

No differences

Examining voting records of the establishment groups in the EU-Parliament



June 2015

Political groups in the European Parliament

EPP - Group of the European Peoples' Party (Christian Democrats), changed in 2009 from PPE-

S&D - Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, changed in 2009 from PSE - Socialist Group in the European Parliament

ALDE - Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

Greens/EFA - Greens/European Free Alliance (Regionalists)

ECR - European Conservatives and Reformists

GUE/NGL - European United Left - Nordic Green Left

EFDD - Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EU critical) founded 2014 mainly from the former

EFD group, changed in 2014 from EFD - Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EU critical), existed 2009 to 2014

NI - Non-attached Members (not a group and therefore their voting is not recorded in this report)

Procedures in European Parliament

CNS - Consultation procedure (*)

NLE - Consent procedure (***)

COD - Co-decision procedure (**I or **II or **III depending on which reading it is in the EP)

BUD - Budget procedure

ACI - Inter-institutional agreement procedure

APP - Appointment

DEC - Discharge procedure

IMM - Immunity

INI, INL - Initiative report

RSP- Resolution

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Executive summary

Examining the voting records of the three, large, establishment groups in the European Parliament (EPP, S&D and ALDE) reveals there are few political differences between the groups. When they show political differences in legislative votes they are usually divided internally. Most of the issues that the EPP, S&D and ALDE vote differently on are non-legislative political statements. On rare occasions one of the three large groups can lose votes on individual paragraphs in a report or a resolution but they still accept the outcome and vote yes in the final vote on the report or resolution as a whole.

The main point raised by this report is that it does not matter which of the three large EU-parties/groups a voter chooses at the ballot box, as they more or less act as one unified block in the final votes in the European Parliament. During all their election campaigns these groups and their member parties claim it makes a difference which party's representative the voter sends to Brussels/Strasbourg. In reality this is not the case, at least not if the voter is considering a choice between the parties which belong to these three big political groups, or indeed, even the Greens/EFA group.

To compile this report, all final votes with Roll Call Votes (RCVs) in the European Parliament in 2014 since the new legislature have been examined and the results are clear as day. Of all the 82 final votes recorded with RCVs on resolutions and reports, the Group of the European Peoples' Party (EPP) and the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) disagree in only four of the final votes (4.88%). The three establishment groups agree in 93.9% of all final votes with RCVs. This percentage would be higher if all the final votes without RCVs were included, however only votes with RCVs register exactly how groups vote. During 2014 since the new legislature, the EPP and the S&D only disagreed on four legislative RCVs votes, with one vote where S&D was split. The EPP and the so-called Liberals in ALDE disagreed in 4.88% of final votes with RCVs. Although the specific votes differed, the S&D and ALDE also disagreed in only two dossiers (2.44% of final votes with RCVs). Previous studies examining final votes in the European Parliament, conducted by the OEIC, showed very close results in 2008 and 2010 to 2014, but the phenomenon of voting rapprochement is increasing.

The few issues that the EPP, S&D and ALDE disagree on are almost all resolutions outside of the legislative process, meaning that they are only political statements.

While analyzing the European Parliament as a political and legislative institution it is important to highlight the existing grand coalition between Christian Democrats, Socialists and Liberals. These three groups act as one single "European Parliament group" that above all wants to protect the special interest that is their EU institution. This means that they consistently demand more political power and more money for the EU, in most cases against the will of their party colleagues represented in the EU Council and national and regional parliaments.

One question that is raised from the results of this study is whether the old ideologies of conservatism, liberalism and socialism are dead in the European Parliament?

They at least seem to be dead in the three large groups EPP, S&D and ALDE, even to a large extent for the Greens/EFA.

IMPORTANT REMARK: All the results in this 2014 report concern the votes with the new legislature, which was elected in 2014 May.

“I’m happy if Jean-Claude Juncker agrees with my programme.”

Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament - 2014

Introduction

This report intends to show the lack of left-right perspectives in the European Parliament. In some, but not all, EU Member States, election campaigns to the European Parliament include a focus on the differences between the centre-right and the centre-left. But in reality, a large governing coalition exists in the European Parliament, consisting mainly of the Christian Democrats (EPP), the Socialists (S&D), the Liberals (ALDE) and the Greens/EFA (Regionalists) who are willing to make deals in general. Even the Conservatives (ECR) and the Left (GUE/NGL) get some pieces of the pie by compromising in committees in exchange for supporting deals such as approving the Barroso II Commission. However in the new legislature, the majority of ECR's members abstained on approving the Juncker Commission's, and GUE/NGL voted against whereas S&D supported the candidate of the EPP.

This report seeks to present a picture of how this large governing coalition works in practice at the final votes during plenary sessions. It examines political deals made in the Parliament and looks at the kinds of issues that really differentiate the political groups.

There are various ways of comparing how political groups vote in the European Parliament. But statistics are meaningless if you do not draw the right political conclusions from the data. Therefore, the OEIC considers this study of voting records more interesting in a political context – examining how the “grand coalition of three” agrees and disagrees on the main political line of the European Parliament.

For further examinations, more data is available at Vote Watch Europe's web page. This report is based on the main first hand source for voting data, the European Parliament.

The general political work of the European Parliament

As the former European Commissioner Ritt Bjerregaard once said; “This is not a real Parliament”. The European Parliament first and foremost seeks to promote an increase of political power for the European Union and of course for the European Parliament itself.

No limitations have been specified on how far the Union should take over the political power of the Member States. On the contrary, the preamble of the Treaty of Rome specifically calls for an “*ever-closer union*”, meaning endless transfers of competences to the community level. Thus the European Parliament tries to suggest that it should assume power over every political area it can, from the environment and education to traffic and culture. No policy area is too trivial, insignificant or remote for the European Parliament to have an opinion on.

The texts voted on in the European Parliament, are compromises negotiated mainly between the EPP and the S&D, but also includes ALDE and the Greens/EFA. Compromises are agreed to because the Parliament wishes to acquire more power in relation to the Council and for the Commission to take into account the Parliament's view in their proposals for legislation.

This inter-institutional power struggle has created a culture of compromise in the European Parliament. One glaring example of this is the confirmation vote of the Commission by the European Parliament, where ALDE, EPP and S&D all voted in favour of the EPP candidate, yet each one supported its own candidate during the EP election campaign. This process is also evident with regards to the election of the European Parliament's speaker. During the 2009-2014 term, the European Parliament had an EPP speaker for 2½ years who was later replaced by a member of the S&D for the remaining 2½ years. In the previous term the same system took place, with the order reversed. For 2014-2019, S&D will start (Martin Schulz) and then an EPP member will take over.

To vote the same – the culture of compromises

According to the European Parliament, EU institutions should be involved in everything from action programs for taking measures against bullying at work to common security and defense policy. The European Parliament also continually makes demands seeking to expand the Union's competences to new policy areas, with inevitable increases in expenditures for the EU budget as a consequence. Every year the European Parliament demands an increase in the EU budget for the following year. For instance, the budget for 2015 (€161,800.45M) has increased by 13.4% since 2014 (€142,690.29M) and reveals the will to obtain a larger budget. But some Member States disapproved because they pay more than they receive. For instance, the EU reviewed the given amount from each country for the 2015's corrective budget relative to the health of each member states' economy. The Commission asked some Member states to pay more e.g. United-Kingdom: however during this period of austerity and rising euro skepticism, Cameron refused.

Today the European Union is examining how to increase its budget, for example they set their eyes on introducing Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), collecting revenue from banks and financial institutions. However, attempts to establish the FTT have been paralyzed since negotiations in December 2014 failed. The negotiations will probably continue in 2015 because some EU member states will work to have it implemented by the 1st January of 2016.¹ Also, a vast majority of MEPs from the biggest groups in the European Parliament agree that the EU treaties should give even more political power to the European Union and that it should be seen as a “federal union of European citizens”².

