

# Becoming Europe's Parliament: How MEPs shaped their institution prior to its first direct elections in 1979

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## Abstract

The European Parliament (EP) is today one of the most powerful actors at EU level. However, it was intended to be merely a consultative assembly at the founding of the European Communities in the 1950s. This paper looks at the institutional evolution of the EP prior to its first direct elections in 1979, and analyses what drove a number of national parliamentarians to invest considerable time and effort far beyond Treaty provisions in an institution which promised no significant political impact, no career improvement, and no acknowledgement by voters. The paper demonstrates in a historical institutionalist analysis how the early MEPs pursued the aim to turn the EP into a fully-fledged supranational parliament. By shedding light on the EP's evolving parliamentary powers, the paper maps the institutional basis for the EP's later empowerment at a time where it was far from clear what role the EP would turn out to play in Community politics.

The analysis is based on 27 interviews with former MEPs from all EP party groups and member states prior to 1979, and with officials who worked in the EP at the time, plus a corpus of ca. 3,500 EP documents, such as resolutions, reports, parliamentary questions and minutes of debates. This variety of source material offers important insight into evolving procedures and the MEPs' activism, leading to the EP's gradual gain in four parliamentary powers typically held by parliaments in liberal democracies: power of control, legislative power, budgetary power and power of initiative. By systematically studying the beginnings of the EP's parliamentarisation, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how the EP became the powerful institution it is today.

## Introduction

Much of the existing literature on the early European Parliament (EP)<sup>1</sup> assumes that, prior to its first direct elections in 1979, its powers corresponded to what the founding Treaties of the European Communities provided. While this may be true for the very first years – with regard to some aspects even only the first months – of the EP's existence, this paper shows that such assumptions constitute a major misconception which hampers a full understanding of the EP's institutional evolution into the fully-fledged parliament it is today. Building on a historical institutionalist approach, this paper demonstrates that a significant gap developed between

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<sup>1</sup> This paper refers to the Parliament as well as its predecessor, the Communities' Assembly, as the European Parliament / EP throughout (and consequently to its members as MEPs), despite the fact that this nomenclature is anachronistic for the very early years, and was only officially acknowledged by the Council in the SEA. On the one hand, the consistent reference to the parliamentary institution as the EP has been chosen for the sake of easier readability. On the other hand, this title corresponded to the majority of MEPs' perception of their institution. Given that this paper focusses on the delegates' activism, which was driven by their ideas and perceptions, the author considered it apt to adopt their designation of their institution.

Treaty provisions and the EP's real powers from the 1950s. The following analysis underlines that in the 1980s and 1990s, Treaty changes which granted the EP more powers often merely formalised procedures that had been established years before. This paper hence focuses “on the dynamics behind rule changes instead of analyzing formal changes”<sup>2</sup> through Treaties and intergovernmental agreements.

The following analysis sheds light on the emergence of different parliamentary powers in the EP typically held by parliaments in liberal democracies, namely the power of control, legislative and budgetary power, and the power of initiative. The sections examining these four powers identify in a historical institutionalist analysis different modes of gradual institutional change, path-dependent developments in the EP's empowerment, and the gain of power through unintended consequences of decisions made by the other Community institutions and the member states. Moreover, this paper uses modes of gradual institutional change – concepts more recently added to the toolbox of historical institutionalism. Mahoney & Thelen (2010) distinguish four such modes:<sup>3</sup>

1. Existing rules may be removed and replaced by new ones (‘displacement’).
2. New rules may be introduced on top of, or alongside, existing ones, changing the way in which existing rules structure how actors behave (‘layering’).
3. The impact of existing rules may change due to shifts in the respective environment (‘drift’).
4. Existing rules may be interpreted and enacted in different ways than initially intended, due to their strategic redeployment (‘conversion’).

Based on this theoretical framework, the paper discusses the reasons for and effects of MEPs' multi-level activism, and their usage of various political tools available to them at Community and national level.

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### Parliamentary powers, and how they were obtained

From its early years, the EP was one of the most fervent promoters of (ever) closer European integration – including a fully-fledged supranational parliament, able to guarantee the democratic legitimacy of Community politics. Yet, the EP held a consultative rather than legislative role prior to the Single European Act (SEA). Other than the power to dismiss the

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<sup>2</sup> Mühlböck & Rittberger (2015): 12.

<sup>3</sup> See Mahoney & Thelen (2010): 15 et seqq.

executive, the EP's formal role was limited by the Communities' founding Treaties to commenting on draft legislation through non-binding statements. The only other decision-making power held by the early EP was its power over its own Rules of Procedure. This meant that MEPs, most of whom were unsatisfied with this limited – and certainly not very parliamentary – role of their institution, depended to a significant extent on informal strategies in the promotion of their political and institutional aims.<sup>4</sup>

The following analyses sheds light on the institutional evolution of the EP based on the parliamentary powers demanded and pursued by MEPs prior to 1979: power of control, legislative power, budgetary power and power of initiative. The EP's (and its members') changing relations with other Community institutions, first and foremost with the Commission and the Council, constitute a focal aspect in the EP's institutional evolution. All empowerment of the EP, as well as all stagnation and each step backward, depended to a significant extent on the attitudes and willingness (or lack thereof) on the side of the Commission and the Council to compromise on concessions to the EP. The following sections demonstrate, however, how the MEPs' persistent activism in their pursuit of more influence in Community policy-making contributed to the gradual empowerment of the EP.

### Power of control

The EP's power of control over the Communities' executive, i.e. the High Authority of the ECSC, and later the Commission of the EEC and Euratom, remained formally unchanged prior to the EP's first direct elections. The EP could dismiss the executive based on its annual report (hence: once a year), and from the Treaties of Rome more generally based on its performance (at any given point in time). However, none of the founding Treaties granted the EP the right to dismiss individual members of the executive, or gave the EP a say in the executive's composition. The fact that the EP held virtually the same formal power of control over the Commission in 1979 as in 1958 might suggest that this parliamentary power would require no further discussion. This section shows, however, that the EP's power of control underwent a significant evolution prior to the EP's first direct elections in connection to the shifting balance of power in Community decision-making.

