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Political splits and Compromises in the European Parliament: voting in Strasbourg

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SUMMARY Although the left-right split is not as evident in the European Parliament as it is at a national level, and even though this split runs in parallel to the expression of MEPs' national sympathies, the division between left and right appears to be expressed with increased vigour alongside the more traditional split between proponents and opponents of European integration. These emerging political differences vary depending on the subject, and particularly according to three main types of centre-right, centre-left and centrist majorities (the so-called grand coalition majority). To explain these increasingly visible differences, this study will use the analysis of 16 roll call votes which illustrate the first year of the 7th legislature (2009-2014) and which are divided into five categories: the European political system; the economy, the social, agricultural and environmental area, external relations and the area of "Justice, Freedom and Security". It suggests that, in spite of its culture of compromise, the Parliament is not a monolithic institution, impermeable to political differences, but that it offers regular opportunities for political debate and contest [1].

INTRODUCTION 3,138 votes have taken place in the European Parliament, since the European elections in June 2009, between July 2009 and July 2010, most of them in Strasbourg [2]. Although these votes have been given relatively little media coverage, they are visible signs of an emerging European democracy. Indeed, MEPs do not sit according to their nationality, but by political group. This does not necessarily mean that nationalities play no role in the Parliament [3]. It does mean, however, that the left-right split is being expressed more vigorously alongside the more traditional division of proponents and opponents of European integration [4].

These conclusions are based on long term studies of roll call votes. A political group or a minimum of 40 MEPs are in fact allowed to ask for the recording of individual MEPs' votes, which are then made public. It should be noted that not all of the votes are recorded as roll call vote [5]. For example, the rejection of the first version of the SWIFT agreement on 11th February 2010 and the resolution on the Roma on 9th September 2010 were not recorded. Moreover, the act of requesting or not a roll call vote is a strategic choice by the groups: on the one hand, the "troops" can be mobi-

lised; on the other hand, it can encourage MEPs not to vote, so that they do not have to approve a result that is difficult to sell from a political and media point of view. We must therefore admit that this strategic aspect may reduce the representativeness of roll call votes [6]. At the same time, however, around one third of the votes can be analysed with precision. Furthermore, these votes have been linked to attendance lists in an interactive database – VoteWatch.eu - which enables the collection of relevant statistics [7].

Finally, the revision of the European Parliament's rules of procedures in 2009 makes the roll call vote obligatory to approve any final vote on a legislative act [8]. By adopting an approach developed in a recent study published by the Robert Schuman Foundation on the 6th Legislature (2004-2009) [9], we have analysed 16 roll call votes that are illustrative of the first year of the 7th Legislature (2009-2014). The 16 votes were selected on the basis of several criteria: their political importance (for the European political system or for their impact on European policies), their importance in the media (assessed notably because they were quoted by the Parliament's press department as being "highlights" of the year [10]), whether they were illustrative amongst

1. This study prolongs the reflection by Y. Bertoincini and T. Chopin, *Elections européennes : l'heure des choix - Le cas de la France*, Robert Schuman Foundation, Note n°45, May 2009.

2. European Parliament (EP), "Parliament's first year in numbers: July 2009 to July 2010", 03/09/2010, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/008-80685-243-08-36-901-20100831STO80674-2010-31-08-2010/default_en.htm

3. Cf. T. Chopin and C. Lépinay, « L'influence nationale au Parlement européen : état des lieux un an après les élections européennes », Robert Schuman Foundation, *European Issue* n°175-176, 28/06 and 05/07/2010.

4. See S. Hix, A. Noury, G. Roland, *Dimensions of Politics in the European Parliament*, Cambridge University Press 2007.

5. The other votes are votes by a show of hands or electronic votes.

6. Bjørn Høyland, "Procedural and party effects in European Parliament roll-call votes", *European Union Politics*, vol. 11 n°4, December 2010, pp. 597-613.

7. <http://www.votewatch.eu/> The authors thank the VoteWatch.eu team for allowing them to use their data. We would also like to thank Arnaud Magnier for his attentive reading of this text.

8. European Parliament, *Rules of procedure- 7th legislature*, November 2010, article 166.

9. Y. Bertoincini and T. Chopin, *Elections européennes : l'heure des choix*, op. cit., pp. 46-67.

10. European Parliament, "Parliament's first year in numbers: July 2009 to July 2010", op.cit.,

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the various categories identified in the previous study and whether the roll call vote was used.

Without going into all of the details, we endeavour to describe how divergences have emerged between political groups and also indicate the cases in which national delegations have adopted a different stance to their group. After highlighting the increasingly partisan approach that is emerging in Parliament, these 16 votes will be studied according to five major categories: the political system, the economy, social, agricultural and environmental issues, external relations and the area of "Justice, Freedom and Security".

1. A LOGIC OF ASSERTION WHICH IS INCREASINGLY DISTINCT

1.1. The major patterns of the 7th legislature

The 7th European election [11] witnessed a clear victory for the right wing which took 44.5% of the votes across the Union, an increase of 5.3 percentage points in comparison with 2004. On the other hand, the Social Democratic parties were defeated, winning only 29.2% of the vote; this was their weakest result since 1979. The right wing won in 20 of the 27 Member States; the left wing won in 7. The protest vote, traditionally greater during an intermediary election like European elections, was therefore weak in 2009.

In this standpoint, the political balance in the European Parliament seems to be relatively stable in comparison with the previous legislature. Indeed, the winning European People's Party (EPP) has almost the same weight it enjoyed during the last term in office (36%). The EPP's biggest "national" delegation is that of the Germans (42 MEPs) followed by the Italians (35). With the merger of the Italian Democrats with the European Socialists the weight of the European Socialist Party (PSE) – which became the "Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats" (S&D) – only declined slightly (25% against 27.6% between 2004 and 2009). The biggest S&D delegations are German (23 MEPs), Spanish (21) and Italian (21). The Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) experienced a slight stagnation (11.4% against 12.7%), but it continues to play a pivotal role in coalition building. The two main ALDE delegations are British and German (12 MEPs each).

The results of the parties on the left are similar to those of the Social Democrats. The far left is stagnating (2.9% of the votes in the Union) whilst the GUE/NGL Group (United European Left/Nordic Green Left), which rallies the far left force, went from 9.4% to 4.7% of the seats. Its three main delegations come from Germany, France and Portugal. Although the Greens achieved high scores in Belgium, France and Luxembourg and have improved their position, they only won 5.6% across the Union as a whole, with 54 MEPs, that is 7.5% of the Parliament. They only have MEPs in 14 Member States, with the two biggest groups being German and French (14 MEPs). In its "European Free Alliance" section, the Greens/EFA parliamentary group includes, amongst others, Catalan MEPs as well as a Corsican, a Scot, an independent Estonian and a Russian speaking Latvian MEP.

At the same time, these European elections heralded a further decline for the Eurosceptics. Declan Ganley, the founder of the Libertas movement, finally lost his wager by winning only one seat: the one of the Frenchman Philippe de Villiers. Eurosceptic MEPs are notably to be found within the EFD group – Europe of Freedom and Democracy (32 members, 4.3% of the Parliament) which mainly comprises two strong delegations: the Italian one (Northern League) and the British one (United Kingdom Independence Party, UKIP). Other Eurosceptic MEPs such as the Austrians in Hans-Peter Martin's List are in the "non-inscrits" group for non-attached members.

A new feature of the 7th legislative is the new Group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), which brings together 7.4% of the MEPs. Amongst these one can find British and Czech (ODS) conservatives – who were part of the EPP/ED group – as well as the Polish conservatives (PiS) – formerly in the UEN group. This group is both Eurosceptic conservative with regard to social issues and liberal from an economic point of view. It is a relatively fragile group in that it only just manages to achieve the representative threshold of 8 countries with the addition of five MEPs (Belgian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Dutch) whose withdrawal could lead to the end of the group. It is above all a pragmatic alliance to access posts and reports within Parliament. The far right won 6.6% on average and over 10% in 8 Member States (Belgium, Austria, Netherlands,

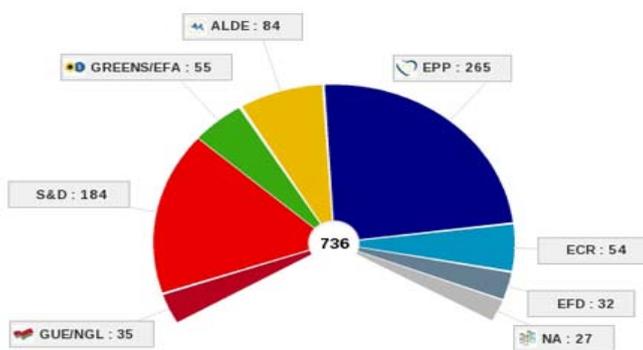
11. For a detailed commentary see T. Chopin, C. Deloy, "The European Elections 2009. Results, review, outlook" in "The State of the Union 2010. Schuman Report on Europe", Paris, Editions Lignes de repères, 2010.

