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Article Four: How Do National Parliaments Cooperate with Members of the European Parliament?¹

Introduction²

The Brexit vote in the United Kingdom referendum in June 2016 illustrates the depth of the legitimacy crisis from which the EU political system suffers. While the main remedy for this 'democratic deficit' has been to strengthen the European Parliament (EP) (Hix and Lord 1997; Costa 2001, Rittberger 2005, 2012; Costa and Rozenberg 2008), the dispersion of political power in the EU across different political institutions and various levels of governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Bache and Flinders 2004) entails that parliamentary scrutiny of EU decision-making is also dispersed across multiple representative institutions situated at different levels of governance (Kiiver 2007; Crum and Fossum 2009). Hence, genuine parliamentary control over EU decision-making entails not only the empowerment of the EP, but also the empowerment of national parliaments in their scrutiny of EU politics (Raunio and Hix 2000; Maurer and Wessels 2001; Auel and Benz 2006; O'Brennan and Raunio 2007; Crum and Fossum 2009;

Although the Treaty of Lisbon of 2009 provides national parliamentarians (MPs) with new institutional tools to participate in EU politics, notably the Early Warning Mechanism (EWM), there is a substantial gap between these formal arrangements and the extent to which MPs actually use them in practice (Raunio 2009, 2010; De Wilde 2012; Crum and Fossum 2013; De Ruiter 2013; Auel and Höing 2014). MPs are already busy with their own parliamentary agenda, and thus have to invest a substantive amount of resources in order to follow the different steps of the complex inter-institutional negotiations that take place at the EU level of governance between the Commission, the Council and the EP.

Hence, a few years into the post-Lisbon era, there is an intensive debate on how to improve national parliaments' use of the existing EU scrutiny instruments they have at their disposal and on which new instruments might be developed. These questions are treated by both academics (Auel et al. 2015 Hefftl et al. 2015; Auel et al. 2015; Rozenberg and Hefftl 2015; Jančić 2015a; Lupu and Fasone 2016) and practitioners in the national parliaments (House of Lords 2014; Folketing 2014,

1 The article will be published in 2017 in *Politique européenne*, in a special issue entitled *Member State Parliaments and the European Challenge(s)*, edited by Dr. Diane Fromage and Dr. Kolja Raube. Bart J. Bes, PhD candidate, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Department of Political Science, is the second author of this article due to his substantial contribution to the logistic regression analysis.

2 Previous versions of this article were presented at CES Conference, Amsterdam, June 25-27, 2013, and two PADEMIA workshops: *Strengthening Parliaments through Institutional Engineering*, Sciences-Po, Paris, 3-4 December 2015; and *Member State Parliaments and the European Challenge(s)*, LUISS Guido Carli, Center for Parliamentary Studies, Rome, 8-9 July 2016. The article profited from the comments of different scholars, notably Ben Crum, Matti Wilberg, Pierre Schmitt, Diane Fromage, and Angela Tacea.

Tweede Kamer 2014; see also COSAC bi-annual reports).

While many of the national parliaments' recommendations on how to strengthen their involvement in EU decision-making require the agreement of the European Commission, and possibly a new inter-institutional agreement, national parliaments can already strengthen their cooperation with the EP. In fact, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) can provide a significant added-value to national parliaments and reinforce their capacity to scrutinize EU legislation. As Brussels-based 'full-time Europeans' (Pogunkte et al. 2007), MEPs can provide MPs with inside and up-to-date information on the negotiation process taking place at the EU level on a particular EU-issue under scrutiny.

National parliaments generally share this role conception of MEPs. According to the Dutch parliament, 'intensifying the discussions with MEPs who hold rapporteurships (or shadow rapporteurships) on European legislation can lead to better insights on both sides into the handling of the dossier concerned.' (Tweede Kamer 2014: 31). In a similar vein, the UK House of Lords states that 'national parliaments should be encouraged to contact the relevant rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs in the EP, who could provide informal briefings to MPs on the progress of trilogue negotiations' (House of Lords 2014: 33) and notes that communication between MPs and the EP 'is essential to share information, to debate policies, and to reach common understandings.' (idem, page 54). The Danish Folketing also argues that 'a better awareness by MPs of the EP's positions and arguments on specific legislative proposals would give the national parliaments a better possibility to influence their governments and thereby the Council' (Folketing 2014: 10) and therefore recommends that 'parliamentary committees from the national parliament gather more often in small groups with relevant MEPs in order to discuss specific subjects.' (idem).

This potential of cooperation notwithstanding, the relationship between the national parliaments and the EP is often dominated by dynamics of competition (Bergman 1997; Neunreiter 2005; Huff 2013; Herranz-Surralsés 2014; Cooper 2014, 2016; Raube and Wouters 2016). In addition, effective vertical interparliamentary cooperation is challenged by a structural division of labour between the different institutions, since national parliaments' primary function is scrutiny of their own national government's positions on EU matters (Raunio 2011). Moreover, practical hurdles related to colliding parliamentary agendas and geographical distances make interparliamentary cooperation difficult in practice (Hix and Raunio 2000; Raunio 2009).

This article examines how and to what extent national parliaments use MEPs as sources of information on EU matters, combining legal and behavioural approaches. I propose a categorization of EU Member States according to the level of MEPs formal participation rights in the work of the national parliaments. I identify four activities: MEPs visits to the parliaments' premises; attendance at meetings of the European Affairs Committee (EAC); attendance at meetings of sectoral

committees; and participation in plenary debates related to EU matters. In addition, two different roles that MEPs play in national parliaments are identified: (1) the role of national representatives at the EU-level, which means that MEPs enjoy special participation rights in the national parliament of the Member State in which they are elected; and (2) the role of external EU-experts, providing the national chambers with up-to-date information on EU affairs, notably in the form of hearings on a particular EU issue.

Regarding the question how often MEPs' attend EAC meetings, the main findings are that the more participation rights MEPs have in the national parliament of the EU Member State in which they are elected, the more often they attend EAC meetings in that parliament; that MEPs attend more often strong EACs rather than weak ones; that MEPs who are affiliated with political parties that are in government attend EAC meetings more often than MEPs whose parties are in opposition; that MEPs from larger political parties attend EAC meetings more often than MEPs from smaller political parties; and finally, that MEPs who are former MPs attend EAC meetings more often than MEPs who have not been MPs in their past political career.

So far, the literature on post-Lisbon interparliamentary cooperation has mainly referred to the formal institutional arrangements that were created and designed by specific legal provisions in the EU treaties (Hefftlar and Gattermann 2015; Fromage 2016). Moreover, scholars study mainly horizontal interparliamentary cooperation, between national parliaments of different Member States. These include mainly the EWM (Raunio 2010; Cooper 2012, 2013, 2015; Pintz 2015) and interparliamentary conferences (Kreilinger 2013; Cooper 2014; Raube and Wouters 2016), in which the EP has a relatively small role to play. The focus of this article is rather on vertical interparliamentary cooperation, between MPs and MEPs. The legal provisions I refer to are only the ones decided upon by the national parliaments themselves in their Rules of Procedure. These legal provisions are then implemented, or not, according to the parliamentary actors' own incentives and resources.

The paper proceeds as follows. After presenting my research methods, I provide an overview of the formal participation rights of MEPs in the national parliaments and an analysis of the two roles MEPs play in national chambers - national representatives at the EU-level and external EU-experts. I then discuss possible cross-national and cross-party variations in MEP practices of participation in the work of national parliaments and develop the hypotheses about the actual involvement of MEPs in national parliaments. The following section provides the main findings of the survey on MEP activities in national parliaments, and the concluding section discusses the findings and future research avenues on the topic.

Methods

A simple examination of the formal rules of the national parliaments in regards to MEPs, as recorded in the chambers' Rules of Procedure (also referred to as the Standing Orders) might be misleading. What is required is 'the combination of formal (i.e. written) rules and unwritten rules and practices that together constitute the *de facto* rules of the game' (Bergman 1997: 375). Hence, the comparison of MEPs' rights in national parliaments is empirically based on several sources, the combination of which provides a detailed picture of MEPs' rights in national parliaments across the EU.

