Symposium Article

Professionalization and socialization of the members of the European Parliament

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Abstract This article provides an overview of the institutionalization of the European Parliament. Quantitative analysis, based on the biographies of Members of European Parliament on the sixth term (between 2004 and 2009), underlines the emergence of specialists who dominate the parliamentary space. First, we point out convergences in the modalities of political and social recruitment. The unattractiveness of the European Parliament (EP), compared to the national political space, has favoured the recruitment of actors who are less endowed with legitimate resources. For numerous members, the EP represents an opportunity for political professionalization. Second, we underline the emergence of a parliamentary elite with specific European resources and career types.

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Introduction

The Europeanization of Members of European Parliament (MEPs) is a central debate between intergovernmentalists and supranationalists within European Studies (Schimmelfeinnig and Rittberger, 2006).¹ The debate dates back to the normative postures put forward by neo-functionalist theorists, who claimed that the election of MEPs by universal suffrage produced a body of professionals constituting a political foundation for the promotion of the Community and its Parliament (Haas, 1968; Cotta, 1984). From this perspective, European socialization, induced by membership of the institution, is perceived as a transfer of loyalty from the national to the European level. Other studies oppose the

evolutionist perspectives implied by these spillover theories. They underline the permanence of national ties and the ineffectiveness of spillover in structural (no emergence of a public or political European space), ideological (no significant conversions to Europe) or sociological terms (no European political class). They emphasize the importance of very nationally centred political careers and the heterogeneity of national processes of selecting representatives (Reif and Schmitt, 1980) and practices of representation (Navarro, 2009), as well as the lack of interest from mostly nationally minded representatives, as shown by high resignation rates (Bryder, 1998). Accordingly, the importance of European Parliament's (EP) internal socialization processes is downplayed. The representatives' pro-European position is perceived as an effect of selection from national parties rather than a conversion through the experience of Europe (Scarrow and Franklin, 1999; Scully, 2005).

These studies provide an alternative to the predictive and normative postures that are very present in the academic literature on the European Union (EU) (Hix *et al*, 2005). However, there are two caveats. First, they neglect the effects of closure linked to institutional construction. Numerous studies published since the 1990s have demonstrated the specialization and rationalization of parliamentary work, following the transformation of institutional configurations brought about by the treaties since 1986 (Bowler and Farrel, 1995; Delwit *et al*, 1999; Costa, 2001). For instance, Hix and Lord (1997) show a shift from an 'exogenous' political system (based on external considerations and constraints) to an 'endogenous' one (based on considerations and constraints determined by the imperatives and specificities of internal games). From a neo-institutionalist perspective based on rational choice approach, A. Kreppel (2002) highlights the constitution of a 'supranational party system', influenced by external evolutions and in which actors develop strategies and use organization skills to respond to these evolutions. The second issue with these studies, and with others inspired by neo-functionalism and neo-institutionalism, is their lack of sociological depth. On the one hand, they neglect the effects of social and political paths on the modalities of investment and the choices made by the actors *in situ*. Their approach is too often descriptive: they do not use the actors' social and political history to put into perspective their stated preferences and practices (votes, number of questions asked, of parliamentary reports and so on). On the other hand, they tend to disregard the consequences of the transformation of the MEPs profiles since the first election with universal suffrage in 1979. These are significant, if relative transformations. Verzichelli and Edinger (2005) analyse the constitution of a 'critical mass of EU representatives', pointing out the permanence of the centrifugal forces opposed to the autonomization and the differentiation of a specifically European elite (especially in terms of careers).

This article aims at going beyond the dilemmas inherent to the debates, often normative, of the first academic studies on the EU. It adopts a political sociology approach (Georgakakis, 2009; Georgakakis and Weisbein, 2010). More precisely, we elaborate on an approach labelled as structural constructivism (Kauppi, 2003). This entails studying Europe as a growing space of power, rather than as a system or a regime (Hix, 1999; Magnette, 2003; Quermonne, 2005) resulting from economic, legal and ideological spillover or as a mere bargaining entirely controlled by Member States (Moravcsik, 1998). In order to analyse the modalities of the EP's institutionalization, we mobilize tools from the sociology of the state (Weber, 1959; Elias, 1991; Georgakakis and Weisbein, forthcoming). The differentiation of this space results from multiple processes of accumulation and concentration of specific resources, under the often unexpected or undesired effect of the 'competitive cooperations' between various actors (European and national officials, political representatives, members of interest groups and so on) who strive to increase their own capacity of action and decision making.

