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Mid-term assessment of the European Parliament's 7th legislature

The European Parliament takes action to tackle the crisis.

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INTRODUCTION

Often berated but never equalled ... since July 2009, MEPs have tabled 11,446 amendments in plenary (not to mention those made during parliamentary committee sittings), they have voted 7,490 times, approved 322 legislative procedures, 705 non-legislative procedures, submitted 1092 direct questions to the European Commissioners and representatives of the Council who came to sit with them!^[1]

The 736 MEPs, whose number grew at the beginning of December 2011 by 18 new MEPs that were planned for in the first review of the Lisbon Treaty^[2], are now midway through their mandate. Firstly, over the first 30 months MEPs became aware of the European Parliament's new prerogatives and of its ability to position itself as a united, strong player in the face of the other institutions. The second part of this paper notes that in view of the number of decisions, votes and legislations, output is sustained but more focused than in the previous legislature. Moreover, the institution's political bipolarisation has grown under the pressure of time, and the centre now stands as a true arbiter. In addition to this we note that middle sized, but well integrated EU States, are significantly influential in terms of their work in comparison with the founder States or the most recent new comers. The last part of the study endeavours to illustrate the major trends of the 7th legislature. Work has focused on crises - more specifically the financial ones and the implementation of the single market, increased ci-

tizens' rights, including those of the consumer, the traveller and the patient.

This new institutional framework and the need for rapid response, have helped to attenuate the Eurosceptic voice in terms of legislative procedures and have guided most of the MEPs work.

I - A RESHAPED PARLIAMENT, BOTH POLITICALLY AND INSTITUTIONALLY

a. After the elections in June 2009

The European elections that took place from 4th to 7th June 2009 resulted in a clear victory for the centre-right. However the three main political groups lost votes, firstly the Social Democrats (S&D), but also the Liberals (ALDE) and the European People's Party (EPP); the latter notably lost votes due to the departure of some British and Czech conservatives, who created the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR)^[3]. Ultimately, this departure weakened the Eurosceptics' as far as their influence was concerned.

In spite of the rightwing victory and even with the Liberals (349 seats out of 736), the EPP did not achieve an adequate majority. Hence cooperation with the S&D was necessary to elect the President of Parliament and to confirm the appointment of the Commission's president; in exchange the chairs of several major parliamentary committees were granted to the socialists which has led

1. Figures set on 10/10/2011, source <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sed/statistics.do>

2. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/pressroom/content/20100223BKG69359/html/Parlement-le-processus-de-ratification-de-18-d%C3%A9put%C3%A9s-suppl%C3%A9mentaires-prend-fin>
See the annexed table with the new comers per country

3. <http://www.ecrgroup.eu/ecrg-and-eu3.asp>

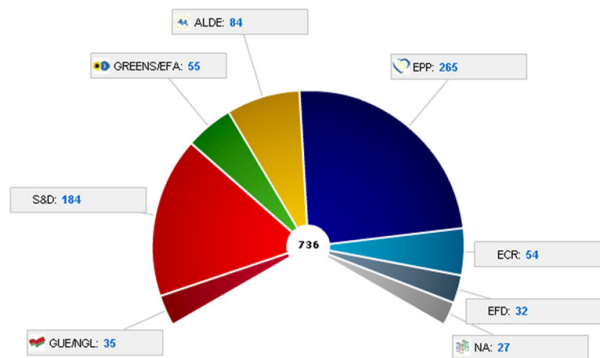
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to this legislature being called the "grand coalition"[4]. In January 2012 the second part of the legislature will start and in this series of negotiations, the so-called "key" posts are due to re-alloc-

ated, illustrated by the probable election of Martin Schulz (S&D, DE) as President of the European Parliament, in replacement of Jerzy Buzek (EPP, PL), in office since 14th July 2009.

European Election Results in 2009

Political Group	No. of seats	Score in %
PPE	265	36
S&D	184	25
ALDE	84	11.4
VERTS/EFA	55	7.5
ECR	54	7.3
GUE/NGL	35	4.8
ELD	32	4.3
NA	27	3.7



Source : European Parliament

- EPP : European People's Party Group (Christian Democrats) (hereafter "EPP")
- S&D : Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats at the European Parliament (hereafter "S&D")
- ALDE : Alliance of Democrats and Liberals for Europe (hereafter "ALDE")
- GREENS/ EFA : Greens/European Free Alliance (hereafter "Greens")
- ECR : European Conservatives and Reformists (hereafter "ECR")
- GUE/ NGL : United European Left/Nordic Green Left (hereafter "GUE")
- EFD : European Freedom and Democracy Group (hereafter "EFD")
- NA : Non-Affiliated

