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THE RISE OF EUROSCEPTICISM AND VOTE CONTESTATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

MA Thesis

Supervisor: Piret Ehin, PhD

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Author's Declaration

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Abstract

Eurosceptic parties have been rising in both national and European elections. This has given a rise to an interesting research agenda that analyzes the role of Eurosceptic actors and the polarization of opinions in the European Union. Although the existing literature has extensively discussed the sources of Euroscepticism, very few studies have discussed its consequences for the EU. This thesis will fill this gap and analyze the consequences of Euroscepticism for the EU institutions, especially the European Parliament. The rise of Eurosceptics and its effects on the extent of vote contestation on legislative proposals in the EP will be examined. Based on the theory of politicization, the thesis will test the hypothesis that the higher the share of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament, the more contested are legislative votes in the EP. Moreover, this research will also identify how the relationship between the rise of Euroscepticism and vote contestation in the EP varies depending on the policy area. To identify the relationship between the share of Eurosceptics and vote contestation in the EP, the 2009-2014 and 2014-2019 compositions of the EP will be compared. The research will determine the extent of vote contestation by looking at two aspects. First, it will analyze the overall voting results for each legislative proposal voted under the Ordinary Legislative Procedure for term 7 (2009-2014) and 8 (2014-2019) of the European Parliament. Second, it will examine the voting results on legislative proposals based on votes of political groups in the EP for both terms 7 and 8. Based on the comparison of both terms the research will show whether the rise of Eurosceptics in term 8 has led to increased vote contestation in the European Parliament. The results show that there is a positive correlation between the share of Eurosceptics and the extent of vote contestation in the EP. The research concludes that when the number of Eurosceptic MEPs increases, an increase in vote contestation is observed in the EP. Increased contestation can result in frictions between two institutions of the EU – the European Commission and the EP - and delay lawmaking and integration process.

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Abbreviations

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

European Union (EU)

European People's Party (EPP)

European Parliament (EP)

European Monetary Union (EMU)

European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)

European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL)

Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)

Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)

Five Star Movement (M5S)

Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz)

Identity and Democracy (ID)

Law and Justice party (PiS)

Member of European Parliament (MEP)

National Front (NF)

Northern League (LN)

Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP)

Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL)

Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)

Qualified Majority Voting (QMV)

United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)

Introduction

Eurosceptic parties have been rising in both national and European elections. The results of recent national elections have shown that right-wing Eurosceptic parties have become successful in various EU member states. Eurosceptic parties such as Alternative for Germany (AfD), United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and Conservative party (Con), Hungarian Civic Alliance party (Fidesz) performed very well in national elections since 2013 (Arzheimer, 2015; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2013; Tournier-Sol, 2020). Eurosceptic parties were also successful in the 2009 European Parliament elections. However, in the 2014 European Parliament elections, Eurosceptic parties received more votes than ever before. As a result of the election, 212 out of 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were affiliated with the Eurosceptic party. In comparison to the 2009 European Parliament election results when the seat share of Eurosceptics was 20 percent, in 2014 this number was more than 28 (Treib, 2014). Although the results of the 2019 European Parliament elections did not change the overall strength of Eurosceptic parties in the EP, the number of Eurosceptic MEPs from radical right parties almost doubled and reached 106 (Treib, 2020). All in all, in the last decade Eurosceptic parties have become extraordinarily successful in both national and European Parliament elections.

The rise of Euroscepticism has been primarily linked to the recent crises in Europe, including the – migration and debt crisis which have resulted in the politicization of European integration and mobilization of Eurosceptic actors. Eurosceptic parties have seized the opportunity, capitalized on the polarization of opinions in the EU, and have mobilized to undermine the European project. In various member states, voters affected by the crises have perceived Eurosceptic parties as potential saviours and have supported them. This way Eurosceptics find their way both to national parliaments and the EP, defend their anti-European position, and politicize the European integration process (Hutter & Kriesi, 2019).

The theory of politicization is a new approach to explaining developments in European integration. Examining the rise of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament has given rise to a substantial research agenda mainly through the politicization theory. The central point of the politicization theory is the division of interests and opinions in the policymaking

process within the European Union (de Wilde, 2011; de Wilde & Zürn, 2012; Zürn, 2019). Although the concept of politicization has emerged long ago, it has become increasingly popular starting from early 2000s. The theory seeks to explain developments and outcomes in European integration, responding to the perceived inability of grand theories of integration to explain the polarization of public opinion towards the EU (de Wilde, 2011; Zürn, 2019).

The existing literature has primarily focused on the sources of Euroscepticism and has paid limited attention to its consequences. Some scholars have discussed the consequences of Euroscepticism with regards to European integration (Börzel & Risse, 2018; Jabko & Luhman, 2019; Schimmelfennig, 2018). One of the key questions that has received limited attention so far in the existing literature is how the European Union institutions have been affected by politicization and rise of Euroscepticism. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to explaining the consequences of Euroscepticism on the European Union institutions, especially the European Parliament. Thus, there is an opportunity to solve the puzzle of how the EP has been affected by the rise of Euroscepticism.

The objective of this thesis is to study the consequences of Euroscepticism for the European Parliament. Specifically, this thesis will focus on vote contestation on legislative proposals in the EP. In other words, the thesis will examine whether there is a relationship between the rise of Eurosceptics and the extent of contestation over legislative proposals. Hence, this thesis seeks to answer the following two main research questions: What is the relationship between the representation of Eurosceptics and vote contestation in the European Parliament? How does this relationship vary by policy area? These research questions will be analyzed by applying the theory of politicization and testing the hypothesis that the higher the share of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament, the more contested are legislative votes in the EP. Moreover, this research will also identify how the relationship between the rise of Euroscepticism and vote contestation in the EP varies depending on the policy area. For example, Eurosceptics can be more involved and more vocal in policies regarding migration rather than external action. To identify the relationship between the share of Eurosceptics and vote contestation in the EP, 2009-2014 and 2014-2019 compositions of the EP will be compared. The share of Eurosceptics in the EP will be measured by dividing the total

number of Eurosceptic MEPs by the number of all MEPs. The research will determine the extent of vote contestation by looking at two aspects. First, it will analyze the overall voting results for each legislative proposal voted under the Ordinary Legislative Procedure for term 7 (2009-2014) and 8 (2014-2019) of the European Parliament. Second, it will examine the vote results on legislative proposals based on votes of political groups in the EP for both terms 7 and 8. Based on the comparison of both terms the research will show whether the rise of Eurosceptics in term 8 has led to vote contestation in the European Parliament.

In order to achieve the objective of the thesis, the correlation between the share of Eurosceptics and vote contestation in the EP will be examined. The share of Eurosceptics will be measured by dividing number of Eurosceptic MEPs by total number of MEPs. The data to determine the share of Eurosceptics will be acquired from the PopuList and ParlGov. The PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019) is cooperation created by academics and journalists to identify the Eurosceptic parties, far-right and far-left parties, while ParlGov (Döring & Manow, 2019) is a database which provides information on election results in both national and the European Parliament level. The vote contestation will be measured by looking at the individual legislative proposals voted under OLP and their vote results. The data on the votes for legislative proposals will be collected from the VoteWatch Europe (2018), which is an organization that provides data on decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. The timeframe for the analysis is chosen as 2009-2014 (term 7) and 2014-2019 (term 8) compositions of the European Parliament because in comparison to term 7 in term 8 the number of Eurosceptic MEPs has increased.

The thesis has both theoretical and practical significance. European integration has been studied through the theoretical prisms of neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism for a long time. But politicization theory is rather a new approach to explain European integration. As a new approach, some areas of politicization have received very limited attention. For instance, so far there is a gap in the existing literature about the consequences of politicization, especially its effects on institutions of the European Union. Studies show that politicization is here to stay. Therefore, studying the consequences of politicization on the EU institutions is important to understand the future developments of European integration.

This thesis is structured in four chapters. The first chapter will introduce the concept of Euroscepticism and provide an overview of its implications. It will also introduce the theory of politicization, which focuses on political conflict over European integration and its implications. The second chapter provides the necessary background for the analytical chapters. It offers an overview of law-making processes in the European Union with special attention to the role of the European Parliament in the legislative processes. It will examine the voting process in the EP considering the political affiliation of MEPs to their national party and party groups in the EP. The third chapter describes the methodology, which will include research design, operationalization of variables, and the data used for the research. The fourth chapter presents the results of empirical analysis, starting with descriptive results before turning to examining the relationship between the share of Eurosceptics and vote contestation in the European Parliament. In other words, it will answer the research questions and test the hypothesis. The fourth chapter also includes a discussion of the results and their importance. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and discusses their implications.

1. Rise of euroscepticism and its implications

This chapter will examine the concept of Euroscepticism and introduce the theory of politicization as a theoretical approach used in this research. The first subchapter presents a definition of the concept. The next two subchapters will distinguish between popular Euroscepticism and party-based Euroscepticism. Next, as a new theoretical approach to the European Union, politicization will be introduced and compared to other major integration theories. The same subchapter will also briefly explain the role of national politics in the politicization of European Union institutions, especially the European Parliament. As a next step, the chapter will examine the consequences of politicization for the EU institutions with a special focus on the EP. Lastly, the chapter will shortly summarize the criticisms of the politicization theory and provide a summary of the chapter followed by the main hypothesis that will be tested in this research.

1.1. Euroscepticism: a phenomenon and evolution of the concept

Euroscepticism has largely been defined as the opposition towards the European project and criticism of the European Union institutions and European integration. There are various forms of Euroscepticism ranging from Eurosceptics that support reform within the EU institutions to the ones that oppose the entire European project and their country's membership to the EU (Crespy & Verschueren, 2009; Leconte, 2010). Some studies define Euroscepticism as a national trend of anti-Europeanism, while others relate Euroscepticism to the politicians and people's reactions to the crisis at the EU level (Daddow et al., 2019; Leconte, 2010; Usherwood & Startin, 2013).

Mainstream opposition to the European project for the first time emerged with Margaret Thatcher's speech in Bruges where she criticized the political and economic integration of the European project. Her address significantly affected the debate concerning the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and led to the use of the term "Euroscepticism" by politicians and media in the United Kingdom (Taggart, 1998; Usherwood & Startin, 2013). The reason was that Thatcher's speech emphasized the protection of national identity and borders by member states despite being a part European Community (Daddow et al., 2019).

The creation of a political union with the Maastricht Treaty deployed Euroscepticism and increased the number of Eurosceptics. The treaty extended the European integration process by promoting the cooperation in justice and home affairs as well as foreign and security policy pillars. In addition to this, the treaty also expanded the powers of the European Parliament and established a new co-decision procedure (Moussis, 2013). By transforming the "European Community" into the "European Union" the treaty introduced a new political order which triggered opposition forces and raised concerns about sovereignty in the member states. Thus, Euroscepticism has been embedded at both the European Union and national political cycles since the introduction of the Maastricht Treaty (Harmsen, 2010; Ray, 1999; Taggart, 1998).

The scholarly approach to study the concept of Euroscepticism has changed since its first appearance on the agenda of researchers. The initial studies on Euroscepticism emerged as part of the effort to understand the dynamics of public opinion on the European Union. In more specific terms, those studies have focused on citizens' economic interests and their attitudes towards the EU. For instance, Matthew J. Gabel (1998) has argued that citizens' attitudes towards the EU have a lot to do with the market liberalization at the EU level. As a result of their countries' membership to the European Union, citizens can either gain benefits or losses from the market liberalization. Depending on citizens' ability to use the opportunities established by the market liberalization, their attitudes change towards the EU membership (Gabel, 1998; Gabel & Palmer, 1995). Thus, Euroscepticism has firstly emerged in the research agenda of academics to explain public attitudes towards EU membership.

