.

Until the Single European Act the EP had almost no power. Under the Treaty of Rome legislative power within the EEC rested firmly with the Council. The Commission had powers of proposal and negotiation but the Council was the sole decision-maker. The Parliament's role was restricted to issuing opinions under the **consultation procedure**.<sup>18</sup> The first major change in Parliamentary powers came when the Single European Act (SEA) introduced the **co-operation procedure** in 1987. This procedure stipulates that the EP is consulted twice before a proposal for legislation becomes EU law.<sup>19</sup> For the purposes of our analysis the most important thing to note about the SEA is that it did not confer the power of co-operation in all policy areas. The committees most affected by this procedure were the Legal Affairs Committee; the Committee on Environment and Public Health; the Industry, Research and Technology Committee; the

---

<sup>17</sup> The need to represent constituency interests through the committee process is not a major imperative in the EP. The fifteen member states all now use some form of proportional representation. In eleven of the member states the whole country forms one constituency while in Belgium, Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom the national territory is sub-divided in a number of constituencies. The list system and the national districts tend to mitigate against very particular constituency interests. In addition, the constituency link is weakened by the low profile of the European Parliament in the member states (Katz and Wessels 1999). If an MEP has a constituency it is more likely to be his national party than the 'district', which elects him.

<sup>18</sup> Prior to the SEA, the only area in which the Parliament had powers beyond the consultation procedure was in the negotiations over the annual EC budget

<sup>19</sup> The co-operation procedure is frequently criticised as being overly complex, but it provides the EP with a second opportunity to influence the substance of EU legislation. At the first reading, Parliament delivers an opinion on the Commission proposal. The Council, acting by a qualified majority, then adopts a common position and forwards it to Parliament. Once the Council has adopted its common position the Parliament has three months to take a decision: it can adopt, amend or reject the common position. In the latter two instances it must do so by an absolute (as opposed to a simple) majority of its Members. If Parliament does reject the proposal, the Council can only take a decision to overrule the EP by unanimity.

Economic and Monetary Committee (EMAC); and the Employment and Social Affairs Committees.

Qualitative evidence suggests that MEPs are fully aware of the differences between the legislative powers of the committees and that there is serious competition for membership of committees with legislative powers. As one former EPP member of Parliament put it succinctly,

“The crux of the committee system is the question of which committee has power. In the beginning Budgets was the most powerful committee, it was the only one with any real powers, as it could reject Commission proposals.”<sup>20</sup>

Elite interviews also indicate that the assignment process is subject to much infighting within parties. One British member of the ELDR commented that,

“The assignment of members to committees reflects one’s standing in the Parliament, you could actually use this as an indicator of one’s standing in parliament, and the request for particular committee positions is always highly contentious”.<sup>21</sup>

Yet another commented on the stiff competition for committee positions,

“Don’t be fooled by what other MEPs tell you about consensus in the party, there is considerable competition within the ELDR for the plum jobs, such as chairmanships, which of course we have few of as a third party”.<sup>22</sup>

MEPs have clear preferences for certain committees, they are keenly aware of the difference in value of particular assignments and have clear preferences for committees whose jurisdictions are covered by the legislative procedures. There are high demand committees and low demand committees. The question this paper asks is if the party leaders have taken advantage of this fact to attempt to build more cohesive party units.

### **The Value of Committee Assignments:**

Unfortunately, no rank ordering of the committees in the EP exists. While it is clear that there is a hierarchy of committees in the European Parliament it is not clear where each committee ranks in this hierarchy. It is easy to differentiate between the very powerful and very weak committees but beyond this we need a more objective ranking.

---

<sup>20</sup> Personal interview, November 22, 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Personal interview, March 23, 2000

<sup>22</sup> Personal interview, November 23, 2000

The importance of committees may change over time and in fact given the level of institutional change in the European Parliament we fully expect the metrics of committee importance to change from one Parliament to the next.

Ideally, one would have member specific valuation of committee seats but in the absence of such information standard methods look to committee transfer patterns to establish rank. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in detail the methodology by which these ranks are derived and the problems inherent in using committee to committee transfer patterns as the basis for rank ordering committees. I have elsewhere (McElroy 2001) derived the committee ranks by the two standard methods in the literature; the Bullock and Sprague (1969) transfer ratio and the Munger (1988) index. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4 for the period of interest.<sup>23</sup> Recall that we expect those committees whose jurisdictions include policy areas covered by the co-operation procedure to rank most highly.

#### TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Looking to the Bullock and Sprague transfer ratio first, there are marked differences in committee rank from the committee period prior to the introduction of the co-operation procedure and the subsequent committee period. Consider for example the Development committee. Ranked first in 1984-1987, it drops to twelfth position after the introduction of the co-operation procedure. Environment ranked in tenth position in 1989-1992 improves its standing, as expected, after co-operation is introduced. Employment experiences a similar rise in the ranks. The evidence for the argument that the SEA would radically alter committee rankings is encouraging. The five committees, which received powers under the co-operation procedure, rank in the top six positions. In particular, both the Employment and Environment committees rise in the rankings. The SEA does have a predictable influence on committee attractiveness. Looking next at the Munger index there is further evidence suggesting that those committees, which received legislative powers under the SEA, rank most highly with MEPs. However, the tenth place ranking of Foreign Affairs is a little puzzling. Always considered a high

---

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that the neutral committees were dropped from the analysis; membership on these committees is in addition to membership on another committee. Such membership is subsidiary to

prestige committee according to observers (Corbett, Jacobs and Shackleton 1995:108), it ranks a lowly tenth by the Munger index.

A third measure of committee rank has more recently been applied to create committee ranks in Congress. The Groseclose and Stewart method (1998) has several advantages over the two methods outlined above. First and foremost, it overcomes the problems that arise when transfers do not involve one for one movement between committees. In the above methods such transfers, though admittedly not common, are difficult to evaluate in a very systematic fashion. What happens when a member gives up two committees for one committee assignment? This would appear to indicate that the added value of the two committees is of lesser value than the one new assignment. Transfers rate rankings do not fully capture this phenomenon. Second, the two methods outlined above view transfers between committees in isolation. That is, they only consider the relationship between the transfer committee and the committee to which a member transfers. These ranking systems do not take into account the quality of the “opposition”. Groseclose and Stewart argue that committee ranks are similar to rankings in competitive sports. Simply looking at the number of wins and losses can be very misleading. Winning against a strong team should count for more than winning against a weak opponent.