Turnout: 43% (45.5 in 2004)

Number of women MEPs: 35% (31% in 2004)

b. Powers increased by the Lisbon Treaty

First and foremost the Lisbon Treaty strengthened the Parliament as an inevitable legislator in the European decision making process. It has confirmed a trend that started in 1979 with the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage[5]. This trend comprises

a strengthening of the European Parliament's influence in the decision making process, that goes hand in hand with greater political legitimacy, with one mutually leading to the other. Article 289 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) establishes this development, stipulating that "the ordinary legislative procedure (formerly the co-decision procedure) shall

4. HIX, Simon, http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/561-2009_8epa.pdf;
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=en&type=IM-PRESS&reference=20090911STO60546>

5. BERTONCINI, Yves & CHOPIN, Thierry, *Politique européenne. Etats, pouvoirs et citoyens de l'Union européenne*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po/Dalloz, 2010, p. 192

consist in the joint adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of a regulation, directive or decision on a proposal from the Commission.”[6]. The Parliament is therefore acknowledged as a co-legislator in its own right with the Council – in any event with regard to issues that are not subject to the exception rule.

Furthermore the Lisbon Treaty has extended the Parliament's competences. The number of areas in which legislative acts are subject to co-decision has almost doubled, rising from 45 to 89[7] of the 120 areas defined in the Treaty. Competences in terms of the internal market and consumer protection, amongst many others, have been completed, for example with those pertaining to asylum and immigration, the common agricultural policy (CAP) and the common trade policy[8]. Notably, in terms of the budget, progress has been remarkable due to the abolition of the distinction between obligatory and non-obligatory spending[9], thereby placing the European Parliament on an equal footing with the Council with regard to the EU's main budgetary posts, which were partly closed to it previously: the CAP and the Cohesion Fund[10]. In addition to this, if there is disagreement with the Council, the European Parliament has the final word: if the Parliament rejects the budget it has to be revised but if the Council rejects it, Parliament can adopt it anyway (if certain majority conditions are met, which supposes strong internal cohesion at the European Parliament.)[11]. However a conciliation committee, involving the representatives of both institutions, is convened first in the event of disagreement and this is intended to lead to a compromise, thereby guaranteeing a certain balance between the Parliament and the Council.[12]. Finally, it should also be noted that the European Parliament also has greater powers simply because the EU itself, due to the Treaty, enjoys extended competences and it can legislate in more areas.

II - PARLIAMENT'S OUTPUT

a. Harder, more focused output than during the previous legislature

The study of MEPs' output during the plenary sittings highlights a variety of activities, both from

a qualitative and quantitative point of view, which is different from the previous legislature.

As an example 322 legislative acts have been voted since July 2009, whilst during the same period in the first half of the 6th legislature, 661 acts were registered and an average 323 reports were registered in 2006, 2007 and 2008. However this has been compensated for in the present legislature by the number of non-legislative procedures voted in plenary which has increased by 18.47% in comparison with the previous legislature (699 against 590).

The study of the number of amendments reveals that there is greater cohesion early on within the parliamentary committees, which reduces the possibility and temptation of making further amendments in plenary. During the first half of the legislature 10,798 amendments were tabled against 23,044 in the same period in the previous legislature. 52.8% of the amendments put forward by the parliamentary committees were accepted in plenary, in comparison with 34.1% of those put forward by political groups since July 2009 (47.1% of all amendments tabled, were accepted). This shows that political splits within the parliamentary committees still exist in the hemicycle during the final vote. Indeed, it is easier to agree in the committee sitting, when there is a smaller number of MEPs, who also know and see each other regularly, than during plenary in which MEPs sit according to their political groups. Greater cohesion within the parliamentary committee also leads to the political parties supporting compromises between committees, which in turn are more readily supported by the entire Parliament. Likewise, better coordinated, regulated work in the committees has also led to more texts being approved at first reading after direct negotiations with the Council and the Commission, when these institutions have decided to accelerate the decision making process.[13]. However the number of amendments tabled by 40 MEPs or more is a marginal event: 140 proposals, with a positive approval rate of only 26.1%.