In parallel to studies seeking to explain the EU attitudes of the general public, distinct literature examining the positions of political parties emerged in the 1990s. The literature shows that multiple typologies have been developed to explain the concept of party-based Euroscepticism. The first fundamental typology on Euroscepticism has been presented by Paul Taggart (1998). The author presents two forms of Euroscepticism: hard and soft Euroscepticism. While the former stands for the opposition to the entire European project, the latter means the opposition only to certain policies of the EU. Kopecky and Mudde (2002) have also put forward two forms of Euroscepticism. The first one is about supporting EU membership but expressing dissatisfaction with the policies and development of the Union. The second one, however, stands for a principled opposition

to the EU which the authors have defined as Europhobia. Flood and Usherwood (2007) on the other hand, have developed a six-point list that demonstrates parties' rejection of the EU. The listed categories range from principled rejectionist of the Union to maximalist position which supports a federal Europe. Although all these typologies have been valuable for the researches to study Euroscepticism, to keep the discussion simple, this thesis will focus on the explanation given by Taggart.

The studies on Euroscepticism has focused on more specific varieties of the concept. In this research, two types of Euroscepticism: popular and party-based Euroscepticism will be analyzed. The former is about skepticism towards the European project in public opinion, while the latter is related to parties' Eurosceptic position on the EU.

1.2. Popular Euroscepticism

Public attitudes towards the European project has been studied extensively. The citizen's rising voice on European integration through the European Parliament elections, referendums on treaty changes as well as national elections has been a major reason behind the interest in studying public attitudes towards the EU (Ejrnæs & Jensen, 2019; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016; Hooghe & Marks, 2005). In the last few decades, researches on public attitudes towards the EU have produced comprehensive literature on the concept. While some studies have focused on the causes of changes in public attitudes towards the EU, others have discussed the effects of those changes.

One group of scholars argue that the voters' level of information is a significant factor that has caused changes in public attitudes towards the EU. Before the ratification of Maastricht, the general public was mainly uninformed about the matters of the European Economic Community. Studies have shown that the support of citizens declines when they are informed about the "concrete implications" of a policy or project (Johann, 2012; Leconte, 2010). As the ratification process involved referendums in countries such as Denmark and France, this led the electorates to learn about the details of their countries' membership to the EU. After the results of the Danish referendum in summer 1992, support for the EU membership decreased in the majority of member states. The survey results demonstrate that between the ratification of Maastricht and 2003, the popular

support for the European project decreased by almost 17 percent in the member states that participated in the treaty negotiations (Mair, 2007).

The majority of the studies have shown that public attitudes towards the EU have been affected more by economic factors than political ones (Gabel, 1998; Surwillo et al., 2010; Werts et al., 2013). The studies argue that the polarization of public opinion is more affected by the effects of EU economic policies on domestic economies rather than people's concerns about their national identity or the sovereignty of their state. As in the case of most of the studies on public opinion, researchers have used Eurobarometer surveys (2007-2014) to show whether it is the economic factors that lead to skepticism towards EU or political ones. The results show that skepticism towards the EU has increased because the EU is seen as having a negative effect on the economic situation in member states (Buturoiu, 2016; Quaglia, 2011; Serricchio et al., 2013).

The existing literature has also discussed the consequences of changes in public attitudes towards the EU. Some studies have shown that policy-making process in the EU level is directly affected by public opinion on the EU. If public opposition towards the EU increases, it can alter the policy outcomes and delay the European integration process (Williams, 2018; Williams & Bevan, 2019). Some studies have explained the shifts in public opinion towards the EU by referring to the responsiveness of political parties to voter attitudes. When political parties observe skepticism in public attitudes due to crisis or certain policy changes at the European level, they tend to emphasize voters' preferences (Hooghe, 2007; Spoon & Williams, 2017; Verney, 2011). This leads to public support for the Eurosceptic parties in both national and European levels and increases the number of Eurosceptic MEPs in the European Parliament.

The studies have produced various models to explain public support for the European project. The first, utilitarian model describes public support based on the economic theory, utility-maximizing. The model predicts that those who benefit from the opportunities that the EU provides such as the free movement of people are more supportive of European integration (Ejrnæs & Jensen, 2019; Gabel, 1998; M. Gabel & Palmer, 1995). The second, identity model builds on social theory and shows that people's attitudes changes depending on social norms and values. It predicts that people oppose European integration if they perceive it as a threat to their national identity and culture

(Ejrnæs & Jensen, 2019; Hooghe & Marks, 2005). The third model is the reference model. It explains public support for European integration by referring to performance of national political establishments. According to the model, individuals support the EU when their governments and institutions at the national level function poorly. In a similar vein, signalling model predicts that people evaluate the performance of supranational institutions by looking at the performance of national government (Ejrnæs & Jensen, 2019; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016). Another model is called cue-taking model. The model comes from the behavioral theory and builds on the observation that since the majority of people do not have fixed opinions about political factors, they make decision by "taking cues from the party they sympathise with the most" (Ejrnæs & Jensen, 2019, p. 1395). Therefore, the model predicts that public can be less supportive of European integration if there are a lot of Eurosceptic parties in a country. Lastly, episodic model emphasizes the importance of time when it comes to public support for European integration. For instance, in the aftermath of an economic crisis public support for the EU can decrease (Ejrnæs & Jensen, 2019). All in all, the explanations provided by the models demonstrate that public attitudes towards the EU can be affected by various factors.

To sum up, there is comprehensive literature on public attitudes towards the EU. While some studies have discussed the causes behind the shifts in public opinion for the EU, others have explained the outcomes of those shifts for the EU and the European integration. As discussed in this subchapter, citizens' level of information about the EU as well as economic crisis have been shown as factors that have had the most impact on changes in public attitudes towards the EU. The rise of Eurosceptics in the EU institutions, especially the EP, and alterations in the policy outcomes which can delay European integration have been presented as the results of changes in public attitudes towards the EU. Lastly, this subchapter also discussed various models that explain how and why public opinion for the EU changes.

1.3. Party-based euroscepticism

This section of the thesis will focus on three important factors. First, it will review the literature on the conceptualization of party-based Euroscepticism. Second, based on the analysis of the literature it will define which parties can be considered as Eurosceptic and which are not. Lastly, it will summarize the literature on the rise of Eurosceptic parties.

The first structured definition of party-based Euroscepticism was provided by Paul Taggart (1998). The author refers to Euroscepticism as "the idea of contingent and qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European Integration" (1998, p. 366). The definition of Euroscepticism by Taggart was later classified in two different forms by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002). The first one was called "hard Euroscepticism" which they described as "principled opposition to the EU and European integration" (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002, p. 4). Their explanation shows that hard Eurosceptics are the ones that oppose their country's membership to the EU or further integration process of the Union. Whereas "soft Euroscepticism" is "not a principled objection to the European integration or EU membership" (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002, p. 4). This form of Euroscepticism demonstrates disagreement with certain policies of the EU and highlights the points of national interests by comparing them to the EU's trajectory. In comparison to Taggart's previous definition of Euroscepticism, the classification of the concept as hard and soft Euroscepticism gives a clearer picture of what Euroscepticism is about.

One of the most explanatory and influential typologies of party-based Euroscepticism has distinguished between hard and soft Euroscepticism. The former parties support their countries' withdrawal from EU membership and oppose the European project as a whole, while the latter opposes only certain policies of the EU, especially if the policies clash with national interests (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002). Although this model has been considered valuable by the academic community, it has also been criticized for different reasons. The soft party-based Euroscepticism has been criticized as "too inclusive" meaning any form of disagreement with EU policies can fall into this category (Flood, Christopher & Underwood, 2007; Kopecký & Mudde, 2002). Also, this classification does not consider that it is not unusual for the political parties to switch their position and use certain tactics to balance electoral appeal (Daniels, 1998; Flood, Christopher & Underwood, 2007; Szczerbiak, 2008; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2008). For instance, to determine its position on EU accession, the Peasant Party in Poland negotiated with the government the terms of various legislative issues that affect farmers or electorates living in rural areas (Szczerbiak, 2008). Thus, despite being an influential typology in Euroscepticism literature, the hard/soft classification of party-based Euroscepticism is insufficient to explain the behavior of Eurosceptic parties.

The literature has paid attention to the question of whether any expression of dissatisfaction with EU policies should be classified as Euroscepticism. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008) argue that it is important to distinguish between opposition to the EU and the actors' dissatisfaction with certain EU policies. The former disapproves of the EU membership entirely, while the latter expresses disagreements and dissatisfactions only with certain policies. Criticizing the EU's lack of sufficient supranationality or democracy cannot only be associated with Euroscepticism. Advocates of the European project, for example, have criticized the EU for not being developed as a "union of citizens" which has led to extending the powers of the European Parliament (Leconte, 2015). This form of criticism by the actors does not necessarily link to Euroscepticism but has rather been defined as "reformist position" in the EU (Flood, Christopher & Underwood, 2007). The actors holding the reformist position expose the deficiencies of the Union and put forward the remedies to deal with them. Thus, criticizing the EU is not the same concept as opposing the EU and may not always be equal to Euroscepticism.

To define whether dissatisfaction with the EU policies is Euroscepticism or not, existing studies have also analyzed the EU policies' relation to national interests of the member states. When political parties oppose the policies that contrast with national interest in their state, their opposition to the EU cannot be perceived as Eurosceptic. These policies have been determined as core policies. On the other hand, parties opposing peripheral policies that do not conflict with national interests are largely seen as Eurosceptic (Leconte, 2015; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2008). The parties that oppose the European Monetary Union (EMU) are more likely seen as Eurosceptic than the parties opposing Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

Context and actors are also crucial to defining Euroscepticism. For instance, in comparison to other member states, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is important to France since it is how French perceive the EU as an international power. Therefore, France is one of the first actors that express dissatisfaction with the under-development of the CFSP. Similarly, pro-Europeans may choose to object to the integration claiming that it distracts the Union from strengthening its institutions. Meanwhile, Eurosceptics may choose to support integration with the same rationale. Thus, "in order to assess whether opposition to specific EU policies is an expression of a

broader type of Euroscepticism" it is important to evaluate context and actors (Leconte, 2010, p. 7).

Although some studies have interpreted parties' opposition to European integration as party-based Euroscepticism, the majority of studies do not agree with this view (Baker et al., 2002; Leconte, 2015; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2008). Parties' opposition to the EU's trajectory or policies does not necessarily mean that they are against the Union's future integration. In contrast, parties may consider integration process as a factor that weakens the EU and support integration for the purpose of undermining the EU (Baker et al., 2002). All in all, parties that support the European integration may as well be the Eurosceptics.

Another theoretical point is to be discussed is the rise of party-based Euroscepticism, specifically focusing on the issue of causality. The literature has extensively described two major factors to explain the causes of the rise of Eurosceptic parties: ideological orientation and strategic calculations of political parties. Sitter (2002) has defined party-based Euroscepticism as a result of strategic positioning of political parties. In the example of East Central European parties, the author explains how Eurosceptic parties diverge from their strategies to maintain or increase electorate support. Another group of researchers explains parties' Eurosceptic nature based on ideological orientation. The political parties choose a Eurosceptic position based on historical or contemporary cleavages within party families that may include liberal, conservative, social democrat or Christian democrat (Marks et al., 2002; Marks & Wilson, 2000).

In sum, Euroscepticism has been defined as the opposition to the European project. In addition to this, categorizing the parties as hard and soft Eurosceptic parties has made it easier to understand what Euroscepticism is about. However, other factors including the strategic and ideological orientations of parties for electoral success as well as specific actors and contexts that involve in Eurosceptic behavior make it hard to accurately identify Eurosceptic parties.

1.4. Politicization of European integration

The theory of politicization, proposed in the late 2000s, emerged in response to the realization that important developments in European integration could not be explained

by pre-existing theories. Two major theories of European integration -- neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism -- have considered different actors and interactions as the main drivers of European integration. The former has seen transnational actors and society as the main actors that will lead to deeper integration, while the latter considers integration as "the outcome of cooperation and competition among national governments" (Hooghe & Marks, 2019, p. 1115). The theory of liberal intergovernmentalism, which was reformulated form of intergovernmentalism, shows that integration proceeds as an outcome of national preferences which goes through intergovernmental bargaining and establishes regional integration (Moravcsik, 1995). In contrast to politicization theory, these grand theories of integration have failed to explain how the European project is affected by the polarization of opinions in the EU.

