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# **PORTUGAL'S PARTICIPATION IN EU DECISION-MAKING**

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*At the European Union we have a seat at the table with big countries and we also have a microphone. But we must be careful about how others around the table will react before we speak.*

A small country ambassador to the European Union

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## SMALL STATES IN A BIG EUROPE: PORTUGAL IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

### INTRODUCTION

Most of the European Union's member states are small states. They lack the hard resources of states with a big national economy or a substantial military force. Yet collectively small states benefit from the EU's distinctive structure. The treaties that confer powers on it must be agreed unanimously by every state and small countries can withhold approval if not satisfied that their rights are protected. The voting rights in the European Council require super-majorities based on an unequal distribution of votes that favour less populous states. Informally, the norm of consensus accommodates most interests of most states regardless of their population. The distribution of seats in the European Parliament gives more MEPs to small states than their proportional share in the EU's population.

Being ignored is chief political risk facing small states. Even though bargains between large states may not be intended to impose unwanted conditions on a small state, that can be the consequence if the states does not participate in discussions leading up to agreement. The politics of presence provides a basic justification for Portugal to be an EU member. Portugal, along with every member state, sits as of right in the European Council and Portuguese MEPs sit in all the committees of the European Parliament. As and when issues are discussed without regard to specific Portuguese conditions, a Portuguese representative can call attention to national concerns. Informally, the norm of consensus means that EU committees try to accommodate specific interests of most member states—provided that they are made early enough in the deliberation process and are phrased in ways consistent with broad EU principles. By being present, Portuguese can propose amendments to draft policies and phrase justifications in ways consistent with collective EU principles.

Being a member state confers obligations as well as rights, including the obligation to accept compromises that offer no more than half a loaf or even impose unwelcome obligations. However, the alternative is to be the object of the politics of absence. This is the position of Norway, which must accept EU policies in order to trade with the Single Europe Market but which, as a non-member state, is outside the room when EU institutions take decisions that affect its interests. For Portugal the issue is not whether the country should be an EU member but how can it best make use of its presence in EU deliberations to ensure that proposed policies take its interests into account in ways that will not only benefit Portugal but also enough other countries to make them adopted as of a collective European interest. These are the challenges that face Portugal and Portuguese today.

## Table Introduction 1. CHALLENGES FACING PORTUGAL

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Collectively, the consensus norms of the EU prevent any single big state from dominating the EU but arriving at a consensus does not require consulting and bargaining with each smaller member state.

Since Portugal joined the EU, enlargement has more than doubled the number of smaller member states making one being at risk of being lost in a crowd.

Portugal needs to emphasise common interests that include the country's specific priorities rather than distinctive national interests.

To avoid having to accept policies as a *fait accompli*, Portugal must participate in coalitions with more than a dozen other member states, large and not so large.

To formulate technically sound and politically acceptable judgments, Portugal needs a Permanent Representative's Office in Brussels in constant contact with the government in Lisbon and affected civil society organisations.

To leverage their political influence, more Portuguese MEPs need to make a long-term commitment to influencing decisions in a European Parliament of 751 MEPs.

To work effectively in a multi-level system of European government and an internationally interdependent political economy Portuguese require European political capital, that is, a knowledge of how decisions are made in multi-national settings, as well as political capital in Lisbon.

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Source: Five Working Papers prepared by the authors for the Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos.

## I PORTUGAL'S SIZE – ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE

In relations between countries, absolute measures of size are less meaningful than relative measures. In global terms France and Germany are small compared to China but in the EU each is large compared to Portugal. Portugal is small compared to the largest EU member states but, whatever criterion is used, it does not want to be near the bottom. Portugal's relative size can be calculated by assigning the median EU country a score of 100 on an indicator and dividing that of Portugal by the value of the median country. To be above the median requires a score greater than 100; a score less than 100 indicates the extent to which a country is below.

In terms of population, the European Union is an association of a few relatively big states and a large number of states that are not big, including some that are very small such as Luxembourg and Malta. Even though Portugal's population is not on the scale of Spain or France, its population of 10.6mn is 13 percent more than that of the median EU member. Portugal's medium-size position is due to almost one-third of EU member states having populations less than half that of Portugal (Table 1.1).

The size of a national economy, as measured by its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), reflects both economic achievements and population. Because it is not so big in population, Portugal's aggregate GDP is inevitably small compared to the EU's large member states. Because it has not been as economically developed as older member states, it is less than half that of similarly populous Belgium. However, the effects of Communist control on the economies of new EU member states results in Portugal having a Gross Domestic Product that is the median in the EU.

The prosperity of individual citizens is shown by its GDP per capita, adjusted to take into account purchasing power. Portugal's GDP per capita in 2012 was one-quarter less than that of the EU mid-point. Reflecting the effect of problems arising from the eurozone crisis, the average citizen's purchasing power was at the same level as Greece and Slovakia. While Italy and Spain were also below the EU average their standards were nonetheless substantially better than Portugal and two post-Communist countries also had achieved higher living standards.

Comparison emphasizes that it is better to think of European countries in relative rather than absolute terms. Thus, Portugal is smaller in population and total GDP than Germany or Spain, but bigger than Ireland or Estonia. When GDP per capita is the measure, the size of these relative differences is much reduced. For example, while Spain has more than four times the population of Portugal, the average purchasing power of its citizens is only one-quarter higher. Notwithstanding the existence of a small number of countries big in population, within a European Union of more than two dozen countries Portugal tends to be more or less average.

Portugal is neither specially big nor specially small when compared to other EU member states. Because the population of the EU is skewed, it has the population of a medium-size EU member state. Even though Portugal's economy is less developed than older EU members, the enlargement of the EU has placed its GDP in aggregate and per capita in the middle third of states.

Table 1.1 ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE MEASURE OF HARD NATIONAL RESOURCES

	Population (mn)	INDEX Population	INDEX GDP total	INDEX GDP per capita
Germany	81.8	868	1435	121
France	65.1	691	1120	108
UK	62.4	663	989	110
Italy	60.6	644	902	98
Spain	46.2	490	609	97
Poland	38.2	406	205	66
Romania	21.4	227	72	49
Netherlands	16.7	177	341	128
Greece	11.3	120	132	75
Belgium	10.9	116	205	119
<b>PORTUGAL</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>
Czech Rep	10.5	112	87	79
Hungary	10.0	106	56	66
Sweden	9.4	100	201	128
Austria	8.4	89	166	131
Bulgaria	7.5	80	21	47
Denmark	5.6	59	137	125
Slovakia	5.4	58	38	75
Finland	5.4	57	104	115
Ireland	4.5	48	90	129
Lithuania	3.2	34	16	70
Latvia	2.2	24	10	62
Slovenia	2.1	22	21	82
Estonia	1.3	14	8	68
Cyprus	0.8	9	10	91
Luxembourg	0.5	5	23	271
Malta	0.4	4	4	86

Indexes calculated as a country's absolute value divided by the absolute value of the median EU country and multiplied by 100.

Source: Eurostat. Population as 1 January 2011. GDP per capita Purchasing Power Standard 2012.

Change over time. When Portugal joined the EU in 1986, it had less than half the members it has today. Of the EU's 12 member states, five were substantially more populous and prosperous than Portugal. Hence, its population was only 3.0 percent that of the EU total. The EU increased to 15 member states in 1995 with the admission of three small Northern European states. Of the 13 new member states admitted since 2004, a dozen are smaller or even tiny in terms of their resources.

Enlargement has substantially altered how the EU deliberates about policies. In an EU of a dozen states, Portugal's representatives were visible in a group of national representatives sitting around a table. They could be known by both name and nationality. Today a large room is required to accommodate 28 national representatives plus EU staff and advisers. This rations the time and attention that can be given to any state, especially one of the 22 small states that are now present at EU meetings. When Portugal joined, it could expect to help set the agenda of the Union by holding the rotating Presidency of the European Council once every seven or eight years. There is now at least a 14-year gap between the most recent Portuguese presidency and the next possible opening in 2021.

When Portugal joined, national economies were much more national. The Single Europe Market was just being launched. The Single Market has created a steady stream of European Commission measures that have Europeanized significant areas of domestic policymaking. The increase in "Euromestic issues", that is, those subject to action by both the EU and domestic governments, has increased the burden on member states to track what Brussels is doing. Without prompting by national representatives, the Commission can hardly be expected to take into account the distinctive conditions of all member states. Moreover, when Portugal does receive special attention as a consequence of its need for financial support, it must deal with officials who know a lot more about economic theory than about the Portuguese economy.

In geopolitical terms, the admission of many new member states from Central and Eastern Europe has placed Germany in a central position. The admission of two Mediterranean states, Cyprus and Malta, has also brought the EU closer to Turkey and North Africa. Atlantic nations such as Portugal are now challenged to make sure that this development does not result in a re-orientation of EU policies to the east. The Northern Europe/Southern Europe division between prosperous economies and less prosperous economies claiming EU economic assistance has been challenged by a division between economies of Western Europe and East European economies competing for funds and for influence against old member states such as Portugal.

