A parliament for the people? - The European Parliament's activism in the area of social policy from the early 1970s to the Single European Act

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The formal powers of the European Parliament (EP) prior to the 1986 Single European Act (SEA) were marginal. However, this limited formal role did not correspond to the perception of the early Members of the EP (MEPs) as to what role the EP should play in Community policy-making: that of an (eventually) fully-fledged supranational legislative, instead of the assembly with limited consultative and control powers provided by the founding treaties. Predominantly driven by pro-integrationist ideas of ever-closer union – and of an ever-stronger parliament – MEPs became activists for deeper political as well as institutional integration from the EP's beginnings in the 1950s.[1] By the 1970s, they had reached a relatively frequent level of EP involvement in Community policy-making, albeit in many areas only through informally established routines. The 1970s and 1980s constitute a period in which some of these interinstitutional routines became formalised and further strengthened, not least in the context of the budget treaties of 1970 and 1975, the EP's first direct elections in 1979, and the SEA.

This article sheds light on the EP's growing legislative influence and increasing parliamentarisation through such processes during the two decades preceding the SEA. It does so through the lens of Community social policy, an area providing a particularly strong ideational dimension already at the time. The EP's involvement in Community social policy was significantly influenced by the discrepancy between MEPs' ideas of what the Communities' social dimension and the EP's role in its creation should be on the one hand, and of Community competences and the influence of the EP on Community decision-making in the area, according to the Treaties, on the other. This discrepancy led to a high level of EP activism in the area, thus providing ample material to study MEPs' attempts to empower their institution, and to influence Community policy-making.

Perceiving a lack of public support for and identification with the Community project, MEPs invested considerable time and effort at the time into attempts of creating a broad Community social policy. Through a variety of measures that would make the member states' citizens feel connected to the Communities, MEPs hoped to convince the people of the value of closer integration for them personally, and to counter perceptions of the Community as a top-down, technocratic and purely economic entity. What is more, by presenting the EP as representative of the citizens

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1. M. ROOS, *Becoming Europe's Parliament: Europeanization through MEPs' Supranational Activism, 1952-79*, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 6(2020), pp.1413-1432; M. ROOS, *Far Beyond the Treaties Clauses: The European Parliament's Gain in Power, 1952-1979*, in: *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 13(2017), pp.1055-1075.

through the channelling of their interests and needs, MEPs were able to emphasise their institution's role as provider of democratic legitimacy for Community policy-making, justifying a larger involvement of the EP before the Commission and the Council. The delegates thus hoped to increase public support for closer European integration whilst simultaneously enhancing their own institution's position.

Before diving into the analysis of EP socio-political activism, this article provides a brief summary of what can be considered Community social policy during the period under consideration. While it should not be assumed that there was any such thing as a broad and comprehensive social dimension to the common market at the time, the 1970s and 1980s did see some noteworthy European-level action in the area, notably concerning the harmonisation of national legislation and the setting of common minimum standards, as further outlined below.

This contextualising section is followed by the analysis of EP involvement in Community social policy during the examined period. The analysis is structured in two parts: a first section sheds light on the socio-political aims pursued by MEPs in their involvement in Community social policy, and their attempts to contribute to the creation of a broader Community social dimension. The second section of the analysis examines MEPs' strategic usage of social policy as a means to increase the EP's influence in Community policy-making, and to strengthen its role as the people's representative at the European level. This second section thus demonstrates to what extent social policy provided fertile ground for MEPs' more general endeavour to parliamentarise their institution, and through it the Community project.

This analysis of EP socio-political activism is based on an extensive collection of EP documents – mainly resolutions, reports, parliamentary questions, minutes, and working documents – which were consulted at the Historical Archives of the EP in Luxembourg and the Historical Archives of the EU in Florence. The article is furthermore based on a previous research project by the author on EP supranational-level activism with a specific focus on Parliament's institutional evolution prior to 1979, and furthermore on the growing corpus of academic literature on the EP's general development into the powerful institution it has become today.[2] The article adds new insights to these publications by pointing out the significant potential of Community social policy as an area which, despite its limited and fragmentary nature at the time, provided MEPs with fertile ground to deepen and widen the EP's gradually growing competences and parliamentary powers in everyday policy-making procedures. Thus, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the EP's empowerment beyond momentous events such as Treaty changes and elections. In this sense, the area of social policy provides an insightful case study on the importance of small and initially informal steps towards increasing parliamentary powers in the EP's institutional development.

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2. Https://mechthildroos.eu/the-institutional-evolution-of-the-european-parliament/ (last visit, 02.04.2020). See also Desmond Dinan's contribution to this special issue.

Community social policy during the 1970s and 1980s

The area of social policy was integrated more slowly, with more difficulty and reluctance than a number of other Community policy areas such as economic, transport or agricultural policy.[3] Amongst other reasons, most of the member state governments did not envisage European integration to require a strong socio-political dimension at Community level up to the early 1970s, assuming that flourishing markets and a peaceful Europe would sufficiently contribute in themselves to a steady improvement of people's living and working conditions.[4] Indeed, governments saw a need of Community action in the area of social policy only as far as it helped to ensure the proper functioning of the common market, whereas it was not supposed to have the interventionist-redistributive role typically attributed to social policy at the national level.[5] This perception of a restricted Community social dimension changed only with the various crises of the 1970s and 1980s.[6] Moreover, the historically grown differences among the member states' social security systems and resulting differences in national definitions of social policy complicated political harmonisation or even unification.[7]

As a result of governments' reluctance to codify socio-political integration, and to transfer competences in the area to the Community level, most of the treaty provisions for common social action were relatively vague.[8] The founding treaties of the European Communities (European Coal and Steel Community – ECSC, European Economic Community – EEC, and European Atomic Energy Community – Euratom) contained specific social provisions merely for a handful of issues, namely where a distortion of competition was feared, or where it was expected that market failures would need to be corrected, concerning e.g. labour migration, training and occupa-

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3. R. LEBOUTTE, *Histoire économique et sociale de la construction européenne*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2008, p.665.
4. P. HERRMANN, *Social Policy in Context*, Rozenberg Publishers, Amsterdam, 2009, p.101; J. LODGE, *Towards a human union: EEC social policy and European integration*, in: *British Journal of International Studies*, 4(1978), pp.107-134, here p.116.
5. L. MECHI, *Consultation technique et légitimation politique: la participation des experts aux premiers pas de la politique sociale européenne (1958-1975)*, in: *Revue d'histoire de la protection sociale*, 10(2017), p.107.
6. H. SCHULZ-FORBERG, B. STRÅTH, *The Political History of European Integration. The hypocrisy of democracy-through-market*, Routledge, London, 2010.
7. G. ESPING-ANDERSEN, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990; A. SAPIR, *Globalization and the Reform of European Social Models*, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44(2006), pp.369-390, here pp.375 sqq.
8. L. HANTRAIS, *Social Policy in the European Union*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2007, p.28 and pp.93 sqq.; S. LEIBFRIED, *Die soziale Dimension der Europäischen Integration*, in: H. PFAFFENBERGER (ed.): *Um eine sozialpolitische Kompetenz der EU*, Schäuble Verlag, Rheinfelden, 1998, pp.27-46, here: pp.30 sqq.

tional safety.[9] Consequently, social policy initially remained at the margins of Community action and legislation.

