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The Sources of Committee Influence in the European Parliament

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of**

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Abstract

The European Parliament (EP) has evolved into a powerful legislative actor over the past 40 years. In order to exercise its hard won legislative competencies in an efficient and effective manner the EP has developed an extensive and influential committee system. The Treaty of Lisbon (ToL) recognised its equal status as co-legislator with the Council of the EU and introduced the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP) as the default EU legislative procedure. Despite the fact that after the introduction of the OLP all EP committees formally operate under the same legal procedure, disparities remain in the levels of influence that each committee commands. This state of affairs demonstrates that if we are to understand what drives committee influence we need to explore the informal sources of influence that committees draw on in addition to the formal rules.

This project addresses the lack of understanding of how the committees establish legislative influence by identifying and testing the different resources which committees may be utilising to establish their influence. The thesis puts forward four hypotheses concerning the factors that can account for how committees establish influence. These are developed and tested within three case studies. The case studies comprise the highly influential committees on, firstly, the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee, secondly, the Budget Committee and, thirdly, the International Trade Committee.

The research project adopts a qualitative approach to complement and create a different perspective from the quantitative studies which dominate the field. It draws on extensive primary material from thirty semi-structured interviews held with MEPs, advisers, EP staff and party officials active in the 7th legislative term (2009-2014). A number of the current conventions concerning the way in which expertise, partisan dynamics, and policy outputs affect how committees establish legislative influence are challenged and new insights regarding their relative importance are offered. Overall, these original findings, contained within this dissertation, have highly significant implications, not only with regard to the committee system of the EP but, also, for the wider field of legislative politics.

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Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature _____

Printed name David Alisdair Alexander

Abbreviations

AFCO	Committee on Constitutional Affairs
AFET	Committee on Foreign Affairs
AGRI	Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
ALDE	Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
BUDG	Committee on Budgets
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CCP	Common Commercial Policy
CEPS	Centre for European Policy Studies
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CONT	Committee on Budgetary Control
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CRIM	Special Committee on Organised Crime, Corruption and Money Laundering
CULT	Committee on Culture and Education
DEVE	Committee on Development
DG	Directorate General
DROI	Subcommittee on Human Rights
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists Group
ECON	Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
EESA	European External Action Service
EFA	European Free Alliance
EFD	Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group
EMPL	Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
ENVI	Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
EP	European Parliament
EPP	Group of the European People's Party
EU	European Union

FEMM	Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
Greens	Group of the Greens
GUE	Confederal Group of the European United Left
IMCO	Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection
INTA	Committee on International Trade
ITRE	Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
JURI	Committee on Legal Affairs
LIBE	Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NGL	Nordic Green Left
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NI	Non-Attached Members
NMS	New Member States
OJ	Official Journal of the European Union
OLP	Ordinary Legislative Procedure
PECH	Committee on Fisheries
PETI	Committee on Petitions
PES	Party of European Socialists
QMV	Qualified Majority Voting
REGI	Committee on Regional Development
SEA	Single European Act
S&D	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
SEDE	Subcommittee on Security and Defence
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
ToL	Treaty of Lisbon

TPC	Trade Policy Committee
TRAN	Committee on Transport and Tourism
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
US	United States

Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The European Parliament (EP) has undergone a dramatic evolution in its role as a legislative actor over the comparatively short period since its establishment (McCormick 2015).¹ The EP has transformed from being a non-elected consultative ‘talking shop’ into becoming a fully elected co-legislator representing the democratic interests of the people of Europe. While the EP, as a single entity, has been the subject of significant, and growing amounts of, academic attention (Westlake 1994, Tsebelis 1994, Kreppel 2002a, 2002b, Judge & Earnshaw 2003, Rittberger 2007, Hix *et al* 2007, Corbett *et al* 2007, 2011) the system of committees, which the Parliament uses to operate efficiently, has been woefully neglected despite its vital importance to the formation of the EP’s position on all legislation (Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Whitaker 2011, Yordanova 2013).

Furthermore, the role and importance of EP committees has grown significantly since the Treaty of Lisbon (ToL) (2007) (enacted 2009), which recognized the EP as a full co-legislator alongside the Council of Ministers (Duff 2009, Judge & Earnshaw 2011). While some attempts have been made to address a lack of scholarly attention over the role of EP committees, with the most notable examples being the studies by Whitaker (2011) and Yordanova (2013), the issue of EP committee influence within the EU legislative process requires further attention. Within the timeframe of this thesis (the 7th legislative term 2009-2014), it is particularly puzzling that while all EP committees enjoy the same legislative powers since the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, some committees continue to be more influential than others. While committees of the EP have been acknowledged as influential legislative actors (Corbett *et al* 2007, Ringe 2009, Whitaker 2011, Yordanova 2013), how committees practically establish and maintain their influence, remains vague. By drawing upon a range of comparative studies from the US Congress (Shepsle & Weingast 1981, 1987, Baron & Ferejohn 1989, Krehbiel *et al* 1987, Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, 1990, Krehbiel 1991, 2004, Cox & McCubbins 2007a, 2007b) and other national committee systems within Europe (Arter 1984, 1990, 2008, Della Sala 1993, Norton &

¹ The parliament has matured significantly over a relatively short period of time since its 1952 inception as a debating chamber and its establishment in 1979 as a fully elected parliamentary body. Many other parliamentary

Olson 1996, Strøm 1998, Grøn *et al* 2015), this thesis addresses the highly pertinent research question: “*how do committees establish legislative influence?*” The thesis, therefore, does not retread the well-worn ground attempting to measure EP influence, rather it is concerned with identifying the sources of committee influence, through an in-depth comparative analysis of three prominent EP committees during the 7th parliamentary term (2009-2014).

The context of the EP’s legislative committee system is examined within the first section of this chapter in order to begin to highlight the outstanding puzzles surrounding committee influence. The chapter discusses how the central research question was arrived at, and why it is of vital importance to have this answered within the context of EP committees. This discussion is conducted alongside an account of the potential variables identifiable within the study. The chapter presents a research design to elaborate on the choices made over the research methods, and the theoretical perspective that this thesis has adopted to generate a better understanding of the topic. Finally an outline of the decision making process of the EU is presented to ensure the reader understands the backgrounds and the environment within which EP committees work. This introductory chapter concludes by outlining the structure of this thesis with an overview of all chapters contained within.

1.2 Legislative Committees

With the enactment of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 at the start of the 7th parliamentary term (2009-2014), the legislative powers of the EP have increased significantly. The extension of the co-decision procedure, known after the ToL as the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP), into all policy areas² has established the EP as an equal co-legislator with the Council of Ministers (Duff 2009, Judge & Earnshaw 2011). As a result of these new powers, the pressure the EP has been under to be an increasingly efficient actor within the EU legislative process has intensified (Jensen & Winzen 2012). This is important, as to maintain itself as a relevant policy actor (an actor deserving of influence) the Parliament must demonstrate its continued ability to deal efficiently with an increasing workload of policy proposals (Kreppel 2003).

² Except for the limited policy areas of tax and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

Committees, in theory, result from the need for greater specialization as governmental systems develop and the policy problems they face become more complex (Blondel 1969, Krehbiel 1991, Mattson & Strøm 1996, Strøm 1998, Shaw 1998). As a result committees often become privileged subsets of legislative actors, due to their ability to deal with complex legislation in an efficient way that the main chamber of a parliament could not achieve (Krehbiel 1991, Strøm 1998). If a parliamentarian wants to influence a policy he/she will do it through a committee (Mattson & Strøm 1996, Longley & Davidson 1998). Committees, therefore, become conduits for the parliament and its members to actively influence legislative outcomes.

In order to operate efficiently, the EP, as with many other parliaments (Blondel 1969, Strøm 1998), has adopted a system of legislative committees. Increasingly the EP has had to deal with complex policy matters, and it is within the EP committees that legislative specialization takes place in order to process these multifaceted issues of legislation (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Dinan 2005). It is also within the committees that the formal positions of the whole EP towards legislative proposals are formulated (Tsebelis & Kalandrakis 1999, Yordanova 2013). The EP committees set the agenda of the Parliament's position towards legislative proposals as it is extremely rare for the EP to amend committee reports in plenary: in fact, it follows the committee reports, largely, *verbatim* (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Tsebelis & Kalandrakis 1999, Yordanova 2009a, 2013). Thus, the committees are the main conduits through which parliamentary legislation takes place and, as a result, the most appropriate way for a member of the Parliament to participate and influence legislation is by being a member of a committee (Jensen & Winzen 2012).

While committees of the EP have been recognized as highly influential legislative actors (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Kreppel 2002a, McElroy 2006, 2013, Corbett *et al* 2007, Ringe 2009, Whitaker 2011, Yordanova 2013)³, how they are able to establish themselves in this role remains significantly understudied. Simply stating an actor has a formal power does not equate to practical influence. Influence is only realised once a committee mobilises the resources it has at its disposal (Bowler &

³ See chapter 2 for a detailed account of how committees are practically assessed as influential.

Farrell 1995). Indeed, many successful outcomes result from informal interplays between actors outside the formal institutional conventions (Farrell & Héritier 2003, Häge & Kaeding 2007). Interactions such as ‘trialogue’, where the EP (in the form of committee members in the relevant area), the Council and the Commission meet informally to discuss compromise agreements is a prime example of an informal interaction which has now become a central element of the EU legislative decision making process (Judge & Earnshaw 2011).

Previous attempts to understand the influence of EP committees have often only focused on the formal powers, which a committee has to potentially affect legislative outcomes. Work on the EP’s influence has often examined it under different legislative procedures in an attempt to measure when it was either more or less influential according to the application of formal rules (Tsebelis 1995, 1997, Moser 1996, 1997, Tsebelis & Garrett 1997a, 2000, 2001, Garrett & Tsebelis 1997, Scully 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, Crombez 1997, 2000). These ‘legalist’ approaches, as they have been termed (Häge & Kaeding 2007: 345), while contributing significantly to the field have, however, been criticised for being sometimes too narrow in their normative assumptions over the concept of ‘influence’ (Thomson & Hosli 2006: 415), too focused upon the use of purely theoretical or quantitative methodologies (Kreppel 2002b), and often not taking account of the informal factors at play behind the scenes when attempting to understand influence (Häge & Kaeding 2007).⁴ The quantitative approaches, which have dominated the field, have notably been inconsistent in their findings, differing in their conclusions over EP committee influence, despite often using matching data sets.⁵ Furthermore, these approaches which have been adopted in the field, especially when formal legislative processes are uniform as they were during the timescale of this study, the 7th parliamentary term (2009-2014)⁶, offer little understanding of how committees can be influential and the source(s) they draw upon for this influence. Overall no current consensus exists as to how different sources of influence help to establish a committee’s legislative influence as all committees operate under uniform legislative rules.

⁴ Most approaches previously did not account for the role of EP committees within the parliament, but rather focused upon the influence of the parliament overall in policy areas.

⁵ As will be discussed in more detail within the methodological section, this thesis adopts a qualitative approach to address and counterbalance the dominance of the quantitative studies within the area of legislative politics.

⁶ At the start of the 7th term the ToL came into effect making co-decision the default legislative procedure.

Despite the default application of the OLP some committees operate better, and are more able to establish a high level of influence, than others.

1.3 The Puzzle

All committees of the European Parliament, upon entering into the 7th parliamentary term (2009-2014) with the enactment of the ToL (2009), operated under the same legislative procedures. As a result of the uniformity of legislative procedure, with the introduction of the OLP, all committees are, in theory, equal in legislative influence having matching formal powers to impact legislative outcomes. In practice, however, committees are not uniform in their influence and this has been observed empirically (Corbett *et al* 2007, Yordanova 2013). It is here that the central puzzle of this thesis becomes apparent. Before the ToL, differences between the levels of influence of committees could have been attributed to a disparity of formal powers. That is, to the fact that some committees operated under co-decision (more influential) whereas others did not (less influential) (Yordanova 2009a: 256). The literature on what renders EP committees influential has focused on one dominant explanatory factor, the formal rules of legislative institutions, along with some focus on expertise, partisanship, or policy type. A disparity of formal powers has, however, now been eliminated as a variable impacting committee influence with the blanket application of OLP. After Lisbon the explanation for some committees having a significantly higher level of influence, above others, is not readily apparent. It is, therefore, the aim of this thesis to go beyond formal procedures as an indicator of influence, and to test alternative explanations that explore the relevance of other potential indicators.

Furthermore, some of the assumptions, which have previously been made over sources of committee influence, such as the role of committee specialization, committee unity and policy output, may be ready for questioning. Empirical research on specific EP committees has emerged that shows committees not considered particularly well endowed with expertise can still, potentially, be highly influential (for example the International Trade committee (INTA⁷) (Woolcock (2010a) and possibly

⁷ Appendix I contains list of EP Committee for the 7th term.

the Environmental, Public Health and Food Safety committee (ENVI) (McCormick 2001), or that committees where partisan divisions are not unknown can be among the most influential in the chamber (the ENVI committee being the prime example (Burns 2013a)). By focusing exclusively on one source of committee influence, most studies (with the notable exception of Whitaker (2011) and Yordanova (2013)) thus, only portray a partial view of committee influence and its drivers. A theory of committee influence is lacking as there is little consensus on the source of committee influence. The present study approaches committee influence as the result of the confluence of a number of factors (sources of influence) rather than as attributable to one single cause. It is from this puzzle that the research question below is devised. Ultimately this thesis seeks to test the validity of previous assumptions, against the case study of the EP committee system, to gain a better understanding of the interplay and totality of committee sources of influence, with findings having implications outside of the EU.

A number of comparative studies have attempted to understand the ‘why’, and to an extent the ‘how’, committees are powerful or influential in the context of the US Congress and in other systems around Europe, such as the Nordic parliaments. The committees of the US Congress have been well established as significant legislative actors in a wide range of studies (Lees 1979, Feller *et al* 1979, Shepsle 1979, 1986, Weingast *et al* 1981, Shepsle & Weingast 1987, 1994, Krehbiel *et al* 1987, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Weingast 1989, Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, 1990, Krehbiel 1991, 2004, Cox & McCubbins 2007a, 2007b, Kellermann & Shepsle 2009⁸). However, despite several studies (Corbett *et al* 2007, Ringe 2009, Whitaker 2011) establishing EP committees as significant actors, no clear consensus has been forthcoming regarding the sources of their influence (Yordanova 2013), hence the evidence is currently inconclusive.

⁸ These US congressional studies have been used as a point of reference to conduct the present study, as EP committees have been considered, in some examples, as having more in common with the influential committees of the US Congress, than most other comparable European systems (Ringe 2009, Yordanova 2013).

1.4 Research Question

The aim of this thesis is to develop an understanding of sources of committee influence in the context of the EP. The main research question, derived from the puzzle stated above, is therefore; *'How do committees establish legislative influence?'* By answering this question a better understanding of how committees in the EP can establish themselves as influential actors, able to impact outcomes, under uniform procedures, can be gained. It is important that these sources of committee influence are understood, as committees are the only direct route with which democratically elected legislators can impact the policy making process on behalf of their constituents (Longley & Davidson 1998, Jensen & Winzen 2011). Without strong committees, legislation could become the realm of non-elected technocrats and administrators (Krehbiel 1991, Arter 2008). It is, therefore, important to actually have a firm understanding of how committees are able to assert their influence, as one does not currently exist. Indeed, without the committees of the EP processing legislation, the plenary of the EP would not have the resources to efficiently deal with the legislative responsibility it has been given (Kreppel 2003, Maurer 2003), and this would allow the Council and the Commission, or more likely their administrative arms, the COREPER⁹ and Directorate Generals (DGs) wings, to dominate decision making, significantly weakening democratic oversight. This, however, is not a factor limited to the EU, but all committee legislative systems. Therefore, this study does not only speak to the EU, but, also, looks to further general understanding of these institutional, legislative committees, so vital to democratic systems and which are affected by similar phenomena. If a committee better understands how it can be influential the quality of representative democracy could be improved, avoiding the development of a less accountable, bureaucratic, administrative system.

By answering the research question, this thesis will generate empirical data that has not been accessible until now. It is the perspective (supported with empirical evidence) of this thesis that committees rather than utilising a single source of influence, such as specialist expertise, can potentially draw upon a range of different identifiable sources to be influential. The extent to which a

⁹ *'Comité des représentants permanents'*, or 'Committee of Permanent Representatives' (COREPER) acts as the Council's administrative arm.

particular committee draws upon different sources of influence will be significantly illuminated by this thesis. A number of different sources (the ‘independent variables’) may, indeed, impact upon the dependent variable ‘committee legislative influence’.

1.4.1 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of this study is ‘committee legislative influence’. Committee influence is defined as the ability of a committee to alter, or attain, a legislative outcome towards its own desired preferences (Costello & Thomson 2013). It may not, in all repeated interactions, achieve a perfect outcome but will more times than not invariably demonstrate the ability to gain an end product closer to its ideal preferences. This phenomenon of committee influence has been observed within the comparative field and many studies (Romer & Rosenthal 1978, Lees & Shaw 1979, Riker 1980, Shepsle & Weingast 1984, Tsebelis 1994, Mattson & Strøm 1996, 2006, Strøm 1998) have identified the concept and observed it empirically within a number of systems. Much has, indeed, been written within the context of the United States Congress about the existence of committee influence and the potential variables that may impact upon it due to the significant democratic role they play (Shepsle & Weingast 1987, Krehbiel *et al* 1987); however, within the context of the EP, understanding of committee influence is still developing. Committee influence is an identifiable phenomenon within the EP, which has been established, empirically, within current literature (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Kreppel 2002a, Farrell & Héritier 2004, McElroy 2006, 2008, Corbett *et al* 2007, Ringe 2009, Whitaker 2011, Yordanova 2013).¹⁰ The object of this thesis is to therefore, understand the phenomenon of committee influence by testing the different potential independent variables, within committees established as influential, in order to determine how it is actually manifested.

1.4.2 Independent Variables

The independent variables of this study are the different potential ‘sources of influence’ that a committee can draw upon to establish and exercise influence. It is these potential sources that enable legislative influence; however, the patterns over how and to what extent, different committees draw

¹⁰ For a discussion of how this is established see chapter two.

upon different sources to be influential remain to be unravelled and understood. A number of potential sources of committee influence have been identified within comparative studies. These perspectives, however, have yet to be extensively tested in the context of the EP system for their validity. This thesis will test the four main sources of influence currently proposed: (1) levels of committee ‘policy making expertise’ and (2) ‘professional expertise’, derived from the ‘informational perspective’ of committees (Krehbiel 1991, Bowler & Farrell 1995), (3) ‘committee political unity’ derived largely from the ‘partisan perspective’ (Cox & McCubbins 2007a, 2007b; Kreppel 1999, Costello & Thomson 2013), and finally (4) the impact of ‘policy outputs’ derived from the ‘public policy perspective’ (Lowi 1964, 1972, Burns 2005a, 2005b). By testing these different perspectives on the sources of committee influence, drawn largely, but not exclusively from studies on the US Congress, a more comprehensive understanding will be generated to answer the research question posed. Findings will be expected to have a far-reaching impact within the context of legislative politics and organization, not just furthering understanding of EP committees but contributing to the wider field. In addition, a number of different patterns surrounding sources of influence are likely to be extracted from the empirical data. While a unified theory of committee influence is not yet forthcoming within the field, this study is intended to contribute towards its future development. So as well as potentially identifying how committees can be influential, which could lead to improvements in the quality of representative democratic processes in the EP and beyond, the thesis also strives to make a significant contribution to the existing literature, by acting as a first step towards a theory of committee influence. Many of the assumptions tested within this thesis involve factors synonymous with most, if not all, committee systems, leading to far reaching implications for the wider field of legislative politics.¹¹

1.5 Research Design

To answer the research question posed in this thesis, an appropriate research design is adopted, which requires discussion. The thesis uses a comparative ‘most similar’ case study approach, comparing three highly influential EP committees in terms of the informal sources of legislative influence they

¹¹ Discussion of the important contribution of this thesis is contained in the final chapter.

draw on. What is meant by this is that cases are similar in almost all aspects, apart from the independent variable which is different, and is the object of testing. By maintaining all ‘spurious’ variables¹², as they are sometimes referred to, and only allowing for a change in the independent variable, a relationship may be established between independent and dependent variables as the independent variable will be the only major factor having a direct impact upon the dependent variable (Burnham *et al* 2008: 74-75).

This thesis is a ‘multiple case study’ which seeks to explain differences across the cases, with the classic goal of replicating results across three cases (Yin 2003). Three cases were chosen from within the committee system of the European Parliament, as this is both a manageable sample size and allows for an in-depth investigation of each case. Each of the cases originates from the exact same institutional system and has the same formal legislative powers. Furthermore, each of the selected committees has a similar level of political salience¹³ as is outlined below. Thus, while the different application of formal rules and the political salience of a committee have previously been suggested as variables that impact upon influence, for this study these factors can now be discounted as having an impact over influence. Finally, the stage of agreement has been cited as also affecting committee influence (Yordanova 2013: 107). Evidence generated by Yordanova (2013) suggests those legislative proposals which have an early agreement (at the first legislative stage) are less likely to contain committee amendments. Legislative early agreement rates do differ to some degree between EP committees (Pittella *et al* 2014, see Figure 2-1), however, the three EP committees selected as case studies in this study have highly similar rates of early agreement, reducing this factor’s potential affect. Consequently, the only remaining identifiable variable which can affect the dependent variable is the informal source or sources of a committee’s influence. Three main potential informal sources of influence, expertise, committee unity and policy output type, have been identified within comparative literature. For the purpose of this study, therefore, it is only these variables which will differ and by

¹² i.e. variables which are present but clearly do not have a causal link to the dependent variable (Burnham *et al* 2008: 74).

¹³ Salience is understood as, the policy issues within the remit of a said committee, are seen as being of high political importance and prioritised by the political groups. For a deeper discussion of the theoretical concepts of salience see Wleziën 2005

comparing the differences across the cases the relative impact of these informal sources of influence can be understood.

It is important, in order to justify the use of the comparative approach, to discuss the rationale behind the adoption of the method, before a deeper discussion over its potential impact upon the thesis is conducted below. A significant debate surrounds both the theoretical use, and the practical application/empirical merits of the comparative case study method (For an in-depth discussion of the methodological debate see Yin 2003, 2014, Gerring 2004, Flyvbjerg 2006, Della Porta 2008). The conventional understanding of any case study is that each case is a focused examination of a 'single example' (Flyvbjerg 2006: 2). A single case, or 'unit' as it is sometimes referred to, is investigated intensively in order to potentially gain more information on a wider 'system' within which the selected case exists (Gerring 2004).¹⁴ Case studies are therefore not simply conducted to further the understanding of the case which has been selected (the deeper understanding of a case is, however, an unavoidable and important product of conducting a case study project), but rather to gain a potential understanding of the wider 'system' within which the case is located (Gerring 2004: 342). By comparing well selected cases a more general understanding of the subject of investigation is potentially gained (Collier 1993). This explanation, drawn from Collier (1993), Gerring (2004) and Yin (2014), is a basic understanding of the approach; however, in practice the use of the comparative method requires wide discussion over its relative merits and potential limitations, both of which have clear implications for this thesis.

In order to practically investigate and provide answers to the research question as outlined, this study adopts a small-n comparative approach, which investigates and compares a limited number of cases (three in all total) in-depth. The rationale behind adopting a small-n qualitative study is that it allows for the in-depth investigation of a limited number of cases, to generate a deeper (sometimes referred to as a 'thick description' (Geertz 1973)) intimate knowledge and understanding of the processes and practices which each case entails (Collier 1993). The small-n approach potentially helps to better

¹⁴ 'An intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units' (Gerring 2004: 342)

contextualise the patterns of causal relationships as they may be affected by different circumstances, which are often only understood/identified as a result of examining at a deeper level of analysis (Ragin 1987). The type of data which a small-n study generates could not be gained from a study that examines a large-n of cases, which while generating a broader data set which comes with different merits, results in less depth of understanding of the individual cases examined, which is the direct aim of this thesis to provide.

This study seeks to establish a richer qualitative understanding than has previously existed within the field of EP committee research. Previous research on the influence of EP committees has generally focused on the committee system as a whole, in what has often been a more general quantitative manner, with few examples of in-depth qualitative case studies on individual committees and how they have established influence. While they are limited in number, those in-depth case studies (for example Judge & Earnshaw (1994) and Hurka (2013) on the ENVI committee) which have been conducted have contributed significantly to the current empirical understanding of the formal as well as informal processes of influence, a subject often overlooked in the more general studies of the EP system. These studies identified processes which worked to establish the individual committee cases as influential, and in particular observed important factors, such as the potential role of membership policy making experience, which would have been over looked potentially in broader studies of the EP legislative system. It is for this reason that the present thesis adopts a qualitative case study approach, as a deeper understanding of the selected cases will help to elucidate the processes by which each case study committee attempts to establish its influence. This in-depth examination will create a rich comparative data set which, as well as further understanding of the processes each committee adopts to establish influence, can potentially be used for the future development of theory in later studies. Evidence from the Parliament (Pittella *et al* 2014) already exists claiming that different committees of the EP have established different cultures and practices of operations. However, little is known, even by the Parliament (Pittella *et al* 2014) about the affect this has on committee influence beyond the point of understanding that the phenomenon of differential influence exists within committees despite the general application of the OLP. Without an in-depth

investigation, it is unclear how these apparently different factors may affect an individual committee in establishing its influence, or indeed what sources of influence are actually available to different committees in practice. Therefore the approach adopted here helps to fill a gap within the literature of the EP committee system for greater in-depth empirical qualitative data. This in turn, will contribute towards a more detailed understanding of how committees can establish influence in the selected in-depth cases, and potentially set the groundwork for a more general understanding to be developed in future research of legislative influence.

While the aim of the study is to further understanding of how committees can establish influence, some of the limitations of the comparative approach small-n type study must be acknowledged. Much of the debate over the use of the method centres on how much a few 'cases' can, in reality, inform the researcher about a wider phenomenon (Lijphart 1971, King *et al* 1994). The main criticism of the case study approach has been that it does not actually lend itself towards generalizations, an important goal of comparative research according to seminal studies (King *et al* 1994). Comparative case study research will, normally, sample a number of cases from a wider Universe. However, the point has been made within a number of reflective studies that one cannot generalize, with high confidence, based on a sample, unless it is a (very) large sample (Giddens 1984, King *et al* 1994, Burnham *et al* 2008). It is, therefore, important to acknowledge this limitation of the case study design in order to avoid over-stating the generality or impact of a result generated based on the sample size selected within this thesis. This, however, should not detract from the important findings which are generated within this thesis, which would be on a par with other 'small-n' case study research projects, many of which have been influential. The data collected here may indeed form the basis, via extrapolation from the results obtained, for future research enabling generalization, as small-n studies are often the best first step towards informing on wider platforms (Della Porta 2008).

One final positive point may also be acknowledged on reflection in the use of case studies. As well as being an important method of in-depth research, the comparative case approach is also a useful

practical learning experience for the developing researcher. Cases are important for researchers' 'own learning processes in developing the skills needed to do good research' (Flyvbjerg 2006: 223).

'If researchers wish to develop their own skills to a high level, then concrete, context-dependent experience is just as central for them as to professionals learning any other specific skills. Concrete experiences can be achieved via continued proximity to the studied reality and via feedback from those under study. Great distance to the object of study and lack of feedback easily lead to a stultified learning process, which in research can lead to ritual academic blind alleys, where the effect and usefulness of research becomes unclear and untested. As a research method, the case study can be an effective remedy against this tendency' (Flyvbjerg 2006: 223).

Therefore, as well as acting as an in-depth method of research and data generation, the use of the case study approach assists the researcher in their all important development.

The timeframe of the project takes place during the 7th (2009-2014) legislative term. The 7th term has been selected as it is the most recent to be concluded, at time of writing, being still fresh in the minds of members active during the term, and whose extensive empirical contributions were invaluable to this study.¹⁵ The 7th term was, also, importantly the first to be conducted with all EP committees as full co-legislative actors. The Lisbon Treaty was enacted at the start of the 7th term (2009) and, therefore, it was the first time-period in which EP committee influence could be examined at the point where they potentially reached their summit of legislative influence. No disparity of rules exists during the 7th term, which could be said to affect committee influence, making the EP committees during this timescale an excellent case to test and thus to answer the research question. It is important to state that some mention of the 8th, and of the 6th parliamentary terms will be made, with data also collected on committee retention rates, parliamentary retention rates, and previous political/professional backgrounds of all members on selected case study committees, during these terms. This was done to directly compare these with matching empirical data collected on the 7th term, in order to further enhance the findings.

¹⁵ See appendix II for list of interview citations.

1.5.1 Case Study Selection

In order to elucidate what variables are impacting committee influence, three committees that current literature (Corbett *et al* 2007, Whitaker 2011, 2014, Yordanova 2013,) has viewed as maintaining similarly high levels of legislative influence have been selected for case study analysis, and used to test the hypotheses that have been generated in the following chapter. The committees that have been selected are the ‘Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)’, the ‘Committee on Budgets (BUDG)’ and the ‘Committee on International Trade (INTA)’. While each of the three cases was selected for being highly influential, each has been identified as being influential for sometimes conflicting and differing reasons. It is these differences which allow for the testing of alternative explanations of how committee influence is established. Before discussing the rationale for the case selection (the unit of analysis) and the analytical strategy adopted in more detail, it is important to discuss the implications, both positive and negative, of selecting each of the cases on the dependent variable (legislative influence) of committee influence, in order to place this study in the correct context. All research choices must be shown to be systematic and justifiable (George & Bennett 2004) and their impact understood.

The general criticism of studies which maintain a constant dependent variable (in this thesis ‘committee influence’) across all selected cases is that it is hard to establish causal inferences¹⁶, which are seen as a vital outcome of social science research (King *et al* 1994). The criticism is, how can something be established as having a causal relationship (if it is assumed that this is the goal of research, as suggested by King *et al* (1994)) if the dependent variable does not vary to some extent between selected cases. If the dependent variable is maintained equally across all cases, the study conducted may actually establish a false cause and effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables, which is potentially only a correlation rather than an actual causal link. It is only when the dependent variable varies, can a study claim strong causal inferences, confirming an independent variable is having an impact (King *et al* 1994). According to the important work of King

¹⁶ Establishing ‘casual inferences’ is the ‘process’ of drawing a conclusion concerning a casual connection between a variable and an outcome, or in other words establishing a potential empirical link between a potential cause and an outcome effect (King, *et al* 1994).

et al (1994), cases within a small-n study, which adopts a uniform dependent variable across all cases, result in a study where the ‘estimated casual affect is zero’, or in other words, casual inferences cannot be validated as a result of the study which has been conducted (King *et al* 1994: 89). A control case is required, as in a natural science experiment, to account for a false correlation. This is an important point to consider in the context of this research, which made the choice to select cases upon the dependent variable, as it has significant potential ramifications for the impact of its implications. Thus, as well as recognising the limitations of a small-n case study approach, further consideration of the affect of selecting upon the dependent variable must be acknowledged to avoid over inflated claims of strong validity of any potential causal factors identified within the study. It is, however, important to discuss, that King *et al* (1994) thesis’ is not a universal one, and indeed many qualitative studies do select cases, legitimately, on the dependent variable (Della Porta 2008) despite the concerns raised by King *et al* (1994).

In contrast to the more ‘scientific approach’ (McKeown 1999: 167) of King *et al* (1994) to qualitative (and quantitative) research, Della Porta (2008) suggests that within case oriented research, and small n-studies, selecting upon the dependent variable is a ‘common and legitimate practice’. If little is already known about a system of cases, examining positive cases which have the dependent variable, can expand current understanding that may be limited and can help to ‘evaluate the impact of a main causal variable’ (George & Bennett 2004: 76, Della Porta 2008). Little is currently known about how committees of the EP can establish a level of legislative influence and the route(s) to influence they may utilize. This thesis seeks to address this by examining cases which have been perceived as having a high level of influence, in order to develop understanding of this area by looking in-depth at the ways in which these committees utilizes (informal) resources to establish and exercise influence. Furthermore, selecting upon the dependent outcome can also be useful for ‘singling out different paths to certain outcomes’ (Mahoney & Goertz 2006 :232, Della Porta 2008: 216). While each of the committees selected as a case study in this thesis has been observed as equally influential according to the literature (table 1-1), these committees are also perceived as influential for different reasons and seemingly follow different routes to similar outcomes. By adopting the approach of selecting

dependent outcome cases, these different routes to influence can be tested and probed, helping to answer the research question of how committees can establish their legislative influence. Cases which are selected on the dependent variable may also become so called ‘building block’ cases (George & Bennett 2004: 76) as they are vital components in the development of theory in areas where little understanding already exists, such as described above. Thus, a more general understanding of phenomena can be developed as a result of case studies lending themselves to building knowledge of an area. As will be discussed within the theory chapter, little is known about the committee system of the European Parliament and there is a major requirement to build knowledge within the area.

To summarise, the general perspective of King *et al* (1994) is a legitimate approach, cases selected on the dependent variable do not directly facilitate generalization, although they can provide the building blocks to construct a wider platform of understanding (George and Bennet 2004). It is therefore important to stress that the present study, fitting within the tradition of small-n studies and their limited ability to generalise results, can only make limited claims for the data generated. The study does, however, provide a more fleshed out qualitative understanding of the cases, which were selected, for those interested in the subject area, setting the ground work for more comprehensive or wide-spread testing in future studies. While strong causal relationships using small n-studies cannot be established with the degree of certainty demanded by King *et al* (1994), a strong contribution is made by the approach adopted (George & Bennett 2004, Della Porta 2008). Thus, while recognising, as noted by King *et al* (1994), that case studies of the type used within the thesis may have fundamental limitations in testing a hypothesis and generalizing results, this thesis provides a significant step towards future research confirming (or disputing as this thesis appears to indicate) our current understanding of sources of committee influence.

Table 1-1 Variable Sources of Committee Influence

Case Study Committee	Committee Expertise	Committee Cohesion	Committee Policy Type
The Committee on the Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety (ENVI)	High Level of Expertise ¹⁷ (Bowler & Farrell 1995)	Mixed Cohesion (Burns 2013a)	Mixed Policy Output (Yordanova 2009a)
The Committee on Budgets (BUDG)	High Level of Expertise (Lindner 2006)	High Cohesion (Yoshinaka <i>et al</i> 2010)	Distributive Policy Output (Rasmussen 2011)
The Committee on International Trade (INTA)	Low Level of Expertise (Kleimann 2011)	High Cohesion (Settembri & Neuhold 2009)	Regulatory Policy Output (Yordanova 2009a)

Table 1-1 indicates some of the factors that the existing literature has identified as potential sources of influence for the three committees. For example, the BUDG committee (Lindner 2006) and the ENVI committees are seen as having high expertise, but in the case of the ENVI committee what type is debatable (McCormick 2001, Weale *et al* 2005, Hurka 2013). Consensus is, however, clear in that the INTA committee does differ significantly from the other two, by possessing low levels of expertise (Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). As table 1-1 shows, each further potential explanation, ‘committee cohesion’ (or as it has been also termed in some studies ‘partisan unity’ (Kreppel 1999)), but will be referred to in this thesis as ‘committee unity’ to avoid confusion) and ‘policy output’ (Burns 2005a) also differ between the committees. By selecting these committees for analysis, which do display different alternative explanations for committee influence, a range of explanations can be tested. The rationale behind the selection of the three cases was driven in the first instance by the observation that out of the 20 committees of the EP, each case study selected was perceived as having similar high levels of legislative influence. While, as noted above, selecting upon the dependent variable (King *et al* 1994) limits the ability of the study to truly validate any causal inferences and broad generalizations, it does, however, allow the thesis to probe how each of the

¹⁷ The presence of ‘technical’ expertise on the ENVI committee, without disputing the committee’s overall [high] level of influence, has been subject to debate (McCormick 2001, Weale *et al* 2005, Hurka 2013).

committees are seemingly reaching the same important outcome of high influence despite using different resources, and how different sources of influence are, in fact, drawn upon in practice. Committees which were of a non-legislative nature, such as the Foreign Affairs committee (AFET), which does not, as yet, have a legislative role, while being acknowledged as a senior/important committee¹⁸, were excluded from the study, as an examination of such committees would not assist in understanding the role of sources in establishing influence, as even if the identified sources were present within a non-legislative committee they could not be applied in practice. Similarly, the level of political salience was also considered in the selection of cases. The political salience of a committee has often been cited as benefiting a committee's influence in the comparative perspective (Deering & Smith 1997: 67-73, Cox & McCubbins 2007b), and potentially in the EP (Whitaker 2011), often due to heightened party interest in the committee. The more salience a committee has, from the issues it deals with, the more likely it will be to have influence, and a differing level of salience will have an impact on overall influence. As a result of selecting three committees with equal salience its impact can be isolated in order to test other potential factors determining influence. Both the ENVI and the BUDG committees have been identified as highly salient committees due to the policy areas they operate within, with both environment (Burns 2013a) and budgets (Corbett *et al* 2007) being key areas of EP interest. Within the 7th term the INTA committee has reached a similar level of salience, *'making it the committee everyone wants to be on'*¹⁹ as a result of an increase in formal powers and involvement with trade deals. This conclusion was not only supported by the interview evidence collected, but also suggested by previous assessments (Woolcock 2010b).

By isolating the dependent variable, and levels of salience, the range of potential cases that could be studied was limited. It is also important to reflect that when the cases were selected the ability of the case to potentially draw upon any, or all, of the potential sources of influence was factored into the selection process. While as noted each of the committees, as shown in table 1-1, has their influence attributed to differing sources of influence, they were also identified as having no clear impediment in

¹⁸ In the respect that the committee attracts senior parliamentarians and is well respected in the parliament, despite the committee possessing little legislative involvement.

¹⁹ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/1/16 Glasgow UK

adopting a different source of influence, according to current understanding. Finally, as mentioned above, three cases were selected as this appeared to be a manageable sample size for a thesis looking to generate extensive qualitative data from representative cases, to directly answer the research question.

1.5.2 Methodology

In order to empirically identify the variables that are responsible for establishing ‘committee legislative influence’ this thesis has adopted a distinct qualitative approach with extensive use of 30 elite semi-structured interviews, supported by the use of document analysis. In addition to the extensive qualitative data, a select amount of statistical data has, also, been collected on the backgrounds²⁰ of all case study committee members in order to support, and corroborate, the primary qualitative data collected. The adoption of this approach has enabled an original perspective to be developed in response, or as an alternative, to the quantitative approaches that have dominated the early field of legislative decision-making in the EU (Tsebelis 1994, Moser 1996, 1997, Crombez 1997, 2000, Tsebelis *et al* 2001). The predominant issue with these quantitative studies, that have often adopted spatial modelling to understand EP legislative influence, has been their wide ranging and generally conflicting results with little consensus to provide meaningful answers on the subject of influence (Tsebelis 1995, 1997, Tsebelis & Garrett 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2001, Garrett & Tsebelis 1997, Scully 1997a, 1997b). Kreppel (2002b) have identified this mainly quantitative approach as resulting in an underdeveloped understanding of legislative decision making and influence, in the context of the EP. Consequently, calls have been made (Kreppel 2002b, Yordanova 2013), which this thesis looks to answer, for qualitative empirical evidence to be generated in order to create a broader comprehension of legislative committee influence. The early studies of the EP, listed above, have greatly informed our current understanding of legislative influence. This study, however, seeks to address the areas which they have overlooked, such as committees, with original qualitative data.

²⁰ The previous career backgrounds in politics and professional life of committee members, as well as retention rates on committees, and parliamentary experience were examined.

A qualitative approach has, also, been adopted for the benefits it brings to the quality of empirical data. By directly interviewing legislative committee actors, a clear and direct understanding of their actions and the resources that they utilise can be gained (Burnham *et al* 2008). As this thesis is concerned with elucidating the sources of committee influence rather than attempting to simply measure the influence that a committee may be able to exercise against and over other EU institutions, interviews have mainly been conducted with actors who have directly participated on EP committees. Semi-structured interviews²¹ were conducted with elite actors operating on a range of EP committees but mainly conducted within the remit of the case studies selected. Those interviewed as well as representing a cross-section of experience ranged in partisan affiliation covering all mainstream EP political groupings,²² as well as politically neutral administrators within the EP secretariat and relevant Commission's Directorate Generals (DGs). It is important, however, to briefly discuss the rationale behind the adoption of semi-structured elite interviews as a mode of data collection, as well as to highlight the potential risk of this methodology, which the researcher was aware of during the data collection stages.

Elite interviews are today a common and much used research technique (however, as noted above, qualitative methods have, in general, been underused in the case of the EP and its committees), and have been noted as a significant source of information within many studies, including the early studies of congressional policy making, which attempted to understand legislative actor influence (Berry 2002). The benefits of elite interviews are well known and often outlined (see Richards 1996, Berry 2002, Burnman *et al* 2008, Bryman 2015). Elite interviews allow, in the first instance, the researcher to acquire data and understanding which is not accessible within written documentation, as well as potentially assisting the researcher in understanding the unwritten motivations behind many documents and policies, upon which only a direct participant can provide information (Richards 1996). Many important conventions surrounding policy-making are, indeed, unwritten. This is evident in the example of informal 'trialogue negotiations' where much of the legislative decision-making is

²¹ A sample interview question key can be viewed in Appendix III.

²² No member of the EFD(D) or ENF groupings has been interviewed in the course of this thesis.

conducted. Interviews help researchers to understand the patterns, interactions, and relationships surrounding a process of events, which created an outcome (Richards 1996), the understanding of which is central to this thesis. Interviews allow the researcher a direct insight into the, often isolated, world they are attempting to understand and it is this rationale that motivates their adoption within this particular thesis. Despite their benefits, however, the drawbacks of elite interviews must be acknowledged to demonstrate the researcher's awareness of them, as this is the first step towards negating many of the potential pitfalls.

The potential drawback of elite interviews will always be the reliability of interviewees (and in part the skill of the interviewer). An interviewee may potentially not remember accurately their role, or the actions of others, which took place within an interaction (Richards 1996). It may, also, be the case that an elite interview participant will over emphasise the role which they may have had in achieving an outcome. Having a number of different interviews explaining the same events in conflicting ways is, also, a potential hazard of this technique (Richards 1996). In both of these instances, data can be validated more accurately by increasing the sample size to confirm and eliminate some of the mistakes, which do occur, simply as a result of human nature and error. The other major drawback associated with elite interviews is the often cited 'power relationship' between interviewer and interviewee (Smith 2006). An over use of deference may occur in the interviewer's interactions with an 'elite' interviewee, meaning that some points and lines of enquiry that may be pursued with a non-elite actor would not be pursued by the interviewer with an elite actor (Richards 1996).²³ The ability to address this issue depends on the skill of the interviewer to 'push' the interviewee in order to acquire the information needed. A skilled, or more simply put, an interviewer with a degree of common sense will be able, while showing the correct level of deference, to pursue a line of enquiry without over stepping the boundary which would irritate or alienate the interviewee and harm the potential for further data acquisition. No method for collecting data is foolproof but by highlighting

²³ The reverse may be true in non elite settings where the interviewer is potentially dominant over the interviewee in the power relationship, again affecting the data collected (Smith 2006).

the potential pitfalls of elite interviews many can be avoided, or negated, with proper reflection in order to conduct an accurate and informed study.

Table 1-2 Political Affiliations of MEP Interview Participants

	EPP	S&D	ALDE	Green-EFA	ECR	GUE-NGL	EFD	NI
Members interviewed	5	6	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A

Table 1-3 Member State Affiliations of MEP Interview Participants

	United Kingdom	Germany	France	Netherlands	Austria	Romania
Members Interviewed	6	3	2	2	1	1

Of the 30 interviews conducted for this thesis, 14 were conducted with current members of the ‘committee secretariat’, active during the 7th legislative term. The remaining interviews were conducted with members of the European Parliament, assistants to MEPs, and a single supporting interview with a senior Commission official. Interviews were conducted with a range of parliamentary actors representing a diverse range of political affiliations (table 1-2²⁴). It was the aim to collect data from as wide a sample base as possible in order to avoid confirming results based only on data collected from particular political backgrounds. However, it must be acknowledged, although probably reflecting the relative political diversity of the Parliament, most interviews were conducted with members representing the largest political groupings, the EPP and S&D. Table 1-3 also demonstrates the geographical breakdown of origin of interviewees to demonstrate again that data, while mostly acquired from interviewees from the larger member states, derived from a diverse range of participants.

²⁴ Members of the secretariat interviewed are not included within table 1-2 or 1-3 as they are non-political actors and do not, in theory, represent their home country.

To supplement the extensive interview data collected, policy documents looking at indicative examples of legislation were, also, analysed to corroborate interview data collected. A level of statistical data was, also, accumulated on committee turnover rates and membership committee system experience, within each of the case study committees. With the wide range and significant volume of data collected, and verified, this thesis is able to make strong empirical claims when answering the research question posed, and to provide the 'real world' data woefully lacking in the field, as well as adding a dynamic original insight. To elaborate further on the documents used, and how they facilitated triangulation of the extensive interview data collected, a short discussion is required.

Documents covering the professional backgrounds of all 146 full committee members were collected and examined to confirm the levels of professional expertise contained within each case study. In almost all of the 146 examples, members curriculum vitae were available (and in general found in English, which avoided the risk of translations which may misrepresent a member's professional background), were accessed. In the limited cases where a formal CV was not obtainable from a member's 'European Parliament profile page curriculum vitae section', or from a personal website, a general outline of the member's professional history was found outlined on their personal website. The information gained from these documents created a simple database of professional experience across the case committees where key professional expertise, relevant to committee policy remits, could be assessed and quantified. This collection of data from the documents allowed for relative rates of professional expertise to be stated for each of the case studies.

Policy documents directly related to legislation were also examined to support and confirm statements made within interviews, and to test the validity of the data collected. Within a number of the conducted interviews, examples of key legislative acts and amendments were often mentioned or highlighted, and the role of the interviewee within the relevant policy negotiations outlined. Legislative proposals, institutional positions which are published at each of the required readings, public statements and press releases were examined to confirm the claims made by the interviewee

over the outcomes and their involvement within the legislative process. All of these listed documents were readily available and obtained from the ‘EUR-Lex’ and ‘European Parliament Legislative Observatory’ service websites. By examining these documents a more accurate picture of events was gained, which was generally assistive in significantly validating the interview data presented within this thesis. Supplementary to the important validating role which policy documents provided, a number of documents were analysed, such as the plastic bag directive, the conflict minerals directive, and the TTIP negotiations, in order to better elucidate the progress of some key examples of legislation. These documents were also examined with reference to the success and intention of amendments which could be rated as distributive or regulatory.

1.5.3 Analytical Approach

This study adopts an approach based within the ‘rational choice’ tradition. ‘Rational choice institutionalism’ is defined as originating from the ‘new institutionalism’ approach that institutions need significant attention of academic focus as they are constructed by the agents (actors) which operate within these systems, reflecting the rational choices of those actors (Rosamond 2010). The emergence in the application of rational choice, within legislative decision-making, stems from the ‘social choice’ literature which, itself, has its roots in uncompromising mathematical models used in the early research on committees (see Rohde & Shepsle 1973; Pollack 1997).²⁵ Within the rational choice perspective all actors are viewed as rationally seeking to strategically maximise their influence over outcomes. The main focus of the rational choice perspectives is that all actors are constrained by the institutional rules and structures, both formal and informal, that they operate within. This framework of rules defines the actions of the actors within the institution, dictating what they can do (Bache & George 2006), and how they can practically influence outcomes. While actors are guided by the rules in place, in order to maximise their outcomes (increase committee influence), actors in the real world stretch the rules for their own gains (informational or efficiency) without fundamentally violating them (Weingast 1979, Shepsle & Weingast 1981, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Helmke &

²⁵ This helps to explain the prevalence of quantitative modelling within the field of parliamentary legislative influence research.

Levitsky 2006). It is for this reason that many informal conventions such as ‘trialogue’ have been developed, which guide the actions of committee members.

The committees of the EP are rule-based institutions operating a clear decision making system based in EU law. Rational choice institutionalism best accounts for the mechanics that motivate actors within the institutional setting of the EP (Tsebelis 1994, 1995, Garrett & Tsebelis 1997) and has been viewed as appropriate in other comparative examples looking to investigate committee influence (see Hall & Taylor 1996 for review). Rational choice institutionalism developed in part from comparative studies on the US congressional committee system’s influence over outcomes (Shepsle 1979, 1986, 1989, Shepsle & Weingast 1987, Krehbiel 1991, Hall & Taylor 1996). Rational choice had been adopted by many previous studies attempting to, also, clarify the decision-making processes of the European Parliament (see Hix 1998; Tsebelis 1994, 1995, Moser 1996, 1997, Garrett & Tsebelis 1997, Kaeding 2004). It is, therefore, the most appropriate approach to adopt when attempting to elucidate the role of committees and from which sources they draw influence.

However, in order to understand the sources of EP committee influence, it is necessary to establish the actual decision making process within which the committees are operating and their context. This study, as stated above, does not examine the formal (and informal) rules as a source of committee influence but, nonetheless, it is important to explain those rules so that the reader can understand the constraints committees face when they attempt to exercise influence, when drawing upon other sources of influence.

1.6 European Parliament Committee System

A level of description is needed of the context and decision making process under which all EP committees now operate before delving into discussion of different sources of influence. By engaging with this discussion the reader can begin to understand the legislative context within which EP committees find themselves, and the decision making process with which they are involved, and must operate within.

Over the years the EP has been the beneficiary of the biggest increase in institutional power of any of the main European institutions. This can be attributed to attempts by the member states to counter the democratic deficit by increasing the legislative role and power of the only directly elected EU institution (Dinan 2005, McCormick 2015). The greater the power of the EP the less the democratic deficit should be, in theory²⁶ according to influential accounts (Follesdal & Hix 2006). The Parliament, however, began life as the ‘Assembly’ of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952 (McCormick 2011). Originally comprised of sitting members of national parliaments, the only legislative procedure then in place was the ‘consultative procedure’ where the Council would only have to consult with the Parliament before passing legislation. Table 1-4 summarises the major legislative reforms to affect the EP and its committees.

²⁶ “Federalists consider that the solution to the democratic deficit consists of giving more powers to the Parliament, which is, after all, the only directly elected EU institution”. (Crombez 2002: 103)

Table 1-4 Treaty Reform in the European Union and the Evolution of the Legislative Procedure

Reforming Treaty (Date)	Legislative Procedure Introduced	Effect on Parliament
Treaty of Rome (1958)	Consultation Procedure	The Parliament must be consulted within areas consultation applies.
Budgetary Treaties (1970 & 1975)	New budgetary procedures	Parliament given ability to reject EU budget.
Single European Act (1987)	Cooperation Procedure	Parliament given a second reading of bills, on mainly single market issues.
Maastricht Treaty (1993)	Co-decision i	Conciliation committee (third reading stage) introduced.
Amsterdam Treaty (1999)	Co-decision ii	Co-decision reformed making Parliament and Council co-legislators in areas of its application.
Nice Treaty (2003)	No new procedure introduced	
Lisbon Treaty (2007)	Ordinary Legislative Procedure	Co-decision applied as the now default legislative procedure in the EU, renamed the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP).

Source: Corbett *et al* 2011.

Committees have been a key component of the institution since the early days of the community when the EP was the ‘Common Assembly’. Starting with seven committees in 1953 there has been an inevitable expansion and during the 7th term there were 23 committees (including two sub-committees and one special committee) (Table 1-5). The committees were formed to deal with the ever-expanding legislative and budgetary powers increasingly placed with the Parliament over time (Dinan 2005, Corbett *et al* 2007). The increasing of the legislative role of the EP developed in parallel with the growing powers of the EU.

Table 1-5 Committees of the European Parliament, 7th Term (2009- 2014)

Standing Committee	Committee Formed	Committee Chair
Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)	1979	Elmar Brok (EPP)
- Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI)	2004	Barbara Lochbihler (Greens/EFA)
- Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE)	2004	Arnaud Danjean (EPP)
Committee on Development (DEVE)	1979	Eva Joly (Greens/EFA)
Committee on International Trade (INTA)	1979 (2004) ²⁷	Vital Moreira (S&D)
Committee on Budgets (BUDG)	1979	Alain Lamassoure (EPP)
Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT)	1979	Michael Theurer (ALDE)
Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON)	1979	Sharon Bowles (ALDE)
Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)	1979	Pervenche Beres (S&D)
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)	1979	Matthias Groote (S&D)
Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)	1979	Amalia Sartori (EPP)
Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO)	2004	Malcolm Harbour (ECR)
Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN)	1979 (2004) ²⁸	Brian Simpson (S&D)
Committee on Regional Development (REGI)	1979	Danuta Maria Hubner (EPP)
Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI)	1979	Paolo De Castro (S&D)
Committee on Fisheries (PECH)	1994	Gabriel Mato Adrover (EEP)
Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)	1979	Doris Pack (EPP)
Committee on Legal Affairs	1979	Klaus-Heiner Lehne (EPP)

²⁷ International was originally called the External Economic Relations committee. The Committee was combined with Industry, Research and Energy Committee in 1999 but re-established independently in 2004.

²⁸ Responsibilities merged into the Regional Policy Committee in 1999; re-established as independent committee in 2004.

(JURI)		
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)	1992	Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar (S&D)
Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO)	1982 (1999) ²⁹	Carlo Casini (EPP)
Committee on Woman's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)	1982 ³⁰	Mikael Gustafsson (GUE/NGL)
Committee on Petitions (PETI)	1987	Eriminia Mazzoni (EPP)
Special committee on Organised Crime, Corruption and Money Laundering (CRIM)	2012	Sonia Alfano (ALDE)

Source: European Parliament Website 2014, Corbett *et al* 2011.

The makeup of the committee structure of the EP undergoes review and limited operational change every few years in order to facilitate efficiency. However, a normal committee will consist of MEPs serving on a single committee and substituting on a second committee, where they may have wished to be a permanent member. Generally, turnover of membership within EP committees compared with other comparative legislative committee systems is high and it is extremely rare for a MEP to stay on the same committee for a number of parliamentary terms (McElroy & Benoit 2012). Nevertheless, this trend may be changing as it has been noted that it is becoming more common for MEPs to continue on the same committee over a number of terms (Corbett *et al* 2007, Whitaker 2011, 2014).

Office holders in committees consist of a chair and a number of vice chairs, normally four, who attempt to ensure efficient running. The committee chair is responsible for chairing meetings, shaping the agenda, and representing the committee outside of the EP. The chair and vice-chair positions are spread between the parliamentary groupings depending on grouping size, with seniority not perceived as playing an overtly significant role in post selection (Bowler & Farrell 1995). This is in stark contrast with the importance of seniority for US Congressional committee chairs (Kellermann & Shepsle 2009). While seniority is not the key determinant in deciding which MEPs will gain positions

²⁹ Began in 1982 as the 'Committee of Institutional Affairs' but amalgamated with Rules committee to create 'Constitutional Affairs' in 1999.

³⁰ 'Woman's Right and Gender Equality' was originally a temporary committee subsequently made permanent.

on a particular committee, it has been suggested that MEPs with many years of EP experience from the larger parties will be appointed to the most ‘prestigious’ EP committees more often than inexperienced members (Judge & Earnshaw 2003, McElroy 2006). This suggestion has been substantiated by Yordanova (2009b: 274) who empirically demonstrates that a ‘less well known MEP’ is significantly less likely to be assigned to seemingly important committees.³¹ Yordanova (2009b) believes this signifies greater committee specialization with seniority affecting ‘committee incumbency’. In contrast to the American congressional committees, EP committee chairs do not, however, generally hold their positions for extended periods of time; tenure is normally for a maximum of one parliamentary term, although evidence would suggest this is, also, a trend that is possibly changing (Corbett *et al* 2007).

1.7 Decision Making Process

Committees are responsible for formulating the EP formal legislative position on any proposed legislation coming from the Commission (Tsebelis & Kalandrakis 1999). They will adopt draft reports containing their views on the Parliament’s position with regard to the legislative proposal coming from the European Commission, in accordance with the OLP as contained within the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

The committee nominated to be responsible for drafting the Parliament’s position will be based upon the appropriate policy area and following discussion within the conference of Committee Chairs (Pittella *et al* 2011). The responsible committee will appoint a rapporteur to follow a legislative report. The role of the rapporteur, a position not often observed outside of the European Union in a legislative context, is extremely important to the legislative process. It is the rapporteur’s responsibility to draft a text, which is representative of the committee’s viewpoint. The rapporteur will also amend their own text if changes are needed to better reflect the committee’s position. The committee will vote to adopt the report, which will then be presented to the plenary by the rapporteur who will respond to any proposed amendments by the plenary on behalf of their committee. If the

³¹ Original empirical interview data collected for the study, also, confirmed some importance of member’s ‘name recognition’ in getting committee assignments.

process enters a second legislative reading, it will be the responsibility of the rapporteur to follow the situation and make recommendations for progression during the second reading (Bowler & Farrell 1995). Thus, the committees play a significant role in constructing, and not merely reflecting, the Parliament's position to proposed legislation and indicating what amendments the Parliament should, and do, include. There is, also, the potential, as indicated, for the plenary to attempt to introduce amendments to a report. However, this is generally an unusual occurrence as plenary amendments are rarely successful (Tsebelis & Kalandrakis 1999).

1.7.1 The Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP)

Since the application of the ToL in 2009, to coincide with the start of the 7th term (2009-2014), the OLP has become the default legislative process in the EU. As with previous legislative processes that have been used in the European Union, the Ordinary Legislative Procedure begins with the Commission making a legislative proposal. The Commission maintains the right of initiative in making legislative proposals and consequently retains the agenda setting power. Once the Commission makes a legislative proposal it is simultaneously sent to the Council and the EP. This initiates what is known as the first reading (Council Secretariat 2010). Although two further reading stages are possible, there is the provision for the dossiers to be concluded early at the first reading stage.

