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Why the 2014 European Elections Matter: Ten Key Votes in the 2009–2013 European Parliament

Abstract

The European Parliament elections in May 2014 will be the most important such elections to date. In addition to providing European citizens with an opportunity to express their views about how the EU has tackled the Eurozone crisis, the elections will produce a new political majority in the European Parliament. With the new powers of the European Parliament under the Lisbon Treaty, this new majority will shape EU policies in many important areas, from regulation of the single market to the free movement of persons, international trade agreements, reform of the common agricultural policy, carbon taxes, and so on. The new majority will also for the first time formally “elect” the next Commission President.

To illustrate what is at stake next May, this analysis looks at how the political composition of the current Parliament, EP7, has shaped EU policies. The paper first looks at how party-political coalitions have varied across policy areas, before focusing on what happened in “ten key votes”. These votes demonstrate the broad range of policy issues on which the European Parliament has power. They also highlight how the political make-up of the Parliament and the types of coalitions determine EU policy outcomes on many salient issues.

1 Introduction

The European Parliament elections in May 2014 will be the most important such elections to date. Normally during European Parliament election campaigns, voters, parties and the media are focussed on domestic rather than European issues. However, “Europe” is likely to play a more prominent role in these elections. The elections will be an opportunity for European citizens to express their views about how Europe’s leaders have addressed the crisis in the Eurozone. The elections will also provide a mandate for, or a break against, the plans for further political and economic integration in Europe. Above

all, though, they will produce a new political majority in the European Parliament. With the new powers of the European Parliament under the Lisbon Treaty and the growing role of the Parliament in the governance of the Eurozone, the party-political make-up of the next European Parliament will have a significant impact on the direction of the European Union (EU) policy agenda for the next five years. Among other things, the next European Parliament will have legislative powers to change the way the single market is regulated, to alter EU policies on the free movement of persons, to amend and approve the annual budget, to reform the Common

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Agricultural Policy, to ratify or reject an EU-US free trade agreement, and to scrutinise the implementation of the “fiscal compact” treaty and the other new provisions relating to the governance of the Eurozone.

In addition, for the first time the newly elected European Parliament will formally “elect” the next Commission President. This new power is likely to mean that the main European political parties will nominate “lead candidates” ahead of the elections, with the hope that their candidate will be elected as Commission President. The European Council will still propose a candidate for President (by a qualified-majority), and the Parliament will then vote (by an absolute majority) to accept or reject the nominee. However, the Lisbon Treaty states that when deciding who to propose, the European Council must “take into account the elections to the European Parliament”.¹ In practice this means there will be pressure on the governments to propose the candidate of the largest political group in the newly elected European Parliament. Of course, this might not be the case. However, the dynamics of the electoral campaign are likely to mean that if the governments prefer an alternative candidate, they will have to work hard to put together a majority-winning coalition amongst the main groups in the new Parliament in support of this candidate, for example by linking the appointment of the Commission President to the appointment of the next European Council President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

In short, the political majority that emerges from the May 2014 elections will not only determine the policies pursued by the European Parliament in the governance of the single market and the Eurozone but also determine who will hold the most powerful executive office in the EU machinery: the Commission President. The outcome of these elections will hence shape EU politics for the next five years, and perhaps beyond.

To illustrate how the political make-up of the European Parliament shapes policy outcomes in the EU this report focusses on 10 key votes in the 2009-14, the seventh directly-elected European Parliament (EP7). The material for this analysis is based on a research I conducted with

Doru Frantescu, the Policy Director of VoteWatch.eu, for the 2013 Annual Report of VoteWatch.² Choosing the “most important” ten votes out of more than 4,000 recorded (roll-call) votes in EP7 so far is not straightforward. When deciding which votes to choose we applied 3 criteria: (1) the issue is highly salient for many parties, member states and citizens in Europe; (2) the subject of the vote is relatively easy to explain to a general non-EU specialist audience; (3) the issue generated controversy both inside the European Parliament and in the public domain, which resulted in conflicts between and within the political groups in the Parliament.

Not all votes in the European Parliament are by roll-call. Indeed, some highly salient issues in EP7 have been decided by a show-of-hands vote rather than by a roll-call vote; such as the vote in February 2010 to reject the so-called SWIFT agreement on data sharing between the EU member states and the US. In these votes it is not possible to see how each MEP, national party, or political group voted. Nevertheless, the high volume of roll-call votes means that a recorded vote has been taken on almost all controversial issues that have passed through EP7, either on a crucial amendment to a text or on a legislative package as a whole. There is hence a lot of material to work with for this analysis.

First, though, to help understand what happened in each of these votes, I explain the composition of EP7, the coalitions that can and do form across policy areas, the “cohesion” of the groups in roll-call votes, and how these factors interact to determine “who wins”.

