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Lucca, Italy**

**The Logic of Voting Behaviour in the European  
Parliament: New Insights on Party Group Membership  
and National Affiliation as Determinants of Vote**

**PhD Program in Political Systems  
and Institutional Change  
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**By  
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*Alla memoria di Lydia ed Elda Ribetti*



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Science, International Relations and Public Policy in memory of the late Yitzhak Rabin, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

L. Cicchi (2012) *What really goes on inside the European Parliament? An analysis of MEPs' assistants opinion on party cohesion and voting behaviour*, paper presented at the 22nd ECPR Summer School Standing Group on Political Parties and Party Systems, Université Libre de Bruxelles / Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

L. Cicchi (2011) *Party Groups in the European Parliament, Cohesiveness and MEPs' Survey Data: New Evidence on Voting Behaviour from a New (Simple) Methodology?*, *Interdisciplinary Political Studies*, vol. 1, issue 2. ISSN 2039-8573.

L. Cicchi (2011) *The Logic(s) of Voting Behaviour in the European Parliament*, paper presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> SISP Graduate Conference, University of Turin, Department of Political Science.

## Abstract

*The greater centrality of the European Parliament (EP) within the EU's institutional structure has increased the importance of voting behaviour of its members (MEPs), thus making it more important to fully understand the logic they follow. A consolidated stream of literature has treated the political groups of the European Parliament (EPGs) as cohesive actors, influenced mainly by the classical dimension of left-right politics, with nationality playing a marginal role; a second, anti-/pro-EU dimension exists, but it is orthogonal to the main one and explains a fewer share of votes. In this perspective, MEPs from the same political group are likely to vote together (just like any democratic parliament), no matter which country they come from. However, other scholars suggest that the methods used to reach these findings are biased. I add new elements to this discussion, analysing: (I) the cases when EPGs are exceptionally low cohesive; (II) the different dynamics of various EP's legislative committees; (III) the possible contrast between EPGs and national delegations; (IV) the relationship between MEPs' exogenous policy preferences and their revealed voting behaviour. Theoretically, I originally define MEPs' voting behaviour as a refinement of existing theories both at a macro-level (EU party system, party group cohesion) and a micro-level (MEPs' representativeness, principal-agent theory). I firstly affirm that the current knowledge about the high cohesiveness of EPGs is a consequence, although correct, of a quantitative approach that "dilutes" the variance by looking at the aggregate scores of indexes of cohesion (such as the Agreement Index, AI); secondly, that voting behaviour of MEPs in the various committees of the European Parliament has different dynamics, following the indication of many scholars that knowledge of the internal dynamics of committees in the EP is still blurry; thirdly, that national affiliation, yet emerging only in a small minority of votes, is crucial and has some specific characteristics that can be isolated; fourthly, that MEPs' preferences and behaviour differ more than expected along partisan (EPG) lines than national lines. Empirically I then test these hypotheses on the 6th EP legislature (2004-2009) and partially on the 7th (2009-2013) with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodological tools: a critical use of the AI; the results of an original survey submitted to MEPs' assistants; descriptive and inferential statistical techniques; a combination of survey preferences and behavioural data (roll-call votes). Finally, I add some qualitative insights in order to reinforce my findings. My results show that the oft-repeated claims about the resemblance of the European Parliament to a classical democratic parliament should be taken more carefully: usually political groups are highly cohesive, but when controversies arise (because the outcome of the vote may impact member states' interests) national affiliation plays a greater role than the one usually envisaged by the mainstream literature.*





# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*“Over the last twenty years, the European Parliament (EP) has experienced a greater amount of change than any other major EU institution. [...] For much of its life, the EP could have been justly labelled a ‘multi-lingual talking shop’. This is no longer the case: the EP is now one of the most powerful legislatures in the world”*

(Farrell et al. 2006: 3)

### 1.1. Introduction and research question

Within the framework of the European construction, the European Parliament has been the institution with the most interesting path due to the constant changes that it has gone through over the course of the years. In its sixty-year history the European Parliament (EP) has evolved from a mere consultative body into a full-fledged legislative chamber: “from fig-leaf to co-legislator” (Corbett et al. 2011: 3). Ergo, this increase of power makes it increasingly important to know how Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) vote.

The interest for the general question “how do MEPs vote?” attracted increasing academic attention since the early 1980s, in the aftermath of the newly direct-elected European assembly in 1979; from that point on, a consolidated stream of literature, relying mainly on quantitative analyses of roll-call votes, has treated the political groups of the European Parliament (EPGs) as highly internally cohesive actors, influenced mainly by the classical dimension of left-right politics, with nationality playing a marginal role. In this perspective, MEPs from the same political group are likely to vote together (just like any western democracy parliament), no matter which country they come from. The “national factor” of the logic of voting behaviour, therefore, has been dismissed as secondary. However, other scholars suggest that the methods used to reach these findings are biased, because roll-call votes are only a (non-representative) portion of the whole universe of votes cast, and in general the question of MEPs’ voting behaviour is still at the centre of a heated academic debate. Thus, the relevance of this topic

is twofold: on the one hand, it stems from the importance, per se, of deepening the knowledge of how the members of such a crucial supranational assembly vote, especially after the Lisbon Treaty that put the EP on an equal position to that of the Council. On the other hand, it depends on the possibility for original results, due to the lack of a straightforward and universally accepted answer to the question “how MEPs vote?”.

In terms of specific focus of the research, this dissertation tackles exactly the point raised above: the controversial relationship between party group membership and national affiliation in shaping MEPs’ votes. In the majority of cases, votes fall along the left-right cleavage, with party groups playing a cohesive role: this is true. However, the motivation for studying more carefully the “national alignments” that, from time to time, emerge in the EP is legitimate: what if this national element, latent in most votes, appears only when it really matters, as some Brussels “insiders” – such as the one quoted below – openly recognize?

*“Usually MEPs stick to the national line in the important cases, while for minor issues they tend to vote in group line not to cause too much internal debate” (Anonymous German ALDE member’s assistant – July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012)*

From a broader viewpoint, contemporary studies on the EP can be classified into four interrelated areas, according to the taxonomy provided by Hix et al. (2003a: 193), according to the object under scrutiny:

- a. Works on the general development and functioning of the European Parliament, focusing especially on the institutional change provided by the entry into force of the new Treaties;
- b. Research on political behaviour of the citizens/voters and European elections;
- c. Research on the internal politics and organization of the EP;
- d. Examinations of inter-institutional bargaining between Parliament, Council and Commission.

This dissertation, analysing the logic that lies behind MEPs’ voting behaviour, falls under the third category. More specifically, I investigate the internal dynamics of the EP following the aforementioned central research question: how do party group membership and national affiliation influence the outcome of members of the European Parliament’s vote? This central, necessarily broad question then can be disaggregated in a variety of sub-questions: can MEPs’ legislative behaviour be theorized in a satisfactory framework

that takes into account these two factors? Are these two factors competing in defining the logic of voting behaviour? If yes, why sometimes MEPs decide to disregard the party group line to form a “national alignment”? And when these alignments emerge, can we isolate some key features of the vote – first of all, the presence of a national interest? Do they surface more in regards to specific areas of legislation? Finally, in light of all these elements, can we compare the European Parliament to its national correspondents? A systematic and structured answer to these questions could improve our understanding of legislative behaviour in the European Parliament.

## **1.2. The approach: theory, methodology and data**

In order to address any research question, the starting point must be the theory. In this perspective, the approach used is to first define MEPs’ voting behaviour as a combination of existing theories both at a macro-level (EU party system, party group cohesion) and a micro-level (MEPs’ representativeness, principal-agent theory). The methodological approach relies on mixed, quantitative and qualitative, research strategies. The data employed to conduct this research is essentially threefold: firstly, the available dataset of roll-call votes. Secondly, survey data from MEPs’ questionnaires already published by other scholars. Finally, additional data from an original survey submitted to EP “experts”, namely parliamentary assistants. The time span considered is, whenever possible, the last two European legislatures (EP6, 2004-2009 and EP7, 2009-current); in case of lack of fresh data, the analysis has been limited to EP6.

## **1.3. Brief outline of the chapters**

In chapter 2 I briefly analyse the state of the art of the literature on the Euro party system, party group cohesiveness and MEPs’ voting behaviour. Then, I build my theory as a refinement of different conceptual approaches. In chapter 3 the cases when EPGs are exceptionally divided are analysed, with the help of simple descriptive statistics – yet, reaching interesting and partially counter-intuitive results. In chapter 4 I investigate the different rationales of various EP’s legislative committees, with a specific focus on party membership versus country affiliation (related to the emergence of national interests at stake), also relying on the original data from the expert survey. In chapter 5 I empirically operationalize the concept of “national alignment”, and discuss the possible contrast between EPGs and national delegations. In chapter 6 I analyse the relationship between

MEPs' exogenous policy preferences and their revealed voting behaviour using an original methodology that combines exogenous policy preferences to revealed behavioural data. In chapter 7 I exploit again the information provided by the original survey with a qualitative analysis that corroborates my previous empirical results. Finally, in chapter 8 I conclude by summarizing the main findings and contributions of the dissertation and pinpointing the possible venues for future research.

## Chapter 2

### **Theoretical framework: party politics, representation and voting behaviour in the European Parliament**

*“Despite the fact that there is no real process of political representation at this level, in that there are no European parties competing for the votes of a European electorate, the aggregation of the outcomes of national processes still leads to a reasonable congruence between the European electorate and the European Parliament”*

(Mair and Thomassen 2010: 30)

#### **2.1. Introduction**

When approaching a topic such as MEPs’ voting behaviour, the necessary focus of the analysis is on the outcome of the whole legislative process: the vote, and how it relates to the main dimensions of this work, i.e. party groups and national affiliation. Before the formulation of a theory (yet, like the one presented here, only marginally different from the different conceptual frameworks it is based on), there is the need to look at the object under scrutiny from a broader perspective. In this light, first some general notions on the national and supranational dimensions of the EU, thus leading to different approaches, are presented. Then I briefly examine the evolution of the EP party system and how it can be observed using the lenses of Katz and Mair’s “three faces of party organization”. Thirdly, party cohesion in the EP is analysed, showing how different scholars attribute this to different explanatory factors. Then, I move on to focus on the individual level of members of the European Parliament, first by assessing their representativeness towards the European electorate, and then by analysing their effective voting behaviour in relation to the principal-agent theory. Afterwards, I present my theoretical refinement as a combination of these different approaches, focusing on the oft-overlooked broader element of national affiliation instead of national party membership. Finally I formulate the associated hypotheses.

## **2.2. National and supranational dimensions of the EU**

Any EU study, hence also the present dissertation that focuses on a specific aspect of behaviour of the components of one of its main institutions, must start from the general theoretical discussion on the nature of the EU. EU studies have been long at the centre of a debate between two approaches: the International Relations and the Comparative Politics approach. Scholarly interest on the development and the role of the European Parliament have increased after the first direct elections in 1979, apart from some pioneering (empirical, yet with a strong normative feature) studies prior to that moment (Marquand 1979). After the '80s decade, dominated by more empirical approaches (Bulmer 1983; Taylor 1983; Putnam 1988) that failed to ignite a proper theoretical debate, in the early '90s this dichotomy became evident, especially thanks to the contributions of two scholars presenting diametrically opposed views (Moravcsik 1993; Hix 1994). Other scholars tried, in fact, to reconcile these two positions (Majone 1996; Marks 1996) proposing a "third way" that combines them or alternative approaches; however, here only the main two are briefly discussed.

In sum, the International Relations approach considers the EU as an international organization (or at best an international regime) that evolved thanks to a series of successful international bargains. Thus, it privileges the study of national actors' behaviour, and is especially successful in indicating and explaining the evolution of the EU system, included that of the European Parliament. Nevertheless, it cannot provide satisfactory explanations for the internal evolution of the EU and its institutional components, since these dynamics often took place without the direct control of member states. The Comparative Politics approach, on the other hand, identifies the EU as a developing domestic political system: its functions, further development and overall performing, thus, can be compared to those of a nation state. This approach is needed to observe and understand the evolutionary, slow changes that take place in the EU without the necessity of a new treaty or an intergovernmental decision (Bardi 2002: 294). One of these changes is, unquestionably, the evolution of parties and party system at the EU level.

## **2.3. Parties and party system at the EU level**

Political parties are present at the EU level in two types of European structures: EP party groups (parliamentary groups, as those that exist in regular national parliaments) and extra-parliamentary organizations (the so-called "Europarties"). EP party groups became a relevant and

crucial actor right after the first EP elections; they organize MEPs belonging to the same party families, or to ideologically compatible national parties (Bardi 2002: 295). On the other hand, extra-parliamentary organizations can either take the form of transnational federations (EPP, Socialists, Liberals) or of less formally structured organizations of international cooperation. National parties, finally, are also relevant in this picture since they directly engage in EU politics, but above all because they constitute the primary link between Europarties and civil society<sup>1</sup>.

These three types of structure can be seen as analogous to the “three faces” of party organization, the conceptual approach that has probably influenced the most the debate on political parties’ functioning since the mid ‘90s (Katz and Mair 1993). National parties are the equivalent to the “party on the ground”; Europarties (albeit still substantially powerless) represent a sort of “party in central office”, and finally EP party groups correspond to the “party in public office”. Scholars interested in the organizational evolution of EU party system advocate for an integration of these three faces as a necessary step for a full-fledged Europarty development (Bardi 2002; Bardi et al. 2010). Here, this theoretical framework is useful to analyse how MEPs’ voting behaviour may be shaped by the influence of a combination of such faces, without taking into account its possible organizational evolution.

### 2.3.1 Party cohesion

First of all, since most of the work focuses on the concept of cohesion (either by political group or nationality) it is useful to define this concept. Cohesion (or cohesiveness<sup>2</sup>) in studies of legislative assemblies simply refers to the internal coherence of a political actor. When discussing voting behaviour and party groups *vis-à-vis* national delegations, cohesion corresponds to the capacity of such actors of voting cohesively, namely expressing the same ballot preference among the options available.

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<sup>1</sup> Ideally, this function should be performed by Europarties; however, their weakness has insofar not allowed them to replace national parties.

<sup>2</sup> Although a slight theoretical distinction between cohesion and cohesiveness could be legitimately provided (“cohesion” refers to the characteristic itself of an actor of being cohesive, while “cohesiveness” implies that this actor is able to exert a unifying force on its internal component, in order to act as an integrated and unitary system), in this dissertation the two terms will be used as synonyms.

Why do we observe party cohesion in legislatures? Theories of party cohesion can be divided in two groups. According to the first group of theories, voting cohesion stems from the ideological homogeneity of the members of a certain group “or, in a more sociological reading, from learned norms of collective behaviour” (Bressanelli 2012: 187). In this sense, cohesion of a group is high because its members share the same ideological or policy preferences. A second group of theories instead focuses more on institutional or organizational incentives. Cohesiveness, in this sense overlapping with the concept of “discipline” (Bowler and Farrell 1995), is the product of the use of sanctions and rewards by the party leadership.

From an institutional perspective, instead, organizational strength and voting cohesion of legislative parties is explained by two types of institutions: external ones (the structure of relations between the parliament and the executive) and internal ones (the structure of incentives inside the legislature). The literature usually differentiates between parliamentary systems and presidential systems. In the former, legislative parties are usually more cohesive, because the executive is “fused” to a parliamentary majority, and governments can reward loyal backbenchers with ministerial seats. On the external side, legislative parties are more cohesive in parliamentary than in presidential systems (Tsebelis 2002; Huber 1996; Shugart and Carey 1992; Bowler and Farrell 1995). In addition, governing parties can call a vote-of-confidence motion, which confronts their parliamentarians with the risk of not being re-elected if parliament is dissolved (Diermeier and Feddersen 1998: 611-621). In presidential systems, by contrast, parties in government are less able to enforce a strong party discipline amongst their supporters in the parliament: “loyalty to the party line is less important, since lack of discipline does not threaten survival of the executive” (Hix et al. 2005: 212).

The short theoretical framework described above is deliberately general, and can fit any political system. Using the approach of Comparative Politics, described at the beginning of the chapter, we “transpose” this theory of party cohesion to the EU level<sup>3</sup>. But the case of the European Union is peculiar and not ascribable to any of the classical forms of government present in standard Constitutionalism. From the mere perspective of institutional functioning, the EU can be classified as a separated-powers system, where the Executive (the European Commission) does not require the direct support of a

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<sup>3</sup> Similarly to what has been done before for the three faces of party organization, from the national context to the EU level.



majority in the EP to govern. Moreover, the Commission cannot introduce a vote-of-confidence motion in the EP or dissolve it, calling for new parliamentary elections: although there has been some movement towards the parliamentary model, the relationship between the Commission and Parliament is far removed from a parliamentary system or a system of party government. The main differences are that a parliamentary majority cannot “hire and fire” the executive at will (Hix et al. 2007: 13) and that there is no direct relationship between the outcome of the elections for the European Parliament and the composition of the Commission. So, party cohesion could be lower than in other political systems. However, despite this peculiar institutional structure, it is still reasonable to expect that the structure of incentives inside the EU legislature can lead to well-structured legislative party organization. Legislators who expect to have similar voting preferences on a range of future policy issues can reduce the transaction costs of coalition-formation by establishing a party organization on the basis of a division-of-labour agreement<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, the benefits associated to group membership also entail costs. In some cases, a party takes decisions that may be unpopular with specific constituencies, or ideologically distant from a legislator’s preference space. In these situations, he/she may either vote against the party, to show his/her disappointment but with the associated risk of a political defeat, or may adhere to the official line and vote cohesively with the party group (Hix et al. 2005: 213-214).

Therefore, party groups’ cohesiveness in the European Parliament can be ascribed either to preference homogeneity of members of EPGs or to the capacity of its leadership to successfully “whip” them. Scholars reached different findings in regards. Westlake (1994a) and Raunio (1999) conclude that discipline enforced by the Euro-leadership must be low, because ultimately who controls for MEPs’ re-election is the national leadership. Kreppel (2002) further refines this point. Focusing on the role of the group leadership in the allocation of committee chairmanships and rapporteurships, she concludes that party groups have high levels of cohesion not because MEPs fear the sanctions of group leadership if they vote against the party line, but because they generally share similar values and ideas. Also McElroy (2006: 12) agrees on this point. Other scholars, however, reached different conclusions. It is the case of Hix and colleagues: despite describing in a first moment the discipline of Euro-party groups as a “weak sanctioning mechanism” (Hix and Lord 1997: 147), they later rectified

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<sup>4</sup> Party members provide labour and capital – such as information gathering and policy expertise – while leaders distribute committee and party offices.

this position, rejecting the theory of cohesion based on preferences alone. In this respect, they analysed the variance of patterns of cohesion over time and showed that, despite a growing internal ideological diversity primarily caused by the subsequent enlargements, cohesion has actually increased. In their perspective, EPGs' increase of cohesion in spite of their growing internal heterogeneity, that ideally would lead to different policy preferences and – thus – different voting behaviour, can be explained only by taking into account the presence of a certain level of party discipline (Hix et al. 2007: 87-104).

### 2.3.2. Systemness and inclusiveness

Cohesion of Euro-party groups is one of the most relevant element that allows to study MEPs' voting behaviour, but it is also an indicator of the development of the EU party system as a consequence of EP party group institutionalization. Bardi, starting from the concept of institutionalization in the definition of Huntington, i.e. "the process by which organizations acquire value and stability" (Huntington 1968: 12), identifies three indicators to measure EP party system's institutionalization: cohesiveness, inclusiveness and systemness (Bardi 2002: 302-303). The former has already been discussed; as theoretically defined in the previous paragraph, cohesiveness is not the only relevant element of the voting dynamics European Parliament, although it is the only one directly related to MEPs' voting behaviour. The two latter indicators, albeit not directly connected to the research question of this work, are nonetheless useful for a complete comprehension of European Parliament's internal functioning. They are discussed below.

Inclusiveness refers to the capacity of EPGs to include members coming from different member states; in other words, this indicator "is designed to reveal the 'Europeanness' of Europarties" (Bardi 2002: 304). "One-country EPGs", although very rare throughout EP's history<sup>5</sup>, represent the extreme case of a completely secluded political entity. Conversely, a parliamentary group that comprises MEPs' from all member state is the most inclusive possible. Since the very beginning of EP's history, keeping the first direct election as the starting point of the "modern" European Parliament, party groups in the EP have been highly inclusive. In 1979 the three main EPGs were composed of

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, the parliamentary group "Forza Europa" was formed by solely Italian centre-right MEPs after 1994 European elections; however, it was a short-lived experience (in 1995 most of their member merged in the Liberal group, with the exception of a few members merging in People's party group).

deputies marked by a fairly differentiated national background: the People's Party group included MEPs from seven member states; the Socialists from all and the Liberals from eight member states. This trend has remained consistent, despite the subsequent enlargements of the EU. Neither has the last "injection" of heterogeneity due to the Eastern enlargement in 2004 and 2007 substantially reduced EP's inclusiveness. After an "external shock" such as the one caused by the eastwards mega-enlargement, almost doubling the number of member states, new political entities could have originated according to regional cleavages (a party group of Eastern members, for instance). However, it was not the case. This proves the high absorption potential of the EPGs in relation to the European dynamics (Bardi 1996, 2002: 304), and corroborates Hix et al.'s argument concerning party formation at the European level according to political, not territorial cleavages (Hix et al. 2007: 54-55).

Finally, systemness in an indicator of institutionalization as it captures the degree of stability and the achievement of an equilibrium by a certain (party) system - or, as Mair puts it, the predictability of it (Mair 2001: 34). This concept originally is intended to measure national (mass) party systems, and does not fit "terribly well" (Bardi 2002: 305) the European arena. However, considering the number of groups, their size, the percentage of members in transnational groups and the number of "one-party groups" it is reasonable to conclude that the EU party system shows a notable degree of systemness. In particular, the current number of EPGs equals the number of EPGs in the parliament of 1979. During the years the number of party groups increased and then decreased again; especially today, in a post-enlargement EP the growing heterogeneity of political families inside the EP seems to have been overshadowed by a highly systemic environment<sup>6</sup>.

#### **2.4. MEPs' political representation**

The European party system is a structured system in terms of party cohesion, inclusiveness and systemness. But is it also representative of the European electorate? Again, before discussing how representative

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<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, following the increase of EU membership, the number of EPGs formed by only one national party has fallen dramatically and completely disappeared as the creation of one-nation groups has been explicitly forbidden. A specific EP Rule of Procedure (Rule 30, "formation of political groups") states that a political group shall consist of deputies from a specific number of member states. Following the 2004 and 2009 enlargements, the threshold is set to one-fourth of the member states.

is the EU party system, it is convenient to define the object under scrutiny: the concept of political representation.

“Representation is one of the most central, fundamental, and important of political concepts. It is not, however, one of the simplest” (Farrell and Scully 2010: 37). On the contrary, the implication of some of the best scholarly studies of the concept has been to affirm its complexity, instead of to simplify it by giving a unique definition (Pitkin 1967, 1969; Mansbridge 2003). Representation can legitimately be conceptualised in a range of different ways and studied from a number of alternative angles, and practices of representation can reasonably be evaluated according to varying criteria. From the point of view of the history of political thought, it has long been accepted that representation is about more than simply a “match” between people and politicians (or the policies that politicians pursue); it is a multidimensional, dynamic process (Pitkin 1967). As Bardi rightfully notes, “The concept’s multidimensionality is certainly due to the complexity of the relationship between represented and representatives, one that involves different actors (represented citizens, elected or non-elected representatives), conduits (parliaments, interest groups, parties, bureaucracies), foci (individuals, geographic or socio-political constituencies, the nation), styles (trustee, delegate, and various combinations of the two)” (Bardi 2009: 4). Consequently, if we want to reach a clear-cut definition of representation, then it necessary has to be a minimal one: “[...] political representation is the activity of making citizens’ voices, opinions, and perspectives ‘present’ in the public policy making processes” (Pitkin 1967). And to understand the crucial aspects of this process, we need to move from a macro perspective on institutions and aggregate outcomes towards a more micro-level analysis of individuals. We need to consider how those elected interpret and seek to carry out their role as representatives. Much work in this vein has explored the policy responsiveness of individual representatives: the extent to which they view their role as being to act as “delegates”, in place to loyally represent the (perceived) views of the represented, or as “trustees” with a mandate to pursue their own vision of the best interests of those whom they represent – even to the extent of directly opposing the immediate views of the majority of such people (Wahlke et. al. 1962).

The most common representation styles in the literature remain these two, or, as some scholars pointed out, a mixture of them (Pitkin 1967). On the one hand, while the trustee, leveraging on the concept of trust, implies that there is a certain independence between the representative and the represented (since only the former knows what is exactly the vague national interest to be pursued, and has to do it without

constraints), the delegate is linked to the concept of a specific mandate (so there is a bigger dependence of the representative towards those who he/she represents). The concept of “politico”, on the other hand, defines a representative who is able to alternate these two styles in response to the political situation: as the issue changes, whether it is more “high or low” politics, this representative changes his style, from trustee to delegate and vice-versa.

#### **2.4.1. Representation and (Euro) political parties**

One common aspect, that links together all these definitions even if sometimes it is not stated openly because the focus is on the representative as an individual, is the presence of political parties: whether they act as trustee, delegates or any other style, they do it because they sit in a Parliament. The centrality of political parties cannot be denied: in modern politics, if a deputy occupies a seat in a representative assembly, it means that there was an electoral moment before, and the actors aggregating “offer and supply” in the political arena in that peculiar moment are necessarily the political parties – even if for the EU context this is problematic, because it is still the national party that act as gatekeeper for MEPs’ election in the European Parliament<sup>7</sup>. Without political parties, “modern democracies would exist tenuously, if at all” (Schattschneider 1942: 1); parties organize legislatures (Cox and McCubbins 1994), articulate choices, aggregate preferences, and, above all, “supply labels under which candidates vie for public office” (Epstein and Leon 1967: 9). This, to a certain degree, remains valid also at the European level.

Bardi has analysed extensively this topic since his seminal work on representation in the European Parliament (1987). The starting point of this and subsequent works (1996, 2006, 2009) is the concept of dyadic representation, namely “the Burkean, territorially based, representational model based on the relationship between pairings (dyads) of individual representatives and their constituents” (Bardi 2009: 8). In the original meaning this refers to the geographical dimension (Weissberg 1978); Dalton (1985, 1988) extended the notion of dyadic representation beyond the territorial dimension to include

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<sup>7</sup> Most of the discussion about the so-called “democratic deficit” revolves around this point: the lack of a truly European elections where citizens vote on the basis of European-wide issues, instead of a many “second-order national elections”. However, a full dissertation of this long-lasting debate would shift the theoretical discussion to a domain that does not concern directly this work’s research question. Hence, it necessarily has to be left aside.

relationships between representatives and other political and socio-economic groups and so started and inspired a number of empirical representation studies that privileged non-territorial constituencies. Bardi's originality consists in exploiting this concept at the European level, taking as empirical indicator of the congruence between "Eurodyads" (MEPs and citizens) their survey-revealed preferences. Elaborating on Burke's argument, often referred to, perhaps too reductively, as the delegate-trustee dilemma, he argues: "elected parliamentarians may believe their job is to represent either constituencies or national interests. In the former case they are likely to feel obliged to closely follow their constituents' instructions and therefore act as delegates. In the latter, they can use Burke's 'unbiased opinion' and 'mature judgement' only to decide as trustees what they perceive to be the superior national interest" (Bardi 2009: 6). The empirical studies of representation in the EP have contributed to the affirmation of this interpretation of Burkean principles by stressing the importance of the levels of representation, as opposed to the styles of representation. The various waves of EP election candidate and MEP surveys have tried to address the question of MEPs' representational attitudes. All have tried to determine whether Euro-representatives' attitudes were revealing of commitments towards the representation of broad European, as opposed to national or even sub-national, constituencies' aspirations or interests, rather than their propensities to act as trustees or delegates (Bardi 2009: 7). The analysis was also addressed beyond the territorial dimension to include relationships between representatives and other political and socio-economic groups. This required an assessment of whether MEPs felt that their responsibilities as representatives were towards party, interest or territorial constituencies.

The results of the first MEP survey data revealed that over 60% of the respondents indicated European level commitments as those they considered most important, as opposed to about 22% and almost 14% that respectively privileged national and sub-national commitments. This finding is in contrast with MEP perceptions of their electors' wishes, which they saw as prevalently nationally or sub-nationally oriented. In conclusion, this observation allows also to infer, as a by-product of the analysis, that MEPs tended to see themselves "more as (Europe-oriented) trustees rather than as delegates" (Bardi 2009:8). In sum, as also noted by Thomassen, parties at the European level seem to function quite effectively as the representatives of Europe's citizens (Thomassen 2009).

To conclude, although there is no real process of political representation at European level, the aggregation of the outcomes of

national processes nevertheless leads to a reasonable congruence between the preferences of the European electorate and those of MEPs. The “only” (yet fundamental) difference is on the institutional side (the structure of relationship between “executive” and “legislative” at the European level, especially the lack of a governing function of Euro-parties). However, Mair and Thomassen (2010) argue that this difference between the European Parliament and national parliaments is not necessary negative: parties in the national polities are already finding it increasingly difficult to combine their representative and governing functions, with the result that the mainstream parties often lack legitimacy and find themselves subject to the constant challenge of populist outbidding; to attempt to effect a similar combination of functions at the European level may provoke even more difficulties. To advocate a fusion of representation and government at the European level may not only fail to solve Europe’s problems, it may also compound what are already substantial legitimacy problems in the domestic politics of the member states: “the effectiveness of political representation at the European level owes much, in fact, to the absence of party government” (Mair and Thomassen 2010: 30).

## 2.5. MEPs as parliamentary agents with two principals

So far, the EU party system and the concept of party cohesion has been briefly analysed, observing the object of research from a broad, macro-level perspective, i.e. looking at the *aggregate* phenomenon: EU parties and Euro-party groups, and the three indicators that assess its institutionalization as a party system. Then, the discussion has narrowed to analyse the individual, dyadic relationship that exists between (European) representatives and represented. What is still missing is a theory of voting in the EP that accounts for the micro-level of MEPs’ voting behaviour.

The first quantitative studies on MEPs’ voting behaviour (Attinà 1990; Raunio 1996; Hix and Lord 1997), based on roll-call votes – i.e., on how actually *each MEPs votes* – reach two the main findings. First, as partially discussed in paragraph 2.4.2, EPGs show high cohesion. Secondly, according to the patterns showed by this type of vote, the classical political cleavages exist also in the EP: votes tend to fall along the left-right divide. Despite the first critical studies warning against the possible methodological problems related to RCVs (Carrubba and Gabel 1999; Carrubba et al. 2004, 2008, 2009)<sup>8</sup>, Hix later applies Poole

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<sup>8</sup> An extensive discussion of the reliability of roll-call votes can be found in chapter 7.

and Rosenthal's method of creating spatial maps to the EP context (Hix 2001). He did it first only for the 1999-2004 Parliament, then together with Noury and Roland for all the legislatures since 1979, after having processed and systematically collected all the RCVs held in the EP (Hix et al. 2005, 2007). The creation of a such comprehensive (yet biased?) dataset has proved to be functional not only to the spatial representation of the legislative dynamics of the EP, but also to many other quantitative analysis of MEPs' voting behaviour: in the early 2000s this field of research has witnessed a conspicuous flourishing of RCVs-based studies. Many other papers have been published on the topic, all of them agreeing on some main findings. First, EPGs show high intra-party cohesion and inter-party competition. Second, voting patterns fall mainly along the traditional left-right cleavage, and only partially along an orthogonal pro/anti-European continuum. Third, national affiliation is a weak predictor of vote; and consequently, the EP works surprisingly like most of domestic parliaments in Western democracies (Hix 2002; Hix et al. 2003b, 2005, 2006, 2007; Farrell et al. 2006; Hix and Noury 2009).

In terms of individual voting behaviour, the theory on which the aforementioned studies base their assumptions on is the one proposed by Hix (2002: 696) of MEPs as "parliamentary agents with two principals". According to this theory, the main factor behind voting in the EP is the policy position of national *parties*. Hix draws on the classical economic theory based on the principal-agent dilemma, and refines it for the different context of the European Parliament, arguing that MEPs respond to two, (rarely) competing, principals. One is the European group MEPs belong to; the other is the national party who is responsible for their election. Despite the fact that the parliamentary principals in the EP control important benefits – such as committee assignment and speaking time – it is the principals that control candidate selection (the national parties) who ultimately determine how MEPs behave. "When deciding how to vote, MEPs must respond to two different 'principals': national parties, who control the selection of candidates in EP elections, and the political groups in the EP, who control a variety of private goods in the EP, such as leadership positions, committee assignments, speaking time, and the legislative agenda" (Hix 2002: 688) When the national parties in the same parliamentary group decide to vote together, the EP parties look highly cohesive. And this is what happens in the vast majority of cases. But



when these parties take opposing policy position, the cohesion of EP party groups break down<sup>9</sup>.

This peculiar theoretical framework seems to fit particularly well the reality of the European Parliament; moreover, it is simple, clear-cut and apparently unproblematic. However, potential contrasts may arise between the two principals – and the explanation that simply one prevails over the other, as provided by Hix, may prove insufficient. This is the view of Katz, for instance, arguing that “no man can serve two masters (Katz 2013), even if this argument is illustrated by the author in regards to a completely different scenario – the European party system and the transformation of mass parties (national representatives), not the European Parliament and the EU party system (European representatives).

## **2.6. A “new” theory of MEPs’ voting behaviour**

The original theorization of MEPs’ behaviour used in this work to define how they vote, as stated before, has not a single theory of reference. It draws from the various conceptual contributions presented in the previous paragraphs, slightly modifying some critical aspects.

As we have partially seen, the dynamics of the European Parliament, hence behaviour of its members, is the object of an extremely rich literature. This work does not have the pretence to set aside what scholars have acknowledged in order to present a completely new, full-fledged theoretical approach that innovates this field of research. Rather, it builds on what has already been said (and empirically proved), refining one crucial element: in Hix’s words, the “national principal”. In this perspective, first of all I consider MEPs to be satisfactorily representative parliamentarians, according to Bardi’s dyadic élites-citizens analysis. I recognize the centrality of Mair and Thomassen’s argument on “political representation without party government” that revolves around the function at large of the European Parliament in the EU structure. I consider voting behaviour as a product of the juxtaposition between legislator’s preferences and

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<sup>9</sup> This theory and the empirical result are functional also to Hix’s claims about a possible EU reform. He argues that “to break national party control, EP elections would have to be held under a system which limited the power of national parties to control candidate selection [...]. This would dramatically increase the authority of the party leaders in the EP, who would become key actors in the European Union policy process (2002: 697). However, as stated before, the debate about EU’s democratic deficit is not addressed here.

group discipline, partially taking the side of those scholars that consider cohesion as a consequence of *apriori* homogeneous preferences rather than party discipline (Raunio 1999; Westlake 1994a; Kreppel 2002) and partially recognizing that EPGs may exert a certain “whip” (Hix et al. 2007)<sup>10</sup>, but only to the extent that there is no “greater (national) good” to defend. Finally I accept the theory of “MEPs as parliamentary agents with two principals”; however, keeping in mind Katz’ critic of the principal-agent economic theory, I slightly modify the elements in play: if supporters of this theory identify “only” the national party as the competing principal of EPGs, I broaden the scope and consider national affiliation, at large, as the competing force that makes MEPs deviate from the party line.

