Cross-pressure and political representation in Europe

A comparative study of MEPs and the intra-party arena
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ABSTRACT
This dissertation explores political representation and its manifestation within the European Union (EU). The main purpose is to examine the representative roles of Members of the European Parliament (MEP) in the context of cross-pressure between the national level and the EU level. This involves an analysis of how the MEPs understand their roles, how they organize their work, and how they have voted in the European Parliament (EP) in 1999-2002. It also includes a study of how national party organizations adapt to the EU environment and how this influences the MEPs’ link to the national arena. The study is based on various sources, such as interviews, formal documents and voting data.

The most under-researched part of the cross-pressure has been the national link and the empirical focus of the thesis is on that link. It is a comparative study of parties in Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden. In each country, three parties were selected (social democratic, right-wing and green parties). By using a focused comparative method, and by controlling for certain independent variables, the ambition is to go beyond description and identify explanations for why MEPs adopt certain roles.

The overall picture that emerges is of a relatively weak link between MEPs and the national level. To a certain extent, MEPs express frustration over their limited role in the national arena and over the lack of input from the national arena in their work at the European level. Most of the parties struggle to include MEPs in their organizational set-up, and the MEPs experience a growing hostility within the parties toward them. In general, the lack of interest and knowledge in the national arena, concerning the EU in general and specifically the work of the MEPs, obscures the role of the MEPs. They become EU ambassadors at the national level, rather than elected representatives at the EU level.

The dissertation also tests variables that are thought to influence MEPs’ roles: the type of electoral system, popular opinion on EU issues, whether their party is in government, the party’s ideological heritage, and if the party organizes more advanced coordination mechanisms. The main result is that the working assumption that MEPs are influenced by characteristics in the national arena is shown to be largely correct. That is, some of the identified aspects of the national political context do influence how the MEPs understand their roles. For example, the character of the electoral system influences attitudes among the MEPs. However, that relationship is not as simple and straightforward as much of the literature suggests. Rather, the results in this study suggest that the most important aspect of the relationship between the national level and the MEPs is whether parties or others (such as national parliamentarians) actively engage in the work of the MEPs. It matters how parties design the relationship between the levels, especially for how and where MEPs direct their main attention, but also in terms of how MEPs vote in the EP. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of further research into how parties facilitate the link between the national and the EU level.

Key words: European integration, European Parliament, Members of the European Parliament, MEPs voting behavior, party delegations, party groups, political parties, Political representation, representative roles
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Acknowledgments

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Umeå, June 2003
Magnus Blomgren
### National parties and acronyms in the text*

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<th>Name in original language</th>
<th>Abbreviation**</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fianna Fáil</td>
<td>Fianna Fáil</td>
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<td>Fine Gael</td>
<td>Fine Gael</td>
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<td>Irish Green Party</td>
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<td>Irish Labour Party</td>
<td>Irish Labour Party</td>
<td>ILP</td>
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<td>Progressive Democrats</td>
<td>Progressive Democrats</td>
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<td><strong>The Netherlands</strong></td>
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<td>Democraten ’66</td>
<td>Democraten ’66</td>
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<td>Dutch Christian Democratic Party</td>
<td>Christen Democratisch Appél</td>
<td>CDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Liberal Party</td>
<td>Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dutch Social Democratic Party</td>
<td>Partij van de Arbeid</td>
<td>PvdA</td>
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<td>Green party***</td>
<td>Groen Links</td>
<td>GL</td>
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<td>Pim Fortuyn List</td>
<td>Lijst Pim Fortuyn</td>
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<td>Agrarian Party</td>
<td>Centerpartiet</td>
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<td>Left Party</td>
<td>Vänsterpartiet</td>
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<td>New Democracy</td>
<td>Ny Demokrati</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td>Swedish Christian Democratic Party</td>
<td>Kristdemokraterna</td>
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<td>Miljöpartiet de gröna</td>
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<td>Swedish Liberal Party</td>
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<td>Swedish Moderate Party</td>
<td>Moderata samlingspartiet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swedish Social Democratic Party</td>
<td>Socialdemokraterna</td>
<td>SAP</td>
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*) The names listed in the table are currently existing. In the text there are some references to parties that has stopped existing or merged into one of the currently existing parties. They are not included in this table.

**) Acronyms are only used for parties that are frequently mentioned in the text.

*** An accurate translation of the Groen Links is Green Left, however, to facilitate the reading, I use the name Green Party.
### Common acronyms in the text
(excluding national parties)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>EAC</td>
<td>European Affairs Committee. Refers to committees in the national legislatures that shall scrutinize the governmental EU policy.</td>
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<td>EP</td>
<td>European Parliament</td>
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<td>EPD</td>
<td>European Party Delegation. Refers to the group of members of the European Parliament that are members of the same national party organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPG</td>
<td>European Party Group. Refers to the group of members of the European Parliament that are members of the same multi national political group in the European Parliament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPP</td>
<td>The European People’s Party. The European federation that organizes Christian Democratic / Conservative parties. This abbreviation is also used for the Christian Democratic / Conservative group in the European Parliament. However, currently this group is extended with the European Democrats and sometimes the abbreviation is EPP-ED.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREENS</td>
<td>The European Greens. The European federation that organizes the green parties. This abbreviation is also used for the Green group in the European Parliament. However, currently this group is extended with the European Free Alliance and sometimes the abbreviation is GREENS/EFA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEP</td>
<td>Member of the European Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PES</td>
<td>The Party of European Socialists. The Social Democratic European party federation, but the abbreviation is also used for the Social Democratic group in the European Parliament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEN</td>
<td>Union for Europe of the Nations. The group in the European Parliament that includes the Irish Fianna Fáil.</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I listen to the national government. We have contacts with them, but I could never represent the national government. They have their role and we shall have a dialogue with the Council of Ministers, and especially our government, but since I represent a large group, it would be impossible to have 15 different positions – then it wouldn’t work.

(Interview No. 18)

We are democratically elected public representatives from the Republic of Ireland. So therefore, I tend to say that when we leave Dublin airport on the Monday morning, all the political groupings, Irish political groupings, we fly the Irish flight. That is our position generally.

(Interview No. 35)

Almost every week elected representatives leave their countries to go to Brussels and perform their representative task. For many of them the lounges in large airports are a more familiar environment than their local café. Fetching the kids from day-care becomes a luxury, while going to work in a limousine becomes ordinary daily routine. Every week these representatives adopt laws that are implemented in their country, while at the same time they are often removed from the public debate. They are elected politicians, but often little known to the general public.

It is noticeable that the two statements above, which are made by two Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), express quite contrary views on the role of MEPs and how the relationship with the national political arena should be arranged. One of the MEPs argues that the European Parliament (EP) is a separate institution within the European Union (EU) decision-making framework, with its own logic and function. The other MEP emphasizes the national agenda, which should be
jointly pursued in all institutions within the EU. In the first quote, the EU is a political arena in itself; in the second, the EU is an arena on which the national interests should be promoted. These different views of the role of the EP and MEPs are important for our understanding of the development of the EU. They represent different views about representation as a political phenomenon and how this is manifest in the EP.

There are two things that have been closely associated with democracy during the last century – representation and the nation state. We elect people who are assumed to represent our views and interests, and the main institutions in which representation takes place are inside the framework of the nation state. The development of the European Union is challenging this picture of democracy. Substantial political capacity has been transferred from the national political institutions to the EU institutions. Coupled with this process is the development of a European political arena. This means that the EU is no longer limited to an intergovernmental system of cooperation, and the conflict dimensions within the EU are not simply nationalistic, but also ideological. The modern EU includes conflicts between different political projects.

National political parties are certainly not passive spectators of this process. They try to adjust to this new situation. They now act outside the nation-state in ways that they have never done before (see, for example, Sandström 2003). They strive for representation in the EP and they try to coordinate their actions with political allies in other European countries. How party organizations handle this new environment and how they function as a link between the voters and the elected representatives in the EU arena is an important and growing area of research.

Key actors in the relationship between the national arena and the EU arena are the MEPs. They are important for representing interests articulated in the national arena, but they can also be vital as initiators for a more developed European arena. However, much of the research regarding the EU, EP and the MEPs is focused on horizontal relationships on the European level. This study is written from a different perspective and the working assumption is that vertical relationships are equally important, or perhaps even more important, than the horizontal ones. Based on a new institutional
approach (which I introduce in the next chapter), I argue that the MEPs bring with them expectations from the national political arena about what to represent and how to behave. Under pressure from the EU environment, these norms might change, although more rapidly in cases where little exists to support these national norms. Both levels are therefore important.

This study is about political representation and its manifestation within a multi-national arena such as the EU. The main purpose is to analyze MEPs representation in the context of the cross-pressure between the national level and the EU level. This involves an analysis of how the MEPs understand their roles and how they organize their work. It also includes a study of how national party organizations adapt to the EU environment and how this influences the MEPs link to the national arena.

In this study I analyze MEPs from nine parties and three different countries (Sweden, Ireland and the Netherlands). The reason behind these choices will be explained later (Chapter three). My ambition is not only to map out differences and similarities. I also want to suggest explanations for these patterns. By using a focused comparative method, and by controlling for potentially important independent variables, I will try to go beyond description and identify explanations for why parties and MEPs conceive their roles and behave in certain ways. Many of the variables that are examined in this study, as reasonable explanations for political representatives to adopt various roles, are primarily drawn from the literature on political representation at the national level. But I also include variables commonly used in the literature on the European Parliament. Furthermore, I also use logical reasoning from new institutional theory to construct hypotheses that have not been well developed in the previous literature. These arguments will be further discussed and defined in Chapter two. Together they provide the basis for my investigation of MEPs representation in the cross-pressure between the national and the EU levels.

In the remaining parts of this introduction, I explain why it is important to analyze the MEPs from a cross-pressure perspective. I will also briefly describe the current literature on MEPs and place this study into that context. Lastly, I provide a description of how the book is organized.
MEPs situated in two political arenas

Often when we hear about MEPs (or representatives in the EU arena in general) the message is that they are living a rather flashy life, with limousines, expensive hotels and generous allowances. In many respects this is true, but on the other hand MEPs are situated in a rather ungrateful position. They are elected to represent some kind of interest, but at the same time, the notion of what they are doing and how EU is working is very limited among the ones that have elected them. The feeling that “Europe” is something out there, rather than integrated with the national political arena is common among the electorate. The national parties might serve as a link between the electorate and the MEP, and thereby help ensure the compatibility of views between the voter and the representative. We know that the MEPs are selected in the national arena and that many of them have a former career within national parties. At the same time, MEPs have their representative responsibility within the EU framework, which includes European party federations as well as the groups within the EP (EPGs). All this creates an environment characterized by duality for the MEPs and it is reasonable to argue that the MEPs experience a cross-pressure between the levels.

On the one hand, MEPs have to consider a national position, articulated within the national party organization, the government or the national parliament. On the other hand, there is a European position, articulated within the EPG or the European party federation. Depending on political issue on the agenda the two different principals vary in importance. It is also likely that this cross-pressure between the national level and the EU level varies between MEPs from different environments. That is, party organizations and individual MEPs are probably dealing with these relationships in different ways. Let us begin by looking at what the existing literature has to say about this line of research.

What do we know about the MEPs?

Together with the increasing importance of the EU and specifically the EP, the scholarly attention has escalated in recent years. Scholars have to a large extent approached the EP or the EU from a horizontal perspective.
That is, they have tried to understand how the EU institutions work and the relationship between them. Since the main purpose is to analyze the MEPs from the perspective that two levels influence them, this study put the questions a little bit differently. At the same time it is important to relate to various kinds of analyses that have been done and try to utilize conclusions that have been made in earlier work. It is not necessary to try to give an entirely comprehensive description of all the strands of research that is currently going on regarding the EU, but it is important to say something about studies that in one way or the other connect to this project. I will return to some of the more specific and detailed discussions on various results in Chapter two, as well as in the respective empirical chapters, but for now, the important thing is to place this study in the context of the literature on the EP and MEPs.

**LOOKING AT THE MEPS VOTING BEHAVIOR**

Much of the research on MEPs has been focused on their voting behavior, a research approach that is inspired by a long-standing tradition on analyzing roll-call votes in the US Congress. In the beginning much of the effort was concentrated on how cohesive the EPGs acted during roll-call votes. One important question is if the EPGs can be regarded as homogenous actors and thereby be defined as some kind of European parties. Another way to express this is if the voting pattern is along national or ideological lines (Attiná 1990; Brzinski 1995; Hix 2001; Raunio 1996, 1999a). The general conclusion among the large number of studies is that the EPGs are relatively cohesive, although they are not comparable with the party groups in most national legislatures. This also means that the EP, like most national parliaments, is organized (and voting in accordance with) the traditional left and right divide (see also Kreppel & Tsebelis 1999).

However, the analysis of roll-call votes has developed, due to more comprehensive data and new questions on the research agenda. Currently, the focus has shifted in the direction of this study. The literature has begun to ask questions about how different voting patterns can be explained by factors outside the EP institutional environment, such as national party positions, etc. (Hix 2002a, 2002b; Hix, Noury & Roland
This development of the research agenda is very important for this study, because it asks questions regarding the link between the levels and how MEPs handle these two (or more) levels. The general wisdom has been that MEPs are fairly free in relation to the different bodies in the national party (Hix & Lord 1997:109; Lodge 1996b:202). Some explanations for this have been that, first, for national parties, there is little to gain from instructing the European Parliament delegations (EPDs) because it is so tiny in relation to the EP as a whole. Second, there are situations where the party organizations have an incentive not to be involved in a compromise at the European level, which can cause domestic embarrassment. Third, we know that party organizations are unlikely to be punished in elections for anything their MEPs do (Hix & Lord 1997:129). In other words, it might be easier to leave the MEPs alone (see Ladrech 1996:202 for an opposite view). Furthermore, it may be hard for the national party organizations to control their MEPs because of a lack of access to information. Tapio Raunio discusses this conflict and his advice is that national party organizations should not give binding instructions to their MEPs. His argument is that the MEPs are exposed to “information not found in, and not easily available to, a politician working within the borders of a member state…” (Raunio 1996:232). This argument points at the requirement to coordinate between the different levels, within the parliamentary routines, as well as within party organizations.

Many of these arguments have been rather tentative and new analysis of roll-call votes suggest that national parties are important for explaining MEPs behavior and that this result has implications for how we interpret the constraints put on the MEPs (Hix 2002b:696). Even though this research development is only in its early stages, the conclusion is a call for a new research agenda, which broadens the perspective on the surroundings of the MEPs, for example, “…much research remains to be done to improve our understanding of many other aspects of the European Parliament, such as the relationship between individual MEPs and their two party principles – their national parties and their European Parliament party groups” (Hix, Noury & Roland 2002:27).
LOOKING AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AS SUCH

One strand of research on the EU focuses more on the European Parliamentary party groups (EPGs) as such and how they function as enforcing discipline and distributing important assignments (McElroy 2001; Raunio 2000). On the basis of this research we have a relatively clear picture on how EPGs operates and their important function within the EP decision-making procedure. The EPGs are organized hierarchically (see Figure 1:1) and they adopt rules of procedures in order to create a common structure.

Figure 1:1 The internal structure of a European Parliamentary party group

![Diagram of the internal structure of a European Parliamentary party group]

The European Parliament delegations (EPDs) are a very crucial component of the EPGs. The reason is that the national party delegations (EPDs) should be included as much as possible in order to circumvent conflicts along national lines. This fact lead to a number of consequences. One way of doing this is to appoint a vast number of vice-chairmen and this is a strategy to include as many EPDs as possible into the “heart” of the EPG. The Bureau constitutes the leadership of the EPG. Although, the size of the bureau varies between the EPGs, the seats are commonly distributed between the EPDs on the basis of respective size. The EPDs
are also important for the proceedings within the EPGs. For example, the timetable of the EPGs provides for preparatory meetings within the EPDs and sometimes this result in debates within the EPGs that go along national lines (Hix & Lord 1997:126).

However, it is not just appointments to the bureau that serve as a formative mechanism in the EPGs. One of the important functions of the EPGs is to appoint different assignments within the parliament and this entails a complex bargaining process. One of the more crucial types of assignments regards the specialized committees. These committees are an important characteristic of the EP, and it is in these committees that much of the negotiations, compromises and policy formulations are done. It is in these committees that the complex package deals are created and the majority for a certain proposal is won. This is not different from any national legislature that uses committees as a proactive device. The way MEPs operate within these committees, and how different institutional settings influence MEP behavior led some scholars to focus on the specialized committees (Bowler & Farrell 1995; Neuhold 2001). One conclusion in this literature is that committees play a crucial role in the EP as a vehicle for division of labor and specialization. For this reason, the EP is even more important for policy formulation than some of the national legislatures in the member states.

The appointment to committees is a responsibility of the EPGs and the seats are distributed in proportion to the size of the EPG. One of the main functions of these committees is to draft reports on various policy initiatives. The task of composing these reports is assigned to individual MEPs and these are known as the rapporteurs. Furthermore, the EPG assigns a spokesperson in every committee, whose role is to articulate the position of the group. The EPG also assigns a so-called coordinator, which functions as a whip during the work of the committee, as well as during plenary-sessions. All these appointments serve the purpose of aggregating policy positions taken by the EPG and seeing that negotiations are done in accordance with agreements made in the EPG. Sometimes this is a very sensitive process, because the position of the EPG is a result of a complex bargaining process between various interests in the EPGs during the preparatory stage of the process.
All these assignments serve as an instrument for creating cohesion and controlling individual MEPs, and they structure the incentives for a future career in European politics. Transgressing the informal rules too often can affect the MEPs access to political opportunities, such as influential committee positions, speaking-time in plenary sessions and rapporteurships (Hix & Lord 1997:135). However, in practice the possibility for the leadership of the EPG to sanction behavior, or for that matter reward it, is limited (Nugent 1999:228; Raunio 2000:240). Almost all MEPs are backed by an EPD and the allocation of different opportunities to get a prominent position in the EP is based on complex negotiations. Despite the lack of instruments for enforcing cohesion, the organizational environment of the EPGs tells us that the hierarchical structures create incentives for the MEPs to get appointed within the intra-group organization, as well as to specialize in a few particular policy fields (for example within committees). Also, while we have important knowledge on the functions of the EPGs and the committees, the literature shows that we still need information on how this affects the work of the individual MEP and especially the relationship to the national level.

It is, nevertheless, important to bear in mind that the EPDs (and consequently their individual members) are not members of an EPG by force. They profit from the cooperation within the EPG and it would probably be very hard to be an efficient MEP without this cooperation. The whips act not so much as controllers, but as guides serving the individual MEP or EPD. Informational overload is a characteristic of every modern parliament and the EP is certainly no exception. It would be more or less impossible to efficiently follow the proceedings of the EP if it were not for the mutual cooperation within the EPGs.

A different strand of “intra parliamentary” research deals with the institutional evolution of the European Parliament (Hosli 1997; Kreppel 2002). The questions vary considerably, but the focus is how different voting procedures, the increased power of the EP within the EU system, and other institutional indicators affect MEP behavior. The power of the EP vis-à-vis other institutions within the EU political system has undergone a remarkable development. The EP is today an important and influential actor in the institutional game within the Union. One
important explanation to this is that the voting rules within the EP are stimulating the creation of a “grand coalition” between the two biggest EPGs (The Party of European Socialists and The European People’s Party). This environment forces the parties to negotiate on common positions, and consequently more radical suggestions are taken off the agenda. Even though this research gives us important knowledge on how institutions, as well as power relations, influence institutional development, we also need information on how the MEPs view the importance of the EP and its relationship with other institutions within the EU.

LOOKING AT THE MEPS AS POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

A quite different strand of research on the EP and the MEPs concerns the representative roles that the MEPs adopt. This is analyzed with the help of large survey data on the MEPs, and in some cases in comparison to national parliamentarians. This research is guided by several different questions, such as whether the MEPs are more pro-European than national parliamentarians, and how MEPs define their roles and whether this understanding is different from their colleagues in the national parliament (Franklin & Scarrow 1999; Katz 1997, 1999; Scully & Farrell 2003; Wessels 1999). One general conclusion is that MEPs tend to be more positive toward a stronger EP, compared to the national parliamentarians, but the difference is not as large as one might expect. The group of MEPs that do emphasize the role of the EP are otherwise characterized by a more technocratic (compared to a more partisan) role conception. Two important factors explaining why MEPs adopt a specific role is their country of origin and the individual attitude toward the development of the EU.

These studies deal with a multitude of issues regarding representative roles, and some of the conclusions have a great importance for this study. In Richard Katz’s study (1999) one conclusion is that MEPs are more inclined to give priority to their party organization, compared to national parliamentarians. This is a surprising result and the explanation Katz delivers is that the very low salience of EP issues among the electorate, parties becomes more important for interpreting and articulating the interest of the citizens. Furthermore, Katz finds out that
there is a much greater frequency of contacts downward in the system. That is, MEPs have more contacts with national institutions than national parliamentarians have with EP institutions. Surprisingly, MEPs also seem to have more contacts with a variety of national interest groups than the national parliamentarians. The national parliamentarians give more priority to ordinary citizens, organized groups, public opinion and media, while MEPs give greater influence to lobbyists.

Another approach within this group of literature is to analyze norms that exist in the EP and how these influence the MEPs behavior (Bowler & Farrell 1999). This taps into issues regarding the socialization process within the EP environment. Surprisingly, the conclusion is that EP is characterized by having very few informal norms about how to behave in certain situations. The reason is thought to be that EP is basically an international body, with various national and cultural influences and it is therefore hard to build and enforce general norms about how to behave.

The question about who the MEPs are has also led some scholars to ask questions regarding the social background of the MEPs (Mather 2001; Norris & Franklin 1997). The general conclusion is that the EP is in social terms an unrepresentative institution. This has an undesirable effect on the legitimacy of the EU and some even argue, “...liberal representative democracy in western political systems has become an inadequate vehicle for governmental legitimacy” (Mather 2001:180). At the same time, a socially unrepresentative legislature is not unique, most parliaments have a more or less biased composition. But in many respects the EP lacks something that most legislatures do include, namely more or less cohesive political parties. These may function as a link between the voters and the political elite, although the assembly is socially unrepresentative. This has made some scholars ask questions regarding the future party system of Europe.

**LOOKING AT EUROPEAN PARTY FEDERATIONS**

A focus on the EPGs is present in many of the above-described scholarly works. However, one strand of research is more interested in the question of the link between the national parties and the European party federations (Bomberg 1998; Johansson 1997, 2002; Ladrech 1999, 2000; Sandström
Most of these studies use a single case approach, in the sense that they are looking at one party constellation. There are also some studies comparing the development of several party federations (Bardi 1994; Bell & Lord 1998; Gaffney 1996; Hix & Lord 1997; Pedersen 1996) or focus on the European party system in general (Schmitt & Thomassen 1999). However, in most of these cases, the comparative ambition (that is, analyzing differences between several types of EPGs) is given the priority over a vertical perspective on these federations.

The overall conclusion in these studies is that there is a type of embryo of a European party system, where the EPGs are the main actors. Nevertheless, it would not be correct to talk about a party system comparable to the ones that we know in the member states (Bardi 1994:357; Heidar & Svåsand 1997:269). This is perhaps not a surprise. In several aspects the societal and institutional character of EU is not comparable with the national democracies and one crucial aspect is that the EP is not the most important lawmaking body, nor is the EU a separate polity. This leads to the conclusion that European party federations and the EPGs have a slightly different role, compared to the national party organizations. These organizations are vital for bringing the national political elite to the EU arena, as well as shaping the medium-to-long-term policy agenda within the EU (Ladrech 1999).

**LOOKING AT THE ROLE OF NATIONAL LEGISLATURES**

Much of the above-described work has focused on the EU arena *per se*; however, there are scholars who have had a different approach that is more similar to the one used for this study. One research agenda has focused more on the national legislatures and how the EU affects these (see for example Kassim, Peters & Wright 2000, Norton 1996). The strengthening competence of the EU in general has created a need within the national legislatures to tighten their control over the national governments. Therefore, the question on how national parliaments scrutinize the national governments behavior in the Council of Ministers becomes interesting. The national legislatures solve this in different ways, but a general picture is that all member states has created some kind of European affairs committees that has
this role (Bergman 1997, 2000; Bergman & Damgaard 2000; Raunio 1999b; Raunio & Wiberg 2000). However, the power of these committees varies among the member states and this opens up for interesting comparisons, as well as a debate on how the link between the arenas should be developed. This conclusion is interesting for this study because different kinds of co-ordinating devices within national legislatures probably influence the overall environment of the MEPs. As with many of the other findings discussed above, this is something that will be further examined in this study's outline of which is explained below.

The approach in this study

All the types of EU research described above have some kind of bearing on the questions put in this study. The ambition has not been to present an entirely comprehensive account of all types of research agendas found in the literature, but rather to present a broad picture of closely related research on the EP and the MEPs. Relative to most of this literature, there are four main aspects regarding the point of departure of this study that should be emphasized.

First, when analyzing the EU, the analyst faces a choice between focusing on the vertical vs. the horizontal perspective. It becomes increasingly obvious that both national and supra-national democratic institutions have to adjust and be improved if the essence of democracy shall be preserved in the new international environment. Therefore it is of vital importance to understand the relationships between the different levels within the system and the cross-pressure that this exerts on the MEPs. In a sense I am looking at two conflicting pressure-factors (national arena and EP arena) and the MEPs, who are located between them. As mentioned, my starting assumption is that the vertical relationships, and how they shape and are shaped by the MEPs, are equally if not more important than the horizontal relationships. From this starting point it is not sufficient to analyze the EPGs or the MEPs by themselves. Therefore, I analyze how national party organizations adjust to an international environment and how they try to monitor their
representatives. I also study how this influences the way in which MEPs interpret their roles as representatives and how they link their work with the national and the European arena. Both these aspects – horizontal and vertical relationships – merit study by themselves and together. However, since most of the existing literature focuses on the horizontal relationship, empirically this study will devote more time to the vertical relationship.

The main reason behind the empirical focus is that, in recent years, we have seen a huge amount of research regarding the new political system developing in Europe. Much of this work is both interesting and important. However, most of this work also misses (or at least underestimates) the relationship between the developing European political arena, nation-state institutions and political parties. And in order to actually establish the extent to which the EP influences the MEPs, we also need to dig further into the vertical relationship between the levels (especially within the political parties). This does not, however, keep me from discussing the influence of rules, mechanisms, norms and power relations within the European Parliament. The argument is that once we have sorted out the vertical influence over the MEPs, we can have a more knowledgeable discussion about how the vertical and the horizontal relationships influence the MEPs. Thus, if we neglect looking at the vertical relationships, we miss an important aspect of the new European political arena.

Second, my focus is on the intra-party arena. One of the most important means of gathering power is to be publicly recognized. Therefore, much information about party organizations is readily available to outsiders. However, it is not without reason that Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh (1988) call their study on candidate selection “The Secret Garden of Politics,” and Knut Heidar and Ruud Koole (2000) name their book on parliamentary party groups “Political Parties Behind Closed Doors.” Simply put, there are important processes going on within parties that we know very little about. As shown above, there are numerous studies analyzing party organizations within the EP system (if we consider the EPGs and European party federations as a kind of party organization) and studies dealing with national party organizations’ way of handling the EU on the national level. However, there are few studies that handle the link
between the EU level and national level within the parties and with an inside perspective and with a comparative approach. This is the ambition of this study. This is motivated by a lack of empirical data on this area, as well as theoretically important questions.

Third, I choose to analyze the EU with the help of a *comparative approach*. A common approach, especially in studies on party organizations, is single case studies. The reason is that these are complex organizations and the fact that we lack empirical data motivates this kind of approach. However, a strategy to compare different cases is better suited for reaching interesting theoretical conclusions. The reason is that one is able to compare cases on the basis of various variables and thereby conclude that some of these seem to be important and some do not. Even though my opinion is that it is possible to gain a lot of important theoretical insights on the basis of single case studies (both in terms of testing and constructing them), a strategy to compare cases put the theoretical arguments at the core of the study. The problem is basically to find a balance between the more qualitatively rich case study and the more theoretically promising comparative study. My argument is that this is possible if care is taken in terms of what cases are selected and the theoretical arguments that are dealt with. That is, cases are selected for a reason, and that reason is rooted in the theoretical argument. This is a strategy to try to grasp complex relationships and at the same time be able to make theoretically important accounts.

Forth, my ambition is to get close to the object that I am studying, and thereby I base the research on *qualitative data* rather than quantitative. As shown above, many studies on the MEPs role perceptions and behavior is based on quantitative data (for example large attitudinal surveys or a vast number of roll-call votes). My strategy is different. Based on an at least partial confusion in the existing literature about how the important concepts should be defined, and the fact that the intra-party arena is a relatively closed system, a more qualitative approach is necessary. In a sense I want to turn back to the source (the politicians themselves) as closely as possible. This does not, however, mean that I am not able to quantify some of the material and make use of more quantitatively inspired analysis. On the contrary, in this qualitative study,
the coming chapters present many tables and numbers. This will be further explained later on in the methodological chapter. However, the crucial point is that the basic approach is built on a qualitative logic, rather than a quantitative one.

These four statements: focusing on a vertical perspective (rather than horizontal), the intra-party arena, using a comparative approach, and a qualitative (rather than quantitative) method, is a brief guide in order to place this study in relation to other types of EU research. I will develop these arguments further in the theoretical and methodological chapters.

**The organization of the book**

After this introductory chapter, *Chapter two* discusses the normative aspects of representation in a multi-level democracy, as well as the relationship between actor and structure in modern political analysis. I will also further define important concepts used in the study, and elaborate on important conclusions made in earlier studies. The overall aim of Chapter two is to develop both the theoretical framework and the concrete empirical questions that guide the study.

In *Chapter three* I discuss the methodological aspects of this enterprise and argue for the research design that I use. I also describe the methods I use to answer the questions described in this introduction and in chapter two. Furthermore, I present the material that these answers are based on.

In *Chapter four* I analyze the country level institutional features that differentiate the cases in the study. These institutional features are based on various variables identified in Chapter two and a considerable part of this chapter includes an analysis of all 15 members of the EU. The purpose of Chapter four is two-fold, first to present arguments for the selection of the cases included in the study and, second, to give a deeper knowledge of the broader institutional features that are dealt with in the study.

In *Chapter five* I focus on the intra–party environment concerning the relationship between the national level and the EU level. The purpose is to learn how the party organizations try to adapt to the situation of having
MEPs operating on a level outside the national borders. I concentrate on the system for selecting candidates for the 1999 European elections, formal and informal organizational restraints on the MEPs, and day-to-day co-coordinating devices within the party organizations.

In Chapter six I turn to the MEPs and try to capture their views on the intra-party relationship between the levels. The questions in focus are the following: How do MEPs link to the national arena in a more concrete sense? To what groups do they give priority and how do they handle conflicting situations? In what way does the national arena use the MEPs?

In Chapter seven I analyze how MEPs describe their representative roles. I try to capture some commonalities between the MEPs, in their descriptions as MEPs, as well as defining important differences. For example, who or what do the MEPs conceive as their principal? Or, how do they manage conflicting role sets?

In Chapter eight I analyze how the included MEPs have voted between July 1999 and February 2002 and if there are connections among institutional setting, role perception and actual behavior.

In Chapter nine I sum up the main conclusions of the study and estimate the value of the approach used in this study. I also try to point at aspects that should be interesting for further research.

Notes Chapter one

1 The parties in Ireland are the Irish Labour Party (ILP), Fianna Fail (FF) and the Irish Green Party (GP); in the Netherlands the Dutch Social Democratic Party (Partij van de Arbeid - PvdA), Dutch Christian Democratic Party (Christen Democratisch Appèl – CDA) and the Dutch Green Party (Groen Links – GL); in Sweden the Swedish Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterna – SAP), the Swedish Moderate Party (Moderata samlingspartiet – MOD) and the Swedish Green Party (Miljöpartiet de gröna – MP). Note that the comparative discussion also include other national parties. The most relevant parties, i.e. the ones that are discussed in some detail, are listed in the list of party abbreviations.

2 A European Parliament Group means the group that brings together the MEPs within the same party family, but from different national political parties.

3 I will sometime use the term “principal” for the person or group that has delegated power to the representative. Although this term is commonly used in rational choice
(principal-agent) literature, and this study is not written in that tradition, the concept is valuable because of its clarity and conciseness.

4 A European Parliament Delegation is defined as all the MEPs from a specific national party organization from the same member state. This should not be confused with the European Parliament Group (EPG), which is all the MEPs within the same group, but from different national political parties.

5 In the case of EPP-ED, they use the term “Presidency” for the group consisting of chairman, vice-chairman and treasurer (EPP-ED, 1999, chpt 3, art. 13-14). The presidency as a group has some specific duties, but in general this corresponds with the overall picture described in the above text.

6 According to Tapio Raunio (2000) the size of the bureau varies substantially. For example, in 1997, 48% of all ELDR members were appointed to their bureau and at the same time 15% of all PES members were appointed to their bureau.
Representation,
new institutionalism and role theory

The concept of representation is fundamental in political democratic thought. The concept has also drawn much scholarly attention through several centuries. Where shall we draw the line between what is representation and what is not? How shall we distinguish between good and bad representation? What type of demands can we put on those who represent us? On the one hand the concept is categorical; either you represent or you do not. On the other hand it is a question of more or less, better or worse kinds of representation. There is a connection between how we interpret the concept and how we look at society and human behavior in general and specifically the political system.

Consequently, there are different ways of measuring representation. What are the important aspects of this phenomenon that should be investigated? Is the important thing the rules that circumscribe the representative, in order to reduce the risk for bad representation, or is it representation as an action? Maybe it is how well the views of the representative correspond with the ones that are represented or how close the contact is between the represented and the representative? There is not a correct answer to these questions, they are all important. In this chapter, I will present the theoretical departure of this study, which means that I will define my position regarding some of these questions.
The chapter is organized in two major sections: First, I discuss the concept of representation and how it has been used and how it is defined in this study. I also present arguments for using a new institutional approach in order to understand different aspects of representation in the European Union. Second, I present the use of role theory in earlier research as well as in this study and I present a model for understanding how institutions shape and reshape political roles and representation.

**The concept of representation**

The concept of “representation” has been used in several different ways in several different contexts. Difficulty with defining an important concept is certainly not a unique phenomenon in social science, but there are probably few words that have such a long list of different interpretations. One problem is that theories based on different interpretations of the concept tend to get mixed together (Pennock 1968:5). Studies of representation often also start from different normative underpinnings. For example, if our goal is to measure responsiveness, this probably means that responsiveness is one important component in our notion of what is good representation.

One of the most well-known and commonly used interpretations of the concept of representation is found in Hanna Pitkin’s work. She traces how the concept has been used in ordinary life as well as in political and scholarly debate (Pitkin 1972). The literature discussed in the first chapter is in various ways related to Pitkin and her work is often cited. During the more than 30 years that has passed since her work was published, it has sparked many responses and debates. It is not necessary to return to all of these here. Instead it is important to point out the way that the study of representation in the EU has developed. Going back to Pitkin’s original and now classical study helps us assess some of the developments in the more modern literature and some of its weaknesses. Looking back and reflect on the way her work has been interpreted helps us look forward and rethink our research agenda. As also will be developed below, Pitkin’s emphasis on behavior should be interpreted
within a research tradition that also tries to capture the importance of institutional contexts. This combination, together with a critical and constructive review of role theory, will be the theoretical starting point for the empirical study.

Pitkin's aim is to clarify what political representation should mean. Pitkin's main argument is that different interpretations of what representation means are valid in one sense or the other. However, none of them gives the whole picture. Pitkin distinguishes between formalistic views and representation as standing for something. To complicate things even more, these categories can be divided into sub-categories. The formalistic view can either be characterized as authorization view and accountability view. Representation as “standing for” something can either be of a descriptive or a symbolic nature. Pitkin's analysis is the starting-point for the use of the concept “representation” in this study and I shall in this section further describe and discuss differences between various understandings of the concept, and define my own assumptions and normative idea about what representation really means and should mean.

FORMAL MODELS OF REPRESENTATION

According to Pitkin (1972), from an authorization standpoint, representation simply means that people give the representative the right to make decisions that they themselves are not capable of. This view stresses the right for the representative to make decisions that are binding for the represented, and not his obligation to conform to some external standard or act in accordance with certain considerations. This top-down view of representation tends to assume that all authority is representative and that every representative is in authority over those for whom he acts. Thereby, the representative is freed from responsibility for his action as long as he is authorized to act for the represented. Pitkin concludes “authority over others, the right to give orders, is one thing: representation is another. Sometimes the two go together, but sometimes they do not” (Pitkin 1972:53). The accountability view is an answer to the obvious normative problems with the authorization view. The accountability view is characterized by the notion that a representative is someone who is to be held accountable. Someone who will have to answer for what he or
she does. Whereas the authorization theorist sees the representative as free from certain responsibilities, the accountability theorist argues in the opposite direction, the representative has certain responsibilities toward the represented. These two positions, although opposite to each other, stress the formalistic aspects of representation. Either one is authorized to act in another name or one is to be held accountable for the actions that one has taken. However, this says nothing about how a representative should act. With the accountability perspective a representative who acts “…in a completely selfish and irresponsible manner could not be criticized as long as he let himself be removed from office at the end of his term” (Pitkin 1972:58). However, the formalistic view is important because it pinpoints one aspect of the relationship between the representative and the represented. A representative has the authority to act on behalf of those he or she represents and is accountable for his or her actions. A person who acts outside these limitations can hardly be called a representative. For example, it would be illegitimate for the Swedish parliament to decide that Swedish should be included as an equally important language as French in the schools of France. This is of course nonsense, because the Swedish parliament is not authorized to make that kind of decision; the Swedish parliament cannot act for the French people. In the same way, if the Swedish parliament never ended its term with an election, people would soon stop regarding it as a representative assembly; it would stop representing the Swedish people.

Although most research on political representation is not limited solely to discussing the formalistic aspects of a representative system, some studies focus more on these aspects than others. The formalistic view is common in the field of constitutional studies and often this strand of research has the dominant characteristic of wanting to evaluate or to reform the constitution. Perhaps this is also the reason why the formalistic view is common also in the analysis of the European Union (See for example Bulmer 1996; Lodge 1996a; Sbragia 1993; Toulemon 1998; Wessels & Diedrichs 1999; Viola 1997). The so-called “democratic deficit” is often regarded as a lack of constitutional clarity and logic and the common argument is that if the representative institution (the EP) had more power, representation should be better off than if the current
situation continued. The unclear institutional situation within the EU has also led some scholars to define the EU as something new, not comparable to older constitutional arrangements. As a consequence, this influences the way we should regard the representative system. Either you make the political system more representative by changing the power between the institutions or you defend the duality of the system by redefining the whole concept of what is being represented. Despite the importance of this debate and although constitutional arrangements are vital for how the system works, these studies have a tendency to overemphasize the formal aspects of representation. If the institutions have a representative character, representation as an action is assumed to occur. As long as the representatives are elected in a way that conforms to the constitutional logic, and as long as they are accountable for their actions in an election, representation exists. However, this is a too narrow definition for this study.

**REPRESENTATION AS STANDING FOR SOMETHING**

Another way to look at representation is to stress the descriptive aspects of representation. An accurate correspondence or resemblance to what it represents distinguishes a representative assembly. With this view we can speak of good or bad representation. The resemblance can be more or less accurate. This view is common and many legislative assemblies have been analyzed on the basis of how well they “represent” the people. For example, how well they reflect the class cleavages, gender, age, ethnicity, etc. Electoral systems are judged on the basis of how well it translates different characteristics in the electorate to the legislative assembly. The normative assumption is that it is more likely that those with similar characteristics to the group that they represent are better representatives (Rao 1998:20; Uslaner & Weber 1983:184). The logical consequence is that, for example, male representatives are inadequate in representing women, white people representing non-white people, adults representing young people, etc. However, this is not because of what the male, white or adult representative does, but because of what they are. Thus, the problem with this view is that it says nothing about representation as an activity.
With this view “representation is not acting with authority, or acting before being held to account, or any kind of acting at all. Rather, it depends on the representative’s characteristics, on what he is or is like, on being something rather than doing something” (Pitkin 1972:61). This is not representation as acting for someone or something, rather as representation as standing for something. In fact, by itself, sharing group characteristics says nothing about how well a representative serves as a representative.

With this view the research strategy is given beforehand. The researcher always treats the object of analysis as a collective entity, for example, parliamentary assembly. It is pointless to look at individual representatives because a person cannot possess several dichotomous characteristics at the same time. It is not possible to be both male and female at the same time. A person cannot be a more or less male representative. If a legislative assembly is characterized as more representative, this means that the collective is composed of individuals that are corresponding with the overall population. The assembly can be more or less representative, but that says nothing about the individual parliamentarian. This type of analysis has been done in the case of the EP (see for example, Esaiasson & Holmberg 1996; Hoskyns & Rai 1998; Norris 1985, 1999; Norris & Franklin 1997; Rule 1994). Despite the qualities and merits of these studies, the perspective is too narrow for this study.

There is, however, another way of standing for something, without resembling characteristics. You can also represent by standing for something as a symbol. A king is usually regarded as a representative of a country, although not elected, not accountable and without showing any resemblance with the citizens of a specific country. People’s beliefs are a crucial aspect in this meaning of the concept of representation. If the represented people do not see the representative as a representative, it is difficult to regard him or her as such. This component of the political system is not to be disregarded, especially in a European Union context (see discussion in Hedetoft 1997). One strategy to legitimize the authority of the EU is to use symbols. “For representation to exist, it does not really matter how the constituent is kept satisfied, whether by something the representative does, or how he looks, or because he succeeds in
stimulating the constituent to identify with him” (Pitkin 1972:106). If people do not feel represented, efforts are made to make them feel represented by the political institutions. However, this does not say anything about how they are actually represented.

A DEFINITION OF REPRESENTATION

The four different pictures of representation that I have presented are ideal type descriptions. In the literature, these perspectives are often mixed and different aspects of the concept are taken into concern in an analysis of a political phenomenon. An example of this is the research and debate on what is the “best” electoral system (see for example Beetham 1992; Lijphart 1994; McLean 1991). An electoral system can be designed either to promote the accountability aspects of representation, or promote the descriptive aspects. The government in a majoritarian system is supposed to represent the side that won the election. In a proportional system, the basic idea is that the government shall emanate from a much more “representative” institution. This does not mean that the social composition of the parliament in a majoritarian system is unimportant or that the accountability aspects in a proportional system are insignificant. The concept of representation is multidimensional and the important thing is to be explicit about one’s focus when dealing with the concept.

The formalistic views as well as the descriptive/symbolic views are both insufficient in defining what representation really is. I am looking for something more than constitutional studies or the large survey studies alone can supply. These studies try to capture either the institutional arrangements or the descriptive likeness between the represented and the representative. I am rather searching for what has been called “practical representation” (Diggs 1968). I am looking for what Pitkin defines as “a substantive acting for others” (Pitkin 1972:209). Her concluding discussion ends up in a set of criteria as the defining locus of political representation (Pitkin 1972:209):

- Representing means acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them.
• The representative must act independently, his or her action must involve discretion and judgment, and he or she must be the one who acts.
• The represented must be (conceived as) capable of independent action and judgment, not merely being taken care of.
• Despite the resulting potential for conflict between representative and represented about what is to be done, that conflict must not normally take place.
• The representative must act in such a way that there is no conflict, or if it occurs, an explanation is called for. He or she must not be found persistently at odds with the wishes of the represented without good reason in terms of their interest, without a good explanation of why their wishes are not in accord with their interest.

This is a complex definition, but the important thing is that it focuses on the role of the representative and his or her actions. The complexity is not a result of an undeveloped conceptualization, but due to the nature of the concept itself. Pitkin’s definition characterizes the link between the representative and the represented as something changeable. It is the action taken by the representative that defines the relationship with the represented. This study will not decide if the MEPs are good representatives or not. Instead, Pitkin’s focus on the relationship between the representative and the represented will be the basis for empirical questions regarding the formal rules surrounding the representatives, as well as expectations from the represented and the representative’s interpretation of his or her roles. In the end, these aspects of representation are fundamental for our understanding of representation as substantive acting for others. Pitkin’s definition is therefore a suitable conceptual departure in the study of representation in the European Parliament.

**Representation, roles and institutions**

The questions put forward in this study assume that representatives will characterize their roles differently. Sometimes we get the feeling that the relationship between the represented and the representative is obvious. However, the representative shall act, following Pitkin’s definition, independently and in the interest of the represented. The representative is
not an ambassador of the people, acting only on behalf of outspoken wishes of the electorate. As a matter of fact we elect representatives, because we want them to act in areas where we do not have the capacity or desire to involve ourselves. Still, we claim that the representative shall act in our interest, to be responsive to our wishes. This gives the representative freedom and at the same time makes the interpretation as well as the analysis of representation difficult. It is not always clear who the representative really represents.

The electorate consists of different groups with different ideas about what policy to pursue. The fact that it is possible to act on behalf of an entire country, rather than one’s own supporters, and still consider oneself a representative, makes the analysis even more complicated. If we also consider the possibility that the electorate cast their vote for a party rather than a candidate, the relationship between a single elector and the representative is even more diffuse. In the perspective of this study, whether the MEP should represent his or her electoral district, nation, the European Union as a whole, the national party organization, the European party federation or some other entity, is an important as well as difficult question. In one sense, this is a normative question: shall the representatives act only on behalf of the ones that have elected them or do they have a more general responsibility? The reason for these problems is that we do not have a clear picture of what is to be preferred between these different representative ideals. In another sense, this is also an empirical question. Who do the elected representatives think they represent and who or what guides their legislative work? This is fundamental for this study and I have to look at the actions taken by the MEPs as incorporated in their own conception of their roles as representatives. Therefore, in order to analyze actions taken by the representative, we must know whom the representative sees himself or herself representing. The norms about representation are therefore fundamental for the understanding of representing as an action. In a sense these two aspects of representation live in a symbiotic relationship. It is not possible to act as a representative without having some opinion about whom or what one represents.
INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR

These arguments point in a certain direction, that is, the interaction between human behavior and institutional context. What is called theories of “new institutionalism” have a growing importance in political science, as well as in social science in general. This literature is important because it focuses on the link between institutional context (such as constitutional characteristics) and human behavior (such as representative action). However, it would be wrong to talk about one theory, there are several, and from time to time they all proclaim to be the theory of new institutionalism.

I will in the following discussion divide new institutionalism in two broad approaches: agency-centered institutionalism, commonly described as rational choice institutionalism; and structure-based institutionalism, a collapsed category of what is often called historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism (Clark 1998; see also Hall & Taylor 1996; Immergut 1998; Koelbe 1995; Lowndes 1996; Rhodes 1995; Scott 1995).

These different approaches have some similar characteristics. The common ground is that they are all concerned with the difficulties of ascertaining what human actors want when the preferences expressed are so radically affected by the institutional context in which these preferences are voiced. However, there is significant tension between the different approaches over how this should be analyzed. They also stress the argument that the expressed preference does not need to be the same as the actor’s “real” preference. There may be a number of reasons why a person acts in a particular way under one set of circumstances but in another way in another set of circumstances. However, in what way context influences behavior is heavily debated between the different approaches. It is not the purpose of this chapter to give an extensive description of all variants of new institutionalism or their differences. Instead, I will focus on two dividing aspects between agency-centered and structure-based institutionalism: preferences as endogenous or exogenous, and calculus versus cultural behavior.

The classical rational choice models have difficulties including formal and especially informal rules. The fact that people act differently depending on the surrounding environment led several scholars in economics as well as in political science to turn their interest toward the impact of
institutions (Cox & McCubbins 1987; North 1981; Shepsle 1989; Tsebelis 1994; Weingast & Marshall 1988; Williamson 1985). This resulted in a development from the old neo-classical rational choice models, toward an annexation of institutions into the models. However, the basic assumptions of human behavior are maintained in the new models. In general, agency-centered institutionalists posit that the actors have a fixed set of preferences or tastes, behave instrumentally so as to maximize the attainment of these preferences, and do so in a highly strategic manner (Hall & Taylor 1996:944). It is assumed that “actors have complete and transitive preferences over a set of outcomes and that they choose strategies in an attempt to obtain the most preferred outcome possible” (Clark 1998:254). In the rational choice theoretic approach, preferences are exogenously given “tastes” that actors such as parliamentarians have over the outcomes that affect their political fortunes (Strøm 1997:158). That is, institutions constrain the actor’s ability to express his or her “true” preference. How then can it be possible to treat preferences as stable (unchanged by the environment) and at the same time argue that people act differently because of the institutional settings? Agency-centered theories deal with this by distinguishing between preferences and strategies. The preferences are stable, but the strategies to obtain the goals that follow by the preferences, can be different under different circumstances. Institutions are an intervening variable capable of affecting an individual’s choices and actions but not determining them. Ellen Immergut defines rational choice institutionalism as “the analysis of choices made by rational actors under conditions of interdependence” (Immergut 1998:12) and institutions are seen as “the ‘glue’ that holds otherwise atomistic and self-interested individuals together…” (Shepsle 1989:145). Agency-centered institutionalists also build their models on the presumption that the actors are calculating, rational individuals. This is a normative position regarding human behavior, but also a strategy to “purify” the analysis. Therefore a common argument is that institutions serve a limited number of purposes and institutions that appear different on the surface often are similar in what they accomplish, i.e. the rational actor can be expected to create similar kinds of solutions across time and across cultures (Fiorina 1995:113).
The notion that institutions matter for policy outcomes, even when other characteristics (class, bureaucracy, economic development, etc.) remain constant, also led several other political scientists and sociologists to focus on institutions (Evans, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol 1985; March & Olsen 1989; Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Steinmo, Thelen & Longstreth 1992). However, their approach differs from that of agency-centered institutionalism. Structure-based institutionalism rejects the rational choice primary assumption that the preferences are exogenous to the environment in which these preferences are expressed. On the contrary, preferences are shaped and reshaped within institutions (Immergut 1998:18; Skowronek 1995:94; Thelen & Steinmo 1992:8). Scholars within this tradition have even argued that the rational choice norm about the self-serving individual, with a clear ranking of preferences is itself a result of the culture that we are brought up in. In other words, it is an institution in itself (Kloppenberg 1995:126). Donald Searing argues, “The difficulties with economic rational choice models is that their overlay of cognitive assumptions about self-interest tend[s] to obscure and dismiss the wide variety of desires that shape and reshape our goals – and also our judgments about which courses of action will be most effective for satisfying these goals” (Searing 1991:1253). Or as Stephen Skowronek puts it “…institutions do not simply constrain or channel the actions of self-interested individuals, they prescribe actions, construct motives, and assert legitimacy” (Skowronek 1995:94). Where preferences are ambiguous and changing endogenously, treating them as consistent, clear, stable and exogenous leads to predictive theories that are wrong and normative theories that are misleading (March & Olsen 1989:154-55). The “solution” to differentiate between preferences and strategies, by saying that the preferences are stable but the strategies can change with institutional context, is not convincing for structure-based institutionalists. What we think is right or wrong and good or bad is a result of the environment we live in; it is not a pre-set condition. On the contrary, goals, strategies and preferences are something to be explained rather than assumed (Thelen & Steinmo 1992:9). Structure-based institutionalists also reject the argument that actors always should be treated as calculating and rational individuals; most of the time we act in accordance with institutional rules or certain
norms about appropriate behavior (March & Olsen 1989:38; Powell & DiMaggio 1991:10; Thelen & Steinmo 1992:8). Although, several authors within this broad category differ in how much they reject the thought of rational actors (Koelbe 1995:236), they all agree in the criticism of rational choice’s simple assumption of rationality.

AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH FOR ANALYZING REPRESENTATION

The battle between these different approaches within the new institutionalism will probably continue for some time. Although several authors try to point out the similarities in order to find some type of understanding between the approaches, there are deep ontological and epistemological differences that one should not disregard. The choice of approach has an impact on how to formulate the questions and how to carry out scientific work. How then does this discussion apply in the study of MEPs and their representative role? Here, I return to the writings of Pitkin. She argues that people do behave differently, reach decisions differently, when they are acting on behalf of others, and we have certain expectations of someone who acts for us that we would not have if he were entirely on his own (Pitkin 1972:118). This is an important aspect of representation as a phenomenon, because it emphasizes the relationship between the represented and the representative, and it says something about the role as a representative. Our definition of our representative role is a result of expectations in our environment and experience from history, as well as individual preferences and goals. In for example, Liesbeth Hooghe’s (1999a) study of top commission officials she concludes that socialization and institutional learning mainly explain the variations in senior commission officials’ views and that senior officers bring with them rich experiences of previous occupations and prior political settings and these are powerful predictors of their views on European integration.11

Sometimes the theoretical debate simplifies the nature of human behavior and states that we are either rule driven or pursuing selfish goals, all the time, in every aspect of life. This is of course not true – we are both. Sometimes we just follow norms and rules without questioning them, sometime we have a clear order of preferences and sometimes
there is no conflict between our own interest and the rules at hand. Even though rational choice theorists accept and even push the argument that institutions matter, there is a fundamental problem with their way of treating roles. Adapting to norms of representation (i.e. doing one’s representative duty) is not only to pursue one’s self-interest. Politicians do act in a way that is expected of them, though sometimes it is against their own opinion and interest. One motivational force is simply to behave according to the surrounding norms and behave in accordance with expectations. I argue that this is an honest feeling of appropriateness, not a strategy to fulfill personal selfish goals. Or as described by Scott, “Actors conform not because it serves their individual interests, narrowly defined, but because it is expected of them; they are obliged to do so” (Scott 1995:39). This is not to describe politicians as acting irrationally, but to accept that rational behavior can be different under different circumstances. It is not a question of altruistic behavior, just a question of playing your role as a representative, and doing that well.

The emphasis on norms of representation leads me from the agency-centered institutionalism, and toward a more structure-based institutionalism. I argue that different norms of representation (conflicting opinions of what is right and wrong), guide the decision of which institutional solution to choose. At the same time different institutions nourish different norms of representation. For example, the implementation of an electoral system that tends to favor a two party system, is difficult in a society where the norm of what democracy should accomplish is social and political representativeness, rather than strong single party governments. At the same time, a multi-party system tends to foster the norm that social and political representativeness is more important than government stability. Institutions incorporate norms and institutions foster norms. Our laws are institutionalized rules about proper behavior (norms), at the same time the purpose of laws is to see that norms are shaped and maintained. These arguments are in line with what Scott labels “the normative pillar” of institutional analysis (Scott 1995:37). Norms specify how things should be done; they define legitimate means to pursue valued ends. “They confer rights as well as responsibilities, privileges as well as duties, and licenses as well as mandates […] The conceptions are not simply
anticipations or predictions but prescriptions – normative expectations – of what the actors are supposed to do” (Scott 1995:38). At the same time politicians have goals, interests of their own and they perform certain actions in order to meet these desires. Some of these goals are constructed (and limited) by norms and rules surrounding the politicians, however, some of them are not. In environments characterized by few formal rules and weak informal norms, it is possible for the actor to be guided more freely by his or her own personal goals. This interrelation between rules and reason, between cultural behavior and purposeful choice, is expressed through the individual’s conception of his or her role. Or to use Searing’s argument “The best way to understand political institutions is to understand the interaction between … rules and reasons, between the constraints of institutional frameworks and the preferences of goals of individual members. And there is no place where such rules and reasons come together more clearly than in an institution’s roles” (Searing 1994:6). How these roles are constructed in different institutional settings is one goal of this study and therefore it is important to analyze the interaction between institutions and roles in order to understand representation as it is expressed in practice.

**What is there to be explained, what are political roles?**

After discussing the conceptual side of representation and also presenting arguments for including the institutional context in the analysis of political representation. I will now turn to the concept of roles and how this has been used in earlier studies.

The analysis of different role concepts taken by representatives has generated a huge amount of research. This strand of research has been out of fashion in political science for sometime and it is possible to identify several reasons for this. First, there are no convincing arguments for what explains particular role orientations (Jewell 1983:310). Why does one politician regard himself as this or that? Second, it has been difficult to construct a theory of action or parliamentary behavior based on role theory (Müller & Saalfeld 1997:8). Third, the conceptual pluralism in this
line of research has created confusion, rather than clarification (Biddle 1986; Searing 1994:7). The complex system of different roles in different sets of institutions has made it hard to duplicate studies as well as create a common “language” as a tool for understanding different roles. These problems resulted in an almost disappearance of this research tradition. In recent years, however, we can see the return of role theories in political science and much of this is a result of the growing interest in political institutions. Or as Kaare Strom writes in the conclusion of an edited volume on representative roles in West European parliaments, “Parliamentary roles … can best be understood as consistent strategies induced by the members’ pursuit of different objectives … constrained by the institutional environment in which they operate” (Strom 1997:162). However, the growing interest of representative roles should not mean that we forget the identified problems in earlier studies and become ignorant of the fact that this research needs to be improved. This does not mean that we cannot learn from earlier research and I will soon return to that.

The pioneering work on legislative roles, “The Legislative System” by Wahlke et al., had tremendous effect on legislative research all around the world during the 60’s and 70’s (Wahlke et al. 1962). By studying four United States state-legislatures (California, New Jersey, Ohio and Tennessee), the goal was to find out the underlying political process and the informal channels within different institutions by using role theory. “The concept of role associated with a position of membership in any institutionalized group refers to precisely those behavioral uniformities of regularities which constitute the institution. […] If one is interested in the structure and functions of an institution, it would seem proper to ascertain and analyze those forms of behavior which are central and constitutive to the institution as such…” (Wahlke et al. 1962:10). It was a way to go underneath the formal rules and procedures to look at the politician, instead of the system. They describe the origin of different roles as a mix between personal characteristics and “Ecological characteristics of political units” (Wahlke et al. 1962:22). These two elements create what they call the individual’s legislative role potential. Ecological characteristics are, among other things: ethnic and socio-economic character, party composition, political organization and level of voter interest.
The impact of the work of Wahlke et al. has mainly been concentrated toward what they define as the “representative roles” (see for example: Clark & Price 1981; Converse & Pierce 1979; Eulau & Karps 1977; Kuklinski & Elling 1977; Loewenberg & Kim 1978; Müller & Saalfeld 1997; Norton 1994; Norton & Wood 1993; Rao 1998). This research often distinguishes between Trustee, Delegate, and Politico, which are concepts formulated by Wahlke et al. (1962:272-80). The members of a large number of legislative assemblies around the world have been questioned about these role-concepts. In its basic form these typologies are straightforward enough. The trustee follows his own judgment and conscience. He is influenced by what we can call a Burkean representative ideal. The trustee sees himself as a free agent in that “…he claims to follow what he considers right and just, his convictions and principles, the dictates of his conscience” (Wahlke et al. 1962:272). The trustee is not bound by any mandate, either by a party or by the constituency. Edmund Burke argue in his famous speech to the electors of Bristol in 1774 that “Parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole – where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole” (Pitkin 1969:175-76). The delegate, on the other hand, sees himself as having a mandate from someone. He is obliged to follow instructions, even in cases where it is contrary to his own conviction. The delegate is an elected representative and should therefore follow those who have elected him. The role of the politico is to combine the trustee and the delegate. Depending on circumstances the representative hold one of these two roles. Either simultaneously, with the possibility of a role conflict, or serially, for instance, he sees himself as a delegate in local issues, but a trustee in other issues.

Whether the representative shall be regarded as a trustee, delegate or politico, defines how free the representative is toward those he represents. However, underlying these categories, there are different values of what produces good representation. Either you represent different interests or you represent the common good. The already cited Burkan argument is that a parliament should take care of the common good of the nation and not be identified as a “…congress of ambassadors from different
and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and
advocate, against other agents and advocates” (Pitkin 1969:175). Therefore, Burke argued that politicians should have the roles of trustees
and not delegates. However, in Burkes, as well as in later writings
regarding these typologies, the delegate role is defined as a delegate for
the interests in the constituency. Therefore, close ties to the constituency
are regarded as being more encouraged by a delegate role conception (see
for example Farrell 2001:171). However, in modern representative
democracy, the question should rather be whether a representative is
bounded by instructions from his or her party, rather than constituency.
This type of mandate is equally hampering the free will of the
representative and the representative’s opportunity to follow his or her
own conviction of what is right and just. The problem is simply where
the argument begins. When the focus is on the party organization; it is
the strength of the party vis-à-vis the representative that is interesting.
With this perspective, if the representative is freer in relation to the
party, he or she is able to act more as a trustee (See for example Katz
1997:215). If, on the other hand, the focus is on the relationship between
the constituency and the representative, the argument is different. With
this perspective, the freer the representative is in relation to the
constituency, the more he or she pronounces the trustee-ideal. The
question is simply who the principal is, that the representative should be
more or less bound to. Therefore, it is important to be explicit, when
using these concepts. I am focusing on the relationship between party
organizations and MEPs, and therefore my using of the Delegate
concept, should rather be interpreted as capturing a strong orientation
toward the party organization, and not the toward the constituency.