First, I collected data on whether the national chamber's Rules of Procedure contain specific provisions in regards to MEPs. The first resource used for this purpose is the COSAC³ 25th bi-annual report⁴ of May 2016 and its annex, as well as consultation of the Rules of Procedure of several national parliaments, either in the original language or via official translations in English. This was complemented by a recent comparative study of how national parliaments deal with EU affairs in the framework of the Observatory of Parliaments After Lisbon (OPAL) research project (Heffler et al. 2015).

These two sources are cross-checked by two original surveys conducted among parliamentary clerks in charge of EU affairs in national parliaments. Clerks of the EACs of 20 out of 39 national parliaments, half of the survey population, replied to a short questionnaire on the legal provisions of MEPs participation rights in their chamber, which was sent to them by email in July 2016.⁵ In addition, a second survey among EAC clerks was conducted in November 2016 on the practical aspects of MEP attendance in the committee meetings. EAC clerks of 24 out of 39 national parliaments, 60% of the survey population, replied to this survey.⁶

This formal information constitutes the relevant background against which the actual involvement of MEPs can be assessed. To this end, I conducted a survey among MEPs. In June 2012, I sent all MEPs of the 7th legislature (2009-2014), via their official email account, ten

3 Conference of the committees of the national parliaments of the EU Member States dealing with EU affairs.

4 'Development in the EU Procedures and Practices Relevant to Parliamentary Scrutiny' and its annex. COSAC reports are based on the national parliaments' answers to the COSAC questionnaire and prepared by the COSAC permanent secretariat.

5 The 20 national chambers that responded to the survey: Austrian Bundestag, Austrian Bundesrat; Belgian Senate; Croatian Hrvatski sabor; Czech Senate; Danish Folketing; Dutch Tweede Kamer; Estonian Riigikogu; Finnish Eduskunta; German Bundestag; German Bundesrat; Hungarian National Assembly; Italian Camera dei Deputati; Italian Senato; Latvian Saeima, Romanian Senate; Slovak Národná Rada, Slovenian Državni zbor, UK House of Commons; UK House of Lords.

6 The 24 national chambers that responded to the survey: Austrian Nationalrat and Bundesrat; Belgian Senate; Bulgarian National Assembly; Croatian Hrvatski sabor; Czech Senate; Danish Folketing; Estonian Riigikogu; German Bundesrat; Finnish Eduskunta; French Senate; Greek parliament; Hungarian national assembly; Italian chamber of deputies; Italian Senate, Latvian Saeima; Luxembourg chamber of deputies; Polish Sejm; Romanian Senate; Slovak parliament; Slovenian both chambers; Swedish Riksdag; UK House of Commons.

multiple-choice questions on their practices of coordination with 'their' national parliament.⁷ I then re-contacted all the MEPs who did not answer the questionnaire two more times, between October 2012 and March 2013. With 150 returned surveys, the response rate is approximately 20% of the population of 754 MEPs.⁸ The survey constitutes a unique database on MEPs' practices in the national parliaments of the EU Member States in which they were elected.

As for the survey representativeness across EU countries, MEPs from northern European countries are somewhat over-represented while MEPs from southern European countries as well as Central and Eastern European countries are slightly under-represented (see table 4.A1 in the appendix). As for the representativeness of the survey across EP groups, the response rate is 20% among members of the three largest EP groups of 2009-2014, the European People's Party (EPP), the group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). The response rate is higher among the EP group of Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) and the non-attached (NI), and lower among the EP groups of EFD, ECR and GUE/NGL (see table 4.A2 in the appendix).

General overview of MEPs' participation rights in national parliaments

What are the formal possibilities of MEPs to participate in the work of the national parliament? We know that in a few EU Member States, such as Belgium, certain MEPs are full members of the EAC (Bergman 1997: 378), but until now there has been no systematic assessment of MEPs' role in the national parliaments across the EU. One can distinguish three types of activities MEPs may participate in at national parliaments: EAC meetings; sectoral committee meetings; and plenary debates on EU matters (see table 4.1).⁹ There is a wide variety among national parliaments regarding the formal participation rights of MEPs in their activities.¹⁰

7 In most national parliaments, specific participation rights are accorded only to MEPs elected in that Member State. Therefore, the survey conducted among MEPs treats only their attendance at EAC meetings in 'their' national parliament. Previous empirical research indicates that MEPs' involvement in national parliaments other than 'their own' is rare (Miklin and Crum 2011; Wonka and Rittberger 2014). Finally, the survey I conducted among EAC clerks across the EU on the practices of MEP attendance at EAC meetings largely confirms that the attendance of MEPs elected in other Member States is extremely occasional or inexistent in practice.

8 This is a relatively high response rate in comparison to similar surveys conducted among parliamentarians. For instance, Wonka and Rittberger (2014) obtained a response rate of 16% among members of the German Bundestag while Miklin and Crum and (2011) had a response rate of only 11% among MEPs.

9 Meetings of MEPs with their national parliamentary political groups do not require formal provisions in the Rules of Procedure. In general, MEPs are in close coordination with their parliamentary political groups in the national parliament, often attending their meetings on a regular basis, while the precise methods of coordination vary.

10 A descriptive information on the participation rights of MEPs in the national parliaments across the EU is provided in the appendix to this article.

Table 4.1: MEPs' participation rights in the work of national parliaments¹¹

NP activity	Participation rights	N	In %
EAC	Standing invitation	21	54
	On special invitation	11	28
	No provisions	7	18
	Total	39	100
Sectoral committees	Standing invitation	9	23
	On special invitation	8	21
	No provisions	22	56
	Total	39	100
Plenary debates on EU matters	Standing invitation	2	5
	On special invitation	4	10
	No provisions	33	85
	Total	39	100

Source: based on COSAC 3rd bi-annual report of May 2005 and complemented by the author.

Generally speaking, MEPs are more likely to have a right to attend EAC meetings than sectoral committee meetings. MEPs' have a standing invitation to attend the EAC meetings in the national parliament of the EU Member State in which they are elected in half of the parliamentary chambers of the EU; in a third of the chambers, MEPs attendance requires a special invitation, while in 21% of the parliaments there are no formal procedures for MEPs' attendance at EAC meetings. MEPs have no formal participation rights in sectoral committees in the majority of the national parliaments; in one out of four chambers, MEPs have a standing invitation to participate in sectoral committee meetings, while in one out of five a special invitation is required. MEPs are generally not allowed to participate in plenary debates on EU matters in 'their' national parliament, while some particular provisions exist in six chambers: the Bulgarian National Assembly; the national parliaments of Hungary and Lithuania; the National Council of Slovenia; the Dutch Tweede Kamer and the Austrian Nationalrat (See also Valentin 2016). I classified the EU Member States according to the level of MEP participation rights in the national parliaments (see table 4.2).¹² For a descriptive analysis of MEPs' rights by Member State see appendix 4.2.

Table 4.2: MEP participation rights in the national parliament by Member State

Score ¹³	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
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11 The 3rd COSAC bi-annual report of May 2005 includes information on 35 national parliaments and chambers of the EU, not including Romania (two chambers), Bulgaria and Croatia, which were not EU Member States at the time. These four chambers were added by the author on the basis of his own research. Both the Spanish Cortes Generales and the Irish House of Oireachtas are considered as unicameral in regards of the scrutiny of EU affairs.

12 In general, MEPs' formal rights in the national parliaments are similar in both chambers in bicameral systems.

13 MEPs' rights in the national parliaments of the EU Members States are is evaluated according to the MEPs' rights to take part in the three parliamentary activities mentioned earlier: EAC meetings; sectoral committees meetings debating EU issues; and plenary debates on EU issues. For each of these is activities, a score was given from 0 to 2: 0=no rights; 1=on invitation only; 2=standing invitation. Each EU Member State was given an overall score from 0 (no rights at all) to 6 (standing invitation to all three activities).