Common characteristics of small states. Although small states differ in many ways, they share politically significant characteristics. Insofar as a smaller country has fewer policy priorities, this can make it uncommitted on issues of concern to big states, such as foreign and security policy. The claims of small states on the EU budget are small in absolute terms compared to states the size of Poland or France. However, because small states are numerous, the cost of disbursing euros for economic development to a dozen or more states below the EU median is, in total, a lot more than doing so when the EU had less than half as many members.

The legal framework of the EU as a treaty between states enables small states to claim juridical equality. Every state has the right to be present in Council committees deliberating on EU policies. The consensus culture of the EU, affirmed in Article 15 of the Treaty of the European Union, creates an expectation that before decisions are taken, efforts will be made to accommodate concerns of small states, provided that a small state is realistic in what it seeks and does not make claims counter to the key position of the majority. In extreme cases, a small state can even wield a veto, as the

Republic of Cyprus has done in the course of the EU's negotiations about the admission of Turkey. However, small states, like large, prefer to avoid a veto because it may make it more difficult to secure allies on other issues.

Small states have tended to support strong supra-national institutions, because their procedures tend to treat all states as formally equal. Thus, when the EU delegates discretion in applying laws, small states prefer this power to go to the European Commission, whose multi-national staff is expected to act in accord with procedural rules vesting rights in small states. By contrast, big states tend to prefer bargaining in informal meetings between the heads of a few states, whether a global G-7 or bilateral meeting between the German Chancellor and the President of France.

The hard resources of states, such as economic wealth and military force, tend to be fixed. Portugal is and will remain a medium-size EU member state. However, size is no guarantee of success, as shown by the recurring difficulties of Italy's political economy and the inability of the United Kingdom to get its way in the European Union. Moreover, EU policies are not arrived at by what Churchill called "war, war"; they are arrived at by "jaw, jaw", that is, lengthy deliberations.

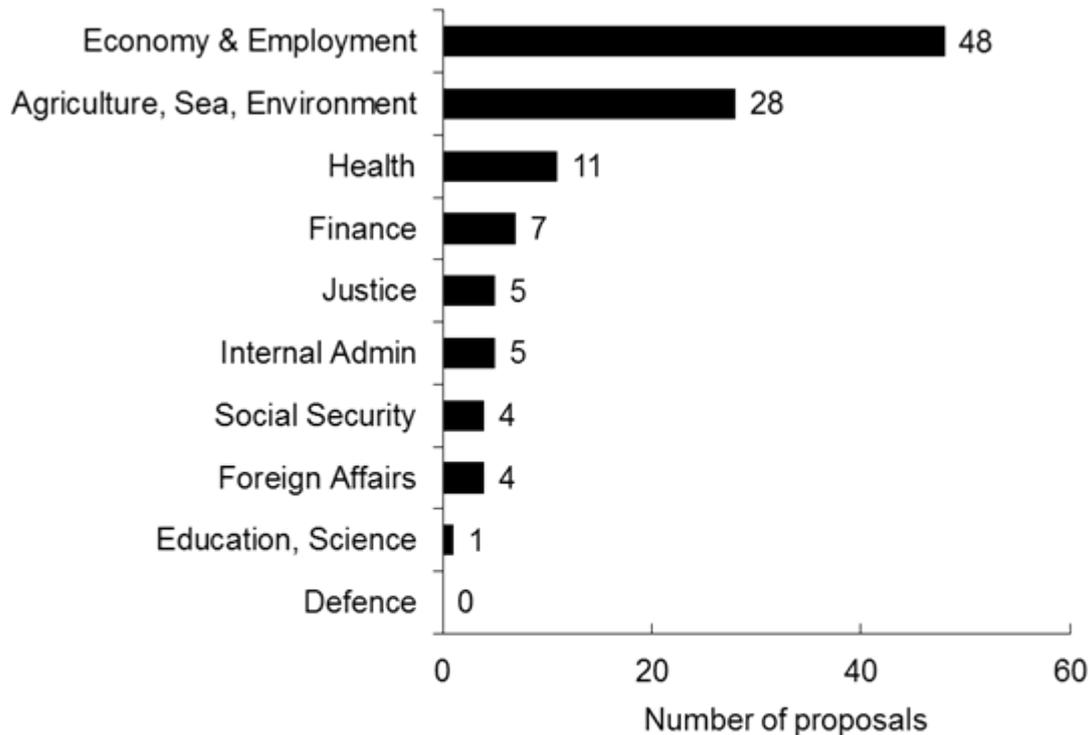
Because Portugal lacks hard power, it must compensate by developing smart power, that is, alertness in identifying issues of national concern; technical knowledge of how an EU proposal will affect the country; and political skill in networking and building coalitions that will support policies of mutual interest. Smart power involves adopting a national position that is close enough to that held by a sufficient number of other countries so that it can be incorporated in whatever decision emerges from the EU policy process. Smart power may also be used to neutralize proposals deemed objectionable to a country. Without the exercise of smart power, Portugal will simply be a spectator when others arrive at European Union agreements.

## **II HOW THE EU SYSTEM AFFECTS PORTUGAL'S GOVERNMENT**

European Union treaties give Brussels the hard power of making laws that can be enforced on Portugal by the European Court of Justice and the EU allocates more than 100 billion euros a year in benefits to member states. In effect, the EU is an additional layer in the multi-level system of governance that affects the lives of Portuguese. In principle, EU institutions are committed to subsidiarity, that is, decisions should be taken at whatever level is appropriate. However, the term is elastic and the Community method is to act at the European level whenever this is possible. There is substantial overlap in the policy responsibilities of national ministries and the activities of EU institutions. The more suitable metaphor for their relationship is that of a marble cake rather than a layer cake.

Commission proposals the first step. The European Commission is important in EU policymaking because of its virtual monopoly on the initiation of legislative proposals. The great bulk of policy work is done within the two dozen plus Directorates

Figure 2.1 EU PROPOSALS AFFECTING PORTUGUESE MINISTRIES



Source: As calculated by the authors from ordinary and special legislative proposals, covering the year 2012, as reported in the Legislative Observatory, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/home/home.do>. Where a DG's concerns affect more than one ministry, measures are counted more than once.

General (DG). Drafting policy proposals to be put to the Council and the European Parliament is in the hands of teams of supra-national civil servants recruited from all member states and expected to give their allegiance to EU rather than to national interests. Because civil servants work in multi-national teams there is limited scope for any particular national point of view to dominate work within the Commission. The staff of the Commission are often referred to as Eurocrats, but they are not bureaucrats routinely enforcing the details of laws. Instead, much of their time is spent in the active preparation of new legislation. By comparison with national governments, the staff of the Commission is minuscule; there are less than 13,000 in administrative grades.

Directorates differ in the number of proposals that each brings forward in a year. In turn, this affects the extent to which Portuguese ministries are subject to Europeanization. In keeping with the EU's origins as a common market, more than two-fifths of all Commission proposals deal with policies of concern to the Portuguese Ministry of Economy & Employment (Figure 2.1). In addition, almost one-third concern the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture, Sea, Environment, and Spatial Planning. Although Justice and Home Affairs is a major EU pillar of policy, its legislative

relevance for Portugal appears to be much lower. The three social welfare ministries-Health, Education and Social Security-are least directly affected by policies prepared in Brussels. Legislation hardly ever affects the ministry of national defence.

Laws, regulations and money the chief EU outputs. While the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, or of the European Council, Herbert van Rompuy, can make statements about such world problems as the need for peace in the Middle East, when the resources to put intentions into effect are lacking, such statements remain exhortations. Law is the chief resource of the European Union. Unlike money, there is no limit on the amount of measures that the EU can adopt that affect Portugal. The most numerous are regulations, which are binding on all member states and directly applicable without any need for further implementing acts at the national level. Most regulations are technical adjustments to specific features of an existing EU law and relate to the Common Agricultural Policy. Directives specify EU policy aims while leaving it up to each state to determine the specific legislative means by which it does so. Decisions that are narrow in scope and highly specific in impact are binding only on those to whom they are addressed, whether member states, enterprises or individuals.

Most of the hundreds of policy measures that the Commission prepares each year are what the Italians call *leggine* (little laws) involving narrowly defined technical matters. It is far more efficient to have proposals prepared by a DG in the first instance than for committees of officials or MEPs from 28 different countries attempting to draft legislation from scratch. A review of initiatives concludes, 'The Commission is a key policy actor in respect of middle and lower levels of policymaking but is less key in respect of 'history-making decisions' such as the negotiation of major treaties, which are influenced more by representatives of national governments (Nugent and Paterson, 2010: 73).<sup>i</sup>

The chief constraint on the output of EU legislation is the need to get approval from the institutions that constitute the EU's compound polity. Formally, proposals must be approved by the Council representing national governments of member states and the European Parliament. Both institutions are open to representations from Brussels-based trans-national interest groups whose members are more often national organisations than individuals.

Table 2.1 NUMBER OF EU ACTS ADOPTED ANNUALLY AND TOTAL

	2011	Total
Regulations	1234	78,058
Directives	105	5,584
Decisions	723	28,498
Total	2,235	112,140 +

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/stats.do?context>.