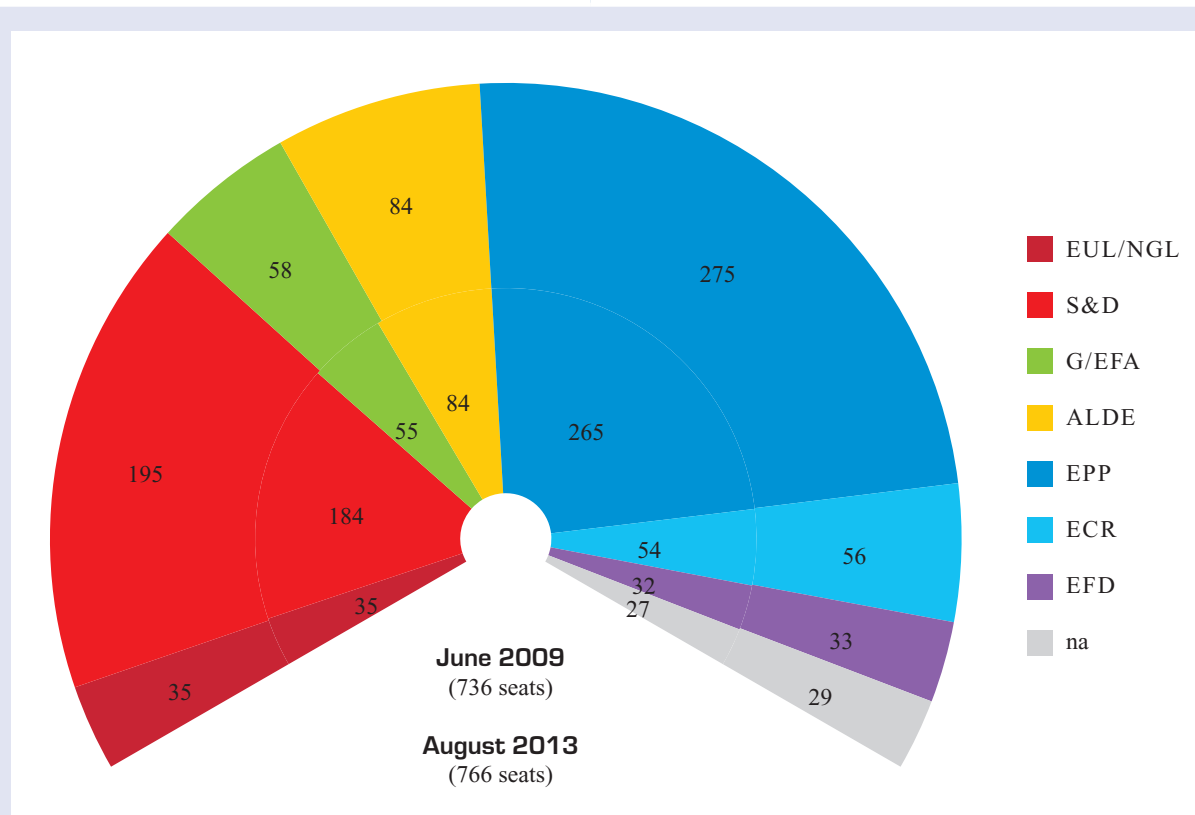
2 Composition, coalitions and cohesion in EP7

Figure 1 shows the composition of EP7 when it was first elected in June 2009 and also at the time of writing. Between these two dates the Parliament expanded from 736 to 766 members, first following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009, which increased the number of MEPs to 751, and then with the accession of Croatia to the EU in July 2013, which increased the number to 766. The Parliament will return to 751 members after the elections in May 2014.

¹ Article 17, paragraph 7, Treaty on European Union.

² See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/research.html>.

FIGURE 1. COMPOSITION OF EP7 IN JUNE 2009 AND AUGUST 2013



Note: The 2009-14 European Parliament had 736 seats after the 2009 elections, which went up to 754 after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 and then to 766 seats in July 2013 after the accession of Croatia to the EU.

Political group abbreviations:

EUL/NGL	European United Left-Nordic Green Left
S&D	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
G/EFA	Greens/European Free Alliance
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EPP	European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EFD	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
na	non-attached MEPs

Despite these changes, the overall party-political composition of the chamber has remained relatively constant. The European People's Party (EPP) on the centre-right has been the largest group, with 36 per cent of the seats. The Socialists and Democrats (S&D) on the centre-left has been the second largest, with 25 per cent. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE), has been third, with 11 per cent. The Greens/European Free Alliance (G/EFA) have been fourth, with 8 per cent. The EU-critical European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) have been fifth, with 7 per cent. The radical-left European United Left/Nordic

Green Left (EUL/NGL) have been sixth, with 5 per cent. The anti-European Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFG) have been seventh, with 4 per cent. And just under 4 per cent of MEPs have sat as "non-attached" members.

With this composition of political forces several potential "majority winning" coalitions have been possible. For example, a "super grand coalition" of EPP, S&D and ALDE commands 72 per cent of seats, while a "grand coalition" of EPP and S&D commands 61 per cent. If the two largest groups do not vote together, a centre-right

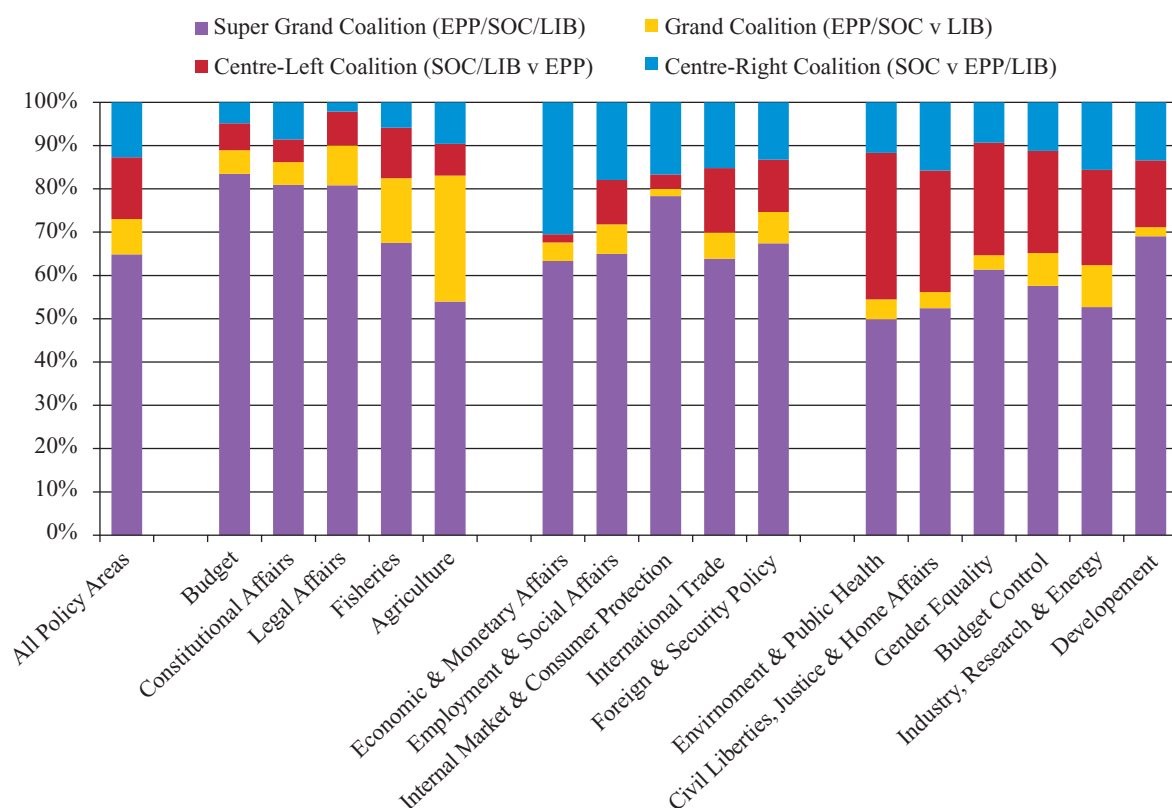
coalition of EPP, ECR and ALDE would command a majority (with 54 per cent of the seats), while a centre-left coalition of S&D, EUL-NGL, G/EFA and ALDE would be just short of a majority (with 49 per cent of seats). As a result, the balance of power in EP7 has been with the centre-right rather than the centre-left. Nevertheless, the centre-left has been able to win on some key votes when the voting “cohesion” in the EPP has broken down.