This changed only during the period on which this article focuses, starting with a gradual shift of attitudes from The Hague Summit in 1969. Whereas both the Communities' executives (High Authority and Commission) and the EP had pushed – albeit to different extents – for common social action already from the 1950s, this summit was the first forum at which member state governments declared a need for a Community social dimension in addition to the Communities' main economic objective. This message was underlined and substantiated at the Paris Summit of 1972, where the Commission received the task from the member states to develop a proposal for a Social Action Programme (SAP).[10] The Commission presented its final proposal for said programme in October 1973; it was approved by the Council in January 1974.[11] Over the following years, the Commission submitted a series of proposals for regulations, directives and other forms of Community action based on the objectives laid out by the SAP, not all of which, however, where adopted by the Council or fully implemented at the national level.[12]

A major reason for this incomplete or delayed implementation lies in the changing contemporary context of Community social policy.[13] At the time when the Six governments commissioned the SAP, and when it was drafted, unemployment was at an average of 2% throughout the Communities, and member states' economies had experienced years of significant economic growth.[14] Already towards the end of the drafting process of the SAP, however, and particularly during the phase of its implementation, the member states were hit by the global economic and financial crisis following the 1971 collapse of the Bretton Woods system and the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979.[15] As a consequence, the final version of the SAP was less ambitious in its

9. L. HANTRAIS, op.cit., pp.2 sqq.; M. RHODES, *Employment Policy: Between Efficacy and Experimentation*, in: H. WALLACE et al. (eds): *Policy-Making in the European Union*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, pp.283-306, here p.288; M. J. DEDMAN, *The Origins and Development of the European Union 1945-2008. A history of European integration*, Routledge, London, 2010, p.85.
10. R. LEBOUTTE, op.cit., p.666; A. VARSORI, L. MECHI, *At the origins of the European structural policy: the Community's social and regional policies from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s*, in: J. VAN DER HARST (ed.), *Beyond the Customs Union: The European Community's Quest for Deepening, Widening and Completion, 1969-1975*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2007, pp.223-250, here pp. 225 sqq.
11. COM(73)1600, Social Action Programme, 24.10.1973; Council Resolution of 21 January 1974 concerning a social action programme, in: *Official Journal*, C 13/1-4, 12.02.1974.
12. M. SHANKS, *European Social Policy, Today and Tomorrow*, Pergamon Press, Oxford et al., 1977, p.16; M. RHODES, op.cit., p.119; A. VARSORI, L. MECHI, op.cit., p.234.
13. T. BROWN, *Something Worth Working For: The Emergence of the 1973 Social Action Programme*, The Institute of International and European Affairs, Dublin, 2012, p.24.
14. I. CASSIERS, *Le contexte économique. De l'âge d'or à la longue crise*, in: É. BUSSIÈRE et al. (eds), *Milieux économiques et intégration européenne au XXe siècle. La crise des années 1970 de la Conférence de la Haye à la veille de la relance des années 1980*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2006, pp. 13-32.
15. R. LEBOUTTE, op.cit.; A. VARSORI, L. MECHI, op.cit., pp.234 sqq.; I. CASSIERS, op.cit.

scope and less concrete than what first Commission guidelines had suggested, leaving the EP – and in particular the members of its Committee on Social Affairs – disappointed.[16]

Member states' crisis-based reluctance vis-à-vis large-scale common social action also led to a comparably limited outcome of the Community Action Programme in favour of migrant workers and their families, proposed by the Commission in December 1974.[17] This action programme encouraged the member states to continuously fight remaining discrepancies between nationals and migrants on issues such as social security benefits, training, trade union rights, housing, and political rights at least at municipal level.[18] Most of the ambitious aims of this programme, however, remained effectively unfulfilled up to the mid-1980s, even though many of them were repeatedly addressed in Commission proposals as well as subsequently adopted Community regulations and directives.[19]

Instead of creating a genuine Community social dimension, the Commission's pursuit of policy measures which had initially been intended to establish a firm social pillar in Community policy-making consequently shifted towards a piecemeal approach through the adoption of single-issue regulations, directives and action programmes. This rather fragmentary approach dominated Community social policy throughout the 1970s and 1980s. To some extent, the circumstances resulting from the unforeseen events of this period dictated in what areas social action was needed: crises resulted in sky-rocketing unemployment figures; numerous workers were forced to retrain and (particularly in the case of migrant workers) move.[20] This led member states and the Commission to focus increasingly on particularly vulnerable groups of (working) people.[21]

The swift technological development, which had started to shape European (and global) economies already during the 1960s, had significant effects of similarly unexpected dimensions as the crises. Technological change led to a change of job pro-

16. HAEP [Historical Archives of the European Parliament], PE0_AP_RP!ASOC.1973_A0-0256! 730010EN_018992), e.g. Report by the Committee on Social Affairs on the Social Action Programme, 06.12.1973, p.21.
17. Council Resolution on an action programme for Community migrants, 09.02.1976 (http:// aei.pitt.edu/1278/1/action_migrant_workers_COM_74_2250.pdf, last visit on 14.06.2018).
18. R.R. GEYER, *Exploring European Social Policy*, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, 2000, p.1838.
19. P.R. IRELAND, *Migration, Free Movement, and Immigrant Integration in the EU: A Bifurcated Policy Response*, in S. LEIBFRIED, P. PIERSON (eds), *European Social Policy. Between Fragmentation and Integration*, The Brookings Institutions, Washington, D.C., 1995, pp.231-266, here pp.239 sqq.
20. R. LEBOUTTE, op.cit.; I. CASSIERS, op.cit.
21. Throughout the examined period, Community social policy was mostly limited to employment-related issues: namely, regarding the preparation of future workers for the labour market, the working conditions and employment-related social security conditions of the Community's citizens, and their social protection after (but still in relation to) their working life. See e.g. M. RHODES, op.cit., p. 288; A. VARSORI, *Le développement d'une politique sociale européenne*, in G. BOSSUAT, É. BUSSIÈRE, R. FRANK, W. LOTH, A. VARSORI (eds), *L'expérience européenne. 50 ans de construction de l'Europe 1957-2007. Des historiens en dialogue. Actes du colloque international de Rome 2007*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2010, pp.235-269, here p.268.

files, and consequently of required qualifications, as well as the entire abolition of a number of jobs, notably in the industry sector; an increasing number of workers shifted to the services sector.[22] There were hardly any provisions in the Community treaties guiding common action among the member states so as to collectively tackle events and developments of such dimensions, or the resulting socio-economic challenges. Treaty-provided aid mechanisms and established financial instruments like the European Social Fund (ESF) quickly proved insufficient to cope with the consequences.[23] Thus, such events and developments opened unintended opportunities of political activism, which allowed actors like the Commission and – as this article demonstrates – the EP to push for an extension of the Communities' otherwise often narrow and vague social policy. This supranational-level activism manifested in a range of legally binding directives, different soft-law mechanisms such as recommendations and the above-mentioned action programmes, and in various forms of exerting pressure on policy makers at Community and national level.[24]

The EP's role in Community social policy

In this contemporary context, EP socio-political activism was driven by a twofold aim, as this analysis section shows. On the one hand, most MEPs who steered the EP's social policy pursued the creation of a Europe for and of the people. Social policy measures were considered a helpful tool in achieving that: by working towards the improvement of the member state citizens' living and working conditions, as provided for in all three founding treaties, MEPs sought to demonstrate that the Community project had a tangible positive impact on people's lives.[25] The delegates considered a stronger European social dimension an important element in strengthening the Community's relevance for the citizens, thus reaching a more favourable public image of, and broader identification with, the Communities.[26] In the creation of a broad and distinctive Community social dimension lay hence the key, in MEPs' view, to make the Community more than a mere common market: it was a necessary component in the establishment of an economic, political and social union.