When the Commission has made its legislative proposal, it will refer the proposal to the relevant committee, which will become the 'responsible committee' (Corbett *et al* 2007). After the 'responsible committee' has been identified, the committee will select its rapporteur to draft the committee's position, which will include the legislative amendments the committee wishes to see adopted within the act. The rapporteur will summarise the position of the Commission and the committee will debate the proposal. The Commission can attend meetings of the relevant committee in order to defend its proposal position and clarify any issues that may exist that have been identified by the committee (Council Secretariat 2010). The committee will request that both the Council and the Commission keep the committee informed of developments within both institutions.

Once the committee and its rapporteur have drafted the report containing its amendment to the legislative act it will be discussed by the plenary of the EP. If the Commission's proposal is of a broad nature covering a number of policy areas, it is possible that a separate EP committee (or committees) may produce a non-binding opinion on the proposed legislative subject. It is the 'responsible committee' who will draft the Parliament's position. The opinion giving committee can suggest an amendment proposal, which the 'responsible committee' will have to acknowledge but is under no obligation to incorporate in its position. The 'responsible committee' is the main legislative actor in the process of creating the European Parliament's position (Corbett *et al* 2007).

Once the committee report amending the Commission's legislative proposal is presented to the plenary of the Parliament it will vote to adopt the report. If the report is adopted by the whole Parliament there are two possible outcomes. The first is that the Council approves the position of the EP and accepts any amendments proposed. If this occurs, the legislation is adopted. The legislative act will then be signed by the president, the secretaries-general of the EP, and the Council before it is published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJ) (Council Secretariat 2010), then becoming EU law.

However, the Council may reject the Parliament's amendment proposals and consequently agreement is not reached at the first reading. The Council will subsequently draft its own position, which will be presented to the Parliament at a second legislative reading. Receipt by EP of the Council's position marks the beginning of this second legislative reading stage. Within the second reading the Parliament has a time-limited period of 3 (+1) months with which to conclude this stage of the process. For difficult or time consuming reports either the Council or the EP can request one extra month on top of the 3 months provided (Council Secretariat 2010). Once the Parliament receives the Council's position at the beginning of this second reading, the EP committee responsible will examine the position of the Council and make recommendations of how to proceed. The plenary will proceed to vote again on the recommendations of the committee. It is possible that the Parliament will accept the Council's first reading position ending the process. The Council's position will, also, be seen as

accepted if there is no EP plenary vote within the 3(+1) month time limit. In both cases the legislative act will be adopted and published in the OJ (Council Secretariat 2010). The second outcome, however, at this second reading stage would be that the Council's position is not accepted by an absolute majority of the members of the European Parliament. A rejection of the Council's position by an absolute majority of the Parliament would end the legislative process. This would finish the likelihood of adoption of the proposed act unless the Commission made a new proposal to begin the process again. It is rare for an act to be blocked completely by the Parliament at this stage; it is more likely that the EP will propose amendments via the responsible committee to the Council's position. The amendments requested are sent to both the Council and the Commission. The Commission having received the EP amendments has to issue an opinion on the amendments proposed by the Parliament. This is referred to the Council before it concludes its second reading.

After the Council receives the Parliament's amendments it has a 3(+1) months' time limit on its second reading. The Council has the option at this stage to adopt or reject the amendments proposed by the Parliament. If the Commission has reacted positively to the EP's proposed amendments, the Council will vote on the amendment using qualified majority voting (QMV). If the Commission has responded by opposing the EP's amendments, the Council will have to pass a unanimous vote in favour of the EP amendments for them to be accepted (Council Secretariat 2010). If the Council does not accept all the parliamentary amendments the act is adopted and published in the Official Journal. However, if the Council does not accept all parliamentary amendments a 'conciliation committee' will be convened (this is often referred to as a third legislative reading). If the process reaches the conciliation stage it has 6(+2) weeks for any outstanding issues between the Council and EP to be resolved. Once again, the extension of the 2 further weeks can be requested by the EP or the Council. Before the conciliation committee has its first meeting it is common for the informal process of trialogue to take place where the three institutions meet and exchange information to facilitate a successful conciliation. During trialogue the Council will be represented by the chairman of the COREPER and members from the Parliament's relevant policy committee.

While this section has largely accounted for the formal process involved in the OLP, the informal processes are of equal importance within the EU decision-making process. Many key decisions and outcomes result from informal interactions occurring in parallel to formal decision making procedures. The so called ‘trialogue procedure’ has become central to all decision making within the EU, despite having no formal basis within the EU treaties. Trialogue follows the formal legislative procedure, potentially operating over all legislative stages. The objective of trialogue is to increase the efficiency of decision making, by organizing regular informal meetings between a selected group of relevant policy actors from the Commission, Council, and the EP committees’ relevant policy actors. Actors from each institution meet in seclusion to discuss how compromise can be reached regarding a report. It has been the expansion of trialogue that has led to an increased number of early agreements, which end the legislative process before all legislative readings are required.

If the conciliation committee meetings do commence, because an early agreement has not been reached or agreed upon in informal trialogue, it will consist of 27 members each for the Council and the EP. The majority of those MEPs selected to attend the conciliation committee will be, similar to trialogue, members from the committee responsible for producing the EP’s original dossiers on the legislation in question (Council Secretariat 2010). The Commission will be represented on the conciliation committee by the Commissioner responsible for the legislative proposal. The Commission has very limited influence during conciliation; its role is to attempt to facilitate compromise between the EP and Council.

Within the conciliation meeting a working document will be drawn up which is divided into two sections, the first containing points already agreed upon by the Parliament and the Council, and the second containing the current outstanding issues dividing the institutions and the respective position of each institution (Council Secretariat 2010). When conciliation does commence each meeting of the committee will be held alternatively between the Council and EP premises. Whichever institution holds the first meeting will have the responsibility of writing the compromise text that the conciliation committee attempts to reach. If a joint text is agreed between the two institutions at this third reading

it is sent to the EP, and the Council, to be voted upon. If the joint text is voted on, successfully, by each institution it is adopted and published in the OJ becoming law. If no joint text is reached in conciliation, or the time limit is passed, the proposed legislation fails. Furthermore, if a joint text is agreed but does not reach the number of votes needed within the Council (by qualified majority) or the Parliament (by majority) the act also fails.

This overview of the workings of the OLP places the EP committees within the European decision making process, the outcomes of which can vary depending on the committee involved and their comparative influence.

1.8 Overview of Thesis Structure

This first chapter has introduced the puzzle and presented the research question, which will be answered over the ‘sources of committees influence’. It has, in addition, laid out how the research project has been conducted to generate original findings, to determine how sources of influence may operate, and as a result how some committees may establish greater influence than others. An account of the methods, qualitative elite interviews and document analysis, has been made, and the justification behind the approaches discussed for their merits and potential drawbacks from their use. The chapter has also placed the committee system of the EP into a proper context within the decision making process of the EU.

Chapter two introduces the conceptual framework, drawing upon a number of studies from comparative politics, mainly from the US congressional systems, where research on committee influence has been extensive. A concept of influence and of committee influence is discussed, placing the EP committee systems in context with other comparative systems where legislative influence has already been empirically observed. The chapter discusses each of the previous perspectives proposed concerning different potential sources of committee influence. From these perspectives, the ‘informational’, the ‘partisan’ and the ‘public policy’, four hypotheses are generated, each of which in turn is tested within the case studies.

Chapter three comprises the first case study. The ENVI committee first formed in 1979, during the 7th term, covers the competency areas of environment, public health and food safety policy, acting as a full co-legislator in all its remit areas. Examples of legislation such as the ‘plastic bag’³² directive are examined as representative of the committee’s legislative involvement. The data collected examines the direct role of members, their use of specialization and the effect of turnover on committee influence. Claims over the negative impact of turnover in the case study are disputed, suggesting that turnover had a positive effect on the influence of the ENVI committee despite expectations to the contrary. Furthermore, the role of unity between party groups on the committee is questioned for its positive effect on committee influence.

Chapter four focuses on the BUDG committee. This committee operates as the main budgetary actor of the EP, being formed at the point the European Parliament became an elected parliament. The committee, in effect, acts as a co-legislator, alongside the Council in agreeing Union budgets. Previous assumptions over the role of membership retention and its effect on committee legislative outputs are questioned within the chapter. The functioning of partisan support and the impact of public policy type is, also, examined in the context of their effect on the BUDG committee legislative outputs during the period and in the example of select ‘Annual Budget’ procedures and financial framework agreements. These findings contributed to an original perspective on the way in which the BUDG committee was able/or unable to have its policy preferences reflected in legislative outputs.

Chapter five examines the role of the INTA committee. Established in 2004 as an independent committee the International Trade committee deals with trade agreements and regulations surrounding their implementation. The committee is placed within the context of the new powers it received after Lisbon, with the extension of co-decision and new veto powers over trade agreements. A number of key legislative examples are examined, such as the INTA committee’s involvement in the ‘Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership’³³ (TTIP) negotiations and the fractures ‘conflict

³² ‘Packaging and packaging waste: reduction of the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags’ (2013/0371(COD)).

³³ A major free trade agreement (FTA) proposed between the European Union and The United States.

minerals' report. The perspective that expertise was not present in significant levels within the INTA committee is challenged, and previous assessments of the INTA committee's source of influence are questioned.

The final chapter presents and analyses the collective findings that have been generated within the case studies. A number of original findings are presented within this concluding chapter that provide contrary evidence to current conventions on committee influence, with regard to the role of committee specialization and unity. These intriguing results are discussed in detail before engagement is made with the potential impact of the findings on the wider field of both legislative influence and committee systems, beyond the EU. Discussion focuses upon the thesis' contribution towards the field, which furthers current understanding of the EP committee system, committee influence in a wider context, and provides the potential groundwork for the beginning of a unified theory that will allow for the patterns of different sources of influence, which this thesis has empirically identified within its selected cases.

Chapter Two Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the sources of committee influence in the European Parliament (EP). This chapter will establish a theoretical framework by drawing upon different strands of the current literature and the various explanations of what may constitute committee legislative influence. EP committees have influence over legislative outcomes: this is an identifiable phenomenon that has been established in a number of studies (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Kreppel 2002b, Farrell & Héritier 2004, Ringe 2005, 2009, McElroy 2006, Corbett *et al* 2007, Yordanova 2009a, 2009b, 2013, Whitaker 2011). However, as stated in the opening chapter, committees are not equally influential legislators, and despite operating under uniform legislative rules with the same powers (the Ordinary Legislative Procedure) since the Treaty of Lisbon, it remains the case that some committees have clearly more influence than others. To address this puzzle, and answer the research question, the thesis looks at the potential different range of ‘sources of influence’ that a committee may have access to draw upon in order to establish its influence. Thus, in the first instance the ‘dependent variable’ (‘committee legislative influence’) will be established, along with the ‘independent variables’ (‘sources of influence’) that may potentially impact upon the ‘dependent variable’.

This chapter will be structured as follows. First, the concepts of ‘influence’ and of ‘committee influence’ will be discussed. Discussion will further focus upon how previous studies have measured committee influence within the European Parliament, as this will help to establish how high influence can be, and has been empirically recognized as significant in some EP committees. This study’s focus on the 7th EP will allow us to disregard formal rules, and solely focus on the ‘informational perspective’, the ‘partisan perspective’ and the ‘public policy perspective’, in that order, and from these, different hypotheses will be formulated. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the important points that have been identified.

2.2 Concepts of Influence

Exactly what constitutes legislative influence within parliamentary systems has been a topic of significant theoretical conjecture ever since the inception of legislative parliaments. With the expansion of parliamentary systems to deal efficiently with the increasing need for specialist technical competences, which occurs over time, greater significance has been placed on the role of committees in the legislative process (Blondel 1969). With the expansion of committees within many parliaments, the debate as to what comprises legislative influence has intensified; however, a consensus among scholars has yet to be reached. The growth of committee influence as defined by Blondel (1969) is not a uniform phenomenon. Committees evolve to deal with non-general legislation in areas that governments identify as needing devoted specialists and, as a result, committee members become area experts if they spend extended periods of time on a committee (Krehbiel 1991:171). Committees, being born out of the necessity to increase legislative efficiency, have been observed in many systems as actors fundamentally important to the legislative process. While they are often established as influential actors within their own legislative processes, being often the only direct official route for elected members to influence legislative outcomes (Mattson & Strøm 1996, 2006, Longley & Davidson 1998), the actual concept of ‘influence’ remains, however, to be clearly defined.

Pivotal to the discipline of political science is the study of both ‘influence’ and ‘power’. However, clearly defining and differentiating these two concepts is not a simple task (Dahl 1984). Defining what comprises influence is difficult as there has been no consensus among scholars over a theoretical definition of ‘influence’. Too often ‘influence’ has been defined in terms that would be more appropriate to indicate an actor’s ‘power’, and in many cases the terms have been used interchangeably (Dahl 1957: 202). In order to have a clear understanding of ‘influence’ this thesis draws upon the concept as it is presented by Dahl (1957, 1961) and others (Blondel 1967, 1995, Bachrach & Baratz 1970) from a general comparative context, and previously applied by selected studies in the case of the EP (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Scully 1997a, Marshall 2010, Costello & Thomson 2013).

The simplest definition and separation of the terms ‘influence’ and ‘power’, suggested by Bachrach and Baratz (1970), is that influence is when actor ‘A’ gets actor ‘B’s’ compliance without having to use threats, either overt or tacit. This definition of influence is different from that of power where actor ‘A’ is able to make actor ‘B’ acquiesce by the use of an explicit or implied threat (Cairney 2012). This is, however, only one simplistic mechanical view of influence and power. As Dahl (1957: 202) advocates, saying ‘A’ has influence over ‘B’ is not particularly informative in understanding what comprises ‘influence’. The statement that ‘A’ has power or influence over ‘B’ may be true but does not explain the full relationship of ‘influence’ between the two actors and what decision making processes are taking place to generate the ‘influence’ of an actor. The influence of an actor, however, can be understood by the resources (for example ‘expertise’) that are available to him/her to exploit in their relationship with others (Dahl 1957, Bowler & Farrell 1995), and identifying from where these resources originate to establish what influence is within the unique system (Scully 1997a). ‘Influence’, therefore, can be defined as the ability of an actor, by the active application of identifiable resources, or as they are termed here ‘sources of influence’ at their disposal, to move a position towards their own desired preferences by the time of the final outcome (Blondel 1995). Utilising this definition, focusing on potential committee resources to determine the origins of committee influence, implies that as outcomes are not uniform for all committees, by extrapolation (supported by previous empirical studies (Tsebelis 1995)) not all committees have the same levels of influence as resources differ. There are a number of possible factors determining the outcome that two different actors can gain from a third (Dahl 1957).

2.3 Measuring Committee Influence

Empirically, committee influence has been measured and established in a number of different ways. Some studies have adopted a ‘legalist’ approach, which focused primarily on formal rules, to ascertain which committees are influential, or not; these have, however, been discounted for reasons discussed above and elaborated on below. This thesis favours the so-called ‘bargaining success’ approach as a more appropriate way of establishing committee influence. Blondel (1995) has stated that the ability of a committee to alter and amend elements of a policy proposal towards its preferences is an

intermediate level of influence, while alteration of broad policy areas would equate to the highest level of influence. Similar ‘bargaining success’ definitions of influence have been recommended in other studies such as those of Kreppel (1999, 2002b) and others (Crombez 2000, Crombez *et al* 2000, Costello & Thomson 2013), who state that (EP) influence can be seen as the ability of an actor to gain outcomes favourable to their own position. The ability to draw an outcome towards a preference has been cited in a number of EP committee cases as exemplifying high levels of influence (Judge 1992, Bowler & Farrell 1995). A number of different practical measurements of committee influence have been proposed.

A committee’s prestige (defined as its perceived standing among actors) could indicate a level of legislative influence, as can a level of familiarity with the application of legislative procedures that allows the development of an institutional memory, and understanding of how procedures work in practice (Corbett *et al* 2007). Actors, from spending extended periods of time dealing with a procedure, learn how to use it to maximise their own benefits. Institutional memory is, however, only a route to influence, not influence itself.³⁴ Similarly, a committee’s prestige is more of an esoteric concept. To say that a committee is influential as a result of its prestige is a cyclical argument. While a committee can use its prestige to its advantage, high prestige is an outcome of already possessing influence and not a direct cause. The example of the AFET committee clearly highlights this point as it carries a very high level of prestige but completely lacks legislative influence (Corbett *et al* 2007). Neither prestige, nor institutional memory can truly help to empirically measure a committee’s influence.

Within the EP framework the committee’s role is to draft rather than reflect the plenary of the Parliament’s position in any particular area of legislature (Tsebelis & Kalandrakis 1999, Ringe 2005, 2009). It is, therefore, the ability of a committee, as a result of ‘bargaining’ with other actors, to have its preferences reflected in the final legislative outcome that can signify relative levels of legislative influence. Change can be observed in the draft policy, often in the form of legislative amendments,

³⁴ ‘Policy making expertise’ is cited as a potential source of committee legislative influence below, which does apparently derive from membership experience with legislation.

from its original proposal until its final outcome, and can be measured by how far, and towards which institution the legislation has orientated (Crombez 2000, Crombez *et al* 2000). When there is convergence between an actor's preferences³⁵ and a legislative outcome this can be denoted as influence (Bailer 2004, Arregui & Thomson 2009, Costello & Thomson 2013). This measurement has been applied in studies attempting to understand the influence of the EP as a whole (with the exception of Costello & Thomson (2013) who do acknowledge the role of committees); it is, also, relevant in the context of EP committee influence.

It is important to identify when committee influence is actually evident rather than an actor being 'lucky', as an actor who gains a favourable outcome in line with their preferences in a single interaction may simply be fortuitous in achieving said outcome rather than being truly influential or as Costello & Thomson (2013: 1026) term it, 'powerful'. Therefore, the ability of a committee to shift a proposal towards its preferred position must be exhibited in a number of repeated interactions rather than on a single 'one-shot' interaction. Therefore, rather than taking a 'one shot approach' which examines isolated and often singular examples of legislation as indicative of the whole process, this thesis will examine multiple interactions within the 7th term (2009-2014), with some notable examples where legislation was extended to carry over into the 8th parliamentary term.

Studies attempting to establish EP committee influence have commonly measured the number of successful legislative amendments proposed by the Parliament (the distinction between committees was often not made, rather policy area was the unit of measurement, which individual committees cover) (Tsebelis 1994, Garret 1995, Moser 1996, 1997, Tsebelis & Garrett 1997a, Scully 1997a, 1997b, Tsebelis & Kalandrakis 1999, Kreppel 1999, 2000, 2002b, Crombez 2000, Tsebelis *et al* 2001, Kasack 2004). It was viewed that through the success of EP amendments this would demonstrate a committee's legislative influence. The more consistent a committee is in achieving amendment success, and thus amending proposals towards its own preferences, the more influential it was deemed

³⁵ An actor's preferences can be judged by assessing the consistent amendment position of that actor in repeated interactions. For example the ENVI committee is seen as an outlier with an observable preference for furthering environmental protection (Kaeding 2004).

to be. Importantly, as identified by Kreppel (1999, 2002b), all EP amendments are not of equal significance, a fact that many previous studies had overlooked. Simply stating that a committee which has more amendment success is more influential would be incorrect on its own. In fact, it would be more appropriate to state that a committee is influential when it has a high amendment success rate, which includes a significant proportion of important amendments (amendments which make broad policy alterations) rather than taking the total volume of amendments as an indicator.

While amendment success rates have been the main process used to establish committee influence, some studies have adopted interesting variations on this theme. The division of committees by Yordanova (2009a: 256) into two types, ‘more powerful committees’ and ‘less powerful committees’, is useful, as it is one that involves a policy output dynamic, which was first identified by Lowi (1964, 1972) as a comparative factor in committee (levels of) influence. What defines a ‘more powerful committee’ and a ‘less powerful committee’ according to Yordanova (2009a) is the number of co-decision reports drafted by an EP committee: the more significant reports adopted, the ‘more powerful’ that committee. While Yordanova’s (2009a) distinction between powerful and less powerful committees may be less relevant now, due to the extension of co-decision³⁶ with the Ordinary Legislative Procedure, it still provides a potential baseline to establish a committee’s legislative influence. Committees do display different levels of report adoption (Figure 2-1). Nevertheless, some committees, while not processing a high volume of reports, deal with highly important and complex singular reports. So while the volume of reports may be a useful indicator in attempting to gauge the influence of a committee it is not a definitive measurement.

In addition to an examination of amendment success rates, the stage of legislative agreement has been assessed as signifying the dependent variable of this research, that of ‘committee legislative influence’. Studies such as those of Rasmussen (2011) and others (Rittberger 2000, Shackleton & Raunio 2003, Hage & Kaeding 2007, Rasmussen & Toshkov 2011, Toshkov & Rasmussen 2012, Rasmussen & Reh 2013) have examined the importance of the legislative agreement stage as a

³⁶ Committees which may have used other legislative procedures would have been considered less influential as they simply did not draft co-decision reports at the same level as committees which used co-decision by default.

sign/potential measure of committee influence. In most parliamentary systems with strong committees, amendments to legislation will occur. However, there are often variations at what stage of the legislative process committees actually become involved and this in turn could affect a committee's influence (Shepsle & Weingast 1987, Blondel 1995).

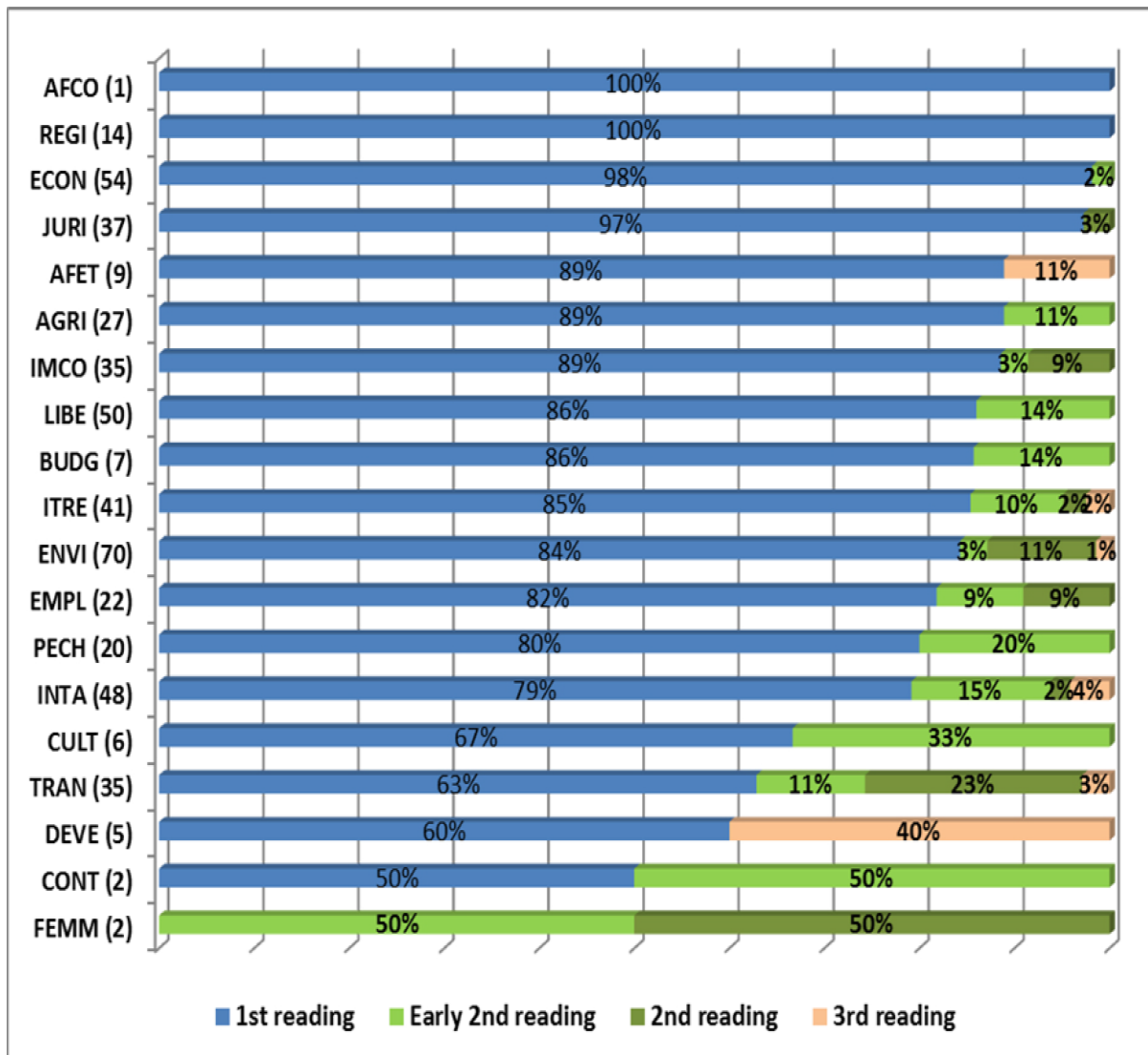


Figure 2-1 Co-decision file adoptions (CODs) by each of the committees of the European Parliament, and illustrating the percentage of these reports adopted by the Council at different reading stages of the legislative process. Source: Pittella *et al* 2014

Statistical publication on report adoption within the EP (Figure 2-1) clearly indicates that there is a disparity between the stages at which agreements are concluded across different committees. Early agreement has been an increasing trend over recent years (Figure 2-2). The rationale according to

Rittberger (2000) behind an actor making early, or waiting for, a later agreement is based upon the premise that actors are driven by their levels of impatience with the length of the legislative process. It has been suggested that patient actors have a greater remit to influence legislation while impatient actors give greater concessions in order for a conclusion to be reached at an early stage (Rittberger 2000). The more patient an actor, the more confident it would appear that said actor is, in expecting the proposed legislation to move closer to their position as time progresses. The impatient actor will often offer concessions at an early stage to avoid a drawn-out process which conversely, they perceive as only disadvantaging them the longer it continues (Rittberger 2000). The reason for this is that the 'patient' actors have more 'resources' to exploit in a drawn-out process, while 'impatient' actors will seek to end the process as they have less 'resources' to utilise/spend as time progresses (Rasmussen & Reh 2013). This understanding, however, is somewhat disputed by Yordanova (2013: 107-112) who supplies evidence to claim that committees which reached an early agreement without extended trialogue negotiations are actually weaker in influence. Evidence supplied by Yordanova (2013: 107) demonstrates that if an early agreement is reached 'it is not uncommon to see all the committee amendments rejected'. Influence, therefore, could simply be measured by what stage agreement was reached and which actor pushed for this, in repeated interactions. However, the findings of Yordanova (2013) do not heavily impact upon this study, as figure 2-1 demonstrates each of the committees selected as a case study has a similar rate of early adoption.

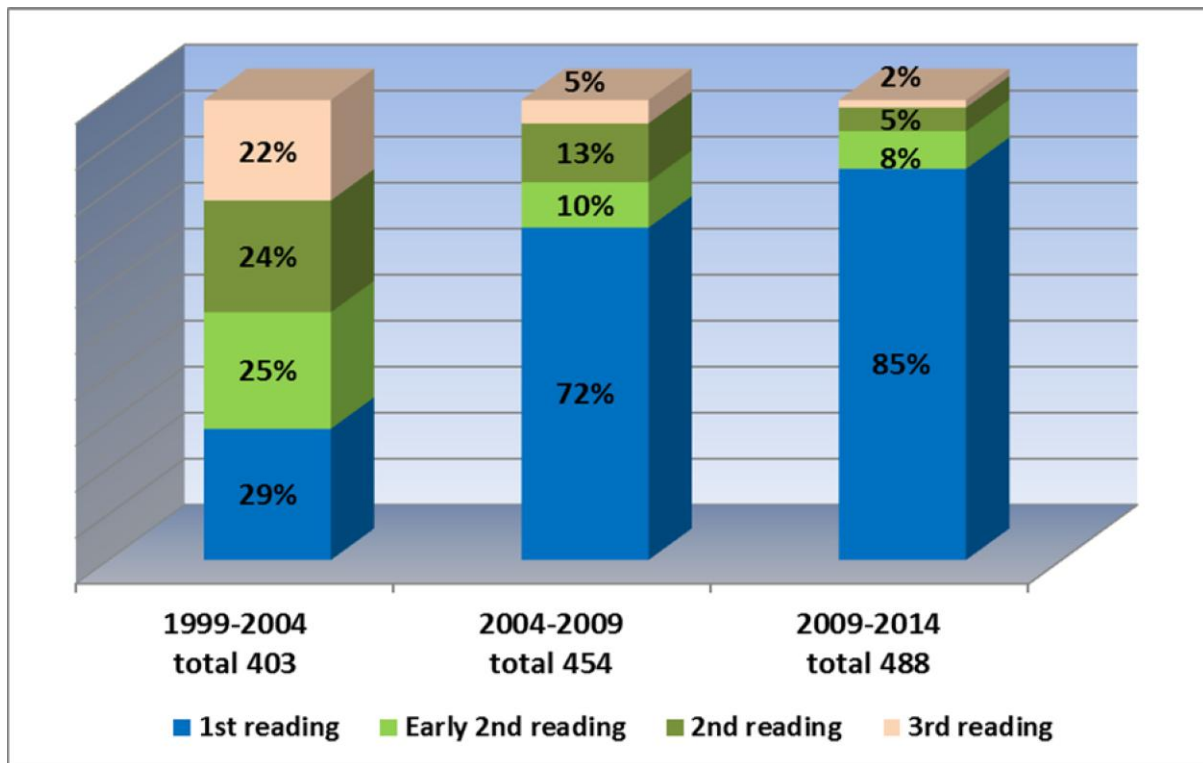


Figure 2-2 Rates of legislative adoption stage. Source: Pittella *et al* 2014

Many more complex ways of understanding influence have been proposed, as comprehensively reviewed by Krehbiel (2004), and many have been applied in the EP (see Kreppel 2002b). This thesis avoids adopting these modelling approaches for the particular reason that they do not always lead to greater clarity, or generate useful empirical results. As discussed above many different alternative models of EP influence have been proposed, which have not always lead to a better understanding of EP influence (Kreppel 2002b: 785)³⁷, and often focused on the impact of legislative rules. While similar assumptions, that actors are trying to get the best outcomes over potentially multiple rounds, have been adopted to those indicated in Baron and Ferejohn's (1989) 'dividing the dollar' game³⁸, this thesis focuses on a better empirical understanding of committee influence rather than testing

³⁷ 'The weakness of the existing empirical data has long allowed various theoretical models of EP influence to coexist, competing for dominance without the ability to effectively test their relative veracity. The result has long been an inability to move beyond the generalized theoretical arguments about procedure. This has left significant aspects of the legislative process and many crucial variables largely unexamined' (Kreppel 2002b: 785).

³⁸ All actors want the biggest share of 'one dollar' and vote on how to distribute the dollar in repeated rounds (legislative readings); the value of the dollar depreciates with every round until a final agreement ultimately dividing up the dollar is agreed. Agreement is seen as often being quick as actors will seek agreement before the dollar has depreciated too much in value.

(complex) theoretical perspectives based on quantitative analysis. This thesis does prefer the approach of focusing on the adoption rates of significant amendments (Kreppel 2002b), as amendments best demonstrate bargaining outcomes. While the different possible ways of measuring committee influence, as discussed above, deviate to an extent from each other in their methods of establishing influence, they do not deviate from the general consensus that committees of the EP are influential when they are able to gain legislative outcomes favourable to their preferences. Furthermore, there is a consensus that the ‘resources’ a committee draws upon define its comparative level of influence (Dahl 1957, 1961, Blondel 1967, 1995, Bachrach & Baratz 1970).

2.4 Sources of Committee Influence

Before tackling the hypotheses a level of engagement with the literature surrounding legislative committees and their influence is required to establish for the reader the current level of understanding upon which this thesis seeks to expand. The initial strand of research on committee influence, originally applied to the US Congress, placed significant focus upon formal indicators of influence with the application (or disproportionate application) of formal rules (and procedures) as defining committee influence, i.e. how legislative bodies, such as committees, are organized, defines the influence of that actor within the institution (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, Krehbiel 2004).³⁹ This focus upon formal procedures was largely driven by political economists, and social choice theorists, who determined to understand the legislator in the same way markets are understood, despite the difficulties of predicting the actions and outcomes of a political actor compared with predicting markets (Riker 1980, Weingast *et al* 1981, Krehbiel 2004). Formal rules are not a focus of this thesis, however, it is important to show an understanding of their effect as much for the literature focusing on committee influence had previously used them as an indicator of influence.

Different legislative rules can empower committees (manifest influence) in different ways such as granting some select actors with the right of ‘veto’, or others with the right to ‘agenda setting’ (McKelvey 1976, Romer & Rosenthal 1978, Shepsle 1979, 1986, 1989, Riker 1980, Shepsle &

³⁹ For a detailed and excellent review of the different concepts of ‘legislative organization’ see Krehbiel 2004.

Weingast 1987). The concept of 'agenda setting' (Romer & Rosenthal 1978), taken from the US Congress, was seen as defining influence, as a committee with this power, in theory, would better control the final outcome, setting the legislative agenda closer to their preferences and, therefore, not having to fight for its position at later stages. Committees with identifiable agenda setting powers would be considered influential actors (Shepsle & Weingast 1984, Riker 1986, Tsebelis 1994). However, the role of agenda setting has been questioned in its ability to explain a committee's influence, as the link between agenda and outcome has not always been well established. Rather, according to Shepsle & Weingast (1987: 929) 'committees are disproportionately influential on legislative outcomes because they possess an *ex post* veto'. What this means is that committees when imbued with a veto at the very end of a legislative process (*ex-post*) are able to bring outcomes towards their preferences with legislative amendments, by threatening to reject the act completely if it does not meet their most basic preferences.

These different formal perspectives, derived from studies of the US Congress, heavily influenced studies on the EP, and informed many of the assumptions held over how committee influence was established. Thus the highly cited studies of Tsebelis & Garrett (Tsebelis 1997, Garrett & Tsebelis 1997, Tsebelis & Garrett 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2001) and others (Moser 1996, Scully 1997a, 1997b, Crombez 2000) attempted to comprehend influence within the EP as a whole between the implementations of, firstly, the cooperation procedure and, latterly, the 'co-decision i/co-decision ii' procedures. Each of these procedures has been applied to different committees at different times. As a result it had been claimed that the EP, or more precisely the committees operating under the cooperation procedure, had disproportionately more power under cooperation, gaining 'conditional' agenda setting powers, than when a number of EP committees gained 'veto powers' with 'co-decision i' superseding cooperation (Garrett & Tsebelis 1997, Tsebelis & Garrett 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2001). This viewpoint has been challenged as being too simplistic, and notably Scully (1997a: 98) suggested that a number of factors including, importantly, the roles which EP committees play in the legislative process and what resources/information committees have access to, must be understood in order to determine what shapes the patterns of committee influence. This important point, that committee

influence is defined by the resources a committee can mobilise, was elaborated upon in more detail by Bowler & Farrell (1995), as discussed above. A more detailed account of this early debate surrounding differing EU procedures can be found in Tsebelis & Garrett (2001). What can be drawn in the context of this thesis is that, while formal rules when they differ do affect levels of influence, committee influence is, however, fundamentally about how effectively a committee can scrutinize legislation, with the ability to impact upon final outcomes. Where a committee sources its influence from is of vital importance when attempting to understand committee influence. This is especially true when formal legislative rules are uniform as they are with few exceptions after the ToL.

One way to further our understanding of Committee Influence is to examine comparative examples of influential committees, which have already been identified empirically. All democratic western European parliaments have committees which play a role in their systems, whether this role is either extensive or limited in legislative involvement differs between parliaments depending on how the system is organised, both formally and informally. The EP, as a recently developing institution, may have more in common with a young parliament than it would with a mature debating parliament such as that of the British Westminster model, where practices are well entrenched and committees are perceived as weak (Krieger 2009). No parliamentary system, at least within Europe, is identical to another (Bergman *et al* 2005); however, within the field of comparative politics the EP does have more in common with the parliaments of the Nordic countries and their strong legislative committee systems. Many of these Nordic examples have in equal part established their committee system's high legislative as a result of formal rules and a number of, identifiable, informal resources.

The Nordic model of parliamentary government and committee systems encompasses a number of countries including Norway, Sweden, Denmark (the Scandinavian parliaments), Iceland and Finland. These Nordic countries are highlighted because, largely, all contain highly significant standing committees which have grown in power, alongside their individual increasingly powerful parliaments (Elder *et al* 1982) and are, therefore, useful in placing committee influence and the EP's committee system in an appropriate equivalent context. The governing style of the Nordic countries has been

termed ‘committee parliamentarianism’ (Hague & Harrop 2010: 310). As their parliamentary systems expanded so did the Nordic committee systems. Committees have been used for many years in the Swedish Riksdag and the Norwegian Storting and display significant independence, from their executives, and efficiency of operations in their respective systems (Elder *et al* 1982). The *raison d’être* of committees according to Blondel (1969) is that they maximise the efficiency of parliaments by being small working groups. The Nordic committees exemplify this concept, containing a large number of small committees, thus maximising efficiency by their numbers and their specialist knowledge (Arter 1984). Small committees are perceived as more likely to have legislative influence than large committees.⁴⁰ Within Nordic countries the small nature of committees has developed a culture of membership expertise generation.⁴¹ It is from this generation of expertise, and operational efficiency, that many Nordic committee systems have established their high influential roles, within their parliamentary systems. EP committees generally operate as small legislative units, while not as small as the Swedish example they are somewhat comparable.

Committees in, for example, the Swedish Riksdag are involved in all stages of the legislative process, and are formally able to propose legislation (something the EP cannot do), amend, and scrutinize, legislation (something the EP committees can do) while maintaining an independence from the executive (Arter 2008). This essentially summarises what ‘committee influence’ is; the ability of a committee to scrutinize and amend legislation towards its own ideal outcomes.⁴² The ability to scrutinize results in equal part from the formal powers of the committee and the informal generation of expertise, which members are identified as developing in the Swedish system. This would be why committees promote the acquisition of information by their members to be able to fully scrutinize legislation and propose realistic alternative solutions (Krehbiel 1991). In Sweden, committees are experts in their respective policy areas and membership is heavily weighted towards past expertise or

⁴⁰ The reasons for this can be observed in the example of the early French assembly where committees were large and unwieldy, which consequently discouraged all but some members from developing policy expertise (Arter 1984).

⁴¹ Similar circumstances have been proposed as occurring within the US congressional committees and are seen as a significant source of influence in that system and something which occurs naturally in small active legislative committees (Krehbiel 1991).

⁴² Setting the agenda could be considered committee influence in a comparative context however, because EP committees do not have proposal powers, it cannot be considered in this study.

training in the appropriate disciplines (Arter 1990). Many new Riksdag members will, in fact, serve apprenticeships as committee substitutes to build ‘policy expertise’, before becoming full members of a legislative committee able to fully exercise formal powers (Arter 2008). Studies (Arter 1990) have, also, suggested that informal contacts between the committee and outside groups, such as civil servants, have developed, with time, beyond the formal rules of the legislative process. As a result of these informal contacts there has been an increase in the flow of information between the different actors in the legislative system of Sweden, increasing the committee’s overall ability to scrutinize and amend legislative proposals (Arter 1990).

Similar practices to this are, also, observed outside of Northern Europe in, for example, the important committee systems of Italy. Within the Italian systems junior members have commonly been placed on ‘technical committees’ in order to build up experience before moving to ‘political committees’ when they become ‘senior’, and more effective legislative actors (Della Sala 1993: 177). This again highlights that it is not simply the formal powers which drive a committee’s influence but, also, identifies that informal resources help to establish influence in these empirical examples.

Within the EP, all committees are formally equal under the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP) since 2009. A disparity of rules, which has previously been the focus of studies of legislative influence in the EP (Tsebelis 1994, 1995, 1997, Garrett 1995, Moser 1996, Tsebelis & Garrett 1997a, 2000, 2001, Garrett & Tsebelis 1997, Scully 1997a, 1997b), can, therefore, be clearly ruled out as a potential source of influence in the case of the Parliament. All EP committees have veto powers over legislation and, in all but some limited cases, have the right to propose legislative amendments. As noted above, however, committees such as the ENVI and BUDG have both been seen as more influential than other committees for a range of reasons surrounding the different sources of influence upon which they could draw. Beyond the very limited areas where consultation still applies (as outlined in chapter 1), no disparity between the legislative rules exists. It is, therefore, unlikely that adopting any perspective that only focuses upon the formal powers, as has been done in past studies on US congressional committees (Krehbiel *et al* 1987, Shepsle & Weingast 1987, Weingast 1989),

would be of use in elucidating answers to the research question. A committee's influence is best defined as resulting from the different resources it can utilise to be influential (Dahl 1957). To claim, however, that solely having a formal power (which previously has been the main focus of literature as a source of committee influence) to do something, such as setting the agenda, equates to influence would be incorrect, an actor must have the resources to turn a potential to be 'influential' into practice. It is the sources of influence which a committee draws upon which turn the formal potential to be influential into reality.

Studies, largely based on the US congressional committee system, have identified three different perspectives to account for the origins of committee influence, namely the 'Distributive' (Shepsle & Weingast 1981, Baron & Ferejohn 1989), the 'Informational' (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, 1990, Krehbiel 1991) and the 'Partisan' (Cox & McCubbins 2007a, 2007b). The 'distributive' committee model can be disregarded from the present study as it focuses on formal rules, which do not essentially differ between EP committees, and strong electoral links between elected officials and their constituents that are generally considered weak in the EP (Yoshinaka *et al* 2010).

2.4.1 Informational

The Informational perspective (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, 1990, Krehbiel 1991, 2004) proposes that committee influence depends upon the level of pertinent remit related information⁴³ contained within a committee. However, importantly, information by its very nature is not symmetrical or ever 'complete'⁴⁴ for all actors but asymmetrical: no two actors will have the same level of information on the same policy issue (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, 1990, Krehbiel 1991). Committees will inevitably be asymmetrical in their legislative influence over policy outcomes, in part, as information is asymmetrical and a committee's influence will be defined, under the informational perspective, by the level of information it has acquired. Consequently, committees that have specialist knowledge and

⁴³ Information which is relevant to the policy making progress; this may involve information on technical aspects of policy making or information on political preference towards different proposals.

⁴⁴ All actors knowing what all other actors know and knowing how all other actors will act. While some (Tsebelis & Garrett 1996) have suggested that information between actors is complete, this thesis does not adopt that viewpoint but accepts that all actors do not know 100% of what all other actors know and have 'incomplete information'.

information that other legislators do not have will have a bargaining advantage. A committee will, therefore, attempt⁴⁵ to use the knowledge it has acquired strategically to increase its influence over legislative outcome (Krehbiel 1991, 2004). The success or failure may, however, depend on the relative number of members experienced enough to use the information successfully (turn potential into practice).

The informational perspective is strongly related to the concept of the specialization of a committee's membership and the ability of that membership to collect and utilise pertinent expert information. Under the informational model, in order to deal with the need to create specialist legislative policy proposals, committees are designed to facilitate data collection and the dissemination of information by its members with the object of increasing legislative efficiency (Krehbiel 1991, Costello & Thomson 2010). Uncertainty inevitably exists within policy-making and no actor can guarantee the position they support will successfully address the policy issues at hand. Members by acquiring specialization can reduce uncertainty and seemingly propose better solutions avoiding unforeseen costs that no member wishes to incur (Krehbiel 1991: 66-67). While it has been identified that actors within committees are encouraged to gain information, there has been a focus on studying how actors who have this information can use it strategically (Krehbiel 2004). In order for the informational levels of its members to be increased, committees are set up in such a way, within the institutional systems that create them, to incentivise members to gain expert and specialist information of their respective policy areas by keeping the costs to do so low (Krehbiel 1991, Kaeding 2004).

A selected number of studies, largely within US state legislators and Congress (Feller *et al* 1979, Sabatier & Whitman 1985, Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, 1990, Krehbiel 1991) but, also, within some EP examples (Bowler & Farrell 1995, McElroy 2006), have attempted to elucidate what specialization and expertise actually entails, but as of yet a clear definition remains elusive. According to Krehbiel (1991: 67), information, which creates specialization with its progressive acquisition by members, can take the form of 'political' or 'policy' (the term 'technical' has, also, been used in place of 'policy')

⁴⁵ Success is never guaranteed in real world circumstances for many reasons such as an actor may end up not taking full advantage of the information they have.

information. 'Political' information is described as an actor acquiring knowledge on the political process and the decision making [political preferences] of other actors. 'Policy/technical' information involves actors understanding 'what policies result in a desired outcome' (Krehbiel 1991: 67), or as it could be described, developing a deeper understanding of the technical implications of policy impact. While some work has been conducted to create a definition between types of expertise, within the US and EP contexts (Feller *et al* 1979, Sabatier & Whitman 1985, Krehbiel 1991, Bowler & Farrell 1995, McElroy 2006, Whitaker 2011), a greater degree of academic clarity is needed which this thesis aims to provide. What Krehbiel (1991) and others (Feller *et al* 1975, Sabatier & Whitman 1985) term as 'political' and 'technical', this thesis conceptualises as '*policy making expertise*' (political) and '*professional expertise*' (technical). This study builds upon and expands the concepts proposed by Krehbiel (1991).

'Policy making expertise' is the collection of information as a result of the political experience that members acquire through the process of making policy. With the acquisition of '*policy making expertise*' over time, committee members seek to reduce the uncertainty of policy making. It is this desire to reduce the risks of the 'unknown implications of policy', which drives the necessity of members to gain specialist knowledge (Krehbiel 1991). Learning from past experience what legislation could be passed in a system and what would be unacceptable to the other legislative actors who have formal veto or amendment rights, enables members to develop an 'institutional memory' which benefits the overall influence of the committee they serve (Krehbiel 1991). This process of institutional learning, and understanding the limitations of different political policy options as a result of generated '*policy making expertise*' will only occur over time with greater institutional experience and the development of institutional relationships. When members who have built up policy making experience and institutional memory leave a committee, normally via the natural turnover of elections, the years of policy experience they have accumulated are lost from the committee (Krehbiel 1991,

Mattson & Strøm 2006, Costello & Thomson 2010), and as a result *'policy making expertise'* is perceived as adversely influenced by membership turnover.⁴⁶

'Policy making expertise' can only be gained if membership is stable; in other words when members spend extended periods on the same policy committee or policy area with low turnover so as to build policy information and *'policy making expertise'* (Mattson & Strøm 2006). If committee turnover is high, this is perceived as having an adverse effect on committee influence with a concomitant loss of experienced members who retained the committee's *'policy making expertise'* (Mamadouh & Raunio 2003). For this reason, some (e.g. Daniel 2013: 836) have asserted seniority (as a collection of *'policy making experience'*) as lending a committee greater influence over legislative outcomes. The greater the resources of information a committee has, the greater deference the plenary will grant it due to the better policy alternative it can propose with specialist knowledge (Costello & Thomson 2010). The current convention maintains that with a high turnover, a committee will undergo a reduction in its *'policy making expertise'* and, as a result, be a weakened legislative actor (see Brady 1978, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Krehbiel 1991 on the US Congress; Scarrow 1997, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Benedetto 2005, Daniel 2013 on the European Parliament; Shaw 1998, Mattson & Strøm 2006 on the comparative perspectives). The seemingly adverse effect of turnover has been cited in the context of the European Parliament; however, the assertions made by these studies have lacked significant empirical evidence to support it. While historically turnover in the European Parliament has been significantly high (Westlake 1994, Scarrow 1997), recent studies have indicated a trend towards higher rates of membership retention, which have, in turn, been associated with the growing influence of EP committees and a maturing of the Parliament overall (Whitaker 2011, 2014).

The impact of turnover on the committee system of the EP has been discussed in the context of previous (before the 7th term) legislative terms by Whitaker (2011), who examined its potential role with data sets starting in 1979 and continuing to the end of the 6th legislative term in 2009. It is important to briefly discuss this empirical work, as it potentially allows for comparisons over time

⁴⁶ It is possible that some experience is retained within the committee staff, something which is, also, tested within empirical chapters.

between the Whitaker study and data collect in this study for the 7th legislative term. Whitaker (2011: 48-49) found that as the Parliament established its self, the general trend of committee membership turnover declined over the 30-year time period between 1979 and 2009, and committee incumbency increased. Some variations were noted with committees such as Agriculture (AGRI) undergoing a lower than average turnover due to members seeking to establish themselves on that committee related to a higher salience of the issue to their particular home-state. According to Whitaker (2011: 39) this trend is consistent with the institutionalization of the committee system. As the Parliament and in particular its committees have increased their powers, members that have gained experience of these powers have tended to be maintained on committees leading to membership becoming more stable over time. The data generated by Whitaker (2011) would indeed indicate that there had been a potential link between both influence and turnover in the EP before the 7th term. By highlighting this data, it allows for a more forensic consideration of the causal relationship between influence and turnover in the context of this studies in-depth examination of turnover in the 7th term.

From the literature reviewed, it can be safely assumed that committees will gain influence in proportion to the degrees of *'policy making expertise'* and specialist knowledge possessed by their respective members, and with this collective knowledge they will be able to achieve greater levels of bargaining success (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, 1990, Krehbiel 1991, Bowler & Farrell 1995, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Costello & Thomson 2010). However, as has been discussed, information is not spread evenly and high committee turnover of members reduces collective *'policy making expertise'* and, as a result, committee influence can be adversely affected (Mamadouh & Raunio 2003). Thus, under the informational model all committees do not have the same levels of *'policy making expertise'* as a result of the different relative levels of committee turnover (Krehbiel 1991). If the informational model does accurately reflect the origins of committee influence, then the higher the level of *'policy making expertise'* within a committee, the greater the influence of that committee. The following, therefore, can be hypothesised:

H1. A committee with high membership turnover will have a weakened level of legislative influence.

Elements of the concept of *'policy making expertise'* have, however, often been confused with what could be better termed as *'professional expertise'*, which results from a committee member's previous professional training or background. As well as focusing on different elements of expertise, *'professional expertise'* is not affected by the same factors as *'policy making expertise'*, such as turnover, and this creates different potential patterns of committee influence, which can be tested.

'Professional expertise' can be understood as the knowledge and technical specialization which members have from a former professional or training background, obtained prior to joining a legislative committee. This specialization will inform actors of different technical policy options (Feller *et al* 1975, Sabatier & Whitman 1985) which would not be apparent to non-specialist actors who have to rely on internal institutional sources of information or possibly information from lobbying groups (Chalmers 2013). Actors who possess a professional and, or, an educational background,⁴⁷ linked to the remit of the committee of which they are a member, will often have their own informational network of contacts in order to collect information not accessible to others, and to further extend their ability to propose and develop policy and amendment options. Actors will generally be attracted to the policy areas with which they have previous professional experience (Krehbiel 1991). For example, committees dealing with agricultural policy will generally attract members with a professional agricultural background and some technical knowledge of the area (Krehbiel 2004). This professional attraction of members to certain committees has been demonstrated in the EP (Yordanova 2009b, Whitaker 2011).⁴⁸

Beyond work on epistemic communities which cites its potential importance to policy making (Hass 1992, Radaelli 1999), a limited number of studies have attempted to assess the general role of *'professional expertise'* on EP committees (Yordanova 2009b, Whitaker 2011, Daniel 2013). *'Professional expertise'* has been shown to be a major factor in a committee's selection of rapporteur positions (Yordanova 2009b, Daniel 2013). The rationale behind the correlation of rapporteur

⁴⁷ An example would be an ENVI committee member who has a PhD in chemical engineering.

⁴⁸ 'Clearly, relevant expertise and experience count for much in the EP's committee system' (Whitaker 2011: 127).

positions selection and *'professional expertise'* has been associated with the level of informational expertise (specialization) a member would bring to the rapporteur position (Yordanova 2009a, 2009b).⁴⁹ Daniel (2013: 834), in particular, postulated that a committee member's aptitude could be assessed by examining their educational and professional history.⁵⁰ The greater the collective professional aptitude (technical expertise) of a committee the more influence it will have, if, indeed, *'professional expertise'* is a source of committee influence as has been suggested (Yordanova 2009a, 2009b, Whitaker 2011, Daniel 2013). The professional networks that a member has developed can be advantageous for acquiring significant levels of information but, also, a technical understanding of a policy proposal would put this individual at a distinct advantage to someone lacking such expertise.

While turnover will inevitably result in members with *'professional expertise'* leaving their relevant committees, new members with appropriate backgrounds are generally attracted to such committees, bringing their own directly related professional experience, and consequently replacing any aggregated loss (Yordanova 2009b⁵¹). Thus a committee that is already evident as attracting a membership with *'professional expertise'* will continue to attract similar expertise to fulfil its remit. This has been demonstrated empirically and is assumed as true within this study (Yordanova 2009b). Consequently, there should be no major professional or technical loss in expertise within a committee, only any accompanying institutional memory and *'policy making expertise'* will be lost as a result of membership turnover. *'Policy making expertise'* and *'professional expertise'*, however, are not mutually exclusive concepts; while being different, there is no reason why a member of the committee could not possess both.

Different dynamics may determine to what extent a committee could utilise each as a source of influence. *'Policy making expertise'* is significantly affected and seemingly undermined by turnover (Scarrow 1997, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Benedetto 2005, Daniel 2013), *'professional expertise'*

⁴⁹ Especially, according to Yordanova (2009a), on committees where informational resources and understanding are seen as key to the committee's overall influence.

⁵⁰ Committees will, in theory, select a rapporteur based on their ability to maximise committee influence as a result of the skills they have.

⁵¹ Yordanova (2009a) and Whitaker (2011) demonstrates that *'professional expertise'* is often a major driving force in assignment to an EP committee.

should, however, be present at similar levels, with slight variations, within a committee over time, according to the best current evidence supplied by Yordanova (2009a). Levels of *'professional expertise'* are, however, affected by the aggregate levels of relevant professional and educational qualifications of its members. *'Professional expertise'* is therefore quantifiable by an examination (when available) of the members' professional/educational backgrounds. A lack of professional expertise will undermine any committee's ability to influence outcomes. A committee lacking in the ability to scrutinize and propose alternative workable solutions will have a weaker legislative influence as result. A second hypothesis can, therefore, be formulated:

H2: A committee with low levels of professional expertise will have low levels of influence.

2.4.2 Committee Unity

The partisan perspective focuses upon the role of party politics as an important facet of committee influence. The role of parties and their effect on committees has been a significant area of study most notably as proposed by Cox & McCubbins (2007a, 2007b) in the context of the American Congress. The classical view of the political parties' effect upon committees had been that party and committee cannot both be powerful at the same time within a legislative parliamentary system, as one would look to have dominance at the expense of the other, often seeing it as a zero sum game over who does hold the executive to account (or does not as the politics may dictate) (Lees & Shaw 1979, Weingast & Marshall 1988). However, the partisan perspective, which does view members of committees as agents of their parties, refutes the argument that for one to be strong, the other has to be weak (Deering & Smith 1997, Cox & McCubbins 2007b). This 'partisan perspective' suggests that it is the parties that define the influence of the committees by controlling the selection of key committee positions, empowering the policy committees in which they are most interested. In addition, a party could, in theory, insert loyal party personnel on to committees they perceive as important (Yordanova 2009a). Parties can, also, act in unity in opposition against the executive to influence outcomes⁵²

⁵² As the EP does not contain a governing party, such as would exist within a national parliament, all parties may potentially unite against the Council, or Commission.

(Kreppel 1999), something highly relevant within the EP due to the multi-party system which it operates.⁵³

Within the general partisan perspective the links between party and committee members are strong to the point that committee recommendations can be, and often are, constrained by political party leaderships (Deering & Smith 1997). Therefore, the partisan perspective can explain why the influence of some committees can be curtailed in a particular system. Many of the studies that have adopted a partisan perspective have drawn significant attention to the disproportionate influence of rapporteurs from large party groupings (Benedetto 2005). Follesdal & Hix (2006) suggest that as the EP has grown so, indeed, has the power of the partisan political parties to influence policy outcomes. It has, in fact, been postulated that as the committees have evolved in influence over time the control that the parties have over the committees, and the resources required to influence legislative outcomes, has expanded dramatically (Follesdal & Hix 2006). Parties do have a significant impact on the allocation of rapporteurs and chair allocation, and, therefore, control key positions and resources. Studies such as those of Benedetto (2005) and Høyland (2006) have examined the reasons for rapporteur selections and their impact on legislative influence. Both gauge the importance of rapporteurs to the legislative systems, with Benedetto (2005) going as far as to label rapporteurs as ‘legislative entrepreneurs’. Both Benedetto (2005) and Høyland (2006) suggest that there is a clear correlation between the number of reports a MEP will receive (becoming a rapporteur) and the party⁵⁴ to which they belong. The importance of key committee positions must be taken into account for their effect on the legislative process. As noted above, it is possible that parties identify and target committees that are most closely associated with areas that they deem as important in order to influence policy towards their preferred outcomes (Yordanova 2009a, 2011). It is, however, more likely that those partisan groups on committee define legislative influence by their ability to work

⁵³ To avoid any confusion, what is being observed is the unity between party groupings on a committee rather than the internal unity of individual party grouping. While it is assumed some dissent may often be present, EP partisan groups have classically been seen as mostly cohesive actors (Hix *et al* 2005). Any examples of disunity internal to individual party groups would be an interesting result even if it is not the main focus of study.