In order to study political roles, we need to understand the
representative’s notion of who he or she represents; who is the principal?
It is important to know if the representative regards himself or herself as
a delegate (having a binding mandate from someone), but it is equally
important to know from whom this mandate emanates. In a European
context party organizations play a crucial role in forming policy and
circumscribing the representatives. In a European context it is possible
to be a representative of a party rather than a constituency. In the edited
volume by Müller & Saalfeld (1997), it is even argued that the most severe problem with using models “imported” from the US for the understanding of political roles is the inadequate incorporation of political parties (Andeweg 1997). Party organizations are in many senses the link between the electorate and the representative, “their raison d’être is to create a substantive connection between citizens and policy makers” (Lawson 1980:3; see also Graham 1993; Manin 1997; Sartori 1976). In other words, to act on behalf of the party is to act on behalf of the general good (in a positive interpretation) or with party egoistic reasons (a more cynical interpretation).\(^\text{16}\) Regardless of interpretation, this is something else than acting on behalf of the constituency. Voters are important, but a well-organized party is more forceful in making the representative accountable while being in office. In many respects, this gets even more complicated if we incorporate the EU level. To be oriented toward the nation, rather than EU, means that there are institutions (parties, a government, etc.) that are able to hold the representative accountable for his or her actions, while these tend to be more or less nonexistent on the EU level. We are able to make this kind of conclusion because different sources of representation vary in terms of tangibility. A change in representational attitudes could be articulated as a shift from one attitude toward another, where both parties vs. electorate or the member state vs. EU are two main representative ideals. This has implications for how we analyze representation, parties and party systems.

Being a delegate for the party or constituency is by some studies regarded as a dichotomy (Converse & Pierce 1979:526; Clark & Price 1981:376; Norton & Wood 1993:26). In the study by Norton & Woods (1993) on the relationship between British members of parliament and their constituencies, they define different representative types upon the dichotomy of party vs. constituency representation (see Figure 2:1).
Either the representative is independent both toward the party and the constituency and thereby promotes the Burkean trustee-ideal. Or the representative is instructed by the party or the constituency and thereby defined as a party loyalist or a constituency delegate. To be loyal to both the constituency and the party is impossible in this model and the authors argue that this is because of the potential conflict between the two obligations (see Figure 2:1). Norton and Wood’s model introduces an important difference between the constituency and party in western democracies where party organizations still play an important role in legislative work, which is, in fact, the case in a majority of countries.

All the above-cited scholarly work follows a common path. They are all more or less inspired by Wahlke et al. and they all approach the empirical world with a set of concepts that are theoretically pre-defined and which try to capture important aspects of representation. However, there is another important tradition that uses another type of approach, the research on roles in the British House of Commons and in the US Congress. This strand of legislative role research does not follow an approach with pre-set concepts in order to pinpoint the relationship between the represented and the representative. These studies of politics in practice are inspired by the pioneering work of Richard Fenno (Fenno 1973, 1978; see also Cain, Ferejohn & Fiorina 1979, 1987; Rush 2001; Searing 1985, 1994). In this approach the aim has been to emphasize that the individual parliamentarians participate in defining their roles and that these roles have many variations, as well as undergoing a constant change. This tradition illuminated the process of social interaction in shaping roles as well as behavior.
The latest more extensive research on roles is Donald Searing’s study on roles in Westminster (1994). He tries to go beyond the structured role concepts formulated in earlier research – by going back to the politicians themselves. He uses what he calls a motivational approach where goals, beliefs and behavior are connected to the role concept that the politicians use themselves. Searing’s motivational approach conceives political roles as resulting from the interplay between institutional frameworks and individual preferences. According to Searing, political roles are particular patterns of the characteristics of people in particular positions. He distinguishes between position and preference roles. Position roles, as a Whip or a Cabinet Minister, are closely tied to and defined by the position in the institutional structure and position roles require the performance of many specific duties and responsibilities. Preference roles, by contrast, are associated with the performance with a few specific duties and responsibilities and therefore “less constrained by the institutions and therefore more easily shaped by the preferences of the role player” (Searing 1994:15). The position roles are relatively easy to find and identify, while the preference roles deserve a more in-depth research. This is what Searing does in Westminster’s World, by interviewing 521 Members of Parliament in the House of Commons, using open-ended questions (Searing 1994:405-7). He identifies four major preference roles: checking the executive (Policy Advocates), maintaining institutional tasks (Parliament Man), making ministers (Ministerial Aspirants), and redressing grievances (Constituency Members). He does not pre-determine the roles that he studies; they are evolved during the investigation in an interpretative approach. Thus, the role types that are constructed are not theoretically derived hypotheses or a pre-set descriptive landscape, but a part of the empirical result.

**The use of role theory in this study**

Searing’s approach includes institutions in the analysis of roles and that makes it suitable for this study. This means that my approach assumes that preferences, goals and incentives change during the interplay between structure and agent. Even though Searing never focuses on norms as guiding the role concepts of representatives, this is fundamental for my argument in
this study. However, norms fit perfectly into Searing’s argument. Norms about appropriateness, ideals and beliefs of the purpose of representation, should be regarded as one type of emotional incentive shaping the role of the representative. This also means that the relationship between institutions, preferences and behavior is the subject of research rather than built on assumptions. By using this approach, I try to satisfy Heclo’s call for analysis that captures the “interrelationship of ideas, interests and institutions” (Heclo 1994:375). However, it is a complicated approach and the number of interviews and the emphasis on fieldwork, makes it time-consuming and costly. The limited resources for this study make it difficult to follow Searing’s advice completely. I need to have some set of guiding questions in order to focus on aspects in the MEP role descriptions that are suitable for my purpose. Therefore I have to complement or restrain the open motivational approach with concepts of roles used in earlier research.

This study deals with the roles adopted by the MEPs. These roles are composed of a representational norm (who is and should be represented). However, it also includes a geographical specificity. That is, if you are more oriented toward the EU level or the national level. This taps into a longstanding debate over whether representatives on the EU level change their role interpretations as a consequence of constant interaction with the EU political environment. Much of the so-called “going native” debate has its origin in Haas’ neo-functionalist synthesis that “political integration is the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states” (Haas 1968:16). This argument has turned out to be hard to empirically investigate because of a number of methodological problems. It is simply hard to really define if a change in attitudes has taken place and if so, it is hard to identify the source of this change (see for example Scully 1999 for a critical discussion).

Still, the basic argument obviously captures something in the empirical world, since it inspires numerous studies despite these problems. Most of these studies have focused on top officials from the national level, but
active on the European level, or top EU officials. The conclusion is that a shift is taking place among these groups and that the variation among these actors may be traced to different institutional settings that these officials are active in. One example is Morten Egeberg’s study (1999) that deals with the loyalty shift among officials working in committees around the European Commission or around the Council of Ministers (see also Beyers & Trondal 2003). The existence of a shift is confirmed, however, this shift is not a replacement of loyalty toward the national institutions; rather the EU identity is complementary or secondary. Furthermore, the institutional context that the officials work in has an effect on how they conceive their roles. Those who participate in Council groups are more likely to conceive of their role as governmental representatives compared to those participating in committees surrounding the commission. Although I have some methodological doubts concerning this study, the results are interesting, because it includes the geographical specificity that is important also for the questions put in this study. Another example is Liesbeth Hooghe’s (1999a, 1999b) study of top commission officials. She identifies a loyalty shift and three factors having importance for how these top officials frame their roles. First, if they were state employees prior to their EU engagement, second, if the country of origin is unitary or federal, and last, whether they come from a small or a large state. Another example is Jeffrey Checkels study on committees surrounding the Council of Europe (Checkels 2003). By using an approach that includes social psychology and communication, he concludes that a more pronounced multi-national concept is replacing the more nationally oriented norm, in terms of how these committees define nationality. At the same time, when moving to the more individual level of the analysis it is harder, but not impossible, to trace such a change. Some individuals do shift their attitude, but some do not.

Based on the discussion of a loyalty shift from the national level to a more European consciousness, I need to introduce two role dimensions prior to the empirical investigation of the MEPs conception of their role: the notion of the main principal and geographical orientation. In ideal type terms, the first role dimension varies between a complete focus on parties vs. an exclusive adherence to the voters. The second role
dimension entails the extreme position of a single focus on the EU arena versus an MEP that places wholehearted allegiances with the national arena. In Figure 2:2, I allow these dimensions to form four theoretical categories that can be used when analyzing the empirical material.

Figure 2:2 Dimensions in an MEP’s role-set

The MEP’s notion of the main principal and their geographical orientation are analytically distinct. If we then look closer to the four types of role-sets, in the first (1) category we have MEPs that theoretically experience the most manifest control by the national level, while the MEPs in the fourth category (4) are the ones that are most disentangled from the national level. The second category (2) contain the group that experience a freer relation to the national party, but still focus on the national level, while the third group (3) orients themselves toward the party organization, but are more oriented toward the EU level.

Different ways of capturing the MEPs role-set

The notion of the principal and the geographical orientation of the MEP are two dimensions of the role of the MEP. At the same time, the position of the MEPs (in relation to these two dimensions) may vary
depending on what aspect of an MEPs attitudes or activities. This study will, therefore, try to capture these dimensions by looking at three aspects of an MEP's daily life (as shown in Table 2.1).

Table 2.1  
**Expressions of an MEP’s role-set**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational role</th>
<th>Representative role</th>
<th>Voting behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavior according to self-description</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Actual behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answers by MEPs</td>
<td>Answers by MEPs</td>
<td>Role-call data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(compared with description by parties)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 6  
Chapter 7  
Chapter 8

First, I try to capture the MEP's roles by looking at how the MEPs describe how they coordinate their work in relation to the national level and EU level. This will also be compared with the internal rules and the organizational set-up of the national party organizations. I will use the concept *organizational role* to capture this part of the MEP’s role-set. Second, I analyze who the MEPs regard as their principal, that is, whom they represent. I will use the concept *representative role* to capture this part of the MEP’s role-set. Third, I will use these two dimensions in Figure 2:2 in an analysis of the voting behavior of the MEPs.

In a sense this is a strategy to focus the analysis along the line of attitudes to behavior (as shown in Table 2.1). This also means that it is possible to compare the position of every MEP (according to the role dimensions), on the basis of these three expressions. This will give us a more comprehensive picture on the role of the MEPs, since it includes several aspects rather than one of an MEP's attitudes and activities.

To create these categories and focus on these dimensions provides a basic structure to the otherwise open approach, advocated by Searing. Some would perhaps even argue that it contradicts Searing’s approach, but my argument is that one fundamental aspect of Searing’s approach is pushed one step further. As explained above, one underlying assumption of this study is that a different institutional context creates different demands on the representatives and that influences behavior. The translating device in this connection is the role concepts used by the actors themselves. How the actor understands his role is an effect of how he experiences the structure and how he understands his role in this structure and
therefore behaves according to these considerations. Here is where Searing’s approach is most relevant, concerning the interaction between institutions and the adoption of roles. Much of the earlier studies focused on the roles \textit{per se}, but this is a too limited focus for this study.

Furthermore, the purpose of defining different roles and focusing on certain dimensions is not a strategy to construct new undetected concepts or names for various roles. In fact, this strand of research has been ineffective as an instrument for understanding various processes precisely because there has been a tendency to formulate numerous names for new roles more or less unique for every single study. Instead, the focus on the dimensions is a way to facilitate the analysis and make it comparable to other studies. Furthermore, these dimensions may be regarded as rather simplistic and narrow, but this does not mean that the MEPs are expected to have such an unsophisticated view of their work as representatives. Of course, in real life, the picture is more complicated. The purpose of formulating dimensions and trying to define where these dimensions are expected to be manifested is to define aspects of the MEPs’ conceptions of their roles. This is of importance for the research questions that will be asked and this study does not try to embrace all aspects of a representative’s role concept, instead focuses on specific parts of these roles. There should be a difference if an MEP regards himself as a representative of the constituency, national party apparatus, the national government, or the European party federation – an important difference.

**Research questions**

The extensive literature overview and the arguments for the approach in this study shows that we need answers concerning the national and the EU level, as well as the relationship between MEPs and institutions. In other words, this study shall try to give one piece in the puzzle of how the EU arena is developing and how important national actors try to deal with a much more complex political environment. However in order to do that, we need to define more concrete research questions to guide the empirical work. Below, I develop the empirical questions that are connected to the main purpose of this study.
THE ORGANIZATIONAL LINK

In order to grasp the MEP’s relationship to the national party organization, it is necessary to understand how the party organizations try to adjust to the new international environment. Consequently, I need a set of questions that captures the national intra-party surroundings of the MEPs. These are important because they say something about the constraints that surrounds the MEPs and about the expectations that the national level has on them. Therefore, the first set of questions is:

- Have the parties in some aspects changed their organizations to facilitate the relationship between the party organization, executive branch, representatives in the national parliaments and the MEPs?
- To what extent and with what means does the party organization exercise control over the MEPs?
- In what way do party organizations deal with EU issues when they appear in the EU-arena?

However, it is not enough to ask the party organizations how they deal with their MEPs (or the EU level in general), we also need to turn to the MEPs and ask how they experience these intra-party surroundings. One aspect is the ambition of the party; another aspect is how this influences the work of the MEPs. Therefore, in order to pinpoint the cross-pressure put on the MEPs, we also need to include questions that try to capture the MEPs experience of the intra-party environment on the national level and within the EPG:

- Does the MEP feel obliged to legitimize his/her position on different EU issues at a national level before acting in the EP?
- What channels does the MEP use to develop a mutual understanding with the party on different issues?
- How is the relationship between the EPG and the MEP organized?
- How does the MEP deal with uncertainty and which actor is more important than others in situations where the MEP is in need of advice?
THE MEP’S ROLE PERCEPTION

The organizational set-up within parties or the described behavior among the MEPs (in organizational terms) does not necessarily say anything about the MEPs’ understanding of whom or what they should represent. On the contrary, the connection between structure and attitudes is one of the topics for this study. Therefore, we need a set of questions that tries to capture the attitudes among the MEPs regarding their representative role.

- Although, they are elected to the European arena, are the MEPs mainly focused on representing the national voters, national party or some other representative interest?
- Do the MEPs view their representative interest as emanating from the EU arena or from the national arena?
- Due to the duality of the EU, do the MEPs experience a conflict in their representative roles?

ORGANIZATIONAL SURROUNDING, ROLE PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOR

With these questions we should capture two pieces of the puzzle, the intra-party environment and the role concepts used by the MEPs. One could ask these questions with a merely descriptive objective; and surely some of the aspects included in this study involve such a project. However, my aim goes further, and I want to try to explain the connection between national characteristics, intra-party organizational set-ups and representative roles, as well as the relationship between attitudes and the MEP’s behavior.

- Are there differences between representatives from different countries and/or party organizations? If there are, how can these differences be explained?
- Does it matter how the national parties organize the link to the MEPs and the role concepts used by the MEPs?
- Do the intra-party surroundings and/or role concepts used by the MEPs influence the behavior of the MEPs (in terms of voting)?
Until now we have discussed representation as a political phenomenon, as well as defined different aspects of the representative roles that are important for this study. We have learned that roles are analytical abstractions of the real world. It seems reasonable to expect that all parliamentarians can play many roles at the same time. However, some focus more on some of these roles and some on others. Yet, definitions of different roles do not explain why different representatives emphasize particular roles. One challenge for the broad institutionalism approach is to pinpoint which institutions that are important explanatory variables for the analysis. It is easy to end up with too many undefined variables. Therefore, it is important to be explicit about what expectations you have of the empirical material, and it is now time to clarify these expectations. I do so in the form of hypotheses.

Hypotheses about the importance of the national level

The simple argument is that certain institutional characteristics, formal rules and informal norms, are important for shaping the roles of the MEPs. On that basis one can, in accordance with a positivist tradition, create hypotheses that are mutually exclusive and logically impeccable. These could then be tested and verified or falsified. However, this study is much more inductive and my hypotheses are not rigorous in a positivistic sense. Instead, the hypotheses below summarize the expectations that I have when I begin the empirical study. By presenting expectations, I want to separate between my own assumptions and the empirical findings that will be presented later on. From this basis, I hope to contribute to the development of more sensible arguments about relationships in a complex world.

Although the research on the EP and MEPs has mainly taken a descriptive form, some basis for the hypotheses can be drawn both from early studies and more recent research. It is, however, important to note that I am only discussing a small fraction of a huge field of academic endeavor. I concentrate this discussion to studies that are known to be important in role analysis, that have importance for the comparative perspective and studies that in some sense are important for the EU or
the EP. According to these, the national level should be important for reasons of electoral system, domestic power relations, popular opinion and party family/heritage. However, I also include explanatory arguments that have not previously been discussed in the literature, at least not to any great extent.

**CULTURAL FACTORS AND THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM**

Several authors point at different national characteristics as important for explaining how representative roles are formulated, especially in comparative studies (see for example Bodganor 1985; Hooghe 1999a; Katz 1999; Loewenberg & Kim 1978:42; Marsh & Norris 1997). In an early work, from the heyday of legislative role research, Hagger and Wing (1979) study role orientations among MEPs. They conclude that what they call a *nationality factor* best predicts different roles adopted by MEPs. This nationality factor includes: type of electoral system, parliamentary model, size of the country, party system, duration of membership (as a country) in the community, and region of Europe.

However, in this study, as well as in many others, it is hard to really pinpoint what kind of factors are more important than others. Often the electoral system is defined as being important for how parliamentary representatives frame their roles. At the same time, many studies show that the link between the electoral system and various representative norms is not straightforward. In Vernon Bogdanor’s edited volume “*Representatives of the people*,” electoral systems and nominating systems are pre-identified as the most important vehicles for the representative norm (Bodganor 1985). However, this argument has to be revised in the conclusion of the volume. The reason is mainly that in some cases cultural factors seem to play a decisive role for this link (Ireland). These “cultural factors” are never distinctively identified, but is referred as “antecedent cultural factors, such as the strength of localism in society” (Bogdanor 1985:299). Also in a special issue of the *European Journal of Political Research*, several distinguished scholars analyze different perspectives on representation in the EU (Marsh & Norris 1997). The electoral system seems to play a minor role in explaining the attitudes regarding acting as an agent toward the constituency in this study.
Instead the result is associated with a cultural effect. Also in a study of MEPs and national parliamentarians by Richard Katz (1999), the influence of the electoral system presents a puzzling result. The theory is that high district magnitude should give a low score on the claim to be guided by one’s own opinion, while the possibility of giving preference votes would give the opposite result. The first assumptions seem to be correct, while the other falls short. Katz does not give us an explanation for this result, but it verifies that electoral systems seem to have some effect on the adoption of various representative roles, however, we have not realized in what way.

However, the electoral system also has a more direct effect on how different societal actors behave and how institutions are organized. We know that the electoral system is important for the selection process of candidates in the party organizations. In the 1994 European Election Study the candidates were asked to estimate the power of different party bodies in their selection process. The conclusion is that countries characterized by elections where the whole country forms one constituency have highly centralized recruitment processes (Norris 1996:199). The character of the link between the candidate/representative and the party organization is therefore in part decided by the electoral system. If the electorate has the possibility of choosing between different candidates in the same party or splitting their votes between several parties (candidates), the ability of the party to control the representative is weaker than if the electorate only chose candidates on fixed lists (Katz 1980:116). Accordingly, if the electorate is limited to choose among candidates decided by the party, the ability of the party to control the representative is stronger. One distinction between these two types of electoral systems is if they are “candidate-based” or “party-based” electoral systems.

These various and sometimes contradictory conclusions need to be addressed also in this study. Parliamentary systems are often divided into two major categories, the majoritarian model and the consensus model (Lijphart 1994). The typical electoral system in the majoritarian model is the single-member district plurality or majority vote. The candidate in one constituency that is supported by the largest numbers of votes wins the mandate from that constituency. The consensus model, on the other
hand, typically uses proportional representation and the basic aim is that both the majority and the minority shall be represented. Instead of over-representing the majority, the proportional system translates votes into seats according to the distribution of preferences among the electorate. The basic expectation in a majoritarian system is that strong governments shall be the result of the election. The minority is therefore underrepresented.

The consensus model is based on opposite principle; the election result shall proportionally express the voters’ opinion. The government in a majoritarian system is supposed to represent the side that won the election. In a consensus system, the basic idea is that the government shall emanate from a much more representative institution. These different arrangements and norms ought to have implications for how parties organize and for representation and this is interesting for this study.

However, both the Katz study and the Bogdanor study point at something more than just electoral systems when explaining different roles adopted by the representatives. They both speak about a “cultural” effect. There seem to be norms about representation that are country specific and more important than different mechanisms in the electoral system. Whether or not the representative should act as an agent for his or her constituency or party organization is a question of the informal rule of the country. For example, in some countries the relationship between the constituency and the representative seems to be strong, despite the fact that the party organization has a strong influence on the decision of what candidates will be put forward for the electorate, i.e. United Kingdom.

Much of this has to do with the general role of political parties in different societies. Party organizations are important in every political system in the modern democracy or to use the words of Klingemann et al. (1994), “Modern politics is party politics.” For example, in Sweden, the party organizations are tremendously important in both the selection of candidates and formulation of policy (Westerståhl 1985). It is party organizations that are the main actors, not individual representatives. The parties’ internal life has an impact on the political outcome, and the dialogue within the parties is a cornerstone in the democratic system. The political power of parties is not only legitimized by the result of an
election but also on the basis of their strength and organization at a grassroots level. However, this description is not applicable on all countries in Europe and it is fundamentally wrong in the US. In the American context, political parties play a more diffuse role and the representatives are accountable more directly to the constituents. It is common to distinguish the traditional Swedish role of parties and the role of parties in the US by the categories them as “collectivistic” or “individualistic” models (Esaiasson & Holmberg 1996). This is a description of different norms about representation that affect institutional choices, how organizations operate and expectations on the political system. However, it is hard to operationalize culture as a political phenomenon, because the concepts include such a vast number of aspects of a society. Therefore, the above distinctions between “collectivistic” or “individualistic” models is seen in this study as one underlying aspect of the electoral system, simply because in most cases these differences are found in the design of the electoral system. In line with my theoretical argument these norms should be translated to the European level by the MEPs. Thus the argument is this: In countries characterized by party-based electoral systems, MEPs will be more inclined to emphasize their roles as member state/party organization representatives.

POWER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE LEGISLATURE AND THE EXECUTIVE

The relationship between the legislature and the executive is sometimes mentioned as influencing what roles the representatives adopt (see for example Katz 1999:70). Power relations within parliamentary systems differ from country to country. In some countries the parliament’s main role is to control the executive power, but in some countries the parliament is more involved in the policy process (King 1976; Polsby 1975). This should have an impact on how parliamentarians regard their representative role.

The relationship between the legislature and the executive is especially important in analyzing the relationship between the national level and the EU level. The duality of the EU system creates a tension within the parliamentary system. That is, governments operate in an international environment, with demands of secrecy, though the policy in question is
more of domestic character than of traditional foreign policy. In this sense, the governments have increased their power in relation to the national parliaments. If the national parliament is strongly involved in the process of defining the government’s position on EU-policy,\textsuperscript{29} this will probably mean that party organizations have a greater knowledge of the current issues in the EU-arena, than parties in parliaments that do not have this opportunity. In the latter case, it is plausible that the MEPs have a more independent role in their relation to the national party organization and the parliamentary party groups in the national parliament.

The argument is this: In countries where the national parliament is in some way involved in the formulation of governmental policy regarding EU-issues, MEPs will be more inclined to describe themselves as member state/party representatives.

THE POPULAR OPINION REGARDING EU DEVELOPMENT

The popular opinion regarding EU and the development of the Union varies among the member states. This constitutes very different environments for the MEPs. Even though this is not tested in earlier studies, the variation among the member states provides an interesting basis for comparative questions. Katz (1999:71) argue that one reason that the MEPs are more inclined to give more priority to their party organization compared to national parliamentarians, is because of the very low salience of EP issues among the electorate, parties becomes more important for interpreting and articulating the interest of the citizens. However, the question of the development of the EU has become more important in several EU countries and it is reasonable to argue that this influences how the MEPs conceive their roles.

Therefore, if the support for the Union is strong among the people, it is reasonable to say that it is easier for MEPs to orient themselves toward the EU, rather than toward the national arena. In a more EU-critical environment, the MEPs must be more careful with how they connect to the national arena; otherwise they run the risk of being accused of neglecting their responsibility toward popular opinion. The reason is that criticism toward the union has less to do with specific policy issues, and more to do with an overall legitimacy of the Union.
When there is a lack of confidence in the system per se, to be associated with that system, rather than with the member state could be devastating. The argument is this, therefore: *In countries with a strongly EU-critical popular opinion, the MEPs will be more inclined to describe themselves as member state/party representatives.*

**PARTY ORGANIZATIONS’ IDEOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL HERITAGE**

Up to now we have focused on various aspects of the political system, now it is time to concentrate on the party organizations. In some studies differences between parties are described as having an effect on what type of roles the representatives adopt (see for example Andeweg 1997; Converse & Pierce 1979; Damgaard 1997; Hagger & Wing 1979; Katz 1997, 1999; Scully & Farrell 2003). In the literature on political organizations, it is common to analyze the character of parties along the left-right dimension. Katz (1997) argues that the individual left-right placement plays a role if the MEPs consider themselves to be trustees (i.e. trusting their own judgment or following the national parties). In the follow-up study by Katz (1999), he concludes that there are differences between MEPs’ ideological positions and how they frame their roles. Those on the left define themselves more as “legislators” compared to those from the right. Additionally, Scully and Farrell (2003) show that right-wing MEPs tend to emphasize more the importance of traditional parliamentary activities, such as legislative and parliamentary oversight. Left-wing MEPs, on the other hand, emphasize values such as social arbitration.

Therefore there are reasons to believe that parties emphasize different representative ideals as a result of various heritage, tradition and organizational structures. Duverger argues, “Domination over the parliamentary representatives by the party is the result of the general structure of the party and its general orientation much more than of particular technical devices” (Maor 1997:137). The importance of ideological dimension in party organizational characteristics has also been empirically tested. Janda and King (1985) test Duverger’s hypothesis and conclude that the ideological dimension is important for how the parties are organized. This means that there are differences between parties, and therefore also
a variation within the countries under study. Therefore, we can assume that different parties foster different norms of how representation should be conducted. This has to be included in this study. The argument is this, therefore: **MEPs belonging to left parties will put greater emphasis on representing the member state/national party organization.**

**BELONGING TO A GOVERNMENTAL PARTY**
Several of the authors in Müller and Saalfeld (1997), argue that a distinction has to be made between those belonging to governmental parties and opposition parties when analyzing representative roles. I agree with this conclusion and I mean that this is especially important when analyzing the European Union. Because of the duality between international cooperation and federal features in the EU-system, the national governments have a specific function, and that the party organizations in government have a different situation compared to those outside the government. The incentives for parties in national governments to maintain a cohesive political strategy in the Council of Ministers, as well as in the EP, should be stronger than in parties outside the government. This should have an impact on how MEPs conceive their roles. The argument is this, therefore: **MEPs from governmental parties will put more emphasis on their roles as representing the member state/party organization.**

**CLOSE COORDINATION BETWEEN THE LEVELS OR NOT?**
One of the empirical goals of this study is to identify whether or not the parties have any specific strategies to monitor their MEPs and how these relationships are organized within the parties. It is reasonable to expect that parties handle this in different ways. This includes formal rules, coordinating devices and more informal expectations. According to the theoretical argument, all these different features shape different representative norms among the MEPs, by shaping incentives, circumventing action and foster different ideals. How MEPs are selected and how they are monitored once in office should be important for explaining how MEPs perceive their roles. The argument is this: **In political parties that have stronger co-coordinating devices, the MEPs will emphasize their role as representing the member state/ party organization.**

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THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEP

In the pioneering work of Hagger and Wing (1979), individual factors were tested. They analyze the length of service in the EP, perceived length of “Euro interest” and “Euro commitment,” and explained the adoption of various representative roles. They show that these variables have some influence, but not as strong as the earlier mentioned country variables. Other studies have showed a similar pattern. In for example Katz (1997), the attitudes toward the EU are shown to have an impact on how the MEPs perceive their roles. Those who feel like Europeans are more likely to perceive the job as an MEP in European rather than national terms. In the follow up study, Katz concludes that MEPs who score high as legislators tend to have a strong pro-European opinion. Those who score high as “partisan” seem to favor the national over the European level (Katz 1999).

I have not included, for example, individual attitudes on the development of the EU in the model that will be presented later in this chapter. The argument is that in order to infer such an influence on how MEPs conceive their role, you need to know the attitude of the individual before going to the EP. Otherwise there are strong reasons to believe that these attitudes are heavily influenced by the way the MEP conceptualizes his or her representative roles. It is simply too hard to differentiate between what is the attitude toward the EU and what is part of their role conception.

However, if those that have a certain position role (such as leader of the EPD or chairman of a committee) speak about their roles in a different way than others, then it is important. The problem with this variable is that it is difficult on the basis of the small number of cases included in the study to make any solid conclusions. I will, however, in the discussion regarding the cases, as well as when analyzing the material, include individual characteristics. Other variables, such as gender, age, professional background, etc., have been shown to have a small effect on how MEPs conceive their roles. If the empirical material in this study points in another direction, this should be mentioned, however, that does not justify bringing that type of variables into the model at this moment.
A model to understand different representative norms among MEPs

Now it is time to put these quite disperse variables together and create an analytical model that suggests a possible relationship between institutions, roles and behavior. It is important to note that the approach in this study is to analyze the cross-pressure on MEPs from the national and the EU level for the purpose of understanding how MEPs conceive their roles. As argued previously, the research has mainly been focused on the horizontal aspects of the MEPs, while this study put the questions from a different angle. The model presented here is focusing on the vertical relationship. However, this does not mean that the horizontal aspects are unimportant. Instead, the focus on the vertical link is a way to balance a bias in the previous literature.

This study is guided by an understanding regarding the relationship between actor and structure that is inspired by a new institutional approach and I have put some emphasis in this chapter in trying to argue why this approach is suitable in the analysis of the MEPs. This ontological understanding serves as a point of departure in creating a model for analyzing how the national level influences the roles adopted by the MEPs and how these influences their behavior. This understanding may be stated as follows:

1. The MEPs bring with them expectations from the national political arena about how to behave. These norms about politics and representation are constructed in the national arena based on institutional solutions as well as historic experiences (the “institutions matter” argument). As a consequence, we should find a variation among the cases, in terms of representative ideals used by the MEPs.

2. These norms will be translated from the national arena to the European arena through the MEPs’ role concepts and behavior (the “logic of appropriateness” argument).

3. These norms are persistent although the environment changes for the citizens, party organizations or politicians in a specific country (the “history dependent” argument). At the same time, norms change more rapidly in situations where there are no formal rules or organizational devices supporting the norm. Therefore, in countries and parties where no organizational efforts are being made to incorporate the MEPs, we will find a more profound emphasis on the EU-level identity.
This point of departure is manifested in Figure 2:3. Furthermore, the model is designed with the purpose of making comparisons between cases and where the presented variables are the main dividing characteristics in the selection of cases. However, it is also important to note that the significance of different institutional settings is as much an empirical question as a departure for the study. During the study, I will identify rules and organizational settings, especially within parties, that are of importance for the MEPs’ work as representatives in the EP. Today we know very little about how these links are organized (if at all); therefore this is one of the empirical tasks of this study.

*Figure 2:3  An analytical model to understand the MEPs’ roles and behavior*

In the boxes to the left we are able to see the above-discussed independent variables. These are divided into national characteristics and party characteristics. The differences between the selected cases according to these independent variables will be done in Chapter four (national characteristics) and Chapter five (party characteristics). In the center box we are able to see the different aspects to the MEPs’ roles that will be analyzed in this study, as described in Table 2:1 and Figure 2:2. This will be done in Chapter six and seven.

The role concepts in this study are treated as dependent variables when looking at the relationship between structure and actor, but independent variables when looking at behavior (see also Searing 1994:22; Vabo 1997). In the box to the right the MEPs’ behavior is in focus. MEP behavior
can be measured in different ways (and will also be so in various chapters in this study). However, one of the more straightforward ways of analyzing behavior is to look at how MEPs vote. Although I have not touched upon this at any greater length in the previous theoretical discussion, some studies have been able to connect various roles and voting behavior. Norton and Wood conclude that differences in role orientation toward party or constituency have an impact on actual behavior. Similarly, the Converse and Pierce study of roles and legislative behavior also shows that orientation either toward the party or the constituency has an effect on voting outcome (Converse & Pierce 1979). I will try to connect the identified role patterns in this study with how the MEPs actually vote, and this will be done in Chapter eight.

THE VARIABLES PUT TOGETHER

What then can we expect to be the result? Above, I have formulated arguments connected to the different independent variables. These arguments are concentrated into Table 2:2, and the expected outcome on the different dependent variables. I assign a plus sign, on the basis of earlier research and the theoretical reasoning, when we expect a positive relationship between the variables. However, it is important to remember that these variables are not dichotomous in the rigorous sense. To give you an example, we expect to find a positive relationship between a party-based electoral system and a representational orientation toward the party. However, a representative from such a system would not say that voters are unimportant. Of course they are. However, in the end of the day it is the party that matters as a source of the representative role. All political representatives bear traces of all these dimensions, though the argument is that due to different reasons representatives from a certain context give priority to one of these dimensions.
Table 2.2  **Explanatory variables and expected outcome**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>Main principal</th>
<th>Geographical orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Member state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral system</td>
<td>Party Candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive-legislature relations</td>
<td>Strong parliament</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak parliament</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU opinion</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological heritage</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to executive power</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System for monitoring</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 tells us, for example, that MEPs from a party-oriented electoral system will probably be focused on the national party and the member state, an MEP that is surrounded with a very critical EU opinion, will probably be more inclined to focus on the national level, etc. The selection of cases for this study should vary according to these independent variables, in a way that it is possible to identify one or the other variable as more important than others. This is the purpose of being explicit regarding the explanatory variables that guides the study. I will return to this in the next chapter.

The European Union gives us a unique chance to analyze the importance of institutions, because the MEPs act within the same political framework, at the same time that they come from different institutional heritages. Or to put it methodologically, it is possible to hold a variety of variables constant, and at the same time compare among different explanatory variables. The differences in institutional contexts for different representatives (countries and parties) should create differences in how the representatives conceptualize their roles, as well as how they behave. Therefore, this study must have a broader approach to the different role concepts, than many studies of national political systems. It is possible to represent so much more in the European Union, than in many national political arenas. Let us now turn to the methodological problems and their solutions.
Notes Chapter two

7 In an article by Malcolm Jewell (1983) there is an extensive description of how the concept has been used in different areas of research.
8 See for example the discussion by Rhodes (1995:51), which describes this type of research in Britain.
9 See Hix (1998) for an extensive discussion about different analytical approaches and normative consequences of different approaches.
10 See for example Peters, B.G. (1999) for an extensive description of various strands of new institutionalism.
11 See also Hooghe 1999b, where she maps different patterns of opinions concerning broad political issues among the top officials in EU.
12 For an extensive discussion on the relationship between norms and rational actors, see Elster (1989). See also the Christensen & Peters (1999) discussion about the relationship between norms and structural variables.
13 Scott differentiates between the regulative pillar, normative pillar and the cognitive pillar (Scott 1995:34).
14 For extensive descriptions of role theory and research see, Biddle 1986; Eulau & Wahlke 1978; Jewel 1983; Searing 1991
15 Wahlke et al. discriminates between the focus and the style of the representative (Wahlke et al. 1962:269). The representative's style is if he sees himself as a free agent or bound by instructions by the represented – if he is a delegate, trustee or a politico. Focus, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which a representative is guided in his decisions by a concern for the welfare of the political unit as a whole, for the constituency or a particular interest. For reasons of simplicity, I disregard this distinction, since the focus and style (as described by Wahlke et al.) is interlinked in such a way, that it is hard to use it empirically.
16 In Lawson (1980:13-14) four different kinds of linkages are developed. The representatives' actions are an expression of these linkages. Lawson distinguishes between “participatory linkage” where the political parties serve as agencies through which citizens can participate in government. In “policy-responsive linkage” parties serve as agencies for ensuring that government officials will be responsive to the views of the voters. “Linkage by reward” is where parties act primarily as channels for the exchange of votes for favors and “directive linkage” is where the parties are used by government as aids to maintain coercive control over their subjects.
17 This is true in one sense. However, it is possible that what Wahlke et al. define as the politico can be hosted in the fourth logical impossible cell. In some issues, perhaps where local interests are very strong and salient, the representative is guided by his own judgment and follows the opinion in the constituency, but on every other issue he chooses to follow the party line.
18 According to Searing, this notion makes the motivational approach something else that is either the “structural approach” or the “social interaction approach” in earlier role research (Searing 1994:11).
Searing argues that his motivational approach is associated with what Wahlke et al. calls “purposive roles” (Searing 1994:11). The purposive role describes the legislators’ perception of their most important aspects of their work. I agree with this conclusion. To study purposive roles is useful in differentiating among members of a legislature and it is even more valuable, to use Jewels words, “… for comparing legislatures – particularly along cross national lines” (Jewel 1983:316).

Searing discusses norms and even reports data on informal rules’ impact on political behavior (Searing 1994:5). However, the purpose of this exercise is rather to question assumptions within rational choice theories and he never really integrates norms in the motivational approach model.

The fact that there is a formal difference between the Council and the Committee should probably have an impact on the representative’s opinion on who they “should” represent. In a formal sense there is a “correct” answer to the question. These measures are also made during one single time. Egeberg measures identity by asking “whom of the following institutions they feel an allegiance to” (Egeberg 1999:464). The problem with this way of measuring a change in attitudes is that we never know the original identity of respondents and therefore it is hard to actually know if a shift has occurred or not. We have nothing to compare with.

Using the more traditional concepts, these two dimensions taps into what Wahlke, et al. define as representatives’ focus. If we would further this comparison, it would be possible to infer that a representative that has a clear party orientation and focuses on the national level, should be regarded as a delegate rather than a trustee. A representative that is oriented toward the voters and EU should be treated more as a trustee.

John Wahlke argues “…the person sees himself not as a mere isolated and unique ‘thing’ in a universe of things, but as standing in certain relationships to other things and persons. The word which refers to his perception of his relationships to the things and persons in the universe around him is ‘role’” (Wahlke 1978:26).

Loewenberg and Kim (1978) focus on five different explanatory factors: constitutional structure, the balance of power between different political institutions; party system, the number of parties operating in the country; political culture, political consciousness in a country; social structure, patterns of social cleavages; and ecology, the size and number of constituencies and their correspondence with the geographic characteristics of the country.

This was published in 1979 and at that time the EP had a more limited function in the European Community and when there were only nine member states.

Bogdanor further concludes that the strength of the party system depends on cultural configurations of societies and pattern of cleavages and their relative salience. The most severe drawback of the Bogdanor volume is that it never, in its concluding parts distinguishes, between different roles within different national legislatures. System wide variables are the focus of the study and it is at that level of analysis that they find their answer (Bodganor 1985).

Marsh and Norris (1997) analyze roles adopted by MEP’s, such as, policy representation, social representation and territorial representation. They use survey data on attitudes, values and opinions of the European electorate and European candidates at the time of the 1994 European elections.

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Britain score high on the variable “acting as an agent of their constituency.” This is completely inconsistent with the hypothesis that countries with intra-party preference voting should score high on this variable, instead Katz refers to a cultural effect (Katz 1997:218).

See Bergman (1997) for a description of how different national parliaments handle the relationship between the legislative and executive power in different member states concerning EU-issues.
Methodology, method and sources

There are two main phenomena involved in this study. The first phenomenon is the various representative role concepts that the MEPs adopt and the second is the intra-party link between the national and European political arena. Both these areas of research suffer from a lack of valid theoretical explanations. We know very little about what causes politicians to emphasize a certain role. Likewise, we know very little about the impact of the developing European arena on the political party organizations and vice-versa. Therefore, this study is about generating hypotheses, rather than testing general explanations. However, this can be done in a more or less ‘tight’ manner, and the purpose of this chapter is to explain my methodological choices as well as argue for them.

The chapter is organized as follows. First, I argue for the use of a small-N strategy to analyze the questions that are put in this study. Second, I argue for the use of different empirical sources in order to grasp important variations in a complex world. Third, I present the different sources used in this study. Fourth, I describe and discuss the limits of the study, making clear some of the important aspects of the topic that are not included in this study.
The research design and the selection of cases

The questions that this study is addressing are characterized by rather broad and unclear concepts. In Chapter two, I put some effort in trying to discuss the concept of representation as well as different role concepts. This discussion should show the conceptual difficulties that this type of research is dealing with. Therefore, the choice of methodological approach is important.

It is possible to think of scientific work as clearly dealing with either two things. Either, it tries to generate in-depth knowledge of a certain phenomenon and make conclusions that could be relevant for other cases. With this ambition a single case approach is most common, because the focus is on complex relationships and the purpose is to understand a phenomenon, rather than explain one. This is a design promoting the depth in the analysis. The other approach is when the goal is to explain a phenomenon, for example by comparing many cases or using survey data. The ambition is to trace different relationships between various variables, defined beforehand or developed during the empirical analysis. This design promotes the breadth in the analysis. However, I have not chosen any of these strategies. This is a small-N comparative study and I use this approach in order to get some breadth into the study, but at the same time make the workload with in-depth interviews manageable. In other words, I try to combine breadth and depth into the study and precisely for these reasons the method of structured, focused comparison of a set of cases is chosen as a strategy (see a more detailed discussion in George 1979; George & McKeown 1985; Collier 1995).

A SMALL-N APPROACH

The common strategy analyzing representative roles has been to use large survey data. At the same time it is important to remember that if the research question is coupled with unclear concepts, as well as highly normatively influenced concepts, a quantitative research strategy is a rather risky enterprise with respect to validity. It is difficult to know what we are measuring and if we are measuring the same thing in the different cases. Take the example where a politician argues, “I represent my voters
first and foremost…” If this politician receives a questionnaire, where this question is asked, it is reasonable to believe that he or she would tick in the box that captures this position. However, this provides very limited information about what representation means for this politician. There is simply a correct answer to this question; an elected politician is expected to represent the voters. This is a simplification, most surveys are more advanced than this example implies, but the basic argument is still relevant. If the definition of a certain concept is weak, the inference based on more or less simple questions, becomes difficult.

The same argument applies to questions regarding coordination. All MEPs coordinate with the national arena, the question is how. We need information on how this is done in practice and what kind of problems the MEPs experience in their relationship toward the national level. We need simply for the MEPs to tell us their story. Questionnaires are badly equipped to handle these kinds of problems. The reason is simply that a statement from an MEP most often deserves follow-up questions in order to capture what we are looking for. A qualitative method, based on interviews, is better equipped to handle this type of situation.

Qualitative case studies, either single case approach or small-N approach, have the advantage of trying to capture deeper knowledge about a phenomenon. That does not mean that all case studies succeed in this ambition, but the focus on a single or a smaller number of cases makes it manageable to trace patterns that otherwise are difficult to follow. Case studies, however, can be done for several reasons. In the seminal work by Arend Lijphart (1971), he distinguishes between atheoretical, hypothesis-generating and theory-confirming case studies. These different types serve different purposes and an atheoretical case study can be important for gathering material for theoretical purpose, while the theory-confirming approach is stricter in the sense that a theoretical argument is set out in the foreground of the investigation. The major problem with case studies is that it is hard to make generalizations on the basis of their conclusions. Even though, they may have importance for verifying theory or testing theory, case studies are weaker in this respect compared to large-N studies. Although, Lijphart admits that case studies may be used in terms of testing theory, he also
argues that “…assuming that the proposition is solidly based on a large number of cases, the demonstration that one more case fits does not strengthen it a great deal” (Lijphart 1971:692).

In a similar classification by Harry Eckstein (1992), he distinguishes between different case studies based on their function in relation to theory. Eckstein is much more positive about the use of case studies in order to test theory. One important argument is that: “…the practical advantage of crucial case studies does not lie merely in resources. Case studies yield methodological pay-offs as well. This is in large part due to the fact that they help avoid difficulties that are hard to reduce or abolish in cross-culture research […] the problem of the proper cross-cultural translation of research instruments [and] we are far more likely to develop theories logically and imaginatively, rather than relying on mechanical processing to reveal them” (Eckstein 1992:162-163). There is much to say on behalf of a case study strategy, especially in a situation where we are unsure how to link theoretical concepts with the context in which these are voiced, or to use Yin’s argument, “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 1994:13).

The research in this study is not explanatory in the sense that I have a logically consistent and clearly defined set of background variables, intervening variables, and logically coherent hypotheses. Nor is it a test of different competing theories with different hypothesized implications. It is rather an exploratory model in which I beforehand map out relevant variables and their presumed relationships and these are then used to analyze the empirical material. The selection of cases is based on a variation on these independent variables and the empirical analysis is conducted in the same manner in all these selected cases. This is a way to do a focused comparison, even though the relationships are complex and the relative weights of different variables are difficult to state. The purpose is to avoid problems with only telling a unique story of a single case and make the study more comprehensive in terms of theory.
**SELECTION OF CASES**

In Chapter 2, I explicitly identified variables important for this study. The cases are selected on the basis of these variables. Thus, this is a strategy of trying to sort out some variables that are more important than others, to make qualified statements about the relationships between variables and hypothetically testable arguments regarding role concepts used by MEPs. I argue that this gives me a greater ability to create valid hypotheses, than if I would be more exploratory and inductive in my approach.

I have selected MEPs that are elected in Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden. Furthermore, these MEPs all come from the social democratic parties, or leading right wing parties, or the green parties within these three countries (see Table 3:1).

**Table 3:1 The selected cases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Democratic party</th>
<th>Right wing party</th>
<th>Green party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ireland</strong></td>
<td>Irish Labour Party (ILP)</td>
<td>Fianna Fail (FF)</td>
<td>Irish Green Party (GP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Netherlands</strong></td>
<td>Dutch Social Democratic Party (Partij van de Arbeid - PvdA)</td>
<td>Dutch Christian Democratic Party (Christen Democratisch Appèl - CDA)</td>
<td>Dutch Green Party (Groen Links - GL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweden</strong></td>
<td>Swedish Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterna - SAP)</td>
<td>Swedish Moderate Party (Moderata samlingspartiet - MOD)</td>
<td>Swedish Green Party (Mjöpartiet de Gröna - MP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These cases all differ in relevant aspects on the national, as well as party level of the analysis. Of course, they also differ with respect to what EPG they belong to. In Chapter four and five, I will identify more specifically how these countries and parties differ.

However, this does not mean that these cases have nothing in common compared to other member states of the EU. The cases are very similar in certain respects. For example, they are all relatively small unitary states. They are all located in the northern part of the EU and they all have a relatively long tradition of parliamentary democracy. The purpose of the chosen strategy is to isolate some differences between
countries and thereby end up with a smaller number of independent variables. Or in other words, it is a strategy to match the selected countries in some important background variables, and thereby focus on the independent variables that are most important in a theoretical sense (see also King, Keohane & Verba 1994:199; Collier 1995:111). With a too large deviance between the cases there is a risk of having too many explanatory variables, making it impossible to draw any causal inferences in the end. Although, the restriction of the number of explanatory variables makes the design sensitive for missing important variables, this is preferable compared to having too many explanatory variables that says nothing. At least I can isolate the effect of some variables and thereby make an inference about the state of the relationships between these studied variables.

These arguments, as well as the chosen research strategy, are based on the logic characterized by Przeworski & Teune (1970) as a most similar systems design. The purpose of such a design is to eliminate the effect of certain background variables by selecting cases that are similar in these respects. Thereby it is possible to isolate the relevant independent variables. In other words, the selected cases differ with respect to what is thought to influence the phenomenon that is being studied. By tracing commonalities as well as differences back to these independent variables, it is possible to theoretically say something about the phenomenon that is being studied.

The cases are therefore selected on the basis of differences in the independent variable that are thought to have an explanatory power and this is important in methodological sense (George 1979; King, Keohane & Verba 1994:140). The reason is that we reduce the danger of inference problems, due to the fact that the selection procedure has predetermined the outcome of the study. That is, if cases are selected on the basis of the dependent variable, it is harder to isolate what is really influencing these differences. Therefore, to select cases on the basis of the independent variable is a much riskier business in terms of ending with a nice, clear result that supports the argument; on the other hand, it is theoretically much more fruitful.
Triangulation as a strategy

This study is based on a multitude of sources and often this strategy is called triangulation. The problem one wants to avoid by using this strategy is various kinds of insidious biases in the material. The argument is that if a conclusion is verified by using different strategies and methodological approaches, the conclusion is strengthened. Triangulation tries to ensure that the conclusion is not a result of the measurement itself (see for example Denzin & Lincoln 1998:199). This strategy is not without its problems and it is possible to identify several caveats connected to it (see arguments in Burton 2000:298; Silverman 2000:99). For example, the fact that sometimes different methods simply are not compatible or that this kind of research often leads to the dilemma of deciding which findings are to be given more weight when drawing the conclusions. However, the purpose of using triangulation is not only to improve the validity of the conclusions, there is also a descriptive purpose. That is, to give a better understanding of phenomenon that we have limited knowledge about, by analyzing a phenomenon with the help of various sources.

I use a combined method of interviews, written questionnaires, analyzing documents as well as a large number of roll-call votes in the EP. Furthermore, it is important to say that I am not only using different types of material, I also interview different people, situated in different environments, and ask them similar questions. Even though this is usually not associated with the triangulation strategy, one may argue that matching different interviews in such a way is a strategy to validate accounts made by one or the other actor.

This kind of research strategy is useful if the task is to investigate among a complex set of variables and if the aim is to generate new hypothesis. In the following sections I will go through the material used in the different parts of this study, because the various materials and methods deserve different descriptions and arguments. In this methodology chapter I focus on the material as such. In the chapters dealing with every step of the study, I discuss specific problems with the phenomenon under investigation and the methods to solve those problems.
Written material

One important part of the surroundings of the MEPs is the written rules that regulate how they are selected, what is expected of them, and the kind of resources they are able to gain. These written rules include, most often, the party statutes and party rules, but also contracts that are written between the MEPs and the party organizations. These various documents have been gathered and analyzed with the purpose of capturing the more formal aspects of the link between the MEPs and their parties.

Since the character of these texts is formal and stringent, the process of analyzing them is simpler, compared with analyzing newspaper articles or party programs. Therefore the common problems with text analyses are of limited scope, simply there are rules that regulate the MEPs or there are not. How these rules are used in practice, is an important question and this has been dealt with during the interviews with various people.

Rules within the EPGs are also analyzed in the same fashion as the internal party rules. However, the EPGs play a minor role in this study and therefore these documents have been used rather sporadically. At the same time, it has been important to check if the EPGs regulate their relationship with the MEPs or not, but in the same way as with the internal party rules, either such regulations exist or they do not. These questions have also been discussed with the respondents during the interviews.

In some situations I have needed to confirm certain information that has been picked up during interviews or when reading other written material. Therefore, I have corresponded with various persons in order to get a fuller picture of the question in focus. These letters are from party officials in the national arena and connected to the EP arena, as well as from advisors and experts in the national parliaments. This correspondence is not made systematically (except regarding some specific questions); rather, I have contacted various informants when I have felt the need of some kind of clarification.
Interviews

Obvious question when using this kind of approach is who should be interviewed, how these actors are selected and what can be inferred from these interviews. Early in the project I identified different groups of actors important as informants for the questions that I ask. In many cases these are groups within the same party, but acting in different arenas. Although I return to this in every chapter reporting the empirical material, I want to describe what type of actors I have interviewed. For example, in order to pinpoint the institutional surroundings of the MEPs, I have interviewed different groups of people and by comparing different answers I get a more comprehensive picture on relevant relationships. All in all, the study is based on 69 interviews with 60 individuals.

The first group of interviews was with representatives from the extra parliamentary organization, the second group was with representatives from the parliamentary party group, and the third group was with the MEPs. The interviews with these three groups were complementary to each other, as well as they are important in their own respect. During the interviews of one group a picture of the relevant relationships emerged. This picture was then verified or refined by a next set of interviews with the second group. In that order I have tried to capture the relationships that are important in order to answer my questions. At the same time I have analyzed relevant documents, such as standing orders for selection of candidates and party statutes. All these sources discuss the same environment, but from different angles. This should give a reasonably accurate picture of relevant relationships.

This study includes two different types of interviews. The first type is when the respondent represents a source of information. For example, when the respondent describes how decisions are processed through the party or how the party handles the selection of candidates. The second type is when the respondent’s view is in focus. For example, how the representative describes his or her own role, experience conflicts, or describes what links he or she gives priority to. The interviews with party representatives are an example of the first kind of interviews and the interviews with the MEPs are examples of the second kind.
These two types of interviews do not only differ with respect to who is interviewed, but also how they were conducted. The first type of interviews was much more open than the second type. When the purpose of the interview is to gather information on a certain topic, but the respondent as such is less important (except that he or she shall be reasonably familiar with the situation), the questions are guided more toward what is specific in every case. This is hard to know beforehand and the discussion develops during the interviews.

In the second type of interviews, the interest is how the individual respondent experiences the world. The answers to these questions are then compared and analyzed, with the purpose of giving arguments that explains the variation among the respondents. Since these two types of interviews have different functions in the study, I will divide the presentation of both methods and the material.

The Interviews with Various Party Representatives

In 1999, I conducted a series of interviews with representatives from the national party organizations. I selected the respondents by approaching the party headquarters and let them help me identify the persons to speak to. In some cases the interviewees gave ideas on who to go to next. The goal was to conduct two interviews in each party, one from the extra-parliamentary party and one national MP. I almost succeeded in this ambition (see Table 3:2), except for the Dutch and the Irish green parties, where I was not able to meet someone from the parliamentary party. On the other hand, these parties are smaller than the other ones, and they focus more of their relations through the extra-parliamentary organization. Therefore, questions regarding the relationship between the group in the national parliament and the MEPs were put to the representatives from the extra parliamentary organization instead.
Table 3:2  Numbers of interviews with party org. representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewed</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FF</td>
<td>GP</td>
<td>CDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repr. extra parliamentary org.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repr. the parliamentary party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents on the EP level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents from the extra parliamentary organization were, at the time for the interview, responsible for these kinds of issues, such as general secretaries, international/EU secretaries, chief organizational secretaries, etc. In the parliamentary group I generally meet with the chairman of the parliamentary group or the national parliamentarians responsible for EU/international affairs in the party. Additionally, I have made interviews with various types of representatives on the EP level (within the parties or the EPDs). The reason for these interviews has basically been that they had some kind of important role regarding the coordination within the EPDs or the coordination between the levels. In some cases these are advisors or secretaries for individual MEPs. All in all, this resulted in me meeting 24 individuals and two of them I interviewed on two different occasions.

The questions in focus during these interviews concerned the process of candidate selection, intra-party monitoring mechanisms and the relationship between the national parliamentary group and the MEPs (see Appendix 1 & 2). All these broader themes were handled during these interviews and most often the initial questions were the same. However, on the basis of how party organizations form these relationships the interviews took different paths. For example, some parties direct their efforts to the relationship between the parliamentary party group and some focus on the relationship between the regional level and the MEPs. Depending on these various environments, follow-up questions were formulated, in order to dig deeper into how parties handle these relationships and solved certain problems.

In the process of analyzing these interviews, as well as much of the written material, an analytical schema was created. The purpose was to capture different aspects of the MEPs’ surroundings and how the parties
handle the relationship with the MEPs. These analytical schemas were then applied on the relevant material and a picture evolved during the analysis. This created the basis for a comparison between the cases.

Since the interviews with various party representatives were conducted as early as in 1999, the parties were approached one more time in the spring of 2002. The purpose was to verify the conclusion drawn on the basis of documents and the interviews made in 1999, as well as during the interviews with the MEPs. The purpose was also to get information if the party organizations had made any changes or developed the structure surrounding the MEPs. The answers on this questionnaire have mainly had the form of letters. However, it is important to mention that this second round of questions was put to other people than the original respondents. Therefore, the answers also serve as a strategy to improve the validity of the original information.

**INTERVIEW WITH THE MEPs**

The interviews with the MEPs were conducted in two steps, one series in 1999 (before the European election) and one in 2001. As shown in Table 3:3, the 1999 series was much smaller than the one two years later and should be regarded more as a testing round for different strands of questions and arguments. (This does not mean that I am unable to use the information from these interviews in the study.) This also means that some questions that were included in the 1999 series of interviews with the MEPs never ended up in the questionnaire in the 2001 series, while some were elaborated on to a greater extent in the second round (see appendix 3 and 4). As shown in Table 3:3, the total number of MEPs in the EPDs that are included in the study is 41, and this study includes interviews with 33 of them. In addition, I have included interviews made in 1999 with MEPs not interviewed in 2001. All in all, I have made in-depth interviews with 36 MEPs and I met 7 of them two times.
Table 3: Numbers of interviewed MEPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewed</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FF</td>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 but not 2001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 and 2001</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/total no. of MEPs 2001</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>2/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest numbers of MEPs that I have not been able to meet belong to the Irish Fianna Fáil (3 out of 6). The reason is simply that it has been impossible to schedule meetings with these MEPs. The secretarial resources placed in Brussels or Strasbourg is much more limited in the case of FF compared to the other parties. The reason is that the Irish MEPs in general (and especially in the Fianna Fáil) focus their resources on the constituency level, rather than on the EP level. This is in fact an interesting observation within the framework of this study, which I will return to later on. However, it makes the Irish MEPs harder to interview.

The interviews with the MEPs were conducted in a semi-structured fashion (see Appendix 3 and 4). This means that the same questions were put to every single respondent and that they followed a common order. Regarding the broader themes of interest, I asked for the respondents’ initial reaction. For example, “If you yourself would define who or what you represent in your daily work in the European Parliament, what would you answer?” This initial reaction is important, because it gives us a picture of what the MEP feels is most closely related to the concept that the question is focusing on (in this case represent). In a second step, I asked the respondent to grade or estimate the importance of given categories. For example, “If you compare this representative interest with other interests, how would you grade the following categories: (1) your national party, (2) voters or electoral district, (3) national government…etc?” These kinds of questions force the respondent to put their initial reaction into the perspective of other representative interests. This makes it more complicated for the respondent, and this is the whole idea. In a third step, the respondents were able to elaborate more freely on questions given to them. Most often these open questions were not prepared in advance, but developed on the basis of the responses on the two earlier questions. Despite the
ambition to keep these interviews relatively disciplined, it was important to give the respondent an opportunity to elaborate on their answers. Different respondents used this opportunity to various degrees, but more or less all have chosen to develop their answers. This gives us a much fuller picture on several of the stricter questions asked during the interviews and helps us understand nuances in the respondents’ answers.

Although, the above description was a strategy to capture the broader themes of this study, I also put forward questions that did not follow this common path. To give some examples, I asked the respondent a series of questions on how he or she experienced his or her role of being an expert vis-à-vis the national arena and if this is an important part of the MEP’s role. How the MEPs discuss the concept of “expert” tries to capture a different aspect of representation that is not usually included in the representative role. I also wanted to get a grip on how often the MEPs experience conflicts between the levels and try to grasp how the MEPs behave in these situations. In order to do so, a series of questions were asked regarding different aspects of conflicts.

I ended the interviews with two very open questions. The first one related to how the respondent thought about the development of the EP and EU. This question captures how the MEPs experience the current situation, by talking about different paths of development. I also asked them to elaborate on how the respondent thought other MEPs would answer on the questions that they themselves had answered. The purpose was to encourage the respondents to describe their own roles and their own work relating to the national arena, by defining how they believe that others would describe their situations.

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed in full length. This painstaking work has its benefits, because it makes it easier to compare answers to different questions. The process of transcribing also creates a perfect opportunity to reflect about the environment that is described. This communication between theoretical ideas and the spoken word in the interviews is an invaluable strength of this kind of qualitative data gathering.
HOW TO INFER ON THE BASIS OF INTERVIEWS

The transcriptions have then been coded into categories. In this process, different types of questions have helped to make sound judgments on the respondents’ position. These coding procedures involved basically three broader themes: the representative role, coordination with the national arena and questions regarding conflicts between the levels. For example, if the respondent initially says, “I represent the Social Democratic party.” Then, during the grading of different representative interests, emphasize their role as representing the EPG; it is reasonable to argue that this MEP conceives of his or her role as being a party representative in the EU arena. If the same respondent, when elaborating more freely on these questions, argues that the national party does not understand the situation on the EU level and that it would be principally wrong not to have a broader European perspective as an MEP, this conclusion gets even stronger.

Another example is if the respondent argues that their most important contact with the national arena runs through the governmental departments, and that this statement is repeated on several questions. For example, “If you would compare, on the one hand your contacts with the party leadership and on the other hand the parliamentary group in the national parliament, are there differences between how often you have these contacts…” This is not an entirely open question, but gives the respondent the opportunity to elaborate to some extent. A second question is, “Does the contact with your national party normally take place in … [defined categories]?” With this question the respondents were given defined categories to choose from. A third question is, “Could you describe how the coordination with your party is conducted in practice? What is the usual procedure?” This is an entirely open question and the respondent is able to elaborate on their answer. If the same kind of answer is repeated during all these kinds of question, it is reasonable to believe that this is true.

With this strategy, I am able analyze how the respondents place themselves on different dimensions important for this study, as well as to give a more qualitative analysis of different positions. This is also the purpose of the methodological strategy chosen for this study – to be able to report a more comprehensive picture on the relationship between the MEPs and the national arena, and on the other hand, be able to make fruitful comparisons with a theoretical outcome.
PROBLEMS WITH CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Although the interview method has its obvious merits, it also has its problems. I would like to mention some of them. This is in many respects an elite study, and the respondents are professional talkers and communicators. And in most cases this means that they are pretty good at this. Therefore, an interviewer must be careful not to give the respondents a too loose string, because then they will use that opportunity to answer their own questions, rather than the interviewer’s. It is more or less impossible to give general advice on how this situation should be avoided, because every interview situation is unique and an interviewer has to keep this problem in mind.