Politicization has emerged as a new approach to explain European integration by focusing on the concept of Euroscepticism. The politicization model refers to how the European integration process has been politicized. The meaning of politicization has been explained as "the act of transporting an issue into the field of politics – making previously apolitical matters political" (de Wilde & Zürn, 2012, p. 139). Collectively binding agreements and decisions have been routinely made by the EU as a political Union. However, in recent years these decisions have been largely criticized by electorates, political parties, and other actors. De Wilde and Zürn quote Schmitter that politicization gives rise to the following issues: 'controversiality of issues' and 'widening of the audience or clientele interested and active' (2012, p. 140). Based on this approach more specific definition of politicization has been given as "an increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards the process of policy formulation within the EU" (de Wilde, 2011, p. 560).

Politicization has also been defined as a transfer of politically binding discussions to the public level (de Wilde & Zürn, 2012; Schmidt, 2019; Zürn, 2014). Based on these definitions, scholars have introduced three indicators to measure politicization: issue salience, mobilization of actors, and contestation. Issue salience is about member state citizens' curiosity and concerns about the EU institutions. Mobilization points to an increase in the number of actors who engage in negotiations and involve in the decision-making processes of the EU institutions. Contestation -- or as some authors define it,

polarization of actors, -- points to contrasting views towards the EU institutions. All these indicators show how the political actors, as well as citizens, form resistance against the institutions of the European Union (de Wilde & Zürn, 2012; Zürn, 2014).

The literature is also concerned with the effects of politicization. One of the major effects of politicization has to do with national party competition in the EU member states and how those national parties can affect the decision-making in the EP. Existing studies have analyzed strategies employed by national parties to affect legislative decision-making in the European Parliament (Grande & Kriesi, 2016; Hooghe & Marks, 2009). Some scholars argue that for the issues to be politicized at the EU level, they first should have importance for the interest groups at the national level. In case an interest group seeks a benefit for a certain policy, they can become the most effective actors to push the agenda of national parties (Grande & Kriesi, 2016; Hooghe & Marks, 2009). In turn, the national parties who look for an electoral advantage can politicize the issue, attract mass public attention, and lead their way into the European Parliament at the end (Mühlböck, 2012).

As widely discussed in the literature, in the context of the EU, politicization appears in three different forms that include the politicization of European integration, EU decision-making processes, and the politicization of the EU institutions. First, the politicization of European integration issues concern "an increase in salience and diversity of opinions" on social subjects (de Wilde, 2011, p. 561). So, the issues become politicized if prominence and diversity of opinions create contestation issues related to European integration. Second, the politicization of decision-making processes demonstrates how politicians become more influential in the EU institutions on the issues that experts or bureaucrats should deal with. Lastly, the politicization of EU institutions is about how the actions of party politicians (Eurosceptics) lead to salience and contestation of decisions in the European Parliament, European Commission, and the Council of Ministers (de Wilde, 2011).

Since this thesis analyses the relationship between the rise of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament and the vote contestation, it will focus on explaining the third form of politicization, the politicization of EU institutions, especially the EP. Since the 2009 European Parliament elections, the Eurosceptic parties have been successful with gaining the representation in the Parliament. The increasing number of Eurosceptics in the EP

results in the polarization between political parties, which scholars has largely defined as the politicization of the European Parliament (Gheyle, 2019; Miklin, 2014). Scholars describe that as veto-players, Eurosceptics politicize the EP and politicization result in vote contestation on legislative proposals and delays policy formulation at the EU level (de Wilde, 2011; Zimmermann, 2019).

1.5. Consequences of politicization

Research on politicization has mainly focused on analyzing the causes rather than the consequences of politicization. Zürn (2016) has pointed out that literature on the effects of politicization is very limited. Although some scholarly articles have focused on the consequences of politicization for international institutions, they only include theoretical assumptions on the effects. The politicization model suggests the potential outcomes that can change the decision-making processes in the European Union. However, neither the model nor the existing literature have introduced how these outcomes affect the decision-making in the EU institutions.

The literature has characterized politicization both as beneficial for the democracy of the EU as well as threat to it. As a result of politicization, decision-making in the EU stops being an elite-driven process and includes public opinion, which is necessary for a democratic society (de Wilde & Lord, 2016; Follesdal & Hix, 2006; Zürn, 2014, 2016). On the other hand, it is considered as a threat to democracy "by leading to an increase in populist, reactionary, and, in some cases, xenophobic responses – a nationalist politics built on people's fears and insecurities" which will decline people's trust in politics of the EU (Paul & Hans-Jörg, 2013, p. 2). There is no empirical evidence that politicization brings on democratization to any international organization. Research shows that in the case of the EU politicization of issues will not bring democracy and instead jeopardize stability because there is not a single demos in EU. In order to have stability in the Union, cooperation should exist among elites without much intervention from the public. Thus, instead of bringing democracy to the EU, politicization of the issues is largely considered as threat to political stability (de Wilde, 2011).

In parallel to the debate on democratization effect of politicization, the effects of politicization on responsiveness of the EU institutions have also been discussed in the

literature. The research has been conducted by Bruycker (2017) has examined whether politicization increases the responsiveness of the EU to public demands or not. The study is based on large-sampled content analysis. It reviews the statements of the high-ranking politicians in various media channels on selected legislative proposals. The sample contains 2164 statements that are based on 125 proposals and were collected from six media channels between 2008 and 2010. The results demonstrate that when there is increased salience on specific policies, the EU institutions are more responsive. In addition, results have also shown that in comparison to other institutions of the EU, the EP is more responsive to issues that are politicized. Other studies have argued that the responsiveness of the institutions to public demands are only limited to discussions. Although public demands are discussed and addressed at the EU level, institutions do not include them in policy outputs (Binzer Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2008; De Bruycker, 2016). Thus, politicization may affect the responsiveness of the EU institutions at some level, but it does not lead to policy outcomes that meet public demand.

Consequences of politicization both at national and the EU levels are very much dependent on the Eurosceptic national parties in the member states. One of the examples of these parties is the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which made its way into the European Parliament. As the Eurosceptic party with one of the most seat share in the EP, it used the politicization of European integration, responded to public demand by mainly focusing on immigration, and as a result delivered Brexit (withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU) (Tournier-Sol, 2020). Another example of such parties is the Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) party which has also benefited from politicization in the EU and challenged the EU's normative order. Both at the national level as well as at the European arena the party's main message has focused on national sovereignty. It has achieved to restrain NGOs, universities, and civil society organizations and made controversial changes in the legal system (Laffan, 2019). Thus, politicization has put negative strains on European integration and undermined the democratic foundation of the EU through the efforts of Eurosceptic national parties.

The votes of Eurosceptic MEPs on the legislative proposals in the EP also demonstrates the outcomes of politicization at the EU level. In the 2014 EP elections, the Eurosceptic right became significantly successful. Although MEPs organize themselves in party groups in the European Parliament, they can either follow their party group or national

party while casting their votes. The MEPs who want to have a successful political career in their state prefer to vote in line with the national party that they are affiliated with. On the other hand, MEPs who prefer to hold key positions in the EP such as rapporteur or EP's vice presidents vote in line with their party group (Bressanelli et al., 2016; Finke, 2016). Research shows that in comparison to MEPs from pro-European parties, Eurosceptic MEPs tend to vote in line with the interests of their national party (Jensen & Spoon, 2010). The main reason behind this is that Eurosceptics in the EP are usually excluded from political discussions which automatically prevents them from holding key positions in the EP. Thus, this leads the Eurosceptic MEPs to vote on legislative proposals in line with their national parties which contrasts the votes of pro-Europeans in the EP and causes contestation (Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019).

1.6. Summary and main theoretical expectations

The rise of Euroscepticism in the EU has been observed among both public and political parties. The transformation of the European Community into a political union has led to the concerns of member states about sovereignty and resulted in the polarization of opinions among public. In addition to this, conditions created by the economic and political crisis in the EU have negatively affected public attitudes towards the EU. Eurosceptic parties in the EU member states have taken the advantage of polarization of opinions among public and have become successful both in national and European Parliament elections. This way Eurosceptic parties have mobilized to politicize the European integration and undermine the European project.

Politicization is a prominent new theoretical approach to explain European integration. The focus of the theory is on explaining both the causes and the consequences of the rise of Eurosceptics for European integration. The existing literature on the theory has mainly discussed the causes of politicization and has paid only limited attention to its consequences for European integration. This chapter provided an overview of hitherto examined consequences that the politicization and its main actors, Eurosceptics have brought to the EU, especially the European Parliament and its decision-making process. Much less research has been conducted on how Eurosceptics have contested legislative decision-making at the EU level.

Building on the politicization approach, this research will ascertain the relationship between the representation of Eurosceptics in the EP and its effects on vote contestation. In term 7 (2009-2014) of the EP, the number of Eurosceptic MEPs consisted of almost 19% of all MEPs. However, in term 8 (2014-2019) the number of Eurosceptic MEPs was even higher in comparison to term 7, reaching almost 28.5%. So far, the analysis of the literature shows that the Eurosceptic MEPs have challenged the pro-Europeans in the European Parliament when voting for legislative proposals. Comparison between the terms 7 and 8 will show whether having more Eurosceptics in the EP leads to more vote contestation or not. This thesis will test the hypothesis that the higher the share of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament, the more contested are legislative votes in the EP.

2. Background: party groups and voting patterns in the European Parliament

This chapter offers a general overview of the structure of the European Parliament, explains the main legislative procedure used to adopt legislation in the EP, and examines the voting patterns of MEPs. The first section describes the composition and structure of the EP. More specifically, it describes the main functions of the EP, how MEPs are elected, and how they organize themselves in the EP. The second section describes the EP's role in implementing the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP) which is the most common procedure to adopt laws in the EU. The last section will examine the voting behavior of MEPs, especially the Eurosceptics MEPs, and explain the concept of vote contestation. The overview of the previously mentioned factors is crucial for this research. It shows that the role of the European Parliament is significant for future European integration and an increasing number of Eurosceptics in the EP can challenge future integration through their votes in the European Parliament.

2.1. The European Parliament: composition and structure

The European Parliament is one of the two legislative bodies of the European Union next to the Council of the EU. It represents the citizens of the Union. The institution has four different functions: legislative, supervisory, budgetary, and political. The legislative is the primary function of the EP which allows it to be the law-making body of the EU. The introduction of co-decision procedure with the Treaty of Maastricht, which made the EP and the Council of EU co-legislators, increased the EP's legislative function. The Lisbon Treaty extended the number of policy fields in which the co-decision procedure can be used and renamed the procedure as the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP) (Moussis, 2013).

Based on the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Parliament is composed of a maximum of 750 MEPs (705 after Brexit), plus the President. The MEPs are elected by the citizens of the EU via direct elections held every five years. The number of seats assigned to parliamentarians from each member state is proportional to population. While small member states such as Malta, Cyprus, and Luxembourg have six representatives in the EP, for Germany this number is 96. The EU has common rules to regulate the elections.

For instance, all member states must use some form of proportional representation. However, the exact date of elections and election rules and procedures may differ from one member state to another (European Parliament, n.d.-c). The studies show that authorization of member states over the EP election rules and procedures leads to lack of public awareness about the status of the EP elections. Instead of considering the issues at the EU level, people assess the national dynamics while casting their votes in the EP elections. Therefore, in the existing literature, the EP elections are defined as "second-order" national elections (Bright et al., 2016; Clark & Rohrschneider, 2009; Reif et al., 1997).

The MEPs are elected from the national party lists. Although elections are aimed to choose the parliamentarians for the EP, MEP candidates are nominated by the national parties in the member states (Nugent, 2010; Scully et al., 2012; Whitaker, 2005). Therefore, once they are elected to the EP, the MEPs can represent the views, ideologies, and concerns of the national party that they belong to. In the same vein, if the national party, whose members have been elected to the EP, is Eurosceptic there is no doubt that MEPs representing the party can reflect the party's views (Nugent, 2010; Scully et al., 2012).

After being elected to the EP, the MEPs form groups based on not nationality but their political affiliations. The political groups in the EP are the entities that conduct the legislative decision-making process. To put it simply, they fulfill the same function as national parties in the member states (McElroy & Benoit, 2007; Nugent, 2010). The important elements that unify the MEPs in groups are their political affinities. Instead of not attaching themselves to any group, the majority of the MEPs with the same ideologies form groups to be more influential for various reasons such as voting for legislative proposals or electing the President of the EP (Faas, 2003; Nugent, 2010; Whitaker, 2005).