Meanwhile, it is worth pointing out that a “Eurosceptic coalition”, of the groups in EP7 who are critical of the institutional design of the EU and deeper European integration (EUL/NGL, ECR, EFD, and the non-attached members), commands 20 per cent of seats. This is not enough to win votes on their own. But this can be an influential bloc, and the size of these anti-European forces might increase after the May 2014 elections.

Since the first elected European Parliament in 1979 the propensity of the two largest groups to vote together has

gradually declined, to approximately 60 per cent of votes, while the frequency of left-right splits has increased, to approximately 40 per cent (Hix et al. 2005; cf. Kreppel and Tsebelis 1999). Interestingly, the frequency of “grand coalitions” between the EPP and S&D in roll-call votes in EP7 has been 70 per cent so far, while just under 30 per cent of votes have been split along left-right lines. One reason for the increasing frequency of the grand coalition in EP7 compared to EP6 or EP5 has been the fact that since June 2009 roll-call votes have been required in all final legislative votes, under the rules-of-procedure of EP7. In practice this has meant that battles have been fought over key amendments and then once a text has been agreed it has been voted on by an overwhelming majority. This was often the case in previous Parliaments but was not observed because roll-call votes were not held on many final legislative votes, for example when an issue was not particularly salient or when the outcome of a vote was a foregone conclusion.

FIGURE 2. COALITION PATTERNS BY POLICY AREA IN EP7



Note: The figure shows the proportion of times the pluralities of the parties in a particular coalition voted the same way in all roll-call votes in a policy area. The policy areas are identified by the committee from which the report emerged. The figure only includes policy areas for which there were at least 60 roll-call votes between July 2009 and July 2013. The appendix contains the raw figures.

Source: Compiled by author from data on www.VoteWatch.eu.

In addition, as Figure 2 shows, the aggregate pattern of coalitions hides significant variations across policy areas (cf. Hix and Høyland). The grand coalition (or the “super grand coalition” of EPP, S&D and ALDE) has been dominant in 5 policy areas: Budget; Constitutional Affairs; Legal Affairs; Fisheries; and Agriculture. In Agriculture, however, the EPP and S&D have often voted together against all the other political groups, including ALDE. In 5 policy areas, when EPP-S&D voting has broken down, ALDE have tended to vote with the EPP to form a centre-right coalition: Economic and Monetary Affairs; Employment and Social Affairs; Internal Market and Consumer Protection; International Trade; and Foreign and Security Policy. Finally, in six policy areas, when the EPP-S&D bloc has broken down, ALDE has tended to vote with the S&D to form a centre-left coalition: Environment and Public Health; Civil Liberties, and Justice and Home

Affairs; Gender Equality; Budget Control; Industry, Research and Energy; and (International) Development.

The final factor influencing which political groups are on the winning side in a vote – and hence who can claim to have shaped a particular policy outcome – is how “cohesive” the groups have been in a vote. As mentioned, for example, a centre-left coalition has only been able to form a winning majority if supported by some MEPs on the right; rebelling against the EPP group line for instance. So, Table 1 shows the voting cohesion of the political groups in all the roll-call votes in EP7 as well as by policy area. These cohesion scores are calculated using the Hix-Noury-Roland cohesion index (Hix et al. 2007). This index equals 100 in a vote if all the members of a group vote the same way, and equals 0 if the members of a group are split equally between Yes, No, and Abstain.

TABLE 1. POLITICAL GROUP COHESION BY POLICY AREA IN EP7

Policy Area	EUL/NGL	G/EFA	S&D	ALDE	EPP	ECR	EFD	Average
All Roll-Call Votes	79.3	94.6	91.7	88.9	93.0	87.2	49.7	83.5
Budget Control	84.1	96.3	94.2	96.3	95.7	91.5	62.6	88.7
International Trade	86.8	95.6	92.2	91.3	95.7	95.7	49.8	86.7
Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs	86.5	96.8	96.1	91.9	93.7	84.9	53.8	86.3
Foreign & Security Policy	82.2	94.9	93.5	93.3	94.9	90.0	54.0	86.1
Internal Market & Consumer Protection	76.0	95.7	97.2	94.7	95.8	96.3	40.4	85.1
Employment & Social Affairs	86.6	94.5	95.8	88.8	92.5	90.6	46.6	85.0
Constitutional Affairs	65.9	92.8	95.0	90.6	96.7	94.8	51.5	83.9
Environment & Public Health	85.6	97.5	91.3	85.7	89.2	86.7	51.0	83.9
Legal Affairs	80.1	95.4	92.1	85.4	95.9	90.1	45.3	83.5
Development	83.6	98.2	96.6	89.7	88.5	80.3	46.0	83.3
Economic & Monetary Affairs	76.0	90.9	94.0	90.5	95.5	87.9	42.8	82.5
Fisheries	78.8	91.7	89.6	92.0	93.3	86.0	43.7	82.2
Budget	71.7	93.2	90.7	85.6	95.0	80.9	51.9	81.3
Industry, Research & Energy	68.4	94.6	86.0	85.3	93.0	92.4	49.1	81.3
Gender Equality	89.7	95.9	97.2	84.8	74.5	81.0	43.2	80.9
Agriculture	67.2	93.9	74.0	77.4	87.8	79.2	46.7	75.2

Note: These cohesion scores are calculated using the Hix-Noury-Roland index (Hix et al. 2007). This index equals 100 in a vote if all the members of a group vote the same way, and equals 0 if the members of a group are split equally between Yes, No, and Abstain. The table only includes policy areas for which there were at least 60 roll-call votes between July 2009 and July 2013. The table is sorted by the average cohesion score in a policy area, from highest to lowest. The group with the highest cohesion score in a policy area is underlined.