Member State	Cyprus Denmark Finland Romania Spain Sweden UK	Estonia France Portugal	Greece Ireland Italy Latvia Malta	Belgium Croatia Czech Rep. Germany Slovakia	Luxembourg Poland Slovenia	Austria ¹⁴ Bulgaria Netherlands Lithuania	Hungary
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There is a certain pattern along geographical regions in Europe. In general, national parliaments in both northern and southern Europe tend to offer relatively weak participation rights to 'their' MEPs in comparison to national chambers in Central and Eastern Europe. The length of EU membership seems to play a minor role in regards to MEPs' rights in national parliaments, as we find a large variation among the six founding members of the European Community, as well as among the EU Member States of the Eastern enlargement of 2004 and 2007.

In addition to the evaluation of the level of MEPs' participation rights in the EU national chambers, it is also possible to analyse in a more qualitative manner what kind of role MEPs play in the national parliaments: national representatives at the EU-level or external EU-experts. National parliaments view the role of MEPs as national representatives at the EU level of politics in the majority of EU Member States. Typically, MEPs who are elected in that Member State have a standing invitation to attend and speak in EAC meetings; they often have particular rights to participate in the sectoral committees; and in some cases also in plenary debates on EU matters. Moreover, MEPs' participation in such plenary debates is often organised by the MEPs' affiliated parliamentary party groups. The ideal-type in this category is Hungary's National Assembly, where Hungarian MEPs enjoy various participation rights, including taking the floor in plenary debates on EU matters. Both Belgium and Luxembourg are close to the Hungarian ideal-type, as MEPs elected in these countries serve as members of the EAC. Austrian MEPs also have relatively developed participation rights in the national chambers of Austria, in which they participate via their affiliated parliamentary party groups.

On the other hand, in a few EU Member States national parliaments view the role of MEPs, not necessarily the ones elected in that state, as external EU-experts. Typically in these parliaments, MEPs have no participation rights in the EAC or their attendance requires a special invitation. MEPs' participation at EAC meetings of these chambers takes the form of hearings, in which the EAC invites MEPs as external experts to provide the parliamentarians with information on a particular EU topic. Such committee hearings with MEPs do not necessarily require any special provisions in the parliament' Rules of Procedure, in which MEPs in general are not mentioned. The ideal-type in this category is the Finnish Eduskunta, known for its scepticism on the added-value of

¹⁴ The Austrian Nationalrat allows MEPs to take the floor in plenary debates on EU matters only since 2015. This modification was not included in the multivariate regression analysis since the survey among MEPs was conducted in 2012 and 2013.

interparliamentary cooperation (Raunio 2015). Other EU Member States in which the national parliament views the role of MEPs as EU-experts are Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Estonia.

Studying the legal provisions of MEP participation in national parliaments is crucial, but not sufficient. As a matter of fact, in both the surveys conducted among EAC clerks, many of them indicated that while MEPs are formally invited to all EAC meetings, they seldom attend them in practice. EAC staffers also referred to the low attendance rate of the chambers' regular joint meetings with MEPs. That is why the rest of the article deals with MEPs' actual behaviour in 'their' national parliament.

Towards hypotheses on MEPs' practices in national parliaments

EAC meetings, which are held on a regular basis, are the main parliamentary arena in which the chamber takes its decisions concerning scrutiny of EU affairs. I consider the physical attendance of MEPs at EAC meetings as a primary indicator of their active participation in the work of the chamber on EU matters. Scholars often use the actors' physical attendance as an important indicator in assessing their engagement with a parliamentary institution (Crum 2006) or an interparliamentary forum (Wagner 2013; Raube and Wouters 2016).

The first hypothesis is related to MEPs' formal participation rights in the national parliament in the Member State in which they were elected. I expect to find a higher frequency of MEPs' attendance at EAC meetings among MEPs who enjoy considerable participation rights in 'their' national parliament, making usage of the chamber's Rules of Procedure (see table 4.2). Hence, I expect that

H1: The more participation rights MEPs have in the national parliament of the EU Member State in which they were elected, the more often they attend EAC meetings in that parliament.

Based on the literature on national parliaments' activities on EU affairs, I have developed additional hypotheses on the variations of MEPs attendance at EAC meetings. The next hypothesis concerns the national parliaments' strength with regards to the scrutiny of EU affairs. Following Thomas Winzen (2012), the level of parliamentary scrutiny powers with regards to EU politics refers to an overall evaluation of the parliament's strength in three different dimensions of parliamentary control of EU politics: access to information; processing of information; and mandating the government.

Scholars often analyse tools of interparliamentary cooperation, such as the EWM or

interparliamentary conferences, as a 'weapon of the weak', an alternative means of empowerment that weak parliaments or parliamentary actors may use as an opportunity to compensate for their structural disadvantages in the domestic arena, notably in order to acquire information independently from the executive (Holzhacker 2002; Wagner 2013; Wonka and Rittberger 2014; Heffler and Gattermann 2015; Strelkov 2015). EU scrutiny activities are hence often seen as a mean to compensate for power asymmetry, either between the executive and the legislative branch or between the governmental coalition and the parliamentary opposition. Hence, I expect to find that:

H2: The weaker the EAC, the more often MEPs attend its meetings.

The next two hypotheses concern variation among political parties, building further on the compensation assumption. Parties' parliamentary groups are the main parliamentary actors who actually use the legal powers and institutional arrangements of EU scrutiny mechanisms (Holzhacker 2002; Strelkov 2015). In practice, interparliamentary cooperation runs primarily through informal party channels (Miklin and Crum 2011; Crum and Fossum 2013) as MPs often contact their own party's MEPs to obtain policy-relevant information on EU politics (Wonka and Rittberger 2014). MPs who belong to parties in the government coalition use their direct informal channels to the Council of the EU through their ministers, and hence tend to use the formal channels of parliamentary scrutiny of the government's EU policies less often (Holzhacker 2002; Finke and Dannwolf 2013). Moreover, being in office, they have little incentives to criticize their governments' policies in public, such as via the EAC. On the other hand, MPs of opposition parties often express frustration about their lack of information on EU matters, and hence may be more inclined than the ones in office to coordinate with their party's MEPs. In addition, opposition parties have more incentives to use formal channels as the EAC to criticize the government positions at the EU level. My expectation is that:

H3: MEPs of opposition parties attend EAC meetings more frequently than MEPs of parties in office.

The third source of variation I expect to find is related to the parties' size. Small political parties tend to use the EP as a 'back door' to national politics, using EP elections (Blombäck 2012; Shemer-Kunz 2013) and the EP institutional arena (Reungoat 2014, 2015) as a means to strengthen their position in national politics. Following this idea, relatively small parties in the national parliament

may use their MEPs more often than well-established parties. I therefore expect MEPs of national parties with a smaller seat share in the national legislature to be more engaged in vertical interparliamentary cooperation than MEPs from parties with a larger seat share in the chamber:

H4: The smaller the seat share a party has in a national parliament, the more often its MEPs attend EAC meetings.

Findings

The analysis of the survey is presented in three parts. I first present some general results of the entire survey population (N=150). I then provide some descriptive analysis of variations in MEP practices across national delegations as well as across EP political groups. Finally, the results of a logistic regression analysis are presented.

General results

The survey's overall findings support the focus in the literature on EACs as the main channel of interparliamentary cooperation in the EU, and the importance of political parties as the main channel of such activities. The overall findings also reveal large variations among MEPs' practices.

Table 4.3: MEPs' practices in national parliaments: general overview

Visits	N	%	Activity when visiting	N	%
Once a week	7	5	EAC meeting	70	47
Every two weeks	30	20	Other committees	41	27
Once a month	29	20	Plenary debates	13	9
1-4 times a year	62	40	Meetings with party colleagues	116	77
Less frequently	22	15	Meetings with journalists	33	22
Total	150	100		- ¹⁵	-

According to the survey's findings, 45% of MEPs visit 'their' national parliament at least once a month, while 55% visit it one to four times a year or less frequently. There is a large variation in the practices of MEPs: while 20% of MEPs declare that they visit the national parliament at least twice a month, and 5% as often as once a week, 15% of MEPs say they visit the parliament of their national constituency less than once a year. While geographical distances are often seen as a factor which hinders interparliamentary cooperation (Hix and Raunio 2000; Raunio 2009), there is no empirical evidence that MEPs whose national parliament is physically closer to Brussels visit it

¹⁵ Total numbers of MEPs' activities when visiting national parliament is above 100 since MEPs could choose more than one answer to this question.

more often.