6. TFEU, article 289 § 1, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:083:0047:0200:FR:PDF>

7. BERTONCINI Y. & CHOPIN T., *op.cit.*, tableau 14

8. TIILIKAINEN, Teija, "The empowered European Parliament", *FIIA Briefing Paper*, n°91, 11.2011, p. 3 <http://www.fiaa.fi/en/publication/224/>

9. BERTONCINI Y. & CHOPIN T., *op.cit.*, p. 198

10. BERTONCINI Y. & CHOPIN T., *op.cit.*, p. 196

11. BERTONCINI Y. & CHOPIN T., *op.cit.*, p. 199

12. TFEU, article 314 § 4 et suivants, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:0047:0199:FR:PDF#page=135>

13. COSTA, Olivier, DEHOUSSE, Renaud & TRAKALOVA, Aneta, *La codécision et les « accords précoces »*. *Progrès ou détournement de la procédure législative?*, *Notre Europe, Etudes & Recherches*, n°84, 03.2011, p. 16, http://www.notre-europe.eu/uploads/tx_publication/Etud84-Codecision-fr.pdf

Comparison of output between the 6th and 7th legislatures

	2009 (July-Dec)	2010	2011 (up to Oct)	Total 7th legislature	Total 6th legislature
No. of draft resolutions delivered in session	219	564	451	1234	2628
No. of legislative procedures voted in plenary	70	155	97	322	1469
No. of non-legislative procedures voted in plenary*	61	342	296	699	1449
No. of votes in plenary	995	3836	3109	7940	25467
No. of amendments put forward in session	1658	6914	2226	10798	51761

Source : European Parliament, compiled by the Robert Schuman Foundation
* initiative, resolution, immunity

i. Analysis of the political groups: bipolarisation with an arbiter in the centre [14]

We can define three major political groups according to the work undertaken by their members: those who work on the substances of the dossier and who provide the European Parliament with its main guidelines; those who compensate for their small numbers by sustained activity to influence the decision making process come what may; and the Eurosceptics, who do not want to work towards European integration, but who are always ready to protest vehemently.

The EPP and the S&D comprise the first family, by far the majority in the Parliament (61% of the seats between them). Their members write the most reports (1.6 reports per MEP on average). They also often speak in plenary (71.2 and 69.1 interventions on average), but, the eurosceptics aside, they are the two groups which put forward the least resolutions. The number of questions they ask and opinion they give is similar to that of the second group.

The second family comprises the parties, who, in certain circumstances, can join forces with the European Parliament's heavyweights. Since they have fewer

opportunities to write reports they do however accomplish a great deal of work in all areas. Hence, the Greens take third place in terms of numbers of reports (one per MEP on average), followed by the ALDE, ECR and GUE (0.8). They also propose a greater number of resolutions in comparison with their colleagues: more than 23 per MEP on average. Notably with the exception of the GUE group, (73.6) they speak the least in plenary, between 32.8 and 44.2 interventions (whilst the overall average is 66.9).

The Liberals also play an important role, because being in the centre of the political spectrum, they can ally with both the left and the right. Hence in this legislature the Liberals have been the political group to find itself the least in a minority, even in terms of the EPP (89.09% of winning votes against 88.49% of all votes, and all parliamentary committees together)[15]. Cohesion within the Liberal group is weaker however, with internal splits between the Germans, who defend economic liberalism, and the French, who rather support liberalism that includes a certain amount of regulation[16]. The Greens group enjoys the greatest cohesion (0.95 cohesion rate), just ahead of the EPP (0.93) and the S&D (0.93)[17], and it is gradually becoming less of an opposition group, voting with the majority, 68,16% of the time instead of

14. This paper is based on the observation of the parliamentary and legislative work of 7 strategic parliamentary committees.

By nature it is exhaustive and focuses on the most important parliamentary committees during the first half of the mandate. We should remember that the most important, work is by far the obtention and writing of a report.

15. http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_epg_coalitions.php?vers=2

16. VoteWatch, "Voting in the 2009-2014 European Parliament : who holds the power?", 07.2011, http://www.votewatch.eu/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/votewatch_report-july-2011-who-holds-the-power.pdf

17. http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_european_party_groups.php

60,2% in the previous legislature[18]. This trend grew in the summer of 2011, when the Greens supported the majority vote 75% of the time[19].

Finally, the EFD and the non-affiliated (8% of the seats together) fall in the final group, that of the Eurosceptics. Their substantive work is limited (0.3 and 0.5 reports per MEP respectively on average). They give fewer opinions than their colleagues, 0.5 for the EFD on average and 0.2 for the non-affiliated. However, they are the

most active speakers in plenary (138.5 and 128.5 interventions per MEP respectively on average), far ahead of all of the other groups. Likewise the EFD and the non-affiliated take the lead in terms of questions addressed to the Commission and the Council, with the EFD group asking 168.8 questions on average and the non-affiliated, 70.1. Indeed their lack of political relations and the difficulty they have in building alliances means that these parties turn to oral and written questions more, since they are easier to implement than winning reports.

