

Power versus Representation? The Making of the European Parliament

Guerrieri, Sandro

Univ. "La Sapienza" Roma. Fac. di Scienze Politiche. Dpto. di Studi
Politici. Piazzale Aldo Moro. I-00185 Roma
sandro.guerrieri@uniroma1.it

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Europako batasuna honezkeroko Estatuaren arteko kooperazio maila, nazioarteko zuzenbidezko arauetan oinarriturik, gaindu du. Gaur egungo bereizgunetarikoa da ordezkartze Batzarrek garrantzia irabazi duela. Europako parlamentua da gehien aldatu den erakundea azken urteotan.

Giltza-Hitzak: Europako parlamentua. Altiero Spinelli. Lisboako ituna. Maila askotariko gobernara.

La Unión Europea es una organización que ha superado el carácter de una simple cooperación entre los Estados basado en las normas del derecho internacional. Una de sus principales peculiaridades es el importante papel que actualmente se atribuye a una asamblea representativa, el Parlamento Europeo, que es la institución europea que más ha cambiado en el curso de los años.

Palabras Clave: Parlamento europeo. Altiero Spinelli. Tratado de Lisboa. Gobernanza multinivel.

L'Union européenne est une organisation qui a dépassé le caractère d'une simple coopération entre les États basée sur les normes du droit international. L'une de ses particularités principales est le rôle important que l'on attribue actuellement à une assemblée représentative, le Parlement européen, l'institution européenne qui a le plus changé au fil du temps.

Mots-Clés : Parlement européen. Altiero Spinelli. Traité de Lisbonne. Gouvernance à multi-niveaux.

1. The European Union is an organization that has overcome the character of a simple cooperation between states based on the standards of international law. Over time, an extremely original political system has been created, characterised by the combination and interaction of the inter-governmental and supranational dimensions. One of its main peculiarities is the important role now attributed to a representative assembly, the European Parliament, which is the European institution that has changed most over the years. The first parliamentary assembly –whose name was the Common Assembly– created by the Treaty of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, was formed by 78 members appointed by the parliaments of the six member states and had no legislative powers. Today, the European Parliament has more than seven hundred members¹ elected by the citizens of 27 States and in most legislative fields is an equal partner of the Council of ministers². The empowerment of the European Parliament bears, from several standpoints, important similarities to the parliaments' development process in their respective national contexts. But it also presents significant differences, which are due in part to the originality of the overall European institutional system, and are responsible for the problems it has to face in order to exercise its representative function.

2. On 12 March 2008, the European Parliament celebrated its 50th anniversary³. But the history of this representative institution began in fact with the Common Assembly of the ECSC, the first European Community, founded by the Treaty of Paris of 18 April 1951. The idea underlying this sectoral cooperation was that according to which European integration was to proceed through de facto solidarities, with the creation of supranational structures aimed at governing the sectors that had been united. Jean Monnet, who had drawn up the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, in particular thought of an organ composed of independent experts⁴. But, in order to avoid giving the Community an excessively technocratic stamp, it was decided that this organ –which was named the High Authority– would be controlled both by a Council of ministers (whose creation was supported especially by the Benelux Countries) and by a

1. In 2007, after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, the number of seats in the European Parliament rose to 785. In June 2009, citizens have elected, on the basis of the Treaty of Nice, 736 MEPs. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon of December 2007, the number of seats will rise to 751.

2. See, e.g., R. Corbett, *The European Parliament's Role in Closer EU integration*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998; P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele, P. Magnette (eds.), *A quoi sert le Parlement européen?*, Bruxelles, Complexe, 1999; O. Costa, *Le Parlement européen, assemblée délibérante*, Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2001; L. Bardi and P. Ignazi, *Il Parlamento europeo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2004; B. Rittberger, *Building Europe's Parliament. Democratic Representation beyond the Nation-State*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005; R. Corbett, F. Jacobs and M. Shackleton, *The European Parliament*, seventh edition, London, John Harper, 2007; D. Judge, D. Earnshaw, *The European Parliament*, second edition, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2008; Y. Mény (ed.), *Building Parliament: 50 years of European Parliament History (1958-2008)*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009.