However, one thing should be said regarding this problem. My own self-confidence regarding the questions I put forward and the communicative situation in general, was weaker during the first series of interviews in 1999, but improved in the second series in 2001. One reason was the experience from the earlier round of interviews, but also a deeper knowledge on the issues involved. This helped me to guide the interview in a way that I preferred and thereby reduced the risk that the respondent was dominating the situation. The conclusion is therefore that it is important, when dealing with this kind of respondents, to be very carefully prepared and purposely prove one’s knowledge in the field of study (see also Ostrander 1995).

Much of the empirical material on the MEPs is built on self-estimations. This could be regarded as a problem (at least by some). On the one hand the interviewer gives the respondent great freedom to interpret reality, which itself becomes an object of study. On the other hand, the purpose of this research is to come closer to the respondents and try to depict the situation through their eyes. Much of this depends on the questions that guide the research. If our ambition is to understand how a certain group thinks about themselves and their surroundings, we have to ask them. Or as Donald Searing argues: “If one wants to know why politicians do something, the most sensible way to begin the investigation is by asking them about their conduct and listen very carefully to what they have to say” (Searing 1994:28). Therefore, the problem with self-estimations is due to the research question and not to a weak methodological strategy.
However, some problems connected to the use of self-estimations should be mentioned. I am basically interviewing one type of elites (MEPs), at the same time the questions involved concerns their relationship with other elites (for example national parliamentarians). Due to the design of this study, I get only one side of the story in this relationship and this could be regarded as a problem (at least among national parliamentarians). That is, when the MEPs voice a critique regarding the national arena, this is more or less uncontested. In that sense, this is certainly a one-sided story. In the perfect world, I would have matched the interviews with the MEPs with corresponding interviews with other elites, however, this have not been manageable in the framework of this study. I try to handle this problem, at least to a certain extent, by interviewing representatives from the national arena, but these are not done in a way that they are strictly compatible with the interviews with the MEPs. However, my argument is that we know very little about the day-to-day life of the MEPs and therefore this merits a study by itself. Additionally, the purpose of this is to analyze differences among MEPs and not differences between attitudes among representatives from different levels. This is simply another scientific project yet to be developed.

Another problem using a small-N approach with in-depth interviews is anonymity. In the interviews with the national party representatives, this is a smaller problem, because they represent an organization and the character of the questions put to them are not sensitive compared to the questions put to the MEPs. Therefore, in some cases their name and function will appear in the text. However, in some situations I have felt that the answers have a more sensitive character, and therefore I hide their identity. The interviews with the MEPs are a very different story. One condition for these interviews to occur in the first place was that the respondent’s identity was hidden in the presentation of the results. These interviews try to dig deep into internal party affairs and this is sensitive for many of the respondents, especially when it comes to questions on conflicts within and between the levels. In order to receive truthful answers to these questions, it is necessary to ensure anonymity and I have put a lot of effort trying to fulfill this requirement. Consequently, all quotes are just attached with a numeric code.
(connected randomly to every single interview), and the name of the source is thereby hidden from the reader. A greater problem with anonymity concerns many of the tables included in the study. This would not be a problem if there were many representatives from each party, but this is not the case. If I would present the results divided into every single party, this would enable the reader to trace how an individual MEP has answered on a certain question. This means that I will generally present the results divided into country categories, a left-right divide, or other categories that hide what each individual has answered.

One more caution should be addressed. Using this strategy, with a relatively small number of interviews, it is hard to make any general conclusions. Using advanced statistics and inferring general conclusions would simply be wrong on the basis of this kind of interview material and this is not the purpose of this study. However, some simple descriptive data will be presented, in order to show some tendencies and these will then be used to analyze qualitative aspects of representation.

Roll-call votes

This study tries to grasp both norms about representation and how these norms are articulated in actual behavior. There are different strategies for measuring behavior. One way of measuring actual behavior is to analyze roll-call votes. This method has a long tradition, especially in studies of the US Congress. However, in a European context, these studies have been sparse and the reason is that the party groups or parliamentary parties have acted more or less united. Therefore, other questions have received the attention when analyzing west European parliaments. However, with the increasing interest in the EP, roll-call votes have become an interesting measurement of parliamentarians’ behavior also in a West European context. The most important question has been whether we are able to see traces of a more consistent party system on an EU level, and large research programs have been launched to investigate this kind of question. The purpose of this study is more limited and the roll-call analysis functions as a bridge between norms and behavior in the specific cases included in the study.
THE MATERIAL

Since the focus is to link attitudinal data to voting behavior, I have limited the use of the data to the fifth parliamentary period, that is, all roll-call votes between July 1999 and February 2002, summing up to 3050 votes (Faas 2002a). The focus on the fifth parliamentary period excludes some MEPs that are included in other chapters, because they have retired as MEPs. Furthermore, in two EPDs there has been a shift of MEPs during the fifth period. Consequently all the MEPs have not been present during the whole time and in some of the analysis these MEPs are, therefore, excluded. However, all the parties that are included in the study are represented by a majority of their MEPs that have been present in the EP during the period that is studied.

The data matrix has been organized in a way that some of the attitudinal data (from the other chapters) have been collapsed with the roll-call voting data. This makes it possible to test different categories identified in other chapters on the behavioral data, for example if the MEP is more oriented toward the national level in their pattern of contacts or in their role perceptions. Also other independent variables are used and these tap in to the broader independent variables that are described in the theoretical chapter: electoral system, governmental or non-governmental party, etc.

PROBLEMS WITH ANALYZING ROLL-CALL VOTES

To measure cohesiveness in the EP by looking at roll-call votes is not without its problems. One reason is that during ordinary proceedings, votes are not recorded. It is only possible to analyze how every single MEP has voted, at least in a systematic way, when the roll-call votes are used. It is, therefore, important to remember that roll-call votes are only a fragment of all votes that are processed within the EP. This means that these can be biased in one way or the other, because roll-call votes are demanded for specific reasons. It is, for example, usual to request roll-call votes in order to display disagreements in the opposing group, or to publicly show how one’s own group voted in a single issue, or to impose party cohesiveness among one’s own MEPs (Carrubba & Gabel 1999).
These strategic considerations all show that roll-call votes are requested when one or several groups are divided in a certain issue. Consequently, the EPGs should be even more cohesive in issues that do not result in a roll-call vote. Despite these problems, roll-call votes are the only manageable way to analyze the voting of the MEPs, and we have to live with these shortcomings.

Another common problem that is addressed when dealing with roll-call votes is the ability to connect voting behavior to various institutional mechanisms. For example, it is hard to infer, from studying roll-call votes, that it is the organizational strength of the EPGs that creates a cohesive voting behavior. The effect of the institutional environment is one of the most important questions in focus, when dealing with this kind of material. The reason is basically that we cannot be sure that the voting pattern is not due to similar policy preferences, rather than institutional mechanisms (see for example Krehbiel 2000). Because of this problem, several authors try to define the representative’s position, irrespectively of the vote as such. That is, to define an ideal point of voting and compare that to the actual voting. Although Krehbiel’s point is credible, I analyze the material by assuming that the majority of the EPD is the parties’ ideal position and if one or several MEPs defect from that position, it is regarded as defection caused by a genuine policy preference, and not by institutional mechanisms. I am able to do this because the problem in focus in this study is to identify whom the defectors are and not to measure cohesiveness per se.

**Limitations of the study**

Although all studies of complex societal phenomenon suffer from their own limitations, it is important to be explicit about what aspects are consciously excluded from the analysis. One of the more common criticisms regarding scientific work is that it did not take a certain argument into account and this is probably something we have to live with. The truth is that we have to make choices in order to make the study achievable. However, in order to at least answer some of the obvious questions regarding this study, I want to say something about the limitations that this study suffers from.
THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

The focus of this study is the relationship between the national level and the EP level and, more precisely, the relationship between MEPs and their national party organizations. However, the national party organization consists of several levels. Most parties are organized in some kind of local level (branch-structure) and regional level (that consists of several branches). Although, this is described and in some cases discussed in the presentation of the party organizations included in this study, it is never really the focus in the empirical analysis. There are basically two reasons for this. First, it would be impossible (with the limited resources for this study), to include all sub-national links within the same study, in terms of data gathering. One way to solve this would be to use a single case study approach, rather than having the comparative ambition that this study is guided by. I simply give priority to the strength of the comparative method, rather than the merits of focusing more on the different sub-national parts of the party organizations. Second, EU policy is commonly defined as national policy, in the sense that it deals with legislative work and issues that traditionally were (and to a certain extent still are) handled by national legislatures, especially in unitary states of the kind that are included in the study. If I had included Germany, for example, it would probably be impossible not to include the role of the Länder. Therefore there are good reasons for making the relationship between the national party apparatus and the work that is done in the EP the focal point of the study.

The exclusion of the sub-national levels of the parties does not, however, mean that they are not at all reflected on in the study. For example, during the analysis of the intra-party environment (for example the process of selecting candidates) the local and regional dimensions are indeed included in the analysis. Furthermore, the MEPs themselves talk about their relationship with sub-national levels, when describing their links to the national arena. I also ask questions that refer to these sub-national levels. However, this should be seen as giving a more comprehensive picture of the link with the national arena, rather than a rigorous analysis of how this link is organized and what kind of conclusions we are able to make out of differences between the cases.
THE EU LEVEL

In many respects various groups on the EU level are treated in the same fashion as the sub-national party organizations. One obvious problem is how to treat the EPGs. It is reasonable to criticize this study for not paying enough attention to how the EPGs function and how they influence the MEPs. The arguments are the same; it is hard to include everything in the same study. Furthermore, the work within the EPGs and how these are organized has been the subject of several earlier studies. To put it frankly, it is not the EPGs that we know the least about; it is the link to the national arena.

At the same time the EPGs are not entirely forgotten. I describe at least fundamental information on how these are organized and they are certainly present in the discussion with the MEPs. In many respects the EPGs are treated as the alternative to a more nationally-oriented focus among the MEPs (especially in conflicting situations). Despite this, the EPGs are in several aspects treated as a fairly well-known entity, and should, if the resources had been greater, have been analyzed more seriously.

Summary

The aim of this study is to provide descriptive data on aspects of the growing European political arena, that is, mapping out the empirical world. However, the ambition is also to build, refine, and elaborate on different theoretical statements about different relationships within this area of research. The research strategy is formulated in order to capture the institutional framework, as well as individual preferences and goals of the actor. Structure and actor both play parts in the same play.

This is a small-N analysis with a strategy of focused comparison. This means that the cases are selected on the basis of various independent variables identified in the theoretical chapter. Additionally, the cases are compared using the most equal measurements possible. I also use a strategy that combines different sources of information, although interviews with relevant actors on the national level and the MEPs are the most important source of information. However, by comparing statements on different levels in the political system and within the same party organization, I try to strengthen the validity of accounts made by other actors.
Notes Chapter three

30 This article was originally published in Eckstein (1975).
31 Eckstein (1975) distinguishes between configurative-idiographic studies, disciplined-configurative studies, heuristic-case studies, case studies as plausibility probes, and crucial-case studies.
32 In the reprint of the article, Eckstein (1992) argues in the “author’s note” that the method of matched comparison is even more telling for theory than expected when the original text was written in 1975.
33 David Silverman (2000:122) differentiates between interviews that deal with the respondents’ external reality (for example facts or events) or internal experience (for example feelings or meanings). Although Silverman does not attach these two types of information with various approaches, the distinction pretty much captures the differences between the two types of interviews used in this study.
34 The mean length of these interviews with various party representatives is 41 minutes.
35 The mean length of the interviews with the MEPs is 44 minutes.
36 I have promised the respondents that it shall not be possible to identify the name when using quotes or answers to various questions. However their name will appear in a list of interviews conducted in the study.
37 I have had the fortune to receive help gathering the roll-call material from Thorsten Faas from the Otto-Friedrich-Universität in Bamberg (Germany). Since I am aware of the great effort he has put into organizing the data, I am in great dept to him.
38 Pieter Denkert from the Dutch Social Democratic Party, Mark Killilea from the Fianna Fáil and Ulf Holm from the Swedish Green Party were interviewed in 1999, but retired as MEPs after the European election later that summer.
39 Lisbeth Grönfeldt Bergman from the Swedish Moderate Party has stepped into the EP after the death of Staffan Burenstam Linder. Furthermore, Hans Karlsson from the Swedish Social Democratic Party has stepped in for Pierre Schori when he became the Swedish ambassador to the United Nations.
40 Role-call votes shall be conducted upon request from at least one EPG or the minimum number of 32 members (European Parliament, 1999, Chpt 17:134).
As I have previously argued, the cases selected for this study differ on certain particularly relevant explanatory variables. That is, they are thought to explain the variation among the cases on the two role dimensions (voter vs. party organization & member state vs. EU) discussed in Chapter two (Figure 2.2). However, until now I have only stated these differences between the cases without actually demonstrating that they exist. That is the purpose of this chapter and therefore this is both an empirical chapter and a chapter that generates a set of expectations about how these factors influence the MEPs. These expectations will then be tested in the empirical parts of the chapters to come.

The five aspects that I focus on in this chapter are, first, the electoral systems used in the member states to the national parliament, as well as to the EP. The second aspect is differences regarding the legislative-executive relationship in all the fifteen member states, specifically focusing on this relationship regarding EU issues. Third, I examine public opinion regarding the EU within the three selected countries. Thereafter I turn to the party organizations and I briefly look at the parties’ post-war development and, fourth, describe their ideological heritage and fifth, analyze their current strength in their respective political contexts.
Electoral systems

The electoral system is the most important device for people to express their political will. People elect as well as punish representatives and they support policy. However, the variation among different electoral systems is large. There are differences between how the electorate casts its votes and how the votes are translated into parliamentary seats. This has an effect on how parties operate in different systems and how governments are formed; that is, the electoral system promotes different aspects of the representative ideal. I will concentrate the following discussion on three aspects of the electoral system: the voting system, the type of and number of constituencies, and ballot characteristics. In Table 4:1 below, I present how the EU countries differ in these respects. However, before turning to the table, I want to explain some of the concepts used in this description.

The most common way of classifying electoral systems is to distinguish between different voting systems. In a plurality (PLUR) system the candidate that receives the largest amount of votes in a district, relative to other candidates, is elected. The part of the electorate that did not support the winning candidate is therefore not represented in a formal sense. The ‘losers’ can be a majority or a minority of the voters depending on the number of candidates running in the district. This is the crucial difference between the plurality and the majority (MAJ) system. In the latter the candidates need a majority of votes, in order to win a district and get elected. If the candidate does not receive over 50% of the votes in the first round, a second round is arranged. Some kind of two-ballot procedure is necessary in a majority system. Contrary to these two systems, the proportional system (PR) is designed to translate all (or almost all) votes into seats in one way or the other. There are several different types of proportional systems, but the most important characteristic is that there should be a strong relationship between the allocation of seats and how the votes are cast in an election.

Various differences in the voting systems have an effect on how the party system develops and a plurality system has a tendency to promote two main parties. One common explanation for this phenomenon is that voters know that if they cast their vote on a
party that has no or a small chance of winning the district, their vote could be wasted (see a more elaborate discussion in Dummett 1997:109). Therefore, in the long run, parties that have no dominant position in the political system have a hard time influencing the political process. This is not as obvious in majority systems, because of the use of a two-ballot procedure. The electorate has two chances and they can cast their vote for a minor party in the first round, and change to one of the major contestants in the second round. Proportional systems on the other hand do not have this type of discrimination against smaller parties; although, most proportional systems use some kind of threshold in order to avoid a too-divided party system.

Another important effect of different voting systems is that, generally, plurality/majority systems foster strong governments (support of more than 50% of the legislature). That is, the majority is over-represented in order for the winning side to constitute the basis for stronger governments. This is often used as an argument for this kind of voting system. Although, strong government can be formed also in proportional systems, it is not an intrinsic effect of the voting system. This is sometimes regarded as the major weakness of this voting system.

When looking at the relationship between the electorate and the elected it is not enough to analyze the voting system. We also have to consider differences in the type of electoral districts and the number of districts. Plurality/majority systems use single-member districts. That is, one district returns one elected representative to the legislative assembly. As a consequence there is no room for proportional representation. By contrast, the design in proportional systems is multi-member districts with or without a second tier. Furthermore, the type of district has an effect on the total number of districts. Plurality/majority systems have more and much smaller electoral districts, and theoretically this could have a positive effect on electorate-elected relationship. By contrast, most proportional systems have a smaller number of electoral districts, but each returns a larger number of elected representatives. However, if the electoral districts get too large, it would theoretically have a negative effect on the electorate-elected relationship.
The third aspect of the electoral system important for how representation works in different societies is the character of the ballot. Some electoral systems use simple candidate ballots in which each voter selects one candidate. Other systems use simple party-list ballots, where voters select a list of candidates put forward by the party organization, either with the possibility of casting a preferential vote or with fixed lists. With preference votes, a candidate can override the ranking made by the party organization, by pleading directly to the electorate. At least in theory, this would mean that in such a system, party organizations have a harder time controlling their representatives.

In Table 4:1, I present the different electoral systems used in the EU countries in national elections and the 1999 European election. I use the distinctions discussed above, consequently I report the voting system, type of ballot, use of preference voting, type of district, and number of constituencies.

As we can see in Table 4:1 the most common electoral system within EU is the PR-system (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden). There are only two genuine plurality or majority systems (France and United Kingdom) and those are for the respective national assemblies. We also have two systems that are categorized as mixed between plural and proportional (Germany and Italy), also in these cases it concerns the national elections. In the 1999 European election, however, all 15 member states used a PR system. This is a result of several years of debate within the EU to harmonize the systems used in the European elections.
<table>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>Electoral System</th>
<th>National elections</th>
<th>Intra-party pref. voting</th>
<th>No of electoral districts&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: <sup>a</sup> Two or more numbers indicates multiple tiers. <sup>b</sup> In Northern Ireland PR(STV) system was used.
It is important to note that all member states have much larger electoral districts in the European election than in the national election. With the exception of four cases (Belgium, Ireland, Italy and United Kingdom), the entire nation is one district. In the electorate-elected relationship this could create a problem. The elected have to represent a much wider group of people, at least geographically, and this could have a negative effect on the “closeness” of the relationship.

Although, there are similar designs of the electoral systems (especially to the EP), there are important differences that should be taken into account. The ballot types differ between the countries and between the national and European elections. In the national elections, the pure majority/plurality systems use candidate ballots, since they have single-member districts. Also in the cases with mixed systems, candidate ballots are used (at least to some extent). Even some PR systems use candidate ballots (Finland, Ireland and Luxembourg). The rest of the countries use some kind of party list ballot. However in the European elections, only Finland and Ireland use a candidate ballot, all the rest use party list ballots.

The purpose of this discussion is to analyze the relationship between the voter, the elected and the party organization in the electoral system. The voting system and the type of ballot (as described above) are important information in this process, but it is not enough in order to fully understand these relationships. We also need to analyze the opportunity for the voter to select among different candidates, despite the will of the parties. That is, we need information on the degree of preferential voting used in different systems. All in all this results in a categorization, reported in Table 4.2, which divides the parties as either party- or candidate-oriented (I also use an intermediate category).

In Ireland and Luxembourg, the voter can mix candidates from different parties in order of his or her preference both in the national and the European elections. In the Finish case, the voter chooses one candidate, and consequently cannot mix candidates from different parties. It is therefore reasonable to categorize Ireland, Luxembourg and Finland as being candidate-oriented systems. Portugal and Spain are also easy to define, although on the other end of the continuum. In both cases the
elections (both national and European) are based on party lists and it is not possible for the voter to cast a preferential vote and therefore these countries should be categorized as having party-oriented systems.

In the plurality systems it is not possible, as a voter, to cast a preference vote, and the reason is obvious. With the use of single member districts, it would be foolish of the party organizations to present more than one candidate because the votes would be divided between several candidates and the party would risk losing the district. Voting in the plurality or majority system, it is only possible to choose one candidate from one party. This should make United Kingdom, France and Germany party-oriented in the national elections. At the same time, the party organization must be very sensitive about which candidates they present at elections. The fact that one candidate, if elected, represents the district’s whole population makes the focus on the candidate more apparent and therefore the practical operation of these systems makes them candidate-oriented. However, changing from plurality/majority system in the national election (or some kind of mixed system) to a proportional system in the European election does not entail the possibility for the voters to cast a preferential vote. Consequently, these three countries should be regarded as highly party-oriented when it comes to European elections.

In the Italian mixed system, the voter is not able to put a preference vote in the national election (25% of the seats are allocated with a proportional formula). However, bearing in mind that 75% of the seats are allotted according to single-member districts, the same argument as in the United Kingdom and France applies also to some extent in the Italian case. Therefore, it is categorized as an intermediate case in the national elections. In the European elections, however, preferential votes are used. The seats are allocated to party lists in each district, and successful candidates are decided by their winning personal preference votes (European Parliament 2000-03-23). This should be considered a relatively effective system of preferential voting, however, not as effective as the cases of Ireland, Luxembourg and Finland. Nonetheless, I categorize Italy as candidate-oriented in the European elections.

One large group of problematic cases is those that use party lists, but have different degrees of preferential voting. The question is whether the
preferential vote has a real impact on the outcome of the election, that is, if the electorate has a genuine chance to change the order of the list and to flout the preference of the party (see also Farrell 2001:83). First, some countries use preferential voting, but in a way that should be regarded as relatively ineffective. In the mixed system of Germany, there is no preferential voting on the party-list ballot (Zweit-stimme), and on the first ballot (Erst-Stimme) each voter selects one candidate. We know that the party-list vote eventually decides the allocation of the seats. We also know that in practice, parties put up the same candidates on the single member vote as the top name on the party list vote (Bergman et al. forthcoming; Reynolds & Reilly 1997:77). The scope for the voter to influence the parties’ order of candidates is therefore very limited and consequently I characterize Germany as a party-oriented system when it comes to national elections. In the European elections the German system becomes even more party-oriented, because the voters only have one vote, based on party lists (non-preferential).

In Austria, the voters may mark a candidate in both the national elections and the European elections. However, in order to alter the party list, this candidate needs to win half as many preference votes as votes required for a seat, or preference votes amounting to a sixth of the party vote (provided that the party wins enough votes to get at seat in relevant regional electoral district) (Müller forthcoming). This makes it quite hard for the voters to alter the list order. Therefore, the Austrian system should be regarded as party-oriented.

In Belgium, it is also possible to cast a preferential vote, but, as in Austria, the impact on who is elected is rather small. Although, the proportion of preference votes has increased in Belgium, the number of candidates elected out of order has not increased at all (DeWinter 1988:21). The system is basically the same in the European elections.

In the Netherlands, voters mark one candidate on the party list in the national, as well as in the European elections. The preferential vote is therefore compulsory. At the same time, 90% of the electorate marks the first person on the party list (the so called list-puller) and it requires a high proportion of votes to be able to alter the list (Andeweg & Irwin 2002:81). The parties resent even this limited opportunity. They sometimes demand
pledges from their candidates that if they are elected out of order, owing to the preference vote, they shall resign their seat in favor of the candidate whom the party had placed higher on the list (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995:286). In the middle of the 1990s a number of revisions of the electoral laws were implemented. Before a candidate needed preference votes equal to 50% of the simple quota in order to become elected out of the list order. In practice this made the preference vote ineffective. Only three times since 1945 has a candidate placed at a low position on the list been elected to the Second Chamber because of the preference votes (Koole & Leijenaar 1988:191). However, with the reforms, the requirement of 50% was lowered to 25%, but this had, at least in the 1998 election, a very limited effect; only one Christian Democrat was elected with the help of the preference vote (Deschouwer 2002:164). Consequently, The Netherlands is categorized as a party-oriented system.

In Greece, the system gives the voter an opportunity to cast a preferential vote in the national election and the seats are allotted accordingly. This should be regarded as a system that gives the voter an actual influence on the election of candidates and should therefore be categorized accordingly. However, in the European election Greece uses a party list system without any preferential voting and is therefore categorized as party-oriented in these elections.

Then we have two countries that use preferential systems that should be regarded as reasonably effective. In Sweden, there is a strong tradition of party-based electoral system and the old system gave the voter a very small opportunity to alter the party list. In the 1998 election, a new system with preferential voting was introduced. Candidates need 8% (national) or 5% (EP) of the votes for the party in the electoral district in order to alter the ranking of the party organization. This means that the new Swedish system put more trust in the preferential vote than, for example, the Austrian system does. In the national election 2002, 26% of the electorate used the preferential vote (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2003:4) and ten candidates were elected with the help of personal votes (drawn from Valmyndigheten 2003). However, the system is newly implemented and it is too soon to know its full effect and therefore I categorize Sweden as an intermediate case.
In Denmark, the parties are able to choose different ways to put forward the party list. With the use of the so-called sideordnet uppstilling the party presents the candidates in alphabetic order, i.e. the parties do not present a ranking of the candidates. With this type of ballot, it is possible to choose between voting for a candidate or for the party as a whole, but the preference vote decides which of the candidates is elected. This type of ballots is increasingly used in Danish elections and therefore it should rather be categorized as a candidate- rather than party-based system, compared to, for example, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden (Personvalskommittén 1993:35). However, I want to be a little bit cautious in this categorization because it is far from obvious.

Table 4.2  Categorizations of electoral systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National election</th>
<th>Party-oriented</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Candidate-oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td></td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European election</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I have chosen Sweden, Ireland and the Netherlands as cases for this study. They all have electoral systems with proportional representation. In this sense, these cases are similar to each other, but in several other aspects, their electoral systems differ and they differ in respect to being party- or candidate-oriented (see Table 4:2). Ireland is categorized as candidate-oriented and that is due to the use of proportional representation via the single transferable vote (STV). The system operates within 41 multi-member constituencies, in which voters are expected to rank the candidates
in order of preferences. Candidates from the same party are therefore often in open competition with one another (Farrell 1994:220). In this system voters vote for candidates, not parties (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995:287). Although, the number of districts is limited to four, the basic characteristics of the electoral system are maintained in the European election.

The Netherlands is categorized as party-oriented. The Dutch electoral system is also known for its extreme proportionality, with the whole country as one district and with no formal threshold for gaining a seat in the second chamber. The system used in European elections is identical to the one used in the national elections. Although the parties are able to present different lists for different sub-districts, which gives a hypothetical opportunity for the electorate to change the list-order, this has virtually no impact on the list order presented by the party (Koole 1994:283).

The Swedish case is categorized in between the Netherlands and Ireland. It is regarded as highly proportional, and this is underlined by the use of a two-tier procedure. The lower tier consists of 28 districts covering the country, which between them return 310 deputies. The remaining 39 seats are held back for allocation at the second tier with the purpose of ensuring that the total number of seats received by each party comes as close to its proportional share as possible. In the European election, however, the whole country is one district. Sweden is categorized as intermediate because of the use of a relatively effective preferential vote. As already mentioned, this was used for the first time in full scale in the 1998 national election and Sweden is obviously moving toward a more candidate-oriented system, and is therefore interesting for further study.

After this rather crammed discussion on the electoral system in the fifteen member states, we will now turn to the second aspect dealt with in this chapter. We shall look further into when the parliament is elected and a government is appointed.

**Intra-parliamentary relationships**

In comparative research it is well known that parliaments play different roles in different democratic systems. Although the relationship between the executive and legislative power is similar in a formal sense, a closer
look reveals important variations among countries. Nelson Polsby defines these differences by categorizing legislatures as either *arenas* or *transformative legislatures*. The latter is defined as “…legislatures that possess the independent capacity, frequently exercised, to mould and transform proposals from whatever source into laws” (Polsby 1975:277). The arena, on the other end of the continuum, is described as formalized settings for the interplay of significant political forces in the life of a political system. The transformative legislatures are involved in the process of initiating, reformulating and controlling the legislative process. The arena is more of a battlefield between different societal interests, with a weak capability to actually influence the legislative process.

In a similar way, Anthony King argues that there are differences between how legislatures operate (King 1976). He introduces different modes of executive-legislative relationships and argues “…there are in each political system a number of distinct political relationships, each with its own ‘membership’ … and each with its own dynamics and structure of power” (King 1976:32). The basic argument is that the party composition of the executive and the legislative has to be taken into account. He identifies five modes of relationships: inter-party, non-party, intra-party, cross-party and opposition interaction. This argument points at the electoral system as one important factor explaining legislative-executive relations. For example, the opposition mode should be of less importance in countries characterized by single-party majority governments (the common picture in the United Kingdom). According to King, governments can find themselves operating on different modes at the same time (see also Andeweg 1992). The intra-party mode is always important, i.e. the government always needs the support of its parliamentary party. If the government is in minority it needs to form coalitions through intra-party negotiation, which in the end needs to be reinforced during the daily work of the parliament. Sometimes governments even seek support from the opposition. This is most common on specific issues where it is preferable that the legislative assembly act as consensually as possible (see also Müller 1993:498). In countries where the cohesiveness among parties is less strong, it is possible for representatives to cross the party line and vote together according to common interests. This is less common in a West
European context, but it is possible to argue that in legislative assemblies where the committees are given quite strong authority, the non-party mode is more common, at least in a preparatory stage of the legislative process. King shows that legislative-executive relationships vary based on the relationships between government parties and opposition parties.

Although the arguments presented by Polsby & King had a tremendous effect on the view of legislatures as institutions, the comparative research on this topic has been scarce (see for example discussion in Norton 1998a), and it is outside the scope of this study to make a thorough comparison between the 15 member states with respect to their legislative-executive relationships. However, one of the most important aspects of the power relation between parliaments and their governments identified by Polsby and King is how the committee system is organized. This is one conclusion drawn in many studies when looking at these relationships (King 1976:67; Polsby 1975:278; see also Norton 1998b:196; Saalfeld 2000:367). An effective committee system makes it possible to benefit from division of labor, expertise and continuity of interest. In addition, specialized committees are one of the most important institutional means of monitoring and acquiring information. Therefore it is safe to say that strong committees are a necessary condition for effective parliamentary influence in the policy-making process. (Mattsson & Strom 1995:250; Polsby 1975:279). How the committee system works is therefore one way of depicting differences between various legislatures.

One of the most comprehensive analyses of parliamentary committees is published in Herbert Döring’s edited volume on parliaments in Western Europe (1995). The analysis ends up defining two aspects of committee power as ‘Drafting authority’ and ‘Agenda control’ as more important than others (Mattsson & Strom 1995:298; see also Powell 2000:31). This two-dimensional perspective on committee power seems to be a fruitful way to compare different legislatures. In Table 4:3, I present these findings according to the material reported in the Döring volume. The higher the value on one or both of the variables, the more authority is given the parliamentary committees in a specific legislature. Therefore, the committees with the most decisive power should be found in the lower right corner.
Table 4:3  Committee powers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drafting authority</th>
<th>Control over timetable</th>
<th>X1</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>X3</th>
<th>X4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y1 Ireland</td>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y1 United Kingdom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y2 Greece</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y3 Austria</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y3 Portugal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y4 Finland</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y4 Spain</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y4 Belgium</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y4 Sweden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: (Y1) House considers original government bill with amendments added. (Y2) If redrafted text is not accepted by the relevant minister, chamber considers the original bill. (Y3) Committees may present substitute texts which are considered against the original text. (Y4) Committees are free to rewrite government text. (X1) Bills tabled before the committee automatically constitute the agenda. (X2) The directing authority of the plenary body with the right of recall. (X3) The committees themselves set their agendas but right of recall retained by plenary. (X4) House may not reallocate bills to other committees.


Table 4:3 reveals that there is no strong correlation between the two variables. The variation is quite large and it is possible to have a high value on one dimension but not the other. Taking these two dimensions one by one, most parliaments prevent the committee from deciding the parliamentary agenda. In the most obvious cases, Ireland, United Kingdom and Finland, the government alone defines the timetable and in the other cases the parliamentary majority is able to circumvent the committee by recalling a bill or making a final vote in the plenary without the committee report. The committees in the Dutch, Danish, and Swedish parliaments have the highest control over their agendas. On the other dimension, drafting authority, only a few parliaments give the committee the authority to rewrite government bills as it pleases (Finland, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Germany and Sweden). In all the other countries the committee report is supplemented by the government bill in one way or the other, or the redrafted text needs to be accepted by the relevant minister.

If we put the variables together and concentrate on the cases selected for this study, it is obvious that all three are placed quite far from each other. Although there are signs that the committee structure in Ireland has become more effective during the last decades, the
committee tradition in Ireland is very weak (O’Halpin 1998). The Westminster model influences the Irish parliamentary system and it is not a coincidence that the United Kingdom and Ireland are placed in the same cell in Table 4:3. These are classical examples of what Nelson Polsby would call arenas, rather than transformative legislatures (see also Chubb 1997:161). The role that the Irish parliament plays in formulating or influencing the content of proposed bills is meager. Ad-hoc committees have no right to initiate, consolidate or split bills. The permanent committees do not consider bills at all and the bills tabled before the committees automatically constitute the agenda. In Ireland the government controls the passage of business through the two houses.

The opposite case is Sweden. Here the committees enjoy a strong authority in redrafting government bills as well as setting their own agendas. The standing committees are cornerstones in the Swedish parliamentary system. It is in the standing committees where compromises are developed and inter-party cooperation is maintained (Sannerstedt & Sjölin 1992:111). It is also in the committees where the conflicts between the majority and the minority are most obvious. Every proposal from either government or individual parliamentarians must be processed through a committee and the committees are also specialized and given responsibility for a specific policy area. Using Polsby’s definitions, Sweden should be regarded as a transformative legislature. In the Netherlands the committees are rather strong regarding control of their own timetables. However, they have no authority to rewrite government bills, they can only add amendments. This places the Netherlands as the middle case among the three countries selected for this comparison.

This study deals with the new circumstances for European parliamentary democracy as a consequence of the development of the European Union. Therefore, I shall focus a little bit more on the specific legislative-executive relationships regarding EU issues.

THE INTRA-PARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS CONCERNING EU ISSUES

The role of the national parliaments in the European Union decision-making is limited. Since 1987 and the European Single Act, and the advancement of decision-making capacity on the European level, national
parliaments have been faced with a more difficult and complex situation than before. This was even more accentuated with the Maastricht Treaty and Amsterdam Treaty. The dilemma is multi-dimensional. The national government operates on the supra-national level, by negotiations and compromises with other governments in the Council of Ministers. This most often demands secrecy and cohesive action from the governments. Fortunately, legislatures are seldom cohesive or secretive and the national legislators have been and still are put aside in the European decision making process. In that sense, the governments have increased their powers at the expense of the national legislators. Notwithstanding, this fundamental problem of the relationship between the national and the supranational level, the national legislators have four basic functions: (1) contributing to national policy formulation on European legislation, (2) monitoring governmental behavior in the Council of Ministers and in the European Council, (3) treaty ratification and (4) national implementation of some Community directives (Raunio & Wiberg 2000:149).

In order to facilitate the control over the government regarding EU issues, all member states have formed some kind of European Affairs Committee (EAC) within the parliaments. These EACs differ in important respects compared to the ordinary standing committees in the national legislatures, and the basic aim is to underline the first two of the four above-mentioned functions of national parliaments (that is, contributing to the national policy formulation and monitoring governmental activities). However, even in this, the member states differ in important respects and this results in different contexts for different parties.

In Table 4:4, I present the conclusion of some authors concerning the powers of different EACs in the different member states. At this point this must be regarded as the most well-founded interpretations of these relationships. Since the main focus in this study is on the MEPs, I also report whether the MEPs are included in the national legislative process or not.
Table 4: European Affairs committees in member state legislatures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Bergman ‘97</th>
<th>Raunio and Wiberg</th>
<th>Bergman ‘00</th>
<th>MEPs Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>By invitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>By invitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>By invitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>By invitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. Kingdom</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Not included</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


To measure influence and power is difficult, but these authors have tried to make an overall estimate of the different systems and they seem to agree in their conclusions. The countries with the weakest process of scrutiny include all the Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal), as well as France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Ireland. This means in practice that the EACs in these countries are more or less limited to exchange of information between the government and the EAC (legislature). They have no authority to give any kind of binding instructions or in a formal sense influence the government position on EU issues. Most of these countries are also restricted in their ability to transfer proposals from the government to other standing committees in the legislature (Raunio & Wiberg 2000). This makes it harder for these committees to use the expertise in the standing committees as one way to strengthen the position of the legislature vis-à-vis the government.
The second group of EACs with a moderate authority is Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In all these cases it is assumed that the government takes a position consistent with the majority in the EAC. The government is also forced to transfer information to these EACs at an earlier stage compared to the above-mentioned countries. In these cases it is also a formal possibility to include the standing committees in the process. The EAC is not limited to exchange of information, and the committee is assumed to take part in the legislative process. They are the authorized counterparts of the legislature in the negotiations with the government concerning EU issues. Austria, which was ranked rather high in the early estimate by Bergman, is placed slightly lower in the later version. The reason is that the formal rules in Austria give the EAC quite strong authority, but in practice the committee is not as influential as the constitutional statutes allow (Bergman 2000:419).

The third group with strong authority is Denmark and Finland. The former is perhaps the most well known EAC, with a longstanding tradition of scrutiny of the government concerning EU issues. The Danish EAC has increased its power since the day Denmark was included in the Common Market in 1973, often as a result of a confrontation with the government (Sidenius, Einersen & Sørensen 1997:14). In Finland, the Grand Committee has the major role in the scrutiny process concerning EU-affairs. The preparation of the Grand Committee takes place in the standing committees and several chairpersons of the standing committees are included in the Grand Committee (Jääskinen & Kivisaari 1997:35). Although the Grand Committee cannot instruct the government, the involvement of key persons in the committee makes it very hard for the government to depart from the position taken by the Grand Committee.

In Table 4:4, I also include information on whether the MEPs are involved in the process at the national level or not. In some cases the MEPs (or a selected group among the MEPs) are standing members of the EAC (Belgium, Germany, Greece and Ireland). Except in Belgium, the MEPs have some kind of observer status, with the right to propose and to speak. However, in Belgium the MEPs also have the right to vote (European Parliament 2000-09-01). In Finland, France, Luxembourg and
Sweden, the MEPs can be invited to join specific sessions of the EAC. However, I have no information on whether this happens. In the rest of the countries the MEPs are not included in the process at all, at least not in a formal sense.

We now look a little closer at the countries selected for this study. They all have formed slightly different systems for parliamentary scrutiny over governmental EU policy. The Irish system is defined as the weakest of the three. This is in line with the weak committee system in Ireland, and EU policymaking is very much a question for the government. The Dutch and the Swedish systems are both categorized as moderate and neither can give the government binding instructions. However, there seems to be one important difference between the systems. In the Dutch case, the role of the EAC seems to be more of a coordinator between the standing committees, and the EAC facilitates the link between the government and the standing committees concerning EU affairs. In Sweden, the EAC seems to be more a committee authorized to negotiate with the government. In a way, this illustrates the dilemma of EU issues. There are different pay-offs with the two strategies. If the standing committees are involved in the process, the legislature benefits from expertise and division of labor. However, the downside with this strategy is that it has been proved to be hard to really involve the standing committees and it is easier for the government to win in negotiations with approximately 20 standing committees, rather than with one specialized EU committee. If the negotiations are concentrated to one committee, with the overall focus on EU issues and the specialized expertise on the EU system, it is harder for the government to override its opinion. This has long been the argument for the Danish system. The government is more prepared to give information and really take notice of the legislature’s position, if it has to negotiate with one partner in a closed environment. The downside with this strategy is that a lot of responsibility is put on one committee, which shall deal with issues relating to most legislative work in the parliament. This has also been the critique against the Danish system; the EAC in Denmark has been called “…a parliament within the parliament” (Dagens Nyheter 1995-05-07).
The differences between how the Dutch and the Swedish parliaments deal with these issues are also apparent when it comes to including the MEPs in the national parliamentary process. In the Netherlands, there has been a long debate on how to tighten the link between the MEPs and the Dutch parliament. In 1999 the committee on internal procedures presented a list of proposals on how this could be done (Kolk 2001:163). The Dutch Liberal Party (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie) opposed the proposal, while its coalition colleagues, the Dutch Social Democratic Party (PvdA) and Democraten’66 were in favor. The main argument from the Dutch Liberal Party was that MEPs are not elected to the parliament and should therefore not be able to speak in it; otherwise it would not be possible to deny other groups this right. However, the proposals were accepted. This means that the MEPs have the right to attend committee meetings if dealing with the preparation for the Council of Ministers meetings. They also have limited rights to speak at these meetings. Although the government is not obliged to react to questions put forward by the MEPs, they normally do (Mattijssen 2001-03-20). The Dutch standing committees are also able to invite the MEPs when dealing with issues outside the preparation of the Council meetings. However, this hardly ever happens. In addition, the MEPs are able to join the annual plenary debate on the State of the European Union. This means that the parliament does not solely depend on the working of the EAC, and that the parliament makes some effort to include the MEP in the working process of the parliament. In Sweden the debate and routine is different. The MEPs do not have the right to attend standing committee meetings, although it is possible for the committees to invite them. However, this is seldom or never done. The same rules apply for the Swedish EAC. In a report from a parliamentary committee appointed to formulate reforms of the working process of the parliament, it is clearly argued that the two parliaments are separate institutions and should remain so (Riksdagskommitténens referensgrupp för utvärdering av budgetprocessen 2000/01:RS1). The main contact between members of the national parliament and MEPs should go through the parties, even though the practice of inviting the MEPs to standing committee meetings and the EAC should be developed. This is a much more modest
ambition than in the Dutch case and reflects a different attitude regarding the involvement of the MEPs in national parliaments.

The above discussion about electoral systems and legislative-executive relationships shows that the selected countries differ in important respects. Although some of these variables are very hard to measure, institutional characteristics are worth investigating further. I will now turn to the second level of the analysis, the selected parties.

The selected parties

Party organizations have a specific role in a democratic system, but at the same time parties are organizations like many others. That is, they include different organizational bodies, all with distinct roles and functions. In the next chapter, I will analyze the specific surroundings for the MEPs. However, in order to get a fuller picture of the party organizations selected for this study, I will start in this chapter by introducing these cases more generally. Furthermore, this is a way to show how the parties differ according to important independent variables defined in the theoretical chapter. That is, these parties differ in a within-country comparison, but at the same time they have common characteristics in a between-countries comparison.

Party organizations in Ireland

The political system in Ireland is very different from these in other countries in Western Europe. This is also true regarding the Irish party organizations and party system. In most modern democracies the main social cleavages are along a left-right continuum. In Ireland, however, the most important division among parties is their position regarding the independence issues in the early 1920s. It is hard to understand Irish politics without having some notion about the transformative years during the liberation from Britain.

In 1918, Sinn Féin received strong support in the election to the British House of Commons. Sinn Féin was the leading political movement for a free independent state of Ireland. They constituted themselves in 1919 as Dáil Éireann in January 1919, an Irish parliament, and it adopted
a constitution that marks emancipation from British rule. This led to civil war between the Irish independence movement and British forces and the conflict was temporarily resolved in a treaty between the newborn Irish state and Britain in 1922 (the so called Constitution of the Free Irish State). However, the treaty never gave Ireland a truly sovereign status. Basically, the treaty made Southern Ireland an autonomous part of the British Commonwealth and this created a severe tension within the whole Irish society and especially in Sinn Féin. This deep cleavage led to a bitter civil war between June 1922 and May 1923. Furthermore, the split between anti- and pro-treaty groups eventually resulted in a split of the Sinn Féin, and the current two largest parties Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil arise out of this split (Collins & Cradden 1991:6). The Fine Gael defended the treaty with United Kingdom, while Fianna Fáil opposed it and wanted a constitution that meant a truly independent state. With the appointment of the Fianna Fáil taoiseach (prime minister) Eamon de Valera in 1932, the process of emancipation from Britain was accelerated and a new constitution marked the start of a more independent Ireland. In 1949 the last formal ties to Britain were cut. However, this conflict has remained as the major political cleavage in Irish politics ever since.

Fianna Fáil has turned out to be the dominant party in Ireland, with strong support in all areas and in all classes. In the 2002 election the national parliament, the Fianna Fáil received 41% of the votes. In the early days the support came basically from rural areas and small farmers. However, one explanation for the success of Fianna Fáil is that the party has been able to transform itself to attract a broader spectrum of people (Chubb 1997:99). Fine Gael attracted people from the business world, shop-keepers and the more prosperous farmers (Collins & Cradden 1991:26). People or groups that favored stability and those who could not abide de Valera, turned to Fine Gael. Though, this situation has changed to some extent, the party has never been able to gain as strong support as Fianna Fáil. The Fine Gael received 22% of the votes in the 2002 election.

Due to the peculiar pattern of Irish politics, it is hard to really define the ideological heritage of the two leading center-right parties. Fianna
Fianna Fáil is most often defined as a party with a conservative socio-economic appeal with an emphasis on the pursuit of national interests (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995:195; Mair 1987:204). To “serve the nation” is a pragmatic stand, rather than an ideological. The party has a kind of corporatist ideology, which, by emphasizing the importance of national interest, deliberately sets its face against any attempts to translate social conflict into politics (Mair 1999:140). Fine Gael, on the other hand, is sometimes defined as a Christian democratic party (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995:193). This has more to do with the fact that the party has joined European Christian Democratic forces, than the position they have in Irish politics. In practice the party combines both a pluralist social agenda and conservative economic policy and it is in reality hard to distinguish any major ideological differences between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil (Farrell 1985:257, see also Budge & Bara 2001:55).

The third major party in Ireland is the Irish Labour Party. However, this social democratic party has never really fitted the dominant pattern of Irish politics. Still, the party has existed since 1912 and is therefore the oldest party in the current political spectrum. One of the major reasons why the party is so weak compared to its counterparts in other parts in Europe is that it stayed outside the struggle concerning the major independence issue (Mair 1999:133). At least today, the motive to maintain an outside position in 1918 and 1921 was to avoid a split in the labor movement (Labour Party 2000-09-06). Perhaps this was a wise strategy at the time, but by that decision the party remained outside the big battle that has characterized Irish politics ever since. Support for the Labour Party is class-based and the party is therefore concentrated in urban areas. However, it is, compared to its European counterparts, a very small working-class party (Mair 1999:129). In fact, Fianna Fáil attracts a larger working-class vote than does the Labour Party. In 1999, Labour merged with the much smaller, but ideologically more left-oriented, Democratic Left. This is a strategy to join left-wing forces and by that enhance the electoral support. At this point it is hard to say if this strategy is successful or not. In the 2002 election the Labour Party received almost 11%, which was more or less the same as in the 1997 election.
Since the beginning of the 1980s, the Irish party system has changed. Until then, partisanship was handed down from generation to generation. The three main parties had a strong core of voters and the electoral support was quite stable. However, during the 1980s this weakened markedly and Irish voters increasingly became an available electorate (Chubb 1997:99, see also Murphy & Farrell 2002:222). The result was that support for Fianna Fáil weakened and Fine Gael and the Labour Party managed to take over the cabinet in 1982. Fianna Fáil had, if not lost its leading position, at least experienced trouble receiving the support from more than half of the electorate. The problematic situation for Fianna Fáil was accentuated when a small part of the party split and started the Progressive Democrats. With its right-wing economic policy and liberal-pluralist social policies, it succeeded receiving support from both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael voters, and for Fianna Fáil to return to governmental politics it had to give up the longstanding policy of avoiding a coalition (Collins & Cradden 1991:36; Mitchell 2000:131). In 1989 Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats joined in a coalition cabinet that lasted for three years. Since that time we have seen several different governmental coalitions. The Labour Party has joined coalitions with both Fianna Fáil (1993-94) and Fine Gael (1994-97). After 1997, Fianna Fail entered the government again, together with the Progressive Democrats. This illustrates that something has happened in Irish politics. The party organizations, especially the three main parties, cannot be certain of their support (Laver & March 1999:166). The electorate is not as faithful as it once was.

This is also illustrated by the fact that new parties are able to gather enough electoral support to win seats in the parliament. It is especially the Irish Green Party that is interesting in this respect. The party started in 1981 and built up its organization during the 1980s. In 1989 the party first entered parliament with one seat and has since then had a small, but seemingly stable support among the electorate. In 2002 election the party received 3.8% of the votes. Although its role in parliament is marginal, it managed to win two seats in the 1994 European election and this achievement was defended in the 1999 European election (it received 6.7% of the votes). Labour had only one seat in the EP during
the same period. This creates a rather peculiar situation: the Green Party is weak in Irish politics, but has a relatively strong position regarding EU politics. The Green Party’s supporters, as well as local branches, are concentrated in some parts of the country. Despite this, the fact that the Green Party has been able to mature in a context that is dominated by strong traditional parties must be regarded as an impressive achievement.

Ireland has been a member of the EU (EC at the time) since 1973. There is quite a strong consensus, regarding the Irish role in the EU. The popular support for the EU membership is indeed very high (European Commission 2000:26). However, most people do not want the Union to strengthen its role in the political system. In fact, Ireland tops the list of public support for the membership in the Union, while the country is found second-to-last in favor of giving the union more importance (European Commission 2000:82). This ambivalent popular support for the Union probably explains the result in the first Nice referendum in 2001, in which the Irish people rejected the ratification of the treaty, although the political elite strongly urged a Yes in the referendum. It has been suggested that this popular refusal is explained by four factors: concerns about neutrality, the democratic deficit in the EU, the position of small member states within the Union, and the enlargement process (O’Brennan 2003; see also Gilland 2002). Dana Rosmary Scallon, an MEP that was expelled from Fine Gael group in the EP due to her objections to the Nice treaty, says: “The reason I and many other people voted No to the treaty of Nice was because it was a bad deal for Ireland and Europe. I’m not against Europe or EU enlargement, but I am for Irish sovereignty and independence” (The Irish Times 2001-06-01). However, for the second referendum the political elite managed to get their message through and it ended with a Yes for a ratification of the treaty.

Now, we focus more specifically on the selected parties and the question of the EU. Fianna Fáil was one of the dominant forces campaigning for entering the Union. It has maintained this pro-European position ever since. However, it has at the same time hesitated to give EU and especially the EP more power, by referring to the national interest (Holmes 1996:199). The Irish Labour Party started out as an opponent
of membership in the EU in 1972 (European Common Market at the time), which reflected a general left-wing suspicion of the community (Holmes 1996:194). However, gradually the party’s position has changed to a pro-European stand and it favored the Maastricht Treaty, as well as the Nice Treaty. In spite of this, the party includes both those who are positive about further integration and those who oppose such a development. Some in the Labour party see the free market orientation of the union as a threat to Ireland (Coakley, Holmes & Rees 1997:226). It remains to be seen whether or not a more EU-skeptical stand is developing in the party due to the merger with the much more EU-critical Democratic Left. It was not, however, possible to trace some kind of shift in attitude in the 1999 election. On the contrary, the party is one of the pro-European parties in the Irish political arena. The Irish Green Party, on the other hand, is the only major EU-critical party among the selected Irish parties. Although it tried to refute its alleged anti-EU stance in the 1999 EP election (Moxon-Browne 2001:143), it is in the Irish context the more critical voice. Especially this criticism concerns the development of the Union’s joint military force and the bias toward business. The Green Party also opposed the Nice Treaty and maybe this critical stand is one of the explanations of why it is relatively strong in European elections compared to national elections.

PARTY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands is comparably well represented in social science, due to the path-breaking analysis by Arendt Lijphart during the 1960s and onwards. The Netherlands was described as a consociational democracy, with stable and effective government, despite the fact that the country was deeply divided in religious and social cleavages. Catholics, Protestants, liberals, and socialists, had their own schools, parties and media. In contemporary social science, this would mean a deeply divided society, with inbuilt tensions, that sooner or later would make the country very hard to govern. This was not the case in the Netherlands, and Lijphart’s explanation was that the elite negotiated and formed compromises and this overarching cooperation made it possible for different groups to co-exist (Lijphart 1968). Although, much has changed in the Netherlands since the 1960s, Lijphart’s thorough case study reveals important aspects of the Dutch society.
The Netherlands is characterized by its grand coalitions and the representation of a large number of party organizations in parliament. Between 1945 and 1997, 22 cabinets were formed in the Netherlands. All were coalitions, 18 with a majority base, 9 of them oversized (Comparative Parliamentary Democracies Data Set 2002). The formation of cabinets has often been lengthy and these negotiations involve an extensive, detailed and technical government program. The inter-party cooperation in the Netherlands cannot be compared to any other West European country. Due to the electoral system, the Dutch parliament also includes a large number of parties. As a crude measurement, between 1946 and 1997 the Netherlands had 15 elections, and the mean value of parties entering the second chamber after the election is 9.8 (Comparative Parliamentary Democracies Data Set 2002). The number of parties has varied from 7 to 14. These two measurements tell us that Lijphart’s argument seems to be accurate. Even small groups get representation in parliament, and the elite in the larger parties make compromises in order to govern the country (see also Timmermans & Andeweg 2000:396).

One explanation of the many coalition governments in the Netherlands is that there are three equally strong parties, each without the ability to form a single party government. The Dutch Christian Democratic Party (Christen Democratisch Appèl – CDA) has been included in almost all post-war cabinets and one reason is its central position in Dutch politics. The Christian Democratic Party is the result of a merger between two separate Protestant parties and the major Catholic party in 1977 (Koole, 1994:280). This was a result of the declining importance of religious ties in Dutch politics. The Christian democratic party defends religious values and maintains a moderate conservative position in relation to social and economic issues (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995:162; Heidar & Berntsen 1998:144; Middendorp 1992:252). The party receives votes from all major social classes and regions and has joined forces with both the left and the right in various governmental constellations. However, in the 1994 national election the party’s catastrophic result led to the so-called purple coalition consisting of the Dutch Social Democratic Party (Partij van de Arbeid – PvdA), the
Liberal Party (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie) and Democrats ’66. The decline in support of the Christian Democratic Party continued in the 1998 parliamentary election and the purple coalition could remain in office. However, in 2002 the purple coalition was severely defeated in the general election. The electoral campaign was marked by the murder of Pim Fortuyn, a maverick politician who launched his own anti-immigration party in February 2002. He was killed on 6 May 2002 after giving a radio interview in the town of Hilversum, near Amsterdam. The Pim Fortuyn List (Lijst Pim Fortuyn) had been rising quickly in the opinion polls and seemed at one point to be in line to win the elections. However, the Christian Democrats won a resounding victory and the Pim Fortuyn List came in second. A new coalition government was formed made up of the Christian Democratic Party, the Pim Fortuyn List and the Liberal Party. This means that today the Social Democratic Party is outside the government, however, at the time for the empirical gathering for this study, they were in government.

The Dutch Liberal Party has for a long time being one of the most important right-wing parties in Dutch politics. The party was created in 1948 and is built on a liberal-conservative tradition. Compared to the Christian Democratic Party, the Liberal Party is a more distinct middle-class party (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995:162). The party had a very limited support up until the late 1970s, when the party rapidly gained support from voters who traditionally had supported some of the religious parties (Koole 1994:281). Although the party lost some of its support during the 1980s, it has steadily grown, and in the last national election it received almost one-fourth of the total number of votes. By that it is the second largest party in the Netherlands (at least until the 2002 election). It would seem wise to select the Liberal Party for this study, instead of the Christian Democratic Party. Many regard it as the more right-wing party (see for example Middendorp 1992:252). However, since one criterion is to have a variation on the government variable, the selection of the Liberal Party would create a problem, since they are in the same government as the Social Democratic Party at the time for this study.
The history of the Dutch Liberal Party illustrates the secularization process during the 1960s and the far-reaching consequences this had on the Dutch party system. Another sign was that the new party Democraten’66 entered the scene in 1966. It was the result of a democratization wave and the “end of ideology” movement (Koole 1994:241). On that platform it aimed at the major parties and demanded a profound democratization of Dutch society. The party never won more than 4.9% in national elections until the 1994 election, when the party gained almost 16% and entered the coalition government. However, they suffered severe loss in the succeeding election and received 9% of the votes and even worse in the 2002 election (5%), so perhaps the 1994 election was a one-time success for Democraten’66.

The largest party until the 2002 election was the Dutch Social Democratic Party. It is a traditional Social Democratic Party in the sense that it receives its basic support from the working class and promotes both the role of the welfare state and a more egalitarian distribution of social and economic resources. Although it is the largest party, it has no hope of winning a parliamentary majority and thereby is forced to go into coalition with some other party. In the last two elections it has gained 25-30% of the votes. The Dutch Social Democratic Party has been in cabinet since 1989, first with the Christian Democrats (1989-94), then together with the Liberal Party and Democraten’66 (1994-98, 1998-2002). The expression purple coalition reflects the mix between red and blue ideology governing together and in most West European countries this mix would probably be impossible, but not in the Netherlands. Although having the common opposition toward religious values promoted by the Christian Democrats, the two parties are based on fundamentally different ideological legacies (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995:162). The purple coalition was created after the 1994 election and continued its support in the 1998 election. However, as mentioned above, the included parties experienced a severe loss in the 2002 election.

Besides the major parties in the Netherlands, the Dutch Green party (Groen Links – GL) is the strongest as well as the most interesting. The party is a result of a long cooperation within the so-called “small left.” After having putting forward joint programs and lists in various
elections, the parties officially merged in the end of 1990. The party mixes green and left ideology and stands against the “...traditional model of economic growth and chooses instead selective state intervention and far-reaching decentralization of government tasks” (Groen Links 1998). The forerunners of the party experienced several years of decline, while the new concept seems to work. The Dutch Green Party have increased its support since the merge, both in national elections and especially in European elections (they went from one seat to four seats in the 1999 European election).

In the Netherlands there is a very solid support for the development in the EU, both in public opinion and among political parties. Among the electorate in the Netherlands, 71% regard EU membership as a good thing and only 3% as a bad thing (European Commission 2000:26). Half the Dutch people also want to give the EP a more important role and only 12% think it is too important (European Commission 2000:82). This places the Netherlands at the absolute top level of pro-European countries among the member states. This support is also echoed among parties and in the Netherlands there is no significant EU-critical party or movement (Raunio & Wiberg 2000:154). Nevertheless, the European elections only attract less than one-third of the electorate (in the 1999 election) and one reason could be that the major parties agreed on their agenda for the further development of the Union. They all favored greater transparency, and the enlargement process, and most of them wanted an agreement involving asylum policy and crime. If there are no major differences between the parties, this obviously creates a weaker incentive to visit the ballot box. Furthermore, the campaign for the 1999 European election was influenced by a book on the inner life of the EP, in which the MEPs were pictured as profiting on generous pension rules and extensive expense accounts (Kolk 2001:166). This book made it into the public debate and this did not help to boost the turnout in the election. At the same time, all member states presented a poor turnout and this is a democratic problem in the Netherlands as well as in the whole Union.
PARTY ORGANIZATIONS IN SWEDEN

Sweden has for a long time been regarded as a stable five-party system, with two distinct blocs along a left-right continuum. Although the rural-urban dimension is also present in Swedish politics, it has never superseded the left-right dimension. One stabilizing factor is the relatively high support of the Swedish Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterna – SAP). It has been supported by almost 40-50% of the electorate during most of the post-war period (Bäck & Möller 1997:106). Of 26 appointed post-war cabinets, the SAP has formed 22 of them (Comparative Parliamentary Democracies Data Set 2002), in most cases as a single-party minority cabinet, supported by the Left Party (until 1990 called the Left Party Communists). So, if the Netherlands is a country with many large coalition governments, Sweden is a country with many single-party minority governments. The right-wing bloc has traditionally included the Swedish Liberal Party (Folkpartiet Liberalerna), the Agrarian Party (Centerpartiet), and the Swedish Moderate Party (Moderata samlingspartiet – MOD). They have alternated as the stronger part of the right-wing bloc, but since the beginning of the 1980s the Moderate Party has been the strongest of the three.

However, the five-party system changed at the end of the 1980s, when new parties emerged on the scene. In the national election in 1988, the newborn Swedish Green Party (Miljöpartiet de gröna – MP) entered the parliament. However, in the following election, in 1991, the Green party did not manage to breach the threshold of 4%, but a right-wing populist party New Democracy (Ny Demokrati) created a tumult by receiving 6.7%. In addition, the Swedish Christian Democratic Party (Kristdemokraterna) received 7.1 % and thus contributes to the disassembling of the five-party system. New Democracy lost almost all its support in the following election, while the Green party returned to parliament. It seems like the five-party system has transformed itself to become a seven-party system. The conclusion is therefore that the Swedish electorate has become more volatile and the party system is much more competitive (Demokratirådets rapport 2000:50). Traditionally, it was very unusual for voters to jump from one bloc to another, but this tendency is more obvious today and the new party organizations are a result of this increasing volatility, as well as a precipitating cause in this process.
Despite these changes in the party system, the Swedish Social Democrats remains the dominant party. In a Western European perspective, this is a rather unique accomplishment. They have succeeded in keeping a very large core of voters, although much has changed during the post-war period. Successfully attracting a greater number of middle-class voters has compensated for the diminishing base of working-class voters. Although, this has opened the possibility for the Left Party, the Social Democratic Party has not, at least until late 1990s, lost its dominant position among the Swedish electorate. However, in the 1998 election the Left Party seems to have increased its support from the traditional 4-6% to 12%, and at the same time Social Democrats suffered its worst result (36.4%) since 1921. Much of this was due to severe cuts in the Swedish welfare system and probably also the party’s positive stance on the EU. The declining support for the Swedish Social Democratic Party forced it to develop far-reaching cooperation with the Left party and the Green party over the governmental program for the following term. The Social Democratic Party increased its support in the 2002 election at the expense of the Left Party. However, the collaboration between the two parties (and the Green party) over the governmental policy continues still.