Source: Compiled by author from data on www.VoteWatch.eu.

The voting cohesion of the European political groups has increased over time (Raunio 1997; Hix et al. 2005, 2007). This has continued in EP7, where the average cohesion score has been 83.5 – in other words, 84 per cent of MEPs in a group vote the same way. This is slightly higher than the level of cohesion amongst the Democrats and Republicans in the US House of Representatives, but slightly lower than cohesion in votes in national parliaments in Europe (where governments have considerable control over their “backbenchers”).

There has been some scepticism about whether cohesion scores in roll-call votes in the European Parliament are a fair reflection of the actual levels of party unity, because roll-call votes are requested by political groups often for strategic reasons (Carrubba et al. 2006; Hug 2010). Nevertheless, evidence from EP7 suggests that there is no statistical difference in the levels of group cohesion in roll-call votes that are compulsory (on final legislative votes) compared to the levels of group cohesion in roll-call votes that are requested by the groups (Hix et al. 2013, cf. Høyland 2010). Hence, this suggests that cohesion scores in roll-call votes in the European Parliament are reasonable indicators of how well the leaderships of the groups are able to “keep their troops in line” in a particular policy area.

The results in Table 1 show that some groups are more successful in some policy areas than in others. On average all the main groups have cohesion scores above 87, with G/EFA highest, with 94.6. EPP have been least cohesive on Gender Equality issues, which influenced outcomes in several key votes. Meanwhile, S&D, ALDE, EUL/NGL and ECR have been least cohesive on Agriculture, which tends to split MEPs along national lines as well as along political group lines. In contrast, EPP have been the most cohesive group on International Trade, Foreign and Security Policy, Economic and Monetary Affairs, Legal Affairs, Fisheries, and Budget, while S&D have been the most cohesive group on Internal Market and Consumer Protection, Employment and Social Affairs, and Gender Equality. As we shall see, the two largest groups have been most successful in the policy areas on which they have been able to marshal their troops most effectively.

These factors – group size, coalition behaviour, and voting cohesion – consequently determine who “wins” and who “loses” in a key vote in the Parliament. Table 2 (see opposite page) shows the percentage of times each political group has been on the winning side in EP7 in all roll-call votes as well as by policy area. Overall, EPP have been on the winning side more often than any other political group (89 per cent of the time), with ALDE second (86 per cent) and S&D third (83 per cent). The other groups are a long way behind these three, with G/EFA (on 68 per cent) ahead of ECR (57 per cent), EFD (54 per cent) and EUL/NGL (52 per cent).

There is significant variance by policy area. EPP have been on the winning side most in 7 areas: Economic and Monetary Affairs; Legal Affairs; Constitutional Affairs; Budget Control; Employment and Social Affairs; and Industry, Research and Energy. Meanwhile, S&D win more often than EPP in 5 areas: Budget; Fisheries; Environment and Public Health; Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; and Gender Equality – in other words, in the areas where a centre-left coalition often forms and where EPP voting cohesion tends to be lower.

3 Ten key votes in EP7

Having given an overview of coalition and cohesion patterns, we can now look at the ten key votes that have shaped EP7. The votes are listed in chronological order. Tables A2 and A3 in the Appendix show the results of the votes by political group and member state, respectively.

Vote 1: Extension of maternity leave

On 20 October 2010 the European Parliament adopted its first reading position on the Directive on Maternity Leave.³ The draft legislation contained a number of measures extending the rights of mothers and pregnant women as well as more generous paternity leave. The centre-left groups supported the proposal, arguing that its provisions would ensure greater protection of women and encourage demographic growth. The centre-right groups, meanwhile, opposed the proposal, arguing that the legislation would impose extra costs, particularly on small businesses, and could cause indirect discrimination of women in the labour market, as employers would

³ European Parliament legislative resolution of 20 October 2010 on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding. See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/improvements-in-the-safety-and-health-at-work-of-pregnant-workers-and-workers-who-have-recently-give-12.html>.

TABLE 2. PERCENTAGE OF TIMES A POLITICAL GROUP WAS ON THE WINNING SIDE IN EP7

Policy Area	EUL/NGL	G/EFA	S&D	ALDE	EPP	ECR	EFD
All Roll-Call Votes	51.6	67.9	83.2	86.4	89.4	56.7	53.5
Economic & Monetary Affairs	31.5	67.1	69.2	93.4	98.1	50.2	54.3
Legal Affairs	51.1	68.8	90.8	82.3	97.9	69.5	68.1
Constitutional Affairs	31.6	64.5	89.5	92.8	96.7	52.0	43.4
Internal Market & Consumer Protection	50.0	75.0	83.3	98.3	96.7	88.3	56.7
Agriculture	48.0	55.4	88.7	67.0	94.4	64.4	77.4
Budget	68.5	77.8	94.4	92.6	94.2	36.5	41.3
Budget Control	55.1	84.6	71.4	76.1	92.7	44.7	51.7
Employment & Social Affairs	42.4	72.5	80.9	89.0	90.3	49.6	38.6
Foreign & Security Policy	37.1	62.9	84.9	90.1	89.5	58.6	55.7
Fisheries	52.0	61.7	92.2	80.5	89.0	71.4	63.0
International Trade	39.5	46.6	80.7	89.9	87.8	78.7	63.9
Industry, Research & Energy	40.3	43.0	76.3	81.2	86.0	73.7	73.1
Development	74.8	79.8	84.9	96.0	84.9	65.7	53.5
Environment & Public Health	64.6	67.2	78.4	84.2	76.0	68.9	52.2
Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs	61.8	74.5	80.9	90.6	75.3	50.2	38.6
Gender Equality	89.3	90.7	93.3	94.0	71.3	31.3	26.0

Note: The table shows the percentage of times the plurality of a political group voted on the winning side in a vote: Yes if the majority outcome was Yes, or No if the majority outcome was No. The table only includes policy areas for which there were at least 60 roll-call votes between July 2009 and July 2013. The table is sorted by the percentage of times the EPP was on the winning side in a policy area, from highest to lowest. The political group that was on the winning side most in a policy area is underlined.

