

Profesionalización sin especialización o una elite parlamentaria amateur

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Abstract

En este trabajo se analizan los principales factores que explican una de las dimensiones de la profesionalización de los parlamentarios en España: su especialización en un ámbito político concreto. Para ello, se examinan las tasas de continuidad de los miembros de las comisiones parlamentarias del Congreso de los Diputados a lo largo del tiempo y se exploran diferentes explicaciones para los bajos niveles de continuidad encontrados. Los resultados muestran bajos niveles de especialización. Así pues, los diputados españoles pueden ser veteranos y diputados expertos aunque, en lo que respecta a la especialización en algún ámbito político sustantivo, sean amateurs.

Palabras clave: profesionalización, especialización, élite parlamentaria, Congreso de los Diputados

1. Introduction

Parliaments and members of Parliament have been the focus of a remarkable amount of scholar attention. Almost every dimension and aspect of their features, structure, powers, roles, activity and effects have been largely studied from different perspectives (among others see Loewenberg, 1971; Polsby, 1975; Loewenberg, Patterson & Jewell 1985; Liebert, 1988; Pakenham, 1970; Norton, 1990, 1997; Copenand and Patterson, 1994; Döring, 1995; Stolz, 2001, 2003, 2012; Cotta, 2007; Squire, 1992, 2007; Borchert, 2003, 2011; Borchert & Stolz, 2011; Blomgren & Rozenberg, 2012). The literature on Legislatures and MPs grows fruitfully, shedding light in old and new topics either in a comparative view or on single case study bases. Parliaments are one of the most important institutions in our political systems and, therefore, it most probably will continue to receive this attention in the future.

We know Parliaments are, nowadays, rationalized institutions that develop complex and fundamental functions in the democratic political systems. The expansion of the State in the 50s and 60s enlarged the scope of policy fields Legislatures deal with and regulate. They have adapted to political changes becoming complex institutions where professionalization, specialized work and division of labor is the rule. Their organizational structure has made possible that specialization: committees are, generally, the bodies that allowed specialization, focusing in a specific area of responsibility and exerting certain decision-making power over a policy field. As Laundry (1989: 96) put it, "all Parliaments work to a greater or lesser extent through committees".

At the same time, Members of Parliament (MPs) have become professional politicians, who develop a full time activity devoted to a wide range of initiatives and who live out of politics (Squire, 1992 & 2007; Borchert, 2003): they make a living out of their activity in Parliament, in a full time dedication, using the material and staff resources and facilities provided for the development of their "job". As professionals, they develop knowledge, skills, know-how, personal and political networks with social and political groups and stakeholders, as well as shared interests and privileges among MPs. They may even share a common conscience as MPs, what would turn them as members of a political class (Squire, 2007; Borchert, 2003).

Given the increase of the level of specialization and complexity of the parliamentary work, committees have become the body where most debates and decisions take place. Committee system facilitates division of labor and, therefore, creates legislative efficiency. As Mezey (1979: 64) put it, a high-developed committee system enables Legislatures to "divide the legislative labor in such a way that a degree of legislative expertise is generated in most policy areas". The complexity and degree of detail of the tasks developed in committees demands a high level of specialization on the

side of MPs. Specialized committee system creates an incentive structure that induce members to acquire policy expertise, specially if committees have long tenures (permanent or for the entire parliamentary term), if the scope of the committee's jurisdiction is well-defined, and if those committee's jurisdictions are parallel to those of government ministries (Mattson and Ostrom, 1995: 270; Olson and Mezey, 1991).

Committee members are expected to be or become experts in the committee field, familiar with the knowledge, know-how, networks, institutions or authorities, and stakeholders related to the committee field. In doing so, MPs capture informational efficiencies, avoiding "information uncertainty in policy making" and reap collective (partisan) benefits and, therefore, improve their chances to be promoted by their party and re-nominated in order to be re-elected when a new election comes (Shepsle and Weingast, 1994: 159; Mattson and Strom, 1995: 253-255).

Specialization is, therefore, a political asset for MPs willing to go on in their political career as professional politicians. It may not guarantee by itself the promotion in the parliamentary party structure or the re-nomination but --all the other factors being constant-- specialization and expertise will push forward their chances for advancement in their political careers: "Considering the importance of committee work in most Parliaments it seems likely that good, serious and loyal committee service increases the chances of promotion within the party" (Damgaard, 1995: 320).

Therefore, it is in the interest of both, MPs and parties, that MPs become experts in a given policy field remaining in the same committee for consecutive terms, accumulating knowledge, skills and personal networks related to that policy field. That is why it is common in Western European Legislatures that parliamentary parties (and leaderships) decide on committee assignments) taking into account individual MPs preferences. Nevertheless, these preferences are not the sole basis: there may be competing candidates, incumbency and seniority priorities, party needs to cover all committees --even the less attractive ones--, or party needs to reward loyal and hard working members. Parties will pay attention to special competence, knowledge or expertise (incumbency and seniority) possessed by competing candidates, even if party loyalty and satisfying systemic demands on the party group as a whole may also play an important role (Damgaard, 1995: 314-315).

The same could be said for the appointment of positions in each committee (chairs, members of committee boards, parliamentary party committee spokesperson). Besides formal procedures, party leaderships usually decide these appointments: And these appointments may reward accumulation of good committee work, specialization and expertise skills -- since they are leading positions, really important for the party activity in each committee. Nevertheless, partisan or general parliamentary seniority

may matter more than previous service on the particular committee (Mattson and Strom, 1995: 278).