I made a distinction between two types of activities MEPs can engage in when visiting the national parliament - formal and informal ones. I then defined three types of formal parliamentary activities MEPs may attend: EAC meetings; meetings of sectoral committees; and plenary debates on EU matters. The majority of MEPs declared attending at least one of these formal parliamentary activities while visiting 'their' parliament, although a substantive minority of MEPs did not attend any of these formal parliamentary activities while visiting the chamber's premises.

In general, MEPs who visit 'their' national parliament often tend to attend a lot more formal parliamentary activities than MEPs who rarely visit 'their' national parliament. Of the formal activities MEPs take part in, attending EAC meetings is the most frequent one: 46% of MEPs declared attending EAC meetings when visiting, against only 27% of MEPs who declared attending meetings of sectoral committees. Only 9% of MEPs declared attending plenary sessions on EU matters in the national parliament in the EU Member State in which they were elected.

Besides the formal activities in the parliament, I also identified two informal activities MEPs might engage in when they visit 'their' national parliament: meet party colleagues and meet with journalists. Meeting party colleagues is the most frequent activity of MEPs during their visits in the parliament's premises. In fact, 34% of MEPs *only* meet party colleagues while there, *without* taking part in any formal parliamentary activity, while 43% of MEPs combine both formal parliamentary activities and meeting party colleagues. This finding resonates with the centrality of informal party channels in interparliamentary cooperation (Crum and Fossum 2013). Meeting with journalists is not a common activity for MEPs while in the national parliament of the Member State in which they were elected. A few MEPs mentioned other activities they take part in when in the premises of 'their' national parliament, such as meeting their staff members, who are based there, or speaking in conferences or seminars.

Descriptive analysis by EU Member States¹⁶

We observe large variations across EU Member States with respect to MEPs' frequency of visits to 'their' national parliament. For instance, all Danish MEPs who took part in the survey stated that they visit the Folketing at least once a month and reported that they attend EAC meetings. On the other hand, Swedish MEPs reported a low frequency of visits to the parliament, and both French

¹⁶ For the descriptive analysis of the variations in MEPs' participation in the work of national parliaments across EU Member States, I used only part of the database; the 15 EU countries from which at least four MEPs answered the questionnaire (see table 4.A1 in the appendix). Hence, after leaving 18 questionnaires out of this analysis, we remain with a population of 132 MEPs. These essentially include the 17 biggest EU Member States (with the most MEPs) except Romania, but including Luxembourg.

and British MEPs reported that they do not visit 'their' national parliament very often.

We also find a north-south division, in line with previous findings on the geographical variation in the engagement of Member States' parliaments in EU scrutiny (Raunio 2011: 311). In general, MEPs from northern European countries visit 'their' national parliament more often than MEPs from southern European countries such as Spain, Italy or Portugal. What is more, the large majority of Italian MEPs and half of the Spanish ones declared that they only meet party colleagues when visiting 'their' national chambers, and do not participate in any formal parliamentary activity. Among MEPs of Central and Eastern Europe countries, MEPs' attendance rates at EAC meetings are relatively high.

Descriptive analysis by EP group¹⁷

In general, MEPs from the largest EP groups, which are affiliated with larger parties in the national parliaments, are more engaged in 'their' national parliaments than MEPs who belong to smaller EP groups, which are affiliated with relatively small parties in the national parliaments (see table 4.4). MEPs of smaller parties visit 'their' national parliament slightly less often than MEPs from larger parties, and their attendance at EAC or sectoral committee meetings during their visits is less regular.

Nevertheless, these numbers should be taken with a grain of salt. As the large variation across EU countries suggests, there is a large variation between national parties' delegations *within* EP groups. For instance, taking the case of the EP group of the Greens/EFA, the German Greens' delegation in the EP coordinates rather well with the Green parliamentary group in the Bundestag, while the coordination of the French Green MEPs with their party colleagues in the national chambers in Paris is a 'catastrophe',¹⁸ characterised by intra-party conflictual relations of competition rather than coordination.¹⁹

Table 4.4: MEPs' practices in national parliaments by EP group (in %)

EP Group	N	Visit NP at least monthly			Attend EAC meeting			Attend sectoral committee meeting		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
EPP	48	44	56	100	58	42	100	38	62	100
S&D	37	49	51	100	49	51	100	35	65	100
ALDE	17	50	50	100	50	50	100	19	81	100
G/EFA	25	40	60	100	36	64	100	12	88	100
NI	7	29	71	100	14	86	100	0	100	100

17 Five EP groups are included in this descriptive analysis: EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and NI (n=134). Among other EP groups, I do not have sufficient data to present any meaningful results (see table 4.A2).

18 Greens/EFA deputy secretary general, interview, 29 September 2014, by phone.

19 Greens/EFA staff, advisor on constitutional affairs, interview, 13 May 2014, by phone.

In this section, we test the hypotheses in a multivariate setting. Since the dependent variable, i.e. ‘attendance in the EAC’ is dichotomous, we perform a logistic regression analysis. The analysis is weighted for the number of MEPs per nationality so that the observations of MEPs from EU Member States that are underrepresented in the sample are increased in the sample, whereas observations of MEPs from Member States that are overrepresented in the sample are decreased in proportion to the number of MEPs from the corresponding delegation in the EP.

Besides the four main independent variables underlining the four hypotheses, four additional control variables were added to the logistic regression model: one at the level of the political party, i.e. party positioning on the EU (Pro/Anti EU), and three at the level of the individual MEP, i.e. age, gender, and whether the MEP is a former MP or not.

Table 4.5: Logistic regression model of MEPs attendance at EAC meetings

	<i>r</i>	<i>Partial r</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>Exp (B)</i>
H1: MEPs rights in national parliaments	.26***	.24***	.33 (.12)***	1.38
H2: Strength of the EAC	.14*	.22**	1.11 (.45)**	3.02
H3: Party in government	.10 <i>ns</i>	.06 <i>ns</i>	.26 (.45) <i>ns</i>	1.3
H4: Party seat share in national parliament	.18**	.18**	.03 (.01)**	1.03
Controls				
Pro/Anti EU	.17*	.05 <i>ns</i>	.10 (.16) <i>ns</i>	1.1
Age	.02 <i>ns</i>	.01 <i>ns</i>	.00 (.02) <i>ns</i>	1
Gender	-.09 <i>ns</i>	-.12 <i>ns</i>	-.60 (.43) <i>ns</i>	0.55
Former MP	.15*	.20**	1.11 (.48)**	3.03
Constant			-4.53 (1.66)***	0.01
$\chi^2 = 29.676$ (d.f. = 8).				
Log likelihood = 145.615				
$R^2_{\text{Nagelkerke}} = .28$				
1.11 N = 150				

Note: The model predicts 70.9% of the cases correctly. The analysis is weighed for the number of MEPs per nationality. *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .10$.

The analysis offers a number of findings. There is a positive correlation between the rights of MEPs in 'their' national parliament and their attendance at EAC meetings ($r = .26, p < .01$), even when all

²⁰ Bart J. Bes, PhD candidate, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Department of Political Science, had conducted the logistic regression analysis and is therefore the second author of the paper for publication.

other variables are held constant (partial $r = .24$, $p < .01$). On the basis of the logistic regression analysis, H1 is confirmed: the more participation rights MEPs have in 'their' national parliaments, the more they attend EAC meetings (Beta = .33, $p < .01$).

In contrast to our hypothesized direction (H2), there is a positive correlation ($r = .14$, $p < .10$) between the strength of the EAC and the attendance of MEPs at their EACs, even when controlled for the rest of the model (partial $r = .22$, $p < .05$). The logistic regression confirms this positive association and pinpoints the causal direction: the stronger the EAC, the more often MEPs will attend EAC meetings (Beta = 1.11, $p < .05$). This suggests that the MEPs attendance at EAC meetings is not a 'weapon of the weak' but rather a 'weapon of the strong'.

