

# Euroscepticism at the Supranational Level: The Case of the ‘Untidy Right’ in the European Parliament\*

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## Abstract

For the last 20 years, Euroscepticism has become a stable component of European politics and has attracted much attention. European elections have provided Eurosceptic parties with an opportunity to get parliamentary representation. While there is a burgeoning literature on the Eurosceptic stances of these parties, there remains relatively little research on their strategies once inside the European Parliament. This article analyzes how Eurosceptic MEPs from the ‘untidy right’ conceive and carry out their representative mandate in an institution they despise. First, it takes an historical perspective to show that despite the persistence of Euroscepticism in the European Union’s elected chamber, the body of research remains comparatively limited. Second, it examines the institutional constraints faced by Eurosceptic representatives resulting from the institutional environment and the ideological heterogeneity of these actors. The final part proposes a typology of parliamentary roles to account for their attitudes and behaviours inside the chamber.

## Introduction

Euroscepticism has become an integral part of the political landscape in Europe, both at the national and supranational levels. If there have always been diverging views of the European project, those views and oppositions have broadened in scope and range over time. Indeed, the increasing extension of European Union (EU) competences has multiplied the potential sources of tension, leading to various criticisms throughout Europe (Harmsen and Spiering, 2004, p. 13). The recent constitutionalization process of the EU and the uncertainty around its aims and future led not only to fears about what it might become (De Wilde, 2010) but also to the stabilization of Eurosceptic groups in the European Parliament (EP) and the persistence of the pro/anti-integration divide within the chamber (Hix *et al.*, 2007).

If a rich literature has developed since the mid-1990s on the diverging attitudes towards the European construction, the field of research tends to be the national arena. Literature on political parties usually focuses on the definition and explanations of Euroscepticism at the national level, while EP specialists tend to neglect Eurosceptic actors, who are considered to be a weak minority with very limited opportunities within the EU institutional system (Neunreither, 1998). Recently though, Euroscepticism at the supranational level has attracted some attention, with some research on Eurosceptic EP groups and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (Benedetto, 2008; Brack, 2012; Katz, 2008) and on Eurosceptic candidates and supporters (Lynch *et al.*, 2011).

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Building on these studies, this article examines those dissenting voices by concentrating on MEPs from the ‘untidy right’ – that is, representatives from Eurosceptic, radical right and sovereignist parties (Bell and Lord, 1998). More precisely, the analysis focuses on members of the Eurosceptic group Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD, Seventh Legislature, 2009–present) and its predecessor the Independence and Democracy group (IND/DEM, Sixth Legislature, 2004–09), as well as on Eurosceptic representatives from the radical right (Sixth and Seventh Legislatures). Indeed, those actors are representatives of fringe right-wing parties, sharing an opposition to the EU and/or European integration primarily for political and cultural reasons (contrary to the radical left who opposed the EU primarily on economic grounds). Moreover, they are at the heart of an interesting paradox: their greatest electoral successes have occurred in elections to an institution they oppose and having taken their seats, they are obliged to operate within it (Benedetto, 2008, p. 128). Being a member of an institution one despises or opposes thus poses an existentialist dilemma for this type of actor (Startin, 2010, p. 431).

This article therefore aims to understand the strategies developed by those actors once inside the EP. Drawing on the motivational approach of role theory, it shows that facing similar institutional constraints, Eurosceptic MEPs from the ‘untidy right’ can be categorized in three types of roles. It contributes thereby to a better understanding of these fringe actors and their behaviour at the supranational level. A first section shows that despite the persistence of Euroscepticism in the EP, the body of research on this issue remains comparatively limited. The second section examines the institutional constraints that Eurosceptic MEPs from the ‘untidy right’ face at the supranational level, with a focus on the institutional context and the ideological heterogeneity of these actors. The final section then proposes a typology of parliamentary roles to determine how they conceive and carry out their representative mandate, and examines the relation between those roles and their Euroscepticism.

Based on a qualitative methodology, this article relies on semi-structured interviews with a sample of 31 Eurosceptic MEPs from the EFD and the former IND/DEM group as well as from the non-attached members;<sup>1</sup> ten interviews with parliamentary assistants, group staff members and civil servants of the EP; the observation of EFD group meetings (July 2009–February 2010);<sup>2</sup> and the qualitative analysis of the parliamentary activities of these actors.

## I. The Persistence of Euroscepticism in the European Parliament

If the development of anti-EU sentiment is one of the most important features of the integration process over the last 15 years (Usherwood, 2007), there is one place where

<sup>1</sup> The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and three hours, were recorded and allowed for in-depth discussion of their visions of their mandate, their priorities, the meaning they attribute to their activities, their vision of the EU, of the integration process and of the EP. The MEPs interviewed were: John Agnew (UK), Marta Andreassen (UK), Gerald Batten (UK), Bastiaan Belder (NL), Godfrey Bloom (UK), Louis Bontes (NL), Graham Booth (UK), Andrew Brons (UK), John Bufton (UK), Philip Claeys (BE), Trevor Colman (UK), Hanne Dahl (DK), William Dartmouth (UK), Nigel Farage (UK), H elene Goudin (SE), Nils Lundgren (SE), Claudio Morganti (IT), Fiorello Provera (IT) Giancarlo Scott a (IT), Kathy Sinnott (IE), Timo Soini (FI), Lydia Schenardi (FR), Francesco Speroni (IT), Frank Vanhecke (BE), John Whittaker (UK), Tom Wise (UK), B. Wojciechowski (PL), a French MEP (NA), a Dutch MEP (NA) and two Austrian MEPs (NA).

<sup>2</sup> Permission to attend non-attached co-ordination meetings was not granted.

