One parliament, two political regimes
The Portuguese legislative body between the Monarchy and the Republic

Introduction
Parliament was one of the main settings of the country’s political activity. Besides acting as a sovereign body, it was at the São Bento Palace in Lisbon that most of the parties’ political activity took place. However, the importance of the institution in the framework of the powers designed to sustain the regime in the aftermath of the Civil War between absolutists and liberals in 1834, both in its monarchical and republican facets, was seldom proportional to the image the representatives of the nation projected of themselves. Newspaper editorials and writers, the speakers who began to inflame street rallies and the writers who imprinted their opinions in the many pamphlets written in this period all believed deputies and peers of the kingdom (during the Monarchy) and deputies and senators (during the Republic) to be, as a whole, a political body lacking preparation, of dubious electoral legitimacy, undisciplined and excessively conflict-prone, and that when they met, their work was scant and poor. In the light of this, public opinion adopted an extremely negative view of the functioning and activity of the parliamentary institution, more disposed to creating confusion than to solving the problems of the country.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the feeling that parliament was an unproductive and ineffective instrument – a perception that went back to the foundation years of the regime in the 1830s – increased amidst the majority of commentators of public life. This opinion, which gave an unflattering image of the capacities of that legislative body and became more accentuated during the Republic, went hand in hand

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with straight criticism of the short number of parliamentary sessions held in both chambers, low attendance rates of their members and their scarce productivity. Nonetheless, this was a distorted perception of the period, influenced by an ideological interpretation of the political reality\(^1\).

This paper aims to offer a closer insight of the political role and functioning of the Chamber of Deputies in Portugal, as well as of its relationship with the executive power, focusing on the period between 1906 and 1917. It proposes to assess how the transition from the Monarchy to the Republic in 1910 affected the activity of the lower chamber, by comparing the functioning of the Portuguese parliament during its last two monarchical legislatures with the first two of the republican government. It starts by analyzing the relationship between the Chamber of Deputies and the government, comparing the patterns of ministerial and legislative stability, followed by an examination of the causes for the removal of successive governments from their executive roles, in order to ascertain the importance of parliament as a privileged setting for that finale. This work also pinpoints and examines a few of the particular and most specific characteristics of parliamentary activity which were under constant scrutiny, such as the regularity of the sessions per year, the attendance record of members, sources and the volume of legislative output. The paper ends with an analysis of the thematic organization of parliamentary activity, divided as it was in committees, in an attempt to identify the major continuities and discontinuities in the period under examination. The aim is not to explain the fall of the Portuguese liberal regime, be it in its monarchical or republican facets, due to conspicuous executive instability, but to illustrate some of the main characteristics of parliament’s activity in a period of

transition between political regimes to understand the role it played in the political context of the time².

**Brief description of the Portuguese political regime**

On the eve of the 1910 republican revolution, the Portuguese political regime was governed by the Constitutional Charter of 1826, the Constitution granted by king D. Pedro IV from Rio de Janeiro. Even though it was successively reviewed in 1885, 1895-1896 and 1907, the Charter envisaged a parliamentary model composed of two chambers. The Chamber of Deputies was based on the principle of elections. All male citizens over 21 years of age who fulfilled a series of census and capacity-based requisites laid down in the electoral legislation had the right to vote. All those who paid the State an amount of no less than 500 Réis in direct taxes and who were concurrently able to read and write were entitled to vote³. Voting was direct and secret. The legislation envisaged 33 constituencies (22 in mainland Portugal), 4 in Madeira and the Azores and 7 in the overseas possessions), electing a total of 155 deputies in 26 plurinominal and 7 uninominal constituencies (the latter pertaining to the colonies). Consequently, according to data on the total population of the kingdom, about 12% of Portuguese had the chance to vote, which corresponded to 47% of the male population over 21 years of age. The Chamber of the Peers, in turn, was based on different political assumptions, which were at the basis of the main conflicts between the major political parties and the ruling elites practically throughout the entire constitutional monarchy

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³ This disposition was introduced by Decree of 28 March 1895, and it remained unaltered in all subsequent electoral laws. In 1910, the electoral law approved by decree of 8 August 1901 was in force. Pedro Tavares de Almeida, Legislação Eleitoral Portuguesa, 1820-1926, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional, 1998, pp. 345-522.
regime, due to its non-elective nature\textsuperscript{4}. According to last amendment of the Constitution in 1907, the upper chamber, which had legislative powers, was occupied by an unfixed number of life members appointed by the king.

