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EU-Latin American Parliamentary Relations: some Preliminary Comments on the EUROLAT

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EU-Latin American parliamentary relations: some preliminary comments on the EUROLAT

Stelios Stavridis[♦] and Natalia Ajenjo[♦]

INTRODUCTION

Regional integration (regionalism, regionalization) has produced a plethora of academic and policy studies, be it over the most advanced, sophisticated and developed process of them all (that of the European Union in Europe), or over other much less successful ones (like regional and sub-regional integration efforts in Southern or Central America, let alone in Africa or Asia). Emphasis is often put on their similarities and differences. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Globalization (initially financial and economic) has come to strengthen Regionalization even more: a complementary two-way development in world affairs. In other words, it is a process that contains simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal factors, both at the regional and at the world levels¹.

The existing literature on EU integration and on Latin American integration can be summarized as follows:

- plenty of work on Europe (Chrysochoou 2009; Chrysochoou, Tsinisizelis, Stavridis, Ifantis 2003; Rosamond 2000).
- the same with Latin America, either taken as a regional unit or through its various, often overlapping, sub-regional units (Southern Cone, South America, MERCOSUR, Andean, Central American, even sometimes politically-defined like the 'Bolivarian' front) (Ajenjo 2007; Malamud 2005b)
- a comparative analysis between the two² (Paulo Paranagua, 'L'Amérique du Sud sur les traces de l'UE', *Le Monde*, 12.06.08; Roy, Dominguez Rivera, Velázquez Flores 2003; Santander 2005; Roy, Domínguez 2005; Mukhametdinov 2007; Colomer Viadel, de Bartolomé Cenzano, Cabedo Mallol 2007; Umaña 2008), including sometimes from the perspective of their parliamentary dimensions (Malamud, de Sousa 2007).

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He has published several books, including *La Unión Europea y el conflicto chipriota, 1974-2006* (2008); *Factores políticos y de seguridad en el área euro-mediterránea* (2009); and *Understanding and Evaluating the European Union: theoretical and empirical approaches* (2009), as well as articles in journals such as *European Foreign Affairs Review*, *Mediterranean Politics*, or *Journal of European Integration*.

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¹ in the same way that the European model can only be understood if it is viewed as a constant and mutually reinforcing process towards *both* (some form of) supranationalism *and* (different types of) decentralization.

² often taking into account what, among others, José Antonio Sanahuja has called the EU as an 'external federator' for the Latin American region: as quoted in Colomer Viadel, de Bartolomé Cenzano, Cabedo Mallol (2007: 30).

- more recently, expanding work on EU-Latin American relations (Colomer Viadel, de Bartolomé Cenzano, Cabedo Mallol 2007: 375-400).

The comparative dimension is of particular interest here: how can one apply the success of European integration to try and remedy the failures and shortcomings of so many integration efforts in Latin America. For instance, Malamud and de Sousa (2007) have outlined five factors that account for those different outcomes:

- the European integration process started well before that of Latin America. Institutional development differences may result from different maturity gaps (the so-called 'time factor').
- the European process followed the 'Monnet-method': function preceded form and as a result, incrementalism was preferred to early institutionalization, in Latin America, early institutionalization has clearly favoured form over function (the so-called sequence method').
- the European process long ago set up a common market and is now consolidating an economic union, already sharing a common currency among many of its member states; on the contrary, most Latin American counterparts have yet to even complete a full customs unions (the so-called 'integration level gap').
- there is a link between the strength (or weakness) and stability (or instability) of the domestic states involved in regional institution-building. Success or failure in those processes often stems from that important 'internal' dimension. There are clear differences between Latin America and Europe, especially the 'Old Europe' countries (the so-called 'domestic weakness factor').
- the overall political structure can also play a role: most European countries have parliamentary or semi-parliamentary regimes. This is not the case in Latin America where all countries have presidential systems (the so-called 'political system factor').³

As Mukhametdinov (2007: 207) sums it up well: 'they are qualitatively different processes that are highly conditioned by their unique regional properties'.

The set of studies that deals with *relations between the two regions* goes beyond the question of whether Europe can be a model for integration elsewhere in the world. Of course, this does not mean that the question of a model is not important. Nor that any lessons cannot be drawn from other experiences. But what has changed since 1989 is the emergence of a new academic literature that argues that there are many models of regional integration; and, that, as a result, New Regionalism (NR) is fundamentally different from Old(er) forms of Regionalism. Moreover, lessons from other regions of the world could also be useful for the European continent. The NR literature is immense (Hettne 2003; Laursen 2003; see also Buzan, Waever 2003). Although, admittedly, it may be more appropriate and accurate to more appropriate to talk about *continuities and discontinuities* after all (Soderbaum 2008: 4, emphasis added; see also Robinson, Rosamond, Warleigh-Lack 2010).

From NR what is important for this study is the impact of informal (i.e. not institutionalized) forms of integration; in particular that their importance should not be underestimated: neither that of the informal dimension of institutional relations, especially in set-ups like EUROLAT. Moreover, one should note that the whole exercise is more complex than initially thought: with several processes taking place at the same time; with more than one set of unitary actors; and, with a number of policy areas much wider than first considered (mainly economic).

³ Although this is not the main focus of this paper it is important to note that as a result, integration processes in Latin America are often driven by presidential diplomacy, and there is evidence showing that national presidents seek to design regional institutions in such a way as not to hamper their latitude (Malamud 2005a).

Furthermore, and this point is particularly important for this paper, there is an important parliamentary dimension to NR. Parliamentary bodies of all types and, for that matter, parliamentarians at the individual and collective levels, have all become relevant international actors and factors. This does not mean that there was no parliamentary input in the old(er) forms of regionalism. In fact, there were a number of such examples, including important ones, especially in European and Latin American regional integration processes (see below). But what NR argues is that there is a new both qualitative and quantitative leap in that direction. There is clear empirical evidence for this on both the international level (with a proliferation of such international and regional parliamentary bodies *throughout* the world), and with the revamping of existing ones.