I define MEPs as “strongly ideological regional legislators”. They are politically oriented, representative, European-wide cohesive parliamentarians, but what ultimately matters – and matters the most – is not to go against the “reason of state”. From this original theoretical refinement, hence, the real logic that drives MEPs’ voting behaviour includes this key element that all the previous literature has too often overlooked: the question of national interests. MEPs operate in a legislative environment that, due to its institutional constraints, privileges their representative function in respect to the governing one (Mair and Thomassen 2010). And this genuine representativeness makes collectively “members of the European Parliament pretty much in touch with the concerns of the European people” (Bardi 2009: 18). Finally, they vote in a generally cohesive way with the EPG they belong to, even though their real principal is the national party that (re)-elected them (Hix et al. 2002). All these conceptualizations, related to different “levels”, do not stride with the element that I add to the framework, national interests at large – not dependent solely on the national party. This means that, on overall, they tend to tow the party line, making the EPG system result as a cohesive one; so, very generally – for instance – the Italian members of the Socialist group tend to vote together with the members, from other countries, of the same group, but only inasmuch as there’s no national interest at stake (and that’s the majority of the cases). In this majority of cases their votes fall along ideological left-right lines. But when they decide not to follow this line, it is certainly because their well-known “other principal”, the national party, takes an opposing line. But this is only a by-product of a bigger phenomenon: the majority MEPs from the same country voting together. Just like members of regional parties with a strong, political connotation: all together in parliamentary groups formed along the

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<sup>10</sup> Chapter 6 analyses the relationship between MEPs’ preferences and behaviour.

left-right cleavage, the majority of their votes depend on ideological position. They generally have similar policy preferences that make them genuinely cohesive – and only partially “whip-induced” cohesive (Raunio 1999; Westlake 1994a; Kreppel 2002). However, if a certain legislation under scrutiny may endanger their closest constituency, then they split along lines that have nothing to do with the left-right cleavage.

In this sense, to use the words of Moravcsik (1993, 1998), I argue that the EP is still more “intergovernmentalist” than generally acknowledged by the mainstream literature: as Hix et al. state (2007: 181), “national interests, independent of national party positions, have very little systematic influence on voting in the European Parliament. This finding is surprising from the perspective of some of the “state-interest” based theories of EU politics (e.g. Moravcsik 1998)”. I argue that, in fact, nationality independent of party position is actually crucial, even though it does not have a “systematic effect<sup>11</sup>”. The main reason why sometimes MEPs break the EPG lines is because there is a general national interest at stake, so they vote in order to protect it – and they do it together with all MEPs from their member state, not only those of their national party. Just like what happens with an ideological regional party in a national parliament. This is the element that has been overlooked by the literature. Not only it has to be noted that sometimes EPG fail to discipline their MEPs; the crucial element in these case is that MEPs from different the groups vote together with only one key element in common: being part of the same country (or countries) whose interests were touched by the European legislation.

In sum, The real discriminant when MEPs act as “rebel” against the EPG line is not being part of a certain national party, as already acknowledged by the literature (Raunio 2003; Hix 2002; Hix et al. 2005, 2007; Coman 2009) but being part of the state – at large – where that party comes from. Moreover, and partially as a consequence of what said before, I argue also that many of the claims about the resemblance of the EP to a classical democratic parliament are misplaced. Not only because of the aforementioned “national alignments” that prevail over the EPG line, but also because of the multi-dimensionality of it. Just like a Parliament that is composed by regional parties that, despite being solidly anchored on the left-right spectrum, have all some “regional specificities”, the EP has still (and probably will always have) a variety of dimensions along which votes can fall, consistently to the specific interests of each member state (or a combination of them). Not only

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<sup>11</sup> Due to, primarily, methodological reasons that will be analysed in the next chapters.

left-right and pro-/anti-EU dimensions (Hix et al. 2007) do exist, and have a substantial effect, in the EP.

### **2.6.1. Associated hypotheses**

The associated hypotheses are the following. For each main hypothesis I explain how it fits to the theoretical framework presented above.

*H1: Party group discipline in the EP explains most of the votes but when the issue concerns a national, direct interest MEPs will protect them*

*H1a: MEPs vote according to their interests, creating a national alignment, even if this means being rebel to their political group (thus voting against it or abstaining)*

*H1b: National alignments emerge on more important issues*

*H1c: Conversely, less important issues show higher group cohesion*

This main hypothesis is consistent to the “core” of my theory of MEPs as ideological members of a regional party: the baseline of their parliamentary behaviour is defined by left-right policy preferences, but when controversies arise, the defence of their closest constituency is the element that prevails in the logic of voting behaviour. If a national interest shows up, MEPs will disregard their EPG (even if this happens only in a minority of cases). And the potential for such undermine of a national interest is clearly related to the legislative nature of the vote: if the decision has no substantial effect, MEPs do not “need” to act united as “regional parliamentarians” to defend their homeland.

*H2: Groups’ cohesion in RCVs is generally high, but every group show consistent and often deviation from this trend.*

The rationale behind the second hypothesis is also correlated to the theoretical approach presented before. In addition to this, it takes account of the fact that this generally high cohesion may stem from the “symbolic – rather than potentially concrete – significance of most EP decisions” (Bardi 2002: 303).

*H3: MEPs’ voting behaviour and consequently group cohesion differs in various committees*

*H3a: National alignments emerge in committees that are generally perceived as more important*

*H3b: Party groups are more cohesive in less important committees*

The starting point is again that not all the decisions taken in the EP have the same impact, and this disparity is partially reflected by the

committee system of the EP: some are powerful and take high-level decisions, others are (still useful) “talking shops”. I argue that votes concerning decisions that may have concrete consequences in member states (taken in some specific committees) are more likely to see the emergence of these nationality-oriented votes. Conversely, more symbolic, non-binding decisions will show higher group cohesion, because no direct interest is at stake (and they concentrate in other committees).

*H4: MEPs vote following different rationales if the vote is secret rather than a public roll-call (RCVs)*

*H4a: national affiliation is a stronger determinant of votes in non-RCVs rather than in RCVs*

*H4b: conversely, EPGs are less cohesive in non-RCVs*

Partially related to the theoretical framework and partially to the methodological debate around the reliability of roll-call votes, I argue that these controversial votes are more likely to emerge when votes are secret, non-RCVs.

*H5: regional dimensions other than left/right cleavage and anti-/pro-EU do exist and exert a significant effect in the EP*

*H6: MEPs' nationality influences how he/she deals with classical political issues that refer to the L/R cleavage*

*H6a: Major social, economic, cultural or regulatory differences of MEPs' opinion may determine deviations from party group line*

The last two hypotheses are related to the aspects that, I argue accordingly to my theory, make the EP still significantly different from a regular democratic parliament. These hypotheses are strongly influenced by the literature, extensively discussed, inferring that the prevalence of left/right oriented votes makes the EP look like “a normal democratic Parliament” (Hix 2002, Noury et al. 2002, Hix et al. 2005, 2006, 2007)<sup>12</sup>.

These hypotheses are tested with different methodological approach (quantitative, qualitative and a combination of the two) in the empirical part of this dissertation (From chapter 3 to 6), in order to see if the

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<sup>12</sup> This may actually prove to be a problematic point: when inferring that the EP looks like a normal parliament, what do we mean by “normal”? Also national parliament, especially of federal states, may show a regional multi-dimensionality, yet not as marked as the EP (from the national perspective). Thus, the validity of this hypothesis is specifically constrained to the relevant literature.

empirical reality of the EP fits the theory I presented. Finally, chapter 7 is dedicated to a brief qualitative in-deep elaboration of the results obtained in the previous empirical part, to further corroborate or challenge the validity of my findings.

## Chapter 3

### Analysis of outliers: when party group lines break down

*“The cohesion of the party groups has increased over time as the main party groups have gained in size and as the powers of the parliament have increased. This increase in cohesion has occurred despite an increase in the internal national fractionalization of the party groups”*

(Hix et al. 2005: 231)

#### 3.1. Introduction

As discussed extensively in the previous chapter, we know that EPGs are, in general, highly cohesive – despite giving slightly different explanations to this cohesion. This means, in short, that MEPs from the same political group are likely to vote together, no matter which country they come from: a French socialist, for instance, is more likely to vote together with a German Socialist than with a French green or liberal (or belonging to any other group). At the same time, the literature has also recognized that, under certain conditions, party cohesion can break down (for instance Hix and Lord 1995; Gabel and Hix 1997; Brzinski et al., 1998). Other studies focused on specific key, controversial votes, alternatively arguing that despite the presence of national interests at stake ideology remained the most important element in defining MEPs’ voting behaviour (Hix et al. 2006, 2007; Hix and Noury 2009) or that country-based logics prevailed over party group cohesion (Kitschelt et al. 1999; Hall and Soskice 2001; Callaghan and Höpner 2004; Ringe 2005)<sup>13</sup>.

However, when discussing party group cohesion in the European Parliament, the literature usually looks at indexes of cohesion (the most common is the “Agreement Index”, explained in paragraph 3.3) and presents the scores calculated not for the single vote, but aggregated for

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<sup>13</sup> This topic is deliberately treated without an in-deep discussion: for an extensive dissertation of national alignments versus party cohesion and the presence of crucial national interests in EP’s votes see chapter 5 and 7.

a certain time span. This may lead to some misrepresentation (or, at least, misunderstanding) of EP's internal dynamics. Thus, looking at party group cohesion outliers, namely those cases where EPGs are exceptionally divided, may help shed light on some meaningful dynamics of EP's legislative life. As a preliminary note of caution, it is worth stressing that the results presented in this chapter has a merely descriptive valence; no causal-effect arguments are made. The purpose of this analysis of roll-call votes is "simply" to show how a large-N, quantitative approach relying on aggregated indexes may overlook certain aspects that, nevertheless, are important and meaningful. The analysed time span corresponds to the latest two European legislatures: EP6 (2004-2009) and the current seventh European Parliament, elected in 2009 and to be renewed in spring 2014.

### 3.2. The data: roll call votes

The analysis of this chapter is performed on roll-call votes. These are the votes that are officially recorded, in the form of minutes drafted by the Parliament's offices. The records track how each MEP voted or abstained. Commonly, this voting procedure is called "public vote", because a member of a parliament has no means of keeping the vote secret. In the American, British and in few other parliaments all the votes are roll-calls; however, in many other cases such as Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Argentina, and Brazil some votes are public and recorded, while others are secret (Hug 2006: 24-33).

In the European Parliament the choice of voting procedure is defined by the EP Rules of Procedure, which states that only certain votes are required to be taken by roll-call<sup>14</sup>. However, a political group or at least 32 MEPs can request any vote to be taken by roll-call. Before the start of the current, 7<sup>th</sup> European legislature it was also provided that it is compulsory to have RCVs for all the final legislative votes, as stated in the new Rule 166<sup>15</sup>. In addition to RCVs, two other voting procedures are possible: the "raise of hands" and "voice" vote where it is recorded only if the bill passes or not, and another type of electronic vote that records the *aggregate* number of yea/nay, but no information about the single vote. Roll-call votes represent slightly more than 30% of the whole universe of votes cast in the EP, thus potentially leading to

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<sup>14</sup> Namely, Rule 106(5), which relates to the vote on the election of the Commission; and Rule 107(5), which relates to a motion of censure in the Commission.

<sup>15</sup> "When voting on any proposal for a legislative act, whether by way of a single and/or final vote, Parliament shall vote by roll call using the electronic voting system" (Hix et al. 2013: 15).



selection bias, as anticipated in the previous chapter. Therefore, at this point it is necessary to discuss how the academic debate over the reliability of such dataset has evolved in the years.

### **3.2.1. Are roll-call votes a reliable source of information?**

From the early '90s scholars of MEPs' voting behaviour started to focus almost exclusively on roll-call votes (Attinà 1990; Hix and Lord 1997; Raunio 1996; Hix 1999), as already discussed in chapter 2 and in the previous paragraphs. In response to these studies, Carrubba and Gabel (1999) were the first to draw attention on the potential selection bias in using RCVs to study MEPs' voting behaviour. First of all, it has to be clarified that it is impossible to empirically analyse the votes falling under the other voting procedures, because there are no records of those vote. In other words, voting behaviour in non-RCVs is, simply, not directly observable and analysable with the quantitative approach usually employed for RCVs. However, RCVs are a small subset of the whole universe of votes cast (roughly  $\frac{1}{3}$ ). Thus, only if RCVs represent a random sample of the whole universe of votes cast, then the causal inferences based on RCVs can be generalized as a reflection of MEPs' voting behaviour. If a dependent variable of a research (e.g. intra-party cohesion, inter-party competition) is related<sup>16</sup> to the rationale behind the RCV request, endogeneity problems are expected to emerge. In the light of this it may be assumed that RCVs are requested by EPGs for strategic reasons.

However, the extreme usefulness (yet unpaired by an equal reliability and completeness of information provided) of roll-call datasets is indisputable. Their popularity has increased over time, and "in recent years, statistical analysis of roll call votes (RCVs) has become the bread and butter of empirical research on legislative behaviour in democracies" (Hix et al. 2013: 2). From the early '2000s almost every student of EP legislative behaviour has faced, somehow, RCVs analysis – or their potential shortcomings. Those who employ RCVs usually base their analysis on the following assumptions: RCVs and votes falling under a different voting procedure do not vary in terms of importance; both are cast on the same policy issues, so no issue is voted too often with a certain type of vote; and finally, all the EPGs are equally likely to request RCVs, so no group requests them

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<sup>16</sup> Either positively, negatively or both - but in a way such as the two effects do not cancel out each other.

disproportionally more often than the other groups (Hix and Noury 2002, Hix et al. 2007)

Meanwhile, an increasing number of critical scholars (Carrubba et al. 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009; Thiem 2006; Hug 2006, 2009) claim to have concrete evidence to confute the assumptions made by scholars that use them to analyse legislative behaviour. First of all, according to them the majority of non-RCVs are cast on legislative voting (the most important votes), while most of the RCVs are cast on resolution and consultation votes (less important). Second, RCVs are cast disproportionately on specific issues. Finally, some EPG requests them more often than other groups. Consequently, inferences based on RCVs only, may be misleading and it seems necessary to look somewhere else to fully understand the dynamics of voting behaviour within the EP. Later, these authors rephrased their criticisms in clearer terms, pointing out not only the problems of endogeneity in party cohesion, but also the possibly misleading way scholars pooled data together to create the dataset (Carrubba et al. 2003: 6-9). Consequently, these authors switched their research focus from voting behaviour to the reasons why RCVs are requested. Some scholars have tried to provide an explanation to the real reasons behind a RCV request, relying mostly on theory, while others have applied methods based on game theory to model this kind of situation. Carrubba et al. (2008: 570-572) consider the RCV requests a consequence of high party cohesion. On the other hand, Thiem (2006: 17) see these requests as signalling strategies either for a group to highlight their pre-existing unity or another group's coordination failure. In other words, cohesion – or lack of it – increases the likelihood of a RCV request.

Nevertheless, this debate is far from being settled, as demonstrated by the latest working paper written on the topic. Again, Hix et al. (2013) try to confute these critical scholars' argument by suggesting that, according to the original methodology proposed (a comparison between final votes in the sixth and seventh EP, exploiting the new provision according to which all final legislative votes have to be publicly recorded), selection biases in roll call votes due to strategic choices are at best negligible<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Convincing arguments have been presented on both sides of this academic debate; however, no matter how refined may be the model employed to prove that voting behaviour bears no difference in both types of vote, the central doubt remains: how can a non-random, non-representative sample lead to unbiased results?

### 3.3. Hypotheses verification

As already stressed in the introduction, this chapter does not have the presumption of explaining the causal effect that lies behind the decision of MEPs to vote divided from their party colleagues from other countries, thus resulting in a vote where party groups show low cohesion. However, even a simple analysis of the Agreement Index outliers in roll-call votes can help in making some general inferences about hypotheses H2 and H5, as formulated in chapter 2:

*H2: Groups' cohesion in RCVs is generally high, but every group show consistent and often deviation from this trend.*

*H5: regional dimensions other than left/right cleavage and anti-/pro-EU do exist and exert a significant effect in the EP.*

### 3.4. Measures of cohesiveness

What exactly does “cohesive” mean? As defined in chapter 2, cohesiveness (concerning parliamentary groups) simply refers to the fact that their members vote united in the same way, or divided in different ways. But if the concept is relatively straightforward, the operationalization needed to make cohesion empirically measurable may be more problematic, as it often happens (Marradi 1981).

A variety of indices of party cohesion are used in the literature on voting behaviour. The “Index of voting likeness” (Rice 1925) represents one of the first attempts. It consists of the absolute difference between yes and no votes of the members of a party, divided by the sum of yes and no votes. The main asset of this index is represented by its simplicity; however, it presents the major shortcoming of not including abstentions in the calculation<sup>18</sup>. Attinà (1990) in one of the first quantitative studies of MEPs' voting behaviour proposed a slight modification of this index in order to include the possibility of abstention. However, the index created by Attinà can result in a negative number, making it harder to use it for descriptive analysis and statistical purposes. For instance, if a party group is split equally between all three voting options the Attinà index produces a cohesion score of roughly -0.3. Hix et al. (2005) introduced the “Agreement

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<sup>18</sup> Paradoxically then, in a group where half of the deputies abstain and the other half votes yes (or no), this index would give the result 1, the highest level of cohesion possible. This is the reason why this index does not provide an accurate picture of party cohesion.

Index" (AI), which is now considered the standard index to measure group cohesion. It is calculated as follows:

$$AI_i = \frac{\max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\} - \frac{1}{2}[(Y_i + N_i + A_i) - \max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\}]}{(Y_i + N_i + A_i)}$$

$Y_i$  denotes the number of Yes votes expressed by group  $i$  on a given vote,  $N_i$  the number of No votes and  $A_i$  the number of Abstain votes. As a result, the AI equals 1 when all the members of a party vote together and equals 0 when the members of a party are equally divided between all three of the voting options (vote in favour, vote against, and abstain). AI scores give us a first impression of how cohesive the groups in the EP are. For the first four Parliaments (1979-1999), the cohesion scores are taken directly from Hix et al. (2005: 218). For the fifth and sixth legislature (1999-2009), the source is again Hix et al. (2009). With respect to the current legislature (2009-2014), the source of the data is [www.votewatch.eu](http://www.votewatch.eu), and the cohesion scores are calculated for roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the legislature (RCVs cast from July 2009 to September 2013). If we consider all the votes cast in the EP the results are pretty straightforward. The EPGs show very high cohesiveness, starting from the very beginning. Looking at the current EP, many EPGs show *very high* cohesiveness (four groups' AI score 0.9 or higher: S&D, European People's Party, Liberals and Nordic Green Left), and all the groups show *high* cohesiveness (over 0.8), with the only exception of the non-attached members and of the Eurosceptic group of Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD). From a diachronic perspective (1979-2009), all the groups increased their cohesiveness, with the exception of the Euro-sceptics, falling from 0.83 in 1989 to 0.49 in 2009. The AI scores are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** EPGs' cohesiveness in RCVs, 1979-2013.

	EP1 (79-84)	EP2 (84-89)	EP3 (89-94)	EP4 (94-99)	EP5 (99-04)	EP6 (04-09)	EP7 (09-13)
PES	0.76	0.87	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.91	0.93
EPP	0.90	0.93	0.91	0.90	0.87	0.88	0.93
ELDR	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.86	0.88	0.89	0.90
LEFT	0.81	0.87	0.86	0.80	0.80	0.85	0.83
GAUL	0.80	0.84	0.85	0.79	0.75	0.76	0.88
GRN		0.81	0.85	0.91	0.92	0.91	0.96
CON	0.89	0.92	0.89				
RIGHT		0.93	0.88				
ANTI			0.83	0.67	0.5	0.47	0.49
REG			0.87	0.91			
IND	0.78				0.64		
NA	0.74	0.79	0.81	0.63	0.44	0.44	0.42

**Source:** Hix et al. (2005) for EP1 to EP5, author's own calculation based on Hix et al.'s dataset (2009) for EP6, author's own calculation based on data from [www.votewatch.eu](http://www.votewatch.eu) for EP7. **Party group labels:** PES: Party of European Socialists (SOC, PES), then Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D, after 2009 elections to include the Italian PD, Partito Democratico). EPP: European People's party - Christian Democrats & Conservatives (EPP, ED) and Italian Conservatives (FE), then EPP alone (after 2009 elections). ELDR: European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELD, ELDR groups), then Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE, after 2004 elections). LEFT: Radical Left (COM, LU, EUL/NGL) and Italian Communists & allies (EUL). GAUL: Gaullists & allies (EPD, EDA, UFE, UEN), then European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR, after 2009 elections). GRN: Greens & allies (RBW(84), G, G/EFA). CON: British Conservatives & allies (ED). RIGHT: Extreme Right (ER). ANTI: Anti-Europeans (EN, I-EN, EDD, IND/DEM after 2004 elections, then EFD after 2009 elections). REG: Regionalists & allies (RBW(89), ERA). IND: Independents (TCDI, TGI; group dismantled in October 2001). NA: Non-attached members.

The three main EP groups – Socialists, Christian Democrats/People's Party, and Liberals – present a relatively high level of cohesiveness starting from the first direct election (respectively 0.76, 0.90, 0.58). Since the first election the trend has constantly increased positively. Today, the three main EPGs score respectively 0.93, 0.93 and 0.90. Looking at EP6, we see that two EPGs (Socialists and Greens) score more than 0.90; the three other bigger groups (the Christian-democrat group, Liberals and the radical left) score between 0.85 and 0.88. The only exceptions to this trend are the national conservatives (Union for Europe of Nations) and the anti-European (Independence/Democracy), both Euro-sceptic

groups, even if to a very different degree<sup>19</sup>: the former has an AI equal to 0.73, the latter 0.46. For a party group that define itself as anti-European, though, a lack of discipline in performing its European function should not surprise.

Finally, it has to be noted that the group of non-attached MEPs' cohesion fell drastically over time. This is consistent with the fact that the threshold to form a group used to be lower, so the non-attached group was smaller and more "homogeneous". Since the 1990s, the non-attached group has constantly grown bigger and politically more heterogeneous, even though it remained numerically dominated by far-right wing members. Thus, it is reasonable to expect its cohesiveness to decrease. To sum up, in the light of the results of all RCVs one may conclude that the EP has been "increasingly marked by high cohesiveness" (Hix et al. 2005: 231).

### 3.5. Trends in party groups' Agreement Index outliers

However, as anticipated in the introduction, looking only at the aggregated scores for each EPG in a whole European legislature may be misleading, because all the variance between the AI scores of each vote gets "diluted". In other terms, we only look at the "general trend", given by the statistical average, of five years of votes; but we don't exactly know what happens in each of these votes. What can help, at least to give a brief idea of how actually more complex and multifaceted is voting behaviour of MEPs, is to look at the statistical outliers of EPGs' cohesiveness.

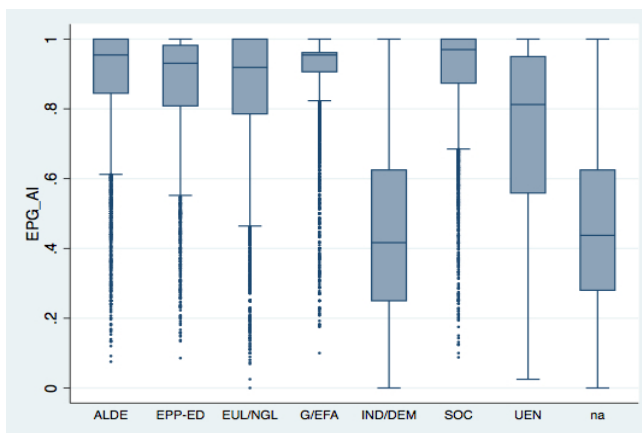
In statistics, an outlier is an observation that is numerically distant from the rest of the data; since the unit of observation is the single RCV each MEP casts, these data were aggregated for each group. So each outlier means a single vote where one of the groups is highly divided – despite on average these groups are quite cohesive. If the EP resembles so much "all other democracy parliaments" (Hix et al. 2006: 509), these deviant votes should be present, but truly exceptional: a reiteration of such cases could endanger the political unity of a political group, ultimately leading to fission. But if we look at figure 1, a classical "box-

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<sup>19</sup> IND/DEM was a full-fledged anti-European party; after the 2009 European Election was renamed EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy. By contrast, The UEN group consisted more of conservative nationalist, "Euro-realists", highly influenced by the tradition of the French right wing Gaullism. Founded in 1994, in 2009 merged in the newly established ECR Group, European Conservatives and Reformists, except for some more Euro-sceptic MEPs who joined the other new group, EFD.

and-whiskers-plot” that shows AI values of each political group in the 6<sup>th</sup> European Parliament, we see a different picture. The descriptive statistics concerning EP6 are calculated over the whole universe of roll-call votes<sup>20</sup> cast in the relevant time span (2004-2009), 6200 votes.

**Figure 1.** Box plot of EPGs’ Agreement Index, 2004-2009 (EP6)



**Source:** author’s own compilation.

First of all, we can notice that a clear-cut division between two groups of EPGs exists: on the one hand, the majority of generally pro-EU, bigger groups (Socialists, people’s party, liberals, greens and radical left), on the other, the two euro-sceptic groups and the non-attached members. The former shows some characteristics in common: first of all, as expected they are all negatively skewed. The median is very high, generally over 0.9, and the upper and the lower quartile are comprised between 1 (the maximum score possible, which means complete cohesion – all MEPs voting together) and 0.8. Upper

<sup>20</sup> It is worth stressing again that RCVs represent roughly 1/3 of all votes cast in the European Parliament, thus no quantitative analysis based on this sample can be completely unbiased. An extensive discussion of the methodological debate over the reliability of this source of information can be found in chapter 7.

“whiskers<sup>21</sup>” are either very small (People’s party group, radical left) or even absent, which means that they overlap with the third quartile. Since the lower part of the box is generally around 0.8 (0.9 for the Greens), we can fairly say that in 75% of roll-call votes the main EPGs are extremely cohesive. By contrast, lower whiskers are quite long and end approximately at the value of 0.5/0.6 (excluding the greens, which show higher value, roughly 0.8). So, even the minimum value of these EPGs is actually quite high. But what really strikes is the number of outliers: all these groups show plenty of votes where they are profoundly divided, and so much more divided than the median that statistically can be considered outliers.

As for euro-sceptics and non-attached, the situation is completely different: IND/DEM and non-attached show an identical, positively skewed distribution. The median is close to 0.4, the first and third percentile are roughly set at 0.25 and 0.6, and the whiskers range from the minimum value (0.0, which means complete division of the group) to 1 (complete cohesion). And, most importantly, they show no outliers at all. UEN group, despite having no outliers, shows some characteristics similar to the first group of EPGs: the median is high (0.8), and the distance between the upper quartile and the maximum value is small, while the distance between the lower quartile and the minimum value is more substantive. In other words, UEN is negatively skewed like the first group of EPGs but shows no outliers like the second one.

Moving on to the subsequent, current 7<sup>th</sup> European parliament, we see how the general picture remains the same, despite the minor party group reshuffling between the two legislatures. The same box-and-whiskers graph is employed, as shown in table 2. Here, The descriptive statistics are calculated on a dataset that comprises roll-call votes cast between the beginning of the legislature (spring 2009) and September 2013 (2004-2009), roughly 4600 votes<sup>22</sup>.

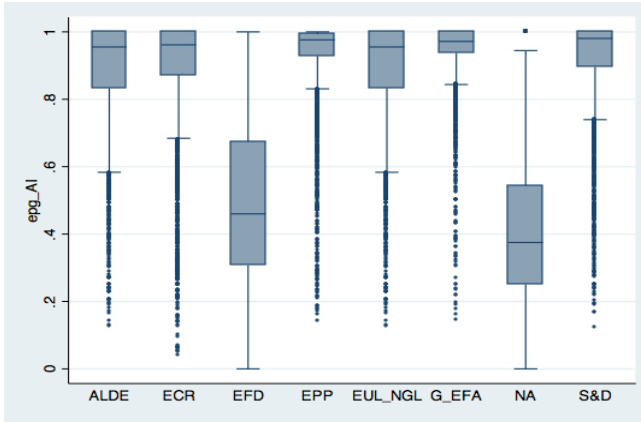
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<sup>21</sup> The upper “whiskers” show graphically the range of values that are comprised between the third quartile (Q3) and the most extreme value within 1.5 standard deviation from the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile; conversely, the lower whiskers identify the observation between the first quartile (Q1) and the most extreme values calculated in the same way (1.5 standard deviation from the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile): in mathematical terms, respectively  $Q3+1.5*(Q3-Q1)$  and  $Q1-1.5*(Q3-Q1)$ .

<sup>22</sup> Precisely, 4684 votes. This dataset is available for download from the website [www.votewatch.eu](http://www.votewatch.eu).



**Figure 2.** Box plot of EPGs' Agreement Index, 2009-2013 (EP7)



**Source:** author's own compilation.

In comparison to the previous legislature, the liberals and the radical left EUL/NGL show an exactly identical outlier trend. The Socialists, despite the “label change” towards S&D due to the inclusion of the Italian delegation of PD (Partito Democratico) do not change their behaviour substantially, at least in terms of outliers. This is largely expected, as this “new” delegation was present, although under a different party name and without the more centrist parliamentarians, also in the previous legislature. However, the small number of such members and the substantial ideological homogeneity had no effect on the Socialist group. People’s party, conversely, slightly benefitted from the exclusion of the British conservatives that formed the ED subgroup until 2009. As we can see, in EP7 the EPP group is even more negatively skewed, and the (small) upper whisker present in EP6 almost disappears. A similar thing happens for the greens: the third quartile coincides with the maximum values of cohesiveness, making it an even more cohesive group (as confirmed by the data in table 1: AI average AI scores for this group grow from 0.91 to 0.96). Non-attached members become even less cohesive – actually, their only (few) outliers are upper outliers. Euro-sceptics, despite the change of name from IND/DEM to EFD and a partial group reshuffling, keep showing the same trend: slightly positively skewed, median close to 0.4, no outliers at all. The newly established conservative and reformists group (ECR), as expected because of its high internal political homogeneity, shows a similar trend to what I called in the previous section the “first group” of EPGs (highly cohesive, but presenting a substantial set of outliers).

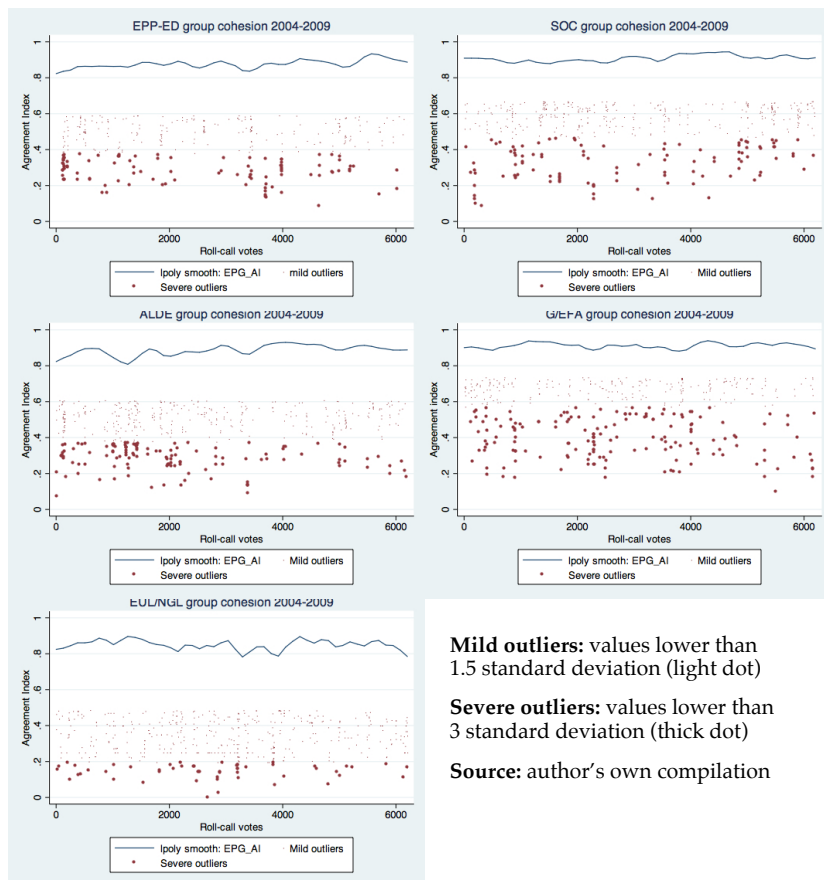
Thus, it is possible to draw some preliminary conclusions from these graphs. Considering the last decade of legislative life of the European Parliament (2004-2013), Euro-sceptics and non-attached members are generally quite divided EPGs, still with their differences (especially between IND/DEM and UEN), while the other, bigger and generally more pro-EU groups tend to be much more cohesive, as most of the literature acknowledges (Hix et al. 2005, 2006, 2007; Kreppel 2002). In the 7<sup>th</sup> EP this is partially disconfirmed by ECR, that despite their “euro-realism” show a highly cohesive parliamentary behaviour. What this literature overlooks is the fact that even if this high cohesion is composed by a great majority of votes where these groups are completely cohesive (because all of their MEPs vote in the same way), there’s a significant minority of votes where they are completely divided, showing AI scores close to 0. This pattern strikes as quite surprising: even the mainstream, more organized, pro-EU political groups can bluntly fail to discipline their members, letting them vote in a way that makes the group perfectly divided. So, it can be misleading to only look at the mean cohesion of EPGs (Hix et al. 2005, 2006, 2007), because it does not illustrate the distribution or the standard deviation, thus giving the impression that all the votes have AI scores close to this value, without substantial variance<sup>23</sup>. By contrast, to have a more comprehensive knowledge of MEPs’ voting behaviour it is important to bear in mind that EPGs’ high cohesiveness is the result of *almost all* votes where EPGs are voting harmoniously together, but *a few* where they completely fail to be cohesive.

This picture is further reinforced by figure 2, which shows the tendency of cohesion in time for each political group in the 6<sup>th</sup> European Parliament.