⁵⁴ Both, also, highlight the importance of the nation state, i.e. members from the big member states are more likely to gain reports. This does not deeply factor in this study, but it is important to acknowledge all elements which have driven selection that are known.

together, across party lines, to unite committee members, regardless of political group affiliation, behind a single committee legislative position, creating broad '*committee unity*' (Kreppel 1999, 2002b).

The level of unity displayed between party groupings on a committee has been suggested as a significant factor in the success of a committee to influence legislative outcomes (Kreppel 1999, 2002b, Nugent 2010, Hagemann & Høyland 2010, Costello & Thomson 2013, Burns 2013b). A committee will have greater influence if its members present a united front to other actors, most notably the Council (Kreppel 1999: 533). When unity is absent, the committee is less likely to have its amendment positions reflected within the final legislative outcome (Kreppel 2002b, Costello & Thomson 2013). When a committee is able to present a united front it can claim to represent the only negotiating position that the EP will accept and as a result it maximises its influence in negotiations with the Council (Kreppel 1999, Costello & Thomson 2013). Therefore, the level of unity can establish a committee as influential as it directly assists the committee's overall bargaining power.

Committee unity, the concept that committee members across the partisan divides could unify on a single legislative position, has often been previously overlooked when assessing legislative influence in parliamentary systems according to Kreppel (2002b). A number of studies (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Kreppel 1999, 2000, 2002b, Nugent 2010, Hagemann & Høyland 2010, Costello & Thomson 2013, Burns 2013b), with varying degrees of empirical support, have highlighted the possible impact of '*committee unity*' on committee influence. Research on the powers of the EP, as a whole, observed that the Parliament, while still establishing itself during earlier terms, acted in unity to increase its overall legislative powers (Tsebelis 1994) but, as it was never guaranteed, it had to manufacture this unity (Bowler & Farrell 1995). Thus, different party groups must actively work with each other towards unity rather than it being a natural state of affairs within the EP.

Table 2-1 Party Groupings of the European Parliament 7th Term (2009–2014)

European Parliament Grouping	Political Ideology	MEPs 7th Term (2009-2014)
Group of the European People’s Party (EPP)	Christian Democrat	274
Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)	Social Democrat	195
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	Liberalism/Centralist	85
Group of the Greens /European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)	Green/Regionalist	58
European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR)	Conservative/Euro-sceptic	56
Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)	Socialist/Communist	35
Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EFD)	Populist Right/Euro-sceptic	33
Non-Attached Members (NI)	N/A	30

Source: European Parliament Website 2014

Table 2-1 show that party breakdown of the EP during the timeframe of this study. The EP in the 7th term (2009–2014) was made up of 7 different party groupings with diverse political ideologies. The different parties are represented in all committees based upon their relative size within the EP plenary. Party groups have formed into increasingly cohesive and competitive (between different groupings) actors as the EP has developed (Hix *et al* 2005). With an increased cohesive nature the interactions of partisan groupings has merited significant attention over when, and if, coalitions form or if competition prevails. The range of ideologies in the EP represented on committees covers a wide political spectrum (Table 2-1), possibly more than in many domestic European parliaments. Previous research has shown that coalitions do form around ideological lines over the left – right spectrum (Kreppel & Tsebelis 1999). While coalitions form and party groups work together on a regular basis, the formation of coalitions between groups is not consistent and has been seen as fluctuating depending upon the policy issue at stake (Kreppel & Tsebelis 1999). Debate has surrounded the level of cohesion between party groups, with some (Hix *et al* 2005) asserting that greater politicization is taking place as the EP gains enhanced legislative powers. Evidence indicates that the rate of coalition

forming depends upon the policy area (or to be more exact the committee) at stake during the 7th term (Hix & Høyland 2013). During the 7th term, while it has been suggested that partisanship has grown on some committees, in other committees, grand coalition forming between the groupings has actually increased in frequency (CEPS 2012).

A significant correlation has been established, empirically, between the amendment success and unity between parties on committee in the EP (Kreppel 1999). Amendments, coming from the Parliament, are adopted more often by the Council when unity has been achieved within committees and the EP plenary. Using committee unity as a unit of analysis had been seen as problematic in previous quantitative studies as voting data on individual amendments in committee has not always been available (Kasack 2004). While a link has been suggested between the internal ‘unity’ of a committee’s membership and its relative legislative success (Kreppel 1999), greater empirical evidence is required in order to verify this claim. ‘Committee unity’ has been suggested as differing notably between EP committees during the 7th term (CEPS 2012) with some potentially displaying consistently more or less unity between the party groups represented. It is therefore appropriate to propose a third hypothesis to be tested within the case study chapters:

H3. The lower the degree of unity on committee, the lower the level of influence.

2.4.3 Policy Output

The final perspective that has been identified from the literature as a potential source of committee influence is that of ‘public policy output’. It has been postulated that some committees have greater influence than others simply because of the policy field in which they are working (Kreppel 1999, Burns 2005a).⁵⁵ For instance, Shackleton (2000: 337) argues that ‘outcomes are issue-specific: some are more likely to lead to the Parliament having [more of] an influence than others’. According to Judge and Earnshaw (2003), different policy types do create ‘different patterns of decision making’ which affect the influence of different actors.

⁵⁵ ‘The EP may simply have more influence in some areas of legislation than others, even holding legislative procedure constant. It may be that certain areas are more likely to be influenced by the EP because they are viewed as less important or more effectively dealt with at the supranational level’ (Kreppel 1999: 524).

Individual committees have often been classified according to the types of output they create (Lowi 1964, 1972). According to Lowi (1964) 'policy affects politics'. The type of policy choice that a committee makes will affect the political systems that are in operation. With different political motivations the type of policy output will be different between committees. Lowi (1964, 1972) has proposed that there are four different public policy types that affect the influence of an actor (committee) when attempting to create legislation. Of the four policy types that have been proposed by Lowi (1972) the most important to this study are the 'distributive' and 'regulatory' policy types, while the other two policy types, 'constituent' and 'redistributive' policy types are much less relevant. The reason for this is that 'constituent' policy deals with the setting up of new agencies and is dealt with at intergovernmental conferences (Burns 2005b). The Parliament does have some minor involvement in intergovernmental conferences but it is limited, and the EP committees play no role and, therefore, these processes are not relevant to the present study. With respect to redistributive policy this would largely be defined by the ability to tax one actor and redistribute the gains to other actors. Tax policies as well as other types of redistributive policy remain closely controlled by the member states and the committee's formal role in policy areas which would deal with them are very much limited (Burns 2005b). However, it is important to note there is some overlap between distributive and redistributive policy, and that some redistributive policy proposals will be produced by the committees.

Lowi (1972) divides different types of policies by the level of coercion a policy will generate on one level to force an actor to follow the policy, and on a second level the sanctions which may be adopted to change a group or an individual's behaviour. Regulatory policies do involve a high level of coercion towards a group or individual (Dodds 2013). As proposed in their simplest form, they are legislative constraints to stop procedures or actions deemed bad practice and promote other more appropriate activities (Lowi 1964, 1972). Understanding the impact of different types of policy in their implementation is not relevant for the present study, but rather, what is important is discussing the effect the process of creating different policy appears to have on the legislative influence of committees. Indeed, no actor is able to foretell the complete implications of the policy they wish to

produce and understanding the practical impact of policy is not the objective of this study.

Importantly, the application of regulatory policy can inflict both costs and benefits on different actors (Wilson 1984). An example of a regulatory policy would be the plastic bags directive⁵⁶ that sought to regulate the consumption of plastic bags within Europe. Distributive policies are different from regulatory policies in both their focus and means of changing behaviour. Distributive policies assign resources to a specific group or area (Dodds 2013). Legislators will decide, often based on their political preferences, which identifiable groups will benefit by the allocation of resources, generally funding. A practical example of a distributive policy in the European context would be the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) where resources from member states' contributions are directed towards a specific group.

⁵⁶ 'Amending Directive on Packaging and Packaging Waste to Reduce the Consumptions of Lightweight Plastic Carrier Bags (2013/0371(COD))'

Table 2-2 Classification of different committee driven policy outputs and levels of power pre-Lisbon Treaty

	<i>'More Powerful Committees'</i>	<i>'Less Powerful Committees'</i>
'Information- driven committees with predominantly regulatory outputs'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget (BUDG) • Transport and Tourism (Tran) • Internal Market and Consumer Protection • Legal Affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign Affairs (AFET) • Development (DEVE) • International Trade (INTA) • Budgetary Control (CONT) • Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) • Petitions (PETI)
'Interest-driven committees with predominantly distributive outputs'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture (AGRI) • Fisheries (PECH) • Regional Development (REGI)
'Mixed Committees'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) • Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) • Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) • Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) • Culture and Education (CULT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Source: Yordanova 2009a: 256.

According to Yordanova (2009a: 256) (figure 2-4) some committees such as the ENVI committee can be classed as 'mixed' in terms of their policy output. 'Mixed' committees, depending on the policy being discussed, are both 'information-driven' and at times 'interest-driven' (Yordanova 2009a). Furthermore, as a result of this mix in driving forces the policy output of some committees can be both regulatory and distributive in nature depending on the policy being dealt with. Some committees may deal with each type at somewhat equal levels but it is highly possible that 'mixed' committees will deal with one policy type more than another. This is significant for a number of reasons, as according to Yordanova (2009a) policy type does affect committee assignments and possible influence.

Lowi (1964) and others in the context of the EP (Judge *et al* 1994, Shackleton 2000, Burns 2005b, Yordanova 2009a) state that the type of public policy that an actor attempts to produce as a legislative

output is a determining factor of that actor's influence. This can be seen in the example of the ENVI committee. Judge *et al* (1994) has stated that the ENVI committee, in large part, is in fact dealing with regulatory policy. As a result of this focus on a regulatory output, Judge *et al* (1994) believe that the committee is more influential. They assert that, through the use of regulatory policy, the ENVI committee exerts influence because, although the costs of the regulation are concentrated on a targeted actor, the benefits are transparent and dispersed between numbers of different actors. While the original assessment of Judge *et al* (1994) lacked for supporting empirical data, the assertion that 'policy type' affects influence has been reported in other literature (Burns 2005b) as a potential source of committee influence.

From the evidence supplied by Yordanova (2009a) it would appear that committees can be divided by the outputs that they produce. As a consequence of the different circumstances that drive the different policy outputs identified, it would be intuitive to suggest that there would be asymmetry in influence between distributive and regulatory committees. Indeed, there are some indications that this is the situation for the committees of the EP. Burns (2005b), while focusing largely on the costs and benefits of different legislative decisions, has suggested that the Parliament *via* its committees does have greater influence in the field of regulatory policy than in the area of distributive policy. The rationale behind this is that the EU member states have been comparatively less willing to allow supranational institutions input as to how their contributions are allocated and how taxes are spent. They have, however, been willing to let supranational bodies work on their behalf when creating regulatory policy which focuses costs on industrial, rather than state actors (Shackleton 2000, Burns 2005b). Regulatory committees will face less resistance from the Council and have greater remit to attempt to influence policy towards their own preferences. Committees wishing to produce more distributive policy would appear to be significantly more likely to encounter resistance from the Member States. From the evidence available it is, therefore, possible to hypothesise that:

H4. Committees with distributive policy outputs will exercise lower levels of influence over legislation than committees with regulatory policy outputs.

2.5 Summary

Based upon strands of literature derived particularly from the committee system of the US Congress but, also, from other pertinent committee systems, four hypotheses have been formulated. A number of different assumptions have been made about committee influence, where it comes from, and how an individual, or mix of sources, may establish an EP committee as having evidential legislative influence. Within the next three chapters each of the hypotheses will be tested sequentially against the data collected from interview and document sources pertaining to each of the three case studies. This chapter have put together an analytical framework for the study of legislative committee influence, which considers influence as a result of the confluence of a number of factors rather than related to one single factor (source). Within the EP, despite the prevailing procedural equality of the OLP since Lisbon, a number of committees have been identified as having a disproportionate amount of influence over legislature compared with their counterparts. Consequently, it is appropriate that a number of salient case studies of perceived influential EP committees be examined,⁵⁷ with the aim of further understanding and identifying the different possible sources of legislative influences manifest within committees.

⁵⁷ As noted above each cases selected within this thesis is seen as maintaining an equally and concordant high level of legislative influence.

Chapter Three Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

3.1 Introduction

A committee that is widely acknowledged as having significant levels of influence over legislation, and according to some, one of the highest levels of legislative influence in the Parliament (Burns 2005a, Judge & Earnshaw 2011), is the ‘Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety’ or ‘ENVI’ committee. Previously the high influence of the ENVI committee has been attributed to a significant level of ‘expertise’ and ‘political understanding’ contained within the committee (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Weale *et al* 2005, Lenschow 2012). However, this opinion is not universally shared as some question the actual use of ‘expertise’ on the committee, as a source of influence (McCormick 2001). This chapter will test some of these previous claims, with an aim to further understanding of the potential sources of committee influence.

This chapter, therefore, in the first instance comprehensively reviews the literature on the origins, development, and current remit of the ENVI committee, and from where its potential sources of influence may derive. Thereafter, previous claims involving sources of influence will be tested, along with the hypotheses as outlined in the theoretical framework, with original empirical data, in order to understand how the ENVI committee has, in reality, established its influence. The empirical findings question many perceptions held over the sources of ENVI committee influence, in particular the current understanding of expertise, unity, and the ‘negative’ effects of membership turnover.

3.2 ENVI Committee Outline

The ENVI committee has a particularly wide and prominent policy remit and has been perceived in a wide range of studies as constituting a highly prestigious committee with significant legislative influence (Kaeding 2005, Weale *et al* 2005, Burns 2005a, Corbett *et al* 2007, Hurka 2013).⁵⁸ Indeed, members, themselves, believe it to be ‘*one of the most influential committees*’.⁵⁹ In terms of workload it has been one of the most active legislative committees in the EP (Lenschow 2012). The

⁵⁸ The formal powers and responsibilities of the ENVI committee can be found in appendix IV

⁵⁹ Interview with ‘Group Coordinator’ Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

ENVI committee throughout the EP's development has, to a large extent, attempted to emulate the comparative European example of the highly powerful and prestigious Bundestag committees (Weale *et al* 2005). By the end of the 7th Parliament (2009 – 2014) the committee had processed 221 procedures, 78 of which were co-decision acts falling under the OLP. By way of contrast the total number of legislative proposals the committee system of the EP dealt with between 2009 and 2014 (7th term) was 629 legislative files. It is due to this legislative workload and wide policy remit that Burns (2005a: 89) has suggested that the ENVI is the 'most powerful' EP committee. Numerically the ENVI committee was the most active legislative committee during the term; it handled 12.4% of the total co-decision reports in Parliament (ENVI Activity Report 2014). This percentage is, however, less than that processed by the committee during the 6th term. This is as a consequence of the introduction of the OLP in to other EP committee policy areas, which has resulted in a larger spread of co-decision reports, with more committees reaching the same level of legislative involvement as the ENVI committee (ENVI Activity Report 2014). In total some 24,761 amendments were tabled and voted upon by the committee during the 7th term (ENVI Activity Report 2014).⁶⁰

Historically, the EP and its members have had a special interest in the area of environmental policy. The ENVI committee has been assessed as participating significantly, being an active advocate, and comparatively more assertive compared with other committees, in the policy areas under its remit (Westlake 1994, Burns 2005a). Starting in the earliest days of the EP, as one of the smallest committees in terms of members (Bowler & Farrell 1995), at the end of the 7th parliamentary term the ENVI was the largest legislative committee in the Parliament having 71 members (with an equivalent number of substitutes) (ENVI Activity Report 2014).⁶¹ In context with the other EP committees, the non-legislative 'Foreign Affairs committee' (AFET) is larger (7th term) containing 78 members. The legislative committees closest to the ENVI in terms of membership were 'Industry, Research and

⁶⁰ This number of amendments is the total number proposed within the committee, and not the number of amendments which were successfully adopted, and included in the final legislative output. Unfortunately, the ENVI committee does not provide this statistical information.

⁶¹ For the 8th term (2014 – 2019) the membership numbers of the ENVI committee are down slightly to 69, this is a return to the number of members on committee before the accession of Croatia, which took place during the 7th term.

Energy' (ITRE), with 60 members, and 'Economic and Monetary Affairs' (ECON), with 50 members (ENVI Activity Report 2014). The larger the number of members a committee has, or requires, the greater importance is attributed to that committee due to the resources that will be required to be mobilised to successfully fulfil its remit (Bowler & Farrell 1995). Consequently, the large complement of members reinforces the importance that is placed on the ENVI committee.

While the ENVI committee has been acknowledged to have significant influence over environmental legislative output (Weale *et al* 2005), the mechanisms and sources it utilises to be influential are, however, subject to debate and the literature can be conflicting. The main assumption within the literature is that the ENVI committee's influence stems from high levels of expertise and institutional memory (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Weale *et al* 2005, Lenschow 2012). This supposition, over the role of expertise as the main source of the ENVI committee's significant influence, has been tested below. Before empirically testing this assumption, and others, an understanding of the processes under which the committee operates and the decisions it can make, or shape, is discussed.

3.3 The Decision Making Process

The Environment committee was created in 1979, in tandem with the EP becoming a directly elected body for the first time. The Environment committee is, therefore, one of the oldest and best established in the EP with seemingly a strong institutional memory, which has helped develop relationships with other legislative actors (Judge & Earnshaw 2003, Burns 2005a). The Single European Act (SEA) (1986) would formally codify the policy area (environment) with a constitutional basis subject to EU law (Judge 1993, Lenschow 2012). The ENVI committee's importance had its watershed, however, once it acquired more extensive formal powers, which in turn further extended its informal powers as a result of its capability to develop institutional links (Judge 1992). This development finally culminated with the Maastricht treaty's (1992) introduction of co-decision, which placed the ENVI committee formally as an equal legislative partner with the Council.

The competencies of the ENVI committee are extensive, covering, unsurprisingly, the areas of EU environmental, public health and food safety standard policy. The committee has to oversee some

distinctively different policy areas, and as a consequence the sphere of activity of the committee is significantly larger than other comparative EP committees. The committee exists to scrutinize and amend policy proposals falling under its remit. These different areas require different informational skill sets and contain divergent expert policy solutions. Consequently, it is important to highlight the distinction between these different areas, as the dynamics of influence may be different when comparing public health policy making, against, for example, that of environmental policy. Each area would entail different policy considerations and solutions, and it is of significance that different committee members do specialise in particular areas, with some only involved in the areas of public health or food safety because that is where their particular area of interest, or '*professional expertise*' lies (Hurka 2013). What is important, however, is that all legislative files dealt with by the ENVI committee in the 7th term fall under the OLP.

Under the OLP the ENVI committee has the right, codified in treaty law, to propose amendments at the three different reading stages of the legislative process, and finally it has a veto over legislative files at the end of the decision making process. Consequently, as full co-decision makers, a position coming from the Council cannot be forced upon the committee. The ENVI committee has clearly displayed its willingness to use this nuclear option and exercise its veto right, with the main example that of the vetoed 'Novel Foods and Novel Food Ingredients Regulation'⁶² (Burns 2005b). Both of these formal legislative powers (amendment and veto rights) are highlighted as being significant in defining how influential a legislative committee is overall from a comparative context (Shepsle & Weingast 1987).⁶³ Furthermore, the ENVI committee has had many more years of experience dealing with the co-decision powers it obtained after the Maastricht treaty (1992) than most committees, that only gained these powers during this study's focus on the 7th term. As a result of these formal powers and a possibly entrenched institutional memory, the ENVI has developed its legislative expertise significantly over time.

⁶² The regulation aimed "to introduce Community-wide safety assessment and notification procedures for the marketing of foods with no established history of use, genetically modified (GM) foods, or foods that had been produced by processes that had changed their composition or nutritional value" (Burns 2005b: 496).

⁶³ This comparative perspective is drawn from studies of the US congressional committee system.

The ENVI committee has gone through an extensive developmental phase in acquiring legislative powers. As the committee has developed it has been granted new areas of responsibility, and as a consequence in some respects it has had to change to adapt (Burns 2005a). In 1994 its remit expanded to include the area of public health and consumer protection⁶⁴, and in 1999 its sphere of activity was again expanded to include the area of food safety (Burns 2005a). A number of studies have identified the adoption of co-decision by the ENVI committee as a watershed moment (Judge & Earnshaw 1994, Burns & Carter 2010, Ripoll-Servent 2012). While it is clear where the committee is involved during the decision making process, its ability to influence legislative outcomes is an area of significant debate within a number of studies (Judge & Earnshaw 1994, Bowler & Farrell 1995, McCormick 2001, Weale *et al* 2005, McElroy 2006, Burns & Carter 2010, Ripoll-Servent 2012, Hurka 2013).

3.4 Informational Perspective

The importance of expert specialization as a key source of ENVI committee influence over legislation has been an area of focus for a number of studies (Bowler & Farrell 1995, McCormick 2001, Hurka 2013). A committee with high levels of specialist information will have a potentially significant ability to influence legislative outcomes (Krehbiel 1991). As discussed in the theory chapter, two types of expertise exist, '*policy making expertise*' and '*professional expertise*'. Elements of both '*Policy making expertise*' and '*professional expertise*', have been identified as potential sources of ENVI committee influence previously, however, a consensus has yet to be reached within the academic literature over how expertise does in practice, or if it does, establish ENVI influence.

3.4.1 Policy Making Expertise

The significance of '*policy making expertise*' towards the ENVI committee's influence has been a subject of debate (McCormick 2001, Weale *et al* 2005). A number of studies (Judge 1992, Judge *et al* 1994, Bowler & Farrell 1995, McCormick 2001, Weale *et al* 2005, Burns 2005a, Corbett *et al* 2007) have attempted, previously, to pinpoint the rationale behind the ENVI committee's legislative influence, and have often draw conclusions identifying many factors underlying this influence, which

⁶⁴ Consumer protection would, however, be removed from the ENVI committee's competency and placed under the remit of the Committee on Internal Markets and Consumer protection, which was established in 2004 (Whitaker 2011)

would fall under this thesis' definition of '*policy making expertise*'. The committee, according to current literature, potentially as a result of containing members who have served for extended periods of time, and having developed an understanding of how the decision making process works, possesses extensive '*policy making expertise*', and has been shown as able to exploit the decision making process at many different stages.

Since its creation the committees of the EP have had the ability to draft non-binding 'own-initiative reports'. 'Own-initiative reports' that are successfully adopted in committee and plenary will be passed onto the Commission (Burns 2005a). Weale *et al* (2005) states the important role which the Parliament's generated 'own-initiative' expert reports have had on the ability of the ENVI committee to 'pursue a proactive policy role in agenda setting', reinforcing a similar observation found in an earlier study by Judge *et al* (1994: 32). It is important to emphasise that these reports do not formally compel the Commission to draft any legislation. The ability to propose legislation has been and remains the sole right of the Commission. The own-initiative reports have, however, been a useful political tool for committees to signal what they are more willing to accept in the event of legislation being proposed by the Commission, and thus further enhancing communication and understanding between the actors. Indeed it has been reported that a select number of directives were in fact based on reports that were drafted and presented by the committee to the Commission (Judge 1992). Also, in order to communicate its standpoint, beyond presenting a report to the Commission, the committee would often conduct hearings with external experts and invite the other institutions to attend. According to Burns (2005a) the ENVI committee became very skilled at using these meetings to highlight precise policy areas in which it wished the Commission to develop a proposal. Consequently, the ENVI committee has demonstrated significant '*policy making*' acumen in attempting to informally shape policy proposals and setting the agenda as a result of developing an understanding over time of how these reports can be efficiently employed (Judge 1992). The ability to successfully draft an own-initiative report will, to a great extent, rely on the level of '*policy making expertise*' which is contained within the committee.

The extent of the active engagement of the ENVI committee in influencing the early legislative process has, however, been questioned. According to McCormick (2001) the committee is less involved in policy formulation, which is the right of the Commission, but rather focuses more on amendment proposal which, also, relies on '*policy making expertise*' (and to an extent professional expertise) in order to develop successful amendments. More satisfactory amendments will result from a committee that's members understand what was politically acceptable to other legislative actors in past interactions ('*policy making expertise*'), and what proposals would not be rejected in technical groups ('*technical expertise*'). Due to this lack of participation by MEPs at the formulation stage of policy proposal their ability to influence policy is 'marginal' according to McCormick (2001). This, of course, is contrary to the position of Burns (2005a) who suggests that the ENVI committee has utilised, as this thesis would term it '*policy making expertise*', to influence early policy proposal, developing strong links between the Commission and the committee. The ENVI committee has, indeed, been seen as a forerunner for the sort of informal policy interactions with the Commission and the Council that are now perceived as more common with the use of trialogue by other committees (Burns 2005a). Over subsequent years the Environment committee developed a close relationship with the Commission due, it has been reported, in part to the continued presence of long term members experienced in policy making (Corbett *et al* 2007). Informal negotiations between ENVI members and the Commission were perceived in previous legislative terms as the deciding factor in the committee's ability to achieve outcomes closest to its policy preferences (Burns 2005a). When the Commission and the committee are in coordination, studies have shown that the committee is more likely to be successful (Kreppel 2003) in gaining preferred results. This highlights '*policy making expertise*' as a particularly significant source of legislative influence. If '*policy making expertise*' was lost as a result of high turnover of members, this would, supposedly, have a marked negative impact on the relationships with the Commission that are vital to the committee's success.

The impact that long-standing chairs, such as Ken Collins (79-84 and 89-99, see table 3-1), have had on the committee cannot be overemphasised. It is common practice in most EP committees to have a regular turnover of chairs (Corbett *et al* 2007) accompanying a reasonable general membership

turnover. This can deeply and negatively affect committee resources, such as the lowering of collective memory of legislative practices at a senior level. This, of course, can also happen within the general committee membership with the level of *'policy making expertise'* potentially adversely affected by high turnover (Judge & Earnshaw 2003). It is general practice on the ENVI committee for a senior committee member to become the new chair when one is required, thus ensuring a significant degree of policy continuity, a practice not adopted by many other EP committees. Both Carolyn Jackson (1999 – 2004) and Karl-Heinz Florenz (2004 – 2007) (table 3-1), who succeeded Collins, despite representing different political ideological backgrounds, have been identified as helping the ENVI committee to retain its influence due to their previous experience of the committee (Lenschow 2012, ENVI Activity Report 2014). Interestingly, over part of the 6th term the committee was not chaired by an experienced committee member⁶⁵, the result of which was seen as a significant drop in influence (O'Donnell 2007, Burns 2013), emphasising the importance of the chair incumbent. The selection of a chair evident as lacking in *'policy making expertise'* was largely driven by political consideration.⁶⁶ Partisan party groups do seemingly have an effect on the potential level of expertise contained within a committee. McElroy (2006) does, however, suggest that parties within the ENVI committee, in past terms (before the 7th term), did tend to select their own members who possessed *'policy making expertise'* (and *'professional expertise'*) on to senior positions due to the overall benefits that this would bring.

⁶⁵ The member, while having *'professional expertise'*, was new to the committee, and relatively new to the Parliament.

⁶⁶ The member was selected as chair as a result of being the senior member from their member state in the EPP grouping.

Table 3-1 Chairs of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Date Held Chair	Chair Person	Party Grouping
1979 - 1984	Ken Collins	SOC (S&D)
1984 - 1989	Beate Weber	SOC (S&D)
1989 - 1999	Ken Collins	SOC (S&D)
1999 - 2004	Caroline Jackson	EPP
2004 - 2007	Karl-Heinz Florenz	EPP
2007 - 2009	Miroslav Ousky	EPP
2009 - 2012	Jo Leinen	S&D
2012 - 2014	Matthias Groote	S&D
2014 -	Giovanni La Via	EPP

Source: ENVI Committee Website 2015, Corbett *et al* 2007

The ENVI committee has been identified as one of the main EP committees prioritized by the different competing party groupings within the EP (Judge & Earnshaw 2003). The committee appears dominated by members from northern European states who significantly prioritize environmental issues, and as a consequence prioritise the acquisition of *'policy making expertise'*. This has been attributed to the partisan party group coordinator positions on the ENVI committee being held predominately by members from similar Northern European countries, and who in turn have allocated positions to other like-minded actors (Kaeding 2004). With the accession of new member states from Eastern Europe, the dynamic of the ENVI committee appears to have changed, however, and this has been attributed to different policy priorities within these member states. As a direct result of these new member states accession to the EU there has been a drop in the aggregate number of Green MEPs, and from making up 7.7% of the committee in the 6th term they now comprise 5.4% (Lenschow 2012). Notably no Green MEPs were elected to the EP in the 7th term from the then 12 most recent accession member states (Carter 2010). Lenschow (2012) attributes this to the different policy preferences of these member states towards areas other than environmental issues. This would possibly be a reflection of the general shift in the Parliament towards the political right, before the 7th term (Burns 2013a, 2013b). This may, also, affect how different parties attempt to support their own committee members on the ENVI committee, and the potential level of *'policy making expertise'* on the committee; however it is unclear within the literature what impact this observed dynamic has had. Kaeding (2004) suggests that experience of working for an EU institution or EU party grouping, and understanding how policy is made, does have a significant effect in the allocation of co-decision

reports in the ENVI committee, and has boosted the committee's influence. This increased influence does not, however, come as a result of technical expertise gained from working in related areas, but has more to do with the connections or networks that can be developed as an EU insider (Kaeding 2004). It is clear that parties on the ENVI committee recognise the importance that a '*policy making expertise*' could bring. It is still not clear, however, how '*policy making expertise*' has been used in the 7th term to affect outcomes.

Empirical Data

The level of '*policy making expertise*' and its relevance as a source of ENVI committee influence has been an area of intense debate. '*Policy making expertise*' has previously been reported as being deeply affected by committee membership turnover (Mattson & Strøm 2006, Costello & Thomson 2010); therefore an examination of the relative membership turnover rates within the ENVI committee entering into, and at the end of the 7th term should provide an indication as to whether it is an important contributor to influence. As hypothesized (*H1*), a committee with a comparatively high rate of membership retention between terms should be more influential than if it had a higher turnover rate, as a result of it maintaining institutional memory and retained '*policy making expertise*'. It is the general consensus that if turnover is high institutional memory is lost from the committee as experienced members are replaced with members who lack '*policy making expertise*'. The relative rates of membership turnover and retention on the ENVI committee are presented in figure 3-1 for the 7th parliamentary term. This data is presented alongside information in figure 3-2 that demonstrates the turnover and retention rates at the end of the 7th term and the start of the 8th.

Committee Retention Rate ENVI 6th to 7th Term

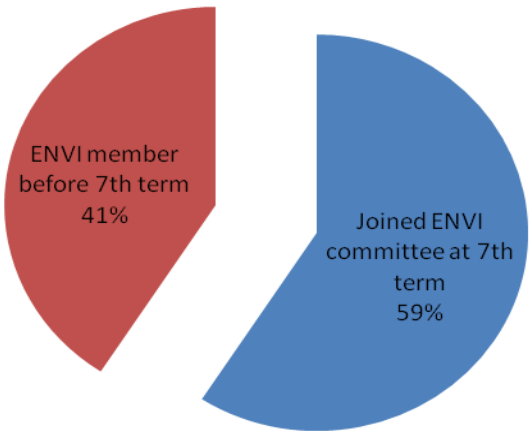


Figure 3-1 Membership turnover rates of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety 6th to 7th term. Source ENVI committee website (2014)

Committee Retention Rate ENVI 7th to 8th Term

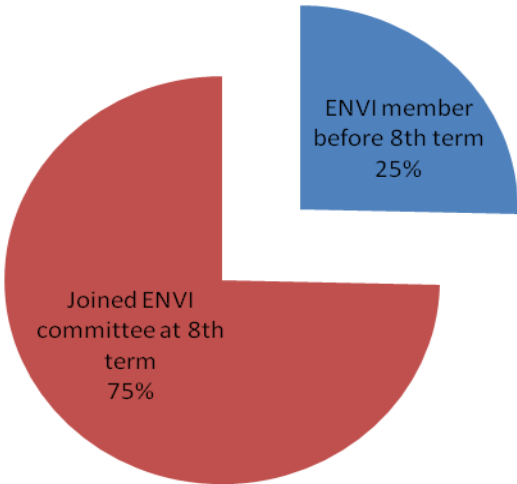


Figure 3-2 Membership turnover rates of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety 7th to 8th term. Source ENVI committee website (2014)

The membership retention rate going into the 7th term (the focus of the present study) is comparatively high for the ENVI committee (41%) compared with the other case studies comprising the thesis. By comparison the BUDG committee had a 32% (into 7th term), and the INTA committee a 26% (into 7th term) membership retention. Overall, the data collected on membership turnover reveals that the ENVI committee retained relatively high levels of experience within the committee during the 7th term, and this could be a potential source of influence (figure 3-3). In addition interview evidence supported the particular importance of institutional memory in influencing desired outcomes. However, as is discussed below, the original empirical data did not indicate, that with the higher levels of turnover in to the 8th term (figure 3-2) there was a concomitant reduction in committee influence, as would have been expected.

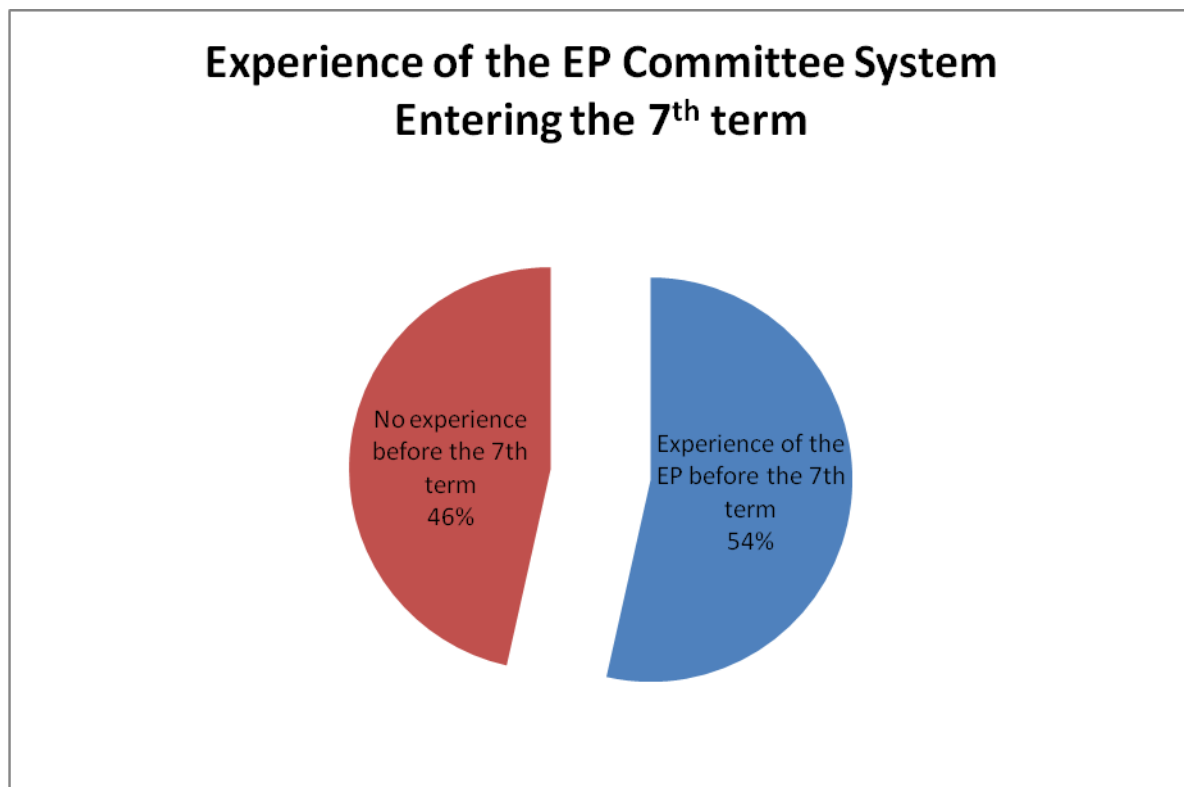


Figure 3-3 Rate of EP committee system experience entering ENVI committee 7th term. Source: ENVI committee (2014).

In terms of membership turnover, the committee has been described *‘as not entirely unique, but [it has] a special place within the Parliament’s system because inevitably people tend to stay on the*

[ENVI] committee for years and years'.⁶⁷ The retention of ENVI committee members has been cited as significant, as consequently members utilise retained '*policy making expertise*' to make significant contributions to the ENVI committee's overall standing. The interview evidence does, however, further our understanding and the significance of '*policy making expertise*' as a source of ENVI committee influence. Thus, due to the retention of members, ***'the environment committee obviously already had members who had been co-deciding for a long time, and were pretty much ahead of the game on that, and the understanding of the processes'***.⁶⁸ Thus, the ENVI committee is in part more influential than other committees due to the experience of its members in understanding what is achievable under co-decision and what would be harder or unachievable, as a result of developed policy making experience. ***'I have been working in that [ENVI] committee [for] 15 years now and it has always been co-decision during my time'***.⁶⁹ This is highlighted by members, as one of the main reasons for the ENVI committee being perceived as the ***'most influential committee'***.⁷⁰ '*Policy making expertise*' is beneficial as it is ***'a real political game in which you have to have some experience'***⁷¹ in how the decisions and policies are made in practice. Most experienced members will try to ***'meet with a mix of people'***⁷², and ***get all views onboard'***⁷³ to understand the political issues at stake, which may prevent the committee from getting what it wants.

'*Policy making expertise*' is, of course, not only contained with members but, also, often with their assistants. ENVI committee assistants are ***'having to negotiate and be political'*** when carrying out much of the policy 'legwork' for their members and, therefore, have to have a level of '*policy making expertise*', which many have ***'developed over the years'***. ***'You have to understand the complicated politics of the European Parliament and be able to gain the majority for your point of view'***⁷⁴ which

⁶⁷ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

⁶⁸ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

⁶⁹ Interview with Member of ENVI Committee. 6/11/14 Brussels BE

⁷⁰ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14 Brussels BE

⁷¹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁷² It is interesting to note, however, when members refer to contacting NGOs they are contacting, in most cases, only ***'the NGO offices based in Brussels'***. The rationale for this is that the NGOs in Brussels understand the political systems of the EU whereas outside groups do not. Members often find that time is not efficiently spent if they are to bring in outside groups or NGOs into the Brussels bubble.

⁷³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁷⁴ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

only comes with a developed level of *'policy making expertise'*. The role of the committee secretariat has, also, been evident as vital to the ENVI committee in the drafting policy due to its own well developed level of *'policy making expertise'* which is evident as supplementing the ENVI committee's expertise. ***'We have the secretariat for all the formal things'***.⁷⁵ The secretariat's role can be to compensate for any lack of *'policy making expertise'* contained within the committee. Indeed according to the ENVI committee secretariat ***'it is rare'*** that a rapporteur will draft a report with their assistants in total ***'isolation'*** from the secretariat, as they will not generally have the expertise to create a ***'coherent piece of legislation'***.⁷⁶

'What is more common is that we [secretariat and MEPs] work together. The rapporteur, or the political group staff who come up with ideas very often ask us to help them, as the secretariat, to turn those ideas into legislative text because this is something we are doing very often, especially in a busy committee like the environment committee, we have lots of reports for which we are responsible running in parallel'.⁷⁷

Members will use the committee secretariat as a source of *'policy making expertise'*, ***'sometimes they ask us simply "please send me/prepare for me a briefing", and then we are writing report briefings for them'***⁷⁸ on a policy proposal. This is on a case by case basis, however, as some members are clearly able to rely on their staff to collect the policy information they require according to both senior secretariats⁷⁹ and MEPs assistants.⁸⁰ It is important to note, however, that the ENVI committee's secretariat was ***'under staffed'*** during the 7th term with, according to senior members of the secretariat, only ***'11 secretariat'***⁸¹ covering the whole committee's brief; this is a ***'lower number'*** comprising the secretariat than many other committees which have ***'significantly less demanding legislative workloads than the ENVI committee'***.⁸² The use of the committee secretariat is, therefore,

⁷⁵ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁷⁶ Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014 Brussels BE

⁷⁷ Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014 Brussels BE

⁷⁸ Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014 Brussels BE

⁷⁹ Interview with Senior Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

⁸⁰ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁸¹ Interview with Senior Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

⁸² Interview with Senior Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

undermined by *'force mobility rules'* which move administrators to positions in different areas every few years and as a result weaken area specific *'policy-making expertise'*.⁸³ While some ENVI committee members do recognise the secretariat as a source of *'policy making expertise'* other members do not according to secretariat members as;

'they [MEPs] have their own assistants, they have their political advisors because the political groups have their own staff, and so they will deal pretty much with them, and just ask the secretariat to make sure that the formalities are in order'.⁸⁴

Overall therefore, any lack of *'policy making expertise'* on the ENVI committee can be supplemented somewhat by the committee's secretariat, many of whom simply remember what proposals have been successful in the past; however, as the data collected attests, the ENVI committee already draws its influence largely from its own members and their retained *'policy making expertise'* which has been facilitated due to comparatively low turnover. While this would appear to support hypothesis (H1), and the current understanding of the source of ENVI committee influence, subsequent evidence does, in fact, question the positive nature of high membership retention. While many highly experienced members may have knowledge of what was successful for the ENVI committee in the past, they are not always open to new innovative policy solutions.

Within the ENVI committee the continued residency of some highly experienced members has been observed as potentially detrimental to the committee's continued and overall influence. Members interviewed who were retained on the committee 8th term did not confirm that the relatively high turnover entering into that term had weakened the committee's overall influence, as convention would have expected, but had in fact lead to a positive revitalisation of the committee. ENVI members are often dealing with highly technical, controversial, and evolving policy matters; however, *'there is always a sell-by [date] for everything and, sometimes, members who have been there for too long can provide blockage'*.⁸⁵ This does negatively impact upon the ENVI committee's influence, with

⁸³ Interview with Senior Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

⁸⁴ Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014 Brussels BE

⁸⁵ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

some older experienced members acting as a hindrance to, rather than being facilitators of legislative progress. The observation as stated is that while *'it is always good to have people who are experienced [in policy making] in doing it for a while, unfortunately, everything does go off after a while'*⁸⁶ and the membership must be periodically 'refreshed' if the committee is not to stagnate and lose influence. Committee turnover is, therefore, not necessarily perceived by members as a negative; *'it is good to have new people [on the committee]'*, and when considering the overall influence, a *'balance is needed between experience and fresh heads'*.⁸⁷ Thus low turnover in membership may be important, but need not be a fundamental prerequisite for high levels of committee influence as current prevailing convention has ascertained (Mamadouh & Raunio 2003). *'Policy making expertise'* may indeed have a saturation point, once reached it no longer provides actual benefit. A more subtle understanding of membership turnover and its impact on influence must be considered, such as the regenerating effects of an influx of 'new blood' membership on a committee, bringing fresh ideas. If similar findings become evident in other selected cases this would mark a truly significant result within the research field of legislative politics, and potentially question current convention.

The empirical evidence collected, also, shows that party groups do impact upon the level of *'policy making expertise'* in the committee. EP party groups and national parties, as a result of their greater ability to organise information more efficiently than individual members, do supply their members with invaluable policy making information, such as the negotiating position of other legislative actors, which increases the ENVI committee's overall influence. Within the Parliament *'every [political] group has its own secretariat'*, and on each of the *'committees there are a few people from the [political] group secretariats who work on these [committee] issues'*⁸⁸ assisting group members. *'Some [ENVI] members let the group's secretariat draft pretty much everything'*.⁸⁹ Support staff from party groups assists the members in a similar way to the non-political committee secretariat by supplying them with technical and procedural information, *'but are more political, because they have*

⁸⁶ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

⁸⁷ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

⁸⁸ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁸⁹ Interview with Assistant to member of the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

to guard the lines and position of their groups'.⁹⁰ So, while these political support staff attempt to increase the influence of the ENVI committee with increased efficiency, and the supply of policy making information to members with the *'developed institutional memory'*⁹¹ they possess their focus is always on the political outcomes. Of course, the use of party sources to benefit a committee's influence is expected to be common on most committees, however, somewhat unique points are observed on the ENVI committee, which may affect its overall influence.

The level of support members receive is starkly different depending on the specific political group within the ENVI committee. *'The smaller groups such as the Greens or the ALDEs'* have within the committee *'political secretariats even more powerful and important than seen in the bigger groups'*. The rationale for this is that in the *'smaller groups there are only a small number of MEPs, so their secretariat is usually better informed than the offices of the MEPs, and sometimes more professional'*. This is *'especially true'* as may be expected *'with the Greens'* grouping secretariat; *'they are very active and proactive'*⁹² in the ENVI committee. The bigger groups are somewhat less reliant on the assistance that could be provided by the political secretariat to increase overall influence, as *'we have a lot of MEPs and a lot of offices of MEPs who follow the files along with the secretariat'* and possess higher levels of *'policy making expertise'* and retained institutional memory. Nevertheless the political secretariat assistants are still valued as *'certain individuals in the bigger groups'*⁹³ are just as *'proactive and productive'* as their 'Green' counterparts, providing a good level of *'policy making expertise'* and contributing retained institutional memory. *'There are political advisors which I work with a lot and we have a really good relationship'*.⁹⁴ While similar mechanisms are used by all committees of the EP, and this is not exclusive to the ENVI committee as a source of influence, there are evidently different dynamics between these staff actors depending on the committee; *'there are committees where the relation between committee staff, the secretariat staff, and the political group staff, are not that good'*. There has been evidence on some committees

⁹⁰ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁹¹ Interview with Assistant to member of the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

⁹² Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁹³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁹⁴ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

that *'jealousy between political group's staff or assistants, and the secretariat exists'*⁹⁵ and this has been detrimental to the influence of those committees. In the example of the ENVI committee, according to staff, however:

*'For all of my colleagues, and for all of our counterparts in the political groups, it's a good working relationship. I think we on the secretariat respect that it is them [the political staff] who are the political drivers and they accept that we [the secretariat] have the technical knowledge and also most of us here are lawyers who really know how to draft legislative text.'*⁹⁶

The ENVI committee, therefore, does benefit from a better working relationship between the various associated staff, more so than may be evident in other committees, which consequently enhances its influence.

Party groups do play a formal role within the ENVI committee by supplying policy information and organising resources (facilitating contacts with NGOs or other expert stakeholders). In addition the political groups are useful in keeping members in touch with their national constituents'; as they are best placed to help members better understand the *'political impact'* of legislature on those they are representing. Furthermore, the political groupings provide their own ENVI members with external expertise by putting them in contact with *'independent experts'* as well as helping to facilitate contact between *'experts from the Commission, experts from home governments, experts walking around Brussels'* and interested *'stakeholders'*.⁹⁷ So the parties do play a very significant role in supplying ENVI committee members with informational contacts in addition to any they may have formed themselves independently.

In addition to the party group acting as an extra source of *'policy making expertise'*, some members have identified that, alongside their own groupings/national party, *'member states governments can be useful as well'*⁹⁸ as a source of information on the drafting of policy as they will *'know what is*

⁹⁵ Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014 Brussels BE

⁹⁶ Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014 Brussels BE

⁹⁷ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁹⁸ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

happening within the Council'.⁹⁹ ENVI committee members can, and do, make use of national contacts as, *'most MEPs do orientate towards their own national institution if they have an issue'*¹⁰⁰ and wish to gain vital information on both technical and political elements of policy making. Such sources do assist the committee's overall influence, supplementing the *'policy making expertise'* available from group sources. However, MEPs on the ENVI committee, not only contact their own national home representative to acquire vital information on policy making, but are also known to contact the representatives of other member's states, regardless of their position in the political spectrum, as one senior MEP stated;

'I will speak to the Germans and the Dutch [for example], the government representatives in Brussels, particularly if I know those governments and member states have a particular issue with something, to understand what it is'.¹⁰¹

Experienced members on the ENVI committee understand the benefits that national state actors can contribute towards their understanding of a policy issue, *'learning what [amendment] proposals a Council member [may have] objections over'*¹⁰² and what the committee needs to propose to be successful. However, as would be expected, the ability of ENVI committee members to effectively gain *'policy making expertise'*, by utilising national state resources, can depend on the MEPs own individual enterprise and experience:

'It's easy to think sometimes if you are dealing with something like shale gas, the French already have banned it so there would be no point talking to them. I would, however, say if the French have banned it they already have a very strong view, and I need to speak to them and find out why they have this view, and what is the motivation behind it'.¹⁰³

The evidence shows that members will develop networks with committee experience, and better utilise national contacts (in both their own state and in other member states) for relative policy making

⁹⁹ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 8/4/2014. Phone Interview

¹⁰⁰ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁰¹ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁰² Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁰³ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

gains. Most experienced members will attempt to develop *'a lot of contact with the different member states'* in order to gain further *'policy making expertise'*. This will not only help them to better understand the technical issues at stake, but also to gain a better understanding of the possible different attitudes and negotiating positions of the different actors involved. It is useful for the ENVI committee to know which states have the *'strong position'*¹⁰⁴ over the issues discussed.

While member are not solely reliant on their own member states, for many MEPs, however, their first contact, when becoming involved in the policy process, will be their own national governments; *'I have a lot of contact with my government on every file I work on, and I am the political coordinator for my political group so I work on almost everything'*.¹⁰⁵ While members do use national resources to benefit them individually as well as the committee as a whole, they are quick to stress that on a national political position *'I don't always agree with it [the national position], and I don't always vote their way, but you know what the national position is, which is important'*.¹⁰⁶ This is significant information when dealing with the Council during negotiations, as policy positions of member states are not always explicitly made clear to all ENVI committee members, but often communicated through personal 'political' contacts. So *'all member states, do inform their own MEPs'*¹⁰⁷ and supply their members on the committee with some level of informational knowledge on their positions. However *'very often national states fight for their own interests in the Council and try to force their MEPs to support that position'*¹⁰⁸ which would not benefit the ENVI committee's influence, unless its preferences were already aligned with the Council, which is unlikely.

While all members are able to gain information from their political groups, members from different states will, as is evident, have some advantages over other members in the acquisition of information due to the greater prominence that their national parties place on the issue. *'That is our special situation here, as MEPs, we have to go ourselves in detail [with the researching for reports], but*

¹⁰⁴ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁰⁵ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁰⁶ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

how deep you can go in details depends a little bit on the nationality of the members'.¹⁰⁹ Different states prioritise different policy areas; this can mean that they are less interested in the areas such as environmental policy during their presidency. *'I have not had anything from the Latvian presidency, I've seen nothing in the post, or been invited to any meetings or receptions by them, it's very unusual. I imagine they are going to be pretty low-key in ENVI*'.¹¹⁰ The reason for the understated nature of the Latvian presidency in environmental policy is that *'they are interested in one or two other things, foreign affairs [Ukraine conflict and Russia] and Energy. That may affect me a little bit in ENVI but not much*'.¹¹¹ Different states do prioritise areas of interest. Germany, like many other northern European states, has a long tradition of environmental legislation and as a result has a great interest in its outcomes in the EP. *'German members are very active [in the ENVI] because they know that they have the best chance to influence the legislation to make it feasible in the member states*'.¹¹² This is in contrast to NMS such as Latvia which have a less developed tradition of environmental policy, with more concern focused on other policy areas.

Different ENVI committee members from different member states often do have diverse positions on what would be considered an acceptable amendment or successful policy outcome. Many of the issues dealt with by the ENVI committee have classically been controversial due to the political divide between the left and the right, over environmental issues. While party groups (which can act as sources of specialized information) and national contacts do help to account for the ENVI committee's high level of influence, previous studies do indicate a level of conflict between the party groups and between the priorities of member states. The level of unity has been hypothesised (*H3*) as an important possible factor in determining the influence of committees, which is discussed after the impact of *'professional expertise'*.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

¹¹⁰ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹¹¹ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹¹² Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

3.4.1 Professional Expertise

General consensus has been that those practitioners attracted to becoming members of the ENVI committee would, in all likelihood, have some form of environmental, medical, or professional food safety, expertise covering the areas within the committee's remit (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Hurka 2013). An early examination of the composition of the ENVI committee by Bowler & Farrell (1995) suggested that during earlier terms, the committee was largely composed of members who did have strong ties or backgrounds with environmental groups. Consequently, the ENVI committee was seemingly composed of members who did appear to have working knowledge of the area or able to access outside sources of specialist information due to professional networks (Bowler & Farrell 1995). So potential '*professional expertise*' was identified as establishing the ENVI committee's influence. McElroy (2006) supports this viewpoint, and suggests that the nominations of political groups, for positions on the ENVI committee, are driven by the prospective member's relevant expertise. However, the perspective that the ENVI committee contains a high level of specialised technical members has been challenged in some studies (McCormick 2001), questioning the consensus over its role as a source of influence.

McCormick's (2001) position on the level of '*professional expertise*' contained within the ENVI committee is not consistent with the view that the committee is able to use this form of expertise as its main source in helping to establish its influence. In broad terms he suggests a lack of technical expertise within the ENVI committee, as a member is more likely to join the ENVI committee coming from a professional background, which, while highly interested in environmental issues, is not in reality technical in nature. Kaeding (2005) confirms the importance of specialist, often non-technical, interest group affiliation as being a significant factor in committee assignments and membership of the committee. McCormick (2001) supports this view, of a lack of technical specialization, by highlighting that the Council and the Commission apparently perceive many elements of environmental policy outside of the competency of the ENVI committee and direct certain legislature towards the 'Agriculture' (AGRI) and 'Internal Market' (IMCO) committees. The reason for this observation is that McCormick (2001) states that the ENVI committee does not contain the same level

of specialist understanding as the Commission. As a result the Commission does not extensively consult with the ENVI committee, as it perceives that the committee will ‘offer little constructive input’ on technical matters (McCormick 2001: 114). According to Weale *et al* (2005) many members of the ENVI committee do concentrate in more emotive areas of environmental issues such as climate change policy without personally having a technical background. This is contrary to the Commission’s position, which would rather focus on ‘technical harmonization’ between the member states (Weale *et al* 2005). It is, therefore, not always clear to what extent the committee utilises ‘*professional expertise*’ as a source of its influence. However, with the assistance of empirical evidence collected for this thesis it is possible to test the role of ‘*professional expertise*’ as a potential source of ENVI committee influence.

Empirical Data

The perspective of Weale *et al* (2005) does appear correct, in that the ENVI is a committee of ‘mixed’ professionalization. Within the committee there is a divide between professional members who have a level of expert technical knowledge, and members who come from a less technical, professional background, which are interested in the policy area, but not overtly technical in their understanding. ‘*The ENVI committee it is a bit different*’, from other EP committees, ‘*there are quite a lot of colleagues with a good will, who want to do something good for the world*’ who do not have any level of technical ‘*professional expertise*’. This, however, is compensated for by ‘*quite a lot of colleagues with professional backgrounds, which suits them to their ENVI committee work*’.¹¹³ This evidence confirms that the ENVI committee does consist of both non-professional members, who are motivated by ideological (often environmental) concerns, and professional members who possess a technical understanding of the policy areas. From the evidence provided members of the committee do ‘*sort themselves into the committees they have a professional background within*’.¹¹⁴ To accompany this interview data, evidence has been collected examining the relative level of committee

¹¹³ Interview with Member of ENVI Committee. 6/11/14 Brussels BE

¹¹⁴ Interview with Member of ENVI Committee. 6/11/14 Brussels BE

member's *'professional expertise'* by extensive examination of the MEP's past experience/career/training backgrounds.

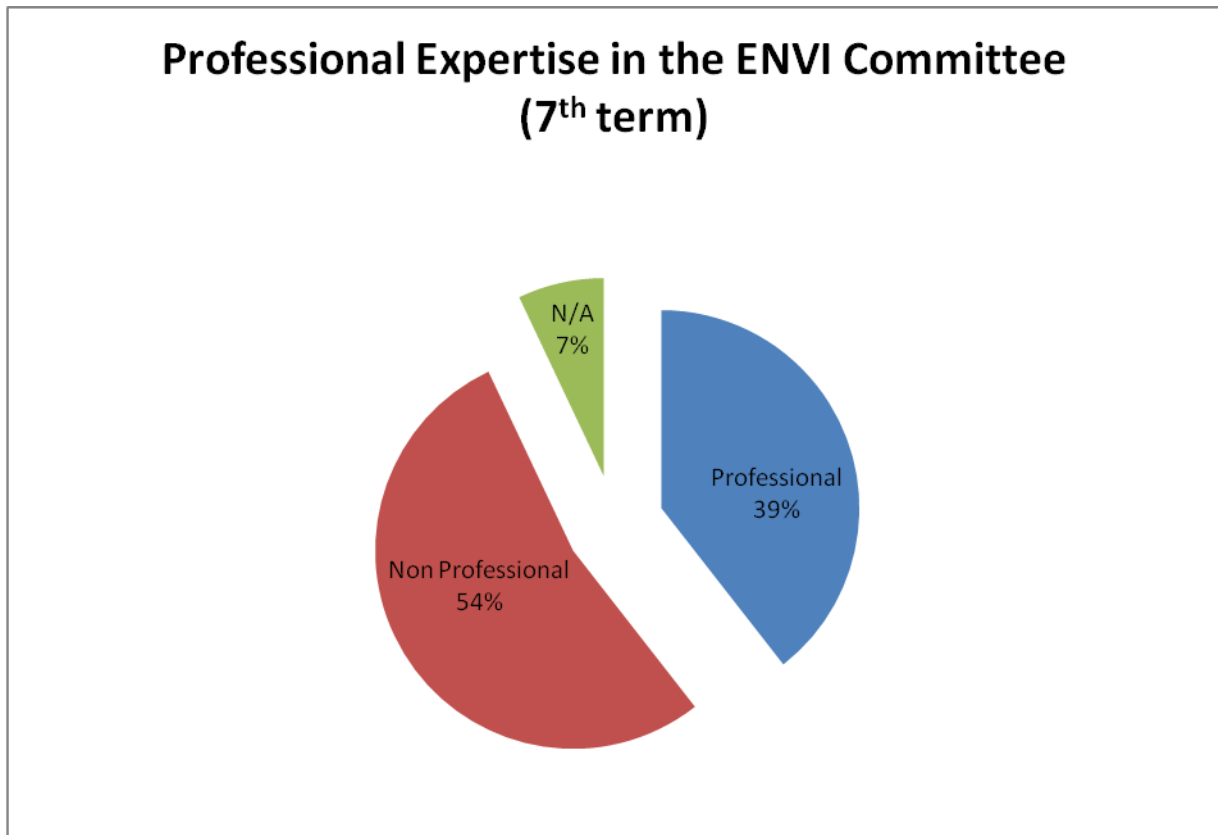


Figure 3-4 Professional expertise in the ENVI committee at the end of the 7th term. Source: Collective *Curriculum vitas* of committee members.