3. Agence Europe, *Le Parlement européen souffle ses cinquante bougies*, in « Bulletin quotidien Europe », n. 9621, 13 March 2008, p. 6.

4. A. Isoni, *L'Alta Autorità del carbone e dell'acciaio. Alle origini di una istituzione pubblica*, Lecce, Argo, 2006.

representative assembly. A Court of Justice completed the Community's institutional system.

The ECSC Treaty of 1951 gave the Common Assembly limited but not negligible duties, if one compares them to those of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe founded in 1949: without legislative power, the Assembly of the ECSC nonetheless exercised political scrutiny over the High Authority, which was forced to resign if the Assembly approved a censure motion⁵. According to the Treaty, the Assembly was to limit itself to exercising control over the activities of the High Authority in retrospect, examining the annual report that the latter was required to submit to it prior to its ordinary session, set for May. The Assembly, however, immediately showed its intention to give a broad interpretation to its supervisory function. Not only did it exercise its right to hold extraordinary sessions, but also, and above all, it created a system of committees that would enable it to monitor and discuss High Authority activity more closely. Another important step was taken towards enhancing the role of the Assembly on 16 June 1953, when political groups were officially recognised and offered financial contributions, notwithstanding the resistance of supporters of a more individualistic conception of representation. Considerable attention was also given to developing the Common Assembly's Secretariat. Thus, in 1954, the first report presented by the Common Assembly to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe stated:

It is now possible, after two years of existence, to judge how the texts have been given practical application, and to form an idea of the way in which the Assembly has interpreted its mission, the means it has adopted to carry it out, the broad lines of its activities and its characteristic juridical features.

The Assembly has passed beyond the stage –where it might have remained– of exercising supervision after the event to that of discussing the future policy of the High Authority. Its Committees keep a watchful eye on the activity of the Community. It has assumed a definite parliamentary character⁶.

We may say, therefore, that the start of European integration saw the emergence of an element we will find in its subsequent developments: aware of its own role, the representative assembly showed the tendency to increase its influence by expanding the possibilities offered by the treaties. And I think that this will to maximize its formal powers is a significant aspect that connects the experience of the European Parliament to that of national parliaments, since they often acted in the same way –at the beginning of the history of constitutionalism– in their institutional contexts.

5. P.J.K. Kapteyn, *L'Assemblée commune de la Communauté européenne du charbon et de l'acier. Un essai de parlementarisme européen*, Leyde, A.W. Sythoff, 1962.

6. *First Report to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe on the activities of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community from 10th September, 1952, to 30th June, 1954*, presented, on behalf of the Common Assembly, by M. Alain Poher, rapporteur, Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, Sixth Ordinary Session, 28th October 1954, Doc. 319, p. 4.

At its first session in September 1952, the Common Assembly was also given the task, by the Council of ministers of the ECSC, to draw up a draft of political community to complete the creation of the European Defence Community (EDC), whose Treaty had been signed in Paris on 27 May 1952. To prepare this draft, a constitutional commission of 26 members was appointed. The text developed by this commission was approved by the Assembly (which for this task had re-dubbed itself the “ad hoc Assembly” and had been supplemented by 9 more members) on 10 March 1953⁷. It provided for a government system hinged on a relationship between the Executive and Parliament (which was composed of a Chamber of Peoples elected directly by the citizens and of a Senate whose members were elected by national parliaments) that mirrored various traits of the national parliamentary regimes. This political community draft was destined to be cast aside once the EDC Treaty ran aground due to France’s failure to ratify it. Nevertheless, the conferral of this sort of “constitutional” task had contributed, albeit temporarily, to raising the value of the European parliamentary assembly, whose institutional proposals would re-emerge later on in the community integration process.