Table 2.2. HOW THE EU BUDGET AFFECTS MEMBER STATES

	Receives (€ bn)	Contributes (€ bn)	Net effect (€ bn)
Poland	15.7	3.9	+12.0
<b>PORTUGAL</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>+5.0</b>
Greece	6.4	1.8	+4.5
Spain	14.3	10.7	+4.0
Hungary	4.2	0.9	+3.3
Czech R.	4.5	1.6	+3.0
Romania	3.4	1.5	+2.0
Slovakia	2.3	0.7	+1.6
Lithuania	1.8	0.3	+1.5
Bulgaria	1.7	0.4	+1.3
Latvia	1.2	0.2	+1.0
Estonia	1.0	0.2	+0.8
Ireland	2.0	1.4	+0.7
Slovenia	0.9	0.4	+0.6
Croatia	0.1	0.0	+0.1
Malta	0.1	0.1	+0.1
Cyprus	0.2	0.2	-0.0
Luxembourg	1.5	0.3	-0.1
Finland	1.3	2.0	-0.7
Denmark	1.4	2.7	-1.1
Austria	1.9	2.9	-1.1
Belgium	7.0	5.2	-1.5
Sweden	1.6	3.8	-1.9
Netherlands	2.1	6.1	-2.4
Italy	11.0	16.5	-5.1
UK	6.9	16.2	-7.4
France	12.9	21.3	-8.3
Germany	12.2	26.2	-12.0

Source: 2012 figures, [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/figures/interactive/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/figures/interactive/index_en.cfm)

The revenue of the European Union is little more than one percent of the total Gross Domestic Product of member states. However, the money it annually collects in total from member states is equivalent to about three-quarters of the Gross Domestic Product of Portugal. EU revenue from member states is the result of levying an ability-to-pay formula on the Gross National Income of member states, augmented by a percentage of each country's Value Added Tax. The result is that the per capita contribution of Portugal to the EU budget is bigger than that of poor East European countries but much less than that of prosperous small countries such as Sweden. In 2012 Portugal contributed euro 1.8bn to the EU, about one percent of its Gross Domestic Product.

Two sets of entitlement policies account for more than five-sixths of EU expenditure: cash payments for agriculture and rural development and social cohesion policies intended to promote employment and economic growth where it is lagging. A country's claim to these funds reflects its economic structure, for example, economic problems arising from an uncompetitive labour force or whether agriculture is relatively important. National governments must make their case for getting more money spent in their country by producing evidence of entitlements or by seeking to alter EU entitlement formulas in ways that will enable their country to benefit.

Portugal receives euro6.8bn from the EU budget. Of this total, almost three-quarters is for economic growth and employment policies and one-quarter for agriculture and rural development. It is one of the biggest beneficiaries of economic development funds, receiving three to four times more money as countries with a similar population but much greater prosperity, such as Sweden and Austria and almost as much funding as the United Kingdom.

Whether a country is a net beneficiary of the EU budget depends on its economic and social structure and geography rather than its population. Poland is the biggest net beneficiary of EU funding because it is both populous and relatively poor. Portugal ranks second in the net benefit it receives from the EU budget. It is thus much more subsidized than nine of the ten new EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe. It is also more subsidized than smaller eurozone countries in difficulty, such as Greece and Ireland, and larger countries such as Italy and Spain.

### **III MAKING THE GOVERNMENT'S VOICE HEARD**

The Council of the European Union gives the national governments of member states the power to decide on the adoption of policy proposals of the Commission and to take some policy initiatives. The national government of Portugal can thus voice reservations about Commission proposals and, if its concerns are shared by many other governments, a proposal can be amended or even rejected.

The structure of the Council is complex. At the highest political level it consists of committees of national prime ministers and of ministers whose departments are affected by EU measures. However, the time that ministers of national governments give to the Council is limited by the claims of their role in national politics. Most of the work of the Council is conducted by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) of national governments. It consists of Brussels-based national civil servants with the time and knowledge to scrutinize in detail the myriad narrow proposals that the Commission brings forward. In turn it is assisted by expert working parties of national and Commission officials.

Proposals are filtered into two categories: those that require agreement of government ministers and those that can be agreed by COREPER. Filtering has both administrative and political causes. Administratively, the volume of proposals is so high

that it would be impossible for national ministers to find the time to consider all of them. Politically, many proposals do not raise divisive issues. If national governments have done their job in making their views known to the Commission, controversial points will have been removed before a proposal comes forward.

The Office of Permanent Representative (PERMREP). Portugal's PERMREP Office is concerned with collecting intelligence about the content of proposals coming from the Commission and about how other countries' PERMREPs view these proposals. It is also responsible for informing other national representatives as well as Commission staff about what Portugal would readily assent to and about any national considerations that could create an obstacle to arriving at a consensus. Such intelligence is particularly important for a small state such as Portugal, since it is less likely to be the first to be consulted when a major policy is in preparation and other countries are unlikely to be familiar enough with Portugal to be able to anticipate its position.

The Portuguese PERMREP Office in Brussels is headed by three senior officials at Ambassador level. It has about 60 senior professionals and is comparable in size to that of other countries with a similar population. Populous countries have larger staffs but not in proportion to their greater size. The functional division of the PERMREP's Office reflects the necessity of having at least one official who can represent Portugal at each committee meeting reviewing a specific Commission proposal. The number of officials dealing with a policy area reflects Portuguese priorities and major activities of the Commission. The EU's promotion of the free movement of peoples makes the Justice & Home Affairs section the largest unit, with seven people dealing with such topics as Migration and Asylum as well as commercial and civil law. The number of officials dealing with EU responses to security crises, six, is as large as the number dealing with the eurozone crisis in economic and financial affairs. There are also individuals charged with monitoring EU policies in different regions of the world, and with a variety of activities arising from the single Europe market. A few posts reflect distinctive Portuguese interests, for example, outermost regions such as Madeira and the Azores.

The PERMREP's Office mixes career diplomats dealing with broad issues that are the responsibility of the foreign ministry and officials seconded from ministries in Lisbon to deal with complex technical issues that are often central to Commission proposals. The mix is needed because PERMREP staff are engaged both in diplomatic negotiations with foreign governments and in agreeing laws that will be binding domestically. The more technical the subject of a Commission proposal, the more important is subject-matter expertise found in Lisbon ministries. Specialists from national ministries tend to emphasize what suits their ministry's national view without regard to the need for a multi-national consensus. However, this has a risk. As a diplomat notes, 'While expert representatives can be useful in dealing with details, I never let the experts take the microphone, because they would lose our country support from other countries' (Aus, 2008: 103).<sup>ii</sup>

Co-ordinating with Lisbon. To represent Portugal in multi-national meetings Brussels officials must be well briefed by national ministries, and national ministries must be aware of the political constraints that other countries impose when formulating

recommendations for collective decision at the EU level. Portuguese officials have the advantage of representing a centralized unitary state that does not need to consult with federal partners to arrive at a domestic political consensus, as is often the case in Germany. A single party dominating government avoids the problems of maintaining a coalition that creates difficulties, as can happen in Italy and the Netherlands. By contrast with the United Kingdom, where Europe has been a very divisive political issue, in Portugal parliamentary parties and civil society institutions do not engage in harassing the government of the day about European issues.

From the prime minister's perspective EU policies are a means to the end of maintaining his or her government's political standing. Competing demands on the prime minister's time from the Cabinet, his party, the media and the electorate limit the time and effort that the prime minister can invest in EU issues. However, as an ex officio member of the European Council, the Prime Minister requires briefing on the small set of major EU issues. The Office of Prime Minister has staff monitoring the whole range of government policies, including EU affairs. Portugal's current financial dependence on the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has increased the national impact of EU policies. Co-ordination of economic policy with Brussels is the job of the Ministry of Finance, whose minister ranks equal with the Foreign Minister as a State Minister close to the Prime Minister. To oversee the political implications of Portugal's economic dependence, the Secretary of State for the Prime Minister (ESAME) monitors the Ministry of Finance's proposals to meet conditions of the Economic Adjustment Programme and discussions with representatives of the EU, the ECB and the IMF.

The Portuguese government has an Inter-ministerial Commission coming together before and after each meeting of the European Council in order to anticipate major issues likely to arise in the near future and to consider what Portugal could put on the agenda that would be in its interest. An example of the topics considered is the front-end loading of long-term EU commitments to pay structural funds to Portugal in order to make a disproportionate amount of funds available to deal promptly with the problems that financial austerity creates.

Formally, ministries are meant to co-ordinate their guidance to the PERMREP's Office through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, when time is of the essence, this can create a risk. As a member of the Brussels PERMREP's Office has noted, 'Everything goes very fast here, and there is never enough time to prepare everything'. Telecommunications is not an obstacle to effective communication but competing priorities and time zones can be. Since Portugal is an hour behind Brussels, a Lisbon answer to a request for information may arrive in the hands of a PERMREP official too late for a morning meeting. If a memo from a specialist in a department must go through layers of clearance in Lisbon, this risks the PERMREP official having to sit silent in a meeting for lack of a reply or else improvise a statement if asked to state a view.