If *'professional expertise'* were a major source of the ENVI committee's legislative influence, this would have been reflected in the makeup of the committee, and the interview evidence. Figure 3-4, however, reveals that less than half (39%) of ENVI members had any relevant previous professional experience within the policy remit of the committee. Due to the wide competency of the committee, *'professional expertise'* was accredited to members that had training or a previous professional career in engineering, agricultural engineering, chemical engineering, environmental law or any similar technical field applicable to the area of environmental policy. *'Professional expertise'* was also accredited if a member had a background in medicine, chemistry or food manufacturing/production

and safety, and consequently covered the other policy areas within the committee's remit.¹¹⁵

Interestingly, out of the 28 members assessed as having clear '*professional expertise*', 12 (43% of the 28 deemed to have '*professional expertise*') originated from professional medical backgrounds, while the remainder came from a mix of different relevant, but largely environmental, backgrounds. This does show that on a committee with 71 members, '*professional expertise*' is almost equally concentrated between the areas of health policy and environmental policy. As figure 3-4 demonstrates, however, there are more members of the committee (54%) who do not have a professional level of expertise than those who have a clear degree of '*professional expertise*' (39%). Therefore, it is demonstrated that the ENVI committee has a mixed level of '*professional expertise*', which, while contributing some clear benefits from its presence, as discussed below, does not wholly account for the ENVI committee's significant legislative influence.

Despite a relatively lower rate of '*professional expertise*' compared with other committees,¹¹⁶ its presence is important and does have an impact on the committee's work, as stated by a senior ENVI committee member;

'I'm an agricultural scientist and I know a lot about agricultural production and how to produce food, and in addition I did my PhD in production of food so that fits very well together and helps me to work on this legislation'.¹¹⁷

Members of the ENVI committee acknowledge the significance of '*professional expertise*' as a potential foundation of influence as there is '***no scientific services in the European Parliament***'¹¹⁸ where vital technical information could be sourced on legislative proposals internally. This is a detriment when considered against the highly technical nature of the policy dealt with by the ENVI committee. Members must rely on their own informational networks (often derived from professional contacts) to gain technical/specialised information. Significantly, however, even when members ***'know quite a lot because that is their profession, there are other technical things you cannot***

¹¹⁵ Appendix V contains a list of the professionals which were counted.

¹¹⁶ The much smaller INTA committee had 71% of its members with indicators of professional expertise.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

¹¹⁸ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

know'.¹¹⁹ The usefulness of '*professional expertise*' can only extend so far in many highly technical areas. This could be expected as within most policy proposals there will be spill-over from one diverse technical area to another when a report is drafted. As a result of the wide technical nature of much of the policy dealt with by the ENVI committee, this does have a limiting factor on the overall impact of '*professional expertise*'. ***'It is impossible to become an expert on the content [within the ENVI committee] as an MEP or assistant'***. One of the main reasons for this is that ***'it's pretty difficult to get the time to even read the proposal of the Commission in its entirety'***.¹²⁰ While members with a professional background would have a significant advantage over those who have no specialist knowledge in being able to process information more efficiently, the informational benefits brought by '*professional expertise*' can only act as a form of compensation rather than a dramatic enhancement as a source of committee influence.

Interestingly, further evidence indicates that it is not, always, the '*acquisition of information*' which is important or indeed problematic, ***'the difficulty I think is processing the information, understanding it, [and] coming to conclusions on it, more than actually getting it'***.¹²¹ It can be difficult even for '*professional experts*' to assimilate the required technical information efficiently. If specialist/technical information is abundant, the impact which '*professional expertise*' could make is curtailed, without becoming fully redundant as evidence shows. Thus, even when '*professional expertise*' is contained to a degree within a committee, this does not necessarily mean a member is able to process or prioritise all the information available on a subject area, in order to use it appropriately to maximise the committee's influence. ***'It's not difficult to get information, but it's difficult to get qualified impartial advice'***¹²² which can be fully relied upon, as most information comes from a self interested perspective. ***'Certain political groups get a lot of help from NGOs'***, or alternatively ***'other groups get help from industry'***; others still ***'acquire technical understanding [on***

¹¹⁹ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14 Brussels BE

¹²⁰ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹²¹ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹²² Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

*policy] from their parties*¹²³ when drafting reports. As a result of a large degree of external information, committee members without *'professional expertise'* are not significantly disadvantaged or have to incur extra costs to actively participate in decision-making. Even when members do not already possess *'professional expertise'*, technical information on policy is still widely available to ENVI committee members.

Although *'professional expertise'* is not contained to a significant degree within the membership of the ENVI committee, as the information provided above would suggest, it does not account for the ENVI committee's perceived high levels of influence and, therefore, the question arises as to whether a compensating level of expertise may be provided by assistants and committee staff that have professional backgrounds within the policy area. To understand the overall role of expertise in the committee the potential involvement of committee staff much be factored into the study. While *'each case is different'*, experienced assistants are normally employed by members to support their technical policy making and *'some MEPs really rely heavily on their assistants with the [technical] policy work'*.¹²⁴ It will often, also, be the case that an assistant to an MEP *'will chair the technical trialogue meetings on a report'*, while the *'MEP [as rapporteur] will chair the political trialogue'*.¹²⁵ This signifies the important role which is placed upon assistants in the ENVI committee. The technical trialogue is portrayed as *'really intensive'* and to be successful an assistant must have a strong *'level of technical policy knowledge, you have to understand the piece of legislation inside out, every line and every paragraph'*. The responsibility of an assistant is *'supplying background policy information and very technical information to your MEP'*.¹²⁶ While assistants do appear to play an important role dealing with many of the *'highly technical sides of committee policy'*, assistants do also attest that it is *'impossible'*¹²⁷ to become an expert in your policy area, and will often *'not possess prior professional backgrounds'* in that policy area.¹²⁸ Member's assistants *'are*

¹²³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹²⁴ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

¹²⁵ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

¹²⁶ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

¹²⁷ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹²⁸ No data exists on the rates of professional background of MEP's assistants.

not real experts in policy' but often *'generalists'* having to work on different *'committees and areas'*¹²⁹ over time. Assistants are still often *'given responsibility over highly technical areas despite often possessing no professional expertise'*; despite this they are still perceived as acting to the benefit of the committees in important areas. Again it is *'not seen'* on the ENVI committee *'as a significant disadvantage'*¹³⁰ to not possess *'professional expertise'*. This evidence further demonstrates that *'professional expertise'* does not constitute a significant source of ENVI committee influence. It is, however, important to note that there is a growing trend, which has become evident from the collected data, within the ENVI committee, of a drive to develop and have assistants who are policy experts, rather than only generalists with *'a high level of professional expertise'*.¹³¹ This is, however, only happening outside the timescale of the thesis, within the 8th term.

In a similar manner, as attested to by a senior member of the committee secretariat, *'practical professional policy knowledge is lacking'*¹³² in many of the new members of the committee secretariat. The *'recruitment policy'* of the secretariat *'is to hire well educated persons'* who, however, are *'often lacking in practical policy area experience'*, with no professional background within the ENVI committee's remit. While some ENVI secretariat members *'do possess professional'* expertise, as a result of their *'heavy workload, understaffing and forced mobility'*¹³³ the secretariats are not able to act as a significant substitute for a lack of *'professional expertise'* within the ENVI committee. The application of forced mobility, where every few years a member of the secretariat will move to a new committee, has *'impacted'* upon *'[our] expertise on the [ENVI] committee secretariat'*.¹³⁴ *'After certain years your next assignment [after mobility] does not necessarily relate to the knowledge you have, in your first job, and often what you have learned in one area'*.¹³⁵ The data collected would indicate that in the past the committee secretariat did offer a level of technical expertise (while political party contacts and MEP advisers offer more *'policy making expertise'*)

¹²⁹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

¹³⁰ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹³¹ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade. 15/1/16 Glasgow UK

¹³² Interview with Senior Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

¹³³ Interview with Senior Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

¹³⁴ Interview with Senior Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 20/3/14 Brussels BE

¹³⁵ Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014. Brussels BE

which, as shown above, members do utilise, however, this support has diminished in depth with time as a result of policies surrounding the forced mobility and hiring of new administrators.

The evidence collected demonstrates that while overall¹³⁶ *'professional expertise'* does play a mixed role in assisting the committee's overall functioning, the degree to which it is beneficial to the committee's total influence is not overtly significant, being outweighed by non-professional elements within the committee, and is low compared to the comparatively higher rates of *'professional expertise'* contained within other committees.¹³⁷ The cost of not possessing *'professional expertise'* is not high enough to prevent ENVI members from being active in legislative decision-making. A heightened level of *'professional expertise'* would no doubt benefit the committee's influence, but is not a causal factor for that, already established, high legislative influence. It is highly likely that other sources of influence underlie the ENVI committee's established high standing.

3.5 Committee Unity Perspective

3.5.1 Political Dynamic of the ENVI Committee

The ENVI committee has been noted for the longevity and continuity of its committee chairs (O'Donnell 2007, Corbett *et al* 2007, Burns 2013a). The position of committee chair has so far been held consistently by political parties of the centre right (EPP), or the centre left (S&D/SOC¹³⁸) (table 3-1), and has displayed a noteworthy level of practical continuity (similar approaches to policy making, despite potential differences over desired outcomes and priorities) despite alternating between the S&D and EPP groupings. As a consequence of this consistency of leadership, the ENVI committee has been viewed as developing its own distinctive culture and approach to furthering its own influence over legislative outcomes (Judge 1992, Corbett *et al* 2007). During the 7th term, the committee consisted of a chair from the centre left S&D and four vice chairs from the ALDE, the EPP, S&D and the Greens, representing a wide spectrum of the ideologies contained within the

¹³⁶ Factoring the information on MEPs expertise and what the evidence indicates on member assistants and committee secretariat.

¹³⁷ A detailed comparison of the levels of *'professional expertise'* within the three case study committees is contained within the Conclusions chapter.

¹³⁸ The Socialist Grouping has had a number of different name iterations without changing its centre-left, social democratic standing.

Parliament. It should be noted that the chair alternated between two different S&D members during the second half of the 7th term (Jo Leinen (2009 – 2012) and Matthias Groote (2012 – 2014)) (ENVI activity report 2014). The role of the chair can be significant, not only for the organizational skills that are brought to the table but, also, for the associated contacts that have been or will be developed. Committee chairs are exceptionally important positions, and it is common practice for the party groups to negotiate over the allocation of chairmanships. The seats on a committee were divided by grouping size after the last election with the largest group getting the first selection (Judge & Earnshaw 2003). In the 7th term seven different political groups were represented on the committee¹³⁹ with the largest bloc being the EPP with 26 seats. Thereafter, the S&D (17) and the ALDE (8) made up the next largest blocs. The Greens/EFA had 6 seats on the committee, while the European United Left/Nordic Green Left had 3 seats.¹⁴⁰ The final seats were taken by the ECR (6), the EFD (2) and 3 non-attached members (ENVI activity report 2014).

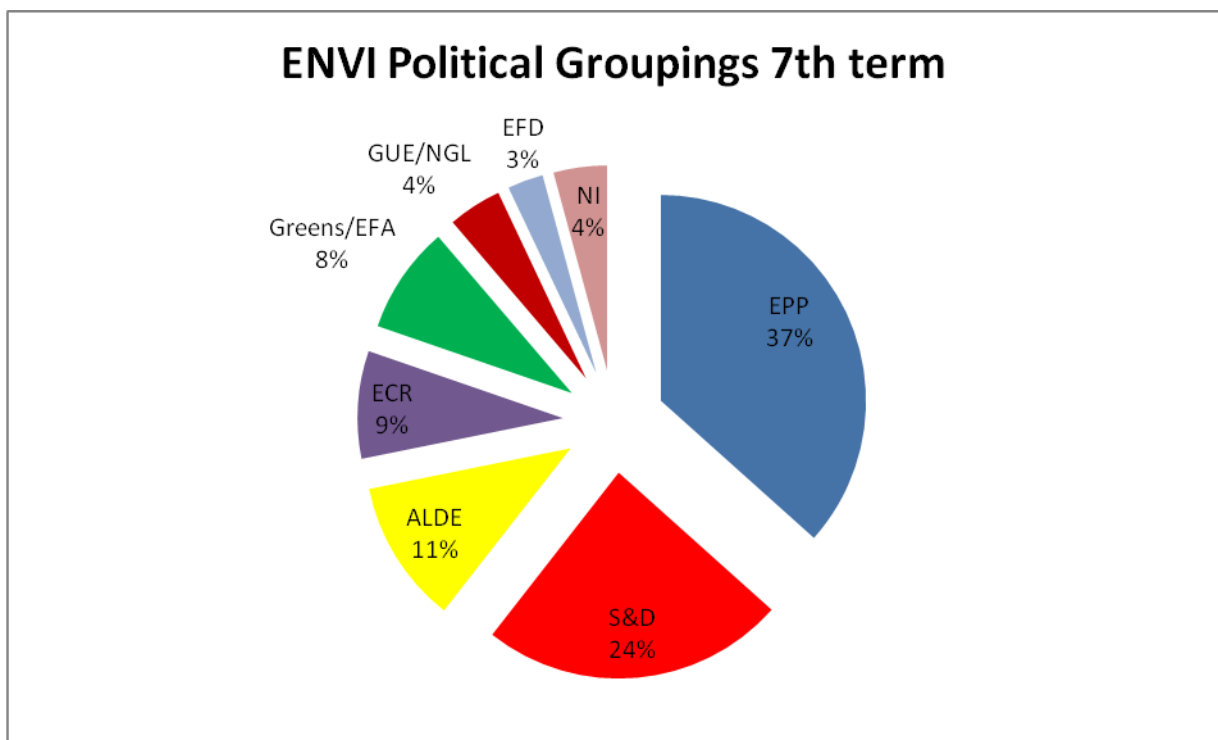


Figure 3-5 Political breakdown of party groupings within the 7th term Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. Source: ENVI activity report 2014.

¹³⁹ Along with independents not attached to an EP political family.

¹⁴⁰ The Greens/ EFA and European United Left/Nordic Green Left heavily prioritise the ENVI committee due to its environmental remit.

EP political groupings prioritise the committees on which they wish to be most represented. The ENVI committee has been selected as first choice by different groupings on a number of occasions (Judge & Earnshaw 2003), due to its perceived influence and potentially high impact on policy. For example, in 1999 the EPP was the largest party in the Parliament and selected the ENVI committee as its first choice, nominating an EPP member who had extensive knowledge of the workings of the committee before becoming the chair (Judge & Earnshaw 2003).¹⁴¹ The committee is also highly prioritised, perhaps unsurprisingly, by the Green groupings.

With respect to the inter-party dynamics, according to a Centre for European Political Studies (CEPS) (2012) special report looking at the ‘legislative activity and decision making dynamic’ of the EP, the committee has undergone significant partisan shifts during the 7th term. The report states that the level of partisan cohesion has dropped on the ENVI committee. There has been a growing trend for the main party groupings, the S&D, the ALDE and the EPP, to be less likely to vote in unity over a policy proposal (CEPS 2012). The report suggests that the centre-left¹⁴², as of the end of the 7th term, was the dominant partisan force on the ENVI committee, with a voting coalition being three times more likely to form around the S&D position than one that could be characterised as being centre-right¹⁴³, despite the EPP being the largest single bloc and prioritising the committee (CEPS 2012). While not discussed in this CEPS (2012) report, evidence collected for this study does help to elucidate the almost paradoxical position of the EPP. While being the largest party, and thus having the greatest potential to form a voting bloc, it has not been as successful as the S&D in having its position reflected. From evidence collected it is apparent this situation is a consequence of the unique political dynamics of the EPP within the ENVI committee, which has had an overall knock-on impact on the unity of the ENVI committee.

If committee unity had been less stable on the ENVI committee during its 7th term this may have had an impact on the committee’s overall influence. Committees are at their most influential when all

¹⁴¹ Similarly, the PSE (S&D today) placed the second case study, the Budgets committee, at the top of its list of priorities after the EPP had control of the ENVI committee.

¹⁴² The S&D, the ALDE and, potentially with the further left Green and GUE/NGL.

¹⁴³ Forming around the EPP.

political actors are united behind a proposal (Kreppel 1999, 2002b). All committees no matter the field or policy area have the ability to use unity as a source of legislative influence: its absence from the ENVI committee would, therefore, be significant. The current partisan dynamic, within the Parliament, has been viewed in some studies as moderating the ENVI committee's overall influence (Burns 2013a). With the dominance of the EPP in the Parliament, and simultaneously a perceived shift by this group away from environmental preferences it has become harder for the committee to make more radical proposals on environmental matters (Burns 2013a). Also, in general, it is the consensus that the average ENVI committee member is considered as an outlier in terms of policy preferences, being more radical than the plenary equivalent, and whose consent is required before any action can be taken (Burns & Carter 2010). As a result of this dynamic the ENVI committee's influence may have become curtailed, and evidence of political disunity may now be more apparent within the committee.

3.5.2 Committee Unity

The political dynamic of the ENVI committee is vital to it being successful in gaining preferential outcomes in legislative proposals. A disunited ENVI committee would not have as strong a negotiating mandate as a united one. The issues, however, with which the ENVI committee are dealing are highly 'political' (or ideological) in their nature, and this may affect the committee's political dynamic. As shown in figure 3-5, the committee political grouping breakdown in the 7th term revealed the EPP as the ENVI committee's largest grouping. While *'it was easier during the last years because we [the EPP] managed to often have a majority, the ENVI committee political majorities were changing at that time too'* during the 7th term. A united political position depended, very much *'on the topic and issues debated, and depending on the ALDE; the Liberals sometimes lean very green in the ENVI'* committee. So it is evident that *'it's not so very easy to build majorities in this committee'*.¹⁴⁴ With the reduction in EPP members on the committee in the *'new [8th term]* term it will be more difficult than before because no political side in the Parliament has a majority

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

*with its ‘Socialist green wing’ on one side and the ‘Christian democrat wing’ on the other side’.*¹⁴⁵

While it would appear that conflict has increased in the 8th term, and the focus of this study is the 7th; this evidence does reveal that conflict was present in the 7th term, and has only increased with time.

The ENVI committee (7th term) is dominated by the two largest political groupings in the EP, the EPP and the S&D. *‘The truth is on the really important legislative files if the two bigger groups want it they will get it as they can always out bid you [the ECR, GUE/NGL.....], and at the end of the term they always have points left over [to buy ENVI legislative reports]’.*¹⁴⁶ With the important policy reports, dealt with by the committee, according to members from smaller groupings *‘the only way for a small group’* to gain a prestigious or important report is *‘if there is conflict between the two big groups. We [as a small party] can support one or the other, and then they will support you in turn’.*¹⁴⁷ This suggests a fluid interaction between the party groups on the ENVI committee, underlining why different studies have examined the allocation of reports to understand the partisan dynamic:

*‘Internal group dynamics matter. It does also depend on the Committee. In the ENVI, for the EPP, for example, it is basically the coordinators deciding amongst themselves [assigning reports]. It was the two coordinators who decided the files [who get a rapporteur-ship]; it’s very un-transparent’.*¹⁴⁸

However to other actors, while the party *‘coordinators play a vital role’* when it comes to *‘organising compromises’* and unity between the political groups *‘the most important role is the Parliament’s rapporteur and the shadow [rapporteurs] from the other groups’* they *‘are the ones who negotiate on compromises’*¹⁴⁹ for any given file.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁴⁶ Interview with ‘Group Coordinator’ Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁴⁷ Interview with ‘Group Coordinator’ Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁴⁸ *‘Now for example my MEP was also on the AGRI committee and they do it the same way as the ITRE committee, for the EPP everybody who is interested [in becoming the rapporteur on a report] is written down on a paper. This group of people is communicated to the members and a preliminary meeting of the EPP for this committee is convened. Of the candidates, anyone who wants to withdraw or anyone who wants to speak out in favour of a candidate will do so, and then if need be its voted on who gets the report, that is very transparent’.* Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14 Brussels BE

The selections of rapporteur on the ENVI committee are often hotly contested, which does help to elucidate the dynamics of unity, as it is the rapporteurs who attempt to facilitate compromise and unity. This highlights that it is important to the committee's influence to reach a unified position but reaching it is far from easy. It is evident that politically driven perspectives within the committee are deeply entrenched, and divergent, even internally within the party groupings. This is made apparent by evidence from the smaller ECR centre right party group *'I would be considered by most people to be not very green even though my conservative colleagues think I'm very green, that's the range of politics'*.¹⁵⁰ Even within the groups there is careful consideration over who gets a report and what their perspective is in a wider political tradition. *'Even for the ECR and for the EPP we have had members that are a bit more progressive [towards green issues] than their groups are'*,¹⁵¹ and this has led to some internal tensions. While opinion may differ within the political groups the divides between the groupings can be pronounced and impact significantly on committee influence.

According to one senior centre right MEP;

'There would be some files that the Greens and far left would not want me to have as they would think "oh they will compromise with industry". On our side conversations will take place saying no we can't let the Greens have this because it won't get anywhere, they will come up with something so idealistic that the Council will never negotiate'.¹⁵²

Striking a balance can be difficult for the committee and it must be unified if it is to have a strong negotiating mandate. However, practical evidence demonstrates that this is not always achieved on the committee, much to its detriment. *'Often it is possible to reach compromises but in other issues it is impossible'*.¹⁵³ There is a wide range of views within the EPP and ECR groupings. In effect many EPP and ECR members find themselves split between the outlier status of the ENVI committee and the shift towards the right in the plenary (Burns *et al* 2012, Burns 2013a). It is for this reason that the

¹⁵⁰ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁵¹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁵² Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁵³ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

centre right has more trouble than the centre left in creating a voting bloc, which helps to explain the CEPS (2012) report demonstrating such.

While unity has been identified by members as being a vital source of the committee's legislative influence, the political groups are evidently in competition. As discussed above there are tensions between the groups, and sometimes even within groups, due to the nature of the policy dealt with by the ENVI committee. Understanding of political conflict that exists can be expanded with further interview evidence that examines the interactions of the ENVI committee during trialogue. The ENVI committee has been noted for its expert use of informal interactions to further its legislative influence (Corbett *et al* 2007). It is, however, within these informal negotiations that partisan conflict has been apparently most evident during the 7th term. Different political groups within the ENVI committee have attempted to speed up or slow down the legislative procedure to their own benefit *'there are different interests there at stake'*. Within the committee it is recognised *'that for the Greens it's very good there is informal trialogue'* which attempts to *'speed up'*¹⁵⁴ the process. This benefit for the Greens, however, does not mean an increase in overall influence for the ENVI committee.

The rationale behind the Greens' drive to speed up the informal process is that they are attempting to set the agenda towards their own preferences. If the Greens wait for the formal process to continue *'they would lose a vote in the plenary as they are outnumbered'* and would be unable to have their preferences represented. However, if the Greens are able to set the agenda in informal trialogue, they will be in a stronger position to have their preferences represented before the plenary stage:

'It's very beneficial to start as early as possible [for the Greens] with the trialogue so that it's on the basis of their text and not the plenary text. They have much more power in the committee text because they are part of the processes'.¹⁵⁵

Within the trialogue process the Greens *'sit at the same table as the rapporteur'*. As a result of this you *'have only one person for the ECR or the EPP or the Greens getting the same influence there*

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

at the table'. So despite the marked difference in numbers between the Greens and the other groups, each are equal in the trialogue, which has become the main decision making mechanism in many cases. This, however, does not benefit the committee overall as *'if you draft a report that is only good, for say, the ECR or the greens, it's going to be voted down in the committee immediately'*.¹⁵⁶

These smaller groups are outliers to the ENVI committee's own preferences, which itself is an outlier from the plenary preferences. If Greens preferences are reflected with the same standing as the main party groups, the committee's influence suffers as a result. The *'plenary will amend and reject proposals'*¹⁵⁷ which are beyond their median preference. The ENVI committee does, however, attempt to operate in a way to avoid this situation as detailed above in order to create a unified position which is not fully unpalatable to the plenary.

Unity on the ENVI committee is not consistent, even between the largest political groups. Off the record conflict was observed between ENVI members during trialogue, to the point where *'quite intense discussion'* occurred *'in front of the Council's delegation'* which was a *'shock to them'* as *'this shouldn't happen'* as all outstanding issues *'should have been sorted out in committee'*. A point was reached, where the Council asked if the EP delegation wished to take some time out of the room to sort their position out. The Council was concerned that the committee members were in effect undermining their own position and did not want to take an overt level of advantage.

3.6 Public Policy Perspective

The final perspective proposed as having consequences for influence is that of the public policy type. To summarise its main points, the rationale of the policy perspective is that the different types of public policy, which are proposed by a legislator, will affect the legislative standing of the committee proposing that policy. As has been conjectured, an EP committee more focused on producing regulatory policy than one producing distributive/redistributive policy outputs will be less likely to face stringent opposition from the Council (H4). While member states resist supranational actors distributing their contributed funds, they have been, historically, more amiable in allowing

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

supranational actors to draft and implement regulatory policy (Burns 2005b). Committees producing regulatory policy will be more influential than those dealing with distributive/redistributive outcomes (H4).

To understand if policy type is a source of the ENVI committee's influence it first needs to be established what the committee's policy output most closely resembles. According to Yordanova (2009a :256) the ENVI committee can be classed as mixed in terms of its policy output. Depending on the policy being discussed, the committee is both 'information-driven'¹⁵⁸ and at times 'interest-driven'.¹⁵⁹ More importantly, however, the policy outputs of the ENVI committee have been assessed as being both regulatory and distributive in nature (Yordanova 2009a). By contrast, an earlier study by Judge *et al* (1994) asserted that the ENVI committee is to a great extent only dealing with regulatory policy. As a result of this focus on a regulatory output Judge *et al* (1994) believed that the committee was more influential. Judge *et al* (1994) asserted that through the use of regulatory policy the committee exerted influence, as although the costs of the regulation were concentrated on a targeted actor, the benefits were seen and dispersed between different actors. The issue with Judge *et al* (1994) assessment was that it was not fully tested or substantiated (Burns 2005b). While the committee potentially is producing more distributive outputs (Follesdal & Hix 2006), the policy areas which it is dealing with are still largely regulatory in nature (Burns & Carter 2010, Jordan *et al* 2015). The costs of producing regulatory outputs may, however have increased over time for the ENVI committee, weakening its overall influence.

Studies that have examined the policy output of the committee have often examined the main competency area of environmental policy and found that the type of policy the ENVI committee is producing has changed over the years, possibly in correlation to the accession of new member states from Eastern Europe who have resisted the expansion of regulatory policies (Burns *et al* 2012). In the past the committee has been viewed as an environmental champion in a Parliament and Union that

¹⁵⁸ Information-driven committees' policy outputs are driven by the use and acquisition of specialist information, producing generally political neutral technocratic policy.

¹⁵⁹ Interest-driven policies are organised around member interests to see a desired political outcome.

placed environmental issues as highly salient (Judge 1992), drawing influence from its regulatory outputs (Judge *et al* 1994). As well as being prestigious the ENVI committee has been viewed as being progressive, or even radical, in its desired environmental policy outcomes. As discussed in relation to the committee unity perspective the new member states (NMS) of Eastern Europe place the salience of environmental issues at a lower order than the early accession northern European member states. The reason for this is that the cost of implementing environmental legislation was higher in the NMS who often lacked the resources or organisational skills in the area (Börzel 2009). Despite their lower salience of environmental policy the NMS accessions did not greatly impact the policy output of the ENVI committee in as negative a way as may have been expected but has still seemingly mediated the committee's regulatory ambitions (Burns *et al* 2012). Whereas in previous years the ENVI committee's policy proposals had been more radical in nature, pushing for stronger environmental controls, after the NMS accessions policy proposals became more moderate, although overall the adoption rate of amendments actually increased (6th term) (Burns *et al* 2012). Seemingly countries with higher regulatory costs are undermining the ambition of ENVI committee's regulatory proposals. The ENVI committee does appear to continue to be a regulatory committee; however, its proposals are less ambitious in their imposition of regulatory burden.

Empirical Data

Even with the moderating factors placed on the committees with the accession of the NMS the *'ENVI committee is not a representative group for the entire Parliament [7th term], it is much greener and it is much more to the left'* than the plenary as a whole, a committee rapporteur will therefore *'need to come up with a text [report] which will have support in, first, your committee but after that also in the entire house [plenary]'*.¹⁶⁰ With the political shift towards the centre right (and the EPP) in the 7th term environmental policy preferences have become more moderate, moving away from their radical origins (Burns *et al* 2012, Burns 2013a). The ENVI committee does, however, still prefer more environmentally stringent policy outputs than the plenary as a whole. *'No ENVI text gets through the*

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

plenary without amendments because’ the committee’s membership *‘is not a representative group of MEPs’*.¹⁶¹ This evidence therefore indicates that the ENVI committee appears to have its influence weakened as a result of the constraints placed on it by the plenary, potentially as a result of a shift by the plenary to the right on environmental issues, and a divergence in preferences, confirming Burns (2013a) assertions. The committee cannot rely on the plenary to support its position against the Council as *‘the Parliament in plenary moves closer to the Council [in negotiations] than the committee especially when it comes to the ENVI [committee]’*. The repeated rationale for this situation is that the *‘ENVI is rather green and it is not a representative group for the Parliament’*.¹⁶² It must be made clear that while many members of the committee want to see outputs more radical, where costs are most likely imposed in order to achieve environmental goals, they will avoid negative implications for their own member states. *‘A lot of these targets at European level may seem very objective, and really well founded, but if it’s going to cost a lot of money in your member state you are not going to vote for that’*.¹⁶³ The ENVI committee and the member states do share the preference to not impose unpalatable costs on their constituents. This sentiment, reflected by EPP members, is that *‘you have to get legislation which doesn’t unnecessarily burden your own constituents, of course that’s what everyone does here’*.¹⁶⁴ Conflict over policy output does still occur, however, even unexpectedly between the ENVI Committee and the Commission.

The policy situation for the ENVI committee was exacerbated by the attitudes of the Environment Directorate-General (DG) towards the committee in the 7th term. *‘My experience is that the DG very often tries to work against the Parliament, they try to fight for their own policy ideas’*.¹⁶⁵ This is surprising to an extent as it is expected convention that the Commission and the ENVI committee are on good terms with similar policy preferences (Judge 1993). It is the cooperation of these actors, and the joint support they can give each other, which has often been cited for the ENVI committee’s legislative development in to an influential actor (Corbett *et al* 2007). It came as a surprise to

¹⁶¹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁶² Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁶³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14 Brussels BE

members during the 7th term that *'even from the out, the DG [Environment] started to do lobbying inside the Parliament for the Commission against the [committees] rapporteur'*. To members this *'was [something] really strange, that goes too far and that should not be allowed'*.¹⁶⁶ Even after the Commission President had been contacted by the relevant rapporteur, the Commission's lobbying continued unabated;

'It should not be allowed for the Commission, because the Commission is not the legislator. The Commission has to deliver a proposal, and if the Parliament or the Council want to change it, it's their job to do so, but it's not the Commission's job to fight for the ideas of a single civil servant'.¹⁶⁷

To some extent the normal support from the Commission was lacking as a result of its desire to see its own policy preferences adopted by the Parliament. Even internally in the areas of environmental policy the Commission have had *'massive fallings out with itself, it doesn't necessarily agree across its own political [spectrum], just on an individual basis the tone is set by the DG or commissioner and that can be very different from one to the other'*.¹⁶⁸ This evidence should, however, not be taken for a disregard of the importance of the Commission/ENVI committee's close relationship. All elite actors interviewed stated that the relationship and exchange of information between institutions was seen as *'being important'* to the ENVI committee's continued *'legislative successes'*.¹⁶⁹ It is with the Council, rather than the Commission, that the major policy conflicts occur. To understand this in terms of the policy perspective some practical examples of significant policy proposals have been examined over their progression. These examples illuminate the impact that different types of amendment proposals have on the ENVI committee's legislative influence.

In terms of legislative output it is interesting to note that for the 7th term the ENVI committee dealt with 79 Commission proposals falling under the OLP, 61 of which were finished in the 7th term. The ENVI committee, with regards to report adoption, has been notable as favouring first reading agreements; in fact 84% of all its cases were agreed and completed at first reading. 14% were agreed

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 6/11/14 Brussels BE

¹⁶⁸ Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee. 7/1/15 SKYPE Interview

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee. 8/4/2014. Phone Interview

at second reading, and only 1% of reports required a conciliation meeting. The only case which did reach conciliation, the ‘Novel Food’ codecision act¹⁷⁰, was ultimately rejected before completion (ENVI Activity Report 2009-2014). 18 outstanding legislative files were carried over to the 8th term. Out of the completed files an important file to better appreciate the ENVI committee’s relative influence is the ‘Amending Directive on Packaging and Packaging Waste to Reduce the Consumptions of Lightweight Plastic Carrier Bags (2013/0371(COD))’. This co-decision file was **‘small [in terms of pages], but controversial’** and, as a legislative proposal, the **‘content [of the file] was explosive’**.¹⁷¹ It is, therefore, an excellent case to examine. A controversial file will be enlightening in terms of understanding the ENVI committee’s relative influence, more so than a file that was not controversial, and no evidence of actors exerting influence was displayed. Despite being cited as an **‘explosive’**¹⁷² file, agreement was reached at an ‘early stage’ within the 2nd reading of the report, and did not require a full formal second reading.

The file concerned the relative reduction of plastic bag consumption within the member states, due to the associated environmental impact. The objective of the Commission’s original proposal was to ‘promote similar reductions of the average consumption level’ (Commission Proposal COM (2013)0761) and seek harmonized standards across the EU. The Commission’s proposal stated that member states should seek to reduce their national consumptions; however, the mechanism by which this would be achieved was not explicitly outlined within the Commission’s proposals leaving it to a member state’s discretion how they would comply within a two year deadline (Commission Proposal COM (2013)0761). The Commission proposal did, therefore, not originally place any burden or binding targets on the member states.

After the original proposal, at the committee stage, 43 amendments in total were adopted by the ENVI committee, which would become the Parliament’s position on the file. Of the amendments

¹⁷⁰ The Novel Foods Regulation (2008/0002(COD)), not to be confused with the earlier Novel Foods and Novel Food Ingredients act (COM (92) 295), sought ‘to establish harmonised rules for the placing of novel foods on the market in the Community with a view to ensuring a high level of human health and consumers’ protection, whilst ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market’ (European Commission 2008).

¹⁷¹ Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014. Brussels BE

¹⁷² Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014. Brussels BE

introduced two significant amendments stand out. Both involved introducing binding targets obligating member states to reduce consumption. These targets looked to reduce plastic bag consumption by 50% in 3 years and 80% in five years. The second provision involved the total phasing out of plastic bags in food packaging (ENVI committee first reading 2013/0371(COD)).

These proposals went further than the Commission's own proposals which had not stated any binding reduction targets. Both these proposals were significant amendments within their remit of extending the scope of the legislation; however, both amendments can be classed as regulatory in nature as they seek to curtail the actions within member states by proposing a cost to promote improved actions.

The ENVI committee's proposals were sent to the Council in conjunction with the commencement of informal trialogue (ENVI committee 'first reading position' (2013/0371(COD))). The response from the Council was not to accept the entirety of the ENVI/EP proposed amendments at first reading. This is evident as of the commencement of the second reading stage. A full second reading of the file was not required as an agreement was reached during informal trialogue. As trialogue is an informal process no formal record exists detailing the discussion which took place between the ENVI committee and the Council, apart from interview evidence which indicated the '*difficult*'¹⁷³, but ultimately successful, nature of the negotiations. It was possible to observe the outcome of negotiation, however, as this was evident in the final draft of the legislative report. The final draft of the plastic bags report included two alternative obligations which member states could meet in order to be in compliance with the amended directive. The first stated the relative rates by which the member states must reduce consumption, while leaving it at the discretion of the member states as to how they would meet these targets. The alternative provision was to introduce charges (costs) on the consumption of plastic bags. Monitoring provision was also included within the file to assess member states' progress (Official Journal of the European Union 2015).

The ENVI committee, and the EP, were successful in having these extra regulatory provisions included, placing cost on actors, despite reservations being raised, surprisingly, by the Commission

¹⁷³ Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee. 19/3/2014 Brussels BE

(European Commission 2015). This report is, therefore, an example of the ENVI committee being influential and successful when proposing regulatory amendments to what had originally been perceived as a controversial act. The committee and EP were able to get the Council to sign up to requirements more stringent than first proposed. This case demonstrates that the ENVI committee got its way on a key policy proposal, with regulatory outputs, against the Council. The reason for this success was associated with the fact that the outcome of the proposal was seen as burdening the consumer rather than being placed on the state. While this is a single example it appears to be indicative of the interactions between the ENVI committee and the Council. Out of the 62 files, dealt with by the committee, only one failed that of the Novel Foods regulation (ENVI activity report 2014) over the political point of cloned meat labelling. The committee did largely draft regulatory policy outputs, with little evidence of files containing significant distributive outcomes.

3.7 Conclusion

The ‘Committee on the Environment, Public health and Food Safety’ has been denoted as one of the most powerful committees in the EP, as a result of its wide policy remit and significant legislative influence. However, the sources of its significant influence have yet to be fully understood within the current body of literature. This study has sought to comprehend the different sources which the ENVI committee is drawing upon to reach its significant levels of legislative influence. Three different perspectives accounting for legislative influence were applied to the ENVI committee, and as a result a better comprehension of the sources of the committee’s influence was gained. With a better understanding of these sources of influence, as a result of the original data collected by this study, evidence contrary to current conventions on committee influence has been highlighted, and new observations on the influence of the ENVI committee have been generated.

With regard to the first perspective applied to account for committee influence, the informational perspective, it was discovered that *‘professional expertise’* is a limited source of ENVI committee influence. It was revealed that technical information is widely available within the committee and while members with *‘professional expertise’* are able to assimilate this information better than non-

professional members, due to its ready availability, the overall impact of *'professional expertise'* on overall influence was relatively weak. Thus, the costs of not possessing technical expertise are low for ENVI committee members. Understanding the political dynamics of the European Union institutions was seen in the empirical data as critical to the committee's success. Retention rates in the 7th term were relatively significant, being higher than many other EP committees during the same time period. The *'policy making expertise'* of members was deemed as important as a source of the ENVI influence; however current convention was questioned over the actual impact of membership retention. Evidence indicated that a level of turnover, rather than consistently harming the committee, can actually boost the committee's standing and influence by the introduction of 'fresh blood' with new members replacing long term members who often have become blockages to further progress. This is a significant result, casting major doubt over the fundamental nature of retention of members as a prerequisite for committee influence. Evidence showing a similar dynamic taking place within the other selected case studies would be a significant new finding within the area of legislative organization.

Party unity was demonstrated as having a significant impact on overall influence. While evidence suggested that unity fluctuated to an extent on the ENVI committee during the 7th term, members testified that on the whole unity was a positive to the committee, and it was generally achieved. Political competition does, however, occur, which does affect the committee's overall influence. Different political actors will attempt to use committee procedures to their own ends, often shifting the policy proposals away from the committee's own median preference. This weakens the ENVI committee's overall standing, as the committee's mean preference is already perceived as being an outlier within the plenary. While unity is often achieved there are some issues where partisan preferences differ to such an extent that agreement cannot be reached, and this fundamentally undermines influence. The final perspective applied to the ENVI committee examined the effect of public policy and its function as a possible source of influence. The ENVI committee has evolved from a committee largely dealing with regulatory policy into becoming a committee dealing with

more mixed policy outputs. It was demonstrated, with the use of a key example of legislation, that the committee was largely successful when proposing significant regulatory proposals.

Chapter Four Committee on Budgets

4.1 Introduction

A political institution cannot exist without some form of continuing financial mechanism, or simply put, a budget (Ippolito 1978, Crain & Muris 1995). As a result of the fundamental importance of budgets to governmental systems, budgetary committees have often established themselves as vital legislative actors in a comparative context (Ippolito 1978, Wehner 2007). It is for this reason that the Committee on Budgets (BUDG) of the European Parliament is an interesting case to examine, due to the overarching consequences its policy remit has for the EU. The BUDG committee is the main parliamentary actor dealing with budgets,¹⁷⁴ an area acknowledged as of major significance for the EP, and many studies have identified a significant level of legislative influence held within the committee over this key EU policy area (Burns 2006, Corbett *et al* 2007). Formally it is the Parliament (and the Council) who have the direct authority over the budget according to the treaties; however, the responsibility for dealing with the practicalities of the policy area, within, and for, the Parliament, are delegated to the BUDG committee. The BUDG committee, due to the formal legislative powers it possesses, acting on behalf of the Parliament within the budgetary procedure, has been labelled by several investigators as an influential (Whitaker 2005, 2014, Burns 2006, Corbett *et al* 2007) and highly prestigious (Burns *et al* 2012) committee in its own right. Furthermore, while the BUDG committee has not been directly named in some studies, a number of reports in the literature have noted the EP's important potential for influence in relation to the budget (Duff 2009, Buonanno & Nugent 2013, Crombez & Høyland 2014). However, beyond the formal powers, the sources of influence of the BUDG committee are a subject of debate as understanding is lacking at an empirical level (Benedetto & Milio 2012). As noted in the theoretical framework a '*catalyst*' (a source of influence) is needed to turn a potential to be influential into reality. A number of studies (Westlake 1994, Corbett *et al* 2007, Kauppi & Widgren 2008) have cited the rationale behind the BUDG committee's high influence as a result of the committee possessing an institutional memory which

¹⁷⁴ The Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT), the other EP budgetary committee has no involvement in the important area of budgetary decision-making but is an audit committee monitoring the spending of budgets once the BUDG Committee, Council and Commission have decided on the budget.

developed as a result of gaining involvement in budgetary decision making at an early stage. *'Policy making expertise'* has, indeed, been suggested as a main source of BUDG committee influence and as a result the level of turnover of committee members has been implicated previously as adversely affecting the committee's overall influence (Lindner 2006). It is claims such as these concerning the role of *'policy making expertise'* as a source of committee influence which this chapter will look to empirically test, to ascertain how the BUDG committee has established its influential standing.

This chapter will address how the BUDG committee has established itself as a significant legislative actor and what sources the committee draws upon to gain preferential outcomes, and thus demonstrable influence when dealing with budget and legislative reports. Indeed, in a similar way to assessing a committee's influence through how successful it has been in gaining a policy outcome close to its preferences in a legislative act, the BUDG committee's influence can also be gauged by how successful it has been in gaining an outcome closer to its political preferences in the budgetary procedure's final outcome. The BUDG committee has a significant decision making role and potential to affect the final budgetary outcome. Previous studies (Settembri & Neuhold 2009: 133) that have assessed the influence of the EP, have accepted both legislative and budgetary files as generally of equivalent value, as both follow similar procedures. It would, therefore, be constructive to begin by placing the BUDG committee's role in context with the budgetary decision making process before testing the validity of the hypotheses.

4.2 The Decision Making Process

The EU, as with most political institutions, creates a budget that sets out its funding priorities on a regular basis. However, the EU budget does not operate within the same basic framework that comprises a typical national state budget. The EU does not raise funds via taxation, as would a nation state; rather the budget to be spent comprises national state contributions. The EU does, however, produce a binding budget framework setting funding priorities on at least a 5 year (quinquennial) cyclical basis along with an 'Annual Budget' each calendar year (Buonanno & Nugent 2013). The Parliament is one of only two bodies within the Union's institutional structure which has formal

authority over the EU budget, the other budgetary authority being that of the Council (Arthuis 2014). In practice the Budget committee officially formulates the EP's position on the whole EU budget prior to it being adopted by the plenary (TFEU 2014).¹⁷⁵ A confirmation in plenary is largely a foregone conclusion; since obtaining a budgetary role, with its founding in 1979, the committee has reportedly turned gaining a majority in plenary into a 'refined art' (Westlake 1994: 194). The Budget committee will formulate amendments to the proposed budgets, and possibly recommend vetoing a budget if agreement is not reached with the other institutional partners, primarily the Council. Formally, the budget of the EU is agreed upon under the so-called 'budgetary procedure', in which the BUDG committee is a direct and formal participant on behalf of the Parliament. The budgetary procedure is notable for generally following the same basic parameters as the OLP, with the same amendment process although with some key differences as explained below (Duff 2009, Crombez & Høyland 2014). It is important to note that the Committee on Budgets will operate formally, as the Parliament's representative, to a great extent, as an equal partner with the Council, as the Council *'has to get our [BUDG committee] consent; as long as we [BUDG] say no, there is no budget'*.¹⁷⁶

The Lisbon Treaty, in addition, importantly removed the distinction within the budgetary procedure between so called 'compulsory' and 'non-compulsory' spending, and this as a consequence further consolidated the equality between the BUDG committee and Council (Roederer-Rynning & Schimmelfennig 2012). The importance of the abrogation of this distinction is highlighted by an elaboration on its impact. Expenditure was divided prior to the ToL between 'compulsory', in which the BUDG committee had no role, and 'non-compulsory', in which the committee and EP did have a direct legislative engagement. As a result of interpretation of treaty language, 'compulsory spending' was interpreted to involve 'all expenditure necessarily resulting from the treaties, or from acts adopted in accordance with the treaties' (Westlake 1994: 123). Compulsory expenditure related directly to issues such as member state refunds, resulting expenditure deriving from international agreements and important areas such as agricultural funds, which include the 'Common Agricultural Policy' (CAP)

¹⁷⁵ The formal responsibilities of the committee are presented as they appear in the formal European functioning treaties within appendix VI.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

(Westlake 1994). With the removal of any definition between these areas, the role of the BUDG committee has been greatly extended with the ability to be involved and propose amendments to all areas of EU spending, including those that were previously limited in areas in which member states had protectionist interests. The potential remit of the BUDG committee is therefore, after Lisbon, extremely significant with extension into the important distributive areas such as agriculture spending.

The EU budget itself will determine where and what funding is not only allocated for different policies, ranging from the ‘CAP’ to the funding of the ‘European External Action Service’ (EESA) but, also, what funds are made available to the institutions and the everyday operations of the Union. In the past some areas were out of the BUDG committee and EP’s remit,¹⁷⁷ but following the ToL all annual budgetary matters are subject to amendments coming from the committee. Therefore, the BUDG committee has an important role in determining the allocation of funds within the European structure of institutions and programmes, as any funds allocated must in practice be approved by the EP whose position in this regard is the prerogative of the committee (Westlake 1994). Political priorities are indicated by where an institution or an actor wishes funds to be allocated within a budget. Therefore, an actor is influential by the extent to which they are able to have their political priorities reflected within the budget. While the Commission, the Council and the EP will each have their own funding preferences,¹⁷⁸ a review of the budgetary process will help to understand how the committee can have its position best reflected in the final outcome. If the BUDG committee is successful, the budget to some extent will result in the allocation of funding to policies and bodies that the committee wished to be funded, and possibly against the preferences of other Institutions. In the first instance it is necessary to understand the basic composition of the BUDG committee and what decisions it can, and does, make by discussing the two main budgetary elements that make up the budgetary process, the ‘Multiannual Financial Framework’ (MFF) and the ‘General Annual EU Budget’.

¹⁷⁷ This former split between compulsory and non-compulsory spending.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

4.2.1 Multiannual Financial Framework

The budgetary procedure is a rather complex mechanism that has to be broken down into a number of parts in order to understand its different elements and the BUDG committee's relative involvement. A number of elements must be decided before a budget is turned into EU law; the first component that must be agreed upon is the development of the so-called 'Multiannual Financial Framework' (MFF). At least every 5 years a new MFF is negotiated and adopted, signalling the start of an on-going budgetary process which will last for at least a 5 year period until a new MFF is agreed. The last MFF extended from 2007 to 2013, with the new budgetary regime starting in 2014, following negotiations undertaken during the 7th term. What the MFF actually comprises is a political agreement between the institutions determining the maximum EU expenditures for, at minimum, a five-year period. The MFF will set out the framework and parameters for future budgets. The MFF is not a budget in itself but a planning mechanism for creating a yearly budget to ensure European spending is consistent and capped over the framework's 5-year (minimum) lifespan (European Commission 2015). The MFF will be used as a clear framework to facilitate the adoption of an 'Annual Budget' that is fiscally consistent over its lifetime. How the MFF works in practice is that different areas of EU policy are divided into 6 broad categories that are referred to as 'headings' (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1 MFF Headings (2007-2013) and Policy Breakdown as Promulgated by the European Commission (2015)

Multiannual Financial Framework Headings (2007-2013)	Outlines of Policy Areas Within Heading (European Commission 2015)
1. Sustainable growth	<p>1a. Competitiveness for growth and employment – ‘Research and innovation, education and training, trans-European networks, social policy, economic integration and accompanying policies’.</p> <p>1b. Cohesion for growth and employment – ‘Convergence of the least developed EU countries and regions, EU strategy for sustainable development outside the least prosperous regions, inter-regional cooperation’.</p>
2. Preservation and management of natural resources	‘Includes the Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy, rural development and environmental measures’.
3. Citizenship, freedom, security and justice	<p>3a. Freedom, security and justice – ‘Justice and home affairs, border protection, immigration and asylum policy’.</p> <p>3b. Citizenship – ‘Public health, consumer protection, culture, youth, information and dialogue with citizens’.</p>
4. EU as global player	‘Covers all external action ("foreign policy") by the EU. Does not include the European Development Fund (the European Council and Parliament rejected a Commission proposal to include it in the EU budget)’.
5. Administration	‘Covers the administrative expenditure of all the European institutions, pensions and EU-run schools for staff members' children’.
6. Compensations	‘Temporary heading which includes compensatory payments relating to the latest expansion of the EU’.

Source: European Commission 2015

The MFF states how much total money, over the period, can be allocated to each of these overarching headings. The MFF does not distribute the funds directly paid to different areas but sets a ‘budgetary ceiling’. These so called ‘ceilings’ for the different ‘headings’ set the maximum which is committed, in effect the maximum which could be spent, in each heading for the life span of the MFF. Each year

an ‘Annual Budget’ is then negotiated which allocates the funds to different policy areas within the multi-year constraints of the MFF ‘ceilings’. Normally when the ‘Annual Budget’ is agreed it will be below the MFF’s area ‘ceiling’ to compensate for unforeseen expenditure or to reduce spending.¹⁷⁹ The MFF is highly significant to the working operations of the EU; as the Commission (2015) states that ‘the MFF translates the political priorities set by the EU and its Member States into financial and legal terms’. So, in effect, the MFF determines the funding priorities for almost an entire parliamentary term. A reduction in the ‘ceiling’ within one heading could have significant political ramifications over at least a five year period with the consequent reduction of funding to the policies falling under that heading’s area. The actual breakdown of the percentage of funding overall for 2007-2013 reserved for each area can be seen in figure 4-1 from the Commission (2015).

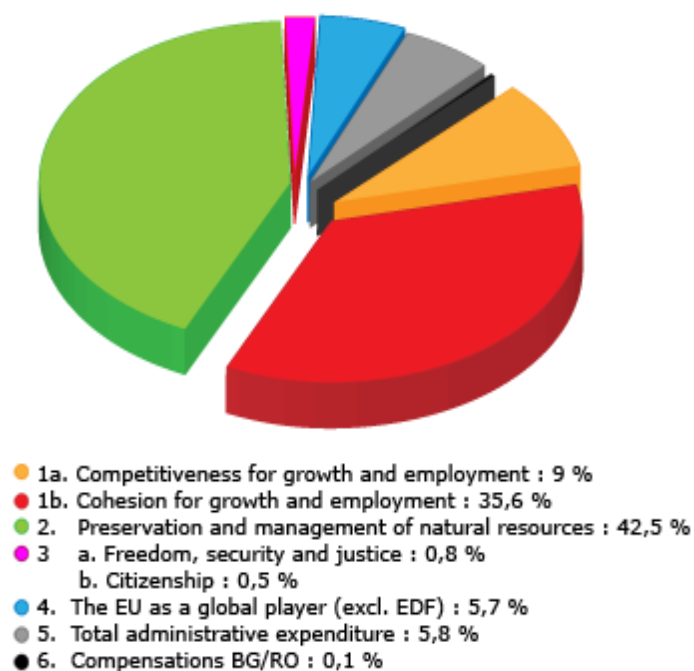


Figure 4-1 2007-2013 MFF headings and percentage of budget allocation to each heading. Source: European Commission 2015

The formal involvement of the Budget committee in the area of the MFF, although significant, is more limited than its role in the ‘Annual Budget’, as discussed below. Formally the MFF falls under

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

the ‘consent procedure’, meaning that the EP can only approve or reject the official position of the Council. Thus, while the Parliament, acting on the recommendation of the BUDG committee, could veto the Council’s position by not consenting to approval, this would result in the whole MFF not being adopted. It is important to note that the Council, after the reforms of Lisbon, must adopt its own opinion by unanimity (Crombez & Høyland 2014). There is, therefore, not the flexibility for the BUDG committee to introduce formal amendments as in other legislative areas falling under co-decision. The MFF is, however, only one part of the budgetary process that involves the BUDG committee, the other, of course, is the ‘Annual Budget’ where “real monies” are being allocated to different identifiable policy areas each year.

4.2.2 General Annual EU Budget

The ‘General Annual European Union Budget’ will define the amount of funding allocated by the MFF to different policy areas each year. This defines what money is actually available to be spent during the timescale of the budget. At the beginning of any annual budgetary procedure (Figure 4-2), and in a manner similar to other EU policy areas that have been examined, the Commission will make its budget proposal that will then be sent to the BUDG committee and the Council. Before the Commission makes its proposal the first step of the procedure involves it confirming budget estimates from all EU institutions (TFEU article 314).¹⁸⁰ Once the Commission has these estimates it will create its draft annual budget and send this jointly to the Council and BUDG committee of the EP. On receipt of the Commission’s draft budget, the Council will adopt its own position towards this draft proposal, agreed by a qualified majority. Once the Council has formulated its position this will then be forwarded to the BUDG committee with justifications for its position attached. The Council is formally required by treaty law to provide such an explanation of its position (TFEU article 314.3). The normal format, according to BUDG members, is that the Council *‘makes cuts across the board’*.¹⁸¹ When the Council’s position is received by the Parliament, it is the BUDG committee’s responsibility to set the EP’s formal position towards the proposed Council modified budget

¹⁸⁰ With the exception of the European Central Bank (ECB).

¹⁸¹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

(European Commission 2015). The EP and the Council are co-decision makers with regard to the annual budget (Buonanno & Nugent 2013) and, therefore, the BUDG committee can formally propose amendments to the Council's position at this first reading stage. It is the general consensus according to BUDG committee MEP's, that *'at the Budget committee we [BUDG members] re-establish the figures of the Commission, not all the lines, most of the lines, with some political choices a bit different [from the Commission] to sometimes increase the figures even of the Commission'*, while still, *'abiding by the ceilings of the financial framework to offset any increases by also agreeing on some cuts from the Council'*.¹⁸² So the general procedure followed is that, *'the Council cuts and we normally restore the draft budget of the Commission, but slightly changing its focus'*.¹⁸³ The reasons for deviating from the Commission's original proposal is to signify *'a difference to the draft budget going back to the Commission; this would allow the Commission to see Parliament's [BUDG committee] priorities'*.¹⁸⁴ Normally these budgetary lines coming from the committee are designed to generally *'increase funding'*¹⁸⁵ as this is the *'preference of the committee to see more money distributed to prioritized areas'*.¹⁸⁶ The nature of the budget negotiations is somewhat fluid due to the formal procedure being undertaken. Interestingly, the Commission can amend its budget proposal, if it wishes, up until the conciliation stage of the process (TFEU article 314.2). This could be an interesting caveat with the on-going process of trialogue taking place behind the scenes which could lead to the Commission altering its proposals to match the developing negotiations.