Parliamentarization may be by definition a formal, elite-driven process (i.e. engaging national or regional parliaments), however its agenda does not merely involve cooperation among parliaments or parliamentary diplomacy (Stavridis 2002; Eloriagga 2004). Indeed, it aims to strengthen other elements such as the involvement of civil society and non-state actors. At the same time, the existing literature has so far mainly linked parliaments with regionalism focusing on its impact on *democratization*. Thus, Alex Warleigh (2004: 310) argues that '[r]egional integration can be a force for (liberal) democratisation'.

As a result, most, if not all regional, integration arrangements include (at some stage in their development) a parliamentary dimension which provides the following:

- [i] it adds a level of legitimisation to the process;
- [ii] it provides a parliamentary context;
- [iii] and, it contributes to a sense of common regional belonging.

On the whole, the literature on the international role of parliaments remains rather limited. There are few exceptions. Here we will not dwell on the question of what types of parliamentary institutions (known as 'IPIs'/international parliamentary institutions in the literature) exist in the world (Cutler 2006; Sabic 2008a). We will simply concentrate on one of them, the EUROLAT (Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly).

The paper will therefore consider one particular aspect of EU-Latin American parliamentary relations. It will offer a snapshot of the way those relations have materialized and developed over the past few years. Its objective is to fill an important gap in the literature. What follows will consist of four main parts. First, there will be an overview of the wider EU-Latin American relations. Second, a number of other parliamentary organizations dealing with European and Latin American regional processes will be briefly presented. Those two parts will allow for a better understanding of the wider context of the EUROLAT creation and development. Third, the bulk of this paper will deal with the EUROLAT itself, and in particular its structure, functions, and main activities to date. Finally, drawing from the literature on parliamentary diplomacy and on regional parliaments, the fourth part will present a number of other activities that the EUROLAT could develop in the future.

The paper thus consists of 4 parts:

1. EU-Latin American relations
2. parliamentary organizations in European and Latin American regional processes
3. the EUROLAT (structure, functions, main activities).
4. the EUROLAT (potential for the future).

PART 1:

THE WIDER CONTEXT EU-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

The EU has traditionally had little presence in Latin America if compared to the obvious importance of the region for the USA.⁴ This is politically speaking and referring only to the EU as

⁴ In a recent seminar, it was said that the Monroe doctrine refers explicitly to the 'unacceptable' threat that any adoption of a parliamentary system in Latin America would pose to the USA. President Monroe reserved the right to

a whole. As individual EU member states, many of them have had a long presence on the continent be it historical or political (especially the Iberian countries), through migration (especially Italy), or economically (Germany and Britain). But as far as the EU as an entity goes (and its predecessor the European Community), Latin American has long been a priority as a *strategic* region for its goods and services. As noted above, comparisons were also made between the European and Latin American common market processes as far back as the early 1960s⁵.

In political terms, the EU (previously EEC) has only 'appeared' recently: starting timidly during the Cold War years with its support to the Contadora Group in 1983 (Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela and Panama) dealing with the peace and democratization process in Central America which extended to the Rio Group in 1990. The latter is given the rank of *strategic partner*, especially to its *big* countries, Mexico, Brazil and Chile. The EU's main contribution comes from its capacity to 'bring its own lessons' about democracy and democratization, thus often positioning itself in contraposition to the US foreign policy towards Latin America.

As far as stable EU-Latin American relations between the two regions are concerned, they began to be very weakly and tentatively institutionalized via a number of intergovernmental/ministerial meetings and interparliamentary conferences from the year 1974. However, more recently much more ambitious agreements have materialized. Association Agreements have been signed between the EU and each sub-region or countries: MERCOSUR countries in 1999; Chile in 2002; Central America in 2006; and the Andean Community countries in 2007.

In parallel to those bilateral EU agreements, the EUROLAT Inter-Parliamentary Committee was set up in 2006 (see below). The fact that all those developments and processes occur recently and simultaneously show to a large extent that whereas the Association Agreements contain an economic bias, there is still an important political dimension in the Union's multilateral relations with the region, clearly visible in the case of its parliamentary dimension.

In its discourse, the EU refers consistently to the wider challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean. It systematically refers to the importance of supporting democracy, strong political parties, effective human rights protection, and the promotion of the internal consolidation of the various regional processes that take place in the region. However, if one analyzes its actions, the European Commission mentioned recently (2009) the creation of 'Latin American Investment Facility' (LAIF), with three main inversion priority areas: (1) energy, transport and communications; (2) to limit the effects of climate change; (3) to promote growth of the private sector, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The Commission also concentrates on what areas the EU-LA relations should prioritize: sustainable growth, anti-drugs trafficking, and migration policies. As can be seen, sustainable growth is a wide concept where a vast number of policies can be explored. Drugs are more specific, and migration has become a key EU topic nowadays.

Overall, the persistence of bilateralism (EU negotiations with each country or with a given sub-region) in parallel to the recent efforts at multilateralism (the dialogue between members of supranational parliaments of both sides, the EUROLAT) is far all to see.

The Bi-regional Strategic Association was established in June 1999 in the context of the EU-LAC (European Union-Latin American and Caribbean) Summits. The EU-LAC strategic partnership began with the first summit of Heads of State or Government of both regions in Rio in 1999. There followed more such meetings in Madrid (2002), Guadalajara (2004), Vienna

intervene, including militarily if necessary, to avoid any such a development (Diego Valadés, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM, Mexico: *El Parlamentarismo Europeo y el Presidencialismo Latinoamericano: Cara a Cara*, Fundación Manuel Giménez Abad de Estudios Parlamentarios y del Estado Autonomico, 17-18 March 2010, Zaragoza).

⁵ It is worth repeating that the now exclusively EU studies *Journal of Common Market Studies* began as an academic journal dedicated to comparing common markets experiences throughout the world, in particular in Western Europe, Latin America and Africa.

(2006), and Lima (2008). The next meeting is scheduled on 18th May 2010 in Madrid during the Spanish Presidency. A few days earlier, the EUROLAT Plenary will take place in Seville.