On the other hand, political activism in the area of social policy helped MEPs position themselves as representatives of the people, both in the eyes of the citizens themselves, who should see that 'their' delegates fought in their interest, and in the

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22. H. KAELBLE, *Sozialgeschichte Europas. 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, C.H. Beck, Munich, 2007, pp. 58 sqq.; A. SAPIR, op.cit., p.372.
23. S. LEIBFRIED, op.cit., p.32.
24. S. LEIBFRIED, op.cit., F.W. SCHARPF, *The asymmetry of European integration, or why the EU cannot be a 'social market economy'*, in: *Socio-Economic Review*, 8(2010), pp.211-250.
25. Arts. 2 ECSC, 2 EEC, 1 Euratom.
26. HAEP, PE2_AP_PR_B2-0429!850001EN, e.g. Resolution on the Council's failure to take decisions on directives on social affairs, the labour market and equal treatment for men and women, 12.06.1985.

eyes of the other Community institutions, who should acknowledge the EP's function as bridge to the member states' population. MEPs thus hoped to gain democratic legitimacy for the EP, helping them argue that the EP's involvement in Community decision-making would also contribute to democratically legitimise Community action. Indeed, democratic legitimacy of Community policy-making was seen as the EP's preserve until the late 1980s; only then was it gradually understood as being divided between member-state governments and the EP.[27]

When analysing EP social policy in the 1970s and 1980s, it is not always possible to clearly distinguish these two dimensions of parliamentary activism. At times, the same action would be geared towards both reaching a strengthening of Community social policy, and improving the EP's institutional role in Community legislation procedures. Nevertheless, this section examines each of these two dimensions separately, so as to contribute to a more systematic understanding of the dynamics and motives underlying EP policy-making strategies at a time of limited parliamentary powers, and in a policy area of limited Community competences.

Creating a Europe for and of the people: EP activism to establish a Community social dimension

The EP's social policy of the 1970s and 1980s developed largely along the broader lines of EP socio-political activism of the 1950s and 1960s. According to a 1969 publication by the EP's General Secretariat, the Parliament had, from the founding of the first Community, "always opposed the view that social problems are only incidental to economic integration", and had instead emphasised the importance of treating social policy at Community level as an aim in itself.[28] Whereas this fundamental attitude continued to form the basis of EP social policy, MEPs' concrete actions arising therefrom took on some new shapes and directions during the period under consideration.

First and foremost, EP socio-political activism could build on a growing (if still fragmentary) corpus of Community social legislation. The opportunity to refer to an increasing number of occasions where member states agreed on common standards, or at least on harmonisation of national legislation and practices, allowed MEPs not only to push for more progress down those paths of Community social measures which member states had once set foot on, but also provided the delegates with a basis of argumentation in favour of a comprehensive Community social policy. After all, as summarised in a 1984 EP resolution, social legislation and harmonisation "confined to a few isolated aspects of the social sector can only produce substantially

27. J. LODGE, *The European Parliament*, in: S.S. ANDERSEN, K.A. ELIASSEN (eds), *The European Union: How Democratic Is It?*, SAGE Publications, London et al., 1998, pp.187-214, here p.193.
28. GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, *The first ten years 1958-1968. Directorate-General of Parliamentary Documentation and Information*, Luxembourg, 1969, p.91.

poorer results" than a broader socio-political course.[29] In the pursuit of "the creation of a People's Europe", MEPs urged the Commission and the Council instead to aim for maximum progress across the Community through the development of a dense and comprehensive net of social policy measures and legislation.[30]

To support this call for a more comprehensive Community social policy, and to set and promote their own socio-political aims on the Community agenda, MEPs referred repeatedly to economic gains which, they argued, would come with Community-wide social progress. Thus, they hoped to convince reluctant governments to further extend Community competences in the social area. After all, member states had proven at this point to be open to setting common standards and adopting legislation with a prospect of enhancing the functioning of the common market and increasing the Community's global competitiveness, even if going beyond Treaty provisions – but much less so if only socio-political issues were on the table.[31] Consequently, MEPs emphasised potential economic gains coming with proposed social initiatives (pointed out e.g. by the Italian Christian Democrat Alberto Ghergo in a May 1983 debate), or warned of lower "'comparative effectiveness' of the European economic and social system in relation to other, non-Community countries" (Johan van Minnen, Socialist Group, November 1983) through "piecemeal and fragmentary" legislation (Ioannis Pesmazoglou, non-affiliated, May 1984).[32] These examples indicate that EP socio-political activism did not originate from one party group alone during the period under examination, but was often carried by MEPs across the EP's party-group landscape.

Inter-party unity at parliamentary level in the area of social policy can be explained through several factors. Most importantly, given the EP's limited formal powers at the time – and particularly as regards social policy – MEPs typically presented a common EP opinion so as to give more weight to their institution's position vis-à-vis the other Community institutions. While unity at the group level played an important role in the process of brokering political compromises which then became the EP's positions, this intra-group unity was usually displayed first and foremost during the drafting process of EP opinions.[33] Once the vote in plenary was passed, groups rarely

29. HAEP, PE1_AP_RP!ASOC.1979_A1-0066!840001EN, Resolution on the harmonization of social legislation in the Member States, 22.05.1984.
30. HAEP, PE2_AP_RP!FEMM.1984_A2-0029!860001EN, Resolution a draft Council resolution on the adoption of a new Community medium-term programme (1986-1990) to promote equal opportunities for women, 13.05.1986.
31. Resolution on the harmonization of social legislation…, 22.05.1984, op.cit.
32. See e.g. HAEP, PE1_AP_DE!1983_DE19830516-029900EN, Speech by Alberto Ghergo during plenary debate, 16.05.1983, p.19; HAEP, PE1_AP_DE!1983_DE19831117-139900EN), Speech by Johan van Minnen during plenary debate, 17.11.1983, p.267; HAEP, PE1_AP_DE! 1984_DE19840522-109900EN, Speech by Ioannis Pesmazoglou during plenary debate, 22.05.1984, p.69; Resolution on the harmonization of social legislation…, 22.05.1984, op.cit.
33. M. ROOS, *Intra-Party Group Unity in the European Parliament Prior to its First Direct Elections in 1979*, in: *Parliamentary Affairs*, 72(2019), pp.464-479.

