



# DIIS REPORT

Christine Nissen

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Voting behaviour in the European  
Parliament 2009-2014:  
Implications for EU and national politics

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DIIS Report 2014:11



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Layout: Allan Lind Jørgensen  
Printed in Denmark by Vesterkopi AS  
ISBN 978-87-7605-685-8 (print)  
ISBN 978-87-7605-686-5 (pdf)  
Price: DKK 50.00 (VAT included)  
DIIS publications can be downloaded  
free of charge from [www.diis.dk](http://www.diis.dk)  
Hardcopies can be ordered at [www.diis.dk](http://www.diis.dk)

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## Abbreviations

The European Union (EU)  
The European Parliament (EP)  
The European Commission (EC)  
European Political Group (EPG)  
Member of European Parliament (MEP)  
European Central Bank (ECB)  
European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL)  
Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)  
Socialists and Democrats (S&D)  
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE)  
European People's Party (EPP)  
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)  
Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD)  
Non-attached MEPS (NI)  
European Parliament 7th term (EP7)  
Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA)  
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)  
Financial Transaction Tax (FTT)  
European External Action Service (EEAS)  
Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)  
Single Supervision Mechanism (SSM)  
The June Movement (J)  
The People's Movement against the EU (N)  
The Socialist People's Party (F)  
The Social Democrats (A)  
The Social Liberals (B)  
The Liberal Party (V)  
The Liberal Alliance (I)  
The Conservative People's Party (C)  
The Danish People's Party (O)

## **Executive summary**

The next European Parliament elections that take place from 22 to 25 May 2014 will not only shape politics in the European Parliament, but also influence the direction of the EU and Europe for the years to come. With the increased powers that the European Parliament gained after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the new political majority following the elections has the competences to change or block almost all EU policies as the main legislator in the EU in cooperation with the Council of Ministers. Besides its significantly expanded competences in legislation, the next European Parliament will also for the first time formally ‘elect’ the next President of the European Commission.

To illustrate how big a role the European Parliament plays in shaping EU legislation, and how the political and ideological composition of the European Parliament ultimately decides the direction of the Parliament’s footprint, this report focuses on the European Parliament as an institution and on 15 key votes that shaped Europe in 2009-2014. Moreover, the report presents an in-depth case study of Denmark in the European Parliament, examining how Danish MEPs work in the European Parliament.

This report is a part of a larger research project, ‘European Parliament votes that shaped EU and national political 2009-2014’ initiated by VoteWatch Europe and Notre Europe. Together with partners in two thirds of the Member States the objective of the project is to highlight and analyse the impact of European policy issues on national politics in the last five years and to help raise public awareness of the May 2014 European elections on the basis of a set of 15 key votes between 2009 and late 2013. The 15 votes chosen for the report emphasise some of the big issues the EP has decided, and also highlights how the ideological balance of power in the chamber has influenced the outcome of these decisions. Moreover, these votes show how the national background of the MEPs has influenced some key decisions.





## Introduction

After the Lisbon Treaty came into force in 2009, the European Parliament became the main legislator in the EU together with the Council, and thus has the competences to shape most EU policies in many important areas, from regulation of the single market, to the free movement of persons, international trade agreements, Euro-zone governance, environmental policies etc. Besides its significantly expanded competences in legislation, the next European Parliament will also for the first time 'elect' the next President of the European Commission. Though it is still up to the European Council to nominate a candidate for President, which the EP will then accept or reject, the Lisbon Treaty also stipulates that the Council, when deciding who to propose, must 'take into account the result of the EP elections'. The main European groups in the Parliament have prior to the elections nominated their lead candidates hoping that the next Commission President will be the candidate of the party that wins the most seats.

Therefore, the political majority in the next European Parliament that emerges from the May 2014 elections will play a crucial role in shaping Europe and the EU for the years to come.

At present, Europe stands in front of a decisive crossroads. The EU faces a deep crisis which started with the financial and sovereign debt crisis that soon spilled into the political system of the EU. This has led to major dissent among the member states, and we have seen a resurgence of widespread euroscepticism, not least among European citizens. The crisis has however also made the majority of European heads of state realise that solutions to the euro-zone crisis is best or only to be found at the EU level, and consequently we are likely to be heading towards further economic and political integration in Europe. The coming European elections will be an opportunity for European citizens to express their views about what kind of Europe they want, and whether they support the plans for further integration in Europe.

To illustrate not only how big a role the European Parliament plays in shaping EU legislation, but also how the political and ideological composition of the European Parliament ultimately decides the direction of the Parliament's footprint, this report focuses on the European Parliament as an institution and on 15 key votes that shaped Europe in 2009-2014. Moreover, the report presents an in-depth case study

of Denmark in the European Parliament, examining how Danish MEPs work in the European Parliament.

This report is a part of a larger research project, *“European Parliament votes that shaped EU and national political 2009-2014”* initiated by the Paris based think-tank, ‘Notre Europe’, founded by Jacques Delors and ‘VoteWatch Europe’ – a research institute providing a public database of all recorded votes in the European Parliament. Together with partners in two thirds of the Member States the objective of the project is to highlight and analyse the impact of European policy issues on national politics in the last five years and to help raise public awareness of the May 2014 European elections on the basis of a set of 15 key votes between 2009 and late 2013. The 15 votes chosen for the report emphasise some of the big issues the EP has decided, for example the establishment of the European External Action Service, the decision on whether or not to create euro-bonds or a new tax on all financial transactions, and the decision to ratify or reject an EU-US free trade agreement, among others. Moreover, the votes chosen are good examples of how the ideological balance of power in the chamber has influenced the outcome of these decisions, and how the national background of the MEPs has influenced some key decisions.

The structure of the report is organised as follows. First, basic information on the European Parliament, including the nature of EP elections, the role of the political groups in the parliament, the legislative procedures, and the current composition and coalitions, is presented to put the next parts into context. Second, the 15 key votes will be presented and analysed and provide an understanding of how the political make-up of the European parliament has shaped policy outcomes in the EU in the current 2009-2014 term. The final part of the report presents the Danish case, looking into the Danish relationship to the EU and the European Parliament, not least by examining the voting behaviour of the 13 Danish MEPs represented in 2009-2014.

### **A note on methodology**

The report bases its analysis of the European Parliament and of the 15 key votes on the data sets and analysis provided by VoteWatch Europe and Notre Europe. The second part of the report ‘Fifteen key votes in EP7’ originally appeared in the analysis carried out by VoteWatch and Notre Europe, Notre Europe & VoteWatch Europe (2014): ‘15 European Parliament Votes that shaped EU and national politics 2009-2014: global elements of analysis and contextualisation’.

Consequently, Notre Europe and VoteWatch Europe are only responsible for the second part of the report ‘Fifteen key votes in EP7’. For the third part of the report introducing the Danish case, analysis is carried out by examining multiple empirical sources including party programmes of the national parties contesting EP elections, media analyses of the votes in question, news declarations and statements from the MEPs and quantitative data extracted from [www.VoteWatch.eu](http://www.VoteWatch.eu)

The votes analysed in the report are chosen from a pool of over 5000 ‘roll-call’ votes recorded by VoteWatch in the 7th term of the European Parliament. In the European Parliament, votes take place by ‘roll-call’ (recording the voting behaviour of each MEP), or in a non-recorded electronic way, or by showing hands. Roll-call votes do thus not tell the complete story of voting behaviour in the EP, because they are not being used in all votes. This limitation should to be kept in mind when analysing the empirical studies of voting behaviour.

## **I. The European Parliament in context**

The European Parliament (EP) is the world most far-reaching experiment in transnational democracy where 751 directly elected politicians represent EU citizens. The EP has three main roles. First, it exercises the legislative function of the EU, i.e. debating and passing European laws, together with the Council of Ministers. Second, it scrutinises the other EU institutions, especially the European Commission (EC), to make sure they are working democratically. Third, the EP has to approve the EU's common budget, and together with the Council, it debates and adopts the budget.

This section will present some of the basic elements explaining the workings of the EP. First, the hybrid nature of the European elections will be presented, before going into the composition of the EP, including the coalitions that form across policy areas, the role of the political groups, the 'cohesion' of the groups, and how these factors shape politics.

### **Elections for the European Parliament**

The standard assumption in the literature on European parliament elections is that they are 'second-order national contests'.<sup>1</sup> This implies that they are 'secondary' to the main (national) electoral contest, and that they are 'national' rather than 'European' contests.

The second-order nature of European elections has two main empirical effects.<sup>2</sup> First, although EP elections do not have a direct impact on the formation of national government, they can be used by voters to influence the next national election or the policies of the current government. For this reason, national political issues and the political standing of national parties are likely to dominate the EP election campaign. Second, there is lower turnout in European than in national elections. This is because parties devote fewer resources to their campaigns and because there are lower incentives for people to vote.

<sup>1</sup> Reif & Schmitt (1980); Van der Eijk & Franklin (1996)

<sup>2</sup> Hix & Marsh (2007)

These two trends are considered to have significant implications on the election results. Since there is ‘less at stake’ for the voters at European elections, they tend to vote sincerely rather than strategically in the sense that they may vote for parties that are closer to their ideal preferences, rather than for larger parties there are further away but have a greater chance of forming government.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, voters can use EP elections to signal policy preferences or express dissatisfaction with the current parties in government. This implies that large parties lose votes to small parties and governing parties are likely to lose votes to opposition parties. Moreover, the low turnout also benefits the small parties on the far left or right, because it is especially the ‘middle’ voters that stay at home.

Though the second-order theory to a large extent explain the EP elections, there is also evidence to suggest that EP elections cannot solely be seen as second order national elections. It is suggested that when voters in EP elections allow European issues to influence their vote this implies that parties whose platforms give greater salience to European issues, either in a negative or positive way, are likely to do relatively well in EP elections.<sup>4</sup> Especially parties or movements that are strongly opposed to European integration are likely to do better in European elections.

In conclusion, we may expect the following differences between European and national elections:<sup>5</sup>

- Turnout will be lower in European elections than in national elections
- Large parties will tend to do worse and small parties do better
- Incumbent national government parties may suffer losses
- Parties with a strong pro/or Anti EU profile are likely to perform well at EP elections

The perception that ‘Europe matters’ in these elections is likely to be confirmed, at least to an increasing extent at the 2014 elections.<sup>6</sup> Today, the “second order national election”-theory does not cover the growing complexity any longer. The crisis in the euro zone has recently prompted national public debates and political agendas to focus on, or even to be shaped around, European issues. Even national elections

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ferrara & Weishaupt (2004)

<sup>5</sup> Notre Europe & VoteWatch (2014)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

in recent years have come to be about European issues, where the eurozone crisis and its possible solutions have been a key issue in many member states. The turnout rate and the public debates could be influenced by this political context.<sup>7</sup>

## **Life inside the European Parliament: composition, cohesion and coalition**

### *European Political Groups (EPGs)*

Once elected, the MEPs in the European Parliament organise along political lines and not national lines. They are members of European Political Groups (EPGs) so that they can better defend their positions at the European level. The political groups were initially created for several reasons.<sup>8</sup> This model followed domestic practices and was thought to help overcoming collective action problems and allowing for a division of labour and competition along party lines. Thus, the system is beneficial for everybody since it reduce volatility, promotes high predictability and more efficiency in policy making.<sup>9</sup>

The overall cohesion rate of the political groups in the EP (meaning that x% of the members of the political group vote in the same way) stands at a remarkable 90%: the groups are not subject to the kind of majority discipline that a government would demand, thus it relies only on a genuine ideological convergence.<sup>10</sup>

According to the rules of procedure of the EP, a political group must be composed of at least 25 MEPs and at least one-quarter of the Member States must be represented in that group.