Denmark, Hungary, Finland, Bulgaria and Italy). The increase was sharp in the UK where the British National Party (BNP) won two seats in Parliament. The far right is not a homogeneous movement and it is therefore hard to consider it as a united force. While some joined the EFD group, others are to be found amongst the non-attached [12].

These seven political groups form the backbone of the Parliament and represent the major political fami-

lies: socialist, ecologist, liberal, Christian-Democrat, conservative and so on. It is significant that in spite of a certain level of heterogeneity within the various groups, they show great discipline when it comes to voting, and the coherence of the partisan families remains high [13]. The cohesion of the groups in the European Parliament is just as high as that of the Democrat and Republican camps in the American Congress [14].

Distribution of MEPs by political group in the EP (2009-2014)



Source: European Parliament

EPP : Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)

S&D : Group of the Alliance of Progressive Socialists and Democrats at the European Parliament

ALDE : Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

GREENS/ EFA : Group of Greens/European Free Alliance

ECR : European Conservatives and Reformists

GUE/ NGL : Confederal Group of the European United Left/ Nordic Green Left

EFD : Group for Europe of Freedom and Democracy

NA : Non inscripts

1.2. A cultural history of transpartisan compromise

The European Parliament is typified by a culture of transpartisan compromise which has arisen due to cultural, political and institutional reasons.

From a "cultural" point of view, European affairs are marked by a culture of compromise, at a community level in general and at a Parliament level in particular. The culture of compromise has emerged within each institution – Commission, Council and Parliament – as they members have adopted converging stances contrasting with the other two, in spite of their belonging to rival political groups, as observed during the negotiation on the 2011 budget.

From a political point of view, the nature of the Union's competences helps us to understand the influence of the logic of compromise in Parliament. Neither labour nor employment policies, nor the vital issues in taxation, retirement pensions and the social protection system, nor the educational systems, nor public security are the genuine focus of EU policies. It is over these issues that the left-right split is the greatest at national level. The fact that consumer protection or health-care are the most disputed subjects, explains, on the contrary, that two political groups such as the EPP and

the S&D can adopt identical stances in around 2/3 of the votes submitted in the European Parliament.

The importance of these compromises is further enhanced by specific voting rules within Parliament which impede the expression of alternatives and the reversibility of the Community political system and make the constitution of clear, stable coalitions difficult. On the one hand, its functioning (attribution of responsibilities, reports and speaking time etc) relies on proportional rules. On the other hand, numbers of votes have to rally the support of "the majority of the component Members of Parliament" [15]. Indeed For legislative acts, the approval of amendments to a Commission proposal requires the absolute majority of component members of Parliament at second reading, as opposed to a simple majority of the votes cast for the first reading. At first reading, this may encourage the formation of occasional transpartisan majorities.

These transpartisan majorities occur frequently, since they have no effect from a national point of view or in terms of support for a government. The grand coalition agreement which was renewed between the EPP and the S&D in September 2009 bears witness to this. This so-called "technical" agreement aims to achieve the absolute majority of members (369

12. Simon Hix, "What to expect in the 2009-14 European Parliament: Return to the Grand Coalition?", Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (SIEPS), European Policy Analysis, n°8, August 2009, p.3., http://www.sieps.se/files/download-document/561-2009_8epa.html

13. Cf. Simon Hix, Christopher Lord, *Political Parties in the European Union*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997.

14. Hix, 2009, op.cit., p.1.

15. For a detailed inventory of these rules, see Yves Bertoncini and Thierry Chopin, op. cit., p. 476-477.

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MEPs out of 736) and to share the Presidency of the Parliament. This alliance can be explained from an arithmetical point of view. Neither a centre-right alliance ALDE-EPP (47.7% of the members) nor a centre-left alliance S&D, Greens/EFA, ALDE and GUE/NGL (48.6%) would achieve an absolute majority. With respectively 265 and 184 MEPs, the EPP and S&D groups rally 60.9% of the seats and rise above the threshold necessary to achieve an absolute majority [16]. Even though this technical agreement is not supposed to have a political impact on the coalition partners' voting freedom, it is obvious that the quest for a transpartisan compromise retains a high profile in the functioning of Parliament.

Last but not least, the traditional culture of compromise finds an explanation in Parliament's historical institutional assertion vis-à-vis the Commission and the Council on the basis of a kind of internal transpartisan unity. Although the logic of institutional assertion has not disappeared, it should now become secondary due to the dual effect of the growth of community competences in areas that are strictly political (in the area of "Freedom, Security, Justice" for example) and in the extension of the co-decision procedure that increases Parliament's legislative powers quite significantly. This dual phenomenon has been witnessed over the last few years and has been especially enhanced by the Lisbon Treaty. With the Lisbon Treaty, the Council and the Parliament decide on an equal footing with regard to the adoption of a greater majority of legislative acts: 89 out of 120 EU policy areas are subject to the "ordinary legislative procedure", 44 being new "co-decision" areas. *The enhancement of these powers is significant in terms of the area of "freedom, security and justice" and also from a budgetary point of view – the abolition of the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditures enables the Parliament to decide on the entire budget on an equal footing with the Council. Two subtle nuances might be added however to this point. Firstly, the increase in the Parliament's co-decision powers will not prevent it from holding sway over the other community institutions and notably vis-à-vis the Commission, as witnessed during negotiations over the European*

External Action Service [17]. Secondly co-decision sometimes quite paradoxically leads to a certain type of renationalisation of some debates as well as an increase in the number of diverging votes within the political groups; the Permanent Representations of some Member States' sometimes try to influence the MEPs of their respective countries to win the battles they have lost in the Council.

1.3. Votes that define distinct partisan choices

In spite of this culture of compromise, some recent empirical studies have shown that votes in Parliament have become increasingly polarized from an ideological point of view over the last ten years [18]. Partisan splits appear in the choice of which MEPs will be appointed to positions of responsibility (President of the Parliament, Presidents of the Committees in particular), but they especially emerge during regular votes which the MEPs cast, notably in plenary sessions.

The left-right division is of course not as clear in the Parliament as it is at national level [19]. But the study of the parliamentary votes reveals the progressive development of two-sided political splits: on the one hand between partisans and adversaries of continuing community integration, on the other hand between the left and the right split over economic issues and questions relative to the areas of "freedom, security and justice" (asylum, immigration etc). This duality might explain the non-emergence of a clear majority on the right because although the EPP, ALDE and ECR groups form a majority (54.9%) the Eurosceptics of the ECR group are quite apart from the Europhiles of the EPP and ALDE groups [20].

Data available on the subject confirms that the Greens and the Communist left vote much more often in the same way (79.3% of the votes recorded) than the Greens and the far right (45.2% of the votes); socialists and communists also often vote similarly (69.1% of the votes) more than the EPP and ALDE MEPs (67.9%). The proportion of joint votes between the EPP and the PSE declined over the period 1999-2004: it was over 65% in the early years but less than 64% in 2004 (for an overall average of 64.5% over that period).

16. Hix, 2009, op..cit., p.3.

17. Cf. Maxime Lefebvre, Christophe Hillion, "The European External Action Service : towards a common diplomacy?" *European Issues* n°184, Robert Schuman Foundation, 18th October 2010 - http://www.robert-schuman.eu/doc/questions_europe/qs-184-fr.pdf

18. See S. Hix, A. Noury, G. Roland, *Dimensions of Politics in the European Parliament*, op. cit.

19. On this point see, Paul Magnette, Yannis Papadopoulos, "On the Politicization of the European Consociation: a Middle way between" Hix and Bartolini", in *European Governance Paper*, Eurogov, 2008.

