Elections to the European Parliament
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Communicate or Perish

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Abstract

In this dissertation I have tried to close the gap between the research in pan-European political communications and research of the European Parliament. There is a lot of research political communications, but it is rarely pan-European. There is also some research on the European Parliament, but there is no research that combines both. This type of communication is an activity that spans over several communications practices, notably: institutional, public policy, corporate and issues management. In practise this gap posed some difficulties when finding literature posed, much of the literature in political communication has national angles and/or looks at individual political parties which make it unsuitable for this pan-European project. It is much the same with the rest of the material.

Is this a necessary piece of research? Leaving aside individual thoughts and viewpoints about the EU in general, the European Parliament is the only EU body that European citizens have a direct influence over is through the elections. As an elected body, it is accountable for its actions to the electorate, so its communications are critical. With increasing criticism and disillusionment about the EU construct, EP communication is a vital aid as a basis for citizens to form their opinions. Decisions by national parliaments are decreasing as more powers are given to the European Parliament and its elected members, so how the European Parliament communicates is of utmost importance. It is also essential that EP communications are unbiased and factual. This is not only because of Parliament's integrity and trust; it is because the EP communications is often the only source of non-partisan information that EU citizens can access. We need to be confident that this information is useful and does not attempt to persuade us to take a specific stance. The fact that so few citizens bothered to vote is not not only because the EP lacks branding and feels far away from us citizens, nor is it because there is a general downward trend in voter turnout. I am convinced that one reason for the low voter turnout is that the EP seems out of touch with our reality and its election-related communications are so bland, that it doesn't speak to us.

My main findings are two. First, there is a gap in the research on pan-European political communications that needs to be filled. The European Parliament is coming of age which means a new era for European politics with European political parties that have

the EU as constituency which in its turn will mean changes in how political communications will be made.

The second finding is that any communications campaign needs to be based on properly framed messages.

Contents

Preface

When looking for a compelling and interesting subject to tackle in this thesis I started with what was closest to me at the time – the European Parliament and its communications aimed at citizens. Initially the subject of interest was the communications that take place in the cross-roads between "corporate" communications and political communications and how this was to be balanced. But as I learned more about the EP communications this approach evolved and the reader will soon notice that this approach is only underlying.

The purpose of this thesis is to look at one part of the European Parliament communication: the communications done by Directorate C in the European Parliament communications department. I have used a mixed method and reviewed literature, the European Parliament website and made one in-depth interview.

Introduction

In this thesis I have tried to analyse of the European Parliament communications aimed at EU citizens and I've used the communications for the European elections as example. With increasing powers to the European Parliament and its elected members more decisions are moved away from the national parliaments, so how the European Parliament communicates is of increasing importance. However, it seems to be an almost entirely overseen area of research. There is a distinct lack of research about this type of communications which are neither political nor corporate or institutional, but still of the utmost importance for any citizen. By asking the question "How can the European Parliament reach the EU Citizens better [in election campaigning]" I am trying to close part of that gap.

According to Fossum J.E. and Schlesinger P (2007) the European Union (EU) is neither state nor nation, so it remains unclear whether any public communication can be modelled on that of a nation state. If that is so then the question arises: From a communication stand-point is there such a thing as a "Europe"?

I base my research on the 2014 European elections, and I use the materials developed by the European Parliament Communications department. I also use the publicly available strategies developed by the European Parliament Communications

department. Added to this I have done my best to find and study relevant literature. In the literature I have found, in interviews and off-hand conversations, there seems to be an overwhelming consensus that the European Parliament should communicate. And that it should communicate more. But why? Why should the EP communicate on anything else than factual results and outcome of the political process? In fact, the EP has several reasons to communicate: first of all it communicates the bare facts i.e. the results and outcome of the political deliberations taking place in EP. It also communicates about all the issues that are treated in the EP, as well as financial information about the EP administration, etc. in short the same type of information that comes out of every member state parliament. And even if the example in this thesis is the European Parliament; the rising disenchantment with (national) parliament, politics and civil society is something to be taken seriously at all levels in our society.

Why is this of any interest? And why should this piece of research be done? Whatever one thinks about the European construct, federalists or non-federalists and everything in between, the European Parliament is the only directly elected body Europeans have. It is also the only body we can hold accountable for its actions which is why the communications done by this body is of utmost interest. In a period where the EU construct is under heavy criticism and more and more citizens feel alienated and left out of our society the EP communication is of even more importance since this is almost the only foundation on which we as citizens can form our opinions on many parts of our society. In other words it is of utmost importance that the EP communications is non-partisan and factual. Why? Not only because it is a question of Parliament's integrity, but it is also a question of citizen's trust. Furthermore the EP in itself is almost the only non-partisan information source about the EP we have access to. As citizens we must be able to trust that this information does not in any way or form try to influence us and our view points.

Methodology

Finding literature for this thesis has proved to be somewhat of a challenge. There is hardly any literature about the type of political communication I am discussing here so I have had to extrapolate from literature that deals with party based political communication. The literature covers mostly election-related issues; e.g. how to identify an audience with the aim of getting them to vote on any political party. Literature that covers political communication from a pure policy perspective is rare.

Where the civil society can take over is the subject for discussions in the anthology edited by Arvidson (1996). The texts had limited interest for this thesis and are included because they were they only texts with a leftish approach to the nation state construct.

Sterner (2001) briefly touches on the difficulties of building a nation. He discusses the development of nation states as we know them today and how communication played an integral part in this. It was of utmost importance that all citizens in one state adhered to the same story so the future nation states set about to ensure a cohesive and collective [national] story telling. This national story is told through the national curriculum in the schools, churches, military, national history books and more.

Texts in the both anthologies reason about state building. This reasoning is of interest since the EP communication has a sort of state building remit, in as much as it is a part of the European construct. Even critics of this construct seem to accept the basic premise that we have an EU to deal with.

van Riel and Fombrun (2007) provided a good basis for the thinking on communications in their book on corporate communications.

Romarheim's (2005) paper served to give a basic overview of the different strategies political communicators can use. In particular the paper gives a good overview of the difference between propaganda and rhetoric. Romarheim state that the term rhetoric has a name of being the bad kid on the block but that as with many terms it is largely contextual and rhetoric can be both good and bad.

In his article Habermas (2006) discusses the legitimacy process which has bearing on my research because a large part of the problems the EP is facing is due to lacking legitimacy with the citizens.

In their paper Stratulat, C., and Emmanouilidis, J. A. discusses how the elections can be made feel more relevant to the EU citizens.

Since framing is a large part when developing any communications strategy the article by Manetti L., and Brizi A., came in handy in further explaining the concept of "framing" and how this can be helpful for all of us when forming a stand-point.

The European Parliament website www.europarl.europa.eu has a wealth of factual information about the EP. The website also provides a good overview of the election results and a presentation of the election campaign material.

Eriksen, E. provides a good insight into developing audiences and is the basis for much of the discourse in the chapters about these issues.