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<sup>23</sup> Not all the literature, as stressed in the introduction, completely ignores these recurrent lacks of cohesion; however, specific studies on EPGs failing to enforce cohesion are missing.

**Figure 3.** Main EPGs' cohesion trend (mild and severe outliers highlighted), 2004-2009



**Mild outliers:** values lower than 1.5 standard deviation (light dot)

**Severe outliers:** values lower than 3 standard deviation (thick dot)

**Source:** author's own compilation

The x-axis represents roll-call votes, from no.1 (September 2004) to no. 6200 (May 2009); the y-axis represents values of the Agreement Index. Separate graphs are presented for each of the main political groups (excluding non-attached members, IND/DEM and UEN which – as discussed before – present lower cohesiveness, thus showing no outliers). The blue line represents the trend of AI in time, while the dots represent the outliers. Here, a further distinction is added (see figure 1). “Mild outliers” identify values lower than one and a half standard deviation from the mean AI of the group; “severe outliers” identify values three times lower than the standard deviation (Ruan et al. 2005: 318).

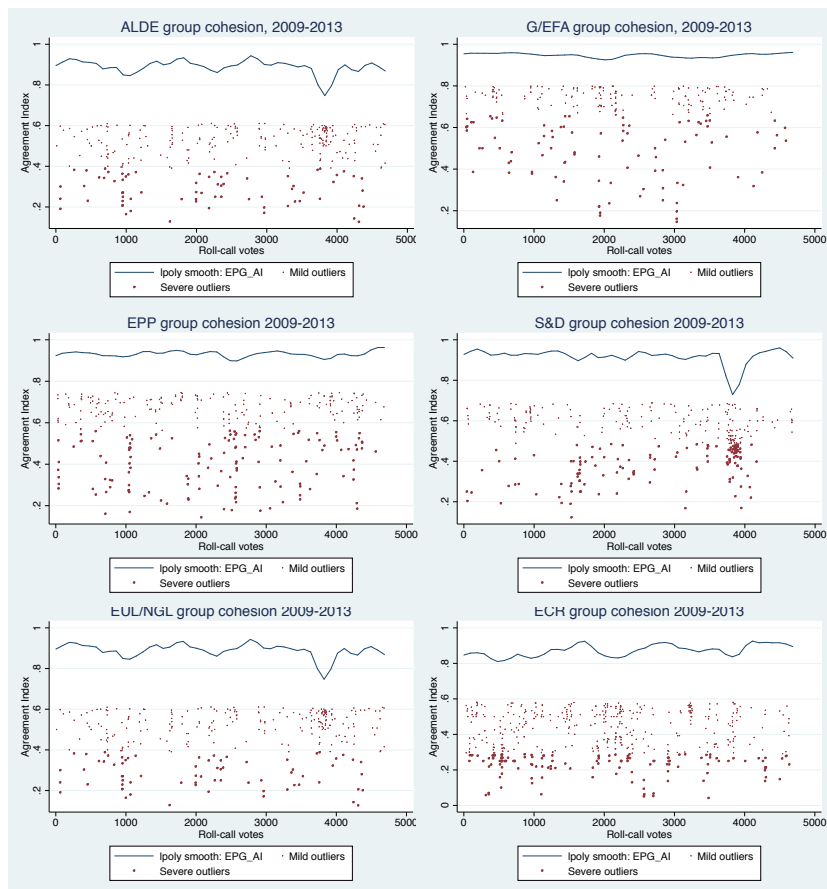
The impression that can be elicited from these graphs is quite straightforward: even considering only the severe outliers (represented by thicker dots, while smaller dots represent mild outliers) it is clear that the occasions where EPGs are extremely divided are not so rare and exceptional. They are, more likely, something that happens constantly over time (as demonstrated by the fact that the red dots are homogeneously distributed in the graph) but get statistically “swallowed” and diluted, becoming invisible, by the high number of votes cast and the often complete cohesiveness of groups. The only exception seems to be the People’s party group (EPP-ED), that right at the beginning of the European legislature shows a concentrated number of outliers, while roughly after vote 2000 seems to be more cohesive for some time, showing no severe outliers at all (even though it continues to present mild outliers).

Figure 4 shows the same tendency of cohesion for the 7<sup>th</sup> European Parliament<sup>24</sup>. Here, the x-axis represents roll-call votes, from no.1 (September 2009) to no. 4684 (September 2013); the y-axis represents values of the Agreement Index. Separate graphs are presented for each of the main political groups, including the newly established ECR (so, in total here we consider six EPGs instead of five for the previous parliament).

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<sup>24</sup> Again, for EP7 the choice of a subset of the whole universe of votes cast in the current European legislature (roughly  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the votes cast in the previous one), due to an inevitable time constraint, does not represent a methodological problem.

**Figure 4.** Main EPGs' cohesion trend (mild and severe outliers highlighted), 2009-2013



**Source:** author's own compilation. Mild and severe outliers as defined in figure 3.

The general trend for EP7 remains the same as the previous EP6 for most of the groups, but some interesting exceptions show up. European People's party, after the scission from the ED component of the party group, displays a higher average cohesion (from 0.87 to 0.93). Thus, more outliers emerge, but the general trend remains the same. No "interruption" of severe outliers, however, can be seen, differently from EP6. Greens and EUL/NGL show no substantive difference with the previous legislature. The new actor in the arena of party groups, ECR, shows a slightly different pattern. Despite being not as highly cohesive as other group (the mean for the whole period is 0.87, so

lower than – for instance – S&D, EPP and Liberals) they show a higher number of (at least severe) outliers. This may point out that this group either is very cohesive, or very divided.

Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Liberals and EUL/NGL, however, show some noteworthy results. Despite their outliers trend, in general, mirrors the one of the previous legislature, for all the three groups a negative peak of the Agreement Index can be spotted around vote 3900. This peak lasts for a short period of time/votes, and after vote 4000 the cohesion scores go back to “normality”. The interesting thing is that all three groups share the same lack of cohesion at the same time, leading alternatively to an abnormal rise of mild outliers (EUL/NGL and liberals, as demonstrated by a denser concentration of lighter dots in correspondence of the abovementioned votes) or severe outliers (S&D, showing a denser concentration of thicker dots). An in-deep analysis of these votes show that all these uncommonly dividing votes refer to the same policy area: Agriculture. Starting from vote 3745 (concerning interinstitutional negotiations on the issue of direct payments to farmers within the framework of the CAP) and finishing with vote 3938 (concerning interinstitutional negotiations on the issue of financing, management and monitoring of the CAP), all these votes have in common the same object, the Common Agriculture Policy reform<sup>25</sup>. It is interesting to note that this is a topic on which often, as already widely recognized by EU practitioners and expert, albeit less by the academic literature (Roederer-Rynning 2003), different voting patterns than those defined by the left-right cleavage emerge. Here, national oriented votes are more likely to have a substantial effect, considering the economic interests at stake. This apparently trivial result has been often overlooked (or completely ignored) by some literature on the topic. For instance, 2013’s Votewatch report on “ten votes that shaped the 7<sup>th</sup> European Parliament” considers only one vote on CAP reform, the final vote in the plenary session of March 2013<sup>26</sup>. Here, among the three EPGs that in my analysis show such an uncommon behaviour only the S&D are slightly divided (with 56 MEPs voting against the group line). The Liberals are sufficiently united voting yes and EUL/NGL completely united voting no. So, this analysis concludes that even on a controversial topic such as CAP reform, no substantive departure from

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<sup>25</sup> Including the common organisation of the markets in agricultural products (Single CMO Regulation), the reform of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and other crucial topics, all attributable to the bigger “umbrella” of CAP reform.

<sup>26</sup> “Final decision on the opening of, and mandate for, interinstitutional negotiations on financing, management and monitoring of the CAP”, final vote, March 2013 EP plenary session.

the widely accepted claim of MEPs voting primarily according to ideological position of can be acknowledged. This confirms my methodological argument according to which the consideration of the single vote leaves out a meaningful part of the story. To have a clear picture of these legislative dynamics, especially to see if party cohesion is as strong as usually described and if national interests emerge, shaping voting behaviour, it is helpful to consider the trend of multiple votes.

Finally, table 2 quantifies the recurrence of this lack of cohesion, showing the effective number of outliers by group for the two considered European legislatures, EP6 and EP7.

**Table 2.** Mild and severe AI outliers by EPG, 2004-2009

	EP6 (2004-2009)				EP7 (2009-2013)		
	Mild	Severe	All		Mild	Severe	All
ALDE	324	125	449	ALDE	217	70	287
EPP-ED	227	100	327	EPP	185	138	323
EUL/NGL	414	54	468	EUL/NGL	217	70	287
G/EFA	231	163	394	G_EFA	164	95	259
SOC	322	107	429	S&D	192	137	329
				ECR	353	141	494
Total EPGs	1518	549	2067	Total EPGs	1328	651	1979
Total votes	1125	498	1623	Total votes	884	549	1433

**Source:** author's own compilation.

The importance of the number of outliers comparatively between groups should not be overstated, but even if we focus only on the aggregate numbers some meaningful indications can be elaborated. In the whole EP6, EPGs have been “mildly non-cohesive” 1518 times, and “severely non-cohesive” 549 times. In total, 2067 times a party group has displayed a voting behaviour that departs from the trend of extremely high cohesion. It is worth noting, however, that these numbers refer to the actual party groups that my analysis pinpointed as outliers; so, considering that in some votes more than one EPG was divided, it would be incorrect to say that cohesion outliers emerged in 2067 votes. The actual number of votes is smaller, as it can be seen in the last row of table 2. Anyway, this picture still remains surprising, considering the usual conclusions on party group cohesion of the relevant literature: in 1623 votes at least one of the main party group

has been divided, either mildly or severely (respectively, 1125 and 498)<sup>27</sup>. Knowing that in the five years of the 6<sup>th</sup> European legislature 6200 roll-call votes have been cast, we can fairly affirm that (on average) roughly every 3.8 votes cast, there's one vote where at least one EPG is divided, either mildly or severely.

In the subsequent EP7, EPGs have been "mildly non-cohesive" 1328 times, and "severely non-cohesive" 651 times. In total, 1979 times a party group has displayed an uncommonly low AI score. The outlying, single votes have been 1433, divided between 884 (mild) and 549 (severe). In the four years (2009-2013) of the 7<sup>th</sup> European legislature taken into consideration 4684 roll-call votes have been cast; so, on average every 3.2 cast, there's one vote where at least one EPG is divided, either mildly or severely. Considering the myriad of votes cast in a single plenary session (Corbett et al. 2011: 200), this means that there is no plenary where all EPGs are cohesive on every vote. Is such pattern of vote something that happens in a "normal democratic parliament", as part of the literature envisages?

### 3.6. Conclusions

In this chapter, after a short introduction and the statement of the hypotheses under verification, I described of the most common indexes of voting cohesion of parliamentary actors. Then, the cohesion of EP party groups from 1979 has been presented together with the most common claims of the literature in regards. Then, after a look at a simple "box-and-whiskers" graph of EPGs' voting cohesion in the last two European legislature (EP6 and EP7), I turned my attention to the analysis of the statistical outliers. Here I demonstrated, albeit with a simple presentation of the presence of statistical outliers and without a proper cause-effect argument, that party group cohesion has to be treated cautiously. Both for EP6 and EP7, party groups are usually completely united in voting, but there is a substantial number of cases when this cohesion breaks down in a surprising fashion. For EP7, for instance, this emerges clearly for the votes concerning the CAP reform. Every three and a half votes, on average, in the last ten years there's been a vote where EPGs fail to discipline their members in voting according to the party lines.

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<sup>27</sup> It is worth remembering that Euro-sceptics and non-attached members are excluded from the analysis, due to their absence of outliers. Including them in the analysis would lead to an even less rosy picture.



This picture plainly contrasts with the oft-repeated claim according to which the “the European Parliament is surprisingly like all other democratic parliaments” (Hix et al. 2005: 509): who could imagine a German *Bundestag*, an Italian *Camera dei Deputati* or a French *Assemblée nationale* where the marginal party groups are always highly divided (UEN, IND/DEN and non attached members) while the more institutionalised ones are highly cohesive in the majority of votes, but every now and then fail completely to discipline their members resulting in a complete division? The explanation of this dynamics is strictly related to the peculiar institutional arrangement of the European Union: the EP, lacking the classical government-opposition dynamics of democratic politics (Mair and Thomassen 2010: 21), can somehow “afford” to have these divisions. There is no executive that governs, depending on a majority in the parliament; so even if sometimes these groups lack cohesion, no government can fall – and more importantly, no group has incentives to split.

EPGs are certainly the “internal political engine” of the Parliament, and most of its daily work revolves around them. The importance of political groups has emerged since the very beginning, when in 1952 the at the time appointed MEPs decided to sit according to their political family instead of nationality (Bardi and Ignazi 2004; Corbett et al. 2011: 78), so their centrality has not to be dismissed. But this does not mean that their members cannot decide, from time to time, to vote along patterns that completely break (because a national interest is at stake, such as outcomes of CAP reforms) their unity as political groups. And since, as scholars acknowledge (Raunio 1999: 193; Westlake 1994a; Kreppel 2002), EPGs or even more European parties have very little power to “whip” them, their election being ultimately in the hand of the national parties, no consequences arise from these “rebellious votes”. The reason of such understatement, as stated before, is based on a perspective that looks only at the mathematic mean of EPG cohesiveness over five years, but does not deepen the analysis to what really happens if we disaggregate these statistical indexes.



## Chapter 4

### Legislative behaviour and EP committees: a critical analysis of roll-call votes

*“If the political groups are the Parliament’s life blood, then its nineteen committees and four sub-committees are its legislative backbone”*

(Westlake 1994: 191)

#### 4.1. Introduction

As previously demonstrated, when discussing voting behaviour and specifically party group cohesion it may be misleading to consider indexes broadly calculated by EPG membership and country of origin. The purpose of this chapter is to deepen the research question (how these two elements concur to define MEPs’ legislative activity) by taking into account the role of legislative committees. As Strøm pointed out, “committees are, by broad consensus, among the most significant internal organisational feature of modern parliaments” (1998: 55). The European Parliament bears no exception, as demonstrated by the number of studies in regards (see Whitaker 2011 for an extensive discussion of such area of research).

This chapter is structured as follows: after a presentation of the basic functioning of the EP committee system and a brief literature review, relevant information from an original survey submitted to MEPs’ assistants in July 2012 are presented and discussed. Then part of these data are combined with roll-call votes from the sixth European parliament (2004-2009), showing consistent results with my theory according to which national affiliation is more likely to emerge when crucial issues are at stake, at least for some committees.

##### 4.1.1 The European Parliament committee system

The committees of the European Parliament have three main functions: to draw up, amend and adopt both legislative proposals and own-initiative reports. They consider Commission and Council proposals

and, where necessary, draw up reports to be presented to the plenary assembly. Thus, committees are designed not only to aid the European Commission in initiating legislation, but to draft the actual parliamentary amendments on the basis of Commission proposals. Standing committees are made up of MEPs, and each committee has a Chairman and four Vice-Chairmen, along with numerous committee members; each committee also has substitute members. There are currently 20 standing committees<sup>28</sup>, plus a special committee on Organised Crime, Corruption and Money Laundering (appointed before the Summer 2012), covering all the areas of legislation. Two other special committees (Financial, Economic and Social Crisis, and Policy Challenges) completed their works between June and July 2011 and were dismantled. Reports are usually compiled by a rapporteur, who is appointed by the chairman of the Committee, selected from amongst the Members or permanent substitutes. This process of selection is not an autonomous decision of the chairman: rather, it represents a complex selection by party groups after an intricate process of inter-group bidding for reports, as shown by the literature (Kaeding 2004, Yoshinaka et al. 2010, Yordanova 2011).

In the process of proposing and drafting legislation, the European Commission consults the various Standing Committees during the standard legislative procedure, and these committees advise the Commission by producing reports, proposing amendments to the draft legislation, and providing, if necessary, a drafted legislative resolution. Committees are also able to produce non-legislative reports. The appointed rapporteur is responsible for preparing the report, and presenting it to Parliament on the Committee's behalf. These reports must include a motion for a resolution, an explanatory statement, and must also outline financial implications. Committees can also produce reports relevant to their competence, without having to be consulted. These are called "Own-Initiative Reports", and are used to submit a motion for a resolution. When drawing up a report, a Committee may ask the opinion of another Committee on the matter, particularly if it is felt that a proposed amendment would fall into the interests of another

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<sup>28</sup> Foreign Affairs; Development; International Trade; Budgets; Budgetary Control; Economic and Monetary Affairs; Employment and Social Affairs; Environment; Public Health and Food Safety; Industry, Research and Energy; Internal Market and Consumer Protection; Transport and Tourism; Regional Development; Agriculture and Rural Development; Fisheries; Culture and Education; Legal Affairs; Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; Constitutional Affairs; Women's Rights and Gender Equality; Petitions. Human Rights and Security and Defence are two sub-committees of the standing committee Foreign Affairs.

Committee. The Committees are based in Brussels, where together with the Political Groups lies the real “political core” of the European Parliament.

#### **4.2. Brief literature review**

Concerning the role of the committees of the European Parliament – as pointed out in the introduction – the existing literature is in a relatively florid state. However, some aspects of it have been analysed more extensively than others.

While there is, in fact, a body of work on the role of EP committees in the legislative process (Neuhold 2001), which includes case studies of the Environment (Judge 1992; Collins et. al. 1998) and more recent work on the EP amendments in plenary sessions (Yordanova 2010), most of the research is focused on the topic of membership of EP committees, starting from the earliest work of Hagger and Wing (1979) in the aftermath of the first direct elections of the EP. Westlake (1994b) examined British MEPs’ movements within the committee system. Bowler and Farrell (1995) empirically analysed the assignment of committee leadership positions, and were among the first scholar to study from a broader perspective the internal organization of the EP, (committees and party groups), arguing that from an organizational point of view the EP resembles a normal legislature, “opening the path” to what Hix et al. later would have argued looking at MEPs’ voting behaviour.

McElroy (2001) showed how transnational party groups reward MEPs who toe the party line, promoting them in the EP’s committee system; later, a series of journal articles has examined the role of rapporteurs and the distribution of rapporteurships at the party and individual level in the EP (e.g. Benedetto 2005; Høyland 2006; Mamadouh and Raunio 2003). Settembri and Neuhold (2009) examine the role of the standing committees in building consensus within the European Parliament, finding that committees generally work very consensually, regardless of the issue at stake and the procedure applied. But, except for some very recent works (Costello and Thomsen 2010, Whitaker 2011) that try to demonstrate the extent to which national parties use the committee system to further their policy goals, the question of the relationship between national parties and Euro-party groups as not received satisfactory scholarly attention; in particular, how voting behaviour is significantly shaped by the links between European parties and national parties has to be investigated more carefully, as stated by Whitaker (2011: 3). However, if this topic has been already studied but still needs research, what has received very little attention

is how MEPs actually vote in the various committee in relation to the central research question of this thesis, namely national affiliation at large, independent of national parties, *vis-à-vis* party group membership of MEPs.

### **4.3. Hypotheses verification**

Considering the various committees as a sort of “proxies” for the importance of the vote, depending also on the fact that the committee under scrutiny deals or not with legislative issues, the empirical part of this chapter can be considered to verify the first hypothesis formulated in chapter 2 and its correlated hypotheses:

*H1: Party group discipline in the EP explains most of the votes but when the issue concerns a direct interest MEPs will protect them*

*H1a: MEPs will vote according to their interests, creating a national alignment, even if this means being rebel to their political group (thus voting against it or abstaining)*

*H1b: National alignments will emerge on more important, legislative issues*

*H1c: Conversely, less important, non-legislative issues will show higher group cohesion*

However, the central focus of this chapter is on hypothesis 3, that refers explicitly to the different logics of voting behaviour of EP’s committees:

*H3: MEPs’ voting behaviour and consequently party group cohesion differs in various committees*

*H3a: National alignments will emerge in committees that are generally perceived as more important*

### **4.4. European Parliament available surveys**

Surveys are a useful tool to explore the preferences of the members of elected assemblies. To date, each direct-elected EP has been surveyed by scholars: the first four by different research groups, while in the last fifteen years there has been only one research group responsible for the survey. The 1979-84 Parliament was investigated with a survey prepared by Reif and Wildenman (Bardi, 1989; Westlake, 1994a). In the 1984-89 parliament there was a survey conducted by Hrbek and Schweitzer (1989). In the 1989-94, the survey was organised by Bowler and Farrell (1993). In the 1994-99 parliament, Wessels led the research

group on the MEPs, while doing a parallel study on members of national parliaments in 11 EU member states (Katz and Wessels, 1999; Schmitt and Thomassen 1999). The remaining three legislature (fifth, sixth and seven) were investigated by three waves of surveys (1999, 2006, 2010) prepared by the European Parliament Research Group (EPRG), led by Farrell et al. However, only minor changes were made to this survey during the years, confirming the goodness of the original model and allowing students of EP to make diachronic comparative analyses.

The survey includes personal questions, questions about the attitudes towards representation and general political attitudes, and on further EU institutional reform. Even though the basic structure of the survey remained mainly unchanged during the year, as noted previously, some questions were added and some methodological refinements were implemented<sup>29</sup>. The percentage of respondents has increased overtime: in 1999 only 192 MEPs participated to the survey, while in 2010 the number of participating MEPs equalled 272 (Hix et al. 2011). But these already available surveys do not include specific question on the basic research question of this paper – the intertwining between national affiliation and EPG membership in shaping the outcome of the vote – and on the role of committees in the EP’s legislative process. So, a new survey had to be created.

#### 4.5 MEPs’ assistant survey

The survey<sup>30</sup> consists of 24 questions, covering four main topics: the role of lobbies in the EP; the role of committees in the legislative process; the possible contrast between national affiliation and EPG membership; and finally, some information on RCVs *vis-à-vis* the other types of votes in the EP. For the purpose of this work, information from all sections except the first one were employed. However, the full survey can be found in the appendix section.

The target of the new survey, MEPs’ assistants instead of European parliamentarians themselves, was decided for a twofold reason: on the one hand, MEPs have usually little time, so choosing their (usually

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<sup>29</sup> For instance, some answers were operationalized using different scales, leading to possible methodological problems in case of a comparative effort. See chapter 6 for a more extensive discussion of this point.

<sup>30</sup> The survey was submitted online, using the platform *surveymonkey*. This eased the logistic aspects of the survey and, at the cost – probably – of some recipients ignoring the request, it made the collection possible for a single researcher.

numerous) staff instead of them makes the response rate higher; secondly, assistants help the work of their MEP on a daily basis, often doing the “hard work” of following the committees, reading, writing and correcting the amendments, preparing reports, and most of all drafting the vote list of a specific group; so to a certain extent they not only are a reliable source of information, but in some cases may know better than their “bosses”. Two versions of the survey were created – one in Italian, the other in English. Both were submitted to all MEPs’ assistants using the official mail of an Italian MEP, Mrs. Rita Borsellino, in mid-July 2012. The last collection of answers was set on late August 2012.

Roughly half of the question were structured as closed-questions where the respondent could pick among a range of possible answers; more or less the other half were questions where it was asked to pick the level of agreement or disagreement with a certain statement (the widely accepted 1-to-5 range: strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree). In some open-ended question it was asked to list a certain set of answers. All the questions presented the possibility to add some generic “additional information”, in case the respondent wanted to deepen a certain aspect of the question. The final response rate was 188, resulting in the 24.9% of the 754 MEPs that compose the EP<sup>31</sup>. All EPGs and almost all member states (23 out of 27<sup>32</sup>) are included in this sample: no assistant from Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta and Slovakia replied. A slight over-representation of the Italian population (54 responses) and for the S&D group (63, compared with the “only” 40 responses from EPP group) has to be noted, probably a consequence of the fact that the request to fill the questionnaire came from the email address of an S&D Italian MEP. However, since the object of the research question is not correlated to

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<sup>31</sup> There is no fixed rule on the dimension of each MEPs’ staff (usually they have two assistants; in some cases one or three; rarely more than three), but in the request for the compilation of the survey it was explicitly asked that for each office only one assistant should fill out the survey. So, it can be expected that each response actually coincides with one – and only one – MEP. In terms of response rate (188), this number can be considered acceptable, especially if we keep in mind that the last official MEPs’ survey, held in 2009 using the professional agency Ipsos-MORI and available in 23 different languages (Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Slovak, Slovene and Swedish) had 270 responses, only 1/3 more than this survey.

<sup>32</sup> No assistant from Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta and Slovakia replied. To be noted a slight over-representation of the Italian population (54 responses) and for the S&D group (63, compared with the “only” 40 responses from EPP group), probably due to the fact that the request to fill the questionnaire came from the email address of an S&D Italian MEP.



the slightly over-represented sample, no selection bias problems are expected to arise.

#### 4.5.1. Survey items relevant to the research question

In question 11 MEPs' assistants were asked the following question:

“Do you believe that some committees can be considered more important than others?”

The answers show a clear uniformity of views. MEPs' assistants almost unanimously convened that actually not all the votes cast in the EP are of the same importance (86.9% yes, 13.1% no). In the following, open question (question 12) they were asked to simply list the committees that they consider more important, with no limit of number of answers that they could give, in order not to “constrain” their opinion, that can be variously in-depth according on many factors (including their seniority: some assistants have been working in the EP for more than a decade, following different parliamentarians that were members of different committees; others are at their first experience as legislative assistants). The results are showed in table 3.

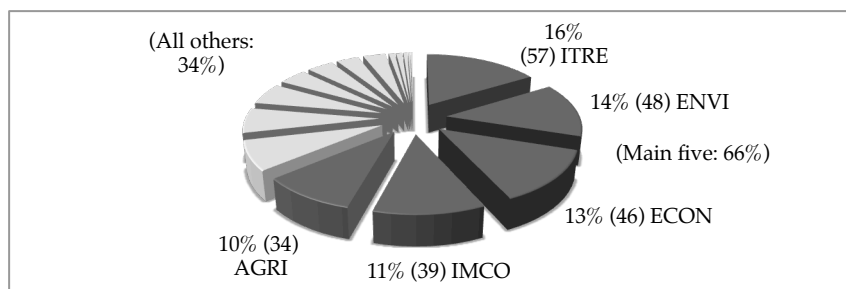
**Table 3.** Questions 12: importance of EP committees, MEPs' assistant survey 2012

<b>Committee</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Industry, Transport and Research - ITRE	57	16%
Environment, Public Health and Food Safety - ENVI	48	14%
Economic and Monetary Affairs - ECON	46	13%
Internal Market and Consumer Protection - IMCO	39	11%
Agriculture and Rural Development - AGRI	34	10%
Budgets - BUDG	26	7%
Civil liberties, Justice and Home Affairs - LIBE	22	6%
Transport and Tourism - TRAN	19	5%
Legal Affairs - JURI	14	4%
International Trade - INTA	13	4%
Foreign Affairs - AFET	11	3%
Regional Development - REGI	11	3%
Budgetary Control - CONT	3	0,9%
Fisheries - PECH	3	0,9%
Constitutional Affairs - AFCO	2	0,6%
Employment and Social Affairs - EMPL	1	0,3%
Financial, Economic and Social Crisis - CRIS	1	0,3%
All others (DROI, SEDE, DEVE, CULT, FEMM, PETI, CRIM, SURE)	0	0,0%
	350	100%

**Source:** author's own compilation.

On average, each respondent chose roughly two committees. Many committees were completely ignored (eight committees received no mention at all); on the contrary, there is a discrete separation between the top five committees and the rest. As presented graphically in figure 3, the first five committees together (Industry, Transport and research; Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; Economic and Monetary Affairs; Internal Market and Competition; Agriculture and Rural Development)<sup>33</sup> represent roughly  $\frac{2}{3}$  of all the answers. ITRE, the first, had the 16% of answers; the fifth, AGRI, received 10% of answers. All the other 20 committees together correspond approximately to the remaining  $\frac{1}{3}$ : currently, as pointed out before, there are 20 standing committees, two sub-committees and one newly established special committee (CRIM). In the survey also the recently dismantled two special committees (CRIS and SURE) were included, resulting in 25 possible answers.

**Figure 5.** Pie chart of EP committees' importance, MEPs' assistant survey 2012



**Source:** author's own compilation.

This is consistent to certain set of consideration: first of all, not all the committees deal with legislative issues. Some of them have their competence limited to the production of non-binding resolutions. Secondly, some issues can be considered, *per se*, more important than others (for instance, building a transnational railway or setting food standards *versus* promoting European-wide petitions or approving a symbolic text on gender equality). Finally, some issues are certainly salient and crucial but the EU has not (yet?) gained a direct influence on them, while on others the EU is the main policy-maker (for instance,

<sup>33</sup> A complete list of competences of these five committees can be found in the appendix.

foreign policy – certainly fundamental, but still completely in the hands of the national governments *versus* agriculture, fisheries or the common monetary policy). Committees are, as acknowledged by the literature, the “political backbone” of the European Parliament (Westlake 1994a: 191; Neuhold 2001), but to different degrees. It sounds reasonable to argue that non all the votes cast in the EP are of the same importance.

The following question (question 13) is formulated as follows:

“Do you think that the logics of how MEPs vote vary between the different committees?”

76.7% of the respondents agreed, while only 23.3% disagreed. This is a broad question; so, the subsequent questions (question 14 and 15) are formulated in order to refine this information:

“More specifically, do you believe that in some committees the political groups are more cohesive while in other committees MEPs vote more often together with their countrymen (even if they belong to different groups)?”

Again, 68.6% of MEPs’ assistants agreed and 31.4% did not. Then, in question 15 and 16 they were asked to list the committees where political groups are more cohesive, and committees where MEPs vote more cohesively by member state. Table 4 shows compares these two questions.

**Table 4.** Party group and national cohesion, MEPs' assistant survey 2012

EP committees: party group cohesion		EP committees: national cohesion	
<b>AFET</b>	12	<b>AGRI</b>	17
<b>LIBE</b>	8	<b>ITRE</b>	10
<b>FEMM</b>	8	<b>ENVI</b>	8
<b>DEVE</b>	6	<b>REGI</b>	7
<b>DROI</b>	6	<b>PECH</b>	7
EMPL	5	AFET	6
ENVI	5	LIBE	6
BUDG	4	IMCO	5
ECON	4	ECON	4
TRAN	4	BUDG	3
AGRI	4	TRAN	3
CULT	4	INTA	2
ITRE	3	EMPL	2
JURI	3	PETI	2
INTA	2	CULT	1
CONT	2	AFCO	1
IMCO	2	All others (9)	0
AFCO	2		
SEDE	1		
REGI	1		
All others (5)	0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>

**Source:** author's own compilation.

The number of each committee corresponds to the number of respondent picking that specific committee. As in question 11, MEPs' assistant had free choice to enlist either one or more committees (or none, if they didn't have an opinion). The fact that the question about the sheer importance of committees received more answers<sup>34</sup> shouldn't be surprising or worrisome: people working in the EP have a clear idea of where the real importance of the legislative process lies (even if they work for MEPs members of different committees); on the contrary, to know what competing rationales do these committees follow, they necessarily have to be aware of its internal dynamics, either working there or having a close relation to some of the staff/some MEPs involved in their works. Thus, on average each respondent "weighted" his or her answer, limiting it to one or two committees they know better (or even refraining from a response).

<sup>34</sup> On overall, 350 compared to 86 for question 14 and 84 for question 15.

### 4.5.2. Party group cohesion or national cohesion?

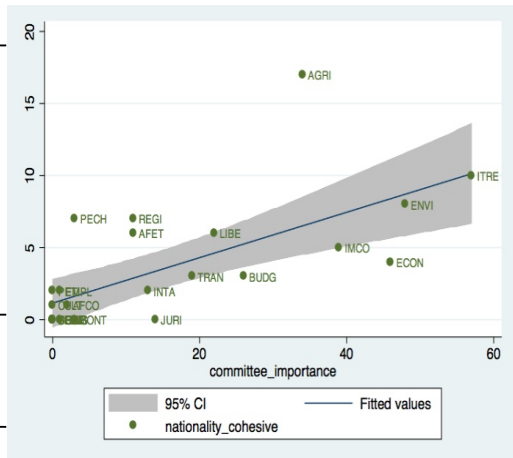
According to MEPs’ assistants, the five committees mostly characterized by high political groups’ cohesiveness are: Foreign Affairs; Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; Women’s Rights and Gender Equality; Development; Human Rights. All prominent issues, but on which the EU has less say from a merely legislative point of view. On the contrary, the five mostly State-driven committees are the following: Agriculture and Rural Development; Industry, Transport and Research; Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; Regional Development; Fisheries. Just by simple eyeballing the data presented in table 3 and 4, it emerges clearly that three out of five of them are also on the list of the most important committees, and that the most important committees and those more “nationality-oriented” seem correlated; on the contrary, the most important committees and the more “group-oriented” seem not<sup>35</sup>. Table 6 shows the correlation between these three groups; then, a simple regression is run to see if there is a substantial statistical significance in this relation (table 5, figure 4).

**Table 5 (left).** OLS regression

**Figure 6 (right).** Twoway with fitted values (DV and significant IV)

	Model 1.	Model 2.	Model 3.
DV: Committee importance			
EPG Cohesive	0.873	-1.229	0.258 (0.947)
Nationality Cohesive		2.891*** (0.660)	2.862*** (0.682)
Cons	11.00* -5.549	4.288 -3.481	3.497 -4.589
r2	0.0215	0.455	0.457
chi2			
F	0.505	19.20	9.252
N	25	25	25

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01



<sup>35</sup> The descriptive statistics of the simple dataset built from these three questions can be found in the appendix, table a2.

**Table 6.** Variables correlation

	Importance	EPG cohesive	Nationality cohesive
Importance	1.000		
EPG cohesive	0.1466	1.000	
Nationality cohesive	0.6745	0.1547	1.000

**Source:** author’s own compilation (all three).

First of all, as we can see, cohesiveness by EPG and by member state are typical of two substantively different groups of committees (low correlation: roughly 0.15), trivially confirming that these two dynamics are clearly competing. This is banal and does not certainly need any empirical confirmation, but it can work as a proof that the choice of MEPs’ assistants as well-informed recipients of a survey about voting behaviour in the EP is successful. Secondly, correlation between importance of a committee and predominance of EPG cohesion in its internal dynamics is, again, quite low (0.14). This is certainly a more interesting result, which partially points towards a more careful consideration of the concept, at large, of aggregated EPGs cohesion. But what’s really surprising is the correlation of committee importance and nationality-oriented patterns of vote: according to our recipients, there is a substantially high correlation (almost 0.7). Put all together, these information can be summarized as follows: some committees deal with less important issues, and usually in these committees votes are defined by group affiliation – thus, as scholars (Noury et al. 2002; Hix et al. 2006: 495, 2009) have extensively proved, falling along the traditional left-right cleavage. But in most important committees, the competing logic of voting according to national affiliation is much stronger.