Basically, the Groseclose and Stewart method considers transfers as a competition between one committee and one or more competing committees. The committee transferred to wins, getting a score of 1, the committee(s) transferred from loses, getting a score of -1. Committees not involved in the transfer process are scored as zero. For each set of adjacent committee periods a matrix of (N) members by (M) committees is created.<sup>24</sup> Estimates of the probability of this data actually occurring are then calculated through maximum likelihood estimation.<sup>25</sup> The resulting coefficients essentially represent the average of the members’ evaluations of a given committee. Table 5 presents the results of this analysis. There is a considerable overlap between these results and

---

membership on a main committee. Similar logic is used in the US literature to drop committees like the Districts of Columbia from the analysis

<sup>24</sup> Data on committee assignments was collected from the committee listings in the *Medlemsfortegnelse* (List of Members) published each year.

those from the Munger and Bullock and Sprague methods. However, the fourth place ranking of the Development committee is unexpected as is the low ranking of the External Economic Relations committee.<sup>26</sup>

#### TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

The standard errors are rather large and this does undermine our confidence in the accuracy of these rankings. To compute the Grosecloses and Stewart rankings we need a reasonably large  $n$ . In the case of the US Congress, many Congresses are estimated together to ensure this result. The assumption made in this case is that committee values do not change over time, however this is clearly not valid in the context of the EP. Finally, there is the problem (for all three measures) that transfers may represent promotions in terms of obtaining a committee position such as a chairmanship. Members may relinquish a position on a high demand committee for a chairmanship on a low demand committee and none of these rankings can take account of this type of movement. Normally, all things being equal, a member would not choose to move from, for example, the Environment committee to Transport but if there is a chairmanship position involved such a move may be attractive for some members.<sup>27</sup> Given the large standard errors, I am reluctant to use the actual Groseclose and Stewart Portfolio values as the dependent variable. Rather it is reassuring that the results by and large reflect the results obtained from the alternative two measures. We must also be reassured by the fact that the rankings do actually reflect our theoretical expectations that are independently derived from the institutional reforms in the EU system itself.

The major problem with all three of these measures is that we do not have a ranking system that is independent of the actual transfers. One must be concerned that these rankings will be biased if a large number of the transfers are not revealed preferences but rather are punishments or demotions imposed by the party leadership. To use these measure we have to make the assumption that all transfers are voluntary, as

---

<sup>25</sup> The matrix of transfers with some manipulation can be estimated as a standard probit equation.

<sup>26</sup> One technical point that requires some further explanation is the estimates for the Environment and Research and Industry committees. No individual member transferred from these committees, thus the maximum likelihood estimation for both these committees is given as infinity. The average valuation of these committees explodes when one attempts the ML estimation.

I argue this is not the case, these measures are biased. If we take this point to its logical conclusion, if all committee seats were punishments, the ranks would reveal not committee prestige but rather the opposite, the undesirability of committees. Fortunately, we do have theoretical reasons to expect certain committees to be more desirable than others and one final means of ranking the committees suggests itself, which is independent of the actual transfer patterns. Each committee has a chairman and upwards of three vice-chairs who are chosen by the committees at the inaugural meeting of the committee (Rules of Procedure Chapter XX: 157). However, in practice these positions are divided up amongst the Political Groups in proportion to party size by the d'Hondt method. Thus in 1989 the PES with 180 members was entitled to the first, third, fifth seventh, ninth, twelfth, fifteenth, seventeenth committees. The EPP with 121 members was entitled to the second, fourth, eighth, eleventh and eighteenth committees. The Liberal Democratic and Reformist Group (LDR) got the sixth and sixteenth committees, the European Democrats (ED), the Greens and the European United Left (GUE) got the tenth, thirteenth and fourteenth choices respectively. These choices are one means of independently verifying the results from the three transfer measures.

In 1989, for the first time in the history of the directly elected Parliament the Environment committee was chosen first (Corbett, Jacobs and Shackleton 1994). This conforms with our expectations from the recent institutional reforms and with the rankings that derive from each of the three transfer methods. The LDR chose the External Environment Committee as its sixth choice and Transport as the sixteenth. The Greens chose the Regional Policy committee in thirteenth place and the GUE chose Culture in the fourteenth slot, confirming evidence from the alternative rankings that these committees are not in high demand. In fact the ED chose a neutral committee in tenth place (Budgetary Control) over several available non-neutral committees. We know that the EPP chose Foreign Affairs, Economic and Monetary and Legal affairs committees as its first three choices, thereby placing all three committees in the top eight. In addition, the PES placed Development in the twelfth places in committee rankings, suggesting that the rank of this committee by the Grosewart method may be artificially

---

<sup>27</sup> One means of surmounting this problem would be to estimate the transfers excluding all such transfers.



elevated. There may of course be some log rolling among party leaders over which committees they get and party leaders preferences may not exactly mirror those of members. Nonetheless, it is a reasonable indicator of preferences.

The four alternative methods of ranking committees for the period 1989-1992 correspond reasonably well and I use the information supplied by each to arrive at a basic division of committees into three types; exclusive, semi-exclusive and non-exclusive. Table 6 represents this trichotomisation of committees. The classification is not unproblematic; the exclusive category may be inflated. It includes all five committees that received powers under the SEA. But these committees were not equally affected.<sup>28</sup> And as such the dependent variable, demotion, may be understated. Certain demotions will be obvious, to move from the Environment committee to the Culture committee is a clear downward movement, but it is not clear if a move from the Environment committee to the Legal Affairs committee is a demotion or not. Two of the measures suggest it is while two do not. We cannot be confident that the fine gradations between committee ranks are captured by any single ranking system. All the methods are sensitive to small sample size problems. The trichotomisation thus errs on the side of caution. Interviews with MEPs who served at this time suggest that the categorisation is not inaccurate. Ideally, one would conduct an expert study to capture the rank of committees. But given the time lapse (over ten years) and the expected changes in rank from one period to the next, such a survey would also be flawed.

*Dependent variable: demotion*

I use demotion rather than promotion as the unit of analysis because it directly captures the notion of party discipline and “individually targeted punishments” (Rasch 1995:123). It is not clear that towing the party line is sufficient cause for promotion, but if parties have some central authority, defectors will need to be punished. Of course demotion through the committee system is not the only means of disciplining a member who defects. But in the EP, as stated earlier, parties have few other means by which to encourage cohesion. Also the possibility of demotion through the committee systems is

---

<sup>28</sup> For instance, less than 10 percent of reports adopted in plenary and which fell under the co-operation procedure emanated from the Employment committee while a quarter came from the Economic committee.

an interesting variation for scholars of legislative organization. In the US Congress it is almost impossible to remove a member from a committee, given the so-called property right norm of reappointment.