¹⁸² Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

¹⁸³ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

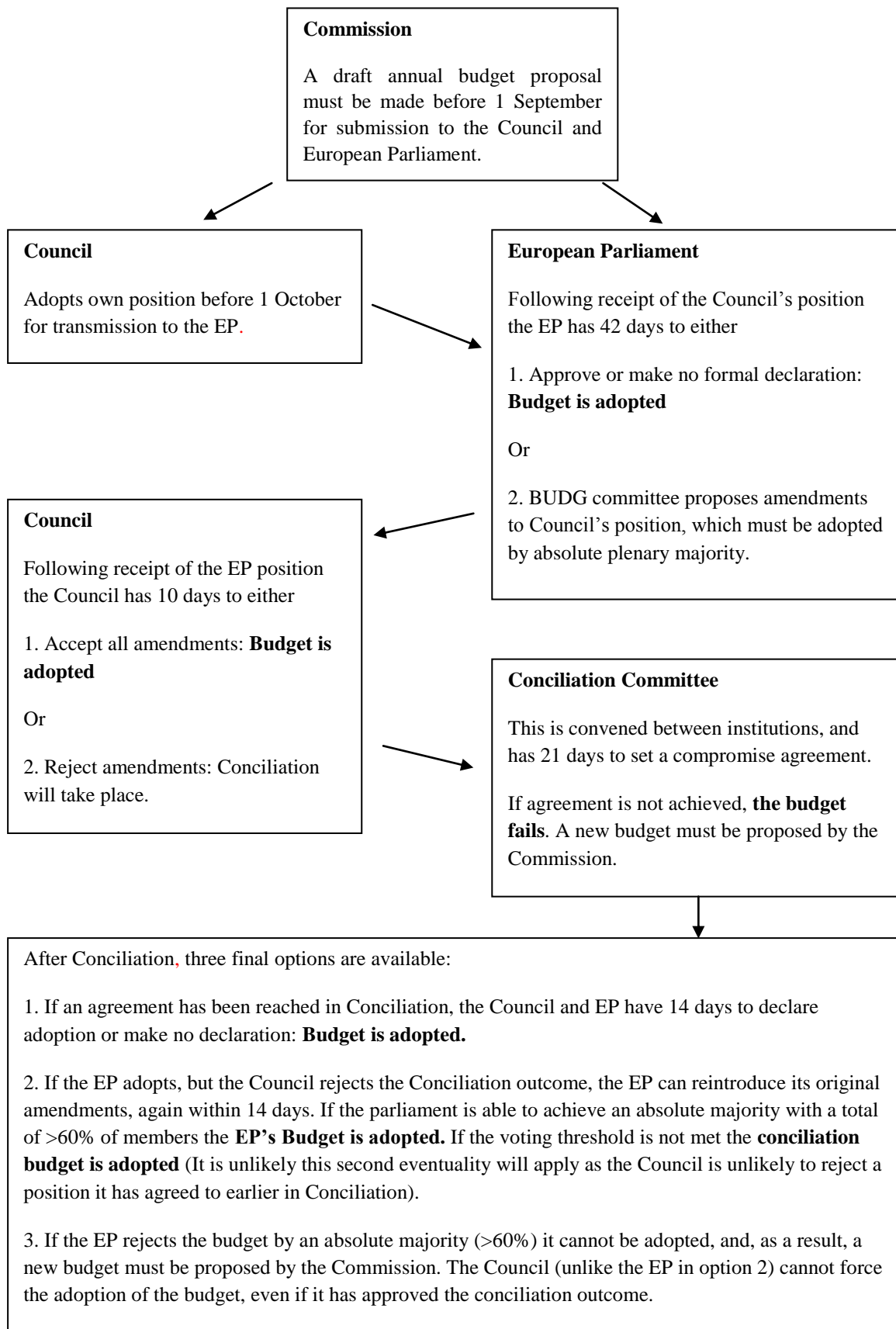


Figure 4-2 Annual Budgetary Procedure. Source: European Commission 2016, Duff 2009

Before the Lisbon treaty two complex reading stages were involved in the process and the Parliament was limited to only amending ‘non-compulsory’ spending areas (Buonanno & Nugent 2013). Since the 7th term there is a single reading and all areas of spending fall under the BUDG committee’s remit and are subject to amendment proposals. After the single reading, a 21 day conciliation period will be enacted. This is different from the OLP with its two legislative readings and its less draconian time constrains (see Chapter 1). The outcomes of the conciliation procedure are somewhat different also from that observed in the OLP. There are three outcomes that could take place as illustrated in figure 4-2. In effect, however, the EP, at the recommendation of the BUDG committee, continues to have a clear veto over the annual budgetary procedure. It is, therefore, impossible for the Council or Commission to force the EP to adopt a budget of which it deeply disapproves. This would indeed highlight the significance of the BUDG committee, and this policy area for the Parliament. Nevertheless, there has been speculation over the impact of these reformed budgetary mechanisms that question their consequences on the BUDG committee’s influence (Benedetto 2013, Crombez & Høyland 2014).

The BUDG committee can draw influence from its right to an *ex-post* (*end of process*) veto after conciliation negotiations have ended, and its amendment property rights over annual budgets. In addition there is, also, the BUDG committee’s formal engagement with negotiations over the MFF and its ability to recommend ‘consent’. Finally, there are the co-decision legislative reports that the committee deals with and involving the accompanying veto and amendment rights. Building on the existing account of comparative committees, a committee with *ex-post* veto rights over budgetary matters would be potentially a powerful actor, especially coupled with amendment proposal rights over draft budgets (Shaw 1979, Shepsle & Weingast 1987). The Budget committee of the EP would comprise an important actor under these guidelines. However, this is only a limited examination and the sources of the committee’s influence, as have been ascertained in the literature, are wider ranging most likely being as a result of what has been termed here as ‘*policy making expertise*’. According to Benedetto & Høyland (2007: 567) actors such as the BUDG committee are interested in bringing policy outcomes as close to their preferences as possible, and will therefore attempt to use formal

rules to ‘maximize their chance of obtaining favourable policy outcomes’. This can only be done if the committee has the resources to maximise its potential. There is, however, an ongoing debate within the literature as to how much of an impact the BUDG committee and Parliament had during the timescale of the present project (7th term). Benedetto (2011), for example, suggests that the ability of the BUDG committee and the Parliament to amend the budget has in fact weakened following the reforms of the post Lisbon annual budgetary procedures. The initial failure of the ‘2011 Annual Budget’ has been seen as a possible indicator of this weakening of influence of the EP in budgetary matters (Benedetto 2011, Benedetto & Milio 2012).

Benedetto’s (2013) assessment is that while the rules of the budget procedure appear to give the EP and BUDG committee more power in the 7th term, they also give the Council a bargaining advantage (alternatively, and this will be examined below, the BUDG committee may have been lacking in *‘policy making expertise’*, weakening its ability to bargain successfully, leaving the Council with an advantage). This assumption is based upon the premise that the Lisbon Treaty increased the veto powers of the Parliament in budgetary matters at the expense of the agenda setting powers it previously possessed (Benedetto 2013). This proposes that reform in favour of the Parliament is unlikely as more veto players will lead to greater conflict, and ultimately as a consequence, a veto would not be used to reject a budget. According to Benedetto (2013), a veto of the budget (by the EP) would not be a return to the status quo, but in fact a retrograde step, and as a result would not be supported as a better alternative, by the EP, to accepting the budget that always improves the status quo, even if only marginally.

While the ability to veto legislation according to Benedetto (2013) and others may be something of a redundant tool, its absence would significantly weaken the BUDG committee’s ability to resist having a position forced upon it. Interestingly, members of the BUDG committee have been reported as threatening to reject (vetoing) whole annual budgets if certain demands are not met, and thus effectively using the veto as a negotiating tool in other policy areas (Nielsen 2015). In a statement made by a number of MEPs officially representing all political groups, apart from the ALDE, they

indicated they would prevent the completion of the budgetary procedure unless there was an increase in transparency from the Commission, and in particular they required more information on the groups from which the Commission received advice (Nielsen 2015). This proposed amendment on transparency in the Commission was indeed adopted within the BUDG committee and EP's negotiating positions.¹⁸⁷ This would suggest that the EP is not short-sighted in its view of the budget procedure; possibly as a result of the institutional memory it has developed, but understands the long-term impact it may have on affecting change in other policy areas and the potential to further the BUDG committee's influence. This idea is supported by Benedetto (2013), in his study on the expansion of veto rights within the EP committee system as normal practice, in which he suggests that the EP will attempt with every extension of powers to further expand its influence beyond the intended remits. According to a leading member, the BUDG committee has expressed clear '*frustration*', with the Council and that '*sooner or later we [the BUDG] will just say no to the budget [veto it] and fall back to a position when we can only have 1/12 the money per month*'.¹⁸⁸ The BUDG committee has made it clear that is it willing to use a veto in the future if the demands of the Council become too unpalatable. In a way the veto rights which the committee does have could be perceived as a shield protecting the BUDG committee's influence from further Council pressure, while its amendment rights are used to actively exercise influence. Crombez & Høyland (2014) recently assessed the powers and influence of the EP in the areas of the budget and came to the conclusion that power derives from the ability, by the apparent use of '*policy making expertise*', to make amendments to the budget rather than from any formal *ex-post* vetoes.

4.3 Informational Perspective

The success of amendments has been closely associated with the informational resources available to an actor (Krehbiel 1991, 2004). The ability to create good legislation depends on the informational specialization, 'policy making' or 'professional expertise', available and retained on a committee, that

¹⁸⁷ The position was later dropped from the parliament's negotiating position as it was apparently not included by mistake in a later draft. The demand, however, has been renewed and will likely be included in future negotiation demands.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

facilitates it to be able to propose acceptable amendments. The expertises, which are required to make committee amendments impactful, are accumulated over time supposedly as a result of low levels of membership turnover that results in increased institutional memory (Krehbiel 1991). Significantly, due to the budgetary amendment rights of the BUDG committee, Crombez & Høyland (2014: 78) state that ‘the EP has become even more important in the budgetary process than the Council’. Thus the BUDG committee’s amendment rights are extremely important elements of this committee’s influence. Crombez & Høyland (2014) affirm that the budgetary procedure (in the 7th term) follows the OLP, as it is understood in previous chapters, to the extent that the EP and Council are equal legislative partners, although, with notable and important differences. If the BUDG committee does in fact draw influence from amendment rights, informational resources, ‘*policy making*’ and/or technical (‘*professional expertise*’) are potentially highly salient to the committee’s level of influence.

According to Kauppi & Widgren (2008) budgets were the very first area over which the EP, and consequently the BUDG committee, gained legislative influence that it could exercise formally with a clear basis in treaty law. The committee, therefore, as it was one of the first committees formed and imbued with legislative competencies, has a great deal of policy-making experience, and potentially significant institutional memory contained within. The significant institutional memory and the early attainment of formal legislative powers encouraged influence to become uniquely entrenched within the BUDG committee (Kauppi & Widgren 2008). As would be expected, and according to current convention, in a committee that has established its influential position seemingly as a result of ‘*policy making expertise*’ turnover and retention of members is a significant factor in determining the committee’s influence. Membership turnover, and how this would potentially impinge on both expertise and institutional memory, has been seen as a key variable affecting BUDG committee influence (Lindner 2006). The retention of members had previously been perceived as important in maintaining the committee as an influential actor; when members leave the BUDG committee they are perceived as taking their ‘*policy making expertise*’ with them, and thus removing a vital source of BUDG committee influence.

4.3.1 Policy Making Expertise

In order to test hypothesis *H1*¹⁸⁹ any investigation of a committee's '*policy making expertise*' as a potential source of influence must examine the committee's turnover. According to current convention (Mamadouh & Raunio 2003) this will have a significant impact. Turnover is measured as the number of MEPs who left a committee at the end of, or during, a parliamentary term. The higher the level of turnover the less institutional memory and '*policy making expertise*' retained within the committee under current understanding. If turnover is explicitly high in the BUDG committee, '*policy making expertise*' would not be presumed to be a source of the committee's significant influence, as the hypothesis states.

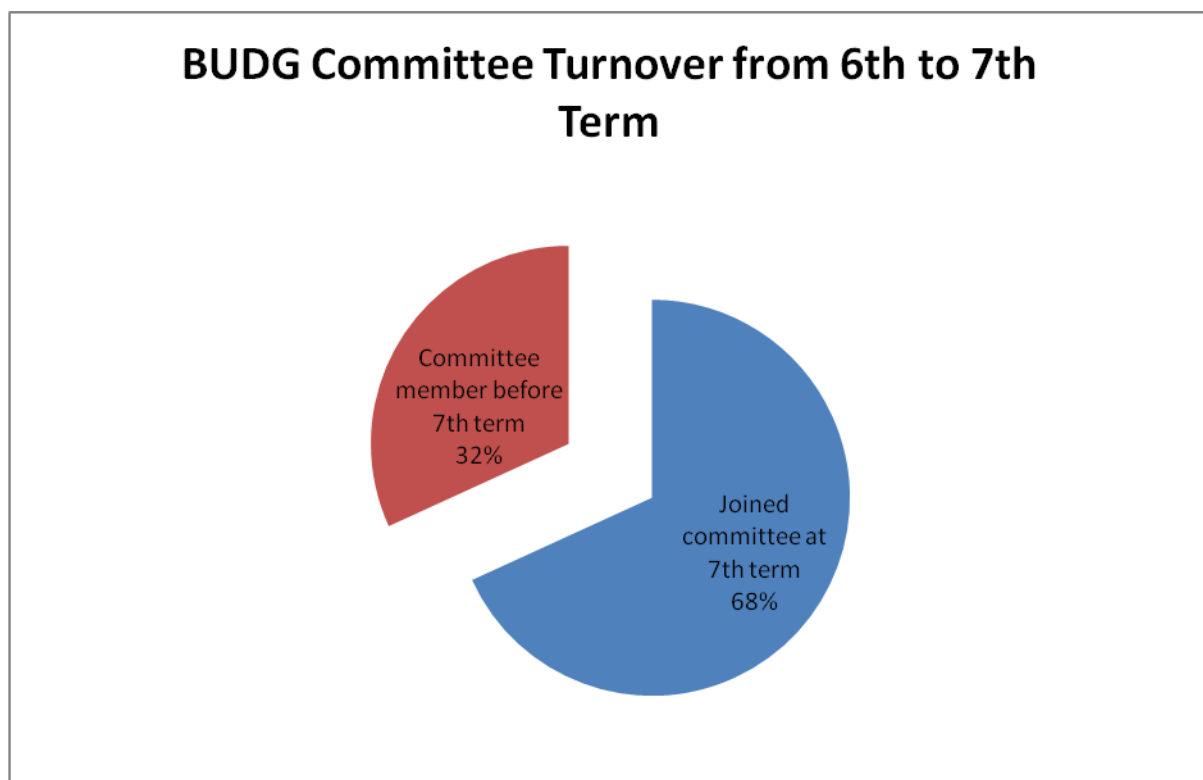


Figure 4-3 Breakdown of comparative BUDG committee members' experience 6th term into 7th. Source: BUDG committee website (2014)

¹⁸⁹ *H1. A committee with high membership turnover will have a weakened level of legislative influence.*

Experience of the EP Committee System Entering the 7th Term

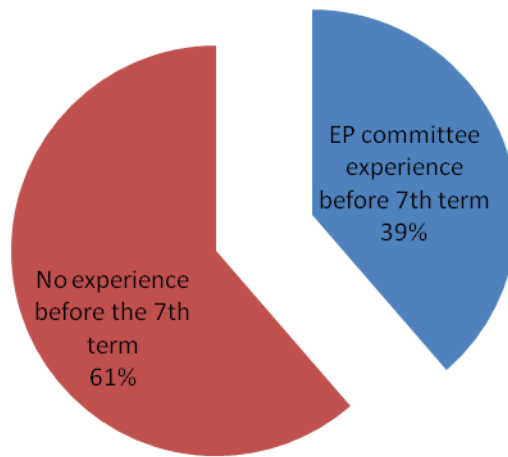


Figure 4-4 Rate of EP committee system experience entering BUDG committee 7th term. Source: Budget committee (2014)

As figure 4-3 illustrates, 32% of the BUDG committee's membership was retained at the beginning of the 7th term. This would appear to have been a reasonable, but not high retention rate in comparison with the other committees, and while not as good as the ENVI committee (41% retention rate 7th term) it is better than the INTA committee (26% retention rate 7th term). This is also reflected in the rates of overall EP committee membership experience in the 7th term (Figure 4-4). Importantly the retention rate within the BUDG committee was much higher during and entering into the 7th term than entering into the 8th term (figure 4-5).

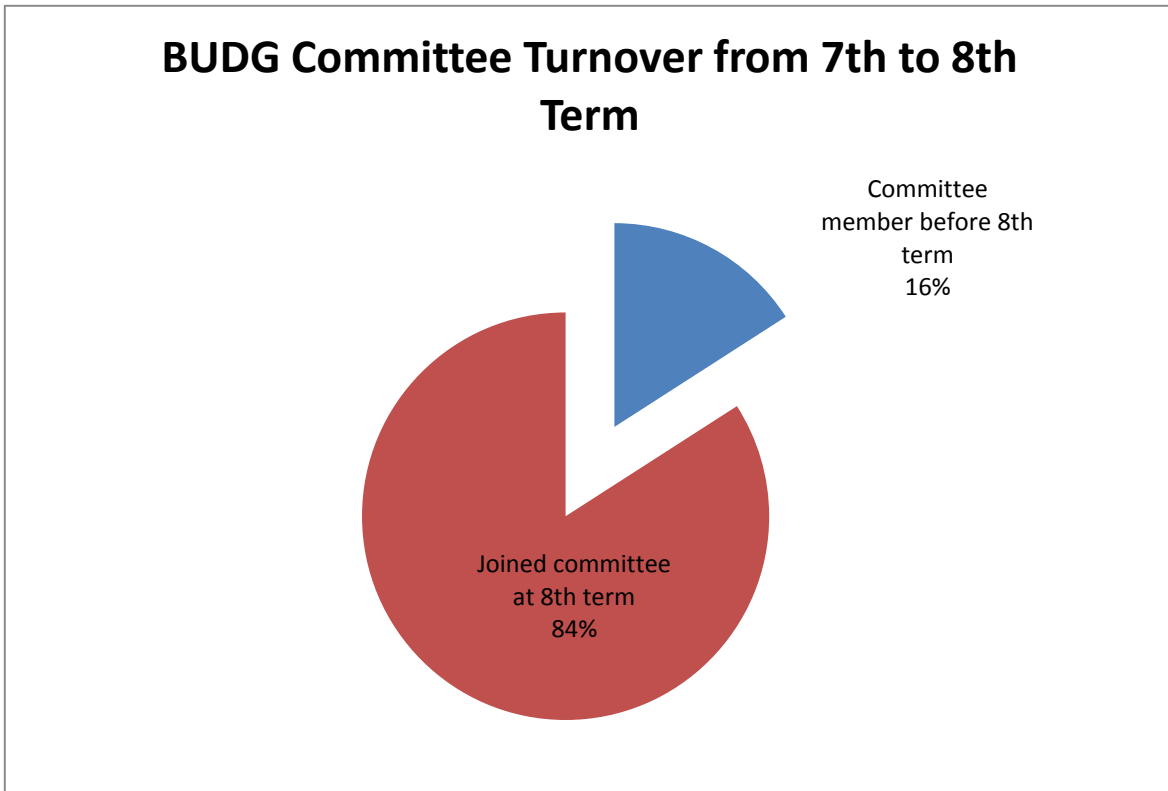


Figure 4-5 Breakdown of comparative BUDG committee members' experience 7th term into 8th. Source: BUDG committee website (2014)

This is an interesting result as the BUDG committee's comparative influence can be compared and contrasted between terms, where one maintained a reasonable retention against the other which saw a significantly lower retention rate.¹⁹⁰ The impact of this on the BUDG committee, according to perceived wisdom, would be that as the committee retained a comparatively high level of institutional memory and '*policy making expertise*' during the 7th term, this would positively promote the committee's overall influence (Mamadouh & Raunio 2003) and certainly to a greater degree than going into the 8th term. Consequently, during the 7th term the BUDG committee should have had a comparatively heightened level of influence with a highly experienced membership, who had developed a strong understanding of the limits of what was achievable by the committee. It is, also, highly likely that over time members were able to develop strong relationships with the BUDG committee's '*natural ally*' the Commission as well as expanding other institutional connections.

¹⁹⁰ Between the 7th term ending and the 8th beginning only 16% of the membership has remained in place on the BUDG committee. In total 84% of members left the committee at the end of the 7th term with only 7 members remaining on the committee.

Members of the BUDG Committee do have *‘a commonly used expression that the two institutions [EP and Commission] are co-operating in opposition to the Council’*.¹⁹¹ Knowledge of *‘how systems operate, along with the establishment of interpersonal relationships are’* generally perceived as *‘a direct positive’*, to committee operations.¹⁹² On the other hand if turnover is high, as it was during the 8th term, a lack of *‘policy making expertise’* and institutional memory should negatively impact on influence, and it is likely that evidence would show a weakening working relationship with the Commission. According to the empirical evidence collected, however, and contrary to all expectations (and the hypothesis *HI*), the opposite was true; turnover did not negatively affect BUDG committee influence, but helped strengthened it.

Interview Data

Possessing a level of *‘policy making expertise’* is important to members of the BUDG committee. *‘It does assist members [and assistants]’* in better policy making, often simply as a result of *‘knowing who to contact from experience’* when *‘dealing with complex issues and extra information is required’*¹⁹³ to make acceptable amendment proposals. A level of [policy making] experience was indicated within all interview data collected as beneficial to committee members and the committee’s influence overall. However, both in forming relationships with other key actors and in the formation of new policy solutions, turnover did not operate in the direction the informed expectation and hypothesis (*HI*) indicated. In fact, as was evident in the data collected, low membership turnover was not a fundamental prerequisite for the BUDG committee’s influential standing.

Evidence collected from senior BUDG committee members identified that while turnover *‘policy making expertise’* and institutional relationships were deeply linked, they did not operate in reality as current conventions concerning turnover would indicate. It was stressed that a *‘good relationship’*¹⁹⁴ between the BUDG committee and the Commission is important as significant *‘[policy making]’*

¹⁹¹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁹² Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁹³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

information’ is readily exchanged *‘between the two institutions’*¹⁹⁵ as both have similar perspectives and preferences on outcomes. *‘The Commission is our [BUDG committee] ally’*.¹⁹⁶ However *‘a lot depends on the quality of relations between the persons’* and BUDG committee *‘members must develop relations with the Commission’*¹⁹⁷ in order to exchange and develop *‘policy making expertise’*. It would have been expected that relationships would improve over time if members were retained on committee. This, however, was not confirmed in the data, and high turnover of members actually improved the committee’s standing and co-operation with the Commission in practical terms, contributing directly to an increased level of legislative influence in the long term.

During the 7th term, when turnover was comparatively low (figure 4-3), it would have been expected that this would have resulted in a highly developed and fruitful relationship between actors as a result of institutional learning and the development of *‘policy making expertise’*. However, the opposite was evidenced; *‘over the last five years [the 7th term] the working relations were not as good as they had been previously [during the 6th term]’*¹⁹⁸ at senior levels. Despite low turnover *‘not much contact exists between’*, rank and file, *‘[BUDG committee] members and the Commission’*¹⁹⁹ during the 7th term, adding to the underdeveloped working relationship at senior committee level.

This evidence clearly contradicts how previous assumptions would have assessed the situation; working relationships between the Commission and BUDG committee were not as developed, or *‘good’* at an important *‘informal level’* of exchange. *‘Unfortunately with the previous [7th term] Commission the informal relations were not very fruitful or very good’*²⁰⁰ which did not benefit the committee’s overall influence. A lack of *‘informal relationships’* did have an adverse impact on the BUDG committee’s influence with a loss of a key ally and the associated *‘exchange of information’*²⁰¹ that can be vital to influence outcomes.²⁰² This was surprising even to the former

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁰⁰ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²⁰¹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE,

²⁰² This was evident clearly in the failed ‘MFF 2014-2020’ negotiations.

BUDG committee leader *'It's odd because on a personal basis the relations were good; the DG for budget was a fellow countryman who was a good friend of mine'*. This became even more surprising when it is considered that *'the Commissioner in charge'*, [during the 7th term] *'was previously my predecessor [on] the budget committee, we knew him well and appreciated him, but it didn't work'*.²⁰³ Even with a former leadership member of the BUDG committee as Commissioner a significant working relationship that would have been mutually beneficial to both Institutions did not develop, and the impact of this was clearly evident in the example of the 'MFF 2014-2020' negotiations.

The direct policy example of the 'MFF 2014-2020',²⁰⁴ negotiations clearly demonstrates how the negative interpersonal relationships impinged on BUDG committee legislative influence. The 'MFF 2014-2020' negotiations, which took place during the 7th term, were one of the most significant budgetary policy issues that actively involved the BUDG committee and it would normally be expected that *'policy making expertise'* and developed relationships with the Commission would be vital for success. However, *'in particular during the big negotiations on the 'MFF [2014-2020]'* *we [the BUDG committee] were disappointed with issues coming from the previous Commission'*. This major disappointment came *'after having put forward reasonable and reasonably ambitious proposals'* and unexpectedly *'the Commission gave up and yielded without fighting, and they left us [BUDG] defending their position [against the Council]'*.²⁰⁵ The BUDG committee was disadvantaged, and influence over getting a preferred outcome was hindered by losing a bargaining partner who appeared to committee members to have the same, or even stronger, policy preferences to the committee. *'As we say you can't be more royalist than the king. We were left alone at the heat of the fight by the Commission and we resented this attitude'*²⁰⁶ which was displayed by the Commission. Thus, despite having great potential as a result of a developed institutional memory with low turnover, and an experienced negotiating team, the BUDG committee was unable to gain the

²⁰³ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²⁰⁴ This would set the all important budgetary ceilings for the EU 2014 - 2020.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²⁰⁶ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

ongoing support of the Commission, who should normally have been an important partner in determining a preferential outcome. Significantly, while the EP and BUDG committee publicly indicated some success in these ‘MFF 2014-2020’ negotiations (BUDG activity report 2014), sources suggest that the EP had to accept the Council’s harder line stipulating spending restrictions which worked out as real world cuts to budgets in contradiction to the BUDG committee and EP preferences (Jędrzejewska 2013). The BUDG committee chair was quoted in press releases as describing the ‘MFF 2014-2020’ deal, rather unenthusiastically, as ‘merely decent’ (Fox 2013).

More surprisingly, however, and again contrary to expectations, the impact of high turnover entering the 8th term did not negatively affect, but in fact significantly enhanced, the influence of the BUDG committee in notable ways. Upon entering the 8th term it was apparent *‘that these relations will improve and have already improved with this Commission [in the 8th term]’* as a consequence of *‘high BUDG committee [membership] turnover’*. The significant level of turnover in the 8th term should not be underestimated; *‘in this Parliament [8th term] of course almost 70% or 80% of the committee are new’*, it is *‘extraordinary as the entire bureau, the chairman, and the four vice chairs are new members of Parliament’*.²⁰⁷ Despite this significant volume of *‘new faces on committee’*²⁰⁸ a significant upturn in relations with the Commission was apparent from an early stage. Members of the BUDG committee found the improved relations, as a result of turnover, *‘surprising’*. According to one senior committee member there is a *‘strong degree of optimism’*, which even with high turnover within the BUDG committee at the 8th term an improvement in the relationship is clearly in evidence, compared with the situation during the 7th term. In part, also, a level of turnover in the Commission appears to have assisted the impression that relationships have dramatically improved 8th term:

‘With the new Commission I am very optimistic with the new Commissioner in charge of budgets, which is very good. In addition, the new DG for budgets was in charge of the financial services in

²⁰⁷ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²⁰⁸ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

the previous Commission, and was highly appreciated by everyone and the relations with her are simple and based on confidence'.²⁰⁹

Senior committee members are confident that the BUDG committee is not only going to maintain, but has actually increased, its legislative influence 8th term. The reason for this increase in influence is that *'turnover has refreshed the important relationship'*²¹⁰ between the BUDG committee and the Commission. The relationship was revitalised as a result of the *'refreshing effect'* that *'turnover can [and has had]'*. This was identified by members who stated that *'turnover is a good positive force'*²¹¹ on the BUDG committee.

The issues with which the BUDG committee are dealing are ever expanding, becoming more complex, and evidence attests that the BUDG committee requires an intake of *'fresh ideas to stay as a relevant policy actor'*. The influential status of the BUDG committee is established and maintained by *'ensuring a balance between the old hands and younger members'*²¹² coming into the committee. This, therefore, does not disregard the importance of *'policy making expertise'* to the BUDG committee, according to members, *'it's often up to our skills, sometimes diplomatic, to circumvent the obstacles [to get a successful outcome]'*,²¹³ however, it illustrates the fundamental balance the committee needs to maintain in order to be influential and indicates the previously unforeseen and vital nature of *'turnover [revitalizing] the committee'*. The BUDG committee requires a level of *'refreshment every few years'*. New member come into the BUDG committee with a *'fresh look at our problems'*, often as a result of having *'a different parliamentary experience'*,²¹⁴ enabling the committee to come up with original and feasible policy solutions. The role of turnover is recognised by committee members as a source of BUDG committee influence, to the extent that some senior committee members have removed themselves from committee leadership roles *'for instance I could have remained [in my committee position], but I refused as I thought that all the ideas I could have*

²⁰⁹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²¹⁰ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²¹¹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²¹² Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²¹³ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²¹⁴ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

on these issues I had implemented. It's up to younger and different members with new ideas'.²¹⁵

Senior members understand the potentially negative affect they could have for the BUDG committee's influence if they became *'roadblocks'* to new original policy making ideas; *'It's to probably younger and different members to continue the processes'*.²¹⁶ Very simply put *'Yes, turnover is a positive for the [BUDG] committee's'* influence as *'it's good to have fresh ideas'* and it is these ideas which establish the committee in an influential position; *'turnover is good'*.

It is evident that the refreshing of membership, which brings in new ideas and concepts, is vitally important to the committee's continuing influence. The committee's lack of success during the 'MFF 2014-2020' negotiations, in spite of being in a situation of possessing a highly experienced membership base as a result of a lower rate of turnover into this term, would support this contention. Thus, it is apparent from the empirical data collected here that *'policy making expertise'* is not as significant a source of BUDG committee influence as would have been expected. Nevertheless, despite the important positive role of turnover, originally identified within this thesis, *'policy making expertise'* does still have some important role to play in determining how the committee establishes its influence.

As a direct result of possessing a developed level of *'policy making expertise'* some members of the BUDG committee do in fact *'know [the Council positions] because sometimes we get hold of the minutes of the Council meetings'*, or often learn *'who the 'hold out' member states are'*²¹⁷ which assists the committee in knowing what proposal would be more acceptable. This information directly related to policy making is not accessible by everyone, as it will often depend upon developed informal contacts which members possess as a result of *'policy making expertise'*. *'Officially no, we do not formally see Council minutes , a lot of members of Parliament have ways inside the Council and have ways for getting inside policy information'*.²¹⁸ The impact of the BUDG committee being supplied negotiating information on the Council is significant, and knowledge on Council positions is

²¹⁵ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²¹⁶ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²¹⁷ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²¹⁸ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

vital to the BUDG committee's success on impactful legislation such as the 'Annual Budget'. The importance of this was indeed highlighted in examples of the '2014 Annual Budgetary' negotiations:

'We know there are two different groups of member states [on a budget], and although they appear to be one group we know exactly where the breaking line is, and it's not surprising you will find the net payers and the net receivers²¹⁹ in different positions'.²²⁰

Having an informed knowledge of the Council's position, as a result of a level of '*policy making expertise*', BUDG committee members were able to understand what the main 'sticking points' were in the Council and were able to react accordingly, or simply put, used their '*policy making expertise*' to the committee's advantage. Without these minutes, the BUDG committee would have been lacking the policy information that ultimately facilitated the negotiating process to the benefit of the BUDG committee. While, as noted above, the committee does not always get what it wants, the committee was able to make some limited gains in the '2014 Annual Budget', according to interview data, that it may have not achieved without a level of '*policy making expertise*'.

Getting information on the Council's negotiating positions, as on the '2014 Annual Budget', is not a formal process, obtaining minutes '*is strictly informal and not official*'. This point emphasises the importance of contacts and relationships as '*sometimes it is also the question of how good you can get along with your national representation*' when obtaining Council minutes and other information vital to good policy making. An additional caveat is that the exchange of information can be improved '*If they are a member of your own party, that helps a lot, but also if you have informal contacts with all the permanent representatives, it can be very good*'.²²¹ Consequently, there are a number of sources, often of a partisan nature, which the BUDG committee can and do draw upon to further the committee's policy making information and, in turn, promote influence. '*It's good if you can approach guys [within the Council] and say "well is that what I presume", and they will say "yes". This is not official government information but you get an idea of what is going on in the*

²¹⁹ Net payers are those member states who pay more into the EU than they receive back. Net receivers are the member states that receive more back than they pay into the EU budget.

²²⁰ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²²¹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

Council'.²²² Partisan contacts as a source of the BUDG committee influence are evidently important; it is noted by an assistant to a member of the committee that '*there are personal ties with ministries or even with the cabinets of ministers so the contact is there*' and that these '*personal contacts*'²²³ are significantly linked to the committees being able to influence outcomes. These contacts only develop as a result of members developing a level of '*policy making expertise*', '*we learn who to contact and who to go to for policy information*'.²²⁴ It is important to note this way of acquiring information is potentially not exclusive to the BUDG committee. It is possible all committees may use similar methods to acquire policy information if they have developed contacts similar to those observed here in the BUDG committee.

4.3.2 Professional Expertise

Members with '*professional expertise*' will have specialist technical knowledge and informational contacts possibly not available to members without '*professional expertise*'. Assessing the relative level of '*professional expertise*' within a committee is not difficult when MEPs publish their background data with the EP or on a personal website. If a committee appears to contain a high number of members with '*professional experience*' that would suggest it is a useful source of committee influence as stated in the hypothesis (H2).²²⁵

²²² Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²²³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

²²⁴ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

²²⁵ H2: A committee with low levels of professional expertise will have low levels of influence.

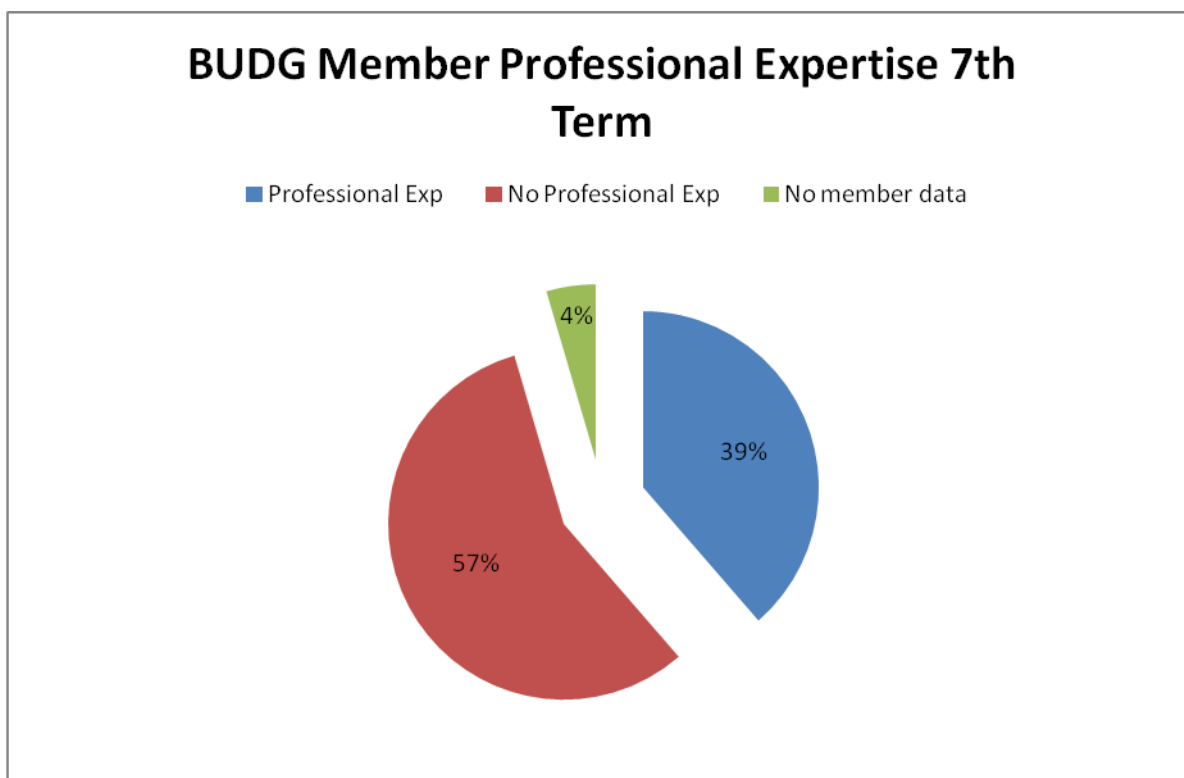


Figure 4-6 Breakdown of professional expertise on the Committee on Budgets. Source: Collective *curriculum vitas* of committee members

Figure 4-6 demonstrates the full breakdown of ‘*professional expertise*’ on the BUDG committee (7th term) between those who have a clear professional background in economics, finance, accountancy or any other area directly related to the BUDG committees remit, and those who would appear clearly to have none. 25 members (57%) of the BUDG committee in the 7th term had no direct training or professional experience of finance or budgetary matters. 17 members (39%) of the committee did have a professional background in economics and finance.²²⁶ Marginally those without professional experience did outweigh those with experience. This data does, however, indicate that on the whole economic professionals are drawn to the committee as no other professional groups apart from career politicians were notably represented on the committee during the 7th term.

²²⁶ Of the 2 outstanding members, one had no record of any professional training or experience that was readily obtainable, while the other was a professional translator for business, and consequently their respective knowledge of technical budgetary policy was unclear.

Out of the 57% deemed to have no directly related professional experience, a large number have extensive domestic or European political backgrounds. Out of the 25 members listed with no economics background, 14 were highly experienced career politicians often with a previous specialisation in financial or budgetary policy areas. Some of these actors are senior EP and BUDG committee members who over the years have accumulated extensive specialist and technical knowledge. Many members did bring specialist/technical expertise understanding as a result of domestic governance experience; ***'I was a former budgetary minister and my successor on the committee is the finance minister, also, from the same government I was from at home'***.²²⁷ Members will, of course, draw upon *'policy making expertise'* from previous political experience, but it also apparent that some will carry a level of technical expertise from this professional political experience.

Overall the data collected does indicate *'professional expertise'* as a source of BUDG committee influence but potentially not an overriding one. It was deemed that having a ***'level of technical understanding is good'***²²⁸ as this will help a committee member to efficiently deal with complex policy issues. The Commission have acknowledged that having BUDG committee members ***'who know what they are doing, technically'*** is ***'helpful to everyone'***.²²⁹ As a result of previous professional experience, members did know ***'what mechanism we could introduce and what would be technically workable [acceptable], to the Commission'***²³⁰ and other actors. Interestingly, the common complaint, which was replicated in most interview data, was the frustrations over the Council's, possibly deliberate (***'you call it playing politics, I call it stubbornness'***²³¹), misunderstanding of technical elements or ***'the [technical] solutions to problems'*** of budgetary policy. This was evident in a number of proposals, surrounding the 'Financial Regulation'.

Members of the BUDG committee, as a result of former professional experience, were able ***'during the middle of the 7th term'*** to propose new ***'technical financial instruments'***²³² within the 'financial

²²⁷ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²²⁸ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

²²⁹ Interview with Senior Commission DG official. 5/11/14 Brussels BE

²³⁰ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²³¹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²³² Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

regulations' of the EU. To very briefly outline the instruments, the committee proposed a so called '*revolving fund*²³³' payment system, which the Council was very positive towards as they are seen as '*positive towards any new financial mechanism*', but at the same time the Council '*likes to keep control of all the money they can*'. The outcome was that the Council agreed with the BUDG committee's position that technically a mechanism was required, but looked to introduce changes to the '*revolving fund*' in a way which disregarded the technical advice of the committee '*so the revolving fund would only revolve for a single year, before going back into the budgets of the member states, who grab it*',²³⁴ rather than having the monies being recycled within the EU agencies. It would, however, take some '*diplomatic skill*', essentially a level of '*policy making expertise*' combined with the '*professional expertise*' which BUDG members first displayed, to propose the revision to the '*financial regulation*' to achieve some positive outcome.²³⁵ As stated by a member of the committee:

*'I had to phone my permanent representative explaining to him what is going on and ask him please go back to the ministry of finance and explain to them if they insist on that point the new financial instruments [as a whole, including the 'revolving funds' point] will never fly and so he did. Next negotiation round the obstacle was gone.'*²³⁶

From the evidence collected it would appear that '*the committee is attempting to propose innovative policy proposals*²³⁷', on its own initiative, which are technically feasible. While this would appear to confirm the importance of new ideas to the committee's influence, as described above, the committee continues to face political resistance from the Council which must be overcome with the application of both policy making and professional [expert] resources.

²³³ '*The revolving fund works like this; while it is not an EU example, the example from my own country. Universities charge fees. A student that cannot afford fees would get money from a state bank and after he had finished his studies he would pay back this money and it was given in a revolving fund so when the money is repaid it is then passed to another student*'. Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²³⁴ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²³⁵ It was expressed that members are not fully happy with the final outcome.

²³⁶ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²³⁷ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

'It shows you politics from the member states is to a certain extent purely ignorant to solving the [technical] problem, they are more in favour of defending the [political] principle than solving a [technical] problem, or inventing a really innovative budgetary instrument here'.²³⁸

So to be influential committee members do need a level of both technical expertise, which was shown in part to come from those members who did have previous professional backgrounds, to propose technically acceptable mechanisms, such as the 'revolving funds' payment system, and also a level of political understanding, such as knowing where the Council is on an issue, as a result of *'policy making expertise'*. While this is not an unexpected revelation it does potentially explain why *'professional expertise'* despite bringing very important benefits is not at higher levels on the committee as it is not a fundamental source of committee influence.

The indication by committee members and assistants, within the empirical data, who themselves had limited or no *'professional expertise'* was that not possessing such a background did not exclude them from being involved in policy making and assisting the committee overall. While the senior members interviewed did display clear levels of *'professional expertise'* a number of potential expert sources, which BUDG committee member could utilise, were highlighted as supplementing any lack of membership expertise. The *'secretariat is very important for all the MEPs, in the Budget committee, because of course they are involved with it all and know how it works with the whole picture and have the technical knowledge'²³⁹* which members may lack. This view was confirmed by senior members of the budgetary secretariat *'because Parliament members, especially when they arrive, they do not have the expertise we [the budgetary secretariat] have here. We are the technical advisors, we prepare drafts for members and everything a member could need'²⁴⁰* with regard to technical information on policy. Members of the BUDG committee *'are in contact'²⁴¹* with their secretariat in order to supplement any technical expertise they are lacking as a result of not possessing professional backgrounds. Members without a professional background seemingly had *'a wide range*

²³⁸ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²³⁹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁴⁰ Interview with Senior Budgetary Secretariat. 14/5/14 Brussels BE

²⁴¹ Interview with Senior Budgetary Secretariat. 14/5/14 Brussels BE

*of internal and external contacts to achieve [technical] information*²⁴², which lessens the impact of lacking ‘*professional expertise*’ on the committee. ‘*Professional expertise*’ does supplement the committees overall influence, but is not a fundamental source. The reason for this is that the BUDG committee may be becoming more of a political rather than a technical committee, a role which the Committee on Budgetary control (CONT) may be adopting.

Many members of the budget committee operate as both BUDG and CONT members. Each has a somewhat different attitude towards spending as *‘the members, like me who are on both committees, do have to restrain the spending attitudes of BUDG members, as we on the CONT committee have to monitor [the] spending and costs’*. As one former CONT committee and sitting BUDG committee member put it *‘the budget controllers [CONT members] are always the ones who ruin the party’*.²⁴³ While the empirical data is not extensive, on this point, the indication from the limited interview data that does exist is that the CONT committee is becoming more of a *‘legislative active’* committee, trying to take over some *‘of the BUDG committee’s responsibilities’*.²⁴⁴ This may reflect a maturing of the Parliament overall, as maturation in many comparable ‘older’ committee systems results in the more ‘important’ committees, in some cases, being perceived as political committee while the others become technical committees (Della Sala 1993).

4.4 Committee Unity Perspective

4.4.1 Political Dynamic of the BUDG Committee

The BUDG committee consists of 44 members (7th term) with the same number of substitute members, making it smaller than the ENVI committee that has 71 members (7th term) but larger than the INTA committee that has 31 members (7th term). The breakdown of the party groups within the committee is shown in figure 4-7 which highlights the EPP and S&D as the largest groupings. This dominance is not surprising as the committee reflects the partisan breakdown in microcosm of the

²⁴² Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁴³ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁴⁴ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

comparative party numbers of the Parliament. The dominance of the centre left and right can be seen in the interchange between S&D (PSE (SOC)) and EPP committee chairs.

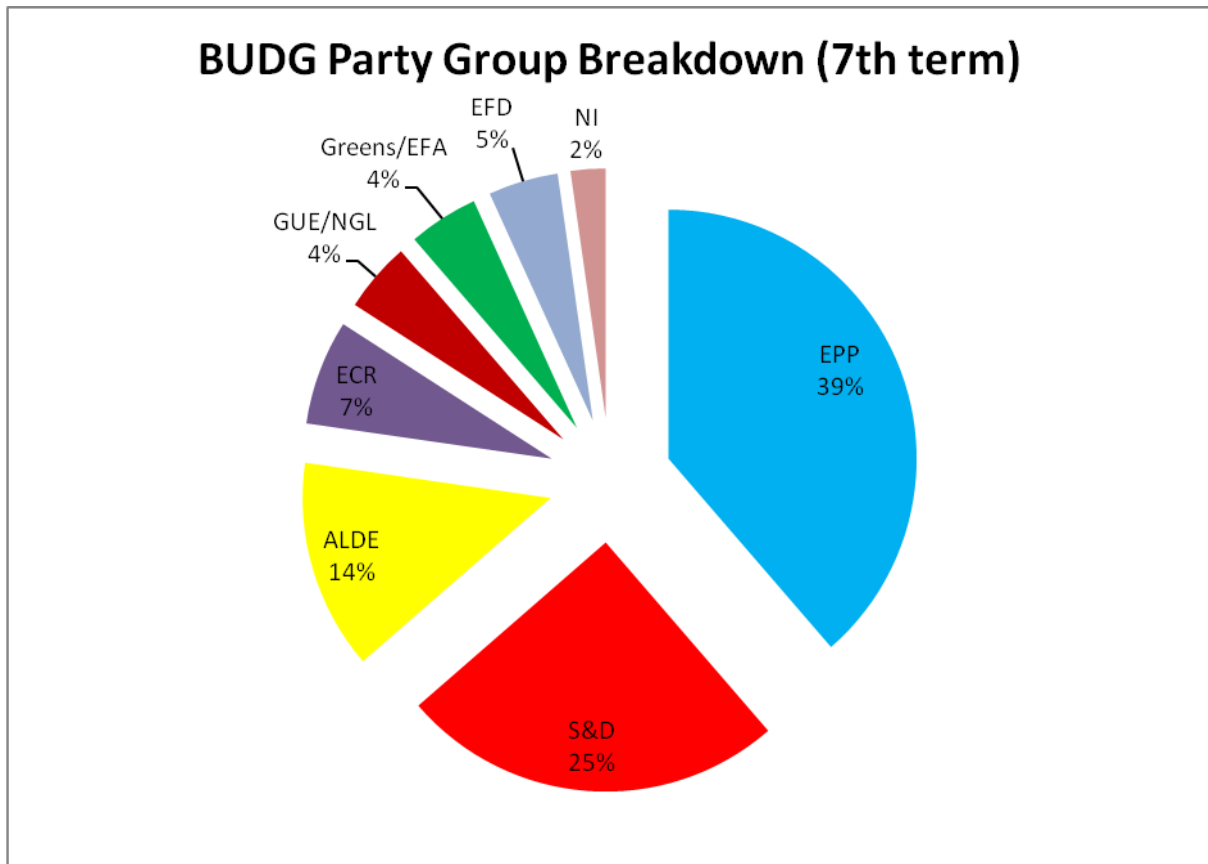


Figure 4-7 Party groupings of the BUDG committee 7th term. Source: European Parliament Website, BUDG committee Homepage 2014

As shown in table 4-2, members of the centralist socialist group held the chairmanship of the Budget committee until 2004, and more recently the EPP have held the chair. The vice chair distribution, for the period of this study of the 7th term, is also somewhat unremarkable to a large extent with two S&D vice chairs, one EPP vice chair (the EPP already controlled the chair) and one ALDE vice chair. This generally reflects the 81% of the committee members that these three groups collectively represent.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Interestingly, although outside the remit of this study, the new BUDG chair is both new to the European parliament and is a member of the ALDE grouping, thus breaking the two main parties' hold over the chair hold over the chair.

Table 4-2 Chairs of the Committee on Budgets

<u>Date Held Chair</u>	<u>Chair Holder</u>	<u>Party Grouping</u>
July 79 – July 84	Erwin Lange	SOC
July 84 – July 89	Jean-Pierre Cot	SOC
July 89 – July 94	Thomas Von Der Vring	SOC
July 94 – July 99	Detlev Samland	SOC
July 99 – July 04	Terry Wynn	SOC
July 04 – Jan 07	Janusz Lewandowski	EPP
Jan 07 – Jan 12	Reimer Boge	EPP
Jan 12 – July 14	Alain Lamassoure	EPP
July 14 -	Jean Arthuis	ALDE

Source: Corbett *et al* 2007, European Parliament Website Budget Committee Homepage 2014

Within the current literature partisan conflict has been identified as playing a significant role in determining committee influence. Various studies indicate that conflict between the groups on the BUDG committee is extremely low and this has greatly supported the efforts of the BUDG committee to be influential in determining outcomes (Corbett *et al* 2007, Settembri & Neuhold 2009, Yoshinaka *et al* 2010). As identified in the theoretical framework, committee unity is extremely important, as a disunited front presented to other institutions can undermine committee influence. With particular emphasis on the present case study, the BUDG committee must have support from the plenary to have its position adopted, and consequently unity between party groups is vital for successful outcomes. The negative influence of any possible partisan conflict in the BUDG committee according to Settembri & Neuhold (2009) has not been particularly pronounced, and generally the committee largely operates in a consensual manner with political conflict being relatively low. This derives from a lack of a perceived left vs. right divide on the issues within which the budget committee functions (Settembri & Neuhold 2009). Whitaker (2005) comments that in order to achieve budgetary policy goals general consensus must be built between the party groupings. Even those more '*Euro sceptic groups*' within the committee appear to '*acknowledge the importance of unity*' as a source of influence, although it is generally with these groups that conflict can arise.²⁴⁶

According to Whitaker (2005) the lack of partisan conflict is as a result of the significant direct influence that the committee has on budgets. The importance of the BUDG committee ensures that the

²⁴⁶ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

different national groups will attempt to represent the largest possible range of views on this committee in order to build consensus. This, according to Whitaker (2005) and supported by Judge & Earnshaw (2003), is to prevent undermining the national parties electoral position in their home states, which could be negatively impacted by partisan fighting and a disunited committee. According to Crombez & Høyland (2014) the main political party groupings are in close alignment and this can be clearly observed in roll call evidence of consistent voting patterns. Any divide that does take place on the budget is over the recognised ideological split between preferences for a bigger or smaller EU, such as over more funding for the integration projects (Crombez & Høyland 2014). Therefore, the generally acknowledged political unity between the groups on the BUDG committee would appear to be a significant source of influence.²⁴⁷ A committee presenting a united front to other actors will be stronger as a result, and much more so than if political infighting is persistent (Hix *et al* 2003).²⁴⁸ The empirical evidence collected would appear to support this perspective which helped to develop hypothesis 3.²⁴⁹ While less of a revelation than observations uncovered in the area of information expertise, particularly over turnover, it has been important to provide qualitative evidence to corroborate and further our current understanding of committee unity that to date has been based largely on quantitative roll call data (Crombez & Høyland 2014). Relying entirely on quantitative data may not reveal some of the interesting dynamics within the committee, and the qualitative data collected as part the present study introduces some important added perspectives to the current body of literature.

4.4.2 Committee Unity

The EPP and the S&D have routinely, over the different terms, made up the largest proportion of the committee.²⁵⁰ According to data collected, however, the committee in the 8th term is very much dominated in its key positions by the centre right (this may reflect the gains made by the centre right

²⁴⁷ This compares positively with what has been observed to happen in the other committees investigated, most notably highlighted by the dramatic infighting of the ENVI (and to some extent the INTA) committee discussed in Chapter 3.

²⁴⁸ In the ENVI committee political infighting across the committee negatively marked the committee's legislative influence (see Chapter 3).

²⁴⁹ 'H3. *The lower the degree of unity on committee, the lower the level of influence*'

²⁵⁰ The dominance of the EEP and S&D over control of the committee chair has, however, been broken for the first time within the 8th term (2014-2019), and the committee is now chaired by Jean Arthuis from the ALDE.

overall at the 2014 elections and the priority given to the BUDG committee). To quote a BUDG committee member in a leadership position, *'we have a liberal chair, and a Christian democrat first vice chair, a socialist [as vice chair], and two other Christian democrats [vice chairs]'*.²⁵¹ The result of this is that members not coming from the Christian democrat tradition perceive the committee's leadership as being *'dominated by Christian democrats, they can support each other'*²⁵² and control the legislative agenda if they so wish. While this may be the situation in the 8th term (2014-2019) the present study has focused upon the 7th term where key committee positions were more evenly spread between the main groupings. In fact, the 7th term, from the evidence gathered, has been marked as one of high consensus between the party groups, despite the wide political spread. Members attempt to work together to construct a united front against the Council.

While members from the two main EP groups may dominate the committee, it has, nevertheless, been described as operating in a consensual manner, and along largely non-partisan lines (CEPS Report 2012). A clear example of this was over the annual budget, potentially the most important area of involvement for the committee. It is common practice on the committee for the groups to unite over files such as the annual budgets. According to a highly senior MEP *'I have chaired the budget committee for 5 years, the previous legislator [7th term], and if I remember correctly, 4 times out of 5 [on the annual budget] I got a majority made up of the two big groups, the EPP and the S&D, the ALDE and the Greens'*.²⁵³ This evidence underpins the data collected in other studies (Yoshinaka *et al* 2010, Crombez & Høyland 2014) appearing to support the importance, and consistency of, committee unity. The only point where a grand voting bloc was not formed *'was in the run up to the elections, so the Greens preferred not to join the majority, but it remained a huge majority'* on the 2014 budget.²⁵⁴ Despite this single example when the Greens did not support the united front on the '2014 Annual Budget', the majority support was still 81% of the BUDG committee, rather than what would have been (86%) with the Greens. The committee and the political groups within it have

²⁵¹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁵² Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁵³ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²⁵⁴ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

identified the importance that unity gives the committee *'because it is an inter-institutional fight, we fight alongside the other party groups against the Council'*.²⁵⁵ The leadership of the committee and the party groupings have clearly identified unity as a source of the committee's influence, or at the very least how imperative it is to avoid a conflict which would undermine the committee's overall standing. While *'it is not always easy to reach a cohesive position'* members will actively look to create *'cohesions between the groups'*²⁵⁶ as it is important when gaining a final outcome. The dramatic negative effect which conflict can have has not always been addressed in some committees, either because it has not been identified as a factor, or partisan/political considerations have simply outweighed common cause, or unity on the scale operating within the BUDG committee is simply not possible.

The BUDG committee does, according to empirical evidence collected, deliberately operate in a way to facilitate the greatest level of unity possible. The main reason for this is the formal majority which the committee must achieve in the plenary as a result of the formal budgetary procedures in place, a condition other committees do not have to meet as stringently. It is noteworthy that the committee has largely been successful in achieving its outcomes in plenary over the years (Westlake 1994). Internal rules, both informal and formal, that the committee has adopted, do promote this unity, according to the original evidence collected in this thesis. An example of this can be observed in the way legislative reports are allocated. One of the most important roles of the BUDG committee is to represent the EP in the budget negotiations that take place every year. This process would begin by selecting two rapporteurs to deal with the different aspects of the budget negotiations, firstly the Commission's budget, and secondly the budgets of the other EU institutions (Corbett *et al* 2007). Both rapporteur positions are highly desirable and the negotiations that take place between the party groups to determine allocation are extensive. Selections for these positions have largely, but not exclusively, gone to members of the EPP and the centre left S&D grouping (Corbett *et al* 2007). It has also become informal practice *'in the last five years that the BUDG committee has developed a*

²⁵⁵ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²⁵⁶ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

*system of standing rapporteurs so that they were distributed among the political groups*²⁵⁷ to avoid conflict. This extends not just to the annual budgets and its rotation of rapporteurs, but also to co-decision reports for which the committee has responsibility. *‘So according to political strength everyone got some responsibility, and also it was very clear in the beginning which political group got which rapporteur on the budget’*.²⁵⁸ Any conflict over the allocation of reports has, therefore, taken place at an earlier point, negating the damage which would be done if conflict was visible or known about by other institutional actors at later negotiation stages. With this established system of standing rapporteurs within the BUDG committee, it is already apparent, before allocation, which groupings will get which reports based on the area.

Some supporting evidence does, however, suggest that there are some tensions within the committee that, if systemic, may lessen the impact of unity. *‘Sometimes the interests are not the same between political groups and then they have a different opinion’* which can result in some *‘delicate situations’*.²⁵⁹ As we have seen in the other case studies selected there is a great deal of competitiveness between the party groups, and this has led to an undermining of the standing of these committees, with a consequent reduction in influence. While the Budget committee is generally perceived as consensual in its operations, tensions still occur as a great deal of prestige is attached to some key files. All of the members of the committee *‘want to have the honour of having the responsibility on a certain subject’*²⁶⁰ such as on the annual budget. The fallout from the last, and the expectations over the next, ‘MFF (2014-2020)’ has created tension, as *‘it is obvious in the coming 5 years that we [the BUDG committee] will have a midterm review of the multi annual framework’*. The direct outcome of this as stated by a senior BUDG committee member is that:

‘The Christian Democrats wanted to have responsibility for it [The ‘MFF 2014-2020’ negotiations] and the socialists said we will not accept that you have it alone, we will share responsibility over it and you get a socialist co-rapporteur. The Christian Democrats were against that for a very long

²⁵⁷ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁵⁸ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁵⁹ Interview with Senior Budgetary Secretariat. 14/5/14 Brussels BE

²⁶⁰ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

time because they wanted to have the responsibility alone. What is clear is that there is no better possibility [opportunity] to become visible [to have a high profile] in the Budget committee than on that very issue [of the MFF] because you are in direct confrontation with the presidency and the Council. You are something like the champion of the Parliament. It is about the prestige. It is not that we don't trust the Christian democrats or they absolutely distrust us, there is some distrust, but it is more, I want the prestige for my political group'.²⁶¹

So there are clear partisan tensions, over some important legislative examples, which can affect the dynamics of the BUDG committee. Even the budgetary secretariat has found themselves in difficult situations, as *'we have to be loyal to the coordinators positions'*, putting them in a hard position, *'where opinions do differ'*.²⁶² In some cases the secretariat have *'been asked'* by *'a member of a small political group, or even a big group, to write something not pleasant for everyone, [but] we are obliged to do it'*. The result appears to be, from the secretariat point of view *'that sometimes [we have] taken the blame even if you don't agree with this'*²⁶³, rather than it being placed on the group that asked for the secretariat to write the original report. Evidence would, however, clearly indicate that conflict is an exception rather than a rule. Despite these isolated examples of friction over who controlled the 'MFF 2014-2020' policy negotiations, a position was reached between the groups which did not undermine the committee's influence, but was ultimately seen as enhancing the committee's position.

