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Comparative Regional Integration Studies

UNU-CRIS Working Papers

W-2007/8

MONITORING AND (GOOD) GOVERNANCE OF THE INTEGRATION PROCESS IN THE
EUROPEAN UNION*

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* The final version of this paper will be published as a chapter in: De Lombaerde, P., A. Estevadeordal and K. Suominen (eds.), *Governing Regional Integration for Development: Monitoring Experiences, Methods and Prospects*, London: Ashgate (forthcoming).

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Monitoring and (Good) Governance of the Integration Process in the European Union

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1. Introduction

This chapter looks at the extent to which monitoring processes and activities provide the integration in the European Union (EU) with sufficient levels of transparency and accountability to make it the relatively well-governed, deep and sustainable process as it is generally perceived to be. This is a usually neglected aspect of European integration. The chapter attempts to show that the complexity of the integration scheme is –to an important extent- matched by or – at least – accompanied by a complex monitoring system. Looking at EU integration through the lens of monitoring actors and actions, reveals also the specificity of the whole integration project and hints at the underlying political culture and historically determined societal equilibria in Europe. This way, the chapter will inform the new social constructionist approaches to regional integration (Duina 2006). At the same time, we will also discuss the more technical aspects of (good) monitoring of regional integration.

After a brief panoramic view of the state of (institutionalized) integration in the EU (section 2), and a sketch of our conceptual framework (section 3.1), the subsequent sections discuss the different forms and modalities of monitoring in the EU, and the actors involved. Both internal (section 4) and external monitoring (section 5) will be discussed. Section 6 concludes.

2. The European integration process

Capturing the (institutionalized) European integration process in a few words is a complicated task, considering the diverse aspects of the process and its long history, even if we limit ourselves to ‘modern’ integration in the post-WWII era, formally starting with the Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. The ECSC was deemed to ensure peace and security to a region that was the origin of two devastating global wars. By putting the coal and steel production, crucial for armament, under common supervision and co-ordination, distrust between the six founding members¹ was reduced, also leading to a significant increase of productivity in this sector. This led to further economic integration, as expressed in the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. Together with Euratom, these three institutions formed what later became the EU. Although economic goals, like the creation of a free trade area and the single market, were the driving forces of integration, political integration was not neglected. With the Commission and the Parliament², the Treaty of Rome already introduced supranational institutions beside the intergovernmental Council of Ministers and the European Court of Justice. European law has overruled national laws since the 1960’s.

From this starting point onwards, regional integration in Europe experienced both deepening and widening. It was deepened by successful projects such as the establishment of a customs union, the realization of a single market, and the creation of the Euro-zone; and it was widened by several rounds of enlargement, resulting in an EU with 27 member-states in January 2007, after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria. The EU comprises around 480 million citizens, and includes several former Soviet

¹ Belgium, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

² Initially named ‘Assembly’.

countries. Yet the provisions laid down in the founding Treaties of Rome still determine many aspects of the European Union and its working. The first substantial revision of these provisions was undertaken by the Commission under the presidency of Jacques Delors in 1986. After the slowdown of integration in the 1970's³, integration regained momentum, especially with the accession of Spain and Portugal in 1986, shortly before the Single European Act (SEA) was ratified. Delors' ambitious goal was to achieve the single market by the end of 1992⁴, economic advantages being again a major driving force of the entire integration process. But the heads of state and government agreed not only on economic integration at this occasion: political integration was also brought forward. What was before a non-binding de-facto political consultation in the context of the European Political Co-operation (EPC), was given a legal basis which associated it more closely with the European Commission and European Parliament. The European integration process should thus be seen as a broader process, never confined to being a narrow free trade area (Gavin 2005: 224; Rosamond 2001).

With the Treaty on the European Union, the so-called 'high politics', namely security and foreign policy, in addition to justice and home affairs, entered the European political arena. Although already existent in the EPC, they were now incorporated in what is known today as the three-pillar structure of the EU (see below). However, they were not integrated in the European Community structure, and thus not part of the community decision-making, but rather intergovernmental scenes of political co-operation where the principle of unanimous decision-making applied. Co-operation in these fields became necessary because of two developments: first, the four freedoms of the single market and the abolition of cross-border controls within the Schengen states;

³ Sometimes referred to as the 'dark age' of European Integration.

⁴ Thus often referred to as 'program 1992'.

second, with the end of the Cold War, European states, especially Germany, pushed for closer collaboration in the field of asylum policy and combating illegal trafficking.

Encouraged by the successful implementation of the single market program, economic integration was taken a step further with the realization of the European Monetary Union (EMU). As demanded in the TEU, it was introduced in 1999 and replaced the national currencies in 2002. The idea of the Euro⁵ was not uncontested. Economists were at strife about whether the positive effects of the single currency, e.g. reduction of transactions costs, would outweigh the loss of control over monetary policy, and about the optimal size of the currency area (Cuyvers et al. 2005: 130). Last but not least, the currency was (and is) an important symbol of identification which is not always easily abandoned, as initial negative reactions to the EMU in Germany showed (Tsoukalis 2005: 36-37).

This deepening of integration, as constituted by the single market and EMU, was soon accompanied by a widening: the inclusion of eight Eastern European countries, plus Malta and Cyprus in 2005, and later Romania and Bulgaria in 2007. Their integration in the 'Pax Europea' was to ensure peace and security to these regions, at the same time opening their markets and enabling access to the Structural and Cohesion funds. Simultaneously, the question arose as to where the limits of European integration are. Applications of Morocco and Ukraine were answered by a polite 'no', Turkey has been given applicant status since 1987, yet debates still prevail over whether it actually should join the EU at all.

The number of member states has almost quintupled, challenging the structure and procedures inherited from the Treaties of Rome. Minor adjustments have been introduced since then, often to ensure the set goals of economic integration; qualitative

⁵ Initially named 'ecu'.

majority voting was introduced with the SEA, and then expanded to certain policy areas with the amendments made in Amsterdam and Nice. The accession of the ten new members in 2005 was, and still is, not only a challenge for the political integration, but for the economic as well. Their economies are considerably less developed than those of the EU-15, 'in economic terms, these ten new members together are smaller than the Netherlands' (Tsoukalis 2005: 172), although in general they now show higher growth rates.

The Lisbon Strategy, as adopted in 2000, aims at fostering growth in the EU and tackling the mentioned economic differences by creating the 'the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, with full employment and increased levels of social cohesion, by 2010' (European Council 2004: 11). The revision of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005 introduced a change of focus towards growth and employment to meet the ambitious goals.

Facing the challenges of the fifth enlargement, a major treaty revision was prepared, which was designated to replace all other treaties by creating a European constitution. In 2004 heads of governments signed what was the result of two years work of the European Convention, led by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. It attempted to provide answers to a series of challenges and criticisms. These cover, amongst others issues, the often mentioned lack of democracy (legitimacy) and transparency of the EU institutions; the problem of obstructing behaviour of minority members; the absence of standards for basic social rights; and the low profile of the EU in 'high politics' on the global level. Resembling modern national constitutions (Gavin 2005: 231), the planned correctives were not radical reforms compared to the existing TEU and its amendments, but rather adjustments to sharpen the profile and competences of the institutions, increasing democratic legitimacy by enhancing the role of the EP and adjustments to the decision-

making process. However, the ratification in the different member-states failed with the French and Dutch ‘no’ to the constitution, which was a severe drawback in the deepening of the European integration process.

3. Monitoring the European integration process

Conceptual framework

In order to capture the multiple forms and meanings of monitoring in the context of the regional integration process in the EU, to identify its characteristics and to compare it with experiences in other regions in the world, we necessarily have to start from a relatively broad monitoring concept. For our purpose the concept will cover *all relevant processes of information gathering, processing and dissemination concerning the European integration process, performed by different kinds of actors in different moments and lapses of time, in order to control, evaluate, correct and/or influence the integration policies and the functioning of the regional institutions.*⁶

A number of elements need some further clarification. First, ‘relevant processes’ are those that actually lead to significant levels of control, evaluation or influence, and that are recognized as such by other relevant actors. Where to draw the line exactly between relevant and irrelevant processes is obviously debatable, but for a number of monitoring actors and processes a wide consensus can probably be reached.

Second, ‘monitoring’ includes ‘evaluation’, but they are not synonymous. Monitoring covers both positive and normative aspects. Positive aspects refer to the systematic description and analysis of the policy process under consideration, including the development and application of methods and tools for this purpose, although accepting that certain biases and implicit value-judgments may influence the (positive) monitoring

⁶ ‘Regional’ will be understood here as ‘supra-national’, i.e. involving a number of states.

activity of an actor. Normative aspects refer to the explicit and purposive evaluation of the results of the ‘positive’ monitoring, approving or disapproving the course of the integration process. This evaluation provides inputs for explicit or implicit policy feedback mechanisms. The criteria that are used in the evaluations, can be contractual obligations of different kinds (treaties, agreements, decisions, laws ...) declared between different parties (European Commission, European Parliament, national states, governments, ...), less formalized public declarations (declarations of intentions, electoral campaign programmes, policy reports...), general developmental goals and principles, or self-defined criteria of the monitors themselves. In this respect, our approach follows to some extent the shift from traditional understandings of accountability to more modern stakeholder views of accountability (Blagescu and Lloyd 2006: 216-17). In principle, the positive and normative aspects of monitoring can be taken care of by different actors. For example, EUROSTAT data can be used by different actors to draw different policy conclusions.

