



HEC 2022/04
Alcide de Gasperi Centre for Research
Department of History and Civilisation

WORKING PAPER

**History of the European Parliament:
Research Projects, Sources and Historical
Memory 1979-2019**

Contributions by Agnès Brouet, Alfredo de Feo,
Ludovic Delepine, Dietmar Nickel, Jean-Marie Palayret,
Christian Salm, Umberto Tulli and Donatella M. Viola

European University Institute

Department of History and Civilisation

Alcide de Gasperi Centre

**History of the European Parliament: Research Projects,
Sources and Historical Memory 1979-2019**

Contributions by Agnès Brouet, Alfredo de Feo, Ludovic
Delepine, Dietmar Nickel, Jean-Marie Palayret, Christian Salm,
Umberto Tulli and Donatella M. Viola

Working Paper HEC 2022/04

ISSN 1725-6720

The Alcide de Gasperi Centre

The [Alcide De Gasperi Research Centre on the History of European Integration](#), established in 2015, combines the expertise of the Department of History and Civilization at the EUI and the resources available at the Historical Archives of the European Union.

The Centre promotes research into the history of European Integration, supports young researchers in the field, coordinates networks of historians, facilitates the use of primary sources and increases public interest in the history of European integration.

The Friends of the Historical Archives of the European Union

The [Friends of the Historical Archives of the European Union](#) is an independent, non-political, non-profit association, founded on 29 November 2013, which gathers all those who wish to lend their support to the enrichment and knowledge of the Historical Archives of the European Union.

© contributing authors, 2022

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 \(CC-BY 4.0\)](#) International license.

If cited or quoted, reference should be made to the full name of the author(s), editor(s), the title, the series and number, the year and the publisher.

Published in March 2022 by the European University Institute.

Badia Fiesolana, via dei Roccettini 9
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

www.eui.eu

Views expressed in this publication reflect the opinion of individual author(s) and not those of the European University Institute.

This publication is available in Open Access in [Cadmus](#), the EUI Research Repository:



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission supports the EUI through the European Union budget. This publication reflects the views only of the author(s), and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Abstract

This publication is the result of the work and discussion by participants in the 2019 conference *History of the European Parliament: research projects, sources and historical memory 1979-2019*, organised by the Association of Friends of the Historical Archives of the European Union together with the Historical Archives of the European Union and the House of History of Europe.

The conference was organised to mark the fortieth anniversary of the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage. It brought together archivists, academics, former senior officials and well-known European parliamentarians to focus in particular on tracing the evolution of Parliament's historiography since the ECSC Consultative Assembly, and its acceleration following the Single Act and the Maastricht Treaty.

This publication presents an inventory of the sources, written and oral, historical and memorial, as well as a revisitation of various research projects bearing on or relating to the history of a European institution whose role and legislative and budgetary powers have steadily increased since its first term of office.

Keywords

European Parliament, European integration, European history

Table of Contents

The Collected Memories of Members of the European Parliament.....	1
<i>Alfredo De Feo and Dietmar Nickel</i>	
The Archives as historical testimonies for citizens	3
<i>Ludovic Delepine</i>	
The European Parliamentary Assembly and the Struggle for its Election.	4
<i>Umberto Tulli</i>	
Les sources du Parlement européen aux Archives historiques de l'Union européenne	5
<i>Agnès Brouet</i>	
The European Parliament in the 1980s: development, role, impact	8
<i>Christian Salm</i>	
Between Democratic Legitimation and Self-Empowerment: Forty Years of the European Parliament elected by universal suffrage.....	10
<i>Jean-Marie Palayret</i>	
From the Tower of Babel to the European Parliament:The importance of the European integration project.....	23
<i>Donatella M. Viola</i>	

The Collected Memories of Members of the European Parliament

Alfredo De Feo and Dietmar Nickel

The 40th anniversary of the European Parliament directly elected deserved a special attention. How the path toward a more democratic Europe was built up? The question had a particular significance for a group of former officials of the Institution who had accompanied a long part of this journey.

Together with three other former colleagues and friends¹ we have considered that collecting oral memories from the actors of this adventure was the best way to celebrate this anniversary. We did not want to compete with academic research, there are already many and more qualified than us, but add to these studies the human touch of the Members who have contributed to the story and development of the Institution. The European Parliament had a collection of interviews of its Presidents and Secretary Generals, so we thought that 'normal' MEPs, even though some had covered high positions, would have brought an added value.

The support of the Historical Archives of the EU was crucial to create a web page and database where we present the oral interviews with former MEPs active between 1979 and 2019, which today contains more than 100 interviews.

The enthusiasm of former MEPs participating in the initiative has convinced us to continue this journey and other colleagues are now on board to make the project live. The archive is easily accessible for researchers in the Historical Archives of the EU in Florence and online². We interviewed only MEPs who volunteer to be interviewed. In the following paragraphs we select some key phrases which give the flavour of what can be found in the database. What better presentation of an oral archive than an oral introduction, such as the one given by Michael Shackleton to the University College of London³.

Virtually all interviewees have a story to tell: a story of success, but also of disappointments and frustrations. MEPs, arriving at the EP have all a personal and political agenda, and they want to achieve and influence the EU policies. The examples below are not a summary but only an appetizer to encourage the readers to go the HAEU and listen to the original interviews.

Thomas von der Vring revealed to us the opposition of governments to increase the EP influence and competences, and the EP had to fight with Council to extend its powers. He reveals that the EP was prepared to follow legally doubtful procedures in order to save the newly created social policy in the vote of the annual budget. In fact most of the Treaty changes took on board progresses that the EP had achieved informally, through soft law. Likewise, the important institutional reform proposals which the EP adopted, like the Spinelli Draft Treaty establishing the European Union of 1984 and the De Gucht Declaration on fundamental rights of 1989, have been integrated in the Treaties.

Gerhard Schmid, one of EP's Vice Presidents, gave an interesting interpretation of MEPs attitude between those who want to be important and the ones that want to be influential.

¹ Further to two authors of this article, the other authors were Michael Schakleton, co-editor, Francis Jacobs and Gerard Laprat

² All the interviews are presented in the EUHA @ https://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/#CM_EP

³ Michael Shackleton, Talking Europe, @ <https://soundcloud.com/european-institute/michael-shackleton-collecting-memories-of-the-european-parliament>

One of the concern of Lord Balfe (UK), Chair of the Quaestors, was how to avoid the influence of the EP administration, and gave us its recipes how to impose the agenda of a meeting.

Terry Wynn and Joan Colom described us how the European Parliament gained influence and powers through the budgetary negotiations.

The resignation of the Santer Commission in 1999, was commented by Pat Cox, Leader of the ELDR Group. He proposed to his group and then to the EP the right approach between accountancy and accountability. This idea came while walking his dog after Christmas lunch. On the same subject Pauline Green, Leader of the Socialist Group, told us how decisive the decision of her group, in spite of internal opposition, was, provoking the resignation of the Santer Commission. Still today former MEPs strongly disagree about the choice made. John Cushnahan sees a mistake to have broken the line of trust with the Commission.

Willi Görlach glorifies the decision as a big progress for the development of the interinstitutional balance.

Jean Paul Gauzes (FR) praised the role of interest groups which were able to provide a valuable source of information in economic and monetary issues.

On the contrary Erna Hennicot-Schoepges (LUX) regrets the aggressive attitude of some of the interest groups in interfering with the legislative procedure.

Perhaps the most frequently cited moment related to President Mitterand's moving farewell speech to the EP in 1995 when he told MEP's never to forget that nationalism means war: le nationalisme, c'est la guerre. (He said it three times in a row) The presiding President, Klaus Hänsch, and all present MEP's knew that the President was in poor health. This served to strengthen the sense of this being a moment of the passage from one generation to the next. It was a speech of high drama felt by everyone that transcended the day-to-day struggle of the institution and reminded all those present of the symbolic importance of the Parliament and of the prime purpose of the European integration: Peace.

Conclusion



To conclude we can report what many told us, no individual Member can claim to have influenced the story of the Parliament on his/her own, but the collective effort of each of them has contributed to shape the European Democracy. That is why we wanted to complement our project with a book, *Shaping Parliamentary Democracy*⁴. We want once again to thank the Historical Archives of the EU and the Friends of the HAEU to give us the opportunity to make our project live.

⁴ A. De Feo, M. Shackleton *Shaping Parliamentary Democracy Collected Memories from the European Parliament*, Palgrave, 2019 @ <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783030272128>

The Archives as Historical Testimonies for Citizens

Ludovic Delepine

La continuité des systèmes démocratiques est une préoccupation qui requiert une attention permanente. Comme l'illustre Yuval Noah Harari¹, cette continuité s'entretient au travers de trois enjeux majeurs: le sens, l'éducation et la confiance. Le sens pour susciter l'intérêt des citoyens et leur participation aux grands enjeux démocratiques. L'éducation pour connaître la genèse du système démocratique dans son identité. La confiance pour établir un rapport d'équité et de responsabilité au sein de la vie publique. Enjeux contemporains fondamentaux.