As a 2008 European Commission brochure entitled *The strategic partnership between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean: a joint commitment* claims⁶:

The European Union (EU), and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are natural allies linked by strong historical, cultural and economic ties, as well as by their ever increasing convergence of basic values and principles. They share a common commitment to human rights, democracy, good governance, multilateralism and social cohesion, and they cooperate to achieve these objectives. This makes them well-matched partners to address global challenges together.

Its main objectives are specified as follows in the same brochure:

- Social cohesion
- Regional integration
- Promoting multilateralism
- Respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law: shared values.
- Environment/climate change/energy.

The approach falls within the now familiar claim that Globalization can be best harnessed by Regionalisation, Regionalism and inter-regional cooperation. It falls under the wider NR academic approach that we highlighted above. It also believes strongly in the possibility of a truly 'multilateral' world.

Although the EU is also very careful to take full advantage of the numerous existing sub-regional arrangements in the region (be they in Central America, the Andean countries, etc.), one obvious consequence is that in this bi-regional strategy the EU has grouped together Latin America and the Caribbean. That is to say that there are 17 countries (with plenty of differences among them and within their respective regional and sub-regional groupings), plus another 17, with some of them falling under EUROLAT and others not. A key player here is Cuba, especially in light of the political controversy its 51-year old regime generates.

Latin America, from North to South:

Mexico
Guatemala
El Salvador
Honduras
Nicaragua
Costa Rica
Panama
Colombia
Ecuador
Peru
Bolivia
Chile
Brazil
Paraguay
Uruguay
Argentina
Venezuela.

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/la/docs/lima_en.pdf (accessed 06.04.10).

The Caribbean:

Cuba

Guyana (it represents the other Caribbean countries in the Rio Group)

Belize

Dominican Republic

Suriname

Haiti

Bahamas

Jamaica

Barbados

Trinidad and Tobago

Antigua and Barbuda

Dominica

Grenada

Montserrat

Saint Kitts and Nevis

Saint Lucia

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

This paper does not deal with EU-LAC relations as it focuses on its parliamentary relations. But it is important to bear this wider framework in mind for what follows. Indeed, the EU is famous for agonising over (and often complicating) its relations with focused or not-so focused approaches throughout the world over the years. The Mediterranean is a good example where the Balkans countries were excluded initially (admittedly there was some logic to it, due to their different political regimes and the wars in the 1990s), only to slowly (re)integrate them via enlargements and the upgrading of the Barcelona Process from the EMP (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) into the UfM (Union for the Mediterranean)⁷. In its external relations, the EU also often loses sight of the wider picture, as again in the case of the Mediterranean, it assumed that the Middle East Conflict would not affect its relations with the other countries in the region. The same can be said about the lack of attention to other big powers, especially the USA but also China, be it in the Mediterranean, Africa or Latin America.

PART 2:**EUROPEAN AND LATIN AMERICAN INTEGRATION PROCESSES: THE PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSIONS**

Although this paper will deal with EUROLAT, it is important to present an overview that presents the wider context within which EUROLAT acts. In the section on EUROLAT there will be a historical overview of developments that led to its setting up ('the antecedents'). Here we provide a commented list of other parliamentary actors. Indeed, the parliamentarization of international affairs is a worldwide phenomenon that contains at least three important, and in fact mutually-reinforcing, dimensions: to control foreign policy widely defined at the parliamentary level (most current democracies are indirect democracies); to engage in 'parliamentary diplomacy'; to act through established regional and other parliamentary bodies (Malamud, Stavridis 2011).

⁷ See *inter alia*, Stavridis, Fernández Sola (2009).

The European context

Parliament	Established	Member states	Regional Process
Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)*	1949; expansion post 1989 (name changes)	47 parliaments (various enlargements, especially linked to East-West divide)	Council of Europe, (intergovernmental)
European Parliament	(several name changes) 1952 (European Steel and Coal Community); EEC and Euratom (1958); enlargements 1973, 1981, 1986, 1995, 2004, 2007. Direct elections since 1979	From the original 6 to the current 27: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, U.K.	European Union
NATO Parliamentary Assembly**	Brussels Treaty 1949 (successive enlargements) Self-appointed parliament 1955 (formerly: North Atlantic Assembly/NAA)	28 members, several enlargements over the years.	NATO
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly***	Following the 1973 Helsinki Process, then CSCE, then OSCE (several enlargements)	55 members	OSCE intergovernmental

* PACE: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, *Austria*, Azerbaijan, *Belgium*, Bosnia-H., *Bulgaria*, Croatia, *Cyprus*, *Czech Republic*, *Denmark*, *Estonia*, *Finland*, *France*, Georgia, *Germany*, *Greece*, *Hungary*, Iceland, *Ireland*, *Italy*, *Latvia*, Liechtenstein, *Lithuania*, *Luxembourg*, *Malta*, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, *Netherlands*, Norway, *Poland*, *Portugal*, *Romania*, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, *Slovakia*, *Slovenia*, *Spain*, *Sweden*, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, *United Kingdom*. The Belarusian Parliament has been suspended since January 1997. The parliaments of Canada, Israel and Mexico enjoy Observer Status. (in italics: EU member states).

** NATO PA: Albania, *Belgium*, *Bulgaria*, Canada, Croatia, *Czech Republic*, *Denmark*, *Estonia*, *France*, *Germany*, *Greece*, *Hungary*, Iceland, *Italy*, *Latvia*, *Lithuania*, *Luxembourg*, *Netherlands*, Norway, *Poland*, *Portugal*, *Romania*, *Slovakia*, *Slovenia*, *Spain*, Turkey, *United Kingdom*, United States of America. (in italics: EU member states).

*** OSCE PA: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden,

Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uzbekistan.

Various sources.