Averages of MEP parliamentary output according to his/her political group

Political Group	Questions asked	Draft resolution	Reports	Opinions	Interventions in plenary	Written declarations
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group	47,7	26,6	0,8	1,1	44,2	1,2
United European Left/ Nordic Green Left Group	66,8	24,4	0,8	0,6	73,6	0,5
Progressive Socialist and Democrats Alliance Group	29,2	10,1	1,6	1,1	66,9	1,1
European Conservatives and Reformists Group	43,9	29,1	0,8	0,7	40,8	0,5
Greens/Free European Alliance Group	26,8	23,2	1,0	1,0	32,8	0,9
European People's Party Group (Christian Democrats)	37,9	16,4	1,6	0,9	71,3	0,7
Europe Freedom Democracy Group	168,8	16,9	0,3	0,5	138,5	0,7
Non-inscrits	70,1	5,6	0,5	0,2	128,5	1,4

Calculations by the Robert Schuman Foundation of "parliamentary output"* undertaken by MEPs in the parliamentary committees including: Foreign Affairs (AFET), Budgets (BUDG), Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), International Trade (INTA), Transport and Tourism (TRAN) and Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), according to European Parliament data, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>, dated 15th November 2011.

* The European Parliament makes the distinction between "questions asked" of the Council or of Commission, "draft resolutions" "reports", "opinions", "interventions in plenary" and "written declarations". The questions and proposals can be individual or common, on behalf of a parliamentary committee or a political group. Interventions in plenary can be oral, written, representing either a political group or an individual. Declarations can be joint or individual. Reports and opinions are attributed to one MEP only.

18. http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_epg_coalitions.php

19. *Votewatch Report July 2011*, p. 4

ii. Analysis of the national delegations: no obvious supremacy^[20]

The analysis of the delegations, unlike that of the groups, does not lead to a simple definition of any major country groups according to work undertaken by their MEPs; it seems rather that each type of activity leads to a reconfiguration in how the countries are distributed, showing that there are no groups of countries working closely together.

As far as reports are concerned MEPs from the "small" countries produce few on average. The MEPs from Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland and Latvia have written none in the committees we have studied, and those from Luxembourg produce 0.25 on average. Malta, with two reports on average, is an exception. Portugal takes the lead (3.2), ahead of Italy (2.44). More generally the delegations of the biggest countries, and those most affected by the economic crisis fall in the upper part of the average. In terms of interventions in plenary the Germans come last with 28.34 interventions per MEP. Portuguese MEPs are extremely active with 306.3 interventions. As with the reports, MEPs from small countries have issued very few opinions. Cyprus, Ireland and Estonia issued no opinions and Lithuania's average is 0.29, unlike the Danes who are particu-

larly active with 2.17 opinions on average. MEPs from the new Member States asked the fewest questions: Latvia (6), Slovakia (8.9), Czech Republic (9.5), Estonia (9.5) and Hungary (9.5). The most active MEPs come from the countries most affected by the economic crisis, i.e. Ireland (168.3), Greece (161.7), Italy (89.8), Portugal (63.5) and Spain (57.4), likewise from the two traditionally Eurosceptic countries, which have the strongest parliamentary traditions, i.e. the UK (62.6) and Denmark (61.5). France and Germany lie in the lower half of the average. Finally, with regard to written declarations, with an average of 6 declarations, some Danes are extremely active, far ahead of the average of 0.9.

The few general trends which emerge are as follows: *a priori* the big countries do not enjoy an notable control over legislative work, but are at the upper end of the average in terms of numbers of reports; MEPs from the countries most affected by the crisis, as well as Denmark, are relatively active, whilst the representatives of the small countries and new Member States are relatively discreet, since they are not yet fully familiar with the Parliament's practices and customs. From this it might be deduced that the middle sized, or rather the oldest members play the most important role, in proportion to the size of their delegation.

Average MEP parliamentary activity according to his/her national delegation

Country	Questions asked	Draft resolution	Reports	Opinions	Interventions in plenary	Written declarations
Germany	20,6	15	1,9	1,4	28,3	0,5
Austria	66,3	18,9	1	0,8	137,9	1,8
Belgium	39,9	16,2	0,6	0,5	50,3	0,6
Bulgaria	19	13,1	0,7	1,4	30,8	0,7
Cyprus	36,3	27,3	0	0	30	0,3
Denmark	61,5	3,2	1	2,2	37,3	6,2
Spain	57,4	23,6	1,6	0,7	45,7	0,5
Estonia	9,5	66,8	0	0	69,5	0,5
Finland	28,6	10,2	1	1,8	53,4	1,6
France	20,6	19	0,9	1,1	61,7	0,5

20. This paper is based on the observation of the parliamentary and legislative output of 7 strategic parliamentary committees. By nature it is exhaustive and focuses on the most important parliamentary committees during the first half of the mandate. We should remember that the most important work is by far the achievement and writing of a report.