While the correlations and logistic regression coefficient suggest that MEPs of political parties that are part of a government tend to visit their EAC more often than MEPs of political parties that are in the opposition (H3), no significant relationships are found (Beta = .26, *ns*). This means that H3, expecting that MEPs from opposition parties would visit their EAC more often than MEPs of parties that are in government, is falsified.

The findings for H4 further confirms the 'weapon of the strong' finding as marked by the findings for H2. The positive correlation ($r = .18$, $p < .05$) and partial correlation ($r = .18$, $p < .05$) are confirmed by the logistic regression. In contrast to our compensation hypothesis, MEPs from larger political parties actually attend EACs more often than MEPs from smaller political parties (Beta = .03, $p < .05$). The results from H3 and H4 seem to suggest that MEPs who actually stand a chance of influencing their national parliaments' position on EU affairs are more prone to attend EAC meetings, the opposite to our compensation assumption.

Finally, one control variable is interesting to note. MEPs who have been MPs are more prone to attend EAC meetings than MEPs who have not served as MPs before (Beta = 1.11, $p < .05$). In fact, the survey results show that MEPs who are former MPs also tend to visit their national parliament more often than MEPs who did not serve as MPs in the past. Among the 41 former MPs who took part in the survey, only one MEP declared that he visits the premises of his former working place less than once a year, in comparison to 20% of the 107 MEPs that have not been MPs before and took part in the survey. Similarly, 37% of former MPs declared visiting their national parliament more often than once a month, against only 21% of those who have no experience in the national parliament.

Conclusions

MEPs can play a crucial role in vertical interparliamentary cooperation, compensating for national parliamentarians' lack of interest or resources to effectively engage in EU scrutiny. MEPs can reduce the investment MPs must make in order to have an effective influence in shaping EU legislation and policies and hence reinforce their capacity to scrutinize EU decision-making, notably by providing national parliamentarians with inside information on the state of inter-institutional negotiations in Brussels on specific EU dossiers. The question remains to what extent national parliaments actually make effective use of MEPs.

There is a considerable variation across the EU in the level of MEPs' participation rights in the work of the national parliament in the EU Member State in which they are elected. There is also a correlation between the level of MEPs' rights in 'their' national parliament and the frequency of their attendance at meetings of the European Affairs Committee (EAC). Empirics indicate that the more participation rights MEPs have in 'their' national parliament, the more often they attend EAC meetings in that parliament.

However, neither national parliaments nor MEPs actually use these legal provisions to their full potential. Hence, more participation rights for MEPs in national parliaments do not automatically translate into more MEP engagement vis-à-vis 'their' national parliament in practice. This may explain why, while around the time of the entry into force of the Lisbon treaty in 2009, many national parliaments in the EU introduced new articles to their rules of procedure to deal with the subsidiarity checks of EU legislation, these modifications did not include a change in MEPs' rights in the chambers.

Moreover, national parliaments may also have strategic reasons to deliberately limit the access of MEPs to their proceedings in order to prevent the participation of MEPs who belong to outsider parties, which have a very small seat share in the national parliament but a substantive representation in the EP. MEPs of the Front National in France, among them the party leader, Marine Le Pen, are a case in point,²¹ as well as MEPs of the British National Party (BNP) in the United Kingdom (Huff and Smith 2015: 324).

While scholars often analyze tools of interparliamentary cooperation as an alternative means of empowerment that relatively weak parliamentary actors use as an opportunity to compensate for their structural disadvantages in the domestic arena, notably to acquire information independently from the executive, this compensation mechanism does not work the same way in vertical interparliamentary cooperation, which is actually a 'weapon of the strong' rather than a 'weapon of

²¹ I thank Olivier Rozenberg for his comment on this aspect.

the weak'. In fact, MEPs who are affiliated with political parties that are in government attend EAC meetings more often than MEPs whose parties are in opposition. Moreover, MEPs of larger parties are more engaged in EU scrutiny activities of the national parliaments than MEPs of smaller parties.

A possible explanation is that most national parliaments view the role of MEPs as 'their' national representatives at the EU-level, and hence tend to engage with MEPs who belong to the majority coalition. However, it seems that national parliaments would be better off using MEPs as experts on particular EU issues rather than as their representatives at the EU-level. National parliaments' effective usage of MEPs would be to invite rapporteurs or shadow rapporteurs, also elected in other EU Member States, to a hearing at the EAC or a sectoral committee, rather than the actual practice among national parliaments of standing invitations to 'their' MEPs to attend EAC meetings. Rapporteurs and shadows can provide national parliaments with up-to-date information on the state of the on-going negotiations in the inter-institutional trilogues, and hence enable them to try and influence the outcome of these negotiations.

In line with this idea, national parliaments can benefit from cooperating on a regular basis with MEPs from other Member States, when these are rapporteurs or shadows. Although we lack systematic comparative data on MEPs' attendance at meetings of EACs in EU Member States in which they are not elected, the survey among EAC clerks indicated that national parliaments almost never invite MEPs from other Member States, except on very rare occasions.

Further research is needed in order to provide us with a more detailed understanding of the EACs' internal procedures and practices across the EU in a comparative perspective. This is particularly needed since EACs greatly differ from one parliament to another (Bergman 1997; Auel et al. 2015: 299). Moreover, while MEPs' attendance rates at meetings of sectoral committees is lower than their attendance at EAC meetings, future research on how national parliaments view and use MEPs should pay particular attention to the variation across the EU in the trend towards the mainstreaming of EU issues (Gattermann et al. 2013) and to the question which sectoral committees invite MEPs to their meetings. It will also be interesting to study more closely the possible evolution of MEPs' speaking rights and practices in plenary debates on EU matters in the Member State in which they are elected. Finally, the role of MEPs in subnational parliaments with legislative rights should also be examined in the future.

Appendix 4.1 – survey database

Table 4.A1: Survey's database among MEPs by EU Member States

EU member state	EP 2009-2014	In survey (N)	Response rate (in %)
Germany	99	22	22
France	74	17	23
UK	73	12	16
Poland	51	10	20
Italy	73	9	13
Netherlands	26	9	35
Spain	54	8	15
Belgium	22	7	32
Austria	19	7	37
Portugal	22	6	27
Sweden	20	6	25
Hungary	22	5	23
Bulgaria	18	5	28
Denmark	13	5	38
Luxembourg	6	4	67
Romania	33	3	9
Greece	22	3	14
Slovakia	13	3	23
Finland	13	2	15

Czech Republic	22	2	9
Estonia	6	2	33
Ireland	12	1	8
Slovenia	8	1	12
Cyprus	6	1	17
Malta	6	0	0
Latvia	9	0	0
Lithuania	12	0	0
Total	754	150	20

Table 4.A2 : Survey's database among MEPs by EP groups affiliation

EP group	EP 2009-2014	In survey (N)	Reply rate in %
EPP	270	48	18
S&D	190	37	20
ALDE	85	17	20
Greens/EFA	59	25	43
Non-attached	27	7	26
EFD	36	6	17
ECR	53	5	9
GUE/NGL	34	5	15

Total	754	150	20
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Appendix 4.2: MEPs' participation rights in national parliaments of the EU (in alphabetical order)

Austria

Austrian MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC meetings in both of Austria's national chambers, the Nationalrat²² and the upper chamber, the Bundesrat,²³ in an advisory capacity. Moreover, the Nationalrat positions and decisions on EU-issues are ought to be sent not only to the Bundesrat president and to all members of the Nationalrat, but also to the Austrian MEPs,²⁴ and similar provisions on informing the Austrian MEPs on the EAC decisions exist in the Bundesrat.²⁵ Austrian MEPs may also have speaking rights in the sectoral committees and in the plenary sessions of the Bundesrat, but on invitation only and according to a special procedure.²⁶ Notably, since May 2015, Austrian MEPs also have some speaking rights in the Nationalrat plenary debates on EU matters²⁷ or on the conclusion of international agreements with consequences on EU treaties,²⁸ and they have an advisory vote. Austrian MEPs are integrated in the chambers' parliamentary party groups (*Klubs*), which may invite Austrian MEPs to take the floor in plenary debates on EU matters for five minutes maximum, if a written notice has been given at least 48 hours before the debate. In practice, however, Austrian MEPs attend EAC meetings only rarely due to conflicting schedules (Miklin 2015: 398).