The OLS statistical regression confirms this argument, adding statistical significance to it. The dependent variable<sup>36</sup> is “committee importance”, while obviously the two independent variables are “EPG cohesion” and “nationality cohesion”. Three models are run separately: the first two with one independent variable, the third with both. Consistently with our argument, EPG cohesiveness is never statistically significant, while nationality always is (and within a 99% confidence

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<sup>36</sup> Here, the goal is not to establish a true cause-effect relationship between the variables: of course, we are not implying that it is one of the two competing logic that actually causes the importance of a committee. Rather, since the model is simple and has only one (or two) independent variables, this regression is a test of significance of the correlation, following the indication of King et al. (1994).

interval). Moreover, if we look at the R2 we see how the model with nationality cohesiveness, in terms of goodness of fit, expectedly explains much more of the variation than model 1. The *twoway* graph shown in figure 4, in addition to a visual representation of this relationship, helps us isolating some deviant cases, which we can divide in two categories. On the one hand – above the regression line – the group of committees where nationality is highly cohesive, but their importance is not as high (PECH, REGI, AFET, AGRI).

The Agriculture committee, in particular, strikes as a real outlier. Despite being one of the crucial committees of the EP, partially responsible for the outcome of EU's Common Agricultural Policy that represents almost one third of the whole EU budget, as proved by the fact that some academic works are dedicated to it alone (Roederer-Rynning 2003) and MEPs' assistant placed it the 5<sup>th</sup> position of the most important committees, its cohesiveness by nationality is so distant even from the second place that it is placed well outside the regression line<sup>37</sup>. On the other hand, those committees that tend *not* to be dominated by a country-based rationale, but nonetheless are considered relatively important are JURI, BUDG and ECON.

#### 4.6. RCVs analysis of the main committees

In the previous chapter five committees have been identified as the most important, and this distinction (least/most important) partially correlates with the least/most nationality-oriented ones. Therefore, this finding is based solely on information from MEPs' assistants; here the focus is on actual voting behaviour, using Hix et al.'s RCVs dataset (EP6, 2004-2009). In this analysis, differently from chapter 3 and 6 (that look at data aggregated by party group or member state), we must limit our investigation to the sixth European Parliament, the latest dataset available with information at MEP level.

Again, the starting point is that EPGs are on overall, without disaggregating for each committee, highly cohesive. However, if we look only at the votes cast in the five "main" committees the pictures slightly changes, as showed in table 7.

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<sup>37</sup> AGRI committee received 17 mentions as the most country-oriented committee; ITRE committee, the second most "national" committee according to MEPs' assistant, almost half of it.

**Table 7.** AI cohesiveness scores (overall and disaggregated by committee), EP6

	Whole EP6	All five	Committee				
			AGRI	ECON	ENVI	IMCO	ITRE
ALDE	0.88	0.87	0.85	0.91	0.86	0.83	0.88
EPP-ED	0.87	0.87	0.80	0.91	0.87	0.90	0.89
EUL/NGL	0.85	0.86	0.76	0.83	0.92	0.94	0.76
G/EFA	0.91	0.91	0.87	0.89	0.93	0.94	0.91
IND/DEM	0.46	0.43	0.38	0.53	0.40	0.45	0.41
SOC	0.91	0.88	0.82	0.90	0.90	0.89	0.90
UEN	0.73	0.75	0.79	0.69	0.73	0.78	0.78
na	0.45	0.44	0.48	0.45	0.44	0.41	0.43
<b>Average</b>	0.85	0.84	0.79	0.86	0.85	0.85	0.85

**Source:** author's own compilation.

The average AI for these five committees is marginally lower (by roughly one point, from 0.85 to 0.84); in particular, amongst the three main groups Liberals and Socialists see their cohesiveness decrease by two/three points (respectively, from 0.88 to 0.86 and from 0.91 to 0.88), while the Christian-democrats remain stable. IND/DEM's cohesiveness decreases, while UEN actually become more cohesive (two points increase); all the other groups show the same level of cohesiveness. Thus, the aggregated data for all these five committees show some difference, however on overall this variation does not seem substantial. But if we disaggregate the votes for each committee, the variation becomes slightly bigger. The average cohesiveness of two committees (IMCO and ITRE) is in line with the average of the whole EP (0.85), though it is a bit higher than the average of the five committees together. The ENVI committee, on the contrary, shows a similar cohesiveness to the five committees we are interested in (0.84), but lower than the EP6 average. The remaining two committees show diverging results. While the ECON committee shows a higher EPGs cohesiveness (0.86), the AGRI committee conversely shows a conspicuously lower cohesion: on average, EPGs are six percentage points less cohesive than the whole EP6 (0.79 instead of 0.85). Looking at the three main groups, the Socialists' cohesion falls from 0.91 to 0.82, the Christian-democrats' from 0.87 to 0.80, the Liberals' from 0.88 to 0.84. Also all the other groups see their AI scores decrease, except for the Conservatives.

One last thing that has to be noted is that, separately for each committee, EPGs are generally less cohesive, but with substantial variation – for instance, in the ENVI committee the “radical” EPGs (far left and greens) are much more cohesive (more than 0.90), which is consistent to their political tradition. Thus, dynamics inside the EP



seem to be slightly more complex and differentiated in respect to what the mainstream literature usually acknowledges.

However, it is quite evident how these variations, except for the AGRI committee, are substantially very small. The analysis of party group cohesion using solely the Agreement Index on roll-call votes cannot let us generalise that EPGs are less cohesive for *all* the most important committees; for the Agriculture committee alone, instead, this can be partially argued.

#### 4.6.1 A simple OLS statistical model for the main five committees

If the Agreement Index is not giving satisfying results, then a more refined approach is needed. Following the same methodology used in a previous work on MEPs' voting behaviour by Noury et al. (2002), the "approach to studying individual voting patterns is to use statistical tools to disentangle the impact of party affiliation and nationality on voting behaviour. In particular, we try to explain how the probability that a given legislator will vote 'Yes' depends upon the share of his/her party group that votes 'Yes' and the share of his/her national delegation that votes 'yes'" (Noury et al 2002: 300).

First of all, using EP6's dataset of roll-call votes, a dummy variable for Yes votes is created. Then two variables are created: the first one as the number party colleagues voting "yes", divided by the number of party colleagues present at that vote; the second one as the number of country fellowmen voting "yes", divided by the number of fellow countrymen voting "yes". These variables are called "share". The estimates presented in table 8 are from the following equation:

$$V_j = \alpha \text{ Party}_j + \beta \text{ Country}_j + \varepsilon_j$$

Where  $V_j$  is the dummy variable indicating the "yes" vote of legislator  $j$ ,  $\text{Party}_j$  ( $\text{Country}_j$ ) is the proportion of MEP  $j$ 's party (country) members voting "yes", and  $\varepsilon_j$  is the error term. The regression used is a linear OLS regression. "It is well known that the estimates of  $V_j$  by linear probability model may not belong to the admissible range [0, 1]. This, however, is not a major concern here given that we are primarily interested in the relative importance of *party* versus *country* on voting behaviour, not on the predicted values of  $V_j$ " (Noury et al. 2002: 300).

**Table 8.** OLS estimates of voting patterns based on party and country affiliation, EP6.

DV: vote_dic	-1 Overall	-2 AGRI	-3 ECON	-4 ENVI	-5 ITRE	-6 IMCO
epg_yes_share	0.858*** (0.000416)	0.708*** (0.00229)	0.906*** (0.00146)	0.871*** (0.00118)	0.867*** (0.00196)	0.840*** (0.00204)
country_yes_share	0.264*** (0.000525)	0.477*** (0.00251)	0.223*** (0.00208)	0.267*** (0.00155)	0.247*** (0.00249)	0.300*** (0.00255)
_cons	-0.0715*** (0.000262)	-0.110*** (0.00133)	-0.0714*** (0.00106)	-0.0786*** (0.000787)	-0.0701*** (0.00127)	-0.0811*** (0.00129)
r2	0.745	0.657	0.772	0.734	0.738	0.749
chi2						
F	5508480.5	192181.1	373100.9	623345.0	250334.2	223715.5
N	3761021	200475	220580	452491	177355	150113

Standard errors in parentheses. Statistical significance: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

**Source:** author's own compilation.

First of all, in respect to Noury et al.'s analysis on the third and fourth Parliament, party influence has declined while national influence has increased. The coefficients they find for the third parliament are 0.84 for party and 0.17 for country; for the fourth parliament, 0.97 for party and a marginal 0.01 for country. My coefficients are much similar to what they find for the third parliament: so, after a period of lower national influence, MEPs seem to be returned to a bigger influence by their member state<sup>38</sup>. However, for the whole EP6, despite the substantial difference with Noury et al.'s findings, still party group membership is much more important in estimating voting patterns than national affiliation (0.86 versus 0.26).

Secondly, if we run the same statistical regression for each of the five main committees, separately, three important findings can be observed. First, ENVI, ITRE and IMCO do not substantially deviate from the coefficient of the whole EP6: MEPs vote in those committee slightly differently, but substantially this difference is marginal. Second, in ECON committee voting patterns are slightly more defined by party membership than national affiliation (0.90 party, 0.22 country). This goes against my argument according to which in the most important committees these two competing explanatory variables are more oriented towards the national element; but again, the substantial effect

<sup>38</sup> The same statistical analysis for the fifth parliament has not been performed.

is extremely small (roughly 0.05). Third, the AGRI committee shows more substantially consistent coefficients that corroborate my argument (0.70 and 0.47): in this crucial committee votes fall along national lines much more than acknowledged by the general literature on MEPs' voting behaviour.

#### 4.7. Conclusions

Committees are the "legislative backbone" of the European Parliament. Not all are of the same importance: some work on mainly legislative bills and vote amendments on proposals that are likely to influence the life of more than three hundred million European citizens; some others simply don't. I argue that, consistently to my theory, the national element is more likely to have a substantial effect on most important committees, while party groups, vice-versa, are more cohesive when there is less at stake.

This is empirically confirmed by the elaboration of the results from the original survey submitted to MEPs' assistant, while RCVs analysis partially confirms it only for the AGRI committee: for the ECON committee, on the contrary, results were against my expectations. Dynamics in votes concerning the AGRI committee are substantially different than the others, and national affiliation plays a greater role than the one usually envisaged by the mainstream literature (Hix 2002; Hix et al 2003; Hix et al 2005; 2006; 2007). These results are especially meaningful if we consider the importance of this committee in terms of sheer economic numbers – roughly half of the EU budget, excluded the bureaucratic expenses to keep running the Brussels and Strasbourg machines, is allocated to the Common Agriculture Policy<sup>39</sup>. Findings that corroborate my argument can be found in the literature, albeit focusing on research questions other than the specific relationship between party and national affiliation. For instance Bardi, when investigating the concept of dyadic representation and specifically the political congruence between citizens and European representatives, finds that this committee, since the very beginning of the history of the European Parliament, has always been one of the most aspired (Bardi 1989).

The average EP vote may be driven, statistically, by political membership; the ideological dimension of the EP may be, as a whole, more relevant than the national affiliation of MEPs, but if we "filter"

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<sup>39</sup> Roughly 1/3 of the whole EU budget is allocated to the Common Agriculture Policy (Morlino 2010).

these votes in a critical way, nationality (the reader has to be careful on this point: nationality at large, not membership of a national party) suddenly becomes something different than the “weak predictor of vote” generally depicted by the most diffused literature (Hix et. al. 2006: 509).

## Chapter 5

### When nationality prevails: explaining MEPs' loyalty and rebelliousness towards party group

*"In general, political behaviour and policy outcomes in the European Parliament are determined more by European party positions and left-right preferences than national interests."*

(Hix et al. 2007: 201)

*"[...] Splits within groups do occur, however, when issues of national interest are at stake."*

(Bardi 1987: 86)

#### 5.1. Introduction and a brief reference to the relevant literature

Empirical findings from previous chapters have already demonstrated how the concept of intra-party cohesion needs to be handled with extreme caution; however, the specific question of national alignments (i.e. groups of MEPs coming from the same country voting together, despite different – often opposed and contrasting – political orientations) has not been addressed yet. Thus, this chapter turns its empirical focus on the cases when MEPs actually choose to follow their fellow countrymen instead of their political group colleagues. In order to pursue this analysis, first the basic statistics disaggregated by EPG, country and committee are presented, then a statistical model is built using a logistic regression.

The literature pushing forward the idea of the EP as a "regular parliament" where the lines of conflict tend to replicate those of a national parliament (left-right, although with a second orthogonal dimension, pro-/anti-EU) do acknowledge, of course, the possibility of these national alignments (Faas 2003, Noury et al. 2002, Hix 2002, Hix et al. 2005, 2006, 2007). Despite the variety of approaches and methodological tools, however, they have in common the same explanatory variable for these deviations from the party group line:

MEPs' national party. Hix et al.'s theorization of MEPs as "agents with two principals" excellently sums up this argument: "it is the principals that control candidate selection (the national parties) who ultimately determine how MEPs behave. When the national parties in the same parliamentary group decide to vote together, the EP parties look highly cohesive. But when these parties take opposing policy positions, the cohesion of the EP parties break down" (Hix 2002: 696). This, in sum, is what makes Hix et al. argue that national affiliation, independent of national party position, is a weak predictor of vote (Noury et al. 2002; Hix et al. 2007). Faas goes forward by arguing that, indeed, party groups may only be cohesive as a by-product of the cohesion of national party delegations (Faas 2003).

Here, however, the argument is different. Consistently to my theory of MEPs as "strongly ideological regional parliamentarians" I am interested in national affiliation, at large, defining MEPs' voting behaviour. I do not look at national parties: I argue, in contrast to this perspective, that national affiliation – independent of party position – has been overlooked and constitutes a substantial element of EP's legislative dynamics. The data on which this analysis is performed is the dataset of roll-call votes, and the considered time span is 2004-2009, the sixth European Parliament<sup>40</sup>.

## 5.2. Hypotheses verification

The first hypothesis under scrutiny here is the main hypothesis of the work, which links national alignments to deviation from European party group lines. Since in the dataset no proxy can be operationalized to pinpoint each state's interest in a specific legislation, only the three sub-hypotheses can be tested; however, H1 has already been (partially) confirmed by the committee analysis in chapter 4, and will be further corroborated by a brief in-depth analysis of case studies in chapter 7.

*H1: Party group discipline in the EP explains most of the votes but when the issue concerns a direct interest MEPs will protect them*

*H1a: MEPs will vote according to their interests, creating a national alignment, even if this means being rebel to their political group (thus voting against it or abstaining)*

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<sup>40</sup> Here, like in chapter 4, the need of MEP-level disaggregated data necessarily constrains the analysis to EP6 only, without the possibility of a helpful comparison with EP7. For the on-going legislature, it is worth reminding, only party group-aggregated data are available via [votewatch.eu](http://votewatch.eu).

*H1b: National alignments will emerge on more important, legislative issues*

*H1c: Conversely, less important, non-legislative issues will show higher group cohesion*

The descriptive statistics of national alignments are disaggregated also for committee, and the logistic regression presented in paragraph 5.5 takes into account with an independent variable the emergence of national alignments in the main committees. Thus, this analysis serves also as a (partial) test for hypothesis 3.

*H3: MEPs' voting behaviour and consequently group cohesion differs in various committees*

*H3a: National alignments will emerge in committees that are generally perceived as more important*

Finally, by looking at national alignments from the perspective of the various member states, this analysis allows to verify hypothesis 5.

*H5: regional dimensions other than left/right cleavage and anti-/pro-EU do exist and exert a significant effect in the EP*

### **5.3. Defining party and country loyalty and rebelliousness**

First of all, the concepts of loyalty and rebelliousness need a clear-cut definition. I have defined the political line of either a European political group or a national delegation as the position adopted by the plurality of MEPs within that group or delegation<sup>41</sup>. In cases where an equal number of MEPs vote "Yes" and "No" in a party group or in a national delegation, the conclusion is that "there is no political line" or "there is no national line" and the statistics for MEPs in that European political groups and the national party delegations are treated accordingly.

Then, I proceed to operationalize loyalty and rebelliousness of MEPs from these information: an MEP is considered 'loyal' to his/her European political group or national delegation if his/her voting option is identical to the political line of the political group or national delegation, respectively<sup>42</sup>. Here the same caveat made by Hix et al.

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<sup>41</sup> For instance: if 40 MEPs from the ALDE group vote "Yes", 25 MEPs vote "No" and other 27 MEPs abstain, the political line of ALDE to this vote is "Yes". In the same way, if 50 Italian MEPs vote "Yes", 15 "No" and 13 abstain, the Italian national delegation line is "Yes".

<sup>42</sup> For instance: if an Italian MEP from the Socialist group votes "Yes" and the political line of the Socialist group to that vote (defined by the plurality of its members) is also "Yes",

(2007) is valid: the use of the terms “loyal” and “rebel” does not imply a value judgment as to whether MEPs were “right” or “wrong” to vote they way they did; the terminology is merely designed to straightforwardly define how MEPs behave. Considering these assumptions, five options are possible for a MEP in each vote:

a. EPG and national delegation line coincide. This means that both the plurality of members of the group the MEP belongs to and the plurality of members coming from his/her country voted in the same way: for instance, “Yes”. In this case the MEP can be:

a1. Loyal to both (he/she votes “Yes”)

a2. Rebel to both (he/she votes “No”, or abstains). This happens rarely.

b. EPG and national delegation line diverge. This, of course, happens more often: for instance, the plurality of members of the group the MEP belongs to voted “Yes”, while the plurality of members coming from his/her country voted “No”. In this case the MEP can be:

b1. Loyal to his/her EPG but rebel to his/her national delegation (voting “Yes”)

b2. Conversely, loyal to the national delegation but rebel to the EPG (voting “No”)

b3. Rebel to both (in this example, by abstaining).

Clearly, what is analysed in this chapter (the concept of nationality prevailing over party group unity) refers to option b2. Before discussing the descriptive statistics of loyalty and rebelliousness, however, a note of caution has to be made. In terms of sheer numbers, the votes identified by this particular condition actually represent a very small portion of the votes cast in the analysed time span, 2004-2009: only in 4,33%<sup>43</sup>. But two things have to be considered in this regard: firstly, here we consider only the public, RCVs; in secret votes these national alignments can emerge more freely, because there is no “whip effect” (for how weak it can be, as part of the literature argues) from the EPG. Secondly, they do not include the cases when MEPs’ accordance with their EPG is accidental, because it happens by chance

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then he is loyal to his political group. On the contrary, if he/she votes “No” or abstains, he is considered as “rebel”. Then, the same calculation is made for his national affiliation: if the line of Italian MEPs is also “Yes” (calculated in the same way: how the plurality of Italian MEPs vote), he is also considered “loyal” to his national delegation. So, in this case he is loyal to both his political group and country.

<sup>43</sup> Precisely 162,921 votes over 3,761,021 total votes cast.



that the EPG line is the same as that of their country of origin (which is the real reason why the MEP voted in a certain way). An example helps clarifying. Let's consider a piece of controversial legislation that may be harmful for a certain country. On this bill, as the European Parliament is increasingly inter-party competitive and the "grand coalition" between Socialists and People's party is less and less likely (Hix et al. 2003, 2005, 2007), the Socialist have a party line of voting "No" while the People's Party have the opposing line, voting "Yes". All MEPs of the country whose interests are at risk vote compact against the bill, "No". In this case the socialist MEPs from that country do not emerge as party rebellious; however, their real reason of vote was not towing the party line, but protecting the homeland. Paraphrasing Faas (2003), EPG loyalty is a by-product of national loyalty (and not *national party* loyalty).

In order to further elaborate this point, it is useful to look at the basic descriptive statistics of the aforementioned cases a1 (MEP is loyal to both national delegation and EPG) and b1 (MEP is loyal to his/her to EPG, but rebel to his/her national delegation). This information can be found in table 10, a box showing the taxonomy of loyalty and rebelliousness of MEPs according to the two "dimensions" identified here, EPG and national delegation<sup>44</sup>. A similar table can be found in Hix et al. (2007: 137) for the fifth EP; but consistently to their argument, there what is analysed is the voting with/against EPG and national parties; here, EPG and national delegation at large.

**Table 10.** Taxonomy of MEPs' loyalty / rebelliousness to national delegation

		National delegation	
		Loyal	Rebel
EPG	Loyal	73.34%	15.16%
	Rebel	4.33%	5.13%

**Source:** author's own compilation.

It is quite evident how the small percentage discussed before (4.33%) acquires a new value if compared to the opposite case ("EPG loyal /

<sup>44</sup> For simplicity, in table 9 cases a2 and b3 are considered as the same item (rebelliousness to both EPG and national delegation), without distinguishing if EPG line and country majority were actually coinciding. Such distinction, in effect, is not relevant to the discussion: what matters is the (rare) rebelliousness to both.

national rebel”): 15.16%, only roughly three times. This means that the cases where, in order to follow their political colleagues, an MEP has to vote against the national majority are relatively rare<sup>45</sup>. But most of all, what strikes is the overarching majority of cases when both EPGs lines and national majority line actually coincide (73.34%): this means that most of the times MEPs vote according to both their party line and national line. So, further national alignments may be “hidden” by this recurring EPG/nationality harmony, as I argued before: when both loyalties emerge it is not possible to pinpoint, if not with an in-deep analysis of each vote, what came first – EPG membership or national affiliation<sup>46</sup>.

In other words, my empirical operationalization of the concept of “nationality prevails” is extremely strict. This comes at the cost of leaving some cases out, but with the advantage of identifying a rigorous and unbiased sample of cases where, without any doubt, national affiliation prevails over partisan lines. Finally, even if it is out of the scope of the discussion here, it is worth noting that the “rebel / rebel” percentage should not be surprising, since it includes all the cases when an MEP votes against his EPG but together with his *national party* delegation (not the *national* delegation, at large, discussed here), MEPs’ “main principal” according to EP students that investigated this aspect of voting behaviour (Raunio 2000; Hix et al. 2002, 2007; Coman 2009).

#### 5.4. Descriptive statistics of nationality prevailing over party groups

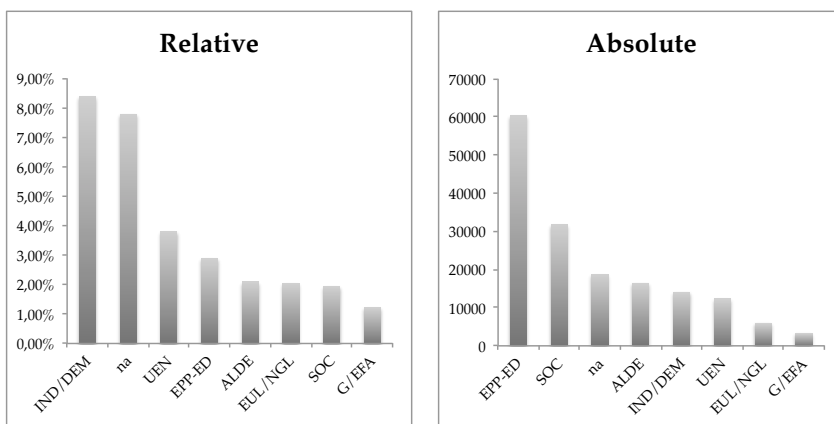
Before proceeding to describe the variables used in the regression it is useful to compare these cases of nationality prevailing over EPG line after having disaggregated them by party group, nationality and finally by committee. Table 10 and Figure 5 show how many times in each EPG a member has voted against its line to join the majority of his/her fellow countrymen.

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<sup>45</sup> This, of course, depends also on the fact that sometimes, especially for the smaller countries, the national line is actually defined by the two bigger EPGs (and still many vote, notwithstanding in a decreasing fashion, are based on a “grand coalition” between People’s party and Socialists).

<sup>46</sup> Also Hix et al. (2007) find similar disproportional results. Their original table showing loyalty and rebelliousness by EPG and national party can be found in the appendix, in table a5.

**Figure 7.** Number and percentage of national prevailing by EPG, EP6 (2004-2009)



**Table 11.** Number and percentage of national prevailing by EPG, EP6 (2004-2009)

no. nationality prevailings		% nationality prevailings	
EPP-ED	60357	IND/DEM	8.40%
SOC	31675	na	7.78%
na	18811	UEN	3.81%
ALDE	16373	EPP-ED	2.89%
IND/DEM	14054	ALDE	2.10%
UEN	12287	EUL/NGL	2.04%
EUL/NGL	5955	SOC	1.94%
G/EFA	3336	G/EFA	1.22%

**Source:** author's own compilation (both).

The “relative” data refers to the percentage of times a certain EPG witnesses one of his members voting in such rebellious way. Not surprisingly, the three groups where this happens most often are the two euro-sceptic groups and the non-attached members; however, the true interruption is, similarly to what happened when looking at AI outliers (see chapter 3), between the first two groups (IND/DEM and non attached) and the other groups<sup>47</sup>. It is worth noting that the two main groups are quite distant from each other. EPP-ED is the first of the big groups (2.89%), while the Socialists are on the opposite situation (1.94%). Socialists are second only to the Greens, the group that shows

<sup>47</sup> From almost 8% of non-attached members to 3.8% of UEN.

the lowest percentage of national alignments (only 1.22%). Liberals and radical left show very similar percentages (2.1% and 2.04%),

What is also interesting, though, is to look at the absolute numbers of this phenomenon: when it comes to voting it is the actual numbers that count. Clearly, bigger groups have more chances to influence (in this case, with their national-oriented votes) the result, changing the outcome of the vote from “approve” to “reject” (or vice-versa). The percentages shown before “weight” differently each group according to its size: in other words, they show how often, in relation to the number of votes cast within the group, such national alignment emerges. On the other hand, in terms of sheer numbers it is the two biggest groups (EPP-ED, SOC) that, not surprisingly, cast the highest number of these rebellious votes. In particular, EPP/ED has almost the double of national-prevailing votes than the Socialists, despite having only 68 MEPs more than the Socialist group<sup>48</sup>. This is certainly a consequence of the co-existence of the two different souls, People’s Party and European Democrats, and in particular of the behaviour of the “usual suspect” UK delegation (Faas 2003: 850). G/EFA group remains in the last place, confirming that it happens rarely that its members vote against the party line.

Interesting insights can be elicited also from the distribution of national alignments according to MEPs’ country of origin, of course. First this is shown in absolute values, also differentiating by EPG (table 11, figure 6) and then in relative values (percentages, table 12 and figure 7).

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<sup>48</sup> Precisely 268 EPP-ED members, in comparison to 200 Socialists.

**Table 12.** Number of national prevailing by EPG and country, EP6 (2004-2009)

	ALDE	EPP-ED	EUL/NGL	G/EFA	IND/DEM	SOC	UEN	na	Total
Austria	389	1068	0	140	0	959	0	1781	4337
Belgium	819	1517	0	172	0	603	0	1033	4144
Bulgaria	174	107	0	0	0	222	0	719	1222
Cyprus	173	389	211	0	0	0	0	0	773
Czech Republic	0	7312	1131	0	726	139	0	1554	10862
Denmark	475	432	201	93	1286	1616	691	0	4794
Estonia	84	45	0	0	0	419	0	0	548
Finland	574	807	207	55	0	243	0	0	1886
France	3566	3505	231	268	862	7901	0	622	16955
Germany	1426	3130	995	612	0	2368	0	0	8531
Greece	0	4426	603	0	854	1328	0	0	7211
Hungary	101	2584	0	0	0	886	0	0	3571
Ireland	262	849	91	0	1116	25	2225	0	4568
Italy	2776	2272	652	130	0	1680	3736	2200	13446
Latvia	139	304	0	154	0	0	1572	0	2169
Lithuania	834	149	0	0	0	122	563	0	1668
Luxembourg	113	310	0	60	0	247	0	0	730
Malta	0	325	0	0	0	687	0	0	1012
Netherlands	669	1063	413	190	2929	1075	0	0	6339
Poland	1804	2336	0	0	3342	1684	3500	1266	13932
Portugal	0	1130	263	0	0	577	0	0	1970
Romania	135	415	0	240	0	241	0	670	1701
Slovakia	0	492	0	0	0	202	0	3126	3820
Slovenia	95	175	0	0	0	47	0	0	317
Spain	279	2870	31	161	0	2206	0	0	5547
Sweden	576	3629	759	308	1735	2005	0	0	9012
UK	910	18716	167	753	1204	4193	0	5840	31783
<b>Total</b>	<b>16373</b>	<b>60357</b>	<b>5955</b>	<b>3336</b>	<b>14054</b>	<b>31675</b>	<b>12287</b>	<b>18811</b>	<b>162848</b>

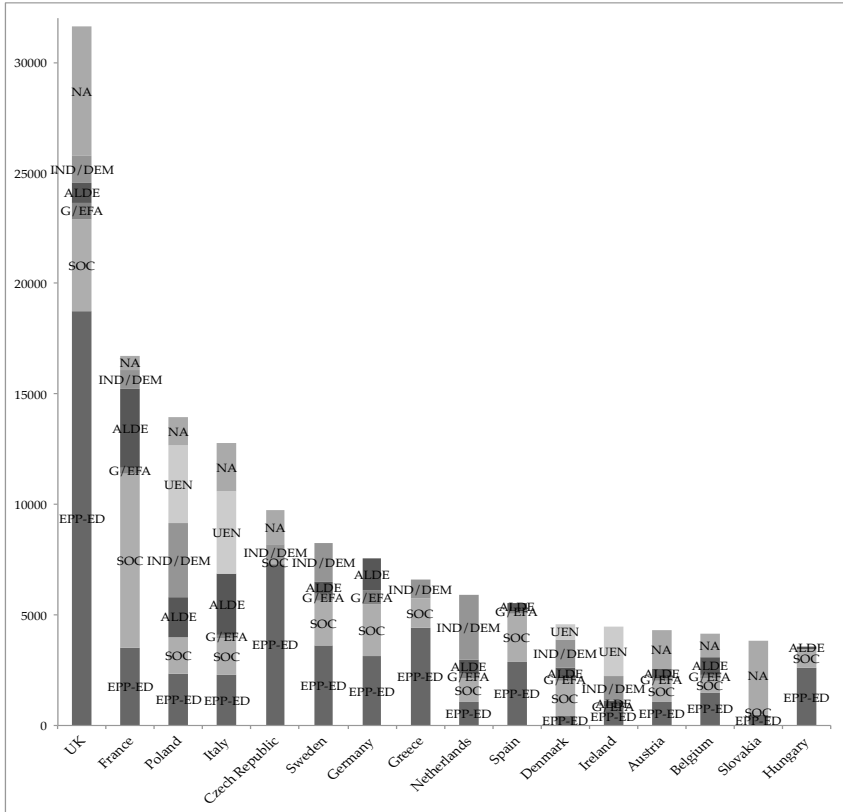
**Source:** author's own compilation.

Clearly, also here the countries that show the highest number of national alignments are the bigger countries that elect more MEPs. UK are, again, the champion of nationality prevailing over EPG: more than 31,000 times in the five years of the 6<sup>th</sup> EP a British MEP has voted in such way. UK's overall number is almost two times the second country, France (roughly 16,000). Then we find Poland, again a quite big member state in terms of EP representation (50 MEPs in the sixth legislature). A striking exception seems to be Czech Republic, a historically euro-sceptic country: despite having only 24 MEPs in the considered time span, the phenomenon of national alignment has happened more than 10,000 times: a value close to – for instance – that of Italy (roughly 13,000), a country that has more than three times the number of MEPs (precisely 78). As for UK, these alignments come from members of the Czech Civic Democratic Party, forming together with the British conservatives the sub-group ED. Germany, on the other hand, despite its large delegation is way beyond these five countries: “only” roughly 8,000 alignments of such.

To see how these trends change by country and by EPG, figure 8 shows graphically, in each country, how many MEPs for each groups form a

national alignment. For simplicity only the first 16 countries are presented<sup>49</sup>.

**Figure 8.** Number of national prevailing by EPG, EP6 (2004-2009)



**Source:** author's own compilation.

This information is not insightful only for the mere point of view of which country has more national-oriented votes, since as noted before this it is dependent on the country delegation size. What can be telling is

<sup>49</sup> Latvia, Portugal, Finland, Romania, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Malta, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Estonia, Slovenia were thus excluded.

to see, within a country, which EPGs are more touched by this phenomenon.

As already shown in the previous table, UK is the champion of nationality prevailing over EPG, as partially recognized by the literature (Hix et al. 2007; Faas 2003); what strikes is that the sole votes cast by EPP-ED members are enough to outnumber the second country, France. This confirms the heterogeneity of UK national delegation in this group: no surprise, for the subsequent legislature (7<sup>th</sup> EP) the EP has reverted to a “pure” People’s Party group, the British MEPs merging with other conservatives in the ECR group, born in 2009. Also many British non-attached members voted in a national prevailing fashion, while the remaining groups (IND/DEM, ALDE, F/EFA) less. Also the British Socialists show a pretty disciplined voting behaviour, considering the size of the delegation. France, on the other hand, has many national prevailing votes primarily due to its Socialist delegation. This is a unique phenomenon in the 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament: in no other country so many Socialist MEPs form national alignments. Poland and Italy show a similar picture: national alignments are almost homogeneously distributed amongst all groups<sup>50</sup>, but the most consistent are the euro-sceptic groups (UEN for Poland, UEN and IND/DEM for Italy). France and Italy, actually, have also a substantial number of ALDE members voting in such way, a characteristic that they share only with another country, Germany. As already discussed before, the Czech EPP-ED delegation that is responsible for most of the national alignments in that country. No surprise, most of MEPs from the Civic Democratic Party later left the People’s Party to join the ECR group in the following European legislature. Greece shows a similar trend, though its EPP-ED members remained in the group after 2009. Spain has these alignments split almost equally between the two main groups. Netherlands and Ireland’s alignment depend mostly on UEN for the former, IND/DEM for the latter. Slovakia, finally, shows a curious pattern: almost all these votes are due to the non-attached members<sup>51</sup>. All the other countries show no peculiar trends.