Third, as already suggested, monitoring processes involve different kinds of actors. When regional integration processes are not just the result of ‘negative’ integration measures⁷ but lead to the creation of regional (supra-national or inter-governmental) institutions, like in the European case, monitoring mechanisms generally emerge at the same level. We will call these mechanisms ‘internal monitoring’ to the extent that they take place within the regional institutions. ‘External monitoring’ by contrast, will include any form of monitoring (of the regional integration process), performed by other actors, independently of their level of operations (local, sub-national, national,

⁷ ‘Negative’ integration is used here as proposed by Tinbergen (1954) and refers to the elimination of regional barriers to trade, whereas ‘positive’ integration refers to the design and implementation of (new) common policies and institutions.

regional/supra-national, pluri-lateral, multilateral/global) or ownership structure (international organization, governmental, other public, non-governmental, or mixed). Examples of external monitoring agents could include, for example, the UN or World Bank (at the global level), the OECD (pluri-lateral), a regional network of trade unions or employers organizations, national and sub-national (regional) parliaments, national political parties, local authorities and interest groups.

Fourth, monitoring takes place in different logical moments and lapses of time. If we look at regional integration as a macro-project, monitoring would cover all the stages of the project cycle. Monitoring should not be confined to *ex post* evaluation.

Fifth, the object of monitoring ranges from grand strategies to small micro-projects. Given the purpose of this paper, we will be less interested in the monitoring and management practices at the micro-level but rather in the monitoring done at the policy and strategic levels.

Sixth, the purpose of monitoring is to have an impact on the integration policies and the course and quality of the integration process. Effective monitoring leads to a traceable policy impact. At the same time, the monitoring activities themselves can target any conceptual component of the regional integration process: (i) relevant actors and their activities, (ii) structural factors affecting the regional integration process, (iii) the institutionalization of the process, (iv) policy implementation, (v) policy effects, and last but not least, (vi) the course of effective regional interdependencies (De Lombaerde and Van Langenhove 2006: 24-31), or a combination thereof.

EU Institutional Setting and Mechanisms

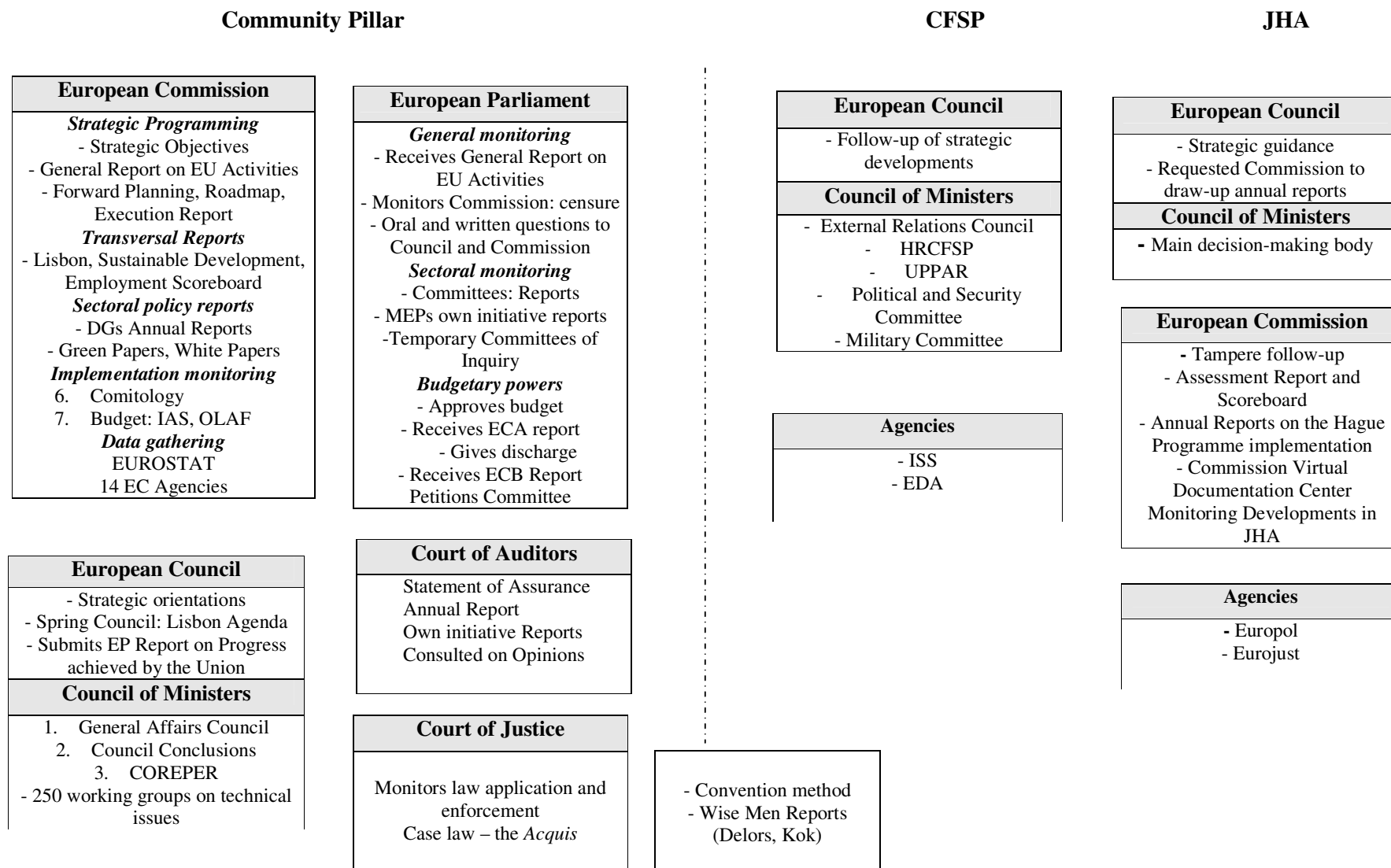
The main difficulty when analysing the tools available for the monitoring of regional integration in the EU comes from the complexity of the institutional settings and mechanisms. This is not only relevant for the internal monitoring but determines also

the scope and modalities of external monitoring. Bridges exist between internal and external monitoring when external actors (civil society, for example) are involved in monitoring activities launched by the European institutions.

Let us, however, start with a look at the institutional setting and mechanisms of the EU. The EU is different both from the traditional nation-state and the international organization structures. The five core institutions – the European Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice, and the European Court of Auditors – reflect this complex interaction and continuous struggle between supranational and intergovernmental characteristics of European integration. While the Council of Ministers acts as the full representative of the Member States governments, the four other institutions are predominantly supranational in nature: though appointed by the national governments, their members are meant to act independently in order to fulfil the supranational Community interest.

Each of the institutions plays a role in the internal monitoring of the European integration process, but their role varies according to the different integration ‘pillars’ set up by the Treaty of Maastricht, with a clear difference between the first pillar based on the Community-method and the fully intergovernmental pillars of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) (figure 1).

Figure 1: Role of the different institutions in internal monitoring of EU activities



Next to this organization of policies along three pillars, the complexity of monitoring is increased by the allocation of competences between the Community and Member States, which varies between the different policy fields, and, in the absence of clear Treaty provisions, what is often advanced through practice. So far, the distinction has been made between the areas where the Community had *exclusive* competences⁸, the areas of *shared* competences in which states act individually only where they have not already acted through the EU or where the EU has ceased to act⁹, and the areas of *complementary* competences where the Union intervenes to complement or coordinate the actions of the Member States¹⁰ except for specific fields where Treaty provisions clearly prohibit harmonization of the national laws.¹¹

Community pillar

The European Commission plays an important monitoring role in the Community pillar in several ways. First, the Commission prepares several transversal programming and monitoring documents. Each new Commission adopts, at the start of its mandate, a strategic programming document that sets out its key strategic objectives. The *Strategic Objectives 2005-2009*, issued on 26 January 2005, have as aim the delivery of Prosperity, Solidarity and Security for all Europeans by the end of this decade. Every year, the Commission publishes¹² the *General Report on the Activities of the European*

⁸ Customs union, competition rules, monetary policy of the Euro-zone, conservation of marine biological resources, common commercial policy, and the conclusion of certain limited international agreements.

⁹ Most of EU policy fields: here the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality act.

¹⁰ Research, technological development, development cooperation and humanitarian aid, economic and employment policy.

¹¹ Education, vocational education, youth and culture.