In addition to their affiliations to political party groups in the EP, MEPs can also influence legislative decision-making through their position in Committees and as rapporteurs. The European Parliament has standing Committees that specialize in different policy areas. Their main duties include the examination of legislative proposals submitted by the European Commission and make preparations for the EP's plenary meetings. The EP Committees also choose rapporteurs among MEPs for each specific legislative proposal.

Rapporteur becomes the responsible person to negotiate with other EU institutions and lead the discussions that help the EP to adopt its position on the legislative act. As rapporteurs or a member of Committees, MEPs can influence legislative outcomes by advising certain changes on the proposals (Costello & Thomson, 2010, 2011).

Since this thesis examines the votes on legislative proposals by political groups, it is important to give an overview of political groups in the EP. In total, there are seven political groups in the EP, plus 29 non-attached and independent members. To form a political group in the EP, there need to be at least 25 members from seven different EU countries. The European People's Party (EPP) group and Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) are the biggest party groups with 187 and 147 members, respectively. The rest of the political groups are Renew Europe (Renew) with 98, Greens-European Free Alliance (Greens-EFA) with 67, Identity and Democracy (ID) with 76, European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) with 61, European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL) with 40 members (European Parliament, n.d.-e). Table 1 demonstrates the names and ideologies of political groups in the current European Parliament. The names of some political groups, as well as the number of MEPs for each political group, have been different for term 7 and 8. The details including the name, acronym, ideology, and the number of MEPs of political groups for terms 7 and 8 can be found in Tables 2 and 3 in the Appendix.

Table 1. Political groups in the European Parliament (2020)

Name	Acronym	Ideology	Number of Members
The European People's Party	EPP	Christian democracy Liberal conservatism Conservatism Pro-Europeanism	187
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	S&D	Social democracy Pro-Europeanism	147
Renew Europe	Renew	Liberalism Conservative liberalism Social liberalism Pro-Europeanism	98
Greens-European Free Alliance	Greens-EFA	Green politics Regionalism Minority politics	67

		Pro-Europeanism	
Identity and Democracy	ID	Nationalism Euroscepticism Anti-immigration Right-wing populism	76
European Conservatives and Reformists	ECR	Conservatism Euroscepticism National conservatism Anti-eurofederalism	61
European United Left-Nordic Green Left	GUE-NGL	Left-wing populism Soft Euroscepticism	40

(Source: Own table, based on data from the European Parliament website)

The compositions as well as the names of the political groups in the EP have changed between the terms 7 and 8 of the EP. In both terms, the EPP and the S&D have been leading groups in the EP with the number of their MEPs. The EPP is the main group on the center-right and has been the biggest political group in the EP for years. The S&D, on the other hand, has been the major political group on the left-wing in the EP. In term 7, the third biggest group in the EP was ALDE with 84 members. The group was the liberal-centrist political group in the EP. However, in term 8, as the third biggest group in the EP, the ALDE was replaced by the center-right, right-wing political group ECR. The Greens-EFA political group in the EP is mainly associated with green politics and environmental issues. The group had 55 members in term 7 and in term 8 the number of its members decreased to 52 only. The GUE-NGL political group which is associated with left-wing populism has been significantly successful in the 2014 European Parliament elections and its members have increased from 35 to 52 in the EP. Another group with Eurosceptic and right-wing ideology in the EP in term 7 was EFD which changed its name to EFDD and the number of its members increased from 32 to 42 in term 8. Lastly, one political group – the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) - with anti-immigration and Euroscepticism ideology was established in term 8 and the number of its members was 36 (European Parliament, n.d.-e; McCormick, 2020). All in all, in comparison to term 7, the political party groups with Eurosceptic ideologies have become stronger in term 8 (See Table 2 and 3).

2.2. The European Parliament as law-making body: ordinary legislative procedure

The most common procedure to adopt legislation at the EU level is the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP). Until the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the ordinary legislative procedure was called the co-decision procedure. There are three readings of ordinary legislative procedure. As a first step, the Commission drafts a legislative proposal and presents it to the Council of the EU and the EP. The proposal should be first reviewed by the EP and then by the Council of EU. If these two institutions agree on a proposal, a legislative act is adopted. However, in case they disagree after the second reading, Conciliation Committee consisting of the members of all three organizations is formed to reach a compromise. The agreement reached by the Committee should be sent to the Council and the EP for the third reading. If they both agree, then the legislative act is adopted (European Parliament, n.d.-a).

Despite the Commission being the main institution to propose the legislation, the votes in both EP and the Council of the EU are significant to adopt legislation in the EU. At the first and third readings, the EP adopts its position based on simple majority voting. The Council uses qualified majority voting (QMV) which is at least 55 percent of all member states representing at least 65 percent of the EU population, to decide on its position for a legislative proposal (The Council of the European Union, n.d.). The Council uses qualified majority voting (QMV) for all three readings. At the second reading, instead of simple majority, the EP should have an absolute majority of its members (with current numbers 353 out of 705 votes) to adopt the Council's position. Thus, voting by both co-legislators is important to pass the legislation in the EU (Council of the European Union, n.d.).

To facilitate a mutual agreement between the EP and the Council, trilogue negotiations were introduced. At the initial stage, trilogues aimed to lay a pathway to a common decision in the conciliation committee. In case a legislative proposal is not adopted in the first or the second reading, through trilogues members of all three institutions could negotiate the terms of the legislative proposal. However, in order to cope with the rising number of proposals, along with the increase in disagreements, the representatives of the EP and the Council opted for using trilogues at the initial stages of the co-decision

procedure (Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019; Roederer-Rynning & Greenwood, 2017). Research shows that trilogues have become quite effective starting from 2009 as about 90 percent of the legislation has been approved either in the first or the second reading (Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019). The trilogues have become more effective in the eighth EP as almost 99% of the legislative proposals reviewed under OLP have passed in either first or the second reading (European Parliament, 2020). Thus, the introduction of trilogues into OLP has sped up the approval of legislation by the Council of the EU and the EP.

Despite the introduction of trilogues, the adoption of legislation can also be challenged by the polarization of opinions in the EP. The number of Eurosceptic MEPs in the EP has increased significantly since the 2014 European Parliament elections and this factor "made it almost impossible to legislate along a left/right ideological divide" (Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019, p. 755). With the increase of Eurosceptics in the EP, the consensus that existed between two major groups in the EP, Social democrats (S&D) and Christian democrats (European People's Party group) became prominent to overcome the challenges posed by Eurosceptics (Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019; Rose & Borz, 2013). As a result, while being challenged by increased polarization, the EP began to find a way to be able to adopt legislation.

2.3. Voting in the European Parliament

For the purpose of this thesis, the focus will be on the voting of MEPs on legislative proposals that are adopted using ordinary legislative procedure (OLP). Most of the time, roll call voting is used to gather the votes of MEPs in the European Parliament. In case the president of the EP decides that show of hands is ambiguous for accurate results, then electronic voting is used to gather votes.[1] Each MEP including the President of the Parliament may use three options to vote: "yes", "no" or "abstain". As a rule, the EP uses a simple majority for the first and the third readings of the ordinary legislative procedure to adopt legislation. In the second reading, however, the MEPs should reach an absolute majority to adopt the legislation (European Parliament, n.d.-d).

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[1] For the OLP votes, categorizing electronic versus roll call style, has not been considered in the analysis of this research

Most of the time, political groups in the European Parliament vote with cohesion, but existing studies have shown that this is not the case with Eurosceptic groups. MEPs and the national parties that form political groups agree on their decision and vote as a united entity. Voting cohesion allows political groups to have control over legislative decisions in the Parliament. In addition to this, pre-voting negotiations with MEPs and the national parties that they represent ensures the parties that political groups consider their interests in the decision-making process (Bressanelli et al., 2016; Hix et al., 2005). On the other hand, Eurosceptic groups have relatively low voting cohesion on legislative proposals. The former right-wing political group, Europe for Freedom and Democracy (EFD) had lower than 50 percent cohesion over legislative voting during term 8 (2014-2019) of the EP (Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014). The reasons behind the lack of voting cohesion of Eurosceptic groups have been defined as the ideological diversity of the group as well as the lack of experience of party leaders to organize votes in the EP structure. While the Eurosceptics in the EP can deal with the latter issue over time and achieve voting cohesion, the former problem may not disappear easily (Bressanelli et al., 2016). Thus, unlike other political groups in the EP, Eurosceptic groups cannot establish voting cohesion on legislation.

Studies argue that MEPs' affiliations to the political party group and national party are the main factors that affect their voting behavior in the EP. MEPs may choose to follow the decisions of national parties because of two reasons. First, the future career of MEPs at the domestic level is dependent on the national party that they are affiliated with. Second, MEPs' re-election is also largely controlled by the national parties. On the other hand, most of the time MEPs vote with the party group lines in the EP. This way MEPs can get support from their party groups and be nominated as Committee members or rapporteurs in the EP (Bressanelli et al., 2016; Finke, 2016). These are crucial for MEPs as they can affect the legislative positions adopted by the EP. Thus, MEPs' voting behavior in the European Parliament is primarily affected either by their national party or party group.

The literature on the voting behavior of MEPs shows that Eurosceptic MEPs are prone to vote in line with the interests of their national party. Some scholars argue that the reason behind this is that the mainstream groups in the EP do not give much opportunity to Eurosceptic MEPs to participate in crucial political discussions such as trilogue

negotiations (Jensen & Spoon, 2010; Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019). This way the mainstream groups in the EP also exclude the Eurosceptics MEPs from holding important positions like rapporteurs. Therefore, the Eurosceptic MEPs usually vote in accordance to the interests of their national party. Another group of scholars shows that the Eurosceptic MEPs themselves prefer being public orators instead of being involved in parliamentary work, which allows them to deliver speeches in plenaries and show their anti-EU position (Brack, 2013, 2015; Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019). This way, the Eurosceptic MEPs demonstrate unity with their national party rather than political group in the EP as well as vote in line with national party they are affiliated with.

There is a lack of empirical evidence to support the claim that Eurosceptic MEPs voting behavior results in vote contestation in the EP. However, some scholars argue that the Eurosceptic MEPs' failure to vote in line with their political groups usually leads them to vote against the major political groups in the EP (Behm & Brack, 2019; Richard & Philip, 2014). Research shows that the grand coalition of political groups such as the European People's Party (EPP) or Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) outnumber the votes of Eurosceptics and prevents vote contestation. On the other hand, because Eurosceptics do not vote with group rules, an increasing number of Eurosceptic MEPs means at some point they can block the legislative proposals with against votes. The rising number of Eurosceptics MEPs and the "agreement to disagree" among the Eurosceptic groups can lead them to vote against proposals resulting in vote contestation in the EP (Behm & Brack, 2019; Brack, 2013; Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019).

The lack of voting cohesion within Eurosceptic groups in the EP makes the research question of this thesis even more relevant. The existing literature shows that Eurosceptic MEPs focus on the "agreement to disagree" principle and vote and behave as a unified bloc in the EP. This shows that Eurosceptic MEPs' votes can lead to vote contestation over legislative proposals in the EP. However, we need to empirically examine to what extent they pose a challenge in the legislative process via their votes in the EP.

3. Research design and methodology

The methodological chapter will shortly summarize the main claim that this thesis examines and present the research design that will be used for the examination. In addition, the chapter will present the variables and explain how they will be operationalized. Lastly, the chapter will introduce the sources of data used in this research.

3.1. Research design

In this research, in order to identify the effect of change in the shares of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament on legislative decision-making, the 2009-2014 (7th term) and 2014-2019 (8th term) compositions of the EP are compared. These two compositions of the parliament are chosen because as a result of the 2009 European Parliament elections Eurosceptics gained a considerable presence in the EP, accounting for about 19% of all MEPs. However, the 2014 election resulted in a considerable increase of Eurosceptics in the EP (Hutter & Kriesi, 2019; Treib, 2014; Usherwood & Startin, 2013), bringing the share of Eurosceptics to a little more than 28%. The change in the number of Eurosceptics between these two consecutive terms is significant enough to analyze whether their increase in the European Parliament affects the decision-making or not.