In the two latest national elections (1998 and 2002) the changes within the right-wing bloc has been more accentuated. The Christian Democratic Party has obviously experienced its breakthrough in Swedish politics, after have played a very limited role for over 30 years. In the two latest elections they have received 11.8% in 1998 and 9.1% in 2002. One explanation is probably that it has profited on the Moderate Party’s swing to a more neo-liberal position (Oscarsson 2000:286). The more conservative family value rhetoric of the Christian Democratic Party finds its supporters among volatile right wing voters that do not feel comfortable in the modern Moderate Party. In the 2002 election the Moderate Party made a catastrophic result and almost lost its role as the dominant right wing party, while the Swedish Liberal Party increased its support with 8.7%. These changes within the right-wing bloc further accentuate the demand on these parties to agree on a common program in order to take over government. This has traditionally been the problem for the right-wing bloc and it remains to be seen if that is still the case.
Sweden joined the European Union in 1995 after a narrow victory for the proponents of membership. And since then the electorate has stayed divided in its opinion of the EU. Only 38% regard the EU membership as something good, while 27% regard it as something bad (European Commission 2002:22). This puts Sweden among those most critical toward the union of the member states. This tendency is also shown in that only 38% used their vote at the 1999 European election and one of the most important reasons for not showing up at the ballot box was criticism of the EU (European Commission 2000:88). These opinions are also represented among the party organizations. The Left Party and the Swedish Green Party were both strongly against a membership in the 1994 EU referendum and they are still the major critical movement against the Union. The Moderate Party and Liberal Party are both the strongest proponents for a more integrated union as well as a stronger Swedish engagement. The rest of the parties are more or less divided on this issue and that causes problems especially in the Swedish Social Democratic Party. This was also obvious in the 1999 European election, for example during the formation of the lists of candidates to the EP. In the Swedish mid-term European election in 1995 (after having entered the Union), the Social Democrats presented several lists, which mixed critical voices with more pro-European ones. This was something that the party wanted to avoid in the 1999 election. It was well-known that the Swedish Social Democratic MEPs (between 1995-1999) were in more or less open conflict because of fundamentally different views on the development of the EU and this resulted in a built-in tension within the EPD (Johansson 2001:201). In the 1999 election they therefore presented a single list, with a strong bias of pro-European candidates. However, hitherto there have not been any party splits because of the EU issue and the parties have been able to embrace both critical and positive voices within the old party structures. The strong criticism toward the EU among the electorate, however, still remains and even if the parties manage to contain these conflicts internally, the issue of legitimacy of the EU is one of the largest cleavages between the political elite and the people in Sweden.
THE SELECTED PARTIES ON THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

The 1999 European election swung the majority of the EP from the left to the right. However, as shown in Table 4:5, there were no dramatic changes between the 1994 European election and the 1999 European election regarding the parties included in this study, except in two cases. The Swedish Green party received two seats compared to four in the previous election. One explanation for this is that the Green party, as an EU critical-party, had difficulties getting its potential voters to the ballot box. In the previous election the referendum was still remembered and people protested by voting for, for example, the Green party. We are also able to note the Dutch Green party, improved its result with 3 seats in the 1999 European election. This is probably due to an overall improvement in the popularity of the party; i.e. the increasing support for the Dutch Greens is also present in the national elections. It should also be mentioned that the Irish Green party managed to defend its two mandates, although it is a rather small party in the national context.

Table 4:5  Electoral data on selected parties for 1999 European election
(Total no. of seats for member state in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Party</th>
<th>No. of seats for party</th>
<th>Change from 1994 (seats)</th>
<th>Change from 1994 in elect. support (%)</th>
<th>Turnout in country (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (22)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-7.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland (15)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands (31)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2001-03-05), http://www3.europarl.eu.int/election/results
The remaining parties received almost the same number of seats between the two elections and seem to have fairly stable support regarding their position on the EU level. However, it is important to note that the three governmental parties (The Dutch and Swedish Social Democratic Parties and the Irish Fianna Fáil) lost one seat each. This is a tendency we recognize from earlier European elections, that it is often characterized as a second-order election. The campaigns concern national issues, rather than European ones, and it is most often a test of the popularity of the sitting national government. However, in the included cases, this has not altered any position in a fundamental way.

Within the EP, these nine parties are all members of established EPGs. The three social democratic parties are members of the Party of European Socialists (PES), which in the 1999 election received 180 seats. The Dutch Christian Democrats and the Swedish Moderate Party are affiliated to the group of the European People's Party and the European Democrats (EPP-ED), which received 233 seats in the 1999 election. The three green parties are members of the Greens and European Free Alliance (GREENS/EFA), which received 48 seats in 1999. The Irish Fianna Fáil is a member of a smaller EPG, the Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN), which received 31 seats 1999.38

The selected cases and the theoretical framework

The selected party organizations differ with respect to the variables discussed in the theoretical framework. Based on the analysis of different cases in the preceding part of this chapter, we are now able to formulate certain expectations about the roles that the MEPs should adopt. In Table 4:6, I list how the different cases relate to the independent variables on the national level and the party level.

I have chosen to connect the more obvious cases to one or other category, and to use a third category to show that the categorization is not clear-cut (as with whether the Swedish electoral system is candidate- or party-oriented), or when the case does not really fit the categorization (as in green parties on a left-right ideological dimension). This third category serves as an interesting variation on the more obvious cases and should make it possible to elaborate more on possible conclusions regarding the different relationships.
Table 4:6  Cases and variables taken together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National characteristics</th>
<th>Electoral system</th>
<th>Intra parliamentary relations</th>
<th>EU opinion</th>
<th>Party-oriented</th>
<th>Candidate-oriented</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong parliament</td>
<td>Weak parliament</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party characteristics</th>
<th>Ideological heritage</th>
<th>Relation to executive power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PvdA, ILP, SAP</td>
<td>PvdA, FF, SAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDA, FF, MOD</td>
<td>CDA, ILP, MOD, GL, GP, MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the argument that the electoral system is the main factor forming representative roles, we expect to find more MEPs in the Netherlands that emphasize the party and the member state, than in Ireland. Sweden is ‘on the move’ regarding its party- or candidate-oriented electoral system and therefore fills the intermediate cell. The intra-parliamentary relation’s argument, that a strong parliamentary control over EU policy would make the MEPs more connected to the national arena and the national party organizations, would apply in Sweden, it would not in Ireland and the intermediate case is the Netherlands.

Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden also represent an interesting variation concerning the popular opinion regarding the EU. As I have already mentioned, Sweden and the Netherlands are two opposite poles in this respect. Sweden has one of the most negative opinions, while the Netherlands has the most supportive. Ireland is harder to define in this sense. Although the Irish people seem to support membership of the Union and its overall role, they are critical of giving too much of their sovereignty to Brussels. These differences are also important aspects of the surroundings of the MEPs. If it is domestic public opinion regarding EU that is the main explanation of why MEPs choose one or the other representative ideal, then we will find a stronger emphasize on the national level in Sweden and the opposite in the Netherlands.
If we turn to the party level of the analysis and argue that it is the ideological heritage that influences the representatives’ role perception, then we should find a stronger emphasis on the national level in the social democratic parties (PvdA, ILP and SAP) and the opposite in the right-wing parties (CDA, FF and MOD). The green parties (GP, GL and MP) are much harder to define in the sense of left-right continuum and therefore they are seen as intermediate cases. In some respect, the green parties in all countries should probably be categorized as more left than the social democratic parties. On the other hand, they are newer parties and they are not founded on the basis of the traditional left-right divide. Therefore, these parties are interesting, because they may organize things differently. They do not have an old tradition to lean on and maybe it is easier for these parties to adapt to the European level. However, that remains an empirical question.

The last variable used in this part of the analysis is whether the relationship to the government is important for the representative ideal. We have three governmental parties included in the study (PvdA, FF and SAP) and according to the theoretical argument, this would make them emphasize their roles as party representatives and orient themselves more strongly to the member state, while the opposite should be true in the other six cases (CDA, ILP, MOD, GL, GP and MP).

**PUTTING NATION AND PARTY TOGETHER**

In Table 4:7, I turn the information around and show the different configurations of cases included in the study. The idea I try to advocate here is to view cases as configurations, rather than collections of distinct, analytically separable attributes. Or to use Charles Ragin’s argument, “the idea of viewing cases as configurations can be captured by examining different combinations of values on relevant variables and treating each combination of values as a potentially different type of case” (Ragin 2000:72). In Table 4:7, a party in which we expect to find an orientation toward the national party and the member state is assigned a value of +1. A party in which the orientation toward the EU and the voters dominates, the assigned score is -1. The identified intermediate case is defined as 0. This is repeated for all five variables. Consequently, the
higher the number in the total column on the right, the more we should expect to find a noticeable orientation toward the national party and the member state among the representatives.

Table 4:7  The expected role perception in the selected cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Electoral system</th>
<th>Parliamentary relationship</th>
<th>EU opinion</th>
<th>Ideological heritage</th>
<th>Relation to executive power</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a simplification in more than one sense. First, the empirical analyses in the chapters that follow have to clarify whether or not these five factors (variables) actually do have an impact, individually and together, on the role perception and behavior of MEPs. Second, if they have an impact, how should we weight their relative influence? It is first when we empirically assess the relative strength of the variables – maybe the electoral system is more influential than the party’s ideological heritage – that we can evaluate the usefulness of the conceptualization that is expressed in Table 4:7. However, by establishing these expectations we now have a point of reference by which we can facilitate a comparison of MEPs. That is, we should find more MEPs in the Swedish Social Democratic Party that emphasize their roles as national party representatives focusing on the member state. The MEPs from the Irish Green Party should regard themselves as representing voters and focusing on the EU. Whether or not this is a correct description of the MEPs’ conception of representative roles remains to be seen, but it provides a useful point of departure.

The next step is to look inside these party organizations and try to map out different institutional contexts that surround the MEPs in their daily work. This is the theme for the next chapter. Also this next chapter is an empirical investigation into the context that the literature on representative roles tells us should impact the role perception and behavior of MEPs.
Notes Chapter four

41 For example the study by Wessels (1999) suggests that the country’s size (and the duration of membership) is important for explaining why MEPs foster a more European focus.

42 This is a commonly forgotten aspect of the electoral system, however, Douglas Rae analyses the consequences of different electoral system by defining different types of ballots used in the electoral systems (Rae 1975). Rae distinguishes between categorical or ordinal ballots. With ordinal ballots the voter is able to express a more complex preference by ranking different parties or candidates from different parties. Categorical ballots are by far the most common in electoral systems, however, the system with Single Transferable Votes (STV) used in Ireland is one example of an ordinal ballot.

43 In the case of Germany, some authors argue that it should be characterized as a proportional system. The reason is that the parties present the same candidates in the plural procedure as in the proportional and that the allocation of the seats more or less results in a high proportionality (see for example Saalfeld forthcoming).

44 The electoral system to the French national assembly deserves some special attention. It is possible for the voter to split his or her vote between different parties in the first and second ballot. This means that the system can be categorized as both categorical and ordinal, but it should not be mixed up with, for example, the Irish STV system, where a voter is able to split his or her vote during one single occasion.

45 These ten candidates would not have been elected due to their placement on the lists, if it were not for the preference votes.

46 In practice, there is a threshold, due to the limited number of seats in parliament. This amounts to only 0.677% of the votes, which means approximately 60,000 votes nationwide (Andeweg & Irwin 2002:77).

47 This does not necessarily discriminate this way of measuring power. It is possible that agenda control and drafting authority are two alternative strategies for a parliament to scrutinize the legislative process. Either the committees have a strong drafting authority, but are circumscribed by the agenda setter, i.e. they can only process issues put forward to them. Or, the committees are free to set their agenda, but are circumscribed in terms of how much they can influence the proposals.

48 Polsby himself defines Sweden, as well as the Netherlands as “modified transformative” and the only genuine transformative legislature is the US Congress (Polsby 1975).

49 Fianna Fail, however, strongly argued for a Yes vote in the Nice referendum.

50 After the 1999 European election, Proinsias de Rossa, the former party leader of the Democratic Left, occupies the Irish Labour Party seat in the EP.
The merge was between katholieke Volkspartij, Anti-Revolutionaire Partij and Christelijk-Historische Unie and they put forward a common candidate list in the election 1977. The formal merge was done in 1980.

In January 2003 the Netherlands arranged an extra election because of a governmental crisis. The result was that the Pim Fortuyn List lost more than 2/3 of their support and the Dutch Social Democratic almost doubled theirs.

An accurate translation of the Groen Links is Green Left, however, to facilitate the reading, I use the term Green Party.

This includes; the Pacifist Socialist Party, the Political Party Radicals, the Communist Party of the Netherlands, and the Evangelical People’s Party.

Between 1951 and 1957, the Social Democratic Party was in coalition with the Agrarian Party.

These attitudes have been fairly stable during the last years. At the time for the interviews the numbers said that 37% regarded the membership as something good and 30% as something bad (European Commission 2002:26)

The last European election was held in 1995.

The Fianna Fáil was affiliated with Union for Europe (UPE) before the 1999 election. However, this group changed both the name and a substantial part of their members after the 1999 election. The group became the Union for a Europe of Nations (UEN) and the most substantial changes regarding parties affiliated with the new group was that the Italian party Forza Italia went to the EPP and Alleanza Nazional was affiliated with the new group. Also the French Rassemblement pour la Republique went to the EPP and the Rassemblement pour la France joined the new group.

According to the data presented in the manifesto project, some of the included parties are defined as more left than the social democratic parties (Budge & Bara 2002:53).
In this study, I aim for a better understanding of the MEPs as representatives in the new Europe. An essential aspect of this broader aim is the interaction within party organizations, because formal and informal rules constitute constraints that surround the MEPs and influence their freedom of maneuvering. Party organizations consist of vertical asymmetrical power relations. According to Angelo Panebianco (1988:22), one of the most interesting and celebrated modern theorists on political parties, this power relation between the leader and members can be expressed as an unequal exchange, in which the leader gets more than the ordinary rank and file member. At the same time, this relation is reciprocal and the leader must give something in return. Power, in other words, is never absolute. The leader is in need of support, but also wants freedom of action. The greater the freedom of action won by the leaders in a vertical power game (inside an organization), the stronger they are in the horizontal power games (outside the organization). This puts the focus on the intra-party environment, which is important for understanding how political leaders act outside the party organization.

In this chapter, I will step inside the party organizations that are selected for this study and analyze the institutional features that surround the MEPs. The theoretical argument is that these different features shape different representative norms among the MEPs, by shaping incentives, circumventing actions and fostering different ideals. This chapter is
based on the parties’ side of the story, which means that it focuses on formal rules and expressed expectations of the party organizations. However, we cannot be sure that this “picture” is the same when it comes to how the MEPs themselves handle these issues. Their side of the story is the theme for the next chapter.

One fundamental driving force for a politician is to get elected for office. Thus, the procedure for selecting candidates is an instrument of control for the party organization and in this chapter I will start by analyzing how the MEPs were selected as candidates for the 1999 European election. After this, I continue with an analysis of different organizational devices for coordinating between the national level and the MEPs once the MEPs have been elected. Basically, I want to answer the question: what instruments do the party organizations use in order to keep track of their MEPs?

**Candidate selection to the European Parliament**

A fundamental but often underestimated aspect of democracy is the selection of candidates that run for political office. In West European countries this is basically an intra-party affair and it is a process where different incentives and strategic considerations have to be taken into account. The obvious motive is to win electoral success. However, parties also want to preserve the cohesiveness of the party. Consequently, the process of selecting candidates is not only a way to give the voters the “best” candidate; it is also an arena for intra-party conflicts. The rules surrounding the selection process are therefore important.

There are studies that show that the MEPs are more loosely linked to the party organizations compared to the national parliamentarians (Johansson 1996:222; Ladrech 1996:292) and if Panebianco is correct, it would be reasonable if the leadership of the party organizations increasingly tried to monitor the selection of candidates for the EP. I will in this section concentrate on answering the following questions: First, to what extent and in what aspects do parties from various party traditions and countries differ in their methods of selecting representatives to the EP? Second, are there differences in how the parties organize their
selection of candidates to the national legislative body and to the EP? Third, to what extent is the party leadership involved in the process of selecting candidates to the EP?

In political science, only a limited number of studies have tried to analyze the process of candidate selection. One reason is that party organizations have been reluctant to reveal their internal rules and practices regarding these types of processes (Skare 1996:331). Furthermore, there have only been a few comparative studies. The reason is that parties, parliamentary systems, electoral systems, and traditions vary between countries. Therefore, it is hard to compare internal party rules, because parties operate in different environments. Primarily, there have been three types of strategies for analyzing this process. One tries to pinpoint the primary selecting agency in order to categorize different systems (Gallagher, Laver & Mair 1995:253; Ranney 1981:77). The problem with these studies is that it is very difficult to single out one actor as the “selecting agency”. The process typically includes several actors and decisions. The second type of research tries to sketch a broader picture of the selection process (see for example Gallagher & Marsh 1988). These studies make it possible to understand the complexity and diversity of the process of candidate selection, but tend to make it difficult to actually compare different procedures. A third strategy has been to use survey data where candidates estimate the importance of different actors in the selection process (see for example Norris 1997:220). However, the problem with this type of strategy is that the conclusions are based on approximations, where the respondents lack a common conceptual framework and a comparative perspective.

The process of selecting candidates is complicated. It involves a process of filtering a large set of candidates down into a selectable group and it is often hard to exactly pinpoint the actual time when the selection is made. Nevertheless, the process itself – who is acting at different steps, and within what set of rules – is important in an analysis of this kind (see also Narud, Pedersen & Valen 2002; Rahat & Hazan 2001). Therefore, I identify the steps in the process, as well as the actors involved. I also create categories that capture which actor operates at a certain step of the process. For analytical reasons I divide the selection
of candidates into three steps. Figure 5:1 is an attempt to describe the selection process in schematic form. This is a simplification of a complicated process and the purpose is to create categories in order to make a fruitful comparison.

Figure 5:1 Procedure schema on candidate selection

All of the three procedural steps can involve a different set of actors. First, we have a nomination procedure, where different candidates are proposed. Voters can be allowed to nominate candidates (free nomination). However, most often there is some kind of involvement of the party members, either through intra-party nominations, a subset of members nominating the candidates, or a selection committee nominating the candidates. However, it is also possible that this is an exclusive right for the national executive.

Second, we have the selection process. Someone has to select among the nominees and the selection procedure is perhaps the most important of the three steps. In the selection procedure, the voters can be involved through inter-party primaries. However, most often this is an intra-party affair, and it is the members who are involved in one way or another, either through intra-party primaries or through a subset of members. Also in this procedure, there can be a selection committee or the national executive can conduct the selection. The selection procedure can be
binding or non-binding. In the case that it is binding, the selector is the actual decision-maker. However, we can also find a variety of systems with non-binding decisions. For example, when the selector selects a group of candidates, but does not decide the order between them.

Third, we have the decision procedure. The difference between the selection procedure and the decision procedure is important. There could be one set of actors (for example the regional branches) that selects among proposed candidates, but in the end another actor decides which of those actually will be the candidates. This happens, for example, when the executive branch has a mandatory right to confirm a candidate or a set of candidates.

Between these three procedures we often find some kind of intermediate organizational body that is designated to prepare for the next step in the process and/or to make a pre-selection of candidates. This organizational body can be important but sometimes it is negligible. This analytical schema makes it easier to compare different systems for selecting candidates, albeit, the fact that the parties operate in very different environments.

**CANDIDATE SELECTION IN IRELAND**

In Ireland the procedures for selecting MEPs are very similar in all parties. As discussed in the earlier chapter, the political system in Ireland is often characterized as one of locality and clientelism and this has an effect on how parties select their candidates. It is basically the local branches within every electoral district that select the candidates through selection conventions. In the last ordinary national election there were 41 constituencies and conventions, and there were 4 in the 1999 European election. However, the national party leadership has in most cases some kind of influence on the selection procedure. Several studies regarding the development during the 70s and 80s points at a growing interest from the national party headquarters to exert an increased influence on the selection of candidates the Irish party organizations (Mair 1987b:122; Marsh 1995: 209-15). However, more recent studies show that there are steps taken toward opening-up the candidate selection process in many Irish parties (Murphy & Farrell 2002:241).

In European elections, the nomination procedures begin in the local branches in all the three parties. In the Irish Labour Party and in Fianna
Fiáil the local branches are limited to nominate one candidate each. In practice this is also the case in the Irish Green Party, although this is not formally regulated. In all the parties a candidate needs support from several branches, which in practice is a requirement for success in the selection process. In Fianna Fáil there is a rule that a candidate needs support from a certain amount of branches (50 in the Dublin area and 30 in the rest of the country) in order to be regarded as a candidate.

The selection procedure in the Irish parties is done through selection conventions and there is one convention per electoral district. In the Irish Labour Party and the Fianna Fáil the number of representatives that the local branches can appoint is limited, while in the Irish Green Party all members are welcome (and if a member is not able to attend he or she may send a postal vote). In practice the procedure is the same in all three parties in the national election as in the European election. These conventions decide by proportional representation with a secret ballot on the composition of the list. However, the result of the convention is not binding in any of the three parties.

The decision procedure is in the hands of the executive in all three parties. They are able to change the result of the conventions, by adding candidates or reject candidates. However, intervention from the party leadership is not especially popular within the parties. In the 1994 European election the Labour Party added one candidate in the Dublin district and this was strongly criticized within the party. It also turned out that this candidate did not succeed in the election and this experience is still remembered in the party and probably has an effect on how the national level has behaved in subsequent elections (see also The Irish Times 980624). According to the General Secretary of Fianna Fáil, the reason for this back door option is that the executive committee wants the opportunity to balance the ticket because of a disproportional gender allocation or regional representation (Mackin 990209).

There are only minor differences between the parties regarding the rules for selecting candidates in the three Irish cases. However, there are differences regarding number of appointed representatives from the local branches to the conventions and in the number of supporting nominations that a candidate needs in order to be regarded as a candidate, but these
differences do not have a fundamental impact on the way candidates are selected. The only major difference between the three parties is that the Green Party has a type of intra-party primary, while the selection in the other parties is conducted by a subset of members. However, it is important to note the difference in size of the three parties. The branches in Fianna Fáil and Labour Party are small and numerous. That every branch sends one or two delegates to the selection conventions should probably be regarded as a fairly representative decision making procedure. The Green Party is much smaller in this respect and it is probably easier to involve a larger share of members in the selection process. However, it is an important difference and if the Green Party grows and maintains its current system, the differences could be of importance. All of the three Irish parties emphasize that the selection of candidates is a matter for the local branches and the constituencies. This is due to the political culture in Ireland and to the electoral system. The general secretary of Fianna Fáil explains that, “…because of the proportional representation that we have and the clientelism that we have, you have to go out there on the road” (Mackin 990209).

CANDIDATE SELECTION IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch parties are known to have a rather centralized selection of candidates (Gladdish 1985:136; Koole & Leijnaar 1988:201). Even though the parties are able to present different lists for different sub-national regions, which give a hypothetical opportunity for the electorate to change the list-order, this has virtually no electoral impact. Therefore, most analysts seem to concur with the statement that the “…ultimate decisions on the composition and ordering of each and every list lie inescapably with the national party organization” (Gladdish 1985:136). The Netherlands is one electoral district in both the national election and in the EP elections. Therefore the differences related to number of constituencies between the national election and the European election that we are able to note in the other two cases, are not relevant in the Dutch case.

The nomination procedure for the European election begins in the Dutch Christian Democratic Party, the Dutch Social Democratic Party and the Dutch Green Party with the adoption of a profile by the top
level of the parties. These profiles consist of recommendations of what type of skills the candidates should possess, and also about regional and gender allocation. These profiles are presented to the party members and a selection committee, which is elected by the party board in each of the three parties, then conducts the monitoring of the process. These committees consist of 6-7 people that represent different groups within the party. The role of these committees is to organize the procedure, receive the nominations and do their own scouting. In the Dutch Social Democratic Party people can “apply for the job” and the party also advertises in newspapers for candidates. Other parties have tried to scandalize this way of collecting nominations, however the Social Democrats argue that it as a way to open up the nomination procedure (Bearkvens 990224).

The selection procedure involves interviews with the candidates and the purpose is to select the individuals that fit the profile and are suitable candidates. Some will not get interviewed because they do not fit the profile. One hypothetical example, suggested by one of the representatives of the selection committee in the Dutch Christian Democrats (as well as the head of the international secretariat of the party), is that a nominee with only a primary school degree and that has reached the age of 65 is not likely to be interesting for the committee (Wiggers 990222). In the end, the committees make a report, as well as a proposal, which is forwarded to the next step in the process. In the Christian Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party, this list is forwarded to the party leaderships (the daily board and the general board). In the Green Party, the proposal from the selection committee is processed directly to the congress. This means that the selection committee is responsible to the congress and not the party leadership. According to one member of the selection committee for the European election in Dutch Green Party, the committee worked pretty much without any interference from the party board (Cornelissen 990224). The party board may nominate candidates, but otherwise the committee maintains a high level of integrity.

The decision procedure differs to some extent in the three Dutch parties. In the Christian Democratic Party, the list is sent from the leading bodies to all the local branches and they vote on the proposal.
This means that they can go along with the proposal or change the order of the list. The result of this process is sent to the congress, which makes the final decision. The leadership of the Christian Democrats does not have any formal right to influence the process at this stage. However, the normal situation is that the voting in the local branches balances each other. That is, if one local branch supports one candidate, another local branch supports another, and the result is that the original list is accepted. According to one member of the selection committee in the Christian Democrats, it is also very seldom that the congress changes the list after being processed in the local branches, and consequently the original proposal has a good chance of being accepted through the whole process (Wiggers 990222). The Social Democrats do not process the proposal from the party board through the local branches. The proposal goes directly to the congress, which is able to alter the proposal. Although this has happened in the past, it is a rather complicated story. If the congress wants to change the composition of the list it needs to agree on an alternative proposal (that is, it is necessary to get a substantial part of the congress to vote in exactly the same way). Also in the Green Party the congress makes the final decision on the proposal of the selection committee. However, in the Green Party it is not unusual that the congress alters the proposed list. The reason, according to one member of the selection committee, is that there is a history of opposition groups existing within the party and it is not uncommon for various groups within the party to organize campaigns for candidates (Cornelissen 990224). This also happened for the 1999 European election.

The Dutch Social Democratic Party deserves some special attention. The party changed the procedure for selecting candidates in the mid 1990s and the procedure described here was used for the first time in the 1999 European election. In the past, the party involved the local branches in the process but today their involvement is minimal. The reason for this change was a dissatisfaction that the candidates tended to be white middle-aged men. These were the candidates that got elected by the local branches. This was not representative for the image of the party or the Dutch population and by centralizing the process, the monitoring of the end-result improved (Bearkvens 990224). However, the consequence of the new system is that,
according to some members, the relationship between the elected and the party organization has weakened. Furthermore, it is harder with this new procedure to get equal regional representation. The reason for implementing this new procedure was that the Social Democrats lost many members and a critical debate on the profile of the party (Bearkvens 990224). It is also a result of a change in the focus of the party. Today it concentrates more on the electorate than on members in the local branches and the ambition is to have a profile of the list that equals the different groups in society. Before this change, having a career within the party was more important.

Analyzing the process in the Dutch parties reveals that the party leadership is a highly important actor in the selection of candidates (the Dutch Green Party is a minor exception to the rule). However, much of this is due to the design of the electoral system. A system based on a single electoral district naturally pushes the selection process to the national level. As stated earlier, there are no differences between the national and the European elections regarding the process of selecting candidates. However, several of the interviewed representatives mentioned that there are in fact differences. For example, the conflicts surrounding the making of the lists are not as profound in the European election as in the national election and one reason is that the members are less interested in the European election. One other difference is that it is more difficult to balance the lists for the European election, because the number of available seats is smaller in the European election. It is simply harder to fulfill different needs of the party when there are fewer representatives. This should be the case also in the other countries included in this study.

**Candidate selection in Sweden**

Swedish party organizations are normally divided into three levels, the local branch, regional level and national level. The local level and the regional level are in most cases synonymous with municipalities and the regional public administrations. At ordinary national elections, the selection of candidates is a fairly decentralized process. Generally, parties put forward lists in every one of the 28 electoral districts and the decisions are often made by electoral conferences on a regional level. The use of
non-binding intra-party primaries has become more common in the Swedish parties. However, intra-party primaries are never fully binding in the Swedish parties. There is often an electoral conference, a selection committee or some other kind of decision-making body that makes the final decision on the list. The three Swedish parties all show similarities as well as differences in the procedures for candidate selection to the European election. The move from 28 constituencies to one has an impact on the way Swedish parties conduct their candidate selection and the procedure is more centralized in the European elections.

In the nomination procedure for the European election, the parties allow free intra-party nominations, that is, all members have the right to nominate candidates. However the Swedish parties differ when it comes to the selection procedure. In the Swedish Social Democratic Party the board on the regional level selects some of the nominated candidates and defines them as the candidates representing the region. In the Swedish Green Party the nominations are sent directly to the national selection committee. In the Moderate Party all nominated candidates are presented to the delegates to the annual national congress (partistämmoombud), that is, party board and regional representatives. The delegates vote individually for 5-10 candidates and on the basis of this preliminary procedure the party board picks out 60 candidates. However, the board is not forced by any statutes to simply pick the ones that have received most votes.

After this initial phase, the three parties use different organizational bodies to operate the next step. In the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the nominations are sent to the national executive and the party board is the one that selects among the nominated candidates. The board is obliged according to the statutes to consider an equal gender allocation, but also age and regional representation. In the Swedish Green Party, the nominated candidates are put forward in an intra-party primary. This procedure was used for the first time in the 1999 European election and unfortunately the result was a disappointment, because a very small number of members used their right to vote for a candidate. The selection committee within the Green Party is responsible to handle the whole process and they decide on the basis of the primary on a list of candidates in a fixed order. The selection committee is obliged to
consider an equal gender allocation. Similar to the Green Party, the Moderate Party also use an intra-party primary. The list of nominated candidates is put forward to the members in alphabetical order and they shall rank five candidates. Also in ordinary national elections, the Moderate Party organizes intra-party primaries on the electoral district level and thus the party members are used to this kind of procedure.\textsuperscript{75}

After the selection procedure, the decision procedure takes place. According to the statutes in Swedish Social Democratic Party, the national party board decides the final disposition of the list. However, the national board has delegated this capacity to a newly created forum, a body of regional representatives (\textit{Förtroenderådet}). This forum is able to make changes in the proposal that was decided upon by the board and their decision is final. In the Swedish Green Party, the proposal from the selection committee is put forward to an extra congress. The congress can alter the proposal and their decision is final. In the Moderate Party, the party board, on the basis of the result in the primaries, finally determines the list of candidates. The board is entitled to add candidates after the primaries and they are not formally obliged to follow the result of the primaries. The statutes also mention that the party board should consult with the regional chairs before a final decision is made.

If we look at the overall process in the three Swedish parties it is clear that the executive committee and the party board influence the decision process in the Moderate Party and the Social Democrats. The media reports from the nomination process also show that the national party executive in at least the Social Democrats directly influenced the process. The national executive committee of the party officially proposed one nominee as the top candidate, although the selection process was not ended in the party (\textit{Dagens Nyheter} 990109). The media reaction was consequently that the top name was already selected, and in practice this circumscribed the \textit{Förtroenderådet}. In other words, the party board had an obvious advantage in the selection process. In the Swedish Green Party, the influence of the national executive is less evident. A crucial question regarding the Swedish Green Party is the relationship between the party executive and the selection committee. The selection committee could perhaps serve as an emissary for the party leadership. It is hard to
say whether this is the case or not. However, in the media reports from the nomination process, high party representatives showed reluctance to comment on the proposal from the selection committee and generally they referred to the decision of the extra congress (Dagens Nyheter 981222).

**COMPARISON BETWEEN THE PARTIES ON SELECTION OF CANDIDATES**

I put forward three main questions in the introduction of this section. 1) To what extent and in what aspects do parties from different party traditions and countries differ in their methods of selecting representatives to the EP? 2) Are there differences in how the parties organize their selection of candidates to the national legislature and to the EP? 3) To what extent is the party leadership involved in the process of selecting candidates to the EP? In Table 5:1 below, I summarize the procedures in every party, according to the steps described earlier. In order to facilitate the reading, I translate the various kinds of actors into numerical codes.

**Table 5:1 EP Candidate selection procedures in the selected parties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nomination</th>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FF</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=Free nomination/primaries, 2=Intra-party nomination, 3=Subset of members, 4=Selection committee, 5=National executive

*From nomination to the locus of selection:* All parties in the study allow intra-party nominations from individual members and sub-national levels within the party. However, there are two types of intervening organizational
bodies between the nomination procedure and the selection procedure. The first type is when the nomination is processed through different levels in the organization. In the Swedish and Irish Social Democratic parties and in Fianna Fáil, the local or regional branch is the intermediate body. They collect the nominations, select some candidates and transfer these to the next step in the process. The second type is when the party uses some kind of selection committee as the intermediate organizational body (the three Dutch parties and the Swedish Green Party). These selection committees collect nominations and scout for candidates. In the three Dutch parties the selection committee is very influential at this stage, and they make up the proposal for the party board (the Dutch Social Democrats and the Dutch Christian Democrats) or directly to the congress (the Dutch Green Party). In the Swedish Green Party and in the Moderate Party the procedure is different. In the Swedish Green Party the proposal is put forward to an intra-party primary and the Moderate Party arrange a preliminary primary among a subset of members on the national level. The Swedish Moderate party is not a clear-cut case, because on the one hand the national executive monitors this intermediate procedure, on the other hand representatives from the regional level are involved in this step. The only party that does not use any kind of intermediate body is the Irish Green Party, where the nominations go directly to the selection convention at the electoral district level.

The selection procedure: None of the parties use inter-party primaries as a tool to select candidates; the voters have their say on Election Day. However, the parties use a variety of procedures. Some of them include the members at this stage in the procedure, either by using selection conventions (the three Irish parties) or intra-party primaries (the Swedish Moderate Party and the Swedish Green Party). However, in none of these parties is this defined as the decisive locus in the process. In all other parties, either the party board or the executive committee makes the selection (The Swedish and Dutch Social Democratic parties and in the Dutch Christian Democrats) or a selection committee handles the process (Dutch Green Party).

The decision procedure: In all nine parties, someone other than the original selector makes the final decision, after the selection is made in practice. It is possible to identify two types of procedures. First, there is
one in which the national executive or party board has some kind of veto power. Second, there is one in which the party uses some kind of election conference. Examples of the first type are the Irish parties. Here the national party executives may veto a decision made by the selection conventions. Although several of the party representatives interviewed in this study believe that this possibility is only remote, still, the rule has been used and it gives the national executive discretionary power. The Swedish Moderate party is similar to the Irish parties in this respect. These parties involve the members in the selection stage, but give the national executive veto power. However, there is an important difference between the Irish parties and the Swedish Moderate Party. The latter base their decision on the result of a primary. This means that they probably can change the order of the list and add candidates more freely than can the Irish parties. If the Irish parties add a candidate, the national executive causes a conflict between candidates on the district level, where the original decision was taken and which has an organizational remedy, to cause a quarrel in the party. This is not the case in the Swedish Moderate Party. The second type of decision procedure, when the party holds a selection conference or a congress, is used in the Swedish Social Democrats and the three Dutch parties. The use of an electoral conference is a way for the parties to legitimize the selection of candidates, which in these parties until this stage has been a relatively centralized process. The Swedish and the Dutch Green parties also use selection conventions. However, in these two cases there is a selection committee that handles the process until the convention. The leaderships of these parties are not involved in the same way as in the other cases.

In general, this study shows that the main variation between the different models for selecting candidates is between countries rather than within countries. The change in number of constituencies between the national and European election has had a “pushing” effect in Sweden and Ireland. That is, the candidate selection for the European election is more centralized than in national elections. In the Netherlands, the number of constituencies between the national and European election does not change, and therefore the parties are not forced to change their selection procedure. The fundamental character of the selection procedure
is preserved in the Irish case, despite the change in the number of constituencies. In Sweden, on the other hand, the picture is much more diverse. In the process of moving from 28 constituencies to one, the parties use new and unfamiliar ways of selecting candidates and therefore the procedures vary among the Swedish parties.

Although differences between countries seem to explain most of the differences between how parties process the selection of candidates to the EP, it is important to notice that the three Green parties all have slightly different procedures than their national competitors. In the Irish Green Party, the local branches do not have the same importance as in the other two Irish parties and the selection procedure has a character of an intra-party primary. In the Dutch Green Party the selection committee is more sovereign than in the other two Dutch parties. This is also the case in the Swedish Green Party, compared to the other two Swedish parties. Why is this? One possible explanation is that these parties are smaller than the other ones. Perhaps they do not need procedures of check and balance as in the other larger parties. It may be that this is not as complicated a story in these parties as in the larger ones. In any case, this suggests that it is meaningful to treat these parties as a separate category in the further analysis.

Now, then, is the process of selecting candidates to the EP a highly centralized phenomenon in the parties? The analytical framework that I am using gives me the opportunity to study at what stage of the process that the national leadership is influencing the process (at least in the formal aspects of the procedures). In all parties included in this study, with the possible exception of the Swedish and Dutch Green parties, the procedures to select candidates for the European election include some influence by the national executive body. The difference is when this occurs. In some parties the national executive has some kind of veto over the decision in the selection procedure (the three Irish parties and the Swedish Moderate Party). Let us call this an \textit{ex post} monitoring type of procedure. In other parties the national executive operates the process by formulating the proposals for the more decentralized regional body (the Dutch Social Democratic Party and the Dutch Christian Democratic Party and the Swedish Social Democratic Party). Let us call this an \textit{ex ante}
monitoring type of procedure. These are two strategies for the party leaderships to have an influence of the selection of candidates. Although debatable, I argue that it is the *ex ante* monitoring strategy that gives the leadership the most powerful tool to influence the selection of candidates. It is basically a question of agenda setting (or rather of ticket setting). If the leadership of the organization is the one that proposes a certain disposition of the list or a set of candidates, it is quit difficult for the more representative body (for example a congress or a selection convention) to alter this proposal. Although, the possibility exists, the votes often outbalance each other and it is much easier to defend the whole composition of a list, rather than make changes in the position of a particular candidate. The concept of veto gives the impression of immense power to the national executive and in certain situation this is certainly true. However, the power to monitor the process from an early stage gives the party leadership a much greater ability to influence the end-result, although the last step in the process includes a more decentralized body of decision. It is easier to set the agenda than to change it. If the above argument holds, the variation on the party leadership’s influence in the included party organizations is as presented in Table 5:2.

**Table 5:2 Party leadership’s influence over candidate selection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Weak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>FF</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>GP</td>
<td>MOD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that the influence of the leadership is strongest in the Dutch Social Democratic party and the Dutch Christian Democrats and in the Swedish Social Democratic Party. It is less strong in the three Irish parties and in the Swedish Moderate Party. In the Swedish and Dutch Green parties, the leadership is comparatively weakest among the nine parties. However, it is not only through candidate selection that the party leadership may influence the MEPs. There are other means at their disposal and that is the theme for the second part of this chapter.
Organizational constraints on the MEPs on the national level

After having analyzed how the MEPs are selected to office, we will now turn to the context in which the MEPs work once they have been elected. The question in focus is if the national party organizations adopt rules, constitute groups or committees, or organize recurrent meetings that in one way or the other are important for the daily work of the MEPs. To put it simply, what type of strategies do the parties use in order to maintain the link between the two levels. This kind of analysis has been very rare. However, William Messmer (2003) shows in a recent article that these types of questions are important for understanding the EP arena. He shows that new rules and organizational devices within the British Labour Party influence the MEPs view and relationship with the national arena.

Figure 5:2 give a schematic description of the actors/organizational bodies that are in focus in this section. If we start with the European level, the groups of MEPs are not treated as one single entity. Of course, the MEPs belonging to the same national party (in the following I will use the term European Parliament Delegation – EPD) should be regarded as a collective. For example, there are important formal rules/statutes regulating the relationship between national party and the MEPs. It also happens that it is the group as such – and not the individual MEPs – that has the right to attend meetings or congresses. However, much of the links between MEPs and their parties are on the basis of individual contacts. At this point, I think that it is fruitful to make a distinction between individual and collective relationships. At the same time, there are differences between the MEPs. The larger EPDs have a chairman or some similar appointment. At least at this stage, I think it is important to differentiate between MEPs with a position role and an “ordinary” MEP.
If we then turn to the national level, we face the fact that MEP relationships can be either channeled to the national level and/or directly to the regional/local level. Of course, this must be taken into account in an analysis of this kind. Additionally, the national level consists of different actors and organizational bodies that are important to differentiate between. It is possible that the party organization mainly treats these relationships as something for the parliamentary system. Then it is the link between the MEPs and the parliamentary party group or the national government that is the most important. For example, relationships could be channeled through the national parliament’s European Affairs Committee. However, most modern political parties have an organization outside the parliamentary arena and the function and importance of these extra parliamentary organizations differ between countries and parties. Therefore, in order to get the full picture on the link between the levels, it is important to understand the relationship between the MEPs and the extra parliamentary organization.\(^7\)

In the following descriptions, I will focus on some specific aspects of the relationship between the MEPs and the national party organizations, and the ambition is to answer the following questions. First, does the party demand that its MEPs sign a contract, and, if so, what is the content of this contract? Second, does the party organize some kind of
committee or group that is designated to facilitate the relationship between the levels, and, if so, who is involved in these committees? Third, what is the role of the EPD leader, compared to other MEPs, concerning the relationship between the levels? Fourth, does the party organize any joint administrative resources in order to facilitate the coordination between the levels?

**THE IRISH LABOUR PARTY**

The Irish Labour Party writes a contract with the candidates for the EP. This document consists of quite precise formulations and the candidate shall “…pledge to vote and act with the Labour Party Group in the Parliament and carry out all instructions issued officially by the General Council, the Executive Committee, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Labour Party Group in the Parliament” (Labour Party, 1998b). An MEP also pledges not to act in any manner considered by the extra parliamentary organization to be prejudicial to the interest of the Labour Party. In addition an MEP has to resign his or her seat in the EP if the General Council so demands. The document also regulates financial relations with the party and employment routines.

The Irish Labour Party does not have any committee specifically designed to facilitate the contact between the party and the MEPs, either toward the extra parliamentary organization or the parliamentary party group. The party has a committee for international affairs. This committee sometimes deals with EU affairs and serves as a support for the leading bodies in the extra parliamentary organization. However, it does not have a coordinating function between the levels, at least not regarding short-term issues.

The MEP is not automatically a member of any leading body of the extra parliamentary organization. However, the parliamentary party group is appointing an *ex officio* representative and it is possible for the group to appoint an MEP to the executive committee, but then as a parliamentarian in general and not specifically as an MEP (Kavanagh 990208). However, it is important to remember that currently the sole MEP is the Party President, which put him in an important position in the party (Allen 020623).
In a formal sense the MEPs are members of the parliamentary party group, and the MEPs are invited to all of their meetings. However, due to practical reasons, it is very hard for the MEPs to attend these meetings (Pennrose 990210). Instead the links have the character of individual informal contacts and since the Labour Party only has one MEP these informal contacts are relatively easy to maintain. If there are issues that need to be discussed the MEP contacts the national parliamentarian responsible for that policy area. If the issues are of a more important character they are submitted to the whole parliamentary party group and, if necessary, the issue finally ends up at the party’s executive. The important thing here is that the questions are first “…discussed and thrashed out in the parliamentary party” (Kavanagh 990208).

The MEP from the Irish Labour Party regularly arranges open seminars dealing with current issues in the EU. These are often quite well attended, by national parliamentarians as well as the public (Pennrose 990210). These seminars are initiated by the MEP and it is not something that the party demands. It is a way for the MEP to make his or her work public to the electorate as well as to the party.

The Irish Labour Party MEPs employ their own staff, although they are obliged to consult with the party head office about who to employ and it is also common for the MEPs to have their secretary based in their electoral district, rather than in Dublin (at least if Dublin is not the district) (Kavanagh 990108). This expresses the importance of the sub-national level in Ireland compared to many other West European countries.

THE FIANNA FÁIL

The Fianna Fáil does not write any formal contract with their MEPs. However, the MEPs are fully members of the parliamentary party group and that entitles them the same benefits and the same loyalty is expected of them, as of the national parliamentarians. In practice this means supporting the governmental policy (O’Hanlon 990211). The Fianna Fáil has an MEP-secretariat placed in Dublin and this also plays an important role in coordinating between the different levels. The secretariat is especially important for communicating with the media and the electorate. Additionally, the MEPs employ their administrative staff in Brussels.
In Fianna Fáil they have a policy committee on Foreign and European affairs. The purpose of this committee is to produce policy documents relevant for the national parliamentarians as well as for the MEPs (Mackin 990209). It is also important to remember that Fianna Fáil is a governmental party, and has been so for most of the post-war period, and this committee also serves as a support for the government. The MEPs do not have any automatic representation in the committee, but it is natural that they keep a close contact at least when dealing with issues that have a connection to the EU.

As members of the parliamentary party group, the MEPs are automatically welcome to the group meetings. However, due to practical reasons they seldom attend. The MEPs in Ireland also have the right to attend the meetings of the parliament’s European Affairs Committee and occasionally they do. The important thing is that the “…facility is there for them as a link with the national parliament” (O’Hanlon 990211). Also the government is an important input to the MEPs, and the government does have a close contact with the MEPs. According to the leader of the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party, the contact with the parliamentary party group would probably be closer if the party was in opposition (O’Hanlon 990211). However, according to party representatives, the most important contact between the MEPs and the national parliamentarians is not found within the parliamentary system, but on the local or regional level. It is here that they meet and exchange information and discuss regional issues that are important for the EU. In an accountability perspective, it is rather at the regional level of the party that the MEP is scrutinized and not on the national level of the organization. However, this is probably more the case for a larger party as Fianna Fáil, with a larger number of MEPs, compared to the Labour Party or the Irish Green Party.

There has not been any real conflict between the larger established parties regarding EU policy in Ireland. There is an overall consensus about the Irish strategy. There is a national agenda, rather than a party agenda. Therefore much of these issues lie on the government’s table and the national parliamentarians rather act toward individual ministers in EU issues, than toward the MEPs. The MEPs are expected to “…go to Brussels and fight for Ireland” (Kavanagh, 990208).
As a governmental party, this put the party in an important position also toward other parties in Ireland regarding coordination of the national position in the EU.

**THE IRISH GREEN PARTY**

To be an EP-candidate for the Irish Green Party, one must sign a pledge regulating that some of the money one receives from the EP is transferred to the party. The party does not, however, define relationships between different bodies of the party in this pledge. They do not have any written rules about the “status” of the MEPs.

Two of the MEPs are *ex officio* members in the coordinating committee (administrative body) and the national council (policy making body), the most important body in the extra parliamentary organization (Goodwillie 990211). The number of MEPs represented in these bodies is limited to two. Today the Irish Green Party has two MEPs and consequently they are both included. The party also has experimented with a leadership group that includes the MEPs, national parliamentarians and the organizational secretary. The conclusion, though, is that it has been hard to actually meet due to practical reasons (Kearney 990211). The party also has policy experts that have regular contacts with the MEPs (at least on the areas relevant for the EU). This is seen as an important link, although it is more of individual contacts, than an established party-MEP relationship.

In a formal sense the MEPs in the Irish Green Party are not automatic members of the parliamentary party group, in the same way as in the other two Irish parties. They are seen as two separate groups. In practical terms, however, they do work together from time to time, especially when it comes to principle issues or issues that require a longer time frame. The two groups, however, do not have any formal link or mechanism to coordinate action and this is a problem when it comes to “politics of the day” (Kearney 990211). From time to time the representatives of the Green Party attend the meetings of the parliament’s European Affairs Committee. This could stimulate the contact between the National parliamentarians and MEPs. However, in the case of the Irish Green Party, the paradoxical situation has occurred that the party’s
MEPs are represented in the European Affairs Committee, but not the national parliamentarians due to the fact that the party is too small to qualify to the committee. Presumably this intensifies the division of different responsibilities for the two groups; the MEPs handle EU issues also within the national parliament.

Besides the economic transfer from the MEPs to the party, the MEPs solely employ their own staff. This means that the party does not have administrative capacity in the central apparatus to handle the link between the MEPs and the national level. In part this is due to the size of the party, they have very small resources to uphold the organization in general, i.e. the money is needed elsewhere. This is a handicap compared to the other parties in Ireland.

THE DUTCH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The Dutch Social Democratic Party writes a contract with their MEPs. The purpose is to verify that the candidate is accepting the nomination (Partij van de Arbeid, 1998, Art. 20:5) and to clarify that the MEP must take part in the EPD; otherwise he or she should give up the seat. The contract also requires the MEPs to give their allowances to a foundation that is connected to the party (Anne Wondeling Foundation). This foundation employs staff and uses the money for joint expenses (Hamans 020718).

The extra parliamentary organization does not have any formal organizational bodies designated to handle the relationship with the MEPs. They have an advisory committee for European politics that is appointed by the party board and consists of various policy experts. However, the role of the committee is regarded as rather weak and it has no official function (Bearkvens 990201; Hamans 020718). Additionally, the EPD leader is not a member of the party board, but is used as an advisor of the board. In practice there is no formal relationship between the MEPs and the extra parliamentary organization, whatsoever (Hamans 020718). To some extent, this is an effect of the relationship between the extra parliamentary organization and the parliamentary party group within the Dutch national context. In a comparative perspective this relationship is relatively weak. Basically the role of the extra parliamentary organization is to handle organizational matters, such as drafting manifestos and selecting
candidates, while the day-to-day political power is formed within the parliamentary party group (see further discussion in Andeweeg 2000). One argument for the division is that the extra parliamentary organization shall be free to criticize the parliamentary party group and the government (that is, when the party is represented in government) (Bearkvens 990224). The lack of contact between the extra parliamentary organization and the MEPs was further weakened when the MEPs office in Amsterdam was first moved to The Hague, and eventually closed down. Instead the administrative capacity was moved to Brussels.

In the Dutch Social Democratic Party, the most important link on a day-to-day basis is between the MEPs and the parliamentary party group. It is also this link that the party has put the most effort in trying to develop. The MEPs are in practice not able to attend any meetings of the parliamentary party group because of conflicting schedules. However, within the Dutch Social Democrats they have created a group on European affairs, which was expected to convene once a month to discuss issues on the agenda in the EP or in the national parliament. In practice this has not been possible. Instead they meet every second-month and not all MEPs or national parliamentarians attend (Hamans 020718). However, at these meetings specialists (advisors and parliamentarians) meet and the committee fills the purpose of coordinating some issues between the two parliaments. In 1999, when I met with the spokesman on EU affairs in the national parliament, he believed that the committee’s responsibilities would develop from information exchange into a forum for policy formulation (Timmermans 990223). A couple of years later, the committee still seems to be trying to find its role. It is obviously hard to find an effective procedure to get the parliamentarians from the two levels to work together, not the least due to their working schedules. Additionally, the party had what it called ministers discussions (until the 2002 election when the party lost their government position), which meant that the ministers, state secretary and the parliamentary party group leader in the Hague as well as the EPD leader in Brussels met and discussed current issues. This was chaired by the Prime Minister and should probably be regarded as a strategy for the government to coordinate the different bodies of the party.
The party has experienced conflicts between the MEPs on the one hand and the parliamentary party group and the government on the other. The most severe conflict so far regards how much money the Netherlands should be paying to the EU. According to the coalition agreement (before the election in 2002) this should be reduced, but the MEPs argue that this would send out the wrong signals. This conflict is considered to be an expression of a lack of coordination between the levels (Timmermans 990223). However it is also an expression of two different institutional inducements, something that probably will increase with a more powerful EP. At the same time, to have two different positions is not regarded as a large problem. The MEPs have an individual mandate and there is a feeling that nobody within the national party really cares what the MEPs do (Hamans 020718).

At the time for the interviews in 1999, the Social Democratic Party, as well as other Dutch parties, were very active in suggesting reforms in order to include the MEPs in the national parliament as well as activate the national parliamentarians in EU affairs issues (Timmermans 990223). These reforms would improve the relationship between the two levels of decision-making and it would have a positive effect on the national parliamentarian’s interest in what is happening at the European level. Some of these reforms passed and the MEPs are now able to attend the meetings of the standing committees, when they deal with preparations for the meetings of the Council of Ministers. The MEPs may use this channel to ask the ministers questions and give their input in the discussion. This opportunity is also, at least to some extent, used by the MEPs. One Social Democratic MEP almost always attends (in person or by sending an assistant) to these meetings and the result is that this MEP’s role in the committee is relatively strong (Hamans 020718). The MEPs may also be invited to join other committee meetings, but by invitation from the committee. The third option is that the MEPs have the right to attend the annual plenary debate concerning the governments EU policy for the year to come. It is however, important to remember that the individual MEPs use these opportunities very differently.
THE DUTCH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The overall picture of the relationship between the extra parliamentary organization and parliamentary party group is the same in the Dutch Christian Democratic Party as in the Social Democratic Party. The division between the two bodies of the organization is more obvious in the Dutch cases compared to many other European countries. Also in the Christian Democratic Party, each candidate for the EP has to declare by a letter of intent that he/she agrees with the congress-determined program, that he/she will be a member of the EPD and EPG and also keep contact with different sections of the party. Furthermore, the MEP shall place the EP seat at disposal for the party if he/she leaves the party or is dismissed from the party (Christen Democratisch Appel, 1999, Art. 2). However, it is pointed out that the party does give the EPD some freedom to form their own position, due to the fact that they have to be able to operate within the EPG (Verhajen 990223).

In the Dutch Christian Democratic party they organize a foreign affairs committee, where one working group is dealing with EU affairs (Wiggers 990223). In this committee MEPs as well as national parliamentarians are included as advisors and the role of the committee is to formulate policy, rather than coordinate daily work. The work of the committee is organized in temporary projects (usually 3 months) dealing with topics that are regarded as important. These projects end with a report that is decided on in the committee and sent to the board of the party for a final approval. This is regarded as an effective and fruitful strategy, not the least, because of the limited time frame (Moorsel 020806). This makes it easier to include all relevant persons in the work (such as MEPs and national parliamentarians). The extra parliamentary organization also has a secretary who divides the working time between Brussels and Amsterdam and whose role could be described as a liaison officer for the group in Brussels.

The essential relationship between the party and Brussels is however between the parliamentary party group and the MEPs. For instance, in a situation with a developing conflict between the two levels, the parliamentary party group plays the most significant role (Verhajen 990223). It is in the parliamentary party group that the leadership of the party is located and in the end that is what counts. The MEPs are invited
to the meetings of the parliamentary party group, but they seldom attend because of practical reasons. Instead the party organizes monthly meetings between the national parliamentarians and MEPs. Who attends these meetings depends to some extent on the issues on the agenda and these meetings are seen as an informal coordinating body (Verhajen 990223). Additionally, the strategy is to integrate national parliamentarians that are policy experts and thereby members of various standing committees, in the parliaments European Affairs Committee. Hereby, the link between various standing committees and the EU affairs experts is facilitated. Indirectly, this means that the MEPs are used as a source of information, since these policy experts in the national parliament, at least to some degree, stay in contact with the MEPs. It also means that the information is spread to a broader group of people within the parliamentary party group.

**The Dutch Green Party**

The Dutch Green Party also writes a contract with their candidates. The basic purpose of this contract is to ensure that the MEPs, while in office, pay some of their money to the party (Cornelissen 990224). This money helps to finance the administrative capacity relating to EU issues. The party has a political secretary (EU secretary) that is a kind of liaison officer for the MEPs within the intra-party environment on the national level and is used as a resource to all other bodies in the organization, when dealing with EU issues. This is probably also the most important link between the two levels (Wouters 990224) and this person divides his or her time between Brussels, The Hague and Utrecht (the party headquarter).

The party also has an advisory committee consisting of EU experts. At its meetings, approximately every two months, the MEPs (with staff), national parliamentarians (with staff), as well as the party board, are invited. The committee has no formal right to make decisions and the purpose is rather to give the different bodies (specifically the national parliamentarians) an input in the political process. In general, it is the party board and its international secretary that make up the formal body responsible for the long-term policy formulation. However, the party board does not take part in the day-to-day work in the EP.
The MEPs are also invited to the meetings of the parliamentary party group, but they seldom appear, due to practical reasons. However, the EU secretary tries to attend these meetings, especially when issues relevant for the MEPs are on the agenda. Most of the contacts between the MEPs and the national parliamentarians are individual and informal and in some cases these are quite well developed, but in some cases not. It depends mostly on the interest of the individual national parliamentarian (Wouters 990224).

According to the EU-secretary, it is possible to note a slight increase of interest in EU affairs among the national parliamentarians (Wouters 990224), which makes the more informal way of handling these relationships more complicated. That is, when a larger number of people are active in the debate regarding EU legislation, the need for more solid coordination increases. At the same time there is a kind of code of conduct within the party that MEPs should check with the other party members if they are unsure about the position taken in the national parliament.

If a conflict developed that could not be solved the informal way, the issue would be sent to the party board and the party’s international secretary. At the same time, the parliamentary party group and the EPD are two separate bodies in the organization. The EPD has to take a more European perspective on things and the party has to accept that. That is, the EPD is accepted to take a divergent stand in European policy, compared to the national parliamentary group (Wouters 990224). For example, there was minor disagreement within the Dutch Green Party regarding the participation of Turkey in the so-called European Conference. This was seen as the waiting room for a full membership in the EU. The Dutch Green Party was strongly against this participation, because of repeated violations of human rights in Turkey, but the MEPs were in favor. The reason was that in the European debate, the main argument against a Turkish membership was that the country does not belong to the western cultural hemisphere and it is a Muslim country. The MEPs felt that it was important to object to that argument and accept a future membership of Turkey. In essence, the issue was framed in a completely different way in the EP compared to the national context and this resulted in the two groups taking different positions on the issue.
THE SWEDISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

In the Swedish Social Democratic Party a contract is written between the extra parliamentary organization and the individual MEPs during the election campaign (Socialdemokraterna, 1999). These contracts have basically two purposes. First, it obligates the candidates to follow congressional decisions and overall party policy. These formulations are probably a consequence of the conflict within the party regarding the future development of the EU and this is something that some highly placed party representatives wanted to resolve in the 1999 European election. That is, they wanted to avoid presenting candidates with a negative view on EU membership (Svenska Dagbladet 990131 and Dagens Nyheter 990110). This was what happened and after the election the delegation consisted of more or less pro-EU representatives. The second purpose with the contract is to regulate the economic relationship between the party and the MEP. MEPs are obliged to give some of their allowances from the EP to the party, in order for the party to grant certain administrative privileges. Also in the party’s statutes there are regulations that emphasize the importance of having regular contacts with the party board and that MEPs coordinate their actions with other Social Democratic parties within the EP, as well as strive for cohesiveness within the group (Socialdemokraterna 1997:75).

The Swedish Social Democrats do not have any organizational body specifically designed to facilitate the contacts between the MEPs and the party. The goal is instead to locate the relationship between the party and the MEP on a regional basis (Svensson 990119). Much of the administrative capacity is placed in the regions and the idea is that the MEPs shall have contacts with their region, rather than the central party apparatus. Although, they have administrative capacity regarding EU issues in the extra parliamentary organization, the purpose of this is to coordinate between the regions, rather than fulfill the role of a link between the extra parliamentary organization and the individual MEP.

The locus of the coordination within the party is put on the EPD leader, who is an ex officio member of the executive committee, as well as attending the meetings of the party’s group in the Swedish parliament’s European Affairs Committee. Furthermore, the party has a reference group for EU issues, and the EPD leader is included also here. Therefore, on a
day-to-day basis it seems like the party put most of its effort in handling the coordination through the EPD leader. In addition to this, there is a cooperation on the administrative level. The chief of staff of the EPD meets regularly with the leadership of the staff in the national parliament.

The relationship between the Swedish Social Democratic parliamentary party group and the MEPs is channeled through meetings between the parliamentary party group and the EPD in order to exchange information and experience. The ambition is to have one meeting per year (Hulterström 990122; Stjernkvist 020926). The regular meetings of the parliamentary party group are open for MEPs. However, except for the EPD leader, the MEPs are seldom able to attend. In practice, the link between the MEPs and the national parliamentarians are based on individual informal contacts and much of these contacts run through the secretary on European affairs, which is placed at the party staff in the Swedish parliament. However, it is not an easy task for the national parliamentarians to follow the work in the EP (Nordström 990122). There are two basic reasons for this. First, there is not enough time to follow the work of two parliaments. Second, the political agenda is so different in the two parliaments that it is hard to synchronize the work, especially when it comes to policy formulation rather than information exchange. In other words, to be proactive in policy issues is very difficult. As a consequence, according to the EU-secretary, the party’s national parliamentarians instead turn to the respective ministers when they want to influence the party’s position in a certain EU issue, instead of contacting the MEPs (Nordström 990122).