Source: Compiled by author from data on www.VoteWatch.eu.

avoid hiring young women with a right to extended paid maternity leave.

The key vote was on an Amendment 12=38, on a proposal to extend maternity leave on full pay from 14 to 20 weeks. The vote passed by a narrow majority, with 327 in favour to 320 against. A centre-left coalition, of S&D, G/EFA and EUL/NGL, won the key vote with the support of 82 EPP MEPs, mainly from Poland, Italy, Hungary and Lithuania.

The Council's first reading is currently at a standstill, with a significant number of EU governments (mainly on the centre-right) opposed to the Council reaching a common

position on the issue. If the Council cannot reach an agreement, the legislation will fall.

Vote 2: Phasing out nuclear energy

On 17 November 2011 a majority of MEPs adopted the Parliament's position on the proposal for a Council decision on the Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for nuclear research and training activities.⁴ Only G/EFA and EUL/NGL voted against in the final vote. The Framework Programme determined the different research activities in nuclear energy and radiation protection, as well as the budget allocated for these activities. The phasing out of nuclear energy is a highly salient issue in several member states, particularly in Germany.

⁴ European Parliament legislative resolution of 17 November 2011 on the proposal for a Council decision concerning the Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for nuclear research and training activities (2012–2013). See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/framework-programme-of-the-european-atomic-energy-community-for-nuclear-research-and-training-activi-10.html>.

The key vote was on Amendment 36, which was drafted by G/EFA and proposed to commit the EU to phase out nuclear energy. The amendment was supported by EUL/NGL and G/EFA plus about two-thirds of S&D and almost half of ALDE. However, this centre-left coalition failed to reach a majority because the EPP (except for the Austrian MEPs), ECR, EFD and the other half of ALDE voted against the proposal. As a result, the amendment fell, with 210 voting in favour and 356 against.

Vote 3: Creation of eurobonds, to pool public debt in the eurozone

On 15 February 2012 the European Parliament gave its first reaction to the European Commission's Green Paper on "stability bonds".⁵ These are collective bonds, often referred to as "Eurobonds", for pooling the sovereign debt of Eurozone member states. The Parliament's Resolution was largely supportive of the initiative, arguing that Eurobonds are needed as part of the solution to the Eurozone's current financial problems. Although this was a non-legally binding Resolution, the position of the Parliament is nonetheless important because the European Parliament will play a significant role in the emerging governance of the Eurozone; in scrutinising the implementation of the European Stability Mechanism and monitoring the actions of the Commission, the Eurogroup of Eurozone Finance Ministers, and the European Central Bank.

The S&D and G/EFA groups, as well as the majority of MEPs from the EPP and ALDE, voted in favour of the resolution. However, 29 EPP MEPs from Germany and Sweden voted against, and 19 ALDE MEPs, also mainly from Germany, abstained. There was also opposition from ECR and most MEPs in EUL/NGL and EFD. The vote passed by 515 in favour, to 125 against, with 52 abstentions. There is hence a clear majority in the current European Parliament in favour of the introduction of Eurobonds. This was a strong signal to the governments in the member states.

Vote 4: European Financial Transaction Tax (FTT)

On 23 May 2012 a large majority of MEPs voted in support of a tax on financial transactions (FTT), to be levied by the EU member states.⁶ The proposal passed by 487 votes in favour to 152 against, with 46 abstentions. ECR and EFD voted *en bloc* against the proposal, as did most ALDE MEPs, although the French, Italian and Finnish members of ALDE voted in favour. Also, 20 EPP members voted against, from Malta, Cyprus, Sweden and Latvia, as did 6 S&D members, from Malta and Cyprus.

Following this vote in the Parliament, the EU governments failed to reach agreement in the Council on the FTT, which, as a tax-related issue, requires unanimity. As a result, in January 2013 the Council authorised the initiation of an "enhanced cooperation procedure" among the 11 member states who wanted to go ahead with the FTT: Austria, Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain. Interestingly, a majority of MEPs from all these member states except for Estonia voted in favour of an FTT (see Table A3 in the Appendix). However, a majority of MEPs from Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, and Sweden also voted in favour in the Parliament, while their governments have chosen not to sign up for an FTT. Meanwhile, the governments and a majority of MEPs from Cyprus, Denmark, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom remain opposed.

Vote 5: Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA)

Following entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament is now required to approve or reject trade agreements between the EU and third parties, although it cannot amend them. Under this provision, on 4 July 2012 the Parliament rejected the ratification of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) between

⁵ European Parliament resolution of 15 February 2012 on the feasibility of introducing stability bonds. See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/motions-for-resolutions-feasibility-of-introducing-stability-bonds-motion-for-a-resolution-vote-reso.html>.

⁶ European Parliament legislative resolution of 23 May 2012 on the proposal for a Council directive on a common system of financial transaction tax and amending Directive 2008/7/EC. See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/common-system-for-taxing-financial-transactions-draft-legislative-resolution-vote-legislative-resolu.html>.

the EU and its member states and Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, and the United States of America.⁷

The MEPs voted by 39 in favour, 478 against, and 165 abstentions. Most political groups voted against, while a majority of EPP and ECR members abstained in the final vote. MEPs raised concerns relating to data protection, fundamental freedoms, and the transparency of the ACTA negotiations. As a result of this vote, neither the EU nor any individual EU member state can join ACTA. This represented a significant victory for the European Parliament against the collective will of the 27 EU governments.