3.1.1 Independent variable – data and operationalization

The independent variable of the research is the share of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament. The MEPs whose national party affiliation is Eurosceptic party will be considered as Eurosceptic. Since the independent variable is the share of Eurosceptics in the EP, that number is calculated by dividing the total number of Eurosceptic MEPs by the number of all MEPs. In order to see which countries have a higher share of Eurosceptics, this is also done on national level. At the beginning of Term 7 (2009-2014), the total number of MEPs was 736. However, after the accession of Croatia in 2013, that number increased to 748 until the end of Term 7. For Term 7, the total number of MEPs is taken as 748. For Term 8 (2014-2019) the total number of MEPs was 751 (European Parliament, n.d.-b). Thus, there will be two types of measurements for the shares of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament – the share of Eurosceptics in the EP and their share in each national delegation for both terms 7 and 8.

To determine the share of Eurosceptics in the EP, this research acquires the data on the independent variable from two sources – The Populist and the ParlGov. The ParlGov (Döring & Manow, 2019) database is known as the Parliaments and Governments Database. The purpose of the database is to provide "an infrastructure that systematically combines information on party positions, election results, and government composition (Döring & Manow, 2019). The database "combines approximately 1400 parties, 640 elections with 5500 election results and 2100 governing parties in 890 cabinets" (Döring & Manow, 2019). For this research, the ParlGov database provides us with 2009 and 2014 EP election results by member state from where I collect information on the vote share and number of seats won by each national party. However, since it is not possible to identify Eurosceptic national parties through the ParlGov database, the research will compare information on the ParlGov to another source called the Populist.

To identify which parties are Eurosceptic, the thesis relies on the PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019). The PopuList is cooperation established by journalists and academics with the initiation of The Guardian, and the participation of the University of Amsterdam, Queen Mary University of London, University of Sussex, and Sciences Po. The list is regularly updated and has been peer-reviewed comprehensively by more than 80 academics. The list includes far-right, far-left, populist, and Eurosceptic national parties from EU member states and the UK, Iceland, Switzerland, Norway. Parties that are on the list either have won at least one seat or at least 2% of the votes in national parliament elections since 1989 (Rooduijn et al., 2019). The PopuList uses the same definition provided by Taggart (1998) to define Eurosceptic parties. The PopuList defines Eurosceptic parties as the following: "parties that express the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European Integration" (Rooduijn et al., 2019). Although the definition also differentiates hard Euroscepticism from soft Euroscepticism, this research will consider all the parties fall under of definition of Eurosceptic as Eurosceptic parties in general. In this research, the data acquired from the PopuList will be used to identify Eurosceptic national parties. The national parties that have been elected to the EP for terms 7 and 8 and identified as Eurosceptic by the PopuList will be marked down as Eurosceptic parties. In addition, an MEP who is affiliated with a Eurosceptic party is considered as Eurosceptic MEP.

3.1.2 Dependent variable – data and operationalization

The dependent variable of the research is vote contestation. In order to determine the extent of vote contestation in the European Parliament, the research looks at the legislative proposals and their vote statistics. For maximizing accuracy and eliminating bias, this study only includes legislative proposals that are submitted to the EP under the ordinary legislative procedure (OLP). Vote statistics of the legislative proposals show "yes", "no", and "abstain" casted by each MEP for each legislative proposal. To see the effect of change in the share of Eurosceptics, vote contestation is measured by dividing the number of failed legislative proposals by the total number of legislative proposals. In addition, it is also done on a quarterly level in order to determine whether there was an increase or decrease in vote contestation over time. Moreover, to identify whether the vote contestation happens in all or specific proposals, the results are also analyzed by policy area of the proposals. Furthermore, to observe vote contestation for each legislative proposal, the research will look at the average share of "no" votes for proposals. To do so, the number of "no" votes will be divided by the number of total voters for each proposal in order to get the share of "no" votes for each proposal. To see the average score of the entire term the min average of share of "no" votes will be calculated.

Furthermore, in order to see who causes the vote contestation most, the study also analyzes the vote results of the political groups in the EP. First, each MEP's vote result for each proposal voted by OLP is converted into a number. "For" is 1, "Against" is -1 and all other results ("Abstain", "Not present", "Not available") are 0. Then, each MEP's results are summed and divided by the number of proposals they have voted for to get an average score. Finally, the MEPs are grouped by the political group they are affiliated with, their scores are summed and divided by the number of MEPs in the group. This gives the average score for each political group in the EP on a scale from -1 to 1. The closer to -1, the more they have voted "Against".

To collect data on legislative votes, the research uses the VoteWatch Europe (2018) database. VoteWatch Europe is an independent and non-profit organization that provides "easy access to and analysis of, the political decisions and activities of the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers" (Citizens for Europe, n.d.). The main objective of the organization is to promote debates and discussions in order to achieve

transparency in the EU's decision-making process. The organization uses the latest technological ways of data mining and information collection including infographics, social media apps or website widgets, and combines these statistics with views of politicians and independent researchers to provide public with valid and accurate analysis (VoteWatch Europe, 2018). The database provides the research with the legislative votes, their dates, policy areas, type of document, general results, and "For" and "Against" votes, "Abstains" for each MEP, and the total number of MEPs present for each legislative voting in the EP.

4. Euroscepticism and vote contestation in the European Parliament

The empirical chapter will consist of four subchapters. The first will examine the share of Eurosceptics by looking at the total share of Eurosceptic MEPs and the political parties from member states that have contributed the highest number of Eurosceptic MEPs. These analyses will be done both for term 7 (2009-2014) and term 8 (2014-2019) and the terms will be compared in the final section. The second subchapter will analyze the results of votes for legislative proposals during the two terms of the EP. The third subchapter will analyze the vote results of political groups in the EP to determine the extent of vote contestation in terms 7 and 8. The last subsection is the discussion which will summarize the empirical findings, indicate the implications and limitations of the research, and give recommendations for future research.

4.1. Share of eurosceptics in the European Parliament

This subchapter describes the share of Eurosceptic MEPs in the European Parliament for terms 7 (2009-2014) and 8 (2014-2019). It consists of three sections. The first and the second sections show the total number of Eurosceptics in the EP and by country, Eurosceptic national political parties that contribute most Eurosceptics, and the Eurosceptic national parties with the highest vote share in the EP elections for terms 7 and 8. The third section describes the changes in the share of Eurosceptics between terms 7 and 8.

Based on the data obtained from ParlGov and PopuList, the European Parliament had a total of 140 Eurosceptic MEPs out of 748 in term 7. This means the share of Eurosceptics in the EP was 18.71%. The country that was represented by the highest number of Eurosceptic MEPs was the United Kingdom with 40 members. The countries that followed the UK were Hungary with 17, the Republic of Poland with 15, the Republic of Italy with nine, the Federal Republic of Germany with eight, and the Republic of France with seven members. The rest of the EU member states had six or fewer Eurosceptic MEPs in the EP (Figure 1). Some countries did not have any Eurosceptic MEPs in term 7. These countries include Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia, and Croatia.
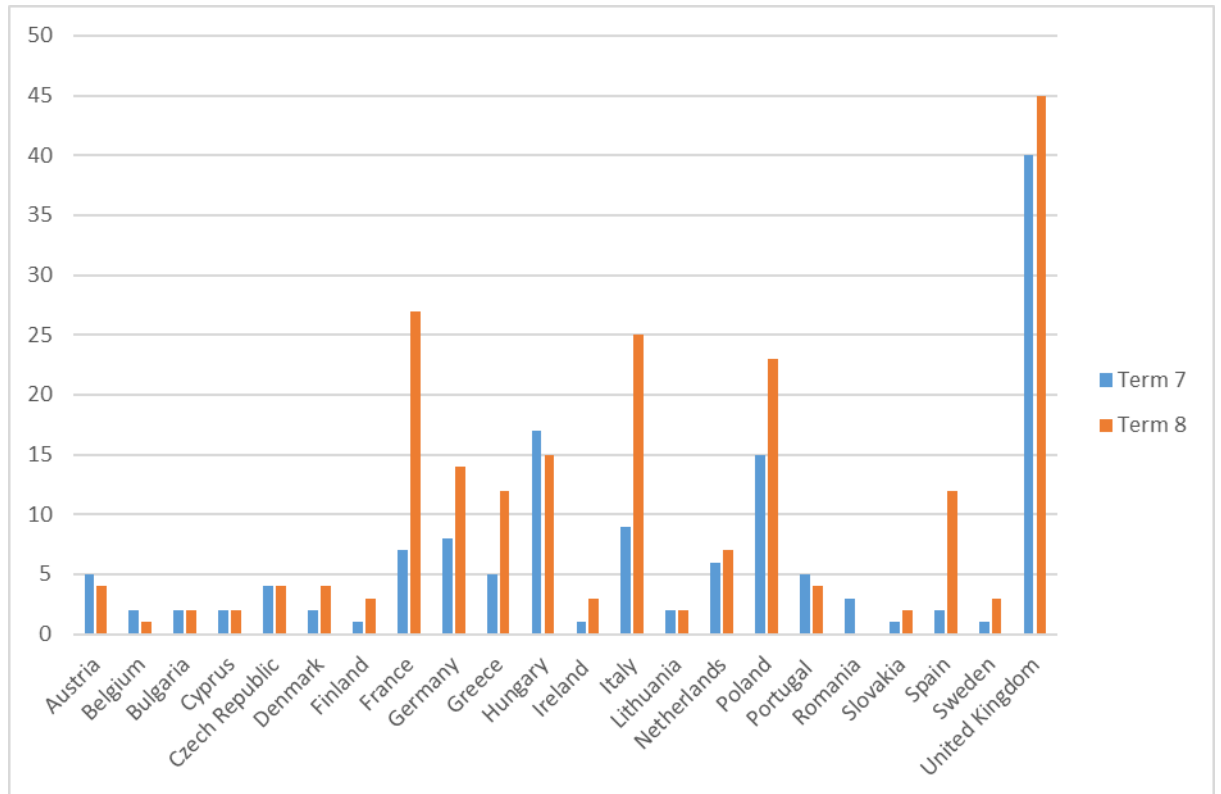
Figure 1: Number of eurosceptic MEPs by country in terms 7 and 8
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the PopuList and ParlGov)

During term 7, there were a few Eurosceptic national parties that provided more than 20% of their country's MEPs. In Hungary, Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) alone took 13 seats in the EP which constituted 59% of Hungary's total seat share. In the United Kingdom, the Conservative and Unionist Party (Con) gained 25 seats in the 2009 elections which were almost 35% of British MEPs. In the case of Poland, Law and Justice party (PiS) won 15 seats in the EP which was equal to 30% of all Polish MEPs. In addition, despite winning only two seats, the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) in Cyprus took 1/3 of seats in the EP allocated to Cypriot MEPs. In the rest of the member states, no Eurosceptic political party was able to obtain more than 20% of the allocated seats.

In term 8, the European Parliament had a total of 214 Eurosceptic MEPs out of 751 which is equal to 28.49%. The United Kingdom was again represented by the highest number of Eurosceptic MEPs which was equal to 45 members. The countries that followed the UK were France with 27, Italy with 25, Poland with 23, Hungary with 15, Germany with 14, and Greece and Spain with 12 members. The rest of the EU member states had seven

or fewer Eurosceptic MEPs in the European Parliament during term 8 (Figure 1). The following countries did not have any Eurosceptic MEPs in term 8: Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia, and Croatia.

In the eighth European Parliament, the number of Eurosceptic national parties that provided more than 20% of their country's MEPs was much higher in comparison to term 7. Similar to term 7, Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) was again on the top of the list with a slight change in the seat share. In this term, the party gained 11 seats constituted 52% of the Hungary's allocated seats. The second place was taken by the Law and Justice party (PiS) of Poland with 19 seats that were equal to 37% of the country's total seat share in the EP. Same as the previous term, the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) from Cyprus won two seats with 33 percent of the country's seat share. The list was followed by national political parties that did not make it to the list in term 7, with the exception being the Conservative and Unionist Party (Con) of the UK which was in lower ranks in term 8. UK Conservatives was in ninth place with 26% seat share (19 seats) and their dominance was taken by United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) with 33% of the seats allocated to the UK. UKIP was followed by seven national parties that had seat share of 20-33%. Thus, in comparison to term 7, Eurosceptic national parties won more seats in term 8 of the EP.

