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# „I WANT TO DESTROY THE EU“

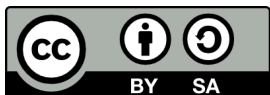
EU OPPONENTS IN THE 8<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

TAKING STOCK OF THE PAST YEAR





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## PREFACE

In the run-up to the European elections of 2014, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung predicted that the EU's opponents would grow in strength (Grabow and Hartleb 2013). Over the last ten to fifteen years, several protest parties whose original attitude had been mainly critical towards foreigners, Islam, or immigration had set up the European Union as their second enemy stereotype, working with increasing success on vilifying the EU. This opposition from the right wing was increasingly seconded by vehement criticism of the Unions' policies and its decision-making processes from the left. Both were drastically reinforced by the sovereign debt crisis of the southern member countries that had been overshadowing many political fields since 2009 and by the attempts to bail out the euro that were made by those countries that were doing better economically. While some, fearing for their prosperity, drew up horror scenarios ("Enough paid!", "The EU gobbles up our money!", "Asylum tourism"), others thought that the endeavours to stabilise the common currency were nothing but a diktat of the global financial markets at the expense of the "man in the street". Thus, the EU, its institutions, decision-making processes, and some of its central decisions themselves were increasingly caught in a pincer movement and/or cannibalised for the preponderantly populist propaganda of the opponents and critics of the EU.

As we know today, these forecasts were overtaken by reality. Never before have there been as many EU opponents sitting in the European Parliament as now. The question is what consequences might arise from that. What are the EU opponents doing in the European Parliament? Will they paralyse it, or will they make use of their greater presence in Brussels and Strasbourg to force their respective countries to leave the EU or even to engineer its dissolution, as announced by one of the winners of the European election, the chairman of the United Kingdom Independence Party, Nigel Farage, in the

light of his electoral success? Are the left- and right-wing opponents of the EU equally aggressive in their actions against the EU or individual organs, or are there any quantitative and qualitative differences between the camps? Could there even be 'shared fronts' between the left and the right wing, i.e. joint projects which they mutually support merely because they are directed against the EU or particular institutions or decisions of pan-European significance? Could the EU even be threatened by the greater strength of its opponents?

These and others questions occupy centre stage in this study, which investigates the activities of Europe's opponents and critics in the first year since the 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament was convened. Drawn up by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in collaboration with scientists from the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, it is based on the evaluation of publicly accessible sources as well as on a number of expert interviews conducted by the research team in the European Parliament in February 2015. At this juncture, I should like to express once again my gratitude to the participants in the interviews on behalf of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Without their collaboration, this study would not have been possible in its present form. I should also like to thank the authors for their initiative and the thoroughness of their analyses, which are very extensive in terms of both quality and quantity. Because this study examines the work of the present European Parliament, it partially resembles 'open-heart surgery'. This gives rise to the occasional methodological problem which, however, may be overlooked because it is outweighed by the study's freshness and relevance. I know of no other investigation that tracks the work of the European Parliament so closely and not retrospectively.

At this point, I should like to highlight three of the study's key conclusions. (1) The political fringes of the new European Parliament have been strengthened, but apart from the greater numbers of their mandates, the EU opponents still have a long way to go to majorities of their own. Permanently blocking the decision-making process in the European Parliament and damaging its decisions-making capability are beyond their abilities. Neither left-wing nor right-wing EU opponents or critics have banded together in an anti-EU party group. Even ideologically close parties occasionally act disparately in the EP. (2) While the two biggest parties that are hostile to the EU, the Front National and the United Kingdom Independence Party, took up an aggressive stance against the EU during the campaign, their behaviour in Parliament is rather passive

or destructive (UKIP), or else they do not work on the key points of their platform in Parliament (FN). Two parties who at least employed the toughest anti-EU rhetoric, the PVV and the FPÖ, are too small and, being non-attached, too marginalised to do any real harm to the EP or the EU itself. (3) The EP still has safe pro-European majorities at its disposal, as well as proven methods for not losing step because of the increased number its opponents.

While the general tone in the Parliament has undoubtedly become rougher, there is no acute danger either to the European Parliament, whose status has been upgraded by the Lisbon Treaty, or to the EU as a whole. This does not mean, however, that the pro-European forces may lean back and relax. Their active advocacy for the advancing process of European integration, their commitment to the solution of concrete problems, and their engagement inside as well as outside the EP are as important as ever to counteract the further expansion of the EU's opponents.

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## SUMMARY

- The number of EU opponents and critics among the members of the 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament is greater than in the 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament. The political fringes of the EP have been strengthened.
- Work in Parliament has become more complicated and finding majorities more difficult in individual cases. But the majority of pro-EU parties still stands. Neither the EP nor the EU is acutely threatened by the greater strength of their opponents.
- EU opponents and critics are united by their dislike of the EU, the scope of its regulatory competences, the manner in which it arrives at decisions, and certain decisions it has made, but the motives of the EU's opponents are as diverse as the objectives they strive for. We distinguish left-wing, technocratic, and right-wing EU critics and/or opponents, subdividing the latter into populist and extreme-right EU opponents.
- Left-wing EU critics bewail the 'austerity diktat of Brussels' and the allegedly one-sided distribution of the burdens involved in endeavouring to contain the sovereign debt crisis. They demand an immediate end to budget discipline, debt cuts for the most highly indebted countries in the EU, or at least the communalisation of state debts through euro bonds and increased taxes for the wealthy.
- Its right-wing opponents regard the European Union mainly as an inadmissible interference with national self-determination. They want to dissolve the Union either entirely or partially, or they demand that their countries leave the EU or at least the euro. They fear that Europe-wide standards regulating economic and financial policy might cause pros-

perity to decline, and they criticise current practices in immigration and asylum policy as well as the cost of the EU institutions themselves.

- Left-wing EU opponents are generally more active than those from the right wing. While right-wing EU opponents often hold aloof from work in the EP and propagate symbolic politics in its plenary, left-wing EU critics want a 'different' Europe.
- The quantity and quality of the Parliamentary work of the right-wing EU opponents varies as well. MEPs from extreme-right parties are present more often than average at plenary as well as committee meetings. In the plenary, they do ask for the floor to speak on cardinal points in their respective programmes, although they preponderantly restrict themselves to make-believe activities. In the committees, they are passive and largely marginalised, being non-attached members.
- The right-wing populists are the least active and united of all. The UKIP, the Front National, the PVV and the FPÖ agitate against the EU in the plenary but participate much less than the average MEP in the EP's committee work. In concrete Parliamentary work, they accord only very little importance to implementing their own programmes. This suggests that their focus is more on national than European policy. They instrumentalise European elections and their mandates in the European Parliament to exert pressure on their governments at home or further their national ambitions.
- A newcomer to the European Parliament, the AfD is a party whose deputies, although their activity is not above average in every field, closely pursue their election platform, i.e. the abolition of the euro. However, their most active deputy, Beatrix von Storch, devotes a great deal of activity to a subject that is not one of the programmatic highlights of her party (gender mainstreaming).
- For an opponent of the EU, the rate at which the AfD agrees to final decisions made by the EP is remarkably high. Therefore, it in no way rejects the EU altogether like, for instance, the UKIP. However, its members contradict each other on important issues in European policy, thus reflecting the party's diffuse condition in Germany. At the end of April, its deputy Hans-Olaf Henkel resigned from his post in the Federal Executive because of the alleged infiltration of the party by 'right-wing

ideologists'. While the AfD party in the EP does not deserve to be called that, its chairman, Bernd Lucke, who is active in Parliament, appears to have but little control over his party.

- At present, a majority of pro-European parties can still be found in the EP on central issues. However, there are individual cases in which forming a majority has become more difficult because the pro-European parties have lost some of their seats. Depending on the content of the bills submitted, the pro-European parties need to look to other EP parties for support for their initiatives.
- It is not the EU opponents in the EP that present the greatest threat to the European Parliament and the EU but their impact at home. The EU opponents will continue urging their governments to put national interests before the European in the European Council, thus making it more difficult to arrive at a pro-European consensus. It is possible that a populist re-nationalisation might spring up in Europe.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

'I want to destroy the EU'<sup>1</sup>. Full of braggadocio, these are the words in which the leader of the Front National, Marine Le Pen, characterised her programme after her party had been returned as the strongest political force in France in the European elections of May 2014, putting 23 members into the European Parliament. For the FN, the European election was quite a triumph, as it was for some other anti-EU parties. Leaving both the Tories and Labour behind, the United Kingdom Independence Party became Great Britain's strongest party at nearly 27% of the vote, gaining 24 seats. Having similarly reached nearly 27%, the Danish People's Party came in first, posting four of Denmark's 13 European MPs to Strasbourg and Brussels. Increasing its vote to almost 20%, the FPÖ came in third in its own country, just like the (True) Finns (12.9%; 2 seats) and the Dutch Freedom Party of Geert Wilders (13.4%; 4 seats)<sup>2</sup>.

The AfD (Alternative for Germany), whose allocation or categorisation in established typologies is still largely a matter of dispute, demanded in its European election platform that the 'standard euro be abandoned' and/or that the 'euro currency zone be dissolved', an attack on pillars that support the EU. Moreover, like the UKIP or the Dutch PVV, it scandalised the EU ('Stop the bureaucracy monster', 'Incredible facts about the EU')<sup>3</sup> and attempted to mobilise resentments among susceptible voters with anti-immigration statements. Thus, the party reached 7.1% of the votes cast in its first European election, so that it is now represented in the EP by seven deputies.

The gains made by the left-wing EU critics were similarly spectacular. Pre-empting the result of the national elections that were to come, the Greek left-wing alliance Syriza won 26.6% and 6 mandates in the European Parliament in May 2014, becoming the strongest political force in Greece. Starting from scratch, the Spanish Podemos movement reached almost 8% of the vote and 5 mandates, while the similarly-young 5 Star movement won well above 21% and 17 mandates in its first European elections, rising to become the second-strongest political force in Italy.

Extreme-right parties whose fundamental ideological orientation has always been nationalist and therefore strictly anti-EU (see Taggart and Szczerbak 2008, Hartleb 2012) did fairly well in the European elections. While Jobbik consolidated its position as Hungary's third-strongest party at 14.7% of the vote, gaining three seats in the European Parliament, the extreme-right Golden Dawn grew to 9.4%, obtaining three mandates. The NPD, which had not contested the European elections in 2009, sent one deputy to the European Parliament in 2014, having benefited from a ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court which abolished any and all exclusion clauses (see Grabow 2015).

*Table 1 Election results, mandates and basic political orientation of parties hostile and critical towards the EU\**

| Ctry. | Party        | Election results 2014 (in %) | Seats in the 8 <sup>th</sup> EP | Δ 2009 (in %) | Basic political orientation   | EP party group |
|-------|--------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|---|----------------|
| AT    | <i>FPÖ</i>   | 19.7                         | 4                               | +7            | EU-hostile, right-wing and national populist ('Austria first')      | none           |
| BE    | VB           | 4.3                          | 1                               | -5.5          | nationalist, EU-hostile, right-wing populist                        | none           |
| DK    | DF           | 26.6                         | 4                               | +11.8         | right-wing populist   | ECR            |
| D     | <i>AfD</i>   | 7.1                          | 7                               | +7.1          | euro-hostile  | ECR            |
|       | <i>NPD</i>   | 1.0                          | 1                               | +1.0          | extreme-right, 'folk-national', pro-Russian                         | none           |
| FI    | <i>Perus</i> | 12.9                         | 2                               | -1.1          | EU-sceptical, critical of immigration, anti-establishment           | ECR            |
| F     | <i>FN</i>    | 24.9                         | 23                              | +18.6         | basically EU-hostile, right-wing and national populist, pro-Russian | none           |

|     |                   |      |    |        |  |         |
|-----|-------------------|------|----|--------|--|---------|
| GR  | <i>Syriza</i>     | 26.6 | 6  | +21.9  | left-wing populist, EU-critical;                                   | GUE/NGL |
|     | <i>Ch.A.</i> **   | 9.4  | 3  | /***   | extreme right;   | none    |
|     | ANEL              | 3.46 | 1  | /***   | right-wing populist, anti-Semitic, EU-hostile                      | ECR     |
| ITA | <i>M5S</i>        | 21.2 | 17 | +21.2  | left-wing populist, anti-EU;                                       | EFDD    |
|     | Lega Nord         | 6.1  | 5  | -4.1   | regionalist, right-wing populist;                                  | none    |
|     | L'Altra Europa-CT | 4    | 3  | +4     | like Syriza (the party's full name is: L'Altra Europa-Con Tsipras) | GUE/NGL |
| LIT | TT                | 14.2 | 2  | +2     | national-populist, EU-sceptical                                    | EFDD    |
| NL  | <i>PVV</i>        | 13.3 | 4  | -3.7   | basically EU-hostile, hostile towards Islam                        | none    |
| SPA | Podemos           | 8    | 5  | +8     | left-wing populist, anti-EU, anti-corruption, anti-establishment   | GUE/NGL |
| SWE | SD                | 9.7  | 2  | +6.4   | right-wing populist, anti-EU                                       | EFDD    |
| UK  | <i>UKIP</i>       | 26.8 | 24 | + 10.7 | basically EU-hostile, right-wing populist                          | EFDD    |
| UNG | <i>Jobbik</i>     | 14.7 | 3  | +/-0   | extreme right, anti-Semitic  | none    |

\* The table shows a selection of parties hostile or critical towards the EU. Those that appear in *italics* have been investigated in this study.

\*\* Ch.A.: Golden Dawn; \*\* In 2009, both parties were still included among the 'others', which together reached almost 5% and are not recorded in detail in the election statistics of the European Parliament; EFDD: Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy party group; ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE/NGL: United European Left/Nordic Green Left; Source: Own compilation based on EP (2009, 2014a), EPP group (2014a) and Nordsieck (2015).