One explicit goal of the Swedish Parliament has been to involve members of the standing committees in the EU legislative process. This has been difficult, however, due to an already full working agenda in the committees. The committee on constitutional affairs has on several occasions criticized their lack of involvement (see for example Konstitutionsutskottets betänkande 1998). Therefore, coordination between various policy areas has fallen to the parties; for example, the Social Democratic Party tries to include its members of important standing committees in the European Affairs Committee. This is also relevant for the other two Swedish parties included in this study.
THE SWEDISH MODERATE PARTY

The Swedish Moderate Party write a contract between the MEP candidates and the party, regulating the financial relations and that the candidate should work for the fundamental ideas of the party (Moderaterna, 1998). The political secretaries that work for the EPD are employed by the national party and not by each MEP (Hökmark 990223). Therefore it is necessary to regulate how the MEPs use some of their funding. Although, the party mentions the role of the MEPs in the party statutes, they do not state that the candidates should strive for cohesiveness within the EPG or some other kind of “advice” concerning the action of the representatives (Moderaterna, 1997).

The Moderate Party have formed a special organizational body designated to facilitate the relationship with the national party and the MEPs (Tobisson 990121). The EU-group (EU-gruppen) consists of all the MEPs, representatives from the parliamentary party group, the leadership of the extra parliamentary organization, and the representatives of the European Affairs Committee within the national parliament. It also involves the political secretaries that work on the respective levels. This is a large group and they meet once a month on Friday after the European Affairs Committee meetings in the Swedish parliament and before the session in Strasbourg. The procedure of these meetings is that the national parliamentarians and MEPs report from their respective parliaments. Important to note is that the members of the European Affairs Committee in the national parliament are able to report on issues concerning the government position in the Council of Ministers. In other words, the composition of the group and timing of the meetings is deliberatively set up to facilitate coordinated action, as well as stimulate policy formulation. The MEPs are thereby able to present their position on a certain issue before the vote in Strasbourg (or Brussels) and it is also possible to use this group to involve the national parliamentarians before the issues are presented in the European Affairs Committee in the national parliament. In other words, this prepares the national parliamentarians on future issues that they have to deal with at a later stage. Although the EU-group plays an important role in the link between the party and the MEPs, the personal informal contacts cannot be neglected. However, the institutional
framework with the EU-group facilitates and stimulates informal contacts and a spontaneous process (Hökmark 990223). This is a positive effect of these more formal gatherings.

In addition to the EU-group, the MEPs are invited to the meetings of the Moderate Party’s parliamentary group. However, they are seldom able to come and the reasons are the same as in the other cases. At the same time the EU-group probably serves as a more effective forum to deal with EU issues, than the meetings of the parliamentary party group. In other words, the incentive to go to meetings of the parliamentary party group is probably weaker compared with a party that does not have this kind of group. This also means that the leader of the EPD in the Moderate party plays a different role compared to the EPD leader in the Swedish Social Democratic Party. Although, the EPD leader of the Moderate Party is an ex officio member of the party board (Hökmark 990223), this seems to be of minor importance for the arrangement to coordinate between the levels. Since all relevant party representatives are included at the meetings of the EU-group, and the fact that they meet quite frequently, fewer issues are probably channeled through the EPD leader. More coordinating responsibility is put on the leader in the Swedish Social Democratic Party, while this is more of a collective responsibility in the Moderate Party.

It is also important to mention that Moderate Party try to facilitate the link between the parliament’s standing committees (especially those committees that are important in an EU perspective) and the European Affairs Committee in the national parliament, by having policy experts (from the standing committees) included in the European Affairs Committee (Tobisson 990121). These representatives are also included in the larger EU-group. This is a strategy to create representatives with a special responsibility for EU issues within the Swedish parliament regarding certain policy areas.

**THE SWEDISH GREEN PARTY**

The Swedish Green Party writes a formal contract with their MEPs. This is limited to economic and administrative issues (Dahlström 990120). The reason is the same as in the other two Swedish cases; the party organization wants to have some control of the money that the MEPs
receive from the EP. The party does not regulate in any formal document that the representatives should follow any party line or strive for cohesiveness within the EP. However the candidates should during the nomination process state if they have a different opinion than the party (Miljöpartiet de Gröna 1994, §12.5).

The Swedish Green Party does not have any organizational group specifically designated to facilitate the relationship between the MEPs and the national party organization. However, they have what they call a “reference group.” This is a loosely organized group and it does not have any formal role in the party. This reference group does not have regular meetings, but comes together when someone feels the need of it (Dahlström 990120). One MEP is a member of the party board but not with an ex officio status. However, the fact that an MEP is represented in the board has a positive effect regarding exchange of information.

The MEPs are invited to the meetings of the parliamentary party group, but in practice they are seldom able to attend and the reasons are the same as in the other cases. The relationship between the MEPs and the parliamentary party group in the Swedish Green Party is limited to informal individual contacts. This is also regarded to be the easiest way to handle this relationship (Samuelsson 990121). These more informal and individual contacts specifically concern two groups of national parliamentarians: members of the European Affairs Committee in the national parliament and members in standing committees that are most affected by the EU legislation.

In the absence of more organized coordination among elected representatives, the secretarial staff becomes an important link. In the Swedish Green Party they argue that they have a well-developed cooperation between the administrative staff in Stockholm and in Brussels. Both the representative from the parliamentary party group and the extra-parliamentary organization emphasize that a well-developed program and experienced representatives in the EP are important in order to monitor the MEPs. This is also relevant for the other parties, but a lack of other coordinating devices makes this even more important.
Organizational constraints in comparison

To compare the strength of the relationships between the MEPs and their national party organizations is very difficult. At the same time it is necessary to differentiate between the cases and try to estimate the strength of the organizational set-up concerning the relationship. I will divide the comparison in a number of different aspects. First, in most of the cases a contract is written between the MEP and the party, but at the same time, these vary in substance between the cases. Second, quite a few parties organize some kind of committee that includes the MEPs; however, the roles of these committees differ. Third, in some cases the leaders of the EPDs are included in the leading bodies of the national party organizations, but not in all. Fourth, parties organize their administrative contacts in different ways.

FORMAL CONTRACTS BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND THE MEPS

Almost all parties write some kind of contract with their MEPs. However these contracts vary in terms of specificity and in Table 5:3, I distinguish between how far these contracts regulate the MEPs relationship toward the party organization and/or the affiliation to the group in the EP.

Table 5:3 Contracts with the MEPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No contract</th>
<th>Regulating financial relationship</th>
<th>Regulating financial relationship and political expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>GP</td>
<td>ILP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
<td>PvdA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>CDA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MP</td>
<td>SAP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is only one party that does not write any contract with their MEPs (or candidates wanting to be MEPs), namely the Irish Fianna Fáil. On the other hand, they are included in the rules that surround the national parliamentarians, which means that the MEPs are expected to pay the same loyalty to the party as their national counterparts. There is a large group of parties where the contract serves to regulate the financial relationship with the MEPs (the three green parties and the Swedish Moderate Party). The purpose is to secure that the MEPs, while elected,
pay money to the party organization for secretarial staff and other joint services. However, it is important to note that this is a way for the parties to keep some control over the staffing of the offices of the MEPs. This is of course a strategy to restrain the freedom of the MEP, as well as gaining money from the EU system. The same goes for the third group of parties (the three Social Democratic parties and the Dutch Christian Democratic Party). However, these parties also include formulations regarding how the MEPs are expected to behave. Although, these formulations are relatively vague, they send a political message to the MEPs. The party expects the MEPs to behave in accordance to the party’s position (Swedish Social Democratic Party and Irish Labour Party) or to leave their seat if so required by the party (the Dutch Social Democratic Party and the Dutch Christian Democratic Party). These formulations should serve as a relatively strong signal to the MEPs that they are in the EP to serve the will of the party and nothing else. Although these are obvious differences between the parties, it is hard to say if this has any affect on how the MEPs regard their relationship with the national party and how the MEPs behave. However, that is one question for the remaining chapters of this study.

COORDINATION COMMITTEES WITHIN THE PARTIES

A well-developed coordination system, for example, through a group specifically designed to handle the link between the national level and the EU level, makes different bodies of the national party more equipped to actually influence the MEPs. In a party that lacks this instrument, it is probable that the initiative to uphold the contact and coordinate actions with the party is a responsibility for the MEPs. It is possible that, in the long run, relying on these informal contacts gives the MEP a stronger leverage and more freedom of maneuvering. Therefore one important aspect of the intra-party surroundings is if the parties organize some kind of committee to facilitate the link.

In Table 5:4, the various committees are categorized in five types. I distinguish between how often they meet and the purpose of the committee. The first type (“Less frequent gatherings”) refers to joint meetings between the EPD and some national organizational body.
These meetings should also occur relatively infrequently (1-2 times a year). The second type (“An irregular activated committee”) refers to a pre-defined network or group, which include the MEPs and party leadership, that meets when someone feel that it is necessary. The third and fourth type (“Policy specific committee,” “less and more effective”) refers to committees that are designated to formulate EU policy, however, not specifically to coordinate between the levels. This could also include policy committees that handle some aspects of the MEPs work. In the more effective type of policy-specific committee, I categorize those that have an obvious purpose to be a support for the MEPs and where the MEPs are supposed to be present and active. In the less effective type, I categorize those committees that have a broader foreign policy focus and where the MEPs are not included (at least not automatically). The fifth type (“Joint coordination committee”) refers to when the MEPs and leadership are included in a joint committee and the purpose is to coordinate between the levels. This group should meet quite frequently (once a month) and the schedule is intended to follow the proceedings in the two parliaments.

Table 5:4 Various forms of coordination devices within parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Less frequent gatherings</th>
<th>An irregular activated committee</th>
<th>Policy specific committee (less effective)</th>
<th>Policy specific committee (more effective)</th>
<th>Joint coordination committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FF</td>
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</table>

The categorization of various types of committees shows that there is a quite large variation among the nine cases. In only one case (the Swedish Moderate Party) do they use a committee that is specifically designed to coordinate between the levels. In the so-called EU-group, the party
leadership, national parliamentarians, MEPs, and staff met in regular sessions, with the explicit purpose of coordinating action. In four cases (the Irish Fianna Fáil and the three Dutch parties), they organize policy-specific committees that handle EU issues. However, these are not designed to coordinate action, rather to formulate policy in a more programmatic style. In other words, the purpose is not to bring important groups together, comparing agendas and strategically discussing voting positions, but to give a broader policy input to the MEPs and the national parliamentarians. In four parties they use a similar committee (the Irish Labour Party, the Irish Green Party, the Dutch and Swedish Social Democratic parties), but in these cases the MEPs are not automatically included. These committees seem to have a broader focus than to handle EU issues specifically. The MEPs are supposed to follow the work of these committees, but its purpose is not to facilitate the relationship between the levels. In the Swedish Green Party they do not have a formal structure to handle the relationship between the levels. However, they have a pre-defined list of people that shall come together if someone feels the need for it. This group may be important in critical situations, but is not equipped to handle day-to-day coordination. The last type of coordinating device is the joint gatherings between the parliamentary group in the national parliament and the EPD (used in the Swedish Social Democratic Party). The goal is to have these gatherings once a year. This can hardly be defined as a coordination device for day-to-day matters. It rather serves as an instrument to bring the groups together and discuss long-term issues.

Some of these categorizations are very difficult to make. First, I suppose that some parties have policy-specific committees that are not listed above. However, since the respondents never mention them as having a role in the coordination between the levels, it is hard to regard them as such. Second, in some cases it can be hard to determine if a policy-specific committee is efficient or not (according to my definition above). At the same time this is an attempt to distinguish between the cases and in a broader perspective these categorizations should be more or less accurate. On the basis of this material and these arguments I am prepared to classify the different coordination devices as more or less strong. The only party that has developed a strong connection (in organizational
terms) is the Swedish Moderate Party. In a larger group of intermediate cases, I classify the Irish Fianna Fáil and the three Dutch parties. The Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Swedish Green Party, as well as the Irish Labour Party and the Irish Green Party, are classified as weak, compared to the other cases.

**EPD Leadership Inclusion**

The overall picture is that it is hard to include all parliamentarians in a committee or a group and coordinate between the levels because of practical reasons. Parliamentarians have a lot of engagements and it is simply hard to find the time to meet. An alternative strategy is to select one MEP that serves as the link between the levels. Most often, in the parties that use this strategy, this is a responsibility for the EPD leader. It is especially in the Swedish Social Democratic Party that this strategy is most obvious. The EPD leader is included in the party’s executive committee and other more or less important groups. It is probable that this is a strategy to solve problems with the connection between the levels, since the party lacks other effective means to coordinate (for example in terms of committee structure). Also in the Swedish Moderate Party, the EPD leader is an *ex officio* member of the party leadership. However, in this case, the party has a relatively effective system for coordination, and the role of the EPD leader seems less important in this respect. The Irish Greens include both of their MEPs in the leading body of the party. In a smaller party, it is probably more efficient to use such a structure, rather than to create a committee structure. Consequently, the classification above, of the Irish Green Party as weak, is problematic as an overall picture. In the Dutch Social Democratic Party, the EPD leader is included in the so-called ministers’ discussions. This is a strategy to coordinate with the Dutch Social Democratic ministers, that is, the governmental branch of the party, but should possibly be seen as a relatively important function in the party.

In all the other parties the EPD leaders are not included in the party leadership in the same respect. Of course, the MEPs may be elected, as all other party members, to these appointments (as in the case of the Swedish Green Party) but it is not seen as a strategy to coordinate between
the levels as such. That does not mean that these MEPs are not important in keeping the contact with the national leadership, but it is not an expression of an explicit strategy to coordinate between the levels. Therefore, their role should be analyzed further when dealing with the MEPs.

**JOINT ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES**

The secretarial staffs have a key-position in the coordination between the levels. To control who is employed is also a strategy for the national party organizations to maintain some control over their MEPs. In several cases included in this study, the allowances from the EP for secretarial staff are processed through the national party organization. One argument for this solution is that it makes the process easier for the MEPs; however, there is also a strategy to maintain some influence over the MEPs’ way of handling their work.

Nearly all parties have some kind of administrative resource on the national level that is responsible for facilitating for the MEPs’ activities on the national level. This person can be regarded as a kind of liaison officer for the EPD on the national level. This resource can be connected to either the national party headquarters or the party group in the national parliament, but in both cases the role is to be the MEPs’ voice in the intra-party arena on the national level. It is hard to distinguish any differences between the parties in this respect. However, it is important to note that using this kind of more or less political appointees is a strategy for the parties to facilitate the relationship between the levels.

**The intra-party surroundings put together**

In this chapter I have stepped inside the party organizations and analyzed the institutional features that surround the MEPs on the national level. Party organizations have different means of monitoring their representatives. One strategy is to control who is elected, through the selection procedure. Another is to create formal rules that force the representative to act in one way or the other. A third way is to arrange coordinating devices between different groups in the party and thereby monitor the activities of the MEPs. In this chapter I have looked into the selected parties and
analyzed this complex environment from different angles. In Table 5:5, I do the same thing as in the previous chapter (see Table 4:7), that is, to collapse the variables in order to illustrate the configuration of the different cases. As argued before, Table 5:5 is an obvious simplification. However, it is a strategy to illustrate the logical consequence of the various arguments, in relation to the described reality. That is, the purpose of this is to demonstrate the theoretical argument as clearly as possible. This makes it easier to judge the argument in the end. If we expect a closer identification to the national level, the party is assigned a value of 1, if we expect to find a stronger identification with the EU the assigned value is -1. The intermediate cases are assigned the value of 0.

Table 5:5 The expected representative role in the selected cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Candidate selection</th>
<th>Contracts</th>
<th>Monitoring device</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GL</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The empirical material shows that parties from the same countries have similar systems for selecting candidates for the EP. This implies that the electoral system is important for explaining how parties manage this process. I also conclude that in all parties, the procedures to select candidates for the European election include some influence by the national executive body (with the possible exception of the Swedish and Dutch green parties). The difference is when this occurs. In some parties the national executive has some kind of veto over the decision in the selection procedure (the three Irish parties and the Swedish Moderate Party). I call this an *ex post* monitoring type of procedure. In other parties the national executive operates the process by formulating the proposals.
for the more decentralized regional body (the Swedish and Dutch Social Democratic parties and the Dutch Christian Democrats) and I call this an *ex ante* monitoring type of procedure. I argue that it is the *ex ante* monitoring strategy that gives the leadership the most powerful tool to influence the selection of candidates because of its agenda setting power, an instrument that the *ex post* monitoring process lacks (at least to some extent). The parties are therefore categorized according to this argument in Table 5:5.

I continue by looking at different organizational devices for coordinating between the national level and the MEPs. I focus on the contracts that are written between the MEPs and their party organizations, the various groups within the parties that could serve as a coordinating link between the levels, the EPD leaders’ inclusion in the party leadership and joint administrative resources.

The finding is that most of the parties write some kind of contract with the MEPs (the exception is the Irish Fianna Fáil). Some of these contracts are limited to regulating the financial relationship between the MEP and the party (the three Green parties and the Swedish Moderate Party). In the rest of the cases, the contracts regulate the financial relationship, but also express some kind of political expectation (the three social democratic parties and the Dutch Christian Democrats). Furthermore, it seems to be a connection between the system for selecting candidates and the way the contracts are written. In the cases where the selection of candidates is more open, the contracts are less strict. The only exception is the Irish Labour Party that has a more open selection procedure, but has rather strict formulations in their contracts. However, when the parties have a more centralized candidate selection procedure, the contracts also include political expectations.

Although some parties try to control the MEPs through the selection procedure and contracts, this is not followed up by well-developed coordination devices. On the contrary, as shown in Table 5:5, one party that is defined as having a relatively open candidate selection and write relatively open contracts, have the most rigorous coordination system, namely the Swedish Moderate Party. On the other end we have the Swedish Social Democrats that have a relatively centralized procedure.
for selecting candidates and write contracts that include political requirements, have probably the weakest coordinating device among the analyzed cases. Although, these two cases represent the most obvious example, it is possible to see the same pattern among some other parties (the Irish and the Dutch Social Democratic parties and the Dutch Christian Democrats). At this point it is hard to make any conclusion regarding this puzzling result. However, it is something that we should return to after looking closer at the MEPs.

In some parties the EPD leader plays a crucial role in the connection between the levels. In the Swedish Social Democratic Party this is as most obvious. One conclusion might be that this is an alternative strategy to coordinate between the levels, instead of organizing committees. This could also be relevant for the Irish Green Party. At the same time, other parties have a similar routine (Swedish Moderate Party and the Dutch Social Democrats) and they are not categorized as having a weak coordination system. In the end, this is perhaps not as much an alternative as a complement to other means of coordinating between the levels. However, the role of the EPD leader is interesting to analyze further when looking closer to the MEPs.

Lastly, it is common among the cases that they organize joint administrative functions in order to facilitate their relationship with the MEPs. In some cases these key-persons could be defined as liaison officers for the MEPs within the intra-party environment on the national level. In other cases, however, this function has been weakened and more of the resources have been moved to Brussels (Dutch Social Democratic Party). This is regarded as having weakened the relationship between the MEPs and the national level. Therefore, it is interesting to see how MEPs consider this aspect of the coordination system to work.

It is important to remember that I will return to many of the aspects discussed in this section, when talking to the MEPs. Therefore, this should be seen as one side of a two-sided coin. These are the formal rules (which do not always agree with reality) and the picture described by party representatives. The follow-up question is how these various aspects of the link between the levels are perceived by the MEPs. This is one of the themes for the next chapter.
In both of the referred studies the description falls back on a second type of influential organizational body. However, it is hard to know how influential and at what point this body influences the process. This complicates the analysis in a comparative perspective.

The information on the Irish Labour Party is based on Kavanagh 990208; Labour Party 1998a

The information on Fianna Fáil is based on Mackin 990209; O'Hanlon 990211

The information on the Irish Green Party is based on Kearney 990209; Goodwillie 990209; Green Party 1997

The difference is that there are a larger number of conventions in the national election (due to the number of constituencies). In the case of Fianna Fáil and the Irish Labour Party the local branches are able to send a larger number of representatives to the selection convention in the national election, than in the European election.

The leadership in the Labour Party supported the candidacy of a young TV journalist, Orla Guerin, and when the convention selected Bernie Malone, the national executive added her as a second candidate in the Dublin area (see Marsh 1995:209-15). Also in the '99 election, another candidate, Mr. Proinsias de Rossa, the former party leader of the Democratic Left that merged with the Labour Party during 1999, contested Bernie Malone. He also won the election and is currently the party’s only MEP.

The information on the Dutch Christian Democratic Party is based on Wiggers 990222; Verhajen 990223; Christen Democratisch Appèl (1999)

The information on Dutch Social Democratic Party is based on Berkvens 990224; Timmermans 990222; Partij van de Arbeid 1998

The information on Dutch Green Party is based on Cornelissen 990224; Wouters 990224; Groen Links 1997

The candidate in the third place on the proposal was moved down to fourth place. The committee proposed a newcomer, but the congress preferred a more experienced candidate.

Compare the above description of the current procedures in Dutch Social Democratic Party, with the description in Koole and Leijenaar (1988:197) in order to see the difference between the procedures before the above-described change.

The information on the Swedish Social Democratic Party is based on Svensson 981118; Svensson 990119; Hulterström 990122; Socialdemokraterna 1997

The information on the Swedish Green Party is based on Dahlström 981102; Dahlström 990120; Samuelsson 990121; Miljöpartiet de Gröna 1994

The information on the Moderate Party is based on Löfgren 981102; Hökmark 990203; Moderaterna, 1997

According to the General Secretary of the Swedish Green Party (Mr. Dahlström) only 10% voted in the primary.
The turn out in the Swedish Moderate Party in the 1999 European election was approximately 20%, which is considered rather good.

I have categorized the Irish Green Party as having an intra-party “primary,” although the selection procedure involves a convention. However, all members have access to the convention and if they are not able to attend it is possible to give a postal vote. This does not discriminate against any member from being involved in the selection procedure and therefore I categorize it as an intra-party primary.

The Dutch Green Party and especially the Swedish Green Party are difficult to categorize in this manner, because it is hard to see that the party leadership actually influences the selection of candidates. In a way this has to do with their system with a selection committee that is responsible for the whole process.

I use the term European Parliament delegation (EPD) for the group of MEP’s from one party. This should not be confused with the term European Parliament Group (EPG) that is the political group of which the EPD is a member.

See Heidar and Koole (2000) for further discussion about the distinction between extra parliamentary organizations and parliamentary party groups and the importance of understanding these relationships in order to understand representative democracy.

The information on the Irish Labour Party has been verified in a letter from the General Secretary, Mike Allen (2002-07-23).

The information on the Irish Green Party has been verified and updated by the General Secretary (Nutter 2003-03-28)

They use the term “convener,” but I interpret the description as some kind of expert.

This includes selecting representatives for the congress of the Party of European Socialists (PES). Before the 1999 PES congress the Dutch Social Democrats did send an open letter to the congress expressing the need for a democratization of the PES (Partij van de Arbeid 1999). One of the main messages was that the delegation to the congress should not be from the party elite, but should consist of ordinary rank-and-file members. This would open up the European party and help transform it into a real party organization. Therefore the Dutch Social Democrats elected “ordinary” members to their delegation to the 1999 PES congress.

The information on the Dutch Christian Democratic Party has been verified in a letter from the international secretary Ellen van Moorsel (2002-08-06).

The information on the Dutch Green Party has been verified in a letter from Annie van de Pas in the party office (2003-05-12).

One delegate, Maj Britt Theorin, was a known representative of the No-movement in Sweden. However, before the 1999 election, she officially declared that she accepted the party position regarding EU issues.

The information on the Swedish Social Democratic Party is verified in a letter from the General secretary Lars Stjernkvist (2002-09-26).

“Regions” are not formal organizational entities in the Swedish Social Democrats. The level beneath the central organization is termed “districts.” However, because of
the small number of MEP’s compared with the number of districts, the party has, at least informally, collapsed these districts into six regions. Although the formal status of the regions is unclear, it plays a crucial role in the link between MEPs and the party.

89 The information on the Swedish Moderate Party is verified in a letter from the international secretary Linda Bergman (2002-09-09).

90 The formulation in the statutes is limited to the candidates for the national parliament (§12.5). The norm is however, that this should apply to all groups of representatives of the party.
CHAPTER SIX

Contacts between the MEPs and the national arena

In this chapter, we will look further into the relationship between the national level and the EU level. In the previous chapter we analyzed the intra-party surroundings of the MEPs, and in this chapter we will turn to the MEPs and ask for their views on these relationships and define the organizational role that the MEPs adopt. By this we are able to get a deeper knowledge of the intra-party environment and grasp one fundamental part of the MEPs’ roles.

The cases selected for this study differ in terms of the electoral system, the relationship between the legislature and the government regarding EU issues, and the popular opinion regarding the development of the EU. We also differentiate the cases at the level of the party organization, considering whether the MEPs belong to a governmental party or a non-governmental party and what type of party the MEPs are affiliated with. We also try to analyze the intra-party surroundings regarding the process of selecting the MEPs and if the parties developed a more rigorous system of coordination. The explanations on which these differences are based will thereby be assessed in the interviews with the MEPs.

We will start by looking at some general aspects of the contacts between the levels. That is, the formality of these contacts and various kinds of resources used to facilitate these contacts. Thereafter, we shall analyze the pattern of contacts, whom do the MEPs give priority to in their relationships with the national level, and if the national party uses
the MEPs as a resource within the organization. Thereafter, we discuss the question of how MEPs handle situations where conflicts develop between the levels. Lastly, we will ask if the MEPs turn to the national level or the EU level groups when they are in need of advice.

Coordination in general from an MEPs perspective

In many respects parties try to collaborate or coordinate between the levels, and it is a kind of trial and error process. In a way these relationships are a new phenomenon for the party organizations, even for those that have been present on the EU level for a long time. Therefore, the MEPs work under quite different circumstances within the different parties, as we have seen in the last chapter and will see in this chapter. However, before going in to the differences between the cases, I want to make some overall remarks that are needed in order to better understand the situation for the MEPs. The reason is simply that MEPs share some common problems and it is easy to miss these if we only concentrate on the differences between the MEPs.

The MEPs’ views on effectiveness of the coordination devices

Chapter five ended with the conclusion that parties differ with respect to how advanced are the measurements they develop for coordination between the national party and the MEPs. This conclusion is based on the description made by various party representatives in the national arena. However, we cannot take for granted that this picture is accurate when it comes to how the MEPs themselves regard the effectiveness of these devices. On the contrary, the national parties have good reasons for overestimating the importance of the measurements that they have developed for this purpose. It is natural that the representatives on the national level describe themselves as being in charge and show that they are able to coordinate action as well as keep track of their MEPs.

For this reason, one part of the interviews with the MEPs dealt with their views on the organizational set-up that the parties have developed for facilitating the relationship between the levels. In Table 6:1, the estimate made in Chapter five (see Table 5:4) is compared with the estimate made by the MEPs about the effectiveness of these various coordination devices.
As it turns out, the overall picture is that the representatives from the national level have seriously overestimated the importance of the coordination devices compared to the views of the MEPs. Only nine MEPs think that the devices described by the national representatives are important and say that they attend its meetings. The rest say that there is no such coordination device or that they never or rarely attend its meetings.

An alternative explanation is that my own understanding of the various coordination systems is inaccurate. However, the difference between the systems according to my understanding and the judgment of the MEPs follows a common pattern. The ones that I have defined as weak are recognized as unimportant or not even existing according to the MEPs. The three that do attend (within the weak category) are found in the Swedish Green party. They attend the meetings of the loosely connected (but pre-defined) network. However, since the group meets very rarely (and only on special occasions), it is defined as weak in my categorization. In the intermediate category, only two MEPs identify these coordination bodies as existing and declare that they attend its meetings. These two are leaders of their respective EPDs and thereby are situated in a particular position, compared to other MEPs within the same EPD. The rest of the MEPs do agree that this device exists, but say that they very rarely or never attend its meetings. As much as 55% say that these devices do not exist in practice, or define them as irrelevant in terms of coordination. In the strong category, the four MEPs (all from the Swedish Moderate Party) agree that the device developed by the party is important and that they attend its meeting on a regular basis. All in all, it seems like my categorization is correct, although the MEPs put a different perspective on these relationships compared to the representatives from the national level.
Because of this discrepancy, I will include the MEPs’ judgment over these relationships when looking at various patterns of contacts in the remaining parts of this study. This will better show the influence of the organizational set-up as an explanation for how MEPs describe their links to the national level.

INFORMAL AND INDIVIDUAL CONTACTS

In all the parties included in this study the MEPs are either members of the parliamentary party group in the national parliament (Irish parties) or invited to weekly meetings in the parliamentary party groups. However, as noted in the previous chapter, the MEPs have a small chance of attending these meetings due to conflicting time schedules. The meetings in the national parliamentary party group occur at the same time that much is happening in the EP. Therefore, almost unanimously the MEPs describe the relationship with the national level as being based on informal and individual contacts. These informal contacts are most often formed on the basis of common policy responsibilities. It is especially the MEP responsible for the same issues as the national parliamentarian that upholds this informal contact. This might make the coordination efficient, but it also increases the individualistic character of the work as an MEP, as well as limiting the general awareness of EU issues within the national parliaments.

The informal character of these relationships gives the MEP that has a former career within the national parliament an advantage. They know the people working in the national parliament and they are familiar with the environment. Especially the “rookies” in this study testify that this is the case (for example interview no. 9). They have to build up a relationship with national parliamentarians while at the same time learning the workings of the EP and their specific policy field.

The Irish case deserves some specific comments regarding how the contacts between the levels operate. In a comparative sense, the national level is important in the Irish case and they generally give high priority to having good contacts with the national level. As in the other two cases the Irish contacts are characterized as individual and informal, but the Irish MEPs differ in one respect. They meet the national parliamentarians and
ministers in their constituencies in a way that the other MEPs do not. In the other countries these informal contacts are based on common policy responsibilities and not, as in the Irish case, on their connection to the regional or local level. Large parties in Ireland organize regular meetings on a regional level with all the elected representatives and representatives from the branches within the electoral district. During these conventions specific questions can be put forward to the MEPs as well as to national and local deputies from this region. This regionally based coordination and corroboration between levels and members of the party differs in very important respects compared to the other parties in this study.

MEPs WITH A POSITION ROLE

As described in the previous chapter, the EPD leader often has a specific position toward the national level. In some cases various appointments in important leading bodies of the national parties explicitly state this. In other cases we can presume that the EPD leader is important, since he or she has a kind of responsibility for the whole EPD. This means that the position of the delegation leader is strong when it comes to coordination between the levels. A complicating fact is that the work in the EP is highly individualized and it is impossible for the delegation leader to control everything that is going on in the delegation. Therefore, it is up to the individual MEPs to coordinate their work with the national party organization through the delegation leader or by other means (or not at all).

The importance of the delegation leader may also be problematic in a situation of disagreement within the delegation. As one MEP told me when talking about these issues:

To be honest, most of the talking is done by the chairman here [the delegation leader] […] He is a very dominant person, so he is doing most of the talking. If I really want to make a deal with a Dutch MP, then I phone the guy personally or let it be done by an assistant (interview no. 29).

This means that the delegation leader functions as a kind of gatekeeper between the levels. According to most of the respondents, it is to the delegation leader that the MEPs turn when they see that a conflict is
arising within their field of work, for example between the national position and the position of the EPG. Consequently, the delegation leader defines which issues should be placed on the agenda and is able to use this position of “coordinator” to strengthen his or her position within the EPD.

SECRETARIAL RESOURCES

Many parties have an appointed secretary at the national level that serves as a liaison officer for the EPD toward the national level in general, and specifically toward the party. Often these key persons represent the EPD position within the intra-party debate and report about the situation on the national level to the MEPs. In one of the included parties this kind of liaison officer was introduced between the first round of interviews in 1999 and the second in 2001. One of the MEPs from that party confirms that the relationship between the levels has developed immensely because of this appointment (interview no. 65). The appointments of these key persons show that parties as well as EPDs try to handle the situation with a lack of coordination. However, the great importance of these key persons illustrates that the relationship between the levels rests on a very fragile foundation.

The MEPs also have personal secretaries and most of them work in Brussels. These secretaries are usually the ones that have the actual contact with various groups on the national level. Often there is a more or less organized relationship between the MEP secretary and the secretary of the national parliamentarian that is responsible for the same question in the national parliament. However, the salary for these personal secretaries is not especially high and the working hours are harsh. The consequence is that these secretaries usually are very young and the time that they stay is rather short, and therefore the development of expertise and contacts is undermined.

There are some differences between the parties with respect to how they handle their secretarial resources. In the Irish parties, especially in the Fianna Fáil, the resources are focused on the MEP’s electoral district (interview no. 64). They have a smaller staffing on the EP level than many of the other cases included in the study. Walking into the office of an Irish MEP and an MEP from, for example, the Dutch Green party is very different. In
the Dutch Green party, they have concentrated a lot of their resources building up a team of secretaries, collectively managed by the MEPs in Brussels. This is something very different from what we can see in most of the Irish cases and this tells us something about what kind of priorities different MEPs give to different tasks. To be linked to the electoral district is more important to an Irish MEP, compared to his or her Dutch colleagues.

The other exception is the Swedish Social Democratic Party. They have divided Sweden into six regions, and even though these are not equivalent to electoral districts (since Sweden does not use electoral districts in the European elections), they are organized in a way that every MEP represents the region that they live in. Although the party has secretarial resources connected to the national party headquarters that are working with EU issues, the major part of secretarial help is concentrated in these regions. This means that at least some of the MEPs, when referring to the national level, mean their region rather than Stockholm. This tells us that the party tries to impose a kind of regional representation, although, the electoral system is not built on this logic. It is hard to say if this has any negative effect on the MEPs opportunity to coordinate with the national party apparatus, but it could arguably be the case.

The secretarial staffs are important for the link between the levels. This is probably also the easiest way for parties to improve the relationship: by giving more resources to secretarial help, creating a more rational and focused system of secretarial help, and try to create a group of expertise within the secretarial staff.

Although the MEPs give similar descriptions of the environment that they work in, there are also important differences. We shall now try to map out some of these differences and we start by looking at the contact between the MEPs and various groups on the national level.

**Pattern of contacts at the national level**

A political party is a complex system of relations between different actors and groups that play various roles in different situations in a party's daily work. The overall topic that this study deals with is how the MEPs fit into these party structures and their roles vis-à-vis the national
level. In this section we will ask how the MEPs describe the importance of having contacts with three different groups and we shall ask if the MEP’s specific competence is used within the national party organizations.

First, before dividing the MEPs according to various explanatory variables, it is important to see the general picture on how the MEPs frame their roles with the national party organization. Table 6:2 reports what priority the MEPs give to different bodies of the party on the national level, that is, the extra-parliamentary organization, the parliamentary party group and the national government.

**Table 6:2  MEPs’ contacts with the national party organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis on contacts with the...</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra-parliamentary organization</td>
<td>23  (64%)</td>
<td>7 (19%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>36 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>12  (33%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>22 (61%)</td>
<td>36 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary party group</td>
<td>32  (89%)</td>
<td>2 (5.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5.5%)</td>
<td>36 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=very important/important, 2=important in some specific situations, 3=important for gathering information/not important

As we are able to conclude on the basis of Table 6:2, it is the national parliamentary party group that is especially important for the MEPs. Almost all (89%) say that this group is important or very important in their daily work. In many respects, it is in the national parliamentary party groups that the expertise of the parties is concentrated and it is in the parliament that the more actual policymaking is being done. Although the general pattern is that MEPs give priority to the connection with their colleagues in the national parliaments, this does not mean that the MEPs are satisfied with how this connection works within the parties. I will return to this discussion later on.

There is also a majority that say that the extra-parliamentary organization is important, though less important than the parliamentary group. In many parties there is a close link between the extra-parliamentary organization and the parliamentary party group in the national parliament. They play very different roles in a party and it is not possible to give a general answer that one or the other is more powerful; it simply differs from party to party and country to country. In general it can be said, however, that the extra-parliamentary organizations have a strong influence over the process of selecting candidates, compared to the national parliamentary party
group (Heidar & Koole 2000:265). In the previous chapter we have seen that this is also the case among the party organizations represented in this study, although they differ with respect to how much control the extra-parliamentary organization has over this process.

It is easy to neglect a third player in the game between the levels, namely national governments. How governments try to influence MEPs and how MEPs regard the relationship with the national government is not analyzed at any greater length in earlier studies (see Messmer 2003 for an exception). One reason is probably that the governments are expected to work within the Council of Ministers in the first place and not with the MEPs. However, as the relationship between the EP and the Council of Ministers is getting ever more important in the overall EU decision-making process, it can be expected that the national governments will try to influence the MEPs at greater length and therefore this relationship should get more attention. Table 6:2 also shows that a minority of the MEPs (33%) mention the government as an important link in their daily work.

Although this general pattern shows that the MEPs direct their contacts toward different groups, it is reasonable to believe that there is a variation among the MEPs in their contacts with the national level. Therefore, we shall take a closer look at how MEPs from different countries and parties handle these relationships.

**EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZATIONS**

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the importance of the extra-parliamentary organization and other parts of the national party. At the same time, it is fruitful to see if the MEPs handle this relationship differently. In Table 6:3, the MEPs have been asked to evaluate their contacts with the extra-parliamentary organization by saying if it plays a role that is very important, important, important in specific situations, important for gathering information or not important. These are collapsed into three categories.
Table 6:3  MEPs’ contacts with the extra-parliamentary organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis on contacts with the extra-parliamentary organization</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>6 (86%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>6 (37%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>6 (37%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td>11 (73%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>6 (75%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9 (56%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (19%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14 (70%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence over candidate selection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>8 (42%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
<td>6 (32%)</td>
<td>19 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>10 (31%)</td>
<td>1 (9%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>5 (83%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Written contract</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>10 (83%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device according to MEPs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>10 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device according to MEPs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14 (52%)</td>
<td>7 (26%)</td>
<td>6 (22%)</td>
<td>27 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=very important/important, 2=important in some specific situations, 3=important for gathering information/not important

Table 6:3 displays an interesting variation between the cases. The Dutch MEPs obviously do not emphasize their relationship with the extra-parliamentary organization and the Dutch extra-parliamentary organizations clearly play a different role than in the Swedish and the Irish cases (37% compared to 85% and 86%). This is especially puzzling with respect to candidate selection. We would think that if the MEPs are interested in re-selection, they should tend to look after their relationship with the extra-parliamentary organization, especially in cases where the party has strong control over the candidate selection process. In Chapter five we concluded that especially the Dutch parties “scored” high on
party leaderships influence over the candidate selection process. However the Dutch MEPs do not give priority to this link. This picture is emphasized further down the table, when we connect the leadership influence over the candidate selection procedure and the priority given to the extra-parliamentary organization by the MEPs. It is actually in the groups that come from parties that have a more centralized candidate selection that give less priority to the extra-parliamentary organization. The answer to this puzzling result may be found in an answer made by a Dutch MEPs when we were discussing these links:

...really, the only thing is if you want to be re-elected, you have to be visible to them [the extra-parliamentary organization] and they are the ones that decide if you will come back or not. But all the functional contacts are with the parliamentary group. That's where you do the real work (interview no. 28).

Although the strategy to influence ones opportunities to get re-elected is considered, this does not influence how the MEPs organize their work toward the national arena at any great length.

As for the other party level variables, the cases do not display any large differences. There is a difference between the socialist parties and the right wing and green parties regarding the importance of the extra-parliamentary organizations (46% compared to 73% and 75%). At the same time, the difference is not that large and if we look at the whole picture (31% of the socialist MEPs regard this link to be important in specific situations), the party heritage seems to have a small influence over how MEPs organize this link. Basically, the same argument applies to the government variable. MEPs from government parties seem to give less priority to this link, but the difference is quite small.

When an MEP is constrained by written contracts or more advanced coordination devices, the effect seems to be the opposite of what we would expect. We would believe that these strategies of controlling the MEP, would make them more keen on emphasizing the relationship with the extra-parliamentary organization, however, this seems not to be the case. Furthermore, if we check for the use of a coordination device defined as effective by the MEPs themselves, we find that all the MEPs that have this kind of device (and use it) also regard this relationship as
important or very important. Only 52% of the MEPs that do not regard themselves as having this kind of effective coordination device give the same answer. This implies that there is an important difference between how the MEPs define these coordination devices and how the national party organizations describe them.

Looking at Table 6:3, it seems like it is the MEP’s country of origin that best captures his or her relationship with the extra-parliamentary party. This implies that the role of this organizational body varies between countries and that the variation in this material is an effect of that. However, one alternative explanation is mentioned in the interviews. The extra-parliamentary organization may function as a mediator between the MEPs and the party group in the national parliament. It can simply be that this function is necessary in a situation where the party disagrees on how to handle issues on one or the other level. Some Swedish MEPs mention that the extra-parliamentary organization does play this role in their party (Interview no. 49). Maybe the need of such a mediator is stronger in the Irish and Swedish context than in the Dutch. Further analysis of the material will show if this pattern is true also when looking at how the MEPs from these different environments operate.

PARLIAMENTARY PARTY GROUP

The relationship between the national parliaments and the EP is fundamental in the future debate on how EU should work. The national parliaments do try to find strategies to receive information from the EU system, influence the national governments and be more prepared for decisions on the EU level. We also know from previous chapters that national parliaments include the MEPs at different length, in order to facilitate the scrutiny of the national government. The question is how the MEPs judge this link. In Table 6:4, we find information on the priority that the MEPs give to their relationship with the national parliamentarians. The categories are the same as for Table 6:3.
Only four MEPs do not regard the relationship with the national parliamentarians as very important or important. This emphasizes that this is the most important link toward the national arena. As the quote above exemplifies, this is the place for things to really happen. The consequence is also that it is hard to see any differences among the cases. Despite this relative cohesive picture, Table 6:4, deserves a few remarks.

Although the differences are very small between the cases, it is interesting to note that among the four MEPs that do not give their relationship with the national parliamentarians a top priority, three come from Sweden. Swedish MEPs generally emphasize (compared to the
Irish and Dutch MEPs) the link to the extra-parliamentary organization, and perhaps this makes the link to the national parliamentarians less important.

Table 6:4 also shows that the MEPs that tend not to emphasize this relationship almost all come from parties that do not have effective coordination devices. It is possible, as was said in the last chapter, that more developed coordination devices also provide a good platform for building more informal contacts and the result in Table 6:4, may be a result of this.

We are also able to see that the emphasis on this link is lower among MEPs from governmental parties, compared to those from non-governmental parties. This is probably explained by the reasonable argument that if MEPs search for the expertise in the national arena, they should probably find it among their party colleagues in the government, rather than in the national parliamentary group. The pattern of contacts simply takes another route among governmental parties, compared to non-governmental parties. Therefore we turn to see the MEPs connection to the national governments.

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Some of the respondents testify that the role of the governments has changed in recent years, especially after the increased use of the co-decision procedure. Governments have become more active and this also influences the behavior of the MEPs (Interviews no. 27; 60). It is however, reasonable to believe that the governments act differently toward different MEPs and that this link is more or less important for different MEPs. Table 6:5 shows how the MEPs in this study regard the importance of contacts with the national governments. The categorization is the same as in the above tables.
Table 6:5  MEPs’ contacts with the national government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Emphasis on contacts with the government</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (57%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (31%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11 (69%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (62%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6 (38%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>16 (80%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence over candidate selection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 (42%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11 (58%)</td>
<td>19 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (38%)</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
<td>5 (46%)</td>
<td>11 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Written contract</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>11 (55%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>11 (92%)</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11 (55%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device according to MEPs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>7 (78%)</td>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 (41%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>15 (55%)</td>
<td>27 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = very important/important, 2 = important in some specific situations, 3 = important for gathering information/not important

The most obvious conclusion when looking at Table 6:5 is that MEPs from governmental parties give priority to contacts with their government. 62% of the MEPs from governmental parties say that contacts with the government is very important or important, compared to 10% of the MEPs from none governmental parties. In a sense, this is intuitive. There is a strong partisan incentive to have a cohesive strategy in different issues in the national parliament, Council of Ministers and in the EP. One MEP describes it as follows:

…therefore we often have this contact with the [...] ministers or the heads of departments or political advisors. [...] I believe that is a much more strong connection, than we have with the parliamentary party group or the party leadership (interview no. 48).
Some of these contacts run through the permanent representation in Brussels, which are responsible for the national government’s negotiations within the Council of Ministers. In most cases the permanent representation arranges meetings with the MEPs in order to describe the government’s position on a certain topic. One MEP describes that:

*Before each meeting of the [...] committee, all Dutch members of the [...] committee are invited by the Dutch permanent representation. We go through the agenda and the representatives of the government tell us what is the Dutch position on this and why and what is exactly the rules in the Netherlands on this. So, the items are explained from a Dutch point of view. That happens in the sectors that are having co-decision items (interview no. 27).*

In addition, as the above quote illustrates, the MEPs use the permanent representation to receive basic facts on issues that they deal with in their committee or otherwise. The permanent representation often consists of policy experts that handle the negotiations, and the MEPs simply make use of them.

The second conclusion concerning Table 6:5 is that there is a significant difference between the countries. The Irish MEPs give an especially high priority to the contacts with the government. However, it is important to remember that the relative number of MEPs that belong to a governmental party is higher in Ireland than in the other two countries.

The third conclusion is that the writing of contracts or the control over candidate selection do not influence the priority given to the government relationship. The numbers presented in table 6:5, regarding these variables, simply do not make sense from a theoretical perspective.

The fourth conclusion is that the existence of a more advanced coordination device has an effect on the way MEPs describe their relation with the national government. The groups that have more advanced coordination devices do not give priority to the link with the government compared to the groups that do not have such devices. This is even strengthened when we sort out the MEPs that define their coordination device as effective. This is to some part explained by the fact that parties in the opposition seem to organize these more advanced devices at a greater length compared to the parties in government (among the nine
MEPs that regard their coordination device as effective, only one represent a governmental party). At the same time we know that MEPs from governmental parties give priority to the contact with the national governments. One conclusion could be that parties in government simply do not need this type of coordination device or that it is harder for governmental parties to arrange one. I lean toward the second explanation. The reason is that parties in government have a third arena in which to be present, namely the Council of Ministers, and this makes this game harder to play. Even though this complexity should be easier to handle with some sort of coordinating device, many MEPs would probably be reluctant to be so closely involved with the national government. It is simply easier to be equal to a national parliamentarian than to a minister. Consequently, to have informal contacts with ministers and their departments rather than a more structured relationship within a committee does not threaten the independence of the MEPs in the same respect. This problem is not as obvious in the parties that are not in a governmental position.

Although many MEPs representing governmental parties defy that they are instructed by the national governments, it is obvious in a comparative sense, that they give priority to this relationship. If they are also influenced is a much harder issue to answer. However, based on these conclusions the national governments, and thereby the Council of Ministers, have an obvious connection to the EP, which probably has been underestimated in previous research.

**MEPs as EU-experts**

Together with the increased importance of the EU, the flow of information between the levels is tremendous. We know that the national parliaments try to find ways to handle the situation and use various means to control the government regarding EU related issues. Intuitively, the MEPs should be key players in the parties’ grasping such things. In the Irish parliament, for instance, the MEPs are invited to the European Affairs Committee as a way of tightening the relationship between the levels. We also know that the Dutch parliament has opened for the MEPs to speak in standing committees as well as in plenary sessions. At
the same time these reforms are contested, because MEPs are not national parliamentarians and the national parliament is an institution that should be reserved for national popularly elected representatives. The answer to the contradiction, between principles of representative interests and incentives for a stronger cooperation between the levels is to make the party organization responsible for the coordination between the levels.

Therefore, one part of this study tries to understand how different groups on the national level use the MEPs insights and knowledge, in order to handle EU issues in the national context. I have used the term “EU experts” to understand this dimension of the relationship between the MEPs and the national level. In Table 6:6, we are able to see how often the MEPs are used as experts by the national level, based on the MEPs’ own self-estimation. In the next chapter we will dig deeper into the importance of this dimension on the overall representative role adopted by the MEPs.

First of all, it comes as a surprise that none of the party variables seems to have any effect on the use of MEPs as experts. It does not seem to matter much what type of party the MEP is affiliated with or if the party is in government or not. Even various ways of measuring party control over MEPs (influence over candidate selection, contracts or coordination devices) does not seem to effect if the MEPs are used as experts or not. For example, we would believe that more advanced coordination devices should create a common arena for the MEPs and the national parliamentarians that would make it natural to use their expertise. Obviously this does not seem to be the case.
Table 6:6  The use of MEPs as expert by the national parliamentarians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the national parliamentary group use you as an expert because of your role in the EP?</th>
<th>Yes, often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>No, never</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>3 (43%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>7 (44%)</td>
<td>7 (44%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>1(6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>7 (58%)</td>
<td>1(8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party type</td>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>2(25%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>5 (31%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7 (37%)</td>
<td>6 (32%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence over candidate selection</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>8 (42%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
<td>4 (21%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written contract</td>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
<td>5 (46%)</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination device</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination device according to MEPs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>1 (12%)</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8 (30%)</td>
<td>10 (37%)</td>
<td>5 (18%)</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the MEP’s country of origin has an effect. In Table 6:6, it is shown that the MEPs from the Netherlands experience that they are used as experts to a higher degree than MEPs in Ireland and especially Sweden. 88% of the Dutch MEPs say that they are often or sometimes used as experts, compared to 57% of the Irish MEPs and 33% of the Swedish MEPs. This could have at least three different explanations. First, this could be a result of different institutional solutions on the national level. In the Netherlands, the national parliament tries to include the MEPs in the procedures in the parliament. Even though this is the case also in Sweden, the Dutch parliament has gone further in this
development. The Dutch MEPs do attend standing committee meetings, during preparation of meetings with the Council of Ministers. This is a way for the national parliament to be stronger in the debate vis-à-vis the government. The government also reacts on questions put by the MEPs during these meetings (Mattijssen 010320). This conclusion, however, should mean that the Irish MEPs also would score higher on these estimates and they do not. In Ireland, the MEPs are able to attend meetings of the European Affairs Committee. They also do attend these meetings (at least sometimes). Thereby these MEPs are able to give their input on the decision process within the national parliament, and thereby being used by the national parliamentarians. One Irish MEP says:

“Yes, I would be there and give my point of view or what ever. But how big impact that has, I am not so sure. […] Within the European Affairs Committee, in the national parliament, I just feel that they are operating in isolation from what is happening in Europe. And there is not enough sort of preparatory work in relation to what ministers are going out to vote on. There is no proper discussion in the national parliament, even in those committees. (interview no. 41)

Despite this skepticism, the fact that some MEPs are able to vocally express their opinion in the national parliament should put them in a very different position compared to the Swedish MEPs, but we are not able to clearly trace that in these findings.

The second explanation is that the MEPs from Ireland and the Netherlands are more integrated in the party organization, than the Swedish MEPs. They are simply more recognized within the party and consequently used as experts. That the Swedish MEPs give relatively less priority to their contacts with national parliamentarians, compared to the other two cases, could be an expression of this (although the differences are quite small). On the other hand, it seems like the Swedish MEPs rather use the extra-parliamentary organization as their point of reference, which in turn would undermine this explanation.

The third explanation would be that this is a result of how the MEPs look upon their roles as MEPs. To regard oneself as an expert could, instead of measuring inclusiveness in the party organization, actually mean the opposite. An expert identifies himself or herself as someone
who represents the EP and brings back information and knowledge to the national level. That is, his or her role is something different than being a national representative. Not to see themselves as experts would then mean that they are equal to other representatives in the national political arena, with tasks not that different from the national parliamentarians, although in a different environment. This third explanation taps into the next chapter, that is, how MEPs view their representative roles, and if this conclusion is correct, it should be possible to trace this argument also in the overall framing of the MEPs roles.

**Problems with the link to the national level**

We have now taken a closer look into the pattern of contacts between the MEPs and the various groups on the national level. Overall, it seems like it is the national parliamentarians that are the most important point of reference for the MEPs. However, the fact that MEPs give priority to the relationships with the national parliamentarians, relative to other groups within the party, says very little about how the MEPs evaluate the operations of this link. Even though the MEPs obviously give priority to these relationships, a vast majority of the respondents complain about the lack of contact with the national level and especially with the national parliamentarians. During the discussions with the MEPs, it is obvious that some general problems do exist in the contacts between the levels, and it is possible to concentrate these complaints into four general categories.

**LACK OF INTEREST AND AWARENESS**

The lack of awareness among the national parliamentarians about how the EU operates and amount of power that actually has been transferred to the EU from the national level is testified by several MEPs. Many MEPs also say that the interest of parliamentary party groups in the national parliament is very limited, when it comes to information on what is happening on at the EP level. As one MEP describes it:
When we deal with specific policy issues, the national parliamentarians have to bring in a new level of decision-making, and they are not used to that. The result is that they do not really understand that we exist. I feel that it is almost always on my initiative and I have to fight my way in. (interview no. 49)

It is often that the competence regarding EU issues within the national parliamentary party groups is concentrated in a few parliamentarians. Often these are members of the national European Affairs Committee. There is a tendency that the knowledge that these people pose is not spread to the others within the parliamentary groups. There are basically two effects of this general lack of knowledge within the national parliaments. As the above quote indicates, it makes it harder for the MEPs to connect to the national level, because the national parliamentarians do not understand the importance of this link. Secondly, the national parliamentarians are not able to see the whole picture. The national legislative process regarding several policy areas is dependent on what is going on at the EU level. In order to get it right, the national parliamentarians need to be aware of the positions taken in Brussels. As one MEP describes it, when talking about trying to get the national parliamentarians to understand the importance of the EU legislative power:

…asylum policy, that is not a national issue any longer, it is a European issue, you [referring to the national MPs] have to understand this […]
Even if you can legislate in the [national] parliament, you have to start think European (interview no. 63).

Especially the Swedish MEPs seem to experience this problem. For example, 66% of the Swedish MEPs say that the national parliamentarians seldom or never use them as a resource. This is underlined by the fact that three out of four MEPs (in Table 6:4) that do not consider the relationship with the national parliamentarians as important are Swedes.

LACK OF MEDIA ATTENTION

The awareness of what is happening on the EU level among national parliamentarians is not helped by the fact that the media attention concerning the work of the MEPs is very limited. One Dutch MEP describes it like:
…the writing press is getting a little better [on reporting about the EU], but you should never forget that 2/3 of the Dutch electorate get their information from the television. And since they hardly ever say something about Europe, let alone the role of the parliament or individual deputies, it is still very much unknown. (interview no. 38)

This kind of complaint is quite common among the MEPs. The opinion is divided over whether or not this is beginning to change; however, the media’s coverage is still limited compared to the coverage of the national parliament. This puts the MEPs in very different positions as political representatives compared to the national parliamentarians.

When something does receive the attention of the media, the topic is most often scandals or suspicions of fraud. This certainly does not help the reputations of the MEPs, because they are connected to a system that is referred to as encouraging dishonesty and criminality. The media also have difficulties separating different EU institutions when reporting about shady affairs. Even though the MEPs may be very active in trying to disclose these kinds of affairs, they are associated with these activities just because the MEPs are present within the EU system. All this makes it harder for the MEPs to communicate with the voters as well as with the national party organization.

DIFFERENT TIME SCHEDULES

One obvious difficulty to link the two levels together is that MEPs mostly deal with issues before they end up in the national parliaments. This puts the MEPs in an awkward position. On one hand, they have agenda-setting power; on the other hand, they risk receiving criticism afterwards. This is frustrating and becomes even more difficult if the attention from the national level on what is going on in the EP is feeble.

Furthermore, the different time schedules also make it difficult to integrate the MEPs in the national parliaments and to inform the national parliamentarians on developments in the EP. One MEP that I interviewed in 1999 and in 2001 reflects on the development between the two occasions:
Our agenda and their [the national parliament] agenda make it very difficult to meet. It is easier now with internet and all that kind of things, but items are complicated, it is not so easy to find a way to communicate over very complex items. [...] I think that it is really [getting] more difficult because our role as legislators is growing. And I think that that is what you will see more often than two years ago. After Amsterdam, the parliament is a grown parliament. We are really an adult parliament. We are grown up now. And that makes life more complicated. The parliament is more responsible and agendas are fuller and fuller every day (interview no. 67).

This quote indicates a paradox. The more power that is transferred to the EU level in general, and specifically to the EP, the more the cooperation between the levels needs to be improved. Either this is done within the parliaments as institutions or within the party organizations. If the processes of transferring legislative capabilities and of improving cooperation between the levels are not connected, we run the risk of weakening the capability of holding the MEPs accountable and of making sound judgments about different policy alternatives. We will return to these issues in the end of this study.

A GROWING HOSTILITY

Some MEPs refer to a growing tendency among the national parliamentarians to defend the national parliament against the EP, and thereby create a tension between the national arena and MEPs (Interview no. 49; 14). Or, as one MEP says:

…they expect us to do the consultation, to do the linking, to give them information. But not the other way around [...] This has its consequences, of course, for the whole way MEPs are looked upon in the party organization, but especially in the parliamentary party. They see us as competitors or second-rate politicians or merely civil servants (interview no. 29).

This tendency is due to the above-discussed problems. However, the risk is that these problems start a cumulative process where the lack of awareness, lack of media interest, and a widening gap between the levels speed up a process of growing hostility toward the MEP among national parliamentarians. Another MEP connects this problem with the general transfer of competence to the EU level. This makes the national parliamentarians more hostile toward the EU level in general and specifically their own MEPs.
It is very difficult [to establish a closer cooperation with the national parliamentarians], because they are very afraid they will lose their independence. They see of course the whole thing in legislation, which comes from the EU, that the EP is becoming more and more important and the national parliament is becoming less important […] Of course, for them it is a reason to be very careful with us. Always to be a little bit distant. (interview no. 9)

If this is a general picture among all MEPs, it is reasonable to think that they get tired of trying to do this linking at the national arena and instead want to grow a stronger EU identification. This is an important topic for the next chapter, when we shall look closer on how MEPs understand their representative roles.

Conflicts between the levels

By talking about two different levels, we assume that they can have different interests and from time to time end up in conflict. If this occurs, the MEPs are right in the crossfire of these conflicts. The MEPs have three options. They can run with the national position and just defect from the position taken by their group in the EP, they can negotiate between the levels and try to change the opinion of either one of them, or they can accept the difference and vote as the group in the EP. In either way, the MEP feels pressure from both levels. Therefore situations of conflicts are interesting from a role perspective. It is during these occasions that we would expect that different role conceptions would be most obvious.

In this section, we will focus on how MEPs regard the frequency of these conflicts and in what policy areas that they are most common.

Do the MEPs experience a conflict between the levels?

It is hard to measure conflicts between the national and the EU level. It is seldom that these conflicts are displayed openly in public and it is hard to estimate the seriousness in various conflicts. At the same time, this study is focusing on the MEPs; their experiences and their views on their situations. Therefore, it is reasonable to let them estimate how often they experience these conflicts, because this tells us something about how
they view these links. In Chapter eight, we will return to this question and analyze how MEPs actually vote, and these two approaches should give us interesting insights regarding these critical situations.

In order to get a general picture of the responses from all the included MEPs, Table 6:7 reports how often they experience conflicts between their own position and the position taken by the national level, with respect to their own position and the position taken by the EPG.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you experience a conflict between your position in the EP and the position taken by...?</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>No, never</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The national party</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>19 (51%)</td>
<td>12 (34%)</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>36 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EPG</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>26 (72%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>36 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6:7 shows that MEPs generally experience a higher degree of conflict with the EPGs compared to conflicts with the national level. 56% think that they often or sometimes have conflicts with the national level, while 83% experience that the conflicts with the EPG appear sometimes or often. This is not surprising. It is natural that the MEPs are more in agreement with their party fellows from the national party than with the much broader EPG. There are even four MEPs that say that they are never in conflict with the national level, which implies an almost unrealistically harmonious relationship.

Although this general pattern is interesting, we need to know if MEPs from various environments experience these conflicts differently. Tables 6:8 and 6:9 report the same information as in 6:7, but divided according to the variables used in the study.
Table 6:8 Conflicts with the national level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you experience a conflict between your position in the EP and the position taken by the national level</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>No, never</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>9 (56%)</td>
<td>5 (31%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8 (61.5%)</td>
<td>5 (38.5%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8 (61%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>3 (37%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>8 (50%)</td>
<td>6 (38%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11 (55%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence over candidate selection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11 (58%)</td>
<td>6 (32%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>19 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1 (9%)</td>
<td>5 (46%)</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
<td>11 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written contract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12 (60%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination device according to MEPs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>10 (50%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>11 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination device according to MEPs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>14 (52%)</td>
<td>8 (30%)</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>27 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6:8 shows that there are no significant differences between the cases regarding conflicts with the national level. The Swedish MEPs score marginally higher than the Irish MEPs, but these differences are too small to make any solid conclusions. This implies, however, that Swedish MEPs are more troubled by these conflicts than MEPs from the other two countries. One interesting tendency is that the Irish MEPs seem to include those who are very troubled by these conflicts and those who are not troubled at all (they are more evenly spread than the other cases). This could mean that the relationship between the national level and the MEP has a more individual character, compared to the other cases. However, we have to analyze these relationships more in order to make such a conclusion.
Furthermore, the various variables on the party level do not seem to have any strong effect on how the MEPs regard the conflicts with the national level. However, three issues should be mentioned regarding Table 6:8. First, the use of more or less advanced coordination devices or other forms of intra-party control mechanisms do not influence the level of conflicts between the MEPs and their parties to any great extent. This is surprising, because we would expect that stronger coordination would mean fewer conflicts. Second, MEPs that belong to governmental parties tend to be slightly more troubled by conflicts with the national level, compared to others. This is also what we would expect. The problem of being in disagreement increases if one’s party is in government, because there is more at stake. Third, the green parties seem to have fewer conflicts with the national party and this suggests that the green MEPs advocate the national position and thereby avoid ending up in a conflict. This should be remembered when we develop this analysis later on in this study.