22 'Die in Osterreich gewählten Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments sind berechtigt, bei den Verhandlungen des Hauptausschusses in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union mit beratender Stimme anwesend zu sein', Geschäftsordnung des Nationalrates, Art. 31C (9); for MEPs' speaking rights see Art. 31C (11).

23 'Jeder Bundesrat sowie die in Österreich gewählten Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments sind vorbehaltlich sind [...] bei den Verhandlungen des EU-Ausschuss über Vorhaben im Rahmen des Europäischen Union mit beratender Stimme anwesend zu sein.' Geschäftsordnung des Bundesrates Österreich, Article 13b, al. 4.

24 'Wenn der Hauptausschuss nichts anderes beschliesst, sind Stellungnahmen und Beschlüsse weiters an den Präsidenten des Bundesrates, alle Mitglieder des Nationalrates sowie die österreichischen Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlament zu verteilen'. Geschäftsordnung des Nationalrates, Art 31d (4).

25 'Wenn der EU-Ausschuss nichts anderes beschliesst, sind Stellungnahmen, begründete Stellungnahmen und Mitteilungen weiters an alle Mitglieder des Bundesrates, den Präsidenten des Nationalrates, die Landtage, die Landeshauptmänner sowie an die in Österreich gewählten Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments zu verteilen.' Geschäftsordnung des Bundesrates Österreich, Article 13b, al. 9.

26 'Der Präsident kann nach Beratung in der Präsidialkonferenz den in Österreich gewählten Mitgliedern des Europäischen Parlaments [...] bei allen Verhandlungen des Bundesrates und seiner Ausschüsse, die der Erörterung von EU-Themen dienen, ein Rederecht einräumen sowie Dauer und Form der Ausübung des Rederechts festlegen.' Geschäftsordnung des Bundesrates Österreich, Article 38b.

27 '[...] kann jeder Klub ein in Osterreich gewaltes Mitglied des Europäischen Parlaments namhaft machen, das an den Verhandlungen mit beratender Stimme teilnimmt, sofern er dies spätestens 48 Stunden vor der Debatte – Samstag, Sonntage and gesetzliche Feiertage nich eingerechnet – schriftlich ankündigt. [...] Jedes Mitglied des Europäischen Parlaments darf sich einmal mit einer Redezeit von maximal fünf Minutes zum Wort melden. Diese wird nicht auf die Gesamtredzeit des verlangenden Klunbs angerechnet. [...] Geschäftsordnung des Nationalrates, Art 74b (6).

28 Geschäftsordnung des Nationalrates, Article 76 (5).

Belgium

In both the *Chambre des représentants* and the *Sénat*, Belgian MEPs are members of the EAC. In fact, the Belgian federal EAC, called the Federal Advisory Committee (*le comité d'avis fédéral*), is composed of 30 parliamentarians – ten MPs of the *Chambre*²⁹, ten Senators³⁰, and ten Belgian MEPs. The committee's first vice-chair is a senator while the second vice-chair is an MEP. While MEPs have exactly the same speaking and voting rights as the Deputies and Senators, their participation 'is relatively limited, since they have other institutional opportunities, most notably at the EU level, to be informed on EU issues, which are often more efficient than a committee of their national parliament. Moreover, it is often practically difficult for Belgian MEPs to participate in the meetings, since they often coincide with meetings of the European Parliament' (Delreux and Randour 2015: 155). In addition, Belgian MEPs can take part in sectoral committees in the *Chambre des représentants* by special invitation, take part in the debate and have an advisory vote, following a specific procedure.³¹ The president of the *Chambre* is immediately informed on this request. Even when the committee chair authorises the MEP's participation, the committee may still decide the opposite.³² In the Belgian Senate, Belgian MEPs can also attend meetings of the standing committees, but as regular audience, without speaking or voting rights.³³ Belgian MEPs have no right to speak in the Senate's plenary.

Bulgaria

MEPs elected in Bulgaria 'may take part in the meetings of the Parliamentary Committees with an advisory vote' (article 21, RoP). In addition, Bulgarian MEPs 'may participate in a non-voting capacity' (article 125 RoP) in certain plenary sessions of the Bulgarian National Assembly dealing with EU matters, which are hearings with the Bulgarian Prime Minister, held either before a session of the European Council (article 122 RoP) or on the occasion of the government's report at the beginning of each six-month period of the presidency of the Council of the EU (article 124 RoP). In practice, though, Bulgaria's MEPs rarely visit the Bulgarian National Assembly (Kanev 2015: 455).

Croatia

29 Règlement de la *Chambre des représentants*, Article 68, 'le comité d'avis sur les questions européennes de la *Chambre des représentants*'.

30 Règlement du *Sénat de Belgique*, Art. 78.

31 Règlement de la *Chambre des représentants*, Article 34. Belgian MEPs' participation requires an authorisation beforehand by the sectoral committee chair, following a request which has to reach the committee chair at least the day before the meeting, mentioning the main question in the debate on which the MEP would like to have the floor. Belgian MEPs do not need a special invitation to participate in committee for foreign affairs, but their participation may also be refused by the committee.

32 An eventual debate on the committee's decision on the MEP request takes part in closed doors without the presence of the MEP in question; The number of speakers is limited to four and the speaking time is ten minutes per person.

33 Clerk at the legislative service – EU affairs, Belgian Senate, email to the author, 14 July 2016.

Croatian MEPs' have a standing invitation to the meetings of the EAC³⁴ in the Hrvatski sabor. They may be allowed to speak if the Chairman of the Committee so decides, but they cannot participate in voting or any other decision making procedures. However, Croatian MEPs only occasionally participate in the EAC sessions due to colliding agendas between the two parliamentary institutions.³⁵ This practical problem led to an informal agreement that EAC meetings will be held mostly on Fridays in order to facilitate the participation of MEPs (Butković 2015: 467). In addition, on special invitation, Croatian MEPs may attend the parliament's sectoral committees meetings³⁶ and may be invited to speak, but they cannot vote or participate in the decision-making.

Cyprus

Cypriot MEPs have no right to attend the EAC meetings of the Cyprus' House of Representatives unless invited to do so (Emilianides et al. 2015: 483).

34 Standing Orders of the Croatian parliament, Article 66, paragraph 3.

35 Advisor to the EAC, Croatian parliament, email to the author, 13 July 2016.

36 'Working bodies of Parliament may invite MEPs from the Republic of Croatia to meetings', Standing Orders of the Croatian parliament, Article 57, paragraph 2.

Czech Republic

Czech MEPs can participate in EAC meetings in both Czech parliaments, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, in an advisory function, but do not have voting rights.³⁷ However, MEPs rarely use these rights because of the conflict of schedules between the EP and the national chambers.³⁸ MEPs have no special rights to speak in the plenary. Apart from that, there are bi-annual joint meetings of the EACs of both Czech chambers with the Czech MEPs, but these meetings are mainly used for networking and are not well attended. As for discussing in detail specific policy issues, 'any political coordination between the Czech parliamentarians and MEPs is informal, for example, a Czech MEP contacting a committee chair' (Hrabálek and Strelkov 2015: 504).

Denmark

In the Danish Parliament, MEPs have no formal rights in the *Folketing* rules of procedure. However, regular monthly meetings are held between the EAC members and Danish MEPs to discuss matters concerning EU legislation, and the permanent representatives of the *Folketing* in Brussels help organise these meetings.³⁹ In general, the *Folketing* cooperates with the Danish MEPs on an individual political party basis, and current European issues of common interest are discussed at these informal meetings.⁴⁰ Danish MEPs have only rare contacts with MPs working in the sectoral committees, usually as a result of personal relations (Chrisensen 2015: 283). In addition, MEPs are sometimes invited to participate in public meeting or conferences, organised by the EAC or the sectoral committees.