The failed possibility of creating a common defence system of the Six and the consequent abandonment of the political community draft approved by the Assembly didn’t halt European construction, which was relaunched in June 1955 by the Messina Conference, which started the process leading to the Treaties of Rome of 25 March 1957. These treaties, which established the EEC and Euratom, partially increased the powers of the representative body, the European Parliamentary Assembly of the three Communities (whose members were still appointed by national Parliaments), that on 30 March 1962 decided to call itself the “European Parliament” in order to emphasize its political role. This increase was partially due to the fact that, while the ECSC Treaty consisted of a set of precise legislative rules, the EEC Treaty was a *Traité-cadre* which gave the institutional bodies broader room for action. This characteristic of the EEC Treaty gave a very important role above all to the Commission, which had the monopoly on legislative initiative, and to the Council of ministers, which became the main decision-making body (in contrast with what took place in the ECSC Treaty). The parliamentary Assembly, once again, was actually given a task of secondary importance. Nonetheless, it had achieved participation –albeit quite limited– in the exercise of the legislative function, thanks to the introduction in various cases of a consultation procedure. And it was allowed to exercise its supervisory function in a broader way⁸.

3. As had occurred with the ECSC’s Common Assembly, the Assembly of the three Communities tried to interpret in an extensive way the provisions of the Treaties. With regard to its legislative function, it obtained from the Council of ministers an extension of the practice of consultation⁹. On the institutional level,

7. D. Preda, *Sulla soglia dell’Unione. La vicenda della Comunità politica europea (1952-1954)*, Milano, Jaca Book, 1994.

8. P. Gistenet, *L’Assemblée parlementaire européenne*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1959.

9. A.-M. Houbdine, J.-R. Vergès, *Le Parlement européen dans la construction de l’Europe des Six*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1966.

in order to simplify the governing system, it asked, starting November 1960, to merge the three Councils of the communities on the one side, and the High Authority of ECSC with the EEC and Euratom Commissions on the other. The merger took place with the Treaty of 1965, which led, in 1967, to the formation of a single Commission¹⁰ and a single Council of ministers. The Assembly tried also to participate in the debate about the Fouchet plan proposed by Gaullist France in 1961, which aimed at introducing (but with a strong intergovernmental vision that made it impossible to reach an agreement with France's five partners) a political cooperation between the member states¹¹. The necessity of strengthening the parliamentary powers within the Community, in order to offset the transfer of legislative powers from the national to the Community sphere, was emphasized in a resolution approved on June 1963, that was presented by German Christian Democrat Hans Furler. In pointing out the foundations of the functions of the Assembly, his report made reference not only to the Treaties, but also to the important experience of the Common Assembly, to the "droit coutumier" and to the "droit parlementaire non écrit et en particulier sur la tradition parlementaire européenne". In this regard, the historical experience of national parliaments had to be considered a notable model:

L'histoire, le développement et l'identité fondamentale des parlements nationaux sont autant de points d'après lesquels le Parlement européen doit s'orienter. Encore que le Parlement européen ait à assumer des fonctions particulières et essentielles, la position qu'occupent les parlements dans le système institutionnel des Etats membres lui donne une force et des droits importants. La conception théorique d'un parlementarisme parfait ne suffit pas ici. L'exemple et l'activité des parlements sont essentiels. L'histoire et la vie des parlements ainsi que la tradition parlementaire européenne constituent une grande force constructive pour le Parlement européen¹².

In 1965, the president of the EEC Commission, Walter Hallstein¹³, sought to create a new axis with the European Parliament regarding the Community's budget procedures: in presenting an organic common agricultural policy funding, which would be based on resources introduced directly into the Community budget, he proposed granting the Parliament significant budget powers. According to Hallstein, this had to be considered as a sort of application of the traditional maxim "no taxation without representation": now that the Community was going

10. M. Dumoulin (ed.), *The European Commission, 1958-72: history and memories*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007.

11. M.-T. Bitsch, *La construction européenne. Enjeux politiques et choix institutionnels*, Bruxelles, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 125-141.

12. Parlement européen, *Documents de séance*, 1963-64, 14 juin 1963, n. 31, *Rapport fait au nom de la Commission politique sur les compétences et les pouvoirs du Parlement européen* (Rapporteur : Hans Furler), pp. 3-4. Regarding the way the European Parliament had exercised its prerogatives thus far, Furler's report stated: "Le Parlement européen a souvent utilisé les moyens d'action dont il dispose jusqu'à la limite de ses possibilités. Certes, il y a eu des cas où le Parlement n'a pas pu atteindre le maximum d'efficacité. Mais, dans l'ensemble, il faut retenir qu'il a réussi à développer ses positions sur la base des dispositions du traité et à s'assurer une place influente parmi les institutions, compte tenu des limites qui lui sont imparties » (*ibidem*, p. 5).