Structural constructivism studies emphasize three complementary elements: first, the importance of the processes through which certain resources ('capital') are concentrated and redefined at European level (Georgakakis and de Lassalle, 2007); second, the emergence of new types of political professionals in charge of individual and collective political enterprises aimed at appropriating specific resources, whose management requires increasingly specialized knowledge (Georgakakis, 2002); third, the existence of socialization processes linked to ensure restrictive access to a space of power involving the existence of shared values, competences and cultures (Georgakakis, 2004a; International Organization, 2005; Michel and Robert, forthcoming). By combining these three elements, we can study the modalities of the invention of a European political and institutional order, both partly differentiated and constantly interdependent from national spaces – a 'multi-level political field' (Kauppi, 2005).

Elaborating on this research, we will show that the institutionalization of the EP should be put into perspective with the emergence of a new category of specialists of political work. This European professionalization is the product of social and political processes, and not the result of ideological choices or a mechanical effect of legal rules (Beauvallet, 2007). Indeed, the peripheral position of the EP in national political spaces makes it less attractive to political elites; this has, in turn, favoured a more open recruitment, with the investment of actors who are less endowed with the most legitimate resources. For a growing number of actors, the EP has constituted an opportunity for professionalization and acquisition of political capital, especially as the increasing importance of the EP within the institutional triangle has helped to give more value to any investment in the Parliament's work. Together with institutional and political evolutions, these socio-political transformations

favour the emergence of actors who are more directly specialized in European spaces, and able to accumulate and concentrate enough internal resources to hold the main leadership positions. The persistent instability of the parliamentary personnel, its strong heterogeneity linked to its multinational character and the practical modalities of election are partly compensated by internal processes restricting the access to the space, the clearest manifestation of which is the strong specialization of leadership positions within the EP.

In order to test our hypothesis, we have built a database of the biographies of elected MEPs between June 2004 and December 2006, with data collected from the institution's official list ($n=732$).² Beyond the national logics and the strong heterogeneity that is representative of a multinational population, the first section will aim at showing the convergences in the modalities of their social and political recruitment. The second section underlines the emergence of a parliamentary elite, that is, specifically European in terms of resources and career types, likely to occupy the main leadership positions within the EP.

The Transformation and Specialization of the MEPs' Recruitment

Studying MEPs' profiles, we observe a degree of convergence in their socio-demographic and political characteristics and a growing mandate stabilization. The EP appears as a privileged space of political investment for MEPs climbing up the political ladder. There is a Europeanization of selection processes, that is, the emergence of explicit and codified norms, which apply to various national contexts. The gaps between MEPs from countries of the 2004 enlargement and the others confirm this conclusion: the former, recently subjected to European regulations, are close to MEPs in the 1980s in terms of characteristics.

The underlying convergence of socio-demographic characteristics

The EP is increasingly considered as an area of political professionalization for a predominantly middle-aged intellectual, partly internationalized and feminized elite.

The professional backgrounds tend to match those of the general political personnel (Best and Cotta, 2004). MEPs have a middle-class profile, with a predominance of jurists and academics (Hix and Lord, 1997; Norris and Franklin, 1997), which is significant in this Community space that is historically based on law and expert competence (Vauchez, 2008). The high level of the degrees obtained by MEPs confirms their intellectual profiles (in the sixth

term, 81 per cent have obtained a university degree, and 26 per cent have completed a PhD). MEPs from accession countries are more academically qualified and have studied Economics, Science and Technology and Health more often than Law and Humanities. They have held more scientific professions and have been senior officials or diplomats (Table 1).

Owing to the internationalization of elites and academic markets (Wagner, 1998), MEPs have increasingly international profiles. In the sixth term of office, 12 per cent of MEPs have obtained a degree in a country other than their own (in Europe, the United States or even Russia for some Eastern European MEPs). They especially come from countries with a more peripheral position in the EU: Hungary, the Czech Republic, Malta and also Portugal and Greece. Going across borders and attending reputable schools in Europe or the United States allows elites from 'small' countries to receive the same training as future elites from 'big' countries, and therefore allows them to be able to acquire resources that can be converted at national or European level.