The only binding tool of control in the hands of the MEPs – the motion of censure – has never been fully used, neither in the period examined by this paper nor thereafter. Indeed, such a motion was rarely discussed seriously until the 1970s. Krumrey (2018) explains MEPs' reluctance to resort to this drastic measure with the fact that the actual use of the motion of censure was considered

*“too damaging to the idea of supranationalism [...] especially as the two supposed antagonists relied on one another to present themselves as what they believed they rightfully should be: a sovereign European government and a full-fledged European parliament”.*<sup>5</sup>

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4 For a concise overview of the EP's institutional development prior to 1979, see Roos (2017): 'Far Beyond the Treaties' Clauses: The European Parliament's Gain in Power, 1952-1979', *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 13:2, pp. 1055-1075.

5 Krumrey (2018): 133.

Only in 1972 did the French Socialist Georges Spénale introduce the first formal request for a motion of censure, related to the delay of the Commission in proposing a strengthening of the EP's budgetary power.<sup>6</sup> The motion was eventually withdrawn and replaced by a much less dramatic resolution leading to a compromise with the Commission; yet it sent a sign to the Commission that the EP was willing to resort to this tool if it did not see another way to reach important political or institutional aims.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Spénale's attempt can be considered a critical juncture for this control tool of the EP. Tabled by an experienced and highly respected figure in the EP,<sup>8</sup> and leading to visible results, namely the significant increase of the EP's budgetary power through the 1975 budget treaty, Spénale's initiative demonstrated to his fellow MEPs and successors that a well-timed motion of censure was feasible, did not necessarily impede good relations between the EP and the Commission, and could indeed result in political and institutional change even without going as far as the dismissal of the Commission.<sup>9</sup>

In the second half of the 1970s, three further – unsuccessful – attempts to initiate a motion of censure were made.<sup>10</sup> They were proposed not only under the influence of the preceding motion by Spénale, but in view of the EP's imminent first direct elections. While the formal proceedings of the motion of censure remained entirely the same, the upcoming elections changed the meaning of this control tool by increasing its potential value with regard to public visibility of EP action. A motion of censure had by the mid- to late 1970s thus become not merely an instrument of control, but a display of parliamentary power. This shift in the impact and relevance of an established procedure due to changes in the respective environment can with Mahoney & Thelen (2010) be defined as a *drift*.

Instead of resorting to this highly confrontational measure, however, the EP usually worked so closely with the Commission that Parliament's scrutiny of the Community executive's action had the appearance of co-operation rather than control. MEPs were encouraged to collaborate with, rather than confront, the executive already by the ECSC High Authority's first president, Jean Monnet, who involved the EP in policy-making "to a far greater extent than formally necessary".<sup>11</sup> This climate of co-operation comprised a voluntary extension of the EP's power of control by the High Authority, which in 1955 agreed to the EP

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6 See Directorate-General for Research (1994): From European Coal and Steel Community to European Union. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p. 27; European Parliament (July 1975): The Sittings. Information Series. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p. 16.

7 See Sasse (1976): 34 et seqq.

8 The interviewee Jean-Pierre Cot called Spénale one of the "pilliers du Parlement européen" before 1979. The interviewees Colette Flesch and Alain Terrenoire confirmed his outstanding importance particularly for the EP's budgetary power.

9 The concrete result in this case was a Commission proposal on the Community budget and the EP's related empowerment on 12 June 1973, which eventually led to the EP's gain in budgetary power through the 1975 Treaty. See European Parliament (July 1975): The Sittings, p. 16.

10 See Herman & Lodge (1978): 51 et seqq.

11 Directorate-General for Research (1994): From European Coal and Steel Community to European Union. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p. 18. See also, for instance, the speech by Jean Monnet during the EP's inaugural plenary session in September 1952 (FJME, AMH 10/6/11), in which Monnet said: "C'est de nos deux institutions, de leur action, des rapports qu'elles entretiendront, que dépendront avant tout la bonne marche et l'avenir de notre Communauté".

demand that every new President of the High Authority would outline before the EP the policy lines he or she wanted to pursue.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the EP's scope of control was extended from a mere *ex-post* to an *ex-ante* scrutiny of the High Authority's actions. Another form of *ex-ante* control – more effective yet less public – was exercised from the 1950s by the EP's committees, both in their frequent contacts with commissioners and Commission officials, and in their in-depth assessment of the executive's actions and plans which allowed the EP as a whole to be more specific in its judgment of the executive's performance.<sup>13</sup>

Notably through such *ex-ante* control in committees, the EP's Treaty-based power of control was instrumentalised by MEPs in order to gain more legislative influence. MEPs thus reinterpreted and enacted existing rules differently than intended by the Treaties, which Mahoney & Thelen (2010) conceptualise as a *conversion*: MEPs acted as if the EP's role was not merely to control the executive, but to contribute to Community policy-making.

The EP's power of control over the executive lost some of its formal significance when the Treaties of Rome made the Council rather than the Commission the most powerful Community institution with regard to decision-making. This change in the impact of the EP's control power, based on shifts in the institutional environment – once more a *drift* – induced MEPs to try from the Treaties of Rome to gain some control over the Council. Prior to 1979, the MEPs never formally succeeded in this quest.<sup>14</sup> Informally, however, MEPs developed a number of strategies to hold the Council accountable.

One of the first tools through which MEPs attempted to scrutinise the Council's policy-making was the use of parliamentary questions. Whereas the High Authority / Commission was obliged by all founding Treaties to answer MEPs' questions,<sup>15</sup> the Treaties contained no such provision for the Council. Nonetheless, delegates tried to persuade the Council to justify its actions before Parliament from the negotiations of the Treaties of Rome,<sup>16</sup> when it became clear that the Council would be empowered without increased accountability through the Treaties. Given that no clause was added to the EEC and Euratom Treaties obliging the Council to answer parliamentary questions, MEPs pushed the Council to reply outside Treaty provisions to their written and oral questions, to which the Council agreed as early as 1958.<sup>17</sup> However, the ministers set the precondition that these questions had to deal with issues already on the Council's agenda. Furthermore, the EP was initially not allowed to adopt a resolution directly after and in relation to an oral question with debate to the Council – which the EP could do in the case of questions to the Commission.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Council tried to prevent MEPs from

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12 See Vergès (1966): 62.

13 See Ripoll Servent (2018): 9; Herman & Lodge (1978): 44.

14 The only leverage which the MEPs held over the Council was, as a last resort, to refer the Council to the Court of Justice for failing to act according to the Treaties. See Arts. 175 EEC and 148 Euratom. However, this provision naturally only allowed for complaints concerning rules and procedures which the Treaties provided – and which many MEPs considered unsatisfactorily limited.