20. H. De Clerck-Sachsse, "The New European Parliament: All change or business as usual?", *CEPS Special report*, CEPS, August 2009, p.3., www.ceps.eu/ceps/download/1714

Table 1: Percentage of joint votes between the majorities of two political groups (1999-2004)

in %	EUL	Greens	PSE	ALDE	EPP	UEN
EUL	-	79.3	69.1	55.4	42.4	45.9
Greens	79.3	-	72		47.1	45.2
PSE	69.1	72	-	72.9	64.5	52.6
ALDE	55.4		72.9	-	67.9	55
EPP	42.4	47.1	64.5	67.9	-	71.2
UEN	45.9	45.2	52.6	55	71.2	-

Source : S Hix, A Noury, G Roland, Democratic politics in the European Parliament, Cambridge U.P., p. 151

In addition, a study of votes in Parliament since the beginning of the 2009-2014 legislature [21] clearly shows that the different types of coalition differ according to the subject at hand:

- a centre-right alliance (EPP, ALDE and ECR) on economic and trade issues, development, industry, research and energy;
- a centre-left alliance (S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL) on the budget, civil liberties, environment, gender equality;
- a grand centrist coalition (EPP, S&D and ALDE) on agriculture, fisheries, constitutional and foreign affairs, the internal market and budgetary control.

2. VOTES ON THE COMMUNITY POLITICAL SYSTEM

It is interesting firstly to analyse votes that focused on the functioning of the community political system. These votes convey the degree of MEPs' acceptance of the Union's main orientations from three standpoints: political, budgetary and constitutional.

2.1. The Political Dimension: investiture of the Barroso II Commission (9th February 2010) [22]

Although the Community political system is not really a parliamentary regime, the election of the President of the Commission by the Parliament is a high point of the legislature. The re-election of José Manuel Barroso on 16th October 2009 was however not subject of a roll call vote but of a secret ballot. Therefore, the vote of approval of the European Commission as a whole is considered.

The Barroso II Commission was approved on 9th February 2010 by 66.3% of MEPs; while Barroso had

been elected by 51.9% of them. The analysis of the roll call vote reveals "a *grand coalition*" and not a simple centre-right majority, since the Commission was approved not only by the EPP and ALDE groups but also by 88.6% of the S&D group. Of course the EPP – Barroso's political family – provided half of the favourable votes. But the comparison with the vote of approval of the "Barroso Commission I" vote in 2004 reveals an increase in the number of MEPs who approved the "Barroso Commission II" within the S&D groups (88.9% against 67.2% in 2004) and the ALDE group (86.9% against a previous 73.1%), contrary to the calls for the politicization of the election of the Commission. The vote on the appointment of the Commission was not just about electing its President, but was also a question of balance between commissioners and the distribution of portfolio. The GUE/NGL, Greens/EFA and non-attached MEPs voted against, like in 2004, the ECR group abstained and the EFD was divided.

The split between partisans and opponents of European integration is therefore not as relevant here, since the pro-European Greens/EFA voted against and some EFD MEPs voted in favour. Although it is difficult to classify this final vote according to a left-right split, the balance between the left and the right were at the heart of the negotiations between the EPP and S&D groups mainly over keys posts in the institutions and the Commission's composition. The agreement of the S&D group was counterbalanced by the perspective of holding the Presidency of the Parliament during the second mid-term of the legislature. However, it was not the S&D's agreement to the final investiture which led to the agreement over the legislature; in reality the former

21. Cf. "Voting Behaviour in the New European Parliament: the First Year", VoteWatch.eu. Annual Report 2010.

22. EP Decision of 9th February 2010 giving consent to the appointment of the Commission, http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=320&lang=en

already existed prior to the latter and the defection of the S&D would have caused the former to “implode”. This investiture vote therefore well illustrates the political dynamics behind a compromise. One might note the defections, for domestic political reasons, of the French Socialists (as in 2004) when they voted against, thereby breaking from their political group – as did the French ALDE MEPs (abstainers in 2004). Finally, British EFD MEPs opposed the investiture and were followed by the Finnish, Danish and French EFD MEPS (the only ones of their respective nationalities), whilst the majority of the group abstained.

2.2. The Budgetary Dimension: the 2010 budget (22nd October [23] and 17th December 2009 [24])

The adoption of the European budget often gives rise to an inter-institutional battle. In 2010, the Commission proposed a budget of €122.3 billion, reduced to €120.5 billion by the Council at first reading whilst 71.6% of MEPs voted for a budget of €127.5 billion on 22nd October 2009. The Parliament notably requested additional funds for the economic recovery package and a Dairy Fund [25]. Negotiations between the three institutions led to a budget of €122.937 billion, including a Dairy Fund [26], approved at second reading by 65.6% of MEPs on 17th December 2009.

Votes at 1st and 2nd reading differed little, suggesting that MEPs followed their political groups aiming at institutional assertion, by requesting an increase at first reading and then by rallying to the inter-institutional compromise at second reading. Moreover, the stricter admissibility criteria at second reading encouraged the Parliament to be moderate. In both cases, the majority comprised the EPP, S&D and ALDE groups, with the Greens/EFA and the GUE/NGL voting against. However, there were tensions in the Eurosceptic groups, the ECR and EFD groups. Within the ECR group, the official line was abstention, but at second reading the Polish and Lithuanian delegations voted in favour aligning themselves with the other MEPs of their nationality. Within the EFD, 48.4% of the group voted against at first reading, but 35.5% voted for at second reading, due to a U-turn of the Italian EFD delegation. The participation of the Northern League – the national party of Italian EFD - in Berlusconi’s go-

vernment could be recalled as a possible hypothesis. The French S&D and ALDE MEPs also broke away from their groups at first reading, voting against but then voted for at second reading.

In a “national” standpoint, a rate of approval below 50% can be observed on the part of MEPs from four countries: the British (30.6%), the Czechs (36.4%), the Danes (38.5%) and the Dutch (44%). The UK, Denmark and the Czech Republic are known for their greater tendency towards euroscepticism and incidentally have delegations within the ECR and EFD groups, whilst the Netherlands is the leading net contributor to the European budget.

2.3. The Constitutional Dimension: transitional adaptation to the number of MEPs (6th May 2010) [27]

On 6th May 2010, 65.1% of the MEPs accepted the Council’s “simplified” revision of the treaties bringing the number of MEPs temporarily up to 754 to enable the 18 additional MEPs created by the Lisbon Treaty to take their seats without the dismissal of three German MEPs. The EPP, S&D and ALDE groups voted in favour, the Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL and ECR groups voted against, the EFD group abstained.

The debate [28] mainly focused on the French case [29]. Finally, Parliament accepted the appointment of two additional French MEPs by the French Parliament, instead of taking into account the results of the 2009 European elections. French S&D MEPs (in opposition at national level) agreed to this solution, but may have influenced the reticence expressed in the resolution. Five French ALDE MEPs out of six however rejected it, as did all of the Green MEPs (who could have “won” a member in case of a direct election).

From the standpoint of proponents and opponents of European integration, one may note that the resolution was prepared by the federalist MEP Inigo Méndez de Vigo (EPP, ES), whilst the EFD and ECR groups were riddled with tensions. The EFD group officially abstained but this position was only followed by 33% of its members – slightly less than half of those present. The ECR group officially voted against arguing of the additional cost of having MEPs as observers [30]. But 10 Polish ECR MEPs (out of 15) voted in favour and two abstained, aligning themselves with the other Polish MEPs. 63.9% of the Bri-

23. EP Resolution on 22nd October 2009 on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2010, Section III – Commission (C7-0127/2009 – 2009/2002(BUD)) and Letter of amendment No 1/2010 (SEC(2009)1133) to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2010, http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=117&lang=en

24. EP Resolution of 17th December 2009 on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2010 as modified by the Council (all sections) (11902/2009 – C7-0127/2009 – 2009/2002(BUD)) and Letters of amendment Nos 1/2010 (SEC(2009)1133 – 14272/2009 – C7-0215/2009), 2/2010 (SEC(2009)1462 – 16328/2009 – C7-0292/2009) and 3/2010 (SEC(2009)1635 – 16731/2009 – C7-0304/2009) to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2010, cf. http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=298&lang=en

25. EP, “2010 Budget : more Money to fund the Recovery Plan and milk Fund”, 22/09/2010, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20091215IPR62941+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

26. EP, “Parliament adopts EU budget for 2010”, 17/12/2010, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20091215IPR66441+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

27. EP Resolution of 6th May 2010 on the draft protocol amending Protocol No 36 on transitional provisions concerning the composition of the European Parliament for the rest of the 2009-2014 parliamentary term: the European Parliament’s opinion, cf. http://votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=623&lang=en

28. EP, CRE 05/05/2010 - 17, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20100505+ITEM-017+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

29. Cf. Chopin and Lépinay, op. cit, p.8.

30. Explanation of the vote of P. Bradbourn (ECR), in EP, PV 06/05/2010 - 7.2, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20100506+ITEM-012+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

tish MEPs did not attend the plenary session which came just after the British elections.