Euroskepticism has been present from the start: the EP (Hanley, 2007, p. 186). In the early stage of the European construction, MEPs were appointed by their national parliament, leading to an over-representation of mainstream parties and of representatives favourable to European integration. Apart from the Gaullists and some liberal parties from the Netherlands and Germany, opposition to the European project inside the EP was somewhat stifled (Zellentin, 1967). On the one hand, the 1970s brought some changes with the enlargement to Denmark and the United Kingdom and the arrival of communist and conservative MEPs. On the other hand, by 1979, the EP was directly elected. As some had feared, these elections have since then become a channel for Eurosceptic votes (Zellentin, 1967; Leconte, 2010). Indeed, being largely second order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), they have offered an opportunity for small and protest parties to gain parliamentary representation. In the 1980s, radical right and protest parties won seats at the supranational level and became more and more active. The ratification process of the Maastricht Treaty led to the emergence of new political forces and revealed the strength of Euroskepticism across the continent. The 1994 election reinforced their position in the EP with the arrival of representatives from anti-EU single-issue parties. Since then, the constitutionalization process seems to have fostered Euroskepticism, and EP elections provide Eurosceptic groups with a forum for mobilization (Usherwood and Startin in this issue). The last enlargements contributed to consolidating the ranks of these dissenting voices and to extending the range of their Eurosceptic attitudes. Although those groups of MEPs are very dependent on their electoral success, their share within the EP has remained quite stable: while there was 19 per cent of Eurosceptic MEPs after the 1979 elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), they account for one-fifth of the current assembly (Leconte, 2010, p. 160).

Despite the persistent nature of Euroskepticism in the EP, the literature on those actors remains rather limited. Since Taggart's (1998) seminal article, there has been an explosion of work seeking to comprehend the growing opposition to the EU (see Vasilopoulou in this issue). Scholars have attempted to understand the levels of support for and opposition to the EU among political parties and to classify the various reactions to the EU. They have shown the importance of strategic considerations and ideological factors to grasping Euroskepticism (Conti and Memoli, 2012; Kopecky and Mudde, 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008). They have also highlighted the fact that attitudes towards Europe have become more complex over time, and that the scope and the range of both Europhile and Eurosceptic positions have broadened (Hooghe and Marks, 2007; Mudde, 2011).

Generally, however, the field of research remains the national political arena. As noted by Jensen and Spoon (2010, p. 180), 'scholarship on the radical right and anti-EU parties has tended towards a focus on the parties' general Euroskepticism and less on their behaviour in parliament'. There are some fairly recent exceptions though. Katz (2008) compared MEPs and their national counterparts to identify the attitudinal sources of Euroskepticism, whereas Benedetto (2008) examined the lack of impact of Eurosceptic MEPs on the functioning of the EP after the 1999 elections. Settembri (2004) and Startin (2010) focused on radical right parties and their difficulties in co-operating at the supranational level.

Other research has focused on individual MEPs to address the question of political representation at the supranational level. It has shown that there remains a great variety in the ways Members select their priorities and follow various models of representation

at the EU level (Farrell and Scully, 2007; Navarro, 2009). The research has also highlighted the fact that the current knowledge of how MEPs understand their role as individual representatives remains limited (Farrell and Scully, 2007, p. 104). In the specific case of Eurosceptics, the study by Lynch *et al.* (2011) on the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) also shows that if representation in the EP provides hard Eurosceptic parties with resources, it also poses awkward questions about the extent to which they should engage with the EU, leading to some variation in the way UKIP's candidates approach their role.

Building on this research, this article examines how Eurosceptic representatives interpret their mandate inside the EP, with a focus on the EFD (former IND/DEM) group and radical right non-attached MEPs. To do so, it relies on the concept of 'role'. This notion has been a key one in legislative studies (Blomgren and Rozenberg, 2012) but 'although not completely ignored, it has not been the main driver of research on the EP so far' (Bale and Taggart, 2006, p. 6). More specifically, this article relies on this concept as defined by the motivational approach: 'as a dynamic configuration of interrelated goals, attitudes and core behaviours that are characteristics of people in particular positions' (Searing, 1994, p. 18). This allows us to explore what actors do, why they do it and why they think it is appropriate to act this way and therefore to articulate and explain parliamentarians' behaviour and perception of their mandate (Searing, 1994, p. 351). By seeking to reconstruct parliamentary roles from the actors' point of view, focusing on actors' meanings and motivations, this inductive approach takes into account the complexity of the parliamentary mandate (Searing, 2012).

In order to apply this approach to Eurosceptic MEPs, the analysis proceeds in two steps: an examination of the institutional environment as it constrains the thinking and behaviour of purposive politicians (Searing, 2012); and the provision of a typology of parliamentary roles. Actors' discourse during interviews was used as an indicator to determine how they perceive their job as representatives, what their motivations are and how they prioritize the various aspects of their mandate.<sup>3</sup> Observation of the group meetings allowed the examination of the daily activities of the EFD group and its members. Interviews were also conducted with parliamentary assistants, EP civil servants and members of the group staff. Parliamentary activities between July 2004 and January 2012 also serve to help construct the role typology as, according to the motivational approach, role perception and actual behaviour are seen as a coherent and dynamic whole (Searing, 1994, 2012).<sup>4</sup>

## II. The Supranational Level: An Unrewarding Location for Fringe Eurosceptics

This section examines the constraints faced by Eurosceptics at the supranational level, and more particularly, those resulting from the institutional context, on the one hand, and those resulting from the ideological heterogeneity of Eurosceptic parties, on the other.

<sup>3</sup> Some MEPs could not be interviewed and, instead, their positions stated on their personal website (if available) were analyzed to determine their role orientations and opinions on European integration and the EU.

<sup>4</sup> These parliamentary activities are reported in Tables 1 and 2. These tables include all MEPs from the IND/DEM group who were part of the group for at least half of the legislature; all MEPs who were members of the EFD by the end of 2011; and all the Eurosceptic non-attached MEPs who sat the whole term except Roger Helmer and Daniel Hannan, who were part of the ECR group in January 2012 (when the data collection ended).