The formal structures that the committee uses, as identified above, prevent any internal tension from negatively affecting the committee's position towards other institutions in stark contrast to the interactions observed with the other case studies.²⁶⁴ Nevertheless the parties in the BUDG committee do work to protect their interests as *'you have the advisors within the committees, the advisor of each political group and they are very useful as they will tell you "this is an EPP line; this is not an*

²⁶¹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁶² Interview with Senior Budgetary Secretariat. 14/5/14 Brussels BE

²⁶³ Interview with Senior Budgetary Secretariat. 14/5/14 Brussels BE

²⁶⁴ See Chapter 3 on ENVI committee.

EPP line” *I don’t think it will be different for S&D*’.²⁶⁵ However, despite party lines being advised, consensus is reached and unity has generally prevailed in the BUDG committee’s interactions with other institutions, to an extent that even *‘surprises’*²⁶⁶ some members. Members have identified the benefits of *‘working together’* as the *‘enemy is not the other political groups but the Council’*.²⁶⁷ Thus all the evidence gathered supports the current assessment of committee unity as an extremely important source of the BUDG committee’s continuing influence, confirming hypothesis 3, with regard to this committee.²⁶⁸

4.5 Public Policy Perspective

It has been hypothesised (*H4*²⁶⁹) that committees dealing with distributive policy outputs will have less influence than other committees focusing on regulatory policy outputs, because, as history indicates, member states will put up greater resistance to the distribution/redistribution of funds (Burns 2005b). When member states are unsure of the consequences on sensitive distributive issues they will be resistant to increased supranational control in the area being devolved to EP committees. It has been argued that the budget in the past has been used as a side payment for furthering market integration, rather than being redistributive in aims (Carrubba 1997). This has been done in a way so as to circumvent objections by member states that may be disadvantaged economically. With the introduction of co-decision powers into the areas of budgets, some studies have indicated the prevalence of path dependence in blocking further reform of the budget (Lindner 2006). This has been observed most notably in dealing with distributive policy such as the CAP, and this in turn hinders the development of influence by the BUDG committee in those particular areas. Therefore, the success of the BUDG committee is likely to be linked heavily with the type of policy or the amendments it wishes to introduce, although this needs to be tested. As previously discussed, for many years the BUDG committee, with the separation between compulsory and non-compulsory spending, was

²⁶⁵ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁶⁶ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²⁶⁷ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁶⁸ There is some indication that entering into the 8th term that partisan conflict within the BUDG committee may be increasing, and while this is beyond the scope of the current study it could be a potential area of future research interest.

²⁶⁹ *H4. ‘Committees with distributive policy outputs will exercise lower levels of influence over legislation than committees with regulatory policy outputs’.*

formally prevented from having an active role in the significant distributive areas, which included CAP spending. During the 7th term the involvement in the more distributive side of the budget has had an effect on the BUDG committee's attempted budgetary outputs, although this has not resulted in a positive increase in influence, according to evidence collected. In order to better understand the impact which policy type has on the BUDG committee a review of the appropriate literature should clarify if the committee is predominantly regulatory, or distributive, or somewhat mixed with regard to its desired legislative outputs.

Overall there has been some disagreement over the labelling of the type of policy that the BUDG committee produces. Yordanova (2009a), who examined a breakdown of the policy outputs of the BUDG committee, determined they were principally regulatory in nature. Other studies suggest that the BUDG committee is actually distributive in both its policy output and where it wishes to allocate funds (Burns 2005b, Rasmussen 2011). According to Kauppi & Widgrén (2008) the BUDG committee and the Parliament, in contrast to the Council, are more likely to favour (re)distributive outcomes from decision making. This is supported by the empirical evidence gained from senior leadership members of the BUDG committee. There was a clear difference between firstly, the position of the Council, and secondly that of the Commission and the committee, over policy outcome preferences. The BUDG committee and EP are reported as being firm advocates for increased spending on 'distributive programmes on social affairs and education' and increased parliamentary control in the area (Burns 2005b); *'members of the Parliament like to hand out money'*.²⁷⁰ Thus the BUDG committee's output does correlate with the concept of distributive outcomes, but with some mixed elements of regulatory policy with regard to financial regulation, discussed above, and non-distributive budgetary areas. This is unsurprising as classically budgets are the prime area of distributive and redistributive policy with funds allocated and reallocated as a direct result of the budget (Kardasheva 2013). The differing conclusions as to the type of policy output produced by the BUDG committee, as reported in the literature, probably arise because the policy areas from which the committee was previously excluded were primarily distributive.

²⁷⁰ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

Little, however, has been written on the impact that policy output may have on the BUDG committee, beyond what has been hypothesised in this study and the classic view of budget policy outputs (Kardasheva 2013). If the general consensus is correct, and the BUDG committee is attempting to potentially increase distributive policy outputs, it will have a weakened influence over final policy outcomes as a consequence of facing greater resistance from the Council. According to Benedetto (2011) the resistance to supranational control may still exist preventing the BUDG committee's growth in influence. While some areas of policy may have been subject to budgetary reform it is possible that other areas have had the status quo firmly entrenched in order to prevent budgetary reorganization (Benedetto 2011). Studies such as Kardasheva's (2013), however, have proposed that the influence may have been increased in distributive areas, when the BUDG committee can make a 'logrolling' deal with the Council in other areas. However, this study concludes that BUDG committee influence in distributive areas remains significantly weak compared with actors in regulatory policy areas.

Empirical data

The possible effect of policy output may well have intensified with the abrogation of the divide between 'compulsory' and 'non-compulsory' spending. For many years, key distributive areas, such as agriculture, covering CAP payments that make up the largest section of the budget, were beyond the BUDG committee's remit (Westlake 1994). This, according to a supporting member '*was devised by the French, for France, for agriculture, to ring fence agriculture and the funding of the CAP*', and this was done by '*ensuring that both the substance of the policy, and the financing of the policy would be in the hands of the governments and the ministers, and without a role for the Parliament, apart from giving its advice: but nobody took account of Parliament's advice*'.²⁷¹ Therefore, previously, as a result of this desire on behalf of member states to keep control of compulsory and distributive expenditure, the BUDG committee was excluded to a purely advisory role. During the 7th term '*with the Lisbon treaty on the expenditure side, now there is no difference between the*

²⁷¹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

mandatory [compulsory] and non mandatory [non-compulsory] spending, and the powers of the Parliament are the same in all the budget lines.²⁷² Nevertheless the member states' extreme interest in the area, formally under compulsory spending, has not lessened despite the BUDG committee's new active involvement in this heavily distributive area. Evidence published to date, on balance, would indicate that the BUDG committee is not drawing influence because of the type of policy that it is making. An insight into the policy dynamics at play is most appropriately undertaken by an examination of the practical legislative example of the *'general draft budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014'* ('Annual Budget 2014') which took place at the end of the 7th term when the budget committee should have been at the zenith of its influence.

Evidence supplied from a number of senior sources demonstrates that the BUDG committee and the EP *'did not feel that a successful outcome was gained at the '2014 budget' negotiations'*.²⁷³ The BUDG committee stated that it *"deplored the Council's decision to proceed again this year with the usual approach of horizontal cuts to the draft budget, aiming at artificially reducing the level of the Union's resources for 2014"* (Jensen & Hohlmeier 2013: 1). The Parliament was also *"surprised that in its position, the Council"* has both *"not taken into account agreements on the MFF"* (made previously between the BUDG committee and Council) over the *"frontloading [of] Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes"*²⁷⁴, but also *"decreased further the appropriations for some of those programmes"* (Jensen & Hohlmeier 2013: 1). This was unpalatable to the committee, and EP, as normally the *'BUDG committee amends to [try to] reinforce and beef up its lines generally over the last few years in what we call category A1, research, infrastructure, investments for the future, Erasmus and also category 4 on foreign policy'*.²⁷⁵ This is a clear budgetary line where the committee has a distributive preference, *'it's a very important 'heading' for us [BUDG committee] which we really care about'*²⁷⁶, and where it is has been successful in the past. From evidence gained

²⁷² Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²⁷³ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁷⁴ A political agreement was previously made and enacted in the MFF 2014-2020 stipulating spending would be brought forward for Erasmus and Horizon 2020.

²⁷⁵ Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member. 4/12/14. Brussels BE

²⁷⁶ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets. 6/11/14. Brussels BE

it is clear that the BUDG committee was unable to resist either a cut in real spending or gain in future commitments to spending. In total the ‘2014 Annual Budget’ saw a 9.4% drop in spending compared with the ‘2013 Annual Budget’, and as a result all headings apart from administration faced extensive real term cuts (Fox 2015).

The BUDG committee and the Parliament decried the Council’s positions over the 2014 budget, and its implications for the wider framework, which was to cut funding by reducing commitments ***‘for the Multi Annual Framework, that we have a situation where the payments are 5% below the commitments and this is political suicide’***.²⁷⁷ Therefore, the Council was adamant in its position on a reduction of funds and the BUDG committee during the 7th term, as evident in the ‘2014 budget’, was forced to accept the Council’s position. This is more significant when it is considered that ***‘they [the Council] are cutting down the payments, firstly the commitments and then the payments even more’***.²⁷⁸ So both the promised commitments member states had made to fund the BUDG committee’s priorities in the future, and the actual monetary payments distributed to the areas, have been reduced. The political situation between the BUDG committee and Council has become difficult as ***‘Sunday they [the Council] are telling the public “the EU is to give money to innovations” and on Monday they cut the research and development money’***.²⁷⁹ The result of this is that it is unlikely a compromise will be reached favourable to the BUDG committee, which undoubtedly impacts the committee’s overall influence. The BUDG committee finds this exasperating as ***‘there is no political line or purpose, they [the Council] just cut it down and you don’t see a system; we just look at the cuts and ask, why? And there is no reason for it’***.²⁸⁰ There is a clear and fundamental policy divide between the Council and BUDG committee over the distribution of funds. This is evident in the normal outcome of conciliation between the committee and the Council:

‘Tomorrow in the afternoon we will have the first conciliation with the Council, that normally stops after some minutes, because they have made their point, and we have made our point; then we

²⁷⁷ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁷⁸ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁷⁹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE.

²⁸⁰ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

would say to the Council do you have something to offer, and they say no, and we say thank you, and then go home'.²⁸¹

While in all areas there are nominal tensions between EP committees and the Council, the current relationship between the BUDG committee and the Council over the policy of direct funding and commitment cuts is not conducive to gaining the desired outcomes that the BUDG committee wishes, especially in distributive areas. In other comparative areas the Council and relevant committees do have different policy preferences that lead to conflict²⁸², and how systemic and fundamental these policy divides are will impact on committee influence. Due to the fundamental nature of the policy divide between the Council and BUDG committee in distributive areas it is less likely a compromise deal will be reached in negotiations, meaning that the BUDG committee will be less likely to gain a favourable compromise outcome. The empirical evidence indicates that this was true in the example of the '2014 Budget' and mirrors the unfavourable outcomes as observed with the resultant massive budgetary cuts.

The evidence above gleaned from the interactions of the BUDG committee with the Council clearly supports the hypothesis (*H4*) that distributive committees have significant problems in influencing policy. Consequently distributive policy outputs are not a source of influence for the BUDG committee, and, in fact, may be detrimental to its influence. The wider impact of this will be discussed in the final chapter in comparison with the other case studies, and conclusions will be drawn on whether public policy type is a major determining factor in EP committee legislative influence. The evidence collected on the BUDG committee clearly demonstrates that the committee was not able to increase funding in distributive areas, and in fact saw a cut in the commitments and payments to its priority projects. Therefore, to reiterate, policy type is most certainly not a positive source of legislative influence for the BUDG committee.

²⁸¹ Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member. 4/11/14. Brussels BE

²⁸² This was reflected on not only the case study committees but was reflected by actors working on the JURI, AGRI, IMCO, FEMM and CONT committees in interview data.

4.6 Conclusions

It is unlikely that any committee would merely utilise a single source of legislative influence, and the present study confirms that the BUDG committee is no exception as it is evidently drawing upon a number of sources, some predictable, some not, to exert influence. New evidence has been generated to support, or complement, existing perspectives such as the importance of policy making expertise and committee unity, while other findings such as the potential positive outcomes of turnover have questioned current expected convention. Overall the BUDG committee has been an excellent case study to examine and it has provided not only different but also some novel perspectives on understanding the dynamics of the various sources of committee influence, such as the role of turnover and committee unity to the committee.

'Policy making expertise' was discovered to be operating in a way contrary to what would be expected and has been reported within the current literature. Turnover levels, and the associated institutional memory loss, have been highlighted as a factor adversely affecting committee influence in a range of studies (Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Lindner 2006). Evidence within this case study, demonstrated this assumption as over-simplistic, in the selected example. In respect to the BUDG committee, the establishment of new and positive relationships, as a result of turnover, have played a vital role in the committee's overall influence. Not only had previous fractious and consequently unproductive relationships been replaced with more positive interactions (between the Committee and Commission) but also an infusion of 'new blood' has contributed new ideas on improving procedures and enhancing outputs. Thus, the BUDG committee draws influence from regular 'refreshment' and membership turnover may not impinge on *'policy making expertise'* and institutional memory as much as was previously thought, perhaps because a significant amount of it is embedded within the secretariat (or other permanent services).

These are significant findings that provide contrary evidence to the current convention that turnover is heavily detrimental to a committee's influence. The committee, also, draws some influence from a level of *'professional expertise'*, although potentially this is starting to shift towards, and more

important for, the CONT committee. It was, also, confirmed within the chapter that the unity of the BUDG committee between the party groups is a significant source of influence. By consistently presenting a united front to other actors, the BUDG committee's position could not be easily undermined. Informal norms (on rapporteur-ship allocation) are shown as important in sustaining the unity observed as vital to the committee's influence.²⁸³ While the findings of the present study generally confirmed previous studies it, also, provided additional original information on the partisan dynamic within the BUDG committee, and demonstrated that while some partisan tensions remain present the committee clearly identifies the importance of establishing unity before negotiating with the other institutions. Finally, the findings on policy output type did confirm hypothesis 4. Following the reforms of the ToL, that extended the BUDG committee's remit to cover significant additional distributive elements, the committee was unable to expand its influence, as an expansion of powers may have indicated, as a result of the Council continuing to resist distributive outcomes. The committee is, therefore, confirmed as not establishing its influence as a result of the type of policy outcome it desires.

²⁸³ The ways in which rapporteur position are allocated, reflects the patterns of unity/disunity particular to each committee.

Chapter Five Committee on International Trade

5.1 Introduction

The INTA committee has been identified in previous research as being an important actor because of the significant formal legislative power it possesses, despite a perceived lack of ‘specialised/technical expertise’ on the committee (Woolcock 2010c, Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). This widely accepted perspective, with regard to the INTA committee’s influence, has been tested at length below, and conversely it has been demonstrated for the first time, with original empirical data, that the INTA committee’s influence is drawn in large proportion from high levels of *‘professional expertise’* contained within its membership. These new empirical findings, not only challenge the prevailing convention of what comprises the INTA committee’s sources of influence, as previously promulgated in the literature (which was not always supported by empirical evidence) but also helps to expand upon our general understanding of the sources of committee influence.

In order to give an appropriate perspective and to establish the INTA committee’s situation within the overriding framework of this thesis, in the first instance, its’ place within the decision-making process during the 7th term has been extensively reviewed and discussed. Past literature on the committee has been examined in order to identify potentially from which sources the committee has been drawing its’ influence. Thereafter previous claims surrounding the committee have then been tested, alongside the hypotheses, as outlined in the theoretical framework, with original data, in order to elucidate a better understanding of how the committee has been able to establish its’ influence. The chapter concludes by reviewing the findings generated from this final case study.

5.2 The Decision Making Process

Trade has long been at the centre of EU policy making, ever since the establishment of the customs union in 1957. Trade is a policy area that is deeply institutionalised within the EU (Young 2011). The Commission is the formal representative of the EU in any international trade agreements (Young 2011), and research has previously focused significantly upon the role of the Commission in international trade as a result. However, with the changes deriving from different EU reforming

treaties, the ToL being the most recent, the power and involvement of the INTA Committee in the process of European international trade policy, although it is yet to be extensively studied, has increased considerably.²⁸⁴

The institutional origins of the INTA committee follow a somewhat convoluted pathway compared with the development of other EP committees. These complex origins have seemingly had consequences with regard to the committee's current standing and involvement in the decision-making process. The body which would become the International Trade Committee was known initially as the External Economic Relations Committee (EERC) on its founding in 1978. In 1999 the EERC was absorbed by the Industry, Research and Energy Committee (ITRE), and as a result lost its independent status. The committee, which would become known as the International Trade committee, would only (re)gain independence as a formal EP committee with its re-establishment as late as 2004 (Corbett *et al* 2007).²⁸⁵ While some studies (Corbett *et al* 2007) do track the INTA committee over these different iterations, others suggest (Woolcock 2008, 2010b) it only had its genesis in 2004, and as a result it is perceived as being a relatively 'junior committee' with an underdeveloped institutional memory (Woolcock 2010b: 23), which may as a result affect the committee's overall legislative influence. A committee identified as relatively 'junior' and lacking in significant seniority in membership will be perceived as a less powerful legislative actor than more established committees with a high degree of senior membership (Kleimann 2011). It has been proposed by Woolcock (2010b), however, that while the INTA committee may be 'junior' and lacking in institutional memory it remains potentially a highly influential committee, whose influence has only expanded over time as a result of its increased formal potential to impact trade deals. Furthermore, this assessment by Woolcock (2010b) was before the implementation of the ToL (2009) reforms, which further expanded the committee's formal involvement in the decision making process.

²⁸⁴ With the introduction of the Lisbon treaty for the first time the INTA committee has gained a veto over trade negotiations as well as seeing its remit of co-decision expanded to include regulation on the implementation of trade agreements.

²⁸⁵ Interestingly some current INTA members '*remember working on the old EERC*', showing a level of maintained institutional memory '*for those days sometime ago*'. Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/1/16. Glasgow. UK

With the application of the ToL²⁸⁶ during the 7th term, the EP (based on the INTA committee's position that will set a defined recommendation) and the Council now must equally agree upon the adoption of all international trade agreements, under the '*consent procedure*'. The EP/ '*INTA committee cannot amend trade agreements due to the application of the consent procedure*'²⁸⁷, but the INTA committee continues to remain able to have a significant impact and influence over the actual policy making process (Gstöhl 2013). The EP must approve all multilateral trade agreements negotiated by the Commission before they can be ratified (Woolcock 2010a, 2010b, Young 2011, TFEU Art.218 (10)). In effect the INTA committee holds a significant veto power with its ability to propose the EP's position to consent, or not, to an agreement. While it is unlikely that the INTA committee would veto an international trade agreement which has overwhelming support, such as from all member states in the Council as well as the Commission, some agreements have been influenced at the negotiation stage by the committee to include provisions such as greater focus on human rights conditions within Free Trade Agreements (FTA) (Woolcock 2010a, 2010b). Prior to Lisbon, the INTA committee was recognised as an actor with significant potential to influence the outcome of agreements, with the Commission taking notice of an opinion produced by the committee over where objections may arise. Lisbon formally codified many already established informal conventions, placing the INTA committee in an even more significant position to (potentially) affect outcomes by imbuing it with formal powers, such as an *ex-post* veto, to potentially force any issues (Young 2011, Van den Putte *et al* 2014).

In addition, after Lisbon, there are now formal requirements for the Commission to inform the INTA committee of the progress of any international trade negotiations. The Commission must regularly report to the INTA Committee and the Council's Trade Policy Committee (TPC) jointly, and with the same policy information (Woolcock 2010c). Some studies have questioned this apparent equality, between the INTA committee and TPC, by asserting that the TPC has a higher stature than the INTA committee due to the higher levels of 'expertise' reportedly contained within the Council (Woolcock

²⁸⁶ The formal responsibilities of the International Trade Committee as defined within the treaty framework of the EU is located in Appendix VIII.

²⁸⁷ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on international Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

2010c, Gstöhl 2013). The first stage of any international trade negotiations begins with the Commission setting out its negotiating mandate. This mandate is subsequently sent to the Council for agreement. Formally it is only the Council who are involved in accepting the Commission's original mandate. It has been suggested, however, that the INTA committee and the Parliament are involved at an informal level when the Commission is creating its negotiating positions (Van den Putte *et al* 2014). The practice for a substantial time has been for the Commission to conduct so-called 'scoping exercises' on the attitudes of the INTA committee and other institutional actors. These 'scoping exercises' would be conducted for all FTA negotiations to effectively sound out the committee's likely position in order to avoid a possible veto coming from it at a later, *ex-post*, stage (Richardson 2012). While the INTA committee can have no formal agenda setting impact on the negotiating mandate proposed by the Commission, a significant impact on the mandate can still be made by the committee expressing its position. By stating an early opinion the INTA committee can clearly indicate what it is willing to accept, and what it would find unacceptable in the Commission proposal (Van den Putte *et al* 2014). An indication that the Commission had changed its voting mandate or even adopted a different mandate to placate the committee would suggest important levels of 'committee influence' at a key formative stage.²⁸⁸ Therefore the INTA committee in practice is allowed some remit in influencing the agenda of trade agreements.

Empirical cases, such as the Japan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations²⁸⁹, certainly indicate a key level of involvement in this important agenda setting stage by the INTA committee (Van den Putte *et al* 2014). During the lead up to FTA negotiations with Japan, the EP requested that no negotiations should take place before the INTA committee had produced and issued its position on the Commission's proposed mandate (Van den Putte *et al* 2014). This is significant as the committee wished to make its position clear to the Commission at this earlier stage in order to, attempt to, influence the negotiating mandate. With the introduction of the Lisbon treaty the INTA committee

²⁸⁸ The ability to influence a proposal, *ex ante*, by a committee is a significant example of committee influence (Shepsle & Weingast 1987).

²⁸⁹ The Japan 'Free Trade agreement' (FTA) sought to remove barriers, such as trade tariffs, between Japan and the European Union in order to establish a free trade area where there are no impediments to the exchange and trade of goods between the areas (Japan and EU member states).

and the EP soon made it clear that they would closely monitor every stage of international trade negotiations and ratification, indicating they would attempt to use its new found ability to its fullest potential (Woolcock 2010c).

The relationship between the INTA committee and the Commission had, to some extent, informally developed pre-Lisbon, with the agreement to inform the committee of trade negotiations via the so called ‘Luns-westerterp’ procedure (Richardson 2012). These informal agreements came as a result of the committee attempting to pre-empt the reform that would be introduced in the ToL, in order to become more accustomed with the processes involved. The INTA committee was, therefore, able to adapt more rapidly than comparable committees to its new powers having built up its institutional memory pre-Lisbon adoption (Armanovica & Bendini 2014). However, the ability to successfully use its involvement in the international trade agreement process, to impact outcomes, will depend on where the committee is drawing its influence from. Indeed studies would suggest that the INTA committee is deficient in major areas, such as lacking significantly in ‘expertise’ and ‘specialist knowledge’ (Woolcock 2010c, Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013, Van den Putte *et al* 2014).

Beyond the, albeit significant, involvement of the INTA committee in international trade agreement negotiations, post Lisbon, the committee is also formally involved in the important decision making area of the Common Commercial Policy (CCP).²⁹⁰ The OLP now applies to the CCP and external trade regulations, and, therefore, the formal role of the committee in this area has expanded significantly (Woolcock 2010b, 2010c). Legislation linked to the implementation of trade policy now also falls under the OLP. The INTA committee has dealt with a growing number of co-decision reports that need to be negotiated with the Council in the implementation of trade framework agreements (Eeckhout 2011). The committee is now an equal partner in the decision making process

²⁹⁰ Common Commercial Policy brings under the competency of the INTA committee areas such as implementation of international trade agreements, anti-dumping policy, foreign (external of EU) direct investment regulation, and other key trade interments related to Common Commercial Policy (Article 207.2 TFEU, Gstöhl 2013)

alongside the Council; it is able to propose amendments and ultimately veto legislation falling under the OLP and its remit.

While these formal powers are important to the INTA committee, and its potential involvement in the decision making process, they do not, however, identify the sources which the committee draws upon to exercise its influence in practice. As discussed in the theoretical framework it is the utilisation of different sources of influence that accounts for a committee's overall influence and its ability to maximise legislative outputs towards its own preferences. Elements of each of the three proposed perspectives, 'expertise', 'unity' and 'policy output', as outlined in chapter 2, have to some extent been identified as being instrumental in determining the INTA committee's influence. However, the current understanding as to what extent each of these different perspectives accounts for the INTA committee's influence is highly ambiguous.

5.3 Informational Perspective

The general consensus of studies that have examined the INTA committee is that the committee is lacking in both technical specialization (associated with '*professional expertise*') and institutional memory ('*policy making expertise*') (Woolcock 2010b, 2010c, Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). However, many of the literature sources discussed, while focusing on specialist information and expertise, do not always precisely report on what type of specialization they observe, be it '*policy making expertise*' or more technical expertise (as a result of professional backgrounds), that may be lacking. Furthermore they have often lacked empirical evidence to support the assumptions made.

It has been the general consensus that while the INTA committee is, with Lisbon, formally equal with its counterpart in the Council, the Trade Policy Committee (TPC), with respect to the high level of information to which it has access, the INTA committee actually contains a significantly lower level of 'technical expertise' (Kleimann 2011). This, as a consequence, is thought to undermine the committee's position against the TPC, which has been acknowledged to contain significant 'expertise' (Woolcock 2010c, Gstöhl 2013). Woolcock (2010b) suggests that, while the committee does appear to

have the same level of specialist information as the Council, or at least is apparently well informed of the Commission's negotiating progress²⁹¹, its influence and impact on negotiations has yet to be fully analysed (or realised) due to a lack of research. The INTA committee being informed, after Lisbon, at every stage of the negotiating and decision making process has been perceived to have extensively expanded its potential to try and shape the negotiation agenda, not only at an early stage but also throughout the decision making process (Woolcock 2010c, Richardson 2012). Without a level of expertise, however, to fully utilise the information to which the committee now has access, the potential gains in influence could be undermined. Nevertheless, a potential to develop '*policy making expertise*' may well result from the abundance of information available.

Strong relationships between the Commission and EP committees can facilitate the spread of specialist information vital to a committee's influence. Currently, the flow of specialist information between the two actors appears to be good according to the formal provisions in place, despite the perceived lack of 'technical expertise' on the INTA committee, and the relationship potentially still maturing (Kleimann 2011). There is a clear indication from Richardson (2012) that the information, both technical and political (related to '*policy making*'), coming from the Commission is, however, spread asymmetrically across the INTA committee. Different party groups and MEPs, such as the greens and other left-wing MEPs, have commented that policy information supplied formally to the whole INTA committee is often short on crucial details (Richardson 2012). Many of these important missing details will only find their way to specific groupings or individuals on the committee. Seemingly, therefore, the committee as a whole is not fully empowered by information coming from the Commission, access to which does apparently depend on partisan factors. The reasons for this asymmetrical spread of information have been attributed to the relationship that has developed between the Commission and some select INTA committee members (Van den Putte *et al* 2014). This may, however, be a weak explanation without further examination, as it is unclear if this was as a result of personalities clashing over a single term, or resulting from ideological cleavages.

²⁹¹ It is now also formal practice that members of the Parliament (in practice mainly INTA members) will be granted observer status in international trade negotiations, increasing the Parliament's ability to monitor important events (Armanovica & Bendini 2014).

Importantly, however, an asymmetrical input of information to the committee as a whole would further exacerbate a lack of any technical understanding.

According to Van den Putte *et al* (2014) & Richardson (2012) those MEPs on the INTA committee who adopt a more classically liberal approach to trade policy have a stronger relationship with the Directorate-General (DG) for trade (where considerable policy making and technical expertise is retained (Kleimann 2011)), which has a similar liberalizing attitude towards trade. Perhaps not surprisingly it has been suggested those members sharing the Commission's perspectives are better informed than those who hold different ideological trade positions. Studies (Van den Putte *et al* 2014) suggest highly important policy documents, which will often include significant details on the Commission's negotiating positions, will only be transmitted to a select number of committee members. Formally members of the INTA committee including the chair, the vice chairs, the responsible rapporteur and the party coordinators should be supplied with this highly sensitive information from the Commission (Devuyst 2013). This, however, has not changed the fact that many on the political left of the Parliament still comment that they are under briefed on the Commission's positions, and the information provided to them is of a lower standard than is supplied to their trade liberalizing counterparts (Van den Putte *et al* 2014).

According to Richardson (2012) the party groupings are not significantly involved in facilitating the flow of policy making information passing between the Commission and committee. Interactions between the Commission and INTA committee often take place through the non-political secretariat (Richardson 2012). However, the effect of this exchange between party groups and their MEPs is not well established and, therefore, comprises an area for further examination in the empirical section below.

While the implications on the role of partisan groupings in supplying expertise remain to be determined, more research has focused on the perceived impact of the late establishment of the INTA committee, as an independent committee, on the levels of retained expertise (Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012). The general, though somewhat limited, consensus is that the source of the INTA

committee's influence is not rooted in a high level of expert knowledge or seniority retained within the committee (Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). Richardson (2012) has commented that due to the INTA committee's late formation the relationships vital to a committee's influence with external (to the EP) expert groups has yet to become fully consolidated, and as a result the committee is perceived as lacking extensive expertise which would be provided by external groups. Almost paradoxically, however, due to its '*junior nature*' (Kleimann 2011) the INTA committee is perceived as requiring a greater input from external groups such as interested stakeholders and relevant lobbyists, than more established committees, to fully maximise effectiveness. As a result of the need for specialist information the INTA committee does appear, according to different studies, to potentially rely heavily on outside experts, who will undoubtedly come with their own agendas (Richardson 2012). According to Kleimann (2011) the '*junior*' nature of the committee means that expertise contained within the INTA committee is underdeveloped and as a result its negotiating influence is weaker.

The impact of the INTA committee's perceived junior nature, also, impinges on its relationship with the Council (Kleimann 2011). Due to the Council's (TPC) long association with trade policy agreements alongside the Commission, it is identified as a powerful actor with a developed institutional memory. The TPC has had a significant number of years to successfully build up its own internal expertise and develop efficient working practices between civil servants (Richardson 2012, Van den Putte *et al* 2014). Added to this there are the substantial resources and expertise that the member states have at their disposal to use in the Council. Woolcock (2010b) suggests that while the Commission will inform the INTA committee at the same level as the TPC, the two institutions are not equal in resources. The committee cannot compete with the TPC due to the latter body having '*more expertise, institutional memory and meeting every week, rather than once a month, as in the case of the INTA [committee]*' (Woolcock 2010b). Consequently, the INTA committee is starting from a lower experience baseline than the TPC and is required to catch up, a task that would seemingly be further hampered by the regular turnover in committee membership (Richardson 2012). Despite these apparent deficiencies both Richardson (2012) and Woolcock (2010b) believe that the

INTA committee still has a significant potential to influence legislative outcomes and trade agreements. Without the technical expertise, however, according to Kleimann (2011: 13) the committee will find it ‘difficult’ to ‘translate political preferences into credible and well-informed negotiation positions’.

Nevertheless the INTA committee is still viewed as an important actor with growing legislative influence that can significantly affect trade policy outcomes, and ***‘is the most current [salient] popular committee to be on for members’***²⁹² in the 8th term. In previous parliamentary terms the INTA committee had been perceived as an actor with relatively low levels of legislative output. However, with the expansion of co-decision, the level of legislation produced expanded significantly during the 7th term. Between the end of 2009 and beginning of 2014 (the 7th term) the INTA committee processed 53 co-decision files and 73 files that fell under the consent procedure (Armanovica & Bendini 2014). A report by the CEPS (2012) examining the legislative output of all EP committees recognised the INTA committee as one that had increased in competence, and influence, over the years, a process that had accelerated with the implementation of the Lisbon treaty. The committee was well aware that an ***‘increase in the INTA committee’s powers’*** would lead to an ***‘increase in workload’***²⁹³ and this, in fact, did happen. The INTA’s ability to deal successfully with an increased workload will to some extent define its current level of influence.²⁹⁴ An inefficient committee will struggle to be influential (Kreppel 2003, Maurer 2003), especially if pre-existing expertise is perceived as deficient as is the general consensus with the INTA committee.

5.3.1 Policy Making Expertise

Many of the elements of *‘policy making expertise’* are perceived as absent within the INTA committee according to the current literature (Woolcock 2010c, Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). *‘Policy making expertise’* is associated with, and often physically evident in the level of

²⁹² Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone interview

²⁹³ Interview with Secretariat of the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament. 4/12/14 Brussels BE

²⁹⁴ Interview evidence demonstrated that despite the increase in work load, the INTA committee and Parliament had difficulty in expanding its resources as this was blocked by the Council as it would have increased their monetary contributions, which they oppose at an almost fundamental level, according to a number of the recorded conversations with Brussels actors.

turnover and membership retention that a legislative committee experiences. A higher level of membership retention between terms would suggest an established level of membership experience, and retained '*policy making expertise*'. The rate of membership retention of the INTA committee for the 7th parliamentary term is displayed in figure 5-1.

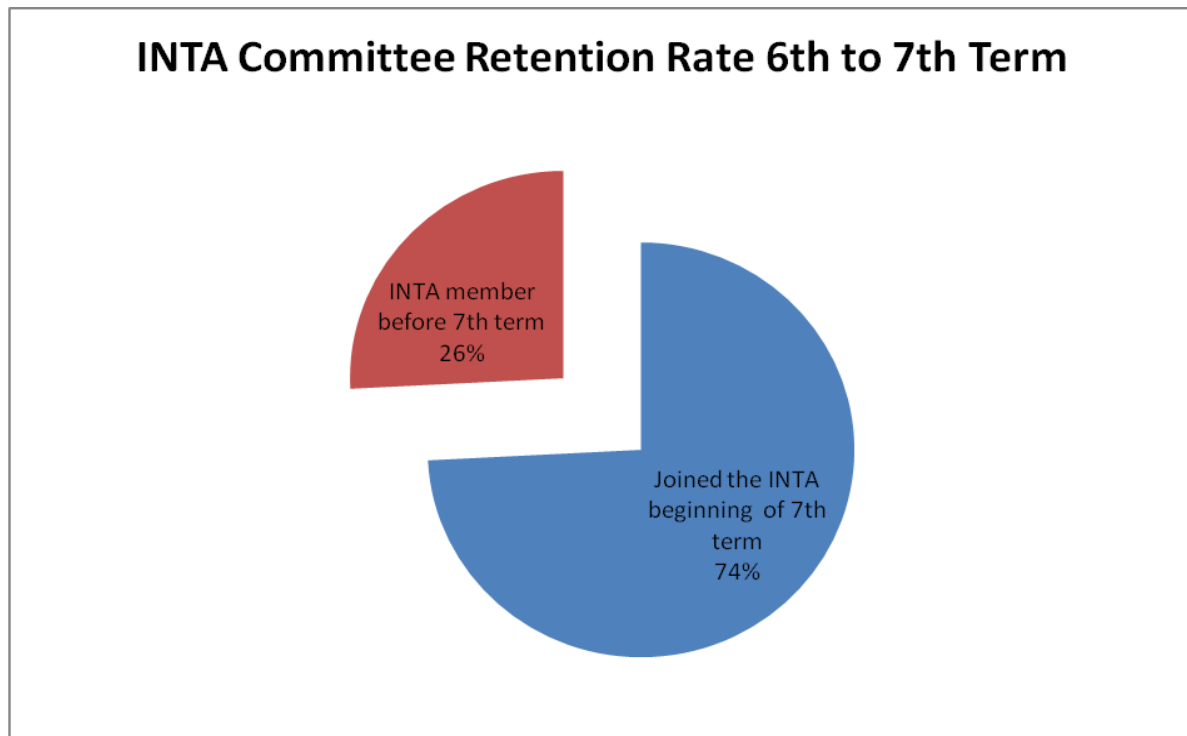


Figure 5-1 Membership retention rate of the International trade committee entering into the 7th term from the 6th. Source: International Trade Committee website (2014).

Figure 5-1 demonstrates that not only was membership retention low but a noteworthy number of experienced INTA members left the committee before the start of the 7th term taking with them their acquired '*policy making expertise*' and institutional experience. This would automatically indicate that '*policy making expertise*' was not present to a significant level within the INTA committee during the 7th term, and does to an extent explain why recent studies, conducted during the 7th term (Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013), have associated the INTA committee with containing low levels of expertise. To take figure 5-1 at face value would be to underplay the potential level of '*policy making expertise*' which may have been contained within the INTA committee, entering into the 7th term, as a direct result of experienced MEPs joining the INTA committee at the start of the term (Figure 5-2).

Experience of EP Committee System Entering 7th Term

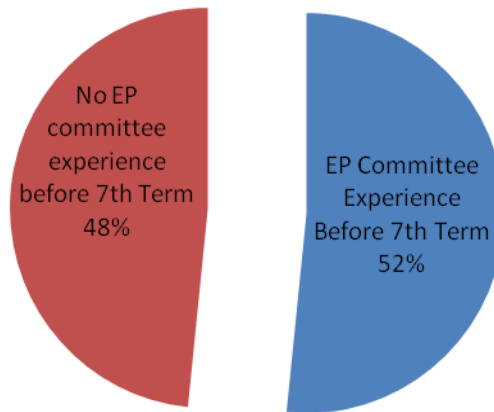


Figure 5-2 Rate of EP committee system experience entering INTA committee 7th term. Source: International Trade Committee (2014).

Figure 5-2 reveals that while *'policy making expertise'* will be more developed with a higher retention rate of experienced INTA committee members, some benefit will result from having members who have previous experience of the EP committee system *'or have a level of name recognition'*.²⁹⁵ The INTA committee was seen as *'the committee to be on [for the 7th term and 8th]*²⁹⁶ by experienced, and senior, parliamentarians as a result of a perception that the INTA committee would be one of the most influential committees after the ToL was enacted. High turnover on the committee came in part as a result of *'experienced MEPs seeking to join the [INTA] committee'*²⁹⁷ on mass and maximise its potential influence. This, therefore, raises further questions about the claimed absence of *'policy making expertise'* on the INTA committee, 7th term. Even if *'policy making expertise'* was low as a result of turnover, membership retention need not be a prerequisite for a committee to be significantly influential, as observed in the present study with the ENVI and BUDG committees (Chapter 3 and 4).

²⁹⁵ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

²⁹⁶ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/1/16 Glasgow. UK

²⁹⁷ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/1/16 Glasgow. UK

The rejuvenation of a committee by the acquisition of *'new blood'* membership was viewed just as, or even more significant, to its influence, as its level of membership retention. To accept that the INTA committee was weaker, in terms of influence, in the 7th term because of high membership turnover (Richardson 2012) would, therefore, be premature in the light of supporting findings showing an influx of experienced MEPs entering the committee at this point bringing with them significant *'policy making expertise'*.

With data collected from elite interviews it was evident, as expected, that *'policy making expertise'* was highlighted by all actors at all levels within the INTA committee as being a *'potentially significant source of influence'*.²⁹⁸ This has been empirically demonstrated, and as a typical interviewee states that *'to have the information [on policy] is one of the main and important things'* for actors to be influential and the committee to be effective overall; however, *'normally it [information] is not given to you'*.²⁹⁹ The significance placed on *'policy making expertise'*, and the impact which the accumulation of policy making information associated with this type of expertise, has on the INTA committee's influence was acknowledged within the data. However, there was an indication that while this expertise was lacking in a conventional sense as a result of the significant turnover of the committee entering the 7th term (figure 5-2), this was in part compensated for by the introduction of experienced MEPs coming in from other senior committees.

The suggestion in the literature that the committee's *'junior standing'* (Kleimann 2011) contributed to the lack of *'policy making expertise'* was challenged by the collected empirical data, refuting this existing consensus. While perceived as a *'rather new committee in the internal structure of the European Parliament'* it was *'15 years³⁰⁰ ago since it was a junior committee'*, and since this time *'it has developed as an autonomous committee with the same standing as all the other EP committees'*.³⁰¹ To equate a lack of *'policy making expertise'* to the INTA committee because of its

²⁹⁸ Interview with Secretariat of the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament. 4/12/14 Brussels BE

²⁹⁹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁰⁰ At the end of the 7th term.

³⁰¹ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

perceived 'junior' standing, as has been done previously (Woolcock 2008, Kleimann 2011) would be a simplistic view. The INTA committee is *'still coming to terms with the new powers it gained with the Lisbon treaty'*³⁰² but it would be more correct to assert from data collected that any lack of *'policy making expertise'* is as a result of high committee turnover entering the 7th term rather than it being 'junior'. The INTA committee, however, is evident as containing some forms of retained *'policy making expertise'*, which does benefit the committee.

The INTA committee is, post-Lisbon, deeply involved in following the process of all trade negotiations and in theory must be equally supplied with policy information by the Commission, previously only accessible to the Council. *'The Commission has to come and explain their position but also answer questions'*³⁰³ before the INTA committee. This has resulted in *'the increased presence of the trade Commissioner [attending committee meetings] and the increased frequency of the supplying of information'*³⁰⁴ to the committee. As stated by a senior committee member, the Commission has taken a greater policy interest in the INTA committee³⁰⁵ as a significant actor:

*'I have seen also more and more frequently the presence of the European Commission and the DG trade within the INTA committee, either on the level of the chief negotiator, for the different trade dossiers, or at the level of the presence of the trade Commissioner them self.'*³⁰⁶

This increased exchange of information³⁰⁷ between the INTA committee and Commission was a significant development during the 7th term and has continued into the 8th. There is now an increased exchange of policy making information in *'both frequency'*, but, *'also'* importantly *'an increase in the quality of the information'*³⁰⁸ between the two. This is an important development, as while the Commission does have the obligation to inform the INTA committee on the negotiating process with

³⁰² Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³⁰³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁰⁴ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁰⁵ It has been suggested that the 'right to veto' by the Parliament could provide Commission officials with greater leverage in international trade negotiations' (Meunier & Nicolaidis 2005) which would explain this interest.

³⁰⁶ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁰⁷ The baseline level before the 7th term often depended on a member's own informal contacts with the Commission.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

policy making information *'of course you can have a presentation [from the Commission] with less or more quality information'³⁰⁹ towards the members'.³¹⁰ Members with experience are able to assess the information for its quality, and it is apparent that there was a definite *'increase in the quality of information that we are given'³¹¹ by the Commission, which has greatly benefited the INTA committee's policy making role.³¹²**

'Policy making expertise', interestingly, is not seen as being evenly spread across the whole committee due to the 'unique' nature of trade policy. The normal practice is that *'trade negotiations are conducted with a certain degree of discretion and a certain degree of secrecy; these are necessary for negotiations'³¹³ to be successfully concluded. As a result of this required discretion, many key documents are not accessible to all INTA committee members. Evidence collected demonstrates that a unique and particular significance is often placed on seniority within the committee.³¹⁴ While *'seniority is important in each EP committee'* it is particularly important *'especially in the INTA'* committee where it is seen that *'you have more senior members'³¹⁵ despite a lower rate of membership retention compared to other committees, therefore, referring to those senior parliamentarians who joined the committee at the 7th term.³¹⁶ This signifies the importance of 'parliamentary seniority', where a member has parliamentary rather than just committee specific experience, within the INTA committee. While senior committee members who retained their position 7th term did have a uniquely over emphasised role, being the only remaining receptacles of maintained *'policy making expertise'* at a European level within the committee, it is clear parliamentary seniority was also important on the committee. Consequently, seniority did play an important role on the INTA committee in the 7th term and is shown to have affected *'policy making expertise'* as a source of committee influence.**

³⁰⁹ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³¹⁰ The indication was that members were pleasantly surprised that the Commission did adopt a policy of supplying quality information as the expectation, off the record, was that this was not going to be the case.

³¹¹ *'Alongside the increase in the frequency of its acquisition'.*

³¹² Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³¹³ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³¹⁴ Collected data, displayed in figure 5-1 and 5-2, shows that seniority is to be understood as a member's institutional memory of the European Parliament.

³¹⁵ *'and they can have the best reports'.*

³¹⁶ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

Members of the INTA committee 7th term, were not equal in their access to policy information *‘senior members, and also the [party] coordinator, will have better access to information than the other members as they receive documents that we [non-senior members] don’t have’*.³¹⁷ Senior parliamentarians will receive better access to information than those still establishing themselves within the parliament overall. According to members serving on both the INTA committee and other EP committees the *‘INTA [committee] is specific in a way because it follows all of the trade agreement’*³¹⁸ negotiations which can extend over parliamentary sessions containing highly sensitive policy information, which is not distributed to every member. Having limited access to policy-making documents would heavily undermine a member’s ability to develop *‘policy making expertise’* and contribute to the collective benefit of the committee with a developed policy understanding. This was clearly evident *‘in the [policy] example of Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership’*³¹⁹ [TTIP]: they [senior INTA members] have access to restricted documents and [non-senior] INTA members we only have access to limited documents³²⁰ due to the secluded nature of trade negotiations.³²¹ This is unique to the INTA committee, and not limited to the TTIP negotiations. Senior members play a significant role on the INTA committee, not only due to the retained *‘policy making expertise’* they already possess, but, also, because of the access to key policy documents they enjoy over other members. There is *‘a hierarchy in the type of communications you can have access to’*³²² which does limit the potential of ‘non-senior members’ (the vast majority) to operate, with gatekeepers controlling access to policy making information and expertise (as well as the impact associated with *‘professional expertise’* detailed below). If members wish to gain access to important restricted policy making documents, which are required for members to draft both competent and politically acceptable policy/amendment proposals, a non-senior member on the INTA committee

³¹⁷ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³¹⁸ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³¹⁹ The aim of the ‘Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership’ (TTIP) was to establish a free trade agreement (FTA) between the United States of America and the European Union. TTIP has been an intensely controversial trade agreement, with many objections raised from a number of different quarters, dramatically slowing the agreements process.

³²⁰ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³²¹ INTA members would only gain the right to see all documents associated with TTIP during the 8th parliamentary term.

³²² Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

must contact their party group coordinator. *'If you wanted access to one document you can talk to the coordinator, and normally there is no reason why they cannot give it to you'*.³²³ So while gatekeepers do exist on the INTA committee preventing everyone accessing all of the policy making documents, in theory, information on policy making is accessible in all normal circumstances. As the term 'in all normal circumstance' would suggest, however, there may be cases where information is not supplied.

The effect of a concentration of *'policy making expertise'* is highlighted in the allocation of committee reports. While senior members on all EP committees will have heightened influence over report allocation this influence is seen as disproportionately greater as *'in practice it's really political [the allocation of reports]'*³²⁴ within the INTA committee. *'If you are a really important member'* in the INTA committee *'you will be able, more often, to get what you want, and if you are a new member, who is less important, it will be harder to get what you want'*.³²⁵ Thus having a level of seniority is often vital for gaining a desired report as these senior members are seen as having a *'developed institutional memory within the INTA committee'*³²⁶ that is crucial if the committee is to maximise its potential influence. New evidence derived from the process, and the presence, of secluded decision making, also, emphasises the importance which seniority has on the INTA committee, and more than on other EP committees.

The justification for this practice, of secluded decision making, is as a result of the general lack of *'policy making expertise'* within the committee. Due to the heavy legislative workload the INTA committee has adopted the documented practice of operating *'a system of monitoring groups'*, which functions as *'a smaller committee [within INTA] which contains only one representative from each [political] group'*.³²⁷ These group representatives will meet with *'experts from the Commission where we discuss more specifically about trade negotiations'*. After these secluded meetings, the

³²³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³²⁴ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³²⁵ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³²⁶ Interview with Secretariat of the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament. 4/12/14 Brussels BE

³²⁷ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

whole committee does meet *‘where you have all the legislative text’*³²⁸, generated from the closed-door meeting, presented. While all members are informed, it is considered more efficient for these monitoring groups to deal with the substantive policy information. The perception is that decision making is isolated within a selected group of senior ‘policy making experts’.

If seniority is important on the INTA committee, this gives greater support to the understanding of the positive effects of committee turnover, as the INTA committee actually experienced an influx of senior parliamentarians (and an ex-Commissioner) joining the committee as a result of turnover. As originally demonstrated in the other case studies, the refreshment of a committee and the acquisition of *‘new blood’* was identified as having a potentially positive impact on the committee’s influence, disproving the fundamentally negative view of membership turnover on legislative influence (Scarrow 1997, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Benedetto 2005, Daniel 2013). Evidence of this concept, of the acquisition of *‘new blood’* onto a committee, and its positive impact on influence is also present within the INTA committee, lending further evidence to the significant findings empirically identified in the previous cases. The evidence collected from the INTA committee, due to its unique nature, further helps to develop this new concept of turnover.

At a fundamental level there is *‘a difference [between members] within the INTA committee’* that has a direct effect on the committee’s decision making process, beyond the discussed ideological divides of left/right over trade preferences (Woolcock 2008, Nugent 2010). This newly identified divide is manifest between those *‘MEPs who were there pre-Lisbon, and those MEPs who have come more recently’* on to the INTA committee. Relatively new INTA members *‘hadn’t had an experience of the [INTA] committee which had very little information and very little power’*,³²⁹ before the 7th term. This has resulted in a difference in attitudes between ‘new’ and ‘old’ MEPs. New members now start in better circumstances than INTA members who had experience of the committee before the 7th term. The impact of this, in the view of new members, is that while *‘the old members have been there and seen a gradual increase in their powers, they are very cautious about asserting*

³²⁸ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³²⁹ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15. Phone Interview

*that power*³³⁰ and maximising their potential. The non-assertive nature of more experienced members means that they are less willing to test the limits of the INTA committee's post-Lisbon influence *'where the new INTA members have come in, and see it as theirs [the new powers of the INTA committee] to use*³³¹ in order to maximise potential outcomes.

New members of the INTA committee *'have'* however *'not seen older members becoming blockages on the INTA committee'*. So, while there is an indication this may happen *'it wouldn't surprise me if it [experienced senior members becoming roadblocks] happened simply due to human nature*³³², there are no specific examples of INTA members who appeared pass their 'sell-by date' on the committee, as seen in the other case studies. The significant committee turnover of the 7th term may have resulted in those members most likely to be entrenched in their viewpoints, and as a consequence facilitating blockage of new initiatives, simply not being retained on the INTA committee. Those members who are still perceived as *'senior'* within the committee *'have worked well with junior members'*.³³³ *'If you had a senior MEP who was determined to only talk to his old friends'* they would, according to junior members, *'not get very far'*.³³⁴

Further evidence collect from the INTA committee does, however, create a more nuanced understanding of the impact of *'new blood'* on a committee's potential influence. As discussed above, senior members, while viewed as less willing to exercise power by new members, did see many new members as making too many *'passionate political declarations at the expense of feasible outcomes*³³⁵ which did not help the INTA committee to gain preferential results (to be influential). While a level of politicization is accepted and *'not [seen as] a [significant] problem'* on the committee, some experienced members are concerned, with the start of the 8th term, that *'now we only have ambition and this is not a way to work and to build a workable solution*³³⁶ on the committee.

³³⁰ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³³¹ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³³² Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³³³ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³³⁴ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³³⁵ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³³⁶ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

A focus on political declaration by new committee members has been negatively received by experienced members:

*‘Be they well intended, if you go along with a political declaration of values and you are so far from the practical feasibility then maybe nothing will happen in conclusion. You will remain very pure [ideologically] because you have stated your values which are very high but you have accomplished nothing in reality, as nothing happens so nothing changes, you remain just with a political declaration’.*³³⁷

While tension is apparent between ‘experienced’ and ‘junior’ members, to an extent it is vital to highlight that this was not a significant problem *‘in the last mandate [during the 7th term]’*. With the start of the 8th term, *‘approximately one third of the Parliament is new’*; this has created more conflict on the INTA committee as a consequence. With the new intake (of the 8th term) *‘many of them are younger people, they are deeply involved in national politics, and they bring very passionate messages of national politics into the EP’*³³⁸, which creates many of the tensions discussed. During the 7th term there appeared to be a balance between old and new members creating a more stable equilibrium to balance tensions, and this appears to have deteriorated during the 8th term.

Political debate is central to any parliamentary system and the party groupings within the INTA committee do play an important role in the distribution of *‘policy making expertise’* in an attempt to compensate for a general absence within the committee. It has been proposed within the theoretical framework of the thesis, and observed within the collected evidence that the party groupings can, indeed, supplement any lack of membership *‘policy making expertise’* by allocating *‘resources to supply their members with information’*.³³⁹ While the *‘exchange of information’* has been indicated as not overtly involving the party groupings in the INTA committee, there is clear evidence of some form of policy information vital to the development of *‘policy making expertise’* being distributed by

³³⁷ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³³⁸ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³³⁹ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15. Phone Interview

the party groups due to their greater access to policy documents. The party groups are *'a source of support to MEPs' offices*³⁴⁰; however, this is interestingly seen as a largely political level of support, rather than the supplying of technical information. Even at the level of national parties and government *'ministers who are attending a triologue meeting'* will sometimes *'report the results of discussions in Council to their group'* within the INTA committee. This will often be followed by *'a political group meeting'*³⁴¹, where all the reports from both sides of the triologue negotiations are discussed.

Access to policy making information in the INTA committee does to an extent rely on the party group to which a member is attached. It *'does depend on which group you are coming from, if you are, say for example, ALDE and mainstream it is easier'*³⁴² to have access to the documents needed to develop a level of *'policy making expertise'*. This result corroborates the previously proposed findings, that *'policy making expertise'* is lacking in the INTA committee, and is further limited by which political group a member originates from. Smaller groups on the INTA committee do find it harder to achieve meaningful outputs as *'if you are Green or non-attached it will be really hard to have a resolution passed or an amendment adopted, as it is politics'*, and in addition *'access to important [policy] documents'*³⁴³ will be limited.

5.3.2 Professional Expertise

Extensive original data has been collected on the professional backgrounds of the members of the INTA committee, 7th term, to determine the presence and extent of *'professional expertise'*. This data is displayed in figure 5-3 and shows the relative rates within the committee of members with appropriate professional or non-professional backgrounds. Exhaustive data was collected by reviewing the complete professional and training backgrounds of every MEP who was a full member of the INTA committee at the end of the 7th parliamentary term. A member was deemed as possessing *'professional expertise'* if they had a professional background in an area directly involving

³⁴⁰ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁴¹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁴² Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁴³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

international commerce, international business/trade, high level (ministerial or similar political position) governmental experience of international trade negotiations³⁴⁴, trade negotiations/trade practices experience, executive experience of cross-border trade or any other relative professional experience with a clear international trade dynamic.

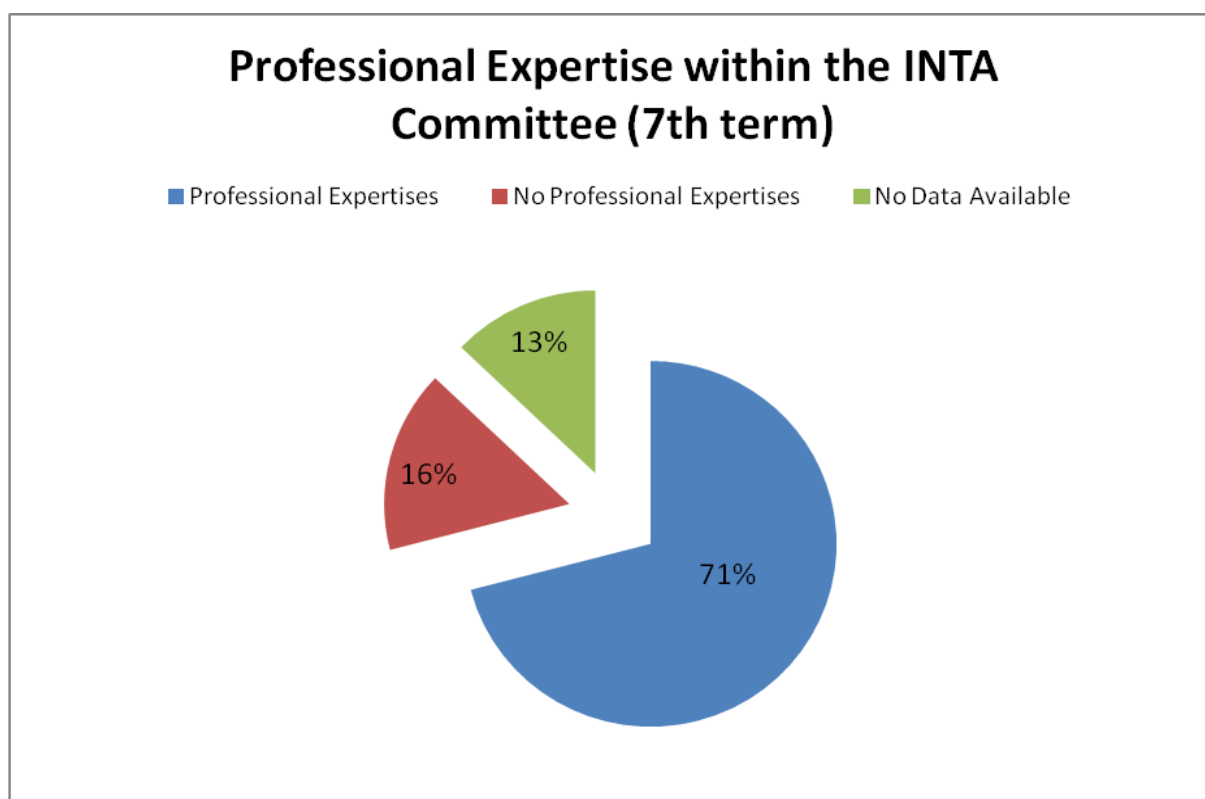


Figure 5-3 Rate of ‘professional expertises’ within the INTA committee at the end of the 7th parliamentary term. Source: Collective *curriculum vitas* of committee members.

