

TOWARDS AN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY CLASS? A PROPOSAL FOR A TYPOLOGY OF THE MEPS

Eugenio SALVATI¹

The article tries to analyse the structure of the European parliamentary class and to understand if there is the enforcement of a core group of European politicians within the European Parliament. Starting from a brief review of the literature, the paper enlightens the relevance of the studies on the parliamentary class to gain also useful information on political institutions. After this, an attempt of typology for the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) has been introduced and, in conclusion, the paper presents the empirical data based on this typology with reference to the 2009-2014 European Parliament. This typology could be useful to evaluate the strengthening of a European parliamentary class, which represents a good indicator about the enforcement of the EP's institutionalization process. The gathered data highlights some important distinctions between the various member states but confirms the trend towards the empowerment of a core group of European politicians.

Key words: European parliament; political elite; representation; institutionalization; European Union.

1 INTRODUCTION

In all the political systems of western democracies there is a group of politicians that can be labelled as professional and, using Max Weber's famous statement, don't live only "for politics" but also "off politics" (Weber 1958). One of the most important things concerning the professionalization of politics is the opportunity to find a vast amount of different career patterns connected with several political systems. For example in many European countries – differently from the U.S. experience - the career within the party is an important prerequisite for a future position in the party lists and for a governmental

¹ Eugenio SALVATI, University of Pavia, Department of Political and Social Sciences. Eugenio Salvati holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Pavia, where he is a teaching and research assistant. His research interests focus on political institutions, comparative politics, political elite, parliamentary institutions and the process of European integration, in particular the development of supranational institutions. He has recently published articles in *Quaderni di Scienza Politica*, the *International Spectator* and *Modern Italy* (forthcoming).

appointment. But what can we say about the political careers at the European level? Have they similar features as the ones at the national level or are they characterized by proper features? The aim of this paper is to propose a valuable typology of the political careers in the EP based on the past experience of the elected at the EP, in order to analyse the issue concerning the strengthening of a new group of representatives in the EU, which have the opportunity to bring representation to the supranational level. The study of political careers represents a useful tool also to know the institutional environment in which these patterns take place; it allows us to understand institutional stability and dynamism (Cotta 1979; Ilonszki 2012). The first part of the paper is committed to the theoretical framework and to the literature devoted to this topic; in this part I'll introduce some important elements to study this new political class. The second part is focused on the presentation of the classification in order to sketch some possible profiles of the MEPs. In the last part I'll present the empirical data based on the analysis of the MEPs of the seventh European parliament.

2 THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL CLASS

The literature devoted to the analysis of the European parties and the MEPs has focused its attention mainly on two aspects: the first is to evaluate the socialization power of the EP (Katz 1997; Franklin and Scarrow 1999; Scully and Farrell 2003; Scully 2005) and the second is mainly committed to understand who the "principal" of the MEPs is; the national parties or the European parliamentary groups (Hix 2002; Kreppel 2002; Faas 2003; Hix, Kreppel and Noury 2003; Hix, Noury and Roland 2007). For what concerns the socializing value of the EP (Franklin and Scarrow 1999; Scully 2005), the focus has been on the study of the socializing power in the European institutions, an element that can be able to promote more pro - European feelings in the members of these institutions.

The studies concerning the socialization within the EP highlights that there is not a "going native process" (Scully 2005) that takes place in the EP and this is confirmed by some empirical evidences like the fact, for example, that MEPs haven't a different vision of the European integration process compared to the MNPs.

For the second steam of research – the MEPs' loyalty – Hix, Noury and Roland (2007) used the expression of "agents with two principals" to define who "controls" the MEPs, referring to the national parties and to the European groups. According to the authors the main principal of the MEPs is the national party, which controls the selection and re-election mechanism, and in case of conflict between the national party and the European party group, the MEPs prefer to accord their loyalty to the home party rather than to the party group. This confirms that MEPs who desire a long political career are obviously primarily focused on re-election and on office seeking, and these goals are possible only acting in a well-defined way in order to gain the support of national parties (Faas 2003; Hix, Noury and Roland 2007; Strøm 2012). The high levels of cohesion that are noticed in the European party groups are explained by Hix et al. through the mechanism of delegation of organizational and leadership powers from the national parties to the European groups.

In this framework we can observe the first peculiarity of the European parliamentary class: the MEPs are the representatives of multiple

constituencies (Farrell and Scully 2003), with the need to act as European representatives without cutting off their ties with their national parties (Farrell and Scully 2007).

Beside these two different approaches, there is one certain empirical dimension: there is a group of supranational politicians that is involved in European issues and that follows specific patterns of career. The development of these different patterns seem to be the direct consequence of a European parliament that is no longer an institutional body mainly composed by amateur politicians: the professionalization of a European parliamentary class is the indicator of a certain degree of institutionalization of the EP and in the process of selection of the political class (Salvati 2012). In order to have proof about this professionalization's process, it is important to take a look at the origin of the euro politicians to understand if they have a strong political background or if they are amateur politicians for which Strasbourg represents the first important step in their political career. A better knowledge of the MEPs' patterns of career could help us to understand if we are facing the empowerment of a new class of supranational politicians, which means the enforcement of a core group of Euro politicians who concentrates its political activity in the EP. This does not mean that the political careers at the national and the supranational level are completely separated; indeed, according to the model of multilevel governance they are rather interconnected. If we think about the political professionalization as a pattern of concentric circles (Borchert 2003), it is possible to consider the supranational arena as the last ring of these concentric circles.