### *The Institutional Context*

The roles adopted by actors are embedded in particular institutions; therefore, the institutional framework influences the scope of opportunities available for actors (Searing, 1994). If, in general, formal and informal rules of parliament act both as a constraint and a resource for the actions of its members, these resources and constraints are not the same for all and might depend on many elements such as the actor's previous experience, nationality or membership in a group (Costa, 2001; Jacobs *et al.*, 2007). The situation of Eurosceptic MEPs is particular in that respect. Unlike members of large groups, they are freer to act: they have to comply to a lesser extent with rules of conduct and voting instructions. In the case of IND/DEM and EFD members, the group has been constituted on the basis of an 'agreement to disagree' and members vote as they see fit. Thus, there is no voting discipline and no group rules concerning the behaviour of its members.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, compared to the situation of non-attached members, the rules grant members of a group more room for manoeuvre and potential for action. As a consequence, they can make greater use of the powers guaranteed to individuals by the rules of the institution, which constitute important resources for these members. As noted by Jacobs *et al.* (2007, p. 56), 'the rules thus give considerable scope for dissident members within a political group or coalitions of individual members across groups, to trigger different procedures'. The non-attached members' situation is a little different as they are even freer to act and do not have to respect any rule or norm from a group. There are co-ordination meetings among them, but those meetings are just a platform for those who want to collaborate with no obligation to do so.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, however, the institutional framework also acts as a constraint on the actions of Eurosceptic members. First, with the empowerment of the EP over time, the assembly tends to focus on its legislative activities. Whereas these Eurosceptics are elected on the pro/anti-integration divide, the EP core business has become its legislative tasks and, except for rare exceptions such as debates on the treaties, there is not much room for debates on more or less Europe inside the EP. Second, the internal working of the EP is characterized by a tendency to decide by compromise. To a large extent, the institution cannot be considered to be a site for political opposition (Neunreither, 1998; Mair, 2007): any conflict is dealt with *ex ante* by the main actors, leaving no room for constructive opposition (Settembri, 2006). The three main groups (EPP, S&D and ALDE, respectively, 271, 189 and 85 out of 754 seats under the Seventh Legislature) work closely together and tend to dominate the legislative work. They do not need the support of marginal fringe groups such as EFD, and therefore Eurosceptics lack any blackmail power (Benedetto, 2008). Third, as a result of their Eurosceptic position, leaders of the main EP groups make sure that these members are unable to promote their European ideas, particularly on sensitive issues. As shown by Startin (2010), there is a sort of *cordon sanitaire*, especially around radical right members, as the majority of the MEPs are hostile to their presence in the EP. It is thus much more difficult for members of small and marginalized groups to obtain reports (Jacobs *et al.*, 2007, p. 59). They receive very few reports in part because some of them do not want to be in charge of reports, but also because, as extremists, they

<sup>5</sup> The IND/DEM and EFD's charter states that in the name of the respect of the national differences and interests, the group respects the freedom of members to act and vote as they see fit.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with parliamentary assistants and EP civil servants.



might obtain the least salient reports (Hausemer, 2006, p. 413). On sensitive issues, the risks are too great that they will write a report considered unacceptable by the majority of the EP.<sup>7</sup> Eurosceptics' actions are thus restricted to individual types of action such as speeches or parliamentary questions because, on the one hand, they are in a minority whose points of view have no chance of prevailing and, on the other hand, because other MEPs do not expect them to be involved within the parliament (Costa, 2001; Navarro, 2009).

An additional constraint has become particularly noticeable over the last few years and comes from the various reforms of the Rules of Procedure. Indeed, over time, political groups have seen their influence grow, at the expense of individual MEPs and non-attached members. At the beginning, many of the rights granted to political groups were also awarded to a small proportion of MEPs who did not belong to any group, but the situation evolved and the proportion of individual MEPs required to exercise the same rights as the groups gradually increased (Kreppel, 2002; Brack *et al.*, 2010). At the same time, the conditions for forming a group have become more constraining in terms of the threshold and number of Member States represented. Moreover, in the specific case of the non-attached members, their representation in the Conference of the Presidents has decreased by half since 2007, and since the reform of 2010 they can no longer choose who will be their representative as it is now the President of the EP who appoints their delegate. They are also kept away from the meetings of co-ordinators who decide on the distribution of reports. Those meetings used to be informal, but since they are now mentioned in the internal rules the status of co-ordinators is reserved to members of political groups, with the non-attached being *de facto* excluded.<sup>8</sup> Finally, after repeated disruptions during plenary sessions by some Eurosceptic MEPs, EP leaders and the main political groups have attempted to regulate more rigorously members' behaviour. This has resulted in several reforms of the Rules, including more strictly supervised plenary sessions and the establishment of a new code of conduct with new sanctions for disruptions (Brack *et al.*, 2010).

In a nutshell, the system tends to provide members with greater disincentives to be in permanent opposition: given the working mechanisms of the EP, any permanent opposition will tend to have fewer resources, more limited visibility and face greater marginalization (Settembri, 2006, pp. 24–5).

### *The Heterogeneous Euroscepticism among MEPs from the 'Untidy Right'*

An additional set of constraints comes from the heterogeneity of Euroscepticism among these actors. If, in general, opposition to Europe is very diverse, both in nature and degree (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008) and Eurosceptics can be found in various proportions among several political groups, even the 'usual suspects' such as radical right representatives have different visions of European integration and the EU (Vasilopoulou, 2011).

In the case of the EFD, IND/DEM and Eurosceptic non-attached members, the interviews revealed three main positions on integration and the EU. A first position reflects a hard Euroscepticism (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008) or a Europhobe position (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002) – that is, maintaining a principled opposition to political integration and

<sup>7</sup> Interviews with members of the group staff.

