

## **“It is true that security and Schengen go hand in hand”: Strategic manoeuvring in the multi-layered activity type of European Parliamentary debates**

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**Abstract:** In this essay, I highlight the strategic discursive choices made by a politician who is arguing in pursuit of several goals. As a case in point, I examine an argumentative exchange from the European Parliament (EP), a venue where it is typical that politicians attempt to achieve several institutional goals. In analysing the exchange, which is part of the debate on the Conclusions of the European Summit of March 2012, I identify the positions taken, reconstruct the standpoints and arguments advanced, and analyse the discursive choices made in light of the different goals pursued. In the analysis, I am guided by the findings of an earlier examination of another EP debate, a debate on immigration in early 2011 (Mohammed, 2013). The arguers’ discursive choices are analysed using the pragma-dialectical concepts of strategic manoeuvring and activity types (van Eemeren, 2010). The analysis enhances the understanding of the argumentative practice in EP debates as a multi-layered activity type in which several initial disagreements are discussed simultaneously and shows that the reconstruction of the argumentative exchanges as a series of several simultaneous discussions is necessary in order to capture the strategic design of argumentative moves.

**Key words:** Argumentative activity type, European Parliamentary debate, goal, multiple dispute, simultaneous discussions, strategic manoeuvring

### 1. Goals and strategies in public political arguments

When speaking publically, a politician typically attempts to achieve several goals and to address several issues. Whether in an interview, in a rally or in a Parliamentary session, whenever a politician is speaking publically the politician needs to respond to multiple demands: the responsibility of a politician is rarely one-dimensional and public political discourse is open to individuals and groups that have different interests and needs as well as different commitments and positions. So, for example, it is typical for a politician speaking in Parliament to criticise or praise the government, advocate a certain plan, policy or action and promote the interests of his or her constituents. In doing that, the politician can be expected to address issues ranging from the latest statement made by the Prime Minister to the condition of the educational system and some initiatives conducted by a small association in his constituency. In order to cope with the limited time they have, politicians craft their arguments strategically to support their case in relation to the several issues they address simultaneously. In this essay, I highlight the strategic discursive choices made by a politician who is arguing in pursuit of several goals.

Parliamentary discourse is a particularly interesting venue for pursuing multiple institutional goals. In parliamentary debates, the goals that discussants pursue are to a large extent defined by the roles they play and the functions they are expected to fulfill in Parliament. Today, parliamentary practices are investigated from interestingly diverse

perspectives. Studies range from political examinations of parliamentary procedures and their efficiency for achieving institutional goals (Corbet et al., 2011; Judge & Earnshaw, 2008) to linguistic investigations in which the different discursive patterns in parliamentary practices are examined in order to gain insights into the different political and social attitudes they reflect (Bayley, 2010; Ilie, 2010). Even though the analysis of parliamentary discourse in terms of reasonable arguments and their opposite – fallacies – started with the very beginnings of modern European parliamentarianism (Bentham, 1824), there is still a need for studies that examine the nature and quality of argumentation in parliamentary practices. Significant contributions came in the last few years to examine argumentative discourse in different European parliaments (van Dijk, 2010; Ilie, 2010, van Eemeren & Garssen, 2010; Mohammed, 2008, 2013). These studies highlight the complexity of parliamentary discourse and identify interesting discursive strategies that members of parliaments use in order to balance the different goals they pursue and to respond to the often-conflicting demands they face. In this essay, I contribute to the study of argumentation in parliamentary practices by examining the way in which the multitude of goals pursued in parliamentary practices influences the discursive choices made by parliamentarians.

In line with the research investigating the link between participants' goals and the discourse choice they make, I assume that the strategic aspects of discourse can be explained by appealing to the multiple goals<sup>1</sup> that underlie the discourse (Craig, 1990; Jacobs et al., 1991; Tracy, 1984; Tracy & Coupland, 1990). I am particularly interested in the influence of the different institutional goals that politicians attempt to achieve on the discursive choices they make. Institutional goals are those goals that can be attributed to arguers on the basis of the type of activity they are engaged in.<sup>2</sup> They can be considered a subtype of what Clark and Delia (1979) distinguish as instrumental goals, which are goals that are related to “a specific obstacle or problem defining the task of the communicative situation” (200).

In order to highlight the multi-purposive nature of EP debates, I have in an earlier work analysed a plenary debate on immigration (Mohammed, 2013). The analysis identified the different types of institutional goals that are typically pursued by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in EP debates and characterised general ways in which such goals shape the argumentative exchanges. The types of institutional goals identified can be considered typical of this type of debate: goals dictated by the occasion of the debate, goals related to the powers of Parliament, and goals associated with the different identities they assume in Parliament. While the pursuit of the occasion-related and powers-related goals gave rise to multiple issues that were discussed simultaneously, the pursuit of the identity-related goals guided the MEPs' choices and formulations as they addressed the different issues.

In this essay, I further investigate the link between the multiple goals pursued by MEPs and the discursive choices they make, by examining in detail how MEPs manoeuvre strategically (van Eemeren, 2010) in their attempt to achieve their several

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<sup>1</sup> Following Craig (1986, 1990), I consider not only goals, which are intentional, formal, and directly responsible for a certain discourse choice, but also goals, which are functional, strategic, and only indirectly responsible for discourse choices.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike the dialectical and rhetorical goals identified by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2003), which are intrinsic to argumentation and independent of any specific argumentative practice, institutional goals are extrinsic and context-dependent (Mohammed, 2007).

institutional goals. As a case in point, I examine a debate from the European Parliament (EP), the (relatively) young and fast-growing institution whose complicated structure and responsibility sharing is a good expression of the complexities of European politics. In particular, I focus on those argumentative moves that contribute to the discussion of several issues simultaneously. I argue that in order to capture the strategic design of such moves it is important to reconstruct multi-issue discourse as a series of *simultaneous discussions* (Mohammed, 2011, 2013). The concept of strategic manoeuvring and the proposal to reconstruct multi-issue discourse as a series of *simultaneous discussions* are discussed in section 2. In section 3, I introduce the case in point, reconstruct the positions taken in it, and discuss them in view of the different goals that can be attributed to the MEPs in this case. In section 4, I focus on one particular move and examine how it is strategically crafted in order to bring about favourable outcomes in relation to several issues at the same time. The analysis makes it clear that the reconstruction of the discourse as a series of several *simultaneous discussions* is necessary in order to account for the several favourable outcomes pursued by means of a single move and the strategic choices made as part of this pursuit.