Currently there are seven EPGs in the European Parliament:

- European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL)
- Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)
- Socialists and Democrats (S&D)
- Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
- European People's Party (EPP)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Hix, Kreppel & Noury (2003)

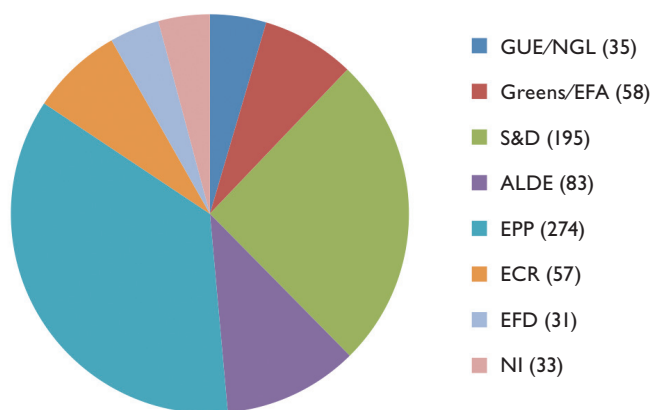
<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Notre Europe & VoteWatch (2014)

- European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)
- Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD)
- Non-attached MEPs (NI)<sup>11</sup>

Figure 1 shows the composition of the current European Parliament (EP7) in regards to EPGs and their size.

Figure 1. Composition of EP7 2014<sup>12</sup>



Source: compiled by author on data from the European Parliament (2014).

On the far left side of the political spectrum, we find the ‘GUE/NGL’ group which currently holds 35 seats in the EP.<sup>13</sup> Its members represent left-wing, socialist and communist parties from 13 member states and 18 political parties. The group has a widely sceptical approach to the EU, considering it to be an unjust, and capitalist institution that is too far away from its citizens. In recent years, the group has been especially critical towards the austerity measures promoted by the Union, and argued that the EU is a key motor for the current economic, financial and environmental crisis that it finds itself in. The party has a quite varied membership with MEPs differing in their ideological positions, and views on European integration,

<sup>11</sup> Note: the MEPs that do not belong to any political group are ‘non-aligned’

<sup>12</sup> Note: the 2009-2014 EP had 736 seats after the 2009 elections, which went up to 754 after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009, and then to 766 seats in July 2013 after the accession of Croatia coming into the EU

<sup>13</sup> Confederal Group of the European United Left (2014)

so it is sometime difficult for the group to establish a common position. The internal cohesion rate of the group is 79 percent.<sup>14</sup>

The left wing green group, 'Greens/EFA', is currently the fourth largest political group in the European Parliament, with 58 MEPs from 15 countries.<sup>15</sup> Its members represent green and regionalist political parties. The group has a traditional green/left profile working to promote social, cultural and environmental values and is a pro-European party. In contrast to the GUE/NGL group, the Greens/EFA is one of the most cohesive parties in the EP, with cohesion rates between 92 and 95 percent.<sup>16</sup>

The centre left group, 'S&D' is currently the second-largest group in the European Parliament with 195 seats.<sup>17</sup> The group is made up of socialists and social-democrats from all of the 28 member states and thus represents classical socialist and social democratic norms and aims. The group is pro-European and one of the most cohesive groups in the EP with internal cohesion rates between 92 and 95 %.<sup>18</sup>

The centre right group, 'ALDE', is the third largest group comprising 84 members from 21 countries.<sup>19</sup> The group represents centrist and liberal parties, and promotes neoliberal economies and the single market. The party is pro-European and supports deeper, especially economic, integration. The internal cohesion rate of ALDE is 88 %.<sup>20</sup>

The conservative group, 'EPP', is the largest political group in the EP comprising 274 members from all member states except for the UK.<sup>21</sup> The group comprises politicians of Christian democratic and conservative orientation and work from a pro-European perspective promoting conservative, centre-right values. The internal cohesion rate of EPP is one of the highest, between 92 and 95 %.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Notre Europe &VoteWatch (2014)

<sup>15</sup> The Greens/European Free Alliance (2014)

<sup>16</sup> Notre Europe &VoteWatch (2014)

<sup>17</sup> Progressive Alliance for Socialists and Democrats (2014)

<sup>18</sup> Notre Europe &VoteWatch (2014)

<sup>19</sup> Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (2014).

<sup>20</sup> Notre Europe & VoteWatch (2014)

<sup>21</sup> European Conservatives and Reformists Group (2014)

<sup>22</sup> Notre Europe & VoteWatch (2014)



The conservative 'ECR' group, is a new political group in the EP, comprising 53 members from 10 countries.<sup>23</sup> The group was formed in 2009 after the British Conservatives left the EPP regarding it as too 'pro-EU', and together with right-wing MEPs from Poland and the Czech Republic, decided to form a new conservative, and more euro-sceptic approach to EU cooperation in the EP. The group thus has a sceptical approach to EU integration, is against any form of federal Europe, and rather stands for a Europe of nation states and free market. The group has an overall internal cohesion rate of 87 %.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, the extreme right EFD group is similarly a new political group formed after the 2009 elections.<sup>25</sup> The group comprises 31 members from 10 countries, stemming from far right national parties, such as the UK Independence party and the Italian Northern League that are the largest national parties in the group. The party strongly opposes any form of EU integration and favors returning power to sovereign member states. It also puts emphasis on how member states should increasingly protect their borders and strengthen their own historical and cultural values. The internal cohesion rate of the group is the lowest in the parliament, namely 49 %.<sup>26</sup>

### *Forming a winning coalition*

Since no group commands an absolute majority in the Parliament, coalitions are needed for passing legislation. In different policy areas, different winning majorities tend to emerge.<sup>27</sup>

With the current composition of EPGs, several potential 'majority winning' coalitions have been possible. The analysis of roll-call votes<sup>28</sup> between 2009 and 2013 reveals three different co-existing winning coalitions in the EP that vary by policy area, but are relatively stable:<sup>29</sup>

- first a 'grand coalition' between EPP and S&D, often together with ALDE (in about 70 % of the cases)

<sup>23</sup> European Conservatives and Reformists Group (2014)

<sup>24</sup> Notre Europe & VoteWatch (2014)

<sup>25</sup> Europe of Freedom and Democracy (2014)

<sup>26</sup> Notre Europe & VoteWatch (2014)

<sup>27</sup> Fratescu (2013)

<sup>28</sup> *Note:* In the European Parliament votes take place either by 'roll-call' meaning recording the voting behaviour of each MEP, or in a non-recorded electronic way, or by showing hands. See introduction, methodology page 11.

<sup>29</sup> Notre Europe & VoteWatch (2014)

- second, a centre-left coalition led by S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and sometimes GUE-NGL (in 15 % of the cases)
- Third, a centre-right coalition led by the EPP, ALDE and ECR (in 15 % of the cases)

The left/right dimension plays an important role in shaping legislative politics and affects about one third of all votes. But the pro-/anti-European dimension (whether more Europe or less Europe is seen as ‘better’) is equally important in shaping legislative politics in the European Parliament.<sup>30</sup>

As it appears, there is however no ‘euro-sceptic coalition’ of the groups in the parliament critical of EU integration and cooperation (GUE/NGL, ECR, EFD and the non-attached members) since these only command 20 percent of the seats. This is not enough to win votes on their own, but it can be an influential bloc and the size of these anti-EU forces are likely to increase after the May 2014 elections.

### *Legislative procedures*

What is it exactly that the European Parliament can decide on? The Lisbon Treaty strengthened the formal powers of the EP to a considerable extent, not least by the very large extension of policy areas to which the so-called ordinary legislative procedure applies.

There exist three types of legislative procedures involving the European Parliament:<sup>31</sup>

- *Ordinary legislative procedure (formerly known as co-decision procedure)*: The ordinary legislative procedure gives the same weight to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on a wide range of areas (for example, economic governance, immigration, energy, transport, agricultural and fisheries policies, the common commercial policy, the environment and consumer protection). After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the vast majority of European laws are adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council.
- *Consultation*: Special legislative procedure. Parliament is asked for its opinion (it may approve or reject a legislative proposal, or propose amendments to it) before the Council adopts it. The Council is not legally obliged to take ac-

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

count of Parliament's opinion but it must not take a decision without having received it.

- *Consent (formerly known as the assent procedure)*: Special legislative procedure that gives the European Parliament the right to veto legislation. Parliament's role is to approve or reject the legislative proposal without further amendments. The Council cannot overrule Parliament's opinion. Consent is also required as a non-legislative procedure when the Council is adopting certain international agreements (e.g. ACTA).

## 2. Fifteen key votes in EP7

Having given an overview of the working of the European Parliament, we can turn to look at the fifteen votes that have shaped the European Parliament in the 2009-2014 term (EP7).<sup>32</sup>

The 2009-2014 legislative term has been marked by increased strength of the European Parliament in relation to the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. Perhaps the most notorious demonstration of force by the EP was the rejection of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) in July 2012. While this may be the most prominent example due to the publicity it received, the number of cases where the Parliament managed to leave its footprint on EU legislation is certainly higher than in the previous term.

The fifteen votes presented in this section of the report have been selected because they emphasise some of the big issues that the EP7 has decided, and also are good examples of how the ideological balance of power in the chamber has influenced the outcome of these decisions. Moreover, these votes show how the national background of the MEPs has influenced some key decisions. Thus, when selecting the votes, 3 criteria were applied: 1) the issue is highly salient for many parties, member states and citizens in Europe; (2) the subject of the vote is relatively easy to explain to a general non-EU specialist audience; (3) the issue generated controversy both inside the European Parliament and in the public domain, which resulted in conflicts between and within the political groups in the Parliament.

### Vote I. Extension of maternity leave

In October 2010, the European Parliament adopted its first reading position on the Directive on Maternity Leave.<sup>33</sup> The proposal contained a number of measures extending the rights of mothers and pregnant women as well as more generous paternity leave.

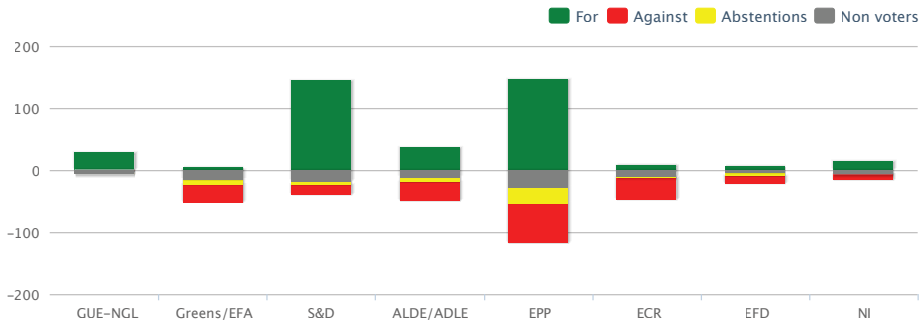
<sup>32</sup> *Note:* this section of the report originally appeared in the analysis carried out by VoteWatch Europe and Notre Europe; Notre Europe & VoteWatch Europe (2014): '15 European Parliament Votes that shaped EU and national politics 2009-2014': global elements of analysis and contextualisation'.