¹² Article 212 of the EC Treaty and Article 125 of the EAEC Treaty

Union, which is presented to the European Parliament in February and reviews the activities of the European Union in the previous year. The General Report¹³ is not organized identically every year; its structure aims to reflect the main institutional and policy developments of each year, prefaced by a general introduction. Additionally, the European Commission adopts every year a *Legislative and Work Programme* (often called ‘Work Programme’), presented by the President of the Commission to the Parliament and the Council, which aims to translate the annual policy strategy into policy objectives and comprises a list of priority legislative and policy initiatives the Commission commits itself to adopt by the end of the year. The Work Programme is accompanied by a *Roadmap*, comprising short fiches of each legislative proposal prepared by the various Directorate-Generals. These aim to assess the main problems identified, the policy objectives, the regulatory or non-regulatory instruments to be considered, likely impacts that require further analysis, what type and level of analysis will be carried out, and which stakeholders and experts will be consulted. Next to this, the Commission issues a more detailed *Forward Programming*¹⁴ document, comprising information on the legislative and non-legislative proposals prepared and an *Execution Report*¹⁵ which follows the same pattern, listing the date of adoption, the legal basis, the policy motivation and the budgetary implications of the proposal.

Second, The European Commission issues regular monitoring reports on the economic, social and legal situation of the Union (Lisbon Strategy, Sustainable Development Strategy, Employment scoreboard). The Secretariat of the Commission issues an *Annual*

¹³ <http://europa.eu/generalreport/en/2005/index.htm>

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/forward_programming.pdf

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/execution_report.pdf

*report on monitoring the application of Community law*¹⁶ and keeps an update on the transposition of European Directives into national law. Next to these yearly transversal programming and monitoring documents, each Directorate-General produces a wide array of reports which can deal with more general policy issues or more detailed and technical aspects. As an example, the Environment DG produces annual *Environment Policy Reviews* (EPR), highlighting the main developments in environmental policy at EU and Member State level over the past year, which provide input to the Spring European Council and help to monitor progress toward the EU's key environmental goals, as set out in the 6th Environmental Action Programme. Next to this, the same DG produces a wide array of more thematic or detailed monitoring documents, such as the Annual Report on Monitoring the Average Specific Emissions of Carbon Dioxide from New Passenger Cars.

Third, the European Commission plays several important functions in decision-making, which have important repercussions on its monitoring function. The Commission has the monopoly of initiating legislation by submitting proposals to the Council and the European Parliament. In this context, the Commission produces discussion papers or *Green Papers* gathering the opinions of various stakeholders on a specific policy development in preparation, and *White Papers*, containing concrete official proposals for Community action in that specific area. Quite often, both green papers and white papers play a monitoring role as they take stock of the current situation in a policy field and bring forward proposals for future developments. Using its decision-making powers regarding competition policy, the Commission acts as Guardian of the Treaties, ensuring acts are adopted properly. It may instigate legal proceedings against member

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/community_law/eulaw/pdf/XXII_rapport_annuel/22_rapport_annuel_en.htm

states and enterprises failing to comply with legislation, thus bringing them to the Court of Justice.

Finally, the Commission has implementing powers under the conditions set by Member States (the comitology procedure), whereby it is in charge of monitoring how the legislation is implemented once it has been adopted by the EU Council of Ministers. Also, next to preparing the draft budget of the EU, it manages the adopted budget for the monitoring of projects and funds¹⁷ and performs the internal audit of the Community funds through its Internal Audit Service (IAS) and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

The European Parliament plays an important role in the Community pillar, acting as co-legislator with the Council of Ministers and scrutinising the European Commission's activities. Next to that, its budgetary powers, which have gradually grown since the 1970s, give the Parliament an important monitoring role over the development of EU policies through the final say over EC non-compulsory expenditure and the power to reject the budget. But even in the first pillar, the power of the Parliament to monitor policy developments varies, its' voice being best heard in the co-decision procedure which now covers 43 policy areas, following the entry into force of the Treaty of Nice. Next to the legislative work based on Parliamentary reports drawn in Committees specialized in the various EC policies, the EP monitoring powers include its power of censuring the Commission as a college, the questions addressed to the Council and the Commission, and the reception of reports from other institutions such as the Commission, the ECA, and the ECB.

The Council of Ministers, acting as main EU decision-making body and as co-legislator together with the European Parliament, represents the voice of the national

¹⁷ Art. 205 of the EC Treaty.

governments. Closely associated with the activities of the Council of Ministers is the European Council, made of the Heads of State and Government of the Member States and the President of the European Commission, which despite not being a European institution plays a key role in issuing strategic orientations for the Union activities. Both the Council of Ministers, and the European Council perform an important role in the monitoring of EU integration developments in the Community pillar.

First, at the level of the meetings of the European Council, the Heads of States and Government discuss four times a year (March, June, October/November and December) the general political guidelines for the development of the EU, based on reports and documents produced by the other institutions. The Spring European Council plays a special role in the Community pillar through the monitoring and review of the Lisbon strategy and the review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. In accordance with article 4 of the Treaty on European Union, the European Council submits to the European Parliament a yearly written *Report on the Progress Achieved by the Union*.¹⁸

Second, the national governments monitor developments of EU policies through each of the nine different configurations of the Council of Ministers, meeting with variable intensity over the year. The General Affairs Council, composed of the Foreign Ministers of Member States and meeting once a month, plays a transversal role in the discussion and monitoring of dossiers that affect more than one of the Union's policies, such as negotiations on EU enlargement, preparation of the Union's multi-annual budgetary perspective or institutional and administrative issues. Similarly, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council, composed of the Economics and Finance Ministers of the Member States, has, next to economic policy coordination, a function of economic

¹⁸ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/2004/12/2/2003.pdf

surveillance and monitoring of Member States' budgetary policy and public finances. At a more detailed level, the COREPER and the 250 technical working groups preparing the Council's work play an important role in the follow-up of integration developments. The European Union Court of Justice monitors the uniform interpretation of Community law and the way in which Community institutions act according to the Treaties. The Court of Justice issues an annual report comprising the list of proceedings and statistical data on the yearly developments in European law.

Although operational since 1977, the European Court of Auditors was acknowledged as a fully-fledged institution only in 1993, following the entry into force of the Treaty of Maastricht. Composed of one national from each Member State, chosen from among persons who belong or have belonged in their respective countries to external audit bodies or who are especially qualified for this office, the ECA's main task consists¹⁹ of performing the external auditing of the accounts and the implementation of the budget of the EU with the dual aim of improving financial management and reporting to the citizens of Europe on the use made of public funds by the authorities responsible for their management.

In the financial and monetary fields, the European Central Bank (ECB) monitors the activities of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) through the production of a yearly report, while the European Investment Bank (EIB) through its Operation Evaluation Department performs thematic, sector and regional/country ex-post evaluations of projects financed by the Bank once they have been completed. Two other EU bodies - the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Council (EESC) - play a less important role in decision-making due to their consultative status. The CoR is nevertheless involved in the monitoring of subsidiarity

¹⁹ Art. 246 to 248 of the EC Treaty.

through the setting up in 2005 of a subsidiarity monitoring network. This network is a tool for exchanging information between European territorial (sub-state level) actors on policy documents and proposals of the European Commission which - when adopted - will have an impact on local and regional authorities and the policies for which they are responsible. The EESC is performing, through its 170 advisory documents and opinions issued every year, an indirect monitoring of European policies by economic and social interest groups in its field of competence.

Next to the main institutions, an important role in the first pillar is played by the EU Community Agencies, bodies set up by an act of secondary legislation in order to accomplish a specific technical, scientific or managerial task which is specified by EU Law. There are currently 16 EU Community Agencies¹⁵ with different functions. Some of these agencies are playing an important role in the monitoring of developments in a specific, well defined, policy field, as is the case for the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, the European Environment Agency, the Community Plant Variety Office, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, and the European Food Safety Authority. Other agencies have functions in training (European Training Foundation, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) or the production of regional standards for harmonization (the Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market) and safety regulations (European Maritime Safety Agency; European Aviation Safety Agency; European Network and Information Security Agency; European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control; European Railway Agency). But even the agencies without an openly stated monitoring function play a role close to monitoring through the production of regular reports used by the Commission as policy input for future actions.

Decision-making in the two intergovernmental pillars created by the Treaty of Maastricht –CFSP and JHA– is dominated by the role of the Council of Ministers. In these two pillars the European Commission and the European Parliament have little authority.

CFSP pillar

In the second pillar, the governments of the Member States, the Council of Ministers and the European Council have the leading role in the control of CFSP. The European Council defines the principles and general guidelines for the common foreign and security policy and adopts common strategies specifying policy guidelines, objectives and resources for activities with individual countries or regions. The Council of Ministers adopts joint actions and common positions. Its External Relations configuration, meeting every month, plays a leading role in the transversal monitoring and coordination of the whole of the EU external policies, dealing, next to common foreign and security policy and the European security and defence policy, with the follow-up of policies with external impact from the first pillar: foreign trade and development cooperation. The Secretary-General of the Council, who plays at the same time the role of High Representative (HR) for CFSP, helps the Council with the follow-up of decisions and policy implementation. Within the Council secretariat, a Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit is specifically in charge of monitoring, analysis and assessment of international developments and events, including early warning on potential crises, and drafting policy recommendations to the Council. CFSP decision-making is supported by a Political and Security Committee composed of senior national representatives meeting twice a week in Brussels, in charge of the drafting of opinions and of the political control and strategic direction of EU crisis-management operations, as well as by a Military Committee composed of Chiefs of Defence.