Average MEP parliamentary activity according to his/her national delegation

Country	Questions asked	Draft resolution	Reports	Opinions	Interventions in plenary	Written declarations
Greece	161,7	12,3	0,9	0,7	66,3	0,7
Hungary	9,5	3,5	2,2	0,7	34,3	1
Ireland	168,3	1	0	0	62,5	0,3
Italy	89,8	18,1	2,4	1	74,5	1,2
Latvia	6	9,6	0	1,2	92,8	1
Lithuania	38,7	24,3	0,4	0,3	228,9	1,4
Luxembourg	15,5	3,3	0,3	0,8	36,3	0,5
Malta	12	0	2	2	39	0
Netherlands	38,4	18	0,7	0,3	45,8	0,5
Poland	21,8	35	1	0,8	46,4	1
Portugal	63,5	20,3	3,2	0,9	306,3	1,3
Czech Republic	9,5	4,6	0,7	0,9	52,5	0,3
Romania	28,4	24,1	1,3	0,9	97,2	1,7
UK	62,6	19,3	1,1	0,6	57,5	0,7
Slovakia	8,9	10,7	1	0,6	59,7	0,3
Sweden	15	6,1	0,7	0,7	55,6	0,4

Calculations by the Robert Schuman Foundation of "parliamentary work"* undertaken by MEPs in the parliamentary committees including: Foreign Affairs (AFET), Budgets (BUDG), Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), International Trade (INTA), Transport and Tourism (TRAN) and Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), according to European Parliament data, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>, dated 15th November 2011.

* The European Parliament makes the distinction between "questions asked" of the Council or of Commission, "draft resolutions" "reports", "opinions", "interventions in plenary" and "written declarations". The questions and proposals can be individual or common, on behalf of a parliamentary committee or a political group. Interventions in plenary can be oral, written, representing either a political group or an individual. Declarations can be joint or individual. Reports and opinions are attributed to one MEP only.

b. Active, responsible MEPs aware of their role,

MEP attendance in parliament has increased during this legislature and this has been a general trend since the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage in 1979. Unsurprisingly amongst the Eurosceptic parties and the non-affiliated attendance is the lowest[21]. This confirms the theory of a growing sense of responsibility amongst the majority of MEPs, who have witnessed an extension of their competences every time the treaties have

been revised in a bid to increase direct democratic legitimacy.

Unfortunately, in the opinion of many European citizens, the corruption scandal involving some MEPs in March 2011[22] partly discredited the institution's responsibility and legitimacy. MEPs responded to this at the end of 2011 with a new code of conduct to control their rights and obligations, which resulted from the work of an ad hoc group that was placed under the direct authority of the President of the European Parliament.[23].

21. http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_epg_attendance.php

22. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/03/22/01003-20110322ARTFIG00778-le-parlement-europeen-terni-par-une-affaire-de-corruption.php>

23. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/fr/pressroom/content/20111114IPR31468/html/L%27adoption-du-nouveau-code-de-conduite-pour-les-eurod%C3%A9put%C3%A9s>

**c. Promotion of the Parliament in its relations
with the other institutions**

In the institutional triangle the Lisbon Treaty has led to a strengthening of the Parliament in relation to the Council. Indeed it can now negotiate directly with the Council, for example over the European External Action Service. It is now prepared to use its budgetary competences as leverage in having its say over policy content. The Parliament is an institution that is aware of its legitimacy and its powers and is therefore able to assert its point of view. For example its repeated opposition to the Swift agreement[24], which plans to provide American authorities access to the bank details of European citizens in their bid to counter terrorism, but which has been the source of reticence as far as the respect of confidentiality is concerned, forced a re-negotiation of the agreement; likewise the increase in commitments for the 2012 European budget[25] is the result of a difficult conciliation process with the Council, during which the Parliament defended its point of view.

Moreover, Parliament's gain in strength has also been achieved to the detriment of the Commission. Indeed the Parliament also now plays a role in taking integration forward and for defending the community method, thereby increasing its invitations to the Commission to act and to be more ambitious. However the Parliament and Commission have many interests in common, notably in the face of the Council. Both try to counter (inter) governmentalism, which increases in times of crisis, when intergovernmental action rather more than parliamentary and community action is certainly preferred. MEPs regularly complain about the Commission's lack of leadership and encourage it to take a clearer stance.