15 See Arts. 23 ECSC, 140 EEC, 110 Euratom.

16 Prior to the EEC and Euratom Treaties, no parliamentary question was addressed to the Council, according to Stein (1959), who also notes that one MEP tried to submit a written question in the 1950s, but the EP's Committee on Procedures ruled that it could not be transmitted to the Council because of the insufficient ECSC Treaty basis. See Stein (1959): 244.

17 See Feestone & Davidson (1988): 81; Bieber (1974): 49; Stein (1959): 244 et seq.

18 See Bieber (1974): 50; Stuart (1971): 88 et seq.

instrumentalising the question from being a tool of mere information exchange and democratic legitimacy through transparency to a tool of broader and publicly visible parliamentary control.

In order to establish some form of pressure to make the Council answer to MEPs' questions – which remained voluntary – it was decided that both questions and answers would be published in the Communities' Official Journal. If the Council did not provide a response within two months, the respective questions would be published unanswered, which allowed to some extent for naming and shaming. Whereas MEPs swiftly learned to appreciate the inter-institutional exchange through questions,<sup>19</sup> they criticised a lack of timeliness in the answers, which often arrived only after several months. This perception of the existing tool of scrutiny being insufficient led MEPs to introduce a new procedure alongside the written and oral questions to the Council, a process of gradual institutional change defined by Mahoney & Thelen (2010) as *layering*: in January 1973, a regular Question Time was established as part of almost each plenary session. This new procedure, based on a model which many MEPs knew from their home parliaments,<sup>20</sup> allowed for follow-up questions and thus for direct and topical debates. Indeed, Question Time developed into a successful tool of scrutiny so swiftly that, after just three years of existence, its standard length was doubled from one and a half to three hours.<sup>21</sup>

The MEPs' effective gain of knowledge through questions was relatively limited, since the Council's answers constituted a compromise upon which all its members had agreed beforehand, which made many of these answers little more revealing than press communiqués.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, MEPs discussed current policy issues with Commissioners in more depth (and honesty) during non-public committee meetings. On some issues, MEPs had in fact more expertise than the Council, notably through their double mandates which provided them with a wide variety of input, through the meticulous preparatory work of EP staff,<sup>23</sup> and also through previous occupations in other Community institutions which some MEPs had held prior to their European mandates.<sup>24</sup> Rather than serving as an open exchange of information, questions thus enabled MEPs mainly to put pressure on the Council to justify its actions – or inactivity – with regard to specific issues in a public setting.<sup>25</sup> The reason that the Council agreed to answer MEPs' questions in public despite no Treaty obligation lies presumably in

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19 See Stein (1959): 245.

20 Medefind (1975: 64) says that Question Time was adopted based on the model from the German *Bundestag*; Freestone (1988: 80 et seq.) and Philip (1981: 107) see a similar procedure in the British House of Commons as inspiration, Philip moreover mentions the “questions d'actualités à l'Assemblée nationale en France” (107).

21 See Westlake (1990): 17.

22 See Bieber (1974): 49 et seq.

23 See i.a. interviews with Fionnuala Richardson, Arnaldo Ferragni, John Corrie, Charles McDonald, Hans-Werner Müller and Arie van der Hek; Priestley (2008).

24 A striking example was recounted by Colette Flesch, who worked as administrator in the General Secretariat of the Council before entering the EP. Shortly after taking up her mandate as MEP, she put a question to the Council in the area of agricultural policy, in which she had become an expert during her time as Council staff member. When the Council answered to her parliamentary question, “a colleague of mine in the Council who had been my boss there said: ‘We wondered whether we should not write in our answer: Ms Flesch probably knows the answer to this question better than we do. But then we were not allowed to write that.’” Translated by the author; see interview with Colette Flesch.

25 See Schwed (1978): 39 et seq.

ministers' perception of a lack of democratic legitimacy of Community policy-making, which could to some extent be remedied through parliamentary scrutiny.

The parliamentary question was the most visible and most frequently applied tool of parliamentary scrutiny over the Council, but it was not the only one. In the late 1950s, a report by the current Council presidency before the EP plenary was introduced. This evolving routine had – like the question – initially been established as control tool of the EP over the executive, and was subsequently transferred in another *conversion* process to inter-institutional exchanges with the Council. The initially informal procedure became gradually institutionalised over the years.<sup>26</sup> Other than parliamentary questions, this procedure gave MEPs an opportunity to comment on Council policy-making before it took (or should have taken) place.

With an annual colloquium of the EP, the Council and the Commission, an additional tool of parliamentary scrutiny was introduced in November 1957, i.e. just before the Treaties of Rome entered into force.<sup>27</sup> This colloquium was initially intended as an informal exchange on current issues, but developed amongst others into an opportunity for non-public parliamentary questions, and thus another form of scrutiny.<sup>28</sup> The Council had initially demanded to limit the topics on the agenda to issues directly or indirectly linked to the Treaties. However, the EP succeeded in broadening the agenda of the colloquia, for instance to include a discussion of the Fouchet Plan and the future of the Communities in the early 1960s.<sup>29</sup> With the increasing involvement of the EP through consultation in the second half of the 1960s, the colloquium lost in significance: it was not prepared as extensively as before, the number of participating representatives decreased, as did the depth of the discussions, and in 1973 no colloquium took place for the first time since 1957.<sup>30</sup>

The most informal tool available to MEPs to scrutinise Council members lay in the delegates' double mandate: they could seek to exercise some control over their respective national ministers in informal talks, or with the support of their national parliaments or parties.<sup>31</sup> Whereas this tool allowed MEPs at best to put pressure on their own ministers, but not the Council as a whole, MEPs occasionally coordinated their national-level action at Community level, whereby indirect pressure on the Council could be increased.<sup>32</sup> The former German MEPs Lothar Ibrügger and Horst Seefeld, for instance, recalled in interviews that MEPs prepared parliamentary questions on Community issues in committee sessions, which

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26 See e.g. speeches by Egon Klepsch and Pierre Bertrand during plenary debate on 6 July 1977 (PEO\_AP\_DE!1977\_DE19770706-019900EN\_9394669), p. 150 & 166.