distanced themselves from or declared their opposition to the adopted position so as not to weaken the EP's standing in the overall legislative procedure.[34]

Another influencing factor with regard to inter-party unity in the EP's social policy was the dominantly favourable attitude towards closer social integration among those MEPs who were particularly active in the area. The fact that it was mostly them who shaped the connected EP opinions (typically in the form of reports and resolutions), and that delegates more critical towards closer social integration or simply less eager to promote it usually did not get involved in the respective debates, contributed further to the impression of a united Parliament on socio-political matters.[35] In this regard, intra-committee unity – notably in the EP Committee on Social Affairs – went hand in hand with parliamentary-level unity, as the high number of unanimously adopted social-policy reports resulting in adopted EP resolutions suggests.[36]

It should not be assumed, however, that the EP's social policy during the 1970s and 1980s was shaped exclusively by MEPs with similar policy preferences and attitudes towards socio-political integration. Whereas significant common ground among the involved delegates existed, as noted above, a further contributing factor to parliamentary-level unity consisted in the fact that groups, committees and the EP as a whole shaped their members' ideas of European social integration, and of concrete policies, ideas which were often vague (if at all existent) when the delegates entered Parliament.[37] Thus, MEPs' argumentation on socio-political issues along of-

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34. This is discussed in more detail for the specific case of the EP's socio-political activism concerning the free movement of persons in: M. ROOS, *The Parliamentary Roots of European Social Policy. Turning Talk into Power*, Cham [forthcoming].

35. Visible not least in a number of speeches during plenary debates on social policy issues – resulting in the adoption of EP resolutions – pointing out the many empty seats of MEPs who were not sufficiently interested in the issue at hand to join the debate. See e.g. HAEP, PE0_AP_DE! 1977_DE19780214-059900EN_9407172, Speech by Commissioner for Social Affairs (and former MEP) Hendrikus Vredeling during plenary debate, 14.02.1978, p.109; HAEP, PE0_AP_DE! 1978_DE19790119-059900EN_9319065, Speech by Vera Squarcialupi during Question Time, 19.01.1979, p.248.

36. For the period prior to the EP's first direct elections, see M. ROOS, *The Parliamentary Roots…*, op.cit. For the 1980s, see e.g. http://aei.pitt.edu/58122/1/B1285.pdf, Reports by the EP Committee on Social Affairs and Employment on the harmonisation of social legislation in the member states, 02.04.1984; http://aei.pitt.edu/58092/1/B1223.pdf, on a draft directive on the principle of equal treatment for men and women in self-employed occupations, 07.05.1984; http://aei.pitt.edu/ 49066/1/A9007.pdf, on the new Commission's priorities in the field of social affairs and employment, 27.02.1985; http://aei.pitt.edu/49131/1/A9021.pdf, on the guidelines for the management of the ESF 1986-88, 04.03.1985; http://aei.pitt.edu/48965/1/A8998.pdf, on a draft recommendation social security for volunteer development workers, 26.03.1985; http://aei.pitt.edu/48941/1/ A8985.pdf, Reports by the EP Committee on Women's Rights on services for the elderly, 24.02.1986; http://aei.pitt.edu/49170/1/A9079.pdf, on one-parent families, 12.03.1986 (all links in this footnote: last visit 24 September 2020).

37. Confirmed by several former MEPs who were interviewed by the author for her larger research project on the EP's early institutional development (https://mechthildroos.eu/the-institutional-evolution-of-the-european-parliament/, last visit 23 September 2020). See M. ROOS, *The Parliamentary Roots…*, op.cit.

ten similar lines evolved as they were socialised into the EP's structures and policy-making procedures.

In the pursuit of a broader Community social dimension, a noteworthy extension of MEPs' underlying normative argumentation can be traced in the 1970s and 1980s, as compared to previous years. Namely, MEPs invoked increasingly the Community's moral duty to guarantee the social protection of the people living on its territory. Such a change of emphasis was possible due to the blurry and tendentially expansive limits of the area of social policy, which allowed MEPs to put new issues on the Community social agenda. This new level of argumentation – adding to the previously dominating, more general and Treaty-based reference to the Community's task of improving people's living and working conditions – was closely connected to an extension of focus groups addressed by EP socio-political activism. This included, on the one hand, groups of people who had been subject to EP socio-political activism already from the 1950s or 1960s, such as women, children and youth, and who gradually became subject to specific Community social legislation from the 1970s. The Commission and Council addressed such groups with a virtually exclusive focus on their inclusion in, or preparation for, the labour market, and with the main aim to abolish differences among the member states with the potential to increase and distort competition within the common market.[38] The EP, however, also took into consideration social problems of these groups beyond working life, and pushed for Community action with the main or even sole objective of improving their individual situation, e.g. concerning work-life balance and family life.[39] With regard specifically to the Community's young citizens, EP socio-political activism aimed, on an additional level, at instilling in these future voters and potential decision-makers a sense of shared Europeanness. MEPs hoped that Community-level activities for instance in the areas of culture (e.g. through the formation of a Community youth orchestra) and sports (e.g. through the introduction of a European sports badge) would induce these young persons – who were expected to lead the Community project into the future – to actively support ever-closer European integration.[40]

On the other hand, EP social policy now also addressed groups of particularly vulnerable persons who had previously not been subject either to EP or Community initiatives. Among them were, from the 1970s, people with disabilities and, from the

38. See e.g. J. KANTOLA, *Gender and the European Union*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2010; H. WILLIAMSON, *A complex but increasingly coherent journey? The emergence of 'youth policy'*, in: *Europe, Youth & Policy*, 95(2007), pp.57-72.

39. See e.g. HAEP, PE1_AP_RP!ASOC.1979_A1-1528!830001EN, EP demands for a more equal share of care work and responsibilities at home between men and women in Resolution on a draft Directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons, 30.03.1984; Resolution… to promote equal opportunities for women, 13.05.1986, op.cit.

40. See e.g. HAEP, PE0_AP_RP!JEUN.1973_A0-0537!750001EN_0001, Resolution on the formation of a European Community youth orchestra, 08.03.1976;HAEP, PE0_AP_RP!RECH. 1961_A0-0012!660001DE_0001, Resolution on the introduction of a European Sports Badge, 10.03.1966.