A great bulk of the literature that studies political careers have a too static perspective about this problem: they are particularly focused on the national legislatures and by this kind of approach it is really difficult to understand the type of relationship that exists between different institutions and various patterns of career (Borchert and Stolz 2011). As underlined by Borchert and Stolz, the career's patterns imply a certain degree of movement and for the great part of professional politicians the beginning of the career starts before the entry in the national legislatures, usually after a strong involvement in local politics. Furthermore, with the enforcement of the supranational arena, some careers start at local level, they reach the national legislatures and they move towards the European level.

The hypothesis is that in this framework there are some politicians who are linked with the national political dimension but act autonomously in the supranational arena, determining a new type of representation; the supranational representation (Farrell and Scully 2007). In this context the supranational representatives are characterized by a specific recruitment pattern, with MEPs that have a specific training, a past political experience and that are specifically involved with European issues.

The kind of politicians that arrive at Strasbourg are also influenced by the degree of attraction exerted by the EP: a strong and institutionalized parliament, with more powers, more resources and more opportunities to influence the EU policy making, representing a more attractive institution for professional politicians: the more the work conditions become regular and increase the power over the legislative process of a legislature, the more it becomes an interesting arena in which to serve (Polsby 1968; Salvati 2012; Daniel 2015). The institutional settings, in which MPs serve, provide a structure of ties and opportunities that influence the different patterns of career. As outlined before, more levels of government and a major number of institutions

increase the number of existing offices: so, a system of multilevel governance represents a great opportunity for professional politicians because it provides the chance to increase career mobility. In this framework, the European level becomes more and more interesting because it increases the number of available offices and because these offices have had a great expansion of power over the last twenty years of reforms. Concerning the structure of opportunities linked with the various institutional settings, Borchert detected three elements of these settings, which influence the patterns of career of the professional politicians (Borchert 2011, pp. 121-123):

1. Availability: the number of offices for which any candidate can compete;
2. Accessibility: how simple it is to obtain a certain office;
3. Attractiveness: the interest that the offices raise in professional politicians.

For what concerns the EU institutional setting, it is possible to outline some features about the three elements presented by Borchert (Borchert 2011):

1. Availability: the number of available political offices in the EU are essentially the seats in the EP, the commissioner offices, the president of the European Commission and the president of the European Council. These offices are fewer if compared to the ones available in the member states and could probably satisfy just the ambition of a core group of politicians. We could refer to this group with the label "political elite", using the expression proposed by Von Beyme in order to detect the narrower group of decision makers in the party hierarchies (Von Beyme 1996, 151),
2. Accessibility: the seats in Strasbourg are easy to access for those politicians who have a strong support by their national party's elite. For what concern the other offices, the conditions are even more complex because what matters is the national government support. So, it is correct to affirm that to reach a euro office is not a simple task, and it is probably more difficult compared to the national arena,
3. Attractiveness: over the last years the attractiveness of a seat in Strasbourg has strongly increased due to the empowerment of the EP (Beauvallet and Michon 2010; Salvati 2013).

So, if the structure of opportunities influences the chances of an advancement in career, and so does the individual ambition of the politicians, a complex structure of multilevel governance could be an incentive to try new patterns of career outside national borders (Borchert 2003; 2011). These movements take into account several elements like the costs and benefits involved in these political routes and can be summarized in three different patterns; a unilinear pattern, an alternative pattern with different career arenas attracting different contenders, and an integrated pattern that hasn't a clear hierarchy between the various offices (Borchert 2003). With the recent development of regionalism and the enforcement of the supranational arena, it is difficult to say that the dominant pattern is the unilinear but it is more likely to be an up and down movement along the ladder of the political career; due to the empowerment of the regional and supranational offices, even the stop in one of these two levels has become an interesting opportunity for a successful political career (Stolz 2003). This kind of bidirectional movements from national and subnational fields to supranational (and vice versa) seem to replicate the structure of ties and opportunities that can be found in federal systems (Hubé and Verzichelli 2012).

3 A TYPOLOGY PROPOSAL FOR THE MEPS

In the literature devoted to the European parliamentary class, the typology attempts are mostly based upon the concept of ambition/motivation, a factor that is quite elusive compared both to the needs of the empirical research and to the explanatory capacity of the typology which derives from (Edinger and Fiers 2007; Scarrow 1997; Verzichelli and Edinger 2005). The ambition seems to be a too unstable element for our purpose because ambitions could change during time for multiple causes like the redefinition of interests/goals or the possibility of a new career. With this statement I don't want to marginalize the impact of the individual ambitions but I have tried to define some limits useful to my empirical research. As written by Schlesinger "*ambitions lies at the heart of politics*" (Schlesinger 1966, 1), and this statement represents evidence that it is difficult to dispute. Professional politicians are ambitious and they fight to gain or keep an office or to advance to a higher position (Borchert 2011). Even Eulau paid great attention to the role of expectations in the political career and wrote that: "*As a subjective experience a career is a developmental sequence of images which links past with present and future. A complete portrayal of political careers as subjective events include recollections of the past, orientations toward the present, and expectations concerning the future*" (Eulau 1962, 74). But in this paper, the main need is to investigate more stable elements that can be used for the definition of a valuable typology of the different types of political career inside the EP: for this reason I decided to analyse the previous political career of the elected and the tenure as MEP, because they could provide a more objective instrument for the empirical analysis.