13. C. Malandrino, "Tut etwas Tapferes": *compi un atto di coraggio. L'Europa federale di Walter Hallstein (1948-1982)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2005.

to have its own resources, the European Parliament was the only parliamentary institution that could ensure the necessary control.

However, the process of European Parliament's empowerment was blocked by Charles de Gaulle, who, considering the Commission as a sort of "aréopage technocratique, apatride et irresponsable"¹⁴, wanted to prevent a supranational evolution of the Community institutional system. The conflict with France gave rise to the "empty chair" policy and ended with the Luxembourg compromise of January 1966, which established the primacy of the intergovernmental dimension¹⁵. But during the phase of relaunching European construction that began after the end of de Gaulle era, new possibilities of development opened for the representative body¹⁶. With the Treaties signed in April 1970 and July 1975, Parliament achieved important budget prerogatives, and in 1974 the government of the nine member states (the first enlargement had taken place the previous year) agreed to transform it into an elected representational body¹⁷. This was obviously a turning-point in the exercise of its representative function: citizens would thereafter be directly involved in European construction¹⁸.

It is certainly true that the Parliament elected by universal suffrage in 1979 suffered greatly from the fact that it wasn't given new responsibilities, but, thanks especially to the impulse of the Italian federalist Altiero Spinelli¹⁹, who created a pressure group inside the Parliament that was named the "Crocodile club"²⁰, it adopted a constitutional strategy that, thirty years after the experience of the *Assemblée ad hoc*, relaunched the goal of a supranational political union. A Committee on institutional affairs was formed, wherein Spinelli was appointed general rapporteur and another Italian MEP, Mauro Ferri, chairman. This Committee presented a Draft Treaty on the European Union which was approved by the European Parliament on 14 February 1984²¹. This Draft Treaty strongly invigorated the supranational dimension of the institutional system of EC

14. Ch. de Gaulle, Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 9 septembre 1965, in *Discours et messages*, IV, *Pour l'effort (Août 1962-Décembre 1965)*, Paris, Plon, 1970, p. 379.

15. N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s. Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge*, London & New York, Routledge, 2006.

16. P. Scalingi, *The European Parliament. The Three-Decade Search for a United Europe*, London, Aldwych Press, 1980, pp. 105 sqq.

17. R. Corbett, *The European Parliament's Role in Closer EU Integration*, Op. cit., pp. 92 sqq.

18. D. Pasquinucci, L. Verzichelli, *Elezioni europee e classe politica sovranazionale (1979-2004)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2004.

19. P. Graglia, *Altiero Spinelli*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2008.

20. "Au Crocodile" was the name of the Strasbourg restaurant where, on 9 July 1980, the initiative's promoters first met.

21. J.-M. Palayret, *Spinelli, entre cellule carbonara et conseiller des princes. Impulsions et limites de la relance européenne dans le projet Spinelli d'union politique des années 80*, in G. Bossuat (ed.), *Inventer l'Europe. Histoire nouvelle des groupes d'influence et des acteurs de l'unité européenne*, Bruxelles, P.I.E Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 355-382; D. Preda, *L'action de Spinelli au Parlement européen et le projet de Traité d'Union européenne (1979-1984)*, in W. Loth (ed.), *La gouvernance supranationale dans la construction européenne*, Bruxelles, Bruylant, 2005, pp. 185-203.

Community: it gave the European Parliament an important role in the legislative process (stating that it would exercise legislative power jointly with the Council of the ministers), reinforced its relationship with the European Commission (which would be submitted to a vote of confidence before taking office) and, regarding the Council of ministers, established that majority voting was to become its general rule.