27 See Krumrey (2018): 137 et seq.; Cocks (1973): 26.

28 See Forsyth (1964): 105 et seq.

29 See Krumrey (2018): 141.

30 See Bieber (1974): 48 et seq.

31 See i.a. interviews with Renato Ballardini, Jean-Pierre Cot, Astrid Lulling, Charles McDonald, Fionnuala Richardson and Horst Seefeld. See also Haroche (2018), who calls national parliaments and national parties “the missing link between governments and the EP” (p. 1012) in the analysis of why governments allowed for the EP's gradual gain in power: he argues that national parliaments considered the EP's empowerment to be an effective compensation for their own lost powers in case of a transfer of competences to the European level.

32 See i.a. Report by the Committee on Social Affairs concerning the implementation of Art. 119 EEC in the member states, 25 June 1963 (PEO\_AP\_RP!ASOC.1961\_A0-0046!630010DE\_00700015), which contains questions of Belgian, Dutch and German MEPs to their national governments concerning the implementation of equal pay.

they then took into their national parliaments – “and then we took our ministers in the Council to task if their answers did not satisfy us”.<sup>33</sup> Such strategies of using multi-level contacts in order to increase parliamentary pressure on the Council can be considered as another process of *layering*: MEPs installed informal routines of exchange on top of procedures such as parliamentary questions and inter-institutional exchanges in order to improve their position in the Communities’ institutional system.

### Legislative power

Prior to the SEA, the EP’s formal involvement in Community legislation was consultative at best, and non-existent in numerous policy areas. Even though the Treaties provided for no binding influence of the EP on Community legislation but merely for the ‘power of deliberation’,<sup>34</sup> however, MEPs could with increasing frequency amend Commission proposals and consequently Community law from the 1950s. Such successful involvement crucially resulted from MEPs’ supranational activism. This activism led to the evolution of mutually accepted and gradually institutionalised procedures, mainly because the Council made the visible and increasingly formalised involvement of the EP a “habitual response to the legitimacy deficit caused by the delegation of national competences to the [Community] level”.<sup>35</sup> Lodge (1998) argues that until ca. 1990, democratic legitimacy at Community level was seen as the EP’s preserve, not least based on MEPs’ activism and the image of the EP which the delegates propagated.<sup>36</sup> MEPs’ strategy to present an increase of the EP’s parliamentary powers as the most evident and logical answer to a lack of democratic legitimacy and to institutional imbalance<sup>37</sup> can be defined with Schimmelfennig (2001) and Rosén (2016) as *rhetorical entrapment*:<sup>38</sup> since member states did not want to suffer the political costs of advocating procedures generally perceived as illegitimate, they agreed to the MEPs’ argumentation about the necessity of involving the EP.<sup>39</sup> This *rhetorical entrapment* led the Council already from the 1950s – though initially to a rather limited extent – to consent to the introduction of procedures for which the Treaties did not provide, and the extension of those with an initially narrow scope.

The most notable case of such an extended procedure was the increasing involvement of the EP in Community decision-making via consultation. The EP’s incremental gain in legislative influence through consultation can be identified as a case of gradual institutional change through *conversion*: the established procedure of consultation was interpreted and enacted by MEPs in different ways than initially intended. Trying to push the narrow boundaries of the Treaty provisions on consultation, MEPs demanded as early as November

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33 Translated by the author; see interview with Lothar Ibrügger.

34 See Art. 137 EEC, 107 Euratom.

35 Rosén (2016): 1452. See also Goetze & Rittberger (2010) and Rittberger (2012, 2003).

36 See Lodge (1998): 193.

37 See i.a. Resolution on the competences and powers of the EP, 27 June 1963 (PE0\_AP\_RP!POLI.1961\_A0-0031!630001FR); Resolution on juridical problems concerning the consultation of the EP, 17 October 1967 (PE0\_AP\_RP!JURI.1961\_A0-0110!670001DE\_0001).

38 See Schimmelfennig (2001): 48; Rosén (2016): 1452.

39 Paper 4 discusses such a case of rhetorical entrapment in the case of the EP’s involvement in Community policy on the free movement of workers. See also Héritier (2007).



1959 in a resolution that the Council extended EP consultation to “all important [policy] issues”, even where no consultation was mandatory according to the Treaties.<sup>40</sup> The Council approved this resolution at a session in spring 1960.<sup>41</sup> In 1964, the Council agreed after intense pressure from MEPs to further extend the scope of EP consultation to all legislative texts, excluding only technical issues and those of temporary relevance. Four years later, non-legislative texts were added, including Commission memoranda and Council resolutions, neither of which was legally binding, but constituted guidelines for future legislation.<sup>42</sup> EP documents from the examined period show that although the frequency of EP consultations beyond Treaty paragraphs steadily increased, the Council was far from always keeping its word; i.e., it often did not consult the EP, or consulted it without taking the expressed opinion and proposed amendments into consideration. Nonetheless, these declarations of goodwill and their partial implementation represent a general openness among Council members to change the EP’s institutional role and position beyond the narrow Treaty provisions related to the EP.

Another striking example of the EP’s increasing legislative power in addition to consultation – and indeed another example of the *conversion* of an initially narrowly defined procedure – is the conciliation procedure: introduced alongside the budget treaty of 1975, this procedure was swiftly applied by MEPs to non-budget related issues.<sup>43</sup> The strategy to transfer a rule or procedure which was provided for by the Treaties to other policy areas proved to require less effort and promised a higher level of success than MEPs attempting to introduce entirely new rules and procedures.<sup>44</sup> New procedures which the MEPs attempted to establish at the Community level usually resembled existing procedures at the national level, which facilitated the process of convincing Commission and Council members of their efficiency and adequacy. Amongst others, the MEPs called from the mid-1960s for a procedure resembling the second reading of legislative proposals: if a proposal on which the EP had been consulted was significantly changed during the legislative process, the EP insisted on being consulted again.<sup>45</sup> As in the above-mentioned case of consultation, the Council agreed to the principle of re-consultation<sup>46</sup> – which constituted yet another case of *layering* – although, once more, the Council did not always act accordingly. The second reading was formally introduced only with the SEA.<sup>47</sup>

MEPs had little leverage on the Council to make it abide by the concessions it had once made, or to make sure the Council seriously considered what the EP proposed or criticised. Based on the Treaties, the delegates had notably one soft political tool to push the Council in their desired direction: if the Treaties provided for EP consultation, the Council was obliged to

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40 See Resolution on the relations between the European Parliament and the Councils of the European Communities, 27 November 1959 (PEO\_AP\_RP!DEVE.1958\_A0-0080!590001DE\_0001).