<sup>8</sup> If some committee chairs allowed non-attached members to participate as observers, the rules now stipulate that the status of co-ordinator is reserved to group members (interview with an EP civil servant).

openly advocating the withdrawal of one's country from the EU. This position on the EU is very hostile, and EU institutions are perceived as anti-democratic and impossible to reform.

Opinions on the EP diverge into two groups. For some, the institution should disappear as it is a useless chamber with no jurisdiction.<sup>9</sup> While the second group does not favour any strengthening of the EP's powers, the institution is considered useful as a forum, as a place to exist politically in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

The second position can be interpreted as 'intergovernmentalist'. These MEPs stress the importance of national sovereignty and do not favour the transfer of responsibilities to the supranational level under the Community method. However, they can be in favour of intergovernmental co-operation and, in their view, the EU should be reformed to enhance the role of Member States through the strengthening of the national parliaments and the Council as they are 'convinced that the legitimate level for democracy lies with the Nation States, their regions and parliaments since there is no such thing as a single European people'.<sup>11</sup> In their eyes, the EP is a forum for the defence of national interests.<sup>12</sup>

The third group perceives European integration as an undesirable constraint or even a necessary evil. These MEPs accept the principle of institutionalized co-operation, a more or less integrated market and some transfers of sovereignty, but they want some limits. They are similar to Kopecky and Mudde's (2002) 'Eurosceptic' category as they accept limited institutionalized co-operation and integration, but are critics of the EU project and consider that the current direction of the Union is not the acceptable form of integration. As noted by an interviewee, 'the EU should be limited to the internal market, the cross-border issues like the fight against terrorism. But integration can only happen in policies in which the EU has an added-value'.<sup>13</sup> They advocate reforms of EU institutions, such as the direct election of Commissioners, and increased transparency and accountability.

Because of this heterogeneity, but also the conflicting logic of nationalist transnational co-operation, Eurosceptics hardly manage to be organized at the supranational level. Radical right members are typically unable or unwilling to join a group or to fulfil the conditions to form one. Usually, they do not even succeed in acting in a co-ordinated way, which excludes them from some rights open to a certain number of MEPs. There have been several recent attempts to form groups among radical right representatives, but they have been rather short-lived (Settembri, 2004; Startin, 2010). Therefore, they languish among the non-attached due to their contempt for the EP and their chronic inability to co-operate in a meaningful way (Hanley, 2007, p. 195). Transnational federations of radical rights are equally unstable and even with the creation of the Euronat in 2005 and the European Alliance for Freedom in 2010, their organization is not comparable to those of the main party families in terms of the degree of institutionalization, stability and comprehensiveness (Ennsner, 2012).

Other Eurosceptics have been able to form EP groups over time. The former IND/DEM and the EFD groups are the only ones based on the pro-/anti-Europe divide, with Euroscepticism acting as the cement of the group. But co-operation outside the EP remains controversial among EFD members. Some have accepted, to a certain extent, the principle

<sup>9</sup> Interviews with Godfrey Bloom and William Dartmouth.

<sup>10</sup> Interviews with Nigel Farage's political adviser and parliamentary assistants.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Claudio Morganti.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Barry Madlener.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Philip Claey's.

of transnational parties, even if it is in a purely instrumental way (Hanley, 2007, p. 188). They choose to belong to a European party such as the European Alliance for Freedom (individual membership) or the Alliance for Europe of the Nations (or EUDemocrats in the case of the former IND/DEM group). Others remain unrelated to any European political party and prefer a less institutionalized network, such as the European Alliance of EU-Critical Movements (TEAM), but these groups and parties lack any cohesion on most issues. They are based on a technical agreement to take advantage of available resources and correspond more to a minimal response to new opportunities than to genuine political groupings.

### III. A Typology of Parliamentary Roles

Facing similar constraints, this section examines whether Eurosceptic MEPs display a variety of strategies and perceptions of their European mandate within the EP. The analysis of the data shows that there is indeed a variation among them that can be summarized in a typology of three ideal-types of parliamentary roles: the Absentee, the Public Orator and the Pragmatist. These roles are to be understood as Weberian ideal-types: the characteristic attitudes and behaviours of each type have been accentuated to highlight its specificities and the differences between the roles.<sup>14</sup>

#### *The Absentee*

The role of the Absentee is characterized by two main elements: comparatively limited involvement inside the Parliament and an emphasis on the national arena and the voters. Although minimal involvement is not restricted solely to Eurosceptics, a lack of involvement has a specific meaning in their case and can reflect another type of representation in the EP. It can be motivated either by a lack of interest in the mandate or by an absolute refusal to get involved in the daily functioning of the institution. They get no satisfaction from sitting in the EP and would rather be elected at the regional or national level.

MEPs identified as playing the role of Absentee display a comparatively limited involvement in parliamentary activities (see Tables 1 and 2). Since they feel that their capacity for action in the assembly is reduced, they consider any activities they might undertake to be quite futile. It matters very little to them which committee they join since they consider it as secondary, and they do not take an active part in the work of their committees – some even do not attend committees on a regular basis.<sup>15</sup> They do not want any reporting duties or responsibilities within the Parliament or its organs: ‘I do not want to be involved in the rapporteur thing’.<sup>16</sup> The same logic applies to other parliamentary activities. Plenary speeches are of no particular meaning for this type of MEP, although some display a great number of them.<sup>17</sup> As far as the vote is concerned, they usually take part in it as the only opportunity to show opposition in the chamber. They tend to abstain or vote against most texts and have a very realistic view of the impact of their vote: ‘I don’t

<sup>14</sup> Each MEP is more or less close to one ideal-type and has been classified accordingly, as reported in Tables 1 and 2.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with a French MEP, with group staff members and with parliamentary assistants.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with John Agnew.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Godfrey Bloom.