In terms of age, European representatives are not different from other political professions: most of them are middle aged (Best and Cotta, 2004). In 2006, their mean age rose to 53.3 years (standard deviation of 9.8 years) – the oldest being 82 years, whereas the youngest was 29 years, and the modal age class being between 50 and 60 years (40 per cent of MEPs). This situation is because of a long-term evolution. In 1979, the European political profile was older: the notion of the 'end-of-career' MEP was a prevalent one. During the late 1990s, it was the opposite; the majority of MEPs (73 per cent) was aged between 40 and 60 years, and only 14 per cent of the total were less than 40 years, whereas 13 per cent were more than 60 years (Hix and Lord, 1997). Noticeable variations between countries should be pointed out; Luxembourg, Cyprus, Estonia, France and Italy had high averages – more than 55 years, as opposed to Malta, Hungary, Holland and Sweden.³ Generally speaking, those who are a bit younger are MEPs from left-wing political groups (51 years for the Greens/European Free Alliance (EFA), 52 years for the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), against 54 years for the European Popular Party (EPP), 56 years for the Independence/Democracy Group (ID), and women (51.4 years against 54.2 years).

The proportion of women, which is higher than in most national Parliaments, has doubled between the first parliamentary term and the last two terms: 16 per cent in 1979 and 30 per cent in 1999 and 2004. If the EP is one of the most feminized Parliaments in Europe (Kauppi, 1999; Beauvallet and Michon, 2008), it has not yet achieved parity. Major variations remain between countries, indicating differences between national political spaces. There are fewer women among MEPs from Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Italy, Czech Republic and Latvia. It is the opposite in Sweden – the only country where the number of women is the same as that of men. There are more than

Table 1: Distribution of occupation and degree level

	Total		First 15 countries		Accession countries	
	Number of MEPs	%	Number of MEPs	%	Number of MEPs	%
Farmer	12	2	10	2	2	1
Craftsman-retailer	7	1	7	1	0	0
Company manager	41	6	34	6	7	4
Liberal profession	67	9	51	9	16	10
High official, diplomat	44	6	29	5	15	9
Scientific profession	128	17	72	13	56	34
Teacher in primary or secondary schools	58	8	51	9	7	4
Senior executive – public sector	39	5	30	5	9	5
Information, communication or arts	76	10	59	10	17	10
Senior executive – private sector	82	11	67	12	15	9
Intermediary profession	36	5	35	6	1	1
Employee/worker	17	2	17	3	0	0
N/A	125	18	108	19	17	12
Total	732	100	570	100	162	100
<i>Degree level:</i>						
High school or lower	50	7	48	8	2	1
University (lower than PhD)	400	55	332	58	68	42
Doctorate	188	26	113	20	75	46
N/A	94	13	77	14	17	10
Total	732	100	570	100	162	100
<i>Degree in:</i>						
Law	151	21	128	22	23	14
Political science	49	7	42	7	7	4
Economics	96	13	63	11	33	20
Humanities	181	25	151	26	30	19
Science and technology	79	11	48	8	31	19
Health	36	5	18	3	18	11
N/A	140	19	120	21	20	12
Total	732	100	570	100	162	100

N/A = Unknown.

Table 2: Gender distribution of MEPs elected in June 2004 depending on country of election (ranked in descending order of percentage of women)

<i>Country of election</i>	<i>Percentage of men</i>	<i>Percentage of women</i>	<i>Total</i>
Sweden	47	53	100
Estonia	50	50	100
Netherlands	56	44	100
Denmark	57	43	100
Slovenia	57	43	100
France	58	42	100
Ireland	62	38	100
Lithuania	62	38	100
Hungary	67	38	104
Finland	64	36	100
Slovakia	64	36	100
Austria	67	33	100
Spain	67	33	100
Luxembourg	67	33	100
Germany	68	32	100
Greece	71	29	100
United Kingdom	74	26	100
Belgium	75	25	100
Portugal	75	25	100
Latvia	78	22	100
Czech Republic	79	21	100
Italy	81	19	100
Poland	85	15	100
Cyprus	100	0	100
Malta	100	0	100
Total	69	31	100

40 per cent of women MEPs in the Netherlands, Denmark, Estonia, Slovenia and France (Table 2).