The first attempt to propose a classification of the MEP's patterns of career has been made by Susan Scarrow. Her starting point is the consideration that every member of parliament is interested in working in a legislature that is strong and autonomous as much as possible; for this reason she believes that the classification of the MEPs is influenced by the fact that for single members the seat in Strasbourg can be a stepping stone position for a more successful national career or it represents a kind of political retirement (Scarrow 1997, p.254). Based on this proposition, she detects three possible patterns of career for the MEPs:

1. Stepping stone politicians: use their seat in Strasbourg to gain a national political office;
2. European careerists: those who have a primary commitment in the European affairs;
3. Political dead-end: those who stay briefly in the EP and will close their political career in Europe.

The results presented in Scarrow's research underline how the EP in the '90s has started to exercise a certain attraction – thanks to the empowerment process of the European institutions – stimulating the development of a core group of MEPs devoted to the European political career. The conclusion made by Scarrow is interesting and particularly valuable considering it *ex post*: "*This trend is likely to be self-reinforcing, because the greater the role that Parliament claims, the more likely it is to attract those with European interests*" (Scarrow 1997, 261). The core idea is that the empowerment of the parliamentary arena is the main element, which is able to influence the political class to act as really European and fully committed on European issues.

Edinger and Fiers share Scarrow's approach and they agree on the idea that the

political and institutional development of the EP has been the incentive of a more pro – European socialization of those members of the national elite that moved towards Strasbourg (Edinger and Fiers 2007). The implication of this development is first of all the possibility for a core group of politicians to shift their career goals from the national (or sub national) level to the supranational one that now represents an interesting career opportunity, so underlining an ever closer relationship between these two levels (Feron, Crowley and Giorgi 2007; Stolz 2001). The two authors present a typology of the European political careers that is mainly focused on the MEP's past political experience and on the ambitions/desires linked with the career positions. This typology gives us three groups of Euro representatives: who have never had a political position at the national level, who had a past political career in their home country and who gained a national political position only after an experience in the European institutions. Edinger and Fiers' typology is the result of the use of two different kinds of variables, one objective – the political career of the MEPs – and one more subjective, the single ambitions/preferences of the MEPs. This attempt of typology is extremely useful because it sheds a light on a very important issue for political science that is really difficult to define due to the peculiarities of the European political system. Having said this, it is important to underline some limits of this typology:

1. The difficulty to measure the eventual changes in the orientations/ambitions of the MEPs. The career ambitions can be variable, frequently not clear and they can be modified by the influence of different factors,
2. It does not pay much attention to the proper career paths of the EP. For example the attribution of the offices in the EP is influenced by the nationality of the MEPs, by the different degree of strength of the various groups and by the different power of the various national delegations in the European parliamentary groups.

Another attempt of typology is presented by Verzichelli and Edinger and is based on two dimensions: the first is represented by the MEPs expertise - distinguishing between specialized competences (linked to the local and European level) and general competences -, the second dimension is connected to the impact that the national political experience has on the development of a European career (Verzichelli and Edinger 2004). With this attempt the two authors try to outline some clear boundaries to define a European political class and they especially underline how the interconnections between the different levels of the political activity are becoming much stronger. Actually we are facing a real empowerment of a multilevel type of political career (Borchert and Stolz 2011; Feron, Crowley and Giorgi 2007; Stolz 2001), interconnected with the national level but characterized by an even higher level of autonomy.

The taxonomy proposed by Bale and Taggart (2005; 2006) is built on the concept of role orientation (or role cognition) and the way in which the parliamentarians' background and their personal interests influence the roles that they take during their parliamentary experience. According to Bale and Taggart role orientations "comprise patterns of beliefs, perhaps even narratives and self-perceptions that guide behavior" (Bale and Taggart 2005, 11), so the unit of analysis is the single parliamentarian and how he conceives his role and how he behaves according to that role conception. Furthermore these role orientations are influenced by what the individual MP intends to do when the parliamentary term is over, if he decides to stop his experience, to fight for a re-election or tries to improve his career. From this point of view the two authors present four types of role orientations: 1) the policy advocate, which is devoted to a limited set of issues and his satisfaction derives from legislative

achievement, 2) the constituency representative which is mainly focused on the relationship with his own constituency, 3) the European evangelist which is committed to the European integration project, 4) the institutionalist which see the EP as an end in itself. Finally there is a residual category that is the absentee. What emerges as the most interesting element of this taxonomy is the possibility to use these different types to control the change and the development in the MEPs' careers and the trajectories of the individual parliamentarians in the EP.

A similar analysis has been conducted by Navarro (2012) which derived from an in-depth interviews with some MEPs, four distinct role types. According to Navarro the study of roles could be particularly useful because it allows making in-depth studies about parliamentary representation beyond the simple analysis of voting behaviour. By this stream of research it is possible to study for what reasons a parliamentarian decides to act according to a well-defined role instead of another. These reasons could be found beyond the classical motivations linked to self-interests and utilitarian considerations but because at the base of this decision there is a set of norms and beliefs that make this choice the best for the individual. An actor decides to follow a specific pattern because he thinks that it is good and legitimate not only "on the basis of instrumental reasons but because his experience and knowledge make him believe that it is so" (Navarro 2012, 185). From this stream of research Navarro derives four role types, which could be found in the EP. In the first type we find the animators that are the MEPs which act to improve the European integration process and that are committed to enforce the political debate about the European future. The second one is the specialist and represents all the MEPs that are committed on the day-by-day decision making process and that "give priority to the technical and practical attributes of their position" (ibid., 190). The third is the intermediary who is mainly focused on improving the connection between electors and European institutions. The last one is the outsider and gathers all those MEPs that are unsatisfied with the European integration and with the functioning of the European institutions and want to manifest it as much as possible.