37 The Standing Rules of the Czech Senate, section 119c: 'Members of the European Parliament elected in the Czech Republic may attend meetings of the EAC, and they shall be entitled to an advisory vote; they may express their opinion on the matter under consideration and submit proposals thereon'. Czech MEPs have also special rights in the Senate's committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security.

38 Clerk, EU unit, Senate of the Czech Republic, email to the author, 13 July 2016.

39 Assistant to the EAC, Folketing International Department, email to the author, 14 July 2016.

40 See information on the Danish EAC website:

http://www.thedanishparliament.dk/Committees_and_delegations/Committees/EUU.aspx (accessed 11 July 2016).

Estonia

Estonian MEPs hold only irregular meetings with MPs of the *Riigikogu*. Committees' chairmen can invite external experts to participate in the meetings, including MEPs. In practice, the EAC and the Foreign Affairs Committee occasionally invite MEPs to their meetings to discuss their work and to hear their views on their area of expertise.⁴¹ The Estonian parliament seems to appreciate personal visits of Commissioners and other officials of EU institutions, but does not especially see the need to intensify its relations with the EP (Ehin 2015: 524).

Finland

Finnish MEPs are not allowed to attend the meetings of the EAC in the Finnish *Eduskunta*. If MEPs are invited to attend EAC meetings, they are invited as experts. While the EAC committee organises joint meetings of Finnish MPs and MEPs twice a year, the participation on both sides is rather poor. All in all, the Finnish parliament is focused on scrutinizing the government and is rather skeptical about interparliamentary cooperation and networking (Raunio 2015: 415). The Eduskunta's EAC and its standing committees make only limited usage of MEPs' expertise since it does not see them as particularly essential channels for information or influence. However, Finnish MEPs are in regular and close contact with their respective parliamentary party groups, with which they meet frequently, providing them with information on EU issues.⁴²

France

The Rules of procedure of France's *Assemblée Nationale* stipulate that the EAC can invite French MEPs to its meetings in an advisory role.⁴³ In practice, the French EAC closely cooperates with French MEPs. Since 2010, the joint EAC of the *Assemblée Nationale* and the *Sénat* organizes three to four meetings per year with the French MEPs, during the week of external activities at the EP, with the participation of 10 to 15 MEPs (Thomas and Tacea 2015: 185).

Germany

German MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC of the Bundestag. Moreover, 16 German MEPs are entitled to attend as representatives (*Vertreter*), to participate in the EAC deliberations, to take positions and even to propose which issues should be deliberated upon, but they have no voting

41 Consultant of the EAC in the Estonian parliament, email to the author, 13 July 2016.

42 Director of EU Secretariat, Finnish parliament, email to the author, 13 July 2016.

43 'La commission des affaires européennes peut inviter à participer à ses travaux, avec voix consultatives, les membres français du Parlement européen'. Rules of procedure of France's *Assemblée Nationale*, Chapitre IX, Article 151-1, alinea 6.

rights.⁴⁴ 'In practice, however, MEPs do not frequently take the opportunity to participate in EAC sessions.' (Höing 2015: 196) These German MEPs are appointed by the President of the Bundestag based on the proposal of the parliamentary party groups (*Fraktionen*), which includes the party from which they have been elected to the EP. All MEPs (hence not only those elected in Germany) require a special invitation to attend the sectoral committees when these discuss EU matters.⁴⁵ MEPs have no right to speak in plenary debates in the German Bundestag. German MEPs are not mentioned in the Rules of Procedure of Germany's upper chamber, the Bundesrat. The chamber's EU committee and sectoral committees may invite MEPs for an exchange of opinions, but this happens on an irregular basis and quite seldom.⁴⁶

Greece

Greek MEPs have a standing invitation to EAC meetings, but these are rather infrequent and are not well attended in general (Sotiropoulos 2015).

44 Geschäftsordnung des Deutscher Bundestages, Art 93b (8): 'Zu den Sitzungen des Ausschusses für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union erhalten deutsche Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments Zutritt; weitere deutsche Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments sind als Vertreter zur Teilnahme berechtigt. Die mitwirkungsberechtigten Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments werden vom Präsidenten des Deutschen Bundestages auf Vorschlag der Fraktionen des Bundestages, aus deren Parteien deutsche Mitglieder in das Europäische Parlament gewählt worden sind, bis zur Neuwahl des Europäischen Parlaments, längstens bis zum Ende der Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages berufen. Die berufenen Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments sind befugt, die Beratung von Verhandlungsgegenständen anzuregen sowie während der Beratungen des Ausschusses für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union Auskünfte zu erteilen und Stellung zu nehmen'.

45 Geschäftsordnung des Deutscher Bundestages, Art. 93a (5): 'Die Ausschüsse können Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments sowie Mitglieder des Rates und der Kommission der Europäischen Union oder deren Beauftragte zu ihren Beratungen in Europaangelegenheiten hinzuziehen. Sie können Unionsdokumente gemeinsam mit Ausschüssen des Europäischen Parlaments gleicher Zuständigkeit beraten'.

46 Clerk, German Bundesrat, Committee for Foreign Affairs, Europe and Defence, email to the author, 18 July 2016.

Hungary

Hungarian MEPs have various participation rights in the Hungarian National Assembly, in the EAC, in sectoral committees and also in plenary debates. However, while Hungarian MEPs are often present at EAC meetings when key EU issues are on the agenda,⁴⁷ their overall participation is rare (Ilonszki 2015: 542). It is rather the Hungarian national parties that mobilize their respective members in Brussels, while Hungary's MEPs try to ensure some presence in national politics. Moreover, while MEPs' participation in meetings of their political groups in the national parliament does not require official provisions, there are also formal regulations that provide Hungarian MEPs with office space in the parliament premises, as well as staffers. Moreover, Hungarian MEPs are members of a consultative body called 'the Forum of MEPs', which is a legally recognised. What is more, Hungarian MEPs have speaking rights in the Assembly's plenary debates related to EU matters. In fact, MEPs from Hungary may attend the debates in the Assembly and speak at any time of the sitting, since they are considered as 'persons having a consultative capacity'.⁴⁸ Alternatively, MEPs from Hungary may request to take the floor in EU-related plenary debates through the leader of their affiliated parliamentary group.⁴⁹ This formal provision is used in practice. For instance, during the plenary debate of 26 February 2015 on the EU-US negotiations of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), four Hungarian MEPs took the floor.⁵⁰

Ireland

Irish MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC of the Oireachtas and may take part in its proceedings, but it is rare they avail of these rights in practice (Barrett 2015: 295).

Italy

In Italy, both the EAC and the sectoral committees of both the Italian *Camera dei Deputati* and the *Senato della Repubblica* may invite MEPs, not exclusively those elected in Italy, to provide information on aspects concerning the powers and activities of the EU institutions.⁵¹ This special invitation requires the agreement of the President of the Chamber. It is a usual practice in the Italian Chamber of Deputies to organise hearings or video-conferences with MEPs, of different

47 Clerk, EAC, Hungarian National Assembly, email to the author, 15 July 2016.

48 See Act XXXVI of 2012 in the National Assembly: section 39 (1).

49 Rules of Procedure of the Hungarian National Assembly, section 35 (2)

50 MEPs Zoltán Balczó (Jobbik, Non-attached members), István Ujhelyi (MSSP, S&D), Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (Fidezs, EPP) and Benedek Jávor (Együtt, Greens/EFA). See <http://www.parlament.hu/hu/ep-kepviselok-felszolalasai-a-pleraris-ulesen> (accessed 15 July 2016).