When it comes to conflicts with the EPG, the pattern is different. In Table 6:9, we see how often the MEPs experience conflict between their own position and the position taken by the EPG.

Table 6:9 shows that Dutch MEPs are more in accord with their EPGs than the MEPs from the other two countries. The difference is not that great, but strong enough to infer an important variation between the cases. At the same time, the Irish MEPs seem to have the greatest problem with their EPGs.
Table 6:9  Conflicts with the EPG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>No, never</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>6 (86%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>11 (69%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2 (15.5%)</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>2 (15.5%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
<td>6 (75%)</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>13 (81.3%)</td>
<td>2 (12.5%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence over candidate selection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>14 (74%)</td>
<td>4 (21%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>19 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
<td>7 (64%)</td>
<td>1 (9%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5 (83%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written contract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>15 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>7 (58%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination device according to MEPs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>15 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>10 (83%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Turning to the party variables, it is obvious that ideological heritage of a party has no affect on its experienced conflicts with the EPGs. This also means that the fact that the parties belong to different EPGs is unimportant in this respect. They all appear to show the same kind of pattern. The difference between governmental and non-governmental parties is very small. The interesting thing is that the governmental parties seem to experience a slightly weaker conflict with the EPG, compared to non-governmental parties. This is not what we would expect. We would think that MEPs from governmental parties would be more troubled by this kind of cross-pressure because of a stronger pressure from the national level, especially since they estimate that the conflicts with the national level are slightly higher. Although the difference is very small, Table 6:9 indicates a different pattern.
Furthermore the various intra-party measurements on national party influence over the MEPs show a very weak (if any) effect on the MEPs’ experiences of these conflicts. This is puzzling, because we would expect that the more parties use different means of controlling their MEPs, the more sensitive the MEPs would be to the national position and therefore end up in conflict more often. Although there is a slight tendency that the parties that have a more advanced system of coordination end up in conflict more often (both according to my categorization of the different systems and the MEPs evaluation of the systems), the difference is not as strong as we would expect. We have to dig deeper into these conflictual situations in order to receive more solid answer to these questions.

DIFFERENT AREAS OF CONFLICTS

Although the differences between the cases are small (except that Dutch MEPs are less troubled by the conflicts compared to the other cases), all MEPs experience conflicts from time to time. The question is within which areas these conflicts appear. The member states, including national party organizations and national parliaments, have different opinions on various political issues. When these interests meet in the EP there should be some kind of conflict between these positions. The content of these conflicts is one thing that has been brought up during the interviews with the MEPs. There are four broad themes that the MEPs identify as more problematic than others. Almost 50% of all MEPs say that the balance of power between the national level and EU level is one important area of conflict between themselves and the national level. As one MEP describes it:

…EU need to work more on environmental questions, labor issues, give priority to enlargement and a lot of other stuff and I don’t find any conflicts regarding these issues. Here I experience a strong concordance. It is more about the level of EU cooperation. That is, how much power to give to EU vis-à-vis the national level, where my party and government advocates the national level, which is natural. We [the MEPs] are perhaps more inclined to represent a tighter cooperation in Europe (interview no. 48).
The second type of conflict is when there is a more European perspective on a certain issue than the national party position. In these situations the MEPs find themselves taking the part of voicing the European argument against the party. One MEP says:

*There have been conflicts, for example about the railway, where we of course think of it more as a [...] trans-European network, with the positive effect also of taking away traffic from the roads or whatever. While the national parliament of course see that it cuts through some native area or whatever. So your perspective is different (interview no. 30).*

Whether these conflicts get really serious depends on how important the issue is on the national level. The important thing is that MEPs sometimes have to choose between arguing for the national position in the EP (for example in a committee that handles the issue) or for the European perspective in the national arena. This is not always an easy choice.

The third type of conflict toward the national arena is a little more difficult to get a grip on. It has to do with the character of the EP in general compared to the national political arena. One MEP argues:

*I think this parliament is more keen on values and the national parliament is more keen on interests [...]. We [the MEPs and the national parliamentarians] have two quite different roles, but the fact alone, that we should have a broader horizon, that we have to behave as European, gives as a side effect that we act more in an ethical way. [...] I think this context in which we are working, makes us keen on the fact that we have a broader interest and which reaches to the levels of values. And I see that in different groups (interview no. 5).*

It is especially on issues like asylum policy, nearby international conflicts or Eastern Europe policy, where these differences are apparent. Quite often the MEPs frame their position vis-à-vis the national arena as more ethical or more broad-minded, and this sometimes creates conflicts between the levels.

The fourth type of conflict, this time toward the EPG rather than toward the national arena, is where the national level in general (party, national parliament or government) has a different position than the position in the EP. In most of these cases this conflict is played out within the EPGs, where parties within the same EPG have a different
position, due to national values or traditions. In some of these cases, the various EPDs from the same member state come together and develop a joint position. According to some respondents, there are examples when this kind of cooperation across party lines has occurred, although, there are very few of these. Examples of this kind of cooperation are when Swedish MEPs act together regarding questions of openness or when Irish MEPs cooperate in agricultural policy.

As the EP is entitled to handle a broader spectrum of issues, it is reasonable to presume that the conflict will increase between the national position and the position of the EP. The question is how the EPGs will handle this situation and if they will develop means of fostering cohesiveness within the EPGs.

THE PRESSURE FROM THE EPGS

The relative independence of the MEPs means that they are freer in terms of following the line in the EPG compared to the relationship between the MPs in their national parliamentary parties. This hardly comes as a surprise. Several studies show that the pressure for cohesiveness is weaker in the EP than in most national counterparts (see for example Raunio, 2000:240). When asking the MEPs if they feel that the leadership of the EPGs have any means of forcing the MEPs to act cohesive with the group, for example during voting in the EP, all the interviewed respondents argue that there is no such enforcement mechanism, at least not in a formal sense. Informally, it is more or less impossible to act opposite to the group in a majority of issues and, at the same time, expect appointments as a rapporteur or to get other important assignments. Some of the interviewed respondents have experienced a more rough treatment of dissidents, but in general this is not the case and it certainly does not constitute the normal procedure of the groups. The only rule that the groups seem to uphold is that it is necessary to inform the leadership when in the process of defecting from the position taken by the EPG. The group does not want to be surprised sitting in plenary session.
The question is how the EPGs manage to uphold quite a cohesive behavior, despite the fact that they consist of very different parties and at the same time lack a more rigorous system of enforcement? In most cases the members of the group, as well as the leadership of the group, respect differences, well aware of the fact that the next time they can be on the losing side of the group. Negotiations create an environment where an actor expects that what he or she concedes on one issue will be reciprocated in some other issue (this is to be compared to negotiations within committees or within coalition governments). Therefore the norm about cohesiveness does not need to be spelled out, because it is not a rule of the game; it is the purpose. The fact that the EPDs are legitimate bodies in these EPGs creates a self-regulating process, where the opinions of different interests are legitimate and therefore serve as a safeguard against too strong disputes within the EPGs. Or to use Hirschmann’s terms, if you are able to use your voice, you do not need to exit. If the goal is to create consensus, negotiations are the means to meet this end.

Therefore, in most cases the positions of different EPDs (or individual MEPs) are well known within the groups, especially on issues that are regularly handled by the EP. Almost all MEPs interviewed refer to at least some issues where they are in confrontation with the majority in the EPG. For example, it is known that Swedish MEPs in general are less excited by federal institutional reforms compared with MEPs from many other countries. It is known that the Dutch MEPs want to go further in reforming the common agricultural policy than many other MEPs. These differences do not constitute a serious problem within the groups, since everyone is aware of this situation and negotiates on the basis of these positions. However, individual MEPs can have problems with their groups.

**Oriented toward the national or the EU level**

Until now we have looked at what priorities MEPs give to various contacts in their day-to-day work. Since one of the important questions asked in this study is if MEPs are more connected to the national level or the EP level, we have to try to estimate the strength of these different contacts. That is, what makes the MEPs have a weaker connection to the national level and orient themselves toward the EP level?
CONTACTS DURING UNCERTAINTY

Problems always arise within a parliament. Some circumstances are simply more problematic than others. The EU level brings in new issues and these can be framed quite differently than issues on the national level. Therefore, it is not always obvious for the MEP how to position himself or herself. That is, the MEP needs advice from someone about how to act. These critical situations are especially interesting because they show how MEPs react to a possible conflict between the levels. This is difficult to measure, because all MEPs have at least some connection to the national level, and it is therefore hard to find issues that disintegrate the MEPs that are more socialized into the EP environment compared to those who are not. One way of dealing with this problem is to ask the MEPs how they act during these critical situations.

Table 6:10 is based on a group of questions where the respondents have been asked to score the importance of different groups in situations where they feel uncertain how to position themselves. That is, if they do not know how to act in a certain situation, for example because the party has not taken any clear stand on the issues, whom does the MEP turn to for advice? The respondent has been asked to score possible “advisors,” if that specific group is, very important, important, important in some specific situations, important for gathering of material, or not important. I have then, on the basis of these scores (from 1 to 5), divided them into one group that generally turns to someone at the EP level, one group that turns to someone at the national level, and one mixed category. On the basis of this, I have made a qualitative analysis of the ones in the mixed category, with the ambition to put them into one of the exclusive categories. Note that one Dutch MEP was too hard to categorize and is therefore excluded from the table.
Table 6:10  Contacts with national level or EU level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contacts during uncertainty</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>6 (86%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>8 (61%)</td>
<td>5 (39%)</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td>9 (64%)</td>
<td>5 (36%)</td>
<td>14 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>5 (62%)</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11 (69%)</td>
<td>5 (31%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11 (58%)</td>
<td>8 (42%)</td>
<td>19 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence over candidate selection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>9 (50%)</td>
<td>9 (50%)</td>
<td>18 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>9 (82%)</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
<td>11 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Written contract</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
<td>9 (47%)</td>
<td>19 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device according to MEPs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>9 (47%)</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
<td>19 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>10 (83%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7 (78%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15 (58%)</td>
<td>11 (42%)</td>
<td>26 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6:10 shows that it is mainly the MEP's country of origin that explains whether he or she is oriented toward the national level or the EP level. The Irish and the Swedish MEPs are more oriented toward the national level (86% and 85%). All MEPs, except one, in the three Irish delegations, first turns to the national level for advice. On the other side we find the Dutch MEPs, where a strong majority turns to the EP level (67%). This result means that there are very different ways of handling a situation of uncertainty.

The second conclusion to be drawn out of Table 6:10 is that governmental parties tend to orient themselves toward the national level, compared to the parties that are not in government (69% compared to 58%). This is also intuitive for two reasons. First, MEPs from governments
probably have better access to information and knowledge in the governmental administration. It is therefore reasonable that these MEPs tend to use this contact in a higher degree than others. Second, it is plausible that MEPs from governmental parties do have a stronger pressure to take a national position, compared to others. However, the difference is very small and we should not overemphasize this conclusion.

Once again, it seems like the ideological heritage has a no effect on whether the MEP orients toward the national level or the EU level. The three types of parties are surprisingly similar in this respect. It is becoming more obvious that the party type variable has a weak impact on how MEPs frame their work within the EP context.

The two intra-party variables (candidate selection and contracts) show an opposite effect compared to what we would believe. It seems like parties that have a stronger leadership influence over the selection of the MEPs and parties that write more detailed contracts have comparatively a higher number of MEPs that orient themselves toward the EU. This is puzzling (to say the least). Although the difference is quite small, it seems like controlling the selection of candidates and writing contracts with the MEPs are very weak instruments for influencing the MEPs. These two instruments are probably important in extremely critical situations, when the party needs to sanction an MEP in one way or the other, but in a practical sense, these are aspects of the relationship with the party that the MEPs can overlook in their day-to-day work.

The use of more sophisticated means of coordination has a slightly stronger effect. According to my classification of the parties, it is hard to make any firm conclusions. Both those with stronger coordination systems and those with weaker coordination systems have a strong nationally-oriented majority. However, the intermediate category is split in half. Therefore, turning to the MEPs’ own estimations of these coordination devices, it is shown that the ones that have more advanced systems also tend to be more nationally-oriented, compared to those that have less advanced systems (78% compared to 58%). This is also in accordance with the theoretical argument. MEPs that have an organized connection to the national level should be inclined to turn to the national level when they run into problems. This is the purpose of these committees or groups
that gather together to solve these kinds of problems. In that respect, it is perhaps surprising that the difference is not larger between those who have this organized connection and those who do not.

Although it is difficult on the basis of this material to come to any solid conclusions, these figures show that MEPs react differently in situations of uncertainty and that the country that they come from is important to explain these differences. It remains to be seen whether the Swedish and Irish MEPs also orientate more towards the national arena when it comes to representative roles. However, the conclusions so far point in that direction.

**Orientation of Contacts and Experienced Conflicts Between Levels**

How MEPs direct their contacts is one way of analyzing how MEPs would act in certain situations. Another way is to try to understand if these two groups experience differences when it comes to conflicts between the levels. Put in another way, do the MEPs that focus their contacts toward the national level and the EU level feel differently regarding the cross-pressure between the levels? We would expect that the ones oriented toward the EU, would have more conflicts with the national level and less with the EU level, and we would see the opposite pattern among the nationally-oriented MEPs. In Table 6:11, it is reported if the MEPs consider these conflicts to be occurring often, sometimes, seldom or never.

*Table 6:11 Conflicts between the levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience conflicts</th>
<th>Conflicts with the national party</th>
<th>Conflicts with the EPG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nationally-oriented</td>
<td>EU-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>1 (4.5%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>14 (63.6%)</td>
<td>4 (30.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>6 (27.3%)</td>
<td>6 (46.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1 (4.5%)</td>
<td>3 (23.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>13 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note that one Dutch MEP is missing from this analysis*
In the group of MEPs that orient their contacts toward the national level, the problems with the EPG seem to be stronger than the problems with the national party. 68% of the more nationally-oriented MEPs feel that they often or sometimes end up in conflict with their national party. This should be compared with 95% that experience that this often or sometimes occur with the EPG. This is also according to what we would believe. If they identify themselves as being representatives of the national level, they also would experience larger problems in the process of decision making within the EP.

The argument that the MEPs that orient their contacts toward the EU level would have more conflicts with the national level than the group that are nationally-oriented is obviously not correct. Actually, there are a relatively high number of MEPs that orient their contacts toward the national level that are more troubled by the relationship with their party. 68% often or sometimes experience this situation, compared with 31% among the more EU-oriented group.

However, the MEPs that orient their contacts toward the EU level do experience fewer conflicts with the EPG (61% experience this often or sometimes), compared to the nationally-oriented MEPs where 95% experience this often or sometimes. This is according to what we would believe. The MEPs that orient their contacts toward the EU level are obviously less troubled by this relationship than the more nationally-oriented MEPs and this emphasizes that the relationship between the EPG and these two groups differs.

However, the general picture is that the groups of MEPs that orient their relationship toward the EU level feel less troubled by conflicts in general. This could indicate that this group is more integrated in the EP system. That is, if they do not have a strong ambition to represent interests on the national level, it is reasonable that they are not troubled by potential conflicts with that level. They feel that they represent something else and therefore they do not feel required to follow a national interest. The MEPs that orient their contacts toward the national level, on the other hand, probably also include the national level as an important part of their role conception. Therefore they feel troubled by the fact that the two levels sometimes end up in conflict. This connects to the analysis that shall be made in the next chapter, where we shall look further into the MEPs’ role perceptions.
Conclusion

This chapter has tried to capture how MEPs coordinate their work with the national level, and what priority they give different interests and how they handle situations with conflicts. This is one way to capture the daily work of the MEPs, and at the same time, analyze how they estimate their links toward the national arena. We now turn back to the theoretical arguments presented in chapter two and try to end this chapter with some preliminary conclusions.

The first argument is that countries characterized by “collectivistic” ideals, with party-based electoral systems, will be more inclined to emphasize their roles as national party representatives. That would mean that the MEPs from the Netherlands would focus more on the national arena, followed by Sweden and Ireland. According to the result presented in the chapter, this explanation does not seem to hold. On the contrary, it is among the Dutch MEPs that we find those MEPs that turn to the EP level for advice in critical situations and they are less inclined to take advice from the national government and their extra-parliamentary organization. The Dutch MEPs also experience fewer conflicts with the EPGs compared to the other two cases, which in turn would point in the direction that they are less connected to the national level. Ireland is the opposite case in these respects. They are most oriented toward the national level, both in terms of obtaining advice and in terms of governmental relations. Sweden is in a middle position. Therefore this argument is fundamentally wrong or we have not been able to capture the whole picture.

The second argument is that in countries where the national parliament is in some aspect involved in the formulation of governmental policy regarding EU issues, the MEPs will be more inclined to describe themselves as country representatives. This would mean that the MEPs from Sweden should emphasize the relationship with the national level, the Irish MEPs are at the opposite pole and the Netherlands take a middle position. Swedish MEPs, in general, do give priority to the relationships with the national level, compared to the Dutch MEPs. However, the argument fits badly, because the ones that give most priority to the national level are the Irish MEPs, and they should, according to the argument, be the ones that pay least attention to the national level. This
The conclusion is emphasized by the fact that the Swedish MEPs pay less attention to the contacts with the national parliamentarians, compared to the other cases (although the differences are very small).

The third argument is that in a country with popular opinion strongly critical of the EU, the MEPs will be more inclined to describe themselves as representatives of the member state and the national party. This fits better than explanations discussed above. As already stated, Sweden is more nationally-oriented and this could be explained by the fact that they work in a more hostile opinion regarding the development of the EU. Also in Ireland, where the popular opinion is more ambivalent toward the development of the EU than in the Dutch case, they have a stronger orientation toward the national level. Swedish and Irish MEPs also feel that they have more conflicts with their respective EPGs, which bolsters the argument. The opposite case is the Dutch MEPs. Therefore, it is reasonable to focus some on this variable for the remaining part of this study.

Regarding the party level explanations, the first argument is that MEPs belonging to socialist parties will put greater emphasis on representing the nation and the national party. Actually, one of the variables that seems to have the weakest explanatory power concerning how MEPs organize their link toward the national arena is the type of party that the MEP belongs to. Only on the question of whether the MEPs experience a conflict between the levels does the type of party seem to influence the MEPs to some degree. In that case it is the green MEPs who experience a stronger conflict with their EPG compared to MEPs from the other parties. However, the difference between the cases is very small and it seems like the party type does not have any effect on how the MEPs organize their contacts or how they experience conflicts between the levels.

The second argument concerning the party organization is that MEPs from governmental parties will put more emphasis on their roles as representing the nation and the national party organization. This argument seems to explain some of the differences between the cases. It is obvious that MEPs from governmental parties do have another pattern of contacts and prioritize differently, than do parties not belonging to governments. They are more oriented toward the national level and they do have more contacts with their national governments. Therefore, it is interesting to
follow up this argument and see if it is possible to identify that MEPs from governmental parties also frame their representative roles differently.

The third argument (on the party level) concerns the intra-party environment, and the more the national party tries to circumscribe the MEPs (by various means), the more MEPs will emphasize their role as representing the member state and the national party. When looking at these explanations, the result must be regarded as inconclusive. Controlling the selection of the MEPs and writing contracts with them seems to have a very small effect on how they operate within the EP. It is even said, in some interviews, that MEPs change their way of operating toward the extra-parliamentary party when it comes to election times. The use of more advanced systems for coordinating between the levels, however, has some effect on some of the questions asked in this chapter. Those who have this system (especially if we concentrate on the group of MEPs that uses this channel on a regular basis) give priority to the national arena. They especially include the extra-parliamentary party as important, compared to the group that does not have this kind of more advanced coordination device. This group also regards the conflicts toward the EPGs as more problematic than the group that does not have this committee (although the difference is very small). There is also a higher number of MEPs, within this group that has a more advanced coordination, that orients themselves toward the national arena, compared the EP arena, when they are uncertain how to position themselves. However, the differences are not that huge and therefore the results are not especially convincing. Therefore we need to analyze this further in order to conclude how important the intra-party environment really is.

Besides analyzing the effect of these different independent variables, one ambition has been to categorize some MEPs as more EU-oriented in their contacts and some MEPs as more oriented toward the member state. The result is that most of the MEPs that are more oriented toward the EU level are found among the Dutch MEPs. Furthermore, this group of more EU-oriented MEPs are found in all party types and it does not matter much if the party is in government or uses a coordination committee or not. It also seems like this group of MEPs is less troubled by conflicts between the levels in general. The explanation presented is that this group of MEPs does not have a strong ambition to
represent interests on the national level, and therefore it is reasonable that they are not troubled by potential conflicts with that level, because they do not feel required to follow a national interest. The MEPs that orient their contacts toward the national level, on the other hand, probably also include the national level as an important part of their role conception. Therefore they feel troubled by the fact that the two levels sometimes end up in conflict. This conclusion must be tested when paying a closer attention to the MEPs representative roles in the following chapter.

In this chapter we have also focused on how MEPs describe the problems with coordinating with the national level. Four types of complaints are relatively common among the MEPs: the lack of awareness on the national level about the competence of the EU system, the lack of media attention, difficulties with different time schedules on the national level and the EU level, and lastly, a growing hostility among the national parliamentarians toward the MEPs. All these complaints point in the same direction. If the process of creating a more mature EP is not followed by a well-thought-out strategy of how to connect the levels, as a consequence, the conflicts between the levels may increase.

At this point, I will not elaborate more on different explanations for the outcome of this empirical data. It is more important to move on and shift focus from coordination between the levels to how the MEPs view their representative roles. Even if these two aspects of representation are equally important, we need them both in order to understand the foundations upon which the MEPs represent.

Notes Chapter six

91 By and large these district meetings are held once a month (except for the summer months). At these meetings every branch sends one or two representatives and every district contains approximately 50 branches (interviews no. 35 and 34).

92 As already mentioned, the Swedish Social Democratic Party is divided into “districts” that are equivalent to the electoral districts in the elections to the national legislature. The “regions” are a relatively new creation and connect several “districts” into a larger unit.

93 See for example Sartori’s (1987:227) discussion about the tendency that committees tend to foster consensus decisions.
MEPs and their representative roles

In the previous chapter we analyzed the pattern of contacts between the MEPs and the national arena. Now it is time to focus on how MEPs understand their representative role. There are mainly two dimensions on which I will concentrate the presentation: if the MEPs regard themselves as representing the voters or the party organizations and if they represent the member state or the EU arena. Taking these two dimensions together, we are able to identify MEPs that frame their representative roles as either nationally-oriented or EU-oriented.

The goal of this study is not limited to describing different role concepts, but also to trying to understand why an MEP frames his or her role in a particular way. Explanations presented in the theoretical chapter, such as differences between member states, differences in party tradition, if the party is in government or not, and if the party uses a more sophisticated system of monitoring the MEPs, will be used to try to explain why MEPs put on different roles.

After this we will try to tie together the conclusions in the last chapter with the results in this one. If we presume that representative roles are important to understand how MEPs behave in certain situations, it should be possible to see traces of the findings in this chapter on the pattern of contacts of the MEPs. The question in focus is if there is a relationship between how MEPs connect to different arenas and how they frame their representative roles?
A comparative study such as this tends to focus on differences between the cases, and this is important when trying to explain the phenomenon under study. But there is a downside to this strategy. Even though the interest in who the MEPs are is increasing, this is a group of politicians that we know quite little about. The focus on differences between cases will therefore create a risk of missing important general observations about the MEPs and for that reason I will start this chapter with a broader discussion on the MEPs' roles as politicians.

**Being a European parliamentarian**

Being an MEP means existing in a melting pot of interesting people, different ideas, and cultural oddities. In many senses, the EP is a unique international political body and as such it is trying to find its role vis-à-vis other institutions within the EU and toward the national level, as well as toward other international institutions. This creates an environment that is constantly on the move and which gives the individual MEPs insights that would be much harder to gain in other political environments. This fascination with the EP is evident in many of the descriptions made by the MEPs, even among those who are very skeptical of the EU and the development of a more federalist Europe. At the same time, to be an MEP means going abroad. It means taking the flight to Brussels every Monday, away from family and friends, and not seeing them until next weekend. It means working in an institution that many people know very little about. And being in a world that sometimes feels artificial in the sense that one works in Belgium without knowing any Belgians and that one is familiar with the glass palaces of the “Euro city,” without knowing how to spell the names of the suburbs around Brussels. It also means being surrounded by check points and metal detectors and having to go to the vestibule and request a limousine in order to go to the hotel that one stays in most of the week. To be an MEP is to live in an ambiguous world. We will pay some attention to different aspects of the life of an MEP in order to grasp their day-to-day work.
BEING AN MEP IS AN INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISE

It is common that MEPs describe their work in the EP as much more individualistic than the work as a member of the national parliament (a majority of the respondents have experience from parliamentary work at some level in their country). Some of them describe this as a relief. To carry out the strict party line within a national parliament is safe, but at the same time, there is less room for individual maneuvering. The way the EP is working, with strong specialized committees and where much of the work surrounds the reports made by the appointed rapporteur, makes the individual MEP more important than the common backbencher in the national parliament. This is emphasized by the fact that much of the modus operandi of the EP is compromises and negotiations. That is, the norm is to find consensus in as many areas as possible and not to relate to a traditional government-opposition divide. This is a result of the overall role of the parliament within the EU system of decision-making, but also a transfer of a decision culture, developed within the parliament, because of its multi-ethnic and multi-partisan character. The result is that the individual capacity is more appreciated in the EP and it is possible to get an important position based on personal insights and hard work in a certain field, rather than the correct party affiliation (that is not to say that party affiliation would be unimportant in the EP - it certainly is). Or as one MEP describes it:

If you are very active, then you actually can accomplish something down here, which the ordinary party apparatus back home would prevent, if you understand me correctly. It is harder to break through a sulky [...] party back home, than to get the group [refers to the EPG] down here to be interested in one’s ideas (interview no. 22).

This makes the competition between the MEPs harsher, but at the same time the MEPs are more independent. And it is evident that the work in the EP is revitalizing both on a professional and personal level for many MEPs that have had a former career as backbenchers in their national parliaments.
The relative independence of the MEPs means that they are freer to defect from the line in the EPG, compared to the relationship between the national parliamentarians and their parties. However, this does not mean that the MEPs do not rely on each other, but this is not a requirement of a party organization (as in many parties in the national parliaments), but as a necessity for things to go smoothly within the EP. An MEP specializes in a field of work and is surrounded by MEPs from other countries and parties that share his or her interest. Often this is most obvious in the activities within the EP committees. Specialized MEPs more or less have the role of spokespersons within their EPG (and certainly within their EPD). Therefore, an MEP has an important input on policy formulated within the EPG in his or her field of work. However, in all other areas outside the MEP’s specialized field, the MEP acts and votes according to the other MEPs that are responsible for the issues that the MEP does not handle personally. For example, the specialized MEP writes a voting list before every session on the issues that he or she is responsible for. On this voting list the EPG’s position is defined, by saying YES, NO or ABSTAIN to a certain proposal. Usually the EPD discusses this voting list before the sessions and decides how to act as a delegation. Sometimes the EPD decides not to follow the EPG and consequently develops a separate voting list. This can then be used by other EPDs that are politically close to each other on the issue. However, the most common situation is that the EPD simply decides to vote according to the list. One MEP describes it like this:

I have to make my decision on how to vote only on those subjects that are mine, in my specialized committees. On the other subject, I simply follow the party line of the EPG, because I can’t know everything. I mean, I don’t care how to vote on agriculture. I vote as they say that I have to vote. I don’t even know what I vote, because we have this silly list (referring to the voting list) (interview no. 29).

In other words, it would be impossible for one single EPD (especially from the smaller countries) to be able to keep track of every single issue and it is necessary to simply trust the judgment of one’s fellow EPG colleagues. This complexity and diversification, coupled with the shared amount of work that is being done in the EP, supports the individualistic nature of the job. An MEP is dependent on colleagues, but the colleagues are also dependent on the MEP.

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That the MEPs feel that their work in the EP is more individualistic than the work done in their national parliaments also means that the MEPs are more independent in relation to their national party organizations. It is very common that the MEPs say that they make themselves aware of the position taken by the national party, but they do not feel forced to act in a certain way by the party. The situation depends on the issue on the table, and in highly salient issues on the national level it is more important to listen to the party. However, the most common problem mentioned by the MEPs is not that they receive too many instructions, rather that the national level is quite uninterested in what is happening in the EP. I have already mentioned this in the previous chapter. This affects the way MEPs view their role and how they relate to the national level. The work becomes more independent, but above all, they have the role of advocating the European perspective within their parties.

ARGUING FOR A “EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE”

Many MEPs say that their perspective became broader after coming to the EP. This may sometimes make communication with the national level more difficult, because it makes it harder for the national politicians to understand the reason for various arguments and standpoints. One Swedish MEP describes that:

> When the Germans talk about changes of the “European constitution,” this upsets many people back home. They use words like federalists, etc. I think it is easier for me to understand this. I have lived in this environment (referring to the EP) and I understand. […] The Swedish reaction is based on our tradition and the German suggestions are based on a German tradition. They do not always understand this back home. Both sides start from their tradition and then it is harder to meet in a discussion. We have a lot easier to meet in such a discussion down here (interview no. 66).

The important thing here is that the MEP feels that he or she knows something and are accustomed to a certain environment, which makes him or her more suitable for judging different positions in the European debate. There is simply a fundamental difference between the two levels, because of different points of departure (“where you stand depends on
where you sit”). It is notable that in many cases the European perspective is regarded as more inclusive in its character, while the national position (as well as actors) is regarded as more exclusive.

The fact that MEPs deal with things that are less interesting on the national level enhances the notion that the MEPs have a very different role than national politicians. That is, questions are put very differently in the EU, than in the national context. One Dutch MEP says that:

In a small country it doesn’t look normal to find a solution regarding the streets of Gibraltar very important, but it is very important. […] People in the national context know less and less about international work […] because they don’t have to know, because we do it for them, more or less (interview no. 60).

This way of reasoning amongst the MEPs means that there is a kind division of labor between the national parliament and the EP. The role of the MEPs is to embrace all-European issues in a way that national politicians will not. This would, at least in the state of mind of many MEPs, mean that they operate on a level that is less connected to the national level and which creates an EU polity in its own right. However, many MEPs argue that national politicians do not give the MEPs credit for this work, which in the long run should hamper a positive relationship between parliamentarians in the two levels.

The notion that the MEPs know things that national politicians do not and that the issues that are dealt with on the EU level are framed differently than on the national level is sometimes coupled with the argument that the EP is a more modern institution, taking care of the important problems of the future, compared to the national legislatures. One Swedish MEP gives this metaphor:

[As an MEP] you are […] going by scheduled flights, more often than on the country bus. You are placed in a different orbit. You refer to Javier Solana, rather than to [the foreign minister of the national government]. Simply, you have a different point of reference. You are involved in discussions that lead further […] and you are often fulfilled by something that is very pro-European and positive. Then you get back home and you cannot understand why they haven’t understood anything. But they haven’t been on the same flight; they were caught on the country bus (interview no. 63).
This picture of the EP as something modern, a fast-working and invigorating institution, compared to the old and narrow minded national parliaments is perhaps an exaggeration of the MEPs views on the national parliaments, but at the same time often it is found in various statements. If the MEPs have this attitude toward the national level, it is easy to understand why there are some problems from time to time. One could, however, argue that this should be understood as a kind of counter-strategy for the MEPs. In the interviews it is easy to find statements saying that the national parliamentarians look upon MEPs as second-rate politicians and with a very limited impact on “real” policy. To say that the EP is handling new important issues, that the national parliaments do not and to argue that the MEPs have insight that the national parliamentarians have not, is a way of legitimizing their roles as politicians.

The overall majority of the MEPs feel that there is a strong need for them to go back home and describe the European dimension, and positions that they have, as well as how the EP is functioning. As the above quotes by different MEPs indicate, many experience this as rather frustrating and problematic. The MEPs have to describe things that should be obvious and the feedback to the MEP is very limited. It is therefore easy to end up with the role of representing the European position within the national political context.

**REPRESENTING THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

Most of the MEPs emphasize that the role of going back home and describe their work, as well as how EU works, is a very important part of their function as MEPs. Some of them even think this is more important than trying to represent various interests during their work in the parliament. The reason is that there is a need in the national arena to have someone who is able to “bring Europe home,” as some MEPs describe this work. It is also important to note that this undertaking is not only directed toward the media and voters, but also toward their national party organizations. Or as one Irish MEP says:
I mean, my biggest role vis-à-vis the party and the party organization as such, would be to explain where things are going to move on to [...] and also to deal with criticism with regard to the operation of the laws [...] When it is good [referring to various EU regulations], the government says, “we are doing this,” but when it is bad, “well, Europe is forcing us to do this” (interview no. 34).

The MEPs are put in a tight spot. They are forced to explain how things work and at the same time defend the system. If the EU functions as the scapegoat for unpopular policy decisions in the national arena, it is easy to see the kind of problems that the MEPs can end up with.

In several interviews, the MEPs give illustrative examples of the differences of being a national parliamentarian and an MEP. For example, when a member of a national parliament takes part in a public debate, it is important that there are members from opposing parties. This is not obvious when participating as an MEP. Furthermore, when an MEP takes part in a television program, it is not obvious that one’s party’s name appears together with one’s own name; it only says “MEP.” What does this tell us? The role of the MEPs is not to represent a party or even a policy position – they are regarded as representatives of an institution (or even of the European level in general). One Dutch MEP explains that this makes the differences between the MEPs from different parties smaller, compared to national party representatives:

If you have a discussion with five people in a political meeting, it is five representatives from different parties, all MEPs, and the differences between them are not very big, because they always try to translate the European politics into national politics. And that is what they are all doing (interview no. 9)

Bringing Europe back home means walking a thin line between being an elected representative in a legislative institution and being an advocate for institutions that have a rather low legitimacy among the popular opinion. They transform from being Members of the EP, to becoming Ambassadors of the EP. This is much more than a semantic difference.
There are basically three aspects that explain why MEPs end up in this situation. First, the party organizations are giving priority to the national level. This means that the MEPs per definition run the risk of becoming outsiders in national politics as well as within the national party organizations. Second, the awareness among the general public of how EU works is very low. People have at least a basic notion on how the national institutions work, how parties relate to each other and they have a history of different policy decisions to relate to. If this does not exist, as is the case in EU policy, people have a hard time understanding the output of the legislative process and how to relate to different alternatives. The fact that the EU system of decision-making is very complicated does not make this problem less acute. Third, the media attention regarding the EU is very low in most member states. This means that the knowledge among the general public and national politicians is weak concerning what is happening on the EU level. And it means that the public debate on different policy alternatives is hampered. The result is that the MEPs repeatedly end up playing the role that media should have instead. These three insufficiencies do put the MEPs in a frustrating situation and it makes the overall communication with the national level difficult.

I will continue discussing the effect of the overall situation of the MEPs in the concluding chapter of this study. Now it is time to turn to more specific questions on the roles of the MEPs and also to see if there are differences between how MEPs view their representative roles based on various institutional contexts.

**Who do the MEPs represent?**

In this part of the chapter we will analyze different roles adopted by the MEPs. In the theoretical chapter I presented a model with two dimensions: representing voters or the party organization and representing the member state or the EU level. In this chapter, these two dimensions are the point of departure. First, I analyze and discuss how MEPs regard their roles when representing different interests on the national level. Thereafter, we will estimate the importance of various groups on the EP
level, for how MEPs conceptualize their representative roles. Last, these two dimensions will be put together and it will be possible to identify different sources of representation among different MEPs.

**REPRESENTING WHAT ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

The question of whether elected politicians should be guided by the interests of the party, the voters, special interests or their own judgment has been under debate since the beginning of representative democracy, both in the sense of what is normatively the “correct” representative interest and also more empirically in how politicians view their representative roles. These questions are in the center of this study and we will start by examining if the MEPs feel that they represent the party organization or their voters.

The respondents have first been asked to give a short answer on who or what they represent in their daily work. Thereafter, they have been asked to score different representative interests, such as voters, party, government (on the national level), EP-group, MEP colleagues from the party or MEPs from the same member state. In Table 7:1, I have categorized every individual on the basis of how they have define themselves spontaneously (without categories to choose from) as well as when they score the voters and the party organization as the most important source of their representative interest.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>6 (86%)</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Right wing</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>11 (73%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>7 (44%)</td>
<td>9 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>14 (70%)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence over candidate selection</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Weak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
<td>8 (73%)</td>
<td>11 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written contract</th>
<th>Detailed</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordination device according to MEPs</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Weak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>12 (60%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordination device according to MEPs</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
<td>9 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>18 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
<td>27 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not surprising that the identification of the voters as the most important source of representative interest is strongest in Ireland. On the basis of the theoretical arguments, this is what we should expect. Although the voters are present also in the other two cases, it is not as strong as in the Irish case. Almost all the Irish MEPs argue that the concern of the voters is their first priority. A little bit more surprising is perhaps that the difference between the Swedish MEPs and Dutch MEPs is not more significant. The introduction of a preferential vote in the Swedish electoral system does not seem to make the MEPs more sensitive to the voters, compared to the more rigorous Dutch list system. However, some Swedish
MEPs do emphasize that they have an individual mandate from the voters first and foremost, and not as party representatives (interview no. 14; 4; 42). This is not the case in the Netherlands. When the Dutch MEPs refer to the voters, this is framed more like an abstract principle than a real source of individual mandate.

If we turn the comparison from country-wise to party-wise, we see that the right wing-parties tend to focus more on the voters than do the socialists or the greens. However, it should be said that the tendency gets weaker if we disregard the Irish MEPs, and it seems that party affiliation does not have any strong effect whether MEPs focus on voters or party organization.

It is basically the same result if we divide the parties as governmental or non-governmental parties. Governmental parties tend to focus less on voters than do non-governmental parties, but bear in mind that two of the governmental parties are from the socialist camp and, once again, if we disregard the Irish case, there seems to be no connection between the two variables. Behind representing the national party organization, the respondents have also commented on the role of the national government and I will return to that question later on.

The various variables measuring the circumscribing aspects of the intra-party environment give poor results in explaining the variation. We would expect that the more the party leadership are in control over the candidate selection procedure, the more the MEPs would define themselves as party representatives. The same argument applies to whether the party writes contracts with the MEPs or not. However, none of these variables seem to influence how the MEPs define their roles as representing the party or the voters.

However, the use of a more sophisticated system of monitoring the MEPs seems to have a minor impact on how the MEPs view their roles. The MEPs belonging to parties that put more effort in coordinating between the levels also tend to identify more strongly with these national parties. Parties that do not have this kind of monitoring device tend to focus more on the voters in their view of their representative role. This is shown both in my estimation of the different kinds of systems and the MEPs’ estimates of the efficiency of these systems. Although this
tendency is not that strong, it is in line with the theoretical argument. We would expect that if a party tries to coordinate between the levels, this would influence the way MEPs think about their role.

Although quantifying this kind of material creates a sense of illuminating important differences, the result is not as straightforward as one would hope. It should be said that many MEPs have huge difficulties differentiating between representing voters and party organization. In many respects, politicians see their party as the expression of voters’ will; the party and voters are synonymous sources of representative interest. For example, one MEP answers the question of how she regards the voters as a source of representative role thus:

*Voters and the constituency, of course that means something. They seldom differ from the national party organization in terms of what way to pursue (interview no. 4).*

Therefore, many MEPs score high on both these variables compared to other representative interests. This does not mean, however, that the differences that are shown in Table 7:1 are to be neglected. These differences are most obvious when the MEPs give more elaborate answers regarding this relationship. Although Swedish and Dutch MEPs argue that they represent their voters, these are seen as far away, as something “abstract,” to quote one Dutch representative (Interview no. 62). In the Irish case, the voters are always present in framing the representative role, independently of what party the MEP represents. On the question on how often the respondents meet voters, a typical Irish answer is:

…every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, I am in some different part of my constituency, meeting with local people. Party organization people, as well as representative groups or private individuals. Every weekend. (interview no. 34).

This is to be compared with a relatively typical Dutch answer on the same question:

*Two times a year I have a newsletter […] Every sixth week, let’s say, I send by e-mail reports to everybody who is interested. I go and have speeches on the meetings they organize and that can be party meetings… (interview no. 11).*
Or a more cynical Dutch response:

... one thing you have to consider is that a working visit, if you want it to have an impact, it only works if there is some media interest in it (interview no. 28).

When an Irish representative talks about the voters, he or she associates that with meetings in the local arena, while a Swedish or a Dutch MEP refers to one-way communication such as newsletters, e-mail lists and media contacts.

At the same time, it is not necessarily that the Swedish and Dutch MEPs are insensitive toward the voters’ will, but it describes a reality of European politics. As one MEP describes the difference of being an MEP compared to a national parliamentarian:

Yes, there is a huge difference. First, the distance is very far, which means that voters are not able to follow what I am doing. When I was in the national parliament, my voters and party friends could follow me more closely. Today that is possible only if I get an article in a newspaper or through my monthly newsletter or when I am out speaking. But they cannot regularly keep track on what I am doing. This means that you are living a much freer life down here, compared to when you were in the national parliament (interview no. 22)

I have already discussed that the distance between the national arena and the life that MEPs live creates frustration among MEPs, and this quote indicates such a feeling. However, it also makes voters even more “abstract” in the sense that it may be hard for the MEPs to receive any kind of input in their work. This makes them freer (but also lonelier) and it makes the notion of the voters less perceptible.

Is the distinction between representing the voters or the party important in evaluating the work of the individual MEP? There are some indications, which point in the direction that this certainly is important. At least some Irish MEPs are able to refer to situations where they have been influenced by citizens in their constituency on a very practical level (interview No. 34). That is, when an issue has been tabled in the EP or some other EU institution, citizens have addressed their MEP and presented argument for a certain position. The MEP has been influenced by that and eventually opposed the decided position of the party. A Dutch MEP illustrates an interesting contrast:
I think our role is to make sure that the policies that are developed at the European level and the way they are implemented is in accordance what we think is what our voters want. I can’t say what our voters want, because I don’t think they have any strong view on it (interview no. 28).

Therefore, the voter in the Irish context serves as a point of reference in a more fundamental way, compared to the attitudes in the Dutch and the Swedish case. It is probably dangerous to overemphasize these differences, but they show that MEPs understand their representative roles differently.

After these more qualitative records, the indication is that it is on the country level that we find the answer to why MEPs regard their representative mandate as emanating from the voters or the party organization. On the basis of the theoretical arguments, this points in two directions. Either the answer lies in the electoral system or in the public opinion regarding EU issues (or both). Most of the respondents refer to the electoral system when describing their representative role in one way or the other, which probably means that the electoral system is important for framing the MEP’s mindset concerning these issues. It is therefore reasonable to argue that different electoral systems create specific environments that influence the way that MEPs frame their roles.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS REPRESENTATIVE INTERESTS

One of the important themes in this study is whether the MEPs feel that they represent interests on the national level or the EU level, and we now turn to the question of the importance of different groups on both these levels. It is important to remember that the European elections are basically a national event; the party organizations are formed on the basis of national borders and the MEPs themselves live in their member states. This might make us expect that the MEPs should emphasize their connection to the national level. However, this is not as obvious as we would think. On the EU level there is a process of shaping a political system, with internal rules and procedures, different interests, a type of European parties or federations, an emerging political culture, etc. It would be naïve to think that this does not influence the MEPs that are present within this emerging system, and who constantly have to relate to this context. At least, it is an important empirical question.
The MEPs included in this study have been asked to score the importance of various representative interests – that is, if they feel that they represent these various groups. In Table 7:2, the estimates of the MEPs are reported as the mean scores, divided into the various categories studied. The scores range from very important (1), important (2), important in certain situations (3), or not important (4). Two MEPs are missing in this part of the material because, in one case, it has been more or less impossible to make a clear inference of the answer and, in the second case, the EPD consists of only one MEP (the Irish Labour) and consequently it is impossible to categorize.

**Table 7:2 Emphasis on various representative interests (means scores)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With respect to your representative interest, how would you grade the following categories</th>
<th>National party</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>EPD</th>
<th>EPG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party type</td>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence over candidate selection</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written contract</td>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination device</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination device according to MEPs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The score ranges from 1 through 4, where 1 equals “very important” and 4 equals “not important.”
Even though using the mean scores to measure these relationships is a blunt instrument, Table 7:2 shows an interesting variation among the cases. First some general comments. It is obvious that the national party is the most important for the MEPs. It is in most cases scored as very important or important. In second and third place we have the EPD and EPG. The least important representative source is the national governments. This does not come as a surprise. MEPs are basically finding their mandate in the national arena and within the party organizations. However, there is a variation among the cases that we should analyze further.

We start by looking at different countries. It is obvious that the government plays a different role for the Irish MEPs compared to the MEPs from Sweden and the Netherlands. A few Dutch and Swedish MEPs mention the government as important, however, not to the same degree as the Irish MEPs. To some extent, this is explained by the fact that Fianna Fáil (as a governmental party) dominates the group of Irish MEPs, and as we will see later on, MEPs from governmental parties and non-governmental parties tend to have different attitudes toward the national government. However, the conclusion that the Irish MEPs differ in this respect is not only based on this measurement, but also on how they generally frame their relationship with the government. In several cases the Irish MEPs argue that they would represent the government independently of which party that controls the government (interview no. 34; 35; 36; 37). That answer would not be found among Swedish or Dutch MEPs. That is, the tendency to represent the member state as such is stronger in an Irish context than in the other two countries.

Furthermore, Swedish MEPs seems to regard the EPD as more important compared to the Dutch and the Irish MEPs. This gets even more interesting if we compare the attitudes regarding the two groups (EPD and EPG) within the same country. In the Dutch case the EPG seems more important than the EPD, while we have the opposite attitude among the Swedish and the Irish MEPs. The relatively stronger position of the EPG in the Dutch case tells us something about the willingness of the MEPs to be integrated in the EP system, and the Swedish and Irish MEPs seem to be more reluctant in this respect.
If we then turn to the party variables, it is obvious (again) that the ideological heritage has a weak power for explaining how MEPs frame their role. In fact, the similarity between the parties is striking. The only difference worth mentioning is that the green parties tend to have a lower estimate of the importance of the government. However, this is probably because none of the green parties are in a governmental position, since it is obvious that MEPs from governmental parties have a different attitude regarding these questions compared to others. First, the governments are more important as a representative source among the MEPs that are also members of these parties. Furthermore, although the difference is quite small, MEPs from governmental parties also give less importance to the EPG, compared to the others. This is also according to the theoretical argument, that is, we would expect that MEPs from governmental parties would have a weaker connection to the EP level, and this could be an expression of this phenomenon. In the previous chapter, we concluded that MEPs from governmental parties gave slightly higher priority to the national level than to the EU level in their contacts with the two levels. This conclusion is illustrated by the results presented in Table 7:2.

Whether or not the leadership in the national parties tries to circumscribe the MEPs by controlling the candidate selection procedures or writing contracts with the MEPs shows a negligible impact in terms of who the MEPs perceive as the most important representative sources. MEPs do not regard these constraints as strong enough to give the national level or the EPD a more important function when framing their roles. The pattern is rather the reverse.

If parties organize a more advanced coordination device has a negligible effect on these relationships. There are some traces that MEPs from parties that organize more advanced systems also put a stronger emphasis on the national level. At the same time, this group of MEPs tends to emphasize the EPG, which is contrary to what we would believe. Consequently, it is not possible conclude with this way of measuring these relationships that MEPs who work under more sophisticated coordination systems emphasize a national orientation in their representative roles.
During the interviews with the MEPs, we have also discussed the role of the whole group of MEPs from the same member state. On the basis of what has been said, it is obvious that this is not a group that is referred to as especially important for the daily work in the EP. The MEPs are divided along party lines and it is very seldom that they cooperate along national lines rather than within EPGs. However, some MEPs mention that it has happened on specific occasions that the MEPs from the same member state has joined forces and acted in a more cohesive way. This attitude, that there is a national agenda that should be pursued by all the MEPs from the same member state, is more common among the Irish MEPs than in the other two countries. However, none of the MEPs claim that the national delegation plays even a minor role in the notion of what is being represented.

The main conclusion on the basis of Table 7:2 is that the national party is the main source of representative notion for the MEPs, compared to the EPD, EPG or the national government. This is hardly a surprise. The MEPs are selected within these national parties and the EP is organized around the national party delegations. This makes the Dutch MEPs’ emphasis on the EPG (compared to the EPD) very interesting. This would point in the direction that the Dutch MEPs (generally speaking) are most integrated in the EP system of decision making. We shall now try to further the analysis and see if this tendency is correct.

**Representing interests on the national or the EP level**

Up until now we have analyzed the main source of representative interests described by the MEPs. However, in order to define MEPs as more oriented toward the national level or the EP level we need to connect the different sources and try to understand if there is a pattern. I will do this by using the already discussed categorization of the MEPs and then address more qualitative accounts that capture these different groups of MEPs.
USING THE TWO DIMENSIONAL MODEL

Figure 2.2, is based on the two role dimensions: party organization versus voters (first role dimension) and member state versus European Union (second role dimension), and these make four distinct role set-ups that should be possible to identify.

1. In the first group we find MEPs that understand their role as representing the party organization and are oriented toward the member state.

2. The second group emphasizes its role as representing the voters, rather than the party, and is oriented toward the member state.

3. The third group of MEPs emphasizes that it is first and foremost a representative of the party organization (in this case the EPD or the EPG) and is oriented toward the EU level.

4. The fourth group defines itself as representing the voters (often talking about the European voters or citizens, rather than the national voters or the national constituency) and is oriented toward the EU level.

Based on the MEPs’ initial responses on who they feel they represent and their emphasis on different groups on national and EU level, every individual has been categorized as one of the four groups. The following is an example of how this has been done. If the MEP has defined him or herself as representing the voters rather than the party, he or she has ended up in either second or the fourth group. If he or she gives higher priority to the EP groups, than to the national party, he or she has ended up in the fourth group. That is, the MEP defines her or himself as representing the voters first and foremost, but feels that the EPG is more important than the national party. It is important to remember that this categorization is based on a number of questions and sometimes quite lengthy answers. These have been qualitatively analyzed with the purpose of placing the MEPs in one of these four categories. This is naturally a simplification and I will soon return to the more qualitative aspects of these answers. The result of the categorization of the material is presented in Table 7:3.
In the material, eight MEPs are identified as being oriented toward the EU rather than toward the member state. The only group of MEPs that is clearly defined as focusing on the national arena is the Irish. This is in line with the results in the previous chapter. There is obviously a different attitude among the Irish MEPs regarding who should be represented than in the other two cases.

The eight MEPs that are oriented toward the EU are found in the Swedish and the Dutch delegations and the difference between the two is too small to say much about. Therefore, the conclusion that the Dutch MEPs tend to be more oriented toward the EU arena is not falsified by this result, however, it seems like the Dutch MEPs are not unique in this respect.

### Table 7:3 Comparison between various representative interests

| Party org. and Voters and Party org. and Voters and | Representing the.. | the member state the member state the EP level the EP level Total |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Ireland 1 (14%) 6 (86%)  |  | — | — | 7 (100%) |
| Netherlands 6 (38%) 5 (31%) 1 (6%) 4 (25%)  |  | 3 (23%) | 16 (100%) |
| Sweden 6 (46%) 4 (31%)  |  | — | 3 (23%) | 13 (100%) |
| Party type  |  |  |  |  |
| Socialist 6 (46%) 4 (31%)  |  | — | 3 (23%) | 13 (100%) |
| Right wing 4 (27%) 8 (53%)  |  | — | 3 (20%) | 15 (100%) |
| Green 3 (37%) 3 (37%) 1 (14%)  |  | 1 (14%) | 8 (100%) |
| Government  |  |  |  |  |
| Yes 7 (44%) 6 (37%)  |  | — | 3 (19%) | 16 (100%) |
| No 6 (30%) 9 (45%) 1 (5%) 4 (20%)  |  | 20 (100%) |
| Influence over candidate selection  |  |  |  |  |
| Strong 7 (37%) 6 (32%)  |  | — | 6 (32%) | 19 (100%) |
| Intermediate 3 (27%) 8 (73%)  |  | — | — | 11 (100%) |
| Weak 3 (50%) 1 (17%) 1 (17%) 1 (17%)  |  | 6 (100%) |
| Written contract  |  |  |  |  |
| Detailed 7 (35%) 7 (35%)  |  | — | 6 (30%) | 20 (100%) |
| Limited 5 (42%) 5 (42%) 1 (8%) 1 (8%)  |  | 12 (100%) |
| No 1 (25%) 3 (75%)  |  | — | — | 4 (100%) |
| Coordination device  |  |  |  |  |
| Strong 2 (50%) 2 (50%)  |  | — | — | 4 (100%) |
| Intermediate 7 (35%) 8 (40%) 1 (5%) 4 (20%)  |  | 20 (100%) |
| Weak 4 (33%) 5 (42%)  |  | — | 3 (25%) | 12 (100%) |
| Coordination device according to MEPs  |  |  |  |  |
| Yes 5 (56%) 3 (33%)  |  | — | 1 (11%) | 9 (100%) |
| No 8 (30%) 12 (44%) 1 (4%) 6 (22%)  |  | 27 (100%) |
We also find these eight MEPs in all party types and they belong to governmental as well as non-governmental parties. Although, as shown in the previous chapter, MEPs belonging to governmental parties give priority to their contacts with the government compared to non-governmental parties, this does not seem to have an impact on how these two groups frame their roles in a more general sense.

The various variables measuring the intra-party environment have little or no influence on the MEPs’ understanding of their representative roles in terms of these four categories. Especially the leadership’s influence over candidate selection and the writing of contracts seem to be unimportant in this respect. Actually the data in Table 7:3 show the reversed pattern compared to what we would expect. In the group of parties where the party leadership is strong in terms of selecting the candidates and where they write more detailed contracts, we find the largest group of EU-oriented MEPs. As said before, these two strategies taken by the parties in order to influence the MEPs seems especially inefficient.

The organization of more advanced systems for coordinating between the levels has no significant effect on the MEPs’ emphasis on the party or the voters as their representative locus. However, it seems that it affects whether the MEPs are defined as oriented toward the member state or the EU. In my categorization of the parties (as having more or less advanced coordination systems), the party that is defined as strong does not include any EU-oriented MEPs. It is in the parties that are defined as intermediate or weak that we find the eight MEPs that are defined as more EU-oriented. The picture gets stronger if we regard the MEPs’ estimates of the effectiveness of these coordination systems. Seven of the eight MEPs that are categorized as more EU-oriented are found in the group that does not have effective coordination. Based on these findings, the strategy to influence the MEPs by adopting effective coordination is more efficient than the strategy of trying to influence who becomes an MEP or to write contracts with the MEPs.

Despite this discussion, none of the pre-defined independent variables we used (with the possible exception of the country variable and the coordination device) clearly succeed in explaining why some MEPs tend to be oriented toward the EU in their representative role. Therefore, I
have also checked for other plausible explanations, such as the number of years the MEPs have been in the parliament, if they have earlier parliamentary experience, if they frame their work differently (for example as a representative or a policy promoter). However, none of these aspects seems to really capture this group of eight MEPs that are more oriented toward the European level. Consequently, this means that there has to be another explanation to why some MEPs develop a stronger European focus. All this makes the representatives focusing on the EU interesting and we will soon pay closer attention to this group of MEPs. However, before that, we shall look further into the largest group among the respondents in this study, namely the nationally-oriented MEPs.

THE NATIONALLY-ORIENTED MEPs

All MEPs refer to both the EU level and their member states when talking about their representative role. This is natural. It is the fact that the tension between the levels does exist that makes the question of what level they identify strongest with interesting. At the same time, it can sometimes be hard to distinguish what level they orient toward. However, a nationally-oriented MEP always has the member state in focus when describing his or her representative role. Either this includes the national voters or the party organization. The following quotes serve as good examples:

The national party organization, to me, it is the central to everything I do (interview no. 35)

The most important role and function I have, is to make sure that my electorate, which are very specific in the Irish case, are first and foremost looked after (interview no. 36)

Among some statements it is obvious that there is a tension between the levels and that the respondents have to relate to this:

I shall represent the Swedish social democracy, that is what I think comes closest. Secondly, which you can have different opinions about, I represent the European socialist group (interview no. 30)
Often these statements are connected to arguments that it is the voters that have elected them or that it is the party that has selected them as candidates. These references to an identifiable group are more common among the nationally-oriented MEPs, compared to the MEPs that are more oriented toward the EU level. The EPG is also important for this group, but not as important as the national party together with the EPD. In some cases they even see the EPG as a result of the organization of the EP, rather than something that they represent.

The nationally-oriented MEPs are also more troubled by a lack of contact with the national level. For example, among the EU-oriented MEPs, none think that the contact is poor or fairly poor, while 31% among the nationally-oriented MEPs do think so. This probably does not mean that there are huge differences in the way the contacts are organized between the two groups; it just means that the nationally-oriented MEPs are more troubled by the fact that there are problems with these contacts.

There is also a difference in how the nationally-oriented and EU-oriented MEPs describe their roles as experts. In Table 7:4, the MEPs estimate how often they are used as experts by their national parliamentarians. The table shows that the more nationally-oriented MEPs are less satisfied with the situation.

Table 7:4  Expert roles vs. representative orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representative orientation</th>
<th>Does the national parliamentary group use you as an expert because of your role in the EP?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>6 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>5 (62.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22% of the nationally-oriented MEPs say that they are used as experts often, compared to 62% of the EU-oriented MEPs. The difference in the mean score is 1.5 among the EU-oriented group, compared to 2.4 among the nationally-oriented group. This pattern was already noted in chapter six. We would expect that the MEPs with a more national orientation would keep closer contact with the national level and thereby be used as experts. However, this is obviously not the case. In the previous chapter, I proposed an alternative understanding of this paradox and the result
in Table 7:4 illustrates that argument. This probably does not indicate that the nationally-oriented MEPs (in general) are used less often as experts, compared to the EU-oriented group. It does show, however, that the EU-oriented MEPs consider themselves as being such experts, and that this is an important role for them. This is probably because they identify themselves as someone who represents another arena with different insights and a different role than the party representatives in the national arena. On the contrary, the nationally-oriented MEPs feel that they are underused in the arena that their representative mandate emanates from.

The nationally-oriented MEPs and the EU-oriented MEPs are each other’s relative counterparts. That is, they are categorized in a certain way because they differ from each other in a specific way. We cannot understand one of them without also looking at the other. Therefore, we now pay a closer attention to the more EU-oriented MEPs.

**THE EU-ORIENTED MEPs**

The EU-oriented MEPs do not refer specifically to the national level as the primary source of their representative mandate. It is common that the EU-oriented MEPs refer to their roles as legislators in general or that they represent an idea.

> I think I am more inclined to see it in a broader role as a policy maker, which you can do in different places. So, I am not so much from the perspective of representing and being elected by members in general. I am really focusing on social and economic subjects (interview no. 26).

It is not representation as such that is the focus of this MEP. Rather, his or her focus is on pushing a specific agenda or act as a well-informed legislator. It is also common for the EU-oriented MEP to refer to the European party family or voters in general (as a more abstract principle). And in some cases it is possible to see the tension between the levels, although this group turns to the EP level rather than the national.

> I see myself as a European social democrat, together with my constituency (interview no. 18)

Although these quotes may seem to overemphasize nuances, I argue that these differences capture something that distinguishes MEPs from each other, also when speaking about other dimensions of the work as an MEP.
The differences between the nationally focused MEPs and the EU focused MEPs are most obvious when talking about the future. On the question of how a respondent views the future for European parties, the typical EU focused answer is,

*It is really happening, but it is too slow. [...] The next step is that European parties get European money [...] and that you also have European lists and not national lists, [...] I was hoping that we would get it [...] already in 2004, but maybe in 2009 and not before, and that is a pity… (interview no. 38).*

The respondent is eager to carry on the project, and despite different obstacles slowing the process down, these difficulties will be defeated. A nationally focused MEP says,

*Formally European parties are created. In reality, that is not the case, of course. [...] I think it will be very hard to get it to work, because it is the same as saying that you should feel like a European, you should act like one, and you should educate the youth to become European. [...] We have at least 15 different cultures and you know, before these have blended together [...]. You never get that feeling; you can never have it. I don’t think so. Many hundreds of years have to pass before something like that can happen. (interview no. 22).*

In this case, the respondent presents arguments against the belief that European parties are emerging and the difficulties are not easy to solve.

The group of EU-oriented MEPs have a tendency to argue that they see the EPD as one part of the larger EPG, while it is more common among the other MEPs to argue that these are two separate parts (although sometimes hard to distinguish between). For example one EU-oriented MEP answers on the question what role the EPD has for him:

*MEP colleagues from my party [referring to EPD], well, yes [they are important] implicitly, because I say I represent my group [referring to EPG] (interview no. 38).*

This MEP does not make a clear distinction between the EPG and EPD, which means that a difference is not recognized between the national and a European positions (at least not in general). This means that the EU-oriented MEP does not regard the cross-pressure as a large problem. A contrasting example is a nationally-oriented MEP that says:
Even I reacted in the beginning of my period when I realized that we are not one cohesive entity [referring to the EPG]. We are fifteen groups in one, which is exactly how it is (interview no. 22).