The above represent the main parliamentary assemblies with a European dimension (either exclusive or not) that are still in force in 2010. For instance the WEU Assembly which outlived the WEU for some years has finally come to an end⁸. The EP is a leading international actor with 36 Delegations and several Committees dealing with international issues. It also belongs to a number of institutionalized interparliamentary assemblies, one of them being the EUROLAT. Others include chronologically speaking, the EU-ACP Joint Assembly, the EMPA and the EURONEST (still in development).⁹

The Latin American context

The parliamentary dimension of EU-Latin America relations has been built on pre-existing sub-regional structures which also reflect the respective degree of regional integration achieved to date in Latin America. Thus, the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) is the oldest in existence if we consider the various regional integration processes in Latin America. They all represent very diverse forms of integration but they all share in common the fact that –unlike the European integration process- they do not aim to form a political union. This is an important point that brings us back to the question of definitions. That is to say that those particular parliamentary assemblies do not aim to achieve eventually a political union but represent instead: ‘a means to improve the economic growth rate of the economies involved and to promote their development in the longer run’ (Rueda-Junquera, 2008: 3¹⁰). This fact is further reflected in the empirical observation that, speaking from an electoral perspective, political parties in Latin America do not mobilize around their presenting differing/alternative proposals about whether there should be more or less of an ‘integration dose’; unlike Europe where this is still the case, at least in several countries like the new members or those more traditionally debating such an issue (Britain *par excellence*, which is traditionally seen as pro-Atlantic) (Ajenjo 2007).

The following Table lists the various Latin American regional parliamentary assemblies in order to show how many are involved in EUROLAT and to try to differentiate between ‘old’ and ‘new’ types of regionalism (thus illustrating how diverse those integration processes actually are):

Table 1. Origins and memberships of Regional Parliaments that belong to EUROLAT

Parliament	Established	Member states	Regional Process
PARLANDINO Andean Parliament	Andean Group: 1969 Andean Parliament: 1979 Andean Community: 1997	Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru Associate countries: Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil Observers: México, Panama	CAN
PARLATINO	1964 (entry into force:	Continental Latin America	There is no

⁸ Esther Barbé, UAB/Autonomous University of Barcelona, *I Jornada europea Jean Monnet Democracia y Derecho: La Asamblea Euromediterránea en el marco de la Presidencia española*, Barcelona, 16 April 2010.

⁹ For details, see Dietmar Nickel, ‘L’Assemblée euroméditerranéenne dans le contexte des assemblées interparlementaires de l’Union européenne’, in *Ibid.* (Dr. Nickel was Director-General for External Policy of the European Parliament General Secretariat).

¹⁰ “un medio para acelerar las tasas de crecimiento de las economías participantes y para promover su desarrollo en el largo plazo” (our own translation).

Latin American Parliament	1987)	Dominican Republic, Cuba and the West Indies	intergovernmental organization
PARLACEN Central American Parliament	Contadora Group: 1983 Constituent Act: 1987 Entry into force: 1991	Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua Panama (since 1994) Observers: Dominican Republic (since 1998), Puerto Rico (since 2001), México (since 2002)	MCCA, 1960 SICA, 1991
MERCOSUR Parliament (commonly known as PARLASUR)	Constituent Act: December 2005 Entry into force: May 2007	Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil Venezuela (adhesion in 2005) Associates countries: Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru	MERCOSUR
Source: own elaboration. Associate countries can attend sessions with the right to speak but not to vote.			

To the above, one must of course mention the additional dimension of the international role of the respective national parliaments of all Latin American countries, and also their sub-national level. In many cases there are federal countries and therefore federal-level parliamentary bodies are important for those countries foreign policies and other international links. This paper does not enter this important dimension for reasons of space.

PART 3: THE EUROLAT: STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

What strikes first is that there is very little literature on the subject, especially, but not only in the English language (Casado González, 2008, is very emblematic: a two page long descriptive account in French).

From 1974 until the setting up of EUROLAT in 2006¹¹, there were 17 biannual interparliamentary conferences between the EP and the PARLATINO, the PARLANDINO, the PARLACEN, and the then PARLASUR parliamentary committee. Within that context, the setting up of the EUROLAT can be seen as the fulfilment of the wishes of both the EP¹² and the various regional Latin American assemblies and as a step forward in the development of relations between the two regions (EU-Latin America)¹³.

According to the EUROLAT Rules of Procedures (Article 1: Nature and objectives)¹⁴:

The Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly is the parliamentary institution of the European Union – Latin American and Caribbean Bi-regional Strategic Partnership. The Assembly shall contribute to the strengthening, development and visibility of this Strategic Partnership, as the

¹¹ Parlamento Europeo, Dirección General de Estudios, *Ficha Informativa sobre la Cooperación Interparlamentaria entre la Unión Europea y América Latina (1974-2003)*, Luxembourg, 3 April 2003 (PE331.099); see also www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/eurolat/interp_to_eurolat_es.htm.

¹² On the wider international role of the EP see Fernández Fernández (2007). See also Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (2009): www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/eurolat/key_documents/eu_commission/eu_la_global_players_in_partnership_en.pdf.

¹³ See http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/eurolat/key_documents/flyer_eurolat_es.pdf.

¹⁴ See appendix 1 for a chart of the EUROLAT, as available on the website of the organisation. The EUROLAT's official languages are English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

institution responsible for parliamentary consultation, supervision and monitoring of the Partnership.¹⁵

Its objectives are to promote and deepen various practical aspects of the Bi-regional Strategic Association on three fronts: political level (including the promotion of democracy, integration, peace, governability/governance and Human Rights); economic (including commercial and financial relations); and social (including the environment, education and migration). There are three such Committees: the Political Committee, the Economic Committee and the Social Committee.

Its Article 3 presents a list of EUROLAT's Responsibilities:

The Assembly shall be the forum for parliamentary discussion, consultation, supervision and monitoring in respect of all questions of concern to the Bi-regional Strategic Partnership. For these purposes, the Assembly shall be authorised, among other things, to adopt resolutions and recommendations addressed to the EU-LAC Summit and the institutions, bodies, groups and ministerial conferences devoted to developing the Partnership, including the Rio Group and the San José Process. Similarly, it shall be responsible for drawing up reports and proposals for the adoption of specific measures related to the various spheres of activity of the Partnership, at the request of the Summit or the ministerial conferences.'