Figure 9, as opposed to the data presented before, shows the *percentage* of nationality prevailing for each country, calculated over the number

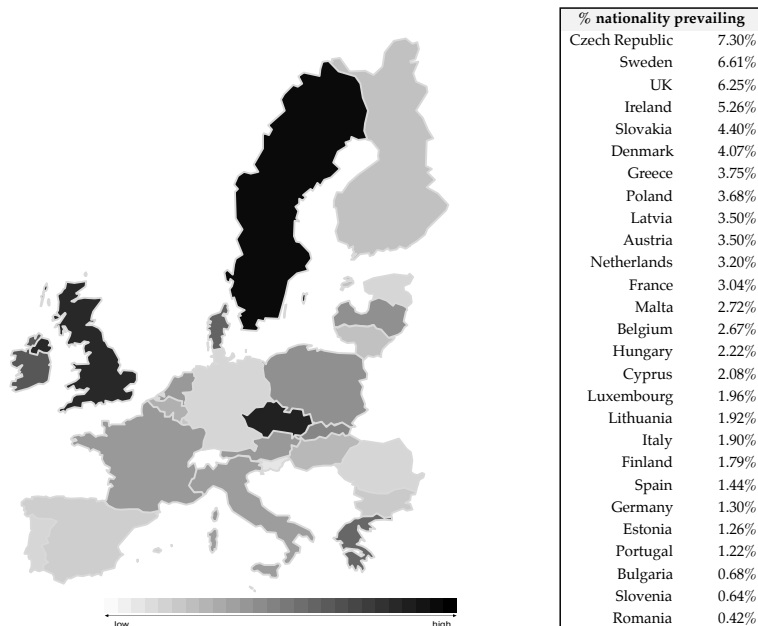
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<sup>50</sup> Except IND/DEM (Italy) and EUL/NGL and G/EFA (Poland), groups for which they elect do not elect any MEP, as shown in table 6.

<sup>51</sup> Considering that Slovakia in 2004 elected only three n/a MEPs and in five years (6,200 roll-call votes) this alignment emerged roughly 3,000 times, these three MEPs voted half of the time in this way. But, as noted extensively, the voting pattern of non-attached members is not particularly significant.

of votes cast (thus controlling for the size), thus representing a sort of map of Europe's national alignments.

**Figure 9.** Map of national prevailing (percentage) by country, EP6 (2004-2009)



**Source:** author's own compilation.

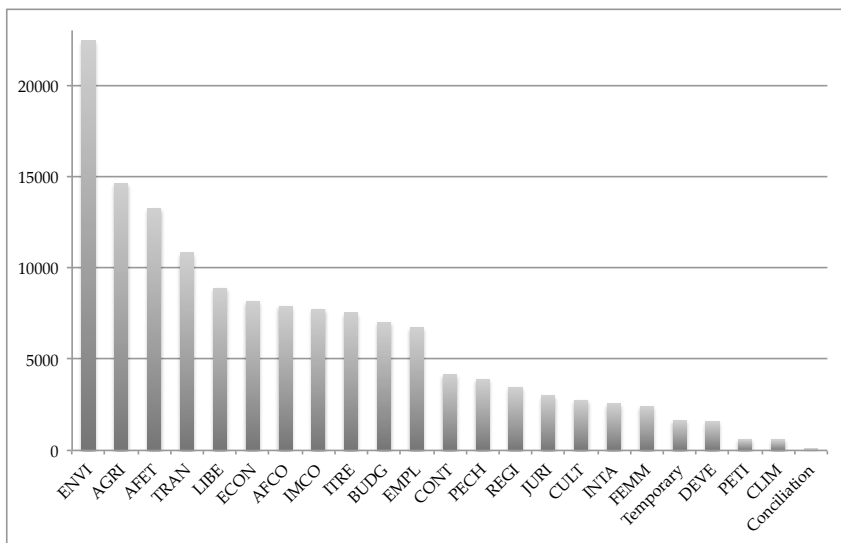
Most of the big states that in absolute terms showed a high number of national alignments score actually quite low in percentage terms (Italy, France, especially Germany). Poland, on the contrary, remains in the higher part of this list (3.7%). UK is not the country with the highest score anymore: Czech Republic and Sweden, two traditionally euro-sceptic countries, have the highest percentages (7.3% and 6.6% respectively). Then, after the UK, Slovakia and Denmark can be found. In general, except for the exploratory meaning of this map, the inference that can be drawn from this list and the previous data is the following: euro-sceptic countries tend to be a higher number of votes



where nationality prevails over EPG group<sup>52</sup>. This is further reinforced by the results of next paragraph's statistic analysis.

Finally, these results are disaggregated according to the committee. Figure 8 shows how many national alignments actually occurred in each of EP6's 25 committees.

**Figure 8.** Number of national prevailing by committee, EP6 (2004-2009)



**Source:** author's own compilation.

As it can be easily seen, the committees where the phenomenon under scrutiny emerges the most are consistent with what has been proved in chapter 4 using MEPs' assistant survey data: nationality-oriented votes correlate with crucial, legislative committees. The five most important committees can be all found in the first nine committees where nationality prevails the most: ENVI, AGRI, AFET, TRAN, LIBE, ECON, AFCO, IMCO, ITRE. The only (relatively) surprising result is the presence of the Foreign Affairs committee in such a high position (third). In fact, other scholars have found interestingly counter-intuitive findings about this committee. For instance, Whitaker (2011) has found

<sup>52</sup> Here, of course, no argument can be made about the question of national interests at stake in the votes, since no information on this issue can be derived from the dataset.

an intuitive correlation between the legislative power of a committee and the probability of MEPs not changing committee: clearly, MEPs seek to work in a committee that counts. However, AFET committee, “despite its legislative weakness, was also associated with comparatively high probability of MEPs remaining on it across half-term” (Whitaker 2011: 49).

In my analysis, the presence on national alignments in AFET can be due to the fact that this committee, despite having almost no real power, is nonetheless perceived as crucial because of the symbolic value of its resolutions. Thus its members often vote in open contrast to the EPG line and forming a national alignment, even though no actual legislative and binding decision is at stake. An example of this possibility is proposed in chapter 7.

## **5.5. Logistic regression: modelling EPG rebellious behaviour**

The goal of the statistical model is twofold. On the one hand, it is to assess if being part of a certain country and of a certain EPG has a statistical influence on the probability that a MEP disregards his/her EPG to vote accordingly to his/her fellow countrymen. Again, the dataset used is the totality of RCVs cast in the 6<sup>th</sup> European Parliament, 2004-2009. My unit of analysis is the single vote; considering that 6,200 RCVs have been cast in the 5-years legislature and multiplying this number for each MEP present at that vote, I have more than 3 million observation (exactly 3,332,882).

### **5.5.1. Variables and expectations**

After having defined loyalty and rebelliousness of each MEP in each vote, the dependent variable is created: a dummy variable called “nationality prevails”. This corresponds to case b2 (as defined in paragraph 5.3), namely those cases when there is a clear contrast between the political group line and the national delegation line and the MEP decides to follow their countrymen, even if this means neglecting the European group line.

The independent variables are created on the basis of the information provided by Hix et al.’s dataset. EPGs are included as a sort of control variables, since it is already well known which groups are cohesive and which are not. The non-attached members are excluded from the regression, following the indication of Kreppel (2013). Nationality is expected to give original results, since except for the generic AI scores that can be calculated via the online platform [www.votewatch.eu](http://www.votewatch.eu) and

presented in various works (Hix et al. 2007 for the first 5 European legislatures; Hix 2009 for the 6<sup>th</sup> EP; Votewatch 2013 report for some crucial votes cast in the current, 7<sup>th</sup> EP) no study has actually analysed with more refined statistical tools which countries are more or less cohesive in terms of nationality prevailing over European party membership. On the other hand, the goal is to assess if also some specific characteristics of the MEP (size of country delegation to the EP, origin from EU15 or the recently eastern-enlarged countries) and of the vote (legislative vote, budget vote, result of the vote, margin, vote in the most important committees) have significant influence.

The expectations about the main independent variables (nationality, EPG membership) have already been discussed. As far as the other variables, firstly I expect “legislative” (dummy variable: 0 = not legislative, 1 = legislative vote) to have a positive effect on the likelihood of the occurrence of a national prevailing: according to my theory, if the vote is not legislative, countries are less likely to have a national interest at stake, thus are more incline to tow the EPG line. “Rule” (dummy variable: 0 = simple majority; 1 = qualified majority) follows the same logic: when the vote is more important, there’s a higher chance that country-based votes emerge. “Budget” (again a dummy variable), considering that “the European Parliament as a whole [is] more cohesive on budgetary issues” (Hix and Noury 2009: 164), is expected to be negatively correlated with the DV: if all EPGs tend to be consensual rather than competitive in these votes, then national alignments are less likely to arise. “Top 5 committees” is a dummy variables coded 1 if the vote is relative to one of the five most important committees pinpointed by MEPs’ assistant in the July 2012 survey: ECON, ITRE, ENVI, IMCO, AGRI. My expectation is that this variable is not only statistically significant, but it also has a substantial effect on the dependent variable<sup>53</sup>. This would represent also a confirmation that the information provided by MEPs’ assistants is reliable. Result (0 = rejected, 1 = approved) is included simply as a control variable. “Margin” is expected to have a negative effect on nationality prevails: the rationale is that the smaller the margin between “Yes” and “No” in a certain vote, the more contested the vote is, and I expect national alignments to be more likely to emerge when

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<sup>53</sup> Actually, the committees in the 6th and 7th European Parliament were not exactly the same: two temporary committees (SURE and CRIS) were dismantled at the beginning of the current legislature, as noted before, and a new committee (CRIM) was established in 2012. But none of these committees was mentioned by MEPs’ assistants as the most important ones, which constitutes the rationale of the variable. Thus, it is not problematic to “retroactively” extend some information drawn from the 7th EP to a statistical analysis performed on RCVs cast in the previous European legislature.

votes are controversial. “Size” is included to control for the fact that bigger member states may be more likely to show a statistical influence on the dependent variable simply because they elect more MEPs.

Finally, a variable called “enlargement” (dummy: 0 = EU15, 1 = eastern countries + Malta, Cyprus) is included to see if the 12 countries that recently joined the EU show different parliamentary behaviour in respect to the EU15 countries. The literature on voting behaviour before and after the eastern enlargement argues, in short, either that these new member states are not yet completely “socialized” to the dynamics of the EP, thus their MEPs are slightly less prone to follow the EPG but this variance is practically negligible (Hix and Noury 2009) or that the enlargement had no effect at all in terms of legislators’ policy preferences and their revealed behaviour (Bressanelli 2012; Costello et al. 2012; McElroy and Benoit 2012). In light of this, I expect this variable to have a consistent effect to these assumptions: either being non significant, or having a slight positive effect.

Two variables are categorical (Euro country, euro group), so they are transformed into dummies with the appropriate STATA command; two are continuous (margin, size); all others are dummy variables. The basic statistics of these variables are presented in the appendix in table a5. Since the dependent variable is a dummy variable, a logistic regression is run. Three different models are tested separately; after running the regression, the margins are further elaborated to have substantially comparable coefficients<sup>54</sup>. Results of the logistic regression are shown in table 14.

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<sup>54</sup> The STATA command used is the following: margins, dyd(\*)

**Table 13.** When nationality prevails, 2004-2009: logistic regression.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3			
				Slovenia	-1.480***	-1.444***
	DV: nationality prevails				(0.0596)	(0.0595)
Italy	.	.	.	Luxembourg	-0.351***	-0.421***
					(0.0401)	(0.0399)
Germany	-0.728***	-0.806***		Finland	-0.264***	-0.389***
	(0.0157)	(0.0153)			(0.0270)	(0.0268)
Sweden	0.932***	0.979***		Estonia	-0.625***	-0.756***
	(0.0162)	(0.0157)			(0.0464)	(0.0463)
Greece	0.546***	0.561***		EPP-ED	.	.
	(0.0169)	(0.0165)			.	.
Portugal	-0.757***	-0.857***		SOC	-0.421***	-0.424***
	(0.0266)	(0.0263)			(0.00774)	(0.00750)
UK	0.719***	0.774***		ALDE	-0.306***	-0.250***
	(0.0128)	(0.0122)			(0.0100)	(0.00950)
France	0.337***	0.235***		UEN	0.256***	0.400***
	(0.0137)	(0.0132)			(0.0131)	(0.0112)
Spain	-0.460***	-0.532***		G/EFA	-1.115***	-1.128***
	(0.0177)	(0.0173)			(0.0190)	(0.0188)
Romania	-1.224***	-1.251***		EUL/NGL	-0.570***	-0.409***
	(0.0338)	(0.0336)			(0.0151)	(0.0147)
Hungary	-0.191***	-0.171***		IND/DEM	0.820***	1.295***
	(0.0206)	(0.0203)			(0.0113)	(0.0108)
Slovakia	-1.232***	-1.157***		Budget	-0.0694***	-0.0687***
	(0.0411)	(0.0409)			(0.0180)	(0.0179)
Belgium	-0.101***	-0.239***		Legislative	0.236***	0.236***
	(0.0220)	(0.0218)			(0.00647)	(0.00644)
Cyprus	-0.236***	-0.307***		Rule	0.0700***	0.0715***
	(0.0413)	(0.0411)			(0.0104)	(0.0104)
Latvia	0.109***	0.274***		Top 5 comr	0.0146**	0.0139**
	(0.0259)	(0.0255)			(0.00645)	(0.00642)
Lithuania	-0.286***	-0.289***		Result	0.00961	0.00754
	(0.0280)	(0.0277)			(0.00601)	(0.00598)
Malta	0.203***	0.146***		Margin	-0.00290***	-0.00287***
	(0.0356)	(0.0354)			(0.0000160)	(0.0000159)
Denmark	0.643***	0.616***		Size		-0.00304***
	(0.0192)	(0.0188)				(0.000101)
Ireland	0.392***	0.659***		Enlargment		-0.352***
	(0.0196)	(0.0194)				(0.00748)
Bulgaria	-1.242***	-1.311***		_cons	-2.328***	-2.499***
	(0.0481)	(0.0479)			(0.0125)	(0.0116)
Netherlands	0.246***	0.215***				(0.00949)
	(0.0173)	(0.0169)		r2		
Poland	-0.0345**	0.223***		chi2	96177.7	79868.2
	(0.0144)	(0.0140)		F		64980.6
Czech Rep.	0.739***	0.795***		N	3207960	3207960
	(0.0160)	(0.0154)				3206924
Austria	-0.123***	-0.250***				
	(0.0239)	(0.0236)				

Standard errors in parentheses

\* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

**Source:** author's own compilation.

Model 1 is the complete regression with all the independent variables, excluding “Size” and “Enlargement” that showed collinearity problems with the country dummies. Model 2 excludes the EPG dummies, while model 3 excludes the country dummies and includes the aforementioned two country-related variables. The three models show little difference both in terms of substantial effect of coefficients and of statistical significance. Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> of model 1 is, as expected, the highest of the three models.

### 5.5.2. Results discussion

First of all, it can be noted that, as expected, all EPGs are statistically significant at 99% confidence interval, and their substantial effects are consistent to the generally acknowledged cohesion of the groups: the two euro-sceptic groups have positive coefficients (which means that being part of these groups increases the likelihood of a national prevailing), while the others have positive coefficients.

Secondly, country dummies show in the majority of cases negative coefficients, which means that a certain member state’s MEPs are less incline to vote together with their countrymen at the expenses of their EPG. But for some countries the coefficients are positive: from the highest to the lowest coefficients, Sweden, Czech Republic, UK, Denmark, and to a smaller degree Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, Malta. These results are consistent with the common perception of euro-scepticism in EU countries, as shown extensively by Eurobarometer surveys. This is a surprising and interesting result, that confirms what the basic descriptive statistics of previous paragraph anticipated; however, it was unexpected in terms of the hypotheses associated to my theory: more euro-sceptical countries are more likely to show national alignments. This result actually contributes to fill a gap in the current literature that, as explained beforehand, usually looks at AI scores, incurring in methodological problems<sup>55</sup>. For instance, Hix et al. have simply recognized this conundrum – incidentally, in a footnote – without deepening the analysis: “Interestingly, one of the most

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<sup>55</sup> For instance and as discussed in chapter 3, if a small country elects MEPs that sit in only two politically close EPGs, its national AI is certainly over-estimated. On the contrary, a big member state like the UK for the 2004-2009 legislature elected members for all groups (except one, UEN) and in addition to that its members sitting in the EPP/ED group belong to different national parties and political families, leading to different behaviour. So, AI calculated by nationality in this case would be lower than the one of the aforementioned small state: but this does not certainly mean that in the UK national-based votes are less frequent.

‘Euro-sceptic’ member-states, the United Kingdom, has the lowest level of nation-based voting among its MEPs” (Hix and Noury 2009: 173). This is because their analysis was based on AI scores: but if we look at national alignments, UK’s position gets completely reversed. UK, from a country with low nation-based cohesion (Hix and Noury 2009) becomes one of the countries with the highest number of national alignments (current analysis). However, it has to be noted that this alternative approach to analyse voting behaviour is not free from flaws, besides – obviously – hiding variation among individual votes by aggregating. Specifically, already whenever only 51% of the MEPs from a given party group or national delegation vote together, the vote is classified as a party group vote or a national vote; this actually disregards a lot of the variation that the Agreement Index does capture. However, it represents at least an alternative approach that, complementarily with the use of the classical indexes, may shed light on meaningful dynamics such as the one presented above, regarding British MEPs’ voting behaviour.

Thirdly, the analysis of the other variables shows noteworthy results. “Budget”, in line with my expectations, is statistically significant but with negative coefficients, which means that a national prevailing is less likely to arise when there is a budgetary vote (even if with a substantively small effect). “Legislative”, again as expected, is statistically significant, positively correlated with the dependent variable and has a consistent substantial effect: when the vote is legislative there’s a substantially greater likelihood that an MEP votes according to his/her national colleagues and against the line of his/her EPG. This confirms my theory according to which it’s in the most important votes that such deviant behaviours are more likely to emerge. “Rule” and “Top 5 committees” display statistical significance with positive coefficient; the former at a 99% confidence interval, the latter at 95%. This is consistent to our expectations, even though the substantial effect of the variable that controls for the five main committees and its statistical significance is actually smaller than expected. The reason is the inclusion in the five main committees of ECON. This committee, as discussed in chapter 4, showed an actual higher cohesion by group than by country: thus, it contributes to keep the estimates for “Top 5 committees” low. “Result” is unsurprisingly non-significant, not even in the 10% confidence interval: rather, a statistical significance would have been difficult to explain. In fact, national alignments are not expected to emerge more likely to when the motion or legislation under scrutiny gets approved instead of

rejected. In some cases countries act unite to block them, in others to support them. It depends if the object of the vote endangers or benefits a national interest.<sup>56</sup>

The last three variables are all statistically significant at 99% confidence interval and negatively correlated with my dependent variable. "Margin" is consistent with my expectations: the bigger the margin between "Yes" and "No" votes, the less the probability of MEPs voting against their EPGs and together with their homeland colleagues. In other words, if the margin is thin, the vote is more likely to entail controversial issues. And if a vote is controversial, votes that follow national majorities instead of EPG lines are more likely to emerge. The substantially small coefficient are unsurprising since, as shown in table 6, this variable has a much different range of values in respect to all the other dummy variables. "Size", included as a control variable, has a surprising negative effect: the envisaged concern was that bigger countries could be positively biased towards the dependent variable since, the more MEPs elected, the higher the chance of voting in that way. But actually, it is being part of countries with a smaller parliamentary delegation that makes it more likely to vote together with the country line and against the party line. Finally, the last variable, "enlargement", has also a counter-intuitive effect that partially disconfirms the current literature on eastern Europe countries' voting behaviour: MEPs coming from countries that just joined the EU are actually less likely to vote along national lines and against EPG lines.

However, it is still unclear if this depends entirely on the greater reliability of my original approach (looking at actual contrasts between country and EPG lines instead of the classical AI scores calculated by country) or, as Hix et al. state when looking at the first two years of the 6<sup>th</sup> EP (2004-2006): "[there is] a tendency among MEPs from the new member-states from Central and Eastern Europe to vote slightly more along national lines than do the MEPs from the original 15 member-states. [But] party cohesion may be lower in the first few months of any European Parliament, while the MEPs gradually sort themselves into political groups and decide how to behave in relation to their political-group whips and leaders. By the end of the Sixth Parliament, the effect of the initial learning period on the average measures of cohesion

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<sup>56</sup> This is comforting, especially considering that when the number of observation is so high (more than three million) and the regression type is logistic, variables "tend" to be statistically significant.



should be smaller" (Hix and Noury 2009: 172-173). Not only it became smaller: it actually overcame old member states' MEPs.

## 5.6. Conclusions

The previous empirical chapters have shown that, despite being generally cohesive, party groups show recurrent and strong deviations, and that these exceptions have different patterns in EP's main committees. The suggestion, based on the theoretical framework previously defined, indicates that national affiliation may be a stronger determinant of vote than how it is generally depicted in the literature, albeit hidden in the myriad of votes cast in each voting session. Here, we have turned the attention to the actual cases when MEPs decide to vote together with their fellow countrymen, despite this implies an open contrast with the plurality of the group they belong to.

After having operationalized the concept of "national alignment", I have firstly performed a simple statistical description of these alignments for the sixth European Parliament, finding firstly (and trivially) that the two euro-sceptic groups are, as expected, the party groups where MEPs are more likely to disregard the party line in order to pursue a national line. Among the bigger, generally pro-EU group, however, the findings for Socialists and People's party diverge substantially, partially because to the ideological heterogeneity of the latter group in the sixth EP due to the presence of the ED conservatives. Secondly, I found that countries with a tradition of euro-scepticism generally are more likely to show these alignments. However bigger countries, electing MEPs that belong to more EPGs do not present – contrarily to what one may think – a higher share of these alignments. UK, in my analysis, is the "champion" of national alignments, whereas the classic literature relying on AI as the only index of voting behaviour had failed to identify this behaviour (Hix and Noury 2009). Thirdly, my results show that these alignments tend to be concentrated in the more important, legislative committees, corroborating what I argued in chapter 4, especially for the AGRI committee. However AFET committee, in contrast to my expectations but consistently to part of the literature (Whitaker 2011), shows surprising results.

Then, I performed a simple logistic regression to establish if a series of variables have a positive influence on the likelihood of national alignments emerging in the vote. In this regards, national alignments are more likely if: the vote is cast in one of the main five committees pinpointed by MEPs' assistant survey; the vote is legislative (thus, more important); the margin between "Yes" and "No" is thinner, expectedly indicating a more controversial issues where there is no

“grand coalition” between the bigger groups; the vote is *not* budgetary issue. Finally, this regression proved that these alignments are not more likely to emerge in bigger country delegation, or in countries belonging to the recent eastwards enlargement, partially disconfirming the already florid literature that argues that eastern MEPs’ behaviour is substantially equivalent to those of the old member states (Hix and Noury 2009; Costello et al. 2012; McElroy and Benoit 2012; Bressanelli 2012).

Clearly, this does not imply that national affiliation is generally a stronger determinant of vote than party group membership: however, these findings show that this may be true in a minority of cases in which member states have so much at stake as to mobilize a national vote.

## Chapter 6

### From survey to votes: a comparison between MEPs' preferences and behaviour

*"In casting apparently partisan votes, do individual legislators vote with fellow party members 'in spite of their disagreement' about the policy in question, or do they vote with fellow party members 'because of their agreement' about the policy in question?"*

(Krehbiel 1993: 238)

#### 6.1. Introduction

The model presented in this chapter is structured as follows. First, I have developed an original dataset of virtual votes based on survey data – i.e. expressed preferences – and compared the results with real votes (RCVs) in the same time span. In this way it is possible to see the extent to which these two dimensions coincide, or diverge. Then an additional comparison is made between cohesion of these “survey-based votes” calculated by party group and by member state: this sheds light on how political preferences and national affiliation, not mediated by (weak?) party discipline, exert an effect on MEPs' behaviour. Many scholars used approaches that involve combinations of policy preferences and voting behaviour to investigate the dynamics of legislative assemblies such as the European Parliament (among others Thomassen et al. 2004, Bressanelli 2012). However, the specific rationale behind this model, namely the idea of comparing directly MEPs' survey preferences and their revealed behaviour, comes from Gabel et al. (2008). But while these scholars used survey data to build a visual representation of MEPs' preferences, the original idea of this study is to transform survey answers into a sort of “virtual votes” and use the same Agreement Index<sup>57</sup> to compare RCVs and virtual votes. In this way it is possible to test through voting cohesiveness if the national

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<sup>57</sup> For a complete definition of the Agreement Index (AI) and the explanation of how it is calculated see chapter 3.

element is a weak predictor of “vote”, even though this vote is dependent upon exogenous preferences and not mediated by party discipline.

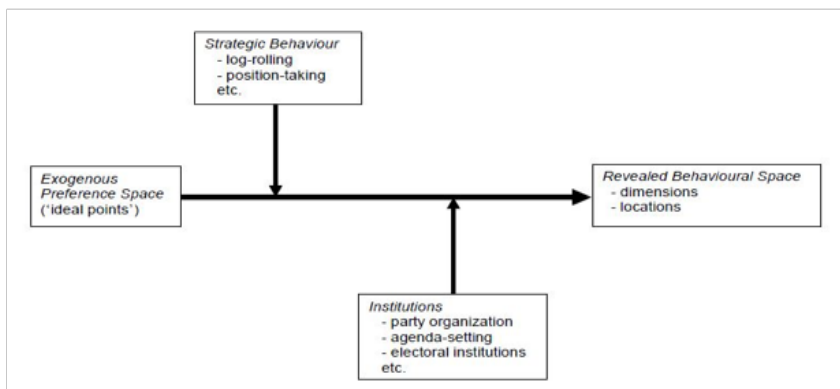
## 6.2. Theoretical approach

Voting in parliaments is one of the crucial activities of the democratic process. Votes in parliament determine legislative outcomes, and how members of a parliament vote is also relevant to normative and positive concerns about representation, as we have discussed in chapter 2. “On the normative side, legislative behaviour is central to representation and accountability in democracies. Legislative behaviour is one of the most prominent activities of elected representatives” (Gabel et al. 2004: 8).

For these reason, parties often attempt to organize and influence legislative behaviour, and there are strong theoretical reasons to believe that legislative institutions at large (and especially political parties) have a powerful influence on legislative outcomes by shaping how legislators’ personal preferences over policies translate into revealed legislative behaviour and, ultimately, policy outcomes. For example, as division-of-labour organisations, legislative parties reduce information and transactions costs for individual legislators, but also constrain the choices of “backbench” members by restricting the legislative agenda (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). Yet, estimating the impact of legislative parties on legislative behaviour is not a simple task. For instance, Krehbiel (1993) points out that if one observes that the members of a party vote in a cohesive way, one does not know whether this is because the party has enforced disciplined voting or because the party members share the same preferences on the issue of the vote (Gabel et al. 2004: 2).

To sum up, the exogenous preferences of each legislator (in our case, Members of the European Parliament) appear shaped by both strategic and institutional factors (primarily, party discipline) as they define legislators’ voting behaviour, as shown in figure 9. As discussed in chapter 2, the predominance of MEPs’ (homogenous) preferences or party discipline in shaping the outcome of the vote is still unclear.

**Figure 10.** MEPs' preference and behaviour in the legislative process.



**Source:** Gabel and Hix (2007).

Existing research, as extensively discussed, has found that parties in the European Parliament have become increasingly cohesive in their recorded voting behaviour. In terms of explaining the source of this cohesion, though, scholars disagree, offering several explanations: e.g., the strategic behaviour of national parties, growing preference homogeneity within the parties, and the control of the European parties over the legislative agenda of the European Parliament (especially Hix 2002; Hix et al. 2007)<sup>58</sup>. However, two main explanatory factors can be pinpointed: either policy preference homogeneity (Hix and Lord 1997, Kreppel 2002) or party discipline enforcement (Noury et al. 2002, Hix et al. 2007, 2009).

All of these studies, on the other hand, lacked observations on the relevant counterfactual for testing their explanations for the observed cohesion: i.e., they could not observe how the individual MEPs would have voted in the absence of national party and European party influence (Gabel and Hix 2007: 3). This is exactly what is sought in this chapter: isolating MEPs' ideal voting behaviour by looking at preferences allows to look at a sort of "virtual voting behaviour" free of institutional and strategic constraints from both MEPs' principals.

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<sup>58</sup> For an extensive dissertation of the literature on intra-party cohesion in the European Parliament see chapter 2.

### 6.3. Hypotheses verification

First of all, as a note of caution it is necessary to underline how the model presented in this chapter does not have the presumption to explain actual voting behaviour in RCVs. Rather, the intention is to show that preferences and behaviour, disaggregated and analysed by EPG membership and national affiliation, contribute to give additional insights on how these two elements are intertwined. In particular, different arguments may be elaborated in case MEPs show a substantially different behaviour in virtual votes and actual votes: one could argue that MEPs would be less cohesive if they could vote according to their preferences, but party discipline forces them to vote accordingly to the party line; or, that MEPs' discrepancy between these two votes actually emerges in non-RCVs, where EPGs have no mean of controlling their revealed behaviour. Both arguments assume that a "whip effect" exists in the EP. In any case, a substantial difference in these votes would mean, for sure, that EPGs' policy preference is not that homogenous.

The hypotheses, formulated in chapter 2, that are tested through this model are H4 and H6 and their related sub-hypotheses, formulated in chapter 2 as follows:

*H4: MEPs tend to vote differently if the vote is secret or a public RCV*

*H4a: national affiliation is a stronger determinant of votes in non-RCVs than in RCVs*

*H4b: conversely, EPGs are less cohesive in non-RCVs*

*H6: MEPs' nationality influences how he/she deals with classical political issues that refer to the L/R cleavage*

*H6a: Major social, economic, cultural or regulatory differences of MEPs' opinion may determine deviations from party group line*

### 6.4. Methodology

In order to build the dataset of "virtual votes" the data from the 2006 and 2010 EPRG MEPs' survey, led by Farrell et al., are used<sup>59</sup>. The choice of two dataset is justified by the opportunity to confront two different, yet recent, European Parliament (sixth and seventh), as it is done in chapter 3. This allows us to test if the findings for EP6 are confirmed in the subsequent EP7, or differences arise. Question 6.4

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<sup>59</sup> Further information on these surveys can be found in chapter 4.

(formulated in the exact same way for both 2006 and 2010 survey) is chosen, as it captures MEPs' attitudes towards different issues that can help position the legislator's preferences on a variety of topics that cover economic matters, social welfare and taxes, crime, immigration and women's rights. The question was presented as follows:

"To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"

Then, the following eight statements are proposed:

1. Greater effort should be made to reduce inequality of income.
2. Tougher action should be taken against criminals.
3. Government should play a greater role in managing the economy.
4. Current welfare spending should be maintained, even if it means raising taxes.
5. The use of marijuana should be decriminalised.
6. It is more important to reduce inflation than to reduce unemployment.
7. There should be fewer restrictions on immigration.
8. Women should be free to decide for themselves on abortion.

For each statement, the respondent is asked to give a grade, using the classical 5-point-scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree). All the answers to this question then are transformed into "virtual" votes, as if there have been a bill proposing the content of the statement, for which each MEP can vote yes, no or abstain according to his preferences. To create this fictional dataset of votes the following rule is used: if a MEP agrees with the statement (either strongly or not), a *Yea* vote is input; if he/she neither agrees nor disagrees, an *Abstention* vote is input; if he/she disagrees or strongly disagrees, a *Nay* vote is input. However, as none of the statements of question 6.4 covers issues related to European Integration, another question from the survey is included. The question added to the dataset is question 6.5 (again, formulated in the exact same way for both 2006 and 2010 survey):

"Where would you place yourself on the question of the European Integration?"

In this case, the answer option in the EPRG survey was operationalized differently in 2006 and 2010. In 2006 it was a 10-point-scale, ranging from 1 (European Integration has gone too far) to 10 (the EU should

become a federal state immediately). In 2010, however, it was recoded as a 11-point-scale, ranging from 0 (European Integration has gone too far) to 10 (the EU should become a federal state immediately). The answers to this question are transformed into virtual votes as follows: for 2006 data, the four values from 1 to 4 are considered *Nay* votes (towards further European Integration); values 5 and 6 are considered an *Abstention* vote; finally, the four values from 7 to 10 are considered *Yea* votes. For 2010, values from 0 to 4 are considered *Nay* votes (towards further European Integration); value 5 is considered an *Abstention* vote; finally, values from 6 to 10 are considered *Yea* votes<sup>60</sup>. For each participating MEP I have created nine virtual votes, one for each issue. Virtually, for 2006 it represents a dataset of 270 MEPs voting nine times on different issues, resulting in 2430 “virtual votes”; for 2010, a dataset of 270 MEPs voting nine times, resulting in 2448 votes.

Before proceeding, a further methodological clarification is needed. Since one of the main problems of looking solely at RCVs is the fact that this sample is non-representative, and one may argue that the proposed method does not produce substantial quantitative improvements over the selection bias problem. This may be true, however, with a crucial qualitative difference. If the problem of RCVs is that there is a correlation between the type of vote and party cohesiveness (because RCVs are requested for reasons that are correlated to this aspect, thus leading to selection bias), this does not hold when it comes to survey data. In other words, one can expect MEPs to shift from their ideal vote in order to comply with party line; but there is no such correlation when a MEP is expressing his/her opinion in an anonymous survey. The original dataset is incomplete, but it does not suffer from endogeneity problems.

Then, I have applied the Agreement Index to the new “virtual votes” and compared it to the results available in the literature. In particular, as stated in the introduction I have conducted two kinds of comparison:

- a. Survey-based EPG cohesion compared to survey-based cohesion by national affiliation;
- b. RCV- based EPG cohesion compared to survey-based EPG cohesion.

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<sup>60</sup> Since this is a symmetric scale with a easily acknowledgeable “centre”, the fact that for 2010 only one possible answer (5) is recoded as an abstention while five possible options (0-1-2-3-4 and 6-7-8-9-10) are recoded as *yea/nay* should not represent a methodological problem *vis-à-vis* the fact that, for 2006, two possible options (5-6) are recoded as abstentions, while four possible options (1-2-3-4 and 7-8-9-10) are recoded as *yea/nay*.



Since the dataset was built from the 2006 and 2010 surveys that investigated the current, seventh EP legislature elected in 2009 and the previous one, elected in 2004 and dismantled in 2009, the RCVs used in these cases are the corresponding ones. Thus, for the 2006 survey-to-votes, all the RCVs cast in the sixth European legislature (EP6) are considered, roughly 6200 votes. For the 2010 survey-to-votes, all the cast in the first four years of the subsequent European legislature (2009-2013) are considered, roughly 4000 votes<sup>61</sup>.

First, I have compared the degree of absolute cohesion by groups, for both RCVs and survey-based data. It would not be reasonable to expect cohesion “by preference” to match exactly cohesion “by RCVs”, given the direct impact of the aforementioned other factors (strategic voting and party discipline, for how weak it can be, above all); however, since EPGs are considered by part of the literature, as stated before, politically homogenous entities, this variation should not be substantial.