**III - ONE PRIORITY: RISING TO THE CRISIS
AND COUNTERING EXCESSES**

The electoral year of 2009 was marked by the 2007 American subprime crisis and its spread to the EU, with a focus on the situation in Ireland, then on the contagion in Greece and Portugal before it destabilised the entire eurozone as of 2010.

In this context the European response to the financial and budgetary crises raised awareness amongst MEPs and the Commission in terms of the role it plays in putting forward new ideas. The consolidation of the single area has led to the emergence of debate and legislation involving the citizen, such as the Schengen area, air passenger rights and consumer rights. Further to this, the previous legislature was marked by major debate on the continued deregulation of the markets (air, post, rail, telecommunications etc...) which have not demanded the same legislative effort over the last two years. These two parameters together have led MEPs to address more technical, structural subjects such as the "six pack" on economic governance. Non-legislative acts, which are not looked into here, were also influenced by current events, such as for example the uprisings in the Arab world, the Human Rights climate and situation in several countries, which had become the focus of particular attention.

a. Regulating the financial sector

The European Union has tried to forestall future crises by establishing new authorities as well as measures designed to settle macroeconomic imbalances, in view of monitoring the markets and the States.[26]. Within this context some parliamentary committees and notably the one responsible for economic and monetary affairs have worked on such measures to adopt. The most important rounds of voting took place in September 2010 with the measures being approved by MEPs who launched three European Supervisory Authorities (ESA) and the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB). We might also mention the work of the special committee on the financial, economic and social crisis (CRIS)[27] and especially the resolution presented by Anni Podimata (Greece, S&D)[28] on innovative financial instruments and the special committee's report on future challenges and budgetary requirements.

Likewise the legislative package, commonly called the "six pack" comprises six legislative texts that entered into force in December 2011[29]. The aim is to strengthen economic governance via the Stability and Growth Pact. This is to be completed with warning in-

24. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20100209IPR68674+0+DOC+XML+V0//FR>

25. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/headlines/content/20110429FCS18370/html/La-bataille-du-budget-de-long-terme-de-l'UE>

26. PAULO, Sebastian, "Europe and the Global Economic Crisis in 10 Sheets" Robert Schuman Foundation, April 2011

27. According to the European Parliament site: "the CRIS committee was formed to analyse and evaluate the extent of the financial, economic and social crisis, its impact on the Union and its Member States, and the state of world governance, to propose appropriate measures for the long-term reconstruction of sound, stable financial markets able to support sustainable growth, social cohesion and employment at all levels, and to provide an assessment of the effect of those measures and the cost of inaction."

28. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2011-0080&language=FR&ring=A7-2011-0036>

29. The six rapporteurs are: Diogo Feio (Portugal, EPP), Elisa Ferreira (Portugal, S&D), Vicky Ford (UK, ECR), Sylvie Goulard (France, ALDE), Carl Haglund (Finland, ALDE) and Corien Wortmann-Kool (Netherlands, EPP)

dicators that are designed to improve crisis forecasting. Although the Parliament wanted to pass strong legislation, the scope of the measures put forward was the subject of bitter debate. On 21st June last, on the eve of the plenary session, MEPs from the ECON committee had said that the compromise proposals made by the Council were "inadequate". On this subject, which is emblematic of the Parliament's work in this area during the first half of its term, the power struggle between the institutions was significant. MEPs gained agreement from the Council that it would be part of the European Semester on Economic Governance (a coordination mechanism which assesses the national economic policies, notably the budgets before they are adopted and their impact from a European point of view) and on the institutionalisation of "economic dialogue" between institutions. The same applies to the political splits, which have been constant. The "six pack" was adopted by a small majority since the Greens, S&D and GUE groups abstained or voted against certain points. Moreover, the report on the prevention and correction of macro-economic imbalances by Elisa Ferreira (Portugal, S&D)[30], the only socialist amongst the six rapporteurs, was widely supported, whilst the Haglund report (Finland, ALDE)[31] which represents a semi-implementation of the Ferreira report, was not supported by the S&D delegation. This subject reveals sustained output on the part of the MEPs, since the European Commission's proposal was put forward in September 2010 and the final agreement was found on 28th September 2011. This came after a bitter political battle with the Council between March and September. Legislative time is often much longer.

MEPs also provided answers to situations that were revealed by the financial crisis and the behaviour of the banks. In the light of this, the European Parliament took a position which supported the capping of the bonuses granted to traders during a vote put forward by the European Commission involving own funds requirements, negotiations, re-securitizations, and prudential remuneration supervision[32].

b. Protecting the citizen who is ... an informed consumer

During the 6th legislature various sectoral directives

were adopted which legislate on product content or on standards (notably in the environmental sphere). This trend has continued over the last few months with a legislator who is determined to enhance knowledge about products and provide any kind of information that could improve purchasers' knowledge *ex ante*. With this in mind the labelling rules (governing labels on foodstuffs and tyres) reveal the prescriptive nature of the MEPs work. With regard to these subjects the Commission's proposals were made more flexible than they were originally, which was the source of "regret" on the part of the European Commission, notably in terms of foodstuffs. This reminds us of the presence of industrial and business representatives who were able to dilute the original proposal.