All in all, the political fringes of the new European Parliament have been strengthened (see Table 1). Depending on how you count<sup>4</sup>, between 120 and 170 deputies from parties that are sceptical or openly hostile towards the EU are now sitting in the newly-elected European Parliament (Niedermayer 2014a: 361-363). Leading EU politicians like the former president of the EU Commission, José Manuel Barroso, or the former president of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, professed themselves 'concerned' on the evening of the election (Merkur 2014, Dom Radio 2014). But what are the EU opponents actually doing? How focused are they on working through their agenda? Will they – independently of their programmatic diversity – join forces in a common cause if and because it is



directed against the EU? Will it be more difficult to find a majority in Parliament because the number of its opponents has grown? What does the greater number of EU opponents mean for the work of the Parliament? Will its functions be interfered with? Or is the EU even threatened as a whole? Is the European Parliament at all the right place to weaken the Union or shake its foundations? Or could it be that it was not the target at all, the EU opponents being much more concerned with their impact in their own home countries and adding to their power there?

These are the questions which we are going to address in this study, taking stock of the activities of MEPs who are opposed to or critical of the EU one year after the last European elections. We based our analysis on online publications by the European Parliament about the activities of its members as well as on the online portal VoteWatch ([www.votewatch.eu](http://www.votewatch.eu)). We derived further information from eleven guideline-based interviews about the EU sceptics' activities in the various committees which we conducted with members of the European Parliament between February 23 and 26, 2015, in Brussels. The period actually under investigation extends from the constituent meeting of the newly elected Parliament on July 1, 2014 to the last session week in March 2015.

Before we turn to the key questions of the study, however, we need to characterise the parties in terms of substance and ideology. It is true that they are united at least by discontent with the EU, the scope of its regulatory competences, the manner of its decision-making, and certain of its decisions. Beyond that, however, the members under scrutiny differ considerably in some instances.

1| *Marine Le Pen in an Interview with "Der Spiegel" (2014: 82)*

2| *All election results according to EP (2014).*

3| *Since it was founded, the AfD has been defending itself against the charge of being 'right-wing populist', presenting itself as the 'victim' of media campaigns and charges of populism by the 'old parties'. However, its European campaign showed some remarkable parallels in content and style with other parties which, like the PVV or the FPÖ, are now regarded as indisputably right-wing populist. They all toy with resentments towards immigrants, their tone is alarmist and scandalising ('Would you have thought? Incredible facts about the EU', c.f. UKIPs 'Did you know?' campaigns), and have set their mark on the EU as their central archetypal enemy. Both the AfD and the PVV describe the EU*

*as the 'bureaucracy monster of Brussels', saying it interferes with national sovereignty and should be 'stopped' (cf. the election platforms and materials of the AfD 2014a,b, UKIP 2014a,b, and Geert Wilders' PVV).*

4| *In internal papers, the EPP group in the European Parliament numbered 118 'populists' among the opponents of the EU, including deputies from the FN, the UKIP, the FPÖ, and the PVV as well as those of Podemos, Syriza, or the 5-stars movement. Other authors again number entire Parliamentary parties among the 'anti-Europeans', arriving at a total of 170 deputies (see e.g. Niedermayer 2014a: 361-363 and 2014b: 544).*

## 2. EU OPPONENTS, EU CRITICS, LEFT- AND RIGHT-WING POPULISTS? TERMINOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS

Older studies about parties hostile to Europe distinguish as a rule between 'rigid' and 'soft' opponents of Europe (cf. e.g. Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008, Hartleb 2012). While long-established right-wing or national-populist parties like the Dutch PVV, the FPÖ, the (True) Finns, or the Sweden Democrats were seen as 'right-wing' because of their hostility towards immigrants and foreigners, their deliberate breaking of taboos, and the manner of their nationalist agitation (e.g. FPÖ: 'Austria first'), they were regarded as 'soft' opponents where Europe was concerned because they criticised the 'how' but not fundamentally the 'whether' of European integration. Conversely, extreme-right parties were judged to be 'rigid' opponents of Europe because they rejected as a matter of principle the Union and its fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, and parliamentarianism as well as methods like free trade and competition. This distinction may be regarded as outdated by now. The once 'soft' EU sceptics have long since turned into EU enemies as tough as nails. To them, the EU stands for 'everything that is going wrong in Europe', according to the chairman of the PVV, Geert Wilders; it is a 'bureaucracy monster' which 'I am fighting with all my strength', as Marine Le Pen, the leader of the Front National, put it (both quoted after Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 7). There is hardly a more 'rigid' way to express opposition.

To the right-wing EU opponents the European Union first and foremost represents an inadmissible interference with national self-determination. They want to dissolve the Union either in whole or in part, and they demand that their country leave the EU or at least the euro. They fear that a decline in prosperity might be caused by Europe-wide standard regulations in economic and financial policy, a less stringent immigration and asylum policy, or the costs of the EU institutions themselves. Their criticism is particularly violent with regard to border controls and immigration. In these respects, they want to recover full national control from the EU. Apart from that, their positions in European policy mainly consist of fundamental criticism and/or rejection of the EU.

Left-wing opponents of the EU mainly complain about the 'austerity diktat of Brussels' and an allegedly biased distribution of burdens in the endeavours to contain the sovereign debt crisis. The 'austerity' imposed by the EU and its institutions has become a symbol of all the problems from which the highly-indebted countries of southern Europe are suffering. Moreover, the EU is criticised for being undemocratic and its decision-making processes for being intransparent. The left wing demands the immediate termination of the EU's austerity policy, debt cuts for the most highly indebted countries in the EU, the creation of Eurobonds, 'social control' of the banking system, the abolition of the 'tax havens', and higher taxes on incomes and profits or the abolition of the 'diktat' of budget balance. Furthermore, Syriza, the *MoVimento Cinque Stelle* and other left-wing EU critics call for the introduction of direct-democracy processes. While the right-wing EU opponents preponderantly steer a course of strict opposition against every aspect of the EU, practising fundamental opposition at least in part, left-wing EU critics mostly operate within the framework of the EU which they want to change according to their own ideas but do not want to abandon entirely.

In view of the fundamental ideologies of the parties and the intensity of their EU opposition and/or criticism we think it makes sense to categorise the parties as follows, independently of their membership in an EP party group<sup>1</sup>:

- Left-wing EU critics: *Syriza*, *MoVimento Cinque Stelle*, *Podemos*, *Die Linke* and other parties belonging to the GUE/NGL group;
- Technocratic EU opponents (some with right-wing populist overtones): *AfD*, *Perus*;

- Right-wing EU opponents:
  - Right-wing populists: *Front National*, *UKIP*, Danish People's Party, *FPÖ*, *Lega Nord*, *PVV*, *Sweden Democrats*;
  - Extreme right: *Jobbik*, *Golden Dawn*, *NPD*.

Assigning adjectives, i.e. verbally ranging a party with an individual camp, always gives rise to conflicts and is rarely unambiguous (e.g. Bauer 2014). Thus, the (True) Finns, which renamed themselves 'The Finns' in 2012 (original, *Perussuomalaiset*, *Perus* for short), having recently taken some of the sting out of their anti-foreigner and anti-immigrant paroles, might thus be ranged with a camp of 'pragmatic' or 'non-ideological' EU opponents. The party sees itself as the force that represents the interests of the 'ordinary population', i. e. 'the Finns', against the political establishments in Helsinki and Brussels (ibid.: 109 and Raunio 2013: 146-148). In this study, we consider 'The Finns' together with their partner in the ECR group, the *AfD*, as technocratic EU opponents with some right-wing populist overtones. Responsibility for the last-named characterisation rests with the party's criticism of immigration directed against the EU which, though more subdued, still exists, as well as with the 'right-wing populist tendencies' within the *AfD* (Häusler et al. 2013).

The classification of the *AfD* is still a matter of dispute among researchers and publicists. For scientists, it is too early to assign the party to a particular camp (cf. Schmitt-Beck 2014). Some media or authors, being rather more prepared to commit themselves, classify the party as right-wing populist (cf. Spiegel online 2015) or as a party with 'right-wing populist tendencies'. In view of demands like 'All foreign EU citizens convicted of criminal offences must be deported' (*AfD* 2014b: 14) or statements like 'The Indians were unable to stop immigration. Now, they live in reservations'<sup>2</sup> no member of the party should be surprised if it is credited with a healthy dose of right-wing populism. Naturally, the party's leadership vehemently and persistently denies the charge of a right-wing bias, but it is either unable to do anything about the on-going infiltration of their party by the extreme-right fringe, or else they connive at it. Theoretically, therefore, there is a sufficiency of signs indicating that the *AfD* should be numbered among the right-wing populists. At all events, its European deputy, Hans-Olaf Henkel, left the federal executive of the *AfD* shortly before the conclusion of this study, his reason being that there were sustained attempts by 'right-wing ideologues' to take over the party (FAZ 24-04-2014: 1). Nevertheless, we will not do the *AfD* the

'favour' of including it among the right-wing populists. In their European campaign, their core concern was the abolition of the euro. By itself, this does not make it a right-wing party of whatever kind. Given the economic know-how repeatedly highlighted by its chairman and the demands derived from it, we regard it as a technocratic opponent of the EU that believes itself able to counter the EU and the common European currency with self-attributed economic expertise and 'common sense'. The intensity with which the seven European deputies of the AfD work on this project forms part of this study. First, however, we will summarise the key points in the platforms of the EU opponents and critics in the last European campaign.

1| *The parties we are investigating in this study appear in boldface.*

2| *Quoted from: Die Welt (21-06-2014)*

### 3. KEY POINTS IN THE PLATFORMS OF THE EU OPPONENTS AND CRITICS

As mentioned before, the ideological principles and the key points in the platforms of the EU opponents and critics differ widely in parts. Thus, the left-wing EU critics focus on terminating the budget consolidation policy, debt cuts for highly indebted euro countries, and the creation of Euro-bonds and other benefits to be guaranteed by the EU and the economically more successful member countries, while the technocratic and the right-wing EU opponents wanted to leave at least the euro zone if not the Union as such. Thus, the left wing is at least in favour of something. They merely regard the EU in its present form as an obstacle on the way there. The technocrats and right-wingers are preponderantly 'against', be it Europe's common currency, more profound European integration, or further immigration. What they all share is the enemy: the EU. While some want to reform it in conformance with their ideas, the others intend to weaken it in central areas or abolish it altogether.

Table 2 Programmatic focal points of the EU opponents and critics

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Left-wing EU critics:</b><br>Syriza, MoVimento Cinque Stelle | Immediate termination of austerity policy within the EU; debt cuts for highly indebted euro countries; restructuring of the euro zone and institution of financial compensation for poorer EU states; creation of euro bonds; abolition of the fiscal pact; referendum on the euro (M5S); end of budget discipline; rejection of the TTIP; introduction of a 35-hour week without loss of pay; complete equalisation of wages and pensions for men and women; financial transaction taxes; introduction of elements of direct democracy in the EU; abolition of deportation methods such as those applied by Frontex; allotment of migrants to EU states on the basis of their per-capita income; abolition of reception camps.   |
| <b>Technocratic EU opponents:</b><br>AfD, Perus                 | Abolition of the euro; 'orderly dissolution of the currency zone'; Germany's withdrawal from the euro zone; return to the Deutschmark (and all the other national currencies); rejection of a European banking union; no further relocation of legislative competences to the European level; veto rights for national parliaments and citizens' vetoes against legislative acts by the EU organs; reduction of the EU budget; halving the EU workforce; organisation of the immigration of qualified labour based on economic interests; granting asylum 'close to home'; consistent deportation of criminal foreigners from EU and non-EU countries; halting the development of the EU towards a federal state; safeguarding the self-determination of the member countries; euro countries in crisis should leave the euro in a controlled process; reduction of bureaucracy ('less of Brussels'); referendum on staying in the EU; upgrading Frontex; putting an end to asylum 'tourism' (Perus). |
| <b>Right-wing EU opponents</b>                                  |   |
| <b>Right-wing populists:</b><br>Front National, UKIP, FPÖ, PVV  | National referendums on EU withdrawal; no further competences for the EU; return of political competences to nation states; no debt union; no further contributions to the EU budget; creation of a 'core Europe of net payers' (FPÖ); return to national currencies; ending mass immigration; border controls; withdrawal from the Schengen agreement; immigration regulation; social benefits first for locals; stop to the immigration of Muslims; immigration as needed by the economy; headscarf ban; ban on double citizenship; against gender mainstreaming.   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Extreme right:</b><br>Jobbik, Golden Dawn, NPD | Re-establishment of national sovereignty; withdrawal of the respective countries from the EU; debt cuts (Ch.A.) and/or national referendum about the euro: return to national currencies; immediate termination of the European debt and transfer union (NPD); rejection of the banking union; rejection of the TTIP; stopping 'uncontrolled mass immigration' from all over the world; upgrading the European border protection agency Frontex; re-introduction of national border controls; cancellation of the Schengen agreement; complete re-nationalisation of domestic and migration-policy competences; ending the immigration of poor and low-qualified immigrants into national social systems; social benefits for 'locals' only; 'deportation' of illegal immigrants to their countries of origin; ending the 'transatlantic fixation'; building partnership-based and durable relations with Russia. |
|---|---|

Sources: Own compilation based on the parties' European election platforms.

AfD (2014a,b), Ch.A. (2014), Dutch News (2014), FPÖ (2011, 2013), FN (2013), Jobbik (2010, n.y.), M5S (2014), NPD (2014), Perussuomalaiset (2014), PVV (2012), Syriza (2014), UKIP (2014a,b).