Un des axes de développement proposé dans notre approche citoyenne pour la valorisation des Archives du Parlement européen est l'éducation, au travers de la communication. Cette approche s'instrumentalise par la valorisation de contenus historiques au travers d'un musée digital de témoignages de citoyens sur la construction européenne de 1900 à nos jours². La méthode hypothético-déductive mise en place s'appuie sur le lien fort entre l'émotion et la cognition visant à susciter l'intérêt d'un citoyen dans un fait historique lié à la construction européenne. En effectuant un travail d'enrichissement multimédia d'un objet archivistique pour mettre en valeur sa perspective historique, nous faisons l'hypothèse que le citoyen accédera plus facilement au signifié de ce fait historique, attiré en premier lieu par le signifiant véhiculé par l'enrichissement multimédia. Motivée par l'arbitraire du signe matérialisé dans une perspective Saussurienne³.

La stratégie éditoriale mise en place s'appuie sur une vision antérieure et postérieure du moment présent, considérant l'histoire comme un continuum passé en ré-écriture permanente et au futur anticipable non-prédictible, qui reste à écrire. La vision antérieure s'appuie une sélection d'années fortement illustrées par les citoyens au travers de leurs contributions pour leurs suggérer un fait historique lié à une position du Parlement européen. L'année 1989 qui a suscité 99 contributions en est un exemple particulièrement notoire en raison de la chute du Mur de Berlin et illustrée par la série de témoignages "East meets West". La vision postérieure répertorie les événements programmés dans l'année à venir pour illustrer certaines positions qui ont été ou qui seront prises par le Parlement européen, comme les Jeux olympiques d'été de 2020.

La démocratie n'est pas l'aboutissement d'une longue évolution de systèmes politiques. Elle en est un mode d'organisation qui garantit à tous ses citoyens la liberté d'expression. Valeur fondamentale que les Archives du Parlement européen utilisent pour communiquer avec les citoyens, à travers une forme de communication innovante ancrée dans un espace que les citoyens se sont appropriés auparavant.

¹ Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, 30 August 2018, ISBN 978-198-480-149-4

² My House of European History, 2016, <https://my-european-history.ep.eu/myhouse/timeline>

³ Ferdinand de Saussure, 1975, *Cours de linguistique générale*, ISBN 2228500658

The European Parliamentary Assembly and the Struggle for its Election.

Umberto Tulli

Some notes for the conference “History of the European Parliament: research projects, sources and historical memory 1979-2019” -- Please do not quote

The following notes are based on my *Un Parlamento per l'Europa* (Firenze and Milano: Le Monnier and Mondadori, 2017).

The paper analysed the evolution of democratic representation within the European Community. It argued that the political meaning of democratic representation underwent many changes between the late Forties and the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979.

The starting point is the idea that post-war direct elections and Parliaments were a national project with some European connections. First, each national parliament contributed to the affirmation of a Western European democratic milieu that, in turn, strengthened the role of national parliaments within their own State. Second, national parliaments established direct international and transnational contacts. Members of National Parliaments met each other in new international assemblies. Between the late 1940s and early 1950s, four supranational assemblies were established: the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe; the Parliamentary Assembly of the Western European Organization; the ECSC Common Assembly, which was then reinforced to operate as the ad hoc Assembly for the creation of the European Defense Community/European Political Community.

Over the following years, a transnational debate on the introduction of direct elections to a European Assembly developed. The major proposal was the so-called “Dehousse Convention” which was calling for the introduction of direct elections to the EEC European Parliamentary Assembly. As such, direct elections were meant to represent a step forward for European integration, something that would trigger a federalist and democratic revolution within the EEC. Yet, the Convention remained in a political limbo until the end of the Sixties.

After the 1969 Hauge Summit, direct elections assumed a new meaning. As an unplanned and unexpected consequence of the new budgetary procedures, a first problem of democratic accountability emerged. By the early 1970s, calls for the democratization of European institutions and direct elections to the European Parliament entered the political debate. They were no longer limited to federalists or advocates of a stronger Europe. Rather, the appeals now encompassed many vocal critics of European integration, who pointed out the lack of any direct democratic accountability for European institutions. In this context, the political meaning of the vote changed. From a step forward for European integration, it became a solution to a democratic accountability problem.

Yet, direct elections became a reality during the Seventies and in connection to the multifaceted crisis the EEC was facing at the time. Indeed, the vote was officially introduced a reality only in the moment in which it had lost its main political meanings and implications. Electing the European Parliament was not conceived as a step forward the European federation, nor was it meant to strengthen the supranational democratic accountability of European institutions. It was first and foremost a legitimation of an integration process centered on the European Council and the role of national governments.

Les sources du Parlement européen aux Archives historiques de l'Union européenne

Agnès Brouet

La mission principale des Archives historiques de l'Union européenne est de conserver et de rendre accessible à la recherche les archives déposées par les institutions de l'UE mais également de recueillir des fonds privés liés à l'intégration européenne. Ce vaste ensemble de sources à disposition des chercheurs est particulièrement important concernant le Parlement européen.

En premier lieu, les documents officiels qui représentent environ 202.000 dossiers versés par les Archives historiques du Parlement européen. Les fonds sont organisés par législature depuis l'Assemblée commune (1952) jusqu'au Parlement élu au suffrage universel (1979 - 1999). Les documents illustrent les activités du Parlement européen et l'essentiel de la collection concerne les dossiers liés à l'activité législative, qui reprennent les travaux des commissions, des délégations et les documents de séance. Il s'agit d'originaux sur papier dans toutes les langues officielles. Les archives sont classées par type de documents tels que les rapports parlementaires, les procès verbaux des réunions des commissions et des délégations, les propositions de résolutions, les questions parlementaires et les interventions des députés pendant les séances plénières.

Un autre groupe important de documents est issu du travail des organes de direction illustrant les procédures et les méthodes de travail du Parlement européen, comme par exemple le Statut des parlementaires européens élus au suffrage universel direct ou encore la gestion des sièges de travail.

Les documents des Cabinets de la Présidence (Gaetano Martino, Walter Behrendt, Simone Veil, Piet Dankert) et des cabinets du Secrétaire général (1958 –1986) mettent en valeur le rôle de ses importantes fonctions notamment en ce qui concerne les relations interinstitutionnelles, internationales ou le fonctionnement administratif du Parlement.

Enfin, le fonds des Organes parlementaires pour la coopération au développement (1956-1980) qui met en valeur la politique européenne du développement à travers les différentes conventions entre les États membres et les États africains, des Caraïbes et de l'Océan Pacifique (ACP) et constitue l'un des éléments clés des relations extérieures des Communautés européennes.

La collection des Coupures de presse 1956 –1992 (CPPE) en provenance du Service de l'évaluation de la Presse (équivalent aujourd'hui de la Direction générale des Services de recherche parlementaire) est également une source très utile et unique. Elle compte plus de 3000 dossiers (1956 – 1992) d'information quotidiens et de dossiers "ad hoc" établis pour répondre à des requêtes spécifiques. Ils sont composés d'articles de presse et de revues des Communautés européennes, Suisse et États-Unis couvrant les sujets débattus pendant les sessions plénières du Parlement, le travail des commissions et des groupes parlementaires, les sommets du Conseil de l'Europe et donnant des informations sur les activités des membres et des personnalités éminentes européennes.

Les publications officielles, notamment les débats parlementaires (1952 à 1999) et les documents de séances (1952 à 1981) sont disponibles sur papier (relié) et microfiches. Un index analytique et un index nominatif facilitent la recherche comme par exemple pour l'activité d'un député ou pour un discours d'une personnalité durant un séance plénière.

Enfin, les fonds privés et collections constituent une source complémentaire non négligeable et qui offre une perspective de recherche différente.

Tout d'abord les fonds des Groupes politiques au PE dont le Groupe du Parti socialiste européen au Parlement européen (1955 –1994), le Groupe de l'Alliance des démocrates et des libéraux pour l'Europe au Parlement européen (1956 –2004) et le Groupe du Parti populaire européen au Parlement européen.

Les documents illustrent la composition du groupe, son travail et ses positions politiques notamment à travers ses organes de direction (la Présidence, les secrétaires généraux, le Bureau, les députés). Mais ils permettent également de mettre en valeur l'activité parlementaire notamment au sein des commissions parlementaires et des délégations d'un point de vue plus politique. Un autre ensemble de documents permet également de replacer le groupe dans un contexte national, européen et international et d'analyser l'impact de ces relations. Les dossiers sont composés de divers types de documents : de la correspondance, des notes, des comptes rendus de réunions, des discours, des coupures de presse, des rapports et des publications.

Les Archives historiques de l'Union européenne mettent également à disposition de la recherche de nombreux fonds privés de personnalités. Concernant le Parlement européen, nous signalons en particulier les fonds Fernand Dehousse, Edoardo Martino, Altiero Spinelli, Carlo Scarascia- Mugnozza, Danuta Hübner, Graham Watson, ou encore Paolo Falcone.