The first part of the present legislature was marked by more transversal issues involving several sectors. It was quite clear that MEPs wanted to improve consumer rights, the possibility for them to appeal, as well as improving information given to the buyer. In this sense the European Parliament showed that it was taking on board its role as the citizens' representative. This approach is linked to the development of the single market, the keystone to building the community, which is still incomplete, but which has progressed significantly during this legislature, notably with the report by Andreas Schwab (Germany, EPP), on consumer rights in general and on-line purchases in particular.

Moreover, independent of its content, the MEPs' management of this theme (the original draft of which on the part of the Commission underwent a great deal of modification at the hands of the rapporteur) illustrates the importance of the customisation of the dossier by representatives who have a structural knowledge of the Parliament (several terms in office as an MEP), a knowledge of foreign languages, which leads to a certain flexibility during negotiations, as well as an asserted political awareness of a dossier, which highlighted differences in national legal bases (common law in the UK for example). In other words some MEPs are now acknowledged as real specialists in certain fields and inevitably have to be consulted when draft legislative acts involve their specialist area. Moreover, the parliamentary committees have often stood together and

30. 2010/0281 (COD)

31. 2010/0279 (COD)
www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/headlines/content/20110429FCS18371/2/html/Le-Parlement-prend-position-avant-le-Conseil-europeen

32. 2009/0099 (COD)

supported their rapporteur in important votes or in negotiations with the Commission or the Council. This example also shows the way that the opportunities that have arisen with the Lisbon Treaty have been implemented; on 26th January 2010 there was a video-conference between the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) and the competent committee at the French National Assembly, which was the first joint meeting between a European Parliament committee and one from a parliamentary assembly of a Member State[33].

Consumer rights were also enhanced with the proposal on the labelling of foodstuffs in July 2011[34] (which still has to be approved by the Council) or the labelling of clothes adopted in May 2011.

... a supported patient

The healthcare sector was also the focus of new regulations with the implementation of a directive in May 2010 to reduce organ transplant waiting time. The supervision of the medicines market was stepped up with the Pharmacovigilance Directive approved on 22nd September 2010[35].

New legislation on counterfeit medicines was put forward in February 2011 and the consolidation of the internal market and the free movement of people were strengthened with the possibility of the reimbursement of medical fees engaged in another Member State.

... a protected traveller

The free circulation of people and the completion of the internal market implies the enhancement of rules governing land, maritime and air transport. People travelling on buses, boats and trains now enjoy more rights if their journey is cancelled or significantly delayed. The number of plane crashes was also the source of concern for the European authorities and in September 2010 MEPs approved the report to step up investigations into these accidents and the means to prevent them.

Finally the Parliament approved additional tax mea-

asures against air and noise pollution to be applied to road haulage companies (which is better known as the "polluter pays principle"). Lorries in excess of 3.5 tonnes, as they travel on the trans-European networks and motorways, were notably targeted by MEPs. Although during this legislature the European consumer will now be better protected, he will also be more responsible since, as of 2013, information on road safety offences will now be communicated between Member States, in line with the proposal made on 25th October 2011[36].

CONCLUSION: A CENTRE-RIGHT, PRO-EUROPEAN, PRO-ACTIVE PARLIAMENT

Mid-term we observe that the citizens' vote in the European elections in 2009 brought to power MEPs who support what we might consider to be centre-right policies. We might also suggest that the centre-right prevails, since the Liberals, the Socialists & Democrats, as well as the Greens often join the majority. However although consensus is the golden rule in the European Parliament, political splits do sometimes appear to be strong, as was the case with the report by Anni Podimata (Greece, S&D) on taxing financial transactions, which rallied a centre-left majority, thereby placing the right in the minority[37]. More generally we see that committee work finds greater consensus, undoubtedly because of the personal ties that form between MEPs in this restricted environment, whilst during plenary sittings, groups - and the opposition which exists between them - prevail. The Eurosceptic voice has little effect however in the hemicycle. These MEPs are in the minority and the departure of the British and Czech MEPs from the EPP even undermined their position since the Europhile trend in the EPP was strengthened.