It is remarkable that the Cinque Stelle movement, which is clearly left-oriented despite its fragmentary programme<sup>1</sup>, should have decided after the elections to join the 'Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy' (EFDD) group which, led by the UKIP, unmistakably opposes the EU as a whole, adopting nationalist and right-wing-populist tones. Next to the counting method for the formation of a party group (at least 25 deputies from at least 7 EU member countries), the key point was forming a front directed against the EU into which Cinque Stelle willingly allowed itself to be trapped. It is furthermore remarkable that no major anti-EU group was formed, contrary to previous announcements and despite major overlaps in substance. The deputies of the Front National, the PVV, the FPÖ, and the Lega Nord all remained non-attached, thus relinquishing the chance of proceeding against their common opponent en masse. The deputies of the extreme-right parties similarly remained non-attached because the right-wing populists had reservations towards them, and because on their own they did not meet the requirements for forming a group in the EP.

1| The movement's platform for the European elections consisted of no more than one page containing seven points, cf. MSD (2014).

## 4. EU OPPONENTS AND EU CRITICS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

### 4.1. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE EU

The European Parliament is one of those EU institutions whose competences have been markedly extended in recent years. Unlike the German Federal Parliament, for example, it still has no right of initiative of its own within the European legal framework, but when the Lisbon Treaty came into force on December 1, 2009, the former co-decision process was upgraded to an 'orderly legislation process' and several areas were added to the competences of Parliament, particularly in legal, budget, and agricultural policy (Pollak and Slominski 2012: 78). Although it still does not have a direct right of initiative, the European Parliament may ask the Commission to submit draft bills on certain subjects.

Together with the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers), the European Parliament forms the legislative power within the EU. Both organs enjoy equal rights under the orderly legislative process. They pass regulations, directives, and resolutions of all kinds. For an initiative of the Commission to be adopted and translated into EU-wide regulations, it must be approved by a majority in both 'chambers', of which none may outvote a decision by the other. Both the Council of Ministers and the Parliament may modify a text tabled by the Commission in two readings each. If the Council

and the Parliament should be unable to reach agreement, a conciliation committee resembling that provided for in the German legislative process would take over.

Next to its legislative duties and its extended budgetary competences<sup>1</sup>, the EP's functions include representation, legitimation, and election. In addition, it exercises rights of parliamentary control over the other organs of the EU, particularly the EU Commission and the Council of Ministers. However, the increased importance of the European Parliament is visible most clearly in its power to elect and appoint the EU Commission (Oppelland 2009: 88ff.).

According to the EU Treaty, the European Parliament elects the president of the Commission with the absolute majority of its members (EU 2010, Art. 7). The right to propose a candidate to Parliament rests with the European Council, i.e. the heads of state and government of the EU member states. When making such a proposal, the European Council should always take the outcome of the preceding European elections into account. Until 2014, however, it was the rule for the candidate for the office to come from that European party which had come out first in the elections, with the proviso that he absolutely had to be approved by all heads of state and government. Since the European parties for the first time nominated their own candidates for the office of Commission President in the run-up to the elections of 2014, the amendment to the treaty which says '...taking into account the result of the elections to the European Parliament' (ibid.) acquired an entirely new significance: now, the European Council can no longer bypass the election result. Thus, the election function of the European Parliament and, consequently, its significance in the power fabric of the entire Union was strengthened further (Heidbreder and Auracher 2015).

In most cases, resolutions by Parliament call for an absolute majority of the members present, but some need the absolute majority of all deputies. This is of particular importance when a Commission President is elected and the EU Commissioners, who have to pass a hearing in the relevant technical committees of Parliament beforehand, are confirmed en bloc. Unlike the parliamentary political systems at the nation state (or regional) level, the Commission is supported in its daily work not always by the same, permanently institutionalised majority, but searches for it where it can find it, just like party groups frequently have to look for

supporters from other groups for their concerns. It is true that party discipline in the EP is still less stringent than in national parliaments, particularly those in parliamentary systems of government, but in the big party groups it is approximating the pattern that we know from national parliaments. For a motion of no confidence against the Commission to be successful, a two-thirds majority is required, a hurdle high enough so that the EP's parliamentary election function is not counterbalanced by an equivalent 'voting-out function' as found in national parliaments. The probability of such a two-thirds majority being found is low. To that extent, the EP cannot really 'endanger' to the Commission.

The 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament has 751 members. The biggest party group is that of the European People's Party, which has 221 deputies, followed by the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats for Europe (S&D) in which 191 European deputies are organised. Next in line are the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), which has a total of 70 deputies since it has been joined by some anti-EU parties like the Danish People's Party, the (True) Finns, and the AfD. The fourth-strongest party group is the Liberals (67), followed by the group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) which comprises 52 deputies, including those from the Greek Syriza, the Spanish Podemos, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, and the German Die Linke. The fifth-biggest party group is that of the European Greens with 50 deputies. The group Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) has grown noticeably from 31 to 48 members. Led by the UKIP, it is home to several EU opponents, including the Sweden Democrats, the Lithuanian Order and Justice Party (TT), and – much to the amazement of most observers – even the Italian 5 Star movement. 52 deputies remained non-attached, including all 23 of the Front National, five from the Lega Nord, and four each from the Dutch and Austrian Freedom Parties, PVV and FPÖ. The three deputies each sent by the Greek and Hungarian extreme-right parties, Golden Dawn and Jobbik, remained non-attached, as did Udo Voigt from the NPD. Thus, each of these groups is far away from the absolute majority of 376 votes.

It is commonly assumed that 'in doubtful cases', a kind of grand coalition between the EPP and the Social Democrats can be formed every time (Niedermayer 2014b: 545). This is certainly true where major issues are concerned, such as the election of the incoming EU Commission on October 22, 2014, the adoption of the EU budget for 2015 on the same day,

the repulsion of the motion of no confidence against the Commission on November 27, or the decision of September 16, 2014, to conclude an association agreement with Ukraine (EPP party group 2014b). Where other decisions are concerned, this is not always the case, such as, for instance, the decision of the Parliament about exchanging flight data in the context of a co-operation agreement between the EU and Canada. In this instance, the opinion of the EPP diverged completely from that of the Social Democrats (ibid.). The latter voted with the Liberals, the Greens, the Left, and quite a number of non-attached deputies to have the European Court of Justice check first whether the project was conformable with the EU treaties (EP 2014b).

What strikes the eye at first sight of the voting behaviour (addressed in greater detail in Section 4.2.4) is that in the first important decisions of the newly convened Parliament, such as the election of the new Commission or the motion of no confidence against it somewhat more than a month later, the deputies of the EFDD, non-attached members, parts of the ECR and deputies of the United European Left voted together. As a general rule, EFDD and non-attached members vote en bloc either 'against' or 'in favour', depending on the wording of the relevant motion. It is also striking that in most cases – intentionally or not – the United European Left votes the same way. Until the end of 2014, its voting behaviour coincided 67% with that of the non-attached EU opponents and those organised in the EFDD. Conversely, conservatives and reformists are highly flexible, alternatively voting with one or another party group or line.

As mentioned before, the formation of a party group uniting all or at least the right-wing EU opponents once again failed after the elections. None of the eloquent and power-conscious 'people's tribunes' wanted to have his thunder stolen by someone else. Because of the sheer numerical strength of the UKIP, the EFDD is firmly in the hands of the British EU enemies ranged around their front man, Nigel Farage. Marine Le Pen, who had announced the formation of a coalition with Geert Wilders' PVV before the elections, found no room for herself and her 22 followers in the EFDD, and the liaison with the PVV also went wrong in the end. Since the other EU opponents are at loggerheads as well (cf. Vejvodová 2013), it was impossible to form a party group institutionalising a right-wing front against the EU.

Furthermore, the EU-friendly forces comprising the EPP, the Alliance of Social Democrats, the Liberals, and the European Greens together still have a mathematical majority, although there are cases where this majority is in no way automatic. Under the majority conditions presently prevailing, the EU opponents will be in no position to unhinge either the European Parliament or the Union as a whole. Yet they are strong enough to table their own motions for a resolution, which enables them to influence parliamentary decisions and processes and, while they probably cannot prevent the EU-friendly parties from forming a majority, they can increase the costs of the process. Moreover, they have a stage on which they can audibly describe their positions and defame the Parliament and the entire Union at any time for the public to read (e.g. EP 2014c). The Union will probably not sink because of that. But just at this moment, when Parliament had succeeded in widening the scope of its rights, the climate in the people's assembly has grown rougher. Consensus, which has so far guided the EP's decision-making, is about to be replaced by conflict, sometimes initiated merely for its own sake.

In the opinion of some, populism, no matter whether from the left or the right, from above or below, is a necessary 'early warning system' to which the established democratic parties need to respond in time to keep populists away from political decision-making positions (cf. Decker 2009). In the present European Parliament, it is too late for that. They are 'in', following their own agenda. How intensely they do that, and with what consequences, we will explain in the following sections.

## **4.2 PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES OF THE EU OPPONENTS AND CRITICS**

### **4.2.1 Activities in the plenary<sup>2</sup>**

Active participation in the plenary sessions of the Parliament allows deputies to state their positions in plenary and share in shaping the decision-making processes within the EU by requests for the floor, inquiries of the Commission, or resolution motions.

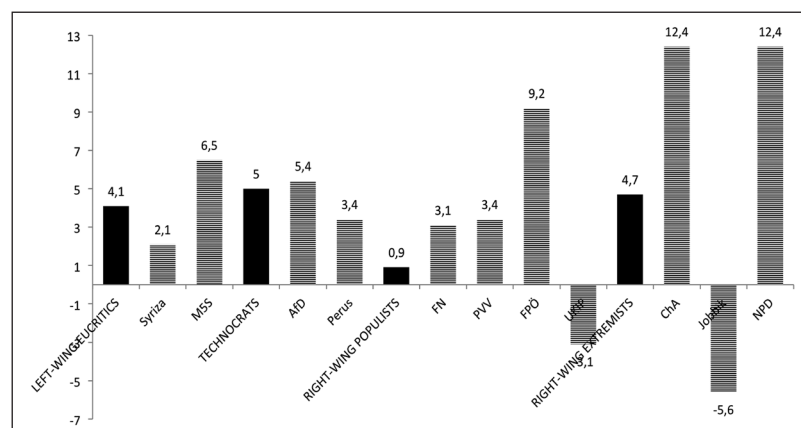
In the period under investigation, which spans the time from the constituent meeting of the 8<sup>th</sup> EP on July 1, 2014 to March 12, 2015, a total of 39 plenary sessions took place. The average attendance rate of all 751 European deputies was 87.6% (34 of 39 sessions). Judging only by their at-



tendance at parliamentary sessions, EU opponents and critics together are more active than the average of all the other deputies, since they took part in 90% of the plenary sessions on average.

If we consider the parties as categorised above, the technocratic EU opponents, i.e. the deputies of the AfD and the 'Finns', were present at plenary meetings more frequently than the deputies of the other parties investigated, their attendance rate being 92.6%. Close on their heels follow the extreme-right deputies with an average attendance rate of 92.3% and the left-wing EU critics with an average attendance rate of 91.7%. At 88.5% the right-wing populists form the rear guard of the parties investigated, although even they range a little above the average of all European deputies (cf. Fig. 1).

*Figure 1 Deviations in the attendance rates of the EU opponents and critics from the overall average (in percent)*



Own computation. Attendance rate of all European deputies between 01-07-2014 and 12-03-2015: 87.6%.

Within the various groups, however, fairly large variations are noticeable. The technocrats are clustered quite close together (average AfD: 93%; average Perus: 91.3%), but even within the AfD itself, the attendance rate varies markedly. While the chairman of the AfD delegation, Bernd Lucke, took part in 38 of 39 plenary sessions (97.4%), the attendance rate of Hans-Olaf Henkel at 87% was the lowest for the AfD but still average for the EP as a whole.

The other groups show wider variations. The extreme right owes its high attendance rate to NPD deputy Udo Voigt who, like the three deputies of the Greek Golden Dawn, too part in all of the 39 plenary meetings in the period under investigation, whereas the three Jobbik deputies together only reached a substandard rate of 82%. Among these three deputies, individual attendance rates varied again, ranging between 100% and 70%.

Among the left-wing parties, too, there are internal variations in the attendance rate. Four of the seven Syriza deputies show very high attendance rates in excess of 90%. The rates of the remaining three deputies vary between 50% and 89.7%. A similar split can be identified in the M5S movement, although unlike Syriza, the group of active deputies is markedly greater in this case. The majority of the seventeen M5S deputies have high to very high attendance rates of between 88% and 100%. Rates that at 74.4% and 84.6% are slightly to materially below the average were observed in no more than two members.

An evaluation of the attendance at plenary sessions with and plenary sessions without voting shows that the attendance of all deputies of the European Parliament declined on average between sessions with and sessions without voting. The same observation holds true for the entire group of left-wing EU critics, which shows an average decline of c. 6%. When parties are considered individually, we find a decline of 8% for Syriza and 3% for M5S.

The right-wing populists show the widest fluctuations in the attendance rate. While the average attendance of all right-wing populists is slightly higher than the average of all European deputies, the attendance of the 24 UKIP deputies at an average of 84.5% is markedly lower than that of other EU opponents. The negative rogue performance is that of the Earl of Dartmouth who, as a quasi-casual deputy, took part only in every other plenary session. Another seven UKIP deputies logged attendances below 80%. Conversely, the four deputies of the FPÖ very frequently take their seats in the EP, reaching an average attendance rate of 96.8%. Nevertheless, neither they nor the FN or PVV deputies whose attendance rates are similarly above average can do anything to improve the substandard attendance of the right-wing populist group, which owes to the UKIP.