All these different attempts to build a typology stress different features of the (potential) European parliamentary class. Considering all these proposals we can affirm that they are all built with a mix of "objective" and "subjective" criterion. And it's probably the large use of the second type of element that can create some problems for the use of the empirical data. Variables that are based on a predisposition, like the ones, which detect ambitions and expectations, are not always reliable like the variables that are built on acts that can be immediately observed. This is extremely important not only because there could be a difference between what is declared and what someone really thinks or believes, but mainly because ambitions and expectations can change suddenly and are always influenced by the transformation imposed by the reality. My attempt of typology tries to overcome these kinds of problems, using only objective elements; however I recognize that this choice can imply some costs about the richness and deepness of the analysis. Despite this consideration, I think that this kind of approach can be useful to inquire on the enforcing process of the European political class, providing quite a clear picture of how the actual political elite in Strasbourg is composed. Due to this choice it is possible to take a snapshot of the actual situation of the career patterns into the EP and if we were in presence of the enforcement of a European political class, we could have an interesting indicator to measure the institutionalization of the EP. By the means of this classification it is possible to understand how the chamber enforcement is proceeding instead of foreseeing the future trajectories

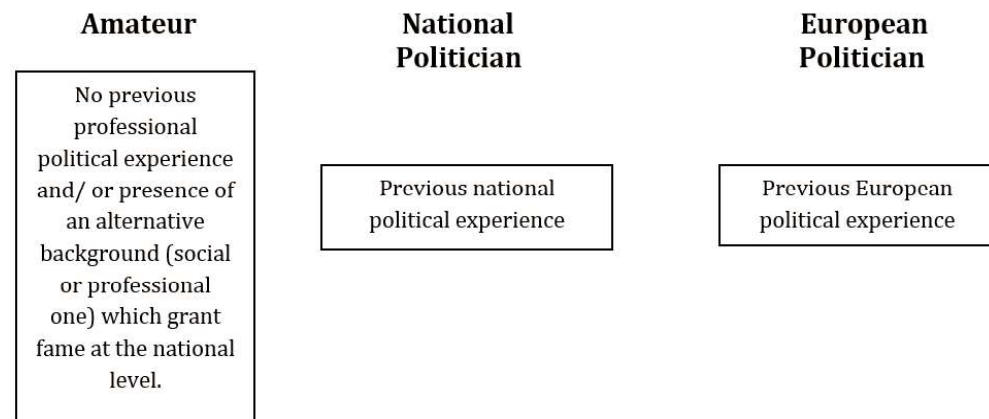
of the MEPs' personal careers (Polsby 1968; Cotta 1979). The stabilization of a core group of European politicians (associated with a turnover reduction) is an indicator of the EP's strengthening and of its institutionalization (Cotta 1979; Whitaker 2014).

What is important to consider is that this typology is influenced by the main features of the arena that we are observing: first of all a context of multilevel governance links together different arenas, in which we can find professional politicians making the shift from one level to another a very credible option during the political career. The peculiarity of a multilevel political system lays on the opportunity to draw multiple career routes (connected with multiple activities): this framework provides a high degree of flexibility and a huge spectrum of chances. For this reason the political careers can benefit of vertical and horizontal shifts that make the political course less stable and defined compared to the one in the national context. Secondly we refer to a political framework in continuous evolution: the fact that the European integration hasn't arrived at a conclusive stage, also means that the institutional structure is in movement with frequent changes in its organization and internal distribution of power.

So, for this proposal of typology, I have started from the previous political experience of the MEP: a first distinction between the concept of amateur politician and professional politician is useful. The case of the amateur politician is one who decides to enter in the political arena but hasn't in his background a prior active militancy in a party and acquires his political knowledge during the parliamentary experience. The professional politician is one who considers politics as a normal work activity, with an entry from low political positions (local and party offices) and the creation of a *curriculum* that allows him to reach relevant offices; this path is normally structured by the training in the party or in the local administrations. Beyond the classical Weberian distinction between "who lives for politics and who lives off politics", in analysing the concept of political professionalism Weber underlines how the emergence of the professional politicians in the legislatures is a function of the rationalization and specialization of the political activity.

If we look at the previous political experience of the elected in Strasbourg, we could distinguish between two levels of origin: the European and the national level. The MEP's origin, associated with the parliamentary tenure, which defines the level of political professionalization, could influence the European political career of the deputy also for what concerns his bias towards the national or supranational political arena. This kind of typology could be seen as a useful path to define which route the deputies' career in the EU could take: starting from the condition of "political novice", it is possible to schematize the features of an eventual supranational political profession. From the MEP with a past political experience, we can outline the dichotomy, which divides the two most relevant types: the MEP with a prior experience in the EP and the deputy with a strong national political background.