Table 1: Distribution of MEPs According to the Typology of Roles<sup>a</sup> – Sixth Legislature (2004–09)

Name	Group	Attendance plenary <sup>b</sup> (%)	Reports	Motions	Amendments	Speeches	Questions
<i>MEPs closer to the ideal-type Absentee</i>							
de Villiers	ID	52	0	1	0	18	1
Whittaker	ID	57	0	1	1	55	2
Le Pen	NA	58	0	0	0	34	0
Le Pen	NA	76	0	1	0	26	6
Mussolini	NA	48	0	1	0	8	0
Couteaux	ID	69	0	1	0	36	3
Natrass	ID	83	0	1	0	34	5
Knapman	ID/NA	73	0	1	0	42	2
Bloom	ID	62	0	1	0	40	40
Schenardi	NA	91	0	1	0	55	5
Zelezny	ID	84	0	2	16	24	4
Karatzafelis*	ID	65	0	3	16	101	663
Kilroy Silk	ID/NA	54	0	0	1	7	1,921
<i>MEPs closer to the ideal-type Public Orator</i>							
Booth**	ID	74	0	2	2	48	4
Titford	ID	72	0	1	0	67	11
Farage	ID	78	0	3	1	99	101
Mote	NA	87	0	1	2	53	419
Batten	NA	86	0	1	0	184	26
Clark	ID	94	0	1	2	101	18
Allister	NA	96	0	0	2	314	214
Gollnisch	NA	91	0	4	0	303	8
Wojciechowski*	ID	98	0	2	2	92	2
Wise	ID/NA	97	0	2	3	82	20
Mglzer	NA	80	0	1	4	369	111
Dillen	NA	95	0	10	3	136	149
Martinez	NA	85	0	0	0	133	15
Lang	NA	97	0	1	0	147	13
Van Hecke	NA	85	0	11	0	159	375
Bobosikova	NA	92	0	3	6	82	28

Table 1: (Continued)

Name	Group	Attendance plenary <sup>b</sup> (%)	Reports	Motions	Amendments	Speeches	Questions
<i>MEPs closer to the ideal-type Pragmatist</i>							
Bonde*	ID	98	0	11	34	122	142
Le Rachinel	NA	87	1	0	1	68	5
Claeys	NA	98	0	15	11	183	202
Romagnoli	NA	94	3	2	18	426	851
Lundgren	ID	83	14	2	16	706	57
Goudin	ID	80	0	2	12	666	150
Louis	ID	84	0	3	12	55	9
Krupa	ID	99	0	2	161	155	16
Giertych	NA	95	0	4	7	31	9
Tomczak	ID	91	0	1	11	42	38
Martin	NA	97	23	1	26	141	74
Sinnott	ID	92	1	8	58	246	213
Belder	ID	94	2	23	18	187	17
Blokland	ID	94	14	14	117	200	17

Source: <<http://www.votewatch.eu>>.

Notes: <sup>a</sup> As mentioned previously, roles are defined as complex and dynamic configurations of interrelated goals, attitudes and behaviours, and the typology presents here ideal-types to which each MEP is more or less close. Therefore, it must be noted that the categorization was not based on one particular behaviour. The priority was given to the motivations and aims of the MEPs as stated during the interviews. In terms of behaviour, particular attention was devoted to the involvement in parliamentary activities and the scope of those activities. For instance, Absentees are characterized by a low involvement in most activities and not only by their attendance rate. Pragmatists, on the contrary, can be differentiated from the two other types through their involvement in a broader range of parliamentary activities, including amendments, motions for resolutions as well as reports. So rather than clear cut-off points, a combination of elements were used to categorize each MEP.

<sup>b</sup> Although attendance in plenary is not the best element to see members' attendance as there are financial penalties to fight absenteeism (related to the payment of the daily allowances), there are no other publicly available data (such as attendance during committee and group meetings). It should also be noted that since October 2009 group leaders no longer have to sign the attendance register.

<sup>c</sup> Members with a \* besides their names did not sit the whole parliamentary term. For the Sixth Legislature, Bonde retired in May 2008, Booth in October 2008, Wojciechowski started his mandate at the end of October 2005 and Karatzafis left the EP by the end of July 2007.

Table 2: Distribution of MEPs According to the Typology of Roles – Seventh Legislature (July 2009–1 January 2012)

Name	Group	Attendance plenary (%)	Reports	Motions	Amendments	Speeches	Questions
<i>MEPs closer to the ideal-type Absentee</i>							
de Villiers	EFD	53	0	2	0	16	1
Le Pen	NA	61	0	0	0	22	2
Le Pen	NA	72	0	0	0	15	0
Becali	NA	25	0	0	8	82	3
Salvini	EFD	72	1	2	30	19	104
Natrass	EFD/NA	81	0	0	0	12	1
Tudor	NA	62	0	0	0	18	0
Agnew	EFD	86	0	0	1	39	126
Kovacs <sup>3a</sup>	NA	86	0	0	1	15	4
Bloom	EFD	56	0	0	0	32	26
Colman	EFD/NA	76	0	0	0	15	1
Nuttall	EFD	62	0	1	5	31	22
Binev	NA	68	1	0	13	69	32
Borghesio	EFD	87	0	9	15	59	114
Griffin	NA	86	0	1	0	38	86
Morvai	NA	63	0	1	14	89	0
Stassen	NA	87	0	1	6	31	50
<i>MEPs closer to the ideal-type Public Orator</i>							
Batten	EFD	78	0	0	0	109	34
Szegedi	NA	69	0	1	1	100	14
Bufton	EFD	79	0	0	0	137	73
Van Hecke	NA/EFD	86	0	2	4	28	121
Clark	EFD	83	0	0	0	61	8
Farage	EFD	–	0	0	0	83	61
Dartmouth	EFD	72	0 <sup>b</sup>	1	13	107	264
Sinclair	EFD/NA	89	0	0	3	104	34
Dodds	NA	90	0	0	9	150	42
Gollnisch	NA	90	0	31	0	218	3
Brons	NA	95	0	1	0	149	39