All in all, the MEPs from countries of the 2004 enlargement are less feminized than those from the first 15 (24 per cent against 32 per cent, respectively) and there are more women in centre-left groups (Norris and Franklin, 1997) – Party of the European Socialists group (PSE) (40 per cent of MEPs), 47 per cent for the Greens/EFA – than in the GUE (30 per cent), EPP (23 per cent) and especially ID, Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN) and non-attached (between 11 per cent and 16 per cent).

However, the proportion of women in the EP turns out to be higher than in national parliaments. The EP provides an opportunity for political professionalization to actors whose socio-political profiles are less favourable in political competition than in national political spaces (Beauvallet and Michon, 2008).

Differentiated political careers

If MEPs in the 1980s often had substantial political experience at the national level, in the 1990s – and regardless of the country – many saw the EP as a means of access to political professionalization: it was often a first important mandate (after a local mandate) or a first mandate (35 per cent in the sixth term). It is thanks to Europe that an increasing number of MEPs were able to exercise a political activity that provided them with a full-time salary.

A progressive differentiation in the paths to Europe can be observed: MEPs less often have national parliamentary and government experience. For instance, 45 per cent of MEPs from the first term have already been members of Parliament in their home country, 35 per cent for the second, and only 28 per cent for the fifth. If these proportions have increased in 2004 (36 per cent former MPs), it is especially because of the MEPs from countries of the 2004 enlargement, who tend to come from the centre of national political fields. Indeed, for the first 15 countries, the percentages are rather similar to those of the fifth term (31 per cent). Hence, these results show the disparities within the population. However, these disparities depend on the evolution of the MEPs' mode of recruitment rather than on strictly national oppositions (for example, German/French).

MEPs with substantial political experience at the national level tend to be older men, usually from a right-wing party and from countries of the 2004 enlargement. Thus, 40 per cent of men were elected in one of the national parliaments (against 29 per cent of women) and 18 per cent have occupied governmental positions (11 per cent of women). Most of the oldest MEPs have already had a national mandate: 57 per cent of those under 60 years of age against only 3.5 per cent of those under 45 years. More than one MEP out of three from the UEN group has worked in a government, one out of five from the PPE; UEN and PPE being the two main right-wing groups – only one out of eight from PSE, one from the Greens/EFA and none from GUE.

MEPs from states that accessed the EU in the 2004 enlargement have profiles similar to those from the mid-1980s. MEPs from accession countries are more frequently male, older, more right wing⁴ and have a national-level parliamentary experience (50 per cent against 31 per cent of the first fifteen), regardless of whether they are Latvian, Estonian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Lithuanian, Polish, Hungarian or Czech. Among the first 15, only those from Portugal (71 per cent) and Finland (77 per cent) have high rates as compared to those from Holland (7 per cent), Germany (14 per cent) and Britain (16 per cent). In the same way, former government members represent 78 per cent of Latvians, 50 per cent of Estonians, 43 per cent of Slovenians, only 5 per cent of British, 0 per cent of Germans and Dutch. Among the first 15 countries, only Ireland and Portugal are an exception (Table 3).

Table 3: Proportions of MEPs of the sixth term having previously exercised a national mandate or been a member of Government according to country of election (data from late 2006)

<i>Country of election</i>	<i>National parliament (%)</i>	<i>Former members of Government (%)</i>
France	26	18
Germany	14	0
Italy	31	12
Belgium	42	33
Netherlands	7	0
Luxembourg	67	67
United Kingdom	16	5
Ireland	69	46
Denmark	42	8
Spain	43	9
Portugal	71	38
Greece	25	17
Sweden	50	5
Finland	77	31
Austria	44	6
Hungary	46	29
Slovakia	77	31
Poland	49	22
Czech Republic	50	13
Lithuania	54	31
Estonia	83	50
Latvia	100	78
Slovenia	57	43
Malta	20	20
Cyprus	67	17
Total	36	16
	(31% for the first 15)	(12% for the first 15)

Bearing in mind the national divergences that are still present, as we will see, political careers appear clearly Europe-specialized. MEPs can no longer have double mandates (national and European): Under the first term (1979–1984), 31 per cent still held double mandates against less than 7 per cent under the fifth term (1999–2004) before the ban of this practice institutionalized a norm already implicit in a lot of Member States. This practice was in fact strongly contested and stigmatized in the EP itself.⁵

Mandates in the EP have become increasingly stable and durable: during the fifth term (1999–2004), less than 15 per cent of MEPs resigned during their mandate (24 per cent under the first term), and close to one MEP out of two was re-elected (Bryder, 1998; Corbett *et al.*, 2000). 15 per cent of the MEPs in the sixth term (2004–2009) from the first 15 countries have already been MEPs

(43 per cent in total). It is only since the third term (1989–1994) that MEPs started joining the EP for longer periods (Marrel and Payre, 2006). Halfway through the sixth term, MEPs from the first 15 countries have 7.1 years of presence and 2.0 mandates on average.