While we could think about a real political life with oppositions and different views on EU, the main groups' behaviour reveals a faux struggle. 2014 European Commission's candidates³ Martin Schulz and Jean-Claude Juncker led during the 2014 EP elections a political campaign asserting the opposition between center-left and center-right was decisive for the future of Europe.

But in practice, even in debates they admitted to be close: for instance during a French debate which took place on the 9th of April in 2014, Martin Schulz asserted Juncker was “very close of my [his] program” and Jean-Claude Juncker declared “Mr Schulz agrees with my opinion” about his own global vision of the EU. When a journalist asked them what distinguished them from one another, Jean-Claude Juncker only talked about his own experience in the European Council that Martin Schulz did not have. Their economic vision looked the same even if the S&D candidate was a bit more focused on social protection. However, some differences in their programs appeared to simply be preference, with more powers to the European Parliaments for S&D and more powers to executive institutions for EPP. However, this OEIC study reveals that in fact, S&D and EPP are building the EU hand in hand in the same direction.

The biggest groups in the European Parliament also agree that the EU should speak to the world through one voice, and have a single seat on the United Nations Security Council and in other international institutions like the International Monetary Fund. The Christian Democrats, the Socialists, the Liberals and most of the Greens in the European Parliament support all the above examples and many of these views are contrary to the opinions held by many of their party colleagues in national politics.

1 Euractive: FTT launch agreed for 2016. 2015-01-30

<http://www.euractiv.com/sections/euro-finance/ftt-launch-agreed-2016-311669> Retrieved 2015-04-14

2 The term “federal union of European citizens” was an example used by the ALDE group leader Guy Verhofstadt in the European Parliament on the 12th September 2012. The exact words can vary, for example José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission, used the words “federation of nation states” during the same debate.

3 An invention by the European Parliament and the political EU parties which does not derive authority from the Treaties.

Votes in the European Parliament

The votes at the session are divided in three stages, with a possibility for a fourth choice.

1/ First is the voting by *Show of Hands*. This is the most common way of voting.

2/ The Second stage - *Electronic Vote* (EV) is used to check if the sitting chairman of the vote interpreted the result correctly. During EV, only the result is recorded, and not how individual MEPs or groups voted.

3/ The third stage is a so called *Roll Call Vote* (RCV), which takes place following a request in writing by a political group or at least 40 Members.

4/ Some votes are also taken by *Secret Ballot* (SB). In the case of appointments, voting shall be conducted by way of secret ballot. Voting may also be conducted by secret ballot if this is requested by at least one-fifth of the Members of Parliament. The names of Members who have taken part in a secret ballot are recorded in the minutes of the sitting at which the vote was held.

The Rules of Procedure in the European Parliament have changed over the years in order to shorten the voting time at the sessions. For example, if very little opposition is encountered in the Committee vote before a session, some reports are handled in a single vote at the session itself.

In 2013 there were 1.961 RCVs in total, almost double the average amount of RCV's in the preceding years. There were only 1,030 in 2012, 1,124 in 2011 and 1,059 in 2010. The votes during 2014 since the new legislature do not represent a sufficient sample on which to conclude that use of RCV will still stay at a high level. RCVs in 2013 range in content from whether or not a certain subject should be taken up on the agenda of the session or the postponement of a vote to the important final votes on economic and financial issues, where the European Parliament shares co-decision rights with the Council. Paying attention to the percentage of RCVs recourses since the new legislature in 2014, it is continuing to increase in 2014 (70%) compared to whole of 2013 (57.5%).

Since the beginning of the new legislature in 2014 until the end of the year, final votes were held 117 times on different resolutions, reports and various texts.

Of the 117 final votes on 105 dossiers⁴ there were 82 RCVs, two were SB (appointments), three were EVs and 30 votes took place with a show of hands.

For the 30 final votes with a show of hands where a RCV was not requested, it is very likely that the four biggest groups voted the same unanimously and most likely the majority of the other groups as well.