## 2. Strategic manoeuvring in multi-purposive discourses

In order to investigate the link between the multiple goals pursued by MEPs in EP debates and the discursive choices the MEPs make in their contributions, the concept of strategic manoeuvring is instrumental. The concept describes arguers' efforts to get their points of view accepted within the boundaries of reasonableness (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999, 2003). In principle, arguers can be expected to try to argue reasonably. Reasonableness, according to the pragma-dialectical ideal of a critical discussion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 2003), is a dialectical norm that requires discussants to engage in the critical testing of the standpoints about which there is disagreement. But, as van Eemeren and Houtlosser rightly observe, discussants in actual argumentative practice are usually not concerned only with finding out whether their standpoints are capable of withstanding criticism or not. Discussants are usually concerned also with being rhetorically effective and getting these standpoints accepted. Accordingly, arguers manoeuvre strategically in an attempt to strike a balance between their dialectical obligation to test standpoints critically and their rhetorical aim to get their own standpoints accepted (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2003).<sup>3</sup>

Analysing public political arguments using the concept of strategic manoeuvring is particularly beneficial. In the political domain, maybe more than in any other domain, arguers are rarely interested in being reasonable only. In fact, one may even say that in the political arena, arguers are generally not interested in subjecting their points of view to critical scrutiny but rather in getting others to accept such points of view. Nevertheless, arguers engaged in a public political argument would certainly not want to appear unreasonable in the eyes of their public, at least because this will undermine their

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<sup>3</sup> Van Eemeren (2010) emphasises that the assumption that argumentation is aimed at the critical testing of standpoints can be made even "when people argue with each other without really wanting to convince each other but are in the first place out to win over an audience of onlookers ("the gallery"), as is the case when two political rivals are debating each other on television in election time" (1). Even in such cases, arguers "still have to conduct their argumentative discourse with each other as if it is aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits in order to maintain decorum and to appear reasonable to the viewers who are their intended audience" (ibid).

credibility in general. Arguers engaged in a public argument will always try to maintain their attempts to persuade their audience within the boundaries of reasonableness, or at least within what seems like the boundaries of reasonableness. In order to achieve that, they need to manoeuvre strategically. Indeed, in the political domain, strategic manoeuvring may be considered a necessity (Zarefsky, 2008: 1).

Furthermore, the examination of public political arguments using the concept of strategic manoeuvring allows for a critical approach to political discourse. Assuming that arguers manoeuvre strategically presumes that arguers ought to act in accordance with the ideal of critical testing. Even though argumentative exchanges in the political context often fall short of this dialectical ideal, the ideal of critical testing remains an important standard in relation to which the quality of political arguments can be assessed. As van Eemeren (2010) argues, applying the dialectical ideal of a critical discussion to argumentation in the political context is not a utopian endeavour, but rather a critical one (4). After all, as he reminds us, the ideal of a critical discussion is by definition not a description of any kind of reality. It is rather a theoretical standard that can be used to protect the quality of the discussion (ibid).

Looking at argumentative moves from the perspective of strategic manoeuvring can be particularly helpful for highlighting the link between the multiple institutional goals pursued by arguers and the discursive choices they make. This is mainly possible because, as van Eemeren and Houtlosser suggest, the analysis of arguers' strategic manoeuvring needs to be situated in the context of the activity (type) in which argumentative exchanges occur. Argumentative activity types characterise the more or less institutionalised<sup>4</sup> communicative practices in which argumentation plays a central role (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2005, 2009). The goals that are pursued in conventionalised argumentative practices play an important role in characterising the different argumentative activity types. Together with the rules and conventions that govern the practice, they constitute the basis for the characterisation (van Eemeren, 2010: 144). Activity types that represent argumentative practices in which typically multiple institutional goals are pursued can be expected to be *multi-functional* and *multi-layered* (Mohammed, 2009: 51-79). An activity type can be described as *multi-layered* when several interrelated differences of opinion are typically discussed by means of the argumentative exchanges that occur as part of the practice. Each of the goals that are associated with the argumentative practice can give rise to an initial disagreement to be discussed in the course of the exchange.

Given the multitude of goals pursued in EP debates, the activity type can be expected to be multi-layered. In this activity type, one can expect several initial disagreements as a result of the several goals typically pursued by the MEPs. For example, one can expect initial disagreements about the particular EU policies, plans or measures to be taken as well as disagreements about the conduct of the executive. The former can be associated with the political power of the EP and the consequent goal of the MEPs to influence the EU policy-making. The latter can be associated with the supervisory power of the EP and the consequent goal of the MEPs to scrutinise the

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<sup>4</sup> Van Eemeren and Houtlosser use the term institutional in a very broad sense, to cover not only formally established organisations but also “socially and culturally established macro-contexts (...) in which certain (formally or informally) conventionalized communicative practices have developed” (van Eemeren, 2010: 129).

conduct of the executive.<sup>5</sup> Typically, MEPs craft their contributions in such a way that their cases in relation to each of the disagreements are supported, often using the same argumentative moves.

In order to analyse the strategic manoeuvring that occurs as part of multi-layered activity types, the reconstruction of the argumentative exchanges in which the manoeuvring occurs should allow for capturing the role that an argumentative move plays in relation to *all* the initial disagreements to which the move is relevant. Unfortunately, existing methods of dealing with multi-issue discourses do not allow for that.

Traditionally, the discourse where multiple issues are addressed has been reconstructed as a case of multiple dispute (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992: 16-22). Multiple disputes typically arise when an arguer brings up two or more issues at the same time. As van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans (2007: 22) explain:

A dispute may also become (...) complex if, rather than one issue, several issues become subject of discussion. If for each of these issues a standpoint is taken which is not accepted, each standpoint necessitates an obligation to defend it, this way creating a multiple dispute.

In analysing argumentative exchanges in which the dispute is multiple, van Eemeren et al. recommend the analyst breaks the multiple dispute into a series of single ones (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992: 20; van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Snoeck Henkemans, 2002: 8; van Eemeren, Houtlosser & Snoeck Henkemans, 2007: 22). Breaking a multiple dispute into elementary ones helps the analyst get a clear idea of what positions the different arguers take and what obligations are incurred on them in view of the positions taken. However, for the analysis of the strategic aspects of argumentative discourse, it is necessary to consider the relationship between these elementary disputes. Especially in this type of discourse, it is often the case that an argumentative move is strategically designed to contribute to several issues simultaneously. As the analysis in sections 3 and 4 will show, so much of the strategic manoeuvring involved would go unnoticed if elementary disputes that constitute a multiple one were analysed in isolation.