FIGURE 1: CLASSIFICATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY CAREERS



This attempt of typology is essentially focused on two elements: the political background of the MEPs before their election and their parliamentary tenure. These two features influence another element, which characterizes the politician’s career (both at the national and at the European level): the degree of specialization. With the term specialization we mean the ability to cope with all the features of parliamentary life (knowledge of rules of procedure, work in commission, party group work...) and the skills developed in some subfields (environment, institutional reforms, foreign affairs...). As sketched before, these elements allow us to analyse types that even if are not totally exhaustive for the supranational parliamentary reality, permit to define with a certain empirical precision some career paths within the EP. These are the types’ features:

1. European politician. In this category are all the MEPs that are re-elected in the EP. I consider an MEP as a European professional if he/she has spent at least an entire legislature in Strasbourg, independently by the fact that he/she has been reconfirmed in the seat or has come back after an interval. It’s not important if before the arrival at the EP the deputy had a more or less relevant experience in the national politics; what is essential is that thanks to the European tenure he/she has presumably gained a deep knowledge of the supranational politics and of the functioning of the EP;
2. Amateur. In this category are all the MEPs that arrive at the EP without a political background; for them Strasbourg represents the first step of the political career. Here we find those who had a prior active militancy in a party but never reached an institutional office (both at national and local level) or a relevant position in the party organization (both at national and local level). In this category there are also those MEPs that haven’t a clear political background but have a successful extra - political career which grant them popularity; they are chosen by the parties for their non-political fame. Here we consider intellectuals, famous journalists, opinion leaders, and personalities of culture and sport;
3. National politician. In this category are all the MEPs that have a well-established career at the national or subnational level; we consider those who hold both an office in the national institutions and/or those who hold an important office in their own political parties.

By means of this typology I have tried to outline some different paths in the development of a political – parliamentary career, with the aim to understand if and how there is a strengthening process of a stable core of MEPs. Now I’ll present and analyse the empirical data referred to the 7th parliamentary term.

4 THE ANALYSIS OF THE CAREER DURING THE 7TH PARLIAMENT

The empirical research is based on the study of the political biographies of the MEPs, limited to the 7th parliament: this choice is due to the opportunity to study the deputies of the ten states which became members in 2004. With this choice I think that it is possible to gain a good picture of the actual situation concerning the strengthening of the European parliamentary class and so make a first useful step towards deeper studies concerning the progress in the EP internal institutionalization. The presented data is all primary sources collected by the author analysing the single biographies of the MEPs present on the EP's website and integrated, where possible, with the personal website of the single MEPs in order to cope with the problem of information deficiencies in some of the personal deputies EP's page (the percentage of personal websites that I have consulted is around 40% of the total).

To establish if an MEP is part of the national politician type, I've considered all the relevant political offices at national and subnational level (national deputies, ministers, junior ministers, regional deputies, mayor) which I consider equivalent due to the increasing importance of the subnational level in a system of multilevel governance (this is not totally true for some of the eastern countries that still have highly centralized political systems), both in the institutions and in the parties (the party's offices considered are general and regional secretaries, members of the national and regional bureaus). Concerning the amateur category, I've considered the deputies that arrived in Strasbourg after a relevant extra political career, and that provided them considerable success and visibility in their home country (intellectuals, famous journalists, opinion leaders, and personalities of culture and sport) and the deputies which had a past political experience but that could not be labelled as professionals.

Looking at the data concerning the distribution of the MEPs in the three different categories (1), we discover that in 2009/2014 parliamentary term the number of the European politicians is consistent, covering 50% of the whole MEPs: in the 7th parliament half of the MEPs had a past experience in the EP. This data means that the parties, which compete in the European arena, prefer to have in Strasbourg not only expert politicians, but politicians that have gained precise skills in European affairs. Even more interesting is the distribution of the elected in the remaining categories; it is from this data that we can understand how the newly elected MEPs have or not a strong political background.

TABLE 1: CAREERS CLASSIFICATION IN THE 7TH PARLIAMENT

European politician 49.9% 1	Amateur 21.5% 2	National politician 28.6% 3
-----------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------------------

The values of type 2 and 3 allows us to draw a first conclusion: the prevalence of type 3 (28.6%) in the 2009 elections means that parties decided to indicate for the new nominations candidates with a strong political career and a good anchorage in the national politics. The other relevant aspect is the extremely high number of deputies with a consistent experience as MEP or as national politician: 78.5% of the total suggests that after some legislatures have been abandoned the kind of political recruitment based on the prevailing presence of elected without a past political experience, represented by the category that I labelled as amateur (Norris and Franklin 1997; Norris 1999). These elements

confirm that the EP is becoming an even more highly professionalized legislature, and that the election in the EP represents an interesting step in the political career of professional politicians (Feron, Crowley and Giorgi 2007). The high rate of type 1, the European politician, underlines that we are facing a real enforcing process of a class of European politicians, devoted to the European issues and more specialized in the supranational affairs (Beauvallet and Michon 2010). It is important to specify that a relevant experience in the national arena is not an obstacle to develop strong pro – European feelings; as demonstrated by Franklin and Scarrow, the MEPs' involvement in the EP's development and the integration process grows for two main reasons (Katz and Wessels 1999): a) the interest in the strengthening of the institution to which deputies belong to, b) a specific socializing power of the EP which operates in the first months of office and that shape a full commitment of the newcomers in the institution's life (Scully 2005). In 2009–2014, the MEPs are for the great part professional politicians (78.5%); if we are reaching a good level of specialization for a core number of purely MEPs (49.9%), we have also the evidence that the great part of the newcomers of the 7th parliament are elected with a relevant past political experience and this means that: a) parties prefer to rely on qualified staff and not on “political apprentices”, b) the EP is becoming a more interesting political arrival for the professional politicians in the member states.

