

THE EFFICIENCY OF PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY ORGANIZATION: EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL FACTORS

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Abstract: Recent trends in populist policies and Euro-skepticism, the lack of transparency and accountability call into question the effectiveness of EU parliaments. The aim of this article was to identify factors of parliamentary efficiency in the EU and Ukraine. The research uses an approach to assessing parliamentary effectiveness based on citizens' perceptions of parliamentary activities, including confidence in parliamentary performance in countries with different levels of democracy. This study uses secondary data from the European Value Study 2017, World Value Survey Wave 7 2011 and 2020 for analysis of parliamentary efficiency according to the following criteria: competence and efficiency; performance of duties; interests of society; service to the country; the presence of corruption; openness and transparency.

Keywords: Parliamentary Efficiency, Factors of Parliamentary Efficiency, Transparency of Legislative Bodies, Legislative Initiatives

1 Introduction

Most EU parliaments act in opposition to the government, influencing individual parliamentary actions and inter-parliamentary activities and efficiency (Bolleyer, 2017). Inter-parliamentary activism presupposes the basic readiness of parliaments to protect institutionally defined interests separately from their leaders. Moreover, in the parliamentary systems of the EU member states (if we do not take into account the parliamentarism of minorities), this readiness is probably low. It is widely acknowledged that the EU complies with the "federal principle" but is not a "federal state". Despite the fact that the EU does not have a monopoly on coercion, its supranational institutions still have significant powers of hierarchical coordination, influencing national parliaments. EU national parliaments are members of transnational assemblies, whose interests are more diverse, compared to the parliaments of countries such as Ukraine. This means that the level of parliamentary efficiency of the EU is declining. Recent trends in populist policies and Euro-skepticism, lack of transparency and accountability also call into question the effectiveness of parliaments.

The aim of the article is to identify factors of parliamentary efficiency in the EU and Ukraine.

2 Literature review

Parliamentary efficiency is seen as legislative effectiveness and legitimacy (Herman & Lodge, 1978; Weissert, 1991; Wessels & Diedrichs, 1997), lack of influence on the legislative initiative, corruption and bureaucracy (Coen & Katsaitis, 2019). The efficiency of the parliament is ensured by reforming and improving the rules and procedures. Parliament and its reform contribute to the formation of democracy through democratization of procedures and rules (Brack & Costa, 2018), narrow specialization of committees, increasing legitimacy, emphasis on public interests, increasing the level of legality and transparency, accountability to citizens (Grau and Segú, 2019).

The scientific literature offers several approaches to assessing the effectiveness of parliament, among the most common - an approach based on the study of citizens' perceptions of the effectiveness of the legislature. Weissert (1991) based on a 10-year expert survey examines the relationship between the perception of the effectiveness of the legislature and changes in society, which are most important from the point of view of citizens (used variable associations of the name of the legislator with the problem, work experience, party affiliation, age). The author found an inverse causal relationship between the urgency of the problem for society and the effectiveness of deputies: the reduction of citizens' attention to the problem reduces the activity of deputies.

Comer, J. C. (1980) assessed the performance of parliamentarians based on the criteria of accountability for the performance of the duties of legislators (based on the indicator of citizens' job satisfaction); effectiveness of responding to inquiries of organizations and citizens (perception and experience of respondents on the level of their influence on legislative processes, awareness and attitude of legislative bodies to the interests of priority groups; accountability based on assessment of citizens' confidence in the influence of his voice that provides problem solving).

Gerber, Maestas & Dometrius (2005) studying the competences of the legislature through the study of ex-ante control mechanisms (veto power (Peters & Wagner, 2011), consideration of procedures, parliamentary approval of policies) based on a survey of experts claim a higher level of public perception these powers. From a strategic point of view on legislative behavior, the literature conceptually covers five roles of national MPs in EU policy: inspectors, subsidiaries, network workers, communicators and transponders (Kinski, 2020). Parliamentary efficiency and factors influencing it are difficult to assess due to the objective specificity of the legislative process and the dependence of the work of the legislature on the work of other branches of government. To assess the work of the legislature, qualitative research methods are most often used, aimed at identifying the correspondence between certain standards of the democracy process and the work of parliament.