Arriving at a Council Consensus. Formal rules and informal norms promote decisionmaking by consensus. It requires agreement by more than a simple numerical majority of countries or of national governments representing more than half the EU's population while not going so far as to require unanimity. Few proposals coming before

the Council involve zero-sum conflicts. Most can be amended to achieve wider acceptability by adding or rephrasing a sentence or two or removing a few lines to which objection is taken.

Discussions within Council take place within the shadow of hierarchy.<sup>1</sup> Each member state has a voice, but votes are not equally distributed. Four countries—Britain, France, Germany and Italy—each have 29 of the Council's 345 votes. Portugal has 12 votes, half again more than its share of the EU's population. Qualified Majority Voting rules require a triple majority. A total of 255 votes is required for the approval of a measure, 73.9 percent of the Council's 345 votes. A second requirement is that a Commission proposal must be endorsed by an absolute majority of member states or a two-thirds majority if a proposal is initiated within the Council. Thirdly, the states endorsing a measure should collectively have at least 62 percent of the EU's population. Thus, a combination of larger and smaller states is required to secure Council approval. Council membership is also divided among party governments. The parties that alternate control of Portugal's government are members of the two largest partisan tendencies in the Council. Thus, when partisan differences become salient a Portuguese minister is sure to find common ground with some other ministers, while the EU's rules and norms prevent any partisan bloc from controlling EU policies.

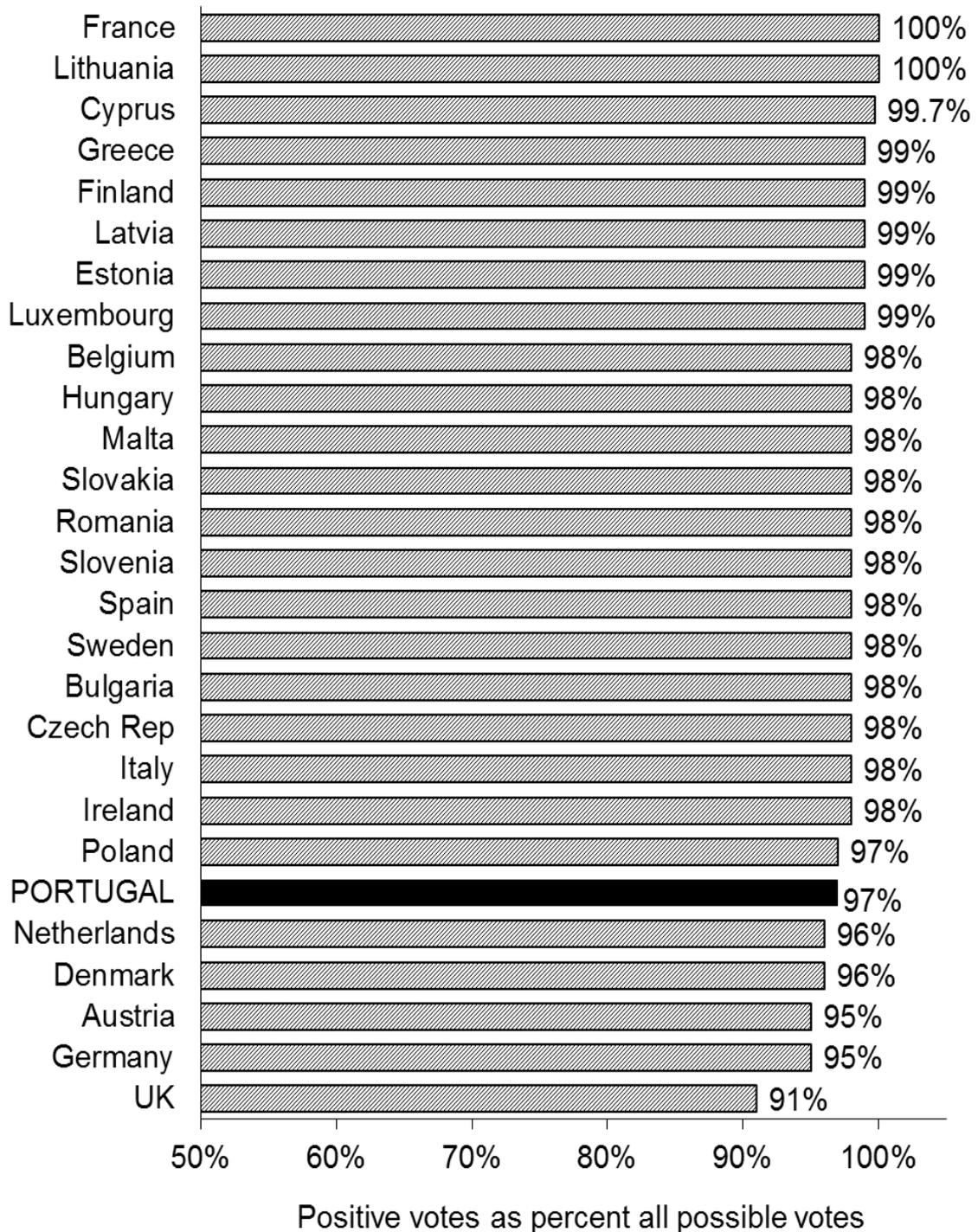
To participate in consensus decisionmaking, Portugal needs to be a partner in a coalition of bigger and smaller states. Whereas a big state not in agreement with majority opinion cannot be ignored, a small state runs the risk of having its preferences ignored if it is not adaptable, because its omission from a consensus of 20 or more states is of no consequence. Making a case for amending a policy by stressing collective benefits, for example saying 'We would like this', is more likely to attract agreement than saying, 'My country wants this'. When issues first appear on the EU agenda, national representatives must think in terms of "pre-compromising", articulating positions that have been adjusted to take into account what may be acceptable to other governments. In this way Portugal can hope to get some satisfaction from a measure that the Council is certain to approve and remove clauses that may be objectionable. Proposals can be endorsed, if not as an ideal solution, at least as a second best or 'not unacceptable' outcome.

A striking feature of Council deliberations is the desire to avoid voting, since a vote shows division within what is supposed to be a Union advancing common European interests. In the past two decades an average of four-fifths or more of proposals coming before the Council have not been subject to a recorded vote. When the Council does vote, Portugal is part of the positive consensus 97 percent of the time (Figure 3.1). Given the consensus culture of the Council, its position is close to the median for all 27 countries. Even though Portugal's share of the total vote is less than that of the biggest member states, nonetheless it is more often part of the consensus than Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.

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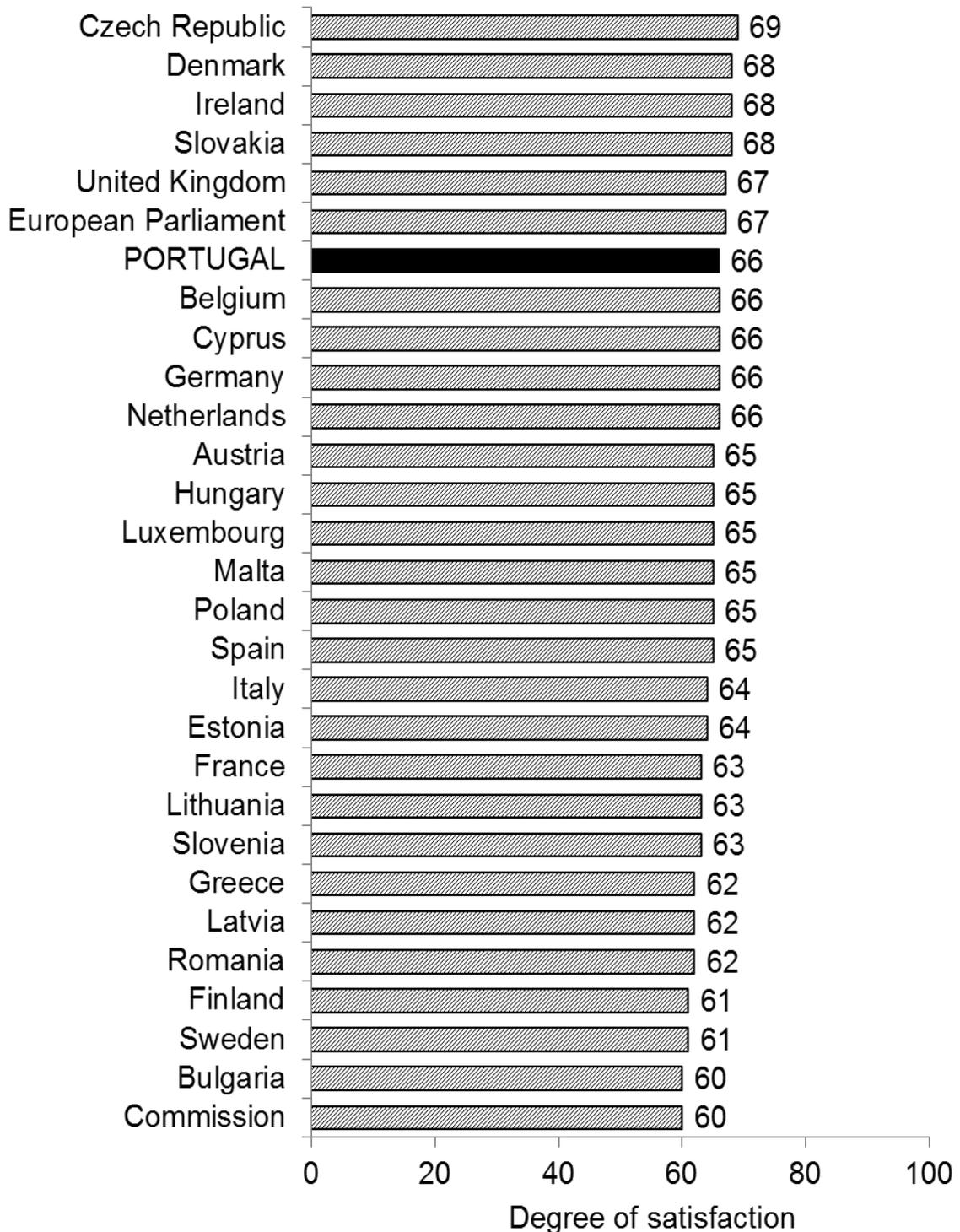
<sup>1</sup>The term Council is used to cover meetings of prime ministers and the more numerous meetings of national Cabinet ministers in the Council of Ministers.