<sup>33</sup> European Parliament legislative resolution of 20 October 2010 on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

The centre-left groups supported the proposal, arguing that its provisions would ensure greater protection of women and encourage demographic growth. The centre-right groups, on the other hand, opposed it, arguing that such provisions would lead to significant extra costs, particularly for small businesses, and would cause indirect discrimination of women in the labour market, as employers would avoid hiring young women with a right to extended paid maternity leave. The proposal (text as a whole) was passed by a relatively narrow majority (390 votes for to 192 votes against), formed by EPP, S&D, ALDE and GUE-NGL.

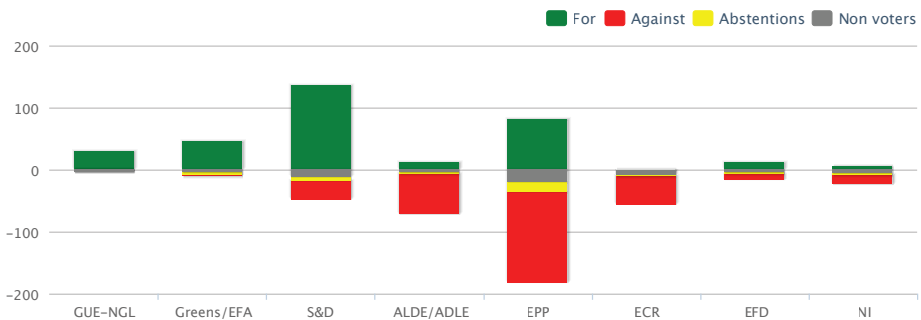
**Graph 1. Improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding**

Draft legislative resolution : *vote: legislative resolution* - ordinary legislative procedure, first reading  
Power table by EPGs



**Graph 2. Improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding with amendment**

Draft legislative resolution : *Text as a whole - 20 weeks, amendment 12=38* - ordinary legislative procedure, first reading  
Power table by EPGs



The key-vote presented in graph 2 was on amendment 12=38, on a proposal to extend maternity leave on full pay from 14 to 20 weeks. The vote passed with 327 MEPs in favour to 320 against. The centre-left groups – Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Greens/EFA and the radical left (GUE-NGL) – succeeded in gathering a majority with the help of 82 MEPs from the EPP, primarily from Poland, Italy, Hungary and Lithuania.

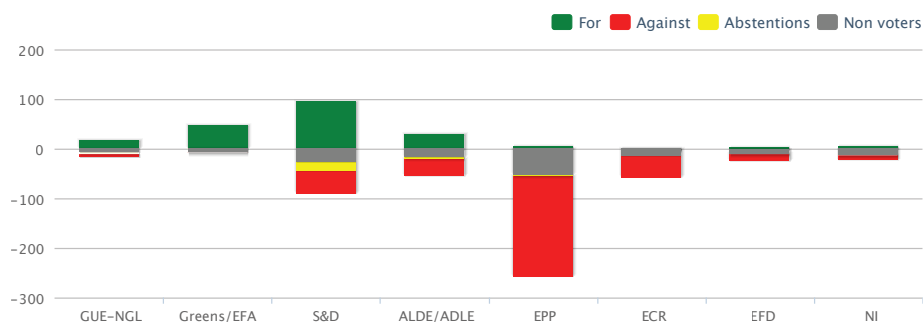
The current status of the law is that the Council’s first reading is at a standstill, because a significant number of member states (mainly with centre-right governments), are opposed to reaching a common position on the issue. If the Ministers will not come to an agreement, the legislation will fall.

### Vote 2. Phasing out nuclear energy

In November 2011, a majority of MEPs adopted the parliament’s position on the proposal for a Council decision on the Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) for nuclear research and training activities.<sup>34</sup> The Euratom Framework Programme determines the different research activities in nuclear energy and radiation protection, as well as the budget allocated to them. Only the Greens/EFA and the GUE-NGL groups voted against in the final vote. Following the consultation of the EP, the Council adopted the act, in December 2011.

Graph 3. Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for nuclear research and training activities

Draft legislative resolution : *Annex I, part II, section 2, paragraph 1, amendment 36 - consultation*  
Power table by EPGs



<sup>34</sup> European Parliament legislative resolution of 17 November 2011 on the proposal for a Council decision concerning the Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for nuclear research and training activities (2012–2013).

The key vote presented in graph 3 was on amendment 36, which was drafted by the Greens/EFA group and which aimed to commit the EU to renounce nuclear energy. The amendment was supported by GUE-NGL and Greens/EFA MEPs, as well as by two-thirds of the S&D members and almost half of the ALDE MEPs. However, this centre-left coalition failed to reach a majority, as the EPP (except for the Austrian delegation), ECR, and EFD groups, as well as most of the ALDE MEPs, voted against. Amendment 36 fell by 210 votes in favour to 356 against.

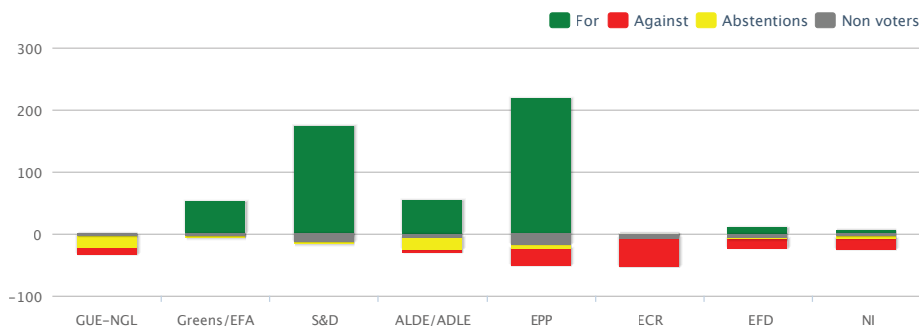
### Vote 3. Creation of Eurobonds to pool member states' public debt

In February 2012 the EP gave its first reaction to the European Commission's Green Paper proposing Eurobonds.<sup>35</sup> The Eurobonds are collective bonds for pooling "of sovereign debt issuance among EU Member States and the sharing of associated revenue flows and debt-servicing costs".<sup>36</sup>

The Parliament's resolution was largely supportive of the initiative, arguing that Eurobonds are needed as part of the solution to the Eurozone's current financial problems. The S&D and Greens/EFA groups, as well as the majority of MEPs from the EPP and ALDE groups, voted in favour of the resolution. However, 29 EPP members from Germany and Sweden voted against, while 19 ALDE MEPs, also mainly

Graph 4. Feasibility of introducing stability bonds

Motion for a resolution: *vote: resolution (text as a whole)*  
Power table by EPGs



<sup>35</sup> European Parliament resolution of 15 February 2012 on the feasibility of introducing stability bonds.

<sup>36</sup> European Commission Green Paper on the feasibility of introducing stability bonds, Brussels, 23 November 2011, COM(2011) 818 final, p. 2.

from Germany, abstained. There was also opposition from the ECR group and most MEPs from the GUE-NGL and EFD groups.

While the resolution was non-binding, the position of the Parliament on Eurobonds is still important because the EP will play a significant role in the future economic governance of the Eurozone.

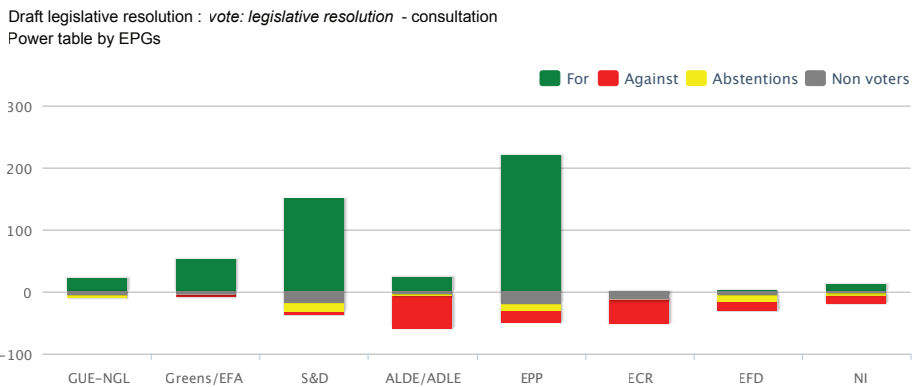
#### Vote 4. European Financial Transaction Tax (FTT)

In May 2012, a large majority of MEPs voted in support of a tax on financial transactions (FTT), to be levied by EU Member States.<sup>37</sup>

MEPs backed the tax by 487 votes, but disagreed on where the money should go to. A significant minority of 152 MEPs, from ECR, EFD, and ALDE (with the exception of the French, Italian and Finnish members), voted against the proposal. 20 EPP members, from Malta, Cyprus, Sweden and Latvia, and 6 S&D members, from Malta and Cyprus, also voted against.

Following this vote, the Member States failed to reach an agreement on the FTT, which, as a tax-related issue, requires unanimity in the Council. As a result, the Council authorised in January 2013 the initiation of an enhanced cooperation procedure among eleven Member States (Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain,

Graph 5. Common system for taxing financial transactions



<sup>37</sup> European Parliament legislative resolution of 23 May 2012 on the proposal for a Council directive on a common system of financial transaction tax and amending Directive 2008/7/EC.



France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia) that wanted to go ahead with the FTT. Consequently, the European Commission tabled a proposal for a Council Directive implementing enhanced cooperation, which is being discussed in the Council. All 28 Member States can take part in the discussion, but only the states that joined have the right to vote on it. Once agreement is reached, the Directive will be transposed into national legislation in the participating countries and it is expected that the FTT will come into force in 2014.

### Vote 5. Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA)

Following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EP is required to approve or reject trade agreements, but it cannot amend them. Under this procedure, in July 2012, the EP voted not to give its consent to the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) between the EU and its Member States and Australia, Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland and the USA.<sup>38</sup> MEPs rejected ACTA by 39 votes in favour, 478 against and 165 abstentions.

Graph 6. Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement between the EU and its Member States, Australia, Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Morocco, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland and the USA

Draft legislative resolution : *vote: consent* - consent  
Power table by EPGs



<sup>38</sup> European Parliament legislative resolution of 4 July 2012 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, Australia, Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the United Mexican States, the Kingdom of Morocco, New Zealand, the Republic of Singapore, the Swiss Confederation and the United States of America.

MEPs raised concerns related to data protection, fundamental freedoms, openness and transparency of ACTA negotiations. Most EP groups voted against ACTA, while a majority of EPP and ECR members abstained.