3 Methodology

The study uses an approach to assessing parliamentary effectiveness based on citizens' perceptions of parliamentary activities, including confidence in parliamentary performance in countries with different levels of democracy.

The paper uses secondary survey data:

- 1) European Value Study 2017 (Balakireva, 2021; EVS/WVS, 2021) to assess confidence in parliament, the level of democratic governance, attitudes towards a democratic political system (Table 1). Indicators of citizens' perception of the work of the Parliament were assessed in the following countries Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and Ukraine. In total, data were analyzed based on the responses of 20,730 respondents in different countries. A correlation analysis was performed between the indicators using a pairwise correlation between Pearson and Spearman to identify the relationship between confidence in parliament and the perception of the level of democratic governance. Pearson's X-square criterion with a significance level of 5% and a critical value of 43.8 was used to identify differences in confidence in the work of parliament and the level of democracy depending on the country.
- 2) World Value Survey Wave 7 2011 for Ukraine to compare the assessment of the level of public confidence in

- parliament and the perception of the level of democratic governance (WVS, 2021b).
- 3) World Value Survey Wave 7 2020 (WVS, 2021a) for a more detailed analysis of the factors of parliamentary efficiency in Ukraine (2020) according to the following criteria (Table 2): competence and efficiency; performance of duties; taking into account the interests of society; service to the country; the presence of corruption; openness and transparency.

Table 1. The questionnaire: confidence in Parliament, democratic governance, and attitude to a democratic political system

	The questions	The answers
1	Q38 Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or none at all? (Parliament)	a great deal - 1, quite a lot - 2, not very much - 3, none at all - 4
2	Q41 And how democratically is this country being governed today? Again using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that it is "not at all democratic" and 10 means that it is "completely democratic," what position would you choose?	From 1 (Not at all democratic) to 10 (Completely democratic), Don't Know, No answer
3	Q43 I am going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country? Having a democratic political system	very good - 1, fairly good - 2, fairly bad - 3, very bad - 4

Source: Balakireva (2021); EVS / WVS (2021).

Table 2. The questionnaire: the activities of Parliament

The questions	The answers
Q291. Now I would like to ask a few questions about the Verkhovna Rada, the government and the United Nations (UN). Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements. What do you think about the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine?	Completely agree - 1, Agree - 2, Both agree and disagree - 3, Disagree - 4, Completely disagree - 5
P1 In general, the Verkhovna Rada is competent and efficient	
P2 The Verkhovna Rada is performing its duties very well	
P3 of the Verkhovna Rada usually acts in the interests of citizens	
P4 The Verkhovna Rada is trying to serve the country as best it can	
P5 In general, the Verkhovna Rada is free from corruption	
P6 The work of the Verkhovna Rada is open and transparent	

Source: WVS (2021a).

The sample of Ukrainian respondents is formed based on a multilevel approach to stratification with random selection at each stage. The size of the estimated sample was 1,714 respondents from 171 constituencies over the age of 18. As a result, 1289 respondents gave answers (40.8% of men; 59.2% of women). SPSS software was used for statistical analysis of the survey results.

The main limitation of the study is the lack of survey data for 2020 for European countries (in general, data are available only for 2017, collected by an excellent questionnaire compared to the 2020 questionnaire), which would compare Ukraine's parliamentary performance with developed European countries according to selected criteria.

4 Results

The confidence in the work of Parliament varies from country to country. Thus, in developed countries (Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden) the highest percentage of respondents who answered that they are confident in parliament (42%, 46%, 46%, respectively, are either completely confident or very confident). In contrast, in less developed countries, a high percentage of the population is not very confident or completely unsure (Albania - 92%, Bulgaria - 84%, Czech Republic - 86%, Romania - 84%, Ukraine - 80%) (Table 3). For comparison, in 2020 in Ukraine the confidence indicator increased to 18.9%, while 76.7% of respondents were either not very confident or completely unsure of the work of the Verkhovna Rada. With a significance level of 5%, we reject the null hypothesis of the lack of statistical significance between the country and the level of confidence, claiming a significant relationship between these variables:

Table 3. Combination table Country and Confidence in Parliament

	Confidence: Parliament				% of those who answer "Not very much" or "None at all"	Total
	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all		
Albania	28	81	305	1009	92	1423
Bulgaria	25	219	708	563	84	1515
Czech Republic	40	195	806	687	86	1728
Germany	156	1324	1591	457	58	3528
Italy	71	571	1079	505	71	2226
Netherlands	74	982	1001	262	54	2319
Poland	38	231	573	430	79	1272
Romania	104	342	1010	1298	84	2754
Sweden	107	667	347	48	34	1169
Ukraine	53	513	1100	1130	80	2796

Source: calculated by the author based on Balakireva (2021); EVS / WVS (2021).

According to society, governance in the country is carried out on a democratic basis: 58% of respondents generally rated the level

of democracy at 6-10 points, while 42% - rated at 1-5 points. At the same time, in Germany 81% of respondents gave a score of

6-10, in the Netherlands - 87%, in Sweden - 92%. For comparison, in Ukraine 40-10 respondents gave a score of 6-10, in Albania 27%, in Bulgaria - 39%, in the Czech Republic - 57%, in Italy - 62%, in Poland - 62%, in Romania - 46%. In developing countries, governance is perceived by respondents as less democratic compared to developed countries. With a

significance level of 5%, we reject the null hypothesis of the lack of statistical significance between the country and the level of democratic governance, claiming a significant relationship between these variables: the level of democracy depends on the country (see Table 4).

Table 4. The combination table Country and Democraticness in own country

	Democraticness in own country										Total
	Not at all democratic	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Completely democratic	
Albania	387	128	138	127	247	118	119	81	12	49	1406
Bulgaria	230	107	161	144	265	199	161	115	53	50	1485
Czech Republic	105	67	122	162	287	240	268	303	98	64	1716
Germany	51	46	101	136	354	310	660	944	486	532	3620
Italy	104	65	143	189	332	382	420	317	98	163	2213
Netherlands	31	19	46	88	120	253	494	671	355	189	2266
Poland	123	83	117	98	211	120	139	173	77	131	1272
Romania	335	134	270	221	466	265	298	221	68	371	2649
Sweden	18	4	20	15	41	78	185	362	254	201	1178
Ukraine	291	170	346	341	488	330	324	244	82	130	2746

Source: calculated by the author based on Balakireva (2021); EVS / WVS (2021).

94% of respondents (as a whole by country) consider the democratic political system to be effective (Table 5). It should be noted that the level of subjective assessment of the effectiveness of a democratic political system differs within countries: in

Albania, 98% of respondents noted efficiency, in Bulgaria - 93%, in the Czech Republic - 93%, in Germany - 99%, in Italy - 97%, in the Netherlands - 97%, in Poland - 97%, in Romania - 91%, in Sweden - 98%, in Ukraine - 85%.

Table 5. The combination table Country (ISO 3166-1 Numeric code) * Political system: Having a democratic political system

	Political system: Having a democratic political system				Total
	Very good	Fairly good	Fairly bad	Very bad	
Albania	1258	135	8	16	1417
Bulgaria	732	560	74	19	1385
Czech Republic	858	706	91	32	1687
Germany	2724	808	28	22	3582
Italy	1629	507	49	18	2203
Netherlands	1254	900	58	11	2223
Poland	583	552	76	33	1244
Romania	1510	903	160	74	2647
Sweden	999	154	12	12	1177
Ukraine	871	1283	262	107	2523

Source: calculated by the author based on Balakireva (2021); EVS / WVS (2021).

There is an inverse linear relationship between confidence in parliament and the level of perception of democratic governance: Pearson's correlation coefficient is -0.367 with a significance level of 1%: a higher level of confidence may lead to a lower level of perception of democratic governance.

agree with the statements about the effectiveness or strongly disagree. 58.1% indicated the incompetence and inefficiency of the Parliament, 67.7% - the poor performance of duties, 67.4% - the lack of action in the interests of citizens, 65.3% - the lack of service to citizens, 71.4% - on dependence on corruption, 66.2% - on non-openness and non-transparency of work (Table 6).