At this point it could be useful to disaggregate the data of our classification, to understand if and how there are some variations between different sets of countries: for this reason I decided to divide the analysis using the European membership as the main criterion, splitting the fifteen countries of the longest membership from the twelve new access countries of 2004 and 2007. According to the results shown in Table 2, the data of the European politicians in the EU15 are quite similar to the EU27: the most relevant difference concerns the number of amateurs that are more consistent if compared to the level of the EU at 27.

This means that in the oldest fifteen members, there is a major willingness to consider Strasbourg as a useful step for those who start their political career. It's possible to suppose, according to Franklin and Scarrow, that in these countries the highest number of beginners are favoured by the longest membership in the EU, which make these countries more socialized with the presence of a supranational political dimension. This idea copes with Borchert's suggestion to consider political professionalization as a pattern of concentric circles (Borchert 2003), thinking of the supranational arena as a possible and natural point of entry for the political career. It is interesting to note Greece's case in which the most prominent category is the amateur one with a striking 40.9%. This data reveals that there is not only a high turnover rate which makes difficult to establish a core group of European politicians, but also that Greek national politicians probably don't see Strasbourg as an interesting step in their career and prefer the national arena. Totally different to Greece are U.K., Germany, Belgium and Ireland that have a high number of European politicians, showing how in these countries it is considered fundamental a strong specialization level for European professionals in order to deal with the complicated European issues. Furthermore the results of these countries also reflect the structure of their own political systems in which the turnover rate is lower compared to the one of countries like Italy, Portugal or France (Matland and Studlar 2004; Manow 2007).

Looking at the four biggest and most important countries – France, Germany, Italy and U.K. – that participated to all the European elections we can underline some interesting elements. First of all U.K and Germany, which have a solid core group of European politicians (the U.K. obtained the highest rate in this type),

substantially higher than France and Italy. Apparently we could exclude that the level of national involvement in the European integration process could influence the predisposition to see the seat in Strasbourg as an autonomous target to which devote attention to: on one hand a Euro sceptic country as the U.K. has a very low turnover on the other hand Italy, that traditionally is a great supporter of integration, has a high turnover level. Italy and France, among the biggest countries, are empowering a European political class with more difficulties. Italy has one of the lowest rate of persistence and one of the highest for the presence of newcomers with a previous national political experience (this data follows the same trend for all the countries with a weak European political class). This means that Strasbourg represents just a step in the political career, probably while waiting for a new office in the home country: in Italy – and in the other countries with this turnover level – we are facing a high level of elite circulation that makes the stabilization of a core group of European politicians more difficult.

TABLE 2: CAREERS CLASSIFICATION IN THE 7TH PARLIAMENT ACCORDING TO THE COUNTRY PROVENIENCE (EU 15)

	European politician	Amateur	National politician
Austria	53%	23.5%	23.5%
Belgium	63.6%	13.6%	22.8%
Denmark	53.8%	23.1%	23.15
Finland	46.1%	30.8%	23.1%
France	44.4%	36.2%	19.4%
Germany	56.6%	27.2%	16.2%
Greece	31.8%	40.9%	27.3%
Ireland	58.3%	33.3%	8.3%
Italy	37.5%	27.7%	34.8%
Luxembourg	50%	50%	0%
Netherlands	44%	32%	24%
Portugal	36.6%	18.1%	45.3%
Spain	60%	26%	14%
Sweden	44.4%	33.4%	22.2%
U.K	70.8%	20.9%	8.3%
Total EU 15	50%	29.1%	20.9%

For what concerns the results by the twelve new member states, if the average of the type of European politician is quite the same as the oldest members of the EU, it is possible to observe a very low rate of amateurs coming from the new access countries. This implies that the parties in the new member states choose to indicate nominees with a solid political experience, which are able to act in the new political arena. For the MEPs of the new access countries a previous involvement in parliamentary or governmental offices seems to be a relevant factor for a subsequent arrival at the EP; this condition is similar to the one of the first elected at the EP (with the EEC at nine) where a past experience as MNP was fundamental for the arrival in Strasbourg. This similarity is confirmed also by Corbett and others (2007) which measured that of the newly elected in the EP in the 2004 European elections from the new member states, 57% had a previous political experience as MNPs and 19.1% as cabinet ministers. The low level of amateurs can be interpreted as the best way to protect the interests of the new member states in a very complex and demanding institutional context as the supranational one.

The great bulk of the elected from the eastern countries have a solid political experience in a proportion that is even higher compared to the oldest fifteen members. This means that there is a certain convergence in the actual selection process of the euro elites and furthermore that there is quite a strong core

group of euro politicians that is actually enforcing in the eastern countries. It will be interesting, for a future research, to monitor if this process will be enforced in the next European elections or if it will be weakened by the rise of a strong anti-euro elite in Eastern Europe.

TABLE 3: CAREERS CLASSIFICATION IN THE 7TH PARLIAMENT ACCORDING TO THE COUNTRY PROVENIENCE (12 NEW ACC.)