However, attendance rates alone hardly furnish sufficient material for drawing conclusions about the intensity of activities directed against the EU or against the EP. After all, the daily allowance of EUR 305 per meeting attended is sufficient inducement for any deputy to enter his/her name in the attendance register and take his/her seat in Parliament at least for a few hours. The Front National has already exploited this additional source of income, using the funds unlawfully to (cross-)finance the party (cf. Nielsen 2015).

The picture grows more distinctive if we look at the activities of the opponents and critics of Europe in the plenary. Under the heading 'activities', we include requests for the floor by deputies present in the plenary<sup>3</sup>, oral and written questions for the Commission, and draft resolutions tabled by individual deputies or party groups which the deputies investigated in this study have joined.

In this context, it is remarkable that the record of the left-wing EU critics in all three forms of activity is higher than the general average, that the technocratic EU-opponents across all three forms are less active than the average, and that the right-wing populists and the extreme-right deputies speak a great deal but are in some instances very much less active than the average of all deputies as far as parliamentary questions or resolution proposals are concerned (cf. Table 3).

As noted before in the matter of attendance rates, there are remarkable differences within in the groups and the parties themselves. Thus, the higher-than-average number of requests to speak from the left-wing EU critics is due solely to the fact that the M5S deputies are much more active than those from Syriza. Then again, the M5S owes its comparatively high number of requests to speak only to the fact that its ranks include two remarkably active deputies who asked for the floor 136 and 195 times, respectively, in the period under investigation. Without these two, the number of requests to speak from the M5S would have remained below the average of all deputies.

The technocratic EU opponents follow a similar pattern. Their substandard activity as far as requests to speak in plenary are concerned is the fault of the Perus deputies who asked for the floor no more than 4 times, while the AfD deputies did so 34 times on average. The front runner in this case is Beatrix von Storch, who asked for the floor 93 times in the period under

investigation. Where questions for the Commission and resolution proposals are concerned, however, the AfD deputies showed reluctance similar to their Finnish colleagues, so that the plenary activity of the technocrats' group must be diagnosed as substandard.

*Table 3 Activities of the EU opponents and critics in the plenary*

| Party/<br>group   | Inter-<br>ventions | Deviation  | Questions | Deviation  | Resolution<br>proposals | Deviation  |
|---|--------------------|------------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Ø Left-wing<br/>EU critics<br/>(N = 23<br/>MEPs)</b> | <b>34*</b>         | <b>+5</b>  | <b>56</b> | <b>+40</b> | <b>18</b>               | <b>+7</b>  |
| Syriza (6)  | 17                 | -12        | 34        | +19        | 19                      | +8         |
| M5S (17)  | 40                 | +11        | 65        | +49        | 17                      | +6         |
| <b>Ø Techno-<br/>crats<br/>(N = 9)</b>                  | <b>28</b>          | <b>-1</b>  | <b>7</b>  | <b>-9</b>  | <b>3</b>                | <b>-8</b>  |
| AfD (7)   | 34                 | +5         | 9         | -7         | 3                       | -8         |
| Perus (2)   | 4                  | -25        | 0         | -16        | 2                       | -9         |
| <b>Ø Right-<br/>wing popu-<br/>lists<br/>(N = 55)</b>   | <b>44</b>          | <b>+15</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>-1</b>  | <b>3</b>                | <b>-8</b>  |
| FN (23)   | 58                 | +29        | 16        | +/-0       | 5                       | -6         |
| PVV (4)   | 7                  | -22        | 11        | -5         | 3                       | -8         |
| FPÖ (4)   | 125                | +96        | 26        | +10        | 3                       | -8         |
| UKIP (24)   | 24                 | -5         | 13        | -3         | 1                       | -10        |
| <b>Ø Extreme<br/>right<br/>(N = 7)</b>                  | <b>88</b>          | <b>+59</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>-2</b>  | <b>0**</b>              | <b>-11</b> |
| Ch.A. (3)   | 176                | +147       | 20        | +4         | 0                       | -11        |
| Jobbik (3)  | 24                 | -5         | 6         | -10        | 0                       | -11        |
| NPD (1)   | 16                 | -13        | 17        | +1         | 1                       | -10        |

The overall averages for all 751 deputies in the EP amount to (figures rounded):

Interventions: 29,

Questions: 16,

Motions for a resolution: 11.

\* All figures rounded.

\*\* As Udo Voigt (NPD) tabled a motion for a resolution, the mathematical average for the group of extreme-right parties investigated is 0.14; like all the other figures in this overview, however, it was rounded on the basis of mathematical rules.

Among the right-wing populists, too, there are active and passive deputies. What is remarkable is the high number of requests to speak from the FPÖ. The average number of requests to speak from its four deputies is 125, and the number of their questions is similarly above average. The number of interventions by the deputies of the Front National ranges from 134 to zero (Jean-Marie Le Pen). Among the UKIP deputies, the frequency of requests for the floor is almost uniformly low: 17 of its 24 deputies asked leave to speak in the plenary less than 20 times in the period under investigation, with only one deputy breaking ranks at 154 requests for the floor. The party's chairman, Nigel Farage, whose verbal contributions in the plenary repeatedly arouse the attention of the media, has no more than 14 requests for the floor to show for himself in the period under investigation.

As far as parliamentary questions are concerned, this difference between the PVV and UKIP on the one hand and the Front National and the FPÖ on the other is apparent, but not as clearly as with regard to the number of interventions. Among right-wing populists, the average number of questions is 15.1, only slightly less than the average of all deputies at 15.8. Considered individually, the figures amount to 11 (PVV) and 13 (UKIP) and/or 16 (Front National) and 26 (FPÖ).

A closer look at each party in turn reveals internal differences. It can be observed that the Front National is divided in two: 14 deputies range below the above-mentioned average of parliamentary questions asked by all deputies, the lowest value in this case being that of Jean-Marie Le Pen at 4 questions. At the same time, 9 FN deputies go beyond the average. In the PVV, too, a split can be observed. Two deputies show a performance that is markedly below the average, having asked six parliamentary questions each, while that of the other two ranges above the average at 16 and 17 questions, respectively. Three of the four FPÖ deputies did markedly better than this PVV maximum: their lowest value is 11 parliamentary questions. The UKIP may be divided into three groups as far as the frequency of parliamentary questions is concerned: first, there are the inactive ones (0 - 3 questions) comprising 13 of 24 deputies, four of which asked no questions at all (Nigel Farage, among others). Second, there is the group of deputies whose activity is below average (4-14 questions), which numbers four deputies. Third, there is the group of deputies whose activity is above average (more than 15 questions). In the second group, the highest value is 10, whereas the lowest in the

group of above-average activity is 26. Therefore, the groups are separated by obvious gaps. In the UKIP, the highest number of parliamentary questions is 56, which is at the same time the highest number of questions in the entire group of right-wing populist deputies.

Ranking the parties by the frequency of their motions for a resolution shows a different picture from that drawn by their interventions in plenary and their parliamentary questions. In this case, the values of all deputies range markedly below the overall parliamentary average of 11.3. All in all, we see that the Front National and the FPÖ are very active with respect to interventions and questions but not with respect to motions for a resolution. Conversely, the performance of the UKIP and PVV is below average in all three forms of activity.

The active impression made at first glance by the extreme-right parties is mainly due to the high number of interventions by the three deputies of the Golden Dawn. On average, they asked leave to speak 176 times, the top performer being Lampros Fountoulis at 200 times. However, the fact that a large proportion of these 'requests to speak' was made in writing, i.e. for the record, tells a great deal about the manner in which the Greek extreme right exercises its mandate. Moreover, they only use the plenary for their make-believe activities. While the three deputies of Golden Dawn do attend their committees, they do not take part (cf. Section 4.2.2). The three Jobbik deputies are passive in every aspect of parliamentary work, whereas the NPD deputy Udo Voigt tallied 34 activities in the period under investigation (16 requests to speak, 17 questions, and one motion for a resolution to release functionaries of the Golden Dawn from prison in Greece). Even so, he remains below the average of all MEPs whose average number of activities is 56.

There are three observations that deserve to be highlighted at this juncture. First, the activity of the left-wing EU critics as a group is higher than average, due first and foremost to the deputies of the MoVimento Cinque Stelle. Second, the EU opponents, whether technocrats, right-wing populists or right-wing extremists, are outstandingly active in the simplest form of activity – asking leave to speak. Some, like the FPÖ or the Golden Dawn, are even conspicuous for a kind of hyper-activity. If we look more closely, however, we find that these are make-believe activities for the record (written interventions, even though they may be formally equal to oral ones). Where the more elaborate forms of activity are

concerned, i.e. questions for the Commission or motions for a resolution, most right-wing EU opponents quickly lose ground, some remaining very clearly below the general level of activity. Together with their engagement in the committees this suggests that at least the majority of the right-wing EU opponents are after effects that can be produced quickly and 'cheaply' in the EP plenary. Where a greater effort is involved, they lose interest. Thirdly, this applies mainly to right-wing populists, while the extreme-right EU opponents are noticeable for their highly disciplined attendance.

#### 4.2.2 Contents of parliamentary activities

So far, we have merely described how frequently the deputies of the parties hostile to or critical of the EU have asked for the floor in the plenary or shown other kinds of activity. This Section shows what subjects they address. At the same time, we will investigate how close the subjects addressed are to the European election platform of each party, so that we may answer the question asked before, whether they are doing in Parliament what they promised their voters.

In view of the large bandwidth of subjects dealt with in the plenary, we formed six categories for our analyses to which activities were assigned. These categories are: (1) euro and financial policy, (2) the European institutional order, including the remit of the EU, the distribution of competences among the EU organs, and questions relating to the EU enlargement, (3) economic and social policy, (4) migration, asylum, border controls, and (5) foreign and international trade policy. Activities that could not be localised unambiguously were assigned to category (6), 'miscellaneous'. Assignment was based on the headings of the interventions, questions, and motions for a resolution. Any activity that could not be categorised immediately from its heading was read entirely and then assigned to a category. Because the contents addressed occasionally varied widely within a group, we dispensed with group averages. Instead, we described the key points addressed by the parties under investigation in each subject, which uncovered common elements at least in some of the groups.

Among the left-wing EU critics, the six Syriza deputies at least are attempting to do what they promised to their voters. While they are less active than the deputies of M5S across the board, they are active in

the categories 'euro and other financial-policy questions', 'economic and social policy', and 'foreign and trade policy'. However, the majority of their activities come under the heading of 'miscellaneous'. Nevertheless, the deputies of Syriza, as announced in their European election platform, propose ending the austerity policy in the EU and in Greece, abolishing the Troika, tying investment packages to combat youth unemployment, ending the strategy of privatisation in the public sector, granting a debt cut to Greece, and standardising the tax system within the EU, meaning that their activities are close to their party's platform.

To what extent the doings of the 17 M5S deputies are compatible with the European election platform of the movement is a question that is not easy to answer because the Italians entered the European elections with nothing more than a DIN A4 flyer showing seven items. However, their activities do aim at some of these items. The work of the M5S deputies concentrated on the topics 'euro and financial policy' and 'foreign and trade policy'. To each of these topics, they devoted nearly 15% of their activities. Following the demands made in their platform flyer, these included activities directed against the 'diktat' of balanced national budgets or against the TTIP. Similarly, the M5S deputies addressed the topic 'economic and social policy' relatively frequently, but not with the same intensity as the six Syriza deputies. In both left-wing parties, the 'miscellaneous' category forms the biggest field of activity, containing, for example, interventions, questions, and motions for a resolution on human-rights issues as well as health, environment, and transport policy. These fields at least jibe with the logo of M5S. Freely translated, the 5 stars signify environment, water, development, connectivity, and transport. While the MoVimento Cinque Stelle does not have a sound programme, the work of its deputies is thematically relevant nevertheless.

The contents addressed by the group of technocratic EU opponents differ widely. Thus, the 'Finns' demanded, in words almost identical with those used by the AfD, a 'controlled withdrawal' of countries in the throes of crisis from the euro zone and a limitation of the EU budget, but they do not work on that subject at all. At 28.6% of all activities, the Finns concentrate on migration and asylum policy as well as on border control issues. Thus, the Perus deputies concentrate more on the field of migration policy in relative terms than the extreme-right parties, even though only four requests for the floor were involved in absolute terms. Moreover, the key points of interest of the two 'Finns' differ widely. One devotes his

activities to the field of migration policy, while 50% of the activities of the other belong to the category of 'economic and social policy'. In absolute terms, however, this relates to no more than two activities in the plenary and 14.3% of the activities of the two Perus deputies taken together.

According to their election platform, the 'Finns', similar to the AfD, basically belong to the economically liberal camp, at least partially advocating more profound economic co-operation in Europe. At 42.9%, most of the activities of the Perus deputies belong to the 'miscellaneous' category which includes children's rights among other items. Compared to the other euro-sceptic parties, the extent to which they deal with the 'foreign and international trade policy' category is conspicuously small. Only 7.1% of the activities of the two deputies belong to this category. However, foreign policy – as distinct from European policy – played no part in the European election platform of Perus. Unlike the extreme-right and right-wing populist deputies, however, they do not criticise the EU in this category for its policy towards Russia but Russia for its infringements of human rights.

More than the 'Finns' and close to its European election platform, the AfD assigns top billing to the categories 'euro and financial policy', 'the EU institutional order', and 'foreign and trade policy'. Although not all of its seven deputies participate equally, the AfD as a party works on central elements of its platform in the EP. However, anyone who should have hoped that the AfD would take the initiative in the field of migration restrictions, asylum policy, and border control issues was disappointed. The AfD deputies hardly addressed this field at all, preferring to deal with economic and financial policy matters, criticising the extensive competences of the ECB, the Banking Union, or the size of the EU budget. What is conspicuous in the AfD is its division of labour. Its high activity in the field of euro and financial policy is due to Bernd Lucke, Bernd Kölmel, and Hans-Olaf Henkel, while Marcus Pretzell and Beatrix von Storch devote themselves especially to the 'European institutional order' and 'foreign and international trade policy'.

