

SciencesPo

**BACK BUT POORLY BACKED
National Parliaments & the EU**

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OUTLINE

I. Some reasons to be optimistic

1. Oversight instruments *are* used
2. An increased oversight over Prime ministers
3. A shared meaning of what national parliaments are

II. Some reasons to be less optimistic

1. The Early Warning System: a distraction & a threat
2. Bureaucracy and division of labor within assemblies
3. The growing inadequacy between the EU governance & national parliaments

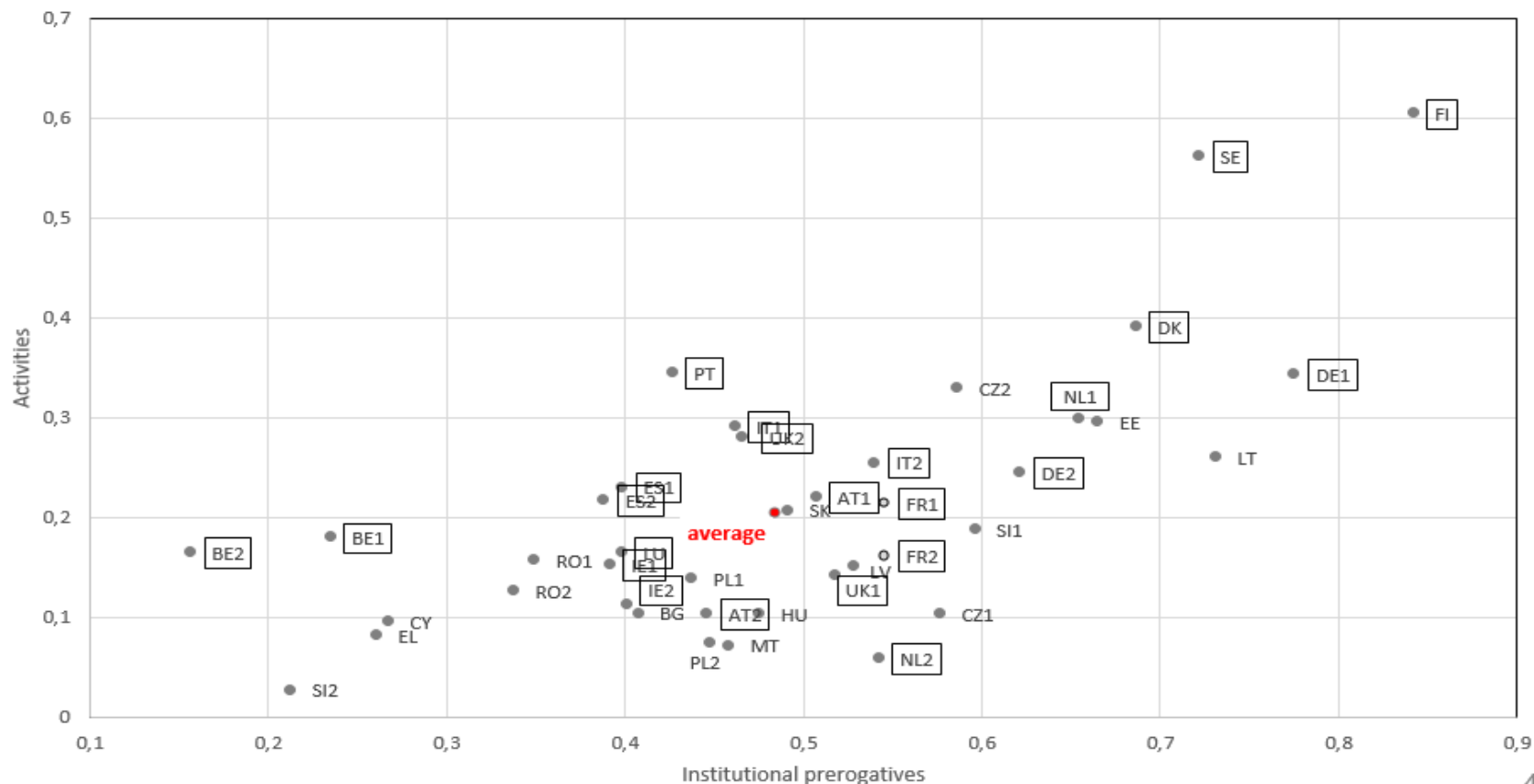
I.1. Oversight instruments *are* used

Mean yearly parliamentary activities for the 40 parliamentary chambers (2010-2012)