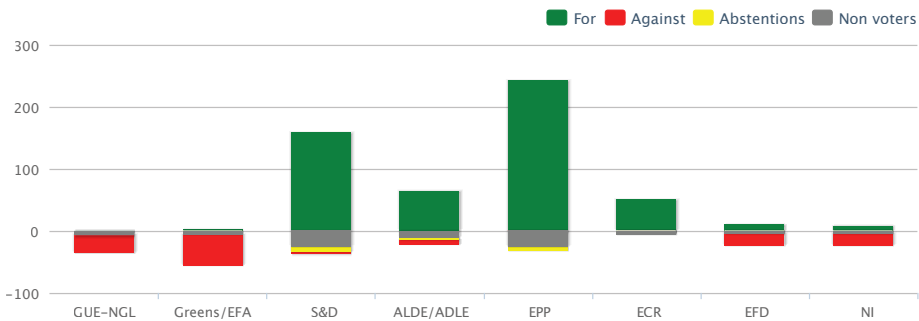
As a result of this vote, neither the EU nor any individual EU Member State can join ACTA. This is considered a significant victory for the European Parliament against the collective will of the 28 EU governments, and clearly demonstrates how much power the EP can have.

**Vote 6. EU budget 2014-2020 including seat of the EP**

In November 2013, the EP approved the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework.<sup>39</sup> Its consent followed the finalisation of lengthy and tough negotiations with the Member States. The multiannual budget will shrink in absolute value compared to the previous 2007-2013 interval and will amount to 960 billion euros in commitments and 908 billion euros in payments. However, the MEPs succeeded in obtaining a number of important concessions from the Member States: flexibility between budget years and budget lines, the promise of the creation of a high-level group on own resources of the EU and a revision clause that states that the Commission will have to bring forward a review of the MFF in 2016. The latter provision is also aimed at aligning the future duration of the MFF with the 5-year political cycles of the EU institutions. The text as a whole was supported by a comfortable majority (EPP, S&D,

**Graph 7. Multiannual Financial framework 2014-2020**

Draft legislative resolution : *vote: consent* - consent  
Power table by EPGs



<sup>39</sup> European Parliament draft legislative resolution of 19 November 2013 on the draft Council regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020.

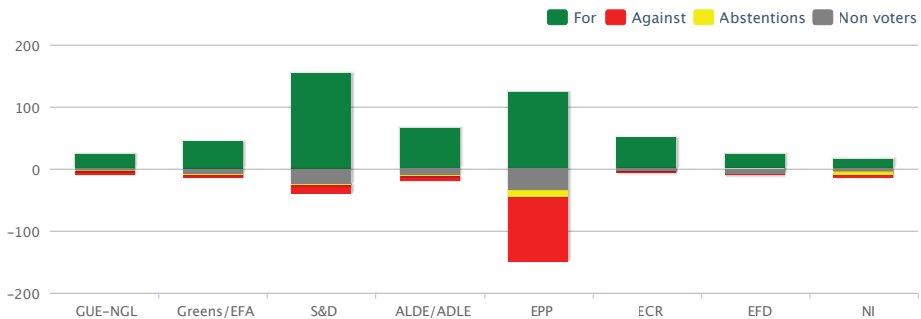
ALDE, ECR), passing with 537 votes in favour to 126 against, and 19 abstentions. The opposition came mainly from the Greens/EFA, GUE-NGL and EFD groups.

As a part of the 2014-2020 budget negotiations, one recurring issue in the debates of the European Parliament was the potential revision of the Parliament’s seat. The EP has three workplaces, namely Strasbourg, Brussels and Luxembourg. Plenary sessions take place in Strasbourg and Brussels, while most of the regular work happens in Brussels, and then there are some administrative offices in Luxembourg. The MEPs voted on the matter several times during the current term, usually as part of the resolutions accompanying the annual or multi-annual EU budget. The latest of these votes, took place on October 2013 as part of the 2014 budget report<sup>40</sup> (different report than the MFF report).

The MEPs called once again on the Council to consider the elaboration of a road-map to a single seat for the EP, in order to make savings to the EU budget. A majority of MEPs in all groups voted in favour, renewing their support for the revision of the seat policy. However, French MEPs from EPP, S&D, ALDE and GUE-NGL defected, voting in line with the national position of the French government. Within the EPP, most of the German, Spanish, Romanian, Estonian, Greek and Croatian Members also voted against.

**Graph 8. Draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014 – all sections**

Motion for resolution : *Paragraph 90, amendment 0*  
 Power table by EPGs



<sup>40</sup> European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2013 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014.

## Vote 7. Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

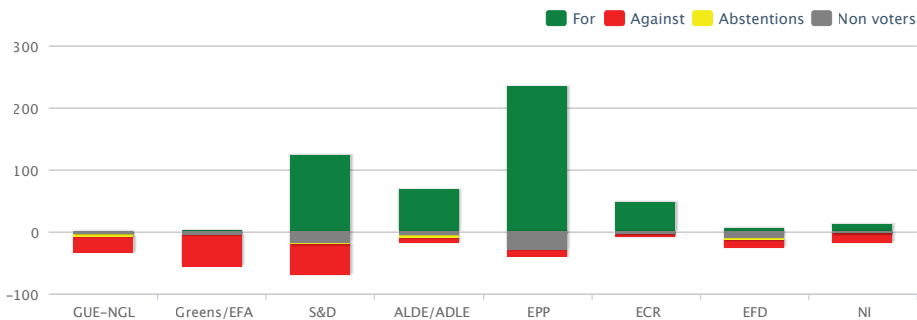
The new Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) was adopted by the European Parliament, following the reaching of a compromise on the most important issues between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission in June 2013.<sup>41</sup>

The five legislative reports adopted by the MEPs propose a reform of the current CAP on financing, management and monitoring of the CAP, direct payments to farmers, rural development, and the agricultural market. The reformed CAP will put more emphasis on a fairer and more transparent distribution of EU subsidies among EU Member States and farmers, and enhanced environmental protection.

Currently, around 40 percent of the EU budget is spent on CAP related payments. The report on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP presented in graph 9, thus also came to center on whether the agricultural subsidies should remain a budgetary priority for the EU. The report was approved by 500 votes to 177, with 10 abstentions, being supported mainly by the EPP, S&D, ALDE and ECR groups. The S&D votes were however split, as 6 delegations (UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and Austria) joined the Greens/EFA, GUE-NGL and EFD in voting against.

### Graph 9. Financing, management and monitoring of the CAP

Draft legislative resolution : *vote: legislative resolution* - ordinary legislative procedure, first reading  
Power table by EPGs



<sup>41</sup> European Parliament draft legislative resolution of 20 November 2013 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy.

### Vote 8. Taxes on carbon emissions

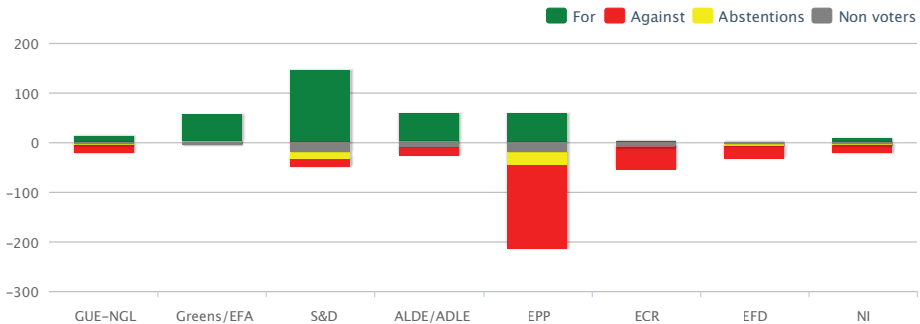
In July 2013, MEPs have adopted a softened version of the Commission’s proposal on the timing of auctions of greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>42</sup> The proposal, also known as backloading, was previously rejected in the April 2013 plenary by the centre-right groups and sent back to the Environment committee. The new version, however, is more restrictive when it comes to allowing the Commission to delay the auctioning of CO2 certificates, mentioning specifically that such action can be undertaken only in exceptional circumstances, and only once for a maximum of 900 million allowances.

The amended version was pushed through the plenary with 344 votes in favour (mainly from S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and a minority of EPP Members) to 311 against (most of EPP, as well as ECR and EFD Members), with 46 abstentions. This was made possible as the revised version garnered more support after a number of MEPs changes their April position, mainly the Spanish, Romanian and Austrian S&D MEPs, Bulgarian ALDE MEPs, and Austrian EPP MEPs.

Against a backdrop of general economic slowdown in Europe, this document should be seen in the context of the oversupply of carbon emission allowances. It aims to boost the Emissions Trading System by preventing the auctioning of some certificates and their release onto the market. However, the vote on the legislative

Graph 10. Timing of auctions of greenhouse gas allowances

Draft legislative resolution : *vote: amended proposal* - ordinary legislative procedure, first reading  
Power table by EPGs



<sup>42</sup> European Parliament draft legislative resolution on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2003/87/EC clarifying provisions on the timing of auctions of greenhouse gas allowances.

resolution has been postponed to allow for negotiations with the Council in view of a possible first reading agreement.

### Vote 9. Supervision of Euro-zone Member States

The European Parliament adopted two reports as part of the so-called ‘2-pack’, that aims at complementing EU legislation in the area of economic supervision.<sup>43</sup> The amended reports voted in the March 2013 plenary were the result of a compromise negotiated between Parliament and the Council.

Both reports were supported by a centrist coalition of EPP, S&D, ALDE and Greens/EFA. It was opposed by the EFD and GUE-NGL groups, while most ECR Members abstained from the final votes. However, S&D MEPs from Belgium voted against.

The former report laid down tougher rules concerning the economic and budgetary surveillance of Member States in the euro area experiencing or threatened with serious difficulties with respect to their financial stability. The latter document focused

**Graph II. Economic and budgetary surveillance of Member States with serious difficulties with respect to their financial stability in the euro area**

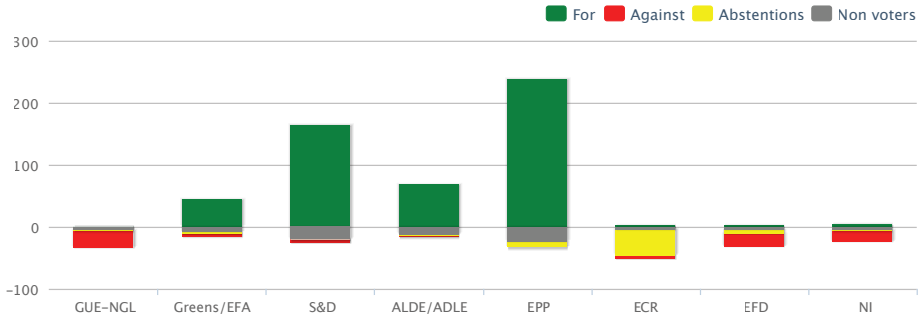
Draft legislative resolution : *vote: legislative resolution* - ordinary legislative procedure, first reading  
Power table by EPGs



<sup>43</sup> European Parliament draft legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the strengthening of economic and budgetary surveillance of Member States experiencing or threatened with serious difficulties with respect to their financial stability in the euro area & European Parliament draft legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on common provisions for monitoring and assessing draft budgetary plans and ensuring the correction of excessive deficit of the Member States in the euro area

**Graph 12. Monitoring and assessing draft budgetary plans and ensuring correction of excessive deficit of the Member States**

Draft legislative resolution : *vote: legislative resolution* - ordinary legislative procedure, first reading  
 Power table by EPGs



on the establishment of common provisions for monitoring and assessing draft budgetary plans. It also set out rules to ensure that national budgets are consistent with the economic policy guidance issued in the context of the European semester for economic and budgetary policy surveillance.