Les fonds des organisations pro-européennes comme l'Union européenne des fédéralistes et le Mouvement fédéraliste européen peuvent offrir également un point de vue intéressant par exemple concernant la campagne pour l'élection au suffrage universel. De même que le « Fonds Femmes d'Europe » propose des documents concernant la création de la Commission ad hoc pour les droits des femmes et la Commission d'enquête sur la situation des femmes en Europe.

A signaler également deux collections sur supports différents mais qui complètent les sources plus « traditionnelles » : tout d'abord les programmes d'Histoire orale (*Leaders Beyond The State* et *Collecting memories: European Parliament 1979-2019*), où l'on trouve de nombreuses interviews notamment d'anciens présidents (Pierre Pflimlin, Enrique Barón Crespo, Josep Borrell, Hans-Gert Pöttering). Et enfin une collection d'affiches (collection Nicola di Gioia), produites par le Parlement européen et concernant entre autres les élections, les droits de l'homme et l'éducation.

La recherche s'effectue principalement à travers la base de données des Archives historiques de l'UE (recherche par mots clés, par date, par fonds, par langues, etc.) et la consultation des originaux dans la salle de lecture à Villa Salvati.

Les Archives historiques de l'UE mettent en lumière l'exploitation de ces sources uniques à travers l'organisation d'expositions ou de conférences, mais également grâce à un partenariat pour l'obtention de bourses de recherche notamment avec le Groupe du Parti populaire européen au Parlement européen.

Accès aux sources : Fonds du Parlement européen aux AHUE,
<https://archives.eui.eu/en/fonds> Fonds privés aux AHUE,
<https://archives.eui.eu/en/fonds#Individuals> et
<https://archives.eui.eu/en/fonds#CorporateBodies> Base de données des AHUE,
<https://archives.eui.eu/en/search> Programmes d'histoire orale,
https://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history Collection d'affiches,
<https://archives.eui.eu/en/fonds/460416?item=NDG> Bourses de recherche,
<https://www.eui.eu/Research/HistoricalArchivesOfEU/AbouttheHistoricalArchives/Postgraduate-Research-Grants> Archives historiques du Parlement européen,
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/historicalarchives/fr/home.html>

The European Parliament in the 1980s: development, role, impact

Christian Salm

Research on the history of the EU has mainly covered the impact of the nation states and their governments on the European integration process. Consequently, historical research on the role of the EU's supranational institutions has been neglected. There are only a few exceptions where historical studies reconstruct the influence of the European Commission on various dimensions of European integration. One example is three volumes on the history of the Commission, which give an inside view of this institution from the 1960s to the 1990a. Source-based comprehensive historical research on the European Parliament, explaining its development since its foundation in the 1950s, did not exist so far. A project of the European Parliamentary Research Service (ERPS) on the history of the Parliament partly remedy this gap in the existing historiography on the EU with three studies on the European Parliament's history in the 1970s. The project researches the character and culture of the first two directly-elected European Parliaments (1979 to 1989) and the role they played in the institutional development of the Community and in the launching of the single market programme. Christian Salm, EPRS policy analyst and historian, presented the key findings of the EPRS project, which is resting on the research work by four historians: Birte Wassenberg and Sylvain Schirmann (both University of Strasbourg), Wolfram Kaiser (University of Portsmouth) and Laurent Warlouzet (Paris Sorbonne University).

The [first EPRS history study](#) (by Wassenberg and Schirmann) analyses the political culture and dynamics of the European Parliament. It argues that the first election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage in 1979 was a groundbreaking democratic event in that it profoundly changed the character, composition and functioning of the Assembly and its political influence in the institutional set-up of the European Community. The impact of this change extended to areas as diverse as the organisation of parliamentary business, the workings of parliamentary committees and intergroups, increased budgetary powers, the socio-professional profile of MEPs, the role of political groups, relations between MEPs and the Administration, changes in the Secretariat's establishment plan, relations with lobbyists, communication policy, the Assembly's activities in the context of the European Community's values and interinstitutional relations.

The [second EPRS history study](#) (by Kaiser), based on a large range of newly accessible archival sources from the European Parliament's Historical Archives, explores the European Parliament's policies on the institutional reform of the European Communities between 1979 and 1989. It demonstrates how the Parliament fulfilled key functions in the process of constitutionalization of the present-day European Union. These functions included defining a set of criteria for effective and democratic governance, developing legal concepts such as subsidiarity, and pressurizing the Member States into accepting greater institutional deepening and more powers for the Parliament in the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty.

Finally, the [third EPRS history study](#) (by Warlouzet) shows that the European Parliament exercised significant influence in shaping the debate and agenda around the concept of completing the 'single' market of the (then) Community. Through both its early campaigning for action in this field and its definition and analysis of issues such as the 'cost of non-Europe', the Parliament contributed to the political and intellectual climate which led to the launch in 1985 by the European Commission, under its new President, Jacques Delors, of an ambitious programme to complete the single market by 1992. This process was reinforced and facilitated by adoption of the Single European Act (SEA) the following year. The introduction of a more

significant legislative role for the European Parliament under the SEA enhanced the position of the Parliament in the Community's 'institutional triangle', enabling it to influence the content of law more directly.

Between Democratic Legitimation and Self-Empowerment: Forty Years of the European Parliament elected by universal suffrage.

Jean-Marie Palayret

On 28 February 1958 in the "Maison de l'Europe" in Strasbourg, the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community met for the last time. A few weeks later, on 19 March, the European Parliamentary Assembly held its constituent session. It took over the task of the Common Assembly within the framework of the ECSC, acting as a parliamentary institution for the two new Communities – the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community - whose treaties (Treaties of Rome) had entered into force on 1 January 1958. As the rules of procedure were only amended or supplemented in so far that the new treaties rendered this indispensable, and the same political groupings continued their activities as before, the transition was above all designed to ensure the continuity of Community parliamentary action¹.

This was the very modest beginning for an Assembly which, in 1962, would adopt the imposing title of "European Parliament". This is hardly surprising, bearing in mind that the Founding Fathers did not have high hopes for the parliamentary institution, convinced as they were that the Assembly could only be the sounding box for nationalism, and considering that the Community within which it acted had a purely economic nature². Yet before long the Assembly would be destined for a very different future. On the one hand, it would increase its representativeness and legitimacy to the point of being elected by universal suffrage, thus becoming the first international parliamentary assembly directly elected by the peoples of the member nations. On the other hand, even before it came to be directly elected, it was to embark, usually with the agreement of the member states, sometimes on its own authority, on a slow but steady conquest of its powers that brought it closer to a classic parliamentary body.

Examining, in the **first session of the Conference**, the **genesis, the organisation and impact of European elections**, profs. Tulli and Viola trace the lengthy negotiations which took place between the Hague Conference (December 1969), which had broken the impasse with the Vedel Report, and the Paris Summit held in December 1974, where the heads of States and government took the solemn decision to convene direct elections as early as possible. Due to the delay in the ratification process by Westminster, the first election to the European Parliament could not be conducted until June 1979³.

The proposal had been principally advocated by the Germans, the Dutch and the Italians. The democratisation of the Community and the election of the EP by direct suffrage constituted one of the basis of Social-democrat vision of Europe and have never been a major dividing line between FRG's political Parties. Since the inception (proposal by Gaetano Martino) of art. 138/3 of the Rome Treaty, which foresaw the holding of European elections on the basis of a uniform procedure, whose layout was up to the European parliamentary Assembly, Italian governments and federalists had always been in favour of a powerful EP, for democratic or demographic reasons (just remind the Spinelli campaigns aiming to endow the European Parliament with constitutional duty).

¹ Sandro GUERRIERI, *Un Parlamento oltre le nazioni. L'Assemblea Comune della Ceca e le sfide dell'integrazione europea (1952-1958)*, Bologna, *il Mulino*, 2016.

² P.I.G KAPTEYN, *La Communauté européenne du Charbon et de l'Acier*, Leyde, AW Sythof, 1962, p.8-10

³ Umberto TULLI, *Un Parlamento per l'Europa. Il Parlamento europeo e la battaglia per la sua elezione (1948-1979)* Le Monnier, Florence, 2017.