Floor debates on EU affairs		EU opinions		EU committees meetings	
n	Duration	To the national government	To the European Commission	n	Duration
13.7 days	23 hours	35.4	12	45	68.4 hours

EU Activities & EU prerogatives:

- high correlation
- strong national variations



I.2. An increased oversight over Prime ministers

- Economic crisis: greater significance of European Councils
- Ex ante & ex post debates in Parliament
- High electoral salience
- So far not paid by deadlocks

Parliamentary activities over the European Council (2011-12)

EX-ANTE	REDUCED INVOLVEMENT	COMMITTEE	PLENARY	INVOLVEMENT BOTH IN COMMITTEES AND PLENARY
EX-POST				
REDUCED INVOLVEMENT	LIMITED CONTROL MODEL Hungary Luxemburg Romania	"EUROPE AS USUAL" Czech Republic Estonia Italy Latvia Poland Slovakia	Netherlands	
COMMITTEE	Cyprus	EXPERT MODEL Belgium Finland Lithuania Slovenia	France	POLICY MAKER Germany
PLENARY	GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY Bulgerie Malta Spein UK	Austria Sweden	PUBLIC FORUM Ireland	
INVOLVEMENT BOTH IN COMMITTEES AND PLENARY	Greece	Portugal		FULL EUROPEANISATION Denmark

Source : EP /
Wessels & al. 2012

I.3. A shared meaning of what national parliaments are

- Despite the great diversity of national parliaments in Europe
- There is a sense of what they are thanks to:
 - **The non-ending debate over their role in the EU**
 - **EU treaties since Maastricht**
 - **Communication and relation within interparliamentary networks**
- **A double definition:**
 - **Democratic institutions: elected, debates, pluralism**
 - **Diverse institutions with their specificity, focus, traditions...**

	<i>Government watchdog</i>	<i>Policy shaper</i>	<i>Public forum</i>	<i>European player</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Sweden	✓	✓	✓	✓	
The Netherlands	✓	✓		✓	
Denmark	✓	✓		✓	
Italy	✓		✓	✓	
Portugal	✓		✓	✓	
Germany	✓	✓			
Finland	✓	✓			
Cyprus	✓	✓			
Slovenia	✓		✓		
Spain	✓		✓		
The UK	✓		✓		
Malta	✓				✓
Hungary		✓	✓		
Croatia		✓			✓
Luxembourg		✓		✓	
Bulgaria			✓	✓	
France			✓		✓
Czech Republic				✓	✓
Belgium	✓				
Estonia	✓				
Lithuania	✓				
Slovakia	✓				
Greece	✓				
Poland		✓			
Austria		✓			
Ireland			✓		
Romania				✓	
Latvia	✓				

Low houses' role in EU affairs: diversity *within* and *between* parliaments

II.1. Early warning on subsidiarity: a distraction & a threat

A distraction:

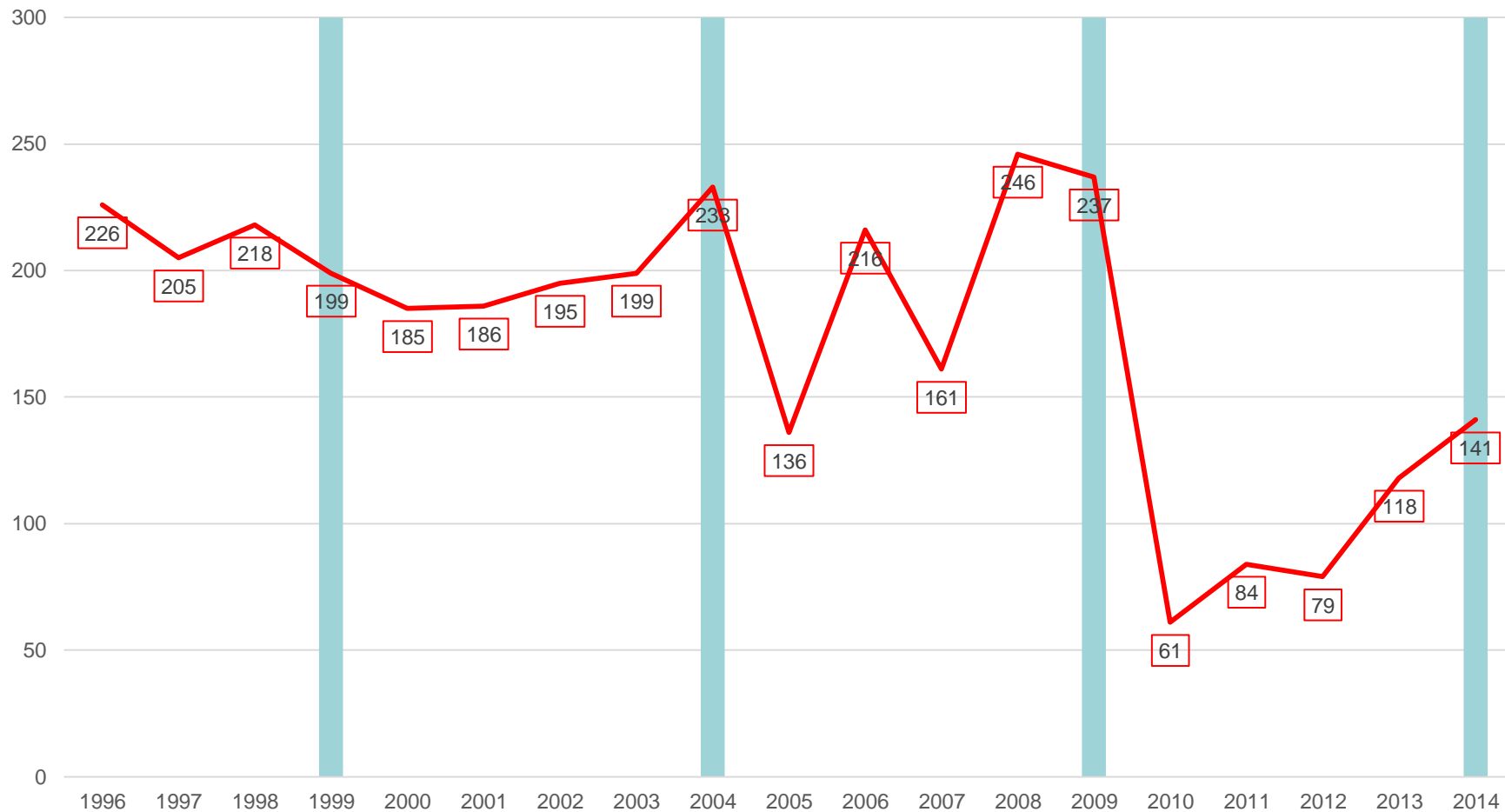
- **A complex system with no real weight**
- **A limited interest from many MPs on subsidiarity**
- **Part of a *pretending strategy* vis-à-vis the democratic deficit**

A threat:

- **Based on the view that national parliaments want to block the EU**
- **A base for the 'red cards' claims (Cameron). Paradoxically: red cards all the more supported that yellow cards are a failure!**

The EU has already slow down... no need for new locks

EU adopted laws



II.2. Bureaucracy and division of labor within assemblies

Bureaucracy:

- **Comprehensive scrutiny of hundreds of EU documents**
- **Costly: human resources**
- **Sometimes, lack of genuine commitment from MPs**
- **Sometimes, to the detriment of political debates**

Division of labor:

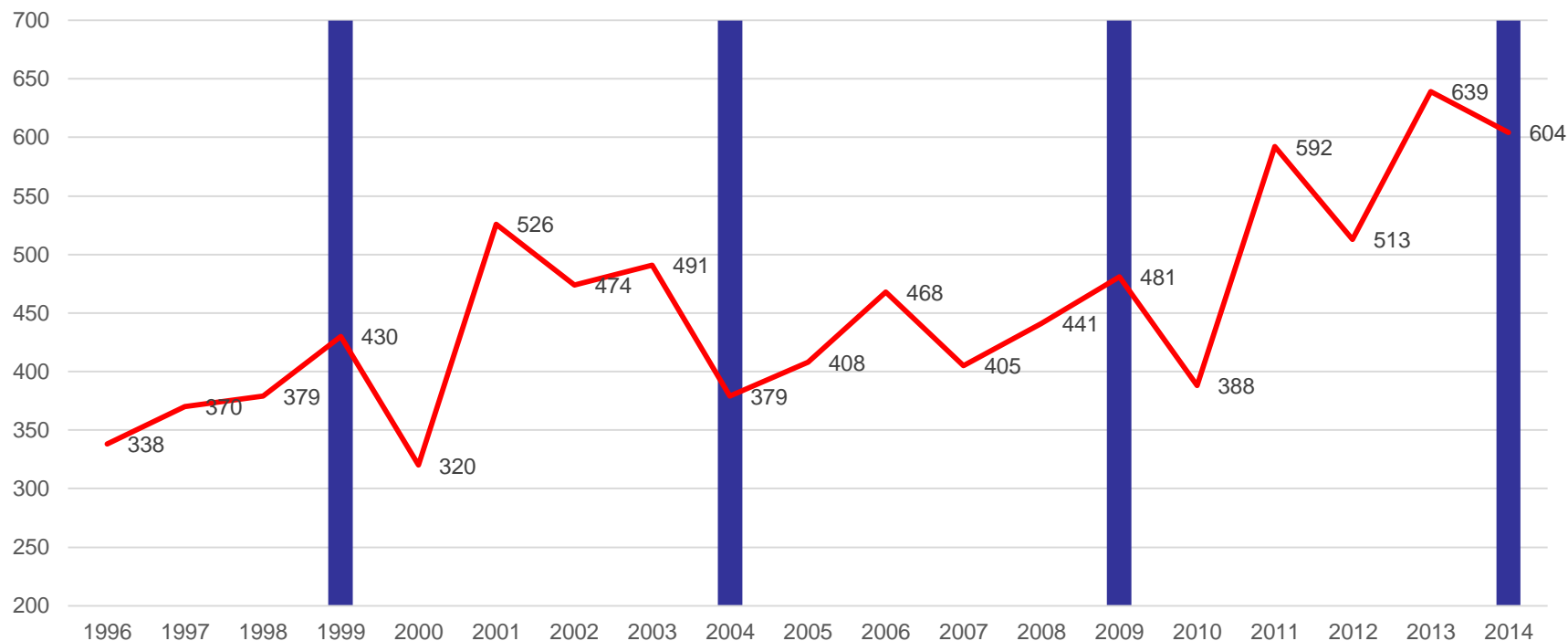
- **EU as a club: threat of specializing too much procedures & MPs within parliaments**
- **Lack of linkage between ex-ante scrutiny and ex-post transposition**
- **Difficulty to institutionalize incentives for specialization in a 'mainstreaming system'**

II.3. The growing inadequacy between the EU governance & national parliaments

The issue of time:

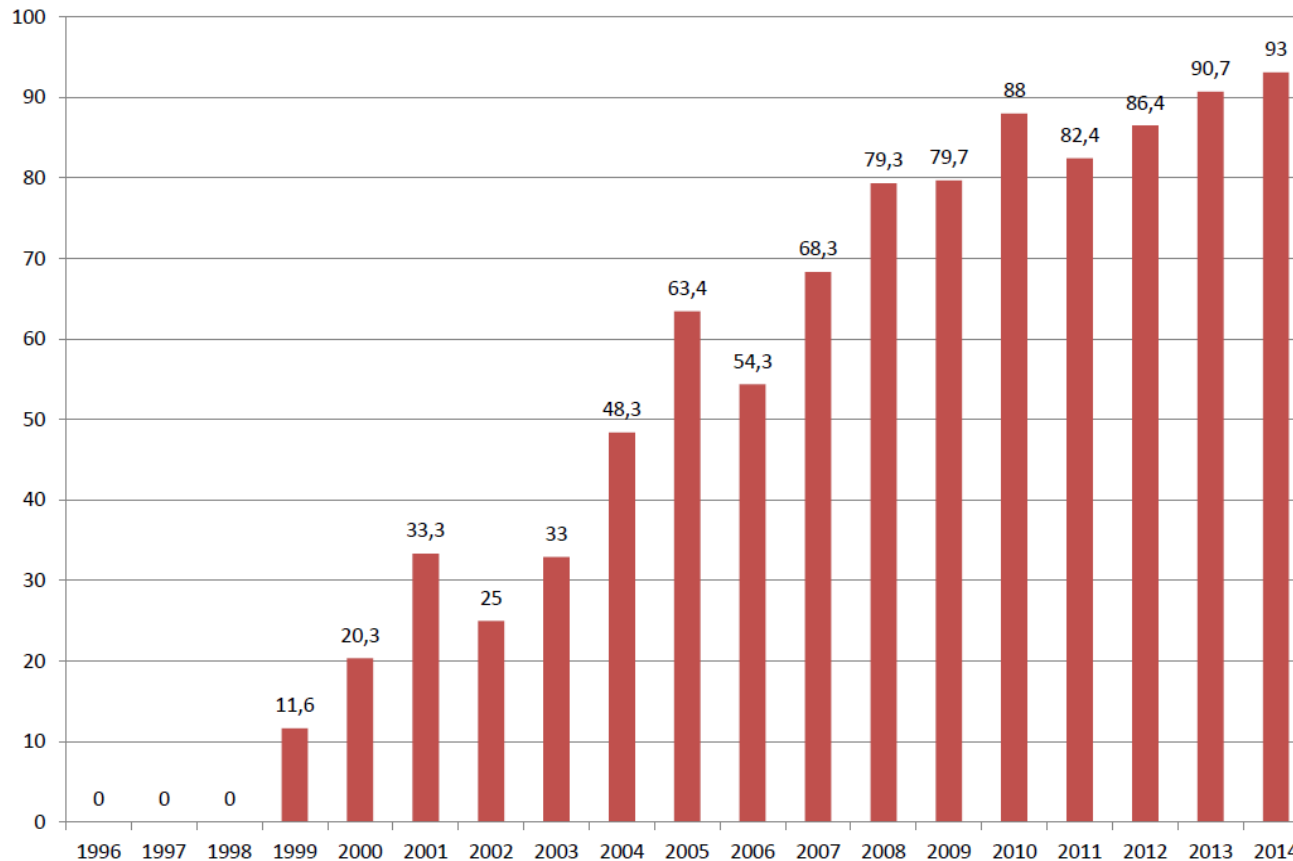
- **Emergency / last minutes decisions**
- **Or: decisions that take more and more time**

Days for adopting EU acts



The issue of information:

- **Secret bargains within the institutional triangle**
- **Secrecy on the positions taken within the EP and the Council of the EU**



Acts
adopted at
1st reading
(%)

The issue of pluralism:

- **High consensual features within both the EP & the Council of the EU**

	1999-2004	2004-2009	2009-2014
% of similar votes of EPP and S&D MEPs	65	70	72.8
% acts for which 1 MS abstained	18	10.7	19.6
% acts for which more than 1 MS abstained	7	5.3	5.8

CONCLUSION

1. National Parliaments are back: more Europeanised... But poorly backed: not supported by their institutional environment.
2. Paradox: the evolution of the EU systems makes it more difficult for national parliaments to oversight it... But national parliaments virtues are all the more necessary.
3. The EU empowerment of the national parliaments appears to be mainly national... But some kind of EU participation should be possible.
4. Can we still afford trompe-l'oeil strategies?
 - **Nationally: MPs or clerks involvement?**
 - **EU treaties: tools or toys for national parliaments?**
 - **EP / NPs relations: dialogue or locks? (Cf art. 13 TSCG inter-parliamentary conferences)**