In this analysis, a member who transfers from an exclusive to semi-exclusion or non-exclusive committee is considered to be demoted and coded 1. Similarly, a transfer from the semi-exclusive committee to a non-exclusive committee is considered a demotion. Members who do not transfer, transfer among committees within the same category, or move from a low to high ranked committed are coded as zero. Using this classification system approximately 8 percent of members of both the PES and EPP are demoted at the halfway point through the Third Parliament (January 1992). If we also count those members who lost committee offices but remained on the same committee as demotions, there are just over 10 percent of members from both parties classified as being demoted.<sup>29</sup>

#### TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

I have chosen to examine the transfer process for the *deuxième moitié* (second half) of the third Parliamentary session for a number of reasons. The problem with first half of each parliament is that upwards of a half of MEPs are freshmen.<sup>30</sup> Thus, it is very difficult at this point to predict the loyalty of any given MEP. It will not be clear which MEPs from this group of newcomers will serve best on which committees. However, at the half-way point through any given Parliament party leaders have had two and half years of voting records for each individual member on which to base their judgments. In addition, party representation on committees is established during the first half of the Parliamentary session, so movements are not undertaken to accord with factors such as proportionality or geographic balance, these factors remain constant and thus need not perturb the analysis.

#### **Data and Independent Variables:**

##### *Construction of the Loyalty Index: The Independent Variable of Interest*

---

<sup>29</sup> This includes chairmanships, vice-chairmanships and co-ordinator positions.

Undoubtedly, party leaders take several factors into account when assigning seats to particular members: geographic balance, members' prior expertise, previous political experience to name but a few. Here we are interested in measuring the impact of loyalty. Loyalty cannot be fully captured through roll-call voting but it is undeniable that the most public demonstration of loyalty or dissent is through the process of roll call voting. The majority of votes are taken by an electronic vote on which no record is kept of how an individual MEP voted. Roll call votes represent only around 15 percent of total votes in the European Parliament (Gabel and Carrubba 1999:24). Roll call votes are probably unrepresentative of votes in general. But for the purposes of this paper this is not really a problem. Roll call votes are certainly called to assess the level of party coherence on an issue.<sup>31</sup> Of course they are not a perfect measure of renegade behaviour. But to vote against the party leadership on the floor, is perhaps the clearest means of rebelling against the party.<sup>32</sup> In this paper we examine if the party does indeed discipline these renegades in terms of committee assignments.

The measure employed here to capture individual members loyalty is a weighted logit technique first developed by Zeller and Lee (1965) and more recently employed by Coker and Crain (1994). I have chosen to use this method rather than the linear method employed by Cox and McCubbins (1993), as it takes account of the fact that votes are generated by a binomial process; a member votes either yes or no on a proposal.<sup>33</sup> The index captures the frequency with which the *i*th member votes with the party leadership. Specifically, let *n* be the number of votes on which a member actually votes. Let *r* be the number of times the member votes with his party leadership. The loyalty index is defined as follows:

$$\lambda_i = \log [(r_i + .5) / ((n - r_i) + .5)]$$

---

<sup>30</sup> In the 1989 Parliament, 49 percent of MEPs were freshmen.

<sup>31</sup> They may also be called by Political Groups to indicate a party issue on a position or to force another Group to take a public stance on an issue. One PES MEP even suggested that Friday votes are called to check who is in attendance (Personal Interview, November 11 2000).

<sup>32</sup> Other forms of rebellion include defecting to another party. Party switching is not uncommon in the EP.

<sup>33</sup> Strictly speaking, votes are either yes, no or abstain in the European Parliament. In this analysis when votes required a simple majority to pass, abstention votes are recorded as non-votes whereas when a vote requires an absolute majority to pass, abstentions are recorded as negative votes. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine abstentions as a separate type of vote. For a more detailed examination of this topic see Noury (2001).

As  $n$  is a finite quantity, when  $r=0$  or  $r=n$  the tails of the loyalty index will underestimate the members loyalty score.<sup>34</sup> In these situations the individuals may have been even more loyal or less loyal if  $n$  was not a finite quantity. In these instances the loyalty index is adjusted by the procedure developed in Gart and Zweifel (1967) and Kalt and Zupan (1984):

$$\text{If } r=0 \quad \lambda_i = ((\log((r_i + .5)/((n - r_i) + .5))) - .5)$$

$$\text{If } r=n \quad \lambda_i = (\log((r_i + .5)/((n - r_i) + .5))) + .5$$

The resulting loyalty score is an unbounded log-odds ratio that increases monotonically with the rate of voting with party leadership. Loyalty is thus constructed to reflect the frequency,  $f_i$ , with which the  $i$ th party member casts a vote with the party leadership (see below).<sup>35</sup>

*Sample of Votes:* Which sample of floor votes should we examine? The very fact that a roll call vote is called is perhaps indication that the vote is important or that the political groups are unsure of how the vote will proceed.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, we expect party leaders to be less inclined to punish members who vote against the party on non-legislative issues. In this analysis only roll call votes on legislative referrals under the co-operation procedure are used. It was only in these instances that the parliament was a true legislative body for the period under examination. Thus votes on motions of resolution or votes that fall under the consultation procedure are excluded from the analysis. A random sample of 160 such votes was collected from the *Official Journal of the European Communities, Series C* for the period July 1989- December 1991.<sup>37</sup>

*Constructing the index, some technical issues:*

---

<sup>34</sup> There are no actual instances in the data used in this analysis in which  $r = 0$  but there are several instances in which  $r = 100$ , indicating that these MEPs never voted against the party leadership.

<sup>35</sup> The mean loyalty score for the 112 members of the EPP is 3.56 and for the 174 members of the PES is 3.27.

<sup>36</sup> Roll call votes are normally called for by Political Groups but can also be called by any 32 members of the EP. (Rules of Procedure 132). The number of individual MEPs required to call such a vote has increased over the years.

<sup>37</sup> This total represents almost 70 percent of such votes for this period.

The party leadership vote on each of these votes was identified for both of the major parties. However, identifying the party leadership was not an altogether straightforward matter. The party hierarchies in both the PES and EPP are rather complex with a party president and up to eleven vice-presidents.<sup>38</sup> In this analysis, the party leadership is defined as to be the president of the party and the vice-presidents from the largest national delegations. For instance, the PES with representatives from each member state had eleven vice-presidents in 1989. But it would be foolish to think that the Luxembourg vice-president representing two members (c.1% of party members) has powers equivalent to those of the British vice-president who represents 46 (25%) members. In the case of the PES the party leadership was taken to be the party president and the leaders of the British, German and Spanish delegations.<sup>39</sup> In the case of the EPP the leadership was defined as the party president and the leaders of the Italian and German delegations, which were substantially larger than any other national delegations.<sup>40</sup> Elite interviews suggest that the larger delegations within the Political Groups are favoured in all internal party matters. Votes on which the party leadership, as here defined, was divided were excluded from the analysis.

Surprisingly such excluded votes were low in number. Of the 160 votes in the sample, which operated under the co-operation procedure, three were excluded on the basis that the (PES) party leadership were divided on the matter. Only two such votes were excluded for the EPP. Of course all members defined as forming the party leadership did not always vote, in these instances the remaining members of the leadership Group were taken as giving the cue. In addition, a handful (three) votes were excluded for the PES when all of one national delegation voted against the party leadership position. In such instances, it is plausible that members are voting on the grounds of 'constituency' interests and will be allowed some leeway by the party leadership.