41 See Héritier (2007): 71; Corbett (1998): 113.

42 See Corbett (1998): 113 et seq.

43 See e.g. interviews with Colette Flesch and Fionnuala Richardson.

44 This confirms and substantiates the theoretical framework of institutional change developed by Rittberger (2012).

45 See Resolution on the position of the EP with regard to the recent institutional development of the European Communities, 20 October 1966 (PEO\_AP\_RP!POLI.1961\_A0-0118!660001DE\_0001); Resolution concerning the consultation procedure of 17 October 1967, Official Journal No. 268, 6.11.1967, p. 8.

46 See Resolution on the further consultation of the EP on proposals amended or withdrawn by the Commission, 12 October 1976 (PEO\_AP\_RP!JURI.1961\_A0-0239!760001EN\_0001).

47 See Westlake (1994): 81; Rhodes (1995): 98.

wait with the adoption of a proposal until the EP had submitted its opinion. In case of absolute disagreement with the Council, the EP could hence “refuse totally to deliver an opinion, whenever this seem[ed] necessary, so as to block completely the passage of a proposal”.<sup>48</sup> However, this rarely happened prior to 1979, since the Council often acted too slowly and hesitantly in the MEPs’ view already, so that the delegates usually did not want to delay decisions any further.

To some extent, MEPs could balance the lack of leverage over the Council through their good relations with the Commission. The French Progressive Democrat Alain Terrenoire, for instance, reflected that “the Council sought to restrict the EP in its institutional competences, whereas the Commission sought to extend its competences with the help of the EP”.<sup>49</sup> In other words, MEPs and members of the Commission were both aware that working together against the Council made it easier for both of them to reach their – often shared or at least connected – policy and polity aims. Indeed, the EP depended upon the Commission with regard to its legislative power in so far as the Commission was the only institution able to propose legislation, and it could change its proposals up to the moment of adoption by the Council. Arnaldo Ferragni, former Secretary General of the EP’s Christian Democratic Group who was frequently in contact with Commissioners’ cabinet members in order to help MEPs prepare positions, recalled:

*“As a matter of fact, once the draft regulations or directives arrived at the Council, the die was cast, so that it was normal and functional to enter into a dialogue with the Commission in the preparation of drafts, and before the texts reached the EP.”*<sup>50</sup>

To that end, EP committees swiftly developed into crucial access points, and into fora in which Commissioners and Commission officials felt comfortable to discuss initiatives for proposals not yet drafted, and where MEPs could in turn both comment on such initiatives, and present their own ideas.<sup>51</sup> The EP administrator Claude Lassalle stated in 1964 that as a result, the texts of Commission proposals submitted via formal consultation “never constituted a novelty” for the MEPs.<sup>52</sup> A further important preparatory stage in the MEPs’ endeavour to influence legislation were informal contacts of EP civil servants with Commission staff members.<sup>53</sup> By providing MEPs with relevant background knowledge, such informal procedures of inter-institutional exchange had an impact on how MEPs could influence legislation in more formal procedures, such as consultation. The establishment of these informal procedures can hence be identified as another *layering* process, improving the MEPs’ standing in established procedures by putting them in a more informed and better inter-institutionally connected position.

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48 Resolution on the conclusions to be drawn from the proceedings of the Seminar held by the Committee on Agriculture in Echternach, 5 June 1979 (PEO\_AP\_RP!AGRI.1958\_A0-0128!790001EN\_0001).

49 Translated by the author; see e-mail from 9 October 2017 by Alain Terrenoire to the author.

50 Translated by the author; see interview with Arnaldo Ferragni. Confirmed also by Colette Flesch in an interview with the author.

51 See i.a. Kornerup (1978): 231.

52 Lassalle (1964): 34 et seq. See also Gfeller et al. (2011): 11.

53 See interviews with Horst Seefeld and Arie van der Hek.

## Budgetary power

The EP's gain in budgetary power through the two budget treaties of 1970 and 1975 is one among few facts in the EP's pre-election history which appears in academic literature that otherwise ignores or just lightly touches upon the EP's development prior to 1979. This paper argues, however, that whereas the budget treaties constituted indeed a significant increase of the EP's formal and binding powers, the institutional procedures which they established were not as fundamentally new as assumed in much of the literature. This section demonstrates that the two treaties formed merely parts of the path-dependent process gradually establishing the EP's budgetary powers which began in the 1950s. In short, the EP's budgetary power can be understood as a product of:

- MEP activism, based on the delegates' shared idea of the need for stronger EP involvement in order to guarantee democratic legitimacy of Community expenditure;
- path-dependent developments beginning formally with the consultation of the EP on Community expenditure as provided in the Treaties of Rome, propelled through informally evolving inter-institutional procedures which proved so effective and logical in the pursuit of democratic legitimacy and accountability of Community expenditure that they were gradually formalised; and
- unintended consequences in the establishment and regulation of the Community budget, not least through a number of "poorly specified" provisions in the budget treaties based on disunity among the member states, leading to vague compromises, which "allowed for competing interpretations" in the implementation phase among the actors involved in the Communities' budgetary procedure on which MEPs could subsequently capitalise.<sup>54</sup>

The roots of the path-dependent process leading up to the EP's formal gain in budgetary power must be sought already in the ECSC years: almost from the establishment of the EP did MEPs ask to be involved in the adoption of the Community budget.<sup>55</sup> From 1956, first inter-institutional exchanges on the budget including MEPs were established, namely between the ECSC's Committee of Presidents (of the High Authority, Council, Court of Justice and EP) and the EP's Auditing an Administrative Committee.

The Treaties of Rome constituted a major step in the evolution of the EP's budgetary power: Arts. 203 EEC and 117 Euratom provided for EP consultation on and allowed the EP to propose modifications to Community expenditure, fulfilling to some extent the demand expressed by MEPs for budgetary power as a "first prerogative of democratic assemblies".<sup>56</sup> Importantly, the Treaties moreover included a provision on the creation of a Community budget in which the initial pool of member states' contributions would be replaced by Community own resources.<sup>57</sup> When the debate on the introduction of such a Community budget officially

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54 Both quotes: Lindner & Rittberger (2003): 460.

55 See Stein (1959): 248.

56 See General Secretariat of the European Parliament (1969): The first ten years 1958-1968. Luxembourg: Directorate-General of Parliamentary Documentation and Information, p. 18.