Table 2: (Continued)

Name	Group	Attendance plenary (%)	Reports	Motions	Amendments	Speeches	Questions
Möller	NA	98	0	7	124	743	420
Obermayr	NA	97	0	3	51	433	229
Paska	EFD	100	0	21	2	300	25
Morganti	EFD	91	0	4	5	125	61
<i>MEPs closer to the ideal-type Pragmatist</i>							
Madlener	NA	87	0	1	9	53	88
Messerschmidt	EFD	83	0	3	14	35	175
Andreassen	EFD	96	0	0	54	73	40
Werthmann	NA	98	0	2	37	451	88
Paksas	EFD	72	0	20	212	239	27
Erhenhausen	NA	99	0	0	7	52	329
Martin	NA	97	0	0	32	85	250
Bizzotto	EFD	90	0	24	31	105	461
Fontana	EFD	99	0	36	38	59	92
Stoyanov	NA	75	0	1	16	61	34
Imbrasas	EFD	93	0	17	120	145	35
Claeys	NA	98	1	8	8	75	108
Belder	EFD	98	1	24	12	86	6
Tzavela	EFD	80	1	16	37	52	357
Salavrakos*	EFD	78	0	20	21	56	248
Rossi	EFD	100	3	29	79	141	396
Salvini	EFD	72	1	2	30	19	104
Scotta	EFD	97	1	8	22	14	84
Provera	EFD	91	1	83	34	53	151
Speroni	EFD	-	4	13	10	31	59

Source: <<http://www.votewatch.eu>>.

Notes: \* Members with a \* besides their names did not sit the whole parliamentary term. For the Seventh Legislature, Kovacs started on 31 May 2010 and Salavrakos on 14 October 2009.

<sup>b</sup> Although he was formally in charge of a report, he decided not to continue with it and to pass it on to another member of his committee.

think it matters by the way because even if we sit there to blow bubbles it doesn't matter, they are going to push the laws through anyway'.<sup>18</sup>

The only tool these MEPs consider valuable to a certain extent is the written questions since they can be used in relation to the second important aspect of their role: the emphasis on the national level. Absentees use the questions as a strategy to emphasize their links with their voters and to defend the interests of their constituency (or particular individuals):

Sometimes, if I'm dealing with a constituent who feels betrayed and let down, and I'm feeling very sorry for him, I put a parliamentary question down, just to say, there is absolutely nothing I can do about it, I would put a parliamentary question down because, at least, that's all I can do.<sup>19</sup>

While Absentees may neglect the parliament, they are very active at home. Most of the interviewees identified as playing that role acknowledged that they spend most of their time at home and come to the EP for a few days a month: 'They elected me to be opposed to the EU, it is my mandate. So I spent most of my time at home to explain how undemocratic and inefficient the EU is'.<sup>20</sup> Absentees see their role as promoting their ideas at home through appearances on television and radio and the organization of meetings and visits to schools.<sup>21</sup> They feel they are in a permanent campaign against Europe. Their main source of satisfaction is not derived from an anti-conformist attitude, but rather from the conduct of a permanent campaign to influence public opinion at home.

Opportunistic and utilitarian considerations also play an important role. They can indeed be strongly motivated by the benefits attached to the position of MEP (immunity, income, access to the media, social prestige). They try therefore to attend plenary sessions in order to avoid the financial sanctions designed to fight against absenteeism:

If I don't come and put my card in the slot to vote, I don't get my money to give to the party. [. . .] And the letters MEP behind my name, I can do a lot more with that, it is silly but that doesn't matter, I use this position for the cause.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, some are more 'utilitarian absentees'. Their participation in EP elections is essentially motivated by national political considerations and by their desire to take advantage of an electoral system that is more favourable to small, marginalized parties.<sup>23</sup> The seat in the EP is then an opportunity to get noticed at the national level and gain some legitimacy (Startin, 2010) while not being involved in the EP. Being an MEP is an ersatz power for these actors (Kauppi, 1996, p. 11): '[I]t was an opportunity, it is the only election with a proportional system. [. . .] I'm a candidate to elections for which there are some chances of getting elected'.<sup>24</sup>

Among the MEPs closer to this ideal-type, there is not much variation between the EFD group and the non-attached members, but one could note that French and British

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Trevor Colman.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Godfrey Bloom.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with John Whittaker.

<sup>21</sup> Interviews with Godfrey Bloom, Trevor Colman and John Agnew.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Trevor Colman.

<sup>23</sup> Being second order, EU elections tend to focus on national themes and to favour small and protest political parties (Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

<sup>24</sup> Interview with a French MEP.



representatives are numerous among this type. Some are party leaders and clearly consider that their role is to be at home and not to be involved in legislating in the chamber.<sup>25</sup> For the others, it tends to reflect the degree and nature of their opposition to the European project. This ideal-type tends to be chosen by either intergovernmentalists who do not recognize much value or authority in the EP, or by hostile MEPs who are more on the ‘*fundi*’ side of the ‘*fundi v. realo*’ among Eurosceptic parties (Usherwood, 2008) – especially among UKIP representatives.

### *The Public Orator*

MEPs playing this ideal-type of role give priority to two aspects of the mandate: public speaking and the dissemination of negative information on the EU. The primary objective of Public Orators is to publicize and defend their positions by all means: ‘[M]y main role is to speak, talk and stand for the people’.<sup>26</sup> They exploit any piece of information that could support their positions, especially concerning the failings of European integration – corruption, fraud, scandals . . . . They often use parliamentary questions that tend to focus on topics such as the costs arising from the running of EU institutions, requests for investigation on an individual Commissioner and the cost of bodyguards for Commissioners.