1980s, homosexual people living in the Community.[41] In proposing common action in favour of such groups, the EP could emphasise its role as representative of all people – including the most vulnerable, and those unable to make a noteworthy economic contribution. Through engagement in these groups' favour, the EP demonstratively took "one stage further, on a broader basis, the question of civil rights and respect for the individual" at Community level.[42] The promotion of such groups' interests resulted from the basic attitude underlying the EP's socio-political activism at the time, namely that Community social policy should not merely be adopted in areas where economic return could be expected. Instead, it should – as an aim in itself – ensure that the "elementary social need[s]" of all those living in the Community should be met and their social situation as far as possible improved, which should ideally strengthen people's connection and identification with the Community project.[43]

In addition to MEPs' activism concerning the above-mentioned specific groups of people, EP social policy also occasionally sought to prevent the downscaling of previously achieved social standards in the course of the Community's deepening and widening through several rounds of enlargement in the 1970s and 1980s, and through the gradual extension of Community competences with and beyond the treaty changes of these decades. An example is the EP's (unsuccessful) attempt in May 1981 to prevent the limitation of Community migrants' access to medical care in other member states than the state of residence.[44] Until then, persons insured in a member state were "authorized to go to another Member State for treatment and to receive the benefits in kind provided by the legislation of the latter State as though [they] were insured there", including benefits not covered in the state of residence and insurance.[45] Through Regulation (EEC) 2793/81, this was changed to the extent that medical care was only covered as far as it was included in the benefits granted in the

41. See e.g. HAEP, PE0_AP_RP!JEUN.1973_A0-0537!750001EN_0001, Resolution on the formation of a European Community youth orchestra, 08.03.1976; HAEP, PE0_AP_RP!RECH. 1961_A0-0012!660001DE_0001, Resolution on the introduction of a European Sports Badge, 10.03.1966.
   Persons with disabilities were occasionally addressed in EP documents from the 1960s, but were initially addressed only in connection with Community competences in other areas – e.g. if their disability had been caused by work in a sector regulated by Community legislation. That changed from the 1970s, when MEPs began to propose Community measures exclusively and specifically aimed at persons with disabilities. See e.g. HAEP, PE0_AP_QP!QE_E-0067!710010DE, Written Question 67/71 by Hendrikus Vredeling to the Commission, 21.04.1971; HAEP, PE0_AP_QP! QH_H-0488!780015EN_01392159, Oral Question with debate no. 5 by Guillaume Schyns and following speeches during plenary debate, 13.03.1979. See also e.g. Resolution on sexual discrimination at the workplace, 13 March 1984, in: *Official Journal*, C 104/46-48, 16.04.1984; HAEP, PE1_AP_DE!1984_DE19840313-039900EN, Debate on the same issue, 13.03.1984.
42. Speech by Vera Squarcialupi during plenary debate on 13.03.1984, op.cit., p.12.
43. Speech by Alberto Ghergo during plenary debate, 16.05.1983, op.cit., p.19.
44. Resolution on a draft Regulation amending Regulation (EEC) 1408/71 and Regulation (EEC) 574/72, 08.05.1981, in: *Official Journal*, C 144/112-115, 15.06.1981.
45. HAEP, PE1_AP_DE!1981_DE19810508-039900EN, Speech by Alberto Ghergo during plenary debate, 08.05.1981, p.270.

state of residence.[46] In a similar vein, the EP frequently sought to prevent the watering-down of initially ambitious Commission proposals in the area of social policy through the Council, albeit also here with often limited success.[47]

Even if the Community's social dimension remained far from MEPs' at times extensive ambitions, however, it should not be assumed that EP activism in the area yielded no consequences. To the contrary, the EP could exert some measurable influence on Community social policy, more indeed than its still rather limited Treaty-based powers at the time would give reason to expect. First and foremost, the increasing frequency of EP consultations through the Council allowed MEPs successfully to introduce amendments to Commission proposals for Community legislation and action.[48] In addition, MEPs' repeated insistence on Community action in specific areas, or in favour of specific groups of people, occasionally even led to the initiation of Community action, even though the EP had no power of initiative according to the treaties. An example for such a successful EP initiative during the period under consideration is the establishment of a European Youth Orchestra in 1976, which was established with the aim to bring the Community's youth closer together, and to help forge young persons' identification with the Community project.[49] With regard to binding legislation, EP socio-political activism resulted for instance in a 1988 Commission proposal for a directive on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex (although the final directive was adopted by the Council only in 1997).[50]

Parliamentarising Europe: EP strategies of institutional empowerment through social policy

As an area of only limited and fragmented Community competences, coinciding with an unforeseen need for political (re-)action triggered through the above-mentioned crises and developments, social policy held significant potential for supranational-level activism during the 1970s and 1980s. In a period of multifaceted institutional change, the EP used this potential to push forward processes of empowerment and

46. Council Regulation (EEC) 2793/81, 17.09.1981, in: *Official Journal*, L 275/1-14, 29.09.1981.
47. See e.g. HAEP, PE2_AP_DE!1988_DE19881215-079900EN, Speeches by Marie-Claude Vayssade and Hanja Maij-Weggen during plenary debate, 15.12.1988, p.278; HAEP, PE2_AP_DE! 1988_DE19881215-149900EN, Explanation of vote by Barbara Schmidbauer, 15.12.1988, pp.288 sqq.
48. M. ROOS, *Far Beyond the Treaties Clauses…*, op.cit., discusses the example of EP influence through consultation in the case of the three equality-related directives of the 1970s.
49. Resolution on the formation of a European Community youth orchestra, 08.03.1976, op.cit. The orchestra – today called European Union Youth Orchestra – still exists, see https://www.euyo.eu/ (last visit, 26.03.2020).
50. Speech by Hanja Maij-Weggen during plenary debate, 15.12.1988, op.cit., p.277; Council Directive 97/80/EC on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex, 15.12.1997, in: *Official Journal*, L 14/6-8, 20.01.1998).

parliamentarisation.[51] This section sheds light on the three main instances enhancing the EP's position in Community policy-making during the period under consideration – the budget treaties of 1970 and 1975, the EP's first direct elections in 1979, and the Single European Act of 1986 – and on the EP's strategic usage of social policy to cement and extend its gain in parliamentary power and policy-making influence in the context of these three instances.

The Treaty on Own Resources of 1970, the first of the two budget treaties which introduced a Community budget (replacing the initial pool of member states' contributions), granted the EP the last word on non-compulsory Community expenditure. Furthermore, it provided for EP consultation on the compulsory part – the bulk of expenditure – for which the EP could propose modifications, though without any binding force.[52] With the 1975 Budgetary Powers Treaty, the EP received the additional power to reject the Community budget in total – a tool significantly strengthening its overall parliamentary powers.[53] Since most Community legislation and action was, or could be, in some way connected to funding, the EP's newly gained say in common expenditure allowed it to insist on being involved in a much wider range of policy-making processes than had previously been the case. This included areas like social policy, where the EP's influence had previously been limited and mostly informal.

One example of intensified EP involvement in Community social policy through the new budgetary procedures is the regulation of the ESF. With Arts. 126 and 127 of the EEC Treaty, which provided for the consultation of the EP in the creation and revision of the fund, this was one of very few social issues at Community level in which the EP was to be formally involved. However, under these articles, the EP's opinion merely had to be obtained, but not respected in resulting decisions. This changed with the EP's newly gained power to reject first a part, then the whole of the Community budget. As a consequence, MEPs swiftly learned to emphasise their right to co-decide on budgetary matters, concerning not least the ESF. Already in 1970, when a rumour reached the EP that the Council would aim to set a maximum limit to ESF funding, Parliament protested vehemently, considering this a restriction of its new budgetary power.[54] In 1977, the EP's Committee on Budgets blamed the Council and the Commission for another case of what the delegates considered an infringement of said power. Following controversies among Council members regarding crisis-related ESF measures, the Commission had transferred ESF appropriations with the Council's assent, whereas the "Parliament, partner in the Budgetary Authority, was not even consulted".[55]

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51. M. ROOS, *Becoming Europe's Parliament…*, op.cit.
52. Treaty amending certain budgetary provisions of the Treaties establishing the European Communities and of the Merger Treaty, 22.04.1970, Arts. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8.
53. Treaty amending certain financial provisions of the Treaties establishing the European Communities and of the Merger Treaty, Arts. 2, 12, 20.
54. HAEP, PE0_AP_PR_B0-0141!700001DE_0001, Resolution on the reform of the ESF, 08.10.1970.
55. HAEP, PE0_AP_RP!ASOC.1976_A0-0084!770010EN_044929, Opinion of the Committee on Budgets on the review of the rules governing the tasks and operations of the ESF, 27.04.1977, p.25.