Besides recognizing the legislative, executive and judicial powers, the 1826 Constitutional Charter acknowledged a fourth power, which was controlled by the king. Under the scope of his moderating role, it was the monarch’s mission to call Extraordinary Parliament Sessions; extend and postpone General Parliamentary Sessions; dissolve the Chamber of Deputies; approve Decrees and resolutions emanating from Parliament; freely appoint and dismiss ministers; suspend magistrates and choose the life members of the Council of State\textsuperscript{5}. The solution that had been found gave the monarch the main role in the regulation of the governing system, placing parliament in a secondary position. This model meant it was the king who ruled the State as the supreme arbitrator of political conflict\textsuperscript{6}.

The onset of the Republic brought a few changes to this outline. Parliament, now changed to a Congress, kept its bicameral structure, but the Chamber of Deputies, despite maintaining its elective role, began to be chosen by male voters over 21 years of age who could write and read or were heads of the family. This regulation led to an increase in the number of voters in 1911, who now represented 14\% of the total population of the country and 57\% of the male population over 21. Subsequent changes – in 1913 and 1915 – to these regulations shrank the electoral body, who, in 1917 represented, respectively, 8\% of the total population and 32\% of the over 21. Voting

\textsuperscript{4} The 1885 reform of the Chamber of Peers, which lasted only 10 years, allowed the combination of the principle of royal appointment with elections.


remained direct and secret, with the number of members of parliament ascending to 234 (1911), subsequently corrected to 155 (in 1915). The aristocratic Chamber of Peers, in turn, gave way to an elected Senate which had the purpose of taming the political aggressiveness of the lower chamber, and to be a form of commitment with the former parliamentary tradition. The president of the Republic, on the other hand, was elected by indirect suffrage and by 2/3 of the votes of the members of the two chambers of the Congress in a joint session. If none of the candidates obtained the majority vote, voting would be repeated. In the third voting session, only between the two candidates with most of the votes, the one elected was whoever attained the largest number of votes from deputies and senators. The winner served a 4-year term of office and was not able to be re-elected in the subsequent 4-year period, a rule which weakened his governing. Under the terms of the new 1911 Constitution, the president was obliged to enforce the laws decided in Parliament. Should he decide not to do so, the legislation was implemented 15 days later. He could freely appoint and dismiss ministers without the approval of Congress, but the latter could equally dismiss the president by a 2/3 majority vote. This system meant the role of the President of the Republic was reduced to the mere symbolic function of representing the Nation in the internal and external affairs of the State. It was only after the constitutional review of 1919 that the president of the Republic had, amongst his duties, the possibility of dissolving Parliament. However, in practice he proved unable to exercise this prerogative as he was limited by the parliamentary majority represented at the Parliamentary Council, the body which had been set up to put forward opinions to

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7 According to the 1911 Constitution, Congress was formed by 163 deputies and 71 senators. The 234 constituents elected the senators among themselves, the remainder forming part of the Chamber of Deputies.
9 Idem, ibidem, p. 110.
justify any type of dissolution. As a tool at the service of the executive power, the presidential personality was subject to the wearing caused by the act of governing and to the constant fluctuation of parliamentary majorities. Between 1911 and 1917, due to the instability that characterized the parliament, the Republic had already swollen up three Presidents and 13 different governments.

The Chamber of Deputies regarding executive power.