Second, I have calculated the degree of cohesion in these survey-to-votes by national affiliation and compared it to those of EPGs. If, as the mainstream literature states, the ideological dimension of the EP is more relevant than the national affiliation of MEPs, I should expect this index to be higher for the grouping by EPG than by nationality. It is worth stressing again that here *preferences* are under discussion, while the aforementioned scholars refer to actual voting. However, the same authors and other scholars also claim that the EP is much more a political-oriented than a national-oriented environment. In this respect, if preferences by EPG are compared to preferences by nationality, the former should be expected to play a more important role, because respondents of from the same country come from different parties (and often opposed on the left/right continuum), with the only element in common of sharing the same country of origin.

## 6.5. Results discussion

To sum up, according to the mainstream literature EPGs are cohesive group; this cohesion is expected to be either a primary consequence of common preferences while slightly strengthened by weak party discipline (Kreppel 2002), or a main consequence of high party discipline that “whips” members of the groups (Npury et al. 2002; Hix

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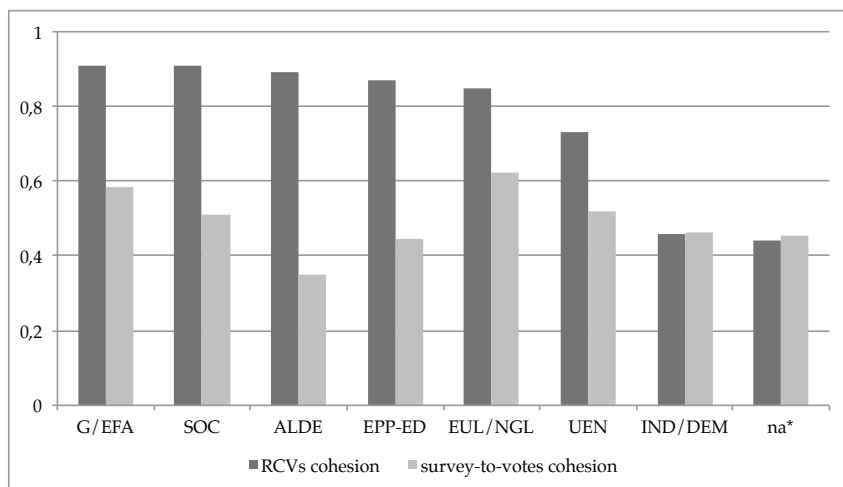
<sup>61</sup> Here, the fact that the RCVs on which the analysis is based is composed of a different number of votes cannot result a bias, since the AI used in this chapter is calculated as the mean of the votes cast.

et al 2003a, 2005, 2006, 2007). In any case, even in these “virtual votes” relying only on legislators’ preferences, party groups should not be too divided. It is worth noting, again, that the results from this original dataset do not necessarily give straightforward information of how MEPs vote in non-RCVs. In other words, these results do not have the ambition to represent a proxy of the universe of all the non-public and recorded votes cast in the EP.

### 6.5.1. Comparing roll-call votes to survey data

Nevertheless, the degree of variation between these two dataset shows surprising results<sup>62</sup>, as shown in figure 10, table 15 and table 16 (2006 survey and EP6) and figure 11, table 17 and table 18 (2010 survey and EP7).

**Figure 11.** Histogram of the comparison between AI cohesion scores of RCVs (EP6, 2004-2009) and virtual votes obtained transforming survey data (2006 MEPs’ survey).



**Source:** author’s own compilation.

Regarding the sixth European legislature, party groups would appear much less cohesive, if their members were to vote according to the

<sup>62</sup> The asterisk marks those groups with few observations (<10). For the 2006 survey, only the non-attached members.

preferences revealed in the survey (figure 10). The only exceptions appear to be the non-attached MEPs and the group Europe of Independence/Democracy, for which the two scores match almost perfectly. In fact, for this latter group, roll-call cohesion is actually marginally lower than survey-to-votes cohesion (-0.1). In particular, the analysis of the three larger groups (EPP-ED, Socialists and Liberals) reveals that the scores of the Liberals are those that differ the most. This may be a consequence of Liberals' higher ideological heterogeneity, due to its composition of two different transnational parties. People's party and European democrats, by contrast, are less divided (despite the presence of the British Conservatives), and the Socialist MEPs display more similar individual preferences if compared to the other two main groups. Conversely, more left-wing groups (Greens and Nordic left) and the conservative group of Union for Europe of Nations are the party groups that show a closer preference cohesion to actual, revealed, voting behaviour. Table 15 shows these differences.

**Table 14.** AI cohesion: RCVs, virtual votes and difference (EP6, 2006 MEPs' survey).

	RCVs cohesion	survey-to-votes cohesion	Difference
ALDE	0.89	0.35	0.54
EPP-ED	0.87	0.44	0.43
SOC	0.91	0.51	0.40
G/EFA	0.91	0.58	0.33
EUL/NGL	0.85	0.62	0.23
UEN	0.73	0.52	0.21
IND/DEM	0.46	0.46	0.00
na*	0.44	0.45	-0.01

**Source:** author's own compilation.

EPGs are ordered from the one that shows the greatest discrepancy between RCVs cohesion and survey-based cohesion (ALDE) to that that actually has a negative variance, the non-attached members, (for which, though, we have less interest in explaining their behaviour since they do not represent a coherent party group pursuing specific policy goals). Surprisingly, the order vaguely remembers (at least for the five bigger, generally pro-EU groups) the position of EPGs in a left-right continuum. Non-attached members, euro-sceptics and conservatives do not follow this trend. Liberals and people's party members show a higher variation; according to this model; vice-versa, left-wing EPGs show preferences closer to their actual voting behaviour. These groups would still be less cohesive, but by a smaller margin (Socialists, G/EFA and EUL/NGL).

Table 16 shows the disaggregated AI scores for each question of the survey: in this way it is possible to pinpoint on which specific issue the groups appear less internally coherent, and if these results are consistent with their political composition.

**Table 15.** Party group AI cohesion scores, disaggregated for each question of the survey converted into votes (2006 MEPs' survey)

	Income	Crime	Ec. Gov.	Welfare	Drugs	Unempl.	Immigr.	Abort.	Pro-EU	Mean
ALDE	0.43	0.21	0.46	0.07	0.07	0.21	0.23	0.72	0.76	<b>0.35</b>
EPP-ED	0.18	0.88	0.52	0.50	0.69	0.21	0.50	0.26	0.24	<b>0.44</b>
G/EFA	0.73	0.25	0.32	0.73	0.45	0.45	1.00	1.00	0.32	<b>0.58</b>
EUL/NGL	1.00	0.18	0.86	0.73	0.05	0.86	0.59	1.00	0.32	<b>0.62</b>
IND/DEM	0.36	0.57	0.36	0.14	0.79	0.25	0.57	0.36	0.79	<b>0.46</b>
SOC	0.92	0.45	0.42	0.58	0.08	0.56	0.26	0.95	0.36	<b>0.51</b>
UEN	0.33	0.83	0.17	0.17	1.00	0.33	0.83	0.50	0.50	<b>0.52</b>
na*	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.25	0.75	0.10	0.75	0.25	0.50	<b>0.46</b>
									All EPGs	<b>0.49</b>

**Source:** author's own compilation.

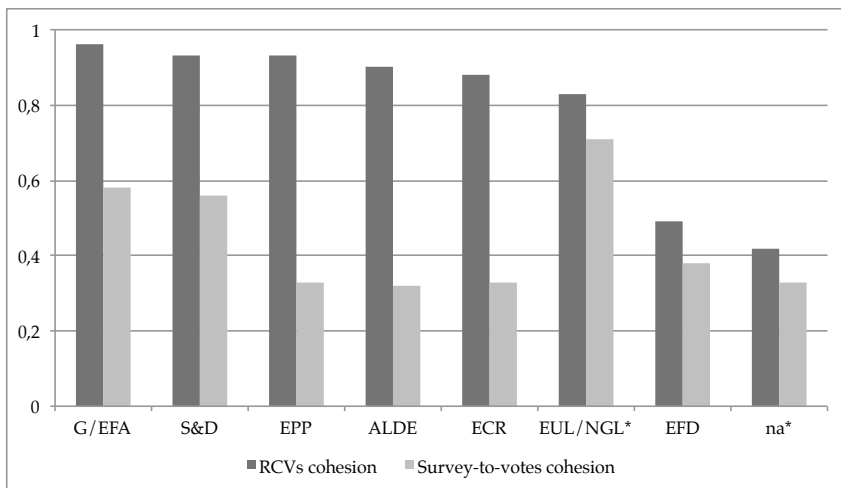
Firstly, the question “how much the State should regulate the economy”, and if “welfare spending should be maintained even if by means of raising taxes” show a clearly divided Liberal party group. Its values denote very high internal division: 0.07. Low cohesiveness can be found also regarding crime, unemployment and immigration. On the pro-EU question, however, they are internally cohesive (0.76), consistently to their traditional position of further European integration (especially on economic matters) as a mean to pursue neoliberal economics. EPP-ED, on the other hand, is mostly divided on the first question (“reduce inequality of incomes”), unemployment, abortion and pro-EU. This may be consequence, again, of the presence of the British, more euro-sceptical conservative MEPs. The Socialists are highly divided on the drugs question and, surprisingly, about immigration and EU integration<sup>63</sup>. But, consistently to their social-democratic tradition, are cohesive on the first question about a possible redistribution of wealth to reduce inequalities, even it this means raising taxes. Without going into details for the other groups, an interesting distribution of results of the aforementioned question can be highlighted. Again, this question seem to show a clear divide: left-wing parties (SOC, EUL/NGL, G/EFA) united in reducing inequalities

<sup>63</sup> Such result is surprising, considering the generally pro-further integration positions of this party group.

(respectively 0.92, 0.73 and 1.00) while centre, conservative and right-wing parties are more divided.

Moving on to analyse the results for the following, seventh European legislature RCVs compared to 2010 MEPs' survey, the general picture does not change substantially, as it can be seen in figure 11.

**Figure 12.** Histogram of the comparison between AI cohesion scores of RCVs (EP7, 2009-2013) and virtual votes obtained transforming survey data (2010 MEPs' survey).



**Source:** author's own compilation.

Non-attached and euro-sceptics remain the less discrepant groups in terms of preferences and behaviour; Liberals, People's party and the European conservatives and reformists, finally "free" from their problematic co-existence with the People's party, are the groups that show the highest difference. EUL/NGL actually increase their congruence between preferences and behaviour; greens and socialists roughly maintain the same result of 2006/sixth EP. Table 15 shows these differences, again with party groups ordered from the most preference/behaviour homogenous to the least.

**Table 16.** AI cohesion: RCVs, virtual votes and difference (EP7, 2010 MEPs' survey).

	RCVs cohesion	Survey-to-votes cohesion	Difference
EPP	0.93	0.33	0.60
ALDE	0.90	0.32	0.58
ECR	0.88	0.33	0.55
G/EFA	0.96	0.58	0.38
S&D	0.93	0.56	0.37
EUL/NGL*	0.83	0.71	0.12
EFD	0.49	0.38	0.11
na*	0.42	0.33	0.09

**Source:** author's own compilation.

Here, the resemblance of this ordering to the right-to-left political spectrum is even more evident (still, excluding the euro-sceptic EFD group). People's party, liberals and conservatives show farther preferences from their behaviour (between 0.60 and 0.55); Vice-versa, left-wing EPGs show closer preferences: these groups would still be less cohesive, but by a smaller margin (G/EFA and S&D: 0.38 and 0.37, respectively) or by a practically negligible margin (EUL/NGL: 0.12). Table 16 shows the disaggregated AI scores for each question of the survey.

**Table 17.** Party group AI cohesion scores, disaggregated for each question of the survey converted into votes (2010 MEPs' survey)

	Income	Crime	Ec. Gov.	Welfare	Drugs	Unempl.	Immigr.	Abort.	Pro-EU	Mean
ALDE	0.22	0.56	0.10	0.10	0.19	0.04	0.10	0.76	0.88	<b>0.32</b>
ECR	0.14	0.79	0.14	0.36	0.57	0.14	0.57	0.14	0.14	<b>0.33</b>
EFD	0.10	1.00	0.10	0.10	0.40	0.25	0.83	0.10	0.50	<b>0.38</b>
EPP	0.23	0.64	0.03	0.06	0.64	0.16	0.16	0.14	0.90	<b>0.33</b>
G/EFA	0.89	0.14	0.46	0.68	0.36	0.46	0.57	0.79	0.88	<b>0.58</b>
EUL/NGL*	1.00	0.25	1.00	1.00	0.63	1.00	0.25	1.00	0.25	<b>0.71</b>
S&D	0.84	0.28	0.53	0.72	0.16	0.63	0.22	0.81	0.87	<b>0.56</b>
na*	0.10	0.40	0.10	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	<b>0.33</b>
									All EPGs	<b>0.44</b>

**Source:** author's own compilation.

The results do not change substantially. The first question still provides a clear definition between "right-wing" ALDE, EFD, ECR and EPP showing high division (values comprises between 0.10 and 0.23) and "left-wing" S&D, greens and EUL/NGL showing low division (0.84,

0.89 and even 1.00, complete cohesion, for EUL/NGL members<sup>64</sup>). Groups tend to be divided/cohesive on the same issues of the previous time span. A noticeable difference that is worth noting, though, is behaviour of EPP and S&D on the pro-EU question. Both groups substantially increased their score (from 0.36 to 0.87 and from 0.24 to 0.90, respectively); if for the People's party this can be explained by the absence of the British conservatives, traditionally more euro-sceptics, for the S&D group there is no clear-cut explanation<sup>65</sup>.

Surprisingly, my findings suggest that despite being part of the same parliamentary group, MEPs from different member states show different attitudes towards these issues (as defined by their preferences). If they were to vote according to these preferences they would be members of strongly divided groups.

### **6.5.2. Comparing survey-to-votes by party group and nationality**

Now, the attention is turned to the calculation of this survey-to-votes cohesion by member states, instead of EPGs. One should expect this cohesion index calculated by national affiliation to be on average lower than the one calculated by EPG: not only there is a lack of a "whip" (whether weak or strong), these MEPs also come from different (often opposed on the left-right spectrum) political groups. The only element they have in common is their national affiliation. However, the data presented in Table 17 show some noticeable results<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> This value should be taken cautiously, though, because in the 2010 survey only a few MEPs from this party group replied to the questionnaire (ten, coming from – at least – six different countries: France, Sweden, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany and Cyprus), as it can be seen in table a2 of the appendix. Still, even focusing only on the bigger groups with a substantive number of observations the results are quite straightforward: left groups less discrepant, centre-right groups more discrepant.

<sup>65</sup> It is also worth remembering that these questions were formulated in 2006 and 2010 using two different scales (10-point and 11-point), thus leading to a different formula for recoding them into virtual votes.

<sup>66</sup> The asterisk marks those states for which there are few observations available (<10): the double asterisk those with too few observations available (<5), so they were treated as missing values.

**Table 18.** AI cohesiveness scores by member state, survey-to-votes (2006 MEPs' survey)

	Income	Crime	Ec. Gov.	Welfare	Drugs	Unempl.	Immigr.	Abort.	Pro-EU	Mean
Austria*	0.40	1.00	0.40	0.40	1.00	0.10	0.63	0.40	0.40	<b>0.53</b>
Belgium	0.83	0.83	0.33	0.06	0.83	0.44	0.25	0.57	0.50	<b>0.52</b>
Cyprus**										
Czech Rep.	0.33	0.83	0.33	0.33	0.17	0.50	0.33	0.83	0.00	<b>0.41</b>
Denmark	0.40	0.40	0.25	0.40	0.40	0.70	0.10	1.00	0.40	<b>0.45</b>
Estonia**										
Finland	0.40	0.10	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.70	1.00	0.70	<b>0.50</b>
France	0.84	0.25	0.53	0.45	0.29	0.61	0.17	1.00	0.53	<b>0.52</b>
Germany	0.08	0.6	0.37	0.42	0.65	0.31	0.37	0.25	0.48	<b>0.39</b>
Greece**										
Hungary**										
Ireland*	1.00	0.25	0.25	0.63	0.25	1.00	0.25	0.25	0.50	<b>0.49</b>
Italy	0.81	0.72	0.40	0.72	0.34	0.25	0.16	0.63	0.38	<b>0.49</b>
Latvia*	0.63	0.63	0.25	0.25	1.00	0.25	0.63	1.00	0.63	<b>0.58</b>
Lithuania**										
Luxemb.**										
Malta**										
Netherlands	0.14	0.79	0.36	0.36	0.79	0.50	0.36	0.79	0.36	<b>0.49</b>
Poland	0.13	0.84	0.33	0.25	0.67	0.21	0.37	0.13	0.40	<b>0.37</b>
Portugal	0.79	0.75	0.25	0.25	0.14	0.57	0.14	0.79	0.50	<b>0.46</b>
Slovakia**										
Slovenia**										
Spain	0.75	0.25	0.10	0.25	0.40	0.50	0.25	1.00	0.40	<b>0.43</b>
Sweden	0.83	0.33	0.25	0.17	1.00	0.06	1.00	1.00	0.33	<b>0.55</b>
UK	0.53	0.57	0.12	0.22	0.14	0.11	0.14	0.53	0.2	<b>0.29</b>
All countries										<b>0.47</b>

**Source:** author's own compilation.

As in the previous paragraph, data analysis starts from 2006 survey. On average, cohesiveness by member state is not as low as expected. If we compare mean score for all EPGs with the one calculated for all countries, we see that the two result are almost equal (party groups have a 0.49 cohesion, vis-à-vis a 0.47 cohesion by country). A closer look at these results with the ones in the previous tables shows how, for instance, a discrete number of states (Sweden, France, Austria, Belgium, Latvia, Italy, Ireland) display a higher cohesiveness than the mean of EPGs. Or, surprisingly, *all states* except the UK show a higher cohesion than the most preference/behaviour discrepant party group, namely the Liberals. In absolute terms, cohesiveness by national affiliation ranges from 0.29 (UK) and 0.37 (Poland), the lowest values, to 0.58 (Latvia), the most cohesive country in the sample<sup>67</sup>. In the light

<sup>67</sup> Only four Latvian MEPs coming from EUL/NGL and UEN participated to the survey: even though these two groups are not certainly politically homogenous, this high



of these results, it can be argued that if votes in the EP were cast according to MEPs' preferences, those based on nationality and on ideological terms would be, on average, equally cohesively. Going further, it can also be claimed that nationality-based votes, on average, would be less cohesive than ideology-based votes cast by party groups belonging to the left side of the political spectrum; by contrast, nationality-based votes, on average, would be more cohesive than ideology-based votes cast by party groups belonging to the centre and right side of the political spectrum (with the exception of the United Kingdom).

Closer consideration shows that many northern European countries, with consolidated tradition of human rights protection (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, but also France, Spain and Latvia) score 1 when it comes to the question on abortion. This means that all the MEPs from these countries would "vote" united<sup>68</sup>, despite being member of different party groups. On the contrary, Poland, where abortion is one of the most controversial political issues, is the country where MEPs would be mostly divided (0.13). Also Germany and Austria, interestingly, are quite divided on the topic (0.25): generally EPP-ED members are divided between Nay and Abstention votes, while MEPs from other party groups are more in favour. Finally, a note is worth being made on the pro-EU question. The three countries where MEPs would vote with a high internal division are, as easily expected, three of the most euro-sceptic countries: Sweden, UK (again) and Czech Republic (respectively 0.33, 0.20 and 0.00, complete division).

This country-based analysis, performed for the subsequent EP7, does not show substantial differences, as shown in table 19.

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cohesion may be the effect of the lack of the political heterogeneity of respondents coming from more political groups. So, these results should not be overstated.

<sup>68</sup> Clearly, a 1.00 score could be also the result of all MEPs from a certain member state virtually voting against (or abstaining) on such topic. But this is not the case: a crosscheck of the dataset showed how all these countries' MEPs would either agree or completely agree on the statement about women free to decide for themselves on abortion.

**Table 19.** AI cohesiveness scores by member state, survey-to-votes (2010 MEPs’ survey)

	Income	Crime	Ec. Gov.	Welfare	Drugs	Unempl.	Immigr.	Abort.	Pro-EU	Mean
Austria*	0.63	0.25	0.63	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.63	<b>0.38</b>
Belgium	0.70	0.70	1.00	0.40	0.10	0.40	0.10	1.00	1.00	<b>0.60</b>
Bulgaria	0.14	0.79	0.79	0.36	0.79	0.36	0.14	1.00	1.00	<b>0.60</b>
Cyprus										
Czech Rep.*	0.10	0.70	0.10	0.40	0.40	0.70	0.10	0.40	0.25	<b>0.35</b>
Denmark	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.14	0.36	1.00	0.79	<b>0.45</b>
Estonia										
Finland	1.00	0.40	0.70	0.70	0.10	0.40	0.70	0.70	0.70	<b>0.60</b>
France	0.73	0.59	0.45	0.32	0.05	0.73	0.18	0.86	0.86	<b>0.53</b>
Germany	0.17	0.25	0.08	0.08	0.25	0.17	0.25	0.42	1.00	<b>0.30</b>
Greece**										
Hungary**										
Ireland	0.79	0.57	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.57	0.14	0.14	1.00	<b>0.48</b>
Italy	0.58	0.74	0.19	0.25	0.41	0.44	0.15	0.13	0.64	<b>0.39</b>
Latvia**										
Lithuania**										
Luxemb.**										
Malta**										
Netherlands	0.40	0.40	0.10	0.40	0.70	0.40	0.40	0.70	0.25	<b>0.42</b>
Poland	0.13	0.63	0.25	0.13	0.50	0.13	0.00	0.00	1.00	<b>0.31</b>
Portugal*	1.00	0.63	0.25	0.63	0.25	1.00	1.00	0.63	1.00	<b>0.71</b>
Romania	0.45	0.73	0.18	0.32	0.59	0.18	0.45	0.73	1.00	<b>0.52</b>
Slovakia**										
Slovenia**										
Spain	0.79	0.36	0.79	0.57	0.14	0.36	0.14	0.57	1.00	<b>0.52</b>
Sweden	0.57	0.14	0.14	0.57	0.79	0.14	0.79	1.00	0.36	<b>0.50</b>
UK	0.32	0.73	0.18	0.32	0.18	0.18	0.32	0.32	0.25	<b>0.31</b>
All countries										<b>0.47</b>

**Source:** author’s own compilation.

The mean of all states remains exactly the same (0.47); thus, in comparison to the corresponding time span votes by party group (0.44), “virtual votes” by country actually become (albeit marginally) more cohesive. The least cohesive country remains the UK (0.31); the most cohesive is Portugal (0.71), but due to the few observations available, this result should be considered with caution.

Two final remark are needed. First, in this dataset two new members become available (Bulgaria and Romania, still not EU members during the previous 2006 survey wave). They show, on the wave of the recent accession to the EU, a high pro-EU score (both 1.00), and on average are both over the mean of all countries (0.60 and 0.52 respectively). Second, the pro-EU question, on overall, shows substantially higher results for all states in 2010 in respect to 2006. This may be a result bias due to the aforementioned incongruence of the scale used in the two survey waves, leading to a different recoding as Yea/Nay/abstain.

## 6.6. Conclusions

These results seem to define a picture that, again, is pretty distant from the mainstream claim that “the European Parliament is surprisingly like all other democratic parliaments”, where votes fall along the left-right political cleavage, and “national affiliation is a weak predictor of how MEPs vote” (Hix et al. 2006: 509), at least in terms of individual preferences. This gives some information on how MEPs would actually vote if they were following their sheer preferences, which in turn can be useful to speculate on how MEPs can vote in non-RCVs. In case these two elements (preferences – behaviour) coincided, then EPGs would be truly politically homogenous entities, consistently to what part of the literature says (Costello et al. 2012, Bressanelli 2012). The results, on the contrary, show that this policy preference congruence is not that high. Consequently, if EPGs are political entities capable of a strong “whip” on their members as part of the literature says, this means that MEPs would vote in a significantly different way from their colleagues – but party groups constrain them. However, if, as recognized by other scholars of the literature, EPG party discipline is weak (Hix and Lord 1997; Raunio 1999; Kreppel 2002) because ultimately the main “principal” of MEPs are national parties (Faas 2003), then MEPs probably vote more accordingly to their preferences. And if this does not emerge in RCVs, as shown, then these dynamics are likely to emerge in non-RCVs.

To sum up, MEPs are representative legislators in regards to the European citizens (Bardi 2002), and on overall they share a certain policy preference homogeneity with their colleagues (Costello et al. 2012); this in turn implies a high cohesion, that however can be either interpreted more as a consequence of this political homogeneity (Kreppel 2002) or more as a product of “Euro-whip” (Hix et al. 2007). My results show that this preference homogeneity is not that marked. This in turn can help speculating how MEPs vote in secret votes. In terms of external validity of this model, it has to be reminded this study has no ambition of explaining how MEPs actually vote. Nevertheless, since voting behaviour is not observable when vote is not held under the roll-call procedure, alternative methods have to be defined. In this respect, my main findings are that, surprisingly, national affiliation plays a greater role than the one usually attributed to it, at least in terms of individual preferences. The EP’s functioning, in terms of centrality of party groups and dimensions of politics, may be evolving towards the classical model of a democratic parliament, however clear national elements still survive.



## Chapter 7

### Deepening the knowledge of MEPs' voting behaviour: qualitative insights from an original survey

*“Studying RCVs to draw inferences about MEP legislative voting behaviour is like inferring the amount of gang violence at night by observing well-lit street corners: the accuracy of observation may be high, but the observed behaviour may not be representative”*

(Carrubba and Gabel 1999: 4)

*“According to my interviewees, national affiliation plays a more significant role than is assumed by previous research. [...] It is doubtful whether these findings would have become apparent without the use of qualitative interviews”*

(Rasmussen 2008: 11, 17)

#### 7.1. Introduction

The results presented in the previous empirical chapters give another hint in the direction that national affiliation has been overlooked by the mainstream literature. However, the empirical analysis of this dissertation is substantially based on roll-call votes (chapter 3), the only sample on which scholars of legislative assemblies are able to measure directly voting behaviour – even if these votes are critically “filtered” by qualitative data excerpted from MEPs' assistant survey (chapter 4 and 5) or integrated in an original way with information from MEPs' available EPRG survey (chapter 6).

The goal of this chapter is to further explore the central research question of this work, party group membership *vis-à-vis* national affiliation, and the potential set of problems concerning any voting behaviour analysis that focuses on RCVs. A literature review of the methodological debate that revolves around roll-call votes has already been performed in chapter 3. Here, an in-depth qualitative analysis the answers to some of the relevant questions included in the MEPs'

assistant survey is performed. Then, a possible list of case studies of national interests *versus* party group lines is presented and briefly analysed, either still untouched by the existing literature or already investigated, albeit with no clear-cut conclusion (for instance, the Takeover Directive)

### 7.3. Hypotheses verification

The deepening of various questions concerning MEPs' voting behaviour does not constitute a proper, empirical hypotheses verifications. Rather, it represents an attempt to further reinforce the previous tests concerning the following main hypotheses, except for H4 that has not been addressed directly, but only indirectly through the model built in chapter 6:

*H1: Party group discipline in the EP explains most of the votes but when the issue concerns a national, direct interest MEPs will protect them*

*H3: MEPs' voting behaviour and consequently group cohesion differs in various committees*

*H4: MEPs tend to vote differently if the vote is secret or a public RCV*

*H5: regional dimensions other than left/right cleavage and anti-/pro-EU do exist and exert a significant effect in the EP*

*H6: MEPs' nationality influences how he/she deals with classical political issues that refer to the L/R cleavage*

### 7.4. Theoretical and empirical implications

Firstly, the attention is turned to the question the possible difference in voting behaviour concerning public and secret votes. The important and controversial legislation (both in terms of relevance to the EU citizen's lives, or in terms of possible undermine of some states' national interests) may be voted in secret votes (non-RCVs). MEPs' assistants did not empirically confirm this specific relationship; nevertheless, they agree on the fact that these two different types of votes entail different dynamics, as shown in question 19:

*"Do you think that these roll-call votes represent more or less the same logics of the secret votes?"*

Roughly  $\frac{2}{3}$  (65.2%) of the respondents answered no, while only  $\frac{1}{3}$  answered yes. This information, to a certain degree, corroborates the literature that stresses the importance of the selection bias of RCVs-

based studies (Carrubba and Gabel 1999; Carrubba et al. 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009). However, it is quite general: it does not provide a specific relationship between RCVs requests and possible characteristics of the vote. What is helpful in this regard is the previous open-end question (question 19), which also provides valuable information that reinforces these scholars' point. The question was formulated as follows:

*"In your opinion, why sometimes groups ask for a public and registered vote (the so-called "roll-call votes")?"*

The majority of answers, "filtered" from normative positions referring to the general concepts of the necessity of transparent democratic processes (certainly noteworthy and agreeable, but out of the scope of this research), followed these lines:

*"[for] Several reasons: to discipline the Members of the own group, to be able to "name and shame" Members of other groups about controversial decisions" (Anonymous Danish EPP member's assistant – July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012)*

*"To challenge MEPs to follow their own line" " (Anonymous Greek EPP member's assistant – July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012)*

*"To increase cohesion" (Anonymous Swedish S&D member's assistant – July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012)*

*"To ensure cohesion with the party line and to be able to watch members votes" (Anonymous Danish ALDE member's assistant – July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012)*

In this sense, it appears more than reasonable that, as Carrubba et al. argue, intra-party cohesion is actually correlated to RCVs request, thus leading to selection bias problems.

Moreover, as already noted in chapter 4, all the committees' works are public, but the votes are almost never RCVs. So, RCVs tend to describe the "final step" of a piece of legislation, without accounting for the previous negotiation, the decision behind the amendments, and in general all the informal committees' work, where power play between different interests is more likely to show up. As rightfully noted by Kreppel, "the real battles are at the amendment stage, whilst the grand coalition [and consequently high cohesiveness] is much more frequent in votes on final texts" (2000: 356). This is also empirically confirmed, again, by the original survey conducted on MEPs' assistants. Question 17 of the survey investigates exactly this aspect. The question is formulated as follows:

*"If a piece of legislation is controversial, do you think that the contrasts are more likely to come up in the preliminary works of the committees or later during the vote in the plenary session?"*

The majority chose the first option (45.5%); a smaller group chose “indifferently in both moments” (37.2%); only a minority of respondents (17.4%) chose the second option.

Secondly, as extensively discussed in chapter 3 these dynamics may well emerge in a few RCVs, but through a statistical analysis that relies on various agreement indexes such as Hix et al.’s AI they simply get “diluted” in the whole universe of votes cast. A similar point can be found in Bardi (2002): “roll-call voting behaviour is conditioned *inter alia* by the symbolic – rather than politically concrete – significance of most EP decisions, and this can be held to lower the level of internal dissent and facilitate quasi-unanimous decisions” (Bardi 2002: 303). For instance, let’s consider the hypothetical (and intentionally extreme) situation where nine votes out of ten deal with abstract resolutions, which have no substantial effect. In these votes EPGs are – clearly – able to make their members tow the party line, and all groups are completely cohesive. The tenth vote is a directive on drive safety that may endanger the big European car manufacturers. Here, the members of some of the states that have a consistent part of their national economy dependent on that industry, no matter which EPG they belong to, act unite to block the legislation, fearing that these provisions may depress the economy of their home country, according to the theory of “MEPs as member of strongly ideological regional parties”. By simply calculating the AI scores for these ten votes a high cohesion would certainly emerge. But the reality, as described, is more complex. The goal of this deliberately naïve example is not to portrait what actually happens in the EP, of course; rather, it represents a caveat that shows how, by looking simply at AI scores, some important elements of MEPs’ legislative behaviour do not surface. However, as noted by some MEPs’ assistants, something similar actually happened in the EP:

*“There is at least one famous case where the German automobile industry lobbied heavily, resulting in a very closely won vote in Parliament to stop a certain kind of legislation that would have “harmed” their business. This was around 10 years ago.” (Anonymous Dutch EFD member’s assistant, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012);*

*“[National alignments emerge in legislation about] cars / Co2 emissions - Germany and France defending their strong industry” (Anonymous German ALDE member’s assistant – July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012)*

Question 9 focuses specifically on the possible contrast between nationality and EPG. It is formulated as follows:

*“How often do you think that national interests of some MEPs are in contrast with the European party group’s political line?”*



67.4% of the respondents chose the option “sometimes”, followed by “often” (23.5%), “rarely” (7.6%), and finally with the same trivial percentage “almost always” and “almost never” (both 0.8%). This information, in itself, is not very telling, but it acquires a greater meaning if paired with the following question. Question 10 focuses on the outcome of this possible contrast:

“In case this contrast actually occurs, how do you think that MEPs vote?”

The answers show a straightforward homogeneity of views: 83.2% of the respondents picked the option “in defence of their national interests”, while only 16.8% chose “Consistently with the political group’s line”. This is further explored in the next paragraph.

### **7.5. Brief case studies of national interests contrasting EPG’s line**

In question 20 it is asked to list some specific legislations where national interests of some member states are prominent, and in open contrast with the political line of a group: this is an open and optional question, with no predefined answer. Still, roughly half of MEPs’ assistant replied, creating in this way a vast range of possible case studies for this phenomenon. The details of all the replies are available in the appendix; here, only four insightful cases are enlisted (the first two and the last briefly, the third with more details), in addition to the one presented in the previous paragraph (the “tendency” of German and French MEPs to protect their automobile industry).

Firstly, on the recent discussion about the possibility of the creation of European-wide government stocks, the so-called “Eurobonds”, Germany had a very strict position. The ALDE group, consistently with its economic tradition, was strongly in this favour of this possible measure to relieve the crisis in Europe. Still, all the German members of the Liberal group voted against.

Secondly, Spain has a strong tradition of radical nationalist parties fighting for independency of their “nation” (such as ETA in the Basque Country, or Esquerra Republicana and Solidaritat Catalana per la Independència in Catalonia). Thus, the question of State-building and secessions is a very sensitive issue in Spain. When the EP had to vote in favour of the recognition of the newly formed Kosovo, the government of Madrid found itself on a slippery slope: a vote in favour would have somehow “legitimized” the nationalist tensions, especially of ETA. In the end a compromise was found: all the Spanish MEPs abstained from the vote.

Thirdly, in 2010 the ENVI committee put forward some amendments to the proposal by the European Commission to have stricter rules on the information contained on food labels. The “Sommer labelling dossier”, named after its rapporteur, was voted in the plenary session of June 2010 in several RCVs (29 total votes on the same dossier) regarding different amendments. Here the focus is on a specific amendment (“Food information to consumers. Subject: Article 50, before paragraph 1, amendment 191”) voted on 16/06/2010. The type of vote is a draft legislative resolution; the procedure is legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading). During the discussion it became clear that there was the possibility of a clear undermining the interests of Ferrero SPA, the Italian manufacturer of chocolate and other products<sup>69</sup>. In fact, the rejection of the amendment would have prohibited Ferrero and other confectionary manufacturers to advertise their products with the word “healthy”. The coalitions in this final vote<sup>70</sup> were the following:

1. S&D, Liberals, Greens/EFA and GUE/Nordic Green Left supporting the line “against”;
2. EPP, Conservatives/Reformists and EFD euro-sceptics “for”.