Overall, the data acquired from ParlGov and PopuList shows that, in comparison to term 7, there has been a significant increase in the share of Eurosceptics in the EP in term 8. While there were 140 Eurosceptic MEPs in term 7, the number has increased in term 8 and has reached 214 (Figure 2). On the EP level, the number of Eurosceptics increased by almost 10 percentage points. The most significant increase in terms of the number of MEPs happened in France, Italy, and Spain. While there were only seven Eurosceptic French MEPs in term 7, the number increased by 20 and rose to 27 in term 8, making it the biggest change in the number of Eurosceptics. In Italy and Spain, this number went up from 9 to 25 and from 2 to 12, respectively (See Figure 1).
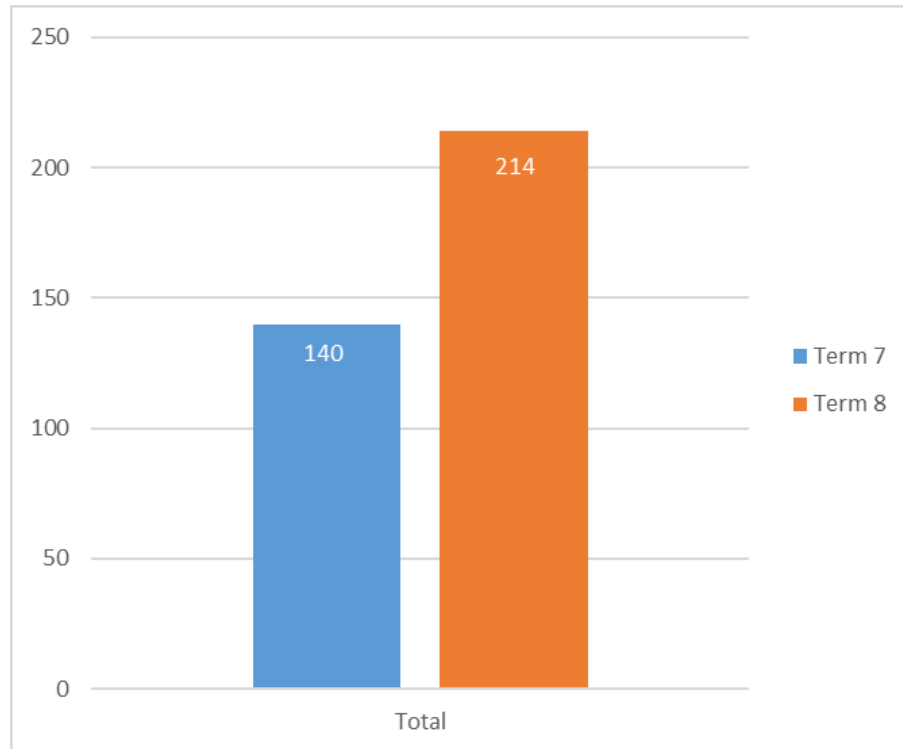
Figure 2: Total number of eurosceptic MEPs in terms 7 and 8
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the PopuList and ParlGov)

In addition, the rise in the number of Eurosceptic MEPs can also be analyzed at the party level. In the case of France, the Eurosceptic party that gained a significant number of seats in term 8 was the National Front (FN) party of France. The party had only three seats in term 7, but gained huge popularity in term 8 and won 24 seats in the EP. Another significant change happened in the case of the UK. The Conservative and Unionist Party (Con) had the lead among the Eurosceptic parties in term 7. However, in term 8, not only the Conservatives lost six seats compared to term 7, but also the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) gained 11 seats and won 25 seats in the EP. In a similar vein, Northern League (LN) party lost four seats in term 8 and only had five seats in the EP. Whereas Five Star Movement (M5S), another Eurosceptic party from Italy, went from no seats in term 7 to 17 seats in term 8.

Unexpectedly, a couple of countries have experienced a decrease in the number of Eurosceptic MEPs. In Hungary, the country where more than 50% of the elected MEPs were Eurosceptic in both terms, the number of Eurosceptic MEPs decreased from 17 to 15 in term 8. Also, Romania experienced a fall in the numbers from three to zero which

is the only country where this happened. Thus, not all countries experienced an increase in the number of Eurosceptic MEPs.

4.2. Vote contestation in the European Parliament

This subchapter analyzes the results of the votes on legislative proposals in the EP and determines whether there was higher vote contestation in term 8 in comparison to term 7. For the reasons mentioned in section 3.1.2, the analysis focuses only on proposals voted under OLP. The first two subsections show overall term results, quarterly results, and overall results by policy area for term 7 and 8, respectively. In addition, the first two subsections describe the results for the average share of "no" votes per legislative proposal for terms 7 and 8 as well as show those results based on policy areas. The third subsection compares the results of two terms to observe the change in vote contestation.
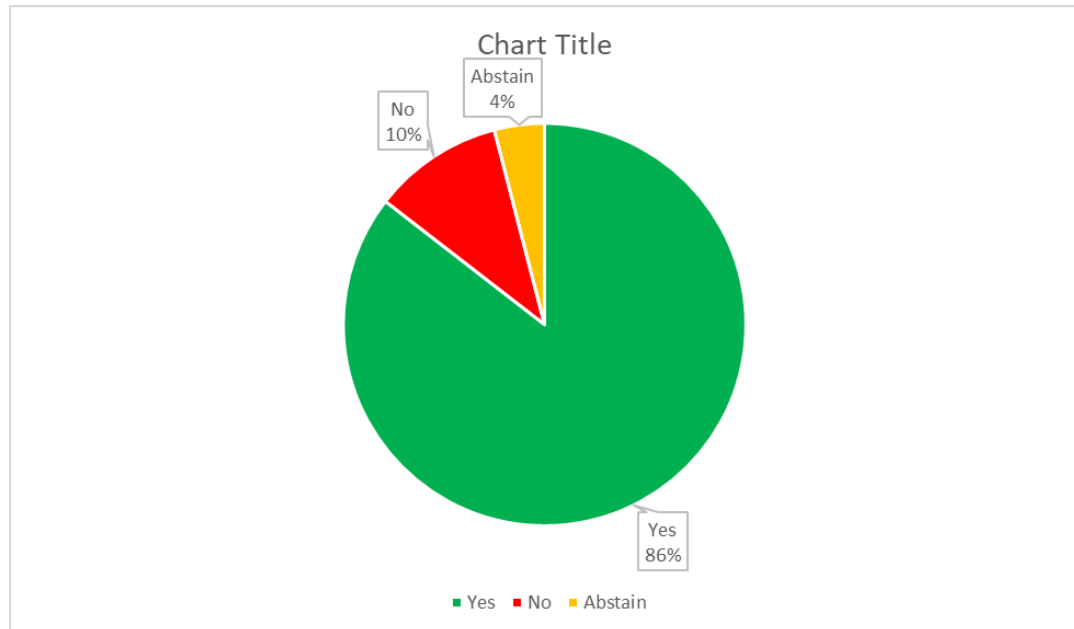
4.2.1 Term 7: vote results of legislative proposals

In term 7, a total of 632 legislative proposals have been voted under OLP. 613 of them have passed, while 19 have failed to pass. As a result, these proposals have a pass rate of 97% (See Figure 3).
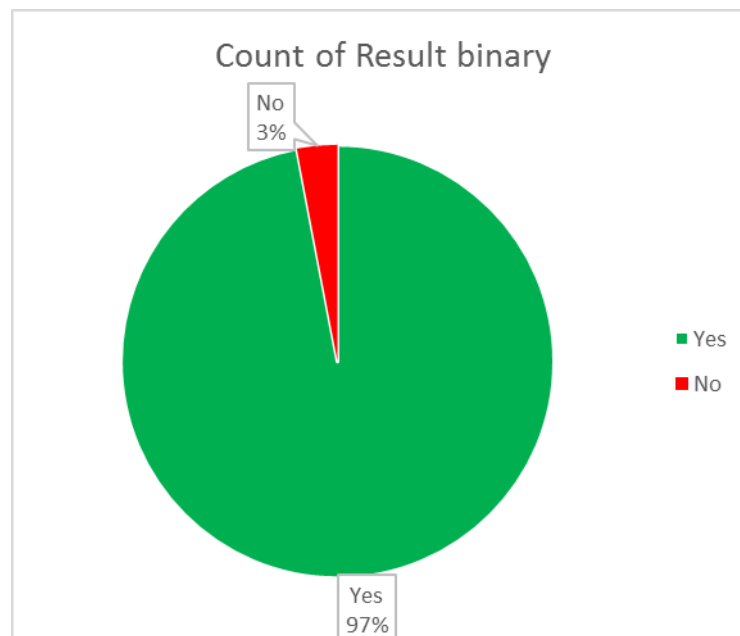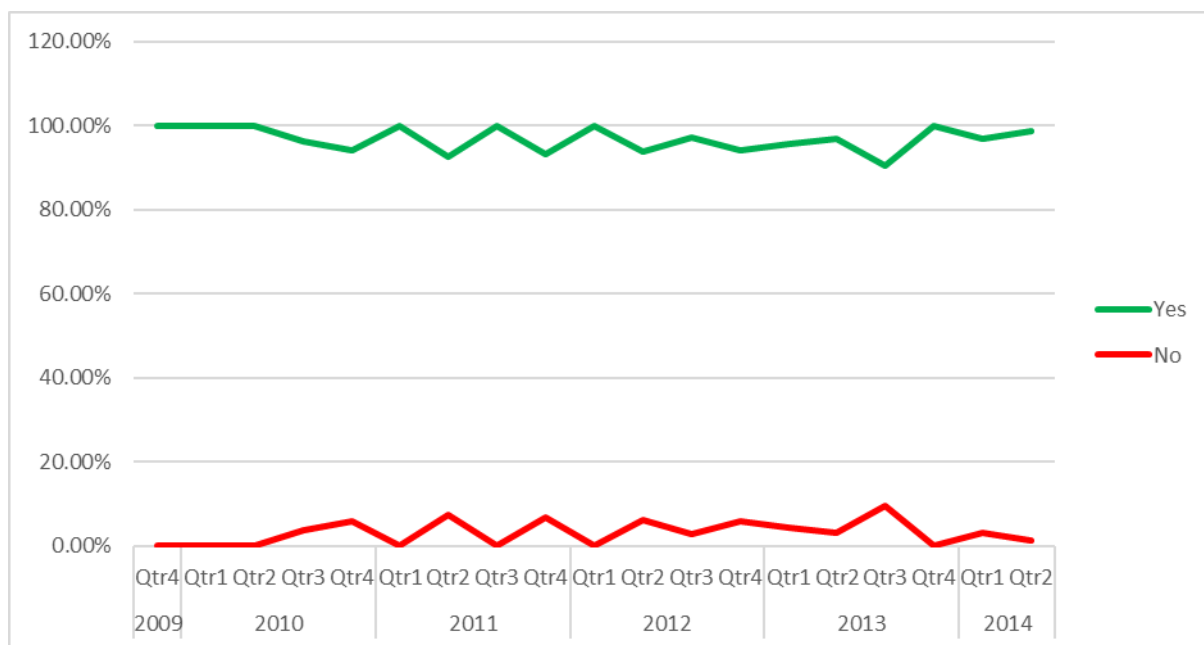

Figure 3: Share of passed and failed legislative proposals in term 7
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