2.4. Approval of the European External Action Service (8th July 2010) [31]

The fourth vote is a mix of the political, financial and constitutional aspects: the vote approving the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS). Although the treaty only required consultation of the Parliament, the latter set itself up as a key player in the inter-institutional negotiations arguing for its right of co-decision over the service's budget and over the rules establishing the status of the European civil servants. Negotiations led to a political agreement on 21st June 2010 which Parliament approved on 8th July 2010. The resolution of 8th July 2010 was approved by an 85.4% majority of MEPs present that is 74.7% of members. The majority was composed of 5 groups out of the 7: the EPP, ALDE, S&D, Greens as well as the ECR groups. The positive voting instruction on the

part of the ECR group led to low cohesion of 53.3%, whilst the other groups in favour showed cohesion of over 95% [32]. The split between partisans and opponents of European integration was to be found in the opposition of the GUE/NDL, EFD and the non-attached MEPs as well as higher levels of opposition amongst MEPs who might qualify as tendentiously more eurosceptics: the Dutch (32% against), the British (22% against), the Czechs (22.7% against), the Austrians (17.6% against), except for the Cypriots (33.3% against). It must be noted, , that these countries have more MEPs within the EFD, GUE/NGL and the non-attached groups.

These four votes illustrate quite clearly the format of the traditional centrist "grand coalition" with regard to institutional issues. They also suggest that the split between proponents and opponents of European integration and the logic of assertion vis-à-vis the other institutions are still significant as far as issues related to the European political system are concerned.

31. EP legislative resolution on 8th July 2010 on the proposal for a Council decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service cf. http://votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=851&lang=en

32. DataVoteWatch.eu

Table 2: Summary of votes on the Community political system

Votes analysed	Investiture of the Commission	2010 Budget		Adaptation of the Number of MEPs	EEAS
		1 st reading	2 nd reading		
Date	09/02/2010	22/10/2009	17/12/2009	06/05/2010	08/07/2010
Procedure	Approval	Budgetary		Approval	Consultation
Key feature	Result of the agreement of the grand coalition EPP-S&D	Logic of institutional assertion		Division of the Eurosceptics	Logic of institutional assertion
Type of coalition	Grand coalition (EPP + S&D + ALDE)		Grande coalition + EFD	Grand coalition	Grand coalition + Greens + ECR
For (1)	488 (66.4%)	Grand coalition	Grand coalition + EFD	479 (65.1%)	549 (74.7%)
Against (1)	137 (18.6%)	522 (71.6%)	483 (65.6%)	122 (16.6%)	78 (10.6%)
Abstentions	72 (9.8%)	68 (9.1%)	48 (8.5%)	15	17
Not present (2)	5.2%	39 (5%)	32 (4.3%)	16.3%, 63.9% of the British	12.5%
Following group (3)	92.84%	23.5%	14.3%	93.51%	94.57%
Following country (3)	71 ;63%	95.56%	94.14%	79.22%	85.40%
suiwant pays (3)	71,63%	83.52%	85.79%	79.22%	85.40%

Sources: Figures by VoteWatch.eu (via the European Parliament) analysed by the authors

(1) The percentages are given based on the total number of MEPs, unless otherwise stated.

(2) Non-present: absent MEPs, justifying their absence or who did not take part in the vote

(3) Percentages of MEPs following the majority of their political group or of their country's MEPs. Data provided by Vote-Watch.eu.

3. VOTES ON ECONOMIC ISSUES

Votes on economic issues are relevant due to the economic and financial crisis but also to observe the emergence of a left-right split.

3.1. Resolution on the "Europe 2020" Strategy (10th March 2010) [33]

Following the extraordinary European Council on 11th February 2010, Parliament organised a debate on 24th February 2010 with the Presidents of the European Council, H. Van Rompuy, and of the Commission, J-M Barroso, to discuss, amongst other matters, the EU 2020 Strategy, going beyond the Lisbon Strategy which came to an end in 2010. After the debate, a non-legislative resolution was adopted on 10th March 2010 by 62.9% of the MEPs. Whilst being positive about the new strategy, the resolution was critical of the "open coordination method" and of the inadequacy of the European budget; it also requested a binding inter-institutional agreement for the implementation of this strategy [34].

This resolution was also the visible result of a compromise by the addition of the positions of the EPP, S&D and ALDE groups which proposed and supported it in a "grand coalition" format. The negative votes of 6 German EPP MEPs (out of 42), the 12 French S&D MEPs present, 2 Belgian S&D MEPs and the abstention of 2 other Belgian S&D MEPs and a French ALDE MEP can be highlighted. The Greens, GUE/NGL and EFD groups as well as the non-attached MEPs voted against. 88.9% of the ECR group abstained having failed to push through its own motion but succeeding – with the EPP and ALDE's support – in the adoption of an amendment which demands structural reform. The opposition between proponents and opponents of European integration was not very relevant in this instance.

3.2. Own-initiative Report on Public Deficits (20th May 2010) [35]

On a topical economic theme and after a Commission communication, Parliament asked French S&D MEP, L. Hoang Ngoc to write an own-initiative report on the "long term viability of public finances in the context of the economic recovery". L. Hoang Ngoc was openly against the reduction of investment spending before the end of the crisis [36], but his report was radically changed by the "Economic and Monetary Affairs"

Committee, notably by the EPP and ALDE MEPs [37]. The resolution adopted is concerned about the high levels of debt and public deficit and calls for a better implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact. Since he failed to have his amendments adopted in plenary, Mr Hoang Ngoc demanded that his name be withdrawn from the report [38].

The non-legislative resolution was approved by a simple majority (49.3% of those present, 41.2% of members from the EPP and ALDE groups except some defections). The S&D, Greens, GUE/NGL and EFD groups opposed it. A simple majority would not have been sufficient for a legislative act [39]. The ECR group abstained but was divided, notably the British delegation: of 25, 7 voted in favour, 6 abstained, and 4 did not vote. Taking these data into consideration, the hypothesis might be suggested that the tension could have been a result of the acuteness of the deficit issue for the new British government coalition between the Conservatives (ECR) and the Lib-Dems (ALDE).

3.3. The Capital Requirements' Directive (7th July 2010) [40]

On economic matters, the Parliament is a co-legislator in many areas. Amongst the directives adopted to improve the governance of the financial markets, Parliament approved at first reading on 7th July 2010 the draft directive on "Capital requirements for the trading book and for re-securitisations, and the supervisory review of remuneration policies" (the so-called "CRD III"). In a view of a quick adoption, the directive was the subject of a political agreement with the Council at first reading. Amongst other things, this directive provides for the control of bankers' bonuses and the implementation of new Basel III rules on banks' own funds.