### **Other factors that may affect transfer:**

---

<sup>38</sup> In the EPP the vice-presidents are separate from national delegation leaders whilst in the PES they are one and the same.

<sup>39</sup> These three delegations constitute approximately 60 percent of PES members at this time.

*Seniority:* It is not clear if seniority is a norm in the European Parliament. Bowler and Farrell (1995:240) argue that seniority is irrelevant. However, their analysis does not take account of the very particular assignment rules in the EP.<sup>41</sup> Elite interview evidence suggests that seniority may play some role in the assignment process. Seniority certainly does not operate to the extent it does in the US Congress. There is such a high turnover amongst MEPs that a seniority system in the traditional sense runs aground pretty quickly. Freshmen MEPs do end up on high prestige committees and have even been known to get chairmanships. Nonetheless, we do have some evidence that seniority is not irrelevant. Table 7 displays the distribution of seats by freshmen versus non-freshmen for the Third through Fifth Parliaments and some noticeable differences emerge. High profile committees such as Foreign Affairs and Legal Affairs have a much higher number of returning MEPs than low prestige committees such as Culture or Regional Policy. Over the course of these three parliaments the Regional Policy committee had twenty-one fewer returning MEPs than expected.

#### TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

It is not clear how important seniority is in the EP but it may not be irrelevant or trivial. Long-standing members may be given some preference in committee assignments and they may have the right to remain on these committees having established some policy expertise in the area. The current 1<sup>st</sup> vice chairman of the ELDR, Bertel Haarder, admitted that he did try to accommodate long-standing members as much as possible if they wanted to remain on a particular committee.<sup>42</sup> As such, long serving members may not suffer as much for voting against the party on the floor of the Parliament as newer members.

---

<sup>40</sup> These two delegations constitute just over 45 percent of EPP membership but are each considerably larger than the next third largest delegation.

<sup>41</sup> For instance, they attempt to measure if seniority affects the probability of obtaining a committee chair position but combine all parties in one regression analysis. However, if one is from a small marginal party, which has no entitlement to such a position under the proportional rule, it will not matter if one served one term or five terms in the Parliament one simply cannot become chair of a committee when the party is not entitled to such a position.

<sup>42</sup> Personal interview, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2000.

*H2: A member's chance of being demoted is inversely related to the length of term he has served in the EP.*

*H2a: A member's probability of demotion decreases with the length of term he has served on a particular committee.*

In this analysis the concept of Seniority is captured by two terms. YEARS simply refers to the number of years the member has served in the EP.<sup>43</sup> COMMITTEE TENURE on the other hand captures the number of terms that a given MEP has served on the committee on which he is currently a member. The two terms are necessary to capture the difference between deference to policy expertise in a given area and simply deference to being a long standing Member of Parliament.<sup>44</sup>

*Nationality:* There may be some advantage to belonging to the larger national delegations within a political group. These delegations tend to dominate the party leadership. Interviews with MEPs from small national delegation in both the EPP and PES suggest that this factor may not be trivial. One Irish member of the EPP suggested that

“Nothing in the EP is a meritocracy, the thing to be is a member of a large delegation in a large party, allocation of reports, rapporteur positions etc. are completely done on this basis”.<sup>45</sup>

NATIONALITY is a dummy variable coded 1 if the member belongs to the German, Spanish or English delegation for the PES and zero otherwise. Coded 1 for Germans and Italians from the EPP and zero otherwise.

*H3: Members from large delegations are less likely to be demoted than members from small delegations.*

---

<sup>43</sup> Data on the length of tenure of MEPs was collected from a variety of sources: *The Handbook of the European People's Party (1990)*, *the Times Guide to the European Parliament 1989, Forging Ahead, 1952-1988 : Thirty-Six Years of the European Parliament (1988)*.

<sup>44</sup> These two variables are obviously correlated but due to the high transfer rates in the EP, not by any means perfectly correlated. The correlation for the PES is .654 and for the EPP it is .725.

<sup>45</sup> Personal Interview, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2000.

*Presence:* The European Parliament is a very new legislature and suffers from high degrees of absenteeism. In fact several countries (for example Italy and Luxembourg) still permit their MEPs to hold a dual mandate.<sup>46</sup> It may be the case that simply participating in the legislative process may have an impact on maintaining one's committee position. MEPs who actively participate in the parliamentary process may be more likely to maintain their positions than those who are persistently absent.

*H4: Members who participate in the legislative process are less likely to be demoted than absentee MEPs.*

Capturing participation is somewhat difficult; ideally one would have a measure that quantified participation in committee, on the floor and in the political group itself.<sup>47</sup> However, in the absence (at present) of such a measure we will use participation in roll call voting in Strasbourg as a proxy measure. Using 290 votes randomly selected from the period of July 1989 to December 1991, I calculate the PRESENCE variable by dividing the number of times that each individual member actually votes by the total number of votes.<sup>48</sup> The number of actual votes ranges from a low of 16 to a high of 270 for the PES.<sup>49</sup> This measure probably overstates the degree of participation by MEPs. Turning up for the once monthly Strasbourg session affords an MEP more visibility than participating in committee or party activities in Brussels. If an MEP is going to participate in only one activity it is reasonable to assume that this would be tuning up for the plenary sessions. Nonetheless, there is high variation in this variable.

*Presence\*Loyalty:* There is reason to believe that there may be some interaction between the PRESENCE and LOYALTY variables. Our expectation about a member who turns up regularly and votes with the party consistently is that he will not be demoted. Similarly, members who vote against the party and have low participation should be

---

<sup>46</sup> For instance, eleven of the thirty-four current members of the Italian delegation in the EPP are also members of the Chamber of Deputies in Rome.

<sup>47</sup> One could use rapporteurships as a proxy for committee activity but I have chosen not to as these positions are highly coveted and they are awarded on strategic grounds rather than a first come first serve basis.

<sup>48</sup> These votes included votes under the consultation, budget, assent and co-operation procedures.

<sup>49</sup> As expected the Italian delegations are particularly remiss in participation. The mean number of times the Italians in the PES vote is 74 times compared with the German mean of 185.



demoted. But what of members who regularly participate but vote against the party? Or the alternative, members who do not participate regularly in the process, but when they do are extremely loyal? It is not clear which of the latter two scenarios is more serious a violation of the party line. Which is more highly valued by the party leadership, party loyalty or participation? I expect there is some interaction between these terms and to allow for this I have included the Presence\*Loyalty variable. It is hypothesised that the impact of participation is not equal for all levels of loyalty.

### **Testing the Hypotheses:**

As each party allocates seats separately I have estimated the following equation for both the PES and EPP,

$$\text{Prob (Y=1)} = \Lambda(\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{years} + \beta_2 \text{Term} + \beta_3 \text{Nation} + \beta_4 \text{Loyalty} + \beta_5 \text{Prescence} + \beta_6 \text{Prescence} * \text{Loyalty})$$

Where  $\Lambda$  represents the logistic cumulative distribution function.