Spanish Lower Chamber (*Congreso de los Diputados*) is a well institutionalized and professionalized Legislature, articulated –as is the case in most Western European countries- by strong, cohesive, hierarchical and almighty political parties (parliamentary political parties or *grupos parlamentarios*) (Oñate, 2000 and 2008): Almost all the activity in *Congreso de los Diputados* is tightly controlled by a few hands and MPs are not able to develop individual initiatives (neither regarding legislative production nor Government oversight or control). Individual MPs chances and prospects to promote in their political career, both inside and outside Parliament, fully depend on party leadership, whose powers go much beyond rules and regulations provisions.

On the other hand, the committee system in *Congreso de los Diputados* sets up four kinds of committees, being the most important for legislative purposes the permanent or standing legislative committees (from now on, Committees).¹ Initially, they are set for the entire parliamentary term, with clear-cut policy legislating and oversight power, which legislate in their own without reporting to the plenary and have well-defined and fixed policy jurisdiction, necessarily parallel to those of government ministries.² Committee assignments (membership) are decided by party leaderships taking into account party needs and individual MPs preferences. Leaderships usually accept MPs preferences for Committee allocation of each MP, especially in the big parliamentary parties).

From this theoretical framework, we will focus in the professionalization and specialization of MPs in the Committees of the Spanish Lower Chamber, Congreso de los Diputados. Most Spanish MPs are political professionals who develop a political career in one or several tiers of government (local, regional and national) and in different kind of offices (either in legislatures –in elected positions- or in the executive branches of government –in appointed positions-- [Oñate & Delgado, 2006; Oñate, 2013]). Our aim is to check whether -and to what extent- Spanish MPs are

¹ There are other three kinds of committees that are not that important for our purposes given their jurisdiction and powers: non-legislative standing committees, non-standing or *ad hoc* committees and standing joint (*Congreso-Senado*) committees.

² The number and jurisdiction of the Committees may vary, due to changes in the Government's ministerial structure. During the period analyzed (2000-2011), there were five restructurings of the government ministerial structure: three at the beginning of a legislative term, and two throughout the 9th Congress). After each of these changes the Committee's structure was adapted accordingly. Sometimes, only their names were modified but most of the times the restructurings affected their jurisdiction or subject (see table A1 in the annex). Therefore, we have focused on the subject and competences of the Committees instead of on their labels to be able to compare them in different legislative terms. The result can be seen in table A2 in the annex.

specialized experts who use their policy expertise in committees as a political asset for their political professional career. Given the cohesive, hierarchical and almighty traits of Spanish political parties (and the parliamentary party-oriented formal and informal rules in *Congreso de los Diputados*) we tend to think that specialization and expertise of MPs is not valued as a prominent political asset. Therefore, our hypothesis is that rates of membership continuity in Committees during consecutive legislative terms will not be high, and that the variables usually linked to considering expertise as a political asset are not that relevant to explain continuity rates in Spanish case. To conduct this analysis, we will consider MPs continuity in the same committee for more than a Congress term reflects that specialization and expertise is a political asset.

Therefore, in the following pages we will analyze and provide evidence of a) the level of continuity of MPs in the same committee; b) the experience of MPs in subcommittees; c) and continuity rates of MPs in frontbencher/leading positions in these Committees; all these evidence is provided for three different legislative terms, 7th, 8th and 9th Congresses, from 2000 to 2011: That implies 487 newcomer MPs and 563 re-elected ones; 49 Committees; 1.922 Committee seats-positions; 475 Subcommittees and 667 Subcommittee positions). That will allow us to check these continuity patterns in different scenarios, contexts of stability and change (regarding which is the majoritarian party in the Legislature and in Government). In the third section we will conduct a multivariate logistic regression analysis in order to weight the potential influence of several socio-demographic and political variables over the continuity rates in the same committee between different legislative terms or Congresses. In the last section we will outline the main findings regarding our research question: Whether, to what extent and why Spanish MPs are or are not specialized and expert professionals.

2. Continuity rates in Committees in *Congreso de los Diputados*

We consider that a member of a Committee has continuity on that particular Committee if he/she was a member of the same committee in the previous term. Given the dynamic composition of the *Congreso* and the goal of this paper (to analyze MPs continuity on Standing Legislative Committees when a new term begins³) we decided to choose two specific moments in each term (initiation and end of the term) and take a snapshot that allows their comparison between terms.⁴ Even if there is a low stability on

³ We do not analyze the changes in the composition of the Committees that occur throughout the term.

⁴ In particular, we have analyzed the Committee membership the day when the "old" Committees (and the whole Chamber) were dissolved with the call for new elections, and the

Committees membership along the term, this snapshot allows us to analyze continuity when the initial decision over which Committee will the MP work is made.⁵

As shown in table 1, in the 7th Congress *Partido Popular* (PP) had majority of seats, while Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE) had a simple majority both in the 8th and the 9th Congresses. The turn from the 7th to the 8th Congress saw a change in the majoritarian (and Government) party, with a clear trade-off between the big parties (PP lost

35 seats whereas PSOE won 39). In the 2008 election, both big parties won seats (PP got 6 and PSOE 5) although the bipartisan tendency persisted and small parties lost 11 seats.