Interview with the director of Directorate C in the European Parliament Communications department, in Brussels on The Directorate C is responsible for contacts with citizens and the directorate that developed the election campaign material. An interview that was revealing since it confirmed my suspicion that the EP communication is really lacking aim, strategy and goals. The interview took place at the EP premises before the elections and lasted for about one hour during which we discussed the EP communications and their strategies. The Director explained in some length the thinking behind the election-related strategies. I had developed some questions as support for memory and these questions were forwarded before the interview.

Fossum J. and Schlesinger P (2007) have a long discussion on European audiences and their construct of which I have used a part in this text.

I draw much of the discussion of legitimacy from Schmidt V.A (2004).

At the time of writing the European Parliament have produced four documents as the basis for their communications work.

- Updating Parliament's communication strategy, from 2010

- Action Plan and Annex for the implementation of Parliament's updated communication strategy 2011 – 2014 from 2011

- Political guidelines for the institutional information and communication campaign from 2012

- This time it's different – A concept for an institutional communication campaign on the 2014 elections from 2013

For part of my reasoning on mass opinion I have used the thinking in Zaller J. (1992)

Wikipedia, www.wikipedia.com, has also been an invaluable source of information.

European Parliament – a short presentation

The European Parliament (EP) is the directly elected parliamentary institution of the European Union (EU). Together with the Council of the European Union (the Council) and the European Commission, it exercises the legislative function of the EU. [1]

It is directly elected every five years by universal suffrage since 1979. However, turnout at European Parliament elections has fallen consecutively at each election since that date, and has been under 50% since 1999. Turnout in 2014 was at 42.50%, ranging from 90% in Luxembourg and Belgium (where compulsory voting is used) to 13% in Slovakia. Turnout was under 50% in 18 out of 28 Member States.

This dramatic decline in voter turnout has importance. Why is it important that citizen's vote? A participatory democracy requires citizen participation. The ballot is almost the only time we as citizens can influence directly. On the other hand the EP is the only elected EU institution so if that gets more visibility (and subsequent transparency) it can only be something positive. The EP as institution hasn't got any power, and shouldn't have either. The power lies with the Members of the European Parliament and those are interchangeable. Opposite to systems where the individual candidates are in the centre, this type of democracy is built on the notion that the parties are the links between the people and the political decision makers. And the weaker the parties the more difficult it is for them to represent the electorate.

It can be said that European elections are disputed on national issues, and used by voters to punish their government mid-term, turning EP elections into national elections of second rank. Turnout has been falling steadily since the first elections in 1979, indicating increased apathy about the Parliament despite its increase in power over that period.

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1 This information can be found in longer, more detailed, version at the European Parliament home page www.europarl.europa.eu accessed several times during the course of writing

Although the European Parliament has legislative power that the Council and Commission do not possess, like most national parliaments it does not formally possess legislative initiative. Parliament is the "first institution" of the EU, and shares equal legislative and budgetary powers with the Council. It likewise has equal control over the EU budget. Finally, the European Commission, the executive body of the EU, is accountable to Parliament. In particular, Parliament elects the President of the Commission, and approves (or rejects) the appointment of the Commission as a whole.

The President (Speaker) of the European Parliament is currently Martin Schulz (S&D) and he presides over a multi-party chamber, the two largest groups being the Group of the European People's Party (EPP) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D). The European Parliament has three places of work – Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. Luxembourg is home to the administrative offices (the 'General Secretariat'). Meetings of the whole Parliament ('plenary sessions') take place in Strasbourg and in Brussels. Committee meetings are held in Brussels.

European Parliament election strategies

In the interview with the Director of Directorate C, and responsible for contacts with citizens which in this case means the elections he explained the thinking behind the strategies.

When setting in place the strategies for the EP elections 2014 the EP management wanted to achieve the following:

- position/brand the parliament

- place the elections in the context of the European reality "times are hard in Europe" to show that the EP is connected to reality

- entice the citizens vote by showing real issues for real people

Based on these targets the Parliament communications department engaged Ogilvy, an agency without any history of political communication, and set about to create a campaign. The resulting campaign is filled with grim imagery, dreary films and greyish pictures of "real people" reminiscent of a campaign developed for a consumer brand and it completely misses the boat on the subjects that are on the citizens minds. 2008 saw the beginning of a financial crisis in the EU and the recovery is shaky. Over the past

years we have seen the rise of extreme parties both to the left and right on the political scale, all questioning the EU. So it is interesting, and a bit surprising, then, taking this into account that not one message in the election campaign discuss WHAT type of EU we want. The campaign messages all seem to take for granted that EU as it is good. In the films that were released early in the campaign the message was to get us to vote. One of them "And then there came lots of sheep"[2] supposedly has the aim to get 1st time voters out to vote. It is doubtful if being run over by a heard of sheep will achieve this. In the other films in the campaign interviewed what were called "normal EU citizens" explaining what they liked about the EU and why they voted in the EP elections. There were also films of a short story character that showed what was positive with the EU e.g. free movement of workers.[3] All the films had the same grim imagery and greyish tones.

Unfortunately for the EP there is a low budget spoof video called "European elections - We're not sexy and we know it"[4] that does a much better job of explaining why it is important to vote in the European elections. The film has message, aim, and well defined audiences. The producers even manage to introduce some humour into the message.

With the election results in hand, we see that many of the new MEPs are EU sceptical. This tendency was not a surprise, quite on the contrary, it was well established facts in poll after poll but this criticism was not present in the campaign. There is by all means an inherent difficulty in being critical towards a system at the same time as you are asking people to go and vote in that exact system. Still, asking the question "What do we want the club of which we are members to look like?" would have asked the question many EU citizens asked and answered by voting in what is possibly the most EU-critical EP ever.

The slogan for the election campaign was "This time it's different" which was accompanied with the wording "Act. React. Impact" imprinted on all the material and it was thought that this stressed that EU voters could exercise their powers through the ballot box and determine the shape of the future Europe and vote for an EU president. The campaign, with a budget of 16 million Euro, was in four phases leading up to the election of the European Commission i.e. after the actual election period in May 2014.

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2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=80ESDHMKjhI
3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Vr9RQVZkac
4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HLkIJAAEBI

Phase one started in September 2013 with the presentation of the campaign material. Phase two ran from October to February 2014 and highlighted five key topics: the economy, jobs, quality of life, money and the EU in the world. This phase was conducted through a series of interactive events in European cities. What the EP called "the election campaign proper" started in February 2015 and concentrated on the election dates 22 – 25 May. These dates were also added to the logo as the elections drew closer. The final phase, after the elections, concentrated on the newly elected European Parliament, the election of the new Commission President and the new European Commission.

Together with the national parliaments the EP communication department developed a repository of arguments to be used by the national organisations in an effort to offer national flavours to the campaign. According to the Director the media narrative was consistent with the messaging developed by the EP, but if the voter turnout is anything to go by, it looks like this never metered out to the citizens.