The political agreement was approved by a very broad majority – 90.6% of those present, 84.9% of the MEPs – including nearly all of the groups and 60.7% of the non-attached except for the GUE/NGL group and some from the EFD group. With regard to the GUE/NGL group, the instruction to abstain was followed by 60% of the members, while 28.6% voted against, since the national delegations were divided. Likewise within the EFD group, the instruction to vote in favour was only followed by 50% of the MEPs, since 10 Britons voted against. 22 British ECR MEPs out of 25 voted in support (like their

33. Cf. http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=446&lang=en

34. EP resolution of 10 March 2010 on EU 2020, 10/03/2010, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2010-0053+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

35. EP Resolution of 20th May 2010 on the long-term sustainability of public finances for a recovering economy, cf. http://votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=664&lang=en

36. L. Hoang-Ngoc, Speech in plenary on the report by on the long term sustainability of public finances" 20/05/2010, <http://www.liemhoangngoc.eu/?p=859>

37. EP, Oral explanations of votes, CRE 20/05/2010 - 7.5 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20100520+ITEM-008+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

38. EP, PV 20/05/2010 - 7.5, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+PV+20100520+ITEM-007-05+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

39. Cf. Bertoncini et Chopin, *op.cit.*, 2010, *loc. cit.*

40. Draft directive by the EP and the Council modifying the directives 2006/48/CE and 2006/49/CE with regard to "capital requirements for the trading book and for re-securitisations, and the supervisory review of remuneration policies", Cf. http://votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=827&lang=en

group), apparently following the favourable position of the British government [41]. However, interpreting the vote through the prism of national interest⁷ bears shortcomings, because 23.1% of British MEPs voted against, a much higher percentage than for other countries – including 2 ECR MEPs (in spite of the Conservatives’ presence in the British government). The abstention of the Czech ECR delegation suggests the relative pertinence

of the split between proponents and opponents of European integration.

The comparison of these votes in the economic area suggests that although long term European economic goals are the focus of relative consensus, the means to achieve them may be subject of greater politicisation and divergences, unless they result from a negotiated agreement with the other institutions.

41. *Ibid.*

Table 3: Summary of votes in the economic area

Votes	EU 2020 Strategy	Long term sustainability of public finances	Capital Requirements’ Directive
Date	10/03/2010	20/05/2010	07/07/2010
Procedure	Non legislative	Non legislative	Co-decision (1st reading)
Key feature	compromise by addition of EPP, ALDE, S&D groups’ positions	Originally an S&D report modified and then adopted by the ALDE and EPP groups	Extremely wide majority in support of a political agreement with the Council
Type of coalition	Grand coalition	Centre right coalition	Grande coalition élargie (avec Verts, ECR et EFD)
(ADLE + PPE)	Extended grand coalition (with Greens, ECR and EFD)	302 (49,3% présents, 41,2% membres)	625 (84,9%)
For (1)	462 (62.6%)	302 (49.3% presents, 41.2% members)	625 (84.9%)
Against (1)	140 (19.3%)	275 (45.1% presents, 37.7% members)	28
Abstentions (1)	58 (7.7%)	34	37
Not present (2)	10.3%	16.5%	6.3%
Following groups (3)	90.64%	95.26%	93.33%
Following country (3)	70.30%	53.43%	89.13%

Sources: Figures by VoteWatch.eu (via the European Parliament) analysed by the authors

(1) The percentages are given based on the total number of MEPs, unless otherwise stated.

(2) Non-present: absent MEPs, justifying their absence or who did not take part in the vote

(3) Percentages of MEPs following the majority of their political group or of their country’s MEPs. Data provided by Vote-Watch.eu.

4 VOTES ON SOCIAL, AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Social, agricultural and environmental issues are of particular concern for citizens and therefore also for MEPs. Although there is a relative consensus over environmental issues, social matters lead to a left-right split whilst those pertaining to agriculture are the source of a certain amount of national sensitivities.

4.1 Environment: Resolution on preparations for the Copenhagen Summit (25th November 2009) [42]

The prospect of the Copenhagen Summit in December 2009 provided Parliament with an opportunity to vote on the Union’s strategy following debate with the Commission and the Council. The Council had however obliged Parliament to make changes to its programme which, a priori, was not to the latter’s advantage. Notwithstanding this, the non-legislative resolution was demanding: it called on the Union to adopt a 40% goal for the reduction of its CO2 emissions by 2020 (instead of the current 20% goal with a possible extension to 30%) and put forward the figure of €30 billion per year by 2020 for the

42. EP Resolution of 25 November 2010 on the EU strategy for the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change (COP 15), cf. http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=196&lang=en

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Union's annual financial contribution (which the Council refused to publicly discuss). However, as a concession to the most conservative actors, it demanded commitments from emerging countries and mentioned nuclear energy and the carbon market as possible solutions.

The resolution was visibly the product of negotiations between the political groups and was supported by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and ECR groups, i.e. 70% of MEPs – only the EFD group officially opposed it. The GUE/NGL group gave no voting instructions due to internal disagreement, even within the national delegations, over the level of demands made in the resolution [43]. Moreover, there were several defections or divisions within the EPP group (division of the German delegation, opposition on the part of the Hungarians, abstention by the Austrians) and ALDE (the Germans notably abstained). Likewise, only 54.2% of the ECR MEPs present (48.1% of its members) followed the positive voting instruction, since the Polish delegation was against the 40% goal [44], adopting their country's position within the Council.

In spite of the transpartisan compromise between the political groups, a left/right split between "national delegations" can be observed amongst the Hungarians (defection of 12 EPP MEPs), the Germans (defection of 24 EPP MEPs, 10 against and 14 abstentions, 11 ALDE MEPs also abstained), the Austrians (defection of 6 EPP MEPs who abstained) and the Polish (defection of the ECR MEPs). Cohesion was higher amongst the S&D group (95.69% in comparison with 66.46% for the EPP group) [45] who seemed to be a key source of inspiration behind the resolution. VoteWatch.eu also suggests that a left/right split is increasingly visible with regard to environmental issues [46]. Hence, behind an apparent consensus, both national and European political dissensions have emerged.

4.2 Social Affairs: working time of independent lorry drivers (16th June 2010) [47].

Voting on social issues is an area in which the left/right split is most visible in the European Parliament as seen in the vote over the regulation of working time for independent lorry drivers. The latter were temporarily excluded from the directive on working time in road transport activities (which established a maximum weekly limit of 48 hours), but the Commission proposed

in October 2008 that the exemption be maintained. The rapporteur, Edit Bauer (EPP, HU) wrote a report supporting the Commission's position but this was rejected by the "Employment and Social Affairs" Committee [48]. The Parliament confirmed the parliamentary committee's position by two votes in plenary:

- the adoption by 368 votes (301 against, 8 abstentions) of an amendment rejecting the Commission's proposal [49],
- then the adoption by 383 votes (263 against, 23 abstentions) of a legislative resolution [50] asking the Commission to withdraw its project, which would lead to the end of the exemption.

These votes are rare cases of tight votes (50% of the members in favour of the amendment, 50.9% for the resolution) and were pushed through by the Parliament's left wing (S&D, GUE/NGL and the Greens/EFA). Although the ECR, EFD and ALDE groups voted against, within the EPP, which officially called to vote against, the national delegations were all deeply divided. The majority in favour can in fact be explained by the swing in favour of large proportions of the French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek and Bulgarian delegations in the EPP. Apart from the southerly location of the countries concerned, the unions of these countries have allegedly also exercised pressure [51]. Conversely, a high percentage of negative votes can be seen amongst the Hungarian, Polish, Finnish and Estonian MEPs since they had a large share of centre-right MEPs (EPP and ALDE) voting against. One can thus identify a twofold geographical split: on the one hand between Northern and Southern Europe and, on the other hand, between the "former EU15" and the "new Member States".

However, "national alignments" [52] might only be observed among the Hungarian, Polish and French MEPs – and even this is stated with reservation. Concerning the Hungarian MEPs, 86.4% were against the amendment but only 54.5% against the resolution. With regard to the Portuguese, the decrease in the number of EPP MEPs in favour of the resolution in comparison with the amendment (likewise for the Spanish EPP MEPs) suggests that there might have been pressure on the part of the political group which thus decreases the relevance of the theory of alignment out of "national interest". As for the French, not only did 25 EPP MEPs (out of 29) join the Socialist, Green and Communist MEPs but so

43. Explanation of vote of Mr. Matias on behalf of the GUE/NGL group, CRE 25/11/2009 - 7.5, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20091125&secondRef=ITE-M-008&language=FR&ring=B7-2009-0141#3-126>

44. Written explanation of vote of K. Szymanski 's vote (ECR/PL), *ibid.*

45. Data VoteWatch.eu

46. Annual Report 2010, *op.cit.*, p.5.

47. EP Legislative resolution on 16th June 2010 on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2002/15/EC on the organisation of the working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2010-0221&language=EN&ring=A7-2010-0137>

48. Karima Delli, "L'Europe sociale réussit son "crash-test" sur le temps de travail des chauffeurs routiers", *Échos d'euro-écologie*, 16/06/2010, <http://ecologie.blogs liberation.fr/euro-ecologie/2010/06/leurope-sociale-r%C3%A9ussit-son-crash-test-sur-le-temps-de-travail-des-chauffeurs-routiers.html>

49. "Amendment 1=29", *cf.* http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=717&lang=en

50. http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=718&lang=en

51. "Parliament votes to limit truckers' working hours", *EurActiv.com*, 17/06/2010, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/transport/parliament-votes-limit-truckers-working-hours-news-495329>

did 5 ALDE MEPs (exceptions in their group) and an EFD MEP (for the amendment). However the fact that the non-attached "National Front" MEPs voted against the resolution may contradict the hypothesis of an alignment in the name of "national interest".