Table 1. Composition of the Congreso de los Diputados in the 7th, 8th and 9th Congresses

Party	Number of seats		
	7th Congress	8th Congress	9th Congress
PP	183	148	154
PSOE	125	164	169
Other parties ¹	42	38	27

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs website (<http://www.infoelectoral.mir.es/>)

¹ In the 7th Congress, in addition to the PP and PSOE there were 8 parties. In the 8th Congress there were 9 additional parties, besides PP and PSOE. In the 9th Congress there were 8 parties, besides PP and PSOE.

As mentioned above, each Committee elects among their members a Committee Board (*Mesa*) composed of a chair, two vice-chairs and two secretaries. These appointments are made following a partisan scheme: the Committee chair is for the majority party and vice-chairs and secretaries are equally distributed between the majority party and the main opposition

day when the "new" Committees were set up, that is to say, approximately one month after the inaugural session. Consequently, the number of MPs included in the analysis is 343 for the 8th Congress and 348 for the 9th Congress, leaving aside absences and replacements. The units of analysis are the posts in committees, since a MP usually is a member of more than one Committee. The number of the units or cases is 562 for the 7th Congress, 631 for the 8th Congress and 729 for the 9th.

⁵ In fact, the steadiness of Committees membership along the same term s quite low. The percentage of MPs who serve on a particular Committee for the whole term is 55.9%, 63.2% and 72.7% in the 7th, 8th and 9th Congress. There are a variety of reasons that explain the desertion of Committee members. It is far from this paper scope to analyze them, although it is worth noticing the high levels of discontinuity this desertion imply for MPs specialization and expertise.

party.⁶ Each parliamentary party group chooses its spokespersons and deputy spokespersons for each Committee. All these appointments are done according to parliamentary party leadership guidelines, since they are relevant positive sanctions good committee members and party loyal MPs (this positions imply a salary complement which ranges from approximately 700 to 1.400 euros per month). The composition of the Committees considering their different positions may be seen in table 2.

Table 2. Composition of Committees in the 7th, 8th and 9th Congress

Position	Number of positions per Committee					
	7th Congress		8th Congress		9th Congress	
	(14 Committees)		(16 Committees)		(19 Committees)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Comm. Chair	14	2.5	16	2.5	19	2.6
Comm. Vice-chair	28	5.0	32	5.1	38	5.2
Comm. Secretary	28	5.0	32	5.1	28	5.2
Comm. Spokesperson	98	17.4	102	16.2	135	18.5
Comm. Deputy Spokesperson	26	4.6	6	1.0	58	8.0
Backbencher	368	65.5	443	70.2	441	60.5
Total	562	100.0	631	100.0	729	100.0

Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso de los Diputados* website (www.congreso.es). It should be kept in mind that MPs usually belong to several Committees, and may be a backbencher in one of them and a frontbencher in the other.

Standing Orders of *Congreso de los Diputados*, section 6.2 (SOCD), state that MPs “have the right to sit on at least one Committee”. Thus, an MP can sit on more than one Committee or not sit on any of them at all. There were 30 MPs in the 8th Congress (all PSOE and PP members except one MP of CiU) and 28 in the 9th (all PSOE and PP members) who did not join any Committee.⁷ Nevertheless, the most common choice among MPs is to sit on several Committees (see table 3).

⁶ There are several exceptions. The Budget Committee is chaired by a MP of the main opposition party since the 2nd Congress. When the majority party does not have an absolute majority, it usually gives up some of its Committee Board positions to those small parties that (will/would) offer their support to the Government. For example, on the 9th Congress, PSOE gave up 5 Board posts (excluding the Budget Committee Chair): three chairs (2 to CiU and 1 to IU), one vice-chair (to PNV) and one secretary (to CiU).

⁷ These MPs are members of the Congress Board, members of Government, members of the Board of Spokespersons and members of the other types of Committees.

Table 3. Number of Committees in which an MP served in (7th, 8th and 9th Congresses)

Number of Committees	7th Congress		8th Congress		9th Congress	
	Big Parties¹	Small Parties²	Big Parties¹	Small Parties³	Big Parties¹	Small Parties⁴
1	30.7	31.1	28.4	18.4	15.8	14.3
2	56.7	53.3	51.6	39.5	52.1	17.9
3	12.3	13.3	18.9	21.1	28.4	42.9
4	0.4	2.2	1.1	18.4	3.4	21.4
5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.3	0.0
6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(265)	(45)	(275)	(38)	(292)	(38)

Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso de los Diputados* website (www.congreso.es).

¹PSOE and PP.

²IU, CiU, PNV, BNG, CC, ERC, EA and CHA.

³IU, CiU, ERC, PNV, CC, BNG, CHA, EA and Na-Bai.

⁴IU, CiU, PNV, UPyD, ERC, BNG, CC and Na-Bai.

Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados* usually registers a high level of MPs turnover between consecutive terms, regardless of big or small electoral changes: Around 50% of the seats in each Congress are occupied by newcomer MPs.⁸ Therefore, there is a high discontinuity rate in the Committee membership imposed by this fact. But even considering this fact, the rate of continuity in Committee membership is strikingly low: Only between one quarter (8th Congress) and one third (9th Congress) of the Committee members were in the same committee in the previous Congress (Table 4). We could expect the continuity rates among those holding the Committee leading positions (Board members and parties spokespersons) to be higher, since they are the ones supposed to have the expertise knowledge, know-how and networks with authorities and stakeholders which would allow these highly specialized bodies to develop their work. But strikingly enough, the continuity rates among these frontbenchers are also quite low, even when there was not a big change in the partisan composition of the Chamber (9th Congress): Even in this electoral stable context, almost two thirds of the Committee Boards members and party spokespersons were newcomers to the respective committee; not even half of the Committee presidents were chairing the same Committee in the previous Congress.