The first wide-range reform of the Community institutions –the Single European Act signed in February 1986– took into account in a quite limited way the Draft adopted by the European Parliament. While, on the one hand, the result of extending the use of the majority vote within the Council of Ministers was partially achieved, on the other, Parliament’s demand for a more incisive role in the legislative process was, with the introduction of the cooperation procedure, upheld in a highly partial fashion. The fact remains that the 1986 treaty reform was the first in a cycle that over the years has led to adopting several proposals included in the Parliament’s Draft Treaty of 1984. The Treaties of Maastricht (1992), Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2001) have constantly increased the powers of the European representative body. As regards the function of political control, the relationship between the Parliament and the European Commission has been considerably reinforced thanks to the establishment of a relationship of trust (Parliament has been given the right to express its favourable vote first regarding the appointment of the President, and then on the entire body), the lack of which could result in the fall of the Commission, as took place in 1999 with the Santer Commission. And the Parliament has strengthened this relationship of trust by the procedure of the preliminary hearings of the proposed commissioners – a procedure that, on the occasion of the appointment of the Barroso Commission in 2004, led to replacing two of the designated members. Just as important are the legislative powers gradually obtained: starting out as a purely consultative body, the European Parliament transformed itself into an institution which, with the co-decision procedure introduced in the Maastricht Treaty and perfected and expanded with the subsequent treaties, in various areas has been given powers equivalent to those of the Council of Ministers, once the single decision-making body. In 2006, the relevance of its legislative role has been demonstrated by the radical modifications that the European Parliament was able to introduce in the directive on the liberalisation of services, the well-known “Bolkestein Directive”, which had given rise to strong apprehensions in large sectors of the European public opinion, as came to light in the French referendum on the Constitutional Treaty on May 2005.

Lastly, the Lisbon Treaty signed in December 2007²², which retains most of the provisions of the Constitutional Treaty of 2004, has further strengthened the role of the European Parliament. The co-decision procedure has been considerably extended and has become the “ordinary legislative procedure.” Parliament’s prerogatives concerning the budget have been developed, thanks, for instance,

22. S. Griller, J. Ziller, *The Lisbon Treaty: EU Constitutionalism without a constitutional Treaty?* Wien, New York, Springer, 2008.

to the abolishment of the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure – a distinction that, in the case of compulsory expenditure (which included the most costly Community policy, the Common agricultural policy), limited Parliament's role. Regarding the appointment of the president of the Commission, the Lisbon Treaty states that he will be elected by the European Parliament on a proposal from the European Council, which will have to take the results of the European elections into account.

For these reasons, and in light of the overall reinforcement of the political dimension of European construction, the European Parliament approved the Lisbon Treaty on 20 February 2008 with 525 votes against 125 and 29 abstentions. The adopted resolution, whose rapporteurs were Richard Corbett, of the socialist group, and Iñigo Méndez de Vigo²³, of the group of the EPP, affirmed that the new Treaty

(...) is a substantial improvement on the existing Treaties, which will bring more democratic accountability to the Union and enhance its decision-making (through a strengthening of the roles of the European Parliament and the national parliaments), enhance the rights of European citizens vis-à-vis the Union and improve the effective functioning of the Union's institutions²⁴.

4. In the space of some decades, the European Parliament has thus obtained prerogatives that national parliaments have historically conquered after very long struggles. And one could add that the empowerment of this supranational Parliament takes all the more importance as it hasn't occurred in a context of continuous expansion of parliamentary prerogatives on a national level: on the contrary, it has taken place while national parliaments have found, on their part, increasing difficulties in facing such challenges as the growing role of the executive in their respective political systems (as has occurred in France's semi-presidential Republic). Underlining these results does not mean, however, concealing the gaps that persist in this European Union parliamentarization process. The traditional functions of the parliamentary institutions are still exercised in an incomplete fashion: the intensified political oversight over the European Commission continues to be offset by scant control over the Council of Ministers, and Parliament has not a right of direct legislative initiative: its proposals have to be submitted to the Commission. Moreover, as far as the representation function is concerned, there are two major negative aspects: on the one hand, turnout in European elections fell constantly after the first elections. In fact, it dropped from 63% in 1979 in the Community of Nine to 2009's figure of 43% in the Union of 27. In 2004 and 2009, participation was very low mainly in many of the new

23. European Parliament, *Report on the Treaty of Lisbon* (29 January 2008), A6-0013/2008.

24. *European Parliament resolution of 20 February 2008 on the Treaty of Lisbon*, Texts adopted, P6 TA(2008)0055. The resolution regrets the lowering of the ambitions of the Constitutional Treaty of 2004, but it underlines the importance of the preservation of outstanding innovations; for instance, thanks to the extension of the legislative prerogatives of the European Parliament and of the reinforcement of prior scrutiny by national parliaments, "the adoption of all European Union legislation will be subjected to a level of parliamentary scrutiny that exists in no other supranational or international structure".

member states²⁵. On the other hand, European elections are very often dominated by issues of a national character²⁶.