Figure 3.1 PORTUGAL ALMOST ALWAYS IN AN EU MAJORITY



Source: Votewatch Europe (2012: Figure 6), analysis of 303 Qualified Majority Votes in Council between July, 2009 and June, 2012.

Figure 3.2 SATISFACTION WITH NEGOTIATED OUTCOMES



Source: Degree of satisfaction is the extent to which a PERMREP's Office initial goals match the outcome of a Council decisionmaking process. Calculated from data supplied by Robert Thomson, as reported in his book, *Resolving Controversy in the European Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

When Portugal disagrees with a proposal, it has three alternatives. It can avoid going on record against it if it expects the measure to pass regardless of its views. In 10 of 384 recorded votes since July, 2009, Portugal has abstained. Voting against a proposal is a clear and unambiguous signal of disapproval. However, in only four cases in three years has Portugal actually done so. EU procedures allow a national government to manage the tension between its national position and the dominant position in the Council by issuing a statement that qualifies its vote in favour. In 20 cases of recorded votes since 2009 Portugal has done so. In an additional 5 percent of cases it has voted for a proposal while qualifying its action.

Consensus norms imply that every country should get a substantial amount of what it seeks, while the give and take of negotiations means that each country will not be satisfied with everything that is the outcome of a decision process involving 28 countries plus supra-national EU staff. Both expectations are met. When social science interviews ask PERMREP officials to evaluate how satisfied they are with a range of measures about which member states have difference, all countries rate outcomes as at least three-fifths congruent with their initial goals while none reports being three-quarters satisfied (Figure 3.2). Portugal's satisfaction ranking is one point above the median for member states. Statistical analysis confirms population size is not a handicap in exercising influence. Big states are no more likely to find that their initial aims are fully realized than are small states. All members must give as well as take to arrive at a consensus about what the EU should do.

#### **IV REPRESENTING PORTUGUESE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

Whereas the Portuguese governing party that speaks for the country in the European Council usually has the support of about half the electorate, the 22 Portuguese who hold seats in the European Parliament can collectively claim to represent virtually the whole of the electorate. However, MEPs speak with the voices of five different parties rather than with the collective voice of a government representing a state. Moreover, Portuguese MEPs not only have a loyalty to their voters but also to the multi-national Party Group to which they affiliate on the basis of political views. While these views are contested between Party Groups and within Portugal, they are also shared by some Portuguese MEPs with elected representatives from a majority of all EU member states.

Portugal's MEPs. Portugal is one of 20 countries that benefits from the allocation of seats in the European Parliament according to a principle labelled degressive proportionality, which guarantees every country at least six seats. In practical terms, this means that the smaller a country's population, the fewer the number of citizens that are required in order to be allocated one of the EP's 751 seats. The quota needed to claim an MEP in Malta or Luxembourg is one-sixth that of Portugal. If seats were allocated to countries in strict accord with its share of the EU population, then Portugal would have had 16 MEPs rather than the 22 seats it was given for the 2009-14

Parliament. While the biggest states need more people to claim one MEP, their much greater population gives them more MEPs in total. Germany, with almost eight times the population of Portugal, thus has almost four times as many MEPs. .

The enlargement of the European Union has reduced both the absolute and the relative size of Portugal's membership in the European Parliament. Initially it had 24 MEPs in an EP of 518 and in 1994 it returned 25 MEPs to a Parliament of 567 members. The 2004 enlargement of the European Union cost Portugal one seat, and in 2009 it lost two seats. The allocation of seats for the 2014 Parliament has further squeezed Portuguese representation; it will have 21 MEPs in the Parliament that sits until 2019. This squeeze is experienced by other medium-size EU countries, which are also affected by the bonus given the smallest countries and the number of seats that big countries claim. Whatever the number of countries electing MEPs, Portugal will always benefit from the EP's commitment to the over-representation of less populous member states. However, its MEPs will always constitute only a few percent of the Parliament's total membership.

Of the MEPs elected to the European Parliament since Portugal joined, 71 percent have previously had experience in the Portuguese Parliament. However, Carlos Coelho, an MEP who had previously served in Parliament in Lisbon, has stressed major differences between the two institutions. In the Portuguese Parliament, information is difficult to obtain, whilst in the EP there is an overwhelming amount of information available; the major problem is processing it. The EP provides a large staff to support individual MEPs, Party Groups and committees, whereas in the *Assembleia da República* it is slight. Moreover, the EP offers the opportunity to review global issues, such as Europe's relations with China, topics that are not meaningful in the national parliament.

Studies of the European Parliament emphasize that it takes as long as one full term for a new MEP to understand how to exercise influence within so complex and multi-national an institution with fellow MEPs who differ in their assumptions about how parliaments ought to operate. Portugal has one of the highest turnover rates in the EP, with only 32 percent of its MEPs returned in 2009 having served in the previous Parliament. The rate for the EU as a whole is that 50 percent of those elected have been MEPs in the previous Parliament. Moreover, the turnover rate has been increasing from 46 percent in 1987 to 68 percent in 2009. Only one in ten of Portuguese MEPs has served more than two terms, and thus accumulated substantial familiarity with the institutions and procedures of the EP, and with its personalities too, to count as a senior politician. While turnover has policy consequences, it cannot be controlled by government. It is first of all the product of the party preferences of Portuguese voters, which fluctuate between one election and the next, often for reasons independent of EU level politics. It also reflects decisions of parties to alter the position of candidates on the party list. Finally, it reflects the extent to which individuals are committed to making a political career in Brussels or for whom serving in the EP is only a passing phase in their career.

Parties in the European Parliament. Since an EP election is not held at the same time as Portugal's national election, in 2009 the Opposition Social Democratic Party and

their allies won the most votes and MEPs, 10; candidates of the then-governing Socialist Party won 7 seats; the Left Bloc 3 seats and the Communists, 2 seats. Portugal's two biggest parties each have more MEPs than the total representation of the four smallest EU member states.

Whereas Portugal's parties and voters propose which Portuguese politicians become Members of the European Parliament, multi-national Party Groups decide what the Parliament does. The two main Portuguese parties affiliate to the two largest EP Groups, each of which has members elected in more than two dozen different countries. This ensures that whatever the partisan outcome of an election, the country's representatives will have a place in the Groups that dominate the work of the Parliament. Membership guarantees MEPs access to Group leaders who can exercise substantial influence on collective decisions of the Parliament. If an MEP participates effectively in a large Party Group, he or she can leverage their influence. However, by belonging to a large Party Group which can include French, Germans, British and Italian MEPs, Portuguese MEPs are a small proportion of the Group. Portuguese Social Democrats are 10 among the 265 members of the European People's Party Group and the Socialists are 7 of the 184 members of the Socialist & Democratic Group.

Centres of influence within the EP. Because the European Parliament has even more members than the biggest national parliament, influence is concentrated in the hands of experienced MEPs holding leading posts in the EP's Bureau, Party Groups, and Committees. There are a limited number of important EP posts. No Portuguese has ever been President of the European Parliament and no Portuguese is currently one of the 14 Vice Presidents with oversight of policy areas. In addition, no Portuguese MEP has ever been president of any of the EP's three largest Party Groups, the People's Party, the Socialists and the Liberals. A Portuguese MEP has only twice been a minor party president, the Greens, 1989-90, and the United Left-Nordic Greens, 1993-94.

Because of the volume and diversity of topics coming before the Parliament, the great bulk of the EP's work is done in 20 standing committees that review Commission proposals and negotiate with the Council to resolve differences of opinion so that a proposal can receive approval by both and become an EU law. Since leadership posts in committees are determined by bargaining between Party Groups, nationality is secondary to partisanship. In the 2009 Parliament Portuguese MEPs chaired the International Trade Committee and were vice chairs of committees for Employment and Social Affairs and for Women's Rights and Gender Equality. Over the decades, Portuguese MEPs have been especially strongly represented in the Agriculture and Fisheries and in the Regional committees.