⁸ The newcomers were 41,8% of the 7th Congress, 44,8% of the 8th Congress MPs and 41,1% of the 9th. The 8th Congress registered quite a big change of seats of each party due to the electoral results, changes that also involved a switch of the majoritarian party in the Chamber and, therefore, in most of Committee Boards. The electoral change prior to the 9th Congress was quite small and did not imply a switch of the majoritarian party in the Chamber.

Table 4. MPs' continuity on Committees, on their Boards and in the same Committee post in the 8th and 9th Congress (%)

	8th Congress					9th Congress				
	<u>All Committee Members¹</u>	<u>Backbenchers</u>	<u>Spokespersons</u>	<u>Board members²</u>	<u>Chairs</u>	<u>All Committee Members¹</u>	<u>Backbenchers</u>	<u>Spokespersons</u>	<u>Board members²</u>	<u>Chairs</u>
<u>Continuity on Committee³</u>										
No	75.3	74.7	75.9	77.5	68.8	66.7	69.4	60.6	66.3	42.1
Yes	24.7	25.3	24.1	22.5	31.3	33.3	30.6	39.4	33.7	57.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(631)	(443)	(108)	(80)	(16)	(729)	(441)	(193)	(95)	(19)
<u>Continuity on Board⁴</u>										
No	–	–	–	97.5	93.8	–	–	–	78.9	52.6
Yes	–	–	–	2.5	6.3	–	–	–	21.1	47.4
Total	–	–	–	100.0	100.0	–	–	–	100.0	100.0
				(80)	(16)				(95)	(19)
<u>Continuity in the same post⁵</u>										
No	87.2	86.9	78.7	100.0	100.0	76.1	78.2	69.4	80.0	52.6
Yes	12.8	13.1	21.3	0.0	0.0	23.9	21.8	30.6	20.0	47.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(631)	(443)	(108)	(80)	(16)	(729)	(441)	(193)	(95)	(19)

Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso de los diputados* website (www.congreso.es)

¹Bachbenchers, Spokespersons, Secretaries, vice-Chairs and Chairs.

²Chair, vice-Chairs and secretaries.

³The MP sat on the same committee when Committees were dissolved during the previous term.

⁴The MP was member of the Board of the same Committee when Committees were dissolved during the previous term.

⁵The MP held the same post in the same Committee when Committees were dissolved during the previous term. The post of Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson are considered equivalents.

But if we want to go a bit further and try to analyze the continuity in Committee memberships, we could exclude from our calculus those MPs who were newcomers to the Legislature in each term (since being newcomers to the *Congreso*, they could not have been in the same Committee in the previous term and could not have chosen to continue benefiting from their specialization and expertise). The result is, of course, a noticeable increase in the Committee continuity rates, that we can see comparing Tables 4 and 5⁹: The figures of Committee members who continue in the same Committee in which they served in the previous Congress double, but still are approximately only half of the Committee members. And these figures do not improve in the context of electoral stability. And the same could be said for Committee frontbencher MPs (even if frontbencher continuity rate is a bit higher than that of backbenchers in the 9th Congress, curiously enough, in the context of electoral stability.¹⁰ Only the continuity rate of Committee presidents is high in 9th Congress).

These figures do not talk very much (or actually it does) for how specialization and expertise through Committee work is valued in *Congreso de los Diputados*. It is either that MPs do not think this kind of expertise is a political asset or that parties (parliamentary parties) are not concerned by the policy specialization and expertise of those to run "their" business in Committees. Figures 1-4 show graphically the differences in continuity on Committees produced by the inclusion and exclusion of newcomer MPs in the analysis.

⁹ Given the levels of re-election in the *Congreso de los Diputados* in the 7th, 8th, and 9th Congresses (58,2%, 55,2% and 58,9% respectively), the number of MPs analyzed was reduced to 203 (7th), 155 (8th), and 205 (9th).

¹⁰ Unexpected electoral victory of PSOE in 2004 (8th Congress) and PP astonish reaction may explain these differences.

Table 5. Continuity of re-elected MPs on Committees, on their Boards and in the same Committee post in the 8th and 9th Congress (%)

	8th Congress					9th Congress				
	<u>All Committee Members¹</u>	<u>Backbenchers</u>	<u>Spokespersons</u>	<u>Board members²</u>	<u>Chairs</u>	<u>All Committee Members¹</u>	<u>Backbenchers</u>	<u>Spokespersons</u>	<u>Board members²</u>	<u>Chairs</u>
<u>Continuity on Committee³</u>										
No	43.1	39.8	49.0	51.4	44.4	43.9	47.7	37.2	40.7	21.4
Yes	56.9	60.2	51.0	48.6	55.6	56.1	52.3	62.8	59.3	78.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(274)	(186)	(51)	(37)	(9)	(433)	(258)	(121)	(54)	(14)
<u>Continuity on Board⁴</u>										
No	–	–	–	94.6	88.9	–	–	–	63.0	35.7
Yes	–	–	–	5.4	11.1	–	–	–	37.0	64.3
Total	–	–	–	100.0	100.0	–	–	–	100.0	100.0
				(37)	(9)				(54)	(14)
<u>Continuity in the same post⁵</u>										
No	70.4	68.8	54.9	100.0	100.0	59.8	62.8	51.2	64.8	35.7
Yes	29.6	31.2	45.1	0.0	0.0	40.2	37.2	48.8	35.2	64.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(274)	(186)	(51)	(37)	(9)	(433)	(258)	(121)	(54)	(14)

Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso de los diputados* website (www.congreso.es)

¹Backbenchers, Spokespersons, Secretaries, vice-Chairs and Chairs.