The negative trend in turnout points to a sort of paradox in the experience of the European Parliament: the increase in its prerogatives seems to be inversely proportional to the interest that European citizens show in it²⁷. This paradox is due to several reasons, which originate from the special features of this supra-national parliamentarianism. In fact, contrary to what occurs in national political elections, European voters are not called upon to pass their judgement on the choice of a government. The governance of the European Union is a highly complex system, whose major players are not only the Commission (now linked to Parliament by a relationship of trust), but also the Council of Ministers and the European Council of heads of state and government. This helps explain a very important difference between the European Parliament and the national parliaments: the absence of a dialectic between majority and opposition. Since the beginning of its experience, the European Parliament has in fact been marked by the research of cooperation between the two major groups, the Socialists and the Christian-Democrat group (renamed group of the European People's Party after the founding of this trans-national party in 1976). This cooperation was necessitated by Parliament's need to present a compact front in claiming the importance of its role in comparison with the other institutions. Now, the consensus-style decision-making, the technical characteristics of most European legislation, and the fact that everyone can speak in his or her own language (so that one can listen to a parliamentary debate mostly by the voice –inevitably a little bit monotonous– of the interpreters), are not factors that help elicit great interest among citizens in this supranational Parliament's life. Above all, while, on the one hand, trans-national parliamentary groups established themselves very early as the key actors in the activity of the European Parliament, and in recent years they have been able to act also as a remarkable factor of political integration in the impressive enlargement process (in today's Europe of 27 countries, the EP hosts members from a huge number of national parties, but they are assembled in just seven political groups)²⁸, the trans-national federations of European parties –to which the most important of these groups are linked– are, on the contrary, still too weak²⁹. They have difficulty elaborating European issues in a way that gives electors the perception of a clear contrast between different large-scale programs. On the contrary, a real interest in European problems often

25. In 2009: 28.2 in the Czech Republic, 20.98 in Lithuania, 24.53 in Poland, 28.33 in Slovenia, 19.64 in Slovakia, 27.67 in Romania.
(http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/turnout_en.html).

26. Y. Déloye, M. Bruter (eds.), *Encyclopedia of European Elections*, New York, Palgrave, 2007.

27. P. Delwit, Ph. Poirier (eds.), *Parlement puissant, électeurs absents? Les élections européennes de juin 2004*, Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2005.

28. As it had occurred in the first European legislature at the time of the Europe of Ten. In the 2009-2014 legislature, 25 members, representing at least one quarter of the member States, are needed to form a political group.

29. P. Delwit, E. Kūlahci, C. Van de Walle (eds.), *Les fédérations européennes de partis. Organisation et influence*, Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2001.

emerges in the referendums, when the issues become more visible to the citizens, as occurred with the referendums of 2005 on the Constitutional Treaty, or the Irish referendums of 2008 and 2009 on the Treaty of Lisbon. But the problem with this kind of referendum is that national and European aspects are often mixed in a confused way.

In conclusion, in the history of the European Parliament, similarities with the process of the historical affirmation of national parliaments are very significant, but this experience is to be assessed within the context of an original system of multi-level governance in which “power” is articulated in a very complex way, so that the problem of political accountability has its specific features.

Now that the Treaty of Lisbon has entered into force, there is the possibility that the European Parliament will act in a Union in which political features will become more visible, thanks, for instance, to the introduction of two new prominent institutional figures: the president of the European Council with a two-and-a-half-year term, and the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is vice-president of the Commission and the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Council at the same time. Moreover, political dialectic could become more lively by virtue of the obligation for the European Council to take electoral results into account when presenting a candidate for the presidency of the Commission: European elections would become more important for the choice of the executive, and trans-national political parties could be spurred for this reason to develop clearer and broader programmatic identities. The European Union will continue to be characterised by an unprecedented mix of intergovernmental and supranational features, but this mix could be oriented in a more political and parliamentary way.