The average share of "yes" votes per legislative proposal is 86% of all votes in term 7. The average share of "no" votes, on the other hand, is 10% of total votes. The remaining were abstains. On average, each proposal received "yes" votes from four out of five MEPs (See Figure 4).
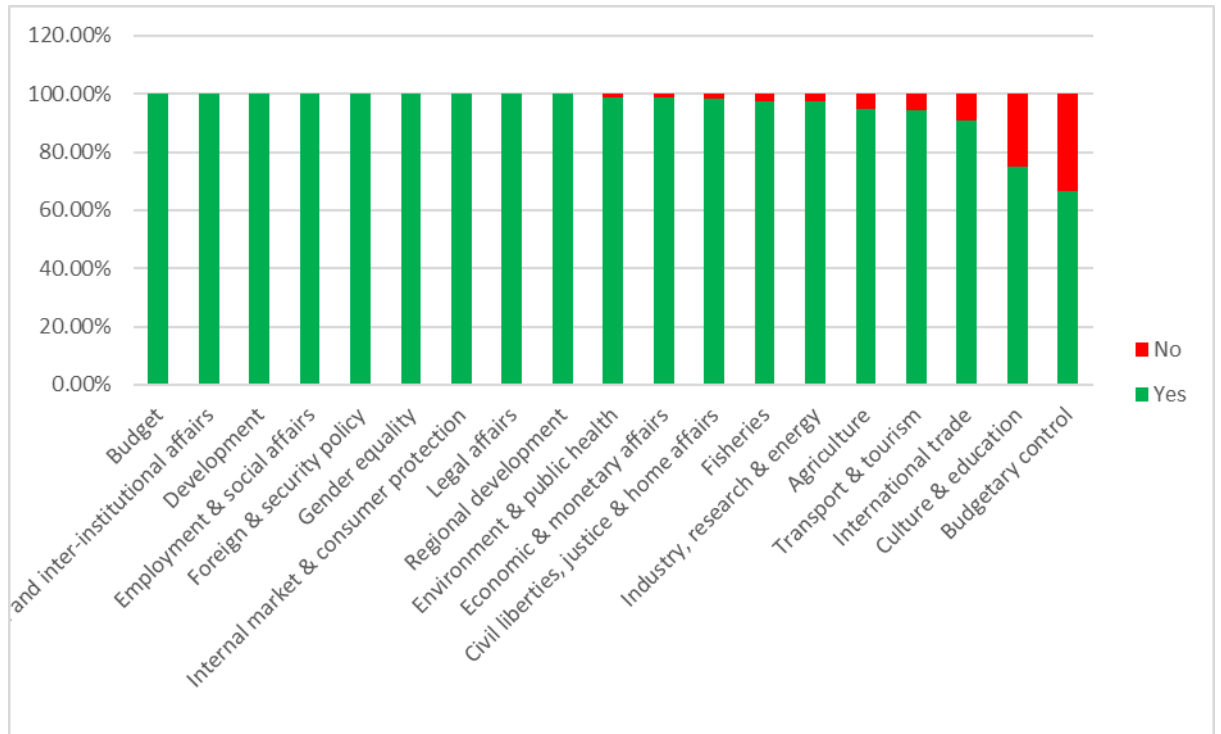

Figure 4: Term 7, average vote share per legislative proposal
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

The quarterly results show that throughout term 7, there were fluctuations in the number of passed legislative proposals. The term started with the complete passage of the proposals. During the fourth quarter of 2009, the first and second quarters of 2010 all the legislative proposals voted under OLP passed. However, starting from the third quarter of 2010, the results started to fluctuate, alternating between 100% and lower pass rate but never dropped down below 92%. The results hit an all-time low during the third quarter of 2013 where it dropped to 90.48% pass rate. By the end of term 7, in the remaining three quarters, there was a notable increase in the pass rate as it fluctuated between 97% and 100%. All in all, despite the variations in the pass rate in term 7, the overall pass rate of legislative proposals was very high (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Share of passed and failed legislative proposals in term 7 by quarter
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

Analysis of the legislative proposals by policy area shows that in term 7, almost all policy areas had a complete or very high pass rate. Of the 19 policy areas that had legislative proposals voted under OLP, nine had 100% pass rate. Those policy areas were Budget, Constitutional and inter-institutional affairs, Development, Employment & social affairs, Foreign & security policy, Gender equality, Internal market & consumer protection, Legal affairs, and Regional Development. The next five policy areas had a very high pass rate, between 95% and 100%. The pass rate for legislative proposals concerning Environment and public health was 98.84%; for Economic and monetary affairs was 98.70%; for Civil liberties, justice & home affairs was 98.28%; for Fisheries was 97.50%; for Industry, research & energy was 97.30%. The following three policy areas had a slightly lower pass rate, between 90% and 95%. The pass rate for Agriculture was 94.74%; for Transport & tourism was 94.23%; for International trade was 90.91%. The legislative proposals in the last two policy areas had significantly more against votes. While only 75% of the Culture and education passed, this number was even lower, 66.67%. Though it is worth mentioning that there were only three proposals regarding Budgetary control in term 7 and only one of them failed to pass. Thus, results show that legislative proposals in the majority of policy areas have had a high pass rate (See Figure 6).
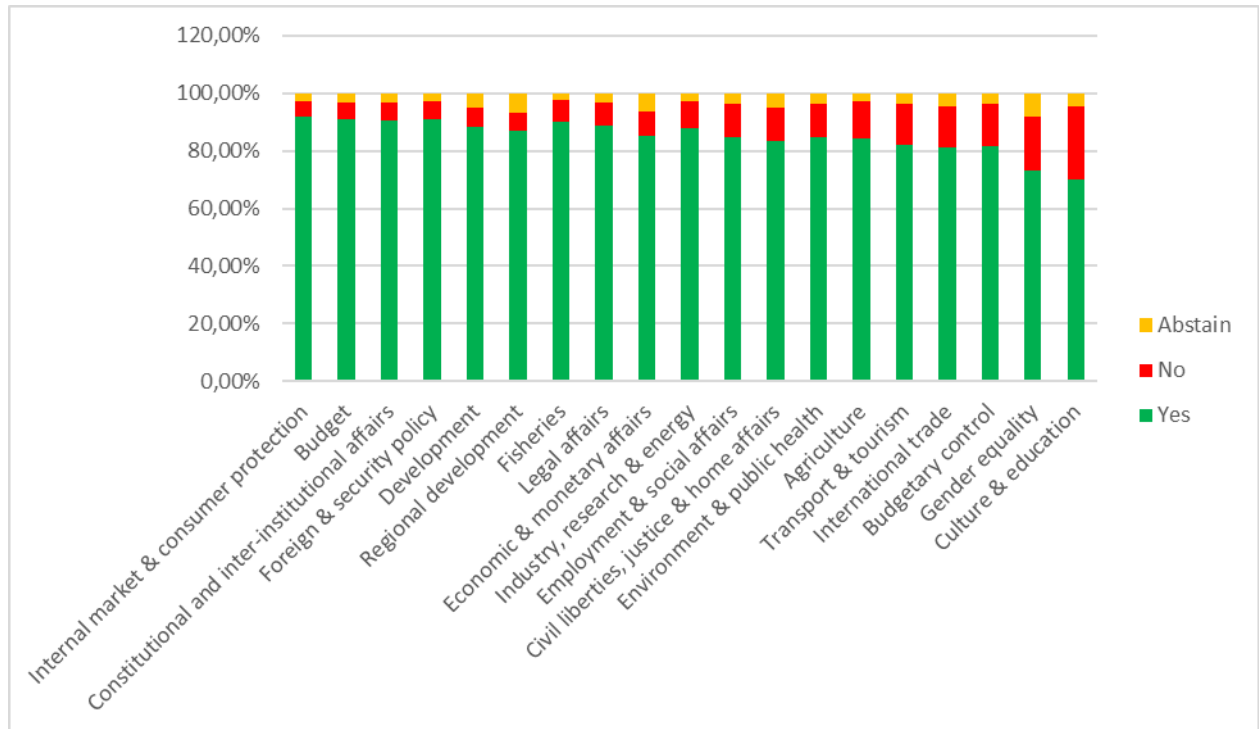
Figure 6: Share of passed and failed legislative proposals in term 7 by policy area
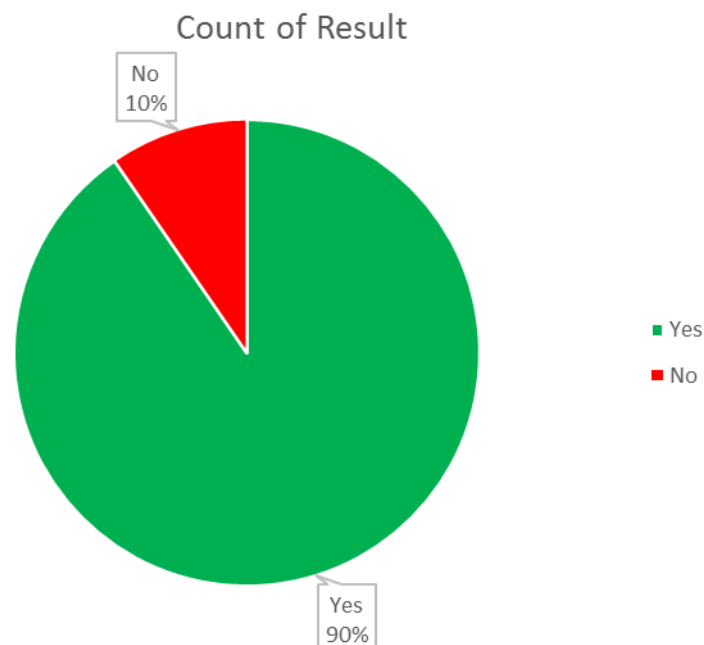(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

Analysis of average vote share per legislative proposal by policy area shows that in term 7, proposals belonging to the majority of the policy areas were voted "yes" by most of the MEPs. The policy area with the lowest contestation was Internal market and consumer protection. On average, 5.13% of the votes on that area was "no", and more than 92% was "yes". The policy areas with the highest contestation were Gender equality and Culture and education. While the former had an average of 18.63% "no" votes, for the latter this number was 25.50%. For the rest of the policy areas the average share of "no" votes ranges from 5 to 15% (See Figure 7).

4.2.2 Term 8: vote results of legislative proposals

In term 8 of the EP, 531 legislative proposals were voted through the ordinary legislative procedure. Of those proposals, 480 were passed while the remaining 51 proposals failed to pass. As a result, this gives the proposals a pass rate of 90% (See Figure 8).
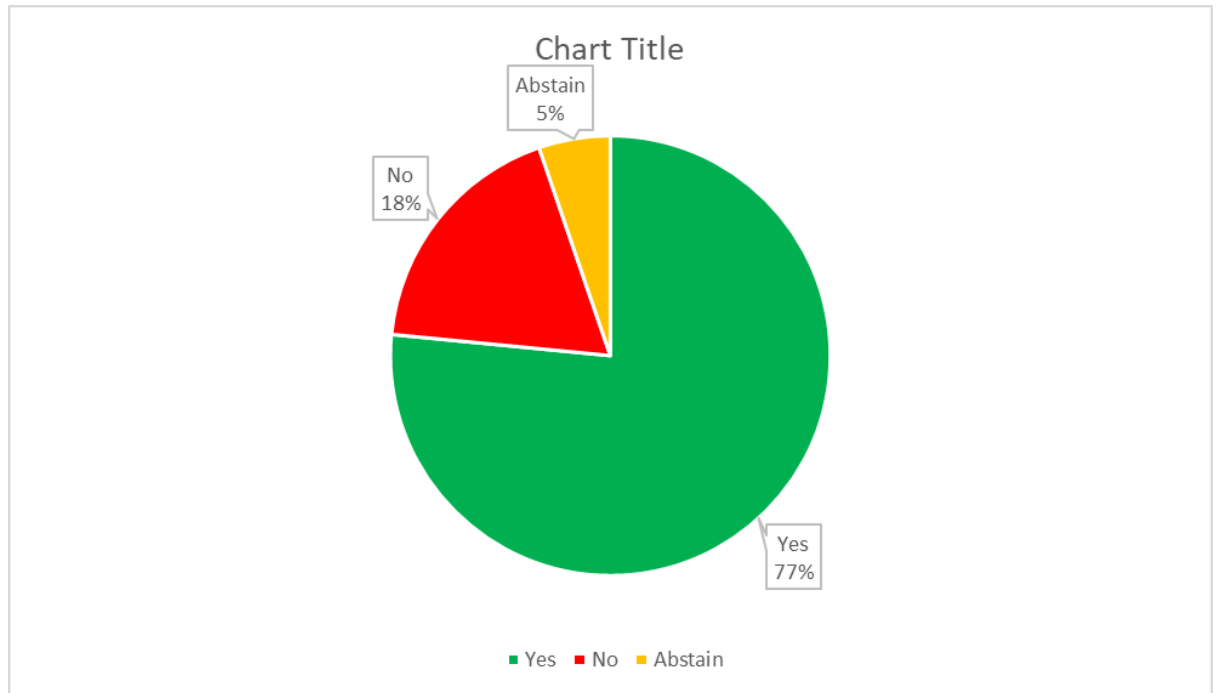
Figure 7: Term 7, average vote share per legislative proposal by policy area
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