²Chair, vice-Chairs and secretaries.

³The MP sat on the same committee when Committees were dissolved during the previous term.

⁴The MP was member of the Board of the same Committee when Committees were dissolved during the previous term.

⁵The MP held the same post in the same Committee when Committees were dissolved during the previous term. The post of Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson are considered equivalents.

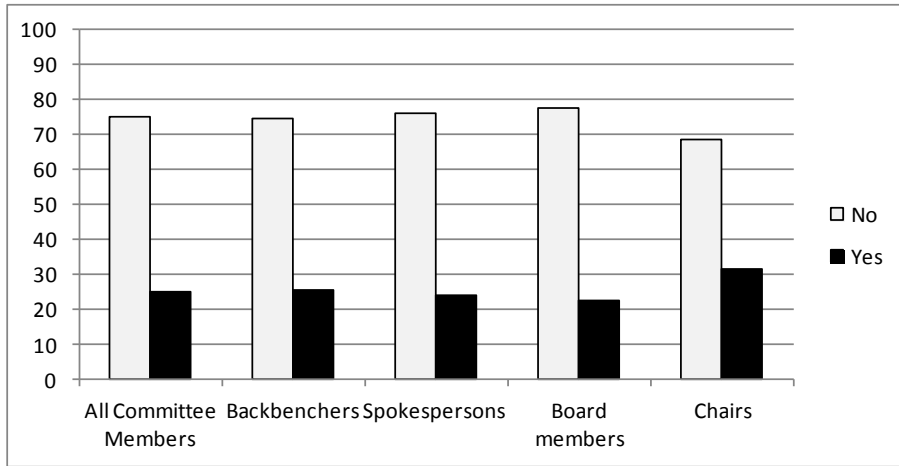


Figure 1. Continuity on Committee for all MPs (newcomers included) in the 8th Congress (%). Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso* website (www.congreso.es).

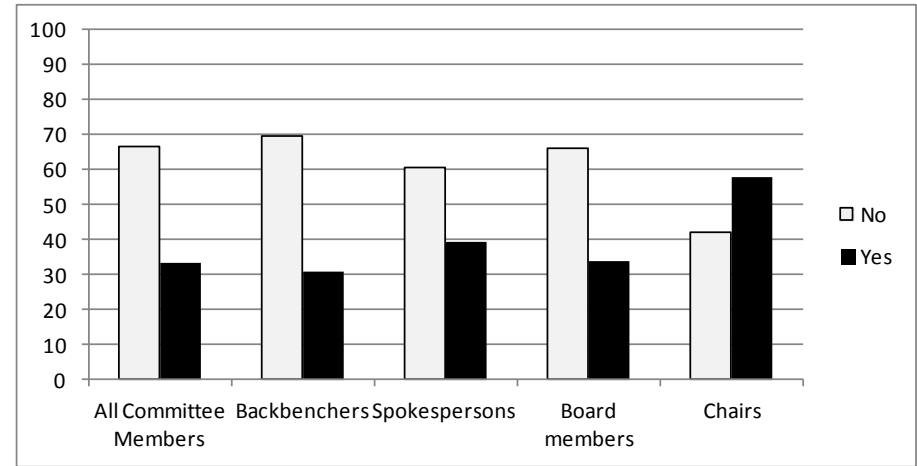


Figure 2. Continuity on Committee for all MPs (newcomers included) in the 9th Congress (%). Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso* website (www.congreso.es).

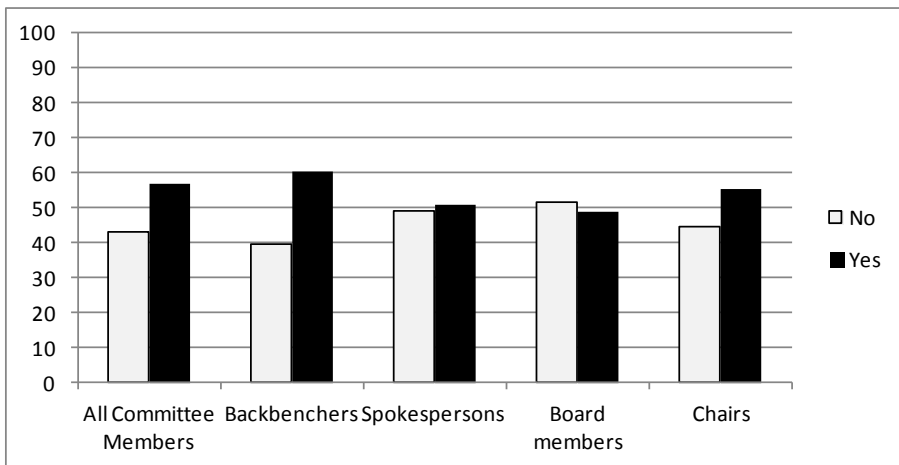


Figure 3. Continuity on Committee for re-elected MPs (newcomers excluded) in the 8th Congress (%). Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso* website (www.congreso.es).