However, this new parliamentary structure does not intend to replace existing more traditional intergovernmental mechanisms in international relations. What has been set up represents only a pluralistic parliamentary structure but with limited formal and deliberative functions, leaving important decision making and classical negotiations to heads of States and/or Governments. Of course, this is not unique to EUROLAT, *and* it is to be expected in what remains after all a world system of *states*. It remains a key paradox in EUROLAT that it is the EU, within which almost all its member states being parliamentary democracies, that develops its relations with Latin America mainly through the executive domain, leaving a very limited decision making role to its parliamentary dimension. And the opposite: the presidential regimes in Latin America have taken a parliamentary bias in their respective regional and sub-regional integration efforts.

EUROLAT membership has not taken into account the many different parliamentary structures that exist in Latin America (see above) and has opted instead for giving the same representation to parliamentary bodies irrespective of whether they are directly elected or not (in the former group, the EP and the PARLACEN, and in the latter the rest¹⁶). No doubt this creates a clear deficit for the citizens involved in the process because their representativeness is simply not the same for each side (especially vis-à-vis the question of legitimacy). In the case of not directly elected parliamentary bodies, mainly Latin American ones, the situation is all the more complex. It is clear that each regional integration process has its own history and that it does to a large extent explain those deficits. For instance, one cannot compare Central America's process that was largely based on pacification and democratization, to that in the Southern Cone which stems from expected commercial exchanges benefits (Rueda-Junquera 2008).

The EUROLAT structure consists of two 'component' elements: one 'European' and the other 'Latin American'. Both components consist of the same number of members: 150 in Plenaries, with 75 participants from each side. There are two Co-Presidents (one from each side),

¹⁵ www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/eurolat/documents/rules_of_procedure/version_april_2009/785140en.pdf.

¹⁶ Direct elections to the MERCOSUR Parliament are scheduled for 2011.

14 Vice-Presidents (7 each) belonging to a Bureau, plus three permanent Committees (50 members each, with 25 each for the EU and Latin America). There is one annual Plenary Session.

This parity is meant to reflect balance and symmetry between the two regions involved. However, whereas the European side is clearly represented by its 'supranational' parliamentary institution (the EP), this is not the case in the Latin American component. Indeed, there are four 'supranational' sub-regional entities, plus two Committees for the two countries that do not currently belong to any of those Latin American regional processes. These are as follows:

- PARLANDINO
- PARLATINO
- PARLACEN
- PARLAMENTO DEL MERCOSUR/PARLASUR
- the Mexico-EP Joint Committee
- the Chile-EP Joint Committee.
-

The current two Co-Presidents (as of April 2010) are Spanish conservative MEP José Ignacio Salafranca for the European side, whereas Colombia's Liberal Party in his capacity as PARLANDINO Co-President, Luís Fernando Duque García represents the Latin American side. As for the 14 Vice-Presidents, on the European side there are 7 MEPs who come respectively from Portugal, Italy (2), Spain (2), Poland, and Germany. For the Latin American side, there are MPs from PARLATINO (3 in all: one from Brazil, one from Chile, one from Peru), from PARLACEN (from Honduras), one each from the JPC-EU Chile, and from the JPC-EU Mexico, and finally, one from PARLASUR (from Paraguay).

During 2006-2009, the period under study in this piece, there were three EUROLAT plenary sessions. The plenary sessions play an important role in putting together and recording the EUROLAT's overall opinions, observations and recommendations. They are directed to both national governments and to the regional processes involved. Their aim is to offer a general 'direction', a kind of a 'roadmap', for the decisions that need to be taken in EU-Latin American relations. What follows lists the topics that have been covered in the sessions that have taken place until early 2009:

First Plenary Session, Brussels, December 2007	Resolution on democratic governance
	Resolution on the opportunities that would follow from an improvement in economic and commercial relations between the EU and the LAC
	Resolution on climate change
Second Plenary Session Lima, May 2008	Resolution on poverty and social exclusion
	Resolution on the challenges of the Doha Round
	Resolution on energy policies
Third Plenary Session Madrid, April 2009	Resolution on a Euro-Latin American Charter for Peace and Security
	Resolution on trade and climate change
	Resolution on water in EU-ALC relations
	Resolution on the urgency of the financial crisis
Source: Own elaboration drawing from the EUROLAT website.	

In terms of how the Plenaries are prepared and organized, what happens is that a number of previous reports are prepared within the three EUROLAT committees (the Political Committee, the Economic Committee and the Social Committee). In practical terms however, as soon as we refer to the EU-LAC summit meetings, the traditional state-to-state intergovernmental means remain the main negotiations mechanisms, as the Assembly only enjoys consultation and

advisory powers. It does however represent 'a basis for strengthening' the EU-LAC partnership, and a 'qualitative leap forward from the previous biannual Interparliamentary Conferences'.¹⁷

The overwhelming majority of EUROLAT resolutions deal with the main priorities that national policies should take, partly reflecting the overall fragility of the various integration processes that characterize Latin America. Occasionally, those resolutions refer to the way European countries have achieved –through integration- a reduction in poverty, exchange of energy resources or education exchanges. The implication is that Latin America should learn from that experience and results.

In terms of topics those resolutions deal mainly with migration, security, sustainable development and regional integration. The permanent presence of those topics reflects not only that the EU has defined the EUROLAT institutional model, but also that it sets the agenda according to its own priorities. For instance when dealing with migration, the EU refers to its own (EU) *Global Approach to Migration*. An approach where there are no references to Latin America, as the Union's main priorities in that domain are migration flows that come through North Africa and the Balkans. It appears that the EU controls totally the EUROLAT agenda according to its own interests.

However (in spite of those important restrictions), it is possible to identify two important innovative aspects in the EUROLAT's resolutions to date:

- First, right from the start, but also in all following plenaries, there is a call for the need to create a 'Euro-Latin American Bi-regional Strategic Association', whose entry into force should occur in 2012. There are no details about how and why this should be so. There is only a general reference to the need for such a bioregional strategic association.
- Second, there is a reference to the "triangular approach" of existing Agreements among the various world regions. The idea being that some of EUROLAT topics could be put on the agendas of its meetings with the USA, Asia or Africa. This is an innovative approach in that it gives EUROLAT a number of common interests in its positioning in the world. Within the European debate/thinking about its (relatively weak) role in globalization, and if used properly, the Latin American region could work positively for the Union in case it reinforces Europe's wider role in the world.