4.3 Agriculture: Council Regulation on the Milk Market (22nd October 2009) [53]

Although the Lisbon Treaty introduced co-decision with regard to agricultural issues from 1st December 2009 [54], the Parliament had already been consulted [55] on Council's regulations creating or modifying agricultural "common market organisations" (CMOs). Since the milk market experienced a crisis in 2009, its CMO was adapted and the Member States were allowed to compensate producers who gave up production [56]. Parliament supported these measures in a vote on 22nd October 2009 in the backdrop of upcoming discussions on post-2013 CAP reform.

The legislative resolution was approved by 65.4% of the members from the EPP, S&D, ALDE and ECR groups. The Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups voted against, whilst the EFD group was divided and 34.6 % of the non-attached abstained. As is often the case with regard to agricultural issues [57], national sensitivities rose to the surface. Hence this vote is a rare case of evident national alignment since 84.6% of Danish MEPs voted against, with the EPP, S&D and ALDE Danish MEPs breaking away from their groups. Indeed, Denmark is known for its desire for in-depth reform of the CAP [58]. It might also be suggested that there was a relative left/right split amongst the Swedish (defection of the EPP MEPs and division of the S&D delegation), the Czech (abstention of the EPP and ECR MEPs) and, to a lesser degree, amongst the British (defection of 9 ECR MEPs out of 25). Actually, these three countries are also quite critical of the CAP [59]. The defection of 6 German ALDE MEPs (out of 12), who voted against, might also be noted.

Table 4: Summary of the votes on agricultural, environmental and social issues

Votes analysed	Milk Market	Preparation of the Copenhagen Summit	Independent Lorry Drivers' Working Time	
			Amendment	Resolution
Date	22/10/2009	25/11/2009	16/06/2010	
Procedure	Consultation	Non legislative	Co-decision (1st reading)	
Key Feature	Broad majority but visible national tension	Resolution negotiated but quite demanding – divides certain groups	Rare case of a successful proposal from the leftwing but a majority enabled by a swing of some EPP delegations	
Type of coalition	Grand coalition + ECR	Grand coalition + ECR and Greens	Left coalition – ALDE + some EPP	
For (1)	480 (65.4%)	516 (70.1%)	368 (50%)	383 (50.8%)
Against (1)	109 (17.6%)	92 (13.5%)	302 (41%)	26 (37%)
Abstention (1)	27 (3.8%)	70 (10.2%)	8	23
Not present(2)	16%	7.6%	8%	9.1%
Following groups (3)	88.03%	78.53%	82.42%	78.92%
Following country (3)	80.10%	77.50%	67.80%	64.87
suivant pays (3)	80,10%	77,50%	67.80%	64.87

Sources: Figures from Vote-Watch.eu (via the European Parliament) and analysed by the authors

(1) The percentages are given based on the total number of MEPs, unless otherwise stated.

(2) Not present: absent MEPs, justifying their absence or who did not take part in the vote

(3) Percentages of MEPs following the majority of their political group and of the country's MEPs. Data provided by Vote-Watch.eu.

53. EP Legislative resolution on 22nd October 2009 on the proposal for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (single CMO Regulation) cf. http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=119&lang=en

54. Article 43§2 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

55. Article 37§2 of the Treaty of the European Community (TEC)

56. EP, OEIL "22/10/2009 - EP: position, at first reading or single reading", <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/resume.jsp?id=5811032&eventId=1089923&backToCaller=NO&language=en>

57. Hix, 2009, op.cit., p.7.

58. "CAP Reform Profile – Denmark" <http://cap2020.ieep.eu/member-states/denmark>

59. "CAP Reform Profile – Czech Republic", http://cap2020.ieep.eu/member-states/czech_rep; "CAP Reform Profile – Sweden", <http://cap2020.ieep.eu/member-states/sweden>

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Amongst these three votes, a clear centre-left [60] coalition cannot really be observed but rather more heterogeneous ones: a grand coalition including the ECR or Greens/EFA groups or a leftwing coalition supported by part of the EPP group. Agricultural and social affairs are also areas where national sensitivities run high, though are not predominant. Likewise, the split between proponents and opponents of European integration is less evident.

5 VOTES ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Although it has limited formal powers with regard to external relations, the Parliament involves itself through informal channels and in fact, it enjoys growing formal powers. Resolutions with regard to external relations, notably the so-called "emergency" resolutions are generally adopted by broad majorities, often counterbalanced by low turnout. However, this category provides three examples of more contested resolutions which had a greater or lesser impact on EU external relations.

5.1 Resolution on the implementation of the Goldstone recommendations on Israel and Palestine (10th March 2010) [61]

A rare case of a politicised debate on foreign policy can be found in the non-legislative resolution that followed a debate with the Council and the Commission on the Goldstone Report. The report of 25th September 2009, written by the UN fact finding mission on the conflict in Gaza, criticised the war crimes committed by both sides in December 2008 but it was not approved by the UN General Assembly.

Whilst the political groups were negotiating a compromise text, the EPP group rejected it and tabled its own motion fifteen minutes before the motion delivery deadline [62]. This rather short motion asked the High Representative and Member States to "work towards a strong EU common position [...] publicly demanding the implementation of its recommendations" [63].

This motion only rallied 243 votes in favour (93.8% on the part of the EPP) and was rejected by 364 votes (49.5% of the members, mainly the ALDE, S&D, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL and ECR groups). However, there was no counter-majority since these groups also suffered division – 20% of the ALDE MEPs in particular abstained. Likewise the EFD, which abstained, was quite divided. Finally, it was the "compromise" motion carried forward

by the centre and left (S&D, ADLE, Greens/EFA and the GUE), which was adopted by 335 votes in favour, 287 against and 43 abstentions. Due to the late disengagement of the EPP, this motion had already included some of the latter's ideas and yet adopted a slightly more favourable position with regard to the Goldstone report even though it was considered as a clear approval [64]. This resolution was not the focus of a roll call vote even though the groups' positions can be estimated as being opposite to the vote on the EPP's motion.

5.2 Resolution on Kosovo's European Integration Process (8th July 2010) [65]

Another controversial resolution concerned Kosovo. After three reports on Kosovo by the Commission's DG Enlargement, this resolution suggested the prospect of enlargement. One should recall that the European Parliament must approve accession treaties to the Union. This resolution was prepared by way of a report and was relatively more moderate than the resolution of 5th February 2009 which called for Kosovo's recognition [66]. The resolution of 8th July 2010 asked the Member States to define a common approach to Kosovo beyond the discussions over its status.

It won the approval of 62% of the MEPs and was rejected by 20.9%. The majority comprised the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and ECR groups and opposition came from the EFD, GUE/NGL groups and 88% of the non-attached members. While the EFD based their opposition on the question of the sovereignty of Member States to decide, the GUE/NGL group believed that the unilateral secession of Kosovo was illegal. The positions of MEPs from five other Member States (Cyprus, Greece, Spain, Romania, Slovakia) which did not recognise Kosovo might also be noted. If MEPs are grouped by Member States, four countries with an opposing majority can be noticed: the Cypriots (83.3% against), the Greeks (81.8% against), the Spaniards (82% against) and the Romanians (60.6% against). However, only 38.5% of Slovakian MEPs voted against the resolution, 23.1% approved it, 15% abstained and 23.1% did not vote. Tension such as this was just as visible amongst the Czech and Portuguese delegations. Overall it seems that there was a relative decline in the opposition of MEPs from the first 5 countries compared to the resolution of 5th February 2009 which was rejected by all of the Cypriots and the Greeks, 85.4% of the Spaniards, 79.2% of the Romanians and 63.6% of the Slovaks.