Public Orators thus see themselves as being the only opposition speakers whose role is to ‘be the critical voice, who asks difficult questions, to highlight the lack of democratic legitimacy’.<sup>27</sup> The logic is to de-legitimize the institution through public speeches. The majority of Public Orators’ activities consist therefore of general denunciations of the failures and negative consequences of European integration. Since Public Orators see their role as being in permanent opposition, they do not take part in the other activities of the EP.

As we can see from Tables 1 and 2, they mainly focus on speeches (and questions), whereas their involvement in other parliamentary activities is very limited. ‘I don’t want to be involved in the way it works. Being in charge of a report, you’re becoming part of it and I don’t want to be.’<sup>28</sup> They are not interested in the ‘traditional’ aspects of parliamentary work, and are very rarely involved in committee work as they do not see any reward to this type of action as they feel they do not receive much public attention in a committee. The vote is another way of showing their principled opposition. They typically oppose – almost systematically – most texts, although they prepare the voting lists with their assistants and discuss them in group meetings or within the party delegation.<sup>29</sup>

The main source of satisfaction of Public Orator is publicity and anti-conformism. Contrary to the Absentee, they are usually familiar with the EP’s formal and informal rules as it helps them to get speaking time. They often resort to such activities as calling to order, putting forward motions of censure or even expressing insults in plenary. This behaviour in plenary and a good knowledge of the Rules of Procedure clearly distinguish this type of MEP from the others. They consider being there to be actively critical. As an interviewee explained:

<sup>25</sup> Interviews with parliamentary assistants.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Nigel Farage.

<sup>27</sup> Interview Frank Vanhecke.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with John Bufton.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with parliamentary assistants and observation of group meetings.

I was elected because I reflected a political philosophy, and I maintained that political philosophy so I attempted to put my particular point of view in every debate, every discussion I can. That means turning up to the meetings, getting speaking time, I am not here to make this place work better, I am not here to help this thing exist, I am here to criticize, criticize, criticize.<sup>30</sup>

Such an attitude does not make for good relations with other MEPs, especially from the large groups. However, Public Orators are generally indifferent to this as their main motive is not to negotiate with others. As stated by an MEP: '[I]t is important to be present and play an active part. Some people go further and say one should play a constructive role. Well it's difficult to play a constructive part in an institution we don't agree with'.<sup>31</sup> They usually evaluate their effectiveness in terms of the publicity and reactions they get from their speeches and behaviours.

The second fundamental aspect of this ideal-type of role concerns the great importance given to the dissemination of information, at all territorial levels. Public Orators think that it is their duty to inform the public of the decisions made by the EU and their negative consequences. They have strong relations with the media and are always available to answer questions from voters, journalists and so on. Their presence in the EP and its bodies is conditioned partly by the satisfaction of making plenary speeches, but also by the need to collect negative information on the EU and to know from the inside what is happening.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of Euro-scepticism, this ideal-type tends to be chosen by either hostile MEPs who are more on the '*realo*' side of the dilemma between '*fundi*' and '*realo*' among Euro-sceptic parties (Usherwood, 2008) or intergovernmentalists who see the EP as a useful forum of expression. There is a clear over-representation of British MEPs in this ideal-type. Their choice of a role can then partly reflect their parliamentary tradition: they tend to have a more confrontational vision of politics and parliamentary debates (Navarro, 2009) and tend therefore to 'import the Westminster style' into the EP.

### *The Pragmatist*

The ideal-type role of the Pragmatist is characterized by greater involvement in the daily work of the EP, a need to achieve results and a tendency to respect the rules. Like the Absentees and the Public Orators, Pragmatist MEPs are aware they belong to a minority that has little chance of deeply influencing the EP's legislative work or seeing their opinion prevail. They tend to share some common characteristics with the Public Orator as they enjoy getting some attention, but Pragmatists have another conception of their role and tend to be driven by a desire to be efficient and contribute in some policy areas. Therefore, they do not remain in a sterile opposition, but develop a different strategy by getting partially involved and being what they call a 'constructive opposition'. They do not aim primarily to perturb the EP proceedings or undermine the European political system. Their objective is rather to strike a balance between the promotion of their views and the pursuit of concrete results. They develop a dual conception of their mandate: as Euro-sceptic they see themselves as an opposition, but as MEPs they want to make a difference.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Tom Wise.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Andrew Brons.

<sup>32</sup> Interviews with Andrew Brons and Frank Vanhecke.

Two subgroups are distinguishable: the first one includes Pragmatists who conceive and carry out their mandate in order to amend and control, in specific areas, the initiatives of their fellow MEPs and of the other EU institutions: 'I think we have to work in the legislative work as well as the control function of the parliament'.<sup>33</sup> They also use their mandate to control the national government – for instance, through questions to the Commission. If all Pragmatists attach great importance to the national arena, which is, in their eyes, the legitimate locus for political action, the second subgroup is primarily driven by the motivation to defend the national/regional interest in the chamber and solve the problems in their country/region. They tend to adopt an instrumentalist approach as they use the assembly as a forum for the advocacy of national or specific interests that they cannot defend at the national level. 'We have decided to enter the structures of the European Parliament because we want not only to take care of Polish business but also to do our best in sustaining the identity of Poland as a sovereign and independent country.'<sup>34</sup> This implies, for all Pragmatists, more constructive attitudes and behaviours and an involvement in a broader range of parliamentary activities, compared to the Absentees and Public Orators.