French Presidents adopted a totally opposed stance: in the long-established French “sovereignist” tradition, it was only the “Council “which mattered. French Presidents and diplomats never considered the EP as a “legitimate body”. De Gaulle considered improper for a consultative Assembly to be elected by universal suffrage, but paradoxically rejected at the same time any attempt to enlarge its legislative and budgetary competencies. It worth to be recalled that one of the causes of the “empty chair crisis” in July 1965 was the Hallstein’s attempt to enlarge substantially the EP competencies in the budgetary procedure through the control of the “own resources”. Pompidou was afraid of a lack of budgetary discipline from the EP: to Willy Brandt, he confessed he was “*terrorisé à l’idée d’une Assemblée ayant l’initiative des dépenses*”. Added to that was the feeling that the EP was in certain points more powerful than the French National Assembly, which could be dissolved. Among the motivations which led Pompidou to pave the way for British membership was his conviction that Westminster shared its distrust of a European Parliament elected by direct suffrage. Even Giscard d’Estaing had proven to be reluctant to agree Helmut Schmidt’s proposal. In the negotiations, the French government accepted it only because it considered it as unavoidable both as a consequence of the final step of the Common Market, scheduled for 1974, which set out the transfer of own resources to the Community and the extension of the EP’s budgetary prerogatives and as compensation to the institutionalisation of European summitry (to be called “European Council”) as the main policy making body of the Community. Giscard perceived that the Community was suffering from a lack of membership, especially in a period of crisis, which advised the prevalence of “decision- making” which could treat problems from a more “global perspective” (The G7 had been set up in the meantime) over the technicalities of the specialised Councils of Ministers and the slowness and uncertainty of the public debate⁴. Giscard had to face fierce opposition from the Gaullist’s barons, former Prime Ministers Michel Debré and Jacques Chirac who initiated contentious proceedings before the Conseil constitutionnel and denounced the subversion « *du parti de l’étranger*” (appel de Cochin – 6 July 1978). Furthermore – with the help of the British and the Danes – the French government succeeded in limiting the impact of this decision and the legitimacy of the Parliament: Brussels’ Act of 20th September 1976 planned elections in a strictly national frame, every State arrogating the right to appoint its MEP’s and to adopt its own electoral regime. This frame imposed national campaigns divested of European themes everywhere. France was for its part organized in a unique constituency, by virtue of the sacrosanct principle of the “*République une et indivisible*”, in order to nip in the bud (*étouffer dans l’oeuf*) any attempt from regionalist movements to “regionalise” the ballot, depriving at the same time the voters of a direct link with their representatives in Strasbourg.

European elections have by no means lived up to the original optimistic expectations. This fact is confirmed by the brutal and linear decline of electoral participation since 1979.

The reasons behind this paradox arise from the fact that the European Parliament has failed “to elicit wholehearted public support and to attract the desirable levels of loyalty and identification by EU citizens” (VIOLA). From the outset, the process of European integration has been described as a period of permissive consensus, with elites freely pursuing new policies amidst public disinterest in the project. Even after the introduction of EP elections, citizens remained quite unconcerned about the direction in which Europe was heading. Although since the early nineties, the permissive consensus has been substantially eroded and EP has become a full-fledged co-legislator in all matters related to the single Market, it remains widely excluded from areas which concern citizens everyday lives, such as employment, welfare, taxation, security and defence.

⁴ Emmanuel MOURLON DRUOL, ‘The Creation of the European Council at the December 1974 Paris Summit’ in Morten Rasmussen and Ann-Christina Knudsen (eds.) *The Road to a United Europe. Interpretations of the process of European Integration*, PIE Peter Lang, Bruxelles, 2009, pp. 349 – 363.

- The so-called EP's "democratic deficit" is also due to the inconsistencies inherent to the modalities to elect its members. The EP has undeniably been penalised by the disproportionate representativeness of citizens of the various Member States. Having, at the beginning of the 1970s, represented a barrier to the election of the EP by universal suffrage, the weighted voting system, devised in the early days of the Community and maintained throughout the treaties without ever being properly revised, has resisted all attempts to make it fairer (Dehousse and Patjin projects). The need to limit the maximum number of representatives strengthened the arguments of those who are loath to modify the sacrosanct rules of equal treatment between the "large" States and the over-representation of the "small" States.

Although its election by direct suffrage since 1979 makes the EP the only Institution to have direct popular legitimacy, it is not representative of a "European demos" still to be created, but of "the peoples of the respective member States". The early renouncement of a uniform electoral procedure, albeit one described by the EC treaty (art.138 /3) in exchange for a number of common principles for Euro-elections (endorsed in June 2002) has undermined the homogeneity and thus the representativeness of MEP's. Since then, all the attempts made by the European Parliament itself to revise its electoral procedures (Andrew Duff's reports) have failed⁵. Elected almost entirely by list-based proportional representation, very often with national and fixed party lists, which mechanically distance them from voters, MEP's have little incentive to adopt a European way of thinking: if they want to be re-elected, they need to look to their national parties in order to be re-entered on the lists.

This equivocation by the authors of the Treaties has two consequences:

-) For long, EP elections have and keep embodying 'mid-term tests' or 'dress rehearsals' for the subsequent general electoral competitions. As such, they are strongly marked by high defection rates, based on domestic political cleavages rather than policies originating in the European Community and later the European Union (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). From then on, it is not surprising to often find a "protest vote" against the national governments there. They offer voters the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction and frustration against ruling majority without altering the cabinet's composition. Over the past decade, Euro-elections have become more salient: citizens have formed more well - structured opinions regarding EU integration (Eijk and Franklin, 2004). When Eurosceptic parties emphasise their opposition to the EU, they may also increase the salience of the issue by challenging the future of Europe in the election campaigns (Steenbergen and De Vries, 2007/Spoon, and Tilley, 2009). Voters have started to take these contests more seriously and party attitude to the EU politics and policies, whether negative or positive, seems to influence gradually citizens' voting behaviour whilst growing anti-European sentiments sensibly favour low turnout. This "European Salient model" entails the following three core postulates:

- Green movements tend to increase their voting share compared to the previous national elections (based on the belief that environmental issues could only be tackled efficiently at the EU level (Hix and Marsh, 2007)

- extreme parties on the left-right scale get relatively more votes

- anti-European parties perform better because of their ability to mobilize voters dissatisfied with the European Union⁶.

⁵ Nicolas CLINCHAMPS, *Parlement européen et droit parlementaire. Essai sur la naissance du droit parlementaire de l'Union européenne*. Paris, LGDG, 2006, p.89.

⁶ The 2014 EP elections provides an interesting case. First the elections were held after four years of a severe financial and economic crisis in Europe. Second, the elections were held at a time when Eurosceptics parties were doing very well in the polls, third, the elections were the first to be held under the provisions of the Lisbon

-) The divide between representatives and European citizen persists, accentuated by the absence of any electoral division in a number of Member States. In spite of the generalisation of preferential vote, which encourage MEP's to invest in the field work, the gap between elected representatives and their voters has continued to widen, as demonstrated by the steady fall in voter turnout: during the 1999 European Elections, fewer than one in two voters took part in the ballot, in 2004, the average participation was 45,6 % across the 25 Member States. In the majority of States, the rate of participation decreases according to their seniority in the Union. As for the twelve Member states, which joined the Union in 2004 and 2007 - with the exception of the least populated (Malta and Cyprus) - their rates of participation are extremely low (lower than 30 % for 7 of them). One can see there the sign of less consolidated practice of democracy but also a kind of growing tiredness towards the process of EU membership⁷. However, in 2019, The decline in turnout, a constant since the beginning of the election of the European Parliament by directive universal suffrage, has been halted for the very first time. The turnout totaled 50.95% across the 28 Member States, up by 8.34 points in comparison with the election of 2014. It has been the highest rate since the 1994 elections (56.67%, whilst at the time the Union only had 12 members)⁸.

- The European Parliament is not sufficiently representative in that federations of national parties, such as the PPE-DE, PSE and ALDE, which dominate the Strasbourg Assembly, still have a very limited impact on public opinion in Europe⁹. Real and visible European Political Parties, as "main aggregators of societal interests" are still to be created. Even if the Political Groups are an important element of the Parliament structure, they appear as federations of parties with an important autonomy of the components in the various States, which nationalize the debate instead of europeanising it. They lack stability: every European election rebuilt the EP political landscape due to new alliances or the disappearance of some groups. The necessary alliance of national parties into the EP groups can in fact contribute to undermine the programmatic and ideological cohesion of thereof.

Voters, who already found it hard to identify the issues at stake, knew that they had very little influence over European Politics. mostly using them as tests on the performance of national parties. As a matter of fact, it's hard, for European elites, to galvanise the public, uninterested in voting for a Parliament that, owing to the nature of its political groups and rules of procedures (the Hondt system) is almost dominated by a centre coalition, adept of compromise, and furthermore till a recent date, deprived of any direct impact on the European Executive. "The EP's privilege to dismiss the Commission cannot be comparable to the sacrosanct right of bringing government down" (Weiler, 1999). As a result, voters faced with elections which do not serve a clear purpose (e. g. Franklin-2014) treat them as a second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt -1980). Even if, further to the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, things have improved, this evident shortcoming has not been fully redressed: notwithstanding the fact that the Treaty extends the parliamentarisation of the European Union

treaty and included EP Spitzenkandidats (front runners) for Commission President. What was the EP 2014 outcome? First the elections were marked by a high degree of stability, 75 % of the cast votes went to mainstream parties and turnout remain stable 42,5% against 43 % in 2009. Second, the 2014 elections saw broader strongest representation of Eurosceptics parties (Front National, UKIP Danish People's party) yet seen at any EP contest. In 2014, Europe played a more prominent role in citizen's voting by reflecting their perception of EU leaders' ability or failure to tackle the on-going financial and economic crisis but domestic concerns continued to prevail in most countries.

⁷ Pascal DELWITT, Philippe POIRIER, *Parlement puissant, électeurs absents ? Les élections européennes de 2004*, Ed. de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2005, p.11.