Following the additional strengthening of its budgetary power in 1975, the EP was in a position to counter such cases of perceived infringements, and also to increase the political and institutional pressure on the Council to take EP opinions into account, not least via the instrument of the conciliation procedure. This procedure was introduced in a joint declaration of the EP, the Council and the Commission in March 1975, in the context of the second budget treaty.[56] It did not take the EP long to try and seek to benefit from this new leverage in the social area, particularly vis-à-vis the Council: the EP threatened to open a first conciliation procedure concerning the ESF in May 1977, in case the Council would intend to depart from the EP's opinion regarding a Commission proposal on the revision of the rules governing the operations of the ESF.[57] Although the Council did not adopt all of the EP's suggestions, the EP eventually refrained in this case from initiating a conciliation procedure, arguing that the ESF's revision should not be delayed. The resolution of December 1977 announcing this decision, however, emphasised that henceforth, "the European Parliament will initiate the conciliation procedure whenever future decisions of the Council clash with its own proposals"[58] – with no indication (or intention) of limiting this strategy to the area of budgetary procedures.

The EP also used its reinforced budgetary power in less confrontative ways to influence Community social policy, namely as a tool of priority and agenda setting. By re-designating parts of Community expenditure to social measures, MEPs sought to increase Community action along the lines of their own socio-political aims and ideas.[59] A speech by the French Socialist MEP Marie-Claude Vayssade on equality policy during plenary debate on 12 November 1986 illustrates this strategy:

> "[E]very budget represents a political will translated into practice. I feel that this Parliament has on numerous occasions, when adopting the programme for equality of opportunity between men and women, demonstrated a clear political will in this area".[60]

56. Joint Declaration of Parliament, Council and Commission concerning the institution of a conciliation procedure between the European Parliament and the Council, 4 March 1975, in: *Official Journal*, C 89/1-2, 22.04.1975.
57. HAEP, PE0_AP_RP!ASOC.1976_A0-0084!770001EN_0001, Resolution on the review of the rules governing the tasks and operations of the ESF, 12.05.1977.
58. HAEP, PE0_AP_PR_B0-0436!770001EN_0001, Resolution on the implementation of the conciliation procedure referred to in paragraph 14 of the European Parliament's resolution of 12 May 1977 on the revision of the ESF, 16.12.1977.
59. HAEP, PE0_AP_QP!QE_E-0878!770040FR_207783, See e.g. Written Question 878/77 by Liam Kavanagh and Lord Murray of Gravesend to the Commission, 09.12.1977, on funding from the Community's structural funds for a new Community exchange scheme for young workers; Resolution… to promote equal opportunities for women, 13.05.1986, op.cit.; HAEP, PE2_AP_DE! 1986_DE19861111-109900EN, Resolution on financial support for local initiatives and the general implementation of intended measures in the area; explanation of vote by Colette Gadioux during plenary debate, 11.11.1986), p.67 on the reorganisation/harmonisation of the Community's structural funds with an eye on job creation.
60. HAEP, PE2_AP_DE!1986_DE19861112-119900EN, Speech by Marie-Claude Vayssade during plenary debate, 12.11.1986, p.135.

Such promotion of more Community action (and investment) in favour of the member states' citizens was driven not least, as mentioned above, by the EP's self-perception as representative of the people. Whereas the parliamentary responsibilities which MEPs derived from this role – notably, promoting the people's interests, and providing democratic legitimacy to Community policy making – remained largely unchanged from the EP's beginnings, they acquired a new level of relevance in the context of the EP's first direct elections in 1979. Through the votes of the Community's citizens, the EP became the first and only European institution whose members were directly elected, implying that the MEPs' mandates represented even more distinctly a connection to the member states' population than previously, when this connection had been derived somewhat more indirectly from the delegates' mandates as national parliamentarians.

A precondition for getting people to vote – which was necessary to convincingly claim the role of the people's representative – was to attract people's interest in Community politics and affairs. Among other areas, social policy provided MEPs with a range of examples through which they could demonstrate the direct positive impact of Community politics on the electorate's individual living and working situation. The motivation of achieving social progress in order to reach the citizens can be traced in EP political discourses particularly in the context of European elections, starting with the second half of the 1970s. Particularly in times of economic and financial crises, showing and strengthening the 'human aspect' of the Communities was considered by the MEPs an effective way to illustrate to the member state citizens the relevance of the EP and its ability to work in their favour, thereby encouraging them to participate in the elections.[61]

Amongst other social policy issues, MEPs considered support for young people as a valuable tool to awaken interest and improve public opinion of the EP before its first direct elections. At the time, young people were among those hardest hit by the unfolding crisis, facing difficulties to enter the labour market, and being over-represented in unemployment statistics.[62] In a 1977 debate, the Dutch Socialist Willem Albers argued that people would increasingly ask what the Community could do for them, and that one way for MEPs to give concrete answers would be measures in favour of the member states' young citizens.[63] On the same note, Albers declared in

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61. See e.g. HAEP, PE0_AP_RP!ASOC.1976_A0-0091!790001EN_0001, Resolution on a draft Decision on setting up a second joint programme of exchanges of young workers within the Community, 24.04.1979; HAEP, PE0_AP_RP!ASOC.1976_A0-0513!770010EN_01277878, Report by the Committee on Social Affairs on measures to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life, 07.02.1978, p.12.
62. EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING, *Youth unemployment and vocational training. An attempt to summarize the most important conclusions drawn during five yours of work on the subject*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 1983.
63. HAEP, PE0_AP_DE!1977_DE19770915-019900EN_9317841, Speech by Willem Albers during plenary debate, 15.09.1977, p.202.

a 1978 debate on a draft programme to combat youth unemployment that "[a]t last we have a subject which appeals to people".[64]

The EP was seen by its members to bear a particular responsibility in upholding and promoting social progress in the Community.[65] The perception and presentation of the EP as driving force and norm setter in the social area also played an important role in the context of the 1984 elections. In congruence with the EP's above-mentioned strengthened focus on specific groups of persons, MEPs sought to demonstrate that they represented and worked in the interest of every Community citizen. In the run-up to the 1984 elections, the Dutch Christian Democrat Hanja Maij-Weggen emphasised, for instance, that "[t]his Parliament has a very good name to protect when it comes to combating discrimination" of particularly vulnerable groups.[66] In the same context, the Belgian Socialist Marijke Van Hemeldonck declared the EP's "duty to condemn" any kind of discrimination "in no uncertain terms" (although adding that this would apply in particular to the area of labour legislation).[67]