	European politician	Amateur	National politician
Bulgaria	64.7%	5.9%	29.4%
Czech Republic	63.6%	27.3%	9.1%
Cyprus	33.3%	0%	66.7%
Estonia	50%	0%	50%
Hungary	54.5%	22.7%	22.8%
Latvia	37.5%	0%	62.5%
Lithuania	16.7%	16.9%	66.7%
Malta	80%	20%	0%
Poland	40%	18%	42%
Romania	60.6%	21.2%	18.2%
Slovakia	53.8%	7.7%	38.5%
Slovenia	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%
Tot 12 new acc. (2004 and 2007)	49.8%	14%	36.2%

5 CONCLUSION

The study of political careers allows us to have a deeper knowledge of the professionalization of the political class and can provide some important insights into political institutions, on how they work and to what degree they are institutionalized (Hibbing 1999; Rozenberg and Blomgren 2012a; Rozenberg and Blomgren 2012b). Studying the political careers is fundamental because it gives a better knowledge of institutions and it enlightens the structure of ties and opportunities in which these careers take place. As outlined by Borchert, when we study political careers we find some patterns that are independent from the individual preferences and that are linked with the institutional structure (Borchert 2011).

This proposal of typology allows highlighting some interesting points, both for a better knowledge of the 2009–2014 EP's composition and for future stream of research concerning the European political class. The first part of the data concerning the composition of the 7th EP shows how strong the presence of career politicians (both European professionals and national professionals) is. This data can be the result of the empowerment of the EP, which has occurred in the last twenty years: this legislature obviously is no longer the amateur body described by Norris (Norris 1999), but it is becoming an even more powerful co-legislator in the European political arena. The institutional structure of opportunities has made the EP a more interesting institution in which to serve in, confirming that the parliament is going through a relevant institutionalization process which will make an even stronger institutional player in the future due to its cohesion and adaptability (Huntington 1968).

Looking at the disaggregate data, it is interesting to note how high is the rate of professional politicians in the ten new access countries. One possible interpretation is the need for these states to strongly protect their interests against the other states; sensible to the public opinion of their home countries, the deputies from eastern countries can be less inclined to embrace the idea of a

strong devolution of powers to the European Union. The future development of a European political class from eastern countries is an interesting element that deserves more attention; it will be important to set a research agenda focused on the behaviour of the eastern MEPs.

The main data that I want to stress is that the evidence presented here, shows how the EP is attracting politicians that decide to serve long European careers, and that the great part of the newcomers that were elected in the 2009 elections, have a previous strong political experience. This underlines how the EP is becoming an attractive institution in which to work in; the greater the role of the EP, the easier it is to attract politicians with European interests or with a professional career. This also explains the increasing ability of the EP to face – and sometimes win – the challenges against the other European institutions.