The final years of the constitutional monarchy were ridden with major political instability. This was not a novelty of the times, as the founding period of the liberal regime had been marked by high turnover of office. The profound frailty of the system was associated to the revolutionary nature of the origins of the regime, ideological and constitutional struggle factors and to the absence of political parties duly formalized as channels for voicing the views of lobbying groups.

The high ministerial turnover in Portugal increased on the eve of the proclamation of the Republic and was one of the conditioning factors of the October revolution. For the period under examination, up to 1910, there were 8 governments, each averaging just over 6 months in office (table 1). During the Republic, up to 1917,

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13 If we take our analysis back to 1890, we notice that until 1910 there were 20 alternating governments whose term of office averaged just one year, and which were led by 11 distinct persons. In other words, in this period, each prime ministered stayed in power for approximately 23 months. The year 1890 is a turning point in the political history of Portugal. In January, the government yielded to the ultimatum imposed by its British counterpart and relinquished its intent to create an empire in the south of the African continent, spanning from Angola to Mozambique, which caused an unprecedented crisis in the Monarchy. The subsequent nationalist opposition to the regime was taken up by the republicans to increase the volume of propaganda, culminating, a year later, in a failed military coup in the city of
13 governments did not even make it to 6 months, which indicates the aggravation of the political instability during this political regime. In the First Republic, the length of governments was practically 4 times lower than during the final years of the Constitutional Monarchy.

The high ministerial turnover at the end of the Monarchy worsened in the beginning of the Republic, which clearly demonstrates that the change in regime was not a factor of governmental stability. On the contrary, there was a slight increase of governmental instability. The common denominator is that in both cases the length of government was, on average, extremely low.

Following the 1885 constitutional review, each legislature at the Chamber of Deputies should last three years (instead of the former four year period), with the yearly session extended by 3 months. The regime founded in 1910 kept the three-year legislature and increased the legislative sessions to four months, with the possibility of the latter being extended or postponed by deliberation of the two chambers of Congress made at a joint session. In the former regime, it was the king, together with the

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Oporto. The 1890-1891 events were considered to be the starting moments of a crisis which would lead to the end of the Constitutional Monarchy in October 1910.

14 This analysis takes into consideration the period which mediated between the first government of João Franco, in May 1906, until the end of the third government of Afonso Costa, which fell following the military coup carried out by Sidónio Pais in December 1917. The provisional republican government, in office between 5 October 1910 and 3 September 1911, and the brief government of João Chagas between 15 and 17 May 1915 were not taken into consideration. It must be pointed out that the alternating feature of governments in Portugal was further accentuated during the republican phase, as between 1910 and 1926 there were a succession of 45 cabinets which were in office, on average, for 4 months. Of these, 10 ministries (22%) only managed to last a month in office.


16 Each daily meeting held in Parliament is called a session. A legislative session is also the name given to the time chambers are at work during the year. The period mediating between the forming of parliament until the day their powers come to an end is known as legislature.

government, who had the prerogative of extending, postponing and dissolving Parliament\textsuperscript{17}.

Regarding the length of the two legislatures examined in each regime, the period corresponding to the transition from the Monarchy to the Republic showed a significant increase in the average length when parliament met. Taking into consideration the time span between the beginning of the first and the end of the last legislative sessions of each legislature, one notices that during the republican phase, parliament enjoyed much more stability, as it permanence indicates. The length of time parliament was in activity almost doubled. Each of the two monarchic legislatures lasted approximately, on average, 16 months, whereas this figure went up to 29 months during the Republic, up to 1917 (table 1)\textsuperscript{18}. This feature reinforces the idea that the Republic, despite all its political contradictions, was a period of reinforcement of parliament, given that the legislative body tended to meet for longer periods than those governments were in office.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>period</th>
<th>government</th>
<th>average/month</th>
<th>legislature</th>
<th>average/month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1906-1910</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6,5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1917</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5,7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parliamentary influence in the fall of governments