The Commission does not play a monitoring role in this pillar where it shares its right of initiative with the Council and is involved in the implementation of the CFSP budget (under the EC budget). It has nevertheless an important monitoring role of EU's external policies related to the first pillar, of which it has responsibility for trade, humanitarian aid, development assistance, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The European Parliament plays a limited role in CFSP decision-making as it is only consulted on the choices in this area, but it has a certain monitoring role through its power to give assent to association and accession treaties, and to receive reports on foreign policy from the Council. Two agencies play an important role in the CFSP monitoring. The European Defence Agency (EDA) monitors the development of EU defence capabilities, in the light of the 2010 Headline Goal, and gathers data on R&T cooperation, setting priorities and developing a roadmap for R&T ad hoc projects. The EU Institute for Security Studies performs research and debate on the major security and defence issues that are of relevance to the EU, providing forward-looking analysis for the Union's Council and High Representative.

JHA pillar

In the Justice and Home Affairs pillar, the situation is slightly different from CFSP. Following the Treaty of Amsterdam which has 'communitarized' a broad number of policies, shifting them to the first pillar (illegal immigration, visas, asylum, and judicial co-operation in civilian matters), which at present deals with Police and Judicial Co-operation in Criminal Matters. Despite the dominance of the European Council and the Council of Ministers over decision-making, the Commission has earned an important role in monitoring policy developments.

The October 1999 Tampere European Council adopted a five-year programme aiming to create an Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, encompassing activities from the

first and third pillar in these areas. The European Commission is in charge of monitoring its implementation through a scoreboard to review progress every six months. Following the European Commission evaluation of the achievements of this programme, the Council adopted in 2004 a new programme for the years 2005-2010, also called the 'Hague Programme'. The Commission is in charge of monitoring the implementation of this new programme on an annual basis by using a new scoreboard²⁰ which, next to following the institutional decision-making process at EU level – as in the case of the Tampere scoreboard - also assesses how measures adopted at EU level are put in place by Member States and draws conclusions in this field. The two lead agencies dealing with JHA co-operation – the European Police Office (Europol), and the Eurojust – deal with monitoring in a more indirect way being mainly involved in enhancing cooperation in specific fields (i.e. combating organized crime and trafficking).

4. Internal monitoring

Commission Instruments

EUROSTAT

Quantitative monitoring requires the availability of statistical data, preferably consolidated at the regional level using uniform methodologies across the member states. The provision of such data for the EU is the task of EUROSTAT (DG Economic and Financial Affairs).²¹ Its creation was thus a logical first step in the process of developing (internal) monitoring capacities. Although the formal launching of

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/doc_centre/scoreboard_en.htm

²¹ See EUROSTAT homepage at:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1090,1&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

EUROSTAT, under this name, took place in 1959, its history goes back to the creation of the Statistical Division of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1953.²²

Important milestones in the history of EUROSTAT include:

- the publication of the European System of Integrated Economic Accounts (ESA) and adoption of the general industrial classification of economic activities (NACE) in 1970;
- the extension of its role following the agreement on establishment of the European Economic Area and adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991, leading to the establishment of Intrastat for the production of statistics on intra-EU trade within the context of the Single Market;
- the organization of the first European household panel in 1994, analysing income, employment, poverty, social exclusion, households and health; and
- the first issue of specific indicators for the EMU area in 1998.

EUROSTAT functions under the authority of the Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs (DG ECFIN).

However, the prime function of EUROSTAT is not to monitor the European integration process. Its main tasks lay in the harmonization of statistical practices of the national statistical authorities and the consolidation and publication (in different formats) of various statistics for the EU as a whole. Most of the statistics that are published are country statistics. They are organized in the following thematic areas:

- general and regional statistics²³,
- economy and finance,
- population and social conditions,
- industry, trade and services,
- agriculture and fisheries,
- external trade,
- transport,
- environment and energy,
- science and technology.

²² For a recent overview of EUROSTAT's history, see De Michelis and Chantraine (2003).

²³ In the EUROSTAT terminology, 'regional' refers to sub-national regions.

In addition, harmonized government finance statistics are produced. Thus, only indirectly these indicators inform us about the integration process *sensu stricto*. Normally, EUROSTAT does not calculate, for example, convergence or dispersion indicators on the basis of the country statistics. It provides the user with comparable and transparent data, which is obviously already a major achievement.

Quality assessments of the produced data are available, following the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice of the European Statistical System (ESS).²⁴ For the Euro-indicators and Structural indicators (see below), for example, quality profiles are available. These quality profiles are user-oriented summaries of the main quality features of certain sets of statistics, covering relevance, accuracy, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, comparability, coherence, and cost and burden (Eurostat 2003). They are very useful to enhance the transparency of the data and are very useful inputs in the (internal and external) monitoring processes.

A few years ago, EUROSTAT started to bundle sets of indicators that are directly relevant for particular EU strategies or policies. This way, the role of EUROSTAT in the (internal) monitoring of the European integration process has become clearer. Although the country data are usually (still) not used to calculate relevant indicators for the region as a whole (apart from averages and totals), the way of presenting the data and their link to Commission reports and policies indeed constitutes a value added for the policy community and the public in general.

A first set of these indicators are the so-called 'Structural Indicators'. They have been published since 2001 to support the Commission's task to provide the Council with an

²⁴ The European Statistical System is refers to the partnership comprising EUROSTAT, national statistical institutes and other national statistical bodies responsible in each Member State for producing and disseminating European statistics (Eurostat 2005a).

annual monitoring report of progress made in the direction of the goals set forth in the Lisbon strategy.²⁵ This strategy refers to the strategic goals for the next decade that were decided upon at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000. The EU set a strategic goal of '[...] becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'.²⁶ The Annual Progress Report has become a relatively important document, not only towards the European Council, but also allowing the broader public to follow-up the results of the Lisbon strategy.

A shortlist of 14 indicators are included in the Annex to the Annual Progress Report (table 1). They are available for all EU states since 1999 on an annual basis, together with EU averages and country and EU target values.

Table 1: Structural Indicators covered in the Annual Progress Report of the European Commission on the Lisbon Strategy

Categories	Variables		
General Economic Background	GDP per capita in PPS	Labour productivity	
Employment	Employment rate*	Employment rate of older workers*	
Innovation and Research	Youth educational attainment (20-24)*	Gross domestic expenditure on R&D	
Economic Reform	Comparative price levels	Business investment	
Social Cohesion	At risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers*	Long-term unemployment rate*	Dispersion of regional employment rates*
Environment	Greenhouse gas emissions	Energy intensity of the economy	Volume of freight transport relative to GDP

* Indicators disaggregated by gender.

Note: For further information on methodology, see:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/structuralindicators>

²⁵ The 2006 Report has been published as: European Commission (2006b). The 2001 figures were published in a 'Synthesis Report', the 2002-2005 indicators were published in the Spring Reports.

²⁶ See Lisbon Strategy webpage at: http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index_en.htm.

Source: European Commission (2006b: Statistical Annex)

A second set of indicators consists of the ‘Sustainable Development Indicators’ (SDI), developed as a follow-up of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, adopted by the European Council in Gothenburg in June 2001 (and renewed in June 2006), aiming at the reconciliation of economic development, social cohesion and environmental protection. Although EUROSTAT had published sustainable development indicators (based on UN indicators) before, the first report with the European SDI was published in 2005, showing time series starting in 1990 (EUROSTAT, 2005b).²⁷ Several indicators are organized in ten ‘themes’: economic development, poverty and social exclusion, ageing society, public health, climate change and energy, production and consumption patterns, management of natural resources, transport, good governance, and global partnership. Seven themes reflect the priority areas of the 2001 Commission Communication (A Sustainable Europe for a Better World) and the 2002 Communication on Global Partnership, while ‘good governance’ and ‘production and consumption patterns’ arise from the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The theme on ‘economic development’ establishes bridges between the SDI and the Lisbon Process (see above).

From a methodological and practical point of view, an interesting feature of the SDI is related to its design as a hierarchical three-level pyramid. In order to facilitate communication, the three levels of the system match different user needs. The themes are thus subdivided in ‘sub-themes’ and ‘areas to be addressed’, respectively (table 2).

²⁷ The SDI database can be consulted via:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1090,1&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Table 2: Three-level design of the SDI and targeted users

Indicator level	Hierarchical framework	Objectives	Users targeted
Level 1	Themes	Headline indicators for initial policy analysis and monitoring progress towards headline policy objectives	High-level policy makers and general public
Level 2	Sub-themes	Evaluation of core policy areas and more detailed monitoring of progress in achieving headline objectives	Policy makers and general public
Level 3	Areas to be addressed (special issues within themes, and various measures implementing headline objectives)	Further policy analysis and better understanding of the trends and complexity of issues associated with the theme or interlinkages with other themes in the framework	More specialised audience (e.g. academic community)

Source: EUROSTAT (2005b).

Of particular relevance here are the good governance indicators (table 3). Contrary to most of the variables considered by EUROSTAT, these variables inform us directly about particular aspects of the functioning of the European institutions and (good) regional governance. They enable the monitoring of both policy coherence and public participation at the European level through a set of indicators.