REFERENCES

- Bale, Tim and Paul Taggart. 2005. "Finding Their Way: the Socialisation of Freshmen MEPs in the European Parliament." *Conference of the European Union Studies Association of the USA*, 31 March-2 April, Austin.
- Bale, Tim and Paul Taggart. 2006. "First Timers Yes, Virgins No: the Roles and Backgrounds of New Members of the European Parliament." *SEI Working Paper N°89*.
- Beauvallet, Willy and Sebastien Michon. 2010. "Professionalization and Socialization of the Members of the European Parliament." *French Politics* 8 (2): 145–165.
- Borchert, Jens. 2003. Professional Politicians: Towards a Comparative Perspective. In *The Political Class in Advanced Democracies*, eds. Borchert, Jens and Jürgen Zeiss, 1–25. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Borchert, Jens. 2011. "Individual Ambition and Institutional Opportunity: a Conceptual Approach to Political Careers in Multi-level Systems." *Regional and Federal Studies* 21 (1): 117–140.
- Borchert, Jens and Klaus Stolz. 2011. "Introduction: Political Careers in Multi-level Systems." *Regional and Federal Studies* 21 (1): 107–115.
- Corbett, Richard, Jacobs, Francis and Michael Shackleton. 2007. *The European Parliament*. 7th ed. London: Harper.
- Cotta, Maurizio. 1979. *Classe Politica e Parlamento in Italia. 1946–1976*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Daniel, William. 2015. *Career Behaviour and the European Parliament. All Roads Lead Through Brussels?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Edinger, Michael and Stefaan Fiers. 2007. "The European Parliament and the Making of a Supranational Elite." *ECPR Joint Session 7-12 May, Helsinki*.
- Eulau, Heinz. 1962. The Legislative Career. In *The Legislative System, Explorations in Legislative Behavior*, eds. Wahlke, John, Eulau, Heinz, Buchanan, William and Leroy Ferguson. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Faas, Thorsten. 2003. "To Defect or not to Defect? National, Institutional and Party Group Pressures on MEPs and Their Consequences for Party Group Cohesion in the European Parliament." *European Journal of Political Research* 42 (6): 841–866.
- Farrell, David and Roger Scully. 2003. "MEPs as Representatives: Individual and Institutional Roles." *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 41 (2): 269–288.
- Farrell, David and Roger Scully. 2007. *Representing Europe's Citizens: Electoral Institutions and the Failure of Parliamentary Representation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Feron, Elise, Crowley, John and Liana Giorgi. 2006. "The Emergence of a European Political Class." In *Democracy in the European Union*, eds. Giorgi, Liana, Von Homeyer, Ingmar and Parsons Wayne, 79–114. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Franklin, Mark and Suzan Scarrow. 1999. "Making Europeans? The Socializing Power of the European Parliament." In *The European Parliament, the National Parliaments and European Integration*, eds. Katz, Richard and Bernard Wessels, 45–60. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Hibbing, John. 1999. "Legislative Careers: Why and How we Should study Them." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 24 (2): 149–171.
- Hix, Simon. 2002. "Parliamentary Behavior with Two Principals: Preferences, Parties and Voting in the European Parliament." *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (3): 688–689.
- Hix, Simon, Kreppel, Amie and Abdul Noury. 2003. "The Party System in the European Parliament: Collusive or Competitive?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 41 (2): 309–331.
- Hix, Simon, Noury Abdul and Gerard Roland. 2007. *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hubé, Nicolas and Luca Verzichelli. 2012. "Ready to Run Europe? Perspectives of a Supranational Career Among EU National Elites." In *The Europe of Elites. A Study into the Europeanness of Europe's Political and Economic Elites*, eds. Best, Heinrich, Lengyel, György and Luca Verzichelli, 43–66. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Huntington, Samuel. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ilonszki, Gabriella. 2012. "Role Stability in the Context of Institutional and Positional Change." In *Parliamentary Roles in Modern Legislatures*, eds. Blomgren, Magnus and Olivier Rozenberg, 162–183. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Katz, Richard. 1997. "Representational Roles." *European Journal of Political Research* 32 (2): 211–226.
- Katz, Richard and Bernard Wessels (eds.). 1999. *The European Parliament, the National Parliaments and European Integration*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kreppel, Amie. 2002. *The European Parliament and Supranational Party System. A Study in Institutional Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Manow, Philip. 2007. "Electoral Rules and Legislative Turnover: Evidence from Germany's Mixed Electoral System." *West European Politics* 30 (1): 195–207.
- Matland, Richard and Donley Studlar. 2004. "Determinants of Legislative Turnover: a Cross National Analysis." *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (1): 87–108.
- Navarro, Julien. 2012. "The Cognitive Rationality of Role Choices: Evidence from the European Parliament." In *Parliamentary Roles in Modern Legislatures*, eds. Blomgren, Magnus and Olivier Rozenberg, 184–210. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Norris, Pippa and Mark Franklin. 1997. "Social Representation." *Special Issue of the European Journal of Political Research* 32 (2): 273–282.
- Norris, Pippa. 1999. "Recruitment into the European Parliament." In *The European Parliament, the National Parliaments and European Integration*, eds. Katz, Richard and Bernard Wessels, 86–104. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Polsby, Nelson. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives." *American Political Science Review* 62 (1): 144–168.
- Rozenberg, Olivier and Magnus Blomgren. 2012a. "Legislative Roles and Legislative Studies: the Neo-institutionalist Turning Point?" In *Parliamentary Roles in Modern Legislatures*, eds. Blomgren, Magnus and Olivier Rozenberg, 8–35. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Rozenberg, Olivier and Magnus Blomgren. 2012b. "Bringing Parliamentary Roles Back In." In *Parliamentary Roles in Modern Legislatures*, eds. Blomgren, Magnus and Olivier Rozenberg, 211–230. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Salvati, Eugenio. 2012. *Il Parlamento Europeo e la sua membership: un'analisi* (The European Parliament and its membership: an analysis). PhD dissertation.
- Salvati, Eeugenio. 2013. "Rappresentanza Oltre lo Stato nazionale. Il Caso del Parlamento Europeo." *Quaderni di Scienza Politica* 2: 255–285.
- Scarrow, Susan. 1997. "Political Career Paths and the European Parliament." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 22 (2): 253–263.
- Schlesinger, Joseph. 1966. *Ambition and Politics*. Chicago: Rand McNaly.
- Scully, Roger. 2005. *Becoming Europeans? Attitudes, Behaviour and Socialization in the European Parliament*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scully, Roger and David Farrell. 2003. "MEPs as Representatives: Individual and Institutional Roles." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 41 (2): 269–288.
- Stolz, Klaus. 2001. "Parliamentary Careers in Europe. Between Regional, National and Supranational Level." *ECPR 29th Joint Session, 6-11 April, Grenoble*.
- Stolz, Klaus. 2003. "Moving Up, Moving Down: Political Careers across Territorial Levels." *European Journal of Political Research* 42 (2): 223–248.

- Strøm, Kaare. 2012. "Roles as Strategies: Towards a Logic of Legislative Behavior." In *Parliamentary Roles in Modern Legislatures*, eds. Blomgren, Magnus and Olivier Rozenberg, 85–100. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Verzichelli, Luca and Michael Edinger. 2005. "A Critical Juncture? The 2004 European Elections and the Making of a Supranational Elite." *Journal of Legislative Studies* 11 (2): 254–274.
- Von Beyme, Kurt. 1996. "Party Leadership and Change in Party Systems: Towards a Postmodern Party State?" *Government and Opposition* 31 (2): 135–159.
- Weber, Max. 1958. "Politics as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber*, eds. Gert, Hans and Wright C. Mills, 77–128. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Whitaker, Richard. 2014. "Tenure, Turnover and Careers in the European Parliament: MEPs as Policy-Seekers." *Journal of European Public Policy* 21 (10): 1–19.