In order to raise voter turnout the 2014 campaign started earlier than the 2009 campaign, but seeing that the turnout went down, this decision was perhaps not the most strategically wise decision. At national levels there is a tendency to start election campaigns closer to the election date than ever before. Taking into account the rather bad result the branding campaign had, at least if voter turnout is something to go by, the question if phase 4 shouldn't be adapted begs to be asked. Having said that, it is however, entirely possible that if this election campaign *had not* taken place the results would have been ever worse. So, in theory, at least, the election participation could have been even lower. It is an undeniable fact that voter turnout did go down, even with a campaign, which suggests that the campaign didn't exactly hit the target. And if that measurement is anything to go by the "Sheep film" was watched 2,4 million times on Youtube and have 955 likes and 114 dislikes. There are 500 million citizens in EU, of these 28% were in the age group 16 - 24, i.e. first time voters, which means that in practise the film's audience was approximately 140 million. The figures speak for themselves, but it is perhaps not a harsh statement to say that while achieving a respectable number of viewers, there still is room for improvement.

Voter turnout is getting lower in all parliamentary elections; I am not speaking about one issue referenda here, this in its turn suggest that there might be other societal factors influencing our will to vote or not. But there is a strong probability that an

already disenchanted audience that won't vote in their national parliamentary elections will even less likely do so in an election they consider second rate.

Low voter turnout could also be a result of the fact that the campaign didn't seem to touch on issues EU citizens face every day. In a world where austerity is on our minds, where desperate people are migrating within our EU borders only to end up on our streets begging, in times where more and more of us are working poor; telling the voters that this time they will be able to vote for a president they don't know, to a parliament they have no relation with only seems callous and out of sync. And what is worse, the majority of the EU citizens couldn't vote for the President. Since it doesn't, yet, exist pan-European parties the candidates for the future president were on national ballots, Germany and Belgium to be exact. As an interesting twist, Jean-Claude Juncker, the man who got elected wasn't even on a ballot. And had he been it would have been in Luxembourg.

Elections to the European Parliament

Elections to the European Parliament were held in all Member States of the European Union (EU) between 22 and 25 May 2014. It was the eighth Europe-wide election to the European Parliament since the first direct elections in 1979.

The theme for the election was "This time it's different" since the EU citizens were told that for the first time we would elect the European President i.e. the President of the European Council. Based on the election results the five largest political groups in the EP were to nominate candidates for this position.

In any election campaign (to Parliament) it can be said there are two types of messages: one non-political institutional message and one (party) political. For the communicator crafting messages the non-political message could be "Vote!" and the political message could be "Vote for us because..." so the European Parliament as institution will then produce messages along the "Vote" line of thinking.

The EU elections 2014 took take place in an entirely new setting. Not only has the EP unprecedented powers, which should have turned the election into a first rate event rather than the lacklustre second rate events it has been before. But as a result of the crisis hitting us with full force 2008 which still isn't over, "Europe" has moved to the very heart of national debates and election campaigns in the Member States. That more

EU citizens than ever before has a notion that EU affect their everyday lives should be something positive to build on for a campaign. As such the 2014 elections could have witnessed more debates about the EU, as well as more citizens voting. Pity it didn't. In the debate between the Spitzencandidaten the subjects were about social Europe, but the question on everybody's lips – what type of Europe do we want - was never asked. Seeing the election results where the EU critical parties rose significantly it was a question that the electorate asked and answered.

Recent Eurobarometer [5] data confirm that a majority of European citizens would be more encouraged to vote if some of the above mentioned initiatives were realised, that is:

- if people were better informed about the impact of EP elections on the ground and about parties' programmes (84%)

- if competing parties were to display their European political affiliation during the campaign (73%)

- if the European parties were to nominate their own candidate for the Presidency of the Commission (62%).

Legitimacy of the European Parliament

One of the many criticisms often heard against the European Parliament is that its decisions lack legitimacy in the eyes of European citizens. So how is legitimacy built and above all, earned?

Schmidt V. A. (2004) says that legitimacy is based on identity. Nation-State legitimacy begins with national identity. But what is a national identity and how is it created? A national identity is a sense of belonging that is based on being just as much about doing and saying.

In other words the glue that binds us together on a national level is often a nebulous mix of shared culture and values, common language(s) and national history, just to mention a few. This belonging, in its turn, is created over years through national mass-communications and -education, national elections etc. Building a national identity is

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5 Eurobarometer http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_en.htm

constant construction process which lately has seen a kind of revival brought about partly by the fact that the sceptical voices of the EU have become more vocal.

Can this glue be found on EU level? Yes, and no is the short answer to that. At the time of writing the 1st world war remembrances are going on and can be considered as one of these events that "glue" us together, whether winner or loser.

Then of course the other question is if this glue should be found on EU level? Many citizens today answer that question with a resounding "NO."

Audiences Typologies

Is there a European collective identity? Collective identities are not natural entities but are constructed from the social structure that unite and divide people. An audience can be seen as a communication network based on informal streams of information and is not aimed at achieving particular results. Habermas J (2006) ask how is this identity formed? And what role does the EP non-political communication play in this?

Every political arena has different audiences based on various typologies. Cultural diversity adds to this. The EU has not so far produced a collective identity; nor can it draw on the shared norms and values that communitarian find necessary to sustain a community. This reading of the EU – a site of identity struggles – is in tension with the formation of an overarching public sphere. The French and Dutch and to a lesser extent the Irish, refusals to ratify the Constitution sent a shock wave through the political classes of the Union. The discussion now concerns how to define the future of the project. At stake are the relationships between the states and the Union and the economic and social model that is to prevail. This discussion intensified in the wake of the elections when it became clear that EU critical parties were to enter into Parliament with vigour. However, the results point to the fact that the EU citizens are less interested in becoming one European audience than many in the centre believe. Any narrative of the EU must take this feeling into account or the very foundation of the Union will be shattered.

Type of public	Participation	Legitimacy basis	Function
General	Open	A sovereign demos	Opinion formation
Segmented	Restricted	Common interests	Problem-solving
Strong	Specialised	Delegated authority	Will formation

Figure 1 - Typology of public spheres

Conceptually Eriksen E. O. (2004) distinguish between three types of audiences:

- *overarching general audiences* – which are communicative spaces of civil society in which all may participate on free and equal basis and, due to proper rights entrenchment, can deliberate subject only to the constrains of reason;

- *transnational segmented audiences* – which evolve around policy networks constituted by a selection of actors with a common interest in certain issues, problems and solutions;

- *strong audiences* which are legally institutionalised and regulated discourses specialised in collective will formation at the policy centre

A general overarching public in Europe is not totally missing; it is mostly based on European audio-visual spaces – newspapers and television. The Internet creates a new social movement and identity politics across borders. Many of these efforts to create a European media space are market driven but address the broad political and economic issues of the continent.