In Ukraine, the effectiveness of the Parliament is subjectively assessed at a low level: on average, 66% of respondents do not

Table 6. Ukraine Parliament effectiveness: percentage of responses of respondents who agree with the statements

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	No answer	Don't know
Parliament: Overall, parliament is competent and efficient	1.2	7.1	28.1	36.6	21.5	, 1	5.4
Parliament: Parliament usually carries out its duties poorly	, 9	3.9	22.8	41.9	25.8	-	4.7
Parliament: Parliament usually acts in its own interests	1.4	4.7	21.5	39.8	27.5	, 1	4.9
Parliament: Parliament wants to do its best to serve the country	, 8	5.4	23.0	39.8	25.5	, 2	5.4
Parliament: Parliament is generally free of corruption	, 9	3.3	16.0	38.4	33.0	, 2	8.1
Parliament: Parliament's work is open and transparent	1.9	4.7	19.4	35.8	30.4	, 6	7.2
Average	1.2	4.8	21.8	38.7	27.3	0.2	6.0

Source: calculated by the author based on WVS (2021a).

In general, the level of confidence in Ukraine in the work of the Parliament has remained at the same level for ten years: 80-81%

of citizens are not very confident or unsure of the work of the legislature (see Fig. 1).

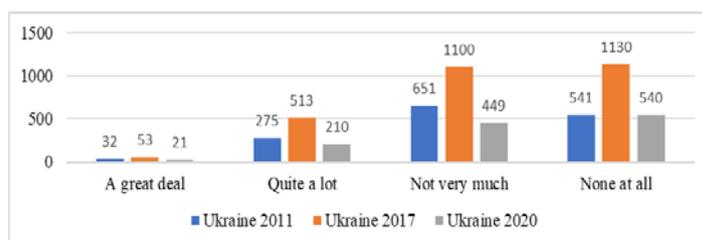


Fig. 1. Confidence to Ukraine Parliament 2011-2020

Source: calculated by the author based on WVS (2021a; 2021b); Balakireva (2021).

The confidence in the work of the Parliament and efficiency criteria are characterized by statistically significant links (at a significance level of 1%): with a decrease in confidence in the work of the Parliament, the perception of the level of democratic processes in Ukraine increases; with declining confidence, satisfaction with the effectiveness of the political system increases; as confidence grows, so does the competence and efficiency of Parliament; with increasing confidence, the level of

performance of public duties by the legislature increases; as confidence grows, the level of activity in the interests of the community increases; as confidence grows, the level of service to the country's citizens increases; with increasing confidence, the level of perception of the absence of corruption increases; as confidence increases, so does the perception of transparency and openness.

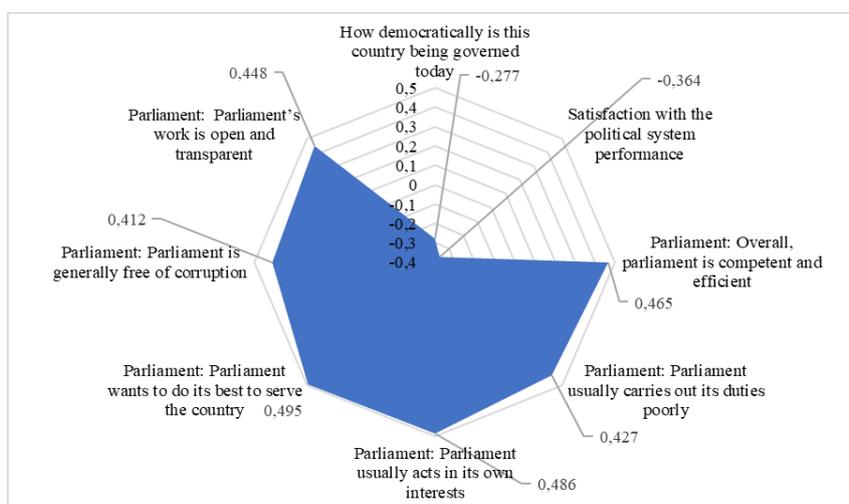


Fig. 2. The value of Spearman's correlation (bilateral at a significance level of 1%): confidence in the work of Parliament and the criteria of effectiveness of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

Source: calculated by the author based on WVS (2021a).