⁸ Pascale JOANNIN, Éric MAURICE, "European Parliament: A New balance, but not Eurosceptic" in *Robert Schuman Foundation, European issues n. 517*, 27 May 2019.

⁹ Pascal DELWIT, Erol KULAHCI, Cédric de VAN VALLE (dir.) *Les fédérations européennes de partis. Organisation et influence*. Bruxelles, Ed. de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2001, p.27.

by recognising that the EU government leaders have to 'take into account' the results of the Euro-elections when proposing the Head of the Commission, EP election outcomes are still irrelevant to the Commission's ideological complexion (the other twenty-seven European commissioners are still put forward by national governments). The Treaty also confirms inter-governmental leadership by strategically linking the appointments of the Head of the European Commission, the President of the European Council as well as the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Every effort has to be made in order to remove some of the internal distorting mechanisms that overtly contradict the EP vocation and to reinforce the connection between MEPs and citizens. Institutionalization of transnational European Parties and Manifestos, better definition of the role and status of MEP's, quest for a uniform voting system across the European Union, should be pursued. The Article 8A (2) of the Lisbon Treaty, which states that "the citizen are directly represented at Union level in the European parliament" could, if it came into force, be an enormous step forward in this area.

Forced to compete with other "levels of legitimacy" (Council, Commission), the European Parliament has since the mid-1990s, endeavored to open itself up to civil society. It has engaged in dialogue with associations, non-governmental organisations, grassroots organisations, trade unions and churches, particularly in the context of intergovernmental conferences or the Convention on the future of the Union, intended to bring about the reform of the Treaties, and engineer a Europe which is closer to its citizens. In 2004, the principle of "participatory democracy was introduced in the Constitutional treaty (art. I-47) while the Treaty of Lisbon made provisions for a tangible means of action: the right of popular initiative¹⁰.

Yet this logic of "participatory democracy" is not without its own risks, since it amounts to challenging the legitimacy of MEPs to speak on behalf of the citizens they are supposed to represent. The increasingly difficult scientific and technical nature of the European decision-making process has also led MEPs to seek the expert opinion of representatives of public or private interests. The reservations that some MEPs have towards lobbying have however, led the EP to be selective in its choices of lobbyists and crack down on any abuses by imposing strict rules aimed at ensuring transparency and control.

- According to the Eurobarometer's surveys, the lack of information about the Parliamentary Institution remains one of the main causes of abstention during European Elections. Although the EP has made a real effort to communicate with the press and social networks in order to publicise its proceedings or publicise its electoral campaigns. D. Viola recalls that in particular, in 2009, the common slogan « Its your choice » was adopted by most Member States and distributed across the European Union. Special websites were designed for the event whilst internet and social networks were used together with photo and video with the purpose of attracting the attention of young voters especially and although the visibility of EU news during EP election campaign is generally increasing, (between 1999 and 2009, the average of television news programmes devoted to the elections in the final weeks increased from 7 to 15 per cent.) considerable variation remains between the different member states and coverage of EP's activities by national and international media remains poor. Coverage of this news considered slow, dull, soft, and at times technocratic, according to the editor of "Le Monde", discourages viewers and readers (In France, The 2009 EP electoral campaign remained "apathetic in two senses: it received limited media attention, most parties did not invest much energy in it" (Julien Navarro, p.65).

¹⁰ Paul MAGNETTE, "European Governance and Civil participation: Beyond elitist citizenship?", in *Political Studies*, 51/1, 2003, p.139,156.

- The proliferation of seats adds to the confusion: this disorients the public, which loses contact with this “nomadic”, costly, and carbon-producing institution; it’s detrimental to the Parliament’s image, especially at a time of financial crisis and global warming. It contributes to the isolation of the Parliament from the civil society organisations. Finally, one wonders whether the disdain shown by certain top political leaders towards the Institution (considered a “second choice”, hence the high turnover rate) is a factor in tarnishing the image of the Strasbourg assembly and fueling latent anti-euro-parliamentarism.

Until the beginning of the 1970s, the European Parliament control was extended by “underground” means, outside of any revision of the Treaties to include communication procedures: institutionalisation of written or oral questions submitted to the Council and no longer just to the Commission, the Luns-Westerterp procedure introducing a duty of information for the EP for trade agreements concluded with third countries, and obligation for the Commission and the Council to keep the Assembly regularly informed of the follow-up to its resolutions.

Conversely, between 1970 and 1975, it was through treaty amendment (Treaty of Luxembourg, Brussels Act) that the EP obtained a crucial power - budgetary power - as a logical consequence of allocating the Community its own resources. The European Parliament and the Council thus shared budgetary power, depending on the type of expenditure and whether or not it was compulsory. The Brussels Act (1975) gave the EP the right to reject the budget as a whole by a two-thirds majority of its members. In spite of this safeguard for the Council, on 15 December 1979, the new European Parliament elected by universal suffrage used this power for the first time, rejecting the budget by a crushing four-fifths majority¹¹. In the 1980s, the Parliament and the Council were in permanent conflict over the classification of budgetary expenditure and the application of the maximum rate of increase of expenditure, a conflict from which the EP emerged victorious on several occasions. For example, by increasing the appropriations of the European Regional Fund or the European Social Fund, the EP satisfied the expectations of the public, concerned by rising unemployment, and enjoyed the support of certain Member States that benefited from the Structural Funds, such as Italy and Ireland. Since 1988, tensions have gradually eased, with the introduction of the “Multiannual Financial Perspectives” - aimed at financial discipline and limiting agricultural expenditure - and more importantly, with the increase in the EP’s legislative powers. As requested by the EP, the Lisbon Treaty transforms the informal multiannual financial perspective into a binding legislation that shall be adopted by the Council after the EP’s assent. It abolishes the distinction between “compulsory” and “not compulsory” expenditures and provides for a joint adoption of annual budgets by the Council and the EP. After the Lisbon Treaty, the EP used the threat of veto of both multiannual and annual budget to get additional competences, in the hope that one day it is given a vote on revenues¹².

Since its election by direct universal suffrage in June 1979 the European Parliament, taking advantage of the added prestige conferred by popular suffrage, has steadily extended its powers of control over the European executive.

Drawing from national parliamentary traditions and tried and tested techniques (House of Commons Question Time, continental practice of right of petition and temporary committees of enquiry), it was gradually assigned a power of investiture of the Commission under the Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon Treaties. Interinstitutional agreements have informally increased these competences even further. Often adopted at the initiative of the

¹¹ Jean-Louis BURBAN, « Les députés de l’An II », in *Revue du Marché commun*, septembre 1980.

¹² Adrienne HERITIER, Katharina MEISSER, Catherine MOURY, Magnus SCHOELLER, *European Parliament Ascendant*, Palgrave, London, 2019, p.245

parliamentary institution, these "framework agreements" or "codes of conduct" outline the competences of the institutions in certain areas, providing a formal basis for cooperation or recognising the status or procedures by which certain supervisory bodies such as the Ombudsman, exercise the right of petition or the right of enquiry¹³.

The need to improve the democratic functioning of the Union has made the European Parliament a very offensive assembly, particularly towards the Commission. Capitalising on the new procedure introduced with the Maastricht Treaty (i.e the hearings for confirmation of Commission's individual nominees)¹⁴, the MEPs have opted for a strategy of affirmation, the most striking episode of which was the collective resignation of the Santer Commission in the spring of 1999, without the EP needing to resort formally to the "atomic weapon" of censure. More recently the reject by the MEP's of the prospective Commissioners Rocco Buttiglione (in 2004)), confirmed that the balance of power had tipped in the Assembly's favour, since "the MEPs have brought the President of the Commission and the Council of the European Union to their knees, forcing the replacement of the Commissioner"¹⁵. A similar scenario occurred in February 2010 with the Bulgarian nominee Rumania Jaleva, in 2014 with the Slovenian Alenka Bratusek and in 2019 with the French candidate Sylvie Goulard.

Finally, EP representatives were able to convince the President of the Convention, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, to strengthen the EP's role in the appointment of the European Commission President. The Treaty of Lisbon states that governments, "taking into account" the political balances within the Assembly, will put forward a candidate for the Presidency of the Commission, who will be "elected" by MEP's¹⁶.

It was not until the 1980s and 1990s that the European Parliament acquired a substantial share of legislative power.

Like the Common Assembly, the European Parliamentary Assembly had only consultative powers. in 1958. However, by adding the term "deliberation", the Treaty of Rome already acknowledged a marginal increase in the powers of the new assembly, which would prove decisive over time. Even before its direct election, the EP has over the years widened its legislative influence by adopting the working methods of a classic parliament and commanded, owing to the sheer quality of its work, the respect of the Council, to the point "that approximately 15 to 40%, of the Parliament's amendments, depending on the legislation involved, were incorporated in the final text of a regulation or directive adopted by the Council"¹⁷.