In sum, these resolutions continue to be declarations of purpose rather than real decision-making ones, as they "underline the need to discuss", "encourage reflection" or "support the reform of the global governance model".

PART 4: THE EUROLAT: OTHER ACTIVITIES

Drawing from and building on the slowly emerging literature on the subject (see above), it is possible to identify a number of specific activities that regional (and inter-regional) parliaments have engaged in over the years. As a result, in this section there will first be a general discussion of what those activities are. Then there will follow a number of general comments about how those activities have taken place in the EUROLAT during the period under study in this paper. Particular attention will be given to areas where the EUROLAT could become more active.

The main role of a regional assembly is to monitor the various agreements that are made within its corresponding international organisation. In the case of the EUROLAT, the obvious candidate is the EU-Latin America and Caribbean Strategic Partnership. We have seen above what it has concentrated on over the past few years. As far as additional, less traditional, activities are concerned, the literature has identified the following ones, both as already important and as the most promising for the future (this draws heavily on Stavridis, Pace 2009):

¹⁷ Constituent Act of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, Brussels, 8 November 2006, p. 2.

For obvious space limitations¹⁸, we will only refer to them rather briefly. These issues are as follows:

- parliamentary bodies as 'moral tribunes';
- parliamentary input in election monitoring;
- the role of parliamentarians in the so-called 'socialization effect';
- conflict resolution.

It is often argued that parliaments act as 'moral tribunes' on foreign policy issues. Because parliamentarians do not have to *necessarily* follow the official governmental line, they can be more 'flexible' and even allow themselves the 'luxury' of adopting a normative (i.e. moral) approach. As Beetham has argued, parliamentarians do not necessarily 'coincide with their respective country's official position on any given issue. This allows parliamentarians *a margin of flexibility* that is denied to the diplomat'. He also thinks that they 'tend to bring a moral dimension to international politics that transcends narrow definitions of the national interest, particularly in their principled support for democracy and human rights' (Beetham 2006: 11, emphasis added). Other concur: '(...) *Realpolitik* concerns are of less interest for the representatives of the European peoples sitting in the European Parliament' (Zenon 2005: 118)¹⁹.

There are however also signs that this may not really be the case. When important national interests are at stake, many parliamentarians, especially within the government's ranks may take a similar view to that of their Executive. As foreign policy issues are very often bipartisan in their nature that may change the moral or moralistic view that is often displayed in parliamentary gatherings. Thus, recent analyses of the EP stance on Cyprus and Turkey point to a strong dose of *Realpolitik* at the expense of morality²⁰.

Electoral monitoring is often regarded as an important element in democratisation. It is particularly important for non-democratic countries of course. The participation of parliamentarians in election monitoring does not only follow logically from their belonging to a parliament. It also shows that they have an important international role to play. In the EMPA, it has been argued that there is a need for 'the strengthening of democratic processes in all the partner countries, particularly *the sound organisation of elections*'²¹. Many a national parliamentarian has been involved in election monitoring throughout the world. The European Parliament has been involved in numerous election monitoring missions over the years²².

In the existing literature, the 'socialization effect' is usually referred to a process that is taken place in situations where parliamentarians from democratic countries mix with their counterparts from undemocratic or partly democratic ones. Such institutional frameworks are supposed to socialize the non-democratic members over time in democratic practices.

This is at least the theory. In practice many problematic questions remain unresolved: one of them is the question of time. How much time is given to that process? How does one evaluate its impact? Whatever the limitations, most parliamentarians accept that on the whole this is a process worth investing time and effort. One of the reasons being the alternative: not to engage.

¹⁸ We do not cover here the question of the parliamentary dimension of decentralized cooperation, that is to say parliamentary paradiplomacy.

¹⁹ For more details, see also Biad (2005); Pace, Stavridis (2010). A large number of parliamentarians have repeatedly made this point on the international role of parliaments to one of the authors of this paper in a series of interviews over the years (Stavridis 2002b; 2003; 2006a; 2006b).

²⁰ see Stavridis (2006b); Stavridis, Tsardanidis (2009); see also Vaquer (2004) on the Western Sahara issue.

²¹ Point 44, 'Resolution of the EMPA on the assessment of the Barcelona Process on the eve of its tenth anniversary, adopted on 15 March 2005 in Cairo (Egypt) on the basis of the resolution tabled by Mrs Tokia Saïfi, Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee on Political, Security and Human Rights Issues', *First Session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly*, Cairo, March 2005, p.64 (emphasis added).

²² 32 such missions during the 1994-1999 term; 37 during the 1999-2004; and no less than 59 during the 2004-2009 term. There is a webpage on the EP website dedicated to what is called Election Observation, not to ruffle sensitivities: www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/implementing_provisions_en.pdf.

Of course, there are also different ways to try and mitigate the circumstances: for instance, the counterparts to EP interparliamentary assemblies cannot be just representatives of their respective regimes (usually appointed diplomats), as was the case in the past²³. No need to say that those regimes have invented ways of circumventing this hurdle, but it is yet another additional obstacle that they still need to overcome. The question remains whether non-democratic regimes parliamentary representatives act indeed as parliamentarians or whether they only represent the parliamentary arms of governing elites. In short are they, for want of a better term, diplomats disguised as MPs?

As for conflict, as Beetham (2006: 11) has noted, '[t]he cessation of regional conflict is the first imperative for regional parliamentary dialogue'. To quote MP Anne S. Makinda, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania: "Parliaments should also be seen increasingly as forums that can assist in peace-building and conflict resolution in those LDC countries that are either at risk of or are emerging from conflict."²⁴

For instance, Alain Berset of Switzerland's Council of States (i.e. Senate) reminds us that the first contact between the British and the Argentinians after the Falklands War took place within the Inter-Parliamentary Union', adding further that a 'meeting between North and South Korean parliamentary representatives [also took place) within the framework of this same organisation, which also set up a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian parliamentary representatives (...)²⁵.