With particular frequency, Pretzell and von Storch criticise the European Commission, the president of the EP, and the EU's alleged competence transgressions in general. Across the board, 22.4% of the activities of the AfD deputies belong to this category, more than in any other party under

investigation. In contrast to the other AfD deputies, Pretzell and von Storch charge the Commission not only with breaking the European treaties with regard to public financing but also with 'command economy', 'socialist centralisation', and a 'democracy deficit'.

*Table 4 Key areas addressed in parliamentary activities\**

| Category<br>-> Party | (1)  | (2)  | (3)  | (4)  | (5)  | (6)    | Correlation   |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|---|
| MSS                  | 15   | 3.5  | 6.2  | 1.5  | 14.4 | 59.2   | unilaterally high in (1) and (5)                                  |
| Syriza               | 11   | 1.6  | 10.5 | 3.6  | 11   | 62     | platform-based and uniformly high                                 |
|                      |      |      |      |      |      |        |   |
| AfD                  | 32,1 | 22.4 | 2.8  | 1.6  | 22.4 | 18.7   | platform-based  |
| Perus                | 0    | 7.1  | 14.3 | 28.6 | 7.1  | 42.9** | only unilaterally high in (4), remarkably passive in (1)          |
|                      |      |      |      |      |      |        |   |
| FN                   | 4,1  | 10.7 | 3.7  | 3.2  | 30.4 | 47.8   | only sporadically high in (2) and (5), remarkably low in (4)      |
| PVV                  | 8,1  | 21   | 25.6 | 3.5  | 31.4 | 10.5   | only sporadically high in (2), (3) and (5), remarkably low in (4) |
| FPÖ                  | 20   | 13.6 | 5.7  | 8.1  | 32.9 | 19.7   | platform-based  |
| UKIP                 | 15,2 | 7.3  | 5.2  | 3.6  | 19.8 | 48.9   | only unilaterally platform-based in (1) and (5)                   |
|                      |      |      |      |      |      |        |   |
| Ch.A.                | 25   | 7.5  | 4.6  | 6.3  | 34.1 | 22.7   | unilaterally high in (1) and (5), remarkably low in (4)           |
| Jobbik               | 6,7  | 13.3 | 6.7  | 13.9 | 47.8 | 11***  | platform-based  |
| NPD                  | 6    | 8.8  | 0    | 14.7 | 56   | 14.7   | platform-based with focus on (5): pro-Russian and anti-American   |

(1) Euro and financial policy, (2) European institutional order, (3) Economic and social policy (4) Migration, asylum, border controls, (5) Foreign and international trade policy, (6) Miscellaneous.

\* In percent of all activities in the plenary. Slight changes in comparison to the German version are due to a recalculation in the meantime. These changes did not change the contents but simply completed the table.

\*\* Including children's rights.

\*\*\* Including climate and gender-mainstreaming policy.

On closer consideration, the AfD reveals internal differences between an economically liberal wing on the one hand and a national-conservative wing on the other. In the field of foreign and international trade policy, for instance, Marcus Pretzell and Beatrix von Storch focus their criticism on the TTIP, the EU's policy towards Russia, and the association agreements concluded with third countries in order to enlarge the EU. These deputies also account for the scanty activities of the AfD in the field of migration and immigration policy. Hans-Olaf Henkel, on the other hand, criticises Russia for its infringements of human rights, and Bernd Lucke does not reject the TTIP out of hand. Joachim Starbatty and Henkel are even basically in favour of the TTIP, while Bernd Lucke additionally advocates association agreements with third countries and the enlargement of the European single market. Thus, while the AfD is far from disapproving the EU policy across the board, there are internal differences on important issues. This suggests that the EP group of the AfD is as disparate as the party is in Germany. Nevertheless, the activities of its MEPs are fairly closely associated with key items in the party platform. A glance at its activities in the committees also shows that this is so (see Section 4.2.3).

The right-wing populist group has a few surprises to offer. Marine Le Pen wanted 'to destroy the EU', but in fact she most frequently dealt with foreign and trade policy. To the European institutional order, she herself devoted only somewhat less than one in five of her contributions, as compared to one in ten contributions by her party as a whole. The FN favours most emphatically protecting French products, opposing the TTIP and the EU's policy towards Russia, thus boosting Putin who is known to lend financial support to the party (cf. Spiegel online 2014).

Conversely, the four deputies of the PVV state their aversion to the EU more clearly. A total of roughly 21% of their activities come under the heading of 'European institutional order'. The four deputies of the FPÖ are similarly active in their opposition to the European common currency and the institutions of the EU. Moreover, they are noticeably more active in their opposition against immigration to Europe and tougher than the other right-wing populist parties in matters relating to asylum policy and border control.

In the UKIP's activities, the European institutional order as well as migration issues play a subordinate role. No more than 7.3% and 3.6% of its activities respectively belong to these categories. The 'euro and financial

policy' category anyway accounts for 15.2% of activities, although this percentage falls far short of that of foreign and trade policy (19.8%) and miscellaneous (48.9%). Nigel Farage diverges slightly from the general trend of his party. None of his 15 recorded activities comes under the heading of 'euro and financial policy' or 'migration and asylum', while one third belongs to category 2. The others are spread between categories 5 and 6.

Generally, it is remarkable that the right-wing populist parties only rarely address issues of migration and immigration, with only the FPÖ deviating upward from that trend. Activities concerning the European institutional order reaches are middling at best (Front National and PVV) but remains below that elsewhere (FPÖ and UKIP). On average, only c. one in ten activities belongs to this topic (UKIP, PVV, FPÖ), no less than one in five with the PVV. Among the right-wing populists, whose presence and activity as individuals and as a group is below average in the EP committees in every respect (cf. Section 4.2.3), activities in Parliament only conform sporadically to the key items in their election platforms. This is because none of the other parties whose activities in the plenary were investigated puts as little store by its own platform as the two biggest right-wing populist opponents of the EU, the FN and the UKIP.

On the other hand, the two extreme-right parties exhaust the category matrix formed by us to the full. The 'miscellaneous' category is their smallest. While they do differ in the items on which they focus their parliamentary activities, the right-wing extremists still deal mostly with foreign and trade-policy issues.

Among Udo Voigt's 16 requests for the floor in the plenary, the 'foreign policy and international trade policy of the EU' category is by far the most frequently addressed at nine interventions. As far as content is concerned, he mainly deals with the Ukraine conflict and the TTIP, where he appears pro-Russian and anti-American. In three interventions belonging to the miscellaneous category, he deals with Ebola and freedom of opinion in Germany, which he thinks is restricted. In two interventions belonging to the 'migration policy' category he deals with the (re)immigration of IS terrorists into the EU. As he logged only one contribution each under the categories 'euro and financial policy' and 'European institutional order', it appears that these subjects are of no great importance to him.



A similar picture emerges when we categorise his questions in Parliament. Dealing hardly at all with 'euro and European policy', he focuses instead on international trade policy and foreign policy, where he criticises the EU for its action against Russia. There is one question in which he again addresses freedom of opinion in Germany, and another three that deal with migration policy. His only motion for a resolution deals with the rights of the Golden Dawn deputies in Greece, which is why it was assigned to the 'miscellaneous' category. Although euro and European policy is a big issue in the NPD's election platform, these categories share only 5.9% and 8.8% of all Udo Voigt's activities, respectively. His apparently low activity in the 'migration policy' category, known for being a big issue for extreme-right parties, is due to the votes taken in the EP. In view of the fact that in the period under investigation, only one vote was assigned to the subject of migration policy, Udo Voigt's activity in this category is even relatively high. Freedom of opinion and/or demagoguery as well as foreign policy in particular constitute key items in the NPD's European election platform as well as in the activities of Udo Voigt, the conclusion being that Udo Voigt addresses at least parts of the NPD platform in the EP as far as his limited options as a non-attached deputy permit.

At 47.8%, the Jobbik deputies log most of their activities in the category 'foreign policy and international trade policy'. However, category distributions differ from one deputy to the next. 54.1% and 48.3%, respectively, of the interventions of two deputies deal with this complex of issues. About half of the interventions of these two deputies are mainly concerned with criticising the USA, with criticism specifically focusing on the CIA's torture tactics, the TTIP, and the western policy towards Russia in connection with the Ukraine conflict. These requests for the floor particularly clearly show how close Jobbik is to the Kremlin in political terms. There are reports saying that the deputy Béla Kovács is suspected of being a Russian spy in the EP, although there is no proof (Die Welt 26-09-2014). The third Jobbik deputy logged only 37.5% of his activities in the category 'foreign and international trade policy'. His attention focuses on euro and financial policy, although he does not attack the euro but the financial means of the EU (of which his own country benefits). Under the category 'European institutional order', the Jobbik deputies criticise the pressure supposedly exerted by the European Commission on their country to adhere to democratic norms. Across the board, the actions of the Jobbik deputies are fairly close to their programmatic guidelines.

As far as the parliamentary activities of Golden Dawn are concerned, two focal points stand out: 'finance and euro-policy' and 'foreign and international trade policy'. However, the party's European election platform was dominated by two topics, financial and migration policy. Of the total number of activities of the Golden Dawn deputies, 34.1% may be assigned to 'foreign and international trade policy', nearly 25% to 'euro and financial policy', 7.5% to 'European institutional order', 4.6% to 'economic and social policy', and 22.7% to the 'miscellaneous' category. No more than 6.3% of all activities in the plenary were dedicated to the party's second focal point in its platform, migration and asylum policy. With respect to Golden Dawn we find that the key contents highlighted in the party's platform only partially coincide with the focal points in the parliamentary work of its European deputies. As mentioned before, the deputies addressed themselves only rarely to migration policy. Then again, euro and financial policy is a key point both in the party's platform and in the activities of its deputies. Under this heading, the deputies of the Golden Dawn logged materially more activities than the deputies of the NPD and Jobbik, both in absolute as well as in relative terms. Moreover, the actions of the deputies of the Golden Dawn show a remarkable degree of mutual coherence. Quite unlike the Jobbik deputies, there are no significant differences in the distribution of activities of the Greek right-wing extremists.

#### **4.2.3 Activities in the committees**

The committees of the European Parliament constitute its working level. Although the EP has no right of initiative within the European legislative process, this is where a large part of the legislative and other work of Parliament is done. Following a key based on their size, party groups appoint rapporteurs who co-ordinate the work on a draft bill in the relevant committee and submit a resolution proposal first to the committee and then to the plenary (Große Hüttmann and Wehling 2013). Their appointment as rapporteurs notwithstanding, deputies may ask leave to speak any time in the committees, and they may even write so-called 'shadow reports' in which they state their position on a specific subject.

Table 5 Activities in committees

| Party/<br>group   | Attend-<br>ance<br>(in %) | Deviation<br>(in %) | (Shadow)<br>reports | Deviation    | Comments    | Deviation    |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Ø Left-wing<br/>EU critics<br/>(N = 23<br/>MEPs)</b> | <b>72.7</b>               | <b>+10.5</b>        | <b>0</b>            | <b>-0.07</b> | <b>1.21</b> | <b>+0.78</b> |
| Syriza (6)  | 65.8                      | +3.6                | 0                   | -0.07        | 1.86        | +1.43        |
| M5S (17)  | 76.4                      | +14.2               | 0                   | -0.07        | 0.94        | +0.51        |
| <b>Ø Techno-<br/>crats<br/>(N = 9)</b>                  | <b>71.4</b>               | <b>+9.2</b>         | <b>0.67</b>         | <b>+0.6</b>  | <b>1</b>    | <b>+0.57</b> |
| AfD (7)   | 68.6                      | +6.4                | 0.29                | +0.22        | 1.29        | +0.86        |
| Perus (2)   | 81                        | +18.8               | 2                   | +1.93        | 0           | -0.43        |
| <b>Ø Right-<br/>wing popu-<br/>lists<br/>(N = 55)</b>   | <b>55.3</b>               | <b>-6.9</b>         | <b>0.02</b>         | <b>-0.05</b> | <b>0.05</b> | <b>-0.38</b> |
| FN (23)   | 60.5                      | -1.7                | 0.04                | -0.03        | 0.13        |              |
| PVV (4)   | 54.6                      | -7.6                | 0                   | -0.07        | 0           | -0.43        |
| FPÖ (4)   | 59.6                      | -2.6                | 0                   | -0.07        | 0           | -0.43        |
| UKIP (24)   | 46.6                      | -15.6               | 0                   | -0.07        | 0           | -0.43        |
| <b>Ø Right-<br/>wing<br/>extremists<br/>(N = 7)</b>     | <b>68</b>                 | <b>+5.8</b>         | <b>0</b>            | <b>-0.07</b> | <b>0</b>    | <b>-0.43</b> |
| Ch.A. (3)   | 75                        | +12.8               | 0                   | -0.07        | 0           | -0.43        |
| Jobbik (3)  | 75                        | +12.8               | 0                   | -0.07        | 0           | -0.43        |
| NPD (1)   | 100                       | +37.8               | 0                   | -0.07        | 0           | -0.43        |

The MEPs investigated attended their committees at an average rate of 62.2% in the period under investigation. The average figure for (shadow) reports by the control group is 0.07 because only four of the 94 control group deputies investigated drew up shadow reports: AfD (1), Perus (2) and FN (1). The average number of comments in the control group is similarly low. Because of the high passivity generally shown by the 94 deputies examined under this heading, the average number of comments is 0.43.