Y= Demotion=1 if a member is demoted from a high demand committee to a low demand committee or is removed from a committee office.

I have only the two major parties in the analysis, as the number of seats that the smaller parties have on each committee is very small and gives rise to some serious sample size problems. In addition, the smaller parties are very fluid in nature.

### *Expectations:*

A negative coefficient for an independent variable implies that changing the value of the independent variable from 0 to 1 reduces the probability of being demoted (and obviously the reverse for positive coefficients). For example, a negative coefficient on NATIONALITY would mean that, holding all other values at their mean, members of large delegations within Political Groups are less likely to be demoted. The hypotheses outlined above provide some expectations about the signs on the coefficients. Hypotheses 2 and 2a lead me to believe that the estimate of  $\beta_1$  (YEARS) and  $\beta_2$  (TERM) will be negative. The longer a member has served in both the Parliament and on a given committee, the less likely he is to be demoted. Hypothesis 1 leads me to expect that the

sign on LOYALTY should also be negative, less loyal members should be demoted. Similarly, the sign on PRESENCE should be negative.

*Results:*

The results are presented as Model 1 in Table 8. A look at the table confirms that the results are largely consistent with expectations. Looking first at the results for the PES we see that all the signs are in the expected direction and that the coefficients on PRESENCE and LOYALTY are significant. Interestingly, the coefficients on NATIONALITY, YEARS and TERM are not significant. For the EPP all the signs are in the expected direction also but only LOYALTY approaches standard significance levels.<sup>50</sup>

Table 8 about here

One cannot easily interpret the substantive impact of logistic regression results. The coefficients report the change in log-odds ratio and need to be converted into predicted probabilities in order to be interpreted. Figure 1 captures the impact of PRESENCE and LOYALTY on demotion in the PES. The variables YEARS, TERM and NATIONALITY were insignificant and set at their mean values. The probability reported is the probability of being demoted. As expected members who exhibit low levels of loyalty and do not turn up regularly have a high probability of being demoted. However, a member who is very loyal to the party and participates in 80 percent of votes has merely a 10 percent chance of being demoted. As the graph reveals the impact of participation is not equal for all levels of loyalty. The results indicate that turning up counts for a great deal in the Third Parliament. Even if one is not loyal but is an active participant the probability of being demoted is very low. It is not clear if participation will continue to be a sufficient condition for retaining one's committee position in future

---

<sup>50</sup> Cross-tabulations of the observed versus predicted outcomes for Model 1 and Model 2 are reported in Appendix 1 and provide one means of evaluating the goodness of fit of these models. Choosing the prediction of the modal category as the baseline null model all of the estimated models yield improvements in prediction. In addition, the failed predictions are reasonably evenly distributed between false predictions of demotion and Status Quo.

parliaments. As parties institutionalise loyalty may become more highly valued. This is a question for future research.

#### FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The committee assignment process is dynamic in nature and here we have only taken a cross-sectional look at the process. The above analysis is open to the criticism that by including all the MEPs in the analysis we may be including some renegade members who have already “bottomed out”. That is, if one is serving on the non-exclusive committees in a non-office holding position, one cannot be demoted any further. On the other hand, members on these committees may be also very loyal in their voting patterns in the hope of getting promoted to a more exclusive committee. Two countervailing processes may be at work concurrently. Model 2 in Table 8 reports the results from the analysis excluding those members of both parties who were in non-office positions on non-exclusive committees (that is members who could not be demoted). The results are consistent with the findings reported for the larger sample suggesting that these committees are not composed of a disproportionate number of party rebels. Given the problems associated with ML estimation with skewed data (Long 1997, King and Zeng 1999a), Table 9 reports the corrected coefficients for both parties using the Rare Events Logit technique developed by Tomz, King and Zeng (1999). The results are consistent with those already reported for Model 1.

#### TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE

The models presented here are extremely parsimonious, they correctly predict about 90% of cases (classification tables are presented in Appendix 1). The success of the models is encouraging when one considers that no individual characteristics of MEPs and their preferences are contained within the models. On the other hand we should exercise some caution. The results for the EPP are not so impressive. Of course the two parties

may have fundamentally different internal mechanisms for creating party discipline.<sup>51</sup> The dependent variable is also not very refined, it does not allow for fine discrimination, the category of exclusive committee is undoubtedly over inflated. In addition, it makes the assumption that each member has the same preference ranking over committees.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

The results demonstrate that even early on in the Parliament's development loyalty to the party leadership had its rewards. The results are particularly impressive when it comes to determining who transfers in the PES. The evidence is strong that members who turn up and vote with the party are less likely to be demoted than absentee and renegade MEPs. The results indicate that there is a significant and positive relationship between voting and transfer patterns. These results are significant because they suggest, contrary to conventional wisdom, that the Political Groups (or at least the two largest ones) were in the process of consolidation even as the Parliament got its first powers. The parties had few means at their disposal to sanction rebel members but they have used the internal organisation of the Parliament, in particular the committee system, to attempt to enforce party discipline. Party cohesion has risen dramatically over the course of the directly elected Parliaments.

This paper should be viewed as the first step in a much larger project on institutional change in the European Parliament. The obvious next step is to extend the analysis in this paper to the Fourth and Fifth Parliaments. Under the terms of the Treaty on European Union (1992) the European Parliament was given **co-decision powers** in a number of areas. The co-decision procedure effectively made the Parliament an equal partner with the Council in the legislative process.<sup>52</sup> The effect of these new powers was to further exacerbate the differences between legislative and non-legislative committees.

---

<sup>51</sup> There are also problems with using asymptotic methods with small sample sizes. The asymptotic p-values are not close approximations of the true p-values. Exact conditional inference may be one means of overcoming this problem.

<sup>52</sup> Under the terms of the co-decision procedure a "Conciliation Committee" is established when the EP and Council disagree on a piece of legislation. This body is composed of equal representatives from both institutions. If the Conciliation committee fails to arrive at a compromise text the EP can reject the legislation in its entirety. Of course it should be borne in mind that the Council is always a veto player in the EU legislative process.

This gives rise to the question did the Political Groups use this development to further consolidate their parliamentary organisations?

This paper has not addressed the question of whether party members actually change their vote to win favour with party leadership. The analysis simply demonstrates that those who vote against the party suffer in terms of committee assignments. We can only conclude that members with high loyalty scores are less likely to be demoted than those with low scores. Parties do exert some control over legislative organisation in the European Parliament. The question of whether or not party members change their voting behaviour and participation rates to curry favour with the party leadership is a question for future analysis. One means to test this hypothesis would be to look at the voting behaviour in the subsequent session of those who are demoted. Do they alter their voting behaviour to regain favour and if they do are they reinstated on high prestige committees? In addition, this paper has not spoken to the preference outlier debate. An obvious next step is to examine the impact of the party leadership's control of the assignment process on the representativeness of committees in the EP.