5 Discussion

Since the 2008 recession, more and more Europeans have become skeptical of the EU by political parties, while people's perceptions of EU institutions have deteriorated steadily (Carrillo-López, 2018). The European Union (EU) is facing two parallel trends of increasing polarization. From the outside, the ambiguous actions of parliaments in the EU to create a positive political environment have become more critical, and the global relations of power are changing. The domestic elections to the European Parliament have brought more Euro-skeptics to the parliament, changing its political majority and making it difficult for the main parties to continue the long-standing political positions of the European Parliament (EP), such as ambitious politics (Petri & Biedenkopf, 2021).

A significant part of the EU legislative process remains a mystery. At unofficial meetings, representatives of the three major EU institutions negotiate on compromises "behind closed doors," which are later, announced to the public at public meetings. Most of the studies of the transparency and openness of the EU parliament depend on the accessibility of the documents, it is advisable to further investigate whether the information in the framework of the negotiations "behind closed doors" is available to the general public, including at the meetings of the European Parliament (EP) committees as the only forum where publicity must be ensured in the negotiation process. Despite the fact that the parliaments of the EU countries require negotiators to report to their committees after each dialogue, in most cases the information is not available to the

public or is not provided in a timely manner. Thus, EU parliaments do not fulfill their promises of transparency and accountability, seriously undermining the legitimacy of the EU legislative process (Brandsma, 2019). The results of this study confirm the high level of parliamentary closure.

De Vreese, Azrout & Moeller (2016) illustrate people's unfavorable perception of the institution, the functioning of the European Union and the EU parliaments in general. The limited assessment of European democracy is partly explained by the still limited accessibility and inclusiveness of the parliament, and partly by the subjectivity of people's perception of EU parliaments through a negative perception of democracy. The accessibility of the parliamentary process for citizens has not increased in direct or technical and metaphorical sense. The "maneuvering circus" remains a source of discouragement, and the design of active and passive electoral law remains suboptimal. The reform of the EU parliaments was ineffective or failed. The right of appeal and European civic initiative leave many citizens unsatisfied with the legislative process. Various scandals over the use of public funds and the suspicions of a conflict of interest further aggravate dissatisfaction. Moreover, the EU parliamentary structure of decision-making and the shadow role of the lobbyists are in place within the EU parliaments. The moments when the Parliament is positively reflected in the news are less rare. In general, EU citizens condemn the actions of lawmakers due to the lack of transparency, negative perceptions, the practice of implementation of legislative initiatives (de Vreese, Azrout & Moeller, 2016).

6 Conclusion

The research showed that the developed countries (Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden) have the highest percentage of respondents who said they were convinced in the Parliament (42%, 46%, 46% accordingly are either fully convinced or very convinced). However, in the less developed countries, a high percentage of the population is not very well or absolutely not (Albania - 92%, Bulgaria - 84%, Czech Republic - 86%, Rumania - 84%, Ukraine - 80%). Governance in the EU countries is exercised on democratic principles: 58% of respondents in general assess the level of democracy at 6-10 points, with 42% assessing it at 1-5 points. In developing countries the governance is perceived by respondents as less, democratic compared to developed countries. The level of subjective evaluation of the efficiency of the democratic political system varies among the countries. There is a direct linear link between the confidence in the parliament and the level of perception of democratic governance in the country.

In Ukraine, the efficiency of the Parliament is subjectively evaluated at a low level: on the average 66% of respondents do not agree or strictly do not agree with the statements about efficiency. In general the level of confidence in parliamentary work in Ukraine remained at the same level for ten years: 80-81% of citizens are not very satisfied or not satisfied with the work of legislative bodies of power.

Further research should be focused on the study of parliamentary efficiency at the international level in the context of Ukraine's integration into the European Union.

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