Common communicative systems of mass media facilitating real public debates, like it is possible in the Member States, are to a large degree lacking at the European level. This is due much to the fact that there is no Lingua Franca in Europe, something which hinders a common European discussion platform of the same type we can see on national level. However, there are transnational public spheres emanating from the policy networks of the Union. In Europe, networks for transnational regulation are conducive to an Europeanization of policies and deliberate governance beyond the nation state. Or in other words, the European Parliament constitutes a platform for European debate and ensuing legislation. Public European discourses take the form of audiences inasmuch as there is coupling between the collective actors and the audience, in the sense that the actors not only communicate themselves but are also heard by others. No one unifying form of discourse develops but rather discourses that vary according to the issues fields

that reflect the institutional structure of the EU. The ability to manipulate or homogenise the European public discourse is rather limited. Mere suspicion manipulation in fact leads to a de-legitimisation critique and is conducive to the broadening and pluralisation of public communication. Still it is a form of elite communication where the experts and the well-educated speak to one another and stage communicative noise and protest. It falls short of reaching the level of mass communication in a "homogenised" political public sphere. But segmented audiences also fall short of complying with the democratic provision of openness and equal access. The European public space is currently fragmented, differentiated and in flux. In the place of the sovereign people, there is the noise of anarchic and polyphonic communication. The public sphere, nevertheless, has effects on governance as it subjects the decision-maker to protests and communicative noise. The informal and unruly streams of communication that characterise the European debate take place in scattered fora and arenas. From a democratic viewpoint, the lingering problem pertains to the lack of ability to form collective identities on an equal basis in order to facilitate collective decision-making as well as solving the de facto problem of holding the rulers to account. But what about the deliberative and democratic qualities of the institutional "hardware" of the EU?

The Public Sphere – a triadic character

Fossum, J. E. & Schlesinger P. (2007) suggest that the public sphere has a triadic character, with a speaker, an addressee and a listener. This is a different model than the "usual" model of a sender and receiver. The public sphere is linked with democracy, since it is based on the assumption that everybody can speak without limitation. In institutional terms, a strong public encompasses parliamentary assemblies and other deliberative entities; they are situated in formally organised institutions permeated with decision-making powers and should, ideally, be constrained by the logic of argument and impartial justification.

How do you as sender/speaker ensure that the addressee is the listener and that the message is received and acted upon? This is the basic question any communicator is asking when it comes to communication. But is it a problem?

On his side Eriksen E. O. (2004) claims that traditional political and media theory have thought of communicative space and public spheres as what goes on inside nation states. But this kind of perspective is rapidly becoming deficient, as the EU manifests more and more characteristics of a supra-national state. The main problem with the development of a European public sphere is held back by a cultural substrate required for a collective will formation. Forging a collective identity, presupposes certain social underpinnings presently lacking in the EU. Can there be a public sphere without a collective identity? A collective identity above the level of primary groups and a collective "we-feeling" is needed in order for the EU citizens to acknowledge the "sacrifices" imposed on us in the name of the European good. At a minimum, the members must recognise each other as being members shared the same group. Collective identities do not merely depict the successful integration of a social entity but also, and specifically, "social communities based on defined membership and shared collective self-conception, shared convictions and aspirations."

The development of a public sphere has profound implications for the conception of democratic legitimacy. It alters the power holders' basis of legitimacy, as citizens are equipped with rights against the state. Decision-makers are compelled to enter the public arena in order to justify their decisions and to gain support. This forms the background to speaking of a modern society that is critical of power. One may, however, ask whether this depends on the institutionalising of one overarching, unifying public sphere. Historically, a single international authoritative public sphere representing one collective identity has never existed instead the collective identities have been many and stratified. After the creation of what became the EU we now see a public sphere that is divided into different types and categories. It consists of different assemblies, forums, arenas, scenes and meeting places where citizens can gather. These are municipal, regional, national and transnational. Various arenas provide the basis for different audiences; elite and mass, professional and lay people, where they can meet, discuss and cooperate.

A parliamentary nexus consists of formal political institutions, such as the parliament, political parties and different types of bodies that influence choices and decision-making e.g. expert committees, boards and councils. This makes up the *centre*, with the authority to take binding collective decisions, is the focus of attention and enjoys the

highest degree of legitimacy. A parliamentary nexus, i.e. the centre is connected to the periphery of civil society – consisting of associations, social movements, pressure groups, clients, organised interests, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and so on – through a set of channels of political influence such as elections, neo-corporatist lobbying, interest aggregation and public debate. For collective decisions to be regarded as legitimate, it must be demonstrated that they started with a communication progress originating in the periphery and were channelled into the formal power apparatus in procedurally correct manner.

While the centre controls instruments of power and decision-maker competence, the public sphere is the only possible channel of influence for the periphery.

The European Public Sphere
The European public sphere has a very particular set-up given the segmented, transnational nature of the audience. One attribute these audiences have in common is that they are all are based on equal citizenship and well-developed civic infrastructures. While the past years' political developments have put these infrastructures into question and under democratic strains which currently jeopardize some of the most fundamental rights, we know in Europe these systems are still the ones the European Parliament bases its political discourse and legitimisation work.

Habermas J (2006) considers deliberation as a mode of problem-solving may enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the decision-making system and help target policies as qualitatively good discussion lead to more enlightened actors and more rational decisions. However, the problem of democratic legitimacy lingers on. Legitimacy is crucial criterion to be met for a political system to be recognised as valid. How strong the EU is as a nexus should thus be tested against the legitimacy and not merely efficiency of the administration. In today's society, democracy is the sole remaining principle of legitimisation. The principle of legitimisation pertains to public accountability and congruence between the law aiders and the lawmakers. In this perspective, transnational bodies of governance and deliberation may be able to tackle normative and politically salient questions in a qualitatively good manner. First and foremost legitimacy stems from the deliberative process itself. However, under modern conditions, this legitimacy cannot stem from direct and full participation in collective

decision-making as the people are rarely present to make choices in modern complex states. It is also hard to see how democratic legitimacy can be based merely on votes, as voting procedures are loaded with aggregation problems and as the principle of majority vote does not guarantee full political equality. Moreover, thanks to the role of media criticism, politicians have to define and refine their mandate on a continental basis, and to drum up support in the general public sphere. Their mandate is "unbound," it is barely transmitted via elections but has to be struggled for by communicative means and this underscores the epistemic value of deliberative democracy.

The public sphere is the place where civil society is linked to the power structure of the state. It constitutes the basis for deliberative politics because it is here that power must find its justification. It is in this space that binding decisions must be justified to the citizens who are bound by them, according to standards they agree upon. As far as counter-arguments are voiced, this is a test as to whether political decisions are correct. The EU public sphere has become fragmented, polymorphic and polyphonic. In the EU there are transnational communicative spaces in which all the citizens of the EU can take part, but more salient are segmented audiences evolving around policy networks and legally institutionalised discourses, strong audiences, specialised in collective will formation. Hence, the situation speaks more to the EU as a regulatory, problem solving entity than to the EU as a democratic government. The assessment of the EU from a democratic view should take heed of different kinds of public and be aware their different functions and spheres of validity.