Figure 5-3 shows that there is in fact significant remit specific expertise present within the INTA committee. This is a finding that drastically contradicts previous studies (Kleimann 2011, Gstöhl 2013) that disregarded or overlooked the high levels of ‘*professional expertise*’ clearly contained within the committee. The findings do however correlate with those of Whitaker (2011) who noted an empirical relationship between member ‘*professional expertise*’ and committee allocation on the INTA committee in previous terms (before the 7th). A new perspective on expertise must, therefore,

³⁴⁴ Professional Governmental expertise was taken as an indication of ‘*professional expertise*’ (as well as potential evidence of ‘*policy making expertise*’) as governments are the main ‘professional’ actors with regard to international trade policy. A business professional will have a professional understanding of trade practices from working within them, but a former trade minister has a professional understanding of how negotiations of international trade agreement are actually conducted and the ‘*technical feasibility*’ of decisions and trade practices.

be adopted which includes as a stand-alone entity '*professional expertise*' and its impact as a source of committee influence. While the impact of these findings indicates that '*professional expertise*' may be a central source of the INTA committee's influence over legislation, contrary to the current prescribed convention, this cannot be definitively stated without considering additional evidence collected from elite interviews.³⁴⁵ The empirical conclusions generated from these interviews clearly support this novel and original finding presented within this study that '*professional expertise*' is not only extensive within, but is important in determining the influence of the INTA committee.

Interview Data

The significance of '*professional expertise*' was highlighted for its '*importance*' to the INTA committee '*in helping members and secretariats in their work, due to the previous experience and expertise which they bring*³⁴⁶ from former professions. As a result of previous professional experience members did see themselves as being more '*capable when dealing with policy*' due to having that specialist knowledge and knowing what is '*technically feasible*³⁴⁷ when drafting policy. Members, who had professional experience, working as, for example, as a senior trade minister in their member state, emphasize the importance of this experience, that does '*benefit*' their committee work; '*as a minister for trade in my country I have been used to trying to build functioning mechanisms*'.³⁴⁸ Committee members with this type of professional experience appear to focus on developing workable technical solutions to files dealt with by the committee '*I'm accustomed with making things work*' rather than looking to reach '*purely political outcomes*'.³⁴⁹ As well as the associated benefits of being able to propose superior amendments and practical policy alternatives, as a direct result of '*professional expertise*', members of the INTA committee are able to set their ambitions at a more appropriate level within negotiations with other actors, and gain preferential outcomes as a result.

³⁴⁵ As well as data collected from the analysis of documents associated with individual examples of legislative reports.

³⁴⁶ Interview with Secretariat of the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament. 4/12/14 Brussels BE

³⁴⁷ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁴⁸ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁴⁹ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

Committee members with '*professional expertise*' understand from knowing what is '*technically feasible*' that '*sometimes when you want to make things work, you have to start with a lower level of ambition*'³⁵⁰ to achieve what would be considered a successful outcome. Once the correct level of ambition has been reached the committee can '*then progressively build more and more ambitious systems, but you have to have a basis*', which comes as a result of previous '*professional expertise*' contained on the committee. Gauging this correct level of ambition and being able to draft proposals that are '*workable*'³⁵¹ places the committee in a stronger negotiating position by demonstrating its technical competence. This makes it harder for other decision making actors to dismiss an INTA committee proposal out of hand claiming a lack of 'technical' understanding. The INTA committee during the 7th term did attempt to draw influence from its '*professional expertise*'; there are, however, a number of caveats that must be examined before '*professional expertise*' can be accepted as a reliable source of INTA committee influence.

Interestingly the data collected demonstrates that high levels of '*professional expertise*' concentrated within a committee can have drawbacks, which could affect a committee's overall influence over legislative outcomes. To treat '*professional expertise*' as a single monolithic entity would be incorrect, different professional backgrounds and expert technical perspectives do exist. For example, those committee members who have a professional background in national government will have different professional experiences as '*the administration system in member states may be very different between states*'³⁵² and this does impact upon what solutions members will find acceptable. This may bias different members towards opposing solutions and technical outcomes. Actors are conditioned by the institutional rules in which they have prior experience, and this can affect their policy attitudes. This suggestion, beyond some limited evidence, was, however, not extensively reflected within the data. In general it was suggested that '*the reflexes of the people working in administration, working in departmental offices and businesses, are very similar*'³⁵³ in their

³⁵⁰ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁵¹ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁵² Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁵³ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

practices and desired outcomes. Despite similar working approaches adopted by members who have *'professional expertise'*, difficulties do arise when dealing with the different technical systems:

'If you want to build something new, something which did not exist [which is known from working in home member states], then you always face difficulty as the governmental system will always be against you if you want to change something'.³⁵⁴

Members who do, as a result of understanding practices and different systems, have a realistic idea of what outcomes the INTA committee are able to achieve, and prevent overreach, when attempting to achieve compromise with the Council and Commission. There have, however, been examples of members, who do not have extensive *'professional expertise'* forcing the committee into an over-extended position, and as a result harming its potential influence. Many ***'young members with less professional understanding, but are more political active'***³⁵⁵ have been seen as being a potential detriment to the committee's overall influence, making unpractical demands based on ***'political declarations'*** rather than technical understanding and ***'technical feasibility'***.³⁵⁶

The role which an MEP's assistants play in supporting INTA committee members, and assisting their level of *'professional expertise,'* must, also, be highlighted. For a committee member to be efficient and successful ***'you have to have good staff'*** who will help collect and organise the ***'large volume of [technical and policy making] information received from many different sources'***.³⁵⁷ A member's influence does, to an extent ***'come down to having good staff in a MEPs office'*** as well as being able to utilize the ***'good resources within the Parliament to rely on for information'***.³⁵⁸ The importance of assistants cannot be overlooked as they do retain *'professional expertise'* alongside their members.

There is an indication from the empirical data that assistants on the INTA committee may differ from assistants on other committees. The practice on the INTA committee is to ***'hire assistants which have***

³⁵⁴ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁵⁵ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁵⁶ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁵⁷ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³⁵⁸ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

a [prepossessed] degree of specialist understanding of trade policy'.³⁵⁹ The evidence indicates, therefore, that assistants on the INTA committee are more likely to have a higher level of '*professional expertise*' than is observed as possessed by assistants on other EP committees. Indeed, evidence further indicates that MEPs on other committees are '*taking a lead*' from the INTA committee and are beginning to adopt similar practices of '*hiring professional specialist assistants in their own [policy] areas*'³⁶⁰ to further their respective committee's influence.

The unique significance of '*professional expertise*' to the committee, however, becomes further apparent with empirical evidence highlighting restrictions, not applied to other EP committees, placed on INTA committee members. Due to the environment associated with international trade policy, documents both of a technical and political nature are often highly sensitive. As a result, many documents have legal restrictions place upon them preventing their removal from the INTA committee. This has often been cited in the case of the, now well publicised, '*Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership*' (TTIP), which has been highly sensitive and controversial in its attempts to establish a free trade agreement between the EU and the USA.³⁶¹ A level of '*previous professional understanding can help*'³⁶² a member to deal with technical documents associated with trade agreements efficiently and increases the committee's overall influence as a result. In other comparable legislative committees, a member without '*professional expertise*' would contact an external expert, within the policy area, to gain their specialist understanding, and, also, to develop their own expertise. Members of the INTA committee are severely limited in this respect as they are '*unable to pass on sensitive documents surrounding negotiations*'³⁶³, with TTIP being documented as a prime, and often cited in the data, example³⁶⁴, due to the legal restrictions on the distribution of these documents to anyone outside of the committee and Parliament. INTA members are often placed in situations where they '*want to pass on a [TTIP related] document to this specialist [external] academic who*

³⁵⁹ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/1/16 Glasgow. UK

³⁶⁰ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/1/16 Glasgow. UK

³⁶¹ It has only been during the 8th term (2014- 2019) that the INTA committee has won the right to allow all its member access to all documents associated with TTIP.

³⁶² Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 12/1/16 Phone Interview

³⁶³ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 12/1/16 Phone Interview

³⁶⁴ In the example of TTIP not only were many documents restricted, but many were not even accessible even to full INTA members until the 8th term when agreement was made to make them accessible.

could tell us the impact’ of a document *‘but can’t due to the restrictions in place*’. Committee members are, therefore, unable to generate the *‘information or evidence needed to support their position in committee*’³⁶⁵ and are, furthermore, restricted in their ability to gain expertise if they do not already possess it. The cost, therefore, of not possessing a level of *‘professional expertise*’ is evident as significant (more so than in the other case studies examined) if a member wishes an active role in policy. TTIP has been a prime example, with many committee members feeling their participation is restricted simply as a result of a lack of technical expertise, and also being prevented from acquiring it externally. This evidence would, therefore, account for the high levels of *‘professional expertise*’ contained and in fact needed within the INTA committee.

Members of the INTA committee without *‘professional expertise*, are also believed by members with *‘professional expertise*’, as, on occasions, harming the INTA committee’s overall influence as a result of their perceived focus on *‘political declarations rather than [finding] workable technical solutions*’.³⁶⁶ This was evident in the example of the ‘Conflict Minerals’ report³⁶⁷, which was proposed originally during the 7th term, but continued into the 8th term, and attempted to create a common European regulation on the trading and tracking of minerals derived from, and potentially produced in designated conflict zones. The plenary of the Parliament adopted a *‘strict political position, due to the tabloidization of this topic*’³⁶⁸ according to some involved. This *‘collective’* position was not supported by the report’s rapporteur, who was *‘in a minority against the reports shadow rapporteurs’*, who had adopted a *collective opposing position against the rapporteur*³⁶⁹ which was considered politically ambitious. This hard-line political position was much to the consternation of other INTA committee members with professional experience *‘I wanted to have a functioning regulation along the line proposed by the Commission, which has not happened*’.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 12/1/16 Phone Interview

³⁶⁶ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁶⁷ *‘Union system for supply chain due diligence self-certification of responsible importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating in conflict-affected and high-risk areas (2014/0059(COD))*’. Dealt with at the very beginning of the 8th term, the conflict minerals file attempted to set clear EU regulations on the process of the trading, and tracking, of minerals exported from known conflict zones. (EUR-Lex 2014)

³⁶⁸ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁶⁹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁷⁰ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

The outcome of the report has been that *‘the Parliament has adopted a very strict position which is very far away from the Commission, and it is also very far from the Council, so it will be really difficult [to reach a successful legislative outcome]’*.³⁷¹ By adopting a position not perceived as technically feasible by other actors, or many INTA committee members, a compromise, which would have remained beneficial to the INTA, was not reached. *‘Professional expertise’* can benefit the committee overall, as this new data clearly demonstrates, however political or policy making considerations do play a role in the relative influence of the INTA committee, as indicated. The INTA committee has been observed to become *‘increasingly political over time’*³⁷², which has affected the *‘balance of decision making’*³⁷³ within the committee.

5.4 Committee Unity Perspective

‘Partisan politics’ is at the centre of decision-making in all areas of the European Union and is, of course, evident in the INTA committee.³⁷⁴ While party sources may empower their members with specialised expertise, they can affect a committee’s influence in both a positive or negative manner by the associated unity and conflict between the different groupings. A committee suffering from internal conflict will have less influence overall than a committee that can present a united front to other actors. A more cohesive committee will be a more influential committee (Kreppel 1999, 2000, 2002b, Nugent 2010, Hagemann & Høyland 2010, Costello & Thomson 2013, Burns 2013b). The INTA committee has its own partisan dynamic that affects the committee’s standing within Europe, and despite being seen as largely consensual, conflict is present due to the extensive national interests at stake.

5.4.1 Political Dynamic of the INTA Committee

The INTA committee is one of the smaller committees within the EP. During the 7th term the INTA committee consisted of 31 full members along with an equal number of substitutes (Kleimann 2011).

To place this in a comparative context with the other case studies, the ENVI committee had 71

³⁷¹ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁷² Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³⁷³ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³⁷⁴ Interview with Secretariat of the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament. 4/12/14 Brussels BE

members and the BUDG committee had 44 members in total during the 7th term. The INTA committee is, therefore, the smallest of the three case studies that make up this project, and is also one of the smallest active legislative committees in the EP. It has often been suggested that the more members a committee comprises (within practical reason at an optimal level to ensure efficiency) the more important it is accredited to be as a legislative actor (Mattson & Strøm 1996, Strøm 1998). It would appear, however, that the INTA committee is an exception to this ‘rule’³⁷⁵, and despite its comparatively low membership numbers, and ‘junior’ standing (disputed above) by way of its perceived late origin, the INTA committee has become one of the busiest legislative committees of the EP during the 7th parliamentary term (Podgorny 2013).³⁷⁶

The origins of the INTA committee are complex, and as a result the history of its chair appointees has been similarly convoluted. If the committee is understood to be a continuation of the External Economic Relations Committee (EERC)³⁷⁷, founded in 1979, there have been a number of different committee chairs (as demonstrated in table 5-1) from a range of political ideological backgrounds.³⁷⁸ Since its establishment³⁷⁹ as the INTA committee in 2004, the committee chairs have comprised appointees from the centre left S&D, and the further left European United Left/Nordic Green Left groupings. During the course of the 7th parliamentary term the INTA committee was chaired by the highly experienced S&D member, Dr Vital Moreira.³⁸⁰ During the Moreira term the committee had two vice chairs being held by the ECR, and one vice chair each allocated to the EPP and the Green groupings. It is important to understand this political dynamic, as if one ideological discipline with a

³⁷⁵ A second, converse, exception to this rule would be the AFET committee which is one of the largest, but one of the weakest committees in terms of legislative involvement, as Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is not a supranational policy area.

³⁷⁶ Interestingly the number of members of the INTA has increased to 41 for the start of the 8th parliamentary term. This would signal an understanding of the importance that the Parliament places on the INTA committee and would match the significantly greater number of legislative files having to be processed by the INTA. It is difficult, however, to gauge how many of these members are indeed active in the legislative process, as it is common that some full members may not actively take part in committee proceedings, whereas some substitutes may take an active interest in the operational procedures (Corbett *et al* 2007).

³⁷⁷ There are still INTA members during the 7th term who had originally served on the EERC committee.

³⁷⁸ Swinging politically from right to left.

³⁷⁹ Or re-establishment depending on your perspective.

³⁸⁰ With the start of the new parliamentary term the committee chair is now held by Bernd Lange, once again of the centre left S&D. In addition for the 8th term the vice chairs of the INTA are largely controlled by the centre right of the EPP, with 2 vice-chairs, and the ECR, with 1 vice-chair, and the final vice-chair held by the Greens.

particular perspective on international trade, is guiding the committee this could have a significant effect on the INTA committee's legislative influence and far reaching ramifications for its legislative standing.

Table 5-1 Committee Chairs of External Economic Relations (1979 – 1999) and International Trade Committee (2004 – 2014)

Date Held Chair	Chair Person	Party Grouping
1979 - 1984	Fred Catherwood	ED (Centre Right)
1984 - 1987	Shelagh Roberts	ED (Centre Right)
1987 - 1989	Jacques Mallet	RDE (EDA)(Centre Right)
1989 - 1997	Willy De Clercq	LIB (Liberal)
1997 - 1998	Luciana Castellina	GUE (Left)
1998 - 1999	Philippe Herzog	GUE
1999 – 2004	External Economic Relations Committee Merged with ITRE Committee	-
2004 – 2007 (INTA committee established)	Enrique Baron	S&D
2007 – 2009	Helmuth Markov	GUE
2009 - 2014	Vital Moreira	S&D
2014 -	Bernd Lange	S&D

The political party breakdown of the INTA committee during the 7th term can be observed in figure 5-4. Interestingly, in most EP committees the third largest bloc would not normally be the ECR, but would commonly be the ALDE, which only has three members on the INTA committee. This reflects the ECR's significant ideological prioritising of trade policy that also appears evident in its control of two vice chairs during the 7th term. In addition, the GUE/NGL and the Greens/EFA groupings had two members each, while the final committee positions comprised one member from the EFD, and one independent member.

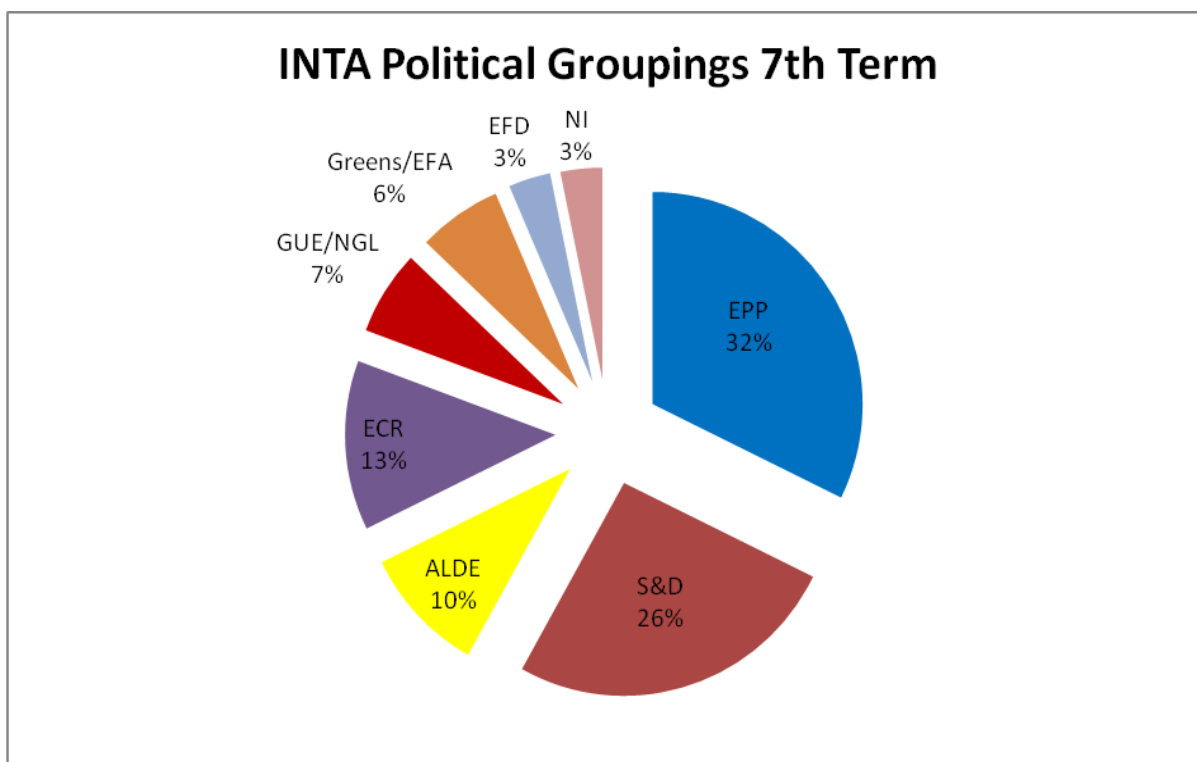


Figure 5-4 Political breakdown of party groupings within the 7th term of Committee on International Trade. Source: European Parliament website INTA committee, members list (2014)

‘Grand coalition’ forming between the EPP and S&D was the most common result within the INTA committee according to published reports (CEPS 2012) on voting patterns. Towards the end of the 7th term the rate at which a grand coalition would form was in two out of every three votes (CEPS 2012). There is, however, existing evidence of a minor shift towards the centre left with the S&D and the ALDE³⁸¹ groupings seen as being marginally more likely to gain a favourable outcome than other groupings at the end of the committee’s legislative process (CEPS 2012). This may indicate to an extent what ideological shape proposed amendments may have taken within the committee. Due to the allocation of seats and committee leadership positions, however, it is clear that the centre right had a particularly strong interest in the INTA committee with the overrepresentation of centre right members, from both the EPP and the ECR on the committee and in leadership positions. This fact, coupled with the success implicated within the literature (Van den Putte *et al* 2014) of the centre and centre left in influencing the committee output, could create an interesting partisan dynamic to

³⁸¹ The ALDE grouping is often perceived as being more classically liberal on trade as their name would suggest, but with a degree of variation, as with all groupings.

examine with regard to its impact on the committee's influence. There has, indeed, been evidence (Van den Putte *et al* 2014) of a clash of views over such key agreements as TTIP, which has undermined the committee's position. However, conflict would appear minor during the 7th term, but dramatic in the 8th term.

5.4.2 Committee Unity

As detailed within the theoretical framework, committees will maximise their potential influence if the party groupings demonstrate significant unity, whereas a collective position and influence would be undermined by infighting between committee members. Significantly, therefore, published reports (CEPS 2012) identify the INTA committee as one of the committees with the highest levels of consensual law making within the EP, despite the partisan issues identified previously. This would suggest that the need to present a united political front in order to best achieve objectives is recognised by the party groupings within the committee. However, a perception that conflict between the party groups is absent in the INTA committee would be an overstatement, challenging the perceived wisdom where unity may be expected, in order to maximise influence. According to Podgorny (2013)³⁸² there has been evidence that the area of trade policy has in fact become, and continues to develop as, a highly politicised area. It is noteworthy that the policy preferences of both the centre right and the centre left are divergent within the INTA committee: classically the centre right preference is for trade liberalization and supporting the Commission's efforts to achieve this objective, while the centre left (the S&D encompasses a wide range of trade priorities, from liberalization to labour protection) and broadly supports more labour and environmental provisions to be included in trade agreements (Woolcock 2008). Although this has the potential to affect the relationship each group has with the Commission, the committee has been noted for supporting to some degree both preferences, and for the most part finding acceptable compromise agreements (Woolcock 2008).

³⁸² An experienced policy advisor to the 7th term chair of the INTA committee

In addition to partisan interest at a supranational level, national interests are, also, often represented on the INTA committee in some sectors and these in turn may affect the committee's decision-making processes (Richardson 2012). Since the extension of powers to the INTA committee, with the implementation of the Lisbon treaty, the EU-Korea free trade agreement (FTA)³⁸³ has been the biggest single item of legislation that has significantly involved the committee. A large number of amendments were proposed by the INTA committee to protect the European car-manufacturing sector. Notably, German and Italian MEPs from a spread of all parties represented on the committee presented these amendments (Richardson 2012), and this demonstrates that the INTA committee provides a platform from which national interests can be represented successfully. Indeed it appears that these provisions largely derived from national lobbying groups.³⁸⁴ *'Trade is an area where national divisions do exist. The national division [on interests] in the Council are replicated in the Parliament, you see them clearly'*.³⁸⁵ Thus the different interests represented on the INTA committee, supranational vs. national vs. party group, which the previous example highlights may affect the policy output that the committee is producing and increase partisan conflict as a result.

It has been suggested that a select sub-group of specialist actors on the INTA committee, largely along partisan lines, dominate in relation to contact with the Commission (Richardson 2012, Van den Putte *et al* 2014). It has been reported that meetings between the Commission and the committee have often taken place with only a small number of INTA members present from particular ideological backgrounds and this, perhaps not surprisingly, causes much 'consternation' with the wider committee membership (Richardson 2012). Those with a more classically liberal outlook on trade are observed as having a closer relationship with the Commission, which as a result empowers said actors.

³⁸³ Which sought to established a free trade agreement (the removal of trade barriers and tariffs) between the European Union and the Republic of Korea.

³⁸⁴ *'We are really lobbied by permanent representatives [representatives of the member states]; they never leave us in peace. Trade is an area of national divisions. Normally the discussion in the Council, they look just like the discussion in the Parliament, you can see this international division too'*. Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE.

³⁸⁵ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

Empirical Data

The party groupings have a significant impact on the decision making process of the INTA committee. All amendments proposed on the committee are examined by *'the political party'* in order to confirm the political *'feasibility of the amendment'*.³⁸⁶ As is the practice on other committees, reports are allocated based on a points bidding system. As would be expected *'the biggest group decides first, so the EPP, then the Socialists, then ECR, then the ALDE, decide which reports they want to follow'*.³⁸⁷ This method of allocating reports is common across the EP with a few exceptions, such as the BUDG committee where reports are rotated in a non-partisan manner; report allocation *'takes place as more a negotiation between the groups'* on the INTA committee. Evidence collected, which highlights significant unity often displayed on the INTA committee, also indicates a clear partisan dynamic within the INTA committee that has created a level of disunity and undermined the INTA's common position as a result. This has been most noticeable during TTIP negotiations, but also in the interesting example of the 'Conflict Minerals' report.³⁸⁸

The members and their party groups, which make up the INTA committee, do *'understand that presenting a united front to other institutions is an important source of committee influence'*.³⁸⁹ Interview evidence from all sources clearly supports the hypothesis that only with a united position can the INTA committee reach its potential zenith of legislative influence. *'Committee unity is not always easy'* as is evident from the conflict resulting from, the almost aptly named, 'conflict minerals report' *'but it's the goal to present a united front to other actors'*.³⁹⁰ Evidence exists of conflict between the different party groups on the INTA committee, with some fundamental policy divides undermining influence. The committee has been highlighted as an area where national interests are represented, *'trade is an area of national divisions'*³⁹¹, and common positions are *'often difficult to*

³⁸⁶ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁸⁷ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁸⁸ *'Union system for supply chain due diligence self-certification of responsible importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating in conflict-affected and high-risk areas (2014/0059(COD))'*

³⁸⁹ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

³⁹⁰ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/12/15 Phone Interview

³⁹¹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

*reach*³⁹² as a result. Empirical evidence does show, despite the perceived consensual nature of the committee, *‘within the INTA committee one important thing is that it’s really about the divisions, between the groups, between the nationalities, and sometimes between the northern and southern Europe division*³⁹³ which does affect the committee’s decision making. These divides can be seen clearly as *‘the discussions in the Parliament, it looks just like the discussions in the Council, you can see this international division*³⁹⁴ displayed within the committee. The importance of partisan interests and conflict would appear particularly salient, therefore, in the case of the INTA committee. To be clear, conflicts relating to national interests are not the same as partisan conflict (the latter refers to conflict among different political groupings/different ideological perspectives). What is being referred to here, are cases where a national interest divides the committee, which is meant to look out for the pan-European (supranational) interest.

There is a *‘clear divide between the attitudes over trade outcomes between the [political] groups*³⁹⁵ of the International Trade committee. The centre right of the committees has a more *‘liberal attitude towards trade agreements outcomes’*, while the left has a *‘more ‘social’ attitude towards trade agreements’*.³⁹⁶ As well as the dimensions listed, differences occur between the *‘northern and western parts of Europe, the service based economies, and you have those economies in central and eastern Europe where manufacturing is still very important’*.³⁹⁷ While these ‘differences’ have been noted within previous studies on decision making in EU trade policy (Woolcock 2008, Nugent 2010), and thus confirm the previous consensus, it is important to clearly highlight these points in the context of conflict and how they impact on INTA committee influence, which has not previously been discussed in significant detail. There is, indeed, an important link between the ideological split and the committee’s overall influence which has not previously been acknowledged. The divide confirmed above impacts upon the committee’s overall ability to influence outcomes. A clear divide exists

³⁹² Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁹³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁹⁴ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

³⁹⁵ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/12/15 Phone Interview

³⁹⁶ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/12/15 Phone Interview

³⁹⁷ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

between what is seen as a successful trade outcome based on the origins of the group and the political actor involved.

Conflict within the committee has been attributed directly to the fact that *'you have national interests and you have European common interests'*, represented on the INTA committee, and *'sometimes it's not very easy to make the compromise'*³⁹⁸ between these deeply conflicting ideas. Attitudes towards trade are starkly different across the whole of the EU, and over a number of different competing dimensions, which *'are reflected clearly on the committee'*.³⁹⁹ Due to this *'diversity of interests'* unity can be difficult to reach within the INTA committee which consequently undermines the collective position of the committee in negotiations with other actors. *'Industries'* which are *'important to one country'* may be *'totally absent in another'*⁴⁰⁰, so policy priorities will, and have been, evident in interview data, as differing to protect these different industries. Due to these *'perfectly rational concerns and differences'* between members, the INTA committee does *'not find it at all easy'* to reach a compromise position especially *'if the stakes are high'*. Depending on the issue *'this leads to the difficulties when dealing with certain dossiers because the political passions arise'*.⁴⁰¹ The direct impact of partisan conflict on the overall influence of the INTA committee is evident within the empirical example of the 'Conflict Minerals' report.

The object of the 'Conflict Minerals regulation' *'was to set a technical plan which would be workable in implementation'* and was originally proposed within committee to be *'close to the Commission's preferred position'*. The final outcome of the report within the INTA committee was, however, that *'there has not been a consensus; there has been a majority decision in the INTA committee, but not a consensus'*.⁴⁰² As shown in the previous section, the Parliament adopted an overly 'radical' political position, far away from the Commission and Council's positions, and as result has been unable to influence the report as would normally be expected. The position adopted

³⁹⁸ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

³⁹⁹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

⁴⁰¹ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

⁴⁰² Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

was due to the partisan conflict which existed within the INTA committee as *‘in this specific report the INTA committee’s rapporteur was in the minority, all the INTA committee shadow rapporteurs made a coalition to change completely the philosophy of the text’*.⁴⁰³ The INTA committee was not able to create a united front *‘which lead to the failure of the report’*.⁴⁰⁴ The role of the rapporteur and the shadow rapporteurs was highlighted as a main factor in the failure of consensual decision making in this case.

As with all EP committees, rapporteurs will draft a position towards a Commission proposal and the capacity to create a united front does to a great extent *‘depend on the rapporteur and their abilities’*.⁴⁰⁵ This has been demonstrated in the data for other EP committees but is, also, confirmed in the INTA committee. In the case of the ‘Conflict Minerals’ report the decisions were taken in the *‘shadow meetings, but without the rapporteur’* being present. Notably the action taken by the shadow rapporteurs *‘is not a regular practice’* within the INTA committee *‘they just completely disagreed with the rapporteur’s line’*.⁴⁰⁶ The outcome was a collective position opposing the rapporteur. It is important to note that the partisan conflict over the report was not over the fundamentally technical elements, but rather the shadows (who were supported by the plenary) were seen, by those in opposition (yet having actually drafted the report), as making *‘political declarations at the expense of technical outcomes’*.⁴⁰⁷ This may not be a universal opinion, of the actual reality of events, but the example does display the empirical potential for conflict on the INTA committee and the impact it can have on influence.

Conflict, between actors within the INTA committee has, also, been observed in the TTIP negotiations. The INTA committee membership does suffer from significant differences of attitudes, matching with the classic understanding of trade policy, in a number of clear policy examples *‘it’s really true these divides exist, you see it on many files like TTIP’*.⁴⁰⁸ In the example of TTIP it *‘was’*,

⁴⁰³ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁴⁰⁴ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/12/15 Phone Interview

⁴⁰⁵ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁴⁰⁷ Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

according to members, *'a Northern European MEP and EPP member'* who drafted the INTA committee's position with a particular *'view'* in mind, while *'all the shadows were Italians or French MEPs'* who *'understood each other very quickly and worked well together'*⁴⁰⁹ with their own position. While this would largely confirm what would be expected for this policy area, based on previous understanding of trade policy, the important finding is that despite partisan conflict over key provision within TTIP, this has been cited as an *'exception rather than a rule'*⁴¹⁰ within the INTA committee.

Some level of partisan conflict will exist on all EP committees, which does undermine collective positions, and the INTA committee is no different. However, while key examples do exist of conflict, over 'TTIP' and 'Conflict Minerals' where the INTA committee's influence was weakened as a result, these are exceptions especially during the 7th term. The outcomes of the 'Conflict Minerals' report is noted as an *'anomaly where consensual decision making did not prevail'*. A *'united position is the more common of outcomes'*⁴¹¹ with any partisan conflicts being dealt with at early committee stages during the 7th term.

5.5 Public Policy Output

The INTA committee has been assessed as being largely driven by informational inputs and producing mainly regulatory outputs (Yordanova 2009a). That the committee is driven by informational input would appear to correlate with the specialist nature of the INTA committee. With the expansion of legislative powers and greater involvement in trade negotiations, post-Lisbon, the nature of the INTA committee policy making may be in a process of realignment. It is plausible with the increase in political involvement that there could be a progression towards a more interest driven input, and correlating distributive outputs originating from the committee, with the committee involved in more politically sensitive agreements where domestic interests may be at stake. This would correlate with Follesdal and Hix's (2006) argument that the EU no longer produces only

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁴¹⁰ Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

⁴¹¹ Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/12/15 Phone Interview

regulatory policy as most policy areas post-Lisbon now include distributive outputs, and a general trend towards politicisation.

If this is happening it would weaken the influence of the INTA committee, as committees seeking regulatory outputs are seen as more successful than those looking to gain distributive outputs against the opposition of the Council, as hypothesised (*H4*). The expansion of co-decision which the committee experienced, after the ToL, was in largely regulatory areas, however, associated with the actual implementation of trade agreements. The empirical evidence collected does demonstrate that the International Trade committee deals largely with regulatory policy as this is the nature of international trade legislation.

The evidence would suggest that the source of the INTA committee's influence does in large part come from the type of policy enacted. There have been a number of new policy provisions proposed and supported by the committee, for example, such as the inclusion of human rights provision into FTA agreements, which have been adopted by the Commission during the negotiation process (Armanovica & Bendini 2014). The INTA committee has a number of opportunities to attempt to influence final agreements during the negotiation process, as detailed in the introduction section, and how framework agreements are shaped. The committee has been placed in an advantageous position that it can use to further its own influence over legislation (Richardson 2012). This is not a surprising development as the committees of the EP are well known for their ability to make incremental gains in their legislative influence, often well beyond whatever was envisioned in any implemented treaties (Judge & Earnshaw 2003). The INTA committee appears, following the ToL, to be a committee that is trying to maximise its potential to influence legislation. It is currently unclear, however, how much this potential influence has developed into real practical influence within policy.

During the 7th term the INTA committee dealt with 53 co-decision reports, of these 53 co-decision files only 8 required a second reading, and only one of these required a conciliation meeting (Legislative Observatory 2014). The greater majority of these legislative files were regulatory in nature. The committee does have formal involvement in areas of legislation dealing with 'Macro-

Financial Assistance' (MFA) packages, which do directly distribute funds to external states. However, while the funds do originate from the member states they generally come as a result of collective agreement within the Council, pledging MFA support to third party states before a legislative proposal is drafted. This can be viewed in the example of the 'Further Macro-Financial Assistance for Georgia'. The objective of this act was to provide the country of Georgia with financial assistance to demonstrate continued economic and political support for the country after the 2008 armed conflict with Russia (European Council 2012, Official Journal 2012). The Commission proposal allocated €46 million in MFA, and included a number of provisions for reform and better economic governance to promote greater integration between Georgia and the EU, and as a result set the potential for a future free trade agreement between the two. This support was, however, already pledged by the member states directly after the conflict in 2008, and thus long before the proposal to continue the support. So, while the INTA committee was involved in amending this legislative act, which did distribute funds, and required three full legislative readings, there was no remit to extend funds beyond what the member states had already agreed to allocate. Therefore, the INTA committee's distributive involvement was already limited.

Most of the files dealt with by the 7th term INTA committee were agreed during the first reading. It would seem that this was due to the significant technical and regulatory nature of the proposals made. Even in the example of the 'Further Macro-Financial Assistance for Georgia' the main negotiating points between the INTA committee and Commission were over comitology issues of procedure (European Council 2012), rather than substantive changes over the distribution of funding. It would appear that, tentatively, the INTA committee was more influential during the 7th term as a result of the regulatory nature of trade policy dealt with over this time period. However, this is a clear area for future investigation, as without more prime examples of the committee attempting to produce distributive policy outputs, a firm conclusion cannot be drawn on what the impact of policy areas on influence could be.

5.6 Conclusions

This investigation of the International Trade committee has revealed a number of original points, greatly expanding upon the current understanding of the potentially different sources and avenues of committee influence. Unique empirical evidence collected for this study has refuted the previous convention over the sources of INTA committee influence, questioning previous orthodoxy contained within the literature. Formerly the INTA committee, while seen as potentially highly influential, in ‘reality’ has been observed in some cases as weak in terms of its ability to impact upon legislative outcomes. This lack of influence had previously attributed to a perceived absence of expertise and specialization within the committee (Woolcock 2010c, Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). The INTA committee, however, as demonstrated in the empirical data collected, has a significantly high level of *‘professional expertise’*. All data collected indicated the significance of this resource to the committee’s overall influence and ability to impact legislative outcomes, supporting *H2*, and challenging previous consensus on the committee. An INTA member without *‘professional expertise’* must pay a heavy cost to be involved in the policy process. This was further compounded by the INTA committee members’ inability to consult external policy experts. *‘Professional expertise’*, therefore, is undoubtedly the main source of INTA committee influence, disposing of some of the out-dated understanding contained within the literature. With regards to the role of *‘policy making expertise’*, however, a more nuanced, while still deeply significant, result was identified.

‘Policy making expertise’ was shown to be comparatively low within the INTA committee, confirming previous impressions of the committee, which had lacked empirical support (Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). However, a previously unidentified level of expertise was retained in senior committee members, which was evident in the hierarchical committee structure observed in this study during the 7th term. This level of stratification did make it harder for new committee members, who did not already possess some level of expertise, to develop the *‘policy making expertise’* skills that would have benefited the INTA committee’s overall influence.

Committee turnover did have an impact on the INTA committee with some loss of *‘policy making expertise’* entering into the 7th term, negated, however, somewhat by an influx of new members with

previous expertise on other committees. Interestingly evidence of tension between ‘*new blood*’ members and older members was evident to an extent. New members were perceived as being more active in policy entrepreneurship in attempting to exercise the formal powers of the INTA committee, although, older members were not seen as potential roadblocks to progress as observed in other case studies. Overall the case of the INTA committee expands our understanding of the potential sources of committee influence, and challenges previous consensus. The role of turnover and current understanding surrounding the concept (Krehbiel 1991, Mattson & Strøm 2006, Costello & Thomson 2010) has been further questioned, and hypothesis *H1* challenged, with evidence showing the (re)invigorating effect of turnover.

Political conflict within the INTA committee was generally low, albeit beyond some exceptional, yet dramatic, examples. Committee members clearly understood the importance of presenting a united front to other actors, largely confirming *H3*. The committee made efforts to pursue this unity despite the classical divisions over trade, which are illustrated in the example of the ‘TTIP’ negotiations. The evidence of the ‘Conflict Minerals’ report, which ultimately ended⁴¹² in protracted dispute did, also, illustrate how important unity was to the committee if it wished to be influential. If more conflict had been apparent between partisan groups, within the INTA committee, it would have seen its influence undermined more often, and as dramatically, as was the case in the ‘Conflict Minerals’ report. Finally hypothesis *H4* was confirmed as the committee was observed as drawing some influence from the fact it did not engage in largely distributive policy outputs.

⁴¹² Officially the file is still active within the plenary but no hope of progress was expressed, with positions currently entrenched.

Chapter Six Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this project has been to elucidate the potential sources of committee influence in the European Parliament. The reason behind this focus has been to address the puzzle, highlighted in chapter one, that while all EP committees are equal in terms of formal legislative powers, some committees are reported to have more influence than others, potentially utilising different informal sources of influence. The central argument of this thesis, therefore, has been that committees draw upon different sources of influence rather than drawing influence from any single source, and that different committees do not utilise these potential sources of influence in a uniform manner. The influence of an actor is defined by the totality of sources (Scully 1997a) and resources (Dahl 1957, 1961) that an actor (committee) has available to exploit and deploy in their relationships with others to impact outcomes towards their desired preferences. This concept of influence presented by Dahl (1957, 1961) and others (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Scully 1997a, Marshall 2010, Costello & Thomson 2013) constitutes this thesis' understanding of influence.

This thesis has proposed and tested four different hypotheses to empirically account for the patterns and relationships that occur between the different sources of influence that can be identified, in an attempt to account for how committee influence is established. As a result, a number of previous assumptions over committee influence were tested, and evidence counter to the standard view provided. This final chapter will review the main findings from the three case studies comprising the thesis, with the aim of understanding their implications, not only for the committee system of the EU, but also for the wider field of legislative politics, within the general limitations of the methods used within the study. The findings from each of the individual case studies will be compared against the proposed hypotheses to test their validity. The empirical evidence comprising this thesis has allowed the research question '*how do committees establish legislative influence?*' to be answered.

Beyond the United States' Congress, which has been researched extensively (Shepsle 1979, 1986, 1989, Shepsle & Weingast 1981, 1984, 1987, Krehbiel *et al* 1987, Weingast & Marshall 1988,

Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, Weingast 1989, Krehbiel 1991, Cox & McCubbins 2007a, 2007b), understanding of sources of committee influence, both in the comparative field, of different parliament systems, and within the European Union, is underdeveloped. What is currently known about committee systems, especially in the EU, is generally derived either from a select number of largely quantitative studies, that have used spatial modelling to assess the EP's total legislative influence (Tsebelis 1994, Moser 1996, 1997, Crombez 1997, 2000, Tsebelis *et al* 2001), or alternatively studies focusing on the former 'legalist' discrepancies which existed between EP committees when differing legislative procedures have been implemented (Tsebelis 1995, Garrett & Tsebelis 1997, Tsebelis & Garrett 1997, 2000, 2001, Scully 1997a, 1997b). While in recent years a very limited number of studies, most notably by Whitaker (2011) and Yordanova (2013), have attempted to address this lack of academic scrutiny, current understanding of what comprises sources of EP committee influence remains largely incomplete and patchy.

Standing committees represent the best mechanism by which democratically elected legislatures are able to influence policy outcomes in many political systems (Strøm 1998). Without influential standing committees, the process of political decision-making would otherwise become increasingly dominated by executives and non-elected technocrats. This is true, not only in the case of the EP, but also for all systems in which committees have a role in the legislative process. If parliamentary committees, by having legislative influence, have a meaningful role, then this is important for democracy as it means that legislatures continue to represent the electorate. The thesis has addressed the paucity of knowledge over sources of committee influence in the EP by adopting a qualitative approach with the use of elite interviews⁴¹³, along with extensive empirical data collected on individual members' professional backgrounds and experience.⁴¹⁴ Quantitative methods have largely dominated the field of legislative politics, and this study has redressed this imbalance. This qualitative data has not only greatly expanded the understanding of what comprises committee influence in the

⁴¹³ 30 semi structured interviews have been conducted in total with actors ranging from former government ministers and senior EP committee chairs, to junior committee members and committee secretariat.

⁴¹⁴ Statistical data was collected on all (146) full committee members serving on the selected case study committees.

EP in particular but also, importantly, it has helped to elucidate better the mechanisms of committee legislative influence, within the limits of a small-n comparative study. Thus, while the attention of this project is on the EP, discussion can be focused on the significant impact that the original empirical findings, comprising the present study, have for developing the wider comparative field of legislative studies, while acknowledging the limitations and avoiding overly general claims.

The chapter will first present, and then analyse, the empirical findings generated within each of the case studies. Once these findings have been discussed, they will be assessed for their impact on the current understanding of legislative influence. Finally, as a result of the findings generated here a number of new avenues for potential future research are discussed.

6.2 Empirical Findings

The empirical findings that have been generated in the present study have far reaching ramifications well beyond the area of focus, the committee system of the EP, as they question and provide evidence to the contrary of many of the existing perspectives on influence and legislative committees.

Committees can draw influence from a number of potential, non-exclusive sources. Three EP committees were selected as case studies as each was clearly identified as being consistently, and highly, influential within the committee system of the European Parliament. Of the three case study committees selected, each has previously had the potential source of its significant legislative influence identified in existing literature, with each apparently drawing influence from a different ‘pattern’ of potential sources (see Chapter 1). Some preconceived ideas regarding the origins from where the three committees have derived their high levels of influence already exist, with varying degrees of empirical support. These perceived sources of influence, drawn from the existing literature, were therefore tested in turn for their validity in each case study against the empirical evidence collected in this thesis, to generate an informed conclusion and understanding of what comprises sources of committee influence. Table 6-1 demonstrates the patterns of the sources of influence which committees do draw upon, identified as a result of the empirical data, across the selected cases.

Table 6-1 Sources of Committee Influence (7th term)

	Policy Making Expertise	Professional Expertise	Committee Unity	Policy Output
The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	Major Source of Committee Influence	Minor Source of Committee Influence	Minor Source of Committee Influence	Source of Committee Influence
The Committee on Budgets	Source of Committee Influence	Source of Committee Influence	Major Source of Committee Influence	Not a Source of Committee Influence
The Committee on International Trade	Source of Committee Influence	Major Source of Committee Influence	Source of Committee Influence	Source of Committee Influence

The informational perspective, originating from the US congressional committee system (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1989, 1990, Krehbiel 1991), proposes that committees operate in such a way as to actively promote members to acquire information (expertise) in order to become experts within their committee's remit, which as a consequence heightens the committee's influence. The more appropriate expertise a committee contains, the greater the influence that committee will have as it is able to make proposals and amendments to legislation which are more technical and specialized in nature. Committees are designed to further the expertise of its members as time progresses, by making expertise a requirement for a member to actively participate in the legislative process and keeping the costs of acquiring it low (Krehbiel 1991). Thus, while expertise has been established as a potential source of committee influence, this is often associated with high membership retention (Scarrow 1997, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Benedetto 2005, Daniel 2013). In order to test the validity of the informational perspective in accounting for committee influence, expertise has been defined as consisting of two separate elements, '*policy making expertise*', which consists of a member's acquired experience and institutional memory of policy making within a system, and '*professional expertise*' which consists of the technical specialization a member has developed from a previous professional career, a clear distinction identified within this thesis.

6.2.1 Policy Making Expertise

The longer a member stays on a committee, the more '*policy making expertise*' that member will acquire (Scarrow 1997, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Benedetto 2005, Daniel 2013) as a direct experience of developing an 'institutional memory' of the policy process and learning how to work with other legislative actors. It was, therefore, hypothesised that with the associated benefit of having a higher level of '*policy making expertise*' within a committee, (H1) '*a committee with high membership turnover will have a weakened level of legislative influence*'. This hypothesis was tested in each of the case studies selected and the results, to a significant degree, refuted the hypothesis and generates evidence counter to the current convention over the effects of membership turnover on committee influence.

'*Policy making expertise*' had previously been established within the literature as a significant source of legislative influence for the ENVI Committee (Bowler & Farrell 1995, Burns 2005a, Weale *et al* 2005) and the BUDG Committee (Corbett *et al* 2007, Kauppi & Widgren 2008), but not for the INTA committee (Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). While the empirical evidence collected confirmed that '*policy making expertise*' was a source of ENVI and BUDG committee influence, the concept of membership retention as a prerequisite for committee influence was significantly challenged in all cases. Furthermore, the INTA committee has been established empirically as containing notable levels of '*policy making expertise*' within the data, questioning previous assessments of the committee's source of influence.

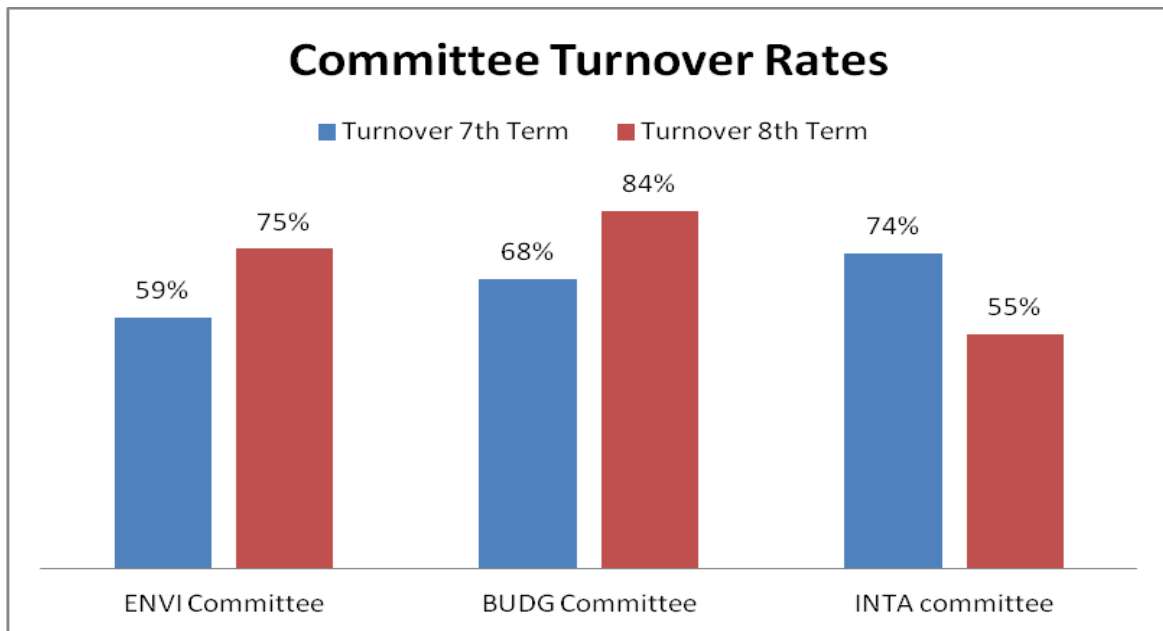


Figure 6-1 Committee Membership Turnover. Source: Collective Data from European Parliament Website (2014)

Each of the cases had a relative level of membership turnover (figure 6-1). The ENVI committee retained a comparatively higher proportion of its membership (41% membership retention) than many other EP committees entering the 7th term. The BUDG (32% membership retention) and INTA (26% membership retention) committees, in contrast, had lower rates of membership retention. Elite interviews confirmed that having a high number of members, who had experience of the co-decision procedure before the 7th term, was an evident factor in determining the ENVI committee's overall legislative influence.⁴¹⁵ Members of the committee, while often shown as lacking in technical understanding of policy, had a deeply developed understanding of the policy making process within the ENVI Committee's remit. However, maintaining a higher level of membership retention would not appear to have improved all aspects of the ENVI committee's influence judging by the empirical data generated.

The ENVI committee does use '*policy making expertise*' as a source of influence; it was, however, observed that extended individual membership on the committee did not result in a continuation and enhancement of the committee's overall influence. ENVI committee members have been shown, for

⁴¹⁵Many committees would only gain co-decision powers at the start of the 7th term.

the first time as part of this study, to have legislative *'sell-by dates'*. After an extended period of time spent on the committee, despite having a deep level of *'policy making expertise'*, such *'past their sell-by date'* members become an observable hindrance to, rather than a facilitator of, policy making and consequently diminish the ENVI committee's influence. This remarkable result, not just specific to the ENVI committee, but also interestingly replicated in the data collected from the BUDG committee, has not previously been noted in the literature which, in fact, has focused only on the negative aspects of turnover. Once an experienced ENVI member has passed this *'expiration date'*, becomes *'set in their ways'*, and begins to oppose original policy making solutions, their removal as a result of natural electoral turnover, has been shown to have a significantly positive effect on the ENVI committee's overall influence.

For the BUDG committee to influence budgetary outcomes, its relationships with the European Commission must be well established as elite interview data has shown. Personal contacts and institutional networking are vital in determining its comparative influence. Empirical interview evidence demonstrated that during the 7th term (2009-2014), despite the extremely high potential⁴¹⁶ for a strong relationship to be formed, this was not in fact established. Notably, upon entering into the 8th term (2014–2019), when significant turnover resulted in only 16% (7 members) of BUDG committee members retained and seemingly the committee was losing significant amounts of collective institutional memory, relations between the Commission and the BUDG committee were greatly improved to the BUDG committee's legislative benefit. This finding, which may appear counter-intuitive, was a direct result of new committee members, or *'new blood'*, having a *'refreshing'* effect on the institutional relationship between the BUDG committee and the Commission.

The previous assertion that high turnover would have a consistently negative effect on the BUDG committee's legislative influence, with a perceived loss of *'policy making expertise'* and institutional memory (Linder 2006), has been challenged for its validity. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that

⁴¹⁶ Interview participants stated strong personal relationships existed despite no *'institutional working relationships'* developing 7th term.

a further perspective has to be considered, namely that for the BUDG committee to be influential it requires a regular '*transfusion of new blood*' with new members '*refreshing*' the committee as they replace older members as a result of turnover. With the acquisition of '*new blood*' onto the BUDG committee, relationships vital to the committee's continuing influence were revitalised. Furthermore, it was established from evidence that the BUDG committee's continuing legislative influence is reliant on '*new blood*' members as they act as a source of original policy making ideas. A steady influx of '*new blood*' is evident, as imperative to maintaining the BUDG committee's high influence and keeping its reputation as a dynamic and highly relevant policy actor. Thus, contrary to expectations, informed by comparative studies (Brady 1978, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Scarrow 1997, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003), turnover of members has been demonstrated empirically as a positive for all three cases.

The empirical evidence has also generated original observations that have questioned how the INTA committee uses '*policy making expertise*', which is identified as present within the committee, as a source of influence. Evidence has demonstrated that a select number of committee members have their access to documents, containing vital policy making information, restricted. The impact of this restricted access was considerable on how it affected committee influence. In examples of contentious legislation, like that of the TTIP negotiations, key policy documents were not available to all committee members and access was controlled by gatekeepers, placing restrictions on the ability of non-senior members to develop '*policy making expertise*'.

The INTA committee did have a markedly higher turnover of members in the 7th term, compared with both the BUDG and ENVI committees. Before the findings of the other case studies this would have, according to *HI*, indicated a low and reduced institutional memory that resulted in weakened committee influence. However, the empirical evidence attests that the significant rate of turnover entering the 7th term was because of the high demand to join the INTA committee from experienced MEPs. The committee did, therefore, gain significant policy making experience from inside the institutional systems of the EU, thus refuting the assessment of the INTA committee's lack of

experience in this area by previous studies (Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). Turnover was in fact perceived as a positive entering into the 7th term, and as a result of this injection of ‘new blood’, the INTA committee was able to maximise its legislative influence as these new members were able to bring their experience from maximising the influence of other previous ‘in vogue’ EP committees to bare.⁴¹⁷ On average the INTA committee did contain a similar level, with a very marginally higher concentration of senior parliamentary members, to the BUDG and ENVI committees (table 6-2). Aggregate levels of seniority (rather than just the seniority of the chair) would, therefore, appear to be important for a committee’s influence, with the INTA committee increasing its levels of senior members to match the two other, long established, influential committees during the 7th term. The rate of seniority on the INTA committee could only have reached the level it did, as quickly as it did, as a result of turnover allowing senior parliamentarians to join.

Table 6-2 Seniority and Institutional Memory of Committee Membership

	Committee (7th Term)		
	ENVI	BUDG	INTA
Total Membership	71	44	31
Mean years (+/- S.D.) in Parliament	8.94+/- 5.77	9.11+/- 7.31	9.74+/- 7.58
Mean years (+/-S.D.) on Committee	7.18+/- 5.22	6.93 +/- 5.96	5.23+/- 3
Years of Co-decision in Committee	21	5	5

Source: Collected Data from European Parliament Website, MEP profiles (2014)

Table 6-2 illustrates that while, as noted above, all the cases have similar rates of senior legislators, variations do exist in the levels of committee specific institutional memory. The INTA committee, compared with the other cases, has a lower level of members with an institutional memory of the

⁴¹⁷ Like cheating in cycling, a rider (committee) can boost their stamina (influence) with a blood transfusion (turnover), this can come from donated blood (newly elected members entering the committee) or from the cyclists own blood which was donated at an earlier time (experienced MEP’s joining a new committee to boost its influence).

committee. More members of the ENVI or BUDG committees have served more than a single legislative term on their particular committees than their counterparts within the INTA committee. This variation would further account for why the INTA committee does not draw upon *'policy making expertise'* to a similarly high extent as the ENVI and BUDG committees, ultimately the INTA has a lower level of the committee specific resources to draw upon, yet this is mitigated somewhat by membership parliamentary seniority.

6.2.2 Professional Expertise

'Professional expertise', a member's specialization often of a technical nature developed as a result of a professional background in a policy related area, has been identified within the theoretical framework as a source of committee influence which may differ between committees. It was therefore hypothesised that (H2) *'A committee with low levels of professional expertise will have low levels of influence'*. Table 6-3 reflects the results from each of the cases examined.

Table 6-3 Relative Importance of 'Professional Expertise' as a Source of Committee Influence

Committee	<i>'Professional Expertise'</i> as Source of Committee Influence
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)	Complementary
Committee on Budgets (BUDG)	Complementary
Committee on International Trade (INTA)	High Reliance

Within the case study examples, the ENVI committee has been deemed previously as containing low levels of *'professional expertise'* in the existing literature (McCormick 2001). However, apart from the ENVI committee, the study of *'professional expertise'* as a source of committee influence has been poorly developed in the EP context. While the level of *'professional expertise'* contained within the BUDG committee had previously not been an area of academic focus, the general consensus from the existing literature for the INTA committee is that, while the committee is potentially influential, it is severely lacking in, or has a total absence in, any type of specialist expertise (Kleimann 2011,

Richardson 2012, Gstöhl 2013). The findings here, however, demonstrate that the INTA committee is drawing upon ‘*professional expertise*’ to a significant extent⁴¹⁸, while the BUDG committee is evident as benefiting from it but to a lower level. An explanation is also provided as to why the ENVI committee does not contain ‘*professional expertise*’ at a higher level.