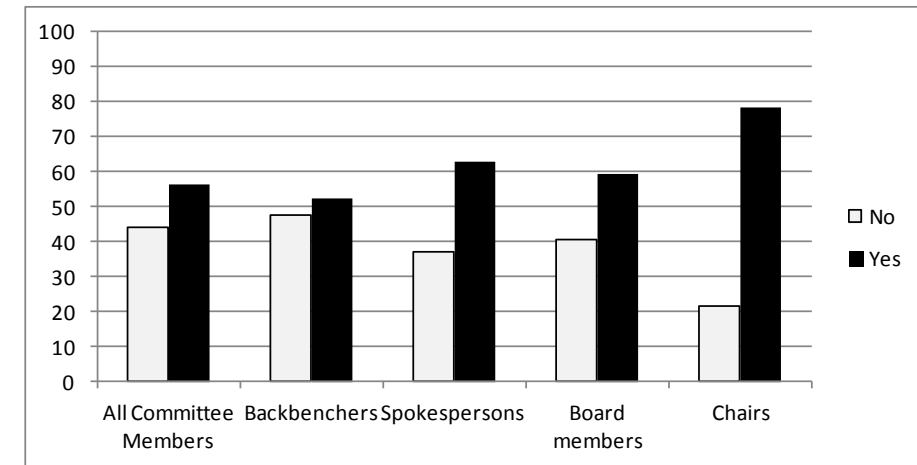


Figure 4. Continuity on Committee for re-elected MPs (newcomers excluded) in the 9th Congress (%). Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso* website (www.congreso.es).

3. Multivariate analysis: what explains continuity on committees?

Our dependent variable is the continuity of MPs as members of the same committee in two consecutive legislative terms (taking into account only MPs who were in both terms). Following previous studies in legislative careers and professionalization, we picked several variables to explaining the dependent variable and expect them to work in the following way:

- 1) Sex of the MP: in general terms, female MPs tend to repeat in their legislative mandates to a lesser extent than male MPs do (table 6). It is true, though, that this pattern may not be transfer to remaining in the same committee in consecutive terms (fostering specialization and expertise). When introduced in regression model, this variable showed not statistically significant. Nevertheless, if we consider we are not using data from a sample, but from the whole universe, may be the regression results (table 9) may be more relevant: they point to a higher odds for continuity in the case of male MPs.

Table 6. Female and male MPs turnover

	8th Congress				9th Congress			
	Female MPs		Male MPs		Female MPs		Male MPs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Newcomers	81	65,9	107	48,6	55	44,4	88	39,3
Re-elected	42	34,1	113	51,4	69	55,6	136	60,7
Total	123	100,0	220	100,0	124	100,0	224	100,0

Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso de los Diputados* website (www.congreso.es).

- 2) A switch of the majoritarian party in the Legislature (and, therefore, in Government). This would imply a variation in the number of seat for each party and some strategic changes in each one of them, with different consequences for the continuity of their MPs in the Committees:
 - a) The defeated party will probably like re-elected MPs to remain in the same Committees they served in the previous term, in order to benefit from their expertise and develop an efficient opposition activity. The continuity rate on Committee will probably rise. The lost seats are not taken into account in our calculation –which consider only re-elected MPs-.
 - b) The winning party will probably appoint its most specialized and expert MPs to executive positions, to develop an efficient government activity. Therefore, the continuity rate on Committee would probably decline. The new seats are not taken into account in our calculations –which considers only re-elected MPs-.

The respective figures may, nevertheless, compensate in the general account. Table 7 confirms our expectations. The continuity rates in Committees for both main parties in contexts of stability (9th Congress) are quite similar. But in scenarios of change in government and in majority in Parliament, the respective figures differ, being higher for the “looser” party.

Table 7. Continuity on Committees of PP and PSOE MP’s in the 8th and 9th Congress

<u>Continuity on Committee</u>	<u>8th Congress</u>				<u>9th Congress</u>			
	PP loses 35 seats (and its majority); PSOE wins 39 seats				PP wins 6 seats; PSOE wins 5 seats (and retains its majority)			
	<u>Party</u>		<u>Party</u>		<u>Party</u>		<u>Party</u>	
	<u>PP</u>	<u>PSOE</u>	<u>PP</u>	<u>PSOE</u>	<u>PP</u>	<u>PSOE</u>	<u>PP</u>	<u>PSOE</u>
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	56	39.7	42	47.2	77	45.8	90	43.5
Yes	85	60.3	47	52.8	91	54.2	117	56.5
Total	141	100.0	89	100.0	168	100.0	207	100.0

$\chi^2(1)=1.25$ n.s.

$\chi^2(1)=0.21$ n.s.

Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso de los Diputados* website (www.congreso.es)

- 3) Party size in the House: MP’s from small parties (see table 3) tend to continue in the same committee less than those from big parties. Due to the reduce number of seat they have, their MPs are assigned to several committees and specialization becomes rather difficult. Nevertheless, parties should promote continuity, in order to improve their opposition and negotiation efficiency. This variable was included in our early version of the regression model but it was lately excluded due to multicollinearity problems with the variables sex, constituencies with strong national identity other than Spanish, and participation in reporting subcommittees.
- 4) MPs elected in constituencies with a strong national identity different than Spanish (Catalonia and the Basque Country): Small non-state wide parties from these regions (CiU, ERC, PNV) should be interested in the specialization through Committee of their MPs, in order to improve their negotiating efficiency (these parties have usually supported simple minority state wide parties governments. continuity of their MPs in the same Committees. And the same could be said for the MPs from statewide parties being elected in these constituencies.
- 5) Position in the Committee: As seen above (see Table 5 and Figures 1-4), frontbenchers MPs (Committee party spokespersons and Committee Board members) showed higher continuity rates than backbenchers in

the 9th Congress, but they did not in the 8th, in the context of a new majority in the House and in the Government.