Although sometimes traditional diplomats consider parliamentarians as 'parasiting' their own work²⁶, this is a rather old-fashioned approach that does not necessarily reflect the reality of international relations in the 21st century. It goes without saying that it is also possible for parliamentarians to 'respecter un devoir de reserve', to use the words of Xavier de Villepin, then President of the French Senate's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armies Committee (Sénat 2001: 16). Moreover, any critical approach tends to ignore the (potential or real) benefits of parallel channels, which represents a constant alternative or addition to traditional diplomatic practice.

Now that we have given the wider context, we turn to the same issues within the EUROLAT context.

EUROLAT's record to date: a preliminary overview

To date, the EUROLAT Plenary Sessions Declarations and other documents have concentrated on economic and trade issues reflecting the fact that 'the EU remains Latin America's second-largest trade partner and the region's biggest investor'.²⁷ This is also the case in the vast majority of the texts that have been adopted to date. However, there is one important issue that is being developed: recent work on the need to adopt a *Euro-Latin American Charter for Peace and Security*. Its objective would be to allow 'political, strategic and security proposals to be signed

²³ French Green MEP Alima Boumédiène interview, in Stavridis (2002b: 47-48).

²⁴ Statement by the Honourable Anne S. Makinda, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, United Nations, New York, 18 September 2006.

²⁵ *Proceedings of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments in Tallinn (Estonia)* on 30-31 May 2006, p. 48.

²⁶ 'un parasitage dans les négociations' to use the words of Gérard Davet and Pascal Ceaux, 'Le cas Julia', *Le Monde*, 09.03.05: www.lemonde.fr.

²⁷ EUROLAT Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights Motion for a Resolution "The European Union-Latin America Partnership with a view to the Sixth Summit in Madrid in May 2010", 15 October 2009 (RM/798588EN.doc), p.3.

jointly²⁸ between the EU and the LAC. In other words, a political counterpart to the more economic and commercial dimensions of the all encompassing objective of a *Euro-Latin American Interregional Global Partnership Area* (scheduled for 'around 2012').

Other intentions refer to the need to fight poverty and also climate change. In more traditional parliamentary diplomacy terms, the EUROLAT is seen as a practical institutionalization mechanism that would allow 'among other things to:

- achieve 'efficient democratic governability',
- promote policies that 'ensure the protection of human rights,
- 'foster multilateralism (...) on the international scene'.²⁹

All these objectives are seen as not problematic as all countries and organizations involved believe and share the same commitments to democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Special attention is given to democratic governance, which at the end of the day forms the basis of the initial EU involvement in the region back in the time of democratization in the 1980s and 1990s. In the words of EUROLAT PA Vice President, MEP José Ignacio Salafranca, this Parliamentary Assembly reflects a long standing commitment by both its component parts to a number of fundamental values, including the rule of law, freedom of expression and a rejection of dictatorial regimes'.³⁰

But EUROLAT also refers extensively to conflict and conflict prevention or resolution. It calls for the setting up of a Bi-regional Centre for Conflict Prevention, whose main objectives would be to be 'dedicated to the early detection of the causes of potential violent and armed conflicts and to seeking how best to prevent them and stop them from escalating'.³¹

On specific conflictual situations, both internal and international, the EUROLAT Parliamentary Assembly has been rather cautious and limited in its statements and declarations. Thus in 2008, it calls for calm and consensus over the situation in Bolivia through 'a fraternal appeal to all of the political and social protagonists' involved.³² At the same Plenary Session, the Assembly issued also a Declaration on the state of relations between Ecuador and Colombia, pointing at the fact that 'relations between the sister republics of Colombia and Ecuador had not yet been restored on a proper footing'.³³

More recently, at the end of 2009, the Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights Committee also discussed the political situation in Honduras (following a coup and the ousting of the elected President). Bolivia, Honduras and – of course – Cuba represent important problematic and often controversial issues for a variety of political and other questions, both national and international.

CONCLUSIONS

To recap the paper's main conclusions: the EUROLAT represents both the institutionalization of long-standing parliamentary relations between Europe and Latin America. It also reflects a growing parliamentarization of international relations widely defined and of regional relations - and especially bi-regional- relations in particular. It is still a relatively new phenomenon that has not attracted the academic attention it deserves.

²⁸ EUROLAT Parliamentary Assembly Message to the 5th European Union-Latin America and Caribbean Summit – Lima, 16 and 17 May 2008, Thursday 1 May 2008, Lima (DV/721105EN.doc), p.2.

²⁹ EUROLAT Parliamentary Assembly Constituent Session, Brussels, 9 November 2006 (DV/639324EN.doc).

³⁰ 'La Presidencia española presenta en el PE su programa para América Latina', *Notas de Prensa*, European Parliament, 18 February 2010, p.2.

³¹ EUROLAT Parliamentary Assembly Texts Adopted at the session of Thursday 20 December 2007 (EUROLAT_DV-PROV(2007)12-20PROVISIONAL EDITION), p.6.

³² EUROLAT Parliamentary Assembly Declaration on the Situation in Bolivia, 1 May 2008, Lima.

³³ *Ibid.*

Another conclusion could be that although there is no national EU parliamentary representation in EUROLAT this does not mean that parliamentarians from some member states are more interested and involved than others. The usual 'suspects' (historical, geographical and cultural that is) come to mind. Empirical data confirms the preponderance of Spanish, Portuguese, as well as Italian and French MEPs. To them one should add German and Polish ones, the former for their sheer demographic, economic and political weight. The latter remains more enigmatic.