51 'Le Commissioni, in rapporto a questioni di loro competenza, previa intesa con il Presidente della Camera, possono invitare membri del Parlamento europeo a fornire informazioni sugli aspetti attinenti alle attribuzioni e all'attività delle istituzioni dell'Unione europea.' Regolamento della Camera dei Deputati, Art. 127-ter; The Italian Senate's Rules of Procedure includes a very similar article 144-quater.

nationalities, on particular draft legislation examined by the EP and other EU matters.⁵² In practice, EAC and sectoral committees in Italy organise around the same number of hearings with MEPs as they do with Commissioners (Cavatorto 2015: 215). In the Italian Senate MEPs' participation is somewhat irregular.⁵³ In the Italian Senato, each of the standing committees may, in relations to the matters falling within its remit, invite MEPs (not necessarily Italian) to provide information on aspects relating to the powers and activities of the EU institutions. An authorisation of the President of the Senate is required.⁵⁴ MEPs have no speaking rights in the plenary debates.

Latvia

Latvian MEPs do not have any particular status in the EAC of the Latvian parliament, the Saeima, besides a possible special invitation, as the EAC chair can allow MEPs to participate in EAC discussions. In practice, Latvian MEPs rarely attend EAC meetings despite an agreement that MEPs elected in Latvia would attend at least one EAC meeting per parliamentary session (Ikstens 2015: 553).

Lithuania

Lithuanian MEPs have a standing invitation to both EACs and sectoral committees and may even participate in plenary debates in the Seimas. While MEPs of Lithuania sometimes indeed participate in the EAC meetings in Vilnius, it is not a frequent practice, and Lithuanian MPs also consult MEPs only rarely (Vilpišauskas 2015: 572).

52 Clerk, Relations office with the EU, Camera dei Deputati, email to the author, 14 July 2016.

53 Clerk, research service, Italian Senate, email to the author, 15 July 2016.

54 Article 144-ter of the Italian Senate's Rules of Procedure.

Luxembourg

Luxembourg MEPs have a standing invitation to all EAC meetings of the *Chambre des Députés* and also to sectoral committees' meetings when these deal with European issues.⁵⁵ Moreover, after every EP plenary session, an exchange of views with the MEPs is the main point in the committee's meeting agenda.⁵⁶ Luxembourg's MEPs regularly attend EAC meetings, especially when ministers attend the meetings as well (Spreitzer 2015: 237).

Malta

Maltese MEPs have a standing invitation to participate in the EAC of the House of Representatives of Malta but with no voting rights (Pace 2015: 581).

Netherlands

Dutch MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC meetings and the sectoral committees of the Tweede Kamer with the aim of informing the House about specific EU matters.⁵⁷ Moreover, Dutch MEPs can also take the floor in plenary sessions on EU matters, but are not allowed to debate with the ministers nor vote.⁵⁸ Dutch MEPs are invited to speak in the annual plenary debate on the State of the Union. For instance, several Dutch MEPs from different parliamentary party groups took the floor in the plenary session of 2 April 2015. In the Dutch second chamber, Eerste Kamer, there are only irregular meetings with MEPs, which have no participation rights in the EAC. Dutch MEPs and MPs are also in contact on an informal basis and along party lines (Högenauer, 2015: 262).

Poland

Polish MEPs can attend all the committee meetings of Polish Sejm and have the right to participate in the discussions.⁵⁹ Moreover, the Sejm EAC invites Polish MEPs to be the rapporteurs on the most significant EU matters. Nevertheless, the overall degree of contacts between the Polish parliaments and the EP remain modest (Barcz and Pudło 2015: 608).

Portugal

MEPs elected in Portugal may be invited to participate in its works of the EAC of the Portuguese Assembly and they frequently do so, mainly as rapporteurs for salient EU matters, giving MPs

55 'Les membres luxembourgeois du Parlement Européen peuvent être invités a assister aux réunions des commissions lorsque celles-ci traitent des dossiers européens'. (Règlement de la Chambre des députés, Article 168, al. 3)

56 25th COSAC bi-annual report, annexe, p. 419.

57 Article 55 of the Tweede Kamer's Rules of Procedure.

58 Clerk of the EAC, Dutch Tweede Kamer, email to the author, 27 July 2016.

59 25th COSAC bi-annual report, Annexe, page. 453.

inside information from Brussels (Jančić 2015b: 378). Less formal intensive contacts with Portuguese MEPs also exist, notably in the form of video-conferences.

Romania

Romanian MEPs are not mentioned in the Rules of Procedure and can attend EAC meetings only on a special invitation.⁶⁰ There are no official contacts or coordination between the Romanian parliament and the EP in general 'mostly due to the difficulties in finding a common schedule, but also because there is some competition between the two' (Tacea 2015: 625).

Slovakia

Slovak MEPs have a standing invitation to the EAC of the Slovak National Council in an advisory capacity,⁶¹ without voting rights. In practice, MEPs attend EAC meetings on an irregular basis and not very often.⁶² Hence, Slovak MEPs rarely use in practice their formal rights in the Slovak EAC (Figulová 2015: 641). In addition, Slovak MEPs can also attend meetings of the sectoral committees on special invitation only and have no speaking rights in plenary sessions.

Slovenia

Slovenian MEPs have a standing invitation to attend EAC as well as sectoral meetings of the Slovenian National Assembly, Državni zbor, and to participate in the debates.⁶³ However, in practice, MEPs' attendance is very poor⁶⁴ despite the fact that EAC meetings are on Friday in order to facilitate their presence. Slovenian MPs complain on MEPs' lack of attendance while the latter find little point in taking part in 'rubber-stamping' by the EAC (Kajnc Lange: 654). MEPs have no right to participate in the plenary. Slovenian MEPs have only informal contacts in the Slovenian second chamber, *Državni svet* but they can take the floor in plenary debates if allowed. The Slovenian MEPs' lack of cooperation with their EAC of the Slovenian National Assembly leads to mutual complaints and allegations between MEPs and MPs.

Spain

Spanish MEPs' contacts with the Cortes Generales are limited, often concentrated on partisan

60 Staff of the EAC of the Romanian Senate, email to the author, 11 August 2016.

61 'Members of the European Parliament elected in the territory of the Slovak Republic under a special law may participate in a meetings of the Committee for European Affairs and may speak on the matters discussed.' Rules of Procedure of the Slovak National Council, 58a, article 7.

62 Clerk, department of EU affairs, Slovak parliament, email to the author, 15 July 2016.

63 'Meetings of the competent committee may also be attended by Members of the European Parliament from the Republic of Slovenia, who may also participate in the debate'. Rules of Procedure of Slovenia's National Assembly, Article 154e, al. 3.

64 Clerk, secretary of the EAC, Slovenian Državni zbor, email to the author, 16 November 2016.

contacts (Kölling and Molina 2015: 359).

Sweden

Swedish MEPs are not allowed to participate in parliamentary work of the Riksdag and do not seem to play any particular role there (Hageland 2015). While MEPs can be invited to attend committee meetings after a special decision by the committee in question, this occurs very rarely. Hence, contacts between Riksdag members and MEPs mainly take place through the parliamentary party groups.

United Kingdom

In the UK's both chambers, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, MEPs have no formal rights to participate in the parliamentary work. The only regular interparliamentary links are informal meetings twice a year of the two chambers' EACs together with the UK MEPs.⁶⁵ These tripartite meetings are chaired in rotation between the House of Commons, House of Lords and the UK MEPs and are used as an 'opportunity for an exchange of views'.⁶⁶ EAC members also regularly travel to Brussels to take evidence from EU stakeholders, including MEPs, and MEPs also travel to Westminster to give evidence before the parliaments upon request.⁶⁷ In practice, however, British MEPs do not even have passes granting them access to the House of Commons since the far-right British National Party obtained seats in the EP in 2009, and UK MEPs complain that they are rarely or never invited to Westminster (Huff and Smith 2015: 324).

⁶⁵ See the House of Commons' publication, *The European Scrutiny System in the House of Commons*, 2015, p. 27. <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/european-scrutiny/European-Scrutiny-Committee-Guide-May15.pdf> (accessed 11 July 2016).

⁶⁶ UK House of Commons, clerk of the European Scrutiny committee, email to the author, 13 November 2016.

⁶⁷ UK House of Lords' permanent representative in the EU, email to the author, 11 July 2016.