- 6) Type of Committee: Committees influence may be measured by the budget of the ministry they are related to, in terms of policy influencing capacity.¹¹ We could expect MPs allocated in powerful Committees to have higher continuity rates in Committee than their colleagues assigned to weak committees. Both, MPs and parties, would be interested – although for different reason-- in keeping high levels of continuity rates in powerful Committees, benefiting from the specialization and expertise MPs may get along the term. This should be a good predictor of continuity.

- 7) Finally, participation in subcommittees (*Ponencias*): This is the variable that should explain to a larger extent continuity in the same Committee in two consecutive terms. Subcommittees are *ad hoc* groups of MPs where many pieces of legislation are initially written or managed.¹² Committee will work on the documents previously produce by subcommittees. Therefore, members who participate in these subcommittees are supposed to be real experts and highly specialized MPs. They are the few ones parties trust to deal with the insights of complex legislation (Table 8). In a Legislature where the core of the work is dealt with by few hands, participants of subcommittees are indispensable actors for parties. Of course parties will be most interested in keeping these experts in their positions in the same Committee in consecutive legislative terms, so continuity rates of those who participated in subcommittees should be higher that that of MPs who did not.

¹¹ Powerful Committees are those “whose” ministry has an annual Budget higher than 3.600 millions of euros, according to the 2009 National General Budget. Weak ones are those “whose” ministry ´s budes is below this amount. For the specific classification of Committees in both categories see Table A3.

¹² There were 173, 166 and 136 Subcommittees in the 7th, 8th and 9th Congresses, respectively. They are set for a given piece of legislation and are dissolved when they finish their task and report to the Committee. The members of the Subcommittees are members of the parent Committee appointed for each case by each parliamentary party.

Table 8. Number of MPs who served in Subcommittees of “their” Committee (newcomers excluded) in the previous term, by parliamentary party groups

<u>Parliamentary Party</u>	<u>8th Congress</u>			<u>9th Congress</u>		
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>Total</u>	<u>Yes</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
PSOE	45	50.6	89	54	28.9	187
PP	75	53.2	141	39	25.3	154
CiU	4	44.4	9	5	45.5	11
ERC	1	20.0	5	–	–	–
IU	1	33.3	3	–	–	–
ERC-IU	–	–	–	4	33.3	12
PNV	5	50.0	10	9	56.3	16
CC	7	87.5	8	–	–	–
Mixed Group¹	4	36.4	11	2	18.2	11
Total	142	51.4	276	113	28.9	391

Source: own elaboration based on *Congreso de los Diputados* website (www.congreso.es)

¹In the 8th Congress: Na-bai,BNG,CHA,EA. In the 9th Congress: Na-bai,UPyD, BNG,UPN,CC.

Analysis

As mentioned above, it was not possible to include in the logistic regression model all the variables we thought would be relevant ones to explain continuity in the Committee in two consecutive terms. Even if some variables may be not statistically significant, since we are not using sample data, but the entire population ones, their results in the regression may be of interest.

Table 9. Determinants of Continuity on Committees

	<u>B (SE)</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
Majority change (Yes)	-0.52 (0.2)**	0.59
Committee type (Weak)	-0.41 (0.21)+	0.66
Sex (Female)	-0.22 (0.2)	0.80
Committee position (Frontbencher)	-0.04 (0.2)	0.96
Constituency strong nat. iden. other than Spanish (Yes)	0.05 (0.24)	1.05
Subcommittees (Yes)	4.05 (0.4)***	57.53
Intercept	-0.15 (0.16)	0.86

R²= .44 (Nagelkerke). Model $\chi^2(6)=281.8$, $p<.001$

Note. Significance levels +p < .1 ** p < .01 ***p < .001.

Our final model is able to explain 44% of the variance of our dependent variable. Three variables are statistically significant (Committee type probability being $p < .1$). As expected, serving in a weak Committee reduces the probability of continuity (by one third) when compared to that of serving in a powerful Committee.

The change of the majority party in the *Congreso* (and in Government) significantly and strongly predicts whether MP's continue on the same Committee or not. In particular, when the majority party in the Parliament changes, the odds of continuity on Committee is 0.59 times the odds of continuity when the same party retains its majority in the Chamber. In other words, when there is a majority change, the probability of continuity on the same Committee is much smaller (almost half) than when there is no such a change (almost the half of it).

Regarding the participation in Subcommittees, the odds ratio tells us that if a MP participated in any reporting Subcommittee, the increase of the chances of continuing on that same Committee are astonishing high: They are multiplied by 57.5; that is to say, the chances of continuing in the same Committee are 57,5 times bigger if the MP participated in any reporting Subcommittee of his/her Committee, than if he/she did not.