A change in the Rules of procedure was made on the 26th of February 2014. It was decided that from April 2014 all final votes at the sessions and in the committees should be taken with a RCV. This was a huge step forward for transparency some MEPs were skeptical at first about. In 2009, it was decided that: "When voting on any proposal for a legislative act, whether by way of a single and/or final vote, Parliament shall vote by roll call using the electronic voting system".

As can be seen in table 1, compared to 2013 when not all the final votes in the Consent procedure were seen as a vote about a legislative act (RCVs were called for in around one third of these final votes), the new legislature always voted with a RCV for the 11 Consent procedures taken.

4 For example at a proposal for a resolution, several groups might table alternative resolutions and there are final votes on several of them. This is because when one proposed resolution fails, the session votes on the next tabled resolution from another group in the same dossier.

The 117 final votes on reports and resolutions during 2014 (in the new 8th legislature)

The question arises of whether RCVs took place for the most important final votes or not. The table below clearly shows that it is much more common to have a RCV at final votes that are part of a legislative procedure, than for votes on reports and resolutions outside the legislative procedure (only 37%), typically approved without a RCV. Since the beginning of the new legislature, only two SB have occurred, both for appointments. Therefore, this sample is obviously insufficient for a reasonable interpretation.

Similarly to the SB, the only three EVs in the final votes are not sufficiently representative for defining a real group's behavior. One was approved in the budget procedure and two on resolutions. Regarding the continuation of common votes' customs since the beginning of the new legislature, we can speculate about the similarity of votes during the rest of the mandate until 2019.

In the 30 final votes with a show of hands it is unlikely that the large groups voted differently due to the issues being uncontroversial as no group or other constellation of MEPs asked for a RCV.

Table 1. Final votes 2014 (since new legislature) with RCVs or no RCVs in the different procedures - percentage

Procedure	Number of final votes of which:	Number of show of hands:	Number of EVs	Number of SBs	Number of RCVs	Percentage RCVs of the votes in that procedure
Final votes	117	30	3	2	82	70%
Consultation procedure (*)	4	-	-	-	4	100%
Consent procedure (***)	11	-	-	-	11	100%
Co-decision procedure, first reading (***)	4	-	-	-	4	100%
Co-decision procedure, second reading proposal rejection (***)	0	-	-	-	0	-
Co-decision procedure, third reading (***)	0	-	-	-	0	-
Decision on the opening of inter-institutional negotiations	0	-	-	-	0	-
Budget procedure	39	-	1	-	38	97%
Discharge Procedure	2	-	-	-	2	100%
Appointments	3	-	-	2	1	33%
Interinstitutional Agreement Procedure (ACI)	0	-	-	-	-	-
Initiative Reports (INI, INL)	4	-	-	-	4	100%
Resolutions	49	29	2	-	18	37%
Immunity	1	1	-	-	-	-
EP Internal subjects	0	-	-	-	-	-

The political groups compromise and vote in a similar fashion

Voting statistics in the tables below show how (in the main) the three biggest political groups compromise with one another on the content of the texts and then vote the same way in the final votes.

The non-attached (NI) have been excluded as they do not form a group. EFDD numbers are not representative of the whole groups behavior and positions, since EFDD's MEPs are more or less always divided between British UKIP and Italian Movimento 5 Stelle. Thus, the mentioned EFDD votes taken into account were decided according to the majority of EFDD members' votes.

Table 2. How frequently the groups vote the same as one other in the 82 final votes requiring RCV in 2014 since the new legislature. Commonality in percentages:

	ALDE	ECR	EFDD	GUE/NGL	EPP	S&D
ALDE						
ECR	52.44%					
EFDD	3.66%	42.68%				
GUE/NGL	53.66%	24.39%	21.95%			
EPP	95.12%	53.66%	2.44%	51.22%		
S&D	97.56%	52.44%	2.44%	53.66%	95.12%	
Greens/EFA	81.71%	40.24%	14.63%	59.76%	79.27%	79.27%

Remarks on table 2:

GUE/NGL Group:

22/10: 17 voted yes, 4 voted no, 22 abstained (*A8-0018/2014 - Gérard Deprez*).