Thus, in 2010 there were 17 Spanish MEPS, 15 from Germany, and 7 each for Italy and France. Portugal had 6, Poland 5, 3 from Greece, and then 2 each come from the UK, from the Netherlands, from Romania, and 1 each from respectively Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Romania, and Sweden. That is to say that out of 75 MEPs in all, only 18 of the 27 member states are represented and out of those 18, out of a total of 75 European members 57 MEPs come from only 6 countries (Spain, Germany, Italy, France, Portugal, Poland). The latter figure represents over two thirds of the total (76%). This is not unique to the EUROLAT. There have been very few studies about other parliamentary assemblies (for instance on the Mediterranean as referred above) or on the EP parliamentary delegations (Herranz 2005). They all agree with this general observation.³⁴

To the general question of 'who represents the Europeans', there is a wider, more political but also a more theoretical/academic dimension: what kind of integration are we talking about? It is no coincidence that two parliamentary institutions that were set up with a strong EU (read: EP) lead at about the same time (respectively in 2004 and in 2006) offer to alternative models: the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) consists of both MEPs and national EU parliamentarians for the European side (in fact there are more national MPs than MEPs); whereas, as we have discussed, the EUROLAT is strictly composed of MEPs. It is an interesting question to ask why is this so? No one claims that the EU is a federal super-state, not even necessarily a federal super-state in the making (except the federalists of course). The consensus is that the EU is a complex set of institutions that mixes supranational, federal or federalistic characteristics with not only traditional intergovernmental ones, but also of different political models such as consociationalism, confederalism to name but a few. Considering the long and tortuous adoption of the Lisbon Treaty (Plan "B" of an even more tortuous and eventually failed Constitutional Treaty) after a number of popular rejections among several EU states, it could be relevant to ponder which representative system is more adequate for an efficient and accountable EU as a whole, and in particular in its role in the world. This would of course be the case of another paper altogether but it is worth mentioning it here as there is a clear link between internal integration and external projection.

All of the above leads us to another set of questions which were not discussed here, but that could form the basis for future academic research:

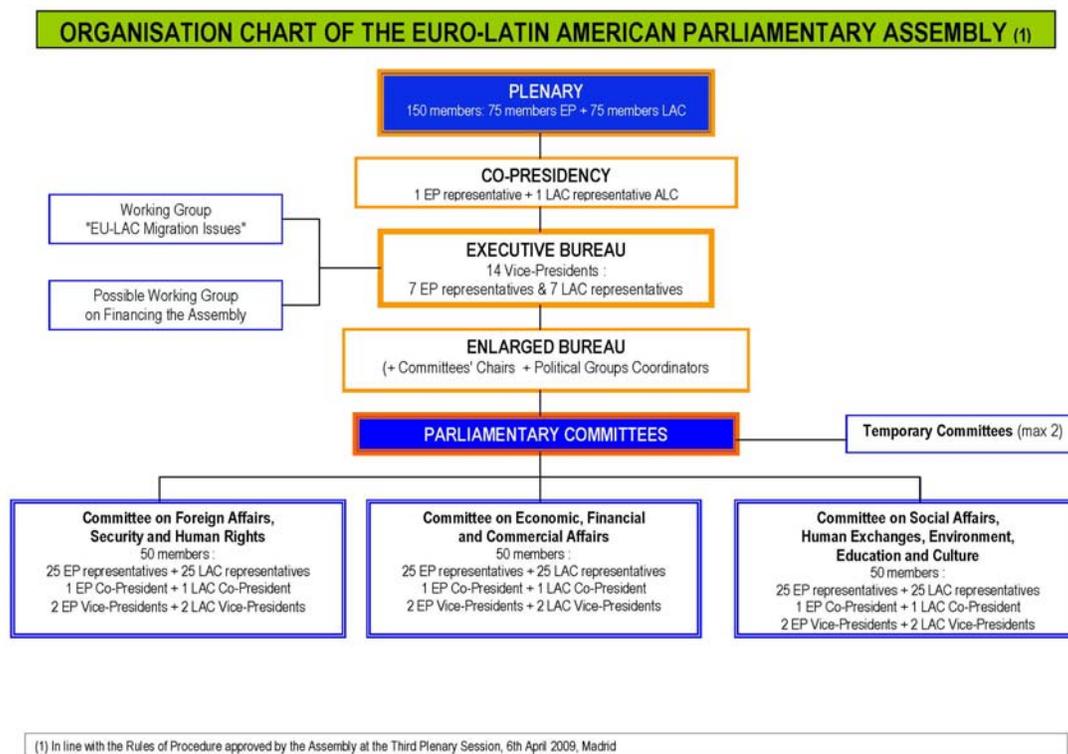
- is there a model of inter-regional EU parliamentary relations? Lessons could be drawn from comparative analysis with other parliamentary set ups where the EU plays an important or a leading role: the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, the EURONEST initiative, and of course the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Committee³⁵. For instance there exist, mainly preliminary, studies comparing the EMPA and the PABSEC (Stavridis, Manoli 2008; 2010) or other such institutions.
- linked to the above, should there be a model? That is to say, if there is no model, does it work against the cohesion and effectiveness of EU parliamentary relations with other regional groupings in the world (Stavridis, Ajenjo 2010)?
- what about the impact of Multi-Level Governance, and in particular the link of interregional parliamentary institutions with civil societies or with sub-state regional

³⁴ This also raises the question of how Europeanized the European Parliament actually is.

³⁵ Dietmar Nickel, 'L'Assemblée euroméditerranéenne dans le contexte des assemblées interparlementaires de l'Union européenne', UAB/Autonomous University of Barcelona, *I Jornada europea Jean Monnet Democracia y Derecho: La Asamblea Euromediterránea en el marco de la Presidencia española*, Barcelona, 16 April 2010.

- groupings? There are after all many institutionalized set ups where sub-state parliaments relate with both national and supranational counterparts (for instance in the Baltic region or in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association). As for the link parliamentary bodies play between the executives and the populations there is an emerging literature on the subject (see Grugel 2008; Sabic 2008b; Pace, Stavridis, Xenakis 2004; Lannon 2002).
- studies on specific issues should also be carried out, including at the comparative level. For instance, what role do regional parliamentary institutions play in a wide range of public policies: from energy policies or migration issues to international conflict resolution.

Finally, it is hoped that this paper will attract and impulse the academic attention and interest to an important question in regional integration that is still missing.



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