In order to capture the strategic aspect of argumentative moves that are meant to contribute to the discussion of several issues simultaneously, I have, in previous work, proposed that an argumentative exchange in which several issues are addressed be reconstructed as a series of several *simultaneous discussions*, each of which is about one of the issues (Mohammed, 2011, 2013). A discussion, in this proposal, is of course not to be understood in the actual sense of a real life discussion that takes place at a specific time and place. It is rather a dialectical analytic reconstruction of a real life discussion, defined in terms of a standpoint and the argumentation advanced in support of it. Two discussions are simultaneous if there is at least one argument, or one argumentative move, that plays a role in both discussions without any of the discussions being subordinate to the other. In multiple disputes, when arguers employ moves to contribute to the discussion of several issues simultaneously, arguers manoeuvre strategically *between simultaneous discussions*. The examination of the manoeuvring that occurs *between the simultaneous discussions* is necessary for an adequate account of the strategic aspects of the discourse. The excerpt from the EP debate on the Summit conclusion analysed here is a good example.

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<sup>5</sup> For another example of a multi-layered activity type, namely the Prime Minister's Question Time in the British House of Commons, see Mohammed (2009) where the different institutional goals and the consequent initial disagreement for this interesting practice are discussed.

### 3. The European Parliamentary debate on the March 2012 Summit conclusions

The EP debate on the conclusions of the March 2012 European Council meeting (hereafter the Summit) started with a statement made by the President of the Council, the just-re-elected Herman Van Rompuy, followed by a statement made by the President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, both concerning the conclusions of the Summit. In the Summit, the Council discussed a number of topical issues, the most important of which was the economic policy of the European Union. It also discussed the EU position concerning the participation in international conferences and some other foreign policy issues. Additionally, the status of the Schengen Agreement and the enlargement of the Schengen Area<sup>6</sup> were the subject of some heated exchanges. The fragment analysed is about this in particular.

Debates on statements are a common practice in the EP. These debates constituted 24.12% of the total debates conducted in the 6<sup>th</sup> parliamentary term, i.e., 2004-2009 (Corbett et al., 2011: 196). In line with Rule 110 of the parliament's rules of procedure, Members of the Council, Members of the Commission as well as Members of the Council can ask for permission to make statements in Parliament. The President of Parliament decides when statements may be made and also whether statements are to be followed by debates or by brief and concise questions from MEPs instead (European Parliament, 2012).

Just like other EP debates on statements, debates on the conclusions of Summits can be seen as an important means through which Parliament exercises its supervisory power over the work of the Council and the Commission. The European Council, which meets four times a year, is the top EU political institution. It is responsible for setting the EU's goals as well as the course for achieving these goals. It provides the impetus for the EU's main policy initiatives and takes decisions on thorny issues that other EU institutions have not been able to agree on (Europa, 2013: 20-27). The Council consists of the heads of states or governments, i.e. the presidents or prime ministers, of all the EU member states, as well as an elected President of the Council and the President of the European Commission (ibid). The Commission, which is represented in the Council by its president, is composed of 27 Commissioners each responsible for a particular portfolio on the EU level. As the executive arm of the EU, it is responsible for proposing new laws and for seeing to it that EU laws and policies are implemented in the member states (Europa, 2011; Leonard, 2010: 58; Staab, 2011: 51).

The debate on the March 2012 Summit conclusions went as it is usual for this kind of debate. Following the statements of the President of the Council and of the President of the Commission, there were contributions by representatives of political

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<sup>6</sup> The Schengen Agreement, signed in 1985 in the town of Schengen, Luxembourg, led to the creation of Europe's borderless Schengen Area in 1995. According to the agreement, countries in the Schengen Area abolish passport and immigration controls at their common borders. The agreement is meant to provide EU citizens with the right to travel, work and live in any EU country without special formalities. Furthermore, the Schengen Area functions as a single country for international travel purposes, with a common visa policy. The creation of the Schengen Area is considered as "one of the most tangible, popular and successful achievements of the EU" (European Commission, 2013). At the time of the debate analysed, the Schengen Area encompassed most EU States (except for Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom), as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, which are not EU member states (ibid).

groups<sup>7</sup> and then contributions by other MEPs, who spoke under the catch-the-eye procedure.<sup>8</sup> In the fragment analysed (see the Appendix), Hannes Swoboda, the President of The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) Group,<sup>9</sup> spoke on behalf of his group.

Mr Swoboda started by expressing his group's position concerning the conclusions of the Summit, focusing mainly on the issue of the Schengen Area. He said:  
I would like to congratulate the Council on its decision regarding Serbia. I believe that it is the right option for Serbia, for the region and also for Kosovo.  
Unfortunately, no positive decisions were made about Schengen, in particular, with regard to Bulgaria and Romania. The people of these countries deserve to have the Schengen Area enlarged. I hope that this will happen soon.

He continued by criticising Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president and a member of the Council at the time, for a statement the latter had made concerning the Schengen Agreement. The MEP said:

what shocked me was the statement by Mr Sarkozy after the Council meeting in which he said that Schengen should possibly be suspended.

The MEP defended his group's stance concerning the Schengen Agreement, denying that the group is preventing reforms of the agreement as a spokesperson of Mr Sarkozy had claimed. Mr Swoboda went on criticising Mr Sarkozy for not "committing to Europe", predicting that he will be losing in the upcoming presidential elections in France. It was not surprising that at the end of Mr Swoboda's contribution, a French MEP from the rival European People's Party (EPP),<sup>10</sup> Jean-Pierre Audy, raised a blue card asking for permission to pose a question to Mr Swoboda. Mr Audy, who is a fellow of Mr Sarkozy in the French Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), did as expected from him and defended Mr Sarkozy. He argued that the French president wanted to strengthen the Schengen Agreement and tried to get Mr Swoboda to admit that the management of the Schengen Area was not satisfactory. In his response to the question, Mr Swoboda continued to criticise Mr Sarkozy and the French authorities under his right wing leadership. In particular, he criticised the French role in obstructing the enlargement of the Schengen Area, which he argued undermined their commitment to what he called "Europe's major achievement". In his answer, the political rivalry between the S&D and the EPP became very prominent. The MEP contrasted the positions of Mr Sarkozy with that of François Hollande, Mr Sarkozy's socialist competitor. He said:

I am standing up for Europe. If Mr Sarkozy does not do this, then that is his problem, but I and, above all, François Hollande and the French Socialists are standing up for this. For security and freedom!