57 See Arts. 201 EEC and 173 Euratom.

began in the 1960s, the question of accountability and legitimisation of the future Community expenditures was a crucial matter of debate. The logical answer – promoted strongly by the Commission and supported by most member states – seemed to be to give the EP budgetary oversight, taking on the role of national parliaments which had held some influence on the previous member state contributions, but which had had no say on the envisaged form of Community expenditure.<sup>58</sup> This EP empowerment was, however, rejected by the French government, which feared a loss of funding from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – by far the biggest section of the Community budget – for French farmers through the involvement of an additional actor pursuing supranational rather than national interests.<sup>59</sup> One of the causes of the Empty Chair crisis in 1965, this dispute arguably had the potential to become a critical juncture in the evolution of the EP’s budgetary power, and thus – in retrospect – its gain in parliamentary powers more generally, considering how significantly for instance the EP’s legislative power increased from the 1970s through the EP’s enhanced budgetary power. The French government’s eventual relenting, and the predominance of the perceived necessity to guarantee democratic legitimacy through strengthened EP involvement, secured the continuation of the EP’s path-dependent empowerment in the area.

The issue of the EP’s involvement in the Community budget was resolved at the Hague Summit in December 1969, at which the Six governments agreed to give the EP a say only over parts of the budget, which did not include the CAP. This agreement resulted in the Treaty on Own Resources of April 1970, which granted the EP the last word on non-compulsory expenditure, and a right of consultation on the compulsory part – the bulk of the Community’s expenditure – for which the EP could propose modifications, though without any binding force.<sup>60</sup> From the late 1960s, the perception that more democratic legitimacy of Community policy-making was necessary in order to gain public support for European integration had increased among governments and Community institutions alike.<sup>61</sup> The perceived need for more democratic legitimacy was also the main factor leading to another strengthening of the EP’s role in the Budgetary Powers Treaty of July 1975. In a major change to the previous budget treaty and the Community Treaties, the EP received the power to reject the Community budget in total.<sup>62</sup>

This extension of budgetary power constituted not only a significant formal leap forward in the EP’s evolution towards a fully-fledged supranational parliament, but it also provided the MEPs with new tools of influence. In so doing, it contributed to the EP’s gain in parliamentary powers other than budgetary through the *conversion* of procedures established for the area of the Community budget, which were transferred and adapted to a wider variety of policy areas. Amongst others, the new budget provisions gave MEPs more leverage in attempts to initiate Community action, in that the delegates could introduce items to the budget

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58 See Rittberger (2003): 213 et seq.

59 See Lindner & Rittberger (2003): 456 et seq.

60 See Treaty amending certain budgetary provisions of the Treaties establishing the European Communities and of the Treaty establishing a Single Council and a Single Commission of the European Communities, 22 April 1970, Arts. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8.

61 See Goetze & Rittberger (2010): 47; Héritier (2007): 76; Kreppel (2002): 70.

62 See Treaty amending certain financial provisions of the Treaties establishing the European Communities and of the Treaty establishing a single Council and a single Commission of the European Communities, Arts. 2, 12, 20. See also Sasse (1976): 43 et seq. and Priestley (2008): 33 et seq. on the negotiations of the Treaty.

that had not previously figured in it, and threaten to delay the adoption of the budget if these items were not agreed upon. Moreover, the EP gained some control over the Council's agenda (though not over the institution itself) via its now binding budgetary power.

These gains in additional parliamentary powers were from a historical institutionalist point of view *unintended consequences* of the two budget treaties, to which the governments had agreed in the pursuit of enhanced democratic legitimacy, rather than the empowerment of the EP.<sup>63</sup> Arguably the most far-reaching gain in additional parliamentary power resulting from the budget treaties was the increase in legislative power. Several of the MEPs interviewed for this research, who were members of the EP's budget committee, confirmed that MEPs used the budget in order to gain a say on policy issues in which the EP was not supposed to be involved according to the Treaties.<sup>64</sup> Given that the Council was now not only obliged to *listen* to the EP in budgetary matters, but also to get the EP's *approval*, budget-related debates gave the EP an entirely different fighting weight than it had in any other decision-making procedure. Whereas MEPs did not fundamentally change their actions as a result – they pushed for more integration based on similar ideas and arguments, and with the same political tools as previously – they had now one decisive new lever: as the interviewee Jean-Pierre Cot put it, by rejecting the overall budget, “we could really mess up things on certain projects if we wanted to”. Cot referred to this strategy as the EP's “power of *nuisance*”.<sup>65</sup> The Irish former MEP Charles McDonald confirmed that the EP's power to reject the budget “was always held there as a last resort”.<sup>66</sup> Fionnuala Richardson, who as a staff member of the Socialist Group also sought ways to reach political and institutional aims and found the EP's budgetary power a helpful means of leverage, similarly recalled that “we always knew [the rejection of the budget] was kind of the nuclear option”.<sup>67</sup> Prior to the EP's first direct elections, however, this ‘nuclear option’ was never fully exercised.<sup>68</sup>

While the EP's gain in legislative influence through references to the Community budget remained a tool of indirect leverage, the budget treaties also brought with them a concrete change to formal legislation procedures through the newly introduced conciliation procedure. This procedure was established in a Joint Declaration of the EP, the Council and the Commission, adopted in the run-up to the 1975 budget treaty, “for Community acts of general application which ha[d] appreciable financial implications” in case the Council “intend[ed] to depart from the Opinion adopted by the European Parliament”.<sup>69</sup> While the conciliation procedure was formally expressly linked to budgetary matters, MEPs swiftly attempted – with increasing success – to apply it to non-budgetary matters over which the

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63 See i.a. Goetze & Rittberger (2010): 46 et seq.; Lindner & Rittberger (2003): 455 et seqq.

64 See i.a. interviews with John Corrie, Jean-Pierre Cot, Ole Espersen, Colette Flesch, Hans-Werner Müller, Jacques Santer and Heinz Schreiber.

65 See interview with Jean-Pierre Cot.

66 See interview with Charles McDonald.

67 See interview with Fionnuala Richardson.

68 For the first escalation of budgetary tensions in late 1978 about the 1979 budget, see Lindner & Rittberger (2003). Priestley (2008) offers a detailed account of the first time the EP rejected the Community budget for the first time (in which he was directly involved as EP staff), namely half a year after the first direct elections in 1979.