22/10: 23 voted no, 24 abstained (*A8-0014/2014 - Eider Gardiazabal Rubial et Monika Hohlmeier - Resolution*).

ECR Group: The ECR group was distinctly divided two times in final votes.

26/11: 28 voted yes, 10 voted no, 26 abstained (*A8-0028/2014 - Kay Swinburne*).

16/12: 26 voted yes, 37 voted no, 2 abstained (*A8-0064/2014 - Daniele Viotti*).

S&D and ALDE have the highest voting cohesions in the final votes – 97.56%. Next is the link between the EPP and ALDE and (95.12%), and between EPP and S&D (95.12%). This is not surprising, as these three large groups are the main actors in the compromises made.

The differences are shown inverted in the table below:

Table 3. How often the groups vote differently to each other in the 82 final votes with RCVs in 2014 (since the new legislature). Differences are in percentages:

	ALDE	ECR	EFFD	GUE/NGL	EPP	S&D
ALDE						
ECR	47.56%					
EFFD	96.34%	57.32%				
GUE/NGL	46.34%	75.61%	78.05%			
EPP	4.88%	46.34%	97.56%	48.78%		
S&D	2.44%	47.56%	97.56%	46.34%	4.88%	
Greens/EFA	18.29%	59.76%	85.37%	40.24%	20.73%	20.73%

The three biggest groups, the EPP, S&D and ALDE, negotiate amongst themselves and ultimately almost always vote in the same way. The big three are quite closely joined by the Greens/EFA in their compromises. The opposition comes from the ECR and GUE/NGL, but also from a part of EFFD, even if that group often is divided. From a right-left political perspective it is interesting to note that the ECR and GUE/NGL vote in the same way in 24.39% of the final votes with RCV, EFDD (despite of the division) and ECR 42.68%, EFDD and GUE/NGL 21.95%.

From the above we can observe that the majority of EFDD members vote the opposite to EPP, S&D and ALDE.

How frequently groups vote the same as one another in all 117 final votes

If all 117 final votes are summed up, especially for the two biggest groups as they are more visible in numbers, it is likely that the EPP and S&D voted identical in the two SB's votes and for the 3 EVs and in the majority of the 30 shows of hands. Undoubtedly, the EPP and S&D voted the same in 78 of the 82 RCVs according to the vote records.

It is not possible to say exactly how they voted in the 35 final votes without RCV. But since S&D and EPP represent the majority in the EP, we can deduce that the texts approved or rejected which were proposed by other groups were voted in common: the behavior of EPP and S&D looks being the same like for RCVs.

From this we conclude it is very likely that the EPP and S&D voted the same way 113 times in 117 votes, which amounts to 96.58% voting cohesion.

Comparing voting behavior in 2010 and 2013

Research of the final votes in the European Parliament during 2010 and 2013 showed more or less the same result, even if the 2014 data are not a sample sufficiently representative.

In 2010 and 2013, the four biggest groups voted the same way in most of the RCVs, and most likely all the other groups as well, with the exception of the EU-critical EFDD. The typical division of its members causes the anti-conformist behavior of this last group. EFDD is a group which gathers members from several political parties, often with different visions for the economy or social issues but united against the evolution of the EU: therefore, the peculiarity of EFDD is that the group never expresses voting instructions to its members. EU-critical EFDD members from the Movimento 5 Stelle support more state intervention in the economy in contrast to Ukip, which has a more libertarian vision.

We conclude that the three big groups EPP, S&D and ALDE, only disagreed on 3.5% final votes in 2010, and 7.4% in 2013. In 2014 since the new legislature, the three big groups disagreed on five RCV final votes, which represent 6.1% of the totality.

The Greens/EFA, the fourth largest group, also came in as the fourth partner in the agreements. In 2014 since the new legislature, the four groups disagreed on 19 RCV final votes, 23.17% of RCV final votes.