Information Processing

We try juggling our opinions to avoid inconsistencies when we receive information that goes against our preconceived standpoints; i.e. information that is presumed to be psychologically painful. To avoid this "thought pain" we rationalise the discrepant opinions in order to avoid cognitive dissonance. For example, fans of former U.S. President Bill Clinton, confronted with the negative news about his embarrassing dalliance with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, focussed on Clinton's political achievements as well as downgrading the scandal information by questioning the motives of Clinton's accusers. Political communication scholars have been especially

interested in exploring how citizens with different political goals vary in choosing and processing election-related information.

We tend to use shortcuts to simplify information searches. Rather than trying to gather massive amounts of information about an unfamiliar candidate, we use party affiliation as a "formula" or stereotype. If the candidate is a Social Democrat, we endow this candidate with our stereotypical view of Social Democrats and so on.

But which messages are stored most readily in memory, making them available for future retrieval, and what conditions enhance or impede storage? Citizens ignore most of the political messages available in our environment because we overlook them or because the messages do not seem relevant. Should there be any conflicting messages we simply avoid messages that contradict our established beliefs, and select supportive messages instead. Thankfully, we tolerate different views quite well because we consider problems from varied perspectives and because we often are critical about the merits of various policy options. Mostly we remain unaware of this conflict; whether it concerns conflicting messages or messages that are in harmony with our [political] beliefs.

Some studies have focused on the circumstances that make audiences receptive to media messages. In his book, Zaller J. (1992) introduced a model of political persuasion known as RAS for how people "receive, accept, sample" information. He found that we resist arguments that clash with our political predispositions only at the rare times when we recognize that a difference exists. It is no surprise that what matters most when it comes to fully accepting political messages is their content and framing, the way they are presented and interact with our existing beliefs, attitudes, and opinions.

Should the European Parliament communicate at all?
Should the EP communicate at all? A parliament can be considered a non-partisan spokesperson for democracy. And in the case of the EP it certainly is so because it claims that all its actions must be based on the Charter of Human Rights. But should it communicate? And if yes, where do you draw the line? Where does a non-partisan stand point become partisan?

The EP can communicate with the aim of raising participation in elections, yes, because voting is still almost the only way for citizens to influence in democratic societies. So the

EP communication around elections should (actually could) only be in the lines of "Vote!" whereas political parties can say "Vote for us because..."

But could it be that the only communication the EP should do around elections is to provide a well-functioning infrastructure for the votes? And for the rest of the mandate period "just" provide simple access to information about issues and "What's on in the European Parliament?"

Many criticize the EP for being distant and far away from the voters. It has taken this to its heart and is creating European parties, but are European parties the way forward? Doesn't that make the politics and the politicians take one more step away from the voters? In today's society we see a trend of lower party memberships, fewer feels like "Tory" or "Labour", is then EU parties the way forward to move the EU closer to it is citizens? Maybe a more consistent branding exercise of the EP could be the way forward? And I would also posit that the European Parliament needs to take a stronger grip on the communications and do what we all do as communicators, build a robust strategy on which it can stand.

Is it possible to communicate politics without taking sides? As often this depends on how you define politics. Here I will more look to policy rather than actual politics, the European Parliament can say "You should vote and exercise your democratic rights" but as an institution it cannot take sides. So, when it comes to communication from the European Parliament there are two major lines of communication – the administrative that consist of decisions, information on parties and groups, members of parliament etc. And then interesting enough, as mentioned above, there is a more value-based communication, which is an opportunity that the EP doesn't take. The European Union itself represents a certain set of values. These core values of the EU as set out in the Lisbon Treaty are human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. They are common to all Member States, and any European country wishing to become a member of the Union must respect them. And you will find very few Member State citizens that don't hold with these values, which makes them an excellent basis for a continued communication with the aim of raising the visibility and credibility of the EP.

European Parliament Communication Department

The European Parliament Directorate-General for Communication works to ensure that information is circulated to the public, media and opinion leaders on a wide range of Parliament's activities. Parliament has set up information offices in each EU Member State to provide information for the public on its operations and activities. The information offices act as intermediaries between Parliament and the public. [6]

The Directorate-General for Communication makes extensive use of diverse means, activities and communications networks to help publicise Parliament's activities. It assists and provides information to a wide range of people by developing various means of communication.

Main tasks of the EP Communication Department are:

- ensuring that the media, public and opinion leaders (associations, civil society bodies and local elected representatives) are aware of the role, operation and views of the European Parliament.

- providing a library and documentation service for MEPs, committees and other European Parliament bodies for their official parliamentary duties

- The department has one director-general and four directorates:

- Directorate A - Directorate for Media

- Directorate B - Directorate for Information Offices

- Directorate C - Directorate for Relations with Citizens

- Directorate D - Directorate for Resources

Directorate C is responsible for the non-political campaign material from the European Parliament.

Why should the European Parliament communicate at all?

There seems to be an overwhelming consensus that the European Parliament should communicate. Why should the EP communicate on anything other than factual results and outcome of the political process? The EP has several reasons to communicate. First of all it communicates the bare facts i.e. the [political] results and outcome of the

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6 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00d7a6c2b2/Secretariat.html?tab=eParliament_secretariat_dgcomm.

political deliberations in the Committees and Plenary. It also communicates around all the issues that are treated in the EP, as well as financial information about the EP administration, factual information etc., in short the same type of information that comes out of every member state parliament. However, since the EU proclaim to have certain core values it represents which are written in the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, the EP communicates these values. Something that became very apparent in the 2014 elections where the campaign material was developed to show these values. With the Treaty of Lisbon, the Charter of Fundamental Rights acquires a binding legal force for 26 Member States, the United Kingdom and Poland having been granted derogation.

What is the difference between corporate communication and political communication?

van Riel and Fombrun (2007) define **Corporate communication** is the set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating a favourable point-of-view among stakeholders on which the company depends. It is the messages issued by a corporate organization, body, or institute to its audiences, such as employees, media, channel partners and the general public. Organizations aim to communicate the same message to all its stakeholders, to transmit coherence, credibility and ethic. Corporate Communications help organizations explain their mission; combine its many visions and values into a cohesive message to stakeholders. The concept of corporate communication could be seen as an integrative communication structure linking stakeholders to the organization.

Political communication is the construction, sending, receiving, and processing of messages that potentially have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics. The message senders or receivers may be politicians, journalists, members of interest groups, or individual citizens. Not many argue against the statement that citizens need information about the society they live in in order to function properly. In our society there are only three ways to gain this information: own experience, interpersonal communication and different [mass] media, as defined in Wikipedia.

Message Framing
Manetti et al. (2013) discusses how well-developed message frames can have a powerful impact on our thinking. Depending on what the sender wants to achieve with the

messages the same message can be formulated (framed) in different ways. To refer back to the farmer and the mother of three, if we look at how to frame e.g. farming subsidies in a positive way two messages could be "They have made it possible for you to stay in business" to the farmer and "They have kept down the milk prices" to the mother of three.