69 Joint Declaration of the EP, the Council and the Commission concerning the institution of a conciliation procedure between the EP and the Council, 4 March 1975 (OJ C89, 22.4.1975, pp. 1-2).

Council and the EP were in disagreement. The adaptation of the consultation procedure thus constituted another case of a successful *conversion* in HI terminology. In most of the cases in which the procedure was initiated, the two institutions did not fight their way through the entire provided proceedings, but found compromises before the full procedure was executed, not least through contacts of MEPs with member states' permanent representatives.<sup>70</sup>

It should be noted that, similar to the EP's involvement in budgetary procedures more generally, the conciliation procedure was not an invention of the 1970s. Rather, the budget Treaties and the Joint Declaration formalised previous informal procedures which had evolved from the 1950s. With regard to the conciliation procedure, Fionnuala Richardson stated that this "kind of hearing [...] where Commission officials would be asked along" to act as mediator between the Council and the EP existed already before 1975, but were not called 'conciliation procedure'.<sup>71</sup> The pre-stage to these inter-institutional exchanges were informal, non-binding talks of MEPs with ministers and Coreper members, which took place from the 1950s, with the aim to reconcile EP and Council positions, and find common ground in amended Commission proposals.

### Power of initiative

The Treaties provided the EP with no power of initiative. Until today, the EP holds only a partial power of initiative, still relying on the Commission to support EP proposals in order to put them on the EU agenda.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, this parliamentary power deserves some attention here, given that MEPs repeatedly tried prior to 1979 to initiate Community legislation or action, and attempted to solidify and institutionalise the EP's power of initiative. However, it should be noted that prior to the EP's first direct elections, one can speak of an evolving agenda-setting power of the EP at best, rather than of a fully-fledged power of initiative. While the delegates could try to present concrete texts to the Commission, it was extremely unlikely that these texts would become official proposals, not to speak of adopted legislation.<sup>73</sup> This section sheds light on the beginnings of the EP's ability to initiate Community legislation or action, and identifies once again a number of processes of institutional change allowing MEPs to enhance the EP's sphere of action.

Given the low workload of the EP in the 1950s and much of the 1960s, self-initiated action constituted a significant amount of the MEPs' work. Frequently dissatisfied with Community legislation not going far enough, being too vague or coming too late, MEPs' self-

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70 Bourguignon et al. (1985: 47) note 42 requests of the EP for conciliation with the Council between 1975 and 1983, but report that only eight cases saw the full formal procedure. See also interview with Colette Flesch on inter-institutional contacts between the EP and Coreper.

71 See interview with Fionnuala Richardson.

72 Art. 225 of the TFEU states: "The European Parliament may, acting by a majority of its component Members, request the Commission to submit any appropriate proposal on matters on which it considers that a Union act is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties. If the Commission does not submit a proposal, it shall inform the European Parliament of the reasons." (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT>, last visit 19 March 2019).

73 Indeed, the author is aware of no single example in which the EP successfully drafted a full proposal for the Commission: none of the consulted EP documents suggests that, nor did any of the interviewees recall such a case.

initiated actions typically included proposals that would lead to closer integration. At times of low public and national party interest in MEPs' work, the threshold of such proposals with regard to profoundness and feasibility was not always very high. The former Luxembourg Christian Democratic MEP Jacques Santer remembered in an interview that "when a colleague had a good idea in a committee, [the other members] said directly: let's make this a resolution, it doesn't hurt".<sup>74</sup> Whereas some of the MEPs' initiatives built on extensive preparatory work and provided in-depth backing material, for instance based on study trips, others aimed simply to put some more general ideas for potential future initiatives on the Community agenda.<sup>75</sup> In that endeavour, MEPs had one notable official tool at hand: the parliamentary question. Questions were used by MEPs not least when considering swift Community action, rather than lengthy legislative procedures, to be necessary. Such perceived needs for immediate Community intervention arose particularly in the context of events not anticipated by the authors of the Treaties, such as crises, accidents or catastrophes.<sup>76</sup> Even if remaining at times rather general, MEPs' proposals for initiatives could sometimes "boost certain political ambitions to an extent that they resulted in measures".<sup>77</sup>

While attempts to initiate Community legislation or action can be traced throughout the entire period under consideration, the proportion of initiatives in the MEPs' work shifted over time. With HI, these changing proportions can be identified as a *drift*, or a change in the application and impact of procedures based on shifts in the respective environment. In this case, the drift was based on the growing willingness of notably the Council to involve the EP in Community policy-making towards the 1970s. The more the number of EP consultations increased, the lower the percentage of own initiatives in the EP's overall output became.<sup>78</sup> After all, consultations offered a much better chance at successfully influencing Community legislation than the MEPs' own initiatives, so that MEPs dedicated their time and effort predominantly to Commission proposals. The EP's everyday work was hence increasingly aligned to Commission proposals and consequently the Communities' policy agenda, leaving less parliamentary capacity for activism on issues not already on the agenda.

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74 Translated by the author; see interview with Jacques Santer.

75 For an example of a detailed EP proposal of initiative, see Report by the Committee on Social Affairs on the free movement of workers within the Community, November 1957 (AC\_AP\_RP!ASOC.1953\_AC-0005!57-novembre0010DE\_00001000), which recommends a number of policy measures based on a profound analysis of the contemporary situation. For a rather general initiative, see speech by Clara Edele Bengta Kruchow during Question Time on 14 January 1976 (PE0\_AP\_QP!QH\_H-0152!750015EN\_01384413), proposing the establishment of kindergartens attached to the Communities' institutions in order to reach an increase of female applicants for staff positions.

76 Jacques Santer, for instance, recalled in an interview that the MEPs' repeated demands for interim arrangements for unemployed during the 1970s crisis had a significant impact on the so-called 'Davignon Plan' (1977), to which consequently a stronger social component concerning unemployed persons was added (see interview with Jacques Santer).

77 Translated by the author; see interview with Lothar Ibrügger. Fionnuala Richardson recounted in an interview that she helped draft an initiative in the form of a question on the education of young workers, which contributed to the introduction of special support for such young workers at Community level. Richardson saw a causal connection between the question and the introduced measures because the Commission (and also the EP) frequently referred to this parliamentary question in the process of adopting the measures.