Of the forms of activity that are possible in the committees, we will now be considering (a) the attendance rates of the EU opponents and critics in those committees of which they are full members, (b) the number of reports and shadow reports generated, and (c) further comments on legislative processes broken down by groups and parties. As the con-

straints of this study did not permit analysing the committee activities of all 751 European deputies, the control group consists of all EU opponents and critics that were examined.

As in our previous analysis of attendance rates in the plenary, we found that the attendance rates of the left-wing EU critics are highest in the committees as well, ranging 10.5 percentage points above the average of all EU opponents and critics. Next in line as far as attendance is concerned are the technocratic EU opponents and the right-wing extremists. On average, the right-wing populist group has substandard attendance rates in the committees of Parliament at somewhat more than 55%, although the UKIP deputies took part in less than half of the committee meetings on average. Moreover, their front man, Nigel Farage, additionally emphasises his dislike of the EU and the EP by not collaborating in a single committee of Parliament. All in all, it appears that the working level of Parliament does not offer enough publicity to the UKIP (although every committee meeting is recorded and may be retrieved from the relevant internet pages of the EP) and involves too much work for their purposes, which is why its deputies are conspicuous by their reticence.

The AfD and 'the Finns' present a different picture. Their below-average activity in the plenary contrasts with a comparatively high attendance rate in the committees. At 71.4%, the average attendance rate of the technocratic EU opponents ranges markedly above the average of all EU critics and opponents. The frontrunner in this group is AfD deputy Beatrix von Storch, who took part in all meetings of the committee on women's rights and gender mainstreaming (FEMM), followed by Bernd Lucke, who took part in 95% of the meetings of the ECON committee whose primary concern is monetary policy. At the beginning of the legislative period, Lucke even stood for the position of deputy committee chairman but was not elected by the other members. He introduced himself to them as a deputy who would like to use his mandate to abolish the common European currency. Hans-Olaf Henkel, on the other hand, was awarded this coveted post in the committee on industry, research, and energy (ITRE).

Another notable feature among the technocratic EU opponents is that 'the Finns' took part more frequently in committee meetings on average than the AfD deputies, and that the Perus deputies logged the highest rate of activity among the EU opponents whose total number of activities in the committees was very small. On average, 'the Finns' drew up two



shadow reports per deputy for the ECR group, which gives them the lead in this category and makes them chiefly responsible for the above-average performance of their group.

Apart from the Finns and the AfD, the other EU opponents are not entrusted with reports or do not volunteer for them. This is either a question of attitude (UKIP) or due to the fact that most of the EU opponents are non-attached and thus only marginally integrated in the work of the committees. The NPD deputy Udo Voigt, for example, took part in every meeting of the committee on civil liberties, justice, and home affairs (LIBE) but was not active in any of the categories investigated. Except for their lower attendance rate, the same applies to the deputies of the Golden Dawn, Jobbik, and the right-wing populists.

Being primarily constructive working bodies of the EP, committees are something for 'doers', not for 'refuseniks'. The latter prefer to use the 'stage' of the plenary but not the engine room of a committee, which may explain the differences in the number and type of activities between right-wing extremists and populists. Conspicuous and (pseudo-)active in the plenary, present (the daily allowance is also paid for committee meetings) but passive in the meeting rooms of the committees. Remarkably enough, exactly the reverse is true for the AfD and 'the Finns', which may be due to their membership in the ECR party group but also to the intense personal commitment (not to say a certain zealotry) of one or the other deputy.

#### 4.2.4 Voting behaviour<sup>4</sup>

The deputies investigated, no matter whether they belong to the right-wing, a technocratic, or the left-wing camp, might be expected to be sceptical to hostile towards the institutions of the EU, its Parliament included. Consequently, it might also be expected that their voting behaviour is mainly characterised by denial, and that relatively independently of the subjects that are being voted on. Whether or not their actual behaviour in Parliament meets this expectation will be investigated in the first section of this chapter.

The foregoing breakdown of the parties under investigation into left-wing EU critics and technocratic, right-wing populist, and extreme-right EU opponents was made a priori, in a manner of speaking, on the basis of

the research literature available on these parties and their key platform points. Now, the interesting question is whether the actual voting behaviour of the deputies investigated tallies with this breakdown. In other words: does the voting behaviour of the AfD resemble that of the Finns? Do the NPD and the Golden Dawn, being extreme-right parties, cast their votes in a similar way, or did 'voting coalitions' emerge which deviate from what might be expected from the party breakdown? Moreover, it is interesting to see whether the left and right-wing EU opponents and/or critics resemble one another in their voting behaviour although they come from entirely different directions, quite in keeping with the oft-quoted 'les extrêmes se touchent' (Backes 2006: p. 94). The answers given to these questions in the following analysis are quite surprising.

##### 4.2.4.1 The EU opponents – are they nay-sayers?

To identify a specific voting behaviour it is necessary that deputies should take part in votes in the first place. As we can see from Table 6, more than 92 percent of the deputies from parties that are opposed to or critical of the EU took part in votes in the period under investigation. This amazingly high percentage argues against a general disinterestedness of the MEPs concerned in matters relating to the EP or the EU as a whole. Once again, however, the UKIP is conspicuous. Its deputies only took part in somewhat less than 81 percent of all votes. At first sight, this is no big surprise, as the party's primary objective is to detach its country from the EU. On the other hand, such a rate of participation could almost be called high for a party which basically considers the European Parliament a superfluous affair which it repeatedly attempts to discredit. The only other parties whose participation rate is below average are the Hungarian Jobbik and the Greek Syriza, which in the latter case might be due to the fact that its deputies are currently not equally interested in all European issues in view of the crisis in their home country.

To be sure, participation in votes – like attendance in the plenary – is only one indicator of the deputies' interest in what goes on in the EP. After all, the payment of a daily allowance for meeting days with votes is predicated on participation in at least half of the votes. Only marked deviations – as in the case of the UKIP – hint at a lower level of general interest in the work of the EP. However, vote participation, like the attendance rates before, does not suggest that the majority of the EU's opponents and critics show a general lack of interest.

Table 6 Voting behaviour

| Party  | Participation in votes* | Aye** | Nay  | Abstentions |
|--|-------------------------|-------|------|-------------|
| Syriza                                       | 89.0                    | 59.5  | 22   | 18.5        |
| MSS  | 93.3                    | 72.0  | 17.3 | 10.7        |
|  |                         |       |      |             |
| AfD  | 93.4                    | 52.4  | 43.5 | 4.2         |
| Perus  | 95.8                    | 56    | 40.5 | 3.6         |
|  |                         |       |      |             |
| FN   | 91.3                    | 34.5  | 50.6 | 14.9        |
| PVV  | 92.0                    | 11.9  | 85.7 | 2.4         |
| FPÖ  | 94.1                    | 54.8  | 26.8 | 18.5        |
| UKIP   | 80.8                    | 8.3   | 72.6 | 19.1        |
|  |                         |       |      |             |
| Ch.A.  | 99.0                    | 35.7  | 63.1 | 1.2         |
| Jobbik                                       | 86.1                    | 56.0  | 28.6 | 15.5        |
| NPD  | 99.4                    | 53.9  | 32.3 | 13.8        |
| Overall average of the deputies investigated | 92.2                    | 45    | 43.9 | 11.1        |

Legend: All calculations based on data concerning final votes in the EP supplied by VoteWatch and the EP's internet pages. Votes on motions to amend belonging to a particular process were left out of consideration.

\* This column shows the average frequency (in %) at which the deputies of a party participated in votes.

\*\* All other figures relate to the majority voting behaviour of the parties, i.e. whenever a majority voted aye, the vote was regarded as aye, irrespective of any dissenters or absentees.

However, the remaining columns in Table 6 hide a few surprises. Only a relatively small group of parties, namely the UKIP, the Front National, the Dutch PVV, and the Golden Dawn, fulfil the expectation that the behaviour of the EU's opponents in votes is preponderantly negative. The UKIP in particular stands out with an extremely low approval rate of somewhat more than 8 percent. This fits in with the rather passive and destructive overall impression of the party in the EP. UKIP's few assenting votes were almost all cast in category 5 (foreign and trade policy), and it is surely no injustice to the party to conclude from this that in these cases, votes were cast in the national interest of Great Britain. Otherwise, the party

hardly accepts or exercises its mandates in the EP. Its interest is primary directed at its impact in its own country (cf. Grabow, Lange et al., 2015). The PVV has an even higher rejection rate but fewer abstentions, so that its approval rate at almost 12 percent is somewhat higher than that of the UKIP.

Up to this point, there are major similarities to be found within the group of right-wing populists, one of them being the fact that the PVV cast most of its total of 20 assenting votes (in 168 final votes) in category 5, prompting the conclusion that the party endorses liberal free trade to a certain extent. However, this already exhausts the store of commonalities among the right-wing populist parties. At 34.5 percent, the approval rate of the Front National is more than four times higher than that of the UKIP. The FPÖ, which approved almost 55 percent of the resolutions of the EP, takes us into a different sphere since this approximately corresponds to the rate of the conservative ECR group (55.4 percent). Remarkably enough, the Front National has shown itself to be anything but a mere 'nay-sayer', with 19 ayes, 10 noes and six abstentions just in category 1 (euro and financial policy). To be sure, noes preponderate in every other category, particularly the European institutional order, where the FN voted nay in six out of seven votes. However, there is not a single category in which the party's deputies voted against all proposals.

In the case of the FPÖ, whose approval rates are higher than that of the FN by another 20 percentage points, there are more votes for than against in all categories, the second (institutional order) alone excepted. To a certain extent, this may be due to the fact that only a single vote could be assigned to the migration and immigration category. Yet even in this one vote, the FPÖ abstained instead of voting nay, unlike the FN and the PVV. This is all the more astonishing as the subject of migration played as big a part in the campaigns of the FPÖ as it did in those of the other populist parties (Oppelland 2015: 130).

In their platforms as well as in their activities in the EP, the right-wing EU opponents again and again showed signs of sympathy for Russia's foreign policy and the Russian president. But even where these issues are concerned, the picture that emerges from an analysis of their voting behaviour is not consistent: when a resolution condemning the murder of the Russian opposition politician, Boris Nemzow, and demanding an independent investigation was put to the vote on March 12, 2015,<sup>5</sup> the deputies of the

FPÖ and the PVV agreed en bloc despite their otherwise high rejection rate, whereas all deputies of the Front National, whose positive attitude towards Putin is as well known publicly as the funding of their party by Russian money, voted against. Most of the UKIP deputies, too, voted with the resolution. To that extent, there is no question of the right-wing populist parties in the EP closing ranks.

If the voting behaviour of the right-wing populist parties is surprising, that of the extreme right is nothing short of astounding. Once again, we find a split similar to that of the right-wing populists, although only with regard to voting behaviour. Whereas the Golden Dawn largely conforms to expectations regarding the voting behaviour of EU opponents, voting either against or abstaining in nearly two thirds of the votes across all categories, this does not hold true for the two other extreme-right parties, the NPD and Jobbik. The approval rate of the NPD at nearly 54 percent and Jobbik at almost 56 percent are high, corresponding approximately to that of the ECR group (to put this in perspective: the approval rates of the pro-European groups range between 81 and 86 percent). The two extreme-right EU opponents preponderantly voted negative only in category 2 (European institutional order).

As we know, the NPD is represented in the EP by only one deputy, Udo Voigt, and the Jobbik delegation consists of three deputies. Being non-attached, all four are not constrained in any way to pay heed to a group majority, though the party discipline required in the EP is somewhat less strict than in national parliaments, as will be described in the context of the EFDD. In view of the general behaviour of the four deputies, is it hardly probable that they might wish to win greater esteem through their voting behaviour in Parliament. Therefore, this cannot be the cause of the remarkably high approval rates of the NPD and Jobbik whose extreme-right ideology cannot be seriously doubted by anybody. At this point, we have to state that the quantitative data gathered by us have reached the limit of their ability to explain things. They do not furnish any basis for answering the question of why these extreme-right deputies agree with the resolutions of the EP so comparatively frequently. Finding that answer would require further detailed research concentrating on these parties (including the FPÖ, whose approval rate, as described above, is unexpectedly high for a member of the group of right-wing populists).

At the same time, it does not run contrary to expectations regarding their voting behaviour that the AfD and the 'Finns' show approval rates that, at markedly more than 50 percent, resemble those of the parties just named. After all, both belong to the ECR party group and are close to its average. For the technocratic EU opponents – meaning those who oppose specific aspects of EU integration and/or EU policy – it is natural that their dissenting votes should be concentrated in a few areas. Thus, the AfD as well as the Finns voted nay in the vast majority of votes in category 1 (euro and financial policy): AfD, 32 times 'nay' and 3 times 'aye'; Perus, 28 times 'nay' and 6 times 'aye', plus one abstention. With regard to category 2, i.e. votes that relate to the European institutional order, the situation is similar though not quite as clear (both, 7 times 'nay' and once 'aye'). In all the other categories, aye votes preponderate.

Given its rejection rate of no less than 43.5%, the fact that the AfD occasionally votes against the ECR party group is a peculiarity in its voting behaviour. On average, the AfD deputies voted with their party group only in 88.4% of all votes. One case in point is the vote of October 16, 2014, on the introduction of the euro in Lithuania to which the majority of the ECR group assented but which was rejected by the AfD deputies almost to a man. However, this reflects the party's attitude towards the euro. As already noted with regard to its key issues, the voting behaviour of the AfD's EP delegation reflects the formation of camps to a certain extent. Bernd Lucke agrees 94.3 percent with the ECR group, while Beatrix von Storch shows only 79.5 percent agreement. Moreover, she voted with the majority of her AfD colleagues in only 85.9 percent of cases.