60. Annual Report, op.cit., pp.4-5.

61. EP Resolution of 10th March 2010 on the implementation of the Goldstone recommendations on Israel and Palestine. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2010-0054&language=EN>

62. Anonymous interview, 08/08/2010

63. Motion by the EPP group, roll call vote on VoteWatch. eu : http://www.vote-watch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=447&lang=en and <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B7-2010-0135&language=EN>

64. P. Leigh, "Despite heavy lobbying, EU Parliament endorses Goldstone report", *Euroobserver*, 10/03/2010, <http://euobserver.com/9/29650>

65. EP Resolution of 8th July 2010 on the European integration process of Kosovo cf. http://vote-watch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=854&lang=en

66. See Bertoncini and Chopin, op.cit., 2009, pp. 58-60.

5.3. SWIFT Agreement (8th July 2010) [67]

The third vote analysed here bears witness to Parliament's increasing decision making powers in terms of foreign policy thanks to the Lisbon Treaty whereby its powers to approve the treaties signed by the Union are extended [68]. In its first use of its new powers on 11th February 2010, Parliament rejected the initial version of the so-called SWIFT agreement on the exchange of banking data with the USA, by 378 votes against 196 with 31 abstentions. No roll call vote was requested, but a majority of the S&D, GUE/NGL and ALDE groups publically opposed it, whilst the EPP appeared to accept it [69]. This was a vote of institutional assertion, and the dimension of "data protection" seemed to be secondary even though a certain left/right split could be observed on this dimension.

The roll call vote of 8th July 2010 approving the renegotiated SWIFT agreement deserves our attention. Since they had achieved some guarantees, 66.2% of the MEPs approved it. The EPP, S&D, ALDE, ECR and EFD groups gave positive voting instructions whilst the Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups opposed it, arguing that the guar-

antees were inadequate. A high non-participation rate is to be noted: although 17.3% of MEPs did not vote on the resolution, if absent MEPs are not counted, the rate of MEPs present but who did not vote can be estimated at around 10% [70], probably to avoid having to take a stance on this sensitive issue. Likewise, there were some significant defections such as the opposition of two EPP and three German S&D MEPs, some Swedish S&D members and a majority of Austrian MEPs against the agreement (56%), as these countries are extremely sensitive about matters pertaining to the protection of personal data.

Interestingly whilst foreign affairs are still mainly in the remit of the Member States, these three votes cannot really be analysed according to a split between proponents and opponents of European integration. It seems that there is rather more a grand centrist coalition in this area, except with regard to the Goldstone Report which is a rare case of politicisation at European level. However, the case of Kosovo invalidates the idea that "national interests" have disappeared in the European Parliament.

Table 5: Summary of voting on External Relations

Votes analysed	Goldstone Report (Gaza) EPP Motion	Kosovo	SWIFT Agreement
Date	10/03/2010	08/07/2010	08/07/2010
procedure	Non legislative	Non legislative	Approval
Key Feature	Rare case of an politicised debate on foreign relations	Persistence but decline (in comparison with 2009) of opposition on the part of five countries which did not recognise Kosovo	A broad majority but defections and non-attendance
Type of coalition	Counter Centre Left Coalition + ECR, only EPP voted in favour	Grand coalition extended to Greens and ECR	Grand coalition extended to EFD and ECR
For (1)	243 (33%)	455 (62%)	487 (66.2%)
Against (1)	364 (49.5%)	155 (20.9%)	110
Abstention (1)	60	28	12
Not present (2)	9.4%	13.3%	17.3% (of which 10% did not vote)
Following groups (3)	90.10%	81.50%	93.10%
Following country (3)	57.72%	83.23%	80.62%
suivant pays (3)	57.72%	83.23%	80.62%

Sources: Figures from Vote-Watch.eu (via the European Parliament) and analysed by the authors

(1) The percentages are given based on the total number of MEPs, unless otherwise stated.

(2) Not-present: absent MEPs, justifying their absence or who did not take part in the vote

(3) Percentages of MEPs following the majority of their political group and of the country's MEPs. Data provided by Vote-Watch.eu.

67. EP Legislative resolution of 8th July 2010 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the EU and the USA on the processing and transfer of Financial Messaging Data from the EU to the USA for the purposes of the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program, cf. http://votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=843&lang=en

68. Article 218 §6 a) TFEU.

69. "Parliament divided ahead of SWIFT vote" Euractiv.com, 04/02/2010, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/justice/parliament-divided-ahead-of-swift-vote>

70. Indeed, absence in plenary (when the MEP does not sign the attendance list) can be distinguished from non-participation to a vote. Exceptionally VoteWatch.eu does not provide data on the MEPs present but "who did not vote" but this rate is inferred from the plenary absence figures for the vote on the EEAS which took place on the same day.

6. VOTES ON THE AREA OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE

The vote on the SWIFT agreement also suggests that "Freedom, Security and Justice" (FSJ) issues, are increasingly politicised. Three other votes illustrate this phenomenon even though national sensitivities are still quite significant in this area.

6.1. The Stockholm Programme (25th November 2009) [71]

The Stockholm Programme is a five-year programme (2009-2014) put forward by the Swedish Presidency following a Commission communication. Although the resolution adopted on 25th November 2009 was non-legislative, Parliament tried to assert its position in the prospect of coming implementing decisions to be adopted under co-decision following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. This vote also can also be analysed in the context of difficult ongoing negotiations over the "Asylum Package" [72]. During the debate, the programme had been favourably received by liberal MEPs rather concerned about fundamental freedoms, but it was criticised by MEPs from Southern Europe – notably the Italians and Maltese – as being inadequate regarding immigration [73].

This resolution was therefore an exercise in compromise taking into consideration each group in Parliament, notably the EPP and the S&D, and especially with regard to asylum, the mutual acknowledgement of homosexual marriages and the funding for new prisons [74]. This explains the majority in favour (66.4 % of members) comprising the EPP, ALDE and S&D groups. 88.5% of EFD MEPs present and 100% of the ECR representatives present voted against it because of national sovereignty issues [75]. Their reticence might explain the high level of opponents amongst the Czech MEPs taken as a whole (50% against) and the British MEPs (48.6% against), as they have a particularly high profile within these two groups. The GUE/NGL group voted against in the name of migrant rights. This argument also explained the abstention instruction of the Green group in spite of their visible influence over some provisions of the resolution. This instruction was followed by 67.9% of the Green MEPs present, 18.9% did however approve the resolution (all nationalities taken together) and 13.2% voted against it.

Finally it might be suggested that there was a split within

the national delegation of one country – the Netherlands: not only was the resolution approved by the EPP, ALDE and S&D MEPs but also by the Greens/EFA and the GUE/NGL whilst the EFD, ECR and non-attached voted against it. This situation suggests a possible national split between proponents and opponents to European integration.

6.2. Freedom: Motions for a resolution on freedom of information in Italy and in the European Union (21st October 2009)

On 8th October, Parliament debated freedom of information in Italy with Commissioner Viviane Reding [76]. Since the subject was extremely politically sensitive, Parliament voted on 21st October 2009 on 9 motions tabled by different groups, without achieving a majority; the last vote on the ALDE resolution even ended in a draw of 338 votes in favour, 338 against and 8 abstentions. Two roll call votes are available on:

- the motion tabled by the EPP, ECR and EFD groups (322 votes against, 297 for and 25 abstentions) [77];
- and the motion tabled by the S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL groups (338 votes against, 335 for and 13 abstentions) [78].