The parliamentary nature of the liberal regime, be it its monarchic facet or republican, can be evaluated through the introduction of a new variable, which allow us


\textsuperscript{18} Given that the Decree of 24 September 1910 postponed the \textit{Cortes Gerais Ordinárias} (Ordinary General Parliament Meeting) to 12 December 1910 and that, when the Republic had already been instituted, a Decree dated 24 October 1910 nullified the deputy elections carried out on 28 August, only the governments resulting from the 19 August 1906 elections (1906-1908) and the 5 April 1908 (1908-1910) were taken into consideration. In the same fashion, the information concerning the 1911 Constituent Assembly was not included in the present study, which, instead, included the data of the 28 May 1911 (1911-1915) and of the 13 June (1915-1917) elections.
to verify if governments discarded their executive duties for extra-parliamentary reasons, or it that happened as a result of political adverse voting or of events which occurred in both chambers of parliament. In this light, the role played by the supreme body of national representation in the ministerial turnover was not uniform throughout the period under examination either, and a visible lack of continuity can be seen after the October revolution.

In the final years of the monarchy, out of the 8 working governments, only two fell in parliament\(^ {19} \). One of them refused to conduct a parliamentary inquiry to its own management, which caused a parliamentary upheaval leading to the government resigning. The other left the scene due to disturbances in the Chamber of Deputies when the issue around the Treaty with the Transvaal was under debate. It must be pointed out that these two governments were the shortest of the final period of the monarchy. This information may indicate a higher level of control of the legislative body by the executive power during the monarchy\(^ {20} \).

The elites moving in the corridors of power, particularly during the Monarchy, proved too permeable to external events, which impeded the fulfillment of the constitutionally established rules and systematically interrupted the normal course of the executive process and the making of the laws. The reasons for the fall of governments outside the scope of the political fight within São Bento had multiple origins. Between 1906 and 1910, internal dissent involving distinct ministers stood out (1 case), followed by divergence from government (3 cases) and by political violence episodes (2 cases).

\(^{19}\) These refer to the coalition governments between the progressive party and dissident regenerators, led by Artur Campos Henrques (25.12.1908-11.04.1909) and by Sebastião de Sousa Teles (11.04.1909-14.05.1909).

In this context, the importance of parliament increased with the advent of the Republic. Contrary to what can be seen in the case of the Monarchy, throughout the Republic there was a reinforcement of the parliamentary setting as a privileged place where governments lost their sell-by date. It comes thus as no surprise that a higher number of governments ceased functions due to parliamentary incidents or hostile voting at the Chamber of Deputies after 1910. Until 1917, of the 13 ministries which took office, 7, which is a little over half, were brought down following unfavorable voting or adverse occurrences in São Bento\textsuperscript{21}.

**Parliamentary absenteeism**

Taking into account the time mediating between the beginning of the first legislative session and the end of the last legislative session in each of the governments examined, we note that, not counting the preparatory sessions, parliament may not be accused of absenteeism on the part of its members, both during the Monarchy and the Republic. The Portuguese parliament showed to possess a quite significant meeting capacity, unlike the perception disseminated and nourished by public opinion.

The percentage of sessions which actually took place, when compared with the number originally forecasted, stood at above 92\%, except in the last monarchic legislature, which was substantially lower than the remaining periods (81\%). The sessions which did not take place due to insufficient attendance were the exception and not the rule (table 2).

Due to the extension of the meeting times of parliamentary sessions during the Republic, legislatures tended to increase naturally and have a higher number of sessions. In the Chamber of Deputies in 1911-1915, 507 sessions should have taken

place, whereas in 1915-17, it dropped to 326 expected sessions. In practice, the governmental tasks started in 97% and 92% of the expected days, which indicates that the lack of attendance on the deputies’ part must not be seen as an explanation for the negative representation associated to parliament (table 2).