While the extent of disagreement with the party group was worth mentioning in the case of the AfD, it is nothing short of astronomical in the case of the Italian M5S: the Italian deputies voted with the majority of their group in not even half of all votes. In point of fact, the percentages of the individual deputies vary between 38 and 41 percent. Small wonder, this, as a glance at Table 6 shows, for while the UKIP at 8 percent has the lowest approval rate of all parties investigated in this study, the M5S deputies on average voted aye in 70 percent of all final votes, topping all the parties investigated. Once again, this shows very clearly that the EFDD party group is an artificial formation which ultimately only serves to gain access to the infrastructure that is available to party groups.

Except for the reference to direct democracy contained in the name of the party group, the UKIP and M5S hardly have anything in common. However, the 72 percent approval rate of the M5S also shows that the movement is anything but a nay-sayer despite all its criticism of the condition, the construction, and many political aspects of the EU. Not only is the party actively involved in the parliamentary policy-making process, it is anything but destructive in its voting behaviour, which reflects the party's critical attitude towards the EU exclusively in category 2 (European institutional order). This is the only category in which rejection outweighs approval at 5 to 3.

The results of Syriza, the second EU-critical party from the left, resemble those of the M5S but are in no way identical. On average, Syriza's deputies participate in votes somewhat less frequently than those of the M5S, but their ayes are fewer in number, too, which is due to the low participation of two of its deputies. At nearly 60 percent, its approval rate is markedly lower than that of the M5S, even though the chief reason for this is the party's much higher number of abstentions. Compared to most right-wing EU opponents, however, this still reflects a high measure of approval which hardly warrants calling Syriza a nay-sayer. Although the number of nays and abstentions is somewhat higher across the board, Syriza preponderantly votes aye in all categories, even in votes concerned with the euro and with financial policy. Interestingly enough, Syriza resembles most right-wing EU opponents in that the only exception is the category of the European institutional order. Arguably, the biggest difference between the two critical parties from the left wing is the degree to which they are integrated in their respective party groups. While M5S, as mentioned before, follows the party line of the EFDD only in c. 40 percent of votes (if the EFDD can be said to have something like a common party line in the first place), nearly all Syriza deputies obey the party discipline in markedly more than 90 percent of all cases. To that extent, it may be said that the seven deputies of Syriza are firmly integrated in the GUE/NGL group.

The European Parliament is not a Parliament like any other but an institution sui generis, like the EU as a whole. What is lacking in particular is the division between government and opposition parties to impart structure and discipline, even though the new procedure for electing the Commission president, which involves the nomination of top candidates by the EU parties, may lead to a trend towards approximation between

the EP and national parliaments in the medium term (Oppelland 2009: 91ff.). The way things are at the moment, most of the EP's resolutions are supported by a very wide majority ranging from the Greens, the Social Democrats, and the Liberals to the EPP, leading to approval rates in excess to 80 percent among these party groups. Of the parties investigated, the MoVimento Cinque Stelle ranges only a little below that rate, while Syriza, the technocrats, and some of the right-wing EU opponents lag behind slightly, their approval rates resembling those of the left-wing GUE/NGL and the conservative ECR group. Only a relatively small number of right-wing anti-EU parties may really be called general 'nay-sayers': the Golden Dawn, the PVV, the UKIP, and – with certain qualifications – the Front National. That all the parties investigated may be classed as EU opponents despite all differences is justified on the one hand by their respective party platforms and on the other by their voting behaviour in two key votes in this still-young legislative period: in the decision about the EU budget, they all either voted nay or abstained, and in the election of the Juncker Commission, they all voted nay.

Lastly, the question that remains to be answered is whether the parties opposed to or critical of the EU form something akin to voting coalitions either in general or in specific areas. The following section will focus on this question.

#### *4.2.4.2 Correlations in the voting behaviour*

The comparison of the voting behaviour with regard to the approval or rejection of proposals already showed that differences can be distinguished within the classification of EU opponents developed by us. What we need to check at this point is the extent of the correlations within these groups.

If we examine all final votes for correlations in the voting behaviour of the parties, we find that the picture drawn in the previous section is roughly confirmed. For one thing, the division of the right-populist camp is evident here as well. Thus, the degree of correlation between the voting behaviour of the UKIP, whose proportion of rejections was the highest, and the PVV with the second-highest proportion amounts to no less than 76.2 percent. Correlation with the Front National, on the other hand, is noticeably lower (50.6 percent), and with the FPÖ it is as low as not quite 37 percent. The latter figure is only a little higher than the correlation

Tabelle 7 Correlations for all final votes (in percent)

|               | Syriza       | M5S   | Ch.A. | Job-<br>bik | NPD   | FN    | PVV          | FPÖ   | UKIP         | AfD          | Perus        |
|---------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Syriza        | -            | 0.690 | 0.423 | 0.571       | 0.554 | 0.429 | 0.280        | 0.560 | 0.238        | 0.393        | 0.375        |
| M5S           | 0.690        | -     | 0.476 | 0.601       | 0.595 | 0.440 | 0.262        | 0.589 | 0.208        | 0.518        | 0.488        |
| Ch.A.         | 0.423        | 0.476 | -     | 0.542       | 0.571 | 0.548 | 0.601        | 0.488 | 0.536        | 0.512        | 0.458        |
| Jobbik        | 0.571        | 0.601 | 0.542 | -           | 0.601 | 0.411 | 0.345        | 0.542 | 0.345        | 0.500        | 0.452        |
| NPD           | 0.554        | 0.595 | 0.571 | 0.601       | -     | 0.613 | 0.393        | 0.708 | 0.351        | 0.446        | 0.423        |
| FN            | 0.429        | 0.440 | 0.548 | 0.411       | 0.613 | -     | 0.565        | 0.625 | 0.506        | 0.310        | 0.292        |
| PVV           | 0.280        | 0.262 | 0.601 | 0.345       | 0.393 | 0.565 | -            | 0.357 | <b>0.762</b> | 0.458        | 0.429        |
| FPÖ           | 0.560        | 0.589 | 0.488 | 0.542       | 0.708 | 0.625 | 0.357        | -     | 0.369        | 0.458        | 0.452        |
| UKIP          | 0.238        | 0.208 | 0.536 | 0.345       | 0.351 | 0.506 | <b>0.762</b> | 0.369 | -            | 0.417        | 0.381        |
| AfD           | 0.393        | 0.518 | 0.512 | 0.500       | 0.446 | 0.310 | 0.458        | 0.458 | 0.417        | -            | <b>0.911</b> |
| Perus         | 0.375        | 0.488 | 0.458 | 0.452       | 0.423 | 0.292 | 0.429        | 0.452 | 0.381        | <b>0.911</b> | -            |
| GUE-<br>NGL   | <b>0.935</b> | 0.696 | 0.452 | 0.595       | 0.589 | 0.452 | 0.298        | 0.589 | 0.250        | 0.417        | 0.387        |
| Green/<br>EFA | 0.625        | 0.732 | 0.381 | 0.530       | 0.506 | 0.381 | 0.220        | 0.524 | 0.143        | 0.488        | 0.530        |
| S&D           | 0.548        | 0.661 | 0.333 | 0.494       | 0.470 | 0.327 | 0.173        | 0.500 | 0.095        | 0.607        | 0.649        |
| ALDE          | 0.536        | 0.655 | 0.339 | 0.488       | 0.464 | 0.321 | 0.179        | 0.494 | 0.101        | 0.601        | 0.649        |
| EPP           | 0.488        | 0.613 | 0.333 | 0.458       | 0.470 | 0.345 | 0.208        | 0.488 | 0.107        | 0.619        | 0.685        |
| ECR           | 0.363        | 0.452 | 0.440 | 0.452       | 0.405 | 0.268 | 0.423        | 0.429 | 0.363        | <b>0.905</b> | <b>0.958</b> |

Legend:

Own calculations based on data (final votes only, i.e. excluding any motions to amend that formed part of a process) available at votewatch.eu and the internet pages of the EP.

All figures relate to the majority voting behaviour of the parties, i.e. when the majority of one party and the reference party voted pro and/or con, this was assessed as a correlation, irrespective of dissidents or absentees.

Boldface and Italics: correlation of 75% and more. Highlighted in grey: reference figures from party groups that did not form part of this study.

between the UKIP and the party that competes with it at home, the British Conservatives, i.e. the ECR party (36.3 percent). The fact that the FPÖ and the PVV reach a relatively high degree of correlation with the voting behaviour of the NPD and the Greek Golden Dawn (70.8 and 60.1 percent) should not be overrated because, as we saw above, the approval rates of the NPD deputy Udo Voigt and of the FPÖ are amazingly high. The correlation between the votes of the PVV and the Golden Dawn is obviously caused by their high rejection rates.

The extreme-right opponents of the EU confirm the picture drawn above: correlation between the Golden Dawn and the NPD is somewhat higher than 57 percent, while between the Golden Dawn and Jobbik it is 54.2 percent. Udo Voigt voted with Jobbik in somewhat more than 60 percent of all cases and in 56.5 percent with the Golden Dawn. While these figures do express a certain measure of agreement, they are not significantly higher than the correlations with parties from other camps; even with EU-friendly party groups, the correlation rates of the NPD deputy Voigt were higher than with the other extreme-right parties. In view of Voigt's astonishingly high approval rate, this is not entirely surprising. The fact that he votes with the Green party group in 50 percent of all decisions can certainly not be construed as signifying ideological agreement. Conversely, the AfD and Perus which, characterised by us as technocratic EU opponents, both belong to the ECR party group and muster a high degree of party discipline, show a high degree of correlation at 91.1 percent. The coherence found here is much greater than among the right-wing populists. While the two parties also vote with the other EU opponents to the right of the centre, correlations in this case do not exceed those with EU-friendly parties. Thus, for example, the AfD correlated with the UKIP almost 42 percent, almost 46 percent with the FPÖ and the PVV, 31 percent with the Front National, and between 44 and 51 percent with the extreme-right EU opponents. Similar figures apply to the Finns. However, the correlation between the AfD and the Social Democrats, the Liberals, and the EPP is markedly higher than 60 percent. To avoid any misinterpretation of the correlations of the AfD and NPD, we should add that the Social Democrats, the Liberals and the EPP voted exactly like the NPD in about 47 percent of all final votes – a fact that, at least statistically, is hardly surprising, given the aforementioned astonishingly high approval rates of Udo Voigt.

Tabelle 8 Correlations for category 2 (European institutional order, in percent)

|               | Syri-<br>za  | M5S          | Ch.A.        | Job-<br>bik  | NPD          | FN           | PVV          | FPÖ   | UKIP         | AfD          | Perus        |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Syri-<br>za   | -            | 0.625        | 0.625        | 0.625        | 0.500        | 0.500        | 0.625        | 0.375 | 0.500        | 0.625        | 0.625        |
| M5S           | 0.625        | -            | <b>1.000</b> | <b>1.000</b> | <b>0.875</b> | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.625 | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        |
| Ch.A.         | 0.625        | <b>1.000</b> | -            | <b>1.000</b> | <b>0.875</b> | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.625 | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        |
| Jobbik        | 0.625        | <b>1.000</b> | -            | -            | <b>0.875</b> | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.625 | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        |
| NPD           | 0.500        | <b>0.875</b> | <b>0.875</b> | <b>0.875</b> | -            | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750 | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        |
| FN            | 0.500        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | -            | <b>0.875</b> | 0.750 | <b>1.000</b> | <b>0.875</b> | <b>0.875</b> |
| PVV           | 0.625        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | <b>0.875</b> | -            | 0.625 | <b>0.875</b> | <b>1.000</b> | <b>1.000</b> |
| FPÖ           | 0.375        | 0.625        | 0.625        | 0.625        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.625        | -     | 0.750        | 0.625        | 0.625        |
| UKIP          | 0.500        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | <b>1.000</b> | <b>0.875</b> | 0.750 | -            | <b>0.875</b> | <b>0.875</b> |
| AfD           | 0.625        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | <b>0.875</b> | <b>1.000</b> | 0.625 | <b>0.875</b> | -            | <b>1.000</b> |
| Perus         | 0.625        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | 0.750        | <b>0.875</b> | <b>1.000</b> | 0.625 | <b>0.875</b> | <b>1.000</b> | -            |
| GUE-<br>NGL   | <b>1.000</b> | 0.625        | 0.625        | 0.625        | 0.500        | 0.500        | 0.625        | 0.375 | 0.500        | 0.625        | 0.625        |
| Green/<br>EFA | 0.625        | 0.500        | 0.500        | 0.500        | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.500        | 0.250 | 0.375        | 0.500        | 0.500        |
| S&D           | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.250        | 0.250        | 0.375        | 0.125 | 0.250        | 0.375        | 0.375        |
| ALDE          | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.250        | 0.250        | 0.375        | 0.250 | 0.250        | 0.375        | 0.375        |
| EPP           | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.375        | 0.500        | 0.625        | 0.250 | 0.500        | 0.625        | 0.625        |
| ECR           | 0.625        | 0.500        | 0.500        | 0.500        | 0.500        | 0.625        | 0.750        | 0.375 | 0.625        | 0.750        | 0.750        |

Legend:

Own calculations based on data (final votes only, i.e. excluding any motions to amend that formed part of a process) available at votewatch.eu and the internet pages of the EP.

All figures relate to the majority voting behaviour of the parties, i.e. when the majority of one party and the reference party voted pro and/or con, this was assessed as a correlation, irrespective of dissidents or absentees.

Boldface and Italics: correlation of 75% and more. Highlighted in grey: reference figures from party groups that did not form part of this study.