Table 4. How frequently groups vote the *same* as one another in the 338 final votes requiring RVC in 2013. Commonality in percentages:

2013	ALDE	EFD	GUE/NGL	EPP	S&D
ALDE					
ECR	55.30%				
GUE/NGL	50.00%	40.80%			
EPP	92.60%	58.60%	47.90%		
S&D	92.60%	53.00%	54.40%	92.30%	
Greens/EFA	72.50%	45.90%	63.90%	70.40%	77.50%

Table 5. How frequently groups vote the *same* as one another in the 266 final votes requiring RVC in 2010. Commonality in percentages:

2010	ALDE	ECR	EFD	GUE/NGL	EPP	S&D
ALDE						
ECR	56.30%					
EFD	61.60%	48.80%				
GUE/NGL	57.80%	48.10%	45.80%			
EPP	95.40%	58.60%	62.40%	55.60%		
S&D	96.60%	56.00%	60.90%	60.50%	94.70%	
Greens/ EFA	89.10%	52.60%	59.00%	63.10%	86.00%	90.20%

In 2008, the three main EP groups voted the same in 95% of RCVs and the two main groups voted the same in 97%. A study⁵ on the 2008 EP votes revealed that PPE-DE (now EPP), PSE (now S&D) and ALDE only disagreed in 5% of RCVs (which represents 28 out of 535 RCVs). The two largest groups PPE-DE and PSE only disagreed in 18 out of 535 RCVs (3%) of final votes.

The voting behavior of the EP-groups, the Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL reveals that they are voting more and more with the EPP/S&D/ALDE since 2008. The “centre-left”, “centre”, and “centre-right” representatives (EPP, S&D, ALDE) continue voting very closely, around 95% of the RCVs. Thus, it looks obvious that the main groups have managed for years to reach compromises in order to influence the evolution of the EU.

The Christian Democratic/Conservative Group (EPP) and the Socialist Group (S&D) thus managed to reach a compromise on 95.12% of the 82 RCVs in the final votes that took place in the European Parliament in 2014 since the new legislature.

5 http://www.oecieurope.com/attachment/Final_votes_2008_EN.pdf

Political issues where the four largest groups disagreed at the final RCV vote 2014

Listed below are the issues with the largest cohesion between the different constellations of the four largest groups. Also mentioned are votes when the groups have been split. We define a split vote as an occasion when a real minority of the political group deviates from its majority, although it very often happens that at least one MEP votes differently from the majority of their group.

Disagreements between the EPP and S&D (4.88% of the 82 RCVs):

On the four RCV final votes where S&D and EPP were opposed, S&D was really split in only one (B8-0348/2014 - Resolution). These four RCV final votes count one CNS (consultation procedure), 3 RSP (resolution).

List of the final votes where the EPP and S&D disagreed and how the splits occurred:

25/11. On seeking an opinion from the Court of Justice on the compatibility with the Treaties of the Agreement between Canada and the European Union on the transfer and processing of Passenger Name Record data (B8-0265/2014 - Resolution) - RCV.

> *Yes: ALDE, GUE/NGL, S&D, Greens/ALE*

> *No: ECR, EPP*

> *Split: EFDD (19 yes, 0 no, 26 abstained)*

26/11. On the draft Council regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 2532/98 concerning the powers of the European Central Bank to impose sanctions (A8-0028/2014 - Kay Swinburne - consultation procedure (*)) - RCV.

> *Yes: ALDE, EPP, Greens/ALE*

> *No: EFDD, GUE/NGL*

> *Split: ECR (28 yes, 10 no, 27 abstained)*

> *Abstained: S&D*

17/12. On Draft Council Directive .../.../EU laying down calculation methods and reporting requirements pursuant to Directive 98/70/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels (B8-0326/2014 - Resolution) - RCV.