It is striking to see that the political groups supported their respective Italian delegations because the votes on both of these resolutions can be interpreted mainly according to a European left/right split: MEPs from the EPP, ECR and EFD groups voted for the first motion and against the second, whilst the MEPs from the S&D, ALDE, GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups voted against the first and for the second. The ALDE group is indeed more to the left on social issues. Those who were not present (absent or who did not vote) prevented the creation of a majority even though their decreasing share in the second vote suggests that each group had tried to rally its troops. The Belgian, Dutch, Swedish and two Finnish (out of four) EPP MEPs and the Finnish and Dutch EFD MEPs abstained in the first vote. Likewise, although there is no list available of the roll call vote, it would appear that the equal numbers on the last resolution tabled by the ALDE group can notably be explained by the defection of the Irish ALDE MEPs after pressure from their government [79]. This seems to suggest that there was national interference but that this was mostly expressed at the level of national delegations within the groups.

71. EP resolution of 25th November 2009 on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – an area of Freedom, Security and Justice serving the citizen – Stockholm Programme, http://votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=222&lang=en

72. S. Guillaume, "Révision de la directive européenne des procédures d'octroi d'asile : un exercice d'équilibrisme", 19/03/2010, <http://www.sylvieguillaume.eu/2010/03/revision-de-la-directive-europeenne-des-procedures-doctroi-dasile-un-exercice-dequilibre/>

73. "Parliament split on 'progressive' Swedish immigration programme", Euractiv.com, 12/11/2009, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/socialeurope/parliament-split-progressive-swedish-immigration-programme/article-186266>

74. "Parliament approves Stockholm programme with prison add-ons", 26/11/2009, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/socialeurope/parliament-approves-stockholm-programme-prison-add-ons/article-187730>

75. Explanation of vote of T. Kirkhope (ECR), EP, CRE 25/11/2009 - 7.6, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20091125&secondRef=ITEM-008&language=EN&ring=B7-2009-0155#3-203>

76. "Freedom of Information in Italy (debate)", CRE 08/10/2009 -5 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20091008+ITEM-005+DOC+XML+V0/EN>

77. http://votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=87&lang=en

78. http://votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=104&lang=en

79. interview under anonymity, Brussels, 10/10/2010

6.3. Justice: Approval of the enhanced cooperation agreement on divorce (16th June 2010) [80]

In comparison, the last vote analysed here did not lead to such division. It concerned the approval of a draft Council decision enabling an enhanced cooperation agreement in the area of law applicable to divorce and legal separation [81]. This enhanced cooperation involves 14 Member States: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia.

As a condition set by the treaty [82], Parliament's approval was given by a broad majority (90.6% of the MEPs present, 83.4% of the members) with all groups calling for a vote in support except the EFD (without an official position) and the non-attached. VoteWatch.eu indicates a higher percentage of MEPs following the majority of MEPs from their country compared to following the majority of their political group, without any real "national position" or defection of delegations ever really emerging. While 90% of MEPs of countries

participating in the cooperation agreement voted in support, the rate of approval is down to 72.9% for MEPs from non-participating countries with some defections, such as the abstention of Irish and Dutch EPP MEPs. No majority against emerged, however, when grouping MEPs by nationalities. For instance, amongst the British, for whom the Union's intervention in family law might have been considered as a sensitive issue, 22 conservatives out of 25 voted in favour (1 abstained) and although 4 liberals abstained, opposition only came from the highly Euro-sceptic non-attached and EFD MEPs. Hence it seems that the question of divorce, which is a sensitive issue in some Member States, did not really divide the Parliament this time round.

The emergence of a centre-left coalition with regard to civil liberties suggested by *VoteWatch.eu* [83] can only be seen in one of three instances (freedom of information) but the three analyses show that national sensibilities seem less pre-eminent than expected in this area which is experiencing increasing communitarisation.

80. European Parliament legislative resolution of 16 June 2010 on the draft Council decision authorising enhanced cooperation in the area of the law applicable to divorce and legal separation, http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=712&lang=en

81. EP, OEIL, "12/07/2010 -Final Legislative Act", <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/file.jsp?id=5849072¬iceType=null&language=en>

82. Article 328§1 TFEU

83. Annual Report, *op.cit.*, p.5.

Table 6: Summary of vote on the FSJ area

Votes analysed	Stockholm Programme	Freedom of Information		Enhanced Cooperation on Divorce
		EPP/ECR/EFD Motion	S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, GUE Motion	
Date	25/11/2009	21/10/2009		16/06/2010
Procedure	Non legislative	Non legislative		Approval
Key Feature	Compromise between groups	Partisan vote between political groups		Broad majority
Type de coalition	Grand centrist coalition	Right	Centre Left	Grand extended coalition (except EFD and NA)
For (1)	489 (66.4%)	297 (46% present, 40.4% members)	335 (48.6% present, 45.5% members)	615 (83.4%)
Against (1)	122	322 (49.9% present, 43.8% members)	338 (49% present, 45,9% members)	30
Abstentions (1)	49	25	13	33
Not present (2)	10.3%	12.4%	6,3%	7,9%
Following groups (3)	94.55%	97.54%	95.35%	88.64%
Following country (3)	76.67%	52.03%	55.35%	90.56%
Suivant pays (3)	76.67%	52,03%	55,35%	90.56%

Sources: Figures from Vote-Watch.eu (via the European Parliament) and analysed by the authors

(1) The percentages are given based on the total number of MEPs, unless otherwise stated.

(2) Not present: absent MEPs, justifying their absence or who did not take part in the vote

(3) Percentages of MEPs following the majority of their political group and of the country's MEPs. Data provided by Vote-Watch.eu.

The 16 votes analysed here lead to two main conclusions and two rather more functional recommendations.

Firstly, this empirical study tends to confirm that voting in the European Parliament is leaning towards greater polarisation from a partisan point of view and this is in spite of

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the culture of compromise that has typified the institution for many years. It also confirms that Parliament mainly functions according to political logic and not according to the representation of national interest. Hence the percentage of MEPs voting according to a national position is only higher than MEPs voting according to partisan lines in two instances, with regard to Kosovo and the enhanced cooperation agreement – and even then only the first of these two instances reveals clear national alignment due to transpartisan “*national interest*”.

Secondly, the analysis of these votes illustrates the co-existence of variable political majorities in the European Parliament:

- a centre-right alliance in an economic vote (public finance) or a right alliance in a vote on civil liberties (the first motion for a resolution on the freedom of information in Italy);
 - a centre-left alliance in two instances (the Goldstone Report and the second motion for a resolution on the freedom of information in Italy) or a left alliance in one instance (lorry drivers’ working time);
 - a grand centrist coalition (EPP, S&D and ALDE) in five instances notably on institutional issues, (the investiture of the Commission, the first reading of the 2010 budget, the adaptation of the number of MEPs, the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Stockholm Programme);
 - a grand extended coalition in eight other instances (the second reading of the 2010 budget, the European External Action Service, the directive on own resources, the Milk Market, the Copenhagen Summit, Kosovo, the SWIFT Agreement and the enhance cooperation agreement).
- Parliament, and more generally, the EU’s political system are not therefore monolithic institutions impermeable to pluralist opinion, but instead they offer regular opportunity for debate and contest based on a power struggle which is defined on the occasion of the European elections.

From this standpoint and from a more functional point of view, it seems that this study quite naturally leads to two recommendations:

- Firstly, it will be because citizens are better informed about how their direct representatives and their political parties vote that they will find it easier to decipher European political stakes and feel encouraged to follow European political life more closely. It is quite naturally the Parliament’s, MEPs’ and the media’s principal responsibility to reveal the existence of these political divisions.
- Also, the present legislature might offer MEPs the opportunity to decide whether partisan approaches can prevail to a greater degree. Indeed the relative vigour in the expression of partisan splits in Parliament does not just depend on the results of the European elections. It also results from the voting rules in force within Parliament which often seem to impede the constitution of clear partisan majorities. The belief that it is now important to foster the expression of clear splits on voting should lead to a movement in support of change in these rules and the reduction of the necessary thresholds required to form a majority by opting as often as possible for the simple majority of the votes cast.

It remains to be seen whether the main groups in Parliament will be ready to follow this path to reform which will enable them to build legislature majorities and reduce the number of votes in which their back-up is vital. Most of the voting rules in Parliament are set by the treaties and are therefore intangible in the short term. Others, however, are set by internal rules, for example in terms of budgetary voting: MEPs might decide to amend this internal rule before requesting a later review of the treaties. This two-tiered change would enable Parliament to enter the partisan era in a more definite manner providing its choices with greater political coherence and visibility in the eyes of the citizens it is supposed to be representing.

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