These two reports come as a completion of the economic governance package (‘6-pack’) adopted in 2011. Back then, the left of the centre largely opposed the regulations, but this time S&D and Greens/EFA voted in favour, presumably because the new legislation puts greater emphasis on the role of growth and employment indicators when monitoring economic performance of member states.

**Vote 10. Banking Union**

The European Parliament voted through a key legislative package in first reading aimed at establishing one of the three pillars of the banking union – the Single Supervision Mechanism (SSM).<sup>44</sup> The reports were adopted in plenary following negotiations between the EP and the European Central Bank (ECB).

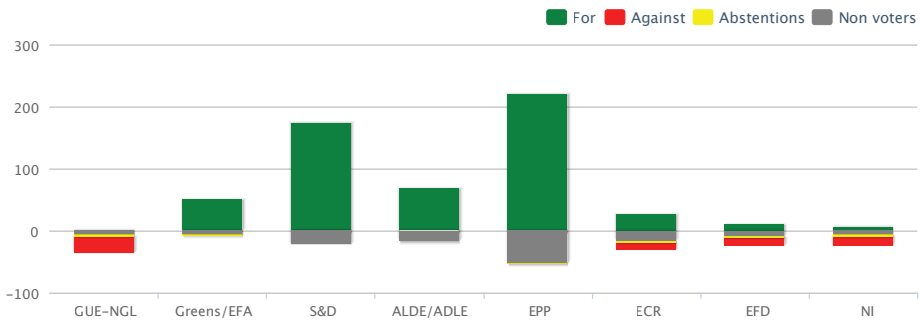
<sup>44</sup> European Parliament draft legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1093/2010 establishing a European Supervisory Authority (European Banking Authority) as regards its interaction with Council Regulation (EU) No .../.... conferring specific tasks on the European Central Bank concerning policies relating to the prudential supervision of credit institutions & European Parliament draft legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council regulation conferring specific tasks on the European Central Bank concerning policies relating to the prudential supervision of credit institutions.

The inter-institutional agreement between the two institutions increased the EP’s oversight powers over the ECB, as MEPs will have more access to information and will be entitled to hold hearings with representatives of the Supervisory Board. The European Parliament will also have to approve the head of the SSM.

The final texts were supported by an overwhelming majority of MEPs. The Thyssen report (graph 13) passed with 559 votes for to 62 and 18 abstentions, the winning majority being formed by EPP, S&D, ALDE, the Greens/EFA and ECR. Only the

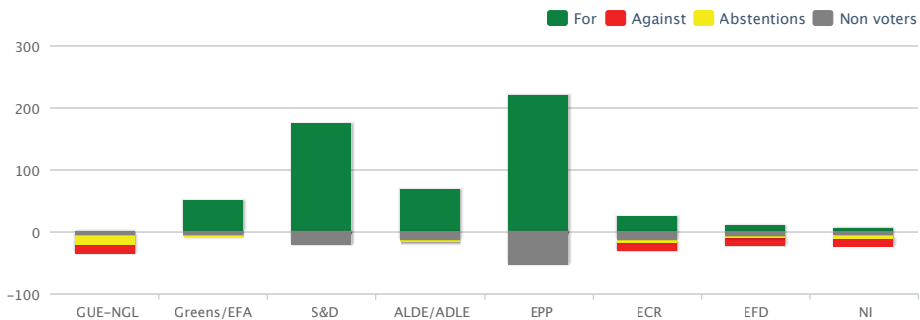
**Graph 13. Specific tasks for the European Central Bank concerning policies relation to the prudential supervision of credit institutions**

Draft legislative resolution : *vote: legislative resolution - consultation*  
Power table by EPGs



**Graph 14. European Banking Authority and prudential supervision of credit institutions**

Draft legislative resolution : *vote: legislative resolution - ordinary legislative procedure, first reading*  
Power table by EPGs





GUE – NGL group, the Polish and Czech ECR delegation and part of the EFD group voted against.

The Giegold report (graph 14) was also supported by a majority made up of the same groups, passing with 556 votes in favour to 54 against and 28 abstentions.

With the adaptation of the two reports, the new supervision mechanism is expected to start operating in 2014. The main responsible actor for the functioning of SSM will be the ECB, which will share this responsibility with national authorities responsible for banking supervision.

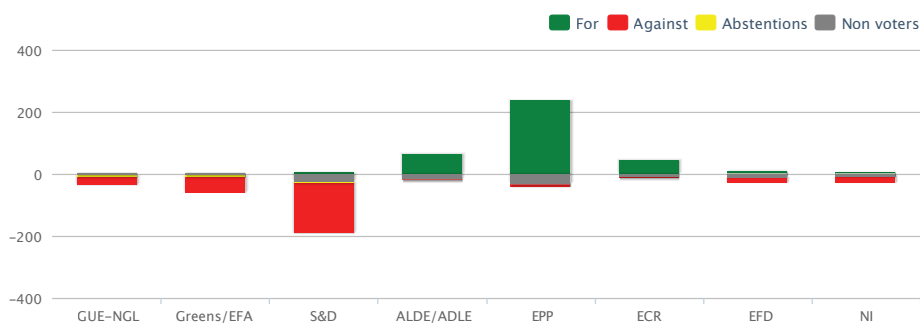
## Vote II. Extension of the internal market

A non-binding report on the Internal Market for Services was adopted in September 2013 in the European Parliament.<sup>45</sup> The text deplors poor enforcement of the 2006 Services Directive in some Member States and calls on them and the Commission to do more to promote free movement of services in the Union.

Among other things, the report calls on the Commission to identify and remove unjustified restrictions, such as discriminatory practices and double regulatory burdens aimed at protecting domestic markets. Furthermore, the report asks for better

Graph 15. Internal Market for services

Motion for resolution : *vote: resolution (as a whole)*  
Power table by EPGs



<sup>45</sup> European Parliament resolution on the Internal Market for Services: State of Play and Next Steps.

communication between the Commission and the Member States which should be supported in their efforts to fully apply the Service Directive.

The final text states that in order to achieve economic growth and improve employment rates, the focus should fall on the services that generate growth and on the inclusion of other forms of services in the internal market – such as the digital economy and the welfare sector.

However, at the final vote, the centre-left groups voted against, as most of their amendments stating that more consideration needs to be given to social and ecological conditions were rejected. The centre-right (EPP, ALDE, ECR) on the other hand, supported the final report.

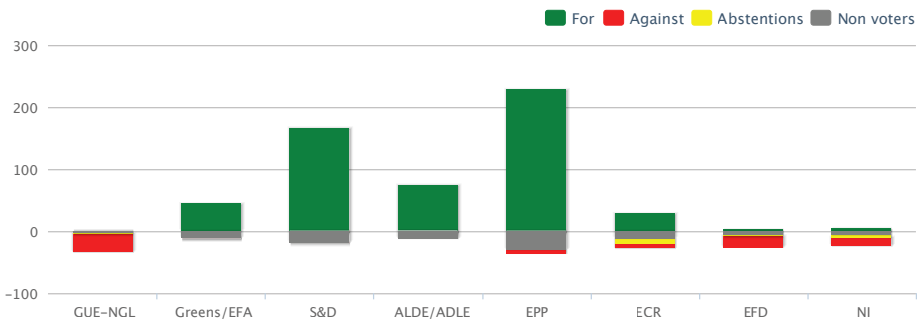
**Vote 12. The European External Action Service (EEAS)**

The European External Action Service (EEAS) was established by the Lisbon Treaty and serves as a diplomatic service for the EU. The EEAS is placed under the authority of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and it is composed of the central administration and the Union Delegations to third countries and to international organizations. Its budget, as well as the budget of every EU mission must be annually signed off by the EP.

Following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the creation of the EEAS, the European Parliament was consulted on a package of recommendations on the

**Graph 16. The European External Action Service**

Draft legislative resolution : *Vote: legislative resolution* - consultation  
 Power table by EPGs



organisation and accountability of the EU diplomatic service.<sup>46</sup> The EP adopted the proposal, with amendments on the structure and organisational functions of the service, the EEAS staff, the External Action Instruments and the financial and budgetary responsibility of the EEAS.

The resolution passed with 549 voted for to 78 against, with only the radical left – GUE – NGL – and the anti-European EFD group opposing it.

Following the consultation of the European Parliament, the Council gave on 26 July 2010 the green light to the creation of the European External Action Service, Member States unanimously voting in favour.

The European External Action Service was officially launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2010.

### **Vote 13. A genuine system of own resources for the EU budget**

In March 2013, the EP adopted by 532 votes to 86, with 67 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the general guidelines for the preparation of the 2014 budget, Section III – Commission.<sup>47</sup> The resolution, supported by all groups except ECR and GUE-NGL, tackles subjects such as the EU 2020 Strategy, the European Semester process, the implementation of the Compact for Growth and Jobs and the fight against youth unemployment.

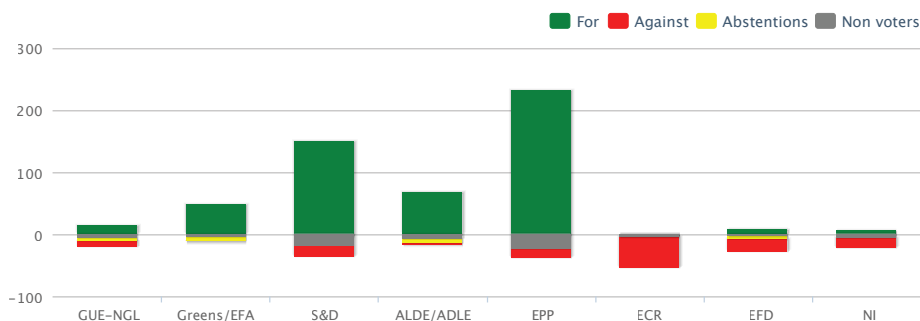
The key vote presented in graph 17 was on paragraph 15, regarding EU's future finances, and more precisely, the increase of EU's own resources. According to the text of the paragraph, the EU's dependence on national contributions contradicts the Treaty and can be especially detrimental in time of economic crisis which seriously affected some national economies. The EP supports the Commission's proposal for a reform of the system of financing of the Budget, the MEPs proposing the introduction of new and genuine own resources such as the financial transaction tax and the new EU VAT.

<sup>46</sup> European Parliament draft legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service.

<sup>47</sup> European Parliament resolution on the general guidelines for the preparation of the 2014 budget, Section III – Commission.

## Graph 17. Guidelines for the 2014 budget

Motion for a resolution : *Paragraph 15*  
Power table by EPGs



The paragraph passed with 531 votes for to 129 against and 21 abstentions, having the support of a large majority formed by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, the Greens/EFA and GUE-NGL groups. However, a significant number of Swedish and Danish MEPs from these groups voted against or abstained.

The system of own resources is to be discussed in 2016, within the 2016 mid-term review of the MFF talks.

### Vote 14. EU-US single market

In May 2013, a large majority of MEPs backed the proposed EP position on negotiations for a free trade agreement with the US.<sup>48</sup> Only the GUE-NGL and Greens/EFA groups, as well as most non-attached Members (who are mostly on the radical right), were opposed. French MEPs in the S&D and ALDE groups abstained. MEPs also voted to ask the Commission and the Council to exclude cultural and audio-visual services from the negotiating mandate, including those provided online.