The exchange between Mr Swoboda and Mr Audy ended there, in line with the blue-card procedure, which does not allow the MEP who posed a question to pose another one.

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<sup>7</sup> In the EP, MEPs sit in cross-national political groups or remain non-affiliated. At the time of the debate analysed, there were 7 political groups and 27 MEPs remained non-attached (Corbet et al., 2011: 78-128; Leonard, 2010: 72).

<sup>8</sup> Under the catch-the-eye procedure, MEPs can try to catch the eye of the Speaker in order to be called to speak. The procedure is meant to provide a chance to speak for those MEPs who were not allocated speaking time in advance (European Parliament, 2012: Rule 149).

<sup>9</sup> The S&D Group is centre-left and was the second largest political group at the time of the debate (Corbet et al., 2011: 93).

<sup>10</sup> The EPP Group is a centre-right political group (Corbet et al., 2011: 88). It was the largest political group at the time of the debate.

Despite its being short, the exchange provides a good example of a political discourse which is crafted to address several issues in the simultaneous pursuit of multiple goals.

Mr Swoboda's attempt to achieve several goals was reflected in his contribution. The contribution started by an assessment of the conclusion reached in the Summit: praising the Summit's decision to grant Serbia the status of a candidate member and criticising the decision to postpone taking a decision concerning extending the Schengen Area to include Bulgaria and Romania. This could be viewed as an attempt to exercise his supervisory power as an MEP by assessing the conclusions of the Summit. Also in his first turn, the MEP openly called for the Schengen Area to be enlarged to include Romania and Bulgaria, which could be seen as an attempt to influence the EU policy-making. Mr Swoboda was also clearly trying to promote the interests of his political group (S&D Group) and the interests of socialists in general. This was particularly clear in his defence of the group and attack on Mr Sarkozy, a representative of the rival Christian Democrats. It is important, however, to note that the criticism of Mr Sarkozy was presented in the context of supervising the Council and assessing its conduct. Sarkozy is a member of the Council and was criticised in relation to an issue that was addressed in the Summit. This, as it will be shown in the next section, is an interesting strategic manoeuvre.

The goals above are in line with the general characteristics of the activity type of EP debates on statements (Mohammed, 2013). MEPs in the debate on the Summit conclusions were in fact expected to assess the conclusions of the Summit (occasion-related goal), to influence the EU policy-making in what concerns the issues addressed in the Summit (powers-related goal), and to promote the interests of their political parties and groups as well as national interests and the interests of the EU citizens in general (identity-related goal). Furthermore, also like in other EP debates on statements, the pursuit of the different goals shaped the argumentative choices in different ways. The goals of assessing the conclusions of the Summit and of influencing the EU policy-making gave rise to several issues in relation to which standpoints were advanced and supported, and the goal of promoting the interests of one's political group guided the choice and formulation of the standpoints and arguments. Moreover, MEPs employed argumentative moves that contribute to the discussion of the multiple issues raised at the same time. A good example of such moves is the concession Mr Swoboda granted his opponent in his answer to the blue-card question.

In his blue-card question, Mr Audy asked Mr Swoboda, "Do you know that in truth, freedom cannot be exercised without security?" Against Mr Audy's intention, the question proved beneficial to Mr Swoboda who responded by saying: "Mr Audy, it is true that security and Schengen go hand in hand" and used the concession as an argument to defend his positions in relation to all the issues that he addressed. In the next section, the strategic manoeuvre in the move is analysed, focusing on the favourable outcomes that can be achieved by the move. As the analysis will show, very interesting instances of strategic manoeuvring occur *in between* the discussions of the different issues that are at stake. The strategic design of these moves cannot be captured without reconstructing the discourse as a series of *simultaneous discussions* and examining the strategic manoeuvring that occurs *between* these discussions.

#### 4. Strategic manoeuvring in the debate on the Summit Conclusions

Overall, Mr Swoboda’s contribution addressed five main issues: (i) the Schengen agreement, (ii) the conduct of the Council, (iii) the conduct of the S&D Group, (iv) the conduct of Sarkozy, and (v) the French elections. It is important to note here that not all of these issues were necessarily related to the occasion of the debate or to the powers he acquires as an MEP. The issue of French elections was certainly not. Interestingly, however, only the standpoint that was directly occasion-related was eventually made explicit. Other standpoints remained unexpressed. This choice of formulation is in line with the institutional constraints imposed in the activity type of EP debates on statements. In this activity type, institutional constraints precondition the allowable issues about which differences of opinion can arise and be discussed. MEPs who wish to address other issues will have to manoeuvre strategically in order to do that. Typically, the manoeuvring involves employing argumentative moves that can play a role in the defence of more than one standpoint at the same time, making explicit only the standpoint which addresses the issue that is institutionally allowable and leaving the other standpoints unexpressed. This strategic manoeuvre allows the arguer to defend standpoints without necessarily making them explicit. The concession that Mr Swoboda granted to his opponent did exactly this.

In the discussion about the Schengen agreement (issue i), the concession supported the standpoint that *The Schengen Area should be enlarged soon to include Romania and Bulgaria*, as Figure 1 below shows:

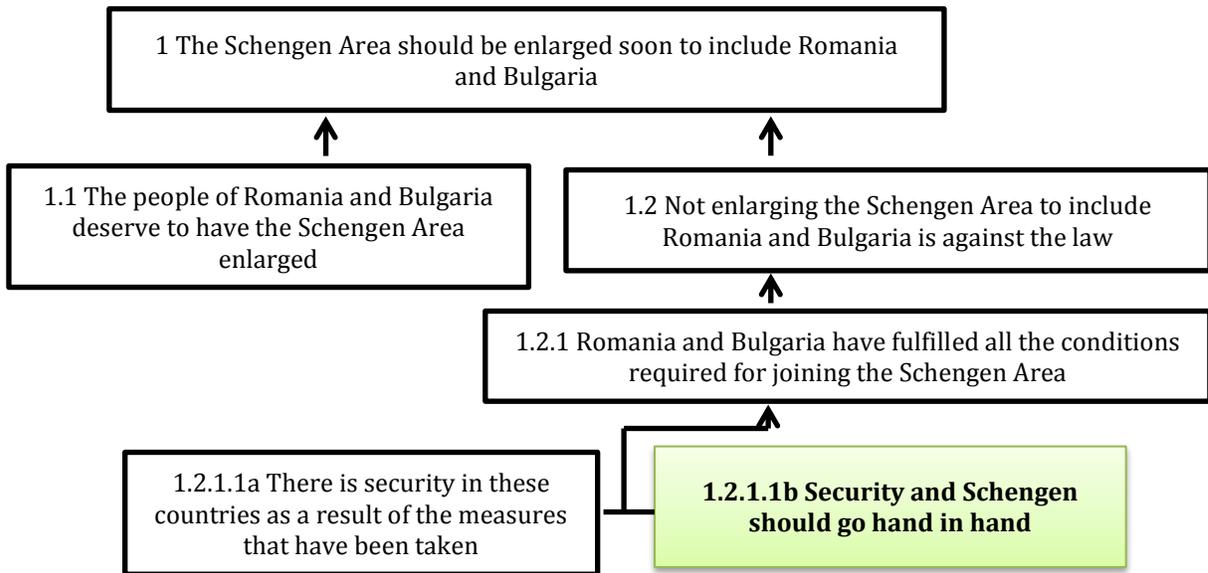


Figure 1

In debates on statements, initial disagreements concerning the issues raised in the statements are to be expected given the institutional rules and conventions of this type of

debates. The difference of opinion concerning the Schengen Area and a standpoint about it were therefore to be expected. The standpoint was explicitly advanced, and so were all the arguments that defend it. In employing the argument that *Security and Schengen should go hand in hand* (1.2.1.1b) to defend the standpoint that *The Schengen Area should be enlarged soon to include Romania and Bulgaria*, Mr Swoboda made expedient choices from the topical potential available to him, adapted optimally to his opponent, and used an effective presentational device. The argument is based on a concession requested by the opponent himself, which makes it more likely to be accepted by this opponent or at least those watching the debate could assume that. But the concession is granted in a formulation that is also very opportune for the arguer: “freedom” in the concession required was replaced by “Schengen” in the concession granted, which allowed the concession to act as a strong argument in support of the standpoint that the Schengen Area should be enlarged. Had the opponent been given the chance to respond, he might have challenged the formulation, but Mr Swoboda was spared this challenge by the institutional constraints.

In the discussion about the conduct of the Council (issue ii), the concession supported the standpoint that *The conduct of the European Council in relation to Schengen is not up to standard*, as Figure 2, below shows:

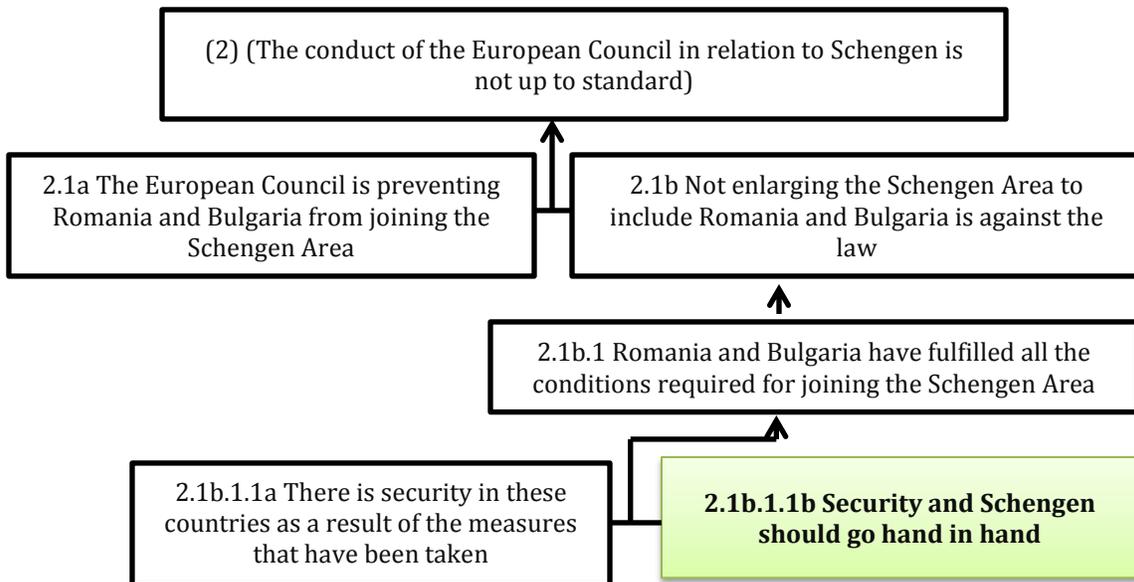


Figure 2

The standpoint was not explicitly expressed, but can be easily inferred from the arguments expressed interpreted, especially if one takes into account the context of the exchange and the roles and functions of the EP. In the multi-layered activity type of EP debates on statements, a disagreement concerning this issue is in fact a preconditioned

disagreement. The discussion of the different positions related to the *conduct of the Council* is one way through which the EP exercises the supervisory power over the executives. Given that MEPs and the representatives of the Council know their institutional roles and powers, the message gets through even when standpoints related to this issue are not made explicit.

Furthermore, the MEP’s critical stance of the conduct of the Council is supported by an explicit argument (2.1a *The European Council is preventing Romania and Bulgaria from joining the Schengen Area*). The argument is complemented by the argument that *Not enlarging the Schengen Area to include Romania and Bulgaria is against the law*, which is the same argument that was also used to defend the standpoint that *The Schengen Area should be enlarged soon to include Romania and Bulgaria* (standpoint of issue i). Given the time limits imposed on MEPs speaking in such debates, making an argumentative move that can defend several standpoints is very strategic. Like the case above shows, defending the second standpoint (issue ii) could be done by merely adding one more argumentative move to the arguments that support the first standpoint (adding only argument 2.1a, in this case).