78 See Sasse (1976): 49.

Whereas the frequency of EP initiatives in connection to EP consultations changed over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, the main addressee of EP initiatives remained the same: the Commission. Given its monopoly on proposing legislation and its openness to collaborate with the EP as opposed to the Council's general reluctance to grant the EP more influence, MEPs' attempts to initiate legislation or action were almost always directed at the Communities' executive.<sup>79</sup> Besides the options of MEPs to propose an initiative via parliamentary instruments such as resolutions, reports or questions, the delegates could approach Commission officials and commissioners less formally in committee meetings and in personal talks. At different levels, MEPs thus regularly provided political stimulus through "discreetly" bringing their own ideas to the Communities' agenda.<sup>80</sup> At times, the Commission even joined in the preparation of MEPs' initiatives: the German Socialist Lothar Ibrügger, for instance, said in an interview that MEPs who were assigned a rapporteurship could undertake travels to gather information for their reports. On these travels, they were often not only accompanied by EP staff, but also by Commission staff, and would then work together in the preparation of a draft report.<sup>81</sup>

In order to reach common aims, the Commission supported the EP in "creatively framing issues in a way that they would fall within EC competences".<sup>82</sup> MEPs themselves sought to make sure that their initiatives did not contravene Treaty provisions, neither with regard to their content nor the form in which they were proposed. The EEC Treaty offered two articles that allowed for wide-reaching initiatives particularly in areas in which the Communities had only limited competences, namely Arts. 100 and 235 EEC, according to which the Commission could propose provisions for matters not covered by the Treaty. The only Treaty article hinting directly in the direction of an EP right (rather than power) of initiative was Art. 122 EEC, which stipulated that the EP could invite the Commission to draw up reports on specific social actions. Whereas the article had no legislative dimension, it provided the EP with a tool to put items on the Communities' agenda in the area of social policy.

Staff members of EP party groups and the EP's library service helped check the compatibility of ideas which MEPs wished to turn into initiatives with the Treaties.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the former Irish Christian Democratic MEP Charles McDonald recalled that he and his colleagues usually tried to connect their initiatives to issues that were already on the Community agenda, because that increased their prospect of success. EP initiatives were hence developed in connection either to the Treaties – in their broadest possible interpretation – or to the Communities' political agenda, in order to increase the MEPs' chance of success. Although

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79 One exception is the EP initiative to introduce a European sports badge. While initially addressed to 'the institutions of the European Communities, governments and responsible administrations of the member states' (Motion for a resolution on the creation of a European sports badge, 21 January 1965, PE0\_AP\_RP|RECH.1961\_A0-0012!660020DE\_001075), the eventually adopted resolution was directed solely at the Council (Resolution on the introduction of a European Sports Badge, 10 March 1966, PE0\_AP\_RP|RECH.1961\_A0-0012!660001DE\_0001). The initiative was not successful, as discussed in more detail in paper 6.

80 See Schwed (1978): 40.

81 See interview with Lothar Ibrügger.

82 Meyer (2014): 241. Meyer demonstrates that also in the area of environmental policy, the Commission was open to EP proposals, and allowed for increasing EP influence in the area of agenda-setting.

83 See interview with Fionnuala Richardson.



many of the proposals made by MEPs went beyond Treaty paragraphs in their policy aims, the delegates did not explicitly try to break out of the institutional framework set by the Treaties with regard to the EP's power of initiative. In the few instances where MEPs expressed a wish to formalise this power of the EP, they emphasised that no Treaty change was required.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the delegates considered the range of tools available to them as sufficient to propose legislation – the only major issue was that the Council and Commission could reject or simply ignore EP initiatives.

## Conclusion

In 1966, a report by the EP's Committee on Political Affairs stated that “the position and the influence of the European Parliament depends to a large extent on itself, on its dynamism, on its power of persuasion as well as the concision and objectivity of its opinions”.<sup>85</sup> This quote aptly summarises the activism and self-perception of MEPs prior to the EP's first direct elections, as this paper has shown. First and foremost, MEPs assumed that, given the restrictive Treaty provisions concerning the EP, it was up to them to try and develop the role for their institution they thought it deserved. Aware that they had little formal opportunity to claim the parliamentary powers they strove for, they resorted to persuasion, and to convincing the other Community institutions of the legitimacy and indeed the necessity of the EP's involvement in Community policy-making. Despite their formally weak starting position – which they did not consider as a given, or as permanent – the delegates pursued influence in those areas constituting the scope of action of their national parliaments: legislative, budgetary and control power, and the power to initiate Community legislation or action. Only through the acquisition of these powers did MEPs expect to turn their institution into a fully-fledged supranational parliament in the long term.

Although tracing remarkable developments, the HI-based analysis of this paper shows that prior to 1979, the EP gained no comprehensive power of legislation, but only legislative influence; it held no formal but at best an informal power of initiative; and both its budgetary power and power of control remained limited throughout the period under consideration. Yet, the powers which the EP holds today were reached crucially through the MEPs' activism towards the acquisition of these four powers in the EP's first three decades of existence. Over time, the EP's gain in power became visible and formalised – starting with the budget treaties discussed above, the SEA, and the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam.<sup>86</sup> This paper has shown, however, that the roots of these powers need to be sought not first and foremost in previous Treaty provisions, but in rules and procedures informally established by MEPs on the basis of their experiences in national parliaments, and of MEPs' shared ideas of closer institutional and political integration. By tracing the development of four crucial powers

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84 See i.a. Resolution on European Union, 10 July 1975 (PEO\_AP\_RP!POLI.1961\_A0-0174!750001EN\_0001); Report drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture on the conclusions to be drawn from the proceedings of the Seminar held by the Committee on Agriculture in Echternach, 4 May 1979 (PEO\_AP\_RP!AGRI.1958\_A0-0128!790010EN\_092724), p. 104.

85 Translated by the author; see Report by the Committee on Political Affairs on the position of the EP with regard to the recent institutional evolution in the Communities, 17 October 1966 (FMJE, ARM 21/4/94), p. 11.

86 See i.a. Gfeller et al. (2011): 8; Ringe (2010): 14; Westlake (1994): 81.

typically held by parliaments in liberal democracies in the Communities' initially far from parliamentary assembly, this paper offers a concise overview of the EP's early institutional history. In so doing, it helps explain the beginnings of the EP's empowerment, and thus seeks to contribute to an improved understanding of the EP's role in the EU institutional system today.