Figure 6-2 Comparative Levels of ‘Professional Expertise’ between Case Study Committees. Source: Collected Member CVs

Data collected on the background of MEPs confirmed that ‘*professional expertise*’ was marginal within the ENVI committee during the 7th term (see Figure 6-2). The ENVI committee did not contain a noteworthy number of members with ‘*professional expertise*’ compared with the INTA committee’s significant levels. The ENVI committee has been shown to be markedly different from the INTA committee, BUDG committee and other EP committees, as significant numbers of the ENVI committee membership have a deep policy interest (for environmental protection) in the committee’s main remit of environmental policy, but are without a professional or technical understanding of the

⁴¹⁸ Supporting Whitaker’s (2011) findings, indicating professional expertise as a reason for members placing on the INTA committee.

policy area. In addition, the *'professional expertise'*, which the ENVI committee does contain, is spread thinly over the committee's wide policy remit, as opposed to the BUDG committee, which although having similar levels of professional experts, focuses entirely on the narrow area of budgetary mechanisms. While studies by both McCormick (2001) and Weale *et al* (2005), without either study producing significant supporting empirical evidence, have suggested a dearth of technical expertise, which is largely derived from *'professional expertise'* within the ENVI committee, the current thesis has now empirically demonstrated this to be correct.

Within the ENVI committee those members who have a clear level of *'professional expertise'* (Figure 6-2), while drawing some collective benefit from it, can only exploit this potential source of influence in a limited and narrow way. Due to the complex policy nature of the ENVI committee's remit a single proposal will 'spill-over' into a number of diverse and highly different technical areas, therefore placing a cap on the use of *'professional expertise'* as a source of committee influence. As a consequence, ENVI committee members with *'professional expertise'* have to rely on external sources of technical information to a similar extent as those ENVI committee members who possess no prior *'professional expertise'*. As technical information is widely available to the ENVI committee, little difference is observed between professional and non-professional members in their ability to efficiently organise and comprehend the significant volume of technical information available; indeed the evidence demonstrates that both find it difficult. Thus a deficit in *'professional expertise'* does not prevent an ENVI committee member from being active in highly technical policies areas, as not possessing it does not place a significant extra cost on acquiring policy information, with the consequence that all members can actively contribute towards the committee gaining successful outcomes. Therefore, unlike the other case studies where it acts as a source of influence in varying degrees, *'professional expertise'* is not a direct source of the ENVI committee's established high legislative influence.

Within the BUDG committee, interview evidence reflected the benefits of *'professional expertise'* in assisting an individual member's ability to comprehend highly technical issues on the committee.

Being able to contribute fresh policy ideas, as a result of a professional background, is an integral part of the BUDG committee's ability to influence outcomes. While members without '*professional expertise*' can contribute fresh and innovative policy ideas, members with a professional background will come to the committee with more understanding of what new policy/budgetary mechanisms are realistic or more likely to be implemented. However, it was evident from the data that MEPs with '*professional expertise*' within the remit of the BUDG committee were also attracted to membership of the Budgetary Control (CONT) committee, and consequently this diluted the wealth of '*professional expertise*' available to, and directly within, the BUDG committee. The CONT committee, while lacking in legislative power, is considered a more 'technical committee' (Yordanova 2009a :257), as opposed to the BUDG committee which is perceived as a more 'political committee' as a result of the powers it has to influence the budgetary outcomes of the European Union. The different technical/political backgrounds of MEPs are likely to influence to which committees they would gravitate. Consequently, the statistical evidence demonstrates that career politicians⁴¹⁹ were the largest group represented on the BUDG committee, as opposed to the INTA committee where professional experts comprised the largest represented group.

Many studies have recognised the inability of the INTA committee to match the Council's Trade Policy Committee (TPC) in resources (Woolcock 2010b, 2010c, Gstöhl 2013), but have completely overlooked the potential of '*professional expertise*' as a source of INTA committee influence. The evidence in this thesis, however, refutes this former consensus by empirically identifying significant levels of '*professional expertise*' contained within the INTA committee (Figure 6-2). Members with '*professional expertise*' constitute a significant proportion of the INTA committee with 71% (Figure 6-2) possessing a professional background in trade, compared with only 39% of ENVI and BUDG members who possessed a relevant background.

As a result of possessing previous professional experience, INTA committee members are quickly able to understand what trade policy solutions are technically feasible within the area of remit when

⁴¹⁹ Career has been defined by working in domestic politics or the European Union, rather than the private sector.

making amendment proposals, and as a result this benefits the INTA committee's overall influence. The INTA committee, during the 7th term, with the '*professional expertise*' it contained, was able to influence policy outcomes, proposing technical/feasible solutions that were acceptable to other actors. The high level of '*professional expertise*' it contains does account for, or may indeed signify, why the INTA committee has not yet developed entrenched contacts with external (Richardson 2012) or internal (Kleimann 2011) sources for the provision of technical information.

In addition, INTA committee members are restricted in their ability to consult external sources and experts, something not observed in the BUDG, ENVI or other EP committees. INTA members are restricted in how they are able to use information contained within trade documents as many documents cannot legally be taken out of the INTA committee. This places a severe disadvantage on any INTA members without pre-existing '*professional expertise*', compared with members in other EP committees, such as the ENVI outlined above that can consult outside experts to gain a developed technical understanding of the relevant policy area. This would help to explain why some studies (Whitaker 2011) have seen in previous terms, '*professional expertise*', as associated with committee allocation to a higher level in the INTA committee, than other EP committees. Consequently, being limited in the ability to contact outside expertise requires members to have prepossessed levels of '*professional expertise*' if they wish to operate on the committee and attempt to influence outcomes successfully. The cost of not having '*professional expertise*' on the INTA committee would, therefore, be considerable. This is particularly significant when compared directly with the ENVI committee where the cost of not possessing '*professional expertise*' was judged as negligible. Thus an ENVI member without '*professional expertise*' can participate in legislative decision making, while a non-professional INTA member would find this extremely difficult.

While it was also found that assistants and committee secretariat could provide members with, and in turn enhance a committee's technical expertise in all cases, the extent to which this happened, or was possible, varied between the committees (Table 6-4). It is common practice on EP committees that member's assistants will often chair technical dialogue meetings, however in the case of the ENVI

and BUDG committees interview data suggests that assistants do not generally possess *'professional expertise'*. In contrast, it is relatively common practice in the INTA committee to hire assistants with *'professional expertise'* to support members. This would appear to correlate with the evidence above, that the INTA requires and utilises a greater level of *'professional expertise'* resources than other committees to establish influence.

Table 6-4 Resources of Professional Expertise Available to Committee

	MEPs	MEP Assistants	Committee Secretariat
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Committee on Budgets	Moderate	Low	Moderate (to, potentially, High)
Committee on International Trade	High	Moderate	Moderate

With respect to the committee secretariat all evidence indicated that, while previously they did supply extensive technical expertise to EP committees, as a result of forced mobility and new hiring practices, in the 7th term their ability to supply this technical expertise was significantly diminished (Table 6-4). Thus, the practices currently adopted directly undermine collection of *'professional expertise'* on a committee. Thus, a new secretariat will start on a committee in which they have a policy remit relevant professional background, but within a few years will find themselves on a new committee operating within a policy remit in which they have no prior knowledge, and as a result *'professional expertise'* is not retained. While interview data did suggest that the BUDG committee, potentially due to the many professional backgrounds that possess financial expertise, did retain a respectable level of technical expertise all committees are currently equally and adversely affected by

the same practices which prevent the collection of *‘professional expertise’* in the committee secretariat.

6.2.3 Committee Unity

Committee unity refers to a consensus developing between different political groupings on a committee uniting behind a single policy proposal. According to current literature (Kreppel 1999, 2000, 2002b, Nugent 2010, Hagemann & Høyland 2010, Costello & Thomson 2013, Burns 2013b) by presenting a ‘united front’ a committee will maximise its influence by creditably claiming to represent the only acceptable policy position, while if a committee is disunited in its position it will potentially have its final position undermined, and as a consequence weaken its influence. It was therefore hypothesised that (H3) *‘the lower the degree of unity on committee, the lower the level of influence’*. While the ENVI committee is perceived, despite being highly influential, as somewhat mixed in terms of its unity between the party groups represented on the committee (CEPS 2012), both the INTA and BUDG committees were consistent in their unity, albeit with some important exceptions (Table 6-5).

Table 6-5 Committee Unity

Committee	Levels of Committee Unity
Committee on the Environment, Public Health & Food Safety	Mixed Cohesion
Committee on Budgets	High Cohesion
Committee on International Trade	High Cohesion

The ENVI committee, during the 7th term, according to the empirical evidence generated in this thesis, operated with a moderate level of cohesion between the largest groupings. While largely confirmed as consensual in its decision making, the ENVI committee is denoted as a committee where cohesion is more difficult to achieve than in other comparable EP committees, as members find it impossible to unite over certain environmental, and even food standard policy issues (the ‘Novel Foods Regulation’ (2013/0435(COD)) being a notable example involving both areas). In addition, incidents were reported, which indicate significant disunity over contentious policy issues, with arguments between

members from different partisan groupings. On one occasion, in particular, this occurred in front of the Council's representatives during a trialogue meeting.

Different partisan groups have been shown to attempt to control the agenda within the ENVI committee at the expense of the committee's overall legislative influence, an action not overtly evident as occurring within the INTA or BUDG committees. Despite their relatively small size, the Greens on the ENVI committee have been most notable in attempting to seize the agenda at an early stage in order to have their interests constitute the committee's initial report. Due to the role of trialogue in decision making, political groups are equally represented during the early stages regardless of group size. The preferences of the Greens are invariably more extreme than the median preference of the European Parliament's plenary. Thus, if the Greens' views are represented in the committee's initial report the committee loses influence, as its position is likely to be amended in plenary (for a similar conclusion see Farrell & Heritier 2004, Costello & Thomson 2010 and Burns 2013b).

A lack of cohesion was also evident within the partisan groups, of the ENVI committee. The ideological spectrum of members on the committee is significantly wide, especially when compared with the more focused remits of the INTA and BUDG committees, and this can lead to internal partisan conflicts. Some members of the European Peoples Party (EPP)⁴²⁰ on the ENVI committee, that are not considered to have a high preference for environmental protection by opposing political groupings, are considered by their own fellow EPP members as having high demander preferences on environmental issues. Matching results were observed for the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) grouping within the ENVI committee. Due to the wide range of environmental preferences on the ENVI committee, finding a compromise agreement which appeals to members holding a median preference (between those who favour stronger environmental protection and those who seek weaker standards), and whose support is required to achieve a consensus position, is highly difficult and sometimes impossible to achieve. Members, who are ideologically moderate, holding centrist

⁴²⁰ The largest partisan grouping in the European Parliament.

environmental positions⁴²¹, are shown from empirical evidence, as often not being selected as rapporteur by their own political group, despite appealing to other ideological moderates on the committee, as they are far out with the entrenched internal preferences of their own party group.

While some similar patterns of conflict have been reported to exist on the INTA committee, with a divide between liberal and ‘left wing’⁴²² attitudes towards international trade (Richardson 2012, Van den Putte *et al* 2014), the empirical evidence here demonstrates a remarkable display of general unity, albeit with some singular, dramatic, incidents of disunity. Partisan groups on the INTA committee did recognise the fundamental importance of unity to the committee’s overall influence. However, this did not mean that all issues resulted in an easy consensus agreement between the partisan groups, potentially to the detriment of the INTA committee’s influence on those issues. This conflict has resulted from the INTA committee being a forum to an extent for national interests to be represented. The embodiment of national trade preferences on the INTA committee creates a situation where a compromise agreement is not always readily achievable due to the distance between some of the national positions of members, which may take precedence over the liberal/protectionist divide. The INTA committee, therefore, perhaps reflects more the Council’s position than other comparable EP committees in its decision making process.

The negative impact of a lack of unity was demonstrated after the INTA committee proposed a position on the ‘Conflict Minerals’⁴²³ report, perceived as too politically radical by many of the committee’s own members. The INTA committee was not able to carry the Commission and Council with it and was, therefore, not able to successfully influence the legislation. Despite this conflict, the INTA committee was empirically demonstrated as drawing influence from operating a largely consensus decision-making process during the 7th term. However, the empirical evidence also suggests that conflict is on the increase during the 8th term (2014-2019) which could negatively impact on influence. Thus, unity is a clear source of EP committee influence; this is demonstrated

⁴²¹ Not particularly favouring a politically left or right approach to environmental issues.

⁴²² The provision of human rights clauses, workers’ rights, etc.

⁴²³ The ‘*union system for supply chain due diligence self-certification of responsible importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating in conflict-affected and high-risk areas (2014/0059(COD))*’.

clearly with regard to the influence of the INTA committee, but more strikingly with regard to the BUDG committee.

The ability to present a unified position between the political groups within the BUDG committee is a significant source of that committee's legislative influence. Due to the nature of budgetary policy in the EU, the BUDG committee must have the support of the plenary in its position. No party group could gain from attempting to have their position deeply entrenched in the committee's proposals, as was observed on the ENVI committee, as it is widely acknowledged by the party groups that they would have their position rejected in plenary and weaken the BUDG committee's position overall. As a result of enforced informal practices, reports are evenly distributed between the party groups, and, as a consequence, no single group dominates key legislative examples such as the annual budget. The party groups within the BUDG committee endeavour to support each other, as budgetary policy is not perceived as a competition between the party groups on the committee, but rather that they are united against the Council. The BUDG committee was demonstrated as regularly forming grand coalitions including the EPP, S&D, ALDE and even the Greens grouping on all but one annual budget during the 7th term (2009-2014). While there is a clear divide on the committee between Euro-sceptics and pro-Europeans, both view the influence of the BUDG committee as of overall importance, and its unity a primary concern.

The example of how reports are allocated has been found, also, to signify to what extent a committee requires unity to be influential. The principles of report allocation differ among committees according to the evidence collected. The BUDG committee, where unity is seen as vital to committee influence, informally assign reports in a non-partisan way, to avoid groupings coming into conflict by allocating the reports before the term starts. The INTA committee adopt the normal bidding approach⁴²⁴ to report allocation but with significant degrees of negotiations taking place between the groups over who will get which report. Finally, the ENVI committee allocate reports in a largely partisan way, negotiations do take place, however evidence suggests in a more competitive bidding environment. This reinforces

⁴²⁴ Committees are allocated points depending on their size which they bid to gain committee reports.

the importance which unity can have in relation to influence. Committees which draw heavily on unity to establish influence adopt informal mechanism to ensure continuing unity. Even the ENVI committee, on occasions have suspended the normal bidding process when dealing with reports seen as too important to risk having its position weakened by internal conflict, the climate change package being the prime example (Burns 2013b).

Finally, evidence did indicate that national interests could impact upon unity, becoming a dividing line that superseded EP grouping divisions. In all cases, it was expressed that national interests had led to some conflict. While this was less pronounced in the 7th term where unity generally prevailed, with some exceptions on the ENVI committee, in the 8th term conflict over national interests are seen as a growing issue, undermining committee influence. This would appear to correlate with the idea that greater politicisation (or re-nationalisation) is (re)emerging (if it even actually went away) within the European Union. This, however, may not be the politicisation that was predicted to alleviate the democratic deficit (Follesdal & Hix 2006, Hix 2008) as it undermines committee influence, which is central to the efficient working of the European Parliament.

6.2.4 Public Policy Output

European Union member states have previously been willing to allow regulatory policy to be dealt with and controlled by supranational institutions as the costs are dispersed and generally paid for by non-state actors such as industry. Distributive policy areas have until recently been closely guarded by the member states as costs are directly paid for by the states who are resistant to supranational control (Burns 2005b). It was, therefore, hypothesised that (H4) *'Committees with distributive policy outputs will exercise lower levels of influence over legislation than committees with regulatory policy outputs'*.

Table 6-6 Policy Output of Committee

Committee	Public Policy Output
The Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	Mixed Policy Output
The Committee on Budgets	Distributive Policy Output
The Committee on International Trade	Regulatory Policy Output

In the first instance the ENVI committee originally sought to produce regulatory policy outputs (Judge *et al* 1994). It was this pursuit of regulatory outputs that some studies have identified as accounting for the ENVI committee’s significant legislative influence (Judge *et al* 1994), though it lacked empirical support (Burns 2005b). However, by the 7th term (2009-2014) the committee was identified as producing both regulatory and distributive policy outputs (Yordanova 2009a). From the evidence collected here it was confirmed that the ENVI committee was able, in the example of the ‘Plastic Bag Directive’,⁴²⁵ to greatly influence policy provision despite the opposition of both the Council and Commission, in areas of regulatory policy. The ENVI committee dealt predominantly with regulatory policy during the 7th term, to the extent that little evidence existed of the committee pushing for distributive outputs.

The ENVI committee has been confirmed as a policy outlier, in part disputing McElroy’s (2006) assessment that the committee was not far outside the plenary preferences, and empirically supporting the mainstream view of the ENVI committee’s outlier status (Yordanova 2009a), which has not always been ‘validated empirically’ (Hurka 2013: 278). While the committee has been perceived as becoming less radical over the years in its policy outputs (Burns 2013a), empirical evidence has shown it remains an outlier within the EP, being more radical than the plenary. The plenary is closer to the Council in environmental preferences. Thus the implications are that the ENVI committee will often find resistance coming from the plenary, which undermines its overall legislative influence. This

⁴²⁵ ‘Packaging and packaging waste: reduction of the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags’ (2013/0371(COD)).

contradicts the conventional wisdom that may have suggested that the plenary willingly rubber-stamps the committee's position (Tsebelis & Kalandrakis 1999). This is in marked contrast to the BUDG committee, which due to its distributive policy outputs, meets resistance from the Council rather than the plenary.

The success or failure of the BUDG committee has been attributed largely to the type of policy it attempts to include within the EU budget. As evidence has shown, the BUDG committee is predisposed to increasing the spending and distribution of funds (table 6-6), as opposed to the Council that actively seeks to cut the distribution of EU funds and spending. Being commonly perceived as a distributive committee (Burns 2005b, Rasmussen 2011) the BUDG committee was predicted to struggle to secure policy outcomes that resulted in the increased distribution, or re-distribution of EU funds. As empirical evidence shows, despite gaining in powers with the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty⁴²⁶ to influence distributive spending, once the sole reserve of the member states, the BUDG committee was unable to increase the distribution of funds and spending, as its position entailed, but was forced to accept significant cuts in these areas. This confirms, and supports with greater empirical evidence, the viewpoint in the literature (Benedetto 2011) that member states would continue to resist supranational involvement in budgetary areas of spending, at the expense of the BUDG committee's influence. However, claims made in the literature that the budgetary status quo would continue to be entrenched, with the BUDG committee accepting the Council's position on cutting distributive funds (Benedetto 2011), has been challenged by the empirical data. The evidence collected demonstrates that BUDG committee members are moving closer to challenging the status quo, on ongoing budgetary cuts, and are potentially willing to use their budgetary veto at the next opportunity.

The INTA committee, as opposed to the BUDG committee's distributive policy outputs, produces largely regulatory policy outputs (Yordanova 2009a)⁴²⁷, due to the nature of trade legislation in

⁴²⁶ With the removal of the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory spending the committee is involved in almost all budgetary spending areas.

⁴²⁷ The INTA committee saw an increase in its powers during the 7th term with regulations which define the framework of trade policy falling under the co-decision procedure for the first time during this term, establishing the INTA committee as a co-legislator with the Council in this area.

Europe. The INTA committee having had its formal powers increased in areas of regulatory policy was most significantly active in those policy areas. This may, however, also signify that member states⁴²⁸ and the Commission did not draft proposals that would greatly involve the INTA committee within distributive areas of trade policy. The INTA committee was active within files dealing with regulatory policy and generated no significant further evidence to question or challenge previous convention held over the impact of public policy output. Some potentially interesting points were, however, identified with regard to the INTA committee's future policy ambitions. With regard to the 'Conflict Minerals' report the committee was unsuccessful after proposing increased regulatory requirements well outside the Commission and Council's desired preferences. This could indicate that the committee is attempting to maximise its influence in regulatory areas and failing, or may signify that the committee over reached as a result of lacking in understanding of what would be achievable for the INTA committee i.e. lack of '*policy making expertise*' (table 6-2).

A clear pattern has, however, emerged from comparing the three cases; when focusing on regulatory policy the committees were, perceived by members, to be more able to gain successful outcomes and draw greater influence. As a result, the INTA and ENVI committees largely produced regulatory outputs to maintain their influence, and seemingly avoided distributive areas, as they saw entering into distributive policies as potentially reducing their influence. To pursue a difficult distributive output would, potentially, waste time and resources which could be better applied to areas where the committee knows it can influence the final outcome (regulatory policy areas). A similar pattern was observed in the BUDG committee. While the BUDG committee, unlike the others, deals with predominantly distributive outcomes, the committee attempted to produce regulatory outputs, alongside their main distributive remits, as this was seen by members as an area they could influence with more certainty. Regulatory outputs are therefore confirmed, across all the cases, as a source of influence.

⁴²⁸ Still play an, expected, large role in trade agreements.

6.3 Implications

Policy Making Expertise and Turnover

From the data collected within this thesis it is clear that significant implications are apparent for the current literature focusing on '*policy making expertise*', and a re-evaluation of the importance of committee turnover may be required, in future, as a result of some of the contrary evidence provided here. Understanding how policy is made, gaining '*policy making information*' (Krehbiel 1991), and learning how to work with different political actors in institutional situations, will always contribute towards the total collective benefit of a committee's legislative influence. As expected, this understanding of committee influence, derived from Krehbiel's (1991) informational perspective, was confirmed within the empirical data comprising all three case studies. However, current understanding of the relationship between '*policy making expertise*' and committee 'turnover', formulated from the collective literature (Weingast & Marshall 1988, Shaw 1998, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003) has been challenged in the selected cases, and perceived wisdom on 'committee turnover' may be questioned as a result of the empirical data collected. Importantly, if replicated beyond this small-n study, these findings may have significant ramifications well beyond the EU into the general comparative literature on the informational perspective of committee influence, changing how we think about committee influence, and questioning fundamental concepts, such as the effects of turnover, which are present in all parliamentary systems. It is important to stress, that while the evidence would suggest important potential ramifications following on from this study, as a result of making deliberate methodological choices to adopt a small-n approach, which selected upon the dependent variable, the study is limited in the generalizations it can make. Without more cases only certain conclusions can be drawn.

Current convention, drawn from the US Congress, European Parliament, and other comparative parliamentary systems, holds that with higher membership retention the influence of a 'stable' parliamentary committee will be heightened as a result of its members having extensive '*policy making expertise*', specialization, and institutional memory (Brady 1978, Weingast & Marshall 1988,

Krehbiel 1991 (US Congress), Héritier 1996, Scarrow 1997, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Benedetto 2005, Daniel 2013 (European Parliament), Shaw 1998, Mattson & Strøm 2006 (Comparative Parliamentary Perspective)). According to Mamadouh & Raunio (2003: 349) turnover is potentially a 'serious problem' affecting the legislative influence of EP committee:

'The development of policy expertise is facilitated when representatives serve on the same committee for an extended time period. Considering the very high turnover of MEPs, the membership of committees changes significantly after each election, and this may weaken the legislative influence of the Parliament'.

The convention according to Mamadouh & Raunio (2003: 349) and others, looking at the EU or US systems, (Brady 1978, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Scarrow 1997, Benedetto 2005) is that turnover weakens (committee) influence, and it is this understanding which helped to generate HI.⁴²⁹ However, this convention may not accurately account for the realities of committee influence, which have been shown as evident in the cases of this thesis. Turnover is evident within the selected cases, as operating in such ways as to positively benefit a committee's overall legislative influence. The thesis therefore contributes empirical evidence that the institutional memory of a particular member may not guarantee continued, or exponential, growth in associated informational benefits. Membership longevity can only benefit a committee's influence for a finite period. Committees may have to be 'refreshed' at regular intervals in order to directly benefit the committee's influence. These findings provide an additional or alternative explanation for Scully's (1997c) observation that a high intake of new members at the 4th EP term had a marked impact on the Parliament's influence. This was originally attributed by Scully (1997c: 244) to an increase in the Parliament's formal powers that a large number of new highly 'motivated' members could utilise. The above quote from Mamadouh & Raunio (2003: 349) is also questioned as the findings have shown that 'policy making expertise' is attained by seniority (years of service in the EP), not necessarily by seniority in the same committee.

⁴²⁹ 'HI. A committee with high membership turnover will have a weakened level of legislative influence'.

Thus, within the scope of the limited number of cases comprising this study, in order to remain influential a committee must undergo a level of turnover which removes members who are past their (*expiration date*) policy making prime, and replace them with new members who revitalise the committee with a *transfusion of new blood*. Once a member reaches an *expiry date* they no longer act as an asset to the committee's influence but become a detriment, acting as a *roadblock*, or *bottle-neck*, to original and innovative policy making solutions. In some notable examples (such as was evident in the BUDG committee) senior members self-identified the benefits of turnover, and in some cases removed themselves from key committee positions after identifying the advantages which *new blood* could bring to the committee's influence. Together with the benefits associated with the removal of *expired members*, the injection of *new blood* as a result of turnover is identified as a key source of committee influence for the first time in this thesis. The introduction of *new blood* onto committee has been shown to act to revitalise a committee and its relationships between other institutional actors. If these observations from this limited small-n study can be replicated within further cases, beyond the scope of this project, many of the general conventions which are held over committee membership turnover may be questioned.

A *transfusion of new blood* onto committee, as a result of turnover, further benefits a committee's influence as new members are able to offer new solutions to old policy making problems, and increase a committee's ability to deal with ever evolving policy issues. The ability to deal with evolving policy issues of increased complexity has always been cited as the main reason for the existence of committee systems (Blondel 1969, Krehbiel 1991, Mattson & Strøm 1996, Strøm 1998, Shaw 1998). The findings of this thesis, with evidence generated from all three case studies, therefore may highlight new and important points of significance to the field beyond the case example of the EU, over the importance of committee efficiency and how it is linked to turnover. Future, larger, studies would be needed to determine whether this is a general phenomenon. Turnover may establish committees as continually relevant policy actors, preventing stagnation, which would negatively impact upon committee influence. Within the empirical evidence the *refreshment* of the committee and acquisition of *new blood* was apparent as a fundamental source of the committee's legislative

influence. All parliamentary committee systems see differing levels of *'new blood'* joining committees as a result of turnover, but it is a factor previously not identified as affecting committee influence until this study. These findings, therefore, may help to account for the concepts of 'turnover' and its potential elemental role within legislative systems, reconciling it with the idea of committee 'specialization', by indicating an unforeseen relationship between the two. Rather than being a detriment to committees, as was expected when it was tested against the example of EP committees, turnover was actually identified within this limited n-study, as part of the process which enables committees to deal with evolving policy issues, by structurally allowing and promoting the propagation of innovative policy solutions.

This thesis has, therefore, by testing *'HI'*, qualified the (now former) convention that a committee with high turnover would result in a committee that has undergone a reduction in its legislative influence with its concomitant loss of expertise (Brady 1978, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Benedetto 2005, Whitaker 2011) in the selected cases. This is an extremely important original observation in the context of understanding committee influence in the European Union, but more importantly, creates a better understanding of how this mechanism of 'turnover', which is found within all legislative committee systems, may operate as a potential source of influence, indicating the need for future testing with a wider number of cases with an aim of establishing a strong causal link. Having a better understanding of turnover, as a result of the testing done in this thesis, will potentially contribute significantly to our comprehension of committee systems in a wider, theoretical, way.

While these findings are significant to the field of legislative systems, some brief comment on the significant implications for the EU is required. Whitaker (2011) suggests that the institutionalization and maturation of the committees of the EP as legislative actors has led to a reduction in the turnover of committee membership. The findings of this thesis would suggest (as only three cases were examined and a clear generality cannot be asserted), that this may endanger, rather than enhance, the continued influence of committees of the EP, as Whitaker (2011) appears to suggest. If committee

retention becomes further entrenched, then the EP may risk⁴³⁰ entering a premature old age where policy stagnation becomes the norm and committee influence reaches an inescapable plateau. The importance of '*committee refreshment*' and '*new blood*' is identified by many senior and junior MEPs across committees whose interview contributions have helped to establish these empirical points. It is only within the academic sphere that the true importance and ramifications of turnover have yet to be recognized.

Committee influence, within the cases examined here, is, therefore, not defined by turnover reducing the '*policy making expertise*'; rather a committee's influence is defined by the rate and level of '*membership refreshment*'. Committees require a level of '*policy making expertise*' to be retained each term but must contain a level of turnover which '*refreshes*' the committee in order to maximise its influence. These findings may have a significant impact far beyond the field of EU studies as they could be applied to any governmental and parliamentary system that relies upon legislative committees to operate efficiently, and does not implement strict term limits on its length of membership service. It is, however, only with more extensive testing that the general application of these findings may become apparent, due to the limited small-n approach of this study. In parallel and in a similar manner to the normative benefits of keeping democratic representation refreshed with regular elections, a regular turnover of committee members has a tangible impact on the continued relevance and influence of committees by preventing the stagnation that is an anathema to any good democratic system. Many of the comparative studies looking at other parliamentary system, discussed above and within the theoretical framework (Brady 1978, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Krehbiel 1991, Shaw 1998, Mattson & Strøm 2006) may be ready for reassessment as a result of the findings of this study. For example, the studies (Brady 1978, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Krehbiel 1991) that previously established the impression of committee turnover as a negative with regard to influence, originated within the US congressional system. However, the importance of seniority within the US

⁴³⁰ High turnover of the 8th term European elections may have lessened this risk.

Congress has been seen as waning over the years (Hall & Shepsle 2014⁴³¹), along with a general perceived stagnation in congressional politics and decision making. The concept of '*committee refreshment*' identified in this thesis, may offer an alternative explanation for changes such as the reduced importance in seniority in the US Congress, or at the very least they may contribute greater evidence to those calling for congressional term limits. Overall, if results can be replicated beyond the cases examined here, it could be argued that the evidence produced as part of this thesis comprises a potential paradigm shift on how committee turnover in general could be viewed as a source of committee influence.

Professional Expertise

Beyond the notable contributions of Krehbiel (1991) and Daniel (2013), '*professional expertise*' is currently not a fully characterised source of committee influence.⁴³² What we know about '*professional expertise*' often derives from comparative and normative work on epistemic communities in different contexts (see Haas 1992, Radaelli 1999). The findings of this thesis help to expand upon current understanding, providing better evidence to contextualise professional expertise. Within the EP the use of '*professional expertise*' was shown, in this thesis' selected cases, empirically as a source of committee influence that varies between committees. Some committees use '*professional expertise*' as a direct source of influence as a result of the benefits it can bring to understanding the technical elements of policy (INTA). Some committees will use it to complement other significant sources of committee influence (BUDG). Conversely, other committees are restricted in their use of '*professional expertise*' due to the nature of the wide policy remit under which they operate (ENVI). While the normative concept is, therefore, confirmed in that '*professional expertise*' will have an impact on (committee) influence in institutions (Haas 1992), its absence does not necessarily mean a lessening of committee influence, in part challenging the second hypothesis

⁴³¹ The explanation according to Hall & Shepsle (2014) is the role of parties taking more control of the legislature. However, as noted, this thesis may help to provide alternative explanations concerning the importance of refreshment and senior members acting as roadblocks to innovative policy solutions.

⁴³² '*Professional expertise*' has however been used as a variable in a select number of studies which have looked at committee allocation and assignments (Yordanova 2009a, Whitaker 2011).

(H2)⁴³³ in the examined cases, which helps to further the understanding of *'professional expertise'* as a generalizable concept which can be expanded upon in future studies.

While the empirical findings of Daniel (2013) were supported with respect to committee members using *'professional expertise'* as a source of influence, the empirical data collected in the present study exposed limitations in the Daniel (2013) study in that it did not identify that the influence of *'professional expertise'* can vary significantly between committees as shown in the cases here.

Variation in levels of *'professional expertise'* between committees does not necessarily result in a 'like for like' variation in the comparative influence of committees. For example, the ENVI committee did not experience a significantly lower rate of influence than the INTA committee despite the wide variations in *'professional expertise'*. To reiterate, a rate of (high) influence is maintained as constant across the case studies within this thesis. In summary, therefore, while certain EP committees are reliant on *'professional expertise'* to establish their high levels of legislative influence others have established their influence as a result of other potential sources of influence. An absence of *'professional expertise'* in all circumstances does not guarantee weaker influence, contrary to 'H2'. By testing this hypothesis, however, patterns, previously unidentified, were observed to account for the findings.

The claim has been made that expertise will be generated in a committee if the cost of doing so is low (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1990, Krehbiel 1991). However, the evidence generated from this thesis expands well beyond this understanding of expertise as a source of committee influence, contributing evidence towards the developing concept of *'professional expertise'*. A comparison of the evidence generated in each of the three case studies examined demonstrates that the reliance of a committee on *'professional expertise'* as a source of influence may depend on how high the cost will be of not possessing a level of technical expertise. So not only will low costs, to acquisition expertise, drive its generation in committee (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1990, Krehbiel 1991) but it will seemingly also be driven by how vital its acquisition is for a member to participate, and not be excluded, from the

⁴³³ 'H2: A committee with low levels of professional expertise will have low levels of influence'.

decision making process. If technical information is widely available in a comparative committee, as a result of well-established contacts such as with external experts, then the committee does not require a significant level of *'professional expertise'* to be influential. If technical information is not widely available or accessible outside the committee, due to underdeveloped or restricted relationships with external experts, as is seen in the case example of the INTA committee (Kleimann 2011, Richardson 2012), then members must rely on their own technical abilities to a greater extent as the costs of not possessing a technical understanding of the remit would have a negatively high impact on the committee's overall influence.

A more coherent understanding of *'professional expertise'* as an indicator for technical expertise has been developed as result of the findings in this thesis, and a previously underdeveloped indicator of committee influence *'professional expertise'*, has been 'fleshed-out', allowing for its application in wider comparative examples as an alternative explanation for committee influence. An understanding of *'professional expertise'* has been developed that includes not only the expertise of committee members but, also, takes account of other resources available to the committee coming from assistants, secretariat, party officials and national contacts. It is the totality of these resources which seemingly affects a committee's ability to draw upon *'professional expertise'* as a source of influence. The evidence from the three in-depth cases compared within this thesis, on links between professional expertise and committee influence, sets the groundwork for future studies to test in a wider range of cases the comparative reproducibility of the results. Overall such studies will create a more general understanding of the link between professional expertise and committee influence.

While it is not unheard of for a young member, with little 'life experience', to find themselves in an elected position, most parliamentarians have previous career experience to draw upon. By using the indicators developed here that *'professional expertise'* does matter, but may differ in significance, and that it is the cost of not possessing technical information that drives its presence on a committee, a better understanding of committee influence can be gained. For example, in US politics today, elected members make much about not being a 'Washington Insider'. Watch any US political advertisement,

for a new or even a sitting congressman, and it will often attempt to instil the virtues of their previous professional careers rather than policy experience.⁴³⁴ While this is often done for political reasons, to connect with voters, this thesis has developed upon the actual impact of *'professional expertise'*, a previously underdeveloped concept in the comparative context.

Committee Unity

Committee unity does affect the relative level of influence that a committee possesses. This helps to confirm and contributes further empirical evidence towards the perspective of Kreppel (1999, 2000, 2002b) and others (Nugent 2010, Hagemann & Høyland 2010, Costello & Thomson 2013, Burns 2013b) that actors⁴³⁵ will be more influential the more often they are consistently united in their legislative position, and for the most part confirms the third stated hypothesis (*H3*).⁴³⁶ However, some important caveats, changing perspectives on the importance of committee unity and its relationship with influence, are apparent as a result of the empirical data. The implications of the findings derived by testing the unity in the case example of the EP will help to create a more developed understanding of committee unity, which can in the future be applied outside the EU. Comparing the results, drawn from the case studies, it is clear that some committees require greater levels of unity to maintain their high levels of legislative influence than other committees that do not require the same levels of unity to be equally influential, and highlights an original observation surrounding the concept of unity.

Members of EP committees do identify committee unity as a potential source of committee influence; however, the actual negative impact of disunity on a committee varies noticeably. The ENVI committee remained a highly influential committee despite having some significant examples of conflict taking place between party groups. If the BUDG and INTA committees were to have similar levels of conflict, as are sometimes present within the ENVI committee, it would have a more marked effect upon both the BUDG and INTA committees' overall respective legislative influences. Indeed,

⁴³⁴ For example, the 'infamous' advertisement for now sitting Senator, Joni Ernst; <https://youtu.be/p9Y24MFOFU>.

⁴³⁵ Often within the literature it is only unity within the EP which is discussed rather than in the committees.

⁴³⁶ *H3. The lower the degree of unity on committee, the lower the level of influence.*

conflict within the INTA committee has been observed as an increasing trend which has had a deeply negative impact on the influence of the INTA committee at the start of the 8th term. The ENVI committee, on the other hand, is seemingly able to accommodate some displays of disunity without overly undermining overall influence. The ENVI committee's ability to deal with disunity may be as a result of having more experience with compensating for disharmony, between party groups, which other committees lack. Committees, therefore, do vary in how they can use unity as a source of influence: for some committees, it appears a fundamental source of influence, while for other committees, unity merely acts to supplement other potential sources of influence. These findings help to expand current understanding of committee unity as a source of committee influence.

What is apparent from these findings is that they contribute additional evidence and re-enforce the concerns of Lord (2013) and Burns (2013b) that the drive for consensus to promote unity and increase committee influence can come at the expense of marginal voices on committees, such as within the EP with the Greens and other 'outsider' groups. However, more importantly, this study builds upon previous findings by demonstrating with its in-depth cases, examples of when the drive to present unified positions inside party groups can marginalise moderate voices even within major groupings. In the EP context, while it has previously been identified that the S&D have experienced internal conflict over trade policy positions (Van den Putte *et al* 2014), the importance of conflict within party groups on committees has sometimes been overlooked despite the related impact it can have on the overall influence of a committee. The political groups of the EP operate as 'broad churches' encompassing a wide spectrum of ideological backgrounds and this will impact committees in different ways depending on the issues within a particular committee's remit. While the party groups have been established as notably cohesive in the EP (Hix & Noury 2009), friction within the groups can have an effect on committee influence even if the group ultimately votes together, as potential disunity in Parliament has been signalled to the Council. In the ENVI committee, rapporteurs will be selected by how closely they reflect their own group's main preferences, often at the expense of more moderate group members who may have more success in achieving compromise positions. In order to have unity on committee the first step must be to have unity within one's own group, which will mean

selecting a rapporteur who is most acceptable to the group's ideological preferences, as shown in the empirical evidence. If a party group is not firmly united behind their own rapporteur, conflict will follow.

Different studies have asked under what circumstances different parties unite over a single position and for what reasons this occurs. However, in most cases the focus has been on internal party unity (Sieberer 2006, Carey 2007, Pasquino & Valbruzzi 2012), while less has been written on the impact of unity between party groups and its impact on committee influence. This thesis has helped to develop a more coherent concept of committee unity, with the case study evidence it provides, which can be used in future studies to attempt to generate a more general understanding, as discussed below. These findings are also important in relation to the broader trends of politicisation and differentiated integration (or re-nationalisation) that are seen as affecting the European Union (Schimmelfennig *et al* 2015). Partisan disunity and conflict over national interests within committees have been identified within this study, while they did not impact heavily upon committee influence during the 7th term; early indications of the 8th term suggest an increase in disunity across both EU party lines and over national interests. These trends, if continued, would undoubtedly undermine committee unity and hence EP committee influence. Political groupings do have extensive experience in reaching compromises which ensure continued unity of committee; however, when national interests are the dividing line the continued influence of a supranational body (the EP's committees) may be less of a concern. Therefore, differentiated integration⁴³⁷ (Schimmelfennig *et al* 2015) and increased politicisation may impact the unity, and influence, of committees asymmetrically, with some committees more exposed and susceptible to such factors, depending on the interests at stake.

⁴³⁷ Integration, occurring in asymmetrical ways with different actors being involved in policy areas to varying degrees.

Public Policy Output

Each of the case study committees selected displayed a uniquely different type of policy output (Table 6-3). The evidence collected and discussed, once compared, confirmed the hypothesis (*H4*⁴³⁸) that policy output would affect the influence of committees. Committees dealing with distributive outputs did meet greater resistance from member states as to having a supranational actor enter into areas that they perceived as their property right, such as the (re)distribution of budgetary funding. Less resistance was observed for committees dealing with regulatory policy outputs as was evident in the case of the INTA committee (with the exception of the ‘Conflict Mineral’ reports example, which was more likely as a result of the committee over reaching or from internal conflict). The ENVI committee has been demonstrated as dealing with both distributive and regulatory policies. In reports dealing with regulatory policy the ENVI committee was able to extend the provision of a report, the ‘plastic bags report’, further than the Commission’s original proposal and with the acceptance of the Council. When dealing with examples of reports with distributive elements the ENVI committee was not able to further, in a comparable way, the provisions of the Commission. This evidence therefore confirms the hypothesis (*H4*) that committee influence does differ depending upon the type of policy that it is being processed, and supports previous findings (Burns 2005b). With regard to the implications for the wider field, this thesis provides more evidence to support policy outputs as an indicator of, and potential source of, influence. This concept first created in the context of the US Congress (Lowi 1964, 1972) has been largely confirmed and reinforced within the difficult case study of the EP, in this thesis and other studies (Judge *et al* 1994, Shackleton 2000, Burns 2005b, Yordanova 2009a). This provides the groundwork and lays a template for testing policy output as a source of influence within other comparative systems.

6.4 Future research

The findings that have been generated within the thesis have significant ramifications for not only the field of EU legislative political and committee influence but may also help to develop future

⁴³⁸ *H4. Committees with distributive policy outputs will exercise lower levels of influence over legislation than committees with regulatory policy outputs.*

understanding of the wider areas of committee influence. Most notably our understanding of turnover within committees and its effects on influence has been expanded far beyond previous assessments (Brady 1978, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Krehbiel 1991, Scarrow 1997, Shaw 1998, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Benedetto 2006, Mattson & Strøm 2006, Daniel 2013). As well as contributing new evidence over the potential consequences of turnover, with the previously unreported aspects of '*new blood members*' and '*committee refreshment*' being outlined in the selected cases, the concept of expertise has been expanded to define two unique types of expertise, namely '*policy making*' and '*professional*', expertise. Both of these key findings may have a significant impact far beyond the case study area of the European Parliament and into the wider field of legislative politics if replicated beyond the limits of this small-n study.

Previously, the general consensus has been that committee turnover wholly acts to reduce committee influence as extensive '*policy making expertise*', specialization, and institutional memory, is lost. The evidence drawn from the case studies in this thesis has been that turnover, contrary to these previous assessments and expectations, consistently enhances, as well as acts as a source of legislative influence. The concepts of '*new blood members*' and '*committee refreshment*' as a consequence of committee turnover resulting in new policy ideas and new invigorated networking opportunities opens up many potential new avenues of research. The impact of committee '*refreshment*' as a potential source of influence is not limited to the European Parliament, but could be applied in future projects to any legislative committee system as discussed below. As moderate turnover has been shown in this study to have a positive effect on the influence of the committees studied, a new hypothesis, which could be tested in future research, can be generated affirming that: '*moderate membership turnover will reinvigorate and enhance committee legislative influence*'. The generation of this new hypothesis can be used to further test and verify the significant findings of this thesis in future projects with the aim of developing new theoretical understanding of legislative decision making, as all committees experience membership turnover. The question to be asked, therefore, is, does the 'injection of new blood' on to a committee increase influence in committee systems, beyond the EU, and do other

comparative committees require regular '*refreshment*' to maintain or enhance legislative influence as has been shown in the cases analysed in this thesis?

Future studies can adopt the findings, and test the hypothesis, on committee turnover produced from this thesis' empirical data, and apply them to all remaining committees of the European Parliament, in the first instance, in order to acquire a deeper understanding of patterns of committee influence as a result of turnover, from a larger sample group of legislative committees and begin to develop more generalizable results. This thesis has been a small-n case study focusing on an important but singular area; however, the aim of future research will be to test how generalizable the findings on '*committee refreshment*' and the induction of '*new blood*' are in a wider range of empirical cases. If these results are replicated, first within the wider EP committee system or within other systems, such as the US Congress, this will add further weight of support to the generalized points identified here, and help develop a more comprehensive theory of committee influence in parliamentary systems. The findings of this thesis have provided the foundations for such a significant theoretical development. Turnover had previously been accepted as having a consistently negative effect on committee influence (Brady 1978, Weingast & Marshall 1988, Krehbiel 1991, Héritier 1996, Scarrow 1997, Shaw 1998, Mamadouh & Raunio 2003, Benedetto 2005, Mattson & Strøm 2006, Daniel 2013). The evidence collected within this thesis' selected cases runs counter to this standard view. Consequently, if the findings from this study can be replicated in a wider range of cases, many of these previous studies which have been conducted both within the US Congress and European parliamentary systems are ready for reassessment. The impacts of these findings on turnover are, therefore, significant not only because they further the understanding of legislative politics in the EU, but because they may act as a new starting point for developing the theoretical perspective of institutional legislative decision making.

The distinction between '*policy making expertise*' and '*professional expertise*' highlights other potential avenues of significant future research. While expertise has been identified correctly as a source of committee influence, and directly related to the 'cost' that drives its acquisition (Krehbiel

1991), expertise has not always been clearly defined despite its repeated application within various studies. This thesis has contributed a more coherent definition of expertise with a clear dichotomy demonstrated between *'policy making expertise'* and *'professional expertise'*. As a result of the clear definition developed between the two types of expertise, both can be applied in different committee systems in future projects to understand their relative contributions to, and relationship to, legislative influence in a wider context. By adopting the lessons produced here that the type of expertise a committee uses as a source of its influence depends on the cost associated with not possessing that certain type of expertise on a particular committee, new research questions and hypotheses can be formulated.

Two clear hypotheses can be proposed, from the data, which can be tested using a wider range of case examples, beyond those already observed in the EP system. In the first instance it could be proposed that: *committees which retain high levels of 'policy making expertise' do not require 'professional expertise' to be influential*. Secondly, *'the 'professional expertise' a committee uses as a source of its influence depends on the cost associated with not possessing that source of influence for the committee'*. By applying these hypotheses to examples of committees outside of the EP, a more cohesive concept, and potential theory of committee expertise, can begin to be developed which builds upon the groundwork that this thesis has already contributed. While previous comparative research has looked at the cost of acquiring expertise, future research must focus on the costs that not possessing a single type of expertise has on an individual committee member's ability to actively participate in legislation and its implications for the committee as a whole. Finding that the cost associated with a type of expertise can define the source of a committee's legislative influence in a larger range of case studies will significantly expand the theoretical understanding of expertise as a source of committee influence.

A further question which could, also, be addressed in future research is: are we now observing in the EP, with its increase in specialization (Corbett *et al* 2007) and institutionalization (Whitaker 2011), the establishment of two distinct types of committees: 'political committees', which contain high level

of *'policy making expertise'*, and *'technical committees'*, which maintain high level of *'professional expertise'*? Developments of this kind have been observed in mature parliamentary systems such as that of Sweden and Italy, and would denote the European Parliament entering into a new stage of legislative maturity. Further investigation will contribute towards our understanding of parliamentary (institutional) development, an area of classic debate (Moravcsik & Katzenstein 1998) which has not often focused on committee development as an indicator of maturity and institutionalization, beyond the notable work of Whitaker (2011).

Finally, with regard to potential future research, there is significant merit in examining the impact of unity within the committees. While disunity has been shown, as part of this study, to affect committee influence to differing degrees, little is known about *'unity'* as a source of influence outside of the EU. By investigating the impact of unity across all EP committees a future project will be able to further confirm if committees only require unity to maximise influence depending on their own circumstance i.e. are some committee more capable of dealing with disunity and preventing it from affecting overall influence than others? Answering this question will result in a better awareness of committee influence that can be developed against the backdrop of an increasing partisan dynamic (politicisation), which appears the case in the EP. Greater politicisation will result in more examples of disunity and disharmony in a chamber historically marked for its unity. Alternatively, the findings developed within this thesis could easily be applied directly to a multi-party legislative system such as one of the many European state systems.

6.5 Final Remarks

An appropriate conclusion to this thesis would be to reflect upon the original research question that was proposed, namely *'how do committees establish legislative influence'*? The empirical evidence comprising the body of the thesis has addressed the research question in significant depth, and determined that committees are drawing upon different sources of influence in patterns not previously identified or understood. This thesis' proposed hypotheses derived from different comparative examples of legislative committees, and suggested a number of different variables for testing them in

the context of the European Parliament. Each of these variables was assessed for their validity and were tested extensively in the three case study examples which comprised (consistent) highly influential committees within the European Parliament. Examination of each of these possible variables established a more comprehensive understanding of committee influence, and significantly addressed studies calling for further understanding of this significant, but neglected, area (Yordanova 2013).⁴³⁹ Overall this thesis has, not only generated a better understanding of the sources of committee influence, but has also questioned previous conventions where expected results were not replicated. As a result of this contrary evidence to previously established conventions on sources of committee influence, new avenues of research have been identified that will require to be addressed, in future academic studies.

⁴³⁹ 'The observed strong variations in legislative influence between committees [also] calls for further explanation' (Yordanova 2013: 112).

Appendix

Appendix I – Committees of the 7th European Parliament

AFCO:	Committee on Constitutional Affairs.
AFET:	Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- DROI:	Subcommittee on Human Rights.
- SEDE:	Subcommittee on Security and Defence.
AGRI:	Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.
BUDG:	Committee on Budgets.
CONT:	Committee on Budgetary Control.
CULT:	Committee on Culture and Education.
DEVE:	Committee on Development.
ECON:	Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.
ENVI:	Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.
EMPL:	Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.
FEMM:	Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.
IMCO:	Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection.
INTA:	Committee on International Trade.
ITRE:	Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.
JURI:	Committee on Legal Affairs.
LIBE:	Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.
PECH:	Committee on Fisheries.
PETI:	Committee on Petitions.
REGI:	Committee on Regional Development.
TRAN:	Committee on Transport and Tourism.
CRIM:	<i>Special Committee on Organised Crime, Corruption and Money Laundering.</i>

(Source: European Parliament Activity Report 2009 -2011 DV\903361EN)

Appendix II – Interview List

Interview with Member of the European Parliament 28/2/14 Edinburgh UK

Interview with Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee 19/3/2014 Brussels BE

Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee 20/3/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Senior Member of the Secretariat for the ENVI Committee 20/3/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Secretariat to the TRAN Committee 2/4/14 Phone Interview

Interview with Member of the ENVI Committee 8/4/2014 Phone Interview

Interview with Secretariat to the REGI Committee 13/5/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Secretariat to the FEMM Committee 13/5/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Senior Secretariat to the JURI Committee 14/5/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Senior Budgetary Secretariat 14/5/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Secretariat to the IMCO Committee 15/5/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Secretariat to the IMCO Committee 15/5/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Secretariat to the AGRI Committee 16/5/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Secretariat to the EMPL Committee 25/6/14 Phone Interview

Interview with Member of the Ex-Post Impact Assessment Unit of the European Parliament 3/7/14
Phone Interview

Interview with Secretariat of the ITRE Committee 4/11/14 Brussels BE.

Interview with Committee on Budgets Leadership Member 4/11/14. Brussels BE

Interview with Senior Commission DG Budgetary Official 5/11/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on Budgets 6/11/14. Brussels BE

Interview with Member of ENVI Committee 6/11/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Assistant to Member of the Committee on International Trade 7/11/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Assistant to Member of the ENVI Committee 7/11/14 Brussels BE

Interview with Committee on Budgets Senior Leadership Member 4/12/14. Brussels BE

Interview with Secretariat of the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament 4/12/14

Interview with 'Group Coordinator' Member of the ENVI Committee 7/1/15 Skype Interview

Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 17/11/15 Phone Interview

Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 2/12/15 Phone Interview

Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/12/15 Phone Interview

Interview with Member of the Committee on International Trade 12/1/16 Phone Interview

Interview with Senior Member of the Committee on International Trade 15/1/16 Glasgow UK

Appendix III – Interview Question Key

Interview Questions.

Q1. Do you consider [the interviewee's committee] to be a powerful legislative actor?

Q2. Is committee decision making usually consensual between the political groups [on the interviewee's committee], or do conflicts often occur?

Q3. Does the [interviewee's committee] have a strong working relationship with the European Commission? Does the committee have a strong working relationship with the Council?

Q4. Are you contacted by stakeholders or national government representatives attempting to supply you with position papers and information directly?

Q5. Does seniority and committee experience play a significant role in the allocation of committee reports?

Appendix IV - Powers and responsibilities of Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

'Committee responsible for:

1. Environmental policy and environmental protection measures, in particular concerning:

(a) Climate change,

(b) Air, soil and water pollution, waste management and recycling, dangerous substances and preparations, noise levels and the protection of biodiversity,

(c) Sustainable development,

(d) International and regional measures and agreements aimed at protecting the environment,

(e) Restoration of environmental damage,

(f) Civil protection,

(g) The European Environment Agency,

(h) The European Chemicals Agency;

2. Public health, in particular:

(a) Programmes and specific actions in the field of public health,

(b) Pharmaceutical and cosmetic products,

(c) Health aspects of bioterrorism,

(d) The European Medicines Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control;

3. Food safety issues, including in particular:

(a) The labelling and safety of foodstuffs,

(b) Veterinary legislation concerning protection against risks to human health; public health checks on foodstuffs and food production systems,

(c) The European Food Safety Authority and the European Food and Veterinary Office'.

Source: European Parliament Rules of Procedure (2014)

Appendix V – Professional Expertise in ENVI Committee

Expertise was seen as possessed by a member if they possessed a background as an;

Agricultural Engineer,

Agriculture Specialist,

Biomedical Researcher,

Chemical Engineer,

Environmental Lawyer,

Environmental Scientist,

Healthcare Manager,

Healthcare Worker,

Hydraulic Engineer,

Medical Doctor,

Medical Technician,

Mental Health Specialist,

Midwife,

Regulatory Agency (Within the ENVI remit) Worker,

Qualified Nurse,

Qualified Surveyor,

Veterinary Surgeon,

Food Scientist,

Or any other profession which contained a clear technical remit within the committee.

Appendix VI - Powers and responsibilities of Committee on Budgets

[Budgets] Committee responsible for:

- 1. The multiannual financial framework of the Union's revenue and expenditure and the Union's system of own resources;*
- 2. Parliament's budgetary prerogatives, namely the budget of the Union as well as the negotiation and implementation of inter-institutional agreements in this field;*
- 3. Parliament's estimates according to the procedure defined in the Rules;*
- 4. The budget of the decentralised bodies;*
- 5. The financial activities of the European Investment Bank which are not part of European economic governance;*
- 6. The budgetisation of the European Development Fund, without prejudice to the powers of the committee responsible for the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement;*
- 7. Financial implications and compatibility with the multiannual financial framework of all Union acts, without prejudice to the powers of the relevant committees;*
- 8. Keeping track of and assessing the implementation of the current budget notwithstanding Rule 95(1), transfers of appropriations, procedures relating to the establishment plans, administrative appropriations and opinions concerning buildings-related projects with significant financial implications;*
- 9. The Financial Regulation, excluding matters relating to the implementation, management and control of the budget.'*

Source: European Parliament Rules of Procedure (2014)

Appendix VII - Professional Expertise in BUDG Committee

Expertise was seen as possessed by a member if they had a background as an;

Accountant,

Agricultural Economist,

Auditor,

Budget Minister,

Economic Advisor,

Finance Minister,

Financial Advisor,

Prime Minister,

Professional Economist,

Or any other profession with a clear former Budgetary/Fiscal responsibility, or technical remit pertinent to the committee.

Appendix VIII - Powers and responsibilities of Committee on International Trade.

Committee on International Trade

Committee responsible for matters relating to the establishment, implementation and monitoring of the Union's common commercial policy and its external economic relations, in particular:

- 1. Financial, economic and trade relations with third countries and regional organisations;*
- 2. The common external tariff and trade facilitation as well as the external aspects of customs provisions and management;*
- 3. The opening, monitoring, conclusion and follow-up of bilateral, multilateral and plurilateral trade agreements governing economic, trade and investment relations with third countries and regional organisations;*
- 4. Measures of technical harmonisation or standardisation in fields covered by instruments of international law;*
- 5. Relations with the relevant international organisations and international fora on trade-related matters, and with organisations promoting regional economic and commercial integration outside the Union;*
- 6. Relations with the WTO, including its parliamentary dimension.*

The committee liaises with the relevant inter-parliamentary and ad hoc delegations for the economic and trade aspects of relations with third countries.

Source: European Parliament Rules of Procedure (2014)

Appendix IX - Professional Expertise in INTA Committee

Expertise was seen as possessed by a member if they had a background as an;

Accountancy with a Trade Remit,

Executive of International, or Domestic, Company with Trade Remit,

International Livestock Trader,

Industrial Lawyer,

International Business Manager,

International Trade and Business Accountancy,

Political Expertise with a Clear Indication of Trade Law Drafting,

Trade Minister,

Trade Lawyer,

Medical Devices Trade Specialist,

Or any other profession which contained a clear technical remit within the committee.

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