The reduced attendance by parliamentarians, on an individual basis, was another criticism that representatives of the nation had to face on a regular basis. Supposedly, deputies, peers and senators, both during the Monarchy and in the Republic, were often labeled as too absent and little interested in fulfilling their commitments towards their voters. This image has conditioned the representation and studies on parliament until our days.22

Again on this particular aspect, facts appear to challenge this negative image. In terms of attendance, records indicate that parliament was quite well attended, with a higher rate of deputy attendance during the period of the Monarchy, although the differences with the republican period are comparatively small (table 2). The internal regulations of the lower chamber, dated 1876, stipulated that no session could start without the presence of a third of the total number of deputies, as laid down in the electoral act (art. 52), a disposition which was further confirmed by the February 1896 regulations (art. 47).

Attendance rates in the Chamber of Deputies of the Monarchy reached its peak in 1879 (77%), but, nonetheless, remained at relatively high levels in subsequent periods, even on the eve of the institution of the Republic. The average attendance rate of the last two legislatures before 1910 oscillated between 72% and 67%. It must also be noted that the legislature before 1908-1910 also stood out as one with the largest

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number of sessions which did not take place, due to the lack of quorum, which can be seen as a symptom of an already perceivable frailty of the constitutional monarchy.

The inception of the Republic brought significant changes to these parliamentary habits. Generally speaking, and as defined in the regulations of the 1911 Constituent National Assembly, which remained in force, no session could start without the presence of one third of the total number of deputies, as laid down in the electoral act. However, the possibility for activity to start with the presence of just a fourth of the deputies designated in the said electoral act was regulated, although they could only deliberate in matters concerning the approval of minutes and acceptance for discussion of any project or proposal (art. 18), something which occurred frequently and which the present paper has included for purposes of counting of sessions which actually took place. The 1911-1915 legislature had a 69% attendance rate, whereas the average of the 1915-1917 legislature dropped to 64% (table 2).

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sessions in the Chamber of Deputies</th>
<th>1906</th>
<th>1908</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1915</th>
<th>1917</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreseen</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>326</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not accomplished</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplished</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accomplished in %</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular attendance in %</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legislative production**

The making of the laws was one of the parliament’s main tasks. Contrary to the perception felt at the time, this organ of sovereignty could not be accused of lack of volunteerism or excessive idleness in the activity it carried out. The number of legal
measures produced was relatively high compared with the number of sessions carried out even during the Monarchy, when the number of meetings was lower. With the advent of the Monarchy, the legislative enthusiasm increased exponentially, as a result of the revolutionary nature of the regime. However, the effectiveness of parliamentary activity in the final years of the monarchical regime proved to be too scarce, since the number of approved proposals was substantially small compared to the number submitted.

It must be pointed out that, in general, deputies of the monarchy submitted a higher number of law proposals and/or of renewal of initiatives accrued from former legislature sessions, than government itself. The exception to this occurred in the 1906-1908 legislature, when governmental centralisation has higher and, as a result, accounted for slightly higher legislative enthusiasm.

The number of approved projects was always substantially inferior in the final years of the regime, which may denote legislative inoperability. In 1906-1908 and 1908-1910, the entire group of deputies only succeeded to have 34% and 29% of the projects initially submitted approved, explained by the fact that none of the parties held absolute majority of the parliamentary mandates obtained (table 3). The opposite had taken place in the 1896-1897 and 1897-1899 legislatures, when the Chamber of Deputies approved, respectively, 82% and 51% of the legislative measures produced. The difference laid in the fact that the general elections that preceded them had generated solid parliamentary majorities, which did not happen between 1906 and 1910.
The intensity of the legislative output grew noticeably with the advent of the Republic. The number of laws approved in Congress was no longer counted in their tens, but in their hundreds\(^{23}\). However, the legislative rage exceeded all sort of expectations, as 11,979 laws were confirmed between 1911 and 1917, whereas between 1906 and 1910 only 104 diplomas were enacted (table 4).