However, a number of other references to potential obstacles to an EU-US FTA, such as GMOs and labour and environmental standards, were voted down.

<sup>48</sup> European Parliament resolution on EU trade and investment negotiations with the United States of America.

## Graph 18. EU trade investment agreement negotiations with the US

Motion for resolution : *vote: resolution (as a whole)*  
Power table by EPGs



The EU Treaty stipulates that international trade agreements are negotiated by the European Commission on behalf of all EU Member States, based on a negotiating mandate adopted by the Council.

In June 2013 the Council agreed to give the Commission a mandate to start negotiations with the US on the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), negotiations that were officially launched later that month. A first round of negotiations were concluded, the second round being postponed due to the shut-down of the US administration. Negotiations are expected to be finalised in the autumn of 2014, at the earliest. To enter into force, though, trade agreements must be ratified by a majority of votes in the European Parliament.

### Vote 15. Temporary re-introduction of border controls

In June 2013, the European Parliament adopted its position in first reading, passing a legislative resolution on the provision for common rules on the temporary re-introduction of border controls at internal borders.<sup>49</sup> The drafting of this report was triggered by the alleged misuse of the Schengen mechanism in several countries and by developments in some Member States that expressed their desire for the re-introduction of border checks.

<sup>49</sup> Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 562/2006 in order to provide for common rules on the temporary re-introduction of border control at internal borders in exceptional circumstances

## Graph 19. Temporary re-introduction of border controls at internal borders

Draft legislative resolution : *vote: legislative resolution* - ordinary legislative procedure, first reading  
Power table by EPGs



The voted text represents the result of negotiations between the Commission, Council and the European Parliament and calls for increased protection of the EU citizens' right to move freely within Schengen borders and for a better evaluation of the compliance with the Schengen rules. It is stated that the reintroduction of border controls within the Schengen borders is possible for security reasons only, in exceptional cases such as great deficiencies identified by the Schengen evaluation mechanism or the presence of a serious threat at internal borders. The Commission was further invited to establish a set of guidelines which would ensure a coherent application of the Schengen acquis.

The resolution passed with 506 voted in favour to 121 against, the winning majority formed by EPP, S&D and ALDE adopting the compromise solution of accepting the reintroduction of border controls in emergency cases. The votes in ECR were split, more than half of its members abstaining from the final vote.

The Greens and the GUE-NGL groups mainly voted against, dissatisfied with the result of the inter-institutional negotiations and the possibility to reintroduce border controls in several cases, a development seen as a limitation to free movement. Most of the EFD members also voted against, but for different reasons, some explicitly asking for the reintroduction of border checks, for a better national control on immigration, during the plenary debate (half of the members, however, abstained from the vote).

The report was also adopted by the Council in October 2013.

### 3. Denmark in the European Parliament

This third part of the report presents a national analysis of the Danish case in the European Parliament.

In many aspects, the Danish case is intriguing. For one, Denmark is often described as a 'Euro-sceptic' country. Evidence for this statement is provided by 6 referenda on the EU, where the Danes had to vote on deepening European integration (soon to be 7 with the forthcoming referendum on whether Denmark should join the European Patent Court). The 'no vote' in 1992 on the Maastricht Treaty led to the establishment of the four Danish opt-outs from EU cooperation within defence policy, justice and home affairs, the euro and union citizenship. The EU debate in Denmark has therefore often been reduced to a 'for' or 'against' the EU, and this is also reflected in the EP election campaigns and within the national parties.<sup>50</sup> The Danish opt-outs are also a reflection of a general trend in the Danish relationship to the EU, namely a reticence towards political integration in Europe and fear of abrogating sovereignty.

However, even though Denmark thus has serious reservations towards aspects of EU cooperation, this does not mean the Danish attitude toward the EU is purely negative. In fact, the Danish population has shown an overall positive attitude to the EU, where a large majority of 74 per cent believes that Denmark would not be better off outside the EU.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the majority of the Danish political parties are considered to be pro-European and favour a strengthening of cooperation with the EU. The dominant understanding of the EU in Denmark has been a pragmatic one, ever since Denmark joined the EU in 1973 for economic imperatives. Therefore, the Danish population and the political parties are generally supportive of EU cooperation when it has instrumental advantages for Denmark, legitimising EU cooperation by its perceived utility for Denmark.

These, at times conflicting, perspectives on the EU, are likely to be reflected in the way in which Denmark acts in the European parliament. Denmark currently has 13 MEPs from 7 national parties and is represented in all of the seven European political groups, which in itself gives an interesting insight into the voting behaviour of MEPs from different political groups.

<sup>50</sup> Buskjær Christensen (2009)

<sup>51</sup> Eurobarometer (2013)

In the following sections Denmark's participation in the EP is examined. Firstly, the Danish political parties contesting EP elections will be presented as well as their different attitudes to EU integration. Secondly, the analysis will turn to examine the overall voting behaviour of the Danish MEPs in EP7, and look for plausible explanations as to *why* the MEPs vote as they do, exemplified by the 15 votes previously presented in the second part of report.

## Danish Political Parties in the EP

There are currently 13 Danish MEPs from seven different national parties, and represented in all of the seven political groups in the EP, as it appears from table 1.

Table 1. Danish national parties contesting EP elections - 2009 election

<i>National Party</i>	<i>European Political Group (EPG)</i>	<i>No of MEPs represented 2009-2014</i>	<i>% of total votes EP 2009</i>
The June Movement (J) <sup>52</sup>	IND/DEM <sup>53</sup>	None	2,4
The Peoples movement against the EU (N)	GUE-NGL	1	7,2
The Socialist People's Party (F)	Greens/EFA	2 (1 from 2013 <sup>54</sup> )	15,9
The Social Democrats (A)	S&D	4 (5 from 2013 <sup>55</sup> )	21,5
The Social Liberals (B)	ALDE	none	4,3
The Liberal Party (V)	ALDE	3	20,2
The Liberal Alliance (I)	-	none	0,6
The Conservative People's Party (C)	EPP	1	12,7
The Danish People's Party (O)	EFD	2 (1 from 2010 <sup>56</sup> )	15,3

*Source:* compiled by author from data found at Statistic Denmark (2013)

<sup>52</sup> *Note:* The June Movement was dissolved in September 2009

<sup>53</sup> *Note:* IND/DEM was dissolved in 2009 after losing many of its MEPs.

<sup>54</sup> *Note:* In March 2013 one MEP left Greens/EFA to become a member of the S&D delegation due to a change in her national party affiliation.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Note:* In March 2011, one MEP left the EFD group to become an independent member of the ECR group, after having parted with her national party (O).



The Danish party system for EP elections is separate from the national party system which means in practical terms that there may be parties contesting EP elections which do not contest the national parliament elections, as is the case for People's movement against the EU.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, not all national parties chose to contest the EP elections, as is the case for the Red-Green Alliance.<sup>58</sup>

The existence of the two anti- EU movements on the left wing side of the political spectrum, the People's Movement against the EU (N),<sup>59</sup> and the June Movement (J) (which no longer exists) is a result of the euro-scepticism that Denmark has experienced since its accession to the EU.<sup>60</sup> The People's Movement against the EU is an anti-EU organisation which was established just before the Danish referendum on accession to the EC in 1972, as a cross-party platform for the no campaign. The cross-party platform implies that it is an organisation welcoming all that share the general aim of the movement: namely to withdraw Denmark from the EU. However, most of its members belong to the left side of the political spectrum. The national far-left party, the Red-Green Alliance (Ø)<sup>61</sup> does not contest EP elections as a party, but instead supports the Movement and has its own candidates running through them. Though the People's Movement against the EU regards the EU as a capitalist and socially unjust organization, and still works for total withdrawal, there are signs that the party is getting more pragmatic in recent years in areas such as environmental protection that can be tackled advantageously at the EU level. The People's Movement against the EU has 1 seat in EP, and is represented in the GUE-NGL group.<sup>62</sup>

The pro-European parties in Denmark include the Socialist People's Party, the Social Democrats, the Social Liberals, the Liberal party and the Conservative People's party.

Traditionally, the Socialist's People's Party (F)<sup>63</sup> was a left-green euro-sceptic party, and played an important role in the negotiations that lead to the four Danish opt-outs in 1993.<sup>64</sup> However, the party has since taken a pro-European turn realizing

<sup>57</sup> Buskjær Christensen (2009)

<sup>58</sup> Enhedslisten (2014)

<sup>59</sup> Folkebevægelsen (2014)

<sup>60</sup> Buskjær Christensen (2009)

<sup>61</sup> Enhedslisten (2014)

<sup>62</sup> Folkebevægelsen mod EU (2014)

<sup>63</sup> Socialistisk Folkeparti (2014)

<sup>64</sup> Buskjær Christensen (2009)

that the party can pursue many of its prime political goals, environmental protection and regulation of social standards, via the EU.<sup>65</sup> The party holds 14 seats (out of 179) in the Danish parliament, and was until 2014 a government party before ideological differences made them leave the government. The party currently has 1 MEP in the EP, and is represented in the Greens/EFA group. As it appears from table 1, the party gained 2 mandates in the 2009 election, but in 2013 one of the MEPs chose to change national party affiliation to the Social Democrats, and therefore left the Greens/EFA and instead became a member of the S&D group.

The Social Democrats (A),<sup>66</sup> which currently hold office in a minority centre-left government with the Social Liberals, is the second largest party in Denmark, and holds 47 seats in the national parliament. The party is a strong supporter of the EU, encouraging abandonment of the four opt-outs, although they have not pursued holding referenda on the opt-outs yet. The party currently holds five seats in EP, and is represented in the S&D group.

The Social Liberals (B),<sup>67</sup> which are the liberal counterweight in government, and holds 17 seats in the Danish Parliament, are strong supporters of the EU in almost all areas. It failed to get enough votes for a mandate in the 2009 election, and is thus not represented in the EP in this term. They are however expected to gain seats at the coming election, and will then join the ALDE group, same as the Liberal party is represented in.

The centre right Liberal Party (V)<sup>68</sup> represents classical liberal values and remains a strong supporter of the EU and not least the internal market. The party is the biggest in Denmark, both in terms of members and seats in the national parliament where they hold 47 seats. The party has maintained office several times, last in 2001-2011 in a right-wing minority government with the Conservative People's Party. The Liberal Party currently holds three seats in the European Parliament and is represented in the ALDE group.

The Conservative People's Party (C)<sup>69</sup> has in the last decade or so diminished in size on the national scene and currently holds 8 seats in the national parliament.

<sup>65</sup> Buskjær Christensen (2009), Socialistisk Folkeparti (2014)

<sup>66</sup> Socialdemokratiet (2014)

<sup>67</sup> Radikale Venstre (2014)

<sup>68</sup> Venstre (2014)

<sup>69</sup> Konservative Folkeparti (2014)

The party is generally pro-European, especially on initiatives that will improve the conditions for the Danish private sector. However, the party is usually hesitant towards initiatives moving the EU closer towards political integration. The Conservative People's Party currently holds 1 seat in EP, and is represented in the EPP group.