The result of the vote was a perfect tie, with 309 MEPs voting against and 309 MEPs voting for, plus 31 abstentions. Since the majority required to pass was 310, the amendment was rejected. By looking at the classical AI aggregated score, one may think that this vote shows no anomalies: 81% of MEPs voted along EPG lines, a pretty high score. But if we look at how Italy at large voted we see a completely different picture: AI calculated for Italian MEPs scores 92.74%, way higher than the average for EPGs. In fact, of the 62 Italian MEPs present, 59 voted cohesively “yea”; only one ALDE member abstained and two other MEPS voted “nay” (one from S&D and another ALDE member). Ten additional members were absent or did not vote<sup>71</sup> (in total Italy has 72 MEPs). In particular, the Italian S&D delegation is quite numerous, 22 MEPs; and only one of them, one out of 22, decided to vote along the EPG line instead of acting rebel towards it to protect Ferrero’s interests. Most importantly, this case shows that the discriminant for this rebellious vote was not the “main principal” of MEPs according to the mainstream literature (Hix 2002; Noury 2002; Hix et al. 2007; Faas

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<sup>69</sup> One of the greatest industrial entities in Italy, with its €7.7 billion revenue, an operating income of €856 million and 22,298 employees (fiscal year 2010-2012).

<sup>70</sup> Vote ID: 742. Available on <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/food-information-to-consumers-draft-legislative-resolution-article-50-before-paragraph-1-amendment-1.html>

<sup>71</sup> Seven MEPs from EPP, one from S&D, one from ALDE and one from EFD.

2003), namely the national party delegation: rather, the real discriminant is nationality at large, consistently to my theory.

Fourthly and finally, when there is some vote regarding nuclear energy or GMOs (genetically modified organism) Austrian MEPs tend to vote compact against it. Various answers from MEPs assistants' survey corroborate this argument:

*"Austria is strictly against nuclear power - and therefore does not follow EPP's party line. Same with GMOs, Austria" (Anonymous Austrian EPP member's assistant – July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012);*

*"All Austrian MEPs across all groups consistently vote against nuclear energy" (Anonymous Austrian S&D member's assistant – July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012);*

*"Nuclear energy and genetically modified food are topics where e.g. Austrian EPP members tend to vote with their compatriots and against the group line" (Anonymous Austrian EPP member's assistant – July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012).*

I deliberately picked four examples which are very different between each other: in the first case, there is a political position, and to a certain degree the will of Germany to shape the whole European monetary policy. In the second case, it's a matter of internal political stability. In the third, it is a pure and simple defence of a national economic interest. In the last, the issue concerns more a cultural and traditional legacy. What is important is that in all cases the contrast of the political group is not against the national party line, but the broad national affiliation (that comprises all national parties). All these examples investigate the central research question in the direction that corroborates my argument: when a *Raison d'État* is at stake, nationality prevails over EPG line. This is certainly intuitive, and scholars such as Bardi have recognised it already more than 25 years ago (Bardi 1987: 86). However, the constant focus on intra-party cohesion and inter-party competition (using RCVs-based analysis), and possibly a normative position of scholars about the emergence of a true European political system, has somehow diverted the attention from this aspect.

Finally, one last question has to be asked: is this particular dynamic also empirically relevant in the opposite direction? In other words, does it happen, sometimes, that MEPs clearly touched by some European legislation deliberately decide to follow what their EPG says, despite endangering their closest constituency – their country of origin? The literature is still very weak in regards. One of such cases, however, is discussed in the next paragraph.

### 7.5.1. The Takeover directive

The Takeover Directive is probably the only exception (albeit a controversial one) of a case study on which some scholars have been able to argue that, despite the national interests at stake, the policy outcome was nonetheless defined by a left-right confrontation with cohesive EPGs. However, other scholars reached the exact opposite conclusion, finding that national interests were paramount in the legislative process.

The Takeover Directive is a legislative action passed by the European Parliament in late 2003 to create a legal framework for mergers and acquisitions. The directive had the goal of making a set of common laws applicable across EU members, creating harmonization between legal systems, as well as setting clear standards and boundaries for companies and individuals working to comply with the law. Drafting the Takeover Directive took over a decade<sup>72</sup> and included substantial political wrangling. EU members intended to create a simple set of legal guidelines for takeovers: it was meant to streamline the takeover process, making it easier for companies to handle takeovers while also protecting the interests of shareholders and employees. But uneven and sometimes contradictory laws in individual member nations made takeovers challenging, which was viewed as an inhibition to doing business in the European Union. In sum, the bill addressed one of the central differences between the so-called "Anglo-Saxon" and "Rhenish" models of capitalism (Hix et al. 2007: 200). In 1996 the EP received a directive from the EC, the latest of a series of attempts to harmonise member states' takeover rules (Berglöf and Burkart 2003). In 1997 the bill was assigned as rapporteur a French EPP conservative, Nicole Fontaine; the committee responsible for the bill proposed a substantive number of amendments, that nevertheless were all accepted by the Commission. In 2000 the Council reached a "common position" incorporating most of these amendments: a compromise looked possible (Hix et al. 2007: 202). However, later the German industry started to express concerns about the directive: following the aggressive takeover of one of the German telecommunication companies by the British Vodafone, it was feared that Volkswagen could suffer the same fate by the hands of an American car company. The German government started then an intensive lobbying campaign in order to block this piece of legislation, an unprecedented

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<sup>72</sup> Only the actual, last draft took more than a decade; actually, the first European-wide debate over a EU regulation on this matter dates back to the early '70s (Hix et al. 2007: 201).

move considering that it implied to “turn against a position previously supported in the Council” (Hix 2007: 204). The result was a tied vote in 2001: 273 MEPs voting in favour, 273 against and 22 abstentions. This meant that the directive was not approved. It was only in November 2003 then that the Council reached a compromise solution that basically was leaving a complete “opt-out”: each member state was free to decide whether to apply or not the controversial provisions (neutrality article, breakthrough rule) that triggered the previous debate. The EP then approved the final legislative act on December 2003.

According to Kitschelt et al. (1999) ideological preferences influenced MEP behaviour; however, a far more significant determinant of voting behaviour is actually the specific model of capitalism in MEPs’ member state: specifically, MEPs from liberal market economies (UK, Ireland) and nationally coordinated economies (Denmark, Finland, Sweden) supported the directive; MEPs from partial or family-oriented coordinated market economies (France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal) were split and MEPs from sectorally coordinated economies (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg) were against. Callaghan and Höpner (2004) and Ringe (2005), despite using slightly different variables, similarly claim that it is national interests, and particularly different “models of capitalism”, that explain the outcome more than EPG position or left-right ideological preferences of MEPs. Hix et al. (2007), however, claim that all these existing studies focused only on few high-profile vote, thus biasing the analysis. A more comprehensive analysis, including the final votes in 2003, show that “parties and ideology matters, even when national interests interfere” (Hix et al. 2007: 214). They show the different patterns of vote, in particular, of 2000, 2001, 2003. Whereas in the first two votes national delegations (at large) are extremely cohesive, especially for Germany and UK (all MEPs voting in the same way), in the third Germany finally splits along EPG lines. UK, by contrast, remains highly cohesive as country even in the last vote. From this they derive that “When there are high political stakes on a legislative issue before the EP, MEPs from one or two member states may vote along national lines rather than on party lines [...]. But in the final vote of the re-proposed legislation in 2003 the German Social Democrats and green followed the position of the socialist group rather than their government, and voted against the directive” (Hix et al. 2007: 215). But that is exactly the point: until the question is controversial and salient, national affiliation is stronger. When a final compromise is reached on a bill that basically leaves a great margin to member states regarding applying or not the crucial provisions, practically leaving it as an

empty provision, then EPGs (and not even all of them) become cohesive again.

## 7.6. Conclusions

Since inferences based solely on roll-call votes may be misleading due to a selection bias problem, it is helpful to look at qualitative data from MEPs' assistants survey. The analysis of the research question's relevant survey items has revealed a number of interesting findings: First of all, logics of vote differ if the vote is secret or public (RCV). In particular, RCVs seem to be requested for several reasons, but mainly to ensure group cohesion: thus, RCVs-based studies that look at party group cohesion may be biased. Secondly, national interests in contrast with EU legislation are not a too often occurrence, but when it happens MEPs overwhelmingly vote to protect their closest constituency. Thirdly, these contrasts tend to emerge in the preliminary committee legislative work; therefore, an analysis of votes that accounts only for the final texts does not captures this aspect, corroborating Kreppel's argument (2000).

Finally, a short dissertation of possible case-studies for these contrasts has been presented, finding that – in sum – it is actually quite common that EPGs get “overridden” by national affiliation. And when this happens, it is always because there is a generic *Raison d'État* (that may refer to different domains – from sheer economic calculation to cultural traditions). MEPS' assistant survey revealed many of such situations. The opposite is much more difficult to find, and even the existing research that tries to prove that sometimes political affiliation is stronger than a national interest, such as studies on the Takeover Directive, actually rests on shaky foundations (Hix et al. 2007) and is counterbalanced by a much more conspicuous literature arguing the opposite (Kitschelt 1999; Callaghan and Hopner 2004; Ringe 2005), namely that the final policy outcome was country-driven.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusions

#### 8.1. Summary of main findings

After an introduction that defines the central research question of this dissertation (Chapter 1), in the theoretical part (chapter 2) of this dissertation I firstly briefly examined the evolution of the EP party system and how it can be observed using the lenses of Katz and Mair's "three faces of party organization". Then, I analysed party cohesion in the EP, showing how different scholars attribute this it to different explanatory factors. Later, I moved on to focus on the individual level of members of the European Parliament, first by assessing their representativeness towards the European electorate, and then by analysing their concrete voting behaviour in relation to the principal-agent theory. Afterwards, I presented my theory of "MEPs as members of a strongly ideological regional party" as a combination of these different approaches, focusing on the oft-overlooked broader element of national affiliation instead of national party membership.

In chapter 3 I analysed the statistical outliers of party group cohesion (using the Agreement Index, AI) for the last two European legislatures (2004-2013). In this way I demonstrated, albeit with a simple cause-effect argument, that party group cohesion has to be treated cautiously. Both for EP6 and EP7, party groups are usually completely united in voting, but there are a substantial number of cases when this cohesion breaks down. Exceptions to this trend can be found for the euro-sceptic groups and the non-attached members, that show lower cohesion. in the EP7, for instance, this emerges clearly for the votes concerning the CAP reform. Every three and a half votes, on average, in the last ten years there's a vote where EPGs fail to discipline their members in voting according to the party lines. This picture slightly contrasts with the oft-repeated claim according to which the "the European Parliament is surprisingly like all other democratic parliaments" (Hix et al. 2005: 509). The explanation of this phenomenon is strictly related to the peculiar institutional arrangement of the EP, that lacks the classical government-opposition dynamics of democratic politics (Mair and Thomassen 2010: 21), that "allows" such relatively

frequent deviations from the party line without the threaten of jeopardizing the executive.

EPGs certainly play a crucial role in EP's legislative life, and on overall they appear extremely cohesive. But this does not mean that their members cannot decide, from time to time, to vote along patterns that completely break (because a national interest is at stake, such as outcomes of CAP reforms) their unity as political groups. And since, as scholars acknowledge (Raunio 1999: 193; Westlake 1994a; Kreppel 2002), EPGs or even more European parties have very little power to "whip" them, their election being ultimately in the hand of the national parties, no consequences arise from these "rebellious votes". The reason of such understatement, as stated before, is based on a perspective that looks only at the mean of EPGs' cohesiveness over the years, but does not deepen the analysis to what really happens if we disaggregate these statistical indexes and look at the outliers.

Chapter 4 focuses on the role of committees, the "legislative backbone" (Westlake 1994) of the European Parliament. I argue that, consistently to my theory, the national element is more likely to have a substantial effect on most important committees that usually work on legislative issues, while party groups, vice-versa, are more cohesive when there is less at stake.

This is empirically confirmed by the elaboration of the results from the original survey submitted to MEPs' assistant. The so-called "money committees" where substantial decisions are at stake are those where nation-oriented votes are more likely to emerge (making EPGs less cohesive), and vice-versa: party groups manage to ensure a higher unity in less important committees. However, RCVs analysis on votes cast in the sixth EP legislature only partially confirms it: a clear-cut trend emerges only for the AGRI committee. Dynamics in votes concerning this committee are substantially different than the others, and national affiliation plays a greater role than the one usually envisaged by the mainstream literature (Hix 2002; Hix et al 2003; Hix et al 2005; 2006; 2007). These results are especially meaningful if we consider the importance of this committee in terms of sheer economic numbers. This is not completely new: findings that corroborate my argument can be found in the literature, albeit focusing on research questions other than the specific relationship between party and national affiliation (Bardi 1989) The ideological dimension of the EP is, as a whole, more relevant than the national affiliation in defining how MEPs vote, but if these votes are "filtered" in a critical way, then nationality (not membership of a national party) suddenly becomes something different than the "weak predictor of vote" generally depicted by the most diffused literature (Hix et. al. 2006: 509).



Chapter 5 focuses on “national alignments”, namely the actual cases when MEPs decide to vote together with their fellow countrymen, despite this implies an open contrast with the plurality of the group they belong to. Again the time span analysed is 2004-2009 due to lack of fresher data at the individual level. Simple descriptive statistics firstly show that the two euro-sceptic groups are, as expected, the party groups where MEPs are more likely to disregard the party line in order to pursue a national line. Among the bigger, generally pro-EU group, however, the findings for Socialists and People’s party diverge substantially, partially because to the ideological heterogeneity of the latter group in the sixth EP due to the presence of the ED conservatives. Secondly, countries with a tradition of euro-scepticism generally are more likely to show these alignments. However bigger countries, electing MEPs that belong to more EPGs do not present – contrarily to what one may think – a higher share of these alignments. UK is the “champion” of national alignments, whereas the classic literature relying on the Agreement Index as the only index of voting behaviour had failed to identify this behaviour (Hix and Noury 2009). This corroborates my argument circa the reliability of an analysis based on such index alone. Thirdly, these alignments tend to be concentrated in the more important, legislative committees, corroborating what I argued in chapter 4, especially for the AGRI committee. However AFET committee, in contrast to my expectations but consistently to part of the literature (Whitaker 2011), shows surprising results.

Then, using a simple logistic regression I established the causality of a series of variables on the likelihood of national alignments emerging in the vote. In this regards, national alignments are more likely if: the vote is cast in one of the main five committees pinpointed by MEPs’ assistant survey; the vote is legislative; the margin is thinner, expectedly indicating a more controversial issues where there is no “grand coalition” between the bigger groups; the vote is *not* budgetary issue. Finally, this regression proved that these alignments are not more likely to emerge in bigger country delegation, or in countries belonging to the recent eastwards enlargement, partially contrasting the already florid literature that argues that eastern MEPs’ behaviour is substantially equivalent to those of the old member states (Hix and Noury 2009; Costello et al. 2012; McElroy and Benoit 2012; Bressanelli 2012).

Chapter 6 presents an original and simple methodology that consists in transforming survey data into votes, then applying the classical AI indexes. This gives some information on how MEPs would actually vote if they were following their sheer preferences, which in turn can be useful to speculate on how MEPs vote in non-RCVs; the analysis is

performed for the last two legislatures, EP6 and EP7. The results firstly show that cohesion by party group would be much lower if MEPs were voting according to their preference, in respect to what emerges from roll-call votes. A second interesting finding is that cohesion by preference is much higher than expected if MEPs are grouped by member state, demonstrating that nationality can influence how MEPs perceive certain issues.

In terms of external validity of this model, this analysis has no ambition of explaining how MEPs actually vote. Nevertheless, since voting behaviour is not observable when vote is not held under the roll-call procedure, alternative methods have to be defined. Since party groups, as recognized by part of the literature, are weak political entities in terms of “whip” power towards its members (Hix and Lord 1997; Raunio 1999; Kreppel 2002), because ultimately the main “principal” of MEPs are national parties (Faas 2003), MEPs probably vote more accordingly to their preferences. And if this does not emerge in RCVs, as shown, then these dynamics are likely to emerge in non-RCVs. This partially contrasts with the same literature that argues that high cohesiveness is a sole consequence of political homogeneity (Kreppel 2002).

Chapter 7 first extensively discussed the methodological debate over the reliability of roll-call analysis. I argue that, if roll-call votes may be misleading due to a selection bias problem, then it is helpful to look at qualitative data (Rasmussen 2008), in this case from MEPs’ assistants original survey. My findings are that logics of vote differ if the vote is secret or public (RCV). In particular, RCVs seem to be requested for several reasons, but mainly to ensure group cohesion: thus, RCVs-based studies that look at party group cohesion may be biased. Secondly, national interests in contrast with EU legislation are not a too often occurrence, but when this happens MEPs overwhelmingly vote to protect their closest constituency. Thirdly, these contrasts tend to emerge in the preliminary committee legislative work; therefore, an analysis of votes that accounts only for the final texts does not captures this aspect, corroborating Kreppel’s argument (2000).

Finally, I shortly discuss some case-studies of such contrasts, showing that it is actually quite common that party group lines are disregarded by vote decision that depend uniquely on national affiliation. And when this happens, it is always because there is a generic *Raison d’État* (that may refer to different domains – from sheer economic calculation to cultural traditions) and not only a specific position of the national party. The opposite is much more difficult to find, and even the existing research that tries to prove that sometimes political affiliation is stronger than a national interest, such as studies on the Takeover

Directive, actually rests on shaky foundations (Hix et al. 2007) and is counterbalanced by a much more conspicuous literature arguing the opposite (Kitschelt 1999; Callaghan and Hopner 2004; Ringe 2005), namely that the final policy outcome is country-driven.

## 8.2. Venues for future research

This dissertation clearly does not have the pretence of setting the final word on the logic of voting behaviour in the European Parliament. In particular, it analysed the topic from a specific point of view, encouraged by the fact that it is still at the centre of a heated debate. In this sense, possible further research may go in the direction of a broadening of the scope of the analysis, keeping in mind the same research question, or refining the methodological tools still focusing on the same object of research.

The former point could be reached by including the other institution, in particular the Council on the picture<sup>73</sup>: specifically, assessing if there is a relationship between possible lacks of cohesion of party groups (and consequently the surfacing of national alignments) and specific key features of Council's legislative behaviour. The question of the relationship between Parliament and Council in the law-making EU process, especially after the introduction of the co-decision procedure, has been the focus of a solid strand of research. In particular, Hagemann and Høyland (2010) have already analysed this topic in relation to the cohesion of party groups. However, the presence of national alignments (independent of national party positions) in this process has not been sufficiently investigated.

The latter point, instead, could be improved in different ways. Firstly, since MEPs' assistants survey has proved to be so helpful in disentangling questions related to this work, a second wave – with more specific items – could be prepared and then submitted to the newly elected Parliament in Spring 2014. Secondly, most of the analysis of this work that needed roll-call votes information at the individual level had necessarily to be constrained to the "old" EP legislature, 2004-2009. As soon as EP7 will be dismissed, this more detailed dataset will become available also for the legislature that started in 2009: in this sense, part of the work of this dissertation (chapter 4, 5) could be "replicated" with fresher data. Thirdly, the analysis of votes in the

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<sup>73</sup> This could be facilitated by the fact that Votewatch, that provided data for most of this dissertation's empirical analysis, recently included the Council's position in the available data.

different committees has proved to be particularly meaningful (AGRI) but also counter-intuitive, from the theoretical framework used (ECON). A more in-depth analysis of all 20 committees could bring interesting results; again, similar research exists (Yordanova 2009, 2011, 2013; Ringe 2009; Kreppel 2002) but has not focused specifically on the central research question of this dissertation, namely the contrasts between party groups and national delegations at large. Moreover, a direct observation of the committees' work would greatly benefit the knowledge of their internal dynamics that, it is worth reminding, is still "blurry" (Whitaker 2011). Fourthly, throughout all this work, the question of "national interests" has been a constant presence as it is the discriminating factor that, in the perspective presented here, influences the EPG or national orientation of a vote. This has been extensively proved by the qualitative corroboration of chapter 7; however, no indicator of such is present in the literature (except, partially, for Kardasheva 2009). A meticulous work of analysis and assessment of the single votes of a legislature, to include a variable that indicates this element and allows to control for it in a RCV analysis, would be extremely useful. In other words, a reliable index that measures the real salience of votes (in regards to each member state's interests) would allow to unambiguously prove that nationality matters more when there is a national issue at stake. Another possible improvement of this work could be reached by refining the empirical operationalization of the concept of national alignment since, as discussed in chapter 5, it leaves out much of the variance that, on the other hand, is captured by classical agreement indexes.

Finally, the possibility (yet remote, due to Socialists and People's party strong opposition<sup>74</sup>) that the EP reforms its internal rule in order to have all votes recorded and publicly available would benefit not only this work, but all the academic community.

### **8.3. Theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions**

The contribution of this work is tripartite. By analysing MEPs' voting behaviour under a combination of methodological strategies, both quantitative and qualitative, and testing my central research question - the concurrent influence of party group membership and national affiliation - I contribute in different ways to the theoretical, empirical and methodological debate.

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<sup>74</sup> Such reform has already been proposed a liberal English MEP Andrew Duff, during the current seventh EP legislature in the AFCO committee, but to no avail.

From the theoretical point of view, my contribution consists in a slight theoretical refinement of current theories of the European Parliament's internal representation and behaviour. Members of the EP, according to my conceptual framework, satisfactorily perform their representative function as they operate in an institutionalized party system (Bardi; 1989; 2002; 2006); they are part of generally cohesive party groups – albeit incapable of a strong “whip” (Kreppel 2002; Faas 2003); however, their theorization as “parliamentary agents with two principals” is potentially dangerous (Katz 2013), especially because – I add – it does not include the question of nationality *at large*, limiting the analysis of EPG and the national *party*. In this sense, I contend, MEPs are better described as “strongly ideological members of a regional party”: they generally share preferences with their party colleagues (however not completely homogenous, as demonstrated in chapter 6), and despite national affiliation has an effect on how they perceive certain issues, they generally act united. However, every time they perceive that their closest constituency is touched by the vote, they deviate from the line without consequences, facilitated by the peculiar EP institutional arrangement (Hix 2007, Mair and Thomassen 2010). In this sense, both shared policy preference and “whip” constraints make EPGs look cohesive; but when it really matters, neither of these elements hold.

From the empirical point of view, I contribute to the field by demonstrating that national-oriented votes are still a paramount feature of the EP, even if they surface in a minority of cases; that they tend to emerge legislative votes, and in more important committees; that national alignments, in sum, emerge whenever a *Raison D'État* is at stake, and they do it regardless of the country size, but more in the traditionally euro-sceptic countries and surprisingly more in old member states than in the eastern countries belonging to the recent enlargement wave. I also demonstrated that the difference between nationality and political affiliation, in terms of “pure” exogenous policy preferences revealed by survey data (opposed to actual votes where constraints do exist) is much smaller in shaping MEPs' behaviour. These empirical findings have also a broader implication in terms of how to consider the European polity. From the point of view of representation in the European Parliament, these results tell us that MEPs are representative both in terms of political affiliation and nationality. In other term, a European citizen is well represented by a MEP that matches his or her political preferences, no matter the country the MEP comes from. But from time to time, when a national interest is touched, this type of representation “shrinks” in favour to a more concrete, economic-based type of representation that is connected to national affiliation. This is not necessary a bad or a good thing for

the European Parliament: simply, it is an element that makes the EP more complex and multifaceted than a classical Parliament. In terms of law-making in the EU, these results indicate that intergovernmental elements still survive also in a body of the European Union that should be the mostly driven by supranational forces.

In terms of methodology, the first contribution of this work goes in the direction of a further warning against the use of RVCs alone to generate causal inferences on MEPs' voting behaviour. A complete and unbiased research, I contend, must necessarily complement a quantitative analysis with a more in-depth qualitative refinement. Secondly, I contribute to the methodological debate by showing how the use of the Agreement Index alone may contribute to draw an incomplete part of the bigger picture of voting behaviour, especially when calculated by member state. A (potentially) more reliable approach, as demonstrated by the case of UK, is to look at strictly defined and operationalized "national alignments", despite this methodology is not free of criticalities too: in particular, it disregards most of the variance captured by the classical indexes. In this sense, I advocate a complementary use of both.

To conclude, it is true indeed that "ideology remained the main predictor of voting behaviour, although nationality also played a role" (Hix and Noury 2009: 159). The point is exactly that this "role" is a paramount feature, which should not be overlooked, of the directly elected assembly that represents more than 500 millions of European citizens. A peculiar, maybe "paradoxical" parliament (Westlake 2007: 350) which, on the one hand, is still a political *unicum* that probably cannot be so easily compared to a regular democratic parliament, contrarily to what many scholars have recently and repeatedly argued (Noury et al. 2002; Hix et al. 2006, 2007, 2009; Hagemann 2009; Kaniovski and Mueller 2010); on the other hand, a parliament that can be fully understood only if the popular and oft-repeated focus on its supranational element is mitigated by a re-evaluation of the older, yet still meaningful intergovernmentalist theory (Moravcsik 1993).

# Appendix

## MEPs' assistants survey

### D1, D2 Country of origin and party group membership

Country	Respondents	EPG	Respondents
Austria	4	ALDE	31
Belgium	10	ECR	10
Bulgaria	3	EFD	8
Cyprus	2	EPP	40
Czech Republic	2	Greens /EFA	17
Denmark	6	GUE/NGL	4
Estonia	1	NI	9
Finland	6	S&D	63
France	15	No Answer	6
Germany	22		
Greece	6	Total	188
Hungary	0		
Ireland	3		
Italy	54		
Latvia	3		
Lithuania	0		
Luxembourg	0		
Malta	0		
Netherlands	10		
Poland	5		
Portugal	4		
Romania	2		
Slovakia	0		
Slovenia	3		
Spain	6		
Sweden	4		
UK	12		
No Answer	5		
Total	188		

### D3 On overall, how much do you think that the lobbies' work has an influence on the legislative output of the European Parliament?

- 1. Not at all	- 2.	- 3.	- 4.	- 5. Very much
0	15	61	50	17
0,0%	10,5%	42,7%	35,0%	11,9%

Answers	143
Skipped	45
Add. comments	10
Average rating	3,48

### Additional comments

Lobbies influence policymakers by providing valuable knowledge and assistance, but MEPs and assistants mostly listen to the lobbyists they already share views with, and who they trust. Therefore the political "line" is not influenced by lobbyists, but set out by the MEP.

Not so much in the sense that they decide the final direction of the legislation, but very important in providing information

It depends on the MEP how much he/she let influence himself/herself

Depends strongly on issue area and topic

It depends a lot on which Committees

Therefore lobby transparency is of the utmost importance

it depends on the MEP and his/her background and on the assistant's attitude

Financial Service and Insurance legislation is dominated by the interest of the industry

Very important to have an overall picture of the impact of legislative texts

I think it depends on the type of lobby - environmental, financial, health, whether the lobby is not entirely based on material gains of a company, etc.

**D4 How do you judge the lobbies' influence in the European Parliament, in comparison to a national Parliament?**

- Much minor	- Minor re or less the same	- Greater	- Much greater
0	11	66	10
0,0%	7,9%	37,4%	47,5%
			7,2%

Answers	139
Skipped	49
Add. comments	13
Average rating	3,54

**Additional comments**

Lobbies in Slovenia do not function in the sense of western practices. They are still quite underdeveloped.

On national level, I believe its easier to lobby directly on governments, thus I rate influence on EP greater.

It is probably also a matter of visibility, because at national level the whole lobbying process is less transparent. In some Member States, like France, lobbying even has a negative connotation, but this doesn't mean lobbying is absent. This is why the influence being greater is probably a perception rather than a reality.

depending on the country as well

No experience of national parliament

Cannot tell, have never worked at a national Parliament

But different: in EP it is more visible, in national parliaments more through informal networks and contacts



Less personal interconnections on European than on national level

In a different way; national p is not such an open process i believe as in the EP

Not so much greater perhaps, but certainly much more visible than in the national Parliaments

With the single market in place, there are lobbies in the EP from all over the Union, which makes it more important. Also it is important to differ from lobby and corruption of deputies.

Non sono in grado di valutare non avendo esperienza simile nel Parlamento nazionale

#### **D5 How do you judge the lobbies' work in respect to the cohesion of the parliamentary groups?**

It makes the groups less cohesive	No effect	It makes the groups more cohesive
64	63	10
46,7%	46,0%	7,3%

Answers	137
Skipped	51
Add. comments	9
Average rating	1,61

#### **Additional comments**

Strategic behaviour of lobbyists makes groups less cohesive

It depends on the topic, the political group and the national delegations. EPP and S&D are much more divided by national topics and the lobbies are part of the reason why they might be divided.

It greatly depends

Depends on the issue - whether it is one that has very significantly differing impacts on different member states (then potentially reducing cohesion), or is rather a matter of principle or ideology (then potentially increasing cohesion).

Differences among national delegations

But not a lot less cohesive. national interests have bigger effect on loss of cohesion

Case by case analysis; no trend

My group tends not to be lobbied by big business groups so I have no real view but I'd imagine it makes it less cohesive

Different countries, different national companies may have different opinion on the legislation. Every deputy will strive to protect his own national interests. If there is a disparity between the national and EU lobby, there might be divisions in the group (personal opinion)

**D6 How do you judge the lobbies' work in respect to the possibility that MEP of different political groups but from the same member state vote together in the same way, thus not respecting the group's line?**

It makes it less likely for these MEPs to vote together	It has no effect	It makes it more likely for these MEPs to vote together
8	42	87
5,8%	30,7%	63,5%

Answers	137
Skipped	51
Add. comments	6
Average rating	2,58

**Additional comments**

Depends, I could imagine that MEPs will be susceptible to arguments to protect jobs in "national champions"

Depends on the issue and who does the lobby work and in what domain

Uninformed MEPs usually follow the group line, which often is the line of the shadow rapporteur, especially in small groups where there are not enough MEPs to do a second check. Lobbyists are often good to point out captured positions and provide for a second view.

I work in horizontal committees like BUDG and CONT and the ones who lobby are mostly the EC and the Council.

As above - if the issue is divisive along national lines then lobbying can result in nationally aligned voting across political groups

As in my comment above

**D7 Which are the policy areas where you think that the lobbies are more influent at the European level?**

Finance and economic

Industrial policy, health, energy, trade

Finance, Nuclear, Automobile

Environment, energy, industry, banking/finance

Internal Market, Consumer Policy, Agriculture

Health, transport

Agriculture, ITRE

Defence and Security

Data protection, copyright, food and chemical industries

Industry (REACH - meaning chemicals etc, food safety, alcohol, transport), regional policy (member states), agriculture (massively member states and there massive lobby by Agri lobbyists.)

Industry, energy

Energy, industry, health (namely pharmaceuticals), environment  
Economic and monetary affairs, Industrial, energy and internal market policy  
Energy, finance, industry, environment  
Industry financials  
Industry, chemistry, nuclear,  
Internal market in general; Work of the following committees: IMCO, ENVI  
Lobbies by member states are much different than by private sector or labour unions.  
And then you have to make the difference by legislative work or none (for example Foreign Affairs)  
Economy  
Agriculture, Pharmaceuticals  
Health Environment Fisheries Regional policy  
More influential in foreign affairs, trade and consumer protection issues than in budgetary matters.  
Environment, energy, industry  
Corporate legislation, internal market  
Environment, energy, industry, pharmaceutical industry  
Economic and financial affairs, energy, internal market, environment  
Financial Services by far as this is one of the most technical and complex area and interests are represented pretty one sided (i.e. there is no "natural" adversary such as an environment NGO, although finance watch might fill this gap to some degree), environmental policy, technical areas in energy or telecommunication  
Infrastructure  
Everything that concerns ITRE, ENVI, AGRI, TRAN, LIBE to some extent  
Agriculture  
Industrial policies and sector/ manufacturing. Environmental issues.  
ECON, IMCO, INTA, AGRI, ENVI  
Human Rights, Animal Welfare  
In all areas that are regulated on European level  
Pharmaceuticals, Chemistry  
The legislative policy areas: ENVI, ITRE, IMCO, TRANS...  
(Financial) industry, subsidies, technology/ research  
Health, Transport, Environment  
ENVI committee Ecommerce Transport (Aviation & Rail)  
Financial Service and Insurance legislation is dominated by the interest of the industry  
Energy, CAP, environment

All? Perhaps those that have more means are more effective...

Most areas

ITRE, ENVI, CULT

Economic policy, internal market, environment,...: any European policy in which economic interests in any way are involved.

Transport, environment (matters that are of public interest and will make it to the newspaper)

Economy, Agriculture and Energy

Energy, environment

Agriculture, environment, transport

Economic governance / Energy / Automotive Industries

Automotive industry, Chemical industry

ICT

Technical areas in general

Agriculture and Fishery, Manufacturing Industry, Finance and Banking, Environment, Research, External Aid

Economic, Industry, Medicines

Financial services, environmental issues

ENVI, ITRE, IMCO

Health

Consumer Protection Data Protection Citizens rights

Anywhere where profit can be made!

Trade / transport / energy / internal market

Internal Market, Energy, Agriculture, Fisheries

Business

Industry, Financial services

Environment, transport, single market, financial and economic affairs, development

Environment

Health

Agriculture and transportation

All technical policy areas where lobbies can bring additional expertise

Energy, Maritime policy, Agriculture, Health

Mercato interno, Agricoltura, Ambiente

Industria ambiente telecomunicazioni ricerca

Credo che le lobbies che operano nel campo dell'agricoltura siano effettivamente molto forti. Non posso esprimermi per altri campi perché non ne ho le competenze.