Variations between national delegations have tended to decrease and an overarching pattern has emerged. This reality is more explicit within major delegations whose number of MEPs easily allows statistically significant historical comparisons. Between 1979 and 1994, 58 per cent of the English and 43 per cent of Germans accumulate up to 7.5 years of presence at the EP against 25 per cent of the French and 28 per cent of Italians (Scarrow, 1997). In the sixth term, it is certainly always the Germans and the British who have the longest seniority (Table 4): During the 2004 elections, more than two German MEPs, and out of three and close to/almost four British out of five were re-elected; they have 2.4 and 2.3 mandates in average per MEP against 2.0 for the French, 1.8 for the Italians, 1.4 for the Portuguese, 1.4 for the Swedish and 1.3 for the Greeks.⁶ But this pattern also increasingly affects, for instance, the French (from 31 per cent of re-elected MEPs in 1999 to 45 per cent in 2004).

Beyond the persistence of relationships of dependence inherent in an institutional space, that consists of actors elected in national contexts whose functioning and structure remain very diverse, the relative convergence of parliamentary profiles tends to show feedback effects of the institutionalization of the EP. The variations of the MEPs' recruitment go hand in hand with the autonomization of the internal functioning of the institution and its government.

The Emergence of a Parliamentary Elite and the Relative Closure of the Space

The analysis of the institution's distribution of power and leadership positions (Presidency, vice-presidency and Quaestors, presidency and vice-presidency of political groups and parliamentary committees)⁷ shows the importance of the types of legitimacy and resources specific to the EP. Gradually, the actors who have the most European professionalization and the most internal political resources have taken control of leadership positions in the institution: specifically, European resources have prevailed over national resources.

The study of the characteristics of MEPs, who hold leadership positions in the institution during the sixth term, confirms variations that were observed in the late 1990s, when there was a notable Europeanization in the EP (Beauvallet, 2005). In addition to the stabilization of the political personnel, seniority favours access to these positions, with an average of at least 2.5 mandates (against 1.8 mandate out of the total of MEPs). The presidency of a

Table 4: Indicators of seniority at the EP according to country of election of the sixth term MEPs (decreasing order)

<i>Country of election</i>	<i>Total number of MEPs</i>	<i>Average number of mandates at Parliament</i>	<i>Average number of years at the EP (on 1 July 2006)</i>
Germany	99	2.4	9.0
United Kingdom	78	2.3	8.2
Austria	18	2.2	6.9
Belgium	24	2.0	6.3
France	78	2.0	6.4
Luxembourg	6	2.0	6.1
Denmark	14	1.9	6.3
Spain	54	1.9	6.3
Finland	14	1.9	5.7
Italy	78	1.8	5.7
Netherlands	27	1.8	5.7
Ireland	13	1.5	3.9
Portugal	24	1.4	3.8
Sweden	19	1.4	3.7
Greece	24	1.3	3.5
Cyprus	6	1.0	2.0
Estonia	6	1.0	2.0
Hungary	24	1.0	2.0
Latvia	9	1.0	2.0
Lithuania	13	1.0	2.0
Malta	5	1.0	2.0
Poland	54	1.0	2.0
Czech Republic	24	1.0	2.0
Slovakia	14	1.0	2.0
Slovenia	7	1.0	2.0
Total	732	1.8	5.5
		(2.0 for the first 15)	(6.6 for the first 15)

political group is the most seniority-dependent function: the (former and current) group presidents have exercised close to four mandates.⁸ Then comes membership in the bureau of the EP (2.9 mandates) and the presidency of a committee (2.8 mandates), which suggests that specifically European resources are key in order to reach central leadership positions within the space.⁹ Finally, vice presidencies of committees (2.4 mandates) appear to be more accessible and less central. Logically, when taking experience into account, the inclusion or the non-inclusion of MEPs from countries of the 2004 enlargement alters the averages obtained. MEPs holding leadership positions have, above all, a high number of years of service in the EP in common (Table 5).