The ultra-liberal party, Liberal Alliance (I),<sup>70</sup> formed in 2007, also contested EP elections in 2009, though without gaining enough votes for a mandate. The party holds 9 seats in the national parliament. The party is mostly sceptical towards the EU, in the sense that although it remains a supporter of the internal market, it positions itself in opposition to what EU has become in its current form, referring to the regulatory competences that the EU has. If the party gains any seats at the coming election, it has not yet established in what EPG it will be represented, but most likely it will be the right wing and EU sceptic ECR group.

The Danish People's Party (O)<sup>71</sup> is a populist right-wing and EU-sceptic party. They have experienced an enormous increase in popular support in the last decade and are currently the third biggest party in Denmark with 22 seats in the Danish parliament. The party is euro-sceptical, in that they do not want Denmark to withdraw entirely from EU cooperation, but they want the EU as a whole to return to earlier stages of integration where cooperation remained strictly intergovernmental. They are especially critical of the effects that EU membership has at the national level and has a main emphasis on defending Danish sovereignty, values and culture. The Danish People's Party currently holds 1 seat in the EP, and is represented in the EFD group. As it appears from table 1, the party gained two mandates at the 2009 election, but one of the MEPs left the national party and the EFD in March 2011, and instead became an independent member of the ECR group.

### **Allocating seats in the EP**

The seats in the European Parliament are allocated to the different party lists by means of firstly determining how many mandates each party should get. This is done by means of the so-called D'Horndt method. This method is generally thought to favour larger parties over small ones, and to counterbalance this, as well as avoiding any votes going to waste, the parties have the opportunity to form elec-

<sup>70</sup> Liberal Alliance (2014)

<sup>71</sup> Dansk Folkeparti (2014)

toral pacts with each other.<sup>72</sup> When parties form electoral pacts, they agree to pool all their votes, resulting in a number of mandates going to all the parties in the electoral part. The second step is then that the parties internally have to allocate the mandates between those taking part in the electoral pact.

In the 2009 election the following electoral pacts were formed:<sup>73</sup>

- The Socialist People's Party (F), the Social Democrats (A) and the Social Liberals (B)
- The Liberal Party (V), the Conservative People's Party (K) and the Liberal Alliance (I)
- The June Movement (J) and the People's Movement against the EU (N)

The Danish People's Party did not take part in any electoral pacts in 2009.

The 2009 electoral pacts implied that the Social Democrats gained an extra mandate from the votes of the Socialist People's Party and the Social Liberal Party, which didn't get any seats at all. Moreover, the Liberal Party got an extra mandate from the votes of the Liberal Alliance and the Conservative People's party. This confirms the assumption that the best way to gain most from an electoral pact is to form a coalition with a party that is smaller than you.<sup>74</sup>

In that way the electoral pacts is a strategic as well as a political decision, and can sometimes mean more than just who gets the seats.<sup>75</sup> It is a way to form cross-party alliances, and potentially get something else in return at a late stage if your votes help another party get their last seat.

It has not yet been established which electoral pacts we will see for the 2014 elections. These are typically to be registered to the Ministry for Economic Affairs and the Interior about 1 month before the day of the election.

<sup>72</sup> Elklit (2005)

<sup>73</sup> EU Information Centre (2014)

<sup>74</sup> Buskjær Christensen (2009)

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

## Danish MEPs in the European Parliament 2009-2014

Table 2 gives a quantitative overview of the voting trends of the Danish MEPs represented in the EP from 2009-2014. As it appears, two, different 'percentages' are shown: the voting behaviour of the MEPs in relation to votes on legislative dossiers and the MEP's voting behaviour across all votes. The latter is marked with brackets in the table. The table shows how often the MEPs vote 'yes' or 'no' to EU legislation and how often the MEPs choose to abstain or are not present to vote. Moreover, it lists the overall percentage of loyalty that the MEPs show their EPGs across all votes, meaning how often their voting behaviour is in line with the overall party line of the EPG.

The tendencies in the voting behaviour of the MEPs are the same in votes on legislative dossiers and across all votes. The tendencies in the votes on legislative dossiers are, however, more distinct, due to the more decisive character of passing final legislation. Therefore, the legislative votes may also tell us more general tendencies regarding the voting behaviour of the Danish MEPs. Consultative votes are also often understood only when analysing the whole context in which a particular vote has been passed. Thus, the analysis that follows focuses in particular on the legislative votes.

We can observe how the far left MEP (N) represented in GUE/NGL and the far right MEP (O) represented in EFD generally show a lower percentage of 'yes' votes implying that they are more likely to vote against EU legislation than the other MEPs. This is also the case for the independent MEP represented in ECR since 2011. Similarly, we can see how these MEPs also show the least loyalty to their respective EPG, especially the MEP from O represented in EFD. This however corresponds to the fact that the overall cohesion rate of EDF is much lower than that of the other EPGs as earlier examined.

When examining the votes of the left and centre left MEPs with a pro-EU profile we can see that these most often vote 'yes' to EU legislation. The percentage is slightly lower for the MEP (F) in the Greens/EFA, who however has shown a very high degree of loyalty to the EPG. The delegation (A) represented in the S&D show a little less loyalty to their EPG when compared to the overall internal cohesion rate of that group, as earlier examined. This is likely to be because the Danish delegation comes from a large government party, and is therefore more constrained by the national party line.

The right wing MEPs (V) represented in ALDE seems to have the highest percentage of 'yes' votes to final EU legislation. This corresponds with the MEPs being (one

Table 2. Showcasing voting behaviour of the Danish MEPs 2009-2014

MEP	Final votes on legislative dossiers (All votes)	% Yes <sup>76</sup>	% No	% Abstain	% didn't vote	Loyalty to EPG in total votes <sup>77</sup>
S. Søndergaard (N)	514 (5085)	49 (54)	29 (32)	21 (31)	9 (11)	80
M. Auken (F)	514 (5085)	81 (67)	16 (29)	5 (4)	3 (6)	96
E. Turunen (A)	514 (5085)	81 (67)	13 (28)	6 (5)	3 (4)	n/a <sup>78</sup>
D. Jørgensen (A)	514 (5085)	88 (67)	9 (29)	3 (5)	2 (5)	85
O. Christensen (A)	514 (5085)	89 (66)	8 (29)	3 (4)	2 (5)	85
C. Schaldemose (A)	514 (5085)	89 (66)	9 (29)	3 (5)	1 (4)	85
B. Thomsen (A)	514 (5085)	87 (66)	9 (29)	4 (5)	14 (8)	86
M. Løkkegaard (V)	514 (5085)	95 (64)	4 (35)	2 (1)	10 (8)	93
J. Rohde (V)	514 (5085)	93 (63)	6 (36)	1 (2)	11 (14)	91
A. E. Jensen (V)	514 (5085)	94 (64)	4 (35)	1 (1)	6 (6)	93,5
M. Messerschmidt (O)	514 (5085)	69 (45)	22 (48)	9 (7)	7 (7)	63
A. Rosbach (independent)	514 (5085)	67 (42)	14 (48)	18 (10)	8 (6)	79,7 <sup>79</sup>
B. Bendtsen (K)	514 (5085)	95 (59)	3 (39)	2 (2)	3 (7)	85

Source: compiled by author from data on [www.VoteWatch.eu](http://www.VoteWatch.eu).

<sup>76</sup> Note: The large number of 'yes' votes does not necessarily reflect pro-EU attitudes, as well as the 'no' votes do not always count as anti-EU or Eurosceptic votes. In some cases, a negative vote might have been cast as a rejection of an anti-EU text, and the other way around (Vote Watch, 2013)

<sup>77</sup> Loyalty percentage calculated on the basis of all votes.

<sup>78</sup> Note: Loyalty of MEP not available because of change in EPG 2013

<sup>79</sup> Note: Loyalty is calculated from 2010-2014 because MEP became a member of ECR not until 2010

of) the most pro-EU national delegations in EP. Similarly their loyalty to their EPG is generally very high. However, their percentage of ‘didn’t vote’ is also a bit higher than those of the other Danish delegations, and it can be expected that they in some of these cases chose not to vote because they disagreed with their EPG. The Danish MEPs (V) are generally considered to be more right wing than most of their European colleagues from ALDE.

The conservative MEP (C) represented in the EPP generally vote ‘yes’ to most final EU legislation confirming his pro-EU attitude. However, his loyalty to his EPG is somewhat lower than the overall cohesion rate of the EPP as earlier examined. This is likely to be because the EPP is one of the most pro-EU parties in the Parliament, and here the Danish MEP has more reservations regarding political integration than his European colleagues in the EPP group.

### **Understanding the voting behaviour of Danish MEPs**

Having examined the overall voting behaviour of the Danish MEPs in the EP7, including their voting records and cohesion rate according to their respective EPGs, the following sections analyse plausible explanations for *why* the MEPs vote as they do, exemplified by the 15 votes previously presented in the report.

#### *Ideology over nationality*

The Danish MEPs are most likely to vote according to their EPG, which was the case in the most of the examined cases. This also affirms the general assumption that political group membership is likely to be a stronger determinant of MEP voting behaviour than nationality.

Consequently, voting trends in the European Parliament have to be analysed primarily by looking at the votes cast by European political groups. These groups generally follow two main patterns: a classical left-right pattern, and a pro-/anti- deeper European integration pattern.<sup>80</sup>

#### *Right-left division*

The left/right dimension was visible in several of the examined cases, including the vote on maternity leave (examined on page 20), the vote on the strengthening of

<sup>80</sup> Hix (2002)

the internal market (examined on page 33) and the vote on the phasing out of nuclear power in Europe (examined on page 22).

In the case of the vote on the directive on maternity leave, the left wing MEPs (N,F,A) all voted in favour of the proposal. Examining various statements from the MEPs in the media shows similar arguments to that of their respective EPG, namely that the provisions of the proposal would ensure greater protection of women in Europe, and encourage democratic growth.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, the directive was supported in the media by the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) which is traditionally a supporter of the left wing political course in Denmark.<sup>82</sup>

The right wing MEPs (V) voted against the proposal arguing that the legislation would impose extra costs, particularly on small businesses.<sup>83</sup> This was backed by the Confederation of Danish Employers (DA), which also warned against the EU directive in the public media.<sup>84</sup> The centre-right MEP (K) abstained from voting, probably because a majority of his EPG supported the proposal. Also the right wing MEPs (O) chose to abstain, while their EPG was split. This is another example of the far right EFD group having difficulties reaching agreements in the group since its MEPs comes from so different political positions.

**Table 3. Vote on maternity leave showcasing right/left division**

<i>For:</i> left wing MEPs	<i>Against:</i> right wing MEPs	<i>Abstention or no vote:</i> right wing MEPs
N	V	O
F		C
A		Independent

*Source:* compiled by author from data on [www.VoteWatch.eu](http://www.VoteWatch.eu).

<sup>81</sup> Ritzaus Bureau (2010)

<sup>82</sup> Nyborg (2010)

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid



*Pro/Anti EU*

The anti/pro integration dimension also seems to be a guiding factor for the Danish MEPs when voting in the European Parliament. Of the examined cases, this was especially evident in the cases of the resolution establishing the EEAS (examined on page 34), the proposal to give the EC increased options for economic surveillance of member states (examined on page 30), and the vote on whether to increase the EU’s own resources in the future (examined on page 35).