Table 3: Good (regional) governance indicators included in the SDI

Level I indicators	1. Level of citizens' confidence in EU institutions	
Sub-themes	POLICY COHERENCE	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
Level II indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Proportion of environmentally harmful subsidies</i> 2. Number of infringement cases brought in front of the Court of Justice, by policy area 3. <i>Administrative cost imposed by legislation</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Voter turnout in national parliamentary elections 5. <i>Responses to EC Internet public consultations</i>
Level III indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Share of major proposals in the Commission's Legal and Work Programme for which an impact assessment has been undertaken</i> 2. Transposition of Community law, by policy area 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Voter turnout in EU parliamentary elections, <i>by gender, by age group and by highest level of education attained</i> 4. E-government on-line availability 5. E-government usage by individuals
Headline objectives in the EU SD strategy (SDS) Presidency conclusions of European Council	<p>SDS: Improve policy coherence; all policies must have sustainable development as their core concern. In particular, forthcoming reviews of Common Policies must look at how they can contribute more positively to sustainable development.</p>	

<p>(EC) WSSD Plan of Implementation (Pol) 6th Environmental Action Programme (6EAP) Millennium Declaration Goals (MDG)</p>	<p>(revised in <u>Barcelone2002</u>): Ensure that all major internal and external policy proposals include an impact assessment.</p> <p><u>SDS</u>: Earlier and more systematic dialogue, in particular with representatives of consumers. The views outside the Union should also be sought.</p> <p><u>EC Lisbon2000</u>: Real efforts must be made by public administrations at all levels to exploit new technologies to make information as accessible as possible.</p> <p><u>EC Gothenburg2001</u>: The Union must be served by modern, open and citizen-oriented institutions. The new rules on the public's right of access to documents are a major step in making the Union more open.</p>
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Note: Normal text = 'best available' indicator i.e. indicator expected to be available. *Italics* = 'best needed' indicator i.e. needed but facing problems of definition, data availability or data quality.

Source: Based on European Commission (2005a).

Finally, a third set of indicators are the Euro-indicators. These have been designed for a more specialized public and contain monthly and quarterly macroeconomic indicators for the Euro-zone, the EU and individual Member States. Data are organized in eight main themes: balance of payments; business and consumer surveys; consumer prices; external trade; industry, commerce and services; labour market; monetary and financial indicators; and national accounts.²⁸

Eurobarometer

The Eurobarometer, created in 1970 by Jacques-René Rabier, forms a quite unique resource of cross-temporal as well as cross-national public opinion surveys. Today it is the public opinion analysis sector of DG Press and Communication that is responsible for the Eurobarometer. The surveys were meant to 'reveal Europeans to one another', by conducting standardized surveys in each member country (since 2003, in the light of

²⁸ Euro-indicators can be consulted at:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1194,47773485,1194_47782287:1194_47791935&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

the fifth EU-Enlargement, also in the acceding countries).²⁹ These surveys are not conducted by the Eurobarometer staff itself, but by private companies, nowadays by TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe. For each member country, 1000 inhabitants are interrogated by the commissioned national institutes. Using Eurostat NUTS II, the surveys are covering the total population of a country.³⁰ The relevant population refers here to those who are older than 15 years with residency in the respective country, with a good command of the spoken national language(s), as the surveys are translated to the different languages of the member countries.

What makes the Eurobarometer particularly interesting for researchers in the social sciences is the fact that changes in attitudes, revealed in what is known today as the 'standard' Eurobarometer surveys, can be traced over a period of more than forty years. Although adjustments have been made to the way the surveys are conducted, many questions of the early reports have been kept until today. These trend questions are frequently used in the standard surveys, although not in every single survey. Table 4 shows topics frequently used in the Eurobarometer surveys.

²⁹ Sometimes surveys are also collected in candidate countries, for instance in the special Eurobarometers.

³⁰ NUTS stands for the EUROSTAT Nomenclature of Statistical Territorial Units (Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistiques). NUTS II refers to territorial units with a size between 800.000 and 3 million inhabitants. These include: provinces (in The Netherlands and Belgium), *oblasti* (Czech Republic and Slovakia), regions (France, Italy, Ireland), counties (UK), etc.

Table 4: Overview of main topics covered in the standard Eurobarometer surveys

General Topics	EU Topics	Demographics
Cultural and National Identity International Relations Living Conditions Media, Information, and Language Political Attitudes Political Participation Political Parties Values and Religion	European Unification European Institutions European Single Market European Policies	Respondent Household Region

Source: Gesis (2006)

Since 1995 these standard reports can be obtained on-line on the DG Communication website, with the earliest report from 1974.

Besides the standard Eurobarometer surveys, different types of opinion polls have been developed: the special Eurobarometer, the candidate countries Eurobarometer and the flash Eurobarometer. These are not managed by DG Press and Communication alone, but can be requested by other DG's and institutions. The special Eurobarometer explores attitudes and opinions of European citizens towards single topics. Recent examples are the Avian influenza, attitudes towards EU enlargement and the future of Europe. The Flash Eurobarometer is based on a smaller scale, and focussed on specific topics and audiences.

A study undertaken by Irenius (2005) shows that since its creation in 1974, the (standard) Eurobarometer reports mainly focus on the view-points and preferences of European citizens, almost neglecting the collection of factual data. While statistical data collection is certainly the realm of EUROSTAT, the Eurobarometer has not provided data on how the citizens perceive their personal situation.³¹ This can be compared with

³¹ With the exception of the year 1975, where questions regarding the 'personal problems' were included in the survey.

the questions dealing with the perception of other European citizens ('Trust in people from other Countries', EB 6, 14, 16, 25), which have been discontinued after EB 25. A content analysis of Standard Eurobarometer surveys shows that since the early 1990s the surveys serve as a tool to reveal the awareness of European citizens of certain topics and institutions, thus rather serving information policies of the EU institutions than the decision-making process (Irenius 2005).

Internal Market Scoreboard

The Single Market Scoreboard, as it was first published in November 1997, was the result of the Action Plan for the Single Market, endorsed by the European Council of Amsterdam of 17 June 1997. The Council underlined 'the crucial importance of timely and correct transposition of all agreed legislation into national law; the need to fully inform citizens and business about the Single Market and the need for active enforcement of Single Market rules in the Member States' (European Commission 1997: 1). This initiative reflects a problem that is often seen as the Achilles heel of many regional integration projects: the correct and timely implementation at the national level of the decisions taken at the regional level.

In order to address this issue and to pressure member states to implement their commitments, DG Internal Market and Services developed quantitative and qualitative methodologies to assess (i) the transposition of Internal Market directives into national law, and (ii) the number of infringement proceedings initiated by the Commission against the member States. The Internal Market Scoreboard (IMS) is published twice a year.³²

As far as transposition of Internal Market legislation into national law is concerned,

³² The Internal Market Scoreboard can be downloaded from:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/score/index_en.htm

transposition deficits are calculated for the different member States and the EU as a whole. The transposition deficit is calculated as the percentage of Internal market directives not yet communicated as having been transposed, in relation to the total number of Internal Market directives which should have been transposed by the deadline.³³ According to the latest available IMS, for example, the average transposition deficit of the EU is 1,9 per cent which is 0,3 percentage points up from the historically low 1,6 percent of November 2005 (European Commission 2006a). This is also above the 1,5 percent interim ceiling as confirmed at the European Council of Brussels on 25-26 March 2004 (table 5 and figure 2). In addition to the transposition deficits, other indicators are published: changes in backlogs of directives not communicated, fragmentation factor³⁴, and long overdue directives.

As far as infringements proceedings are concerned, absolute figures and changes of the number of infringement proceedings initiated by the European Commission against member States are reported (table 5).

Especially the regularly published transposition deficits have become often cited figures in national parliaments and the mass media. The IMS is effectively contributing to pressuring member states to implement timely and correctly the regionally decided rules.

Table 5: Main findings of Internal Market Scoreboard No. 15

<i>EU-25 Member State transposition deficit, as at 1/6/2006 – 1620 directives</i>																									
Member State	D K	C Y	HU	LT	SI	UK	EE	AT	PL	SK	SE	NL	FI	LV	ES	DE	FR	BE	IE	MT	CZ	PT	EL	IT	LU
Transposition Deficit	0.5	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.2	3.0	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8

³³ As of 1 June 2006, 1620 directives and 570 regulations relate to the Internal Market as defined in the EC Treaty (European Commission 2006a).

³⁴ The ‘fragmentation factor’ shows the percentage of the overall outstanding directives that have not been implemented in at least one Member State (European Commission 2006a).