Vote 6: 2014-2020 EU budget

On 13 March 2013 the European Parliament adopted a Resolution criticising the cuts in the multi-annual budget – the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) – that had been agreed between the EU governments for the 2014-2020 period.⁸ According to the Resolution, MEPs would only consent to the MFF if it allowed for consolidation of the EU's system of own resources, and if the MFF permitted more flexibility between budget lines and across budget years. The Resolution passed by 506 in favour to 161 opposed.

A broad coalition, of EPP, S&D, ALDE, G/EFA and EUL/NGL, supported the Resolution, with only ECR and EFD and most of the non-attached MEPs voting against. However, a significant number of MEPs voted against the group line in the EPP, mainly from Central and Eastern Europe (Poland and Romania) and the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, and Finland). Also, within S&D, the British, Swedish and Danish delegations rebelled against the group position, and voted against the Resolution. In fact, despite the large majority in the vote, most Danish, Polish, Swedish and British MEPs voted against the Resolution.

Following the vote, informal negotiations took place between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission. Once an agreement is reached, the Parliament will have to either accept or reject the agreement – hence the significance of the vote on the Resolution, as a signal of Parliament's intent. If no agreement is reached by the end of 2013, the EU will operate on the basis of yearly budgets at the level of the 2013 ceilings, adjusted for inflation.

Vote 7: Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

On the same day, on 13 March 2013, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).⁹ Currently around 40 per cent of the EU budget is spent on CAP-related payments. The Resolution adopted by the Parliament proposed to maintain the current status quo, with some minor changes. Despite the fact that this was a non-legally binding Resolution, the outcome is significant because the Lisbon Treaty extended the ordinary legislative procedure (co-decision) to agricultural policy. Hence, the Resolution was a signal of the majority in Parliament's position in the on-going reform of the CAP, over which the Parliament will play a central role.

The motion passed by 474 in favour to 172 against. The “pro-CAP” majority in the vote was led by EPP, who were supported by S&D, ALDE, ECR and EFD. Only G/EFA and most of the EUL/NGL voted against, as did 56 S&D members, mainly from Germany and the UK, who voted against the group line.

Vote 8: Taxes on carbon emissions

On 16 April 2013 the European Parliament voted on a proposal by the Commission to boost the price of the EU “polluter's permits” within the Emissions Trading

⁷ European Parliament legislative resolution of 4 July 2012 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, Australia, Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the United Mexican States, the Kingdom of Morocco, New Zealand, the Republic of Singapore, the Swiss Confederation and the United States of America. See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/anti-counterfeiting-trade-agreement-between-the-eu-and-its-member-states-australia-canada-japan-the--2.html>.

⁸ European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2013 on the European Council conclusions of 7/8 February concerning the Multiannual Financial Framework. See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/multiannual-financial-framework-motion-for-a-resolution-vote-resolution-as-a-whole-2.html>.

⁹ European Parliament decision of 13 March 2013 on the opening of, and on the mandate for, interinstitutional negotiations on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP. See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/decision-on-the-opening-of-and-mandate-for-interinstitutional-negotiations-on-financing-management-a-33.html>.

Scheme.¹⁰ The proposal was mainly opposed by the EPP, who argued that the increase in prices is counter-productive at a time of economic downturn, because this would raise costs for industry and result in higher energy prices for consumers. On the other side, the centre-left groups supported the reform, arguing that more efforts are needed to fight pollution and climate change, and that renewable sources of energy should receive greater benefits at the expense of conventional energy sources that pollute more.

A proposal to *reject* the Commission proposal narrowly passed, by 334 in favour to 315 against. The EPP led the rejection (Yes) side, supported by ECR and EFD plus a large minority of ALDE, mainly from Germany, Netherlands, Bulgaria, and Estonia, as well as 24 S&D members, mainly from Poland and Romania. In favour of the Commission proposal (on the No side in the vote) were the majority of S&D members, plus ALDE, G/EFA, and EUL/NGL. Victory for the centre-right in this vote was secured because of a breakdown of cohesion in S&D and ALDE. Following rejection by the European Parliament, the proposal was sent back to the on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety committee in the Parliament.

Vote 9: Seat of the European Parliament: Strasbourg vs. Brussels

The next day, on 17 April 2013, the European Parliament voted on an amendment to a Resolution accompanying the final approval of the 2011 accounts of the European Parliament, which urged “the Member States to revise the issue of Parliament’s seat and working places in the next revision of the Treaty”.¹¹ The European Parliament has three places of work: Strasbourg, Brussels and Luxembourg, as defined by Protocol 6 of the Lisbon Treaty. Plenary sessions take place in Strasbourg and Brussels, while committee and political group meetings are held in Brussels, and some administrative offices

are in Luxembourg. The cost of moving from Brussels each month for the plenary sessions in Strasbourg has been highly salient in several member states, in particular the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. However, a modification of this arrangement would require a treaty amendment, although under the Lisbon Treaty the Parliament can propose changes to the treaty.

The motion passed by a clear majority, with 370 in favour to 281 against. A majority in all the groups except EPP voted in favour. A clear majority of French MEPs voted against, as did a slight majority of MEPs from 6 other member states: Germany, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Slovakia. Within EPP, the Swedish, Dutch and Belgian MEPs voted against the group line, and in favour of raising the issue of the Parliament’s seat.

Vote 10: EU-USA Free Trade Area

Finally, on 23 May 2013 a large majority of MEPs backed the proposed European Parliament position on negotiations for a free trade agreement with the US.¹² The Parliament’s position requests the Commission and the Council to exclude cultural and audio-visual services from the negotiating mandate, including those provided online. However, a number of other references to potential obstacles to an EU-US free trade agreement, such as GMOs and labour and environmental standards, were voted down and so not included in the final text. Under the EU Treaty international trade agreements are negotiated by the Commission, on a negotiating mandate adopted by the Council. To enter into force, however, trade agreements must be ratified by a majority vote in the European Parliament. Hence, the position of the Parliament on this is a significant signal to the governments.