Mr Swoboda’s concession about the link between “*Security and Schengen*” supported his case in relation to the issue of the conduct of the S&D Group as well (issue iii). The concession was part of a coordinatively compound argument that supported a positive assessment of the conduct of the political group. The standpoint was not explicitly expressed, but needs to be reconstructed in order to make sense of Mr Swoboda’s argument that *It is not true that the S&D group is preventing the reform of the Schengen Agreement* (argument 3.1). Argumentation in support of this standpoint can be reconstructed as in Figure 3, below:

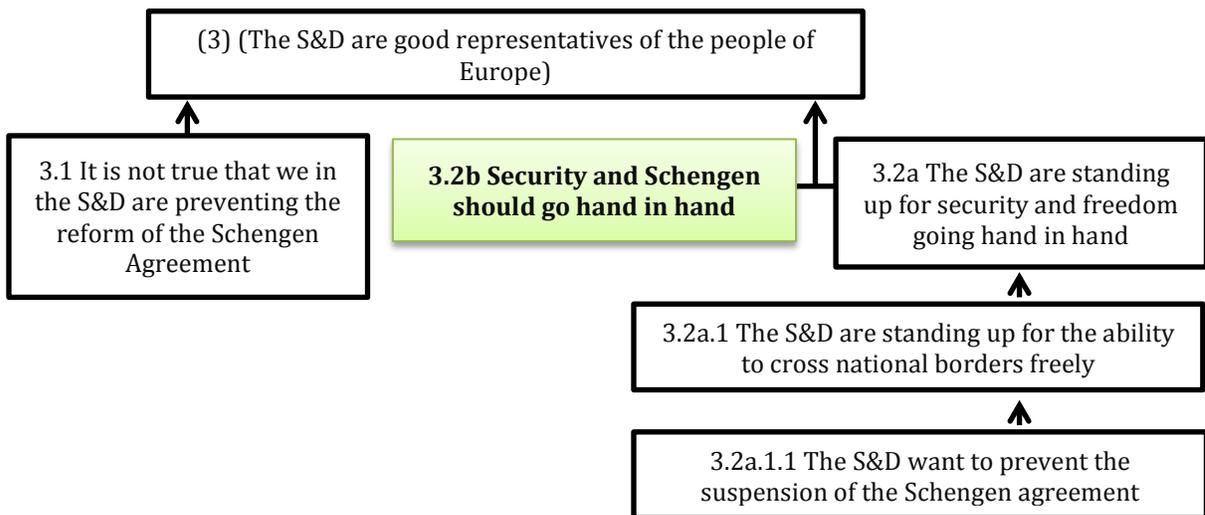


Figure 3

Maintaining a standpoint that defends the general conduct of one’s own political group implicitly was clearly a strategic choice. It is in line with an understanding that is

shared in public political life that explicit self-defence backfires. Making an explicit self-defence standpoint could make the doubts about the conduct of the group even more present, and this is something that is obviously undesirable. However, as we get to know from Mr Swoboda's speech, the S&D group had been accused of preventing the reform of the Schengen Agreement. The accusation casts doubt on the conduct of the group, and one could surely expect that this would not be ignored. Mr Swoboda was in a sense expected to defend his political group, and the issue of the conduct of the S&D group was present anyway. Expressing the arguments and leaving the standpoint implicit was in sense a good way of addressing the issue while avoiding a backfire. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that the issue of the conduct of the S&D political group is not one of the institutionally allowable initial disagreements in this type of debate. That may also explain why the main standpoint related to this issue remained not directly expressed. Keeping that in mind, Mr Swoboda left the standpoint unexpressed and explicitly expressed only the arguments that support it. The arguments made the S&D's position regarding the Schengen Agreement clear, thereby addressing one of the disputes that are allowable in the activity type (an occasion-related dispute). By deciding which moves to make explicitly and which moves to leave implicit, Mr Swoboda manoeuvred strategically in order to support his case in relation to issues that are not typically addressed in the activity type without going against its institutional constraints.

Finally, the concession granted by Mr Swoboda to his opponent was used also to support Mr Swoboda's position concerning the conduct of Mr Sarkozy (issue iv) and the French elections (issue v). The concession that *Security and Schengen should go hand in hand* supported the criticism of Mr Sarkozy, as Figure 4 shows:

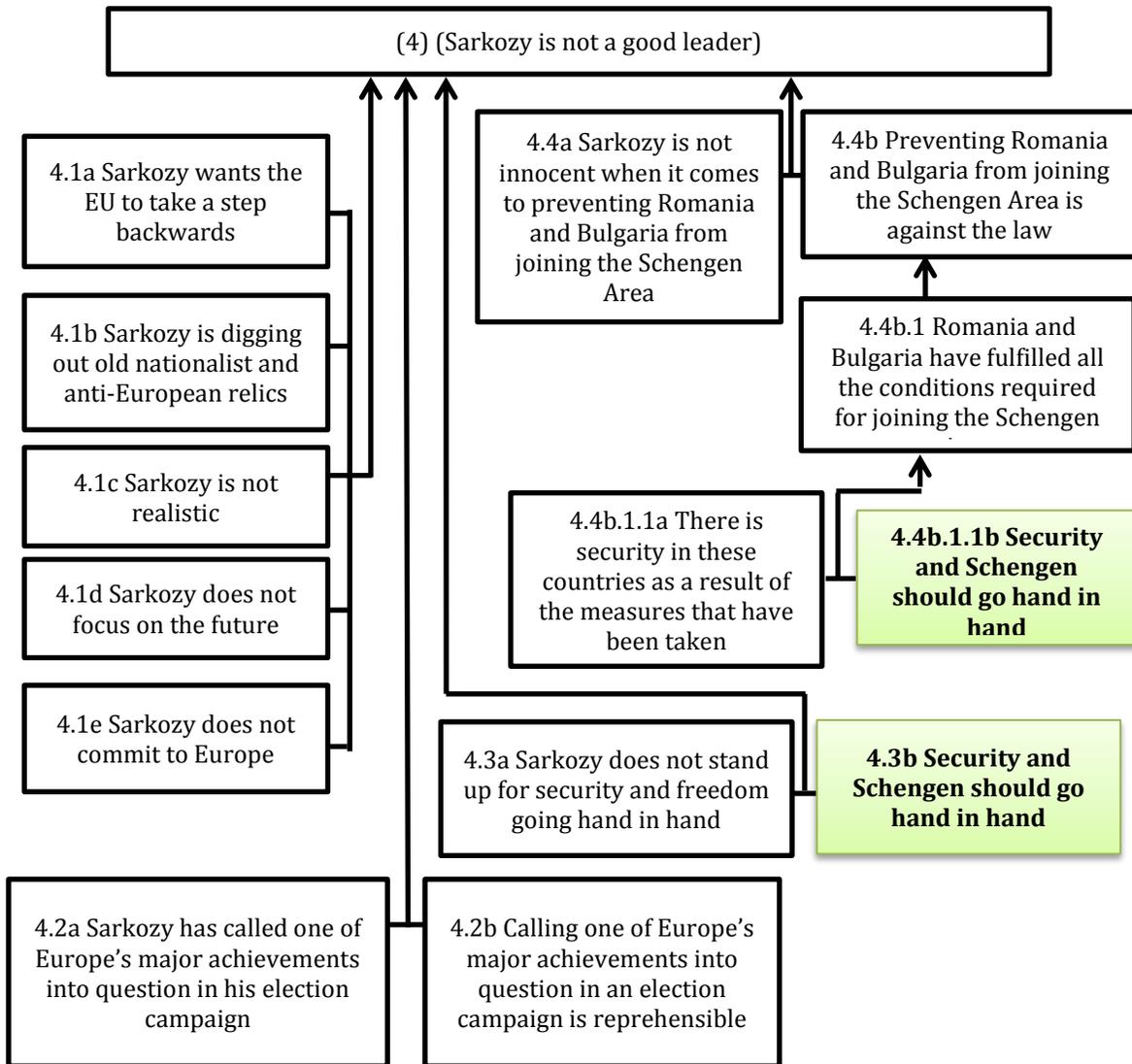


Figure 4

And it also supported his praise of Mr Hollande, as the Figure 5 below shows:

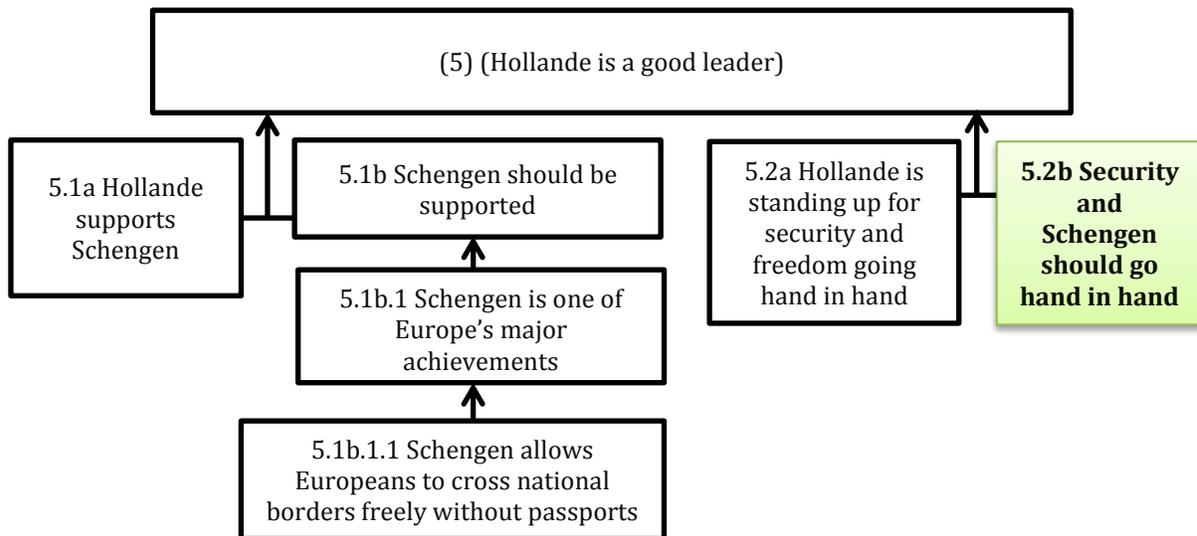


Figure 5

The conduct of Mr Sarkozy was undoubtedly an issue of discussion in the exchange between Mr Swoboda and Mr Audy. The two MEPs devoted a good deal of their contributions attacking and defending him. In principle, the conduct of Sarkozy is an issue about which initial disagreements in this type of debate may arise. As the French head of state, he is a member of the Council. The conduct of members of the Council can definitely be an issue of discussion in EP debates on Summit conclusions. However, not all aspects of Sarkozy's conduct are relevant to the discussion of the conduct of the Council. Unlike Sarkozy's positions in relation to the issues addressed in the Summit, which are legitimate issues of debate in this venue, his merits in the upcoming elections are not. This could explain why Mr Swoboda's left his standpoint concerning Sarkozy's conduct implicit. Possibly, the MEP was trying to avoid making an explicit claim that concerns the conduct of Sarkozy beyond the capacity of the latter as a member of the Council, in order to keep his contribution within what is allowable in this activity type. But the arguments that relate to Sarkozy's position as a French president can certainly not be missed.

Moreover, Mr Swoboda was clearly eager to address the issue of the upcoming French elections and promote the interests of Francois Hollande, the Socialist candidate and Sarkozy's rival. But this could not be done without explicitly expressing arguments that relate to the French elections (e.g. arguments 5.1a and 5.2a). In order to remain as much as possible within the boundaries of institutional relevance, he kept most of his arguments about security and the importance of the Schengen Agreement, which are issues that matter to all the citizens of the EU. The MEP made sure that there are many

more explicit arguments that express his commitment to the European project rather than arguments that reflect only his political rivalry with Sarkozy and his group. In other words, he tried to maintain a balance between promoting the interests of his political group and promoting the interests of the EU citizens in general, which is a concern that is typical of the EP.

Mr Swoboda's concession, analysed above, is a good example of argumentative moves that are crafted by politicians to address several issues and achieve multiple institutional goals at the same time. As the analysis shows, in making the concession, Mr Swoboda made opportune choices from topical potential, stylistic devices and adapted to his opponent in order to craft an argument that has the potential of defending several standpoints, some of which were left implicit to avoid undesirable institutional commitments.<sup>11</sup> The discursive choices of Mr Swoboda were strategically made in order to achieve favourable outcomes in relation to the several issues he addressed. In order to capture the strategic aspects in the design of these kind of moves, the moves need to be analysed as part of what can be reconstructed as several *simultaneous discussions*. That is to say that the analysis should cover the contribution of such moves to the discussion of all of the different issues at stake. Such a reconstruction is necessary in order to account for the several favourable outcomes pursued by means of such moves and the strategic choices made as part of this pursuit.

## 5. Concluding remarks

In this essay, I examined the strategic manoeuvring of an MEP in the EP debate on the conclusions of the European Summit of March 2012. My goal was to throw more light on the multi-purposive nature of EP debates on statements as well as on the strategic choices made by arguers in the context of these debates. In the analysis, I was guided by the findings of my earlier analysis of another EP debate on a statement, namely the debate on immigration in the wake of the crisis in Lampedusa in early 2011. One of the main findings of the examination of that debate was that some of the institutional goals pursued gave rise to initial disagreements that could be considered typical in this type of parliamentary session and that these disagreements were discussed simultaneously: MEPs designed their contributions in such a way that they defended their case in relation to the different issues at the same time. In this essay, the analysis of the link between MEPs' goals and their discursive choices in EP debates on statements was taken one step further, in order to shed light on the strategic design of exactly those moves which contribute to the discussion of several issues simultaneously.