However, it was only with the Single European Act - negotiated in the mid-1980s on the basis of the Spinelli project and the Dooge report and which finally came into force on 1 July 1987 - that the EP legally received a share of legislative power. By identifying areas in which the Parliament and the Council shared legislative power through a "cooperation procedure" and

¹³ Joël RIDEAU, *Droit institutionnel de l'Union et des Communautés européennes*, Paris LGDG, 3rd. Ed., 1999, p.690-692.

¹⁴ Westlake, M. (. "The European Parliament's Emerging Powers of Appointment". *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 1998, 36(3), p.431-444..

¹⁵ Thierry CHOPIN, François-Xavier PRIOLLAUD, « La modernisation de la Ve. République et les Affaires européennes : le parlementaire rationalisé est-il euro-compatible ? » in *Fondation Robert Schuman, European issue n.74*, 8 October 2007, p.4-5.

¹⁶ Desmond DINAN, "Governance and Institutions: The Unrelenting Rise of the European Parliament". *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2014, 52(S1), p.109-124.

¹⁷ In a bold interpretation of the "isoglucose" case, The EP introduced in 1980 the idea that it was sufficient, in so far as the consultation of the Parliament was essential for the validity of any regulation or directive, for Parliament to adopt its opinion, interrupt its consultation procedure and wait for the Commission to indicate its approval of the amendments, to have greater influence on proposals made to the Council.

by granting the Parliament, through the "assent procedure", the right to ratify accession agreements as well as the Community's association agreements with third countries, the Single Act established procedures which, in spite of their complexity (second reading system), would prove to be workable and profitable for the Assembly. The Treaty of Maastricht, which came into force on 1 November 1993, strengthened the legislative power of the European Parliament, which was granted a power of "co-decision" with the Council of Ministers. This entailed, in the areas provided for in the Treaty, the agreement of both parties before legislation can be adopted. A joint Conciliation Committee has the task of reaching a compromise in case of a lasting disagreement¹⁸. With The Lisbon Treaty, co-decision will be extended to more than 40 new decision areas.

The European Parliament has shown an unwavering commitment to the constitutionalisation of the European Union.

Although the right to amend the Treaties ultimately lies at last resort with Member States alone, they, as early as the first session of the Common Assembly in 1952, had recognised the authority of the Parliament to formulate proposals for constitutional change when, on a proposal of Alcide De Gasperi and Robert Schuman, the Council invited the Assembly - renamed the "ad hoc Assembly" for this purpose - to draw up a draft treaty with a view to the creation of a European Political Community. Although the draft failed, owing to the refusal of the French Assembly to ratify the Treaty establishing the European Defense Community (August 1954), most of the proposals it contained resurfaced in later versions.

The most renowned initiative of the European Parliament in this area was the proposal to replace the ECC and Euratom Treaties with a new Treaty on European Union. Drawn up on the initiative of the federalist MEP Altiero Spinelli and adopted by the Assembly on 14 February 1984 by a large majority, the draft was innovative both in terms of the method of preparation (creation of an ad hoc committee and the "Crocodile Club" cross-party within the EP to draw up and promote the draft) and in terms of content of its provisions (new treaty and not just a revision of the existing treaties), overcoming the opposition between cooperation and integration, introduction of the principle of subsidiarity and the legislative co-decision procedure, extension of common policies, entry into force of the Treaty following ratification by a majority of Member States representing two thirds of the population of the Community). With French President François Mitterrand having assured support for the project, the Dooge Committee, set up by the Heads of State and Government (on the model of the former Spaak Committee) in order to prepare an intergovernmental conference, had borrowed its main provisions. However, during the negotiations following the Milan European Council (June 1985), the European Parliament's involvement had remained limited. Although MEPs considered the results of the IGC to be insufficient - in a famous speech in Strasbourg, Altiero Spinelli, taking up Hemingway's image in *The Old Man and the Sea*, had compared them to "the big fish whose sharks had left only the backbone" – they were approved by the European Parliament in January 1986. The result was the Single Act, which would create additional pressures for further integration and paved the way for negotiations on the Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties¹⁹. Following this example, and keen to broaden the democratic basis of the revision of the treaties, still marked by an intergovernmental approach, MEPs were the first to call for a Convention, initially to draft the Charter of Fundamental Rights (1999-2000) and then to draft a European Constitution (2003-2004). MEP's vigorously supported the

¹⁸ Jean-Louis BURBAN, *Le Parlement européen*, cit. p.78.

¹⁹ Jean-Marie PALAYRET, « Spinelli, entre cellule carbonara et conseiller des princes. Impulsion et limites de la relance européenne dans le projet d'Union politique des années 1980 » in Gérard BOSSUAT, (dir.) *Inventer l'Europe. Histoire nouvelle des groupes d'influence et des acteurs de l'unité européenne*, PIE Peter Lang, Brussels, 2003, p.356-382.

Belgian Presidency of the Council in the preparation of the Laeken Declaration²⁰. In his account of the preparation of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Andrew Duff says that "It was the parliamentary ingredient which saved the Convention"²¹. In fact, during the Convention, and despite being a small contingent (16 out of a total of 105 Convention members), MEPs were particularly active and influential. Along with their assiduous participation in the working sessions, the special relationship they had with civil society and the media, the advantage of "playing at home" and having their own people among the Convention (half of the members of the Praesidium, Giscard d'Estaing among them, were Members or had been Members of the European Assembly) the organisation of political "components" or "caucuses" within the Convention had the effect of broadening their influence²². More accustomed to cross-party coalitions and transnational majorities than their national colleagues, MEPs shoved themselves to be able to reach compromises on issues that divided national delegations, which became particularly apparent in the Convention's open forum. In June-July 2003, it was the alliance between Giscard d'Estaing, national integrationist parliamentarians and leaders of the political groups within the European Parliament that enabled the Presidency to come up with the final draft. EP representatives systematically reinterpreted the objectives of the Convention in the light of their own, by playing on the registers of formal simplification, democratic deficit and the supposed expectations of citizens²³. In so doing, they achieved the main objectives they had set themselves. Standardisation of the legislative co-decision procedure, the effective abolition of the three pillars of the Maastricht Treaty, the extension of budgetary competence, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: all of these points, which were to be incorporated in the Constitution, had for a number of years, been a priority in the resolutions issued by the EP²⁴. Under the Lisbon Treaty, the co-decision procedure was further extended and is now the OLP. For the first time, the EP also obtained the right of co-decision in parts of economic and financial governance as well as common commercial policy²⁵.

As a symbol of democracy in Europe, the European Parliament has since the birth of the European Community, presented itself as an undisputed forum for the advocacy and promotion of human rights.

Reflecting public opinion and a sounding box for the human rights movements, the European Parliament, which in this arena has limited normative power but effective powers of sanction, plays a key role in defining Union's policy. It uses a number of bodies to wage this campaign. The Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), a subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, is responsible for managing human rights cases in conjunction with other parliamentary committees (such as the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Committee on Development, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality) and with delegations from the European Parliament or of the parliaments

²⁰ Peter NORMAN, *The Accidental Constitution. The Story of the European Convention*, Eurocomments, Brussels, 2003, p.49-50.

²¹ Andrew DUFF, *The struggle for Europe's Constitution*, London, The Federal Trust, 2007, p.27.

²² Peter NORMAN, *The Accidental Constitution*, cit., p. 149-150

²³ Olivier COSTA, *La parlementarisation de l'Union : pour une approche dynamique du régime politique européen*, Mémoire d'HDR, Université de Bordeaux, 2013, p. 93.

²⁴ Andrew DUFF, *The struggle for Europe's Constitution*, cit. p.26-28

²⁵ Adrienne HERITIER, Katharina MEISSER, Catherine MOURY, Magnus SCHOELLER, *European Parliament Ascendant*, Palgrave, London, 2019, p.120.

of third countries. In addition, the Committee on Petitions and the European Ombudsman often bring human rights to the fore²⁶.

The Parliament has long been pressing for human rights to feature among the direct sources of Community law. Its approach has alternated between accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and drawing up a list of fundamental rights to be recognised by the treaties. As early as 1953, the ad hoc Assembly, charged with preparing a draft treaty for a European Political Community, proposed including the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. In 1975, in its resolution on the European Union (Tindemans report), the European Parliament voiced the need to give the future Union a Charter of Fundamental Rights. In 1984, the draft Treaty on European Union (Spinelli stated that "the Union shall adopt its own declaration of fundamental rights", which Community institutions would have to observe, which was achieved in 1989²⁷. The EP's campaign for values was provisionally recognised by Article 6 of the TEU, which states that "the Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law". Finally, at the 2000 IGC, the Parliament took an active part in the drafting of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (promulgated on 7 December 2000), and has since been calling for the Charter to be incorporated into the Treaties. The Treaty of Lisbon, by making the Charter binding, has partially met parliamentary requirements. At the same time, the Parliament continued to lobby for EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights with as to "establish close cooperation with the Council of Europe, whilst avoiding possible conflicts or overlapping between the Court of Justice of the European Communities and the European Court of Human Rights"²⁸. The Assembly has contributed, in specific areas such as women's and minority rights, to combat racism, antisemitism and homophobia, stimulating reflection and incorporating human rights concerns into European legislation. In issues relating to the protection of privacy and right to information, the Parliament has acted on behalf of European citizens against the lack of institutional transparency and against threats resulting from the use of new technologies, such as the Internet and data protection.