## References:

- Andeweg, R (1995). The Reshaping of the national Party Systems, in J. Hayward (ed.) *Crisis of representation in Europe*. London: Frank Cass.
- Attina, F. (1990). The Voting Behaviour of the European Parliament Members and the Problems of the Europarties. *European Journal of Political Research* 18 (4): 557-579.
- Bowler, S, D. Farrell and R.S.Katz (1999). *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Bowler, S and D. Farrell (1996). The Organizing of the European Parliament: Committees, Specialization and CO-ordination. *British Journal of Political Science*. 25:219-243.
- Bullock, C and John Sprague (1968). A Research Note on the Committee reassignments of Southern Democratic Congressmen. *Journal of Politics*, 31: 493-512.
- Carrubba, C and M.Gabel (1999). Roll Call Votes and Party Discipline in the European parliament. :Reconsidering MEP Voting Behaviour. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 2-5, Atlanta Georgia.
- Coker, D and W. Crain (1994). Legislative Committees as Loyalty Generating Institutions. *Public Choice* 81 (3-4): 195-222.
- Corbett, R, F. Jacobs and M. Shackleton (1995). *The European Parliament*. London: Cartermill.
- Cox, G and M. McCubbins (1993). *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley: UC Press.
- Duverger, M.(1954) *Political parties : their organization and activity in the modern state*. New York: Wiley.
- European Parliament: *Medlemsfortegnelse over Præsidiets, Parlamentet, de politiske grupper, udvalgene og de interparlamentariske delegationer* . Luxembourg : Office des publications officielles des Communautés européennes.
- European Parliament: *Forging Ahead, 1952-1982 : Thirty Years of the European Parliament* Luxembourg : Office des publications officielles des Communautés européennes.
- European People's Party (1990). *Manuel du Groupe du Parti Populaire Européen*. Trier: Paulinus-Druckerei GmbH.

- Gallagher, M and M.Marsh (1988). *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Gart, J. and J. Zweifel (1967). On the bias of various estimators of the Logit and its variance with applications to Quantal Bioassay. *Biometrika* 52(1)(2): 181-187.
- Groseclose, T and C.Stewart (1998). The Value of Committee Seats in the House. *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (2):453-474.
- Hix,S and C.Lord (1997). *Political Parties in the European Union*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Holmes, G (1987). *British Political Parties in the Age of Anne*. London: Hambledon Press.
- Judge, D and D. Earnshaw 1995, Weak European parliament influence - a study of the Environment committee of the European Parliament. *Government and Opposition* 29 (2): 262-276 SPR 1994
- Kalt, J and M. Zupan (1984). Capture and Ideology in the Economic Theory of Politics. *American Economic Review* 74 (1) :279-300.
- Katz, R.S and B. Wessels, *The European Parliament, the National Parliaments, and European integration*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- King. G and L. Zeng (1999a). Logistic Regression in Rare Events Data. *Political Analysis* 9 (2): 137-63.
- Krehbiel, K (1993). Where's the party? *British Journal of Political Science*. 23:235-266.
- Long, J (1997). *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. Publications.
- McElroy, G (2001). Committee Rank in the European Parliament: The Impact of Institutional Reforms. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, 19-22 April.
- Munger, M. (1988) Allocation of Desirable Committee assignments: Extended queues versus committee expansion. *American Journal of Political Science*. 32: 317-44
- Noury, A (2001). Abstention in the daylight: Strategic Calculus of Voting in the European Parliament. Manuscript, Université Libre de Bruxelles.
- Nugent, N (1989). *The Government and Politics of the European Community*. Durham: Duke University press.

- Ostrogorski, M (1903). *La Démocratie et l'organisation des Partis Politiques*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.
- Quanjel, M and M. Wolters (1993). *Growing Cohesion in the European Parliament*, paper presented at the European Consortium on Political Research, Leiden Session.
- Rasch, B (1999). *Electoral systems, Parliamentary Committees, and Party Discipline: The Norwegian Storing in Comparative Perspective* in S. Bowler , D. Farrell and R.S.Katz, *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Shepsle, K. (1978) *Giant Jig-Saw Puzzle: Democratic committee assignments in the Modern House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Shelpsl, K and B. Weingast (1987). *The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power*. *American Political Science Review* 81 (1): 85-104 March 1987.
- Terrenoir, A. (1994) *Le Parlement Européen – Cet Inconnu*. Paris: le Cherche Midi-éditeur.
- Tomz, M, G. King and L. Zeng. (1999). *RELOGIT: Rare Events Logistic Regression*, Version 1.1 Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, October 1. <http://gking.harvard.edu>
- Weingast, B and W. Marshall (1988). *The Industrial Organisation of Congress- or Why Legislatures, like Firms are not Organised as Markets*. *Journal of Political Economy* 96 (1): 132-163 FEB 1988
- Wood, A (1989). *The Times Guide to the European Parliament*. London: Times Books.
- Zellner, A and T. Lee (1965). *Joint Estimation of Relationships Involving Discrete Random Variables*. *Econometrica* 33 (2):382-394.



Table 1: Committee Size in the European Parliament 1978-1999<sup>53</sup>

Committee	Jan. 1979	Dec. 1979	1982	1984	1987	1989	1992	1994	1997	1999
Political/Foreign Affairs	35	41	44	45	50	55	55	53	66	64
Agriculture	35	41	45	44	51	47	45	46	45	38
Budgets	35	34	37	41	44	33	29	34	40	44
Economic and Monetary	35	37	39	42	43	51	48	52	59	44
Energy/Research/Tech	35	36	36	28	32	34	30	28	33	-
Ext. Economic Relations	35	34	34	25	25	28	23	25	23	-
Industry, External trade, Research and Energy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	61
Legal Affairs <sup>‡</sup>	35	26	27	25	25	32	30	25	26	34
Employment and Social Affairs	35	27	30	30	30	41	38	43	47	56
Regional Policy & Planning <sup>°</sup>	35	29	30	28	35	38	35	37	44	59
Transport <sup>*</sup>	-	26	25	25	23	31	30	35	40	-
Environment and Public Health	35	27	27	30	36	52	49	45	51	59
Culture, Youth and Education.	-	25	22	24	21	32	31	36	40	34
Development	35	26	34	42	51	42	39	36	39	35
Civil Liberties <sup>†</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	32	33	43
Budgetary Control	-	27	26	30	19	28	23	24	26	21
Institutional Affairs	-	-	37	31	26	37	36	40	37	-
Fisheries <sup>‡</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	25	21
Women's Rights	-	-	-	24	31	34	28	35	39	38
Verif. Of Credentials	-	-	8	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rules of Procedure and Petitions	18	24	27	26	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rules and Verification of Credentials <sup>*</sup>	-	-	-	-	28	27	24	23	25	-
Constitutional Affairs <sup>†</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	-	30
Petitions	-	-	-	-	27	25	23	27	30	30
Total Committee Places	403	460	528	549	597	667	646	699	768	690
# of committees	12	15	17	18	18	18	19	20	20	17
# of MEPs	198	410	434	434	518	518	518	518	626	626
Ave. Assignments	2.04	1.12	1.22	1.26	1.15	1.29	1.25	1.35	1.23	1.1

<sup>53</sup> Data compiled by the author from the annual Listes Grises (Grey Lists) of the European Parliament.

