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THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S STANDING COMMITTEES: PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR AND MODES OF FUNCTIONING AFTER THE TREATY OF LISBON

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Abstract

The widened scope of Codecision brought on by the Lisbon Treaty considerably strengthened the role of certain standing committees inside the European Parliament (EP). From one day to another, in fact, the vote of these committees began to matter, allowing them both to shape directly EU law and to veto Council's positions. Has this change had an impact on their modes of functioning? Has it influenced the work MEPs and groups carry out on a day-to-day basis inside these committees?

Building up on institutionalist theories and combining data analysis with semi-structured in-person interviews, this work tackles the above-mentioned problematic by examining patterns of behaviour in four EP's standing committees that turned to co-decision on December 1st 2009: AGRI, INTA, LIBE and PECH. In particular, this work focuses on two specific areas of committees' activity under co-decision: interinstitutional relations (notably, early agreements, trialogues and length of first reading) and intra-committee dynamics (notably, participation to vote, coalition building and groups' cohesion). The period of reference ranges from 2009 to 2017.

The added value of this work is threefold: first, it adds up to the literature by inquiring for the first time behavioural patterns within committees that turned to co-decision after Lisbon. Secondly, it adds a comparative element to the study of committee's patterns of behaviour, exploring for the first time possible mainstreaming patterns across them. Finally, it presents original data on voting behaviour inside EP's committees after the Lisbon Treaty. The results here illustrated, far from being exhaustive, nonetheless set up the basis for further studies on the politics inside the EP.