Beyond the self-ascribed responsibility to contribute to the improvement of the citizens' living and working conditions, MEPs also considered it the EP's task to communicate the added value of closer integration, and of Community achievements to the people. "We are often asked in this election campaign what benefit has the Community been", stated the British delegate George Benjamin Patterson, member of the European Democrats' Group, during plenary debate on 22 May 1984, i.e. shortly before the EP's second direct elections. In his view, the answer lay precisely in the area of social policy: he argued that he could "think of no better quotation than that for bringing home" the message that "as a result of Community legislation, social security has improved significantly for millions of European over the years and will continue to do so".[68]

MEPs used intensified public attention for Community affairs in the pursuit of their own socio-political and institutional agenda not only in the context of EP elections, but also in the context of Treaty changes coming with the Single European Act – with the signing of which, as the Portuguese Liberal MEP António Augusto Lacerda de Queiróz expressed during a 1986 plenary debate, "European public opinion expects a new chapter in Community integration".[69] The momentum of broader change

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64. HAEP, PE0_AP_DE!1978_DE19780707-079900EN_9318651, Speech by Willem Albers during plenary debate, 07.07.1978, p.266.
65. See e.g. HAEP, PE2_AP_DE!1985_DE19860310-049900EN, Speech by Alberto Ghergo during plenary debate, 08.05.1981, op.cit., p.272; clearly expressed also in a Speech by Carole Tongue during plenary debate, 10.03.1986, p.18: "the EEC has played a leading role in assuring equal opportunities throughout the Community, with the Commission and European Parliament leading the way and dragging the Council of Ministers, kicking and screaming, very far behind them".
66. HAEP, PE1_AP_DE!1984_DE19840313-099900EN, Explanation of vote by Hanja Maij-Weggen during plenary debate, 13.03.1984, p.71.
67. Speech by Marijke Van Hemeldonck during plenary debate, 13.03.1984, op.cit., p.6.
68. All quotes: Speech by George Benjamin Patterson during plenary debate, 22.05.1984, op.cit., p.68; see also Speech by Ioannis Pesmazoglou during the same debate, p.70.
69. HAEP, PE2_AP_DE!1986_DE19861111-089900EN, Speech by António Augusto Lacerda de Queiróz during plenary debate, 11.11.1986, p.35.

in the distribution of power and involvement in Community politics provided the delegates with an opportunity to (further) redefine their institution's role along the lines of what they considered to be the EP's ultimate function: that of a fully-fledged supranational parliament.

One of the main elements of this function was for the EP to be properly involved in Community legislation. Such parliamentary involvement was partly based on Treaty provisions, but took also place – notably in the area of social policy – through initially informal and non-binding procedures of consultation, which were gradually established not least through repeated references to the democratic legitimacy and accountability provided by the EP.[70] As a result of this 'rhetorical entrapment' of the Commission and the Council, the EP – as representative of the people – was quite habitually consulted on proposals for social legislation by the 1980s, including cases in which that was not required by the Treaties.[71] Parliament's actual influence on the respectively adopted outcomes, however, varied a lot, depending on the Council's openness to parliamentary involvement and the level of controversy among the member states. This is visible, for instance, in the kind of material made available to the EP, which was not always the most up-to-date version of a legislative draft simultaneously discussed within the Council.[72] Seeking to manifest their influence, MEPs not only voiced critique vis-à-vis such practices, but also called for reactions from the Council or the member states to EP resolutions on draft legislation, and insisted "to be consulted again should the Council intend to make substantial modifications to the Commission proposal".[73] Such requests were directed as much at the Council as the Commission: although it was up to the former to formally involve the EP, the latter could, in the process of discussing and amending proposals together with the Council, point out the added value or even (democratic, albeit informal) necessity to take into consideration EP demands and opinions. In the MEPs' eyes, the Commission even had the democratic duty to strengthen the EP's involvement in legislation, and

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70. J.-H. MEYER, *Green Activism. The European Parliament's Environmental Committee promoting a European Environmental Policy in the 1970s*, in: *Journal of European Integration History*, 1(2011), pp.73-85; A. HÉRITIER, *Explaining Institutional Change in Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007; B. RITTBERGER, *Building Europe's Parliament: Democratic Representation Beyond the Nation State*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005.

71. On the concept of 'rhetorical entrapment', see F. SCHIMMELFENNIG, *The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union*, in: *International Organization*, 55(2001), pp.47-80, here pp.48 and 72 sqq.; G. ROSÉN, *The impact of norms on political decision-making: how to account for the European Parliament's empowerment in EU external trade policy*, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, 24(2016), p.1452.

72. See e.g. HAEP, PE1_AP_DE!1982_DE19820914-059900EN, Speech by Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul during plenary debate, 14.09.1982, p.86: "I should first like to say that we are extremely critical of the way in which the Council has again disregarded Parliament, for while we are discussing the Commission's proposal for a directive here, the Council's Committee of Permanent Representatives is already using a different text as the basis for its discussions".

73. See e.g. HAEP, PE2_AP_RP!FEMM.1984_A2-0788!840001EN, Resolution on the draft Council recommendation on the promotion of positive action for women, 25.10.1984; HAEP, PE2_AP_RP! FEMM.1984_A2-0298!880001EN, Resolution on a draft directive on the burden of proof in the area of equal pay and equal treatment for women and men, 15.12.1988.

to defend the positions adopted by it, regardless of the Commission's own stance, so as to help guarantee that the Community's citizens and their common interests were represented in European policy-making processes, instead of allowing mere national preferences to prevail.[74]

The EP did not consider its legislative role in the pursuit of meaningful, standard-setting Community social policy to be fulfilled with the adoption of a legislative text. Particularly with an eye on member states' occasional reluctance to adhere to common standards, the EP also followed closely the implementation of legislation once adopted. The EP's monitoring of implementation practices took place mostly via the political tools available to the EP in its everyday policy-making: resolutions, reports, and parliamentary questions. In the area of social policy, the EP followed critically, for instance, the application of legislation in the member states with regard to the three 1970s directives on equality of men and women, Community measures in favour of migrants' children, and the usage of ESF funding specifically dedicated to Community action in favour of young persons.[75] EP assessments were based mainly on material collected and provided by the Commission, and data from MEPs' home constituencies and countries of origin.[76]

One strategy the EP frequently resorted to, so as to improve the implementation of social standards agreed at the Community level, was the attempt to replace mere declarations of good intentions, non-binding guidelines and recommendations with legally binding formats. In the area of social policy, MEPs promoted first and foremost the instrument of Community directives, which the delegates considered "the *sine qua non* for progress" in the approximation and harmonisation of national law and the setting of common legal standards in the area, and "the only means of bringing

74. See e.g. HAEP, PE1_AP_DE!1982_DE19820916-199900EN, Explanation of vote by Corentin Calvez during plenary debate on 16 September 1982, p.287: "I therefore request the Commission, and particularly Commissioner Richard who takes a different view, to take Parliament's opinion into consideration"; HAEP, PE1_AP_RP!ASOC.1979_A1-0909!830001EN, Resolution on a draft recommendation on the reduction and reorganization of working time, 18.11.1983.