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>deputies</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n.(^o) - %</td>
<td>n.(^o) - %</td>
<td>n.(^o)</td>
<td>n.(^o) - %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1908</td>
<td>62 - 46</td>
<td>72 - 54</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>45 - 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908-1910</td>
<td>146 - 71</td>
<td>59 - 28</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>59 - 29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organisation of parliamentary activity

Analysis of the “affairs” and the submission of views in writing on proposed legislation or projects submitted to parliament were carried out by special and by permanent committees. The former were elected by the whole group of deputies or were designated by the board as soon was the chamber was constituted in the beginning of

\(^{23}\) In this particular case and given the lack of indexes in *Diários das Sessões* (Daily Records of Sessions) enabling us to distinguish between legislative production approved in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate, it was decided to show the available total numbers referring to legislative output in the entire parliament.
the legislature. The latter were formed as appropriate and had the purpose of closely examining matters presented to them by decision of the chamber. According to the 1876 internal regulations, each committee generally comprised 9 members, except otherwise decided by the chamber. They had a president and a secretary and could also include special advisors to opine on matters under debate. These advisors were also responsible for writing well-founded reports on behalf of the corresponding committee. From a political standpoint, the Treasury committee enjoyed a special statute, given it was heard on all proposals or proposed laws involving non-authorised expenses.

The same 1876 regulations predicted the existence of 20 permanent committees. Besides these, it was parliamentary practice to set up power verification committees – up to 3 in number – in the beginning of each legislature, whose only duty was to check the legality of the electoral results to ascertain the political legitimacy of the deputies. There was a further committee comprising 3 members, appointed by the table, in charge of the final writing of all law proposals that need to be sent to the chamber of peers. Replying to the king’s speech was also guaranteed by a special committee comprising the president of the chamber and other 6 deputies, elected by secret ballot.

This situation remained unchanged for two decades, and was only transformed by the 1896 regulations, after which the number of permanent committees increased to 24, which indicates that the specialised activity of the committees was higher during

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24 The Treasury and Legislation committees had 11 members.
25 The permanent committees in 1876 were: administrative of the house, treasury, public administration, legislation, public instruction, public works, war, ecclesiastical matters, infractions, foreign and international affairs, navy, overseas, petitions, statistics, agriculture, trade and the arts, public health, regulations, recruitment and reports of the general councils. *Regimento Interno da Câmara dos Senhores Deputados*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional, 1876, p. 42.
26 In 1986, the permanent committees were: administrative of the house, treasury, public administration, overseas, budget, civil legislation, upper and special public instruction, primary and secondary instruction, criminal legislation, ecclesiastical affairs, navy, war, public works, foreign and international affairs, regulations and discipline, petitions, statistics, trade, agriculture, arts and industries, public health,
the final years of the monarchy. At this time, the Legislation, Public Instruction and Trade committees were divided, with the recent administrative changes leading to the suppression of the General Councils committee. The year of 1896 saw the emergence of two new committees, that of Writing and Fisheries. The Treasury, Public Administration, Overseas and Agriculture were formed by 11 members, whereas the remaining comprised 9 members each, with the exception of the Administrative and Writing committees, with just 5 members each.

Once the Republic had been instituted, the 1911 regulations set the number of committees at 22\(^2\), with the committee in charge of replying to the king’s speech naturally disappearing in the process. Another novelty was the decision that no deputy could be part of two committees at the same time, a requirement which did not exist before.