The vote passed by 460 in favour to 105 against. Only EUL/NGL and G/EFA, as well as most non-attached members, were opposed. Amongst the member states,

¹⁰ European Parliament draft legislative resolution of 16 April 2013 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2003/87/EC clarifying provisions on the timing of auctions of greenhouse gas allowances. See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/clarifying-provisions-on-the-timing-of-auctions-of-greenhouse-gas-allowances-draft-legislative-resol.html>.

¹¹ European Parliament decision of 17 April 2013 on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2011, Section I – European Parliament. See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/2011-discharge-eu-general-budget-european-parliament-motion-for-a-resolution-paragraph-10-amendment-.html>.

¹² European Parliament resolution of 23 May 2013 on EU trade and investment negotiations with the United States of America. See <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/eu-trade-and-investment-agreement-negotiations-with-the-us-motion-for-resolution-vote-resolution-as-.html>.

only a majority of French MEPs voted against the position, while French MEPs in S&D and ALDE abstained.

4 Conclusion: Political consequences of the May 2014 elections

These 10 key votes demonstrate the broad range of salient policy issues on which the European Parliament has power. They also highlight that the political composition of the Parliament matters in determining the direction of EU policy on these issues. The result of the May 2014 elections could hence have real policy consequences for European citizens.

For example, more seats after May 2014 for the groups on the centre-right could mean the European Parliament changing its position on maternity leave. Meanwhile, more seats for the groups on the centre-left could mean a majority in the new Parliament in favour of the Commission's proposal to raise taxes on carbon emissions. Also, even on policy issues where there have been large majorities in EP7 in favour of a particular position, if the political composition of the Parliament changes, the overall position of the Parliament is also likely to change. For example, on the issue of the EU-US free trade agreement, several amendments to Parliament's position on the negotiating mandate, mainly from the left, were narrowly defeated. These could pass with a different political make-up of the chamber.

Hence, there are good reasons to vote in May 2014. There are also good reasons to treat these elections as genuine "European" elections, with a focus on the positions of MEPs, national parties, European political groups, and the prospective candidates for the Commission President on European policy issues. The outcome of these elections will matter for the majority in the European Parliament, which will influence the direction of EU

policy on a range of important issues, which in turn will have a significant impact on the lives of over 500 million European citizens.

More broadly, the 2014 elections could be the next step in the gradual emergence of what I have previously called "limited democratic politics" in the European Union (Hix 2008). Democratic party politics, between highly cohesive political groups who build partisan issue-specific coalitions on key legislative issues, is now highly developed in the European Parliament – as the outcomes in the 10 key votes analysed here show. If a party-based contest for the President of the Commission emerges in 2014, this would take the development of democratic politics in the EU to a new level. Some citizens in Europe would feel they have influenced the choice of the most powerful office in the EU for the first time. Moreover, the coalitions that form in support of the rival candidates for the Commission President, and in the post-election negotiations over the choice of the next Commission President and the other key offices in the EU, are likely to influence the types of coalitions that form in key legislative votes in the 2014-19 European Parliament. Politics in Brussels would then be a step closer to the type of democratic politics we are used to seeing in our national capitals or between the branches of government in Washington, DC.

This new democratic politics in the EU would still be "limited", in that it would still be primarily elite-based (for example with an indirect election of the Commission President) and there would still not be a clear government coalition against an opposition coalition. Nevertheless, a genuinely "European" election in 2014 connected to a contest for the Commission Presidency and party-political coalitions in the European Parliament would be significant reduction of the democratic deficit in the EU.

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Appendix

TABLE A1. COALITION PATTERNS BY POLICY AREA IN EP7

Policy area	Super Grand Coalition (EPP / SOC/ LIB)	Grand Coalition (EPP/ SOC v LIB)	Centre-Left Coalition (SOC/ LIB v EPP)	Centre-Right Coalition (SOC v EPP/ LIB)	Other Type of Coalition	Total Votes
All Policy Areas	2929	369	645	573	12	4528
Agriculture	191	103	26	34	0	354
Budget	415	27	31	24	2	499
Budget Control	205	27	84	40	0	356
Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs	140	10	75	42	0	267
Constitutional Affairs	123	8	8	13	0	152
Development	67	2	15	13	2	99
Economic & Monetary Affairs	266	18	8	128	2	422
Employment & Social Affairs	152	16	24	42	2	236
Environment & Public Health	205	19	139	48	1	412
Fisheries	104	23	18	9	0	154
Foreign & Security Policy	346	37	62	68	2	515
Gender Equality	92	5	39	14	0	150
Industry, Research & Energy	98	18	41	29	0	186
Internal Market & Consumer Protection	47	1	2	10	0	60
International Trade	189	18	44	45	0	296
Legal Affairs	114	13	11	3	0	141

Source: Compiled by author from data on www.VoteWatch.eu

TABLE A2. RESULT OF THE KEY VOTES, BY POLITICAL GROUP

	Vote 1			Vote 2			Vote 3			Vote 4			Vote 5			Vote 6			Vote 7			Vote 8			Vote 9			Vote 10		
Group	Y	N	A	Y	N	A	Y	N	A	Y	N	A	Y	N	A	Y	N	A	Y	N	A	Y	N	A	Y	N	A	Y	N	A
EUL/ NGL	30	0	0	18	6	3	0	13	18	23	0	5	0	30	0	24	3	3	5	25	1	3	22	7	16	10	8	0	30	0
G/EFA	47	2	3	49	1	0	52	0	3	52	3	1	0	57	0	46	2	8	0	53	1	1	54	1	55	0	0	3	43	1
S&D	138	30	5	96	43	20	175	0	1	152	6	14	1	167	6	152	20	0	110	54	2	24	123	28	123	23	26	126	9	9
ALDE	13	67	2	30	37	2	54	4	20	25	54	2	2	66	12	70	5	3	61	8	7	31	44	2	71	5	2	59	2	5
EPP	82	147	15	7	203	2	219	29	6	221	20	10	33	96	109	196	46	7	231	11	6	177	59	21	18	237	1	205	3	10
ECR	0	47	1	0	41	0	0	45	0	0	40	1	0	11	35	1	50	0	44	1	0	46	7	0	34	0	0	42	0	0
EFD	12	11	2	3	15	2	10	16	1	3	15	10	3	27	3	12	19	2	17	8	3	31	1	3	33	0	0	18	2	3
na	5	16	2	7	10	0	5	18	3	11	14	3	0	24	0	5	16	0	6	12	3	21	5	1	20	6	0	7	16	0
Total	327	320	30	210	356	29	515	125	52	487	152	46	39	478	165	506	161	23	474	172	23	334	315	63	370	281	37	460	105	28

Note: Y = Yes, N = No, A = Abstain.