> *Yes: ALDE, GUE/NGL, S&D, Greens/ALE*

> *No: EPP*

> *Split: ECR (3 yes, 26 no, 36 abstained), EFDD (16 yes, 28 no)*

18/12. On the Commission delegated regulation of 19 August 2014 amending Annex III to Regulation (EU) No 978/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council applying a scheme of generalized tariff preferences (B8-0348/2014 - Resolution) - RCV.

> *Yes: EPP, Greens/ALE*

> *No: ALDE, ECR*

> *Split: EFDD (17 yes, 19 no, 3 abstained), GUE/NGL (13 yes, 11 no, 21 abstained), S&D (48 yes, 109 no, 7 abstained)*

Disagreements between the EPP and ALDE (4.88% of the 82 RCVs):

The EPP and ALDE groups disagreed at four RCV final votes. These four RCV final votes were all RSP (resolutions).

List of the final votes where the EPP and ALDE disagreed and how the splits occurred:

25/11. On seeking an opinion from the Court of Justice on the compatibility with the Treaties of the Agreement between Canada and the European Union on the transfer and processing of Passenger Name Record data (B8-0265/2014 - Resolution) - RCV.

> *Yes: ALDE, GUE/NGL, S&D, Greens/ALE*

> *No: ECR, EPP*

> *Split: EFDD (19 yes, 0 no, 26 abstained).*

27/11. On supporting consumer rights in the digital single market (RC-B8-0286/2014 - Resolution) - RCV.

> *Yes: ALDE, ECR, EPP*

> *No: S&D, Greens/ALE*

> *Split: EFDD (18 yes, 1 no, 22 abstained)*

> *Abstained: GUE/NGL*

17/12. On Draft Council Directive .../.../EU laying down calculation methods and reporting requirements pursuant to Directive 98/70/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels (B8-0326/2014 - Resolution) - RCV.

> *Yes: ALDE, GUE/NGL, S&D, Greens/ALE*

> *No: EPP*

> *Split: EFDD (16 yes, 28 no), ECR (3 yes, 26 no, 36 abstained)*

18/12. On the Commission delegated regulation of 19 August 2014 amending Annex III to Regulation (EU) No 978/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council applying a scheme of generalized tariff preferences (B8-0348/2014 - Resolution) - RCV.

> *Yes: EPP, Greens/ALE*

> *No: ALDE, ECR*

> *Split: EFDD (17 yes, 19 no, 3 abstained), S&D (48 yes, 109 no, 7 abstained), GUE/NGL was split (13 yes, 11 no, 21 abstained)*

Disagreements between S&D and ALDE (2.44% of the 82 RCVs):

S&D and ALDE disagreed on two final votes. These two RCV final votes were one CNS (consultation procedure) and one RSP (resolution).

List of the final votes where S&D and ALDE disagreed and how the splits occurred:

26/11. On the draft Council regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 2532/98 concerning the powers of the European Central Bank to impose sanctions (A8-0028/2014 - Kay Swinburne - consultation procedure (*)) - RCV.

> *Yes: ALDE, EPP, Greens/ALDE*

> *No: GUE/NGL, EFDD*

> *Split: ECR (28 yes, 10 no, 27 abstained)*

> *Abstained: S&D*

27/11. On supporting consumer rights in the digital single market (RC-B8-0286/2014 - Resolution) - RCV.

> Yes: ALDE, ECR, EPP

> No: S&D, Greens/ALE

> Split: EFDD

> Abstained: GUE/NGL

Disagreements between S&D and Greens/EFA (20.73% of the 82 RCVs):

S&D and Greens/EFA voted the same way in 79.27% of the final votes, ALDE and Greens/EFA voted the same way in 81.71% and EPP and Greens/EFA voted the same way in 77.27% of the final votes.

S&D and Greens/EFA disagreed in 17 final votes: ten resolutions, one consent procedure, three initiative reports, one consultation procedure, one budget procedure, and one co-decision procedure.

ALDE and Greens/EFA disagreed in 15 final votes: nine resolutions, one consent procedure, three initiative reports, one budget procedure, and one co-decision procedure.