Interestingly, the methodology of the IMS has also been adapted to be used by the EFTA member states that signed the EEA Agreement.³⁵ With the ‘Internal Market Scoreboard – EFTA States’ (IMS-EFTA) the EFTA Surveillance Authority aims at measuring the effectiveness of the Internal Market rules that are part of the EEA Agreement and encouraging the transposition of the Internal Market directives in a timely manner. In addition, the IMS-EFTA contains information on the infringement proceedings commenced by the EFTA Surveillance Authority against the EFTA States with the objective to ensure correct enforcement of the rules. The IMS-EFTA, together with the *Interim Report on Transposition Status of Directives*, have been published twice a year since May 1998.³⁶

Monitoring and the Commission’s ‘good governance’ agenda

The monitoring of European integration is not performed exclusively by the institutions themselves. In recent years, there has been an increasing demand by non-state actors to be involved in EU decision-making and indirectly in the scrutiny of EU policies. Next to concerns regarding the growing democratic deficit, which required a greater involvement of citizens in European policy-making, the European agenda has included a growing debate on the concept of ‘governance’. Following a broad public consultation, the European Commission adopted, in July 2001, a *White Paper on European Governance*. The paper developed its own concept of ‘European governance’ referring to the rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised at European level, particularly as regards openness, participation,

³⁵ EFTA member states include Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland (see: www.efta.org).

The Agreement on the European Economic Area was signed between the EU member states, on the one hand, and the EFTA members Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway, on the other, on 17 March 1993.

³⁶ Full texts of the issues of IMS-EFTA can be consulted at: www.eftasurv.int.

accountability, effectiveness and coherence (European Commission 2001). These five ‘principles of good governance’ reinforce those of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The White Paper has set out key proposals for changes in four broad, action areas: ‘better involvement’, ‘better policies, regulation and delivery’, ‘the EU’s contribution to global governance’ and ‘refocused policies and institutions’. The Commission emphasized that ‘there is a need for a wider choice and more flexible policy tools within, and in addition to, traditional legislation. The instruments available to the Community should be more conducive to better implementation. A better policy and regulatory framework thus establishes the conditions under which legislation, as well as alternative approaches such as co-regulation or the open method of coordination, can be most appropriately and most effectively used. The choice of instruments should also build on a stronger factual base with ex-ante impact assessments incorporating the evaluation of economic, environmental and social consequences, a structured approach to the collection and use of expertise, as well as consultation of the public and stakeholders, all subject to transparency to allow public scrutiny’ (European Commission 2003: 8).³⁷

With the new initiatives following the White Paper, ‘bridges’ are being built between internal and external monitoring in the EU, although steered by the (regional) center.

Role of the European Parliament

Despite the fact that it has been directly elected since 1979 and aims to represent the voice of the European peoples, the European Parliament (EP) does not have the same functions and powers as the national Parliaments, which are in charge of monitoring the

³⁷ The currently applicable set of guidelines for impact assessments at the European Commission has been published in 2005 (European Commission 2005b). In 2006, a Green Paper on transparency was published (European Commission 2006).

national government activities. This is due to the complex design of the European institutional setting, where the EP acts as a co-legislator with the Council of Ministers and where the Commission has some governmental characteristics but could not be considered entirely as a European government.

From a formal point of view, the EP possesses, according to the Treaties, several monitoring functions. First, as required by Article 212 of the EC Treaty and Article 125 of the EAEC Treaty, the Commission presents to the European Parliament each year, in February, the *General Report on the Activities of the European Union*, which reviews the main activities and integration developments in the previous year. Second, the Parliament plays a monitoring role with regards to the European Commission's activities, having not only the power of approving or rejecting the candidate-President and the College as a whole, but also the power of voting a motion of censure which can force the College of Commissioners as a whole to resign³⁸. Third, the Parliament can scrutinize both Council and Commission by presenting them with written and oral questions, with or without debate,³⁹ and questions for Question Time, to which the Commission and Council are required to reply. Fourth, the Parliament has the power to set up a temporary committee of inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions or maladministration in the implementation of Community law, and also receives, through its Petitions Committee, citizen requests to remedy problems in areas within the sphere of activity of the European Union.

Last but not least, due to its gradual accumulation of powers in the budgetary field, the EP plays a major role in the monitoring of the EU finances. The Parliament is one of the two arms of the budgetary authority, together with the Council of Ministers, having the

³⁸ Rule 100 par. 7, European Parliament Rules of Procedure.

³⁹ Article 197 EC Treaty.

last word on non-compulsory expenditure⁴⁰, and the power to propose modifications to compulsory expenditure. It adopts the final budget and monitors its implementation⁴¹, having the power to give or refuse discharge to the European Commission on the implementation of the budget. In performing this monitoring, the EP receives the European Court of Auditors Annual Report, as well as the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Budget, which is forwarded by the Commission together with a financial statement of the assets and liabilities of the Community. Additionally, the President of the ECB presents its annual report to the EP in plenary session, describing the activities of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) and reports on the monetary policy of the past year.⁴²

From a technical point of view, the Parliament monitors the different fields of European integration through its 20 Standing Committees which draw up, amend and adopt legislative proposals and own-initiative reports. The Committees' expertise covers all EU policies fields, and the European Parliament takes part in the drafting of Community legislation to varying degrees, according to the decision-making procedure involved (consultation, cooperation, co-decision, or assent). Next to them, the Parliament can also set up sub-committees and temporary committees to deal with specific issues. But despite the different competences and procedures followed, in general all legislative proposals and other legislative documents must be considered in committee, and the Council and the Commission are required to provide information to the EP about their proposals on a monthly basis. Inside the Committees, a monitoring role on specific issues is played by the *rapporteurs*, the different MEPs mandated by the Committee to

⁴⁰ Art. 272 of the EC Treaty.

⁴¹ Art. 272, 275 and 276 of the EC Treaty.

⁴² <http://www.ecb.int/pub/annual/html/index.en.html>

draft reports containing opinions on legislative proposals. Often, MEPs can also take the initiative of drawing-up own-initiative reports, thereby raising awareness on a specific policy issue.

From a political point of view, the EP has also managed to develop its monitoring influence beyond its initial fields of competence by using its increased weight in the new decision-making procedures and its power to reject the budget. One field in which the Parliament was traditionally not involved but which holds great importance in monitoring the progress of integration, is the adoption of implementation measures for policies. The Commission has implementation powers delegated to it by the Council, which keeps control of the whole process through several hundreds of committees. These committees are composed of national civil servants that supervise the Commission's actions in more or less binding ways, depending on their mandate and type. The EP has not been involved in this procedure since its beginning in the 1960s, but, building on its growing power at the end of the 1990s, it has started to carve its place in the comitology procedure. In 1999 it obtained the right to become fully informed on all comitology decisions, and, through the 2006 comitology reform, it secured the right to block any implementing measures for legislation measures adopted under co-decision. This was considered by the EP as an important step towards gaining the right to scrutinize the daily management of the implementation of European policies, which can often bring forward items with high political relevance for the future development of integration.

Role of the Court of Auditors

The creation of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) in 1975 was based on the acknowledgement that, in parallel with the extension of the European Parliament's budgetary powers and the full financing of the European Union's budget by own

resources, the European Community needed a ‘financial conscience’, a Community-level external audit body. While the European Commission has been endowed since the inception of the EC with an internal audit function, the Court's role, as external auditor, is to assess the financial management of the budget as a whole.

From a formal point of view, according to the EC Treaty (art. 248), the main ECA task is to examine the accounts of all revenue and expenditure of the Community, including the accounts of all bodies set up by the Community ‘insofar as the relevant constituent instrument does not preclude such examination’.⁴³ The Court of Auditors provides the European Parliament and the Council with a *Statement of Assurance* as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, which is published in the Official Journal of the European Union. This statement can be supplemented by specific assessments for each major area of Community activity. Additionally, the ECA examines whether all EU budgetary revenue has been received and the corresponding expenditure incurred in a lawful and regular manner and whether the financial management has been sound. It draws up an *Annual Report* after the close of each financial year. The ECA also assists the European Parliament and the Council in exercising their powers of control over the implementation of the budget. The Treaty requires that the ECA be requested to give a formal *opinion* on each proposal to introduce or amend legislation with a financial impact, including the fight against fraud. It may also, at any time, submit *observations*, particularly in the form of special reports on specific questions and deliver opinions at the request of one of the other institutions of the Community. These reports and opinions are published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

⁴³ Art. 248 §1 of the EC Treaty.

From a technical point of view, the work of the Court of Auditors is divided in several audit groups, comprising a number of specialized divisions that cover the different areas of the budget: Agricultural Policies (Group I), Structural and Internal Policies (Group II), External Actions (Group III), Own Resources, Banking Activities, Administrative Expenditure, Community Institutions and Bodies (Group IV), and the CEAD audit group (Coordination, Evaluation, Assurance and Development) responsible for the coordination of the Statement of Assurance, quality assurance and the development of the Court's audit methodology. The subjects of audits vary from the 'recurrent' audit tasks, which the Court has the obligation to perform under the Treaty, and 'selected' audit tasks, where the Court chooses budgetary areas or managements topics of specific interest for detailed audit.

Each audit follows three main stages: the planning (through the multi-annual work programme and annual plan of the Court), the testing (gathering of data through statistics or field inquiry), and the reporting (with the draft report sent to the European institution concerned and, following a bilateral discussion procedure, the production of the final report) (table 6). The procedure ends with the follow-up of the implementation of the Court of Auditors' recommendations, which is performed a few years after an audit was produced and communicated to the discharge authority.