Source: Compiled by author from data on www.VoteWatch.eu.

The 10 votes:

1. Extension of Maternity Leave
2. Phasing Out Nuclear Energy
3. Creation of Eurobonds, to Pool Public Debt in the Eurozone
4. European Financial Transactions Tax (FTT)
5. Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA)
6. 2014-2020 EU Budget
7. Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy
8. Taxes on Carbon Emissions
9. Seat of the European Parliament: Strasbourg vs. Brussels
10. EU-USA Free Trade Area

TABLE A3. RESULT OF THE KEY VOTES, BY MEMBER STATE

	Vote 1	Vote 2	Vote 3	Vote 4	Vote 5	Vote 6	Vote 7	Vote 8	Vote 9	Vote 10
Austria	3 13 0	17 0 0	13 3 3	17 1 0	0 13 6	13 5 0	10 8 1	9 7 3	10 8 1	11 7 0
Belgium	10 10 1	10 10 0	17 2 1	15 5 2	0 15 5	18 3 1	15 2 4	6 15 0	15 2 4	11 5 0
Bulgaria	9 7 0	3 7 4	17 0 0	13 4 0	0 16 0	12 0 0	7 9 0	15 1 0	7 9 0	15 0 0
Cyprus	4 1 1	4 2 0	4 0 2	0 4 2	0 6 0	6 0 0	1 2 3	2 2 2	1 2 3	1 3 0
Czech Rep.	10 10 0	2 16 1	9 9 4	10 7 1	0 11 9	12 8 0	14 2 4	12 5 4	14 2 4	14 5 0
Denmark	7 2 2	6 2 1	7 4 2	3 6 4	1 7 4	4 7 2	13 0 0	0 12 1	13 0 0	12 1 0
Estonia	2 4 0	1 2 1	4 0 2	2 4 0	0 6 0	6 0 0	4 2 0	4 2 0	4 2 0	5 1 0
Finland	6 7 0	4 7 1	6 4 1	10 2 1	1 8 3	9 3 0	8 4 0	6 6 0	8 4 0	9 2 0
France	33 33 0	17 42 1	57 8 1	58 1 3	21 41 5	64 3 0	17 52 2	25 45 2	17 52 2	25 26 13
Germany	22 69 4	38 46 0	45 23 21	81 12 2	8 49 37	89 1 3	40 46 6	43 48 1	40 46 6	53 17 2
Greece	14 5 0	12 9 0	17 1 1	20 0 0	1 15 5	18 1 0	10 7 3	10 4 6	10 7 3	10 4 0
Hungary	15 2 2	3 14 0	17 2 0	18 1 0	0 18 0	15 4 2	5 15 2	5 16 1	5 15 2	6 2 7
Ireland	4 7 0	4 3 3	10 1 0	4 2 4	0 7 4	9 0 2	9 2 0	1 9 1	9 2 0	9 1 0
Italy	54 8 1	21 34 3	67 0 0	57 1 9	5 46 14	63 2 0	32 30 3	46 22 0	32 30 3	41 2 0
Latvia	3 5 0	2 2 0	5 2 2	2 5 1	0 4 5	8 0 1	4 4 1	4 4 1	4 4 1	6 2 0
Lithuania	8 2 1	0 5 2	9 1 1	10 1 0	0 8 2	5 1 3	6 3 0	2 6 2	6 3 0	10 0 0
Luxembourg	2 4 0	2 4 0	6 0 0	3 1 2	0 5 1	6 0 0	3 3 0	4 2 0	3 3 0	5 1 0
Malta	3 2 0	2 1 0	4 0 0	0 5 0	0 6 0	0 0 0	1 1 1	1 1 0	1 1 1	5 0 0
Netherlands	6 15 0	8 12 0	15 9 2	12 13 0	0 22 2	17 6 1	26 0 0	9 17 0	26 0 0	14 9 0
Poland	23 21 1	2 40 2	33 11 0	32 10 1	0 49 0	7 40 1	16 30 0	50 0 0	16 30 0	47 0 0
Portugal	22 0 0	6 8 3	17 2 2	17 1 1	1 16 3	20 2 0	12 9 0	3 10 8	12 9 0	16 4 0
Romania	18 12 0	6 22 2	32 0 0	23 5 0	0 21 6	18 9 1	13 17 2	22 4 5	13 17 2	26 0 2
Slovakia	5 7 1	1 11 0	11 1 1	8 4 1	0 8 5	12 1 0	4 6 1	2 9 1	4 6 1	9 1 1
Slovenia	3 2 1	2 4 0	8 0 0	5 3 0	0 6 2	8 0 0	4 4 0	2 5 1	4 4 0	7 0 0
Spain	28 7 12	17 12 0	49 1 0	50 0 1	0 22 19	49 1 1	23 22 4	9 15 24	23 22 4	42 3 0
Sweden	6 8 3	5 6 5	10 6 4	10 8 0	0 14 5	2 15 3	17 1 0	4 16 0	17 1 0	12 4 0
U.Kingdom	7 57 0	15 35 0	26 35 2	7 46 11	1 39 23	16 49 2	56 0 0	38 32 0	56 0 0	39 5 3
Total	327 320 30	210 356 29	515 125 52	487 152 46	39 478 165	506 161 23	370 281 37	334 315 63	370 281 37	460 105 28

Source: Compiled by author from data on www.VoteWatch.eu.

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