The Parliament is also involved in monitoring respect for fundamental rights by the Member States. Article 7 EU, which suspends the voting rights of any state "guilty of serious and repeated breach of fundamental rights or democratic principles", requires the assent of MEPs in the first phase of infringement proceedings. The EP intervenes in the follow-up procedure leading to any sanction, its rules of procedure allowing it to adopt recommendations for the Council²⁹. Petitions or Ombudsman's reports enable the Assembly to highlight violations of European citizens' rights by a Member State or a Community institution. Finally, the EP had an active part in establishing of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2007.

The Parliament has always been proactive in defending personal dignity and human rights around the world.

In Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly has denounced, from the early days of the Communities, infringements of fundamental rights and voiced its constant support for freedom fighters both in countries under the Soviet mantle (support for the Helsinki agreements in 1975, debate over the situation in Czechoslovakia after the crushing of the "Prague Spring" and in Poland since the creation of "Solidarity") and in military dictatorships (Birkelbach report imposing in March 1962, the rejection of Franco's request for accession to the EEC, the freeze

²⁶ « Defending Human Rights and Democracy » Fact sheet n. 6.1.2, Directorate General for Information of the European Parliament.

²⁷ EP Resolution of 12 April 1989 (De Gucht Report). OJC 120/51.

²⁸ EP Resolution of 16 March 2000 on the drafting of a European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights.

²⁹ Nicolas CLINCHAMPS, *Parlement européen et droit parlementaire*, cit.p.582.

on the association agreement with Greece following the colonels coup d'état in May 1967). These countries, freed from authoritarian regimes, later embarked on a process of accession to the EU. The Parliament, which is called upon to give its assent for accession treaties, has a right of scrutiny over the progress achieved by the candidate countries in terms of democratisation and respect for human and minority rights in order to reach the Community level.

Outside Europe, the European Parliament, alongside the actions of the Commission and the Council, engages genuine "parliamentary diplomacy" to promote democracy and the rule of law, in the context of the special relations that the Union has with certain regions: Africa, Latin America, the Mediterranean. Following the Lomé IV Convention (1989), it was the European Parliament that insisted that association agreements contain human rights clauses. Since the 1970s, the Union has been engaged in dialogue with all its partners, negotiating policies to be implemented jointly by the Union and by third countries: human rights issues and democracy are among the topics addressed in these dialogues. These are of particular importance in the negotiations that the EU conducts with countries such as China, Iran and Russia. Although not officially involved, the EP's Subcommittee on Human Rights influences the content of these consultations by organising public hearings of opponents and NGOs. Parliament can also use its budgetary powers: the financial instrument par excellence is the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which offers direct financial support to NGOs working in the field of human rights and democracy support, without requiring approval from the authorities of the third countries where they operate, although the EP can also champion the human rights dimension in foreign relations programmes such as MEDA or TACIS.

The EP uses a variety of tools to lobby for the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy. The most common of these are resolutions, public declarations and delegations. Often adopted under the urgent procedure (Art. 115 of the EP's Rules of Procedure), resolutions issued by the EP (or public declarations signed by a required number of MEPs) mainly concern the general human rights situation in a region or country. They usually call for action by the Council and the Commission, as well as the authorities of the country concerned, to act, reminding them of their international human rights obligations. Parliamentary delegations are received in all third countries and are seen as representing the entire EU. The visit of an EP delegation raises expectations, which are sometimes disappointed on the ground. The Parliament has other specialist tools in the human rights arena: the annual Sakharov Prize is awarded for efforts to defend fundamental freedoms and provides protection, financial support and international visibility to the prize winner³⁰; the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World sets out the EP's priorities in this area and facilitates dialogue within and outside the EU.

The Annual Report on Human Rights in the World defines the EP's priorities in this area and facilitates dialogue within and outside the EU.

Although the resolutions adopted have no legal effect and are not properly followed-up, the EP's action still help to reaffirm and consolidate international law and to define the position of the Union in this area. The reports raise public awareness on issues such as the rights of minorities, women's and children, modern-day slavery, as well as on freedom of expression. The reactions of the third countries criticised, in spite of the objections they might raise, are in most cases constructive³¹.

³⁰ Three of the recipients, Nelson Mandela (1988) Aung San Suu Kyi (1990) and Kofi Annan and staff at the UN have also received the Nobel Peace Prize.

³¹ EP's Subcommittee on Human Rights and European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation, "The impact of the resolutions and other activities of the European Parliament in the field of Human Rights outside the EU" Study of July 2006, p.87-99.

The European Parliament has become a key player in the EU political game but has not replaced inter-governmental forums as the centre of gravity.

Looking back, the list of parliamentary achievements is impressive. The progress is so remarkable that some, such as German Foreign Affairs Minister Joschka Fischer, speaking at Humboldt University in 2000, predicted that it would lead to a “full parlamentarisation” of the EU. In actual facts, judging by its formal powers alone, the pro-constitutional movement – echoed by the European Parliament, which for a long time has been trying to constitutionalise the treaties - seems to have found its culmination in the Treaty of Lisbon. However, many commentators observe that the Treaty strips the Parliament of too many of its power. Indeed, although the treaty extends the parlamentarisation of the Union by recognizing the election of the President of the Commission by the European Parliament, it also confirms the intergovernmental leadership by establishing a permanent presidency of the European Council. Although the privilege of nomination by governments seems to have been eroded, the position of Commission President is still not subject to open competition and the establishment of the Santer Commission in 1995, the Prodi Commission in 1999, the Barroso Commission in 2004 and Von der Leyen Commission in 2019, revealed that, despite their threats and injunctions, parliamentarians are unable to oppose the choice of governments³². The Heads of State and Government recently voiced their disagreement to keep on following the SpitzenKandidaten procedure. The Council, the decision-making body par excellence, can only be challenged by the Parliament through indirect controls (judicial remedy) or ad hoc checks (budgetary control). In any case, the Treaty of Lisbon continues to confer the Council considerable powers not only in foreign and security policy, where it remains the dominant body, but also in the broader field of Economic and Monetary Union and "open coordination" of social and employment policy. The influence of MEP's also still remains marginal over matters that remain within the exclusive remit of the Commission, such as competition policy, or that require unanimous consensus in the Council such as taxation and common foreign and security policy.

In parallel with the reinforcement and extension of control of the European Parliament, the national parliaments have acquired a specific power of scrutiny over the European activities of their respective governments and have improved cooperation with the EP. At the European level, the national parliaments are indispensable by virtue of the principle of subsidiarity³³. They transpose Community directives into domestic legislation and are "the natural partners for intergovernmental policy". The Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam recognised their authority to participate, albeit indirectly, in the functioning of the Union³⁴. The Treaty of Lisbon strengthens their power to scrutinize subsidiarity and involves them in the creation of the area of freedom, security and justice. Interparliamentary cooperation has grown steadily: the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) a body set up in 1989 to liaise between the committees of national parliaments specializing in European Affairs and those of the European Parliament, is a structured forum, although its contributions are not binding. In reality, In reality, although accepted in principle,

³² Half of The Prodi Commission consisted of dedicated members of the PES at a time when the group had just lost the June 1999 elections. In June 2004, Governments hesitated between a candidate from a small group (the Liberal Guy Verhofstadt) and another candidate from a marginal faction of the Christian Democratic European People's Party (the British Conservative Chris Patten).

³³ Invoked for the first time by the Treaty of Maastricht, the principle of subsidiarity allows the European Union to "intervene" only if and insofar as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community".

³⁴ Andreas MAURER, Wilfried WESSELS ed, National Parliaments after Amsterdam. From slow adaptors to National players? Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2001.

interparliamentary cooperation suffers from the differences of views and interests that inevitably arise between a European Parliament guided by a supranational approach, which has steadily gained in power and national parliaments, motivated by the protection of national interests, which are gradually being stripped of some of their "sovereign" competences³⁵. These differences of opinion became particularly evident in 1995-1996, when the idea put forward by the French National Assembly to create a second chamber at Union level, responsible for ruling on the application of the principle of subsidiarity was rejected on the grounds that the new assembly would make the current Parliament redundant. This was followed in 2002-2003 when the Convention scrapped the proposal, much beloved of President Giscard d'Estaing, to establish a "Congress of the Peoples of Europe" composed of Members of the European Parliament and national MP's, which would examine the state of the Union and appoint or confirm personalities called upon to exercise certain high – ranking positions within the Union³⁶.

³⁵ Hubert HAENEL, *Les Parlements nationaux, un appui pour l'Europe ?* Memorandum from the Robert Schuman Foundation

³⁶ Peter NORMAN, *The Accidental Constitution*, cit.p.150

From the Tower of Babel to the European Parliament: The importance of the European integration project

Donatella M. Viola

In this short paper, Donatella M. Viola aims to unveil the meaning and symbolism of the Tower of Babel within the context of European integration, initiated in the aftermath of the Second World War, by highlighting its close links with the European Union (EU) and, in particular, the European Parliament (EP).