The importance of seniority in the structuring of the parliamentary space is especially highlighted by a multiple correspondence analysis. This statistical

Table 5: MEPs of the sixth term's average number of mandates and years of service in the EP according to present and past leadership positions (data from late 2006)

	MEPs of the 25			MEPs of the 15 (without the 10 accession countries in 2004)		
	Number of MEPs	Average number of mandates	Average number of years of service in the EP	Number of MEPs	Average number of mandates	Average number of years of service in the EP
Bureau of the EP	33	2.9	10.8	32	2.9	11.1
Group president	14	3.9	16	16	3.9	16
Committee president	32	2.8	10.9	28	3.1	12.2
Group vice president	54	2.8	10.1	50	2.9	10.8
Committee vice president	115	2.4	8.4	96	2.6	9.7
Leadership position (Parliament presidency and vice presidency, committee, group)	189	2.5	9.1	167	2.7	10.1
Total	732	1.8	5.5	570	2.0	6.6

technique consists of associating several variables. By studying the proximities and the distinctions between variables and groups and distributing the main correspondences on different axes, it describes the principles that structure the MEPs' space according to their socio-political and institutional characteristics.¹⁰ The three most important axes represent 13.25 per cent, 10.30 per cent and 9.85 per cent of the inertia. The first axis represents the MEPs' volume of political and cultural capital: on the one hand, those who have more capital (former ministers, members of a national parliament, PhD holders) – mostly men, quite old, from countries of the 2004 enlargement – on the other hand, those whose political capital is often based on party or activist resources, more often women, younger and less qualified. The second axis underlines the structure of political capital: this sets MEPs who are more endowed in terms of local capital (mayors, former national MPs) against those who are more experienced in the EP (five mandates and more) and whose career has been focused on Europe for several terms. The third axis represents seniority and responsibilities within the EP, separating MEPs who exercise or have exercised responsibilities within the Parliament (members of the bureau, president and vice president of a committee or a group), rather old (between 55 and 65 years of age), having several mandates, from the least experienced who are often women, young and members of smaller groups (GUE/NGL, Greens/EFA, Independence and Democracy) (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: A multiple correspondence analysis representing the distribution of socio-political and institutional characteristics of the sixth term MEPs (axes 1 and 2).

Figure 2: A multiple correspondence analysis representing the distribution of socio-political and institutional characteristics of the sixth term MEPs (axes 1 and 3).

The prevalence of seniority on the second and third axis sheds light on the importance of institutional credit based on controlling internal networks, mastering specific skills and expertise and acquiring the practical sense of political games in the European space (which allows the actors to act and to develop relevant political strategies). However, other elements should not be overlooked.

MEPs who hold leadership positions in the EP are more often men and senior officials/diplomats. The clear prevalence of men reproduces the gender hierarchies of the political field. Even though women, compared to the feminization of national parliaments, seem to benefit from a much easier access to the EP, gender discriminations remain: they represent around 30 per cent of the parliament, but only 14 per cent are or have been president of a political group, 19 per cent president of a committee, 22.5 per cent vice president of a committee. Although gender inequalities have tended to diminish in terms of access to the EP, as shown by the increasing feminization of some delegations compared to tendencies in national parliaments, to some extent, they endure in the institution (Kauppi, 1999; Beauvallet and Michon, 2008), showing especially the effect of political capital and the prevalence of seniority.

The high number of former senior officials and of diplomats (22 per cent of Presidents of Committees and 13 per cent of Vice Presidents of committees against 7 per cent of the total population) shows the importance of skills and symbolic indicators linked to the internationalization of political life within the

parliamentary space. These professions allow the development of dispositions and skills, which encourage the acquisition of the European institutional capital, such as the familiarity with multinational political spaces, the command of foreign languages, as well as subtle games of negotiations and compromises. These MEPs' dispositions are activated in this arena, contrary to those who do not have them and have to make more effort to acquire them and earn their place in the Parliament. In fact, national experience does not appear significant in this regard according to the statistics. It appears determinant only insofar as resources and political capital acquired on the national scene are Europeanized, by means of an investment in the parliament. MEPs who have already held leadership positions, taken into consideration here, do not have more or less experience at national level.