For each proposal before a Committee, a *rapporteur* reviews the disparate views of MEPs and interests making representation and summarizes them in reports with agenda points for discussion and decision by the Committee. In the current Parliament Portuguese MEPs have been specially active as rapporteurs. Only German and British MEPs have prepared more reports and Portuguese MEPs have prepared more than three times as many reports as MEPs representing similarly sized countries such as Austria and Sweden.

Partisan cohesion before national cohesion. Portuguese MEPs represent two

constituencies, the national constituency where they compete with other national parties for votes, and a multi-national Party Group with which they tend to share a broad political ideology. The logic of national party competition is that differences of opinion will lead national parties to vote differently in the European Parliament. However, the logic of national interest is that Portuguese parties will vote along the same lines in the multi-national European Parliament. These two logics are not mutually exclusive. Approval by an absolute majority of MEPs is required for a bill to be enacted. Two-thirds of the time this results in the Peoples' and Socialist Party Groups voting together, and these are the two Groups to which four-fifths of Portuguese MEPs belong. The practice of consensus means that bills are often approved by overwhelming majorities in which MEPs from all a country's parties are aligned together.

Analysis of rollcall votes in the European Parliament shows that on average 93 percent of the time Portuguese MEPs vote together with fellow members of their multi-national Party Group (Figure 4.1). Portuguese MEPs of all parties tend to vote together 78 percent of the time, exactly the same as the average for older EU member states. However, this readiness varies somewhat by policy area. It is highest in fields such as regional development, where there is a clear national interest, and lowest in economic and monetary policy, where there is a clear left vs. right difference. Moreover, at 78 percent national cohesion is one-quarter below the level of loyalty that Portuguese MEPs show toward their multi-national Party Group.

The institutional structure that links Portuguese MEPs with their national government offers mixed results. The articulation between MEPs, political parties, and national parliament is still insufficient. There is a general perception that the European Affairs Committee of the Portuguese national legislature is the only body incorporating a European level of governance. Hence, instead of using a policy-driven approach that would link MEPs' to each committee affected by EU measures, the Portuguese parliament still channels all the input from the European level (particularly the insights of MEPs) through the European affairs committee.

Figure 4.1 PARTISAN COHESION STRONGER THAN NATIONAL COHESION

	Loyalty EP Party Group		Loyalty National Party Group		Loyalty Country Group	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
<b>2009-2014</b>	0.93	0.05	0.98	0.02	0.78	0.14
<b>2004-2009</b>	0.95	0.03	0.96	0.02	0.82	0.15

Source: Votewatch.eu. Calculations computed by the authors.

## V PORTUGAL'S CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE EU

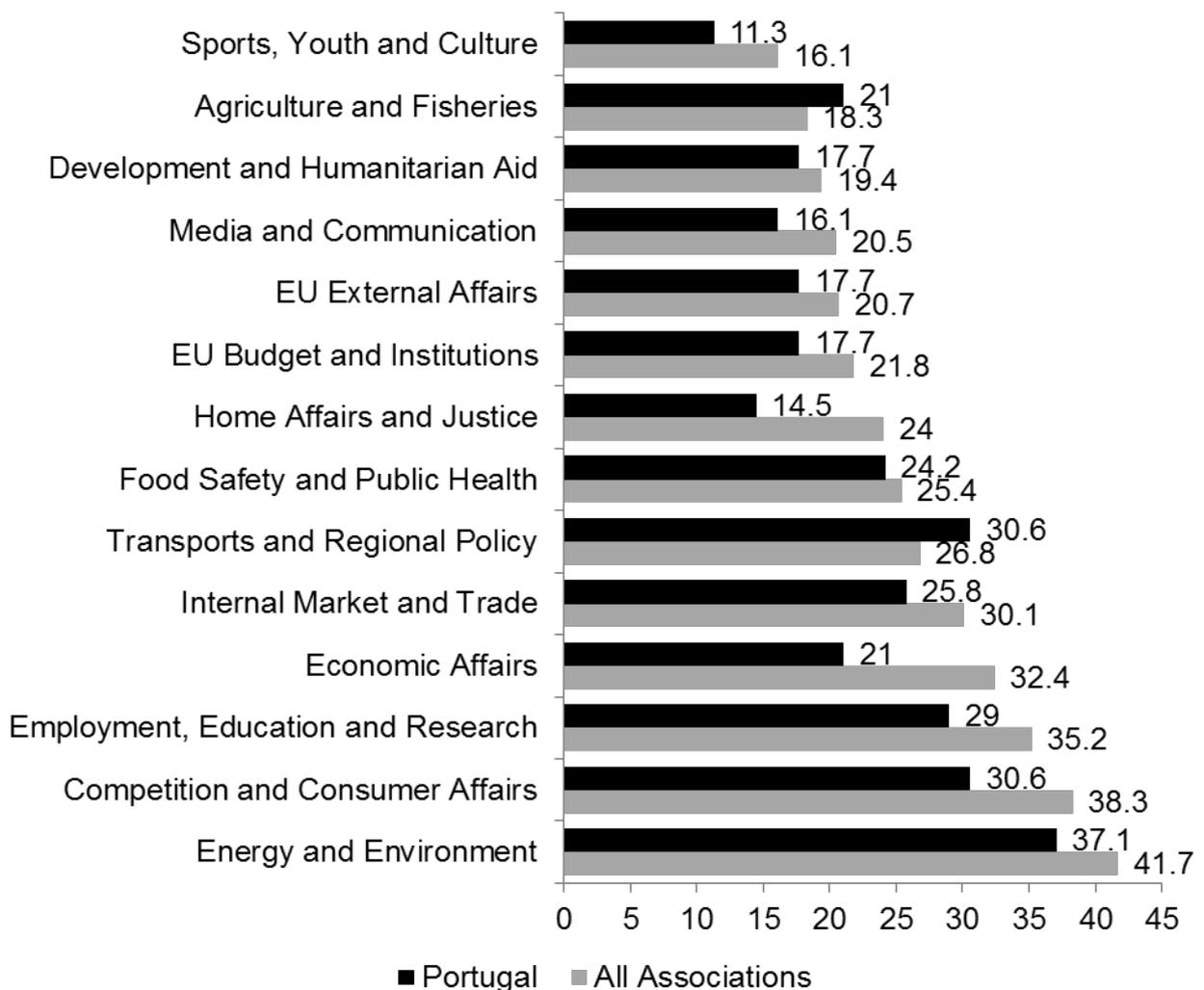
By comparison with strongly organised societies of Northern Europe, Portugal has a relatively weak set of institutions of civil society. The proportion of the labour force that belongs to trade unions is relatively low. Thus, even when Portuguese trade unionists participate in meetings in Brussels, they have fewer resources to prepare a national case or for liaising with similarly placed trade unions elsewhere in Europe. Portugal also lacks a large number of enterprises with business interests across Europe. In recognition of this, the AIP-CE and CIP have joined together to have a permanent representative in Brussels to monitor developments and alert Lisbon of issues arising that affect their business interests.

The European Commission maintains a Transparency Register for civil society organisations monitoring EU policy. While registration is not compulsory, a large variety of organisations wanting to influence EU policy do appear on the Register. Excluding those registered in Belgium because it is the EU's headquarters, there are a total of almost 4,000 organizations on the Register. Of these, 62 have their headquarters in Portugal, one-third less than the average number for member states similar in population size. Most of the organizations registered are trade and professional associations. The Register allows organisations to list up to five different fields of interest. Upwards of half cite energy and the environment; competition and consumer Affairs; Transport and Regional policy; or Employment, Education and Research (Figure 5.1).

In reply to our online survey of Portuguese organizations registered with the European Commission, the most frequent reasons given for engaging with the EU were that their interests went beyond the national boundaries of Portugal and that many issues of concern to the group were decided in Brussels. Thus, while their institutional base is in Portugal (and usually in Lisbon), the interests of these organizations tend to be European in scope. In agriculture, Portuguese groups have forged alliances with organisations with similar interests in other countries and the Portuguese textile industry has alliances developed through European-level associations of textile interests. Dealings with the Commission have declined as the influence of the Commission has been seen as declining vis a vis other institutions. Links with Portuguese MEPs tend to be personal rather than institutionalized. A number of organizations emphasize that contact with Portuguese government officials-both the relevant Minister who attends Council meetings and the PERMREP's Office-is now their usual means of seeking to exert influence in Brussels. Organizations gave positive evaluations of the amount of information that they gained through their active efforts to link with Brussels; the average was 3.7 on a 5-point scale. However, they were less positive about the impact that their efforts had on the EU decision-making process, 2.4 on the same scale.

Advisory bodies. The EU has two bodies for representatives of civil society, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR). Each is a consultative body that receives Commission proposals within their terms of references and can issue advisory opinions. However, their approval is not required for a proposal to be adopted.

Figure 5.1 MAIN EU INTERESTS OF PORTUGUESE ORGANIZATIONS



Source: TR website (<http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister>).