Looking at the material that the EP offered to the press they have developed national press kits to each individual MS, so one can say that they have tried to identify an audience and frame messages purely based on nationality. But what is the content in these press kits? As an example, we can look at the audio-visual press kit for the Netherlands it contains:

- Key dates of EU construction
- Official visits of Royal family and members of the government to the European Parliament
- Official visits of EP President in the Netherlands, meetings with Royal family and members of the government
- European Elections (previous)
- Signature of Treaties
- EU Presidency
- Referendum
- Statements of Dutch MEPs in plenary sessions
- Hearing of Dutch EU Commissioner
- Ceremonies, inauguration

I think it is safe to say that not all Dutch voters are interested in the Royal visits to the EP. Furthermore, I wonder about the how the list had been developed. Elections are forward looking, is then history and the past the best way to entice uninterested voters to vote?

Saying that the EP didn't do any other framing than purely national is not entirely true. In all fairness they did develop information for nine policy areas considered as paramount after the elections:

1. Agriculture and Fisheries

1. Environment and Climate Change

2. Trade and Foreign Affairs

3. Healthcare and medical products

4. Consumer rights and food safety

5. Civil liberties, data privacy, protecting the vulnerable

6. Employment and workers' rights

7. Economic and financial reform

8. Job creation and competitiveness

If we look at subject 2 "Trade and Foreign Affairs" what videos are supposed to get us all to the ballot urns? Seeing that the EU is in the middle trade negotiations with the US maybe some information about those negotiations would be of interest to the voters? So what does the EP Communications department believe will entice the citizens to vote? One video presents the European External Action Service, one video presents the border crossing between Greece and Turkey and one the vote in plenary on the Anti-counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). It is unclear what message this mix of videos has and it is even more unclear what the EP hopes to achieve by showing them.

Communicate with everyone means communicate with no-one?

"Our remit is to communicate with all EU citizens." The words are the Director's for the Department for Contacts with the Citizens. He answered a question I asked concerning the rather high-level documents the EP have produced as basis for its communications. I also pointed to the fact that the citizens are not grouped in any target groups, a fairly normal activity when developing a communications strategy. But communicating with all EU citizens doesn't mean that the communication can't be qualified, framed and adapted to the receiver. In fact adapting a message to the target group is an integral part of developing any communications strategy, so it seems amiss that one of the biggest communications departments in Europe leaves this out. As it is now the communication from the EP is the same whether the receiver is a disgruntled youth in Greece, a mother of three in Germany, a Polish migrant worker in Ireland and a retired public servant in Finland. The one thing they have in common is that they are EU citizens. It goes without saying that while they might be interested in EU affairs they might also be interested in

different angles of these affairs. It is also highly likely that the information reaches them through different channels. The fact the EP communications department doesn't adapt the information to the receiver thinking means that not communicating with everyone might be a contributing factor to the feeling that the EP and its politics are irrelevant. That an increasing number of EU citizens feel disenchanted with the Union is an issue of democracy and democratic relevance. This isn't about whether or not to criticize the EU, this is a question about how, where and when you get the information on which you base your decisions and stance. The blandness of message is in itself a risk.

In a representative democracy such as the EU; what is political communication? When we speak about political communication we often mean opinion building, but political communication is much more than that. It is the question about how a message is passed. Political communication is indirect (through your personal network) and direct (from political parties and civil society representatives). This way, the shape that the communication takes, its channels and its content will be of interest. Almost the only way voters living in a democracy can demand responsibility from a politician is through voting, which why the act of voting can be considered as a genuine expression of the communication between voters and politicians. It is through mass communication e.g. social media, newspapers, television and radio are channels that most of us receive political information.

What does the European Parliament want to achieve with its election-related communication?

When communicating with an audience there has to be a purpose with the communication otherwise there can be no strategy, no message and no aim. And here I see one issue with the communication from the European Parliament – there is no aim with the communication. At least no discernible aim. From the EP there are two types of communication: the one reiterating the political activities, meetings, protocols, decisions etc. i.e. information we can expect from any organization or body public and/or private. But there is also a "softer" value type of communication that aims to [build] support the European ideal of equality, human rights and democracy.

Sterner (2001) point to the facts that for a group of people to consider themselves a nation (state) its collective will has to take three expressions: it must want a sovereignty,

a cohesiveness and both the sovereign will and cohesiveness must be long lived and continuous. Based on this, it is possible to create a cultural homogenisation i.e. a sort of lowest common [cultural] denominator to which all living on the national state territory can subscribe to, whether consciously or unconsciously. And I think this homogenisation is where the real issue for the EP and its corporate communication lies – there is no homogeneous European state. Hence the difficulties with finding a European story which can be used to raise the election participation. Personally, I like the idea that we doesn't have a homogeneous European state, but as a communicator I see it as missed opportunity to not communicate based on the Human Rights values the EU says it subscribes to.

At the onset, "framing" is an unattractive word that gives the impression of brain washing, but it is what we all do either when we receive a message or send one. When receiving a message the framing simply means putting it in a context we feel we can manage, and as a sender of a message framing is what you do when adapting the message to the receiver. We all adapt messages to our frame of references and beliefs. But how can we as communicators improve the efficacy of the same message content when communicating with different audiences is an interesting question. To give an example: 20% unemployment sounds rather horrible, whereas 80% employment sounds a lot more palatable. The activation of the mental concepts we use when receiving news is not a random process; this is based on our background, experience, history, education, language, etc. in short persona. This is why the EP approach to communication and messaging is counter productive as the bland messages are not noticed by the receiver.

When looking at the latest election campaign for the European Parliament it was clear that the Parliament's stance on communication made the campaign material rather bland. The EP used Ogilvy Brussels, an agency best known for consumer goods campaigns, to develop this campaign. Ogilvy is not an agency many relate to nor with political communication but they do have very good knowledge of message framing and customer segmentation which begs the question why the EP seemingly didn't use these insights to identify different groups. These customer insights could have been used to frame the messaging to the citizens throughout all four phases in the programme. Consumer marketing agencies have long used their insights to fine-tune marketing

messages in order to better sell us everything from detergent to cat litter. From an outsider point-of-view not using, insights like these, seems nonchalant. It also gives the impression of a communications department that is either uninterested or not set up for the most basic exercise of all communications work – to strategically get to know your audience. Let us take the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) as an example; one part of CAP is farming subsidies. If we take the farmer and the mother of three as type audiences two ways to frame the same message "CAP is good" can be to the farmer:

- They (subsidies) have helped you to stay in business

And to the mother of three

- Thanks to them (subsidies) you have affordable milk

These frames could be used with the same imagery, although not combined at the same time. Seeing that a mother of three and a farmer perhaps doesn't consume the same media the frames could be used in different outlets. Most important is that the overarching message in this case "CAP is good" is communicated through the different frames in outlets catering to different audiences.

The EP approach to election communications is disappointing. Not adapting the message thus treating us as a mass of grey porridge sends the message that the EU citizens are not important enough to adapt the messages that come out from the only elected body we have at EU level.