The drive for overall consensus, which is also linked to the growing importance of agreement at first reading, is far greater in this legislature than in the previous one. We see institutional solidarity within the European Parliament that aims to bring a strong, united, pro-European position in the face of the Council, notably in terms of the ordinary legislative procedure. This does not mean however that there is no debate, nor political divisions. On the contrary, since voting more often than not, follows a partisan line rather than a national one and this trend has gained force in this legislature[38]. These findings confirm the theory of the progressive politicisation of the Parliament supported amongst

33. <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/europe/rap-info/i3151.asp>

34. Regulation (EU) n° 1169/2011

35. 2010/84/EU <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2010-0332+0+DOC+XML+V0//FR>

36. 2011/82/EU

37. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20110131STO12855+0+DOC+XML+V0//FR&language=FR>

others by Simon Hix and Thierry Chopin[39]. However in the end the Parliament has to enjoy a wide majority in order to be able to influence negotiations with the Council, notably in the co-decision procedure. A direct consequence of this clearly seems to emerge in the determination to stand as a stable, united player in the institutional triangle, comprising the Council, the Commission and the Parliament. Because its competences have grown the Parliament must also adopt more realistic positions which lead to inter-institutional compromises and the satisfactory implementation of legislation, notably when a rapid institutional response is required.

Indeed MEPs have faced a turbulent world: the global economic, financial and monetary crisis has led to major repercussions in Europe; the Mediterranean region has been disrupted by the Arab Spring; environmental and climate problems are increasingly urgent. MEPs have addressed all of these issues to the best of their abilities, adopting when they could, binding legislative acts and making more and more declarations, when they had no other legal means to intervene.

During the second half of their mandate MEPs will have to address difficult, highly politicised and controversial issues;

including the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Cohesion Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy. This will also include negotiations on financial perspectives covering the next few years, which may prove to be difficult. The Parliament might also look into the rules governing "early agreements" with the Council, which in spite of various measures, still seem to lack transparency and exclude some MEPs, or they do not allow the committees involved to exploit this instrument because they lack the means to do so[40]. Finally, it will be interesting to look into the power struggles that arise if Martin Schulz (Germany S&D) is elected president and what his relations will be with a Council, where for the time being, the members mostly sit in centre-right governments.

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38. Calculations by the Robert Schuman Foundation based on data from VoteWatch.eu

39. http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/561-2009_8epa.pdf ; http://www.robert-schuman.eu/question_europe.php?num=qe-189

40. COSTA O., DEHOUSSE R. & TRAKALOVA A., *op. cit.*, pp. 33-39

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ANNEX

New Members of the European Parliament[41]

Modification of protocole 36 in TFEU.

The ratification process came to an end when Belgium approved at the end of November 2011. A clause in the protocol plan that after ratification by the last Member State (ie Belgium in this case) the protocole would enter into force on the first day of the following month: 1/12/2011.

MEP	Country	Party	Election Constituency	Group
Amelia Andersdotter	Suède	Piratpartiet	Suède	Verts
Jens Nilsson	Suède	SAP (sociaux-démocrates)	Suède	S&D
Anthea McIntyre	Royaume-Uni	Conservative Parti	West-Midlands	ECR
Ewald Stadler	Autriche	BZÖ (nationalistes)	Autriche	NI
Josef Weidenholzer	Autriche	SPö	Autriche	S&D
Gino Trematerra	Italie	UDC (chrétiens-démocrates)	Sud	PPE
Karlis Sadurskis	Lettonie	Unity (ex: New Era, centre-droit)	Lettonie	PPE
Joseph Cuschieri	Malte	Labour	Malte	S&D
Arkadiusz Bratkowski	Pologne	PSL (conservateurs)	Pologne	PPE
Swetosław Malinow	Bulgarie	Blue Coalition	Bulgarie	PPE
Zofija Mazej-Kukovic	Slovénie	SDS (centre-droit)	Slovénie	PPE
Yves Cochet	France	EELV	Assemblée nationale	Verts
Jean Roatta	France	UMP	Assemblée nationale	PPE
Dolores García-Hierro	Espagne	PSOE	Espagne	S&D
Vicente Garcés	Espagne	PSOE	Espagne	S&D
Eva Ortiz	Espagne	PP	Espagne	PPE
Salvador Sedo	Espagne	UDC (nationalistes catalans chrétiens-démocrates)	Espagne	PPE
Daniel van der Stoep	Pays-Bas	PVV	Pays-Bas	NI

Source: Julien Bencze, European Parliament

41. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/pressroom/content/20110223BKG69359/html/Parlement-le-processus-de-ratification-de-18-d%C3%A9put%C3%A9s-suppl%C3%A9mentaires-prend-fin>