This MEP does not only define the EPD as important, but also describe the EPG as nothing else than a collaboration of different EPDs. These different attitudes toward the EPG are illustrative in terms of how the MEPs regard their own role in the EP as well as maturity of the EP in general.

The recognition of the EP committees is also an important difference between the EU-oriented and nationally-oriented MEPs. Generally, the MEPs that orient themselves toward the EU level give the committees a more important role. One reason could be that the MEPs that are oriented toward the EU are involved in areas that are associated with the EU level, rather than the national level. If we take a closer look at what committees they are involved in, it turns out that they are members of the committees for: (1) Budget, (2) Employment and social affairs, (3) Environment, public health and consumer policy, (4) Agriculture and rural development, and (5) Regional policy, transport and tourism. Some of these committees are important in the sense that they are involved in co-decision procedures and process issues where the parliament possesses real power. Consequently, these MEPs should be the most important to coordinate with, from a national perspective. The paradox, however, is that the MEPs belonging to these committees are more focused on the EU level. One explanation could be that the centripetal force is stronger in these committees than in others and this makes these MEPs to have a tendency to identify more strongly with the EU level. The character of this study, with the small number of respondents compared to the number of committees, makes it impossible to test such an argument. However, the findings in this study imply that it should be interesting to further analyze the difference between MEPs that are active in different committees.

How the MEPs relate to the EPGs and the committees taps into the theme of the previous chapter, that is, how MEPs connect to different groups. We shall develop this discussion by analyzing if there is a connection between the pattern of contacts and the perception of representative roles.
Representative roles and the link between the arenas

If we presume that representative roles are important in understanding how MEPs behave in certain situations, it would be possible to see traces of the above findings on how the MEPs say that they would act in certain situations and how they experience the link between the levels. I will analyze this by first looking at the pattern of contacts that the MEPs have with various groups in the EP as well as on the national level. Secondly, how the MEPs regard the conflicts between the levels. All this shall be compared with the role concepts used by the MEPs discussed above.

PATTERN OF CONTACTS AND ROLE PERCEPTIONS

Chapter six ended with a categorization of the MEPs as either EU-oriented or nationally-oriented in their contacts. The question was, when the MEP feels that he or she needs advice on how to act, what group do they regard as their most important point of reference? We ended up with 13 MEPs that gave highest priority to one of the groups on the EU level and therefore they were categorized as being EU-oriented in their contacts with various groups in these situations. The interesting question is if these are the same people that also regard themselves as representing groups on the EU level. The result is presented in Figure 7:1.

![Figure 7:1 Representative vs. organizational role orientation](image)

Most of the MEPs that emphasize the connection to some group/person on the national level also regard themselves as representing the national level first and foremost. Furthermore, the MEPs that regard themselves
as representing the EU level, do also give priority to EU groups for advice. Therefore, the argument that there is a connection between representative roles and the MEP’s pattern of contacts seems to be correct. An MEP’s representative notion is important for how he or she directs his or her contacts during work as an MEP. It is also interesting to note that among the six MEPs that are EU-oriented both in terms of their representational and organizational role, five of them are from Dutch parties.

However, some MEPs do not follow this pattern. There is a group of MEPs that gives priority to contacts with the EP level, but does not describe themselves as oriented toward the EP level. This is reasonable. It is not necessary to adopt a more EU-oriented representative role just because it is more appropriate to have the main source of advice from the EP level. There are a lot of reasons why an MEP might first of all turn to the EP level for advice. For example, some questions do not affect the national level as much as others. If an MEP is involved in those areas, he or she would probably rather go to some group on the EP level, without necessarily describing himself or herself as EU-oriented. The important thing is that the overall tendency implies that there is a connection between whom the MEP thinks he or she represents and the MEP’s behavior.

To dwell on this even further, we may ask ourselves if there is a difference between representing the voters or the party organization, and orienting oneself toward the EP level. The absolute majority (77%) of the group that defines itself as first and foremost taking advice from groups on the EP level also defines itself as representing voters, contrary to a party organization. The MEPs that are guided by the national level are evenly spread between representing voters or parties. This tells us that if an MEP’s identity as a party representative is weaker it is easier to direct his or her contacts toward the EP level. Or perhaps the relationship is the other way around. If an MEP’s contacts are mainly in the EP level, then the MEP has a tendency to refer to himself or herself as a voter’s representative, rather than a party representative. Irrespectively of which of these explanations that is more accurate, this is interesting because it tells us that if an MEP is being oriented toward the EU level, it is easier to refer to the voters than the party organization.
CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE LEVELS AND ROLE PERCEPTIONS

How MEPs direct their contacts is one way of analyzing how MEPs would act in certain situations and the connection between their role conceptions. Another way is to try to understand if these two groups experience differences when it comes to conflicts between the levels. Put in another way; do the MEPs oriented toward the national level and the EU level feel differently regarding the cross-pressure between the levels? We expect that the ones oriented toward the EU, would have more conflicts with the national level and less with the EU level, and we expect to see the opposite pattern among the national oriented MEPs.

Figure 7:2 reports if the MEPs consider these conflicts with the national party respective the EPG to be occurring often, sometimes, seldom or never. In the group of nationally-oriented MEPs, the problems with the EPG seem to be stronger than the problems with the national party. This agrees with what we expect. If the MEPs identify themselves as being representatives of the national level, they would experience larger problems in the process of decision making within the EP. The material presented in Figure 7:2, verifies this pattern. 61% of this group says that they often or sometimes experience a conflict with the national party, compared to 93% that regards the same in relation to the EPGs.
Furthermore, the EU-oriented MEPs are less troubled by conflicts with the EPGs, compared to the nationally-oriented MEPs. This also agrees with what we would expect. As already mentioned, 93% of the nationally-oriented MEPs feel that they often or sometimes experience a conflict with their EPGs, while 50% among the EU-oriented group sometimes experience such a conflict (none thinks that this is occurring often). This emphasizes that the relationship between the EPG and these two groups differs.

The argument that the MEPs oriented toward the EU would have more conflicts with the national level than the more nationally-oriented group is not correct. Actually, there are relatively more nationally-oriented MEPs that have problems with their parties than there are in the EU-
oriented group. As already noted in the previous chapter, the general picture is that the group of EU-oriented MEPs feels less troubled by conflicts in general. This could be an indication that this group is more integrated in the EP system. As argued in the last chapter, if an MEP does not have a strong ambition to represent interests on the national level, it is reasonable that he or she would not be troubled by potential conflicts with the national level. They feel that they represent something else and therefore they do not feel required to follow a national interest. A more nationally-oriented MEP, on the other hand, who includes the national level as an important part of their representative role may feel troubled by the fact that the two levels sometimes end up in conflict. One MEP, categorized as EU-oriented, give me the following answer on the question if the conflict pressure has reduced from the time we meet a couple of years earlier.

I feel much more confident in my role now. [...] I didn't know the system down here and I was afraid of making a fool of myself. At the time, there was a series of TV documentaries that asked the question if we had voted in line with our party back home. The fear of taking part in such a program is much weaker today. This confidence is explained by the more independent role that we have been given by the party, and the obvious fact that we have to hold together the political group down here to the greatest possible extent (interview no. 66).

Shifting focus from having a national representative focus to a more EU orientation eases the pressure on the MEP.

In connection to this it should be said that in general the conflict with the national level is regarded as trickier among the MEPs, than the conflicts within the EPGs. The reason is that it is accepted that the EPGs have different opinions and therefore the pressure is not as strong as it otherwise would be. Therefore, even though many give statements that they have conflicts within the EPG, this is not regarded as an especially huge problem. Consequently, if the EPGs would implement stricter rules in order to influence a more cohesive behavior, the pressure on the MEPs would increase, and especially the more nationally-oriented MEPs would probably end up in more severe problems. The inclusive working method of the EPGs is therefore a necessity for the group to create a more cohesive behavior. A more hierarchical working method could trigger off a national alignment among the MEPs.
Conclusion

Based on the material presented in this chapter, we are able to say something about different role concepts among the MEPs. We are also able to say something about how these different roles influence other aspects of the work of the MEPs. The study is built up on a group of explanatory variables. We ask if country-specific aspects explain why MEPs adopt different representative roles. On the country level of the analysis, we distinguish the cases based on different electoral systems, differences in legislative-executive relations regarding EU issues, and the public opinion regarding EU issues. We ask if some of these variables capture the differences between the cases. We also ask if the explanation is found on the party level of the analysis, rather than on the country level. Also here we use three aspects of the party organization: the heritage of the party, if the party is in government, and if the party uses a more sophisticated means of monitoring the MEPs. Now it is time to bring things together and sum up the conclusion so far.

I will start by discussing what we can say about the differences between the countries. The information in this chapter underlines the conclusion in the previous chapter that the Irish MEPs have a stronger national orientation than MEPs from the other two countries. This is shown by the way they focus on the link toward the voters on the local and regional level when describing their representative role. The Irish MEPs also have a more positive attitude toward representing the government than the other two, and this can also be inferred as an expression of a more national orientation. A third indication is that the Irish MEPs give less importance to the EPG and especially the EPD than the other two countries. That is, they pay less attention to the EP level groups and more attention to national groups in their representative roles.

The Swedish MEPs are divided between being oriented toward the national level and the EU level. Although a majority of the MEPs feel that they represent the voters or the parties on the national level, there are some Swedish MEPs that direct their focus toward the EU level. They also give higher priority to the EPD and EPG than the Irish MEPs. However, it seems like it is the EPD that is the most important, and this can be inferred as partly focusing on their national party.
The Dutch MEPs are, as the Swedes, divided between being oriented toward the national level and the EU level, as well as representing the voters or a party organization. However, there are some indications that the Dutch MEPs are even more oriented toward the EU than the Swedish ones. This is based on the fact that there are a few more MEPs that have an EU orientation. Although the difference is very small, it does exist. Second, the Dutch MEPs give higher priority to the EPG than to the EPD, compared to the Swedish and the Irish MEPs. This tells us that the Dutch MEPs are more integrated in the structure of the EP. Third, among the MEPs that give priority to advice from the EU level and also adopt a more EU-oriented role, almost all are Dutch MEPs (five out of six).

Based on the theoretical arguments presented in the beginning of this study we are able to make some initial conclusions on the country level of the analysis. According to the argument regarding impact of the electoral system, we would expect that the Irish MEPs would have the weakest connection to the national level and the Dutch MEPs would have the strongest connection to the national level. Sweden would be an intermediate case. The argument is obviously not correct. Actually, the order is completely the reverse. As the theoretical argument states, the stronger the connection to the party (because of a more party-orientated electoral system) the more nationally-oriented the MEP should be. The result of this study is the reverse – if the electoral system is more candidate-oriented, the MEP is more nationally-oriented.

This conclusion illustrates that the relationship between the representative and the voters or the party organization, is not as simple as we would believe. The argument presupposes that the party organization, in a party-oriented electoral system, is interested in what is happening in the EP and scrutinizes the MEPs. Many of the results in Chapter six, as well as in this chapter, show that this is not the general picture. On the contrary, many parties seem to have difficulties integrating the MEPs in the ordinary structure of the party organizations. Secondly, if there are means of communicating between the voters and the MEP, for example through local or regional party channels, it may well be that the voters are able to scrutinize the MEPs in a more efficient
way than the theoretical argument assumes. At least it makes the MEPs more sensitive toward the national arena. I will develop these arguments further in the concluding chapter of this study.

The second theoretical explanation on the country level is that the stronger the legislative control over the executive, the more nationally-oriented the MEPs would we find. We have defined Sweden as the strongest in this sense and the Irish as the weakest. It is the Irish MEPs that shows the strongest connection to the national level, in terms organizational priorities and representational role conception, and consequently this argument seems to be of minor importance. The way the national parliament works might influence the contacts between the MEPs and national parliamentarians, but it does not influence how the MEPs frame their representative role.

The third theoretical explanation (on the country level) is if the popular opinion regarding EU issues is more negative, we will find a higher number of MEPs that focus on the national arena. This would mean that we should find the most nationally-oriented MEPs in Sweden and the least nationally-oriented in the Netherlands. This explanation does not seem to be valid. Even though some MEPs that take a strongly negative stand on the development of the EU refer to critical voters as their representative locus, the overall argument does not explain the variation between the cases because the difference between the Dutch case and the Swedish case is not that huge. It is obviously possible, in a very EU critical environment, to become a more EU-oriented MEP.

If we then leave the country level of the analysis and concentrate on the party level, the first theoretical argument is that it matters if the party organization belongs to the socialist, right wing or green political tradition. The outcome should be that MEPs from the socialist camp would be inclined to emphasize their roles as national representatives, while MEPs from the right wing camp would be relatively more EU-oriented. The results of this study show that this variable probably explains the least among all the independent variables. Although the right wing parties tend to focus more on the voters, than the other two groups, the rest of the results are inconclusive. Basically, it is hard to find a pattern using party heritage as the explanation. Either the parties’
traditions do not influence representative roles in modern organizations, or they simply become more and more alike. Or the MEPs are situated in an environment that has a much stronger impact on how they frame their representative roles, than what tradition their party belongs to. In this limited study, it is impossible to decide which of these conclusions that is more likely. The important thing is that party heritage seems to play a limited role explaining different representative roles.

The second explanation on the party level of the analysis is that MEPs belonging to governmental parties will emphasize their roles as national representatives compared to MEPs from non-governmental parties. In the previous chapter we concluded that there is a difference in the contacts with the national level depending on whether the MEP belong to a governmental party or not. Also in this chapter we note that MEPs from governmental parties distinguish the government as a more important representative source, compared to MEPs from non-governmental parties. It is therefore reasonable to argue that if an MEP’s party is in government, this influences how the MEP relates to the national arena. Simply put, these MEPs have another important principal in the national arena to be aware of.

However, this does not seem to influence what representative roles the MEPs adopt. Actually, the differences between these two groups are surprisingly small. Even though MEPs belonging to a governmental party most likely represent the governmental position from time to time (explicitly or implicitly), there is a difference between this kind of “acting for” the government and actually defining one’s self as representing the government. As a popularly elected MEP, it would be odd to define one’s representative locus as the government, because it would be inconsistent with the role of being an elected politician. Representing the government would be the same as saying that the MEP has a more or less defined mandate, which in turn would limit the MEP’s own freedom of maneuvering. Therefore, even if the MEP promotes the governmental position in the EP, this does not make the MEP a governmental representative. The results in this and the previous chapter indicate such a conclusion.
As identified in earlier chapters, party leaderships try to circumscribe the MEPs by influencing the selection of candidates and writing formal contracts with their MEPs. However, this does not affect how the MEPs define their representative roles. It is likely that these kinds of restrictions have an effect at certain points in time (for example during times of upcoming elections) or in very critical situations (for example when the party needs to reprimand an MEP). However, this does not influence how MEPs define their representative roles in a broader sense. That is, as long as the MEP has successfully been elected and signed the contract, these instruments stop influencing the MEP's daily life.

The last intra-party explanatory variable is if the parties use more sophisticated systems of monitoring the MEPs, which should lead to a higher number of MEPs that emphasize the national level in their representative roles. This explanation is relevant when looking at the empirical material. Although the relationship is weak, MEPs that belong to parties that have more sophisticated means of monitoring emphasize their roles as representing the member state compared to the group of MEPs from parties that has less sophisticated coordinating systems. Furthermore, parties that have this kind of more advanced coordination systems (and where the MEPs do attend party meetings) have fewer MEPs that are oriented toward the EU level in the framing of their representative roles, compared to parties that do not have these kinds of advanced systems. Therefore, it seems like parties are able to influence the role concepts used by the MEPs by implementing more sophisticated means of keeping the contact with their MEPs. However, we should be very cautious generalizing this conclusion, because the differences are quite small and it is basically one party that dominates the group that has the more advanced systems, namely the Swedish Moderates. This conclusion is also uncertain because it is not valid for all kinds of relationships analyzed in this chapter. For example, there are no significant differences between the attitudes toward the EPG and the EPD and between those that have a more sophisticated system and those who do not. However, between the levels this explanation seems to be valid.

Despite the ambition to explain why different MEPs are more oriented toward the EU level or the national level, this chapter also tries to look further into if these two groups conceive the political
environment differently. First, it is possible to trace a connection between the roles used by the MEPs and how they describe their contacts with the national level. The group of MEPs that has a more EU-oriented representative role does also emphasize contacts with groups on the EP level and vice versa. This is important because it verifies that these are two specific groups of MEPs, both with respect to their roles as representatives and their organizational priorities.

Secondly, in general, the group of EU-oriented MEPs experiences fewer conflicts between their own position and the position taken by the national party or the EPG. This means that the group that is more EU-oriented is less troubled by the cross-pressure between the levels. The explanation is that if the MEPs do not have a strong ambition to represent interests on the national level, they are not as troubled by the potential conflicts compared to MEPs that have the ambition to represent the national level.

This taps into the general discussion about the roles of the MEPs. Based on this study, we know that the MEPs feel that they have an important role of explaining the EU on the national level, both toward the public and the media, as well as toward the national party organization. It is also common that they express frustration because of a lack of response from the national arena. We also know that one identifiable group of MEPs focuses on the EU arena, rather than on the national, both in terms of its contacts and its representative role. The question is if this group of EU-oriented MEPs will grow, whether the contact with the national levels weakens even more? That is, if the party organizations and the national parliamentary system are reluctant to include the MEPs at any greater length, the consequence will be that MEPs will adopt a more EU-oriented role. Although we need empirical material over a longer time period in order to answer such a question, there are some indications in this study, which point in that direction. It seems like the EU-oriented MEPs are found in the cases where the link to the national level seems to be weaker and in cases where the principal is less perceptible. I will in the concluding chapter, return to this analysis. However, one piece is still missing. Based on the material presented so far, it is impossible to say if these different attitudes have an impact on how the MEPs actually behave. This is the theme for the next chapter.
MEP voting behavior

Until now we have analyzed how MEPs frame their representative roles and described their contacts with the national level and the EP level respectively. The conclusions have been drawn on the basis of self-descriptions expressed by the MEPs themselves. These descriptions are important because we learn something about the environment that the MEPs are working in and how they define their situation within this environment. However, these are self-descriptions and it is hard, on the basis of these descriptions, to state that they really act according to how they describe their role. This has also, as discussed earlier in this study, been the Achilles heel of the research on political roles and it has been hard to link role-descriptions by political representatives and actual behavior. Therefore, it is important to try to find a way to measure the behavior of the MEPs and link these two sources of information. By that we are able to say more about how MEPs regard their roles as well as how they act in certain situations.

Therefore, I will analyze how the MEPs included in this study have voted between July 1999 and February 2002, using 3050 roll-call votes during this period of time (Faas 2002a). Some votes have been excluded from the analysis for two reasons. One is that I have not been able to define the majority position among the MEPs in the EPG. A second is that the members of an EPD have all been absent from the vote. Consequently, the number of votes that are analyzed varies, at least to some extent, for different EPDs. To deal with this problem, I have selected votes that
are cast during agreement or during conflict between the EPD and EPG, and adjusted for the number of votes that are included in each set.

The focus on the Fifth Parliament period excludes some MEPs that are included in the previous chapters. Some of them have retired as MEPs and in two EPDs there has been a shift of MEPs (whom I have interviewed) and consequently they have not been present during the whole time period. Furthermore, the Irish Labour Party has only one MEP and it is therefore not possible to define an EPD position, and analyze the individual MEP in relation to that position. Therefore, unfortunately, the Irish Labour Party is excluded from this part of the study. All in all, the analysis in this chapter is done on the basis of the behavior of 30 MEPs.

The overall question is to investigate whether we are able to find the same pattern of how MEPs relate to the national level and EU level, as is found in previous chapters, when looking at actual behavior of the MEPs. A number of relationships will be tested and they are important for the overall theoretical framework and/or the results in earlier chapters. Some of these variables are on the contextual level of the analysis and deal with issues such as what country the MEP comes from, whether or not the party is in government, and the kind of coordination strategy that the party uses. Also a number of explanations on the individual level will be tested, such as the MEPs’ understanding of their roles in terms of party versus voter representation (first role dimension) and the member state versus EU orientation (second role dimension). In most of the analysis in this chapter, I will leave out variables that until now have been shown to have little importance for how MEPs understand their roles or organize their link toward the national arena, such as party type/heritage, whether or not the party leadership influences the selection of candidates and whether or not the party writes formal contracts with their MEPs.

I will start the analysis by providing a general picture of voting behavior in the EP. After this I concentrate on the party organizations selected for this study and analyze to what extent the different EPDs are in conflict or in agreement with their EPGs. Following this, I concentrate on the situations where the EPGs and EPDs are in conflict and analyze
how MEPs behave in such situations. Thereafter, I test some theoretical explanations for why MEPs vote in certain ways during conflict or agreement, and I end this chapter by discussing the significance of the problem of MEPs not being present at roll-call votes.

The general picture of the EPG’s cohesiveness

The EPGs are developing into more traditional parliamentary party groups as we know them from in the member states. They create hierarchical systems, and they strive for reciprocity and cohesive conduct. They also make use of an internal division of labor, which makes the group more efficient in the legislative process within the EU-system. At the same time these groups differ from their counterparts in the national political arena. They consist of parties from different political contexts and the EP differs in many respects from the national parliaments. And while the European party federations do play a role in a European political context, they do not constitute an extra parliamentary organization for the EPGs comparable to the ones in the national arena (Nugent 1999:223; Sandström 2003). But the EPGs themselves do play a crucial role in the day-to-day work within the EP.

The EPGs are also legitimized and encouraged through the procedures in the EP, and the EPGs have successively strengthened their position at the expense of individual MEPs (Raunio 2000). One motive for this development is that the EPGs are thought to enhance the progress of European awareness, which may supersede national and nationalistic thinking (Viola 2000:14). Some examples of this development are found in the rules of the EP. For example, appointments to committees and intraparliamentary leadership positions shall be submitted through the EPGs. Furthermore, the allocation of speaking time is based on the proportionality between the groups (European Parliament, 1999, rule 13, 120 and 152), that is, although there is room for non-affiliated members in all these procedures, the groups are the organizing vehicles of the parliament. To be included in an EPG is therefore of crucial importance for the EPDs as collectives and for MEPs as individuals.
In most cases and for most MEPs and EPDs there is no doubt about what EPG to affiliate with, although there have been several changes in the groups during the years. In most cases the established EPGs attract the EPDs that belong to the same ideological family, that is, the Social Democratic parties are members of the Party of European Socialists (PES), the Christian Democratic parties and Conservative parties are affiliated with the European People's Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED), etc. This is also the case with the parties included in this study. It is only the Irish Fianna Fáil that is affiliated with an EPG that does not represent the traditional division of West European party system, namely the Union for a Europe of Nations (UEN). One reason for the party to belong to a smaller group is that it gives the party more leverage to define their own agenda and act independently. One Fianna Fáil leading member tells me that:

…I think you are better off being a substantial part in a small group, than a small part of a very, very large group, because I think you literally have no voice (interview no. 25)

The strength of being in a large group, regarding division of labor and collective action within the EP, can be a hindrance to sustaining a high profile in the national arena. One reason for this is that the role of the EPGs is to form compromises between national interests as well as ideological perspectives. In many aspects this is the EPG’s raison d’être and the EPGs use different means of attaining this aim.

DO THE EPGS ACT COHESIVELY?

One way of measuring if the EPGs are cohesive actors on the parliamentary scene is to analyze how the MEPs vote. In Table 8:1, the cohesion of EPGs is presented for the cases included in this study (in terms of EPGs). These figures are based on an “Agreement Index,” which is created by Simon Hix and his fellow researchers (Hix, Noury & Roland 2002), where 1 means total unanimity within the group and 0 means that the group is exactly divided between Yes-votes, No-votes and Abstentions (during roll-call votes it is possible to vote “abstain” and this should not be confused with being absent during the vote).
The research team has collected data on all roll-call votes from the time of the first directly elected parliament in 1979 to halfway through the fifth parliament in 2001 and the total number of votes included in the analysis is 11,500.

**Figure 8:1 Party group cohesiveness, 1979-01**

*) In the article by Hix, Noury and Roland (2002), this group is named “GAUL” because the core EPD in this group is the French Gaullists. This group is currently named UEN and includes the Fianna Fáil, which is the object of our interest in this study.

**) The measurement used is “Agreement Index” and varies from 1=all vote the same and 0=the group is exactly divided between voting “yes,” “no” and “abstain” (see details in Hix, Noury and Roland, 2002:10). Furthermore, note that the scale in this figure ranges from 0.6 through 1.0. This is not a strategy to mislead the reader; it is just a way to give a clearer picture on the differences between the cases.


As we are able to see in Table 8:1, the cohesiveness within the EPGs is relatively high and in some cases it has increased during the lifetime of the EP. Consequently, it is possible to talk about the EPGs as relatively unitary actors, at least during roll-call votes, and it is interesting to note that this pattern is quite constant over the years that the EP has developed.
That is, although the power of the EP has increased significantly over the years, this has not resulted in a greater split within the EPGs when it comes to voting.

However, there are two important changes during the development of the EP that should be mentioned. First, the number of roll-call votes has increased substantially. In the first parliamentary period (1979-1984), the number of roll-call votes was 886 and in the fourth parliament (1994-1999) the number was 3,379. This means, that the roll-call instrument is more important today than 20 years ago. Second, the cohesiveness of the parliament as a whole has decreased during the lifetime of the directly elected parliament. Especially during the 1980s, the parliament as an institution was more unitary than today. This means that we are able to see an increased conflict between the EPGs, at the same time as the cohesiveness within the EPGs is increasing. This also supports the argument that the EP is maturing to resemble a more traditional parliament, with ideological differences represented in the various EPGs.

If we then look closer at the individual EPGs, we are able to see that especially the Social Democratic group (PES) has consistently developed a more cohesive behavior during the years. The Green group (GREEN) displays a similar result. However, the Christian Democratic group (EPP) has dropped during and after the fourth parliament (1994-1999). Nevertheless, it is important to note that at the same time that the EPP shows a more cohesive pattern over time, we are also able to see that the UEN group began to drop in the third parliamentary period.

CAVEATS WHEN ANALYZING ROLL-CALL VOTES

Measuring cohesiveness in the EP by looking at roll-call votes is not without its problems. One such problem has to do with the reasons for why these votes are called for in the first place. During ordinary proceedings, the MEP's votes are not recorded and it is only possible to analyze how every single MEP has voted, at least in a systematic way, when the roll-call votes are used. These roll-call votes shall be conducted upon the request from at least one EPG or the minimum number of 32 MEPs (European Parliament, 1999, Chpt 17:134). Consequently, roll-call
votes only represent a fragment of all decisions that are processed within the EP. The question is if this means that roll-call votes are biased in one way or the other, simply because they are requested for specific reasons. We know, for example, that it is common to request roll-call votes in order to display a disagreement in the opposing EPG, or to publicly show how one’s own EPG has voted on a single issue. It is also a strategy to impose cohesiveness within the EPG (Carrubba & Gabel 1999). These strategic considerations all show that roll-call votes are requested when one or several groups are divided on a certain issue (either in one’s own EPG or in an opposite EPG). Consequently, it is reasonable to argue that the EPGs should be even more cohesive in processing issues that do not tempt one EPG to request a roll-call vote. However, as said above, roll-call votes are the only manageable way to analyze individual voting of the MEPs, and we have to live with these shortcomings.

A second methodological problem with analyzing roll-call votes is the fact that some MEPs fail to attend these votes and we do not really know why they do so. This could be a result of a coincidence, but it could also be a result of purposeful behavior. It is simply hard to analyze how MEPs would behave if they were present at the vote. Also in this case, we to some extent have to live with this shortcoming; however, I will return to this problem at the end of this chapter and address the issue if whether it is possible to say something systematic about the MEPs that fail to attend these votes.

SOME EXPLANATIONS IN PREVIOUS RESEARCH

What then, explains differences between various EPGs regarding how their MEPs behave during roll-call votes? This is currently the main question for many scholars dealing with the EPGs in one way or the other. Therefore, this research is very much in its beginning. However, already at this point we are able to say something about some of the results that have been presented in earlier research. One obvious question is whether a high fragmentation of the EPG works against a higher cohesiveness? The results in previous studies show that there is no significant negative effect on cohesion, if the EPG consists of many
different EPDs. However, if the EPDs differ substantially in size in the EPG (defined as fractionalization), the cohesive behavior is undermined (Hix, Noury & Roland 2002:21). The reason is arguably that if a large party (or parties) is able to dominate the EPG’s position, and there are many smaller EPDs within the group, the dominant EPD might be able to impose its view on the other parties. If the EPG is more balanced the group has to negotiate a common position and thereby the incentive for smaller parties to defect might be less than in the former case.

If the MEPs belong to a national party that is in government, this tends to increase cohesive behavior (Hix, Noury & Roland 2002:22). Intuitively this is an odd result and it is also different from the theoretical argument presented in this study. Based on the literature overview in Chapter 2, I hypothesized that governmental parties should have a stronger link with the national level and therefore have greater difficulty forming compromises within their EPGs and consequently they would defect more often. Hix and colleagues, explain their result by saying that the EP seldom initiates legislation (this is done by the European Commission) and if the proposal is accepted in the Council of Ministers, it is reasonable to expect that parties from national governments put pressure on their MEPs to ensure that the proposal pass the legislative process in the EP. This argument underlines the conclusions drawn in earlier chapter of this study, that MEPs from governmental parties have a somewhat different relationship with the national level, than MEPs from non-governmental parties. This unholy alliance between the Council of Ministers and the EP may make the MEPs keener on voting with the EPGs. However, it is logically possible that it may work in the opposite direction, that is, cause the MEPs to defect more often because of the cross-pressure between the levels. Therefore, it remains to be seen if Hix’s explanation also applies to the cases selected for this study.

Furthermore, the argument is if the MEP is elected in a system that is characterized by closed-list proportional representation, with a small district magnitude, or a centralized candidate selection, this increases the MEP’s tendency to defect from the EPG’s position in critical situations (Hix 2002a:24). The explanation is that these variables capture the ability for the national party to punish the MEPs, if he or she votes against the
party’s position on the national level. The influence of the electoral system and how parties select candidates for the EP play an important role also in this study and the cases are selected on basis of differences on these variables. Therefore, we are able to test this argument also on this material. If the argument is correct we should expect to find that the Dutch MEPs defect more often from the position of the EPG and the Irish MEPs should act in the opposite direction.

These various conclusions in the literature on roll-call analysis tap into the questions, as well as the theoretical framework, of this study, and therefore we shall now in the final empirical study see how the selected MEPs behave during roll-call votes.

**Voting pattern during agreement between the EPD and the EPG**

It is common in roll-call studies that the EPDs are regarded as more or less unitary actors (see for example Faas 2002b:25). That is, if MEPs defect from the position of the EPG, it is posited that the EPD is doing this jointly. With an aggregated perspective, this is reasonable. However, the aim of this study is to pay closer attention to the fact that the MEPs may diverge in their support of a common position in the EPG, as well as in the EPD. The fact that this study is based on a small number of MEPs makes this approach possible.

Consistent with the literature and as we will see in the vast majority of votes in our data, the EPD and the EPG are in agreement. At the same time, these agreements are based on a majority position in the EPD and the EPG respectively, and individual MEPs may still defect from these positions. In many aspects the cross-pressure between the national level and the EU level is captured by the relationship between the EPD and EPG. If there is a stronger allegiance to the national level (for some reason) this should work against the cohesiveness of the EPGs. By identifying the majority position of the EPD and the EPG, it is possible to compare this with the voting of every single MEP and thereby analyze how these individuals behave in certain situations. We will start by looking how MEPs vote during agreement between the EPD and EPG,
and relate this to the contextual variables that are used in this study. Thereafter, we will look further into if there is a connection between how MEPs define their roles and their voting behavior.

**COHESIVE VOTING AND CONTEXTUAL ASPECTS**

During a roll-call vote the MEPs have basically three options, voting YES, NO or ABSTAIN. The EPG majority and the EPD majority may have a common position and the individual MEP is able to join that position or to defect from it. I am not interested (at least not in this study) in how the MEPs vote in terms of yes, no or abstention, just if they vote the same way as the EPD and the EPG. I have selected all the votes when there is an agreement between the majority position of the EPD and EPG. Then, based on this selection, I have looked closer at how every individual MEP has cast his or her vote in these situations and the result is reported in Table 8:1. The “Common position” column means that the EPD and EPG agree on a certain position and the MEP votes accordingly. The “Individual voting” column means that there is a common position between the EPD and EPG and that the MEP has defected from this common position and voted differently. The “Absent” column means that the MEP has not been present during these votes. This should not be confused with voting ABSTAIN, which means that the MEP actively chose not to vote YES or NO. The number of votes in every column is also shown as the percentage of the total number of votes that are included in the study. That is, the share of votes that are cast under agreement. Consequently, these percentages do not sum up to 100%, since I do not, in this Table 8:1, include the number of votes that are cast under conflict (i.e. when the EPD and the EPG majorities do not vote the same way).
Table 8:1  Voting patterns when the EPD and EPG have a common position
(In relation to total no. of included votes in percentage)\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common position</th>
<th>Individual voting</th>
<th>Absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1590 (61%)</td>
<td>39 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2353 (79%)</td>
<td>54 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2037 (70%)</td>
<td>29 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>2238 (76%)</td>
<td>47 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td>2048 (71%)</td>
<td>61 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>2089 (73%)</td>
<td>5 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2172 (74%)</td>
<td>37 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2054 (72%)</td>
<td>51 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1940 (68%)</td>
<td>24 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>2201 (76%)</td>
<td>56 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>2182 (72%)</td>
<td>25 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device (MEPs)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2121 (73%)</td>
<td>51 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2121 (72%)</td>
<td>18 (1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^a\) The total no. of votes that are included in the study for every party is: FF 2521, GP 2698, PvdA 2950, CDA 2972, GL 2988, SAP 2932, MOD 3030, MP 2712.

First it should be mentioned that there is a general problem with making too extensive conclusions based on roll-call votes, and this is illustrated well in Table 8:1, namely the high number of MEPs that do not vote since they are repeatedly absent. Since many MEPs fail to attend votes on a large number of occasions, the obvious question is how these MEPs would vote if they were present, and also if the decision not to be present is based on some kind of reason or just random? As mentioned, I will return to these problems later on, but for now focus on the results that are similar to most of the literature on the topic. For the moment it is sufficient to conclude that MEPs from Ireland fail to attend these votes more often and that the Dutch MEPs are present most frequently.

Although the result is obscured by the problem that many MEPs are absent, we are able to conclude that in a vast majority of votes, the EPG and EPD have agreed on a common position and the MEPs vote accordingly (between 61-79%). There are also only a few times (around 1-2%) that
the MEPs opt for an individual position, which tells us that the MEPs in most of the roll-call votes follow the division between the EPGs.

However, there are differences between the cases that should not be neglected. The largest variation may be found when comparing the countries. In contrast, the differences (if any) are very small between different party types, governmental or non-governmental parties and parties with more or less sophisticated coordination systems.

The lack of variation between the cases regarding party specific variables is puzzling. On the basis of earlier studies on roll-call votes, as well as the theoretical arguments presented in Chapter two, we would have expected that MEPs from governmental parties should have more difficulties agreeing with the position taken by the EPG than do non-governmental parties. We have also noticed, in previous chapters of this study, that the MEPs from governmental parties have a different way of making priorities in their contacts with the national level. However, this does not influence the cohesiveness between the EPD and EPG in terms of the MEPs’ voting behavior. Furthermore, we expected that it would be easier for MEPs from parties with less sophisticated coordination systems to accept the EPG position, compared to other parties. We have also seen that the existence of a more sophisticated system for coordination has a slight impact on how MEPs describe their organizational and representational roles. However, the conclusion that may be drawn out of Table 8:1 is obviously that these differences between the parties do not influence the relationship between the EPDs and EPGs when it comes to voting (this holds both if we look at the categorization of different parties based on interviews with national representatives, or based on the descriptions by the MEPs themselves).

However, there are significant differences between the countries. It seems like it is the Dutch MEPs that are most in line with their EPGs, compared especially to the Irish MEPs, but also to the Swedes. This pattern underlines the conclusions drawn in previous chapters, that the Dutch MEPs (generally speaking) are more closely connected to the EU level than the MEPs from the other two countries. The less cohesive behavior of the Irish MEPs underlines the conclusion that Irish MEPs are more nationally-oriented, compared to MEPs from the other two
countries. It is also important to remember that the Fianna Fáil dominates the group of Irish MEPs. We know that the cohesiveness in the UEN is weaker (see Figure 8:1) compared to the other EPGs and maybe the low score for the Irish MEPs is influenced by this? We also know that one fundamental reason for the Fianna Fáil to be a member of UEN is that they get a more independent position compared to if they would have been members of one of the larger EPGs. We should follow up this closer when looking at the pattern of conflicts between the EPDs and EPGs. However, before going into situations where there is a conflict, let us change the perspective and look further into if the MEPs’ role perception has any impact on the cohesiveness between the EPDs and EPGs.

**VOTING PATTERN AND ROLE PERCEPTION DURING AGREEMENT**

The entire basis for role research is how representatives understand their roles and how this effects behavior. That is, representative roles are not just attitudes taken out of the blue, but connected to real life experience. One way of measuring this is to see how MEPs with different role conceptions vote and this is reported in Table 8:2. I have categorized the MEPs according to the result in Chapters six and seven and consequently the different roles are defined on the basis of the two dimensions that are analyzed in this study. That is, according to the first dimension, the MEPs are categorized as representing the party organization or the voters. We expect that MEPs that emphasize their role as representing voters will play a more independent role, compared to more party-oriented MEPs. Furthermore, the MEPs are categorized according to a geographical specificity, as either nationally or EU-oriented (second dimension). This last dimension is analyzed as their representative role (who they represent) and, second, as their organizational role (what contacts they emphasize). We expect that the EU-oriented MEPs vote more cohesively with the joint position of the EPD and EPG.
Table 8.2  Voting patterns during agreement and role perception  
(In relation to total no. of included votes in percentage)\(^\text{A}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Perception</th>
<th>Party vs. Voters</th>
<th>Representative role</th>
<th>Organizational role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common position</td>
<td>Individual voting</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td>2229 (76%)</td>
<td>32 (1%)</td>
<td>460 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voters</td>
<td>2058 (71%)</td>
<td>50 (2%)</td>
<td>513 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>2052 (71%)</td>
<td>43 (1%)</td>
<td>532 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>2311 (79%)</td>
<td>45 (2%)</td>
<td>388 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>2001 (70%)</td>
<td>42 (1%)</td>
<td>535 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>2278 (77%)</td>
<td>45 (2%)</td>
<td>439 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A) The total no. of votes that are included in the study for every party are: FF 2521, GP 2698, PvdA 2950, CDA 2972, GL 2988, SAP 2932, MOD 3030, and MP 2712.

Also in Table 8.2 it is possible to identify some MEPs as being more frequently absent from these votes than others. It seems like the nationally-oriented MEPs fail to be present more often compared to the EU-oriented. It may be that the more nationally-oriented MEPs give a higher priority to the national level in their daily work and thereby are absent more often than the more EU-oriented MEPs. It is difficult, solely on the basis of Table 8.2, to make such a conclusion, but bearing in mind earlier empirical findings in this study, this conclusion is reasonable.

Then, if we look at how the MEPs vote when they actually are present, it seems like the MEPs that emphasize their roles as representing the party (according to the first role dimension), vote more cohesively within the joint position of the EPD and EPG, albeit the difference is not huge. However, this tendency is stronger when looking at situations of conflict, which we will do momentarily.

We are also able to see a difference in the voting pattern when looking at the second role dimension (national – EU). The nationally-oriented MEPs vote less often according to the joint position of the EPD and EPG (around 7-8%). Once again, this is not a huge difference, but it does exist and therefore these results should be scrutinized further by looking exclusively at the critical votes.

In general, however, the differences are very small and it is hard to make any solid conclusions on the basis of these figures. Therefore, we should probably not settle our curiosity by looking at situations of cohesiveness between the EPD and EPG, we should also analyze situations where there is conflict between the two.
Conflicts between EPDs and EPGs in the selected cases

During situations where the EPD majority and EPG majority end up in conflict, the MEP has to “choose sides” and this should be the situation when the cross-pressure should be strongest. This makes these occasions interesting, because the hard choice tells us something about the priorities that the MEPs make. However, before analyzing the material (disaggregated) on an individual level, it is important to identify how often the EPDs and EPGs as collectives end up in conflict. The EPDs position is defined as the majority of MEPs present and voting in a certain way. Consequently, in situations where the majority of the MEPs in an EPD vote against the majority of the EPG, it is defined as a conflict. Below I use the term critical votes for situations where the EPD and EPG are in conflict. Furthermore, a total split in the EPD is also defined as a conflict between the EPD and the EPG. In Table 8:3, it is presented, for each party, the number of conflicts and the percentage of conflicts compared to the number of votes included in the study.

Table 8:3  No. of conflicts between the EPD and the EPG majority
(In relation to total no. of included votes in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of conflicts</th>
<th>As % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The variation among the cases ranges from 2% in the Dutch Green party (with the lowest number of conflicts) and 18% in the Swedish Green party (with the highest number of conflicts). This is interesting because it underlines that there are significant differences between the cases that should

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be possible to explain. To some extent we may say something about some of the parties that obviously end up in conflict more often than others. For example, the Swedish and Irish Green parties have a high number of conflicts with their EPG. These two parties are also regarded as outliers in the Green group, because they commonly take a critical stand in many issues concerning the future development of the EU. Also, the Irish Fianna Fáil ends up more often in conflict with their EPG, and I have already discussed their atypical relationship with UEN, in comparison with the other cases.

Although we might find these kinds of party-specific explanations, the question is if this is only a party-specific variation or if those with more (or less) conflicts share some common characteristics? Therefore we should try to analyze these numbers further. Figure 8:2 reports the mean number of conflicts for the contextual variables analyzed in this study.

Figure 8:2  No. of conflicts and the contextual variables (means)  (No. of MEPs in parenthesis)

It is obvious that the EPDs from Ireland more often end up in conflict with their respective EPGs. Furthermore, the relatively low number of conflicts between Dutch EPDs and their EPGs is obvious and the Swedish case is found somewhere in between. This picture does not come as a surprise. What is interesting here is that the role perceptions match the vote data and this pattern emphasizes the conclusions made in earlier chapters in this study. We have already seen that the Dutch MEPs seem to be more oriented toward the EU level in earlier chapters, and the closeness between the EPDs and EPGs seems to underline this conclusion. Also the Swedish middle position conforms to the findings in the previous chapters.

The type of party has some effect on the variation between the cases. It is especially the green parties and the right wing parties that end up in conflict with their EPGs. However, as already mentioned, it is within the green family that we have the largest ideological gap between the included cases and it is also among the greens that we find the party with the lowest number of conflicts (the Dutch Green party). The Fianna Fáil boosts conflict numbers in the right wing camp. However, the Swedish Moderaterna is also in frequent confrontation with their EPG. The Social Democratic parties tend to end up in conflict less often than their right wing counterparts. This could mean that the stronger cohesiveness within the PES is visible also in this material. However it could also be an effect of the two Social Democratic parties are both being in government positions.

When we divide the cases according to the distinction between governmental and non-governmental parties, the importance of being in government has some effect. Since Fianna Fáil ends up in conflict relatively often, this increases the score. Excluding the Fianna Fáil, it is evident that governmental parties end up less often in conflict with the national level compared to non-governmental parties. These findings supports the conclusions by Hix and his colleagues that EPGs with a high number of MEPs that come from governmental parties tend to have higher EPG cohesion (Hix, Noury & Roland 2002:22). However, it contradicts the theoretical argument presented in this study. That is, EPDs from governmental parties should have a stronger link with the national level and therefore defect more often from the EPGs’ position. We have to keep this contradiction in mind in the following analysis.
If the party uses some kind of coordinating committee, this increases the number of conflicts, compared to the parties that do not have this kind of system. Even though the group of intermediate cases, according to the categorization based on information from national party representatives, shows a very low level of conflicts, the conclusion is valid when it comes to the group of parties that have strong coordination mechanisms. The conclusion is also valid when looking at the MEPs’ estimates of these different coordination devices; those that have this kind of stronger coordination and use it, also end up more often in conflict with the EPG. This conclusion points in the direction that a closer link to the national arena (defined by these variables) tends to make the EPDs more critical toward the EPG’s position. This is also according to our theoretical expectations. At this point, we will keep these conclusions in mind and return to the discussion later in this chapter.

I have also tested if there is a connection between how the MEPs themselves estimate the number of conflicts (reported in Table 6:9) and the conflicts identified analyzing the roll-call data. The mean value for those who estimate that conflicts occur often between their own position and the EPG is 263, sometimes is 231, and seldom is 186. Therefore it is possible to conclude that there is a relationship with how MEPs experience conflicts and the actual conflicts that occur between the EPDs and EPGs. At the same time, it is important to remember that the estimate of the number of conflicts between the MEP and the EPG is based on a much more complex experience than roll-call votes represent.

The overall level of conflicts between the EPD and EPG, gives us a rough picture of how MEPs behave. However, it is a rough instrument, because the majority position may vary from 51% to 100% of the votes in the EPD. Therefore, we need to disaggregate the material further and develop the analysis in more detail. It is time to analyze how MEPs behave during these situations of conflict between the levels.

**Voting behavior during critical votes**

It is during the critical votes that the MEP’s allegiance comes to a test – it is then that the MEP has to choose sides. It is one thing to act independent in situations were the EPD and EPG are in agreement, and it is another thing to defect from one or the other, when these two groups
are in conflict. Therefore we shall now focus on the critical votes and by that try to further develop the analysis of the roll-call data. I start by looking at the contextual variables and then I turn to different role perceptions.

**Critical Votes and Contextual Aspects**

During critical votes the MEP has the option to either vote with the EPD or with the EPG or use the third option and vote independently. Once again, I am not interested in whether the MEP votes yes, no or abstains, just if he or she votes the same as the EPD or the EPG or uses the third option. I start the analysis by looking at the share of votes for each of these three options during critical votes. Furthermore, this analysis is based on the adjusted value of every MEP’s voting behavior – that is, the number of times when the individual MEP is present during these critical votes. Otherwise, the number of conflicts and the frequency of absence would distort the result and we would get an inaccurate picture on the MEPs’ voting behavior. The result is presented in Table 8:4.

Table 8:4  Voting behaviors during critical votes and contextual variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Voter EPD</th>
<th>Vote individual</th>
<th>Vote EPG</th>
<th>Presence (means)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right wing</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination device (MEPs)</strong></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) As percentage of number of times the MEP is present during critical votes

If we start by looking at the MEPs by country, it is obvious that the Swedish MEPs are closer to the EPDs than the other cases. They vote more according to the EPD in critical situations (82% compared to 67% and 63%). That is, when a majority of the MEPs in an EPD decides to go against the EPG, most of them follow this position. In other words, the Swedish EPDs act more cohesively compared to the EPDs from the other countries. On the opposite side we have the Dutch MEPs. They vote according to the EPG more often in critical situations, compared to Swedes (22% compared to 10%).

Ireland represents a puzzling case. Although, the difference is quite small, the Irish MEPs vote less often according to the EPG, compared to the Dutch case (20% compared to 22%). But they also seem less cohesive among themselves within the EPD. Consequently, it seems like the Irish MEPs vote more independently, compared to the Dutch and Swedish MEPs. This indicates that the voting within the Irish parties is less strict, than in the other cases and this would underline the argument that the Irish MEPs have a more individual mandate (although nationally bounded) than the other MEPs included in this study. If this is true, it means that the notion of having a national representative idea as the reference point, which the Irish MEPs have, does not necessarily mean that they act collectively within the EPDs to fulfill this goal. One problem with this conclusion is that the Irish Green Party is relatively stronger in the Irish case than the green parties in Sweden and the Netherlands, and as we can see in this chapter, the green parties act somewhat differently from the other parties. Therefore, I have run the same test, but excluded the green parties, and the result is that the tendency of more independent Irish MEPs becomes substantially stronger (changes from 63% to 76%), and they still vote more independently compared to the Swedish MEPs. Excluding the green parties also has the effect that the cohesiveness within the Dutch EPDs becomes slightly stronger (change from 67% to 68%) and the Swedish cohesiveness becomes significantly stronger (changes from 81% to 87%). Therefore, excluding the green parties strengthens the general pattern, rather than altering it.

There are relatively small differences between the socialist and the right wing party groups (although, the right wing parties vote according
their EPGs more often). However, as already mentioned, the green parties act differently compared to the other cases. It seems like the green parties have more problems acting together as EPDs. However, the fact that two of the green parties in this study only have two MEPs creates a methodological problem. When these two green MEPs within the same EPD do not agree, it is regarded as a conflict. In these cases, it is simply impossible to define a majority within the EPD. Consequently, this is defined as a critical vote (when the EPD and the EPG are in conflict), and most often one of these two MEPs acts according to the EPG. This increases the number of conflicts between the EPD and the EPG and the MEP that does not agree with the EPG becomes relatively stronger, compared with “defectors” in other parties. It is not possible to get around this problem, but it is important to keep it in mind when examining the results. The conclusion is therefore, that the party type variable in general does not have a strong effect on how MEPs behave, otherwise, we would see a stronger effect among all three groups, and that is not the case.

If the party is in government or not does seem to have an impact on how the MEPs vote. However, almost all differences disappear when the green parties are excluded. The MEPs from non-governmental parties act slightly more together with the EPG, but the difference is insignificant. This means that MEPs from governmental parties are in general closer to the EPGs, but when it comes to critical votes, MEPs from governmental and non-governmental parties act more or less the same.

Whether or not the party uses a more sophisticated system of coordination has a slight effect on how MEPs vote. I have, as before, divided this variable in two. The first one is based on the descriptions of the national party representatives and the second on the MEP’s judgment of these devices. The measurements of both these categorizations show that MEPs with a more sophisticated coordination device vote more cohesively within the EPD and less cohesively with the EPG. This is according to our expectation. This pattern is also strengthened if we exclude the green parties. That is, if the EPD has some kind of coordination committee the cohesiveness within the EPD rises to 84% (based on the MEP’s own judgment of these coordination devices)
if the green parties are excluded. Furthermore, they almost never act independently of the EPD and EPG when the two are in agreement. Additionally, they vote less in accordance with the position of the EPG during critical votes. Actually, the parties that organize this kind of committees show the most cohesive behavior, compared to all other variables. However, it is important to mention that the number of MEPs defined as having this kind of strong committee becomes very small (only four MEPs), when the green parties are excluded.

Once again we are able to note that it is the country variable and the organization of more advanced means of coordinating between the levels that seem to have the strongest influence on the voting behavior of the MEPs. However, I will soon put these figures to a more rigorous test. First, it is time to turn to the connection between the MEPs’ understanding of their roles and their voting behavior during critical votes.

**CRITICAL VOTES AND ROLE PERCEPTIONS**

The connection between how MEPs describe their roles and how they vote should be more obvious during critical situations. These votes should trigger the MEPs’ preferred allegiance and make the pattern more apparent. In Table 8:5, voting behavior and role perception is connected. The measurements are the same as in Table 8:4.

**Table 8:5 Voting behaviors during critical votes and role perceptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vote EPD</th>
<th>Individual voting</th>
<th>Vote EPG</th>
<th>Presence (means)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party vs. voters</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voters</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representative role</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational role</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) As percentage of number of times the MEP is present during critical votes
Whether the MEPs are defined as nationally or EU-oriented (according to the second dimension) clearly does not explain the voting behavior of the MEPs. Even though nationally-oriented MEPs act more cohesively within their EPDs and less often with their EPGs, the differences are relatively small. However, while we found that role perceptions had a slight effect on how MEPs vote when looking at the votes during agreement, this does not seem to influence the voting behavior during critical situations. This means that during these critical votes the notion of being EU-oriented or nationally-oriented matter less, compared to votes where the conflicts are less obvious.

Nevertheless, Table 8:5 shows that the categorization of MEPs according to the first role dimension (voters vs. party) has some impact on how MEPs vote. Those MEPs that emphasize their roles as party representatives also vote more often together with the EPD during critical votes. The MEPs that feel more aligned with the voters act differently during critical situations. They vote less often together with the EPD and more often independently. This is also in accordance with what we would believe. If an MEP defines himself or herself as representing the voters, he or she feels less obliged to follow a common position (either in the EPD or the EPG). Furthermore, when there is a conflict it is easier for these MEPs to vote together with the EPGs, which is also verified in Table 8:5. Therefore, we may conclude that even though the second dimension (nation vs. EU) does not have any strong impact on the voting behavior, the perception of the principal as either the party or the more anonymous voters do have a slight impact.

Explaining voting behavior

Until now, we have based the analysis on comparing averages. This gives us a hunch about what is going on, but it is hard, on the basis of these measurements, to confidently state that a relationship really exists. Therefore, we have to advance the analysis in order to make more solid conclusions.

What we have seen so far is that MEPs from different countries seems to behave differently during roll-call votes. Furthermore, a more sophisticated coordination system seems to be relevant, at least during
some of these votes. Regarding role perceptions, the MEPs that emphasize their roles as representing the party (according to the first role dimension) vote more cohesively with the EPDs and the MEPs that emphasize the voters behave more independently. Until now, however, the second dimension (either in terms of organizational or representational roles) seems to have a very minor impact (if any) on the way MEPs behave during roll-call votes.

Now it is time to put these arguments to a tougher test. In Table 8:6, a number of correlations are presented between the variables analyzed in this study and the voting behavior of the MEPs. These measures are done on the votes that are cast during agreement between the EPD and EPG and on the ones that are cast during situations where the two are in conflict.
Table 8.6  Correlations between voting behavior and explanatory variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Contextual variables</th>
<th>Individual variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Country  Government  Coordinating</td>
<td>Coordinating  Party vs.  Representative  Organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>device (MEPs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During cohesion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesive voting</td>
<td>-595**</td>
<td>-.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**During cohesion (adj)**A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesive voting</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>-.290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical votes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting EPD</td>
<td>.531**</td>
<td>-.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting none</td>
<td>.433*</td>
<td>-.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting EPG</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>-.347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Critical votes (adj)**B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting EPD</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting none</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>-.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting EPG</td>
<td>-.166</td>
<td>-.312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A) Adjusted for presence during agreements between EPD and EPG.
B) Adjusted for presence during conflicts between EPD and EPG.

The independent variables are coded on the basis that higher scores indicate stronger national allegiance. Regarding the country variable, the argument from the theoretical chapter is that MEPs from the Netherlands should show the strongest connection to the national level. However, the previous chapters have shown this to be false. Therefore, the argument is reversed in this analysis and I will return to the substantial consequences of this reversed argument in the concluding chapter. Therefore the Dutch MEPs are coded as having the weakest connection (1), Swedish MEPs in an intermediate position (2), and Irish MEPs as having the strongest connection (3) to the national level. The government variable is coded as belonging to a non-governmental party (0) and to a governmental party (1). The coordination device (based on the description of the national party representatives) is coded as weak (1), intermediate (2) and strong (3). The same coordination device, but this time according to the judgments of the MEPs, is coded as not using or having such a device (0), or having and using such a device (1). The variable that captures the first dimension in the role-set of the MEPs is coded as voter (0) and party (1). The two variables capturing the second dimensions of the role-set are coded as EU-oriented (0) and nationally-oriented(1).

I show the correlations both using non-standardized and standardized figures. In other words, not weighted or weighted by the numbers of times the individual MEP is present during the vote. When these variables are non-standardized they measure, in practice, the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable on the EPD level. The reason is that the number of votes under agreement or conflict influences the number of times that the MEPs are able to choose a certain option. Consequently, an EPG that has a lot of conflicts will always get high numbers. Therefore we expect to find stronger correlations on the contextual variables when the numbers are non-standardized. In the same instance, we do not expect to find any strong correlations on the individual level, when measuring this non-standardized, because the numbers are not comparable on an individual level.
When we standardize for how often the EPD and EPG are in agreement or in conflict and how often the MEP is present, the data is comparable at the level of the individual MEPs. Consequently, we should expect to find that the perceptions of individual MEPs have an effect when the numbers are standardized. In the same instance, we do not expect to find any strong correlations on the contextual variables when the numbers are standardized, because we neutralize the differences between the contexts when doing the standardization.

We start the analysis by looking at the contextual explanations (the non-standardized variables). We have seen several indications in this chapter, as well as in previous chapters, of a variation in the alignment towards the national level and the EPD. The general pattern is that Irish MEPs have the strongest connection to the national level, followed by Swedish MEPs and finally the Dutch MEPs. This should mean that the Irish MEPs have more conflicts with their respective EPGs, followed by the Swedish MEPs and the Dutch MEPs. This is also confirmed by the correlations shown in Table 8.6. There is a stronger cohesion between the EPDs and EPGs in the Dutch case, which is shown by the negative correlation (-.595). This is also the pattern when looking at how MEPs vote during critical votes. It is especially the positive correlation between voting together with the EPD and the country variable (.531) that indicates such a relationship.

The rest of the contextual variables show a very weak explanatory power. We would expect that MEPs that belong to governmental parties should end up more often in conflict with the EPGs and that they would vote more according to the EPD when looking at critical votes. Even though, Table 8:6 reveals that MEPs from governmental parties vote less often with the EPG (-.347), this correlation is not significant. Therefore, looking at the voting in the selected parties, governmental parties or not, does not clearly explain if the relationship between the EPD and EPG is characterized by conflicts or cohesion.

The same conclusion applies to parties’ different strategies to coordinate between the levels. At least when it comes to the categorization of the parties based on the descriptions of the national party representatives. We would have expected that those MEPs that work under more sophisticated coordination arrangements would end up in conflict more often.
compared to others. Even though the correlation regarding critical votes goes in the right direction, it is very weak and not statistically significant.

At the same time, talking to the MEPs has revealed that the categorization based on the party representative’s description has been highly overestimated. It is also obvious that the MEPs’ estimate of the effectiveness of these coordination devices has a stronger explanatory power (.492). However, it is important to remember that this variable is based on individual estimates, which means that it is located on the individual level of the analysis. The stronger correlation found when analyzing these numbers non-standardized may therefore be spurious. Therefore, we should turn to the standardized values and see what might explain voting behavior, using explanations connected to individual MEPs rather than EPDs.

As we can see, the correlations among the contextual variables more or less disappear when controlling for the number of agreements and conflicts respectively. As mentioned before, this is also what we could expect and we should therefore concentrate on the individual variables in the analysis. First of all, it should be said that almost none of the independent variables on this level of the analysis successfully explains the MEP’s voting behavior in terms of solid significant relationships. This is a disappointment; however, we may still use the information in Table 8:4 in order to say something about the direction of different relationships.

The variable that best explains the voting behavior on an individual level is the use of a more advanced coordination system (based on the MEPs own estimates of this organizational set-up). MEPs that work under these arrangements vote more cohesive when there is an agreement between the EPD and EPG (.373). Although the correlation is not significant, they also vote more frequently with the EPD during critical votes and less with the EPG.

Furthermore, there seems to be no correlation between if MEPs are more oriented toward the national level in terms of voting more or less cohesively compared to MEPs that are more EU-oriented. Instead, how the MEPs understand their roles according to the first dimension (party vs. voters) seems to have some influence on the behavior. At this point it is hard to understand the reason for this pattern, however, the relationships are very weak and it would be wrong to make too far-reaching conclusions on the basis of this result.

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The general conclusion is that the MEPs’ country of origin explains how often the EPDs and EPGs end up in conflict or find themselves in agreement. To some extent, the parties may influence the behavior of the MEPs by adopting more sophisticated coordination systems. However, for that strategy to succeed, the more tightened coordination must be experienced also by the MEPs. That is, it cannot just be formal arrangements, without any incitements or practical possibilities for the MEPs to attend. Furthermore, in general, it is hard to find a pattern for why MEPs vote in a specific way within the EPDs. That is, given a certain number of conflicts, the MEPs behave individually and it is hard to define why some MEPs go with the EPG and some with the EPD.

Although, these conclusions say something about the voting behavior of the MEPs, one great problem still remains, namely why MEPs fail to attend roll-call votes. If we do not have any good explanation for this phenomenon, it is hard to make any solid conclusions on an individual level. For example, if the MEPs do not attend these voting procedures because they are reluctant to defect from their EPD’s position, this would severely influence the conclusions. In the final section of this chapter, I will try to analyze this problem as much as possible with the limited material.

**Not present to vote, why?**

It is possible to characterize situations where the MEPs fail to attend the roll-call vote as missing cases. This is also common within the literature. At the same time, there is a correspondence between the number of missing cases and the necessity of analyzing why these exist. In the whole material the MEPs fail to be present approximately 22% of the votes (including the times when the whole EPD is not present). The question is if these missing cases bias the result in any way.

The phenomenon of not being present is very sparsely discussed in the literature on roll-call votes. This is in itself a problem. There should be a strong incentive to try to prove that there are no traces of a systematic bias for the MEPs to be absent at the voting and thereby conclude that this behavior is unsystematic. However, such an enterprise is associated with a huge number of problems. How are we able to define how an MEP would vote if he or she had been present, and thereby verify that this
kind of defection is not connected to any systematic reasons that would influence our result? One strategy is to try to pinpoint if MEPs defect more during some circumstances and if the MEPs that are not present vote in a specific way when they are present. Thereby we can at least begin to consider why MEPs are absent at certain occasions. In other words, we need to make a kind of counterfactual analysis. Many data sets on roll-call votes are not equipped to handle these questions, and the one I use is not an exception. However, by trying to compare different variables, I am able to say more about this type of behavior than just to treat the cases as missing.