In analysing the debate on the Summit conclusions, I focused on a concession that was granted by an MEP to his opponent during the debate. The concession was not just a strategic move in the defence of the MEP's position in relation to the main issue of the debate, namely the Summit conclusions concerning the enlargement of the Schengen

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<sup>11</sup> The standpoints that were left implicit were reconstructed on the basis of two main considerations. First, these standpoints were to be expected because the disagreements related to them were already there, either as a result of the institutional roles and powers (e.g. the disagreement about the conduct of the executives, which is central to the supervisory power of the EP) or as a result of a previously taken position (e.g. the disagreement about the conduct of the S&D, which was initiated by the criticism expressed towards the S&D). Second, the standpoints could be reconstructed because the arguments that support them were explicitly expressed. Reconstructing the unexpressed standpoints is necessary for seeing the relevance of these explicit arguments.

Area. The concession was crafted skillfully in order to possibly defend also the MEP's positions in relation to issues that were less central to the debate. By means of the concession, the MEP could address issues that he would be interested in addressing but which were not necessarily institutionally relevant in the context of the debate. In other words, the concession was a strategic manoeuvre *across* or *between* the several issues discussed.

The concession analysed in this essay is a strategic manoeuvre that is typical of public political arguments. Public political arguments are typically multi-purposive activities in which multiple issues are addressed. In order to cope with the multiple issues present in any public debate, arguers resort to argumentative moves that play a role in the discussion of more than one issue at the same time. These moves, such as the concession analysed here, are designed to bring about favourable outcomes in relation to more than one standpoint at the time. Furthermore, the strategic choices made and the outcomes achieved in relation to one standpoint are not independent from those choices and outcomes that relate to the other standpoints addressed. In this essay, I argue that in order to arrive at an adequate account of the strategic design of this kind of move, it is necessary that the connections between the different issues are captured. It is in that sense that existing methods of dealing with multi-issue discourses are not satisfactory and that the traditional advice of breaking multiple disputes into elementary ones needs to be revised. In order to capture the strategic design of argumentative moves that are strategic across the several issues discussed, multi-issue discourses need to be reconstructed as a series of simultaneous discussions and the strategic manoeuvring that occurs *between* these simultaneous discussions needs to be analysed.

In addition to its contribution to the study of strategic manoeuvring of these type of moves, the examination in this essay also contributes to the characterisation of EP debates on statements as an argumentative activity type. In particular, the examination highlights important institutional preconditions that relate to the initial disagreements that can give rise to argumentation in this type of communicative practice. Consequently, it elaborates on the understanding that the activity type of EP debates on statements is a *multi-layered* activity type in which several institutional goals are pursued and where several initial disagreements are discussed simultaneously. Two central preconditioned disagreements are the disagreement concerning proposed EU policies as well as the disagreement concerning the conduct of the executives. The two issues are discussed simultaneously as arguers employ argumentative moves that contribute to the discussion of the two at the same time. This understanding is important for it highlights the argumentative interplay between two important political processes: policy-making and accountability. The former is discursively conducted by means of the argumentative discussion of disagreements concerning policies and the latter is discursively achieved through the argumentative discussion of disagreements concerning the conduct of the executives. The two are intertwined. Moreover, a better understanding of the *multi-layered* activity types of EP debates on statements will hopefully be useful also for the examination of argumentation in other multi-layered activity types. The public sphere is fortunately full of these.

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## Appendix

EP debate on the Conclusions of the European Council meeting, 13 March 2012 (a fragment)

*Hannes Swoboda:*

Mr President, firstly, I would like to congratulate Mr Van Rompuy on his re-election. There are a lot of discussions ahead of us and some controversial issues to be dealt with. We still have a great deal to do. Secondly, I would like to congratulate the Council on its decision regarding Serbia. I believe that it is the right option for Serbia, for the region and also for Kosovo. Unfortunately, no positive decisions were made about Schengen, in particular, with regard to Bulgaria and Romania. The people of these countries deserve to have the Schengen Area enlarged. I hope that this will happen soon.

However, what shocked me was the statement by Mr Sarkozy after the Council meeting in which he said that Schengen should possibly be suspended. Will we have to bring our passports again when we come to Strasbourg? Are the many absent members of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) already looking for their passports ready for their next trip to Strasbourg? This surely cannot be meant seriously. Now, Mr Sarkozy's spokesperson is saying that the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament is preventing the reform of Schengen. This is not true. We are not preventing reform; we simply do not want to take a step backwards. We need to move forwards in Europe and not back. Therefore, I am calling on Mr Sarkozy, in the light of his possible election defeat, not to dig out all the old nationalist and anti-European relics. Let us remain realistic and continue focusing on the future. Let us commit to Europe. That would be a good thing for Mr Sarkozy to do.

*Jean-Pierre Audy:*

Mr Swoboda, you brandished your passport and talked of Nicolas Sarkozy. Do you know that Nicolas Sarkozy has always argued in favour of the Schengen agreements? Do you know that Nicolas Sarkozy does not want to get rid of Schengen, but, instead, to strengthen it? Do you know how the border between Greece and Turkey operates? Do you know that in truth, freedom cannot be exercised without security? Mr Swoboda, I have a question to put to you: do you believe that the Schengen provisions are properly managed – yes or no?

*Hannes Swoboda:*

Mr President, firstly, Mr Audy, I always think of Mr Sarkozy when I pull out my passport. I will think of him particularly when he has retired and can no longer pursue the policy that he is currently pursuing.

Secondly, Mr Audy, it is true that security and Schengen go hand in hand. However, I would like to ask you why the Council – and the French Government is not entirely innocent in this respect – is continuing to prevent Bulgaria and Romania from joining the Schengen Area, despite the fact that they have fulfilled all the conditions? I would very

much like to ask you this, because now there is security in these countries as a result of the measures that have been taken. Our failure to enlarge the Schengen Area is actually against the law. I am very much in favour of it, but calling it into question in an election campaign, as Mr Sarkozy has done, is reprehensible in my view. Schengen is one of Europe's major achievements. An achievement of this kind should not be called into question. Instead, it should be supported because it means that we Europeans are able to cross national borders freely without passports. That is what I am standing up for in Europe. If Mr Sarkozy does not do this, then that is his problem, but I and, above all, François Hollande and the French Socialists are standing up for this. For security and freedom!

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