Correlation in the voting behaviour of the M5S and Syriza amounts to nearly 70 percent. While this figure is comparatively high, it is not the highest for both parties. In more than 73 percent of all votes, the M5S voted exactly like the Green party group, while the correlation between Syriza and its own party group, GUE, amounts to an unsurprising 93.5 percent. In fact, it is inevitable that the two parties should also correlate with right-wing EU opponents, but most of these figures are markedly below the correlations with the pro-European parties. To that extent, an analysis of the voting behaviour appears not to confirm the theory that the EU opponents from the right and the left are close together.

The diagnosis changes a little, however, if we differentiate by voting category. In category 1 (euro and finances), we find markedly higher correlation rates between the right-wing sub-groups formed by us and the technocratic EU opponents. The AfD, for example, voted with the Golden Dawn in 77 percent, with the PVV in 88.6 percent, and with the UKIP even in 91.4 percent of votes, whereas the degree of correlation with the Finns declined compared to the overall average (from 91.1 to 88.6 percent). Conversely, the FPÖ, the FN and also the NPD and Jobbik, whose approval rates in this sector were high against our expectations, show very little correlation with the other parties of their respective camps. Particularly in this political field, which is of special importance in the propaganda of the EU opponents, there is very little coherence among the groups.

A very differently shaded picture emerges when we look at an analysis of the votes on the European institutional order (category 2), although it is based on an evaluation of no more than eight votes, as we have to state by way of qualification. However, it was this category to which the key votes in the first year of the 8<sup>th</sup> legislative period belonged including, for example, the votes on the election of the Commission president and the working programme of the incoming Commission. In this very important category, the large extent to which left and right-wing EU opponents vote together is particularly conspicuous. M5S, for example, correlates 100 percent with the extreme-right parties Golden Dawn and Jobbik and no less than 87.5 percent with the NPD. With the remaining right-wing EU opponents, the M5S voted in 75 percent of all final votes (except with the FPÖ, where the figure is down to 62.5 percent). While Syriza's figures are not quite as high, they are still higher than in the other categories. Another notable feature is that in all parties investigated, the correlation



rate with EU-friendly parties is markedly lower in this category than in the others. It ranges between 12.5 percent (FPÖ compared to the Social Democratic Group) and 50 percent (M5S relative to the Green party group, which, however, is an upward aberration). In this category, the NPD deputy, Udo Voigt, voted 87.5 percent with the other extreme-right deputies, and 75 percent with all the other right-wing and technocratic EU opponents. With the M5S, too, his correlation is 87.5 percent; with Syriza, it is a mere 62.5 percent. Concerning the institutional order, the AfD voted 100 percent with the Finns and the PVV and 87.5 or 75 percent with the other right-wing EU opponents. The list might be prolonged. However, what this means is this: where the institutions of the EU are concerned, the voting behaviour of the EU opponents of all hues agrees conspicuously. Thus, this appears to be the political field where the EU's opponents are of one mind, to put it somewhat pointedly.

What is the meaning of these findings on voting behaviour with regard to the initial question about the appropriateness of subdividing the parties opposed to the EU into four groups? The clearest answer may be given with regard to the 'technocratic EU opponents'. They resemble each other so much in their voting behaviour that this categorisation is undoubtedly justified. With certain reservations as far as the M5S is concerned, the same holds true for the left-wing EU opponents. Despite its high correlation with Syriza, the M5S constitutes a special case inasmuch as the party from its voting behaviour would actually be much better at home in the Green party group than in the weird construct of the EFDD. Were it not for its voting behaviour in the 'European institutional order' category, one would even have reason to doubt whether the M5S should actually be numbered among the EU opponents. The extreme-right and right-wing populist parties vote with comparatively little coherence. Instead, they are divided into two camps as far as their voting behaviour is concerned. If this were to be taken into account, however, any classification of the parties would be even more complicated and confusing.

As far as their voting behaviour is concerned, left-wing EU critics differ very clearly from those of the right: the left are not only more conciliatory in their style and more interested in forming majorities, their voting behaviour is also more constructive in substance. Only in the category of the European institutional order and, as mentioned above, in the key votes on the EU budget and the election of the Commission do we find anything resembling the phenomenon of 'les extrêmes se touchent', but hardly anywhere else.

- 1| *While the EP did have co-decision rights on the EU budget even before the Lisbon Treaty came into force, the sector with the highest expenditures, the agricultural budget, was not included. Since December 1, 2009, the agricultural sector forms part of the Union's overall budget. Thus, Parliament now has the last word on the total expenditure of the EU. However, it cannot increase the budget on its own initiative.*
- 2| *All details given in sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.3 were reconstructed and calculated by the authors based on the minutes of the plenary and committee sessions of the European Parliament.*
- 3| *In follow-up research the term 'asking leave to speak' may cause irritation because these requests may also be made in writing. The EP's rules of procedure comment on that as follows: 'Members who have not spoken in a debate may ... hand in a written statement of not more than 200 words, which shall be appended to the verbatim part of the debate '(EP 2014d: Rule 162, Par. 12) and ' Once the general debate has been concluded any member may give an oral ... or a written explanation of no more than 200 words, which shall be included in the ... report of proceedings '(ibid.: Rule 183, Par. 1). Formally, written and oral declarations are on the same footing. They serve first and foremost to rationalise the work of Parliament. In the activity records maintained by the EP for every deputy, they also receive equal treatment, and this is how we counted them.*
- 4| *Voting behaviour analyses are founded on the authors' own calculations based on the voting data that are accessible at the VoteWatch internet portal ([www.votewatch.eu](http://www.votewatch.eu)).*
- 5| *Cf. 'European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2015 on the murder of the Russian opposition leader Boris Nemzov and the state of democracy in Russia', <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fTEXT%2bTA%2bP8-TA-2015-0074%2b0%2bDOC%2bXML%2bV0%2f%2fDE&language=DE> (accessed April 24, 2015).*

## 5. THE EU IN DANGER? A YEAR OF TOUGHER OPPOSITION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

There is no acute threat to the EP or the EU itself, despite the greater number of EU opponents and critics in Parliament. They differ too much and collaborate too little for that. The representatives of rigid EU opponents like the Front National, the FPÖ, the PVV, or the NPD are non-attached, which deprives them of the option to take co-ordinated action against the Union. The UKIP, on the other hand, displays a conspicuous lack of interest in the work of the European Parliament, which prevents it from becoming a direct threat to the EP or the EU, at least not through its (lack of) activity in Strasbourg or Brussels. Nigel Farage's party pursues an odd strategy – if, indeed, the behaviour of its deputies shows any pattern at all. The UKIP members do not hold themselves entirely aloof – after all, they do take part in four out of five plenary sessions in which they occasionally take the floor, but across the entire range of subjects their behaviour is passive rather than otherwise. They use plenary sessions mainly for grandstanding while remaining inactive in the committees. However, their voting behaviour reveals them as true EU refuseniks.

Furthermore, the EFDD party group lead by the UKIP is a heterogeneous construct which ultimately serves only to gain access to the party-group infrastructure. The two biggest parties of the group, the UKIP and the Italian MoVimento Cinque Stelle, hardly have anything in common and often



do not vote together but against each other. While the M5S, similar to the other left-wing EU-critical party covered by this study, the Greek Syriza, endeavours to implement key campaign promises (extremely scanty though some of these may be) and to join in the work of Parliament in a manner that is at least partially constructive, right-wing populists in general and the UKIP in particular attach minimal importance to implementing their own programmes.

However, the Dutch PVV and the FPÖ are somewhat at odds with the group of right-wing populists: The Austrians, because in their comparatively numerous interventions in the plenary they closely follow key demands of their programmes, attacking the euro as well as Europe's order of institutions and its immigration and asylum policy; the Dutch, because they most frequently of all the parties examined rejected resolution proposals in the EP, while as far as adherence to their programme is concerned, their demands agree only occasionally with their activities in Parliament. Then again, both parties are too small to be regarded as a threat to the EP or even the EU itself.

The activities of the Front National in the EP, on the other hand, are not above average, save for its relatively numerous interventions in the plenary. Furthermore, the party's members devote themselves to euro- and financial-policy matters to a conspicuously small extent, despite Marine Le Pen's announcement that one of her objectives was her country's exit from the euro zone. At the same time, neither the FN nor its leader showed any activity above average regarding the European institutional order. Moreover, the FN's voting behaviour shows no complete denial of the EU or the EP since the FN's deputies voted in favour of somewhat more than one third of the resolution proposals. Thus, there can be no question of the FN appearing as a monolithic block that completely opposes all aspects of the EU. Those parties that most intensely reject the EU are the PVV and the UKIP.

The left-wing EU critics, on the other hand, participate in the work of the EP in a manner that is more active, homogenous, programme-related, and constructive. Admittedly, they never intended to dissolve the EU or the EP; rather, they wanted to reshape politics according to their own ideas but within the framework of the existing institutional order. To be sure, the more active party in the group of left-wing EU critics, the MoVimento Cinque Stelle, weakened itself by pursuing its activities within the EFDD

party group, which is dominated by the UKIP. Thus, its members expend a great deal of capacity on contending with or distancing themselves from their fellow group members, capacity that is lacking for more substantial and high-profiled work on a reform of the EU. At all events, it was strategically rather clumsy or naïve of the M5S to join the EFDD.

The extreme right-wingers in the EP, namely the deputies of Golden Dawn, Jobbik, and the NPD, basically do what was expected of them. They are present in the plenary and the committees (pocketing their daily allowance). In the plenary, the more than 200 subject-related interventions of each of their deputies bear witness to occasional hyper-activity against the EU, the euro, and against emigration as well as occasional pro-Russians sentiments, but at the working level of Parliament they are marginalised or not really interested. At the same time, their voting behaviour, especially that of Jobbik and the NPD deputy, remains enigmatic. All the Jobbik deputies as well as Udo Voigt voted in favour of the majority of all final resolution proposals tabled in the EP. Thus, the rate at which they voted in favour of final EP resolutions is similar to that of the parties which we have categorised as technocratic EU opponents.

While the deputies of the two parties in that category, the 'Finns' and the AfD, are not notable for above-average activity in the plenary (a few individual cases excepted), they do work on key points in their programmes: the 'Finns' oppose the EU's asylum and emigration policy, the AfD is against the euro and the competences of the EU and its institutions. At that, they are not notorious EU refuseniks or obstructionists. Taking all the parties and votes under investigation into account, the approval rates of the Perus and AfD MEP's even range above the average (cf. Table 6), and in almost 62 percent of the votes, the AfD deputies voted with the deputies of the EPP group (cf. Table 7).

Thus, our diagnosis of the AfD's Parliamentary activities is as diffuse as the probable condition of the party itself. As a party, its activity in the plenary is not above average, but it may be considered so thanks to the commitment of individual deputies (Lucke, von Storch, Kölmel, Henkel) and its outstanding engagement in the committees. Apart from Beatrix von Storch, the AfD's active deputies do address the core of their party platform. However, the AfD's deputies disagree on important questions of European policy (attitude towards the TTIP or the EU's policy towards Russia). Where final decisions in the plenary are concerned, they did not

vote against all bills presented on principle. On the contrary: their approval rate of 52.5 percent is remarkably high for a party which entered the field in order to deprive the EU of one of its key supporting pillars.

In view of their frequent motions under and/or references to the rules of procedure of the EP and their repeatedly emphasised economic know-how, the deputies of the AfD occasionally appear particularly eager, obnoxious, and self-opinionated, yet our results show that they do not threaten the EU. Here and there, they are even pro-European, and their behaviour is not entirely destructive in every respect. To a certain extent, however, the AfD in the EP shows signs of inner strife, thus reflecting the condition of the party in Germany. Its deputy, Hans-Olaf Henkel, resigned from his post in the federal executive at the end of April, alleging that the AfD was being infiltrated by 'right-wing ideologues'. While the AfD in the EP does not deserve to be called that, its chairman, Bernd Lucke, who is active in Parliament, appears to have little control over his party.

Even though we arrived at the conclusion that the rise in the numbers of EU opponents and critics in the first year after the European elections does not constitute an acute threat to the EP or the EU itself, we do not mean by this that the coast is clear for the EU-friendly parties. There are enough threats of various kinds that might play into the hands of the EU's enemies. The shadows of a state (indebtedness) crisis that might emanate from Greece have not faded completely yet, and the next big problem which the EU will have to cope with is how to deal with the influx of refugees into Europe in a manner that is equally human and capable of winning a majority, which might evolve into a genuine crisis of control and legitimisation. At the same time, Parliament must do its day-to-day work, such as passing the free trade agreement with the USA or improving Europe's internal security.

It is still possible to find a majority of pro-European parties in the EP on key issues. In certain cases, however, finding a majority is more difficult already because the pro-European parties have lost some of their seats in the EP. Depending on the content of the proposals being submitted to the vote, the pro-European parties need to look to other, sometimes less EU-friendly groups to find majorities for their initiatives. In this, they benefit from the relatively lax party discipline in the EFDD and ECR groups from which the EPP, for example, has repeatedly received aye votes. However, such cases are now rarer, and it is not at all as easy as before

because the Tories, under pressure from the UKIP, are having more and more trouble with pro-European decisions, particularly in the run-up to national elections.

Thus, it appears that the greatest threat to the European Parliament and the EU does not emanate from its in-house opponents but from the impact of these opponents in their home countries. The EU's opponents will continue urging their governments to put national interests before the European in the European Council. Finding a pro-European consensus thus becomes more difficult. We cannot rule out that a populist re-nationalisation might spring up in Europe. Seen in that light, the EU's opponents might reach their objective after all. The number of signs pointing in that direction is growing (cf. Grabow, Lange et al. 2015).

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You will find more data sheets pertaining to this study at [www.kas.de/daten-eu-gegner](http://www.kas.de/daten-eu-gegner).

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