The importance of the absence phenomenon in this study is that the MEPs could use this option in order to defect from a potential conflict. That is, if the MEP, instead of publicly showing that he or she is in conflict by voting either with the EPD or the EPG, it might be preferable to skip the vote altogether. In Figure 8:3, I have connected how often every MEP is absent from the roll-call votes included in this study, with the number of votes when there is an agreement between the EPD and EPG.

Figure 8:3  Absences during agreement


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Figure 8:3 clearly shows that there is no significant relationship between being absent and the number of votes that are cast under agreement. If anything, the direction of the correlation is negative (-.210), which indicates that if more votes are cast during agreement, the MEPs are more often present. We would expect the contrary, namely that it is easier for the MEPs to be absent in situations where there is an agreement between the EPD and EPG. At these votes, the cost of being absent would reasonably be lower, because one vote more or less would not change the overall result.

This result makes it interesting to examine MEPs’ attendance during critical votes. I have therefore compared if the MEPs are more often absent during critical votes compared to votes that are cast under agreement. The difference is between 18% for absence during agreement and 23% during conflicts. This is not a huge difference, but it is interesting enough to follow up. This result indicates that the absence phenomenon is not completely random, but that it happens more often in a certain situation, namely when the EPD and EPG are in conflict with each other. However, at this point in the analysis we cannot be certain that this is not a spurious relationship. It is possible that those MEPs that end up in more conflicts than others simply are absent more often, even when the EPG and EPD are in agreement.

Therefore, this argument needs to be pushed one step further. I have selected the critical votes and this gives an entirely different picture compared to when the EPD and EPG are in agreement. In Figure 8:4, this is displayed with the help of a simple plot.
Figure 8.4, shows that MEPs act differently during critical votes, compared to situations where the EPD and the EPG are in agreement. Consequently, this indicates that the absence phenomenon is not a random event, but rather an expression of purposeful action. This is especially interesting when bearing in mind that the incentive to be present should be at its strongest when the EPG and EPD are in conflict. In these situations it should be important for the EPD to try to manifest this conflict by showing up at the vote. Obviously, MEPs do not always behave according to this logic. Consequently, this means that if all the MEPs would be present at the roll-call vote, this would probably change the cohesiveness in the EPD or EPG. In practice, it is during these critical votes that the cohesiveness is defined.

Bearing in mind that the number of occasions when the MEPs are absent ranges from 20-40% of all votes, this result put some doubt on the conclusions made in earlier roll-call analyses, including the ones drawn earlier in this chapter. If MEPs consciously fail to be present during this vast number of roll-call votes, this means we have to analyze this further. That is, to be absent could be a fourth option during roll-call votes, together with the yes-vote, no-vote or abstention.
However, we are not able, on the basis of Figure 8:4, to say how the MEPs that are absent behave when they are present. That is, if it is the MEPs that are most critical toward the EPD or the EPG that also defect more often by not being present. This is hard to analyze, because we have to speculate on the basis of how MEPs vote in other situations and make an assumption on how they would vote if they had been present. On the other hand, it is hard to do this in another way, without going to these MEPs and asking them, and this will have to be left to further studies on the topic.

Even though the results presented so far provide some information about the pattern of absent behavior, we would like to know more about the MEPs that act in this way. Is it possible to identify whether those who choose to be absent have a certain relationship with their EPDs or EPGs? Furthermore, is it possible to understand whom these MEPs defect from by being absent – the EPD or the EPG? In order to find traces of answers to these questions, I have tested the connection between absence and the MEPs’ voting behavior when they actually are present. The result is presented in Table 8:7.

Table 8:7 The relationship between not present and voting behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting during critical votes</th>
<th>Vote EPD</th>
<th>Not with EPG or EPD</th>
<th>Vote EPG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>- .485**</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>-.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF excl.</td>
<td>-.467**</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens excl.</td>
<td>-.478**</td>
<td>-.184</td>
<td>-.326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
A) The voting of every MEP is adjusted for the total number of conflicts between the EPD and EPG.

Table 8:7 show that there is a significant negative relationship between voting together with the EPD and being not present in conflicts. This means that the MEPs that are more often not present, often also defect from the EPD position during conflicts. Since the Fianna Fáil and the green parties should be regarded as outliers both in terms of conflicts and in terms of absences, I have excluded those in the analysis and the
Conclusions

This chapter connects behavioral data on roll-call votes with a number of contextual variables, and different intra-party links between the national level and the MEPs, as well as different role perceptions among the MEPs. Currently, roll-call analysis on the EP is a popular enterprise among political scientists. In comparison to some of these studies, this is
a more limited study. We should remember that this study only includes 30 MEPs, which means that it would be problematic to make too far-reaching generalizations on the basis of this material. At the same time, the purpose of this analysis is to connect the qualitative data with the behavioral data, and not primarily to prove general patterns.

The main conclusion, after having analyzed how the MEPs included in this study behaved during 3050 roll-call votes, is that country-specific features best predict the voting behavior of the MEPs. This variation between the countries included in this study is quite convincing. However, this conclusion contradicts results in earlier studies. According to these, an electoral system design characterized by closed-list proportional representation, with a low district magnitude, would work against the cohesiveness of the EPGs (Hix 2002a:24). The results in this study support the contrary pattern. The Irish EPDs have more conflicts with their respective EPGs, and the Irish MEPs behave more individually in relation to their EPDs, than MEPs from the other two countries. The Netherlands is the interesting counterpart. The Dutch MEPs seems to be closer within their EPDs, and they seldom run into conflict with their respective EPG. This tells us that the difference between the Dutch EPDs and the EPGs is smaller compared to the relationship in the other two cases. The Swedish case shows an entirely different pattern. The Swedish MEPs vote more often cohesively within their EPD (compared to their Irish colleagues), and they more often end up in conflict with their EPGs (compared to their Dutch colleagues). Therefore, the electoral system design does at least to some extent explain why MEPs behave as they do when it comes to roll-call votes. However, their behavior seems to be guided by a different logic than is often suggested in roll-call analysis. I will return to this discussion in the concluding chapter.

The second contextual variable that has been tested in this study, government or non-government, does not explain the voting behavior of the MEPs. If one only compares the mean scores of how MEPs vote with how often the governmental EPDs and their EPGs end up in conflict, there is a significant difference between the cases using this contextual explanation. However, when advancing the analysis, the relationship does not seem to hold. Therefore, the proposed explanation
that MEPs from governmental parties should be more inclined to follow a national agenda, and thereby end up in more conflicts with their EPG, is not clearly supported in this material. Furthermore, this does not support the conclusions made by Hix and his colleagues (Hix, Noury & Roland 2002:22), that EPGs that have numerous governmental parties as their members also act more cohesively.

The third context-specific variable that has been tested, the use of more sophisticated coordination devices, shows some effect, especially when we take into account the MEPs’ estimate of the effectiveness of these devices. The conclusion is that MEPs that belong to parties with more sophisticated devices end up more often in conflict with their respective EPGs and that they vote more cohesively within their EPDs. This is also according to what we expected. These MEPs should be better connected with the national level and this should influence their voting behavior. However, it is important to note that this connection is far from obvious, even though such a tendency does exist.

A number of variables at the individual level of the MEPs have also been tested in this chapter. One ambition has been to show a connection between different role-sets of the MEPs and the MEPs voting behavior. There is a variation between how MEPs vote and how they are defined according to the first dimension in the role-set (voters vs. party representation). However, when advancing the analysis this explanation does not hold. Although, the main pattern that party-oriented MEPs vote more cohesively within their EPDs, is too weak to allow any clear conclusion.

Whether the MEP is more nationally or EU-oriented (according to the second dimension in the role-set) does not seem to explain why they vote as they do. In the analysis of the overall voting behavior it seems like the more nationally-oriented MEPs end up in more conflicts between the EPD and the EPG. However, the difference is very small and it totally disappears when looking at the critical votes. Therefore, we may conclude that these individual characteristics in general, and especially the MEPs understanding of their roles according to the second role dimension, do not explain how MEPs vote.

During the process of analyzing roll-call votes, it became obvious that there is a methodological problem with how to treat MEPs that are
not present during roll-call votes. This has not really been examined before, but on the basis of the findings presented in this study, the necessity of analyzing this phenomenon is emphasized. This study implies that the absences at roll-call votes express an exit-behavior, rather than being coincidental. For example, the MEPs in this sample use the absence option more often during critical votes. Furthermore, it is the MEPs relationship with the EPD that is important in this respect. MEPs that more often fail to be present at roll-call votes more often defect from their EPD position when they actually are present. If this conclusion is correct, we should probably find a less cohesive behavior within the EPDs, if all MEPs were present. Although, this pattern is quite convincing in terms of the analysis conducted in this chapter, it is important to remember that it is based on 30 MEPs. Nevertheless, these results should make it obvious that this kind of behavior (being absent) should be analyzed further with the help of a larger data-set.

According to the overall theoretical argument in this study, there should be a connection between the institutional environment that the MEPs work within and their behavior. These institutional specificities should be incorporated in the MEPs role perceptions and thereby serve as a “link” between institution and behavior. To some extent this chapter shows that the institutional context that the MEPs work within has an effect on their voting behavior, however, the role concepts do not clearly capture important differences. There are two obvious conclusions, either the theoretical argument is basically wrong, or that the roll-call votes do not represent the kind of behavior that best captures various role perceptions. It is important to remember that roll-call votes are only one minor part of the enterprise of being an MEP. In the concluding chapter, I will deal with this discussion.
Of the 3050 votes, I am excluding the following for each party: FF 521, GP 352, PvdA 100, CDA 78, GL 62, SAP 118, MOD 20, MP 338.

Pieter Denkert from the Dutch Social Democratic party, Mark Killilea from the Fianna Fáil and Ulf Holm from the Swedish Green party was interviewed in 1999, but they all retired as MEPs after the European election later that summer. Lisbeth Grönfeldt Bergman from the Swedish Moderate Party stepped into the EP after the decease of Staffan Burenstam Linder. Furthermore, Hans Karlsson from the Swedish Social Democrats stepped in for Pierre Schori when he became the Swedish ambassador of the United Nations.

Viola (2000) discusses political parties on the European level, however, since the EPGs are the most obvious expression of these party organizations, this argument also applies to them.

The “Agreement index” constructed by Hix, Noury and Roland (2002) is very similar to the more well known “Index-of-agreement” constructed by Fulvio Attiná (1990). The difference is that Attiná’s index may produce negative scores and the Agreement index simply includes a rescaling procedure in order to avoid that problem.

The number of conflicts between an EPD and EPG are connected to each individual MEP that belongs to this EPD. These numbers are then divided with the number of MEPs sharing the contextual characteristic that is analyzed.

To give an example, let’s assume that we have one EPD that has 100 conflicts with their EPG and one EPD that has 20 conflicts. Counting in absolute numbers, there must be differences between these two delegations that make them end up in conflict more or less often. For example one of these EPDs belongs to a governmental party. When we standardize these numbers, we control for the number of conflicts between the EPD and EPG and how often the individual MEP is present during these votes and consequently these two delegations are treated equal. This shifts the focus toward explanations on an individual level within these delegations and not on explanations for a variation between the delegations. Consequently, if two MEPs act differently in a delegation, their belonging to a governmental party cannot explain the variation, because they both belong to the same party. Therefore, the non-standardized analysis tests the contextual variables and the standardized analysis tests the individual variables.
Conclusion

This book has been about political representation and its manifestation within a multi-national arena such as the EU. The main purpose has been to analyze MEPs representation in the context of the cross-pressure between the national level and the EU level. This has involved an analysis of how the MEPs understand their roles and how they organize their work. It has also included a study of how national party organizations adapt to the EU environment and how this influences the MEPs’ link to the national arena.

The main result is that the working assumptions, and concrete research questions and hypotheses that MEPs are influenced by characteristics in the national arena have been shown to be correct in fundamental parts. In addition, the research also provides support for my hypotheses about the importance of the character of the link with the national arena. That is, some of the identified aspects of the national political context do influence how the MEPs understand their roles, although not always exactly in the direction supposed by some of the arguments that were derived from the existing literature on role theory. The study also shows that it matters how party organizations design the relationship between the levels, especially for how and were MEPs direct their main attention during their daily work, but also in terms of how MEPs behave when they vote in the European parliament.
Below I present a general discussion about the picture that this study has illuminated regarding the relationship between the national arena and the MEPs. This is then connected to the more detailed conclusions and I elaborate further on the theoretical explanations presented in the study. Thereafter, I then evaluate the approach that I have used and I end with a broader discussion about cross-pressure and representation in the EU.

The link between the levels and the role of the MEPs

One conclusion of this study is that the party organizations have not, generally speaking, created efficient means of coordinating between the MEPs and other groups within the parties. Most parties have quite meager means of coordinating between the levels, or, for that matter, controlling the MEPs. This is also something that the MEPs recognize, and some of them argue that the current situation is insufficient, while others describe it as a relief! Despite this, there are links between the levels that matter, and it is important to try to understand the nature of these links.

Various strategies to keep up the link

This study shows that parties use various means to try to control the process of selecting the MEPs. The character of European elections, compared to elections to the national legislature, results in a centralization of the procedure to select candidates. The reason is, at least in some part, that the countries are divided into fewer constituencies, which in practice has a centralizing effect. This give the parties’ leadership a more influential position in this process, compared to the selection of national parliamentarians. In the Netherlands, which also uses a single constituency for the national legislature, the differences between the two elections are less obvious. But in Sweden and in Ireland the European elections give the national party leadership a stronger position compared to national elections. Some parties go farther in this centralization compared to others. One reason is that
the party leadership wants to monitor the end result, either because they want a more “representative” list in terms of gender or geographical connection or in terms of attitudes toward the development of the EU.

In most cases, the selection process is followed up by a mandatory requirement for the MEPs to write a more or less detailed contract with the party. However, these contracts do not seem to influence the MEPs that much, except for the fact that some of their money for administrative resources is processed through the party headquarters. None of the MEPs refer to these contracts as circumscribing their action or influencing their pattern of contacts. The candidate selection and the writing of contracts may influence in certain very critical situations, a kind of last resource for the party leadership to control the MEPs, but in most situations this is not the case. On a day-to-day basis, there are other more important aspects that influence the link between the levels.

When the MEPs are in place and the coordination should function as an integral part of the party’s proceedings, this study shows that there are different strategies to maintain the link between the levels. The coordination between the levels may be categorized in three ways. First, most of the contacts between the two levels rest upon the relationships between individual MEPs and individual national parliamentarians. In other words, in most cases these contacts are maintained informally, when one of the parliamentarians feels the need to do so. Most often the MEPs feel that the main responsibility to keep up this informal contact lies on them rather than on the national parliamentarian. One reason that is often mentioned is the lack of interest and knowledge on the national level regarding EU issues in general, and especially about the workings of the EP. I will return to this discussion. If a party limits its connection between the levels to these informal contacts, two caveats have been identified. It gives the secretarial staff a very important role, because, in practice, it is usually through them that these individual contacts are maintained. This makes the connection vulnerable. It also gives an MEP with a previous career within the national parliament an advantage, compared to those that do not have such an experience.
Second, in some cases the coordinating responsibility first and foremost lies on the leader of the EPD. He or she acts as a bridge between the levels. This could be an efficient strategy to link the two levels, because it is easier to include a single EPD-leader into the general hierarchy of the party than a larger group of MEPs. On the other hand, due to the individualized character of the MEP’s work, a large number of issues may fall between the cracks. It is simply impossible for the EPD leader to keep track on all issues that could be relevant. It also imposes a hierarchy within the EPDs that may have a negative effect within the delegation, especially in situations of conflict between the levels.

Third, some parties try to develop or use an already established policy committee that serves as policy advisor and/or coordinating device. However, these differ in terms of how much the MEPs are involved. In some, the MEPs are included as a natural part of the committee’s work, but in others, the MEPs may play just a minor role. These committees may facilitate the link between the levels; however, most of these committees meet too rarely to be regarded as efficient coordination devices. When asking the MEPs, some of them do not even regard the workings of these committees as coordination at all. Therefore, one general conclusion is that political parties have difficulties incorporating MEPs in their parties’ structures. However, some manage better than others. Especially the Swedish Moderates have developed a coordination device that should be regarded as efficient in terms of maintaining the contact between the levels and it constitutes an arena for policy coordination as well as conflict management. One important reason is that this committee includes all the relevant parts of the party (party leadership, national parliamentarians, policy advisors and MEPs). A second reason why this should be regarded as efficient is that the committee meets often enough to make substantial coordination possible, as well as to legitimize the position of the MEPs. It is hard to give a general explanation for why this party has succeeded while others have not, but obviously the Swedish Moderates regard the link between the
levels as important, and the MEPs as well as party leadership have agreed on the ambition to create strong coordination devices.

Why then do parties have problems with including the MEPs in the ordinary party apparatus? First of all, *a priori* it is not obvious why they should incorporate them. A political party has representatives on several levels of the political system and all of them are not included in the leading bodies of the organization. Furthermore, parties do not try to create absolutely cohesive behavior between the local, regional, or national representatives, so, why would this be necessary with regards to the MEPs? Parties simply trust their representatives to behave according to the party’s position as defined in the party program or the election manifest. However, MEPs are not just any representatives of the parties. They are dealing with legislation in a way that local and regional representatives do not. They are also active in an arena outside the national political context, which makes it more important to keep track on their behavior. In addition, MEPs position the party in the EU arena before the issue ends up on the national level (at least in parties that are not in government).

Most party representatives that have been interviewed in this study argue that it is important to keep contact with the MEPs. Even so, they seem to have difficulties fulfilling this ambition. One explanation is the practical problems with finding the time to get together. These are groups of people that carry a heavy workload. It is simply hard to arrange meetings that substantially contribute to the coordination between the levels. This is connected to the fact that the EP and the national parliaments have different time schedules. Often, when one group has a meeting, the other is occupied by the work in the parliament. For example, the MEPs are usually invited to the party groups in the national parliaments, but they are seldom able to attend because they have simultaneous committee meetings in the EP. Consequently, when parties try to create some kind of closer coordination, there are a great number of practical problems.

A substantial number of MEPs included in this study describe an increasing tension between the national parliament and the EP. They experience that the attitude of their national colleagues has become
more hostile toward the MEPs and the EP in general. This expresses a widening gap between the two groups of parliamentarians and some MEPs explain this by a lack of knowledge on the national level about the importance of the EP. The attitude toward the MEPs is that they are second-rate politicians and that it is the work in the national parliament that is of political importance. If this widening gap is a general tendency it could seriously damage the prospects of developing a closer contact between the levels. Consequently, it is important that parties try to find ways to prevent this tendency. The lack of awareness on the national level (according to many MEPs) about what EP is doing is certainly not helped by the fact that the media attention regarding what is happening in the EU is very limited. Parties could instead try to attain this information from the MEPs, but according to many of the respondents, this interest is currently quite limited.

AN UNCLEAR ROLE OF THE MEPS

An unclear role of the MEPs in the national context, coupled with the lack of awareness on what is happening on the EU level, puts the MEPs in an odd position. Many respondents describe that when they return to the national arena they are asked to explain how EU works, rather than to discuss a certain policy. This is basically a role of representing European level politics in the national political context, rather than the other way around. Political representation always includes explaining complicated things and many MEPs mention this as an important part of their role – to describe and educate voters as well as parties on the EU political system. At the same time, this phenomenon has serious consequences. MEPs run the risk of representing the system, rather than those who have elected them. The MEPs become a sort of EU-ambassadors in the national arena. Furthermore, it becomes harder for the voters to identify differences among various policy alternatives and in the long run it undermines the representative mandate. It is reasonable to argue that MEPs run a greater risk of ending up in this kind of reversed representative role, compared to national politicians, because they operate in a different political context.
This role of representing the EP, rather than the voters or the party, becomes even more difficult when there is a tendency for MEPs to develop a new perspective on politics due to their presence in a European political context. Many respondents believe that they have become accustomed to a “European perspective” on politics, which is different from the domestic perspective, and sometimes they therefore end up in conflict with the national arena for this reason. However, most often they just play a different role compared to national politicians; the MEPs and the national politicians are simply active in different spheres of the political system. But as the competence of the EP is increasing, it becomes harder to separate between the levels in legislative terms. Therefore, it becomes more difficult for the MEPs to “just play a different role.” They find themselves arguing their positions, which are shaped in a different context than the national one, and run the risk of ending up in conflict with their respective party or voters. The tension between the levels should increase in such a situation, with the consequence that the MEPs become even more isolated within the parties. It is impossible to say that this is the likely future scenario, but when listening carefully to the MEPs interviewed in this study, they indicate such a direction.

This different perspective on politics, due to working in the EP, connects to one of the important empirical tasks of this study, namely to the MEPs’ understanding of their roles as nationally or EU-oriented. Among the MEPs in this study, it is possible to identify some as more oriented toward the EU-level compared to the national level, both in terms of their organizational role and representative role. The group of more EU-oriented MEPs tends to regard the EPD as one smaller part of the EPG and emphasizes the more professional side of its legislative work, rather than the representative side. Consequently, they also put a stronger emphasis on their work in the EP committees. They are also less troubled by the lack of contact with the national party, as well as by conflicts with the national level. This does not necessarily mean that they have more contacts or are less in conflict; it means that the national arena does not have the
same importance for these MEPs, compared to the more nationally-oriented MEPs. The EU-oriented group of MEPs does not have a strong ambition to represent interests on the national level and consequently they do not feel required to follow any national interest. The more nationally-oriented MEPs, on the other hand, also include the national level as an important part of their role conception. Therefore they feel troubled by the lack of contact between the levels as well as by the fact that the two sometimes end up in conflict.

Based on this material, I am not able to state that the group of EU-oriented MEPs also reacts differently when operating within the national context, but my understanding is that this group is more secure in its European identity and thereby members of this group act more as EP representatives. However, how different MEPs act when coming home to the national arena is an important issue to analyze further.

**Differences between the cases – what explains why MEPs adopt different roles and how they vote?**

The lack of distinct coordination devices among the cases complicates the analysis, because it makes it harder to elaborate on comparative conclusions that would be interesting in a broader perspective. Still, much of this study has been built around a set of variables that were presented in Chapter two. The selected cases differ in terms of these variables and the set of expected outcomes are summarized in Tables 4:7 and 5:5. Although these predictions are simplifications of a complex world, they served as reasonable criteria for the selection of cases, and provided a baseline for the analysis. The explanatory variables, when looking at the MEPs understanding of their roles, were divided into country-specific aspects and party variables. On the country level of the analysis, three distinguishing variables were identified: different electoral systems, differences in legislative-executive relations regarding EU issues, and the public opinion regarding EU issues. On the party level of the analysis, different party heritages and whether or not the party is in government were taken
into account. On the party level, I also included variables that try to capture the intra-party environment of the MEPs: the leadership influence over candidate selection process, the writing of contracts with the MEPs and the use of sophisticated means of monitoring the MEPs. When looking at the MEP’s voting behavior these above described contextual variables were tested, as well as individual variables, such as role perceptions. It is now time to wrap things up and estimate the strength of these factors.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The first argument was that countries characterized by ‘collectivistic’ ideals, with party-based electoral systems, will be more inclined to emphasize their roles as national party representatives. Of all my interviews, the Irish MEPs show a stronger national orientation, compared to MEPs from the other two countries, both in terms of their organizational roles and their representative roles. This is illustrated by the way they focus on their links with the voters on the local and regional level when describing their role and their work. The Irish MEPs also have a more positive attitude toward representing the government than MEPs from the other two countries, and this can also be inferred as an expression of a more national orientation. A third indication is that the Irish MEPs give less importance to the EPG and the EPD. That is, they pay less attention to the EP-level groups and more attention to national groups in describing their role as well as their pattern of contacts. This is also underlined by the fact that the conflicts between the Irish EPDs and their respective EPGs are more common than in the other cases. However, this does not mean that Irish MEPs vote more cohesively within their EPD when a conflict occurs. The pattern is rather that they vote more independently, compared to their colleagues from the other countries.

The Swedish MEPs are divided between being oriented toward the national level and the EU level. Although a majority of the MEPs claim to represent their voters or their party on the national level, there are some Swedish MEPs that direct their focus toward the EU.
level. They also emphasize the importance of the EPD and EPG, compared to the Irish MEPs. However, it is the EPD that is most important for the Swedish MEPs and this can be inferred as a partial focus on the national level. The priority of the EPDs among the Swedish MEPs is also evident when looking at their voting behavior. The conflicts between the Swedish EPDs and their EPGs are relatively common, but contrary to the Irish case, the Swedish MEPs vote more often cohesively within their EPDs.

Like the Swedes, the Dutch MEPs are divided between being oriented toward the national level and the EU level, as well as representing their voters or their party organization. Although there are similarities between how Swedish and Dutch MEPs describe their role and work, there are also substantial differences. First of all, a higher share of Dutch MEPs is oriented toward the EU. Although the difference is quite small, it does exist. Secondly, the Dutch MEPs give higher priority to the EPG than to the EPD compared to the Swedish MEPs, which tells us that the Dutch MEPs are more integrated in the structure of the EP. For example, a higher number of Dutch MEPs turn to the EP level for advice in critical situations, compared to the Swedish (and the Irish) MEPs. They are also less inclined to take advice from the national government and their extra-parliamentary organization. Thirdly, the conflicts are substantially fewer between the Dutch EPDs and their EPGs. When there is a conflict between the EPD and the EPG, there is a higher number of MEPs that chose to vote according to the EPG’s position and thereby defect from the EPD’s position. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that the Dutch MEPs are less aligned with the national level compared to the other two cases.

According to the argument regarding impact of the electoral system, we would have expected that the Irish MEPs would have the weakest connection to the national level and the Dutch MEPs would have the strongest identification with the national level. Sweden would be an intermediate case. This argument is obviously not correct. Actually, the order is completely the reverse: if the electoral system is more candidate-oriented, the more nationally-oriented the MEP is. I will return the theoretical consequences of this conclusion.
EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE RELATIONSHIP

The second argument was that in countries where the national parliament is more involved in the formulation of governmental position regarding EU issues; the MEPs will be more inclined to describe themselves as member state representatives. This means that the MEPs from Sweden should emphasize the relationship with the national level, the Irish MEPs would be the opposite pole and the Netherlands take a middle position.

Swedish MEPs, in general, do give priority to the relationships with the national level, compared to the Dutch MEPs. However, the argument fits badly, because the ones that give most priority to the national level are the Irish MEPs, and they should, according to the argument, be the ones that pay least attention to the national level. Furthermore, it is the Dutch MEPs that are most involved in the Dutch parliament’s process of scrutinizing the government, compared to the other cases. Even though the Swedish parliament has the strongest means of scrutinizing the government, the Swedish MEPs are excluded from that process. It is solely a task for the national parliamentarians. Consequently, MEPs from the two countries where the parliaments strongly scrutinize their government’s EU policy (with or without the MEPs), both show a weaker connection to the national level, compared to the Irish case. Therefore, the argument fails to explain the differences among the cases. This does not mean, however, that it is unimportant how the parties/national legislatures organize this link in order to involve the MEPs. It is obvious that national parliamentarians would gain by making use of the MEPs’ expertise.

POPULAR OPINION REGARDING EU ISSUES

The third argument (on the country level) was that if popular opinion regarding EU issues is more negative, a higher number of MEPs will focus on the national arena. This would mean that we should find the most nationally-oriented MEPs in Sweden and the least nationally-oriented in the Netherlands.
As already stated, Swedish MEPs are more nationally-oriented than the Dutch MEPs and this could be explained by the fact that they work in a more EU negative opinion. Also, MEPs from Ireland, where the popular opinion is more critical than in the Dutch case, have a stronger national orientation. Swedish and Irish MEPs also experience more conflicts with their respective EPGs, which underlines the argument. Some MEPs from Sweden and Ireland even refer to critical voters as their most important representative interest. It is therefore reasonable to argue that the popular opinion is important and that the positive attitude toward the EU in the Netherlands makes it easier for the MEPs to develop a stronger European identification, because this is a legitimate position. In Sweden, and perhaps also in Ireland, this is much more difficult, because the MEPs need to defend a position that is more broadly questioned among the electorate.

However there are two findings that indicate that we should question the influence of popular opinion. First, the difference between the Swedish and Dutch MEPs is not that huge, especially when it comes to how the MEPs frame their representative roles (the difference is greater regarding how the MEPs direct their organizational interest). It is obviously possible, in a more EU-critical environment as in the Swedish case, to become a more EU-oriented MEP. Second, the most nationally-oriented MEPs are found in Ireland and even though the popular opinion is more ambivalent regarding EU issue compared to the Dutch case, it is more positive than in Sweden. At the same time, this is also a question of how the party is positioned in the conflict between anti- and pro-EU attitudes. If the supporters of the party are split, the important question for the MEPs is how to define themselves in this environment. If the MEP belongs to a party with a very pro-EU stand, he or she is not severely hurt by the opinion (albeit the party might be). However, if the MEP belongs to a party that is divided on the issue, the question is much more difficult and the MEP needs to be more careful. Let us therefore look closer at the “party” variables.
PARTY HERITAGE

If we then leave the country level of the analysis and concentrate on the party level, the first argument was that it matters if the party organization belongs to the socialist, right wing or green political tradition. The outcome should be that MEPs from the socialist camp would be inclined to emphasize their roles as member state/party representatives, while MEPs from the right wing camp would be relatively more EU-oriented.

The general conclusion regarding this variable is that it probably explains the least of all the independent variables. Although the right wing parties tend to focus more on the voters and the green MEPs experience a stronger conflict with their EPG than the other two groups, the rest of the results are inconclusive. Basically, it is hard to find a pattern using party heritage as the explanation. Either the party’s tradition does not influence representative roles in modern organizations. Or, the MEPs are situated in an environment that has a much stronger impact on how they frame their representative role, than what tradition their party belongs to. In this limited study, it is impossible to decide which of these conclusions is more likely. The important thing is that a party’s heritage does not have any visible effect on the MEPs regarding how they organize their contacts or how they frame their representative roles.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE EXECUTIVE POWER

The second argument on the party level of analysis was that MEPs that belonging to governmental parties should emphasize their roles as national representatives, compared to MEPs from non-governmental parties. The reason is that the party should have an incentive to show a cohesive position in both the Council of Ministers and in the EP.

It is obvious that MEPs from governmental parties do have another pattern of contacts and prioritize differently than other MEPs. They are more oriented toward the national level and they do have more contacts with their national governments. This also underlines the stronger emphasis on the national level. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that this argument explains to some degree how MEPs
relate to the national arena. Simply, these MEPs have another important “institution” in the national arena to be aware of. Therefore, MEPs from governmental parties distinguish the government as a more important representative source, compared to MEPs from non-governmental parties. At the same time, few MEPs would say they represent the government. Even for those MEPs most likely to represent the governmental position from time to time (explicitly or implicitly), there is a difference between this kind of acting on behalf of the government and actually defining oneself as representing the government. For an MEP to perceive himself or herself as representing the government means that he or she would become something of an emissary for the national government and this would simply be incompatible with the role of being a popularly elected politician. Therefore, even if an MEP more or less promotes the governmental position in the EP, this does not make the MEP a governmental representative.

To some extent, belonging to a governmental party has some effect on the voting behavior of the MEPs, however, not clearly in the direction that the argument outlined in Chapter two predicted. This was the argument that MEPs from governmental parties should be more oriented toward the national level and end up in conflict more often with their EPGs. The result is that, although EPDs that belong to governmental parties end up in conflict more often with their EPGs and they vote more cohesively within their EPDs during conflicts, this is not verified when advancing the analysis. The question is therefore how this argument should be specified. The argument used in this study presupposes a conflict between the government’s position and the Council of Ministers. It may obviously be the other way around. In order for the Council of Ministers to successfully decide on an issue, it needs to win the majority of the EP. Therefore, governmental parties might try to influence their MEPs to vote cohesively within their EPGs. Although the difference in voting pattern between governmental and non-governmental parties is not statistically significant, and therefore it is not clear whether one of these suggestion is more correct than the other, these questions needs to be addressed in further studies.
With regard to the “in government” variable, the most important point to make in this study is that MEPs that belong to governmental parties refer to the national arena differently and they organize their contacts differently. The reason is that the contacts between the levels most often concerns information about one’s party’s position on a certain issue or technical information regarding a certain problem, and it is reasonable that MEPs from governmental parties turn to those in the party that have the best knowledge about the issues involved, which means the governmental departments. The importance of this conclusion is not that it comes as a surprise, but that these issues have not been studied before at any greater length. The question is what happens when the EP becomes more important? Will this mean that the national governments will increase their interest in influencing the behavior of their MEPs? Some MEPs indicate that there has been a change in how governments operate in relation to the MEPs since the implementation of the Amsterdam treaty. It is possible that the trend will continue with future changes of the treaties.

LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE OVER CANDIDATE SELECTION AND THE WRITING OF CONTRACTS

The third argument on the party level of the analysis concerns the intra-party arrangements. The argument stipulated that if the national party tries to circumscribe the MEPs (by various means), the MEPs will emphasize their role as representing the member state and their party organization. One such circumscribing measure is to keep close control over the selection of candidates for the EP. As already mentioned, the procedure to select candidates for the EP is more centralized compared to the procedure to select candidates for the national legislature. At the same time there are differences between the cases and I have distinguished between parties where the party leadership has a strong influence over the candidate selection procedure and those parties that have a more open procedure. A second circumscribing measure is to write contracts with the MEPs. I have divided the cases on the basis of the character of these contracts (if they have any) that are written between the party and the MEPs.
COORDINATION DEVICES

The last argument on the intra-party level was that if parties use more sophisticated systems of monitoring the MEPs, this will lead to a higher number of nationally-oriented MEPs. The analysis of formal rules and descriptions from relevant party representatives shows that parties use very different strategies to handle the relationship between the levels. As already mentioned, these include everything from incorporating the EPD-leader into the leading bodies of the party to more developed committees that include all parts of the party and that have a time schedule that permits substantial coordination. I have divided the parties in terms of their attempts to facilitate the day-to-day contact between the levels.

On the basis of this study, these different strategies have at least some relevance for how MEPs understand their roles, organize their relationship with the national level and behave in terms of voting. Although the relationship is weak, MEPs that belong to parties with a more sophisticated coordinating device are more strongly attached to their parties compared to the group of MEPs that does not have such a device. For example, there are fewer EU-oriented MEPs among the ones that have a more developed system for coordination. Furthermore,
this kind of coordination device influences the pattern of contacts with the national level. Those who have a more sophisticated system of coordination (especially concerning the group of MEPs that uses this channel on a regular basis) give priority to the national arena and they regard the conflicts with the EPGs as more problematic than the group that does not have this committee (although the difference is very small).

How the link with the national party arena is organized (in terms of coordination devices) also has an effect on how the MEPs vote. The group of MEPs that have an effective coordination committee ends up more often in conflict with their respective EPGs and that they vote more cohesively within their EPDs. Although these findings are not clearly verified in the statistical analysis, the overall pattern of findings in this study tells us that parties are able to influence the role concepts used by the MEPs and also their voting behavior, by implementing more sophisticated means of keeping contact with their MEPs.

THE PERCEPTIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL – AN UNDERSTANDING OF REPRESENTATIVE ROLES

None of the variables tested in this study clearly explain why MEPs adopt a certain role. However, some arguments seem to be less valid than others. Among the variables on the country level of the analysis, it is especially the executive-legislative relationship that fails to explain any of the variation in the material. Perhaps this is not that odd, because the argument presumes that parties include the MEPs in their process of scrutinizing the government and we have seen that parties in general have a hard time incorporating the MEPs within the party structure. Therefore, the national executive-legislative relationship in itself is not important for explaining how MEPs conceptualize their representative roles. On the party level of the analysis it is especially the type of party and if the party leadership influences the process of selecting candidates or if parties write contracts with their MEPs, that fails to explain the variation in the material.
The electoral system, popular opinion regarding EU issues, government or non-government party, and the sophistication of the coordination device, are all shown to have some importance in different parts of the study. However, the result is not always in the expected direction. These conclusions illustrate that the relationship between the representative and voters or the party organization is not simple. Therefore, these arguments should be reconsidered and extended and more qualitative accounts need to be addressed.

It seems that the national or regional focus is particularly strong in Ireland and the norm is probably fundamental in the representative ideal, independent of what level you work at as a politician; that is, the arena may change, but the local focus of Irish politics is maintained. Put another way, the principal does not change when going to the EP or some other non-local institution. It is also in the Irish parties that they emphasize that the MEPs should act on behalf of the party (or even the government). The logical consequence should be that the Irish parties did more than, for example, the Dutch parties, to make the MEPs actually behave in accordance with their expectations. However, this is not the case. At least, they do not develop an organizational set-up in order to restrain the MEPs. One explanation for this counterintuitive result is that the Irish parties take it for granted that the MEPs act in accordance with the national party (or government or the national interest) and a more developed coordination between the levels is therefore unnecessary. In other words, in the Irish cases, coordination with the national party is considered a responsibility for the individual MEP, rather than a collective responsibility for the whole party. There is in Ireland a strong norm about whom the MEPs should represent. The more independent voting behavior of the MEPs underlines this conclusion. Although the national level (in terms of voters or national party) is an integral part of the Irish MEPs’ role concepts, this does not necessarily mean that they vote cohesively within their EPDs. The Irish MEPs act individually, but with a national focus.

The Swedish and the Dutch cases illustrate the opposite position to the Irish case. Here the representative idea is much more linked to
the party organization as such. Consequently, when a representative changes arenas, e.g. from the national to the European, the perceived principal may change too. In these countries, it is unclear whether the MEP should maintain his or her role of representing the national party or change toward the EP-level and the EPGs. The argument that MEPs from a more “collectivistic” electoral system should be more orientated toward the national level and the national party, presupposes that the national parties are interested in what is happening in the EP and scrutinize the work of the MEPs. However, most parties in Sweden or in the Netherlands have not succeeded in implementing more thought-out systems. On the contrary, it seems like most parties have difficulties integrating the MEPs in the ordinary party structures. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that in parties that have adopted more efficient coordination devices, the MEPs have a stronger identification with their parties and they are more oriented toward the national level.

Furthermore, it is especially in the Dutch case that the national level, as well as the MEPs themselves, emphasizes the unrestrained role of the MEPs. All this should make it even harder for the MEPs in these parties to uphold the perception that they represent the national party. Instead the MEPs that tend to be more EU-oriented refer to the voters as their representative locus. However, it is unclear when these MEPs speak about voters, if they refer to local, national or European voters; that is, voters are seen as something abstract. However, voters may serve as a legitimate representative source, in a situation where the representative link toward the party becomes unclear. This could be regarded as a contradictory conclusion. The nationally-oriented Irish MEPs define the voters as their representative locus, and so do the EU-oriented MEPs. However, these two groups conceptualize voters fundamentally differently and this basically falls back on the electoral system. In the Irish case representatives have to be more sensitive toward voters than is necessary in the other two cases. If there are means of communicating between the voters and the MEP, for example through local or regional party channels, it may well be that the voters are able to scrutinize the MEP, in a more efficient way.
than the theoretical argument assumes. At least it makes the MEPs more sensitive toward the national arena. In the case of the more EU-oriented MEP, the electorate rather serves as an alternative to a more clear party orientation.

Based on these arguments, there is no automatic relationship between a more party-based electoral system and a more profound emphasis on the role as a national party representative among the MEPs. It depends on how parties organize the relationship between the levels. In one sense, a party-oriented electoral system creates more anonymous elected representatives, because people vote first and foremost on parties and not on candidates. The role of the party organizations is to serve as a link between the voters and the decision-makers and this may function satisfactorily as long as the parties act relatively cohesive and succeed in resolving internal conflicts. That is, as long as they manage to control their representatives and function as a collective. However, if they stop functioning as such, the mandate of the representatives becomes unclear. Do they represent the party or the voters? Do they represent interests on the national level or the EU level? In many respects, we are able to see that national parties fail to link both levels, because the MEPs do not really fit in the traditional party apparatus. There is even a tendency to exclude them, because of a growing hostility toward the EP in general. This certainly does not help creating a mutual understanding between the levels or a strong incentive for the MEPs to relate to the national party as their representative source.

This general conclusion has to do with the perceptibility of the principal. Regardless of whether the principal is the local party, the voter, the national party organization, or even the national government (at least for those representing governmental parties), if the perceptibility of the principal is weak in the national arena, it is easier for the MEPs to divert their attention to the EU arena. In the Irish parties, the principal is uncontested, but in many of the other cases it is not so clear. Therefore, this study indicates that if the parties use their organizational means to connect the MEPs to the national level – that is, by enhancing the perceptibility of the principal – they may influence the MEP’s role concepts as well as behavior.
The fruitfulness of the approach

Since all scientific enterprises include a strategy to discover answers to certain questions, the choosing of theoretical arguments and methodological approach is of fundamental importance. All choices include trade-offs and it is important to reflect on these in the end. In this study, I have tried to connect institutional specificities, roles and behavior. I have analyzed this by using tools from the comparative approach’s toolbox and I have tried to walk a thin line between qualitative and quantitative research tradition. Now it is time to evaluate the fruitfulness of this approach.

INSTITUTIONS, ROLES AND BEHAVIOR

This study is built upon an argument formulated on the basis of the new institutional theory and I have mainly been focusing on the interrelation between structure and actor. The argument for this approach is that we need more comprehensive knowledge about how MEPs operate within parties, as well as within the EP. We also need to know more about how MEPs understand their roles as parliamentarians and how this affects their behavior. This study does not provide complete answers to these questions and it would be naïve to think that it could. These are huge questions and need to be investigated from different angles and with different kinds of empirical material. This is in many respects a research agenda still in its infancy. It is in that perspective that this book shall be judged.

This study has tried to go beneath the formal structures and focus on the inside of party organizations. It has also tried to put the MEPs (the actors) in the forefront and let them tell their stories. It has tried to connect institutions, roles and behavior, in a way that is important if we ask questions about the relationship between structure and actor. At the same time the drawback with this broader theoretical perspective might be that you lose some of the stringency that this topic deserves. That is, a study of this kind might be better off focusing on one aspect of this complex world and by that say more about a certain phenomenon. However, due to the fact that the
existing knowledge on the questions asked in this study is quite incomplete, it might be hard to really pinpoint what these (most important) aspects would be. We have a limited knowledge of how parties deal with their MEPs. We have just started trying to categorize different role-sets of the MEPs and our explanations for why MEPs vote as they do is quite undeveloped. In this perspective, I am prepared to defend the broader approach, although it might be less stringent than some prefer.

The problem with this broader institutional approach is obviously how to define a “norm.” In this study, I have made the assumption that different institutional contexts create different norms. Therefore, I have tried to connect various norms with context-specific features and thereby construct arguments for a certain outcome. This is still a reasonable strategy. However, it is difficult to really define the contents of a norm and its implications. Therefore, this type of theoretical departure runs the risk of saying that norms are important for explaining a certain phenomenon, at the same time that everything may be recognized as a norm. Obviously, this kind of reasoning runs the risk of being circular. The concept itself is simply hard to define and operationalize. The strategy to assume that a certain context should (hypothetically) support or undermine a certain norm, however, makes the argument open for falsification and this is very crucial. If the argument is falsified, it can either be that the institutional setting does not influence the normative aspects of representation or it can be that the argument is wrongly specified. The important point is that without formulating these arguments, we cannot end up with this conclusion and that would severely weaken the approach. As this study shows, some of the various institutional settings capture important aspects of how MEPs frame their roles and important variations in their behavior. This enables us to discuss the content in the underlying norms about representation and the consequence of existing institutional settings or the lack of them.

This study also shows that we need more knowledge on the horizontal relationship between the national level and the EU level. As has been argued many times in this book, much current research
misses this aspect of the developing European political arena. It might be argued that this study would have benefited from including a more comprehensive account of the EU level, in order to get closer as to what influences MEPs’ role perception and behavior. In response, I would maintain that these vertical relationships are important and merit study, and that the research presented here supports that conclusion. At some point it is necessary to choose a perspective and it is impossible do everything at once. When we have a better understanding of the vertical relationship it should be possible to give a more complete picture of the MEPs surroundings.

Although we do not get a full understanding of the connection between institutions, roles and behavior, there are traces of important insights that should be analyzed further. The institutions that MEPs work within, such as different intra-party environments or various electoral systems, have at least some impact on how the MEPs frame their roles as well as defining their room of maneuver. In order to get a more solid match between these variables we need further research, but that does not discount the approach as such.

**COMPARATIVE APPROACH**

This study is based on a small-n approach. This means that a smaller number of cases are analyzed and compared with each other, which makes it possible to make certain general conclusions. However, it is important, when using such an approach, to be cautious about which cases to select. The reason is simply that you want to make sure that they represent a variation on the important variables that you want to analyze. I have put some emphasis during the start-up of this study on arguing for my selection of cases, but of course, one could select different cases. There are several countries and parties that do satisfy the requirement in this specific study. However, again, at some point it is necessary to make a decision.

So, did I make the right decision? The three countries and the nine parties included in this study do differ on the relevant variables. The conclusions also show that they differ in terms of outcome. MEPs
obviously react differently regarding their roles as representatives or in how they link to the national level, depending on what country they come from. We are able to conclude this, although the variation in the outcome does not always go in the same direction as the theoretical argument proposed. This study’s conclusions also show that MEPs work differently under different circumstances depending on various intra-party environments. If these overall conclusions may be inferred as relevant for cases not included in this study is a more open question. The conclusions should be regarded as hypotheses to test on a larger dataset or in other case studies. This is also the purpose of this kind of approach. By analyzing a number of cases, I am able to say more about the relationship between a certain set of variables, compared to a single case study. At the same time, I am able to dig deeper into this limited number of cases compared to a larger-N survey study. My own conclusion is therefore that this research strategy was efficient in many respects.

The intersection between qualitative and quantitative research

The balance between qualitative and quantitative research traditions is tricky. In one tradition the researcher wants to promote the breadth of the analysis and in the other the researcher wants to advance his or her understanding of the deeper aspects of a phenomenon. To try to walk the thin line in between might be a risky project. A researcher might fail to catch either the breadth or the depth. Or to put it differently, the study becomes too superficial and too specific.

This study is based on a qualitative approach. This means that the major instrument for analyzing the empirical reality is through interviews and from the analysis of various texts. However, since I construct quite explicit arguments in the theoretical part of the study and use these to analyze the material, some would probably argue that this study has a tendency to end up in a more quantitative logic and consequently misses qualitative aspects that are not included in the pre-set dimensions or arguments. Because of this, some might say
that this is basically a deductive approach rather than an inductive one. Obviously, I do not agree with such an understanding of this study. To be explicit on what you are searching for does not necessarily impede one’s ability to identify aspects that one did not think of at the very outset of the study.

For example, on the basis of this study we learn how the MEPs picture their relationship with the national arena. In particular, we learn how the lack of knowledge and interest in the national arena obscures the MEPs’ roles as representatives. This opens up an interesting discussion on representation in the EU arena from a more normative perspective. Secondly, much research on representative roles deals with voters, as if that means the same thing in every context. This study shows that this is a too simple understanding of a quite complicated relationship. Voters mean different things in different contexts, although they might seemingly be said to be equally important in all political contexts. This has an impact on how we ask questions in larger survey studies and it puts the more normative question on what representation really means in the forefront of the debate. Without a more qualitative approach these conclusions could not be as easily reached. Therefore, despite the obvious difficulties of walking the thin line between qualitative and quantitative research traditions, the strategy has merits that are hard to deny.

**Cross-pressure and representation in Europe**

In a democratic system we elect people that represent us in various institutions. However, it is not entirely clear what this representation really involves. The discussion in the theoretical chapter (Chapter two) showed that this is not an easy relationship and the empirical findings of this study give several examples of how difficult it is to uphold the relationship between the represented and the representative. At the same time, it is important to put some effort into trying to define what we expect of our representatives and the arguments presented in this book are influenced by one set of expectations and one definition of what representation really means (or should mean).
This study has been inspired by the writings of Hanna Pitkin and basically her argument is that representation means acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them. At the same time the representative should act independently. A conflict between the represented and the representative should not normally occur, but when it does, the representative must have good explanation of why the wishes of the represented are not in accord with their interest.

The MEPs are political representatives that are elected to act in accordance with the voter’s interest. This requires that the MEPs know what to represent. Based on this study, we know that the MEPs feel that they often assume the role of an EU ambassador on the national level, both toward the public and the media, as well as toward the national party organization. Many MEPs define one of their most important roles as going home and teaching the national level about EU politics. They regard this as a very important part of their day-to-day life. From a representation perspective, this has crucial implications. In these situations the role of the MEPs is transformed from representing the voters (or party), to become a representative of the EP (or EU/Europe in general).

We also know that one identifiable group of EU-oriented MEPs focuses on the EU arena, rather than on the national, both in terms of their contacts and their representative role. The question is, will this group of EU-oriented MEPs grow larger if the contact with the national levels weakens even more? That is, if the party organizations and the national parliamentary system are reluctant to include the MEPs to any greater degree, the consequence may be that MEPs will adopt a more EU-oriented role. Although we need empirical material over a longer time period, in order to answer such a question, there are some indications in this study that point in this direction. It seems like the EU-oriented MEPs are found in the cases were the link to the national level seems to be weaker and in cases were the principal is less perceptible.

It is also common that MEPs express frustration because of a lack of response from the national arena. In some cases the MEPs even
experience a hostile attitude toward their role in the political system. In the long run these problems may make the MEPs less interested in trying to coordinate with the national level. As the EP system is maturing, the need to receive advice and support from the national level will be reduced. Some might think that this would be a positive development. In one sense this may create a better basis for a developed party system on the EU-level, and aspects in the EU arena (rather than in the national arena,) would influence the behavior of the MEPs. On the other hand, such a development creates a number of normative problems. In many respects it would severely threaten the representative link toward the national party-arena as well as to the voters. Therefore one important conclusion of this study is that parties, as well as the national political systems in general, should do more than today to include the MEPs in the party proceedings and policy discussions. This would improve the possibility of being more proactive in terms of policy formulation, but most important, it would make accountability possible. The argument that MEPs should be more incorporated in the national political arena would, in practice, enhance the cross-pressure put on the MEPs, but on the other hand, this would make the representative mandate clearer. Therefore, this study should be regarded as a call for reforms to improve the relationship between the MEPs and the national level, within parties as well as in general.

As is common in studies of representation and role theory, it is not possible, based on this study, to say that Pitkin’s requirements for representation are satisfied when looking at the MEPs. Furthermore, since this study does not study policy demands from the electorate on the MEPs, it is hard to determine whether the MEPs act in accordance with the wishes of those they allegedly represent. However, we may say that there are important insufficiencies in the relationship between the two levels that make up the context in which the MEPs are situated. And we can also say that party organizations have been a fundamental requirement for representation as a substantive acting for others in Western Europe. Party organizations may serve as an effective and important link between voters and the
decision-makers; however, it may also serve as an important hindrance for such a link. If the foundation of representative democracy shall be preserved in the new European multi-level democracy, the link to the national parties must be strengthened.
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Appendix I

Questions to representatives of the party organizations
(1999)

1. Do the party have any special organ designated to facilitate the relationship between the party organization and the MEPs. For example a committee, special employees or something similar?

2. If there are, what is the main role of this special organ, for ex policy formulation, coordination, or something else?

3. If there is no special organ designated to handle issues related to the European Union, in what forum does this discussion normally take place.

4. Does the party write any contract or something like that, with the representatives in the EP? Are they formally bounded to follow instructions from any organizational body in the party?

5. If a policy conflict develops within the party, between the representatives in the national parliament and the group in the EP, how do the party resolve this conflict? Do the different group contact the national executive branch or do they have internal mechanisms between each other, in order to handle this type of situations?

6. Could you make a general judgment on how the contact is between the central party administration, party board and executive committee is working? Is there any debate within the party on how this relationship should work?

7. If you should compare the integration of the group in the national parliament and the group in the EP concerning the integration in the party organization, are there any main differences. If so, what are those differences and why?
Appendix II

Questions to party representatives of the national parliaments
(1999)

1. Do your party group have any special group or committee
designated to facilitate the relationship between the group in the
national parliament and the group in the EP?

2. If there is, what is the role of this group/committee, formulate
policy, coordinate or something like this?

3. If there is not a group like this, where does the main cooperation
between the representatives in the national parliament and the EP
take place? In the standing committees, in the body in the national
parliament that is designated to scrutinize the government EU
policy or through personal informal contacts between the
parliamentarians in the two parliaments?

4. Do your party have any written rules regulating the relationship
between the group in the national parliament and the group in the
EP?

5. Do the MEPs have the right two attend to the meetings of the
group in the national parliament? If so, does this occur on a
regular basis?

6. Are there some policy areas that the contacts between the national
parliamentarians and the MEPs are especially common?

7. If a policy conflict arises between the group in the national
parliament and the group in the EP, how does the party deal with
this?

8. If a single parliamentarian finds out that he or she want to enforce
a certain position in an issue, concerning the EP-level, whom
does he or she turn to? The group in the EP directly, the
executive committee or what?
9. The EU political system is changing and I wonder if you yourself would like to identify if there are some problems concerning the relationship between the two levels in the party or in the parliamentary system? Or if you can see that certain problems could arise in this relationship?
Appendix III

Questions to the MEPs (1999)

1. Earlier parliamentary experience, on what level?
   - local
   - regional
   - national
   - other

2. Have you ever been employed within the party organization, on what level?
   - local
   - regional
   - national
   - other

3. What was your occupation before you became a parliamentarian?

4. What year did you get elected as a MEP?

5. Are you running for re-election?
   - Yes
   - No

Structured questions

6. In your view, what is your most important role and function in the European Parliament, if you could describe that with a few words?

7. If you yourself would define who or what you represent in your daily work in the European Parliament, what would you answer?

8. If you compare this representative interest with other interests, how would you grade the following categories? (1 as the most important and 8 as the least important)
   - The national party organization
   - Voters or electoral district
   - Interest groups
   - Your nation
   - Your national government
   - MEP colleges from your party (where applicable)
   - Your EP group
   - The delegation of MEPs from your country in the EP
9. In your estimate, how often do you have contacts with the party group in the national parliament regarding issues that you are responsible for in the European Parliament?

10. If you estimate, how often do you have contacts with the extra parliamentary national party (for example the national party executive) regarding issues that you are responsible for in the European Parliament?

11. Does the contact with your national party normally take place
    
    - in a group or committee specifically designed to facilitate the relationship between the party and the MEPs
    
    - in an established organizational body, such as the executive committee or the parliamentary party group
    
    - or through individual contacts

12. Does it happen that you coordinate your work in the EP with the representative’s responsible for the same policy area in the national parliament?
    
    - yes, often
    
    - sometimes
    
    - seldom
    
    - no, never

13. If you are uncertain how to position yourself in a certain issue in the EP, who do you feel is the best to discuss this issue with in order to give you guidance? Please grade the following categories (1 as the most important and 7 as the least important)
    
    - The other MEPs in your party
    
    - The other MEPs in the EP group
    
    - The members of the EP committee that is handling the issue
    
    - The national party leadership
    
    - The national parliamentary party group
    
    - MPs responsible for this kind of issues in the national parliament
    
    - Interest groups
14. Does it happen that you experience a conflict between the position taken by your national party organization and your own position in the EP?
   - yes, often
   - sometimes
   - seldom
   - no, never

15. Does it happen that you experience a conflict between the position taken by your national party organization and the position of your EP group?
   - yes, often
   - sometimes
   - seldom
   - no, never

16. Does the national parliamentary party group often use you as an expert because of your role in the EP?
   - yes, often
   - sometimes
   - seldom
   - no, never

17. Do you consider the coordination between your national party and your own work to be
   - very good
   - fairly good
   - fairly poor
   - very poor

18. Do you consider the coordination between your national party and all EP members from your national party to be
   - very good
   - fairly good
   - fairly poor
   - very poor

19. In your estimate, how often do you have contact with your local party organization concerning issues that you are working with in the European Parliament?

20. If you estimate, how often do you have contact with the voters in your constituency concerning issues that you are working with in the European Parliament?

21. What is the usual way you have contact with the voters? (media, open meetings, open local office etc)

Open questions

22. Could you describe how the coordination with your party is conducted in practice? What is the usual procedure?
23. Who do you turn to if you experience a policy conflict between your work in the European Parliament and the position taken by the national party? Could you give me one or two examples were this situation has occurred or could occur?

24. In order to keep contact with your national party and your voters, what would you say are the largest constraints for you as a MEP?

25. Would you say that the relationship with your party mainly concerns coordination between the different levels, policy formulation or is it rather a question of reporting on the development on the EU level?

26. Do you feel that your notion on who you represent has changed during your time in the European Parliament?

27. If we look at you as a candidate to the European Parliament, what do you think was your main qualities that made you the candidate of the party? Which body of the organization do you feel was the most important for you to get elected as a candidate?

28. Do you feel that there is a difference between the expectations from the voters and the party on you as a MEP and on the work you actually are conducting here in the European Parliament?

29. There is a debate whether “true” European parties are developing or not. What is your opinion about that? If you do not consider this as possibility in the near future, what are the main obstacles for such a development? If you do consider this as a possibility, what do you think should be the next step in that development?

30. If you have experience as a national MP – or at any other elected level, please define level - do you see any differences in how the election campaigns to the national parliament (or other level) and the European Parliament is conducted? How would you characterize the main differences between the work in the
national parliament (or other level) and the European Parliament?

31. You have now answered several questions concerning your relationship with the party organization and your role as a MEP. If you would compare your answers with what you believe that representatives from (a) other parties and (b) other countries would answer, do you think that there would be any general differences?
Appendix IV

Questions to the MEPs (2001)

1. Earlier parliamentary experience, on what level?
   - local
   - regional
   - national
   - other

2. Have you ever been employed within the party organization, on what level?
   - local
   - regional
   - national
   - other

3. What was your occupation before you became a parliamentarian?

4. What year did you get elected as a MEP?

Representative roles

5. In your view, what is your most important role and function in the European Parliament, if you could describe that with a few words?

6. If you yourself would define who or what you represent in your daily work in the European Parliament, what would you answer?

7. If you compare this representative interest with other interests, how would you grade the following categories? (1 as the most important and 6 as the least important)
   - The national party organization
   - Voters or electoral district
   - Your national government
   - MEP colleges from your party (where applicable)
   - Your EP group
   - The delegation of MEPs from your country in the EP

8. Do you feel that your notion on who you represent has changed during your time in the European Parliament?
9. Do you feel that there is a difference between the expectations from the voters and the party on you as a MEP and on the work you actually are conducting here in the European Parliament?

10. Does the national parliamentary party group often use you as an expert because of your role in the EP?
   - yes, often
   - sometimes
   - seldom
   - no, never

11. Do you consider yourself as having the role of being an EU expert within the party and represent the European perspective in national politics?

12. Would it be correct to say that you have an important role describing and explaining the European perspective in and outside the party?

13. And if you would compare that with your representative role as we have already discussed?

Coordination

14. If you would compare, on the one hand your contacts with the party leadership and on the other hand the parliamentary group in the national parliament, are there differences between how often you have these contacts and are there differences between what type of issues you deal with in these contacts?

15. Does the contact with your national party normally take place
   - in a group or committee specifically designed to facilitate the relationship between the party and the MEPs
   - in an established organizational body, such as the executive committee or the parliamentary party group
   - or through individual contacts

16. Could you describe how the coordination with your party is conducted in practice? What is the usual procedure?
17. Would you say that the coordination with your party mainly concerns reporting and exchange of information on the development on the EU level, or does it also contain policy formulation on the both levels?

18. Does it happen that you coordinate your work in the EP with the representative/s responsible for the same policy area in the national parliament?

- yes, often  
- sometimes  
- seldom  
- no, never

19. Do you consider the coordination between your national party and your own work to be

- very good  
- fairly good  
- fairly poor  
- very poor

20. What form does your contacts with the local or regional party and the voters in your constituency have and how often do you have contacts with the local arena?

Conflicts

21. If you are uncertain how to position yourself in a certain issue in the EP, who do you feel is the best to discuss this issue with in order to give you guidance? Please grade the following categories (1 as the most important and 6 as the least important)

- The other MEPs in your party  
- The other MEPs in the EP group  
- The members of the EP committee that is handling the issue  
- The national party leadership  
- The national parliamentary party group  
- MPs responsible for this kind of issues in the national parliament

22. Does it happen that you experience a conflict between the position taken by your national party organization and your own position in the EP?

- yes, often  
- sometimes  
- seldom  
- no, never
23. Does it happen that you experience a conflict between the position taken by your national party organization and the position of your EP group?
   - yes, often
   - sometimes
   - seldom
   - no, never

24. In what type of questions do you run into conflict between the national party position and the position taken by the EP group?

25. Who do you turn to if you see that this type of conflict is arising?

26. In what type of situations have you or could you deviate from the position taken by your EP group?

27. In these situations, do you act the same in the whole national party group or does it happen that you deviate as an individual?

28. What type of possible sanctions do the EP group control in a conflict situation and how do you regard them, are they strong or weak?

Other questions

29. There is a debate whether “true” European parties are developing or not. What is your opinion about that? If you do not consider this as possibility in the near future, what are the main obstacles for such a development? If you do consider this as a possibility, what do you think should be the next step in that development?

30. You have now answered several questions concerning your relationship with the party organization and your role as a MEP. If you would compare your answers with what you believe that representatives from (a) other parties and (b) other countries would answer, do you think that there would be any general differences?