Discussion

Based on the above there is definitely a gap in today's research in political communications that needs to be filled; the gap is pan-European political communications.

As the European Parliament is coming of age its specificity, supra-national politics on a common European platform, need to be studied. In the near future there will be pan-European parties that will have the EU as constituency, something that profoundly changes the European political arena. It is not so much the communications in itself but the combination of the European Parliament and communications that needs to be looked at in order to avoid a democratic deficiency and void. As EU citizens we have one parliament. A parliament with increasing powers over our everyday lives, to take into account. The fact that so few citizens bothered to vote is not not only due to the fact that the EP lacks branding and feels far away from us, nor is it because there is a general downward trend in voter turnout. I am convinced that one reason for the low voter turnout is that the communications is so bland it doesn't speak to us.

According to the reasoning in the chapter Audiences Typologies, i.e. that there is no real European audience; the Director's answer on the EP communication brief (Our remit is to communicate with all EU citizens) becomes mystifying. The lack of message framing becomes equally counterproductive. The only way the EP will be able to reach any audience is if they take into account that audiences must be identified and messages adapted to them, i.e. traditional communications work. Lacking proper audience identification is also worrying from a budgetary view-point. But most of all if we don't know whom we communicate to, how can we be certain that that we speak with them and that the message gets across? Or indeed, how can we even develop a message? Talking to an audience in a way they find engaging about subjects high up on their private agenda is a natural step in any communication. But with today's approach the European Parliament completely misses out on this. The EU audiences are just as cross-border as the Union is itself. In certain issues, a mother of three in the Netherlands may have more in common with a mother of three in Croatia than the aforementioned Dutch mother has with a Dutch farmer. At the same time both the Dutch in this example also have their nationality in common thus shares certain interests and quite a few commonalities based on that.

This is the charm with EP communications: the wide variety of audiences and it is a fantastic opportunity and challenge. There are the audiences in each member state that can be grouped and identified purely based on where they live and nationality. Then there are different interest groups who might be both national and international, then there are socio-economic factors that are at the same time confined to the member state and international. Just to mention a few audiences which should be taken into account, but isn't in the current communications strategies. I have mentioned earlier about the migrant worker, Finnish retiree, mother of three and disgruntled youth all are target groups that can be identified and spoken to and with. The messages should be framed differently to each one of them. Free movement might be of interest for the unemployed Greek youth. The mother of three might be interested in parental leave. A Finn might be interested to hear about the large market the EU means for Finland. Just to mention a few different messages that could be of interest. This sounds like a lot of work and while a big department the EP Communications department still has its limits, as any communications department, but getting to know whom you speak to about what is a very basic action for any communications department. For starters it can be done on a "rough" level: 28 nation states, 25 languages, age groups, gender, and family situation. Already there we see a far more fine-tuned approach than the current approach that seems to consider us all as one EU wide audience.

The lack of audience identification is curious as one would think that identifying whom you speak with is one of the basic exercises of any communications department. To say that the remit is to speak with every citizen isn't a really argument, because as said earlier, speaking to everyone at the same time consequently means you end up speaking to no-one. Not properly identifying and addressing the different audiences' means in practise that the European Parliament helps build a democratic deficient EU. And that certainly cannot be their remit.

Recommendation and Conclusion

Writing this thesis has been an illuminating exercise in many ways.

Mostly because I find it shocking, to say the least, that the communications planning and strategy development at the European Parliament is seemingly so high-level as the documentation shows around the elections. There might of course be additional material that is not public, but according to the Director, the documentation in this thesis is the same as they use themselves at the communications department in the European Parliament.

The recommendation to the European Parliament, at least to directorate C, is to do an audience assessment and to develop a good understanding of what the audiences look like, what they identify as important, how they receive the information – in short develop a strategic communications plan with properly framed messages.

European Parliament communications have a lot to build on and a lot to do. But by its approach; not to differentiate between the different audiences, when communicating the European Parliament is not only missing out on a unique communication opportunity it also sends a message of indifference and treats EU citizens as a grey mass not interesting enough to bother about.

I think we should be upset both as communicators and citizens.

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Annex I - European Union Institutions

From any point of view the EU is highly complex with many points of access and sites for deliberation, negotiation and decision-making. The EU attempts to comply with the principle of separation of powers. This set-up means that there should be a division of power as well as checks and balances between the decision branch, the executive branch and the administrative branch of the EU.

The European Communities are made up of seven bodies. As with any administrative bodies, these bodies differ but in common they have several strong audiences, they are also institutionalised spaces in which deliberation takes place prior to decision-making. Of these, the European Parliament is the only body that is directly elected by voters in the Member States and can claim to be an institutional expression of the will of the people. It is the only EU institution endowed with direct democratic legitimacy through European-wide elections. Multi-party parliamentary systems are generally consensus oriented and prone to deliberation, but in the EU there is even more scope for open deliberation as there is no clear-cut division between government and opposition.

- Council of the European Union – **legislative and executive**
- European Commission – **executive, legislative and quasi-judicial**
- European Council – **executive**
- European Court of Auditors – **audit**
- European Court of Justice – **judicial**
- European Parliament – **legislative**

The 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEP) make up a multi-lingual body. There are 28 member countries and 23 working languages in the present assembly. The EP as we know it today is a changing organisation and, still, much more than any national parliament, work in progress. It started out as a consultative body with very limited powers and made up of mostly representatives of national parliaments holding assigned seats. Over time, and in particular after the Single European Act and then reinforced by the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties, the EP has moved from a being secondary institution to an important actor in European law-making. Today 80% of national legislation emanates from the EP, a fact that many EU citizens seems oblivious of.

And while it is all very well that the MEPs learn to argue for their cause and to do so in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-party setting – what about the voters aka citizens? Members of the European Parliament are voted in through national elections where each Member State is a constituency which means that say a Finnish MEP will make and vote on laws that are valid in Malta and vice-versa. It also means that in the minute the Parliamentarians step into the European Parliament they become Europeans. Does this systematic conflict have any bearing on voter turnout? And how does it affect the legitimacy of the decisions taken by the MEPs? Due to the fact that there is no one single European public, the link between institutionalised debates and general public debate is largely missing Europe. In fact, as we have seen the problem is not the lack of public spaces in Europe that are capable of holding decision-makers responsible, what we miss is the ability to link and filter themes and topics, the problems and solutions.

Transnational audiences increase the information level and the contestant of different viewpoints. They also enhance rationality of decision-making and may even enable holding supra-national power holders effectively to account, but they do not suffice to constitute a democratic sovereign. Access to *one* common public – one single European public space – is necessary to enable citizens to address the same political issues and be exposed to the same information, arguments counter-arguments. To develop common opinions and will requires common themes, shared interpretative frames and inclusive fora. Only through these can the preconditions necessary for a rational opinion-forming process among all those that are affected be created. In particular, this is required for the proper legitimisation and justification of the basic ruling principles of society – of the constitutional essentials. Since such a discussion revolves around deontic norms or principles (e.g. democracy, the rule of law, equality, solidarity), there are prospects for consensus. Whether these discussions can bring about an identity strong enough to make collective action possible is the decisive point for the EU to develop beyond a regulatory regime in legitimacy terms. The legitimacy of the decisions taken by the EP largely remains questioned by the citizens at large.