The transposition to the Republic was marked by an apparent division of parliamentary activity and by the updating and modernising of the names of the committees. The Treasury committee adopted the more up-to-date designation of Finance committee, whereas its Public Health counterpart became Public Hygiene, for instance. The Legislation, Public Instruction and Infractions committees lost their former degree of specialisation, returning to the 1876 model. In turn, the republican


\(^2\) In 1911, the permanent committees were: administrative of the house; treasury; legislation (subdivided into 4 sections – civil legislation, criminal legislation, labour legislation and commercial legislation, each comprising five members); public education (subdivided into four sections – primary instruction, secondary instruction, upper, special and technical instruction, each with five members); overseas (subdivided into four sections – administration, instruction and missions; war, navy and public health; legislation and economic enhancement; finance and colonisation, each formed by five members); public works (subdivided into 3 sections – roads, railways and public buildings, each formed by five members); war; agriculture (subdivided into 4 sections – agriculture, mines, trade, industrial arts, each with five members); public hygiene; public welfare; fisheries; public administration; post office, telegraph and electrical industries; ecclesiastical affairs; infractions, foreign and international affairs; navy, petitions, statistics; regulations; recruitment and studies. All of these committees comprised nine members, except for the Finance committee, which had eleven members, and the study committee, which did not have a fixed number of members. *Regimento da Assembleia Nacional Constituinte de 1911*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional, 1911, pp. 33-34.
parliament chose to subdivide the aforesaid Legislation, Public Instruction, Overseas, Public Works and Agriculture committees into several sections, a decision which, in practice, led to the strengthening of the level of specialisation of the political action of those committees, despite their actual number being reduced. The new committees for Public Welfare – denoting increasing social concern by the State - Post Office, Telegraphs and Electrical Industries as a sign of the technological modernisation the country had gone through – were also set up, alongside a Study committee, whose organisation now became the responsibility of the Regulations committee.

It must be said that the number of special committees in the chamber of deputies was always lower than those of a permanent nature. In the 1906-1908 legislature, only 11 committees held meetings, and in the period 1908-1910, 14 of these special committees were elected. During the Republic, they were further reduced in number.

**Final considerations**

In Portugal, the final years of the Constitutional Monarchy were characterised by a high level of ministerial turnover, a fact which, among others, restricted the transition to the First Republic. The higher parliamentary stance of the regime brought about by the 1910 revolution was not, however, a factor leading to political stability. On the contrary, the institution of the Republic led to a major worsening of government turnover.

The Republic extended the length of time parliament met. Thus, the levels of legislative stability were much higher than those of governmental stability. While on the one hand it denoted increased respect for the work of deputies and senators, on the other it forced the parliamentary majorities attained in 1911 and 1915 by the Portuguese Republican Party and by its successor, the Democratic Party, to deal with various
cabinets of distinct political backgrounds, which increased the level of conflict between executive and legislative powers. As a result of this interaction, governments lost their sell-by date in parliament more often than in the previous period.

As opposed to the representations and perceptions felt by the public at large regarding the activity and doings of parliament, this legislative body cannot be accused of excessive absenteeism in the period mediating between the Monarchy and the Republic. The number of sessions not carried out due to lack of quorum was reasonably low, while average attendance of deputies attained considerable levels, which were even higher during the monarchical period.

With regard legislative efficacy, the action of the Portuguese parliament may be questioned. At the end of the Monarchy the number of projects submitted was abundant, compared to the number of sessions that took place, but the number of diplomas that were effectively approved was very low, which conveyed a feeling of inoperability.

In the first years of the Republic, and due to the revolutionary characteristic of the regime, the legal output capacity grew enormously. In this area, and despite the political instability, the initiative was clearly taken by the governments, which were able to produce 91% of the 13,198 diplomas published between 5 October 1910 and December 1917.

The increasing specialisation of the activity of the committees was higher in the final years of the monarchy, which led to an increase in the number of committees. The path towards the Republic was characterised by an apparent diminution of the division of parliamentary work and by an updating and modernisation of the names of the committees. On the other hand, the republican parliament chose to subdivide some of the most important committees into distinct sections, which in practice led to growing specialisation of their political activity.
In any case, in the turbulent years of the transition from a monarchical system to a republican one, parliament met its legislative obligations in accordance with the format imposed by the constitutional framework in force, with legislative output mechanisms operating convincingly, despite the fact that this organ of sovereignty was not sufficiently representative of the political, social and economic landscape of the country, where the large majority of the population was not entitled to vote.