The *European Economic and Social Committee* must be consulted on many issues concerning the Single European Market, economic and social cohesion, agriculture and agricultural policy and taxation. On average, it issues about 170 opinions each year; of these, five-sixths are on matters brought to it by the Commission and one-sixth on its own initiative. Since its advice is issued before Commission proposals are put to the Council and Parliament, objections can stimulate a redrafting of Commission opinions but they are not decisive.

The 353 members of the EESC are divided into representatives of three different parts of society; the Employers' Group, the Workers' group, and a vaguely named Various Interests' Group. Medium-size countries such as Portugal each have the right to nominate 12 members, almost twice that of the smallest states and half that of the four largest EU member states. Four persons are nominated for five-year terms for each of the Committee's three sectors. The Prime Minister's office is responsible for the choice

of members, following consultation with relevant ministries and associated stakeholders. Unlike the Parliament, where Portuguese MEPs show a high rate of turnover, members of the EESC often serve for more than a decade. Victor Hugo Sequeira of the Union of Office, Trade and New Technology Workers (SITESE-UGT) has been a member since 1990; Paulo Barros Vale of the Portuguese Business Association (AEP) has been a member since 1994; and Vitor Melicias of the Union of Charitable Associations (UMP) since 1998.

The EESC divides its work into seven sections related to groups of Directorates Generals and each is responsible for preparing the reports that are the basis for the advisory opinions it issues on Commission proposals. The current Portuguese members have prepared an average of 8 reports during their time on the Committee. Since 2010 a majority of EESC members have prepared at least one report and their total of 18 is average for medium-sized countries. It is slightly more than Austria or Sweden while less than the Netherlands.

In an attempt to balance the growth of EU powers at the top of the system of multi-level governance in which states are embedded, the *Committee of the Regions* was created as an advisory body in the 1990s to give local and regional institutions the opportunity to comment on measures that affect their work, including the actual delivery of EU policies in the field. It must be consulted in economic and social cohesion and structural funds; trans-European transport; health, education and youth; culture and other matters related to the Single Europe Market. Like the EESC, the opinions it issues on these matters are advice to the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament; they are not authoritative.

The 353 members of the Committee of the Regions are appointed for four-year terms on the nomination of national governments. They must be either elected representatives or officials of regional or local authorities accountable to elected representatives. Portugal has 12 members and 12 alternates. They include the Mayors of Lisbon and four other cities; presidents of the Azores and Madeira regions; and mayors of smaller towns. Within the Committee of the Regions, elected politicians form themselves into multi-national Party Groups: they include 12 People's Party members, 10 Socialists and 2 nominally non-aligned. Portugal's national delegation normally meets before each plenary session of the Committee to identify the extent to which representatives from different regions of the country agree about a proposal. Given the political vulnerability of elected representatives to frequent turnover, Portuguese members of the Committee of the Regions tend to serve short terms. A third have only been appointed since the 2009 EP election and the median member has been on the Committee for eight years.

The Committee of the Regions divides into six groups to review Commission proposals. As its terms of reference are much narrower than the EESC so too are the number of reports it issues, about 50 each year. This means that in the course of eight years a Committee member would likely write one report. In fact, only three Portuguese members have written any report.

Consistent with the consensus norms of decisionmaking bodies, the advisory committees rarely take recorded votes. When this does happen, there is overwhelming

agreement among appointees from different countries. For example, in an EESC vote on a measure for Partnership in the European Research Area a measure was approved by 120 votes in favour and 2 abstentions. A relatively controversial discussion on a Single Market proposal nonetheless results in 162 votes in favour, 24 against and 18 abstentions. Notwithstanding the affiliation of regional representatives to Party Groups, when a vote is recorded on an issue, there is frequently unanimity.

The advisory role of the two Committees means that its accomplishments cannot be evaluated in decisionmaking terms. However, consultation at early stages of legislation gives them the potential to influence terms of the measures that come up for decision by the Council and the Parliament. Since Committee members are not Brussels-based but owe their appointment to their standing within Portugal, they have little contact with the Portuguese PERMREP's Office. However, since the Portuguese government appoints EESC members and Portuguese voters elect Committee of the Regions members this indicates that members will have access to ministries and party politicians in Lisbon and to some Portuguese MEPs. This access can be used to alert a relevant minister or MEP of points they may raise during the decisionmaking process in which they are involved.

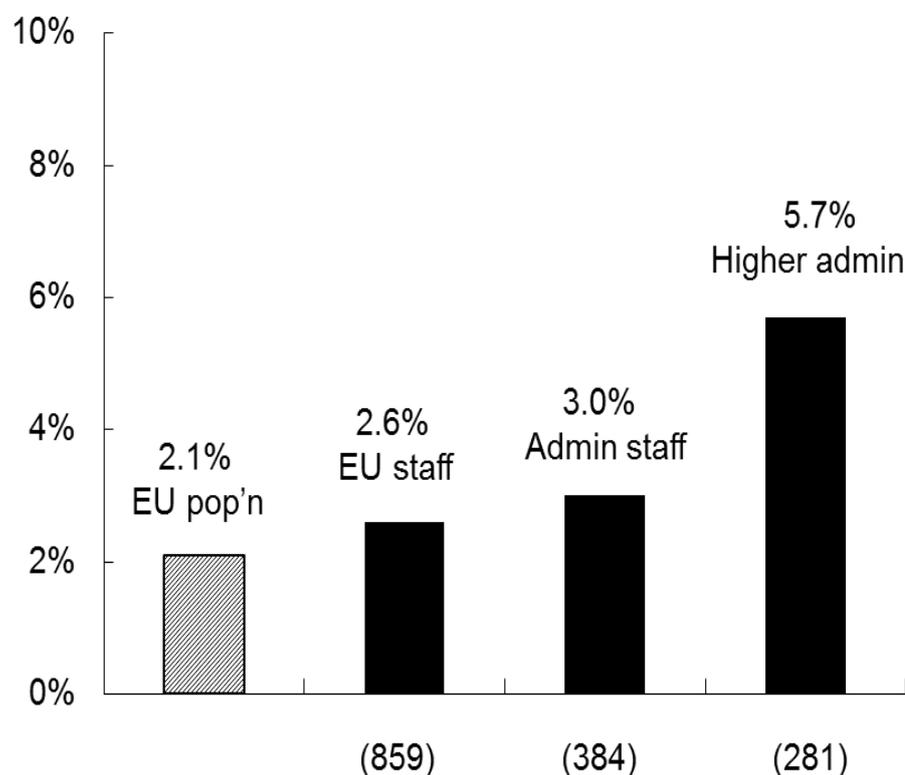
## **VI THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL CAPITAL OF PORTUGUESE**

In order to represent Portugal to best effect in Brussels, a pool of people is needed with European political capital, that is, the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to understand the complex procedures by which decisions are arrived at by representatives of 28 countries and supra-national EU officials. National political capital is also needed to convince colleagues in Lisbon that whatever EU decision is arrived at it is the best that Portuguese could obtain in circumstances in which it was but one voice among more than two dozen.

The pool of Portuguese with European political capital consists of a floating population of "fish", people for whom working in Brussels is but one stage in a lengthy career. To enter the pool individuals must have sufficient motivation and skills to gain a position in a cosmopolitan and competitive environment. Only the supra-national civil servants in the Commission have a permanent job in Brussels. A person who switches from being a national Cabinet minister to being an EU Commissioner is only appointed for five years. National civil servants spend no more than six years as members of the PERMREP's staff in Brussels before returning to their normal job in Lisbon. About half of Portugal's MEPs change after every quinquennial election, and the turnover of their staffs is even greater. Since European political capital is a fungible asset, those who have gained knowledge of Brussels can use it in Portugal to some advantage.

Because Portuguese citizens are automatically EU citizens too, all are eligible to become EU civil servants. Commission officials are expected to put their European citizenship first and promote policies in the collective interest of Europe, and in the

Figure 6.1 DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF PORTUGUESE IN EC POSTS



Source: DG Human Resources and Security, Statistical Bulletin, 2013. Senior administrative grades are points 11 to 16.

interest of the particular DG to which they belong. To be effective, Portuguese ministers need enough European political capital to relate what they think in Lisbon to the interests of a multi-national Council. Portuguese Members of the European Parliament require national political capital to be elected to the EP and European political capital in order to participate effectively in this multi-national assembly.

Supra-national civil servants. To describe European Commission staff as faceless bureaucrats is a misleading half truth. They are faceless in the sense of not being well known publicly. However, they are not bureaucrats, for Commission staff do not directly administer the great majority of the EU's programmes; this task is delegated to bureaucrats in member states or to specialised EU agencies.

To gain a well paid and secure post as an EU civil servant a candidate must go through a brutal competition process. In 2012 more than 45,000 individuals applied for posts, including 3,159 Portuguese. At the end of the competition, 233 were offered EU posts, including 24 Portuguese. This is a small number in absolute terms but disproportionately large in relation to the country's share of the EU's population. Cumulatively, Portuguese hold 2.6 per cent of the posts at the policymaking level of the

EU today, a higher proportion than Austria or Sweden. Moreover, 5.7 percent at the higher administrative grades are Portuguese. This is thanks to the number of able young recruits who went to Brussels after the country joined the EU in 1986.