For this purpose, she briefly recalls the story of the Tower of Babel, written in Chapter 11 of the book of Genesis in the Old Testament. After the universal flood, Noah and his descendants settled along the Euphrates River on the plain of Shinar in Mesopotamia, which corresponds to today's Iraq. Here they decided to found a new city and to erect a tower so high to reach Heaven. Since this project was deemed as a gesture of human defiance towards his supreme authority, God decided to punish the rebels by confusing their language. Given that the architects, the workers as well as of all the other people could no longer communicate with one other, they failed to complete the tower and the city of Babel, elsewhere called Babylon¹.

“Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord mixed up the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the Earth”.

(Genesis 11:9)²

Hence, the divine response to the human act of hubris was the creation of a multi-ethnic and multilingual society, which represents at the same time a curse and a blessing. (Weiler, 2018) The curse, in its milder form, reflects just a mere communication problem that may nevertheless trigger misunderstanding. In fact, such a failure of interaction, by slowly increasing in its intensity, could instigate the loss of mutual respect and trust. The ‘other’ is more and more considered as a potential enemy who has to be defeated, as seen from a Realist perspective. The curse fosters attitudes of extreme arrogance, sense of national and cultural superiority which in turn generate both dissent and conflict. The consequences may ultimately erupt into violence in its multiple variants, such as fratricide, homicide, genocide and war, as well as expand from local to global levels. On the other hand, the blessing is the richness, originality and benefits that such a multicultural society brings, not least by preventing the fall of human race to be under the sway of a single, absolute tyranny. It is the challenge of creating a community ‘united in diversity’, which is by coincidence the official *motto* adopted by the European Union. As a matter of fact, in our time human aspiration is no longer reflected in a utopian desire to erect a tower whose top might reach the heavens, but instead to forge a fully-fledged European Union in the 21st century, finally erasing the anathema of the Tower of Babel and converting it into a blessing.

The biblical image of the Tower evokes the origin of politics as an art of language translation. It is not only the relationship between human pride and arrogance and God's need to reaffirm his infinite power. In the foreground, it raises the crucial question of dialogue and

¹ The word ‘Babel’ is a mixing up of the letters of the Hebrew word בבל (Balal) which stands for ‘confusion’. While we may be familiar with the name ‘Babel’ only in this context, the original term ‘Balal’ can be found throughout the Biblical text. However, whilst the translators chose the word ‘Babel’ in this case, they preferred the term ‘Babylon’ in other occurrences. As such, ‘Babel’ and ‘Babylon’ correspond to the same Hebrew word and here, of course, to the same city. (Benner, 2004)

² Whenever a Hebrew name is given in the text and followed by the word ‘because’, the text is providing the connection between the name and the reason for it.

communication which embody the essence of a modern democratic society and which represent the key instruments of the European Parliament. Indeed, the greatest sin committed in Babel is the human ambition to undertake a project by excluding the possibility of different languages. In fact, by following a narcissistic rush, Noah's descendents aimed to storm the sky in order to assert their name and their strength in a challenge to God. They gathered around a strong principle of identity, which entailed 'one people' and 'one language' with the aim of exalting, glorifying, and worshipping themselves. As such, they also unveiled their extreme ambition of overcoming any possible boundaries and of excluding the experience of the limits. (Recalcati, 2016)

Over the years, the founders of the European Union resorted to this picture of the Tower of Babel in some of its posters by adding the slogan 'Many tongues, one voice'. Its image was used to reflect the multilinguism of the European Parliament. Unlike any other international parliamentary assembly, the European Parliament has insisted on allowing all Members of the EP to express themselves in their native mother tongue. Great emphasis is conferred to this aspect as all official languages spoken in the EU's member states deserve to be treated equally.

Moreover, the design of the new European Parliament building, inaugurated in 1999 in preparation for the future EU's Eastward enlargement, seems to mirror the famous painting of the Tower of Babel by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, exhibited at the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* Vienna. By looking at and comparing the Tower of Babel, as portrayed by the Flemish artist, and the 'Louise Weiss' building in Strasbourg, it is possible to notice a striking similarity.

Bruegel's Tower of Babel, with its circular shape and its numerous arches, is reminiscent of the Roman Colosseum that he certainly saw and admired personally during his journey to Italy between 1552 and 1553. And yet, the Colosseum was not only a venue for festivities, games and shows for Roman civilians but also a place consecrated by the blood of Christian martyrs who refused to renounce their faith. They were devoured by lions, tortured and killed by gladiators. As such, the Colosseum, like the Tower of Babel, can be regarded a symbol of hubris as well as persecution.

The French architect Martin Roubain and his partners appear to have been strongly influenced by Bruegel, although never officially admitting it. In any case, undeniably all of them have been inspired by ancient Roman architecture, above all its superb amphitheatres.

The Tower allegorically reflects the European construction, with on the one hand, its successes and on the other, its failures, showing that the long and complex process of European integration is still incomplete. Just like the Tower of Babel, the edifice looks unfinished in order to reflect symbolically the nature of post-war European reconstruction, with on the one hand, its successes and on the other, its failures, thus showing that the process of the European integration is dynamic and constantly evolving. The external structure is made of glass to signify emblematically that the European Parliament is committed to promoting transparency, democracy and ethics which embody some of the core principles on which the European Union has been founded and developed.

In the mid-1990s when this project was envisaged, it was agreed to orientate the building eastwards, as a sign of opening towards Eastern European candidate countries. Nevertheless, it was decided that the open side of the tower would face west to stress the EU's engagement with and fidelity to Western democratic values and traditions.

With its 220,000 square metre coverage and its height of 60 metres, the 'Louise Weiss' building is one of the largest and most visible buildings in Strasbourg. Most importantly, it houses the hemicycle for the plenary sessions of the European Parliament, the only EU institution which is elected by direct and universal suffrage. By representing over 413 million European citizens

across twenty-seven countries and hosting 705 parliamentarians, the EP is one of the largest democratic assemblies in the world.

Especially since the ratification of the 2007 Lisbon Treaty, the EP has become even more a key decision-making institution within the EU and for a raft of policies acts as co-legislator with the Council of the European Union. As a result, European Parliamentary elections have acquired an increased degree of political significance, by giving voice and power to ordinary people and enabling them to choose their representatives who, through their decisions, may influence the future direction of the European Union.

More fundamentally, the elections are an opportunity to breathe new life into the EU project by involving citizens and encouraging them, through exercising their franchise, to promote a more inclusive, positive and successful European Union capable to face current events and difficulties. Elections may serve as incentives in order to revive this project which has guaranteed peace, freedom and democracy for over seventy years to all its members. We should never forget the tragic context which saw the creation of the European Community/Union, and never forget the need to prevent the recurrence of similar terrible circumstances in the future. In his book entitled *If this is a man*, the Italian writer and Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi warned against the danger of the past, stating that if something had occurred previously, it could happen again. Only by learning from the past, will it be possible to build a better future.

We are living in a crucial moment in the European Union's history, when it is of the utmost importance to draw upon the principles of solidarity and cooperation that inspired the founding fathers and led to the setting up of the European Community in the 1950s. We therefore need to face this challenge, bearing in mind that we are the architects of our own destiny and that, as Pico Della Mirandola aptly remarks:

“God bestowed seeds pregnant with all possibilities, the germs of every form of life. Whichever of these [we] shall cultivate, the same will mature and bear fruit in [us]. [...] “Like free and sovereign artificer[s], [we] might mould and fashion [ourselves] into the form [we ourselves] shall have chosen. [We] can degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish, we can, according to our own will, regenerate ourselves in higher orders which are divine”.

(Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, 1446)

References

Jeff A. Benner, ‘Babel’, *Ancient Hebrew Dictionary: 1000 Verbs and Nouns of the Hebrew Bible* Virtual Bookworm.Com Publishing, 2009. <https://ancient-hebrew.org/names/Babel.htm>.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, 1486.

Massimo Recalcati, ‘La Torre di Babele simbolo eterno dell'antipolitica’, *La Repubblica*, 12/06/2016.

J.H.H. Weiler, ‘Foreword’, in Viola D.M. (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of European Elections*, Routledge, 2018

Contributors

Agnès Brouet is an archivist at the Historical Archives of the European Union.

Alfredo De Feo directs the 'Collection European Memories' project at the Alcide de Gasperi Centre, Historical Archives of the European Union

Ludovic Delepine is Head of Unit at the Archives of the European Parliament.

Dietmar Nickel is Former Director General of the European Parliament

Jean-Marie Palayret, Friends of the Historical Archives of the European Union is Former Director of the Historical Archives of the European Union

Christian Salm was formerly a policy analyst at the Research Service of the European Parliament. He is now Science Officer at COST Association - European Cooperation in Science and Technology.

Umberto Tulli is Assistant Professor in the Humanities Department at the University of Trento.

Donatella M. Viola is Assistant Professor in Political Science at the University of Calabria