Table 6: Stages in audit procedure of European Court of Auditors

PLANNING PHASE	
Strategic guidelines	Sets out the Court's overall audit strategy.
Multi-annual work programme	Survey of the audit field and identification of potential audit topics.
Annual work programme	Selection of topics for audit in the coming year based on the priorities established by the Court.
Preliminary study	Detailed survey of the selected audit topic: evaluation of risks; identification of key issues and possible audit objectives. Includes an assessment of the expected impact of the audit and proposal for whether it should go ahead. Approval by the audit group.

Audit planning memorandum	Detailed audit plan: Who? What? Where? When? How?
Audit programme	Sets out the detailed steps needed to meet the audit objectives.
EXECUTION PHASE	
Audit testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of sufficient, relevant and reliable audit evidence. • Audit visits to EU institutions, Member and beneficiary State administrations, as well as final recipients of EU funds. • Each audit visit gives rise to a statement of preliminary findings, setting out the facts for confirmation by the auditee. • Drawing together of audit evidence to reach conclusions on the audit objectives.
REPORTING PHASE	
Draft report	Adoption of draft report ("preliminary observations") by the Court.
Bilateral discussion procedure with Commission (or other EU institution)	Commission (or other EU institution) checks facts presented in the draft report and prepares a reply.
Report	The Court adopts the audit report at its plenary meeting.
Publication	Publication of the audit report, together with the Commission's (or other institution's) reply in all EU languages on the Internet and in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The Court carries out its monitoring in accordance with its own audit policies and standards, based on the INTOSAI Auditing Standards and the International Standards on Auditing issued by the International Federation of Accountants. The ECA can perform on-the-spot audits in the European Union institutions, at the premises of the bodies or legal persons that manage funds on behalf of the Union and in the Member and beneficiary States, including all levels of administration through to the final recipient of the EU funds.

From a political point of view, the Court of Auditors, acting as the external audit institution of the European Union, plays an important role for the accountability of the supranational institutions with regards to the use of public resources. The Court's work, performed independently of national or European institutions, is nowadays of major importance given the increased number of funds and policies managed from the European level and growing concern of citizens and media with the fight against fraud

and mismanagement of EU funds at supranational, national and regional levels. Of major importance, the *Court Annual Report* is the starting point for the annual discharge procedure, marking the completion of the cycle of accountability over the use of European Union budget, approved by the Parliament and Council.

Additionally, the ECA has grown in importance, carving its place in relation with the other institutions, especially the European Commission and the Council (Laffan 1999).

The Court of Auditors is also playing a monitoring role by assessing the current state of projects implementation in specific policy fields and pointing to the causes of failures.

As a recent example, in 2005 the ECA performed an audit aiming to assess the extent to which the Commission's management system – including the design and implementation of the legal framework, administrative procedures and internal control system - was conducive to the economic, efficient and effective implementation of trans-European networks in the area of transport (TEN-T)⁴⁴. The court's audit found that the execution of the 14 TEN-T priority projects is currently behind schedule and pointed out several weaknesses. These included the fact that the tools used by the Commission are insufficient to allow monitoring to be carried out effectively and efficiently. In its replies, the EC acknowledged most of the observations raised by the court and is currently taking corrective action in fields such as the definition of new TEN-T evaluation guidelines, project reporting procedures, the creation of a TEN-T executive agency, an improved coordination of EU transport infrastructure funding within and between the EC services. Overall, the ECA recommendations also allow lessons to be

⁴⁴ European Court of Auditors, Information note of the European Court of Auditors on Special Report No 6/2005 on the trans-European network for transport (TEN-T), ECA/06/8, Luxembourg, 20 April 2006.

learned regarding the efficient implementation of TEN-T and the overall effectiveness of the Community funding in this area.

5. External monitoring

The multiplicity and heterogeneity of external monitoring

Next to the internal monitoring, the European integration process is characterized by a wide array of monitoring activities and actors, external to the European institutions. These include both governmental and non-governmental actors who are monitoring more or less narrow aspects of the integration process and policies, and who are using more or less sophisticated methods to do this. These external actors can operate on different governance levels (local, sub-national, national, regional/supra-national, plurilateral, multilateral/global).

The non-governmental actors involved in monitoring range from academia and think tanks to political movements, civil society groups and business interest groups. The borderline between monitoring and lobbying is often blurred. Part of these interest groups are organized regionally and have built an institutional capacity to influence the European institutions directly.

Based on Greenwood (2003, 2005), a ‘guesstimate’ of the number of actors would be as follows: >1500 EU civil society interest groups, >170 national groups with Brussels offices, >350 large firms, >140 public affairs consultants, >130 law firms, >170 offices of regions in Brussels, >150 missions from non-EU member states, and a series of informal networks. This gives an approximate idea of the scale and importance of organized monitoring and lobby activities of interest groups.

Governments have also created their own capacity to monitor directly European institutions and policies, charging staff with this task and/or setting up permanent

delegations in Brussels. This is not only done by the national governments but also by the sub-national governments (regional, departmental, provincial) and cities.

In addition to these more informal forms of monitoring, national and sub-national parliaments in the member states also formally follow-up European policy and rulemaking through debates (plenary and in commissions) and ratification or transposition procedures. In the next sections, we will have a closer look at these modalities.

The role of national and sub-national parliaments in European decision-making

In modern democracies, parliaments are a source of legitimization of the exercise of power. Since the Treaty of Maastricht, but surely since the non-ratification of the European Constitution, the conviction has grown that an increased contribution of National Parliaments in the EU can partially offer a solution to the legitimacy crisis in which the latter apparently finds itself (Follesdal 2004). In the Treaty of Amsterdam and in the European Constitution, but also in daily practice, we notice that the role of the National Parliaments is getting more and more important in the European decision-making process. In these sections, we will first examine the impact of National Parliaments on European decision-making and then look at the (potential) role of sub-national parliaments through a case-study of the Flemish Parliament.

National Parliaments

National Parliaments can have an impact on European decision-making, through legislation, the control on European decisions, and/or communication over European policy (Sprungk 2003).

In the framework of legislation, European treaties are formally signed by National Governments but need to be approved by Parliaments. Furthermore, secondary legislation such as the European directives has to be transposed into National law,

whereby the Parliaments can fully exercise their legislative competences. The Parliamentary autonomy is obviously *de facto* restricted by the dominance of the executive power vis-à-vis the legislative power (Kiiver 2006).

The control function applies to the Ministers in the EU Council as well as to the European Commission.

National Parliaments can influence European decision-making by exerting pressure on the Ministers who are politically responsible. In plenary meetings, panel commissions, or a specific European commission, the Minister cannot only be tackled on his/her voting behaviour but also on his/her negotiating behaviour. In countries such as Denmark and Finland, there even is a 'mandate system', in which the Parliamentary commission for European affairs determines which point of view 'should' be followed by the Minister. Anyhow, not only *ex ante* influencing (before or during the decision process) but also *ex post* control is possible. The way in which this is organized and the degree to which such control effectively functions, differs quite a lot from Parliament to Parliament.

The National Parliaments can address resolutions and recommendations to the European institutions via COSAC. This refers to a European network of commissions for European affairs of National Parliaments and members of the European Parliament that has met every six months since 1989, and which is recognized by the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997).

Another possibility to monitor the European decision-making processes, and more specifically the legislative proposals of the European Commission, is through the so-called 'subsidiarity tests'. The principle of subsidiarity was included in the Treaty of Maastricht (1993) and is potentially a powerful control-instrument for the National

Parliaments.⁴⁵ Subsidiarity entails that the EU can only act if this results in an added value and if this result cannot be obtained at the level of the Member States. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) stipulates in a Protocol that all new European legislative proposals and discussion documents are to be sent via the National Governments to the National Parliaments of the Member States. Two protocols to the Constitutional Treaty went even further and elaborated the subsidiarity control. Since 1 September 2006, documents of the European Commission are directly sent to the National Parliaments. The Parliaments have a period of six weeks to control whether the EU-legislative proposal respects the subsidiarity principle. Each Member State has in this early warning system the right to two votes, to be divided over its National Parliaments (taking into account the bi-cameral systems). If 17 votes (1/3 of the total votes) judge that the subsidiarity principle is being violated, the European Commission has to review the legislative proposal and to reply within three months to the remarks of the National Parliaments. However, the Commission is not compelled to change the proposal.⁴⁶ In the absence of a ratified Constitutional Treaty, new initiatives can be expected concerning the regulation and organization of the subsidiarity control.⁴⁷

Apart from these formalized channels, a National Parliament can obviously apply a range of informal means to influence the European decision-making process. This may be achieved not only by developing relations with the members of the EP of the same

⁴⁵ For a discussion on the development and the legal, political and economic aspects of the subsidiarity principle, see e.g. Bainbridge and Teasdale (1995: 430-32), Weatherill, (1995: 57, 285-89), Sun and Pelkmans (1995), and De Lombaerde et al. (2001).

⁴⁶ These rules concerning subsidiarity have been taken from the draft European constitution.