Individuals do not work for the EU in the abstract; they are appointed to a specific post within one of the two dozen Directorate Generals of the EU. The Washington maxim-- *Where you stand depends on where you sit* --emphasizes that what an individual does is much affected by the organization in which he or she works. The multi-national character of the European Commission adds a corollary: *Where you stand also depends upon who you sit next to*. For a Portuguese, it is rarely another Portuguese. The division of posts among citizens of 28 member states means that no DG is staffed predominantly by citizens from a single member state. Thus, anyone moving from a job in a national ministry in Lisbon to a DG experiences a radical shift in their work environment. He or she is no longer sitting with fellow Portuguese but with Europeans from 27 other countries. Moreover, a new recruit is no longer working in Portuguese but in a foreign language, usually English or French.

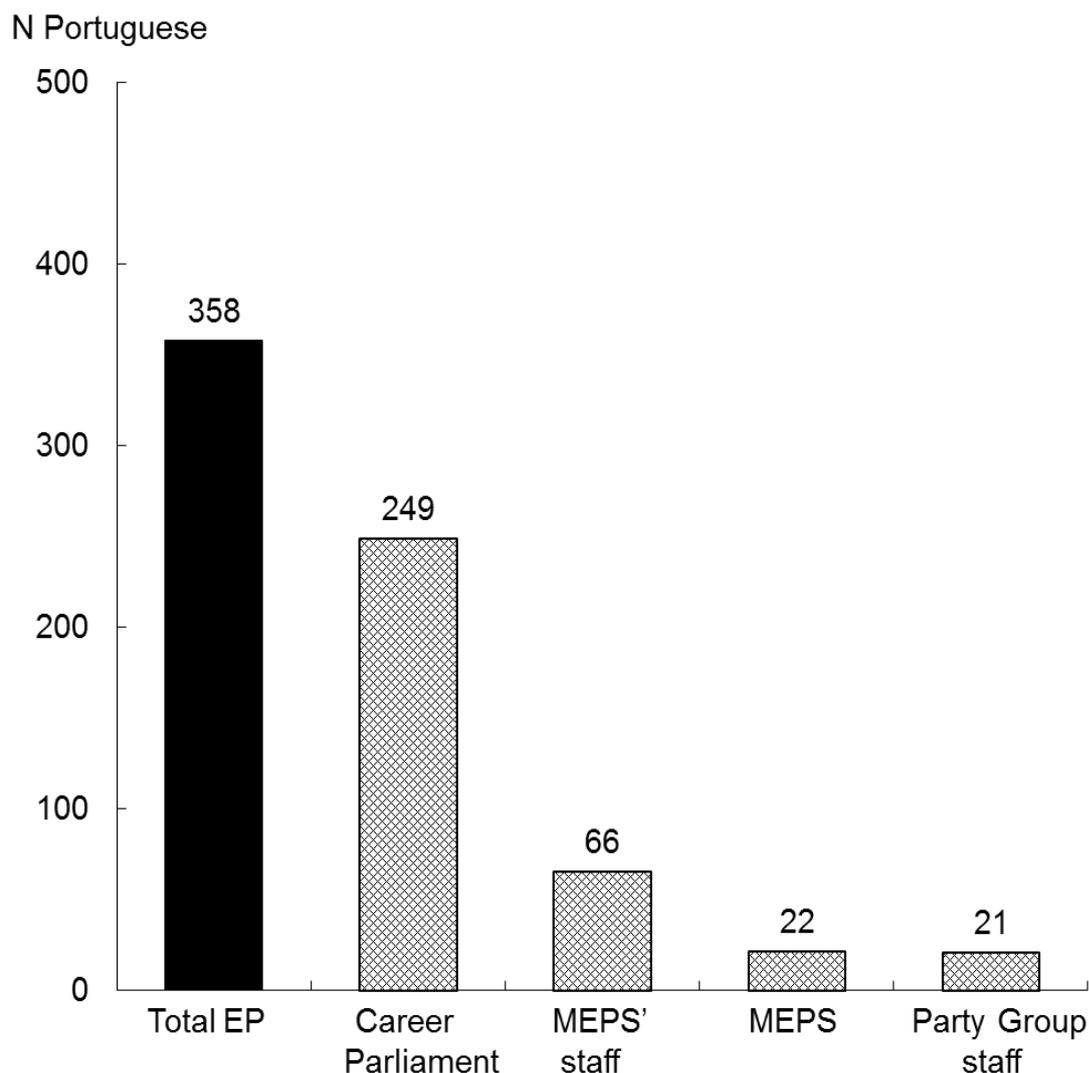
The diversity of people involved in any decision-making committee ensures that any argument to take a single country's situation into account must be supported by reasons that can be accepted by colleagues from other parts of Europe too. When the work of a DG unit is technical, and this is often the case, then the starting point for evaluation is not nationality but a shared body of knowledge, whether legal, environmental or scientific. This may encourage consensus in the harder sciences, while encouraging divisions in economic affairs, where there are differences of opinion among economists within as well as between countries.

Becoming a Commission official does not affect an individual's national citizenship, but it does have a strong de-nationalizing effect on how policies are discussed within the Commission. Whereas in a multi-national corporation people are part of a single organization with shared profit-making, in the Commission the definition of European goals is a matter of political debate. New recruits undergo intensive socialization in the norms and activities appropriate to working in a multi-national European environment. For officials from countries the size of Portugal there is a high likelihood that in most meetings no one else in the room will know their country's laws or language. To succeed in a Commission post, whatever their nationality, individuals must adapt to this environment. The formal loyalty to supra-national values and interests is re-enforced by the daily necessity of thinking in a framework very different from that of national politics. In the words of one official:

One of the best things about the Commission is working in this intercultural environment. It's fantastic. You forget nationality a lot of the time and this is brilliant (quoted in Kassim, 2013: 49).<sup>iii</sup>

Gaining European political capital while remaining Portuguese. Working in the PERMREP's Office in Brussels for up to half a dozen years is but one step in the career of a Portuguese. It adds a substantial amount of European political capital to the national political capital that they acquired earlier in Lisbon. This is an asset when going on to their next job in government, whether it is representing Portugal in another important diplomatic post or interpreting what happens in Brussels to colleagues in a

Figure 6.2 PORTUGUESE IN EP POSTS



Source: European Parliament.

ministry in Lisbon who must take EU as well as national influences into account in what is now a multi-level system of governance. The number of Portuguese civil servants with knowledge of Brussels is multiplied by the participation of Lisbon-based officials in the hundreds of Expert Groups and Working Parties that the Commission maintains to consider details in the drafting and implementation of legislation. A small number of Portuguese are also seconded to work for a period in Commission DGs. Whilst doing so they are expected to take a supra-national view of policies, but when their limited tour of duty in Brussels ends, they bring back the political capital gained to use for the benefit of their ministries in Lisbon.

By contrast with the Commission, the European Parliament gives priority to partisan values and interests. MEPs approach issues in the light of trans-national

partisan values, for example, social democracy or the environment, rather than national priorities. Since nationally elected MEPs are organised in multi-national Party Groups, MEPs and those who work for them as assistants or as institutional civil servants of the EP<sup>2</sup> require European political capital with a capital P.

The paradox of a post in the European Parliament is that one is representing a national constituency but decisions in the Parliament are made by bargaining between partisans in multi-national Party Groups. A second distinctive feature is that turnover is high. However, the great majority of Portuguese who leave the EP do not go into retirement: they take the European political capital that they have acquired to their next post, whether in Portuguese national politics or in a civil society organisation. The staff whom the EP pays to work as assistants for Portuguese MEPs are even more short-term, typically spending less than five years in a job. Whilst doing so they gain experience of multi-national party politics that cannot be gained in the Portuguese parliament or a Portuguese university. Since most assistants are starting their careers, they can use the knowledge acquired in their next job, whether in Portuguese party politics or in another European context. Because of the high turnover of MEPs and their assistants, by the end of each five-year electoral cycle the number of Portuguese acquiring European political capital in the EP is greater than those gaining experience in the Commission, and it is a resource that can be used in future to promote varied interests of Portugal.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> Nugent, Neill and Paterson, William E., 2010. "The European Union's Institutions". In M. Egan, N. Nugent and W.E. Paterson, eds., Research Agendas in EU Studies. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 73.

<sup>ii</sup> Aus, J. P., 2008. "The Mechanisms of Consensus". In D. Naurin and H. Wallace, eds., Unveiling the Council of the European Union. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 103.

<sup>iii</sup> Kassim, Hussein, Peterson, J., Bauer, M. W. Connolly, S., Dehousse, R., Hooghe, L. and Thompson, A., 2013. The European Commission of the Twenty-First Century. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 49.

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<sup>2</sup> The EP's civil servants, who support its complex infrastructure, outnumber MEPs by a ratio of more than eight to one. Portuguese constitute 4.2 percent of the civil servants in the Parliament staff, well above the country's share of MEPs.