<sup>‡</sup> Becomes Legal Affairs and the Internal Market 1999 from legal Affairs and Citizens Rights

<sup>°</sup> 1999 amalgamates Transport and Tourism to become Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism

<sup>\*</sup> Transport was part of Regional Planning and Regional policy until 1979. Becomes Transport and Tourism in 1999.

<sup>†</sup> Becomes Citizens Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs in 1999.

<sup>‡</sup> Fisheries was a part of Agriculture from 1982 until 1994

<sup>\*</sup> Verification of Credentials is amalgamated with the Rules committee in 1986, while Rules and Petitions splits into two.

<sup>†</sup> Amalgamates former Rules and Institutional Affairs committees.

**Table 2: 1997 Committee Seat Advantage for PES and EPP.**

Committee	Size	Expected Number of members of the PES	Actual Number of members of the PES	PES seat advantage	Expected Number of members of the EPP	Actual Number of members of EPP	EPP seat advantage
Foreign Affairs	66	22.6	22	0.6	19.0	21	2.0
Agriculture	45	15.4	15	-0.4	12.96	14	1.04
Budgets	40	13.68	14	0.32	11.52	11	-0.52
Economic and Monetary	59	20.18	22	1.17	16.99	18	1.01
Research and Technology	33	11.29	11	-0.29	9.50	10	0.10
External Economic Relations	23	7.87	8	0.13	6.62	8	1.38
Legal Affairs	26	8.89	10	1.11	7.49	7	-0.49
Employment and Social Affairs	47	16.07	18	1.93	13.54	13	-0.54
Regional Policy	44	15.05	14	-1.05	12.67	11	-1.67
Transport and Tourism	40	13.68	13	-0.68	11.52	11	-0.52
Environment and Public Health	51	17.44	17	-0.44	14.69	14	-0.69
Culture, Youth and Education	40	13.68	12	-1.68	11.52	11	-0.52
Development and Co-operation	39	13.34	14	0.66	11.23	10	-1.23
Civil Liberties	33	11.29	11	-0.29	9.50	10	0.10
Budgetary Control	26	8.89	9	0.11	7.49	9	1.51
Institutional Affairs	37	12.65	13	0.35	10.65	12	1.35
Fisheries	25	8.55	9	0.45	7.2	6	-1.2
Rules of Procedure	25	8.55	8	-0.55	7.2	7	-0.2
Women's Rights	39	13.34	15	1.66	11.23	11	-0.23
Petitions	30	10.26	10	-0.26	8.64	8	-0.64

Data compiled from Listes Gris.

**Table3: Percentage of MEP's transferring between committees 1989-1999.**

Political Group	1989	1992	1994	1997	1999
Party of the European Socialists	41 (101)	38 (184)	43 (105)	23 (214)	38 (100)
European People's Party	33 (70)	34 (125)	44 (72)	27 (180)	41 (102)
European Liberal Democrats	57 (21)	55 (47)	57 (14)	40 (40)	40 (15)
Greens	50 (6)	56 (30)	57 (7)	21 (28)	33 (12)
GUE/NUL	33 (9)	53 (28)	71 (14)	48 (33)	81 (16)
Column Total	207	414	212	495	245

Note: Data represents transfers for the major parties only.

Figures in parenthesis represent the total number of cases.

Data compiled by the author from the annual Melemsfortegnelse (List of Members) of the European Parliament.

**Table 4: European Parliament Committee Rankings 1984-1996.**

Transfer Ratio	Transfer Ratio	Net transfer Dominance	Net Transfer Dominance
1984-1987	1989-1992	1984-1987	1989-1992
1.Economic & Monetary	1. Industry & research	1.Foreign Affairs	1. Industry & research
1. Legal	2. Economic & Monetary	2.Budgets	2. Economic & Monetary
1. Development	3. Foreign Affairs	2. Development	3. Legal
4. Foreign Affairs	4. Legal	4. Agriculture	3. Employment
4. Budgets	4. Employment	4. Industry & research	5. Environment
6. Industry & research	4. Environment	6. Employment	5. Ext. Economic Relations
7. Ext. Economic Relations	7. Culture	7. Environment	7. Agriculture
8. Culture	7.Ext. Economic Relations	7. Transport	8. Regional Policy
9. Employment	9. Budgets	9. Economic & Monetary	9 Foreign Affairs.
10. Environment	10. Agriculture	9. Culture	9. Budgets
11. Agriculture	11. Regional Policy	11. Ext. Economic Relations	11. Transport
11. Regional Policy	12. Development	11. Legal	12. Culture
13. Transport	13. Transport.	13. Regional Policy	12. Development

**Table 5: Ranking of EP committees using Groseclose and Stewart method, 1989-1992.**

Committee	Coeff.	Standard Error	Rank
Environment	.88	n.a.	1
Industry and Research	.88	n.a.	1
Economic and Monetary	.93	.47	3
Development	.65	.39	4
Legal	.57	.37	5
Foreign Affairs	.56	.31	6
Employment	.54	.36	7
Agriculture	.28	.34	8
Transport	.27	.75	9
Culture	.26	.47	10
External Economic Relations	-.03	.42	11
Regional	-.15	.34	12
Budgets	-.38	.45	13

---

N= 162  
 LL=-101.04  
**n.a= not applicable**



**Table 6: Classification of Committees**

Committee Type	Committee
Exclusive	Environment, Industry, Economic and Monetary Legal Foreign Affairs Employment
Semi-exclusive	External Economic Relations Agriculture Budgets
Non-Exclusive	Culture Development Regional Transport

Table 7: Non-Freshmen seat Advantage on standing committees in the European Parliament 1989-1999.

Committee	N	Actual number of non-freshman MEPs	Expected Number of non-freshman MEPs	Non-freshman advantage
Foreign Affairs	184	109	94.8	14.2
Agriculture	133	67	68.5	-1.5
Budgets	118	66	60.8	5.2
Economic and Monetary	165	78	85.0	-7.0
Research and technology	76	40	39.2	0.8
External Economic Relations	63	32	32.5	-0.5
Legal Affairs	95	66	48.9	11.1
Employment	146	69	75.2	-6.2
Regional Policy	128	44	65.9	-21.9
Transport	78	35	40.2	-5.2
Environment Culture	153	81	78.8	2.2
	102	37	52.5	-15.5
Development	109	53	56.2	-3.2

Data compiled by author from the Melemsfortegnelse (List of Members) of the European Parliament.