4. Final remarks

As we expected, rates of continuity of MPs in the same Committee in two consecutive terms are remarkably low in *Congreso de los Diputados*. These low rates of continuity also affect to those MPs holding frontbencher/leading positions in the Committees. Variables related with party strategic options seem to be the factors that better explain the continuity of MPs in the same Committee in two consecutive terms. These variables, especially –given its odds ratio– the one related with participating in Subcommittees seem to be the ones that really awake interest in specialization and expertise of MPs, both in MPs themselves and parliamentary parties. This is coherent with a Legislature controlled by strong, hierarchical and almighty parliamentary parties that trust in a few MPs to take care of the legislative business. Other than that, considering that they easily control assignments and appointments, they don't seem to be worried about specialized and expert MPs.

These findings recommend conducting further research in order to gauge the weigh of the MPs preferences and that of parliamentary party group strategies in the allocation of MPs in the Committees. Of course, once that is done (conducting in-depth interviews in *Congreso de los Diputados*), the data should be compared to those from another Legislature whose MPs are specialized and experts. This comparative approach would most probably help us to better understand why most of Spanish *diputados* are professional ones, even if they are not experts.

5. References

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Annex
Table A1. Legislative Standing Committees in the 7th, 8th and 9th Congress

<u>May of 2000 (7th Congress)</u>	<u>May of 2004 (8th Congress)</u>	<u>May 2008 (9th Congress)</u>
<u>14 Committees</u>	<u>16 Committees</u>	<u>19 Committees</u>
Constitutional	Constitutional	Constitutional
Foreign Affairs	Foreign Affairs	Foreign Affairs
		International Development Cooperation
Justice and Home Affairs	Justice	Justice
	Home Affairs	Home Affairs
Defence	Defence	Defence
Finance and Treasury	Finance and Treasury	Finance and Treasury
Budget	Budget	Budget
Public Works	Public Works and Housing	Public Works
		Housing
Education, Culture and Sports	Education and Science	Education, Social Policy and Sports
	Culture	Culture
Science and Technology		Science and Innovation
Social and Employment Policy	Social and Employment Policy	Immigration and Employment Policy
	Industry, Trade and Tourism	Industry, Trade and Tourism
Food, Agriculture and Fishing	Food, Agriculture and Fishing	Environment, Agriculture and Fishing
Environment	Environment	
Regim of Public Administration	Public Administration	Public Administration
Health and Consumer Affairs	Health and Consumer Affairs	Health and Consumer Affairs
		Equality

Source: own elaboration based on consecutive reforms of the section 46.1 of the Standing Orders of *Congreso de los Diputados*.

Table A2. Equivalence between Committees of the 7th, 8th and 9th Congresses.

8th Congress	Equivalence with 7th Congress' Committees
Constitucional	Constitucional
Foreign Affairs	Foreign Affairs
Justice	Justice and Home Affairs
Home Affairs	Justice and Home Affairs
Defence	Defence
Finance and Treasury	Finance and Treasury
Budget	Budget
Public Works and Housing	Public Works
Education and Science	Education, Culture and Sports
	Science and Technology
Social and Employment Policy	Social and Employment Policy
Industry, Trade and Tourism	Finance and Treasury
Food, Agriculture and Fishing	Food, Agriculture and Fishing
Environment	Environment
Public Administration	Regim of Public Administration
Culture	Education, Culture and Sports
Health and Consumer Affairs	Health and Consumer Affairs

9th Congress	Equivalence with 8th Congress' Committees
Constitucional	Constitucional
Foreign Affairs	Foreign Affairs
Justice	Justice
Home Affairs	Home Affairs
Defence	Defence
Finance and Treasury	Finance and Treasury
Budget	Budget
Public Works	Public Works and Housing
Education, Social Policy and Sports	Education and Science
	Social and Employment Policy
Inmigration and Employment Policy	Social and Employment Policy
Industry, Trade and Tourism	Industry, Trade and Tourism
Environment, Agriculture and Fishing	Food, Agriculture and Fishing
	Environment
Public Administration	Public Administration
Culture	Culture
Health and Consumer Affairs	Health and Consumer Affairs
Housing	Public Works and Housing
Science and Innovation	Education and Science
Equality	Joint Committee on Women's rights and Equal opportunities*
International Development Cooperation	International Development Cooperation**

Source: own elaboration based on consecutive reforms of the section 46.1 of the Standing Orders of *Congreso de los Diputados*.

Table A3. Classification of Committees by Budget
(bold letters indicate Powerful Committees)

<u>Committee May 2009</u>	<u>Ministry April 2009</u>	<u>Budget</u> (in thousands of €)
Equality	Equality	80980
Public Administration	Public Administration	699702
Health and Consumer Affairs	Health and Social Policy	760620
Culture	Culture	888663
Housing	Housing	1617861
Justice	Justice	1619100
Foreign Affairs/International Development Cooperation	Foreign Affairs and Cooperation	3618465
Education, Social Policy and Sports	Education, Social Policy and Sports	3838299
Environment, Agriculture and Fishing	Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs.	4835930
Science and Innovation	Science and Innovation	6432357
Industria, Turismo y Comercio.	Industry, Tourism and Trade	7099761
Home Affairs	Home Affairs	7966539
Defence	Defence	8255772
Inmigration and Employment Policy	Labour and Inmigration	8823392
Public Works	Fomento	10480690
Finance and Treasury/Budget	Economy and Finance	24768520

Source: 2009 National Budget. Ministry of Finance and Public Administration. Available at <http://bit.ly/16vu5wX> (consulted on may 2013).

Note: Committee on Constitutional affairs is considered Weak.