75. See e.g. HAEP, PE0_AP_RP!ASOC.1976_A0-0355!770001EN_0001, Report by the Committee on Social Affairs on the Commission proposal for the later Equal Access to Social Security Directive, 09.11.1977; PE2_AP_RP!FEMM.1984_A2-0294!870001EN, Resolution on the failure to comply with the directives on equal treatment for men and women (the problem of indirect discrimination), 10.03.1988; HAEP, PE0_AP_QP!QE_E-0242!780040FR_214375, Written Question No. 242/78 by Robert Thomas Ellis to the Commission, 18.05.1978; HAEP, PE0_AP_QP!QH_H-0235!780010EN_254964, Oral Question No. 235/78 by Ferruccio Pisoni for Question Time to the Commission, 10-12.10.1978; HAEP, PE0_AP_QP!QE_E-0765!780050FR_219968, Written Question No. 765/78 by Michele Cifarelli to the Commission, 10.11.1978; HAEP, PE0_AP_QP!QE_E-0606!750020FR_196926, Written Question No. 606/75 by Adrien Zeller, 20.11.1975.

76. See e.g. HAEP, PE0_AP_DE!1974_DE19740425-039900EN, Speech by Ep Wieldraaijer on women's working conditions in the Netherlands during plenary debate, 25.04.1974; HAEP, PE0_AP_DE!1976_DE19761013-049900EN_9314461, Speech by Winifred M. Ewing on higher education system in Scotland and UK during plenary debate, 13.10.1976; HAEP, PE0_AP_DE!1977_DE19771114-019900EN, Speech by Michael B. Yeats on problems in Ireland during plenary debate, 14.11.1977.

genuine influence to bear on national schemes".[77] The Commission's argumentation that common social progress could often only be reached if preceded by some (non-binding) preparatory steps taken simultaneously, but individually by the member states was only rarely accepted by the EP.[78] Similarly, the EP tended to call for clear, detailed and far-reaching rules and definitions in legislative proposals, as opposed to the Commission's preference for compromises based on the argument that a binding minimum common standard was better than a high standard which the member states would never adopt or implement.[79] Thus, the EP tried to further cement its role as agenda-setter and Community legislative through the establishment of an efficacious corpus of social legislation.

Conclusion

The European Parliament's formal powers were significantly extended in different respects during the 1970s and 1980s: it gained budgetary power through the two budget treaties of 1970 and 1975. It gained democratic legitimacy through its first direct elections in 1979. And it gained legislative power through the Single European Act of 1986 (followed by an even broader power gain through the 1992 Maastricht Treaty). However, listing these formal acts enhancing the EP's parliamentary role give no indication with regard to their impact on everyday policy-making procedures within the EP, and at Community level more generally. When trying to understand the EP's gradual parliamentarisation, it is consequently helpful to also look into the concrete actions and procedures shaping EP involvement in Community politics, and the extent to which they changed in the context of the above-mentioned instances. This article has sought to shed light on precisely these dynamics for the area of social policy.

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77. Resolution… to promote equal opportunities for women, 13.05.1986, op.cit.; see e.g. also HAEP, PE1_AP_RP!ASOC.1979_A1-1502!830001EN, Quote from Resolution on a draft Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes, 30.03.1984; HAEP, PE1_AP_DE!1982_DE19820916-099900EN, Speech by Heinke Salisch during plenary debate, 16.09.1982, p.234; Explanation of vote by Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul during plenary debate, 16.09.1982, op.cit., p.287; Speeches by Johan van Minnen and Ien van den Heuvel during plenary debate, 17.11.1983, op.cit., pp.267 and 268; Resolution on child-care infrastructures, 10 March 1986, in: *Official Journal*, C 88/21-24, 14.04.1986.
78. See e.g. Speeches by Ivor Seward Richard, Commissioner for Social Affairs, during plenary debates, 17.11.1983, op.cit., p.275 and 22.05.1984, op.cit., p.71; Resolution on the draft Council recommendation on the promotion of positive action for women, 25.10.1984, op.cit.; Resolution on the harmonization of social legislation in the Member States, 22.05.1984, op.cit.
79. See e.g. Resolution on the failure to comply with the directives on equal treatment for men and women (the problem of indirect discrimination), 10.03.1988, op.cit.; Speeches by Marie-Claude Vayssade and Hanja Maij-Weggen during plenary debate, 15.12.1988, op.cit., p.278; Explanation of vote by Schmidbauer during plenary debate, 15.12.1988; op.cit., p.289; Speech by Ivor Seward Richard, Commissioner for Social Affairs, during plenary debate, 13.03.1984, op.cit., p.71; Speech by Nicolas Mosar, Commissioner for Energy, during plenary debate, 15.12.1988, op.cit., p.278.

This policy area has proven to be eminently suited to gain a deeper understanding of the EP's gain in parliamentary powers during the period under consideration (and, in consequence of informally established and later formalised procedures, thereafter), despite the limited role provided for it by the Treaties. On the one hand, the policy-making tools applied by MEPs in order to empower their institution were not area-specific, nor were the parliamentary powers the delegates pursued, so that the analysis of MEPs' socio-political activism provides some exemplary insights into more general developments in the EP's institutional evolution. On the other hand, social policy offers a unique lens through which factors driving MEPs in their supranational-level activism can be better understood. Namely, MEPs saw in social policy the potential to directly reach the member states' citizens with Community measures, having a palpable impact on the people's living and working conditions.

This direct connection to the citizens was considered crucial by the MEPs for mainly two reasons. First, the aim to deepen and extend European integration, which the majority of MEPs shared, could in the delegates' view only be realised based on strong public support for – and on people's identification with – the Community project. One way in which MEPs hoped to reach such support and identification was by demonstrating to the people how Community social measures could have a positive impact on their lives. Second, MEPs sought to establish their institution as the Community's parliament, including the crucial role as representatives of the people. Speaking for 'the people' brought with it the power to argue before the Council and the Commission that the involvement of the EP in Community legislation would provide Community decision-making with more democratic legitimacy. Consequently, working towards an improvement of citizens' living and working conditions helped MEPs to strategically position themselves as promoting the people's interests.

In that regard, the 1970s and 1980s constitute a crucial period in the EP's institutional development: Parliament's involvement in Community politics was no longer questioned as principally as it had been in the 1950s and parts of the 1960s, notably by some member state governments. Its role as the Community's parliament was essentially defined and largely accepted, and its participation in legislative procedures was broadly considered justified. Yet, the EP's actual legal and political influence remained limited and largely dependent on the other institutions' goodwill to take its position into account, and to support and adopt its demands and proposals. At the same time, the developments and treaty changes of the 1970s and 1980s provided the EP with a range of new and strengthened policy-making tools, and with ample opportunities allowing the MEPs to extend Parliament's role in Community politics, as this article has demonstrated for the area of social policy. Hence, this period can be considered a catalyst in the EP's institutional development, a closer examination of which is necessary in order to understand how the assembly with strictly limited powers of the 1950s and 1960s could become the supranational parliament of the 1990s and 2000s.