The role of some variables is obvious. But it is seniority in parliament, which appears to be the most clear-cut, as shown by the logistic regression. The proposed model, explaining the occupation of a leadership position (member of the EP bureau, presidency or vice presidency of a committee or group), includes the main variables: the number of mandates at the EP, having formerly exercised a national mandate (member of the government and/or MP), degree level and gender. The model specifies the number of mandates at the EP as the most important variable (Table 6). In other words, MEPs with long seniority are more likely to hold a leadership position, *ceteris paribus*. Apart from seniority, it is worth noting that, in the model below, only the degree level is significant: the most highly qualified are more likely to hold a leadership position in the EP. On the contrary, political experience at national level and gender are not significant.

Interpretation: The modality that we aim to explain is 'occupation of a leadership position' (EP bureau, presidency or vice presidency of committees or groups). We perform a logit estimation of the model. A statistically significant and positive value shows that a modality increases the chances of an MEP holding a leadership position, *ceteris paribus*. A statistically significant and negative value shows that we are dealing with a modality that decreases the chances of an MEP holding a leadership position. The odds ratios are calculated based on the reference modality. The baseline ('ref') is a male MEP elected for the second time in the EP in 2004, who has never had a mandate at national level (member of a government or parliament) and whose degree level is greater or equivalent to baccalaureate but less than master's.

Even though they still depend on other factors (configuration of the relationships between political groups and delegations within groups), the processes of internal mobility remain linked to the amount of European or Europeanized political resources held. The data thus confirm the autonomization and the growing professionalization of the European parliamentary

Table 6: Model of logistic regression of the occupation of a leadership position at the EP by MEPs of the sixth term ($c = 0.768$; 74.3 per cent concordant) (ns: non-significant and ref: baseline)

	<i>Odds-ratio</i>	<i>Occupation of leader ship position</i>	<i>Significance</i>
<i>Number of mandates at the EP</i>			
One mandate	0.287	-1.6009	<0.0001
Two mandates	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Three mandates	2.820	0.6827	0.0006
Four mandates and more	5.086	1.2724	<0.0001
<i>Former national mandate (government and/or parliament)</i>			
Already exercised	1.389	0.1642	0.1244 (ns)
Never exercised	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
<i>Degree level</i>			
≤ baccalaureate	0.391	-0.7028	0.0200
]baccalaureate-master[	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
≥ master	1.257	0.4656	0.0108
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Female	0.720	-0.1641	0.1478 (ns)
Number of observations		635	

space, with a specific organization, symbolic resources and specific practices (Beauvallet and Michon, 2007).

The emergence of European political careers and the identification of an institutional elite are related to processes of mobility within the space. Actors coming from a core of professionals control the parliament and its major organs (political groups and parliamentary committees). The data show the importance of authority gained through long-term investment in the EP. The EP and its major internal structures (Bureau, political groups and committees) are governed by actors with a profile of 'professionals of Europe'. These figures also represent the institution and embody its specific charisma. From this point of view, the contrast with the 1980s now seems very strong. Between 1979 and 1987, figures such as Simone Veil (France, president from 1979 to 1982) was the former Health Minister to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (President of the Republic of France from 1974 to 1981), or Pierre Pflimlin (France, 1984–1987) – older, who have participated in World War II and who have held mandates at national and local level – seemed to better embody the EP. Between 1994 and 2008, figures such as Klaus Hänsch (Germany, 1994–1997), José-Maria Gil

Robles Gil-Delgado (Spain, 1979–1999), Nicole Fontaine (France, 1999–2002) and Hans-Gert Pöttering (2007–2009), with careers above all centred on the institution have been prevalent.

Conclusion

The results of this research show that, in the European parliamentary space, positions are structured around the distribution of specific resources, linked to the exercise of a European mandate and to the effective participation of actors in the political games at European level. The control of these resources seems to be essential to the acquisition of particular forms of credit necessary for obtaining the occupation of leadership positions at the EP from one's peers. The study of leadership positions through quantitative data shows the increasing importance of properties emanating from involvement and action within the parliamentary space itself (seniority, investments in the institution and its organs on a long-term basis). These properties seem ever more decisive in the access to the main positions of the EP. These transformations attest to a process of Europeanization of the parliamentary elite: MEPs earn their positions at the EP by acquiring specialized resources. The control of these different elements and the progressive acquisition of a real practical sense of Europe give individuals a fraction of this institutional charisma that is necessary for laying claim to the exercise of internal power.