As Tables 1 and 2 show, MEPs identified as playing the role of Pragmatist use the various parliamentary tools at their disposal, including amendments, motions and reports. Moreover, Pragmatists spend more time in the institution and tend to respect its rules. This also distinguishes the Pragmatist from the Public Orator: the language and the rhetoric of the former are less contesting and speeches are not considered to be the most efficient tool: 'I mainly work in the committee, you don't change people's mind with plenary speeches'.<sup>35</sup> Work in committees is considered to be essential to influence the content of some policies in which Pragmatists think the EU has an added-value.<sup>36</sup> Their voting behaviour is more conciliatory, and they vote according to the issues at stake (whether it is the internal market, environmental policy or regional development).<sup>37</sup> They also tend to propose amendments as part of their work for the committees to which they belong and try to have some form of influence:

Basically I am a full member of the budgetary control committee and a substitute in the budget committee and I'm going to work hard in those committees. There are reports that are issued where either I could be the rapporteur or I can propose amendments to reports.<sup>38</sup>

Such MEPs can also work closely with officials from the other institutions in order to increase their efficiency while still criticizing the functioning of those very same institutions.<sup>39</sup> Given their relatively constructive attitude and involvement in committees, they have better relations with MEPs from other groups. They may thus aspire to be in charge of some technical reports or hold some responsibilities due to the principle of proportional distribution of functions between the groups.

In sum, Pragmatists try to keep a balance between ideals (Euroscepticism) and pragmatism, and develop a dual strategy either of control:

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Philip Claeys.

<sup>34</sup> Urszula Krupa, personal website.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Nils Lundgren.

<sup>36</sup> Interviews with Hanne Dahl, Kathy Sinnott, H  l  ne Goudin and Marta Andreassen and group meetings observations.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with members of the group staff.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Marta Andreassen.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Kathy Sinnott.

[A]s MEP my role is to control legislation and see what I can achieve case by case but as a Eurosceptic, my role is to oppose [. . .] and even as MEP, I could make a difference in important areas such as transparency and the division of competences between the EU and the national levels.<sup>40</sup>

or of regional/national involvement:

I have two levels of activities if you like: change as much as I can towards more democracy and efficiency of the European institutions through a political action and second, be active, do all I can to give answers to my territory, to answer their needs, and why not, to bring money, help, from a social, economic or institutional point of view.<sup>41</sup>

However, this balance between ideals and pragmatism seems quite difficult to achieve, especially when it comes to contributing to the legislative process. On the one hand, they accept some collaboration but do not want to compromise on their views.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, some have to face constraints from home as the party may be more interested to be seen as constructive in the EP.<sup>43</sup>

In terms of Euroscepticism, this ideal-type is primarily chosen by reformist MEPs who accept some limited and institutionalized co-operation at the European level and concentrate their criticism on the current state of the EU.

## Conclusions

European integration and the development of the EU polity gave rise to fears and oppositions, both among public opinion and political elites (see Usherwood and Startin in this issue). These oppositions have been reflected in the EP where Eurosceptic members have been active in the defence and the promotion of their points of view. By focusing on the 'untidy right' representatives, this article has analyzed their strategies in an institution they strongly criticize. It has shown that despite the strong constraints they face, these actors conceive and carry out their representative mandate in different ways that can be summarized through a typology of three ideal-types of parliamentary role: the Absentee, the Public Orator and the Pragmatist. These roles allow us to better understand the relations between the attitudes, motivations and behaviours displayed by Eurosceptic actors at the supranational level. Future research including all Eurosceptic MEPs such as the radical left and the ECR group would be necessary though in order to fully understand the strategies of Eurosceptic MEPs and the reasons behind their choice of a role.

It would also allow reflecting on the impact of those actors on the EU and on the role of political conflict in the EP. Currently, Euroscepticism, especially in its outright form, remains rather marginal and has not had a direct impact on policy outcomes. EU institutions have been quite resistant to the arrival of Eurosceptic actors (Brack, 2012; Leconte, 2012). Euroscepticism would thus have to be much more widespread among elites to

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Hanne Dahl.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Fiorello Provera.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, an MEP identified as a Pragmatist, in charge of several technical reports on budgetary control, voted against his own reports because they were amended by his colleagues (interviews with Nils Lundgren and members of the group staff).

<sup>43</sup> For the Seventh Legislature, some parties sent new members to the EFD group to moderate the oppositional attitudes of their representatives and to provide another line of conduct for the delegation (interviews with several MEPs and parliamentary assistants).

really have an immediate impact on the workings of the EU institutions. However, this does not mean that the presence of Eurosceptics within the EP has no impact at all. As Diez Medrano (2012) noted, it is possible that their presence and the fact that they remain able to voice their views help de-legitimize the EU among citizens and thus indirectly contribute to stalling the integration process. And it is indeed the main motivation of the Public Orator type of Eurosceptic.

On the other hand, it is also possible that the presence of dissenting voices could increase the representativeness of the EP, and contribute thereby to the legitimacy of the system. The roles of Eurosceptic MEPs could then be fundamental in that respect. Eurosceptics not only raise the issue of the limits of the current integration process, but also the key question of the role of opposition in a political system like the EU, which relies on relatively depoliticized and consensual interactions (Leconte, 2010). The presence of critical and hostile actors at the heart of the system itself could maybe help diffuse the criticism it faces. Indeed, although political opposition is central to democracy (Dahl, 1966), the European system lacks an institutionalized site for classical opposition and tends to reject conflict. Because of this lack of opportunities for dissenting voices within the EU, classical opposition tends to turn into principled opposition: '[O]nce we cannot organize opposition *in* the EU, we are then almost forced to organize opposition *to* the EU' (Mair, 2007, p. 7). While European citizens are increasingly willing to express dissatisfaction with the EU, the EP as an elected institution has failed to build effective links between the people and the EU (Farrell and Scully, 2007). The presence of Eurosceptic MEPs could then help enhance these links by allowing this dissatisfaction to be expressed and engaged with inside the EP and, hence, by making an opposition *in* the EU possible.

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