Annex 2 - Single European Act

When we speak of the EU we mean the foundations which are based on the Single European Act (SEA). The chief objective of the SEA was to add new momentum to the process of the European construction and to complete the internal market. However, this goal was difficult to achieve on the basis of the existing treaties, notably because of the decision-making process at the Council, which imposed unanimity for the harmonisation of legislation.

To facilitate the establishment of the internal market, the act provides for increasing the number of cases in which the Council can take decisions by qualified majority voting instead of unanimity. This facilitated decision-making and avoided the frequent delays inherent to the search for a unanimous agreement among the twelve Member States. Unanimity is no longer required for measures designed to establish the Single Market, with the exception of measures concerning taxation, the free movement of persons, and the rights and interests of employed persons. The SEA provided for the transformation of the Common Market into a single market on 1 January 1993. By creating new Community competencies and reforming the institutions the SEA opened the way to political integration and economic and monetary union to be enshrined in the Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union.

- **Treaty on European Union, known as the "Maastricht Treaty" (1992)**
  The Maastricht Treaty brought the three Communities (Euratom, ECSC, EEC) and institutionalised cooperation in the fields of foreign policy, defence, police and justice together under one umbrella, the European Union. The EEC was renamed, becoming the EC. Furthermore, this Treaty created economic and monetary union, put in place new Community policies (education, culture, cooperation and development) and increased the powers of the European Parliament (co-decision procedure).

- **Treaty of Amsterdam (1997)**
  The Treaty of Amsterdam increased the powers of the Union by creating a Community employment policy, transferring to the Communities some of the areas which were previously subject to intergovernmental cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs, introducing measures aimed at bringing the Union closer to its citizens and enabling closer cooperation between certain Member States (enhanced cooperation). It also extended the codecision procedure and qualified majority voting and simplified and renumbered the articles of the Treaties.

- **Treaty of Nice (2001)**
  The Treaty of Nice was essentially devoted to the "leftovers" of Amsterdam, i.e. the institutional problems linked to enlargement which were not resolved in 1997. It dealt with the make-up of the Commission, the weighting of votes in the Council and the extension of the areas of qualified majority voting. It simplified the rules on use of the enhanced cooperation procedure and made the judicial system more effective.

- **Treaty of Lisbon (2007)**
  The Treaty of Lisbon makes sweeping reforms. It brings an end to the European Community, abolishes the former EU architecture and makes a new allocation of

competencies between the EU and the Member States. The way in which the European institutions function and the decision-making process are also subject to modifications. The aim is to improve the way in which decisions are made in an enlarged Union of 27 Member States. The Treaty of Lisbon also reforms several of the EU's internal and external policies. In particular, it enables the institutions to legislate and take measures in new policy areas.

Annex 3 - Eligibility to stand for office and to vote

Most often a Parliament refers to a democratic government's legislature. Generally, a parliament has three functions: representation, legislation and parliamentary control (i.e., hearings, inquiries). Normally, a Parliament is tied to a national state and works within the borders of that national state. Members of Parliaments are elected within the national state and their constituency is local.

The European Parliament, however, is one of four transnational parliaments, the other three are: Pan-African, Central American and Latin American. Each Member State has different rules determining who can vote for and run as European Parliamentary candidates.

Every EU citizen residing in an EU country of which s/he is not a national has the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in European Parliamentary elections in his/her country of residence, under the same conditions as nationals of that country - this right is enshrined in Article 39 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It is therefore possible for a person to have the choice of voting in more than one EU member state. For example, a Portuguese citizen who studies at university in France and lives at home outside term-time in the family home in the United Kingdom has the option of voting in the European Parliamentary election in France, Portugal or the United Kingdom. In this scenario, although the Portuguese citizen qualifies to vote in three EU Member States, he/she is only permitted to cast one vote in one of the Member States. [7]

But where European citizens can stand for office is of limited interest for the large majority of EU citizens. And the right of vote is of limited interest unless we exercise it, i.e. turn up to vote on the day. So how will the European Parliament actually get us out to the ballot boxes on the day?

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7 Election website - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Parliament_election,_2014 and http://europeanparliament.newsweaver.co.uk/4kiv48uzp4zql8i8i826ha?email=true

Annex 4 - Article on the Act. React. Impact.

This is an article copied direct from the European Parliament website explaining the Act. React. Impact. Slogan. [8]

As times are changing, so are we. Since the last European elections, the rules of the game have changed. The European Parliament now has more power, both to set the political direction of Europe and over the day-to-day decisions which affect us all. A more powerful European Parliament means more influence for everyone, more ability to deal with our problems, more ability to change what needs changing, more assertiveness to conserve what we want to keep.

Europe faces great challenges. Meeting them won't be easy, and choices have to be made. The changes made to the system were designed to ensure that we, the citizens of Europe, have more say over those choices. Not just when we go to the ballot box, but as decisions are taken, day in, day out. The European Parliament now decides on the European laws that affect you, across the board. On how your money is spent from the EU (European Union) budget, across the board. We must agree to the financing of the EU for years to come, looking at the collective interest of Europeans. And after the next elections it is your parliament who will elect the head of Europe's executive, based on your wishes, as expressed in these elections. This time it's different. Together we now have more power to make a difference. The European Parliament and you. Together we can act, react and have an impact.

Act

These are turbulent times in the history of Europe. For many people in Europe, these are hard times. As times have changed, so have we. The European Parliament now has more power in shaping Europe than ever before. And that gives you more power to make things happen. You can influence the decisions that touch your own life as well as the lives of over 500 million people. You can start something or end something. Ask for more or ask for less. You can act and take all matters big and small into your own hands. Choose which Europe you want. In the end, you decide what happens. Or doesn't happen.
The European Parliament represents each and every one of you and acts on your behalf. Our decisions are based on what matters to you. No, not everything can happen overnight, but one thing is for sure: together we can get it done.

React

You can make a real difference. Hold on to what's worth keeping, change what needs changing. Or question and criticise. Share your thoughts and react. The European way is not about one vision or one goal; it's about giving every opinion a fair chance.
The European Parliament is here to react to your demands and to fight for the things you really care about. Our job is to listen to the multitude of voices in Europe and provide real answers. We will face every challenge and offer solutions that make sense.

Impact

Through the European Parliament, you have more power than you think. You make a direct impact on everyone's future and more importantly: on your own and on the future of the next generations too. Each of your actions and reactions ultimately lead to results. The decisions we make together have an impact on the day-to-day life of over half a billion European citizens.
The European Parliament's responsibility is to make it work for everyone, including you. Not just to make a real difference for you, but with you. Today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

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8 http://www.elections2014.eu/en/top-stories/content/20130902TST18451/html/This-time-it's-different