**Table 8: Results of Logistic Regressions**

Variable	PES	EPP	PES	EPP
	Model 1	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2
Loyalty	-2.07** (.941)	-1.50* (.85)	-1.83** (.95)	-2.14** (1.33)
Years in EP	-.044 (.096)	.002 (.13)	-.03 (.10)	-.03 (.14)
Committee Tenure	-.384 (.558)	-.263 (.46)	-.50 (1.22)	-.45 (.50)
National Delegation	-.918 (.831)	-.637 (1.17)	-.97 (.85)	-.70 (1.18)
Presence	-8.54** (4.20)	-2.35 (5.5)	-8.07** (4.43)	-2.45 (6.72)
Presence*Loyalty	2.399* (1.40)	.80 (1.78)	2.18 (1.48)	1.01 (2.14)
Constant	5.493** (2.50)	3.08 (2.70)	4.96** (2.60)	5.69 (3.99)
Number of Cases	174	112	138	87
Percent Correct	82	90	91	85
-2LL	111.36	99.01	71.93	66.04

Note: \*\*significant at the  $p < .05$  level, \* significant at the  $p < .10$  level

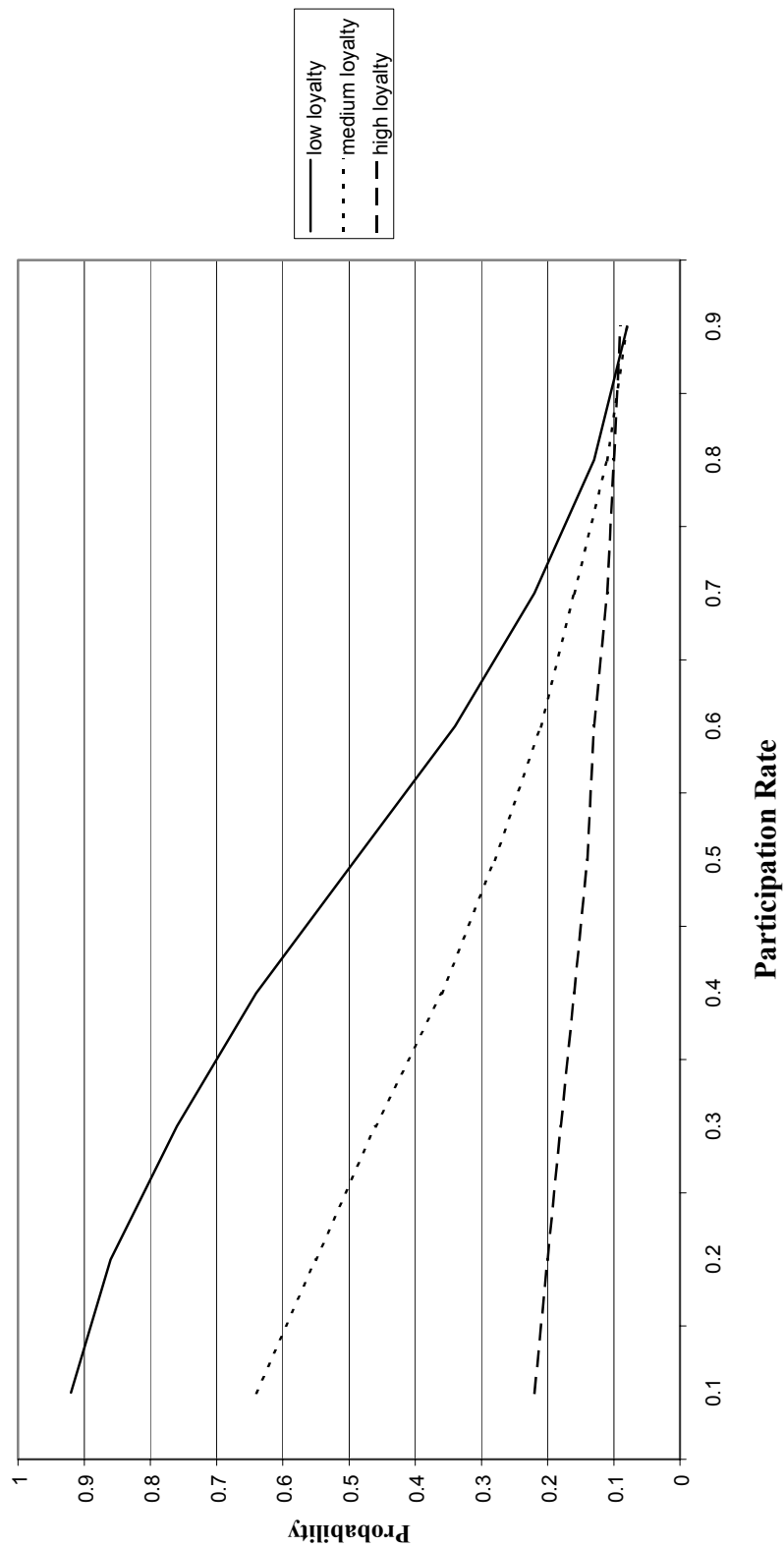
Standard errors in parentheses

**Table 9: Results of Rare Events Logit Regressions**

Variable	Rare	Events	Rare	Events
	Logit		Logit	
	Estimates		Estimates	
	PES		EPP	
Loyalty	-1.78**		-1.48*	
	(.78)		(.90)	
Years in EP	-.035		.03	
	(.08)		(.07)	
Committee Tenure	-.21		-.21	
	(.46)		(.32)	
National Delegation	-.66		-.29	
	(.85)		(1.15)	
Presence	-7.7**		-2.95	
	(4.1)		(4.60)	
Presence*Loyalty	2.12*		1.07	
	(1.30)		(1.52)	
Constant	4.52**		2.91	
	(2.30)		(2.57)	
Number of Cases	174		112	

Note: \*\*significant at the  $p < .05$  level, \* significant at the  $p < .10$  level  
Standard errors in parentheses

Figure 1: PES Probability of Demotion



## Appendix 1

### Predicted versus Observed Outcomes

#### PES Model 1

		Predicted	
		Status Quo	Demotion
Observed	Status Quo	127	10
	Demotion	22	15

Overall: 82%

Null Model: 78%

#### EPP Model 1

		Predicted	
		Status Quo	Demotion
Observed	Status Quo	92	4
	Demotion	7	9

Overall: 90%

Null Model: 85%

#### PES Model 2

		Predicted	
		Status Quo	Demotion
Observed	Status Quo	116	4
	Demotion	9	9

Overall: 91%

Null Model: 88%

#### EPP Model 2

		Predicted	
		Status Quo	Demotion
Observed	Status Quo	62	8
	Demotion	7	10

Overall: 85%

Null Model: 80%