⁴⁷ These initiatives do not have to originate necessarily at the European level. It has been proposed, for example, to horizontally cooperate and to pool the competences with regard to subsidiarity control at the (inter-)national and/or (inter-)sub-national levels (Wouters et al. 2006: 8).

nationality but also by straight lobby work at the level of the European Commission in order to provoke or adjust a particular legislative initiative.

Sub-national Parliaments: Case study on the Flemish Parliament

The role that sub-national representative bodies can or cannot play in Europe depends obviously on the particular institutional setting in each member state. The potential role of sub-national parliaments can probably best be illustrated through a case study of a member state with a high level of devolution of legislative and administrative competences to the sub-national level, like Belgium. In the Belgian constitutional context, the EU appears to be especially competent for matters belonging to the competences of (sub-national) communities and regions (environment, agriculture and fishery, mobility, media, ...). Therefore, in June 2005, the Flemish Parliament (FP) founded its own European Office. This Office has a threefold task: (1) to offer information and training on European affairs to the members of the FP, (2) to strengthen the control of the FP over the Flemish Government when it is taking decisions at the European level and over the European Commission, (3) to bring Europe closer to the citizen. Let us concentrate on two issues: the control over the Flemish Government and the subsidiarity tests.

Within the Belgian institutional framework the division of competences in the area of Foreign Affairs is based on the principle '*in foro interno, in foro externo*'. The policy level which is competent for a particular policy area within Belgium is also competent to negotiate agreements in that area at the international (European) level. With the signing of the European Constitutional Treaty, Belgium issued Declaration 49, especially under pressure of the Flemish Government, and which is very important in this context. The Declaration stipulates that all Belgian Parliaments (thus also the FP) act as components of the National Parliamentary system, with respect to the monitoring

of the competences exercised by the EU. For that purpose, a Cooperation Agreement was signed on 19 December 2005 between the seven Parliamentary assemblies in Belgium. It was agreed that European legislative proposals were to be sent simultaneously to all Belgian Parliaments, and agreements were reached on the autonomy of each Parliament to execute subsidiarity tests, on the division of the two Belgian subsidiarity votes among the seven Parliaments, and on the procedure to follow when transmitting the Belgian standpoint to the European Commission. This Cooperation Agreement becomes, in principle, operative with the coming into force of the European Constitution, but a few transitory measures are foreseen. This kind of agreement thus allows sub-national parliaments to behave practically as any other national parliament within the EU, with respect to monitoring the European policy-making process.

Between 17 October and 9 December 2005 in the Commission for Environment and Nature, a first subsidiarity test was performed, in collaboration with the Committee of Regions, and supported by capacity building. From 7 October till 17 November 2006, the FP participated in a second subsidiarity test, organized again by the Committee of Regions, in the Commission of Education, Training, Science and Innovation. It is to be mentioned that the FP opts for specialized commissions rather than plenary session or the commission on foreign and European affairs. In addition, in both cases the test was not restricted to subsidiarity but included also considerations of proportionality and political desirability.

The control on Flemish Ministers taking decisions at the European level, is taking place in different ways in the FP. There are obviously the classical control mechanisms, such as interpellations addressed to a Minister in the plenary session or commissions or the organization of an (actual) debate, although it is rather rare that Europe is the subject of

these forms of control. The European Office, in collaboration with the parliamentary commissions, has also set up specific control mechanisms. Flemish Ministers can be asked to inform the members of a parliamentary commission on the decision-making process that takes in the working groups, the COREPER or the Council of Ministers, and on the position that is taken by the Flemish authorities. These de-briefings may be done before (*ex ante*, on the basis of the agenda), during or after (*ex post*) the decision-making process. A special role is thereby played by the Flemish Permanent Representation that has direct access to a considerable amount of up-to-date information.

In this context, we shouldn't forget that the Belgian point of view –defended by a Flemish Minister– is already the result of often quite complex previous negotiations with other regions and with the federal Government. It is therefore easier for the FP to influence the position of the Flemish representatives in these negotiations than to influence the Belgian point of view in its totality.

In order to increase the control of the FP on the European decision-making, the Parliament, the European Office and the other concerned services are confronted with a couple of challenges. Three examples can be given:

First of all, although the FP has quite a lot of opportunities to play a role in the decision-making of the EU, it is still very dependent on the readiness of the Flemish Government and administration to release the necessary information and expertise (Baetens and Bursens 2005). Release of this information is foreseen in article 92 of the Special Law of 8 August 1980, which compels the Flemish Government to send all proposals and documents of the European Commission to the FP. Since January 2005, the Flemish Government has been sending a six-month report on important European affairs to the

FP ('Flemish Finger to the European pulse'). However, this report is not sufficient to rigorously debate European themes in the specialized commissions.

Secondly, partially following the first issue, the Cooperation Agreement (see above) should be implemented and deepened. For that purpose, further practical arrangements are needed. In addition, the philosophy of the agreement needs to find its way through to the composition of the Belgian delegations. Flemish representatives need to be able to participate in meetings organized between the EP and members of the National Parliaments and to meetings between members of the National Parliaments and the Parliament of the Member State that is observing the chairmanship of the EU.

Thirdly, there should be an increased commitment of the members of the FP, although a gradual change in attitudes can be observed. With the creation of the European Office, new information flows, training activities and the elaboration of control mechanisms in the specialized commissions, have been foreseen. These should normally contribute to reaching these goals.

Flemish activism with regard to subsidiarity control at the sub-national level reflects the position of the Conference of the European Regional Legislative Parliaments (CALRE). The final declaration of their 2006 Assembly refers explicitly to subsidiarity and participation, and states that: '[t]he Presidents are in favour of a rigorous application of the principle of subsidiarity unequivocally established by the treaties in force. The principle of subsidiarity is of basic importance within the democratic process and for the participation of citizens. [...] [the European Union] should regulate only those aspects which cannot be regulated at national, regional or local level. [...] It must be possible to efficiently check the compliance with the principle of subsidiarity. Owing its very nature, such check of the subsidiarity principle cannot take place solely at European level. Regional parliamentarians with legislating authority constitute the lowest of the

three decision-taking levels (European, national and regional) and hence are particularly favourably placed to oversee the principle of subsidiarity. The Presidents welcome the European Commission's decision to apply as from September 1st, 2006, the procedure to inform National Parliaments directly about all new proposals and consultations, so as to facilitate the taking of a stance with regard to these matters. Account is thus taken in substance of the request made by the Presidents in their Declaration of Catalonia of October 2005. The Presidents expect that Regional Parliaments with legislative powers should be involved in such activities in each member Country so as to be in a position to take a stance on the documents emanating from the Commission in a timely and efficient manner. [...] In particular they invite the Commission to take due account of the positions taken by Regional Parliaments with legislative powers. Finally, the Chairmen welcome the experimental work carried out by the Committee of the Regions for its network of consultations on subsidiarity, also involving the Municipalities, Regional Governments and Regional Assemblies without legislative competences. They invite the Commission to take account of the results of these experiments [...] (CALRE 2006).

6. Conclusion

Our discussion of the role and modalities of monitoring in the European integration process shows a very developed system of monitoring actors and processes, mirroring the complexity of the integration process itself. The system is characterized by different types of actors (state and non-state), acting on different governance levels (supra-national, national, sub-national, local), combining formal and informal types of monitoring. The system in place generates great amounts of policy-relevant

information, provides possibilities for checks and balances, and helps to (politically) equilibrate the whole integration scheme.

The chapter paid particular attention to the internal monitoring instruments created at the regional level. Internal monitoring spans the three integration ‘pillars’ (community pillar, CFSP, JHA) and involves several actors: the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice, the European Court of Auditors and other agencies.

From a technical point of view, in addition to classical reporting methods, statistical data gathering and financial auditing, innovative monitoring instruments have been developed that can certainly be inspiring for other regions in the world. These include: the Internal Market Scoreboard, the Eurobarometer, and EUROSTAT’s policy indicators.

From a political and governance point of view, the wide array of instruments that has been put in place in the EU is the result of a dynamic interaction between the supply and demand for monitoring at the European level. On the supply side we find bureaucrats in the European institutions (e.g. in the European Commission) seeking to legitimize their activities, European politicians (in the EP) seeking exposure to their electorate, technical monitoring capacities (in EUROSTAT) seeking applications, etc. On the demand side we find national and sub-national authorities exposed to their own electorates, organized citizens at different governance levels seeking accountability from the European institutions, etc.

The considerable amount of external monitoring, both by state and non-state actors, illustrates further the important degree of social participation in the European integration process, in spite of the widely shared view on the democratic deficit of the European institutions. ‘Subsidiarity tests’ appear here as innovative monitoring

instruments that might well find replication in other parts of the world in similar or different multi-level governance contexts.

Finally, monitoring in the EU is gradually becoming a reflexive (two-way) process: national states give mandates to regional institutions and therefore the national (and even sub-national) level monitors what happens at the (supra-national) regional level. But at the same time, since the implementation of several regional policies is decentralized and depends on the national implementation of community rules, the regional level also monitors the national level (e.g. Internal Market Scoreboard). In addition, in recent years, specific instruments have been proposed to bridge internal and external monitoring.

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