Leadership positions in the EP depend on a particular form of symbolic internal political capital. Associated with continuous investment in the institution, a large relational network, practical control of institutional and inter-institutional games this political credit is an alternative to other types of political capital (acquired at national level) that are less valuable in the EP. In this sense, the EP indeed functions as a socialization environment: MEPs can develop their knowledge and skills there, their beliefs, legitimate ways of operating that have progressively become necessary for those who wish to enter the institutional game, acquire its 'practical sense' (Bourdieu, 1998) and obtain the available 'trophies'.

Notes

1 We thank Jean-Yves Bart, Didier Georgakakis and the reviewers for helpful comments.

2 The list does not take into account the Bulgarian and Romanian MEPs who accessed the EP in 2007. It includes indicators linked to their demographical properties (gender, age), to socio-cultural properties (level and type of degree, past profession), to dispositions to internationalization (foreign degrees), to their political paths (type of mandates, career characteristics), as well as to their investment in the EP: Committees in which they sit, number of mandates and

years in the EP, positions of power exercised (presidency and vice presidency of committees, of groups, member of the Bureau, delegation presidency), elements available on the EP website. Most of the present material comes from biographical dictionaries. These data are completed by an overview of information from the existing literature, which allows us to carry out useful diachronic comparisons.

- 3 French MEPs, who are among the oldest in the parliament (56 years and 2 months), are, nevertheless, younger than national MPs (56 years and 9 months; (source: French national assembly) and senators (61 years; source: French Senate, 2008).
- 4 The enlargement was beneficial to right-wing political groups: although MEPs from the 10 accession countries of 2004 represent 22 per cent of the Parliament, the UEN group is mostly composed of MEPs from accessing countries, the EPP composed of one-fourth, and there are only 15 per cent of them in the three left-wing groups (only 2 per cent for the Greens/EFA, 17 per cent for PSE and 20 per cent for GUE).
- 5 Included in several national legislations, the prohibition of the combination of European and national mandates was introduced in 2002 in the Brussels' Act of 20 November 1976 on the election of MEPs.
- 6 On average, 9 and 8.2 years at the EP for the Germans and the British against 6.4 years for the French (in the fourth position), only 3.7 and 3.5 for the Swedish and the Greeks, 5.5 for all of them and 6.6 for those from the first 15. Owing to a number of elements specific to this country (in particular, the mode of election), the British seem to be, however, a more Europe-specialized personnel than average (Westlake, 2004).
- 7 These positions are filled every 2.5 years, at the beginning and in the middle of each of the terms. The bureau is elected by secret ballot and by an absolute majority of member votes and the number of votes determines the order of precedence. The group's presidents are elected based on principles that are similar in each group, whereas the committee presidents (in the same way as presidents of delegations and vice presidents of committees and delegations) are designated using the 'd'Hondt system': the number of each group's appointed positions depends on the number of members; the groups then share the positions that they were attributed between their different delegations, and eventually internal delegations in the groups submit names for given positions (but this choice must be endorsed by the group bureau). Their strategic character has considerably increased along with the complexity of parliamentary games, the growth of the institution's internal division of labour and the affirmation of the EP in inter-institutional games.
- 8 In this sense, the appointment of J. Daul as the leader of the EPP group after only one mandate and a half is exceptional. As soon as he arrived in the EP, however, different elements gave him symbolic resources and specialized skills likely to be promptly made profitable in the EP.
- 9 The institutionalization of the EP and the development of the internal political division of labour, which has resulted from the diversification of its skills, match, on the institutional level, the increasing domination of hierarchical structures (the bureau), of political groups and parliamentary committees.
- 10 The active variables are: gender, four indicators of political career (having formerly been a minister, national MP, local representative and mayor), two indicators of diploma (degree level and being a PhD holder) and finally, two indicators on career at the EP (the number of mandates in the EP and the occupation of a leadership position in the EP). Owing to an excessively large number of modalities and sometimes a small number of MEPs, the initial profession, nationality and detailed leadership positions (member of the bureau, presidency and vice presidency of committees and groups) are supplementary variables; they do not contribute to the construction of the axes but can be projected on the map with the active variables.

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