**Table 4. Vote on the EEAS showcasing pro/anti EU integration division**

<i>For:</i> pro EU MEPs	<i>Against:</i> anti EU MEPs
F	N
A	O
V	Independent
C	

*Source:* compiled by author from data on [www.VoteWatch.eu](http://www.VoteWatch.eu).

In the case of adopting the resolution to create an European External Action Service, the ‘Pro EU’ MEPs from F, A, V and C, remained very positive of the decision, corresponding to a generally positive attitude towards deeper EU integration, also in foreign policy.<sup>85</sup> The position of the MEPs was in line with the position of their respective EPGs.<sup>86</sup> The ‘anti-EU’ MEPs voted no to the proposal following their sceptical position on EU integration.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Socialistisk Folkeparti (2014), Socialdemokratiet (2014), Venstre (2014), Konservativ Folkeparti (2014)

<sup>86</sup> European People’s Party (2014), Progressive Alliance for Socialists and Democrats (2014), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Eu (2014). The Greens/European Free Alliance (2014), European Conservatives and Reformists Group (2014), Confederal Group of the European United Left (2014), Europe of Freedom and Democracy (2014)

<sup>87</sup> Dansk Folkeparti (2014); Folkebevægelsen (2014)

### *When nationality matters*

While the Danish MEPs tend to vote according to the line of their EPGs, this can be difficult in a vote where their national party and their EPG want different outcomes.

Conflicts between MEPs' national parties happen on a wide range of issues, including agriculture, environmental issues, economic issues and European integration.<sup>88</sup> In some cases the MEPs may choose to vote with their EPGs. This can either be explained by the fact that MEPs are 'socialised' into their EPG, and feel a greater sense of 'belonging' to the EPG than to the national party. A similar explanation is that some MEPs find themselves favouring 'tighter' EU cooperation than their national party.

There are however also cases where national affiliation does play a significant role, and where the MEPs seem more likely to toe the national party. The decision with which side to align is made by weighing up the importance of the issue for the national party as against the EPG.<sup>89</sup> MEPs are likely to vote in accordance with the national party over the EPG in cases where the issue is highly salient at national level and there exist a pre-established 'national position' or in cases where the issue is of special importance to the national party.<sup>90</sup>

### *The 'Danish Way'*

In some policy issue areas, MEPs are more likely to vote in a 'Danish way' than in a European way, when there exists a particular national context that pre-establishes a certain political position. It has previously been confirmed that the impact of national affiliation is particularly strong in policy areas such as agriculture, environment and employment.<sup>91</sup> That means that although the Danish MEPs rarely vote along national lines, there are exceptions where we see Danish MEPs voting the same as their national colleagues, regardless of party.

Of the votes examined for this report, this trend is confirmed in both the vote on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (examined on page 28), as well as the vote on greenhouse gas allowance (examined on page 29).

<sup>88</sup> Faas (2003); Hix, Kreppel & Noury (2003); Kreppel (2000)

<sup>89</sup> Rasmussen (2008)

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> See for example Rasmussen (2008); Faas (2003); Kreppel (2000)

**Table 5. Vote on agricultural reform showcasing Danish MEPs voting behaviour combined with EPG result**

<i>Group</i>	<i>Vote</i>	<i>Loyal/rebel to EPG</i>
N	No	Loyal
F	No	Loyal
A	No	Rebel
V	No	Rebel
C	No	Rebel
O	No	Rebel
Independent	No	Rebel

*Source:* compiled by author from data on [www.VoteWatch.eu](http://www.VoteWatch.eu).

**Table 6. Vote on greenhouse gas allowance showcasing Danish MEPs voting behaviour combined with EPG result**

<i>Group</i>	<i>Vote</i>	<i>Loyal/rebel to EPG</i>
N	Yes	Group split
F	Yes	Loyal
A	Yes	Group split
V	Yes	Group split
C	Yes	Group split
O	Abs	-
Independent	Yes	Rebel

*Source:* compiled by author from data on [www.VoteWatch.eu](http://www.VoteWatch.eu).

In the case of the CAP vote, we can see that all Danish MEPs voted against the proposal, implying that the majority of MEPs were rebelling against their EPGs, that in most cases are much more positive towards the CAP and want the current structure of farm subsidies to remain unchanged. The only MEPs voting in cohesion with their EPGs are the one from GUE/NRL and the MEPs sitting in the Greens/EFA group.

The vote on greenhouse gas allowances showed similar results. When it comes to environmental issues, Danish MEPs are generally in support of higher and stricter environmental EU standards than most of their European colleagues, and environmental issues are generally seen as salient in the national context.<sup>92</sup> In the case of the vote on greenhouse allowance, all but one of the Danish MEPs voted in favour of boosting the price of EU 'polluter's permits' within the emission trade scheme. While the proposal was indeed passed in the parliament, it was by a very narrow majority implying that several EPGs were split on the issue, including GUE/NGL, ALDE, EPP and S&D. In such a case, the Danish MEPs seem to have voted influenced rather by the 'national' affiliation.

### *Conflicting national party line*

If an issue is highly salient in the national debate and of special importance to the national party, MEPs often find it more important to vote in accordance with the national party. However, in these situations, it is also likely that the MEP will abstain from voting in the EP if either a policy conflict emerges between the national party and the EPG, or if they disagree with the national party.<sup>93</sup>

Of the examined cases, this was especially noticeable in the vote on the FTT (examined on page 24), and the vote on the ACTA (examined on page 25).

The question of creating an FTT raised much attention in the national debate. As exemplified by the Danish opt-out to the euro, there is a general hesitance both among the public and the national parties to cooperating on EU economic governance.<sup>94</sup> Although a large majority of GUE-NGL, Greens/EFA, S&D and EPP adopted the vote on the FTT, the Danish MEPs in GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA were the only ones voting in favour of the proposal. The MEPs (A) from the S&D

<sup>92</sup> Rasmussen (2008)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Greens Analyseinstitut (2012)

abstained from voting because the national party line was against the FTT.<sup>95</sup> This was despite the fact that top members of the Danish S&D delegation had previously been strongly in favour of its adoption.<sup>96</sup> Arguably, it became particularly difficult for the Danish MEPs in S&D to defy the national position, because the national party was in government and the issue raised critical debate in national media.<sup>97</sup>

This also confirms the assumption that small (and left wing) parties are often less constrained by national interests. Although the national party (F) of the MEPs in the Greens/EFA group were also a government party at the time, and similarly critical towards introducing the FTT, the MEPs in the Greens/EFA voted for the proposal. Also the Danish member in the EPP voted no, and thus went against his European colleagues, who generally voted in favour of the bill. This is likely to be an example of the Danish MEP (C) from the EPP being more sceptical than his fellow pro-European colleagues in the EPP.

**Table 7. Vote on FTT showcasing Danish MEPs voting behaviour combined with EPG result**

<i>Group</i>	<i>Vote</i>	<i>Loyal/rebel to EPG</i>
N	Yes	Loyal
F	Yes	Loyal
A	Abstain	Rebel
V	No	Loyal
C	No	Rebel
O	No	Group split
Independent	No	Loyal

*Source:* compiled by author from data on [www.VoteWatch.eu](http://www.VoteWatch.eu).

<sup>95</sup> Thorning-Schmidt (2011)

<sup>96</sup> Politiken (2011)

<sup>97</sup> Politiken (2012)

Another example proving how it can be difficult to defy the national party line, especially when you come from a large government party, is the ACTA vote. Here, the EP rejected the council decision to establish the ACTA by a sweeping majority. The Danish MEPs from the S&D delegation however, ended up abstaining because the national party line and the government as a whole strongly supported the ATCA.<sup>98</sup> The MEPs from A does not seem to have voiced their opinion on the issue in the media. The MEP from F was on the other hand quite active in the media arguing against the proposal,<sup>99</sup> and voted against it in the final vote. Again, it was possible for this MEP to vote against the national party line, and this was despite the fact that the Minister responsible for the trade and investment, and thus the government spokesperson for ACTA, was from the same party as the MEP (F).

Also the MEP (C) from the EPP went against his EPG, because his position and the position of his national party was different from that of his EPG.<sup>100</sup>

**Table 8. Vote on ACTA showcasing Danish MEPs voting behaviour combined with EPG result**

<i>Group</i>	<i>Vote</i>	<i>Loyal/rebel to EPG</i>
N	No	Loyal
F	No	Loyal
A	Abstain	Rebel
V	No	Loyal
C	Yes	Rebel
O	No	Group split
Independent	Absent	-

*Source:* compiled by author from data on [www.VoteWatch.eu](http://www.VoteWatch.eu).

<sup>98</sup> Danish foreign Ministry (2012)

<sup>99</sup> Auken (2012)

<sup>100</sup> Bendtsen & Clausen (2012)

### *Main findings*

The analysis of Danish MEPs voting in the EP7 exemplified by the 15 votes in question, point to some characterising trends and tendencies:

- The Danish MEPs vote primarily along transnational party lines rather than along national lines. In these cases, the right/left dimension and the pro/anti EU dimension often plays an important role in shaping legislative politics.
- National affiliations, independent of national party position do significantly influence voting behaviour of the Danish MEPs when voting on policy issues such as the environment and agriculture.
- When a policy conflict emerges between the national party and the EPG, MEPs do not necessarily vote with their national party. This depends on whether the issue is salient in the national debate and if it is of special importance to the national party. If so, the MEP is likely to toe the national party line. It also seem to be more difficult for MEPs belonging to large national parties, and especially if they are in government, to go against the national party line.

## 4. Conclusion

Today, the European Parliament is a powerful institution that shapes central EU policies and determines in which direction the EU is heading.

The fifteen key votes examined in the report demonstrate the broad range of salient policy issues on which the European Parliament has power, from economic governance, to the free movement of persons, international trade agreements, reform of the agricultural policy, carbon taxes etc.

The analysis of these votes also highlights that the political composition of the Parliament matters in determining the direction of EU policy. In the 2009-2014 term we have seen how the European Parliament often works as one common institution, and in about 70 % of roll-call votes made, the winning coalitions were a 'grand coalition' between the large, centre-parties, EPP, S&D and ALDE. In the rest of the cases, we have seen either a centre right (EPP, ALDE and ECR) or a centre-left coalition (S&D, Greens/EFA, ALDE and GUE/NGL) determining in which way EU politics should go.

The Danish case confirmed how European political group membership is likely to be a stronger determinant of MEP voting behaviour than nationality. The Danish MEPs vote according to ideological persuasions in line with their EPGs, and here the groups generally follow two main patterns: a classical left-right pattern, and a pro-/anti- deeper European integration pattern. However, the analysis of the Danish case also showed that sometimes nationality does matter. There are a number of policy issues that are salient in the Danish context, including environmental policy and agricultural policy as examined, and in these cases, national affiliations independent of national party position do significantly influence voting behaviour of the Danish MEPs. Moreover, if a policy conflict emerges between the national party and the EPG, and the issue is of special importance to the national party, the MEP is likely to toe the national party line, especially if belonging to a large, and/or government party.

For such reasons, the results of the May 2014 election are likely have real policy consequences for European citizens. It matters how the Parliament is composed and which political groups can form a winning majority. The next winning coalition (s) will determine the work of the European Parliament as a co-legislator and for the



first time determine the election of the Commission President for 2014-19. Hence, the next European Parliament will significantly influence the direction of the EU for the next five years and perhaps beyond.

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