Industria

Chimica, industria

Industria, ambiente, mercato interno

Mercati finanziari

Ambiente, industria,

Internal trade

Energia, banche

quelle più tecniche e specifiche

Economia industria questioni sociali (tutela dei minori, donne e disabili) ambiente

Industria, finanza, affari interni, ambiente e salute pubblica

Ambiente, industria

Industria, agricoltura, trasporti

Ambiente, salute, agricoltura

Industria, ricerca, ambiente, politiche agricole e alimentari

agricoltura, industria

energia, commercio, diritti umani, mercato unico

politica industriale

Trasporti Ambiente

Ambiente industria telecomunicazioni

ENVI, LIBE

Industria

**D8 How much do you think that the following factors influence MEPs' final decision on how to vote?**

	1. Not at all	2	3	4	5. Very much
National party leadership	5,3%	17,6%	20,6%	29,8%	26,7%
EPG leadership	1,5%	8,4%	27,5%	46,6%	16,0%
National party delegation of MEPs	4,7%	10,9%	20,2%	38,0%	26,4%
The EP committee leadership	16,4%	34,4%	22,7%	24,2%	2,3%
The European Commission	26,0%	40,5%	26,7%	6,9%	0,0%
The national government	7,6%	27,5%	35,1%	22,9%	6,9%
European interest groups	3,9%	33,3%	40,3%	17,8%	4,7%
National interest groups	3,8%	22,3%	35,4%	32,3%	6,2%
Private citizens	16,0%	40,0%	28,0%	11,2%	4,8%

**D9 How often do you think that national interests of some MEPs are in contrast with the European party group's political line?**

- Almost never	- Rarely	- Sometimes	- Often	- Almost always
1	10	89	31	1
0,8%	7,6%	67,4%	23,5%	0,8%

Answers	132
Skipped	56
Add. comments	2
Average rating	3,16

**Additional comments**

Depends of the nationality of MEP (Belgians vote more pro EU than following their member state)

What is a national interest? Different political parties have obviously different views about the national interest. I have taken the national governments interest here

**D10 In case this contrast actually occurs, how do you think that MEPs vote?**

In defense of their national interests	Consistently with the political group's line
99	20
83,2%	16,8%

Answers	119
Skipped	69
Add. comments	21

**Additional comments**

I think it varies - if the national political party is in government, the MEP will more likely follow the national interests, but if not they will more likely follow the group. The personal opinion of the MEP is also a serious factor.

I would both to equal measures depending of the vote

I think even if MEP personally disagrees, often national interests win.

According to their personal conviction

I am not able to give a clear answer on that. If the national interest is in with or closer to the common values of the party then I would agree that an MEP is more likely to vote in defence of the national interest

Depending of the nationality

Depending on the MEP

Usually MEPs stick to the national line in the important cases while for minor issues they tend to vote in group line not to cause too much internal debate

Mostly with the political groups but not always

Depends on the issue

Depends on the issue at hand

We take our national parties line rather than the above

But it really depends case by case

depends on the MEP

None of both answers. The correct answer according to me is "consistently with the national party's line".

It depends on the acuteness of the issue

In bigger groups consistently with the political group's line. Not in EFD- group.

According to her own interest.

This really differs from one political area to the other, fisheries for instance is very nationally orientated whereas employment of the FEMM committee are much more transversal topics.

Depending on the importance of the national interest of course

Credo che votino al 50%

**D11 Do you believe that some committees can be considered more important than others?**

	Yes	No
	106	16
	86,9%	13,1%

Answers	122
Skipped	66
Add. comments	7

**Additional comments**

Some policies at EU level are more important than others - because they are in exclusive Union competence.

Budgetary control is feared, to a certain extent, but mostly hated. It is not taken seriously enough.

Depending on the EU supremacy over national law

AFET has no power at all for instance

There are committees that deal more with direct European regulation and these are the most important as this is what is applied in every country (ENVI, ITRE, TRANS, IMCO)

(Former) co-decision plays a major role for the importance of the committee

There are non legislative committees which are therefore factually less important

**D12 If yes, can you list the parliamentary committees that you believe are the most important?**

ECON ITRE

LIBE, IMCO, ENVI

ITRE, IMCO, TRAN, ENVI

ECON, ITRE

AGRI, REGIO, ITRE, BUDG...

ECON, ITRE, IMCO, TRAN

ECON, AGRI, IMCO, ITRE, ENVI

ITRE, ENVI, BUDG

ECON, JURI, IMCO for all topics. Other committees are also important but specifically in the fields they relate to, for ex AGRI or PECH

LIBE

AFET ITRE

ITRE; IMCO; AGRI; REGI; ENVI; TRAN and to some extent LIBE

ECON - TRAN - ITRE

AFET, BUDG, ITRE

AGRI TRAN BUDG

ITRE, IMCO, ENVI, REGI, AGRI, BUDG, ECON

ECON, ITRE, AGRI, IMCO, ENVI, BUDG, LIBE

ENVI, ITRE, ECON, AFET, LIBE

AFET, AFCE, ECON, ITRA, LIBE

All Committees dealing with the core competence of the European Union which is the internal market in general. Those committees are: IMCO, ECON (just for financial regulation), ENVI, REGI (just for structural funds)

Foreign Affairs / Economy / Libe

ECON, ENVI, ITRE

IMCO, ENVI, TRAN, AGRI, LIBE

Budget Control Economic and Financial Foreign Affairs Environment, Public health and food Safety Regional Policy

Although it is not given the most importance, I think CONT and BUDG are the most important. ECON gets more and more to do, and INTA is probably the most important one. AFET is overrated. PETI and FEMM are a joke.

I don't believe some are more important (though some are obviously less important). I merely agreed that some could be considered more important.

All committees that pass legislation. AFET or CULT are for example talk shops and less important

AGRI, ENVI, ITRE

ECON ENVI LIBE ITRE IMCO

Depends on how you define "important". In terms of regulatory influence, ECON, ENVI and ITRE are most important, followed by JURI. Especially for the first 3 the issues are



often so technical and complex that plenary is less capable of changing things and therefore rather inclined to take over the position. In Terms of important in as "reputation" foreign affairs, development etc are more important but ultimately have much less of a say.

IMCO, ENVI, BUDG, ECON, (CRIS), ITRE

Foreign Affairs, Budget, Legal Affairs

This is a very hard question to answer however I would find ECON, LIBE, BUDG, AGRI very important

ITRE ENVI IMCO JURI AGRI

Committees with legislative powers

International Trade Committee

ITRE, TRAN, ENVI, BUDG

AFET, ITRE

ECON, JURI, LIBE

ITRE, ENVI, TRANS, IMCO

The legislative committees

ITRE, TRAN, ENVI, AGRI, INTA, ECON

JURI, TRAN, ENVI, BUDGET, ITRE, AFCE, IMCO, INTA

ECON IMCO JURI ENVI

BUDG, ENVI, AGRI, IMCO, TRAN, INTA, PECH, ITRE

All Committees having legislative files...

Legislative committees, think ITRE ENVI etc

ECON, ITRE, LIBE, ENVI.

ITRE, AGRI, ECON

ECON, ENVI, IMCO, AGRI

TRAN ITRE ENVI IMCO

ECON TRAN ITRE ENVI IMCO

ECON

ITRE, LIBE, IMCO

IMCO, ECON, INTA, ITRE

AGRI, REGI, ENVI, ITRE, BUDG, CONT, IURI, IMCO

ECON, BUDG, ENVI, IMCO, INTA, ITRE, LIBE, REGI, AGRI,

ENVI ITRE IMCO

ECON

Agri Pech Envi

EMPL, INTA, AGRI, BUDG  
INTA, LIBE, ECON, BUDG, IMCO, ITRE  
IMCO, ITRE, LIBE  
ECON, AGRI, REGI, BUDG  
LIBE JURI  
AFET, ECON, LIBE, TRAN  
ECON, Home affairs, INTA, legal affairs, budgets, regional development, AGRI  
IMCO  
Afet, Inta, Econ, Envi, Agri  
ECON TRAN JURI IMCO  
Those which consider legislation as opposed to own initiative reports and resolutions  
IMCO INTER ECON TRAN  
Le commissioni con atti prettamente legislativi  
IMCO, BUDG, ITRE, AGRI, ENVI  
afet, itre  
IMCO, ECON, ENVI, BUDG, INTA, ITRE, TRAN  
ECON, ITRE  
ENVI, ITRE, IMCO, AGRI  
econ - envi  
IMCO, ECON, ITRE, BUDG  
ambiente, agricoltura, trasporti  
ITRE ECON JURI TRAN  
ECON, IMCO, BUDG, JURI  
LIBE /libertà, giustizia BUDG/ budget ENVI /ambiente ITRE /industria  
ITRE, ENVI, LIBE, AGRI, REGI  
Industria e ambiente  
Envi, itre, imco, agri  
Industria, agricoltura  
ITRE, ENVI, AGRI  
Itre, agri, tran  
ITRE, ENVI, ECON, AGRI, IMCO, REGI  
JURI, ECON, ITRE, IMCO, ENVI, AGRI, REGI  
ENVI; AGRI; INTRE; LIBE; ECON

Budg, itre, envi, cont, imco, jury

Industria, ambiente e agricoltura

**D13 Do you think that the logics of how MEPs vote vary between the different committees?**

Yes	No
92	28
76,7%	23,3%

Answers	120
Skipped	68
Add. comments	4

**Additional comments**

Cannot tell

Sometimes

Because of the size of the committee

National opposition (Fisheries) / group opposition (employment, ECON) / institutional opposition (Budget)

**D14 More specifically, do you believe that in some committees the political groups are more cohesive while in other committees MEPs vote more often together with their countrymen (even if they belong to different groups)?**

Yes	No
81	37
68,6%	31,4%

Answers	118
Skipped	70
Add. comments	5

**Additional comments**

It seems likely that so might be the case, but I lack the experience to be able to say yes or no

Cannot tell

Might be but not 100% sure about this

But this is also because of the consistency of a lot of committees is dominated by nationalities (for example LIBE has about 7 Dutch MEPs)

I am not sure, I am not an expert on voting patterns in different committees

**D15 If yes, can you specify in which committees the political groups are more cohesive?**

LIBE, FEMM

AFET, DEVE

in committees which have less legislative power or which stand for more universal issues  
- DROI; AFET; CULT for example

AFET

DEVE DROI LIBE

In those which treat more legislative acts, e.g. ECON, IMCO, ITRE

In AGRI for example there are clear country division in the CAP position. On the other side, political groups are more cohesive in committees like LIBE, ITRA, FEMM,

ENVI, IMCO

Depends of the ideology of the group (ALDE is strong cohesive in LIBE for instance)

TRAN, ITRE, BUDG

Environment, Public health and food Safety, Women's rights

Sorry, I can't.

BUDG, CONT

AFET, DROI

ENVI and EMPL seem a bit more cohesive though not much but hard to tell for an assistant who only follows 2 committees max.

Budget and budgetary control are often controlled by S&D and EPP like AGRI and REGI as well

No I cannot, I have no final overview

Where human rights are to be defended

TRAN, AFCO

No

ENVI

I cannot identify specific committees, but according to national priorities, some committees are more important than others for most member states

No

ENVI, AGRI; DEVE, FEMM, LIBE, TRAN

EMPL TRAN CULT

It really depends on the make up of the MEPs of the group in the particular committee. For example if there are 2 MEPs from a group in a committee that are ideologically close then they will vote the same on most issues however if there are difference then they will vote differently

LIBE, AFET, DROI, FEMM, SEDE, CULT

AFCO, AFET

AFET EMPL

AFET

Foreign affairs, INTA

Budg

JURI

ECON, employment, FEMM, ENVI: the strongest topics which make the party line and hold together.

Liberta civili diritti della donna diritti dell'uomo

ENVI

Afet

LIBE, AFET, DEVE

DEVE JURI INTA

FEMM EMPL

AFET, ECON, CULT, DEVE

Agri

Econ, Juri

AGRI

EMPL

**D16 And in which committees MEPs vote more often together with their countrymen? (in case you believe it's important, you can list specific nationalities)**

AGRI, PECH (both typical north-south division)

ITRE

German maybe

Sorry, no-one follows by nationality, unless doing a research on it. REGI and AGRI.

BUDG

In the committees dealing more with non-binding recommendations that can also be targeted to specific countries, e.g. PETI

AGRI, AFCO

AFET, LIBE

Foreign Affairs along the subject and Regional Affairs along the nationality

Human rights issues, foreign affairs issues

Agriculture

AFET, ENVI, AGRI, INTA, IMCO, ECON

Foreign Affairs Regional

Don't know.

AGRI

AGRI, PECH, ENVI, ITRE

AGRI PECH CULT REGI

You can see that in ECON with the British voting along similar lines but less so for other committees where it is only occasionally that there are very important national points at stake.

Budget

ITRE. Spanish and French often follow their capitals

No I cannot, I have no final overview

Where money is to be distributed to the MS

LIBE

It is more on some issues - like the CAP, or the fisheries' reform

EMPL

See above

LIBE

ECON, EMPL, PECH

ENVI IMCO ITRE

No idea of voting patterns across committees

AGRI, IMCO, TRAN, ECON, ITRE

AGRI, PECH, REGI

AGRI

LIBE

AGRI, regional development

AFET

Fisheries, and on certain specific topics AFET, INTA

Ambiente industria

AGRI

Imco

ITRE, AGRI, TRAN

ITRE TRAN ECON ENVI

LIBE PETI AGRI BUDG

REGI, AGRI, ITRE, ENVI

Non so

In molte la Germania

Regi  
 ENVI  
 IMCO, ENVI  
 Agri  
 Agricoltura, pesca e industria

**D17 If a piece of legislation is controversial, do you think that the contrasts are more likely to come up in the preliminary works of the committees or during the vote in the plenary session?**

In the committees' work	Indifferently in both moments	During the plenary session
55	45	21
45,5%	37,2%	17,4%

Answers	121
Skipped	67
Add. comments	3
Average rating	1,72

**Additional comments**

The committee work is often of more importance as decisions are discussed and debated there and by the time it goes to vote most people know how they will vote

In advance, during committee work, one tries to settle difference, but if not possible, it's gonna be power play in plenary - that is why I rate plenary.

**D18 In your opinion, why sometimes groups ask for a public and registered vote (the so-called "roll-call votes")?**

To show something to the general public; to put pressure on certain MEPs

To make sure that all group members vote in the same direction.

to ensure that the result of votes is available to public. to be able to justify their decision/behaviour in front of the citizens. when the EU level political group is divided along national lines.

Political statement

1) because they do not trust their colleagues of the same group 2) because they want to use the results to either display themselves or to use it in the press against their political enemies

For the record, show of national cohesion etc.

Group-cohesion

Cause as a matter of transparency and responsibility it should always be RCVs. But they aren't. So you have to ask at least sometimes to make the lines visible.

To force others not to vote against group line, and to be able to confront other groups MEPs with their voting behaviour

to map opponents and blame-shame own group for instance or they do it for publicity - to showcase, I voted in favour or against.

Transparency

To make pressure to the MEPs in following the group line

To verify cohesion but also to show openly to the press and citizens how they voted so that they can use this as a political argument later on, including in electoral battles)

In order to present their voting behaviour before their national constituencies and for not being held accountable for some majority decisions they did not support

For transparency or political reasons

To put in evidence which of the MEPs from other groups are not following the group's line or to enforce the group discipline among themselves.

To make the vote transparent.

As a image thing or to pressure some MEPs to follow the group line

To encourage group unity

Perhaps to show to their electorate their position

To publicly expose the position taken by each MEP on key or controversial issues

To challenge MEPs to follow their own line

Transparency

To show the voters that political opponents vote in favour, or against something and that the group that asked for the RCV is the only reliable party deserving a vote at the next elections.

Sometimes to be able to show voters how their group voted. sometimes to see how their own group members vote

To increase cohesion

to see what (national) political enemies vote for/against

To show to the public that they vote against a certain point

It's to show the public who voted which way because websites like votewatch.eu make this very transparent nowadays. Also it can give a clear message to the Council if it does not only say "a majority voted in favour" but instead you know how strong the majority was. While it might increase party cohesion a bit, I have not seen cases where it was demanded with the intention to increase party cohesion. Usually it is the greens or left who demand this and they are anyway more coherent than other groups.

For record of making MEPs follow political lines

To make political use of it

To force special consideration and discussion of a particular point, and sometimes to be able to keep track of voting behaviour of certain groups (to be able to criticise the substance, not necessarily just to be able to point out lack of group cohesion.)

It changes the results

In order to give explanations to their constituents



To have a proof of how they votes for concerned citizens and - more importantly - interest groups at home

To have proofs how themselves AND the others voted and to use that for publicity at home

Public scrutiny

To underline the importance of this vote. To make MEPs think twice before they vote. To make MEPs accountable for their votes.

Because of public interest

To track back decisions and hold MEPs responsible

To see who goes beyond the Group or National Delegation line

Transparency Power issues

Because visual counting is often wrong

Because of transparency. And it is ridiculous that we still do not have all votes as RCV

Populism

To see how MEPs vote so they can adjust the political strategy for a next vote on the same subject. Also lobby groups should more check the RCVs: that way they can pinpoint on the MEPs that do not vote according to their lobby interests...

To check how the individual MEPs vote

So that they don't lose their face in their constituencies at home

To know who was in favour

To be able to identify and to point their finger at those who voted in one way or another while their constituents might have expected them to vote otherwise

To control the cohesion of the group and to pressurize their members in view of the public

To ensure cohesion with the party line and to be able to watch other members votes

Several reasons: to discipline the Members of the own group, to be able to "name and shame" Members of other groups about controversial decisions, ...

National interest or political dissensions

Keep the group line

To check the line taken by other groups or for political point-scoring against other MEPs/groups.

Easier to follow who's not voting as the group suggested

To check their own members

On issues that are important to the electorate. Used often to put the position of political opponents on the record.

Political reasons, for voters back home or EU citizens.

to put pressure on MEPs who vote

Press/Media

To see how MEPs vote

In order to try to secure cohesion

To check on each others' position and when the vote is sensitive

When a sensitive amendment is presented by a specific group

In order to make MEPs accountable for their decisions in front of their electors

For individual MEPs or delegations to make public which way they voted, or to force their group to be more cohesive

Publicity

Per esprimere chiaramente la loro posizione

E un diretto dei cittadini

Perché, probabilmente, l'esito del voto in questione condiziona, in modo evidente, le politiche di alcuni Stati membri o è stato al centro di un forte dibattito mediatico.

Per trasparenza e rendicontazione del proprio operato

Desiderio di far conoscere la propria votazione agli elettori, responsabilizzare i singoli deputati e colleghi di gruppo politico

perché i cittadini sappiano in che modo hanno votato i diversi parlamentari. E' uno strumento di pressione sui parlamentari.

Per una questione di trasparenza e forse di coerenza con gli accordi presi con le lobbies in merito di voto

Per evitare "franchi tiratori" e per rendere palesi gli orientamenti politici dei singoli membri

Per trasparenza

Risposta molto complessa. Coesione del gruppo, aspetti mediatici.

Per avere una prova di come si è votato al provvedimento

Per marcare le differenze e le posizioni

Per due motivi: o per compattare il gruppo quando il voto è incerto, oppure per cercare di dividere un altro gruppo su una votazione in cui non hanno una linea unica forte

per fare in modo che la visibilità del voto da parte dell'opinione pubblica influenzi il comportamento di voto di alcuni MEP.

Per verificare chi ha votato e come

Per fare conoscere il comportamento del gruppo all'opinione pubblica

**D19 Do you think that these roll-call votes represent more or less the same logics of the secret votes?**

	Yes	No
	39	73
	34,8%	65,2%
Answers		112
Skipped		76
Add. comments		9

**Additional comments**

Yes but vice versa

Secret votes cannot be sold to the voters

Secret votes are held in order not to scare off the votes of people who are afraid to be exposed.

MEPs think more carefully what to vote for if it is a roll-call vote

In principle it is the same logic though for publicity reasons, MEPs who have a strong national issue simply change their vote afterwards for the minutes if there was a really controversial issue for their constituency.

Because of the large number of members yes

That is why you have them.

More attention will be paid to them as a record is kept and can be used by political opponents

The decision must be much for political

**D20 Do you remember some specific legislations where national interests of some member states were prominent, and in open contrast with the political line of a group? Can you list them (the more details, the better)?**

Rejection of ACTA: Polish delegation within EPP in favour

Cars / Co2 emissions - Germany and France defending their strong industry

Deciding on regional policy, agri budget and policies. You can check all on vote watch, all votes, preferences are explained and showcased there.

Energy Efficiency Directive

Nuclear energy and genetically modified food are topics where e.g. Austrian EPP members tend to vote with their compatriots and against the group line

In trade issues, the greens might vote against as a group, while country delegation of greens from Denmark (or the Netherlands) might vote in favour, because they are more pro-free trade. The socialists are splits in many votes concerning fisheries (the southern MEPs follow the commission while the centre are more pro-protectionism). The EPP is divided between Christian democrats and just conservatives, but not necessary national, it is a quite cohesive group.

Financial Transaction Tax

Financial regulation (the UK tends to be more reluctant), Agriculture

The six pack on the economic governance

ACTA Financial Transaction Tax

There is at least one famous case where the German automobile industry lobbied heavily, resulting in a very closely won vote in Parliament to stop a certain kind of legislation that would have "harmed" their business. This was around 10 years ago.

Energy generation (nuclear, renewables)

Eurobonds (ALDE in favour, German delegation against)

Lately the consultation procedure (i.e. not even EP competence!) on energy taxation where Diesel was going to be taxed more. Many German MEPs changed their vote against the background of national regional elections. All the economic governance dossiers (6 pack, 2 pack, euro bonds etc.) show clear national lines against the EP groups.

Schengen: the Netherlands

Things to do with Automotive Industry and Energy Policy. Industrial Emissions Directive. Budget (UK always a pain in the butt no matter which political group). Probably CAP/GMOs/other AGRI but I'm not too familiar.

Everything concerning Nuclear and genetic engineering

ACTA, PNR, EU-Patent All Austrian MEPs across all groups consistently vote against nuclear energy

European Patent (Spain & Italy against, all the other groups in favour). ACTA

Energy Taxation Directive

CAP, ACTA

SWIFT, ACTA, EU-Morocco fisheries protocol.

No

Austria is strictly against nuclear power - and therefore does not follow the EPP's party line. Same with GMOs, Austria

Third Energy Package Emergency Trade Preferences Pakistan

INTA agreements with Japan - German interests prevailed over group line

Cars (carbon levels)

Offshore oil and gas exploration - UK MEPs took a very distinct line. Working Time Directive - Again, some UK MEPs taking a national position. Common Fisheries Policy

ACTA

SURE (Garriga Report)

SURE report Mandate for Trilogue 2013

TDIP follow-up report

For example concerning the ban of nuclear power - many political groups were against, however, all Bulgarian MEPs, despite their group affiliation voted against.

Spanish delegation in the EPP - recognition of Kosovo's authority

Fisheries agreement with Morocco

Si, televisioni senza frontiere

Discussione pacchetti PAC in Commissione AGRI.

Relazione Sommer su etichettatura

Efficienza energetica

Brevetto unico Europeo

La votazione del six-pack sulla governance economica ha visto molti membri nordici contrari alla linea del gruppo S&D e più vicini a quella del PPE. Con il voto su ACTA è successo il contrario, molti membri del PPE si sono detti a favore della posizione di S&D

20/20

Politica di coesione / pac

Mi sembra significativo il brevetto europeo, per la Spagna.

**D21 Do you think that the political culture (in the broad sense of tradition) of a member state influences their MEPs' voting behaviour?**

	Yes	No
	101	13
	88,6%	11,4%

Answers	114
Skipped	74
Add. comments	11

**Additional comments**

Although I believe that once in the EP, the members develop a kind of a common culture.

Especially in shadow and trilogues meetings

Transparency is more popular among MEPs from the Nordic countries than among those from the Mediterranean countries and Eastern Europe.

I think this is the strongest factor. In some countries party cohesion is seen as important and therefore very strong

Parties in Southern countries tend to have a firm grip on their MEPS, whereas Northern MEPs tend to be more independent from their national parties

There are clear differences since some MEPs have more party coherence in their national system and it is less common there to question the party leadership. Others have more a "free mandate" understanding of their role in the EP.

Maybe sometimes and depends on the age of the MEP

I would hope that it continues to do so

Yes, but it varies and depends on the particular parties.

Topics like abortion, religion, economy

**D22 Do you believe that, in addition to the left-right cleavage (related to group's cohesion) and national affiliation, other dimensions along which the votes fall do exist inside the European Parliament? (for instance, pro/anti-EU, north/south, centre/periphery...)**

Yes	No
99	14
87,6%	12,4%
Answers	113
Skipped	75
Add. comments	18

### **Additional comments**

Countries with high debt vs. countries with low debt

Geographical positions of the countries (for example whether they have borders on the seas or inland only) can make a difference for the interest and therefore the vote

Euro-scepticism

I think regional dimension plays a great role, also pro-anti EU and I would also say religious values - being a fundamentalist or not.

Pro/anti-EU is a very strong cleavage as well as north/south. Another important factor is the size of the member state

North/south, but often coincides with right/left

I said yes but I would only partially agree. There are very seldom dossiers on integration issues such as the EP voting constituencies, euro bonds, etc. Here sometimes you have less left-right cleavage but the left-right is by far dominating. Some groups are more integrationist than others which means, it might actually be pro or contra integration but appears to be left-right.

Pro-anti Europe, control vs trust but verify, EPP &SD vs the rest – especially when it concerns vested interests like cohesion spending & agriculture

Much of your 'for instance' egs are actually the kinds of things that lead to / make up national differences/affiliations.

North/south on the issues of public spending and transparency, East/west when it comes to Gay rights

Gender

See EPP for votes on Economic governance packages (2-pack & 6 pack) north south conflict

Wanting more or less EU-integration (which is not the same as pro/anti), North/South, East/West, Strong state/weak state, Centrist state/non-centrist state. Religious/secular

Yes, but the dominant difference is most definitely Left-Right

Pro/anti-EU. Not all right wing MEPs represented in the NI are actually against the EU.

Parliament VS Council or EC

Nord - sud Europa

**D23 To conclude, how much do you agree with the following statement? "The European Parliament is surprisingly like all other democratic parliaments: the main dimension of voting behaviour is the classic left-right dimension of democratic politics. In contrast, national interests have very little systematic influence on voting in the European Parliament"**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
12	65	22	14	1
10,5%	57,0%	19,3%	12,3%	0,9%

Answers	114
Skipped	74
Add. comments	13
Average rating	2,36

### Additional comments

I think just like in every federal system, the representatives will inevitably be influenced by the interests of their electorate, be it a national state or a "Länder"/... Yet I agree that the European Parliament is probably more detached from national interests than one would expect.

Call for a split vote. Part 1: Agree. Part 2: Disagree.

This is a very simplistic and honestly not a university level posed statement or hypothesis. In comparison to national parliaments, the EP is compromise oriented. Also there are 27 Member States with national parliaments, in many newer democracies, notably in Eastern Europe, the right-left divide is absolutely not to be defined on same criteria than in West. Also, big differences in Mediterranean, Scandinavian, Benelux, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon cultures. Please do not use this as hypothesis, in a German university for example, this would fail even to be a homework hypothesis.

The left-right division is the most important but not the only factor

What you leave out in this question is the fact that there are no fixed coalitions in the EP. Therefore, it is completely different. On some issues you have a left-left-green-liberal coalition on others a right-right-liberal coalition. Everything is in flux and it is not clear when a dossier comes up, which way it goes. In a national parliament that supports the government, things are pretty clear from the outset of a proposal.

The main dimension is not the left right. National interest often constitute a role but definitely not always.

National interests do have influence but not as much as one might think. Increasingly main dimension is left-right. National interests are not always systematic though they can be (e.g. German automotive/ industry - French energy policy / farmers - UK CAP liberalism, perhaps), sometimes they are just very specific/ad hoc/based on citizens/political atmosphere at home/particular circumstances. Perhaps I would lean towards 'neither agree nor disagree', but I hope you get my point!

Depends. But it has a little bit of the two.

It's not democratic. No opposition

It is significantly different from other parliaments; it does not have right of initiative, the "government" does not originate from the Parliament, etc

National interests are still very strong

I would also disagree with the word "interest" which sounds like MEPs make their national sovereignty prevail on the European project. As mentioned above it can also be related to different party constructions and values, different socio-economic realities where a piece of legislation may have a positive impact in one country but be devastating in another.

I think it depends on the country - the UK is more 'cohesive' on some issues.

## Chapter 4

Competences of the five main EP committees, identified by question 11 of MEPs' assistants survey (July 2012):

**ITRE (Industry, Transport and Research)** committee deals mainly with: the EU's industrial and research policy, and development of new technologies; space policy; measures relating to energy policy in general and the security of energy supply and energy efficiency; the (former) Euratom Treaty and Supply Agency; nuclear safety, decommissioning and waste disposal in the nuclear sector; and finally, the information society, information technology and telecommunication infrastructures.

**ENVI (Environment, Public Health and Food Safety)**, as its name says, deals with three macro-areas, all of them composed by many different domains. The first area is environmental policy and environmental protection measures (air, soil and water pollution, waste management and recycling, climate change, protection of biodiversity and sustainable development). The second is public health (programmes in the field of public health and pharmaceutical and cosmetic products). The third is food safety issues (the labelling and safety of foodstuffs, veterinary legislation and public health checks on food production systems).

**ECON (Economic and Monetary Affairs)** committee is responsible for the functioning of the Economic and Monetary Union, and the European monetary and financial system (including relations with the relevant institutions or organisations); free movements of capital and payments; rules on competition and State or public aid; tax provisions, and finally the regulation and supervision of financial services.

**IMCO (Internal Market and Consumer Protection)** deals mainly with the coordination at EU level of national legislation in the sphere of the internal market and for the customs union, (especially the free movement of goods); measures aiming at the removal of potential obstacles to the functioning of the internal market; and finally, the



promotion and protection of the economic interests of consumers (except for public health and food safety issues, competences of ENVI).

**AGRI (Agriculture and Rural Development)** committee is responsible mainly for the operation and development of the common agricultural policy, and for the rural development, including the activities of the relevant financial instruments.

**Table a1.** Descriptive statistics of data from question 11-16, MEPs' assistant survey 2012

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Committee importance	25	14	1.779.279	0	57
EPG cohesive	25	3.44	2987195	0	12
Nationality cohesive	25	3.36	4152108	0	17

**Source:** author's own compilation.

**Table a2.** Descriptive statistics of OLS regression for the five main committees.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
vote_dic	3627087	0.6085978	0.4880641	0	1
epg_yes_share	5818253	0.5893872	0.419668	0	1
country_yes_share	5582846	0.5947832	0.3339888	0	1

**Source:** author's own compilation.

**Table a3.** Descriptive statistics of committee distribution, EP6 (2004-2009).

	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cum.</b>
	0	676,8	12.50	12.50
	AFCO	211,5	3.91	16.41
	AFET	414,54	7.66	24.07
	AGRI	304,56	5.63	29.69
	BUDG	306,44	5.66	35.35
	CLIM	15,98	0.30	35.65
	CONT	172,96	3.19	38.84
	CULT	125,02	2.31	41.15
	Conciliation Committee	3,76	0.07	41.22
	DEVE	83,66	1.55	42.77
	ECON	333,7	6.16	48.93
	EMPL	211,5	3.91	52.84
	ENVI	664,58	12.28	65.12
	FEMM	97,76	1.81	66.92
	IMCO	220,9	4.08	71.00
	INTA	144,76	2.67	73.68
	ITRE	265,08	4.90	78.57
	JURI	152,28	2.81	81.39
	LIBE	334,64	6.18	87.57
	PECH	138,18	2.55	90.12
	PETI	24,44	0.45	90.57
	Parliament's delegation to the Conciliation Committee	5,64	0.10	90.68
	REGI	145,7	2.69	93.37
	TRAN	325,24	6.01	99.37
	Temporary Committee	33,84	0.63	100.00
	Total	5,413,460	100.00	

## Chapter 5

**Table a4.** Taxonomy of MEPs' loyalty / rebelliousness to national party

		<b>National party</b>	
		Loyal	Rebel
<b>EPG</b>	Loyal	88.92%	1.78%
	Rebel	6.56%	2.74%

**Source:** Hix et al. 2007, p. 137.

**Table a5.** Descriptive statistics of independent variables, EP6

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Euro country	5827060	9.706383	7.51162	1	27
Euro group	5827060	2.623404	1.952817	1	8
Budget	5827060	.0527504	.2235349	0	1
Legislative	5827060	.3668334	.4819405	0	1
Rule	5726480	.0842088	.2777007	0	1
Top 5 committees	5150260	.3473262	.4761205	0	1
Result	5818600	.6074313	.4883222	0	1
Margin	5824240	331.9295	190.5754	0	704
Size	5808463	51.69691	30.18965	5	99
Enlargment	5808463	.2892209	.4534007	0	1

**Source:** author's own compilation.

## Chapter 6

**Table a6.** Respondents of 2006 MEPs' survey disaggregated by country and EPG.

	ALDE	EPP-ED	G/EFA	EUL/ NGL	IND/ DEM	SOC	UEN	na	Total
Austria	0	3	1	0	0	2	0	1	7
Belgium	3	5	1	0	0	2	0	2	13
Cyprus	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	5
Czech Republic	0	6	0	3	0	2	0	0	11
Denmark	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	6
Estonia	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
Finland	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	5
France	5	3	2	1	0	12	0	1	24
Germany	2	19	6	3	0	4	0	0	34
Greece	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Hungary	1	3	0	0	0	4	0	0	8
Ireland	1	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	7
Italy	6	10	2	3	0	5	1	1	28
Latvia	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	4
Lithuania	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	6
Luxembourg	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Malta	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Netherlands	3	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	9
Poland	3	7	0	0	2	5	4	1	22
Portugal	0	3	0	0	0	6	0	0	9
Slovakia	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
Slovenia	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
Spain	1	5	1	1	0	3	0	0	11
Sweden	2	2	1	0	1	3	0	0	9
UK	6	13	2	0	4	10	0	2	37
Total	44	95	18	15	8	73	11	8	272

**Source:** author's own compilation on Farrell et al.'s data (2006)

**Table a7.** Respondents of 2010 MEPs' survey disaggregated by country and EPG.

	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP-ED	G/EFA	EUL/ NGL	SOC	na	Total
Austria	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	5
Belgium	3	0	0	2	1	0	3	0	9
Bulgaria	1	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	7
Cyprus	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	4
Czech Republic	0	3	0	1	0	0	5	0	9
Denmark	2	0	1	0	2	0	3	0	8
Estonia	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Finland	2	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	7
France	4	0	1	8	4	2	5	0	24
Germany	3	0	0	11	6	4	9	0	33
Greece	0	0	0	2	1	0	2	1	6
Hungary	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	4
Ireland	1	0	0	4	0	1	2	0	8
Italy	5	0	4	16	0	0	7	0	32
Latvia	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	3
Lithuania	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3
Luxembourg	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Malta	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
Netherlands	2	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	7
Poland	0	3	0	19	0	0	1	0	23
Portugal	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	1	6
Romania	5	0	0	5	0	0	3	1	14
Slovakia	1	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	6
Slovenia	3	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	6
Spain	1	0	0	5	1	0	6	1	14
Sweden	2	0	0	2	2	1	2	0	9
UK	6	5	3	0	0	0	1	0	15
Total	43	12	10	100	23	10	64	8	270

**Source:** author's own compilation on Farrell et al.'s data (2010)

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