EPP and Greens/EFA disagreed in 17 final votes: eleven were resolutions, one consent procedure, three initiative reports, one budget procedure, one co-decision procedure.

Conclusions

In short – the EPP, S&D and ALDE disagree on very few political issues and when they disagree on legislative dossiers the groups are often divided internally. But most of what the groups disagree on are political statements outside legislation.

The main question after reading this report is: does it matter which one of the three large European families/parties you vote for when they are acting as a bloc in their votes in the European Parliament? In election campaigns they say that it makes a difference which party you as a voter send to Brussels/Strasbourg. But in reality it is not the case. at least, not if you choose between the three big party families.

The report above has examined all the RCV in the European Parliament during 2014 since the new legislature. The result is very clear, of all the 82 final votes with RCVs on resolutions and reports the EPP and the S&D disagreed on only 4.88% of the cases. That means they agreed in 95.12% of all the RCV final votes.

The EPP and ALDE disagreed on 4.88% of the final votes with RCVs while S&D and ALDE disagreed in 2.44%. Previously published research from 2013, 2010 and 2008 gave more or less the same results. The disagreements between S&D, EPP and ALDE only represent 6.1% of RCVs.

The few issues on which the EPP, S&D, and ALDE disagreed on are almost all resolutions outside the legislative procedure, where the European Parliament simply makes a political statement. The three groups are often also internally divided on those issues where they do not reach an agreement between the groups.

As mentioned earlier in total there were 82 RCVs in the Parliament during 2014 since the new legislature. Furthermore, there was a numerous show of hands and three EVs and two SBs. The general figures say that when all the votes are considered, it is likely to guess that about 22 votes on the total 117 final votes were disagreed between the four main groups EPP, S&D, ALDE and the Greens/EFA: this means that the four biggest groups likely voted the same in 81.2% of the total final votes.

When analyzing the European Parliament as a political and legislative institution it is important to emphasize the large political coalition in existence, which consists of the EPP, S&D and ALDE. While one of the three biggest groups might have lost some votes on details on a resolution, as can be noted when analyzing the final votes, they live with it and vote in favor of the resolution as a whole in the final vote. More than anything, these groups of MEPs act as a common “European Parliament Political Group” whose concern is first and foremost the protection of the interests of *their* EU institution. This means they consistently call for more powers and funds for the EU, often against the wishes of their national party colleagues in the Council and in national and regional parliaments.

Differences in opinions between the voters are not visible in the work of the European Parliament.

In general, the biggest groups in the European Parliament seem to belong to a “European Party” and act differently towards the other political formations at the national level. Some suggestions that would improve transparency of voting in the European Parliament are:

- The EPP, S&D and ALDE should scrutinize their own work in the European Parliament and think about either merging, since they already act so much as a bloc, *or* consider how they can profile themselves against each other.
- The final votes in the Committees should be recorded is a big step forward. But it would be best if all the votes in the Committees were recorded by RCVs in order to clarify the political positions of both the groups and individual members.

The surprising observation of the rapprochement between political visions of several groups reveals a distortion between the national political life and the European Parliament’s political frame. For instance, while PS (left party) and UMP (right party) in France sometimes concede agreements, Greens in France are radically opposed to UMP and they often link the UMP leaders to extreme-right. Beyond the oppositions between personalities, claimed ideologies are radically different. The important divergences of opinion during the debates and even during the European elections campaign are amazingly hidden throughout the votes in the EP. It is very astonishing to observe that the behavior in national parliaments exhibits opposition between the national political parties, while in the European Parliament traditional left-right divisions become illusions as these same parties work to strengthen the EU.

One overall question raised by this study is – Are the old ideologies of conservatism, liberalism and socialism dead in the European Parliament? They seem to be dead in the three big groups EPP, S&D, and ALDE to say the least.

“This is not a real Parliament”

Former Danish EU-Commissioner, Ritt Bjerregaard -1995