Figure 8: Share of passed and failed legislative proposals in term 8
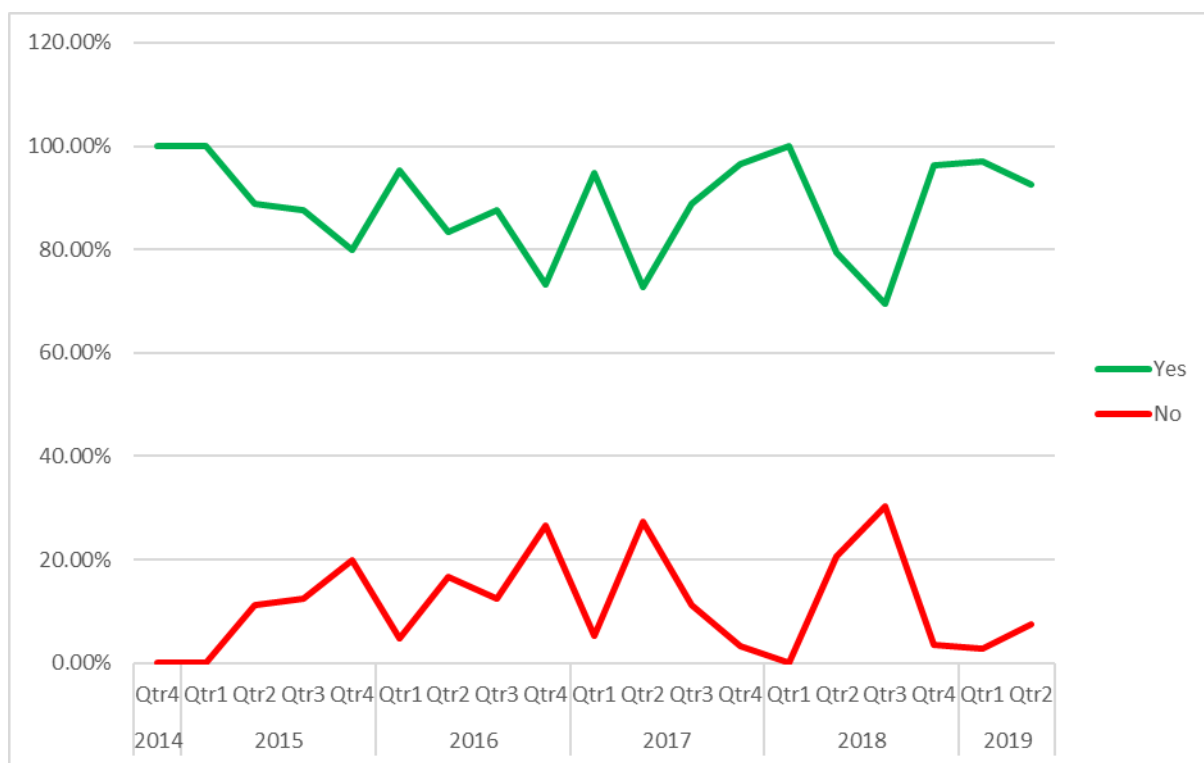(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

The average share of "yes" votes per legislative proposal is 77% of all votes in term 8. The average share of "no" votes is 18% of the total votes. The remaining were abstains. On average, out of every 100 MEPs 77 said "yes" to each legislative proposal (See Figure 9).

Figure 9: Term 8, average vote share per legislative proposal
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

The quarterly results of term 8 show that the passage rate of the legislative proposals has fluctuated. Even though there was not a uniform decrease in the pass rate, it can be observed from the graph that with the exception of 2019, the lowest pass rate in each year was lower than the previous year. This meant that each year the failure rate of the legislative proposals peaked compared to the previous year. Term 8 starts with a complete passage rate as no proposals failed to pass in the fourth quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2015. However, the pass rate plummeted by the end of the year, where only 80% of the proposals passed the voting. 2016 started with a higher pass rate, reaching just above 95%, though it fluctuated a little and plummeted by the end of the year, dropping to 73%. Similar to 2016, 2017 also started with an increase in the pass rate of the legislative proposals and almost reached 95%. Despite having a dip in the second quarter of the year, the trend quickly changed upwards, meaning more proposals were passed compared to the previous quarter. This trend continued until the first quarter of 2018

where the pass rate peaked at 100%. However, after that, it started rapidly decreasing and hit the lowest point of the entire term, dropping a little below 70%. After the drop, the trend recovered sharply where the pass rate reached 96%, and the term 8 ended with small variations around that rate (See Figure 10).
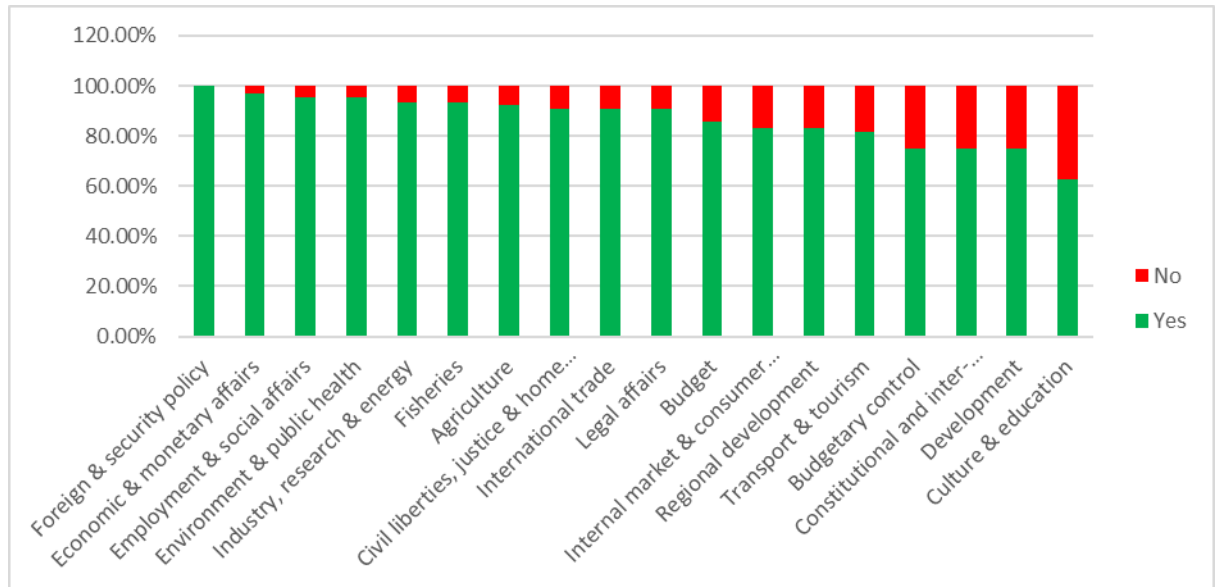

Figure 10: Share of passed and failed legislative proposals in term 8 by quarter
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

The analysis of the legislative proposals based on policy areas indicate signs of controversy and opposition in term 8. Among all the policy areas, only the legislative proposals belonging to Foreign and Security Policy had a 100% pass rate. A group of proposals had a little lower passage rate compared to Foreign and Security Policy, but they still had a pass rate above 95%. Those proposals belong to Economic and Monetary Affairs; Employment and Social Affairs; and Environment and Public Health. The following six policy areas had a pass rate between 90% and 95%: Industry, Research and Energy; Fisheries; Agriculture; Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; International Trade; Legal Affairs. Following them, four policy areas had a pass rate between 81% and 86%: Budget; Internal Market and Consumer Protection; Regional Development; Transport and Tourism. In addition, three policy areas had a passage rate of 75%: Budgetary Control; Constitutional and Inter-institutional Affairs; and Development.

Finally, the policy area in term 8 that had the least percent of passed proposals was Culture and Education with only 62% of the proposals passed. Thus, the results show that the legislative proposals in some policy areas have had a very low pass rate in term 8 (See Figure 11).

Figure 11: Share of passed and failed legislative proposals in term 8 by policy area
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

Analysis of average vote share per legislative proposal by policy area shows that in term 8, proposals in many policy areas were voted "no" by most of the MEPs. The policy area with the lowest contestation was Legal affairs. On average, 13.69% of the votes on that area was "no", and more than 82% was "yes". The policy areas with the highest contestation were Budgetary control, Culture and education, and Constitutional and inter-institutional affairs. The average of "no" votes for proposals in the area of Budgetary control was 25.89% of all votes. For Culture and education and Constitutional and inter-institutional affairs, this number has reached 27.21% and 30.24%, respectively. For the rest of the policy areas, the average share of "no" votes range from 14 to 20 percent (See Figure 12).
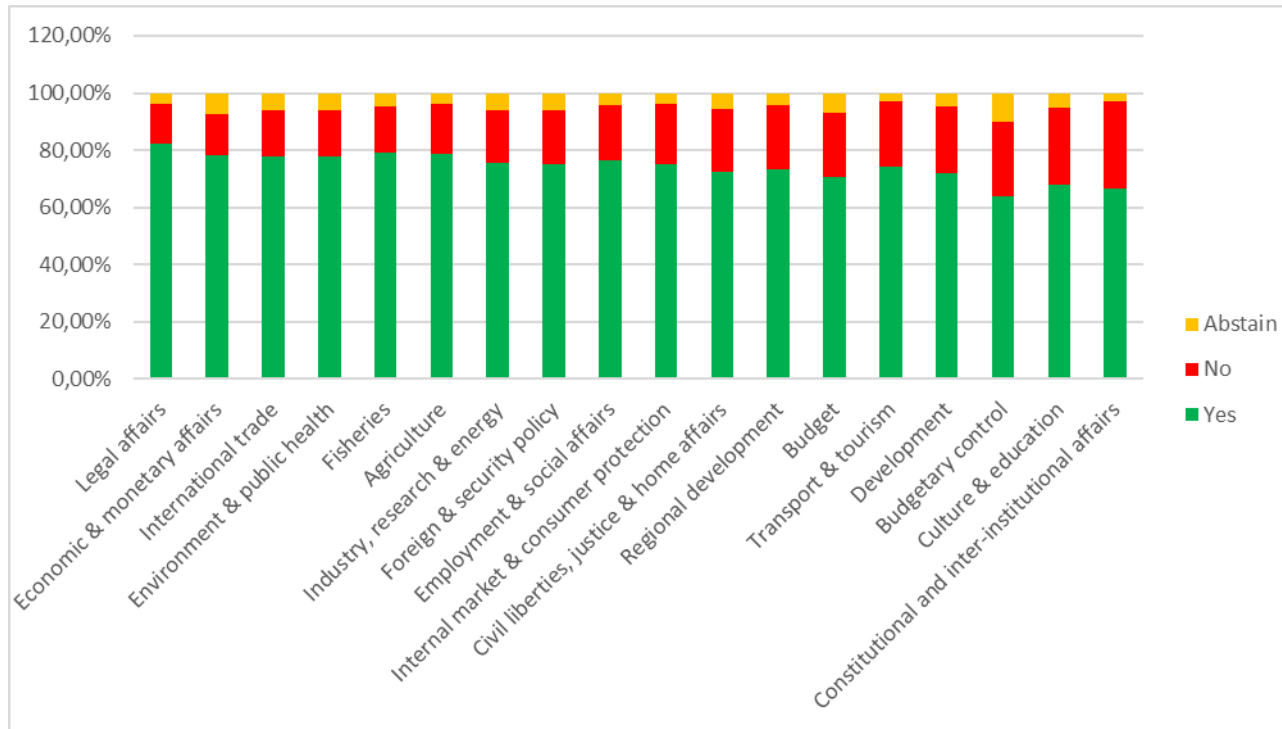
Figure 12: Term 8, average vote share per legislative proposal by policy area
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

4.2.3 Comparison of vote results of terms 7 & 8

In comparison to term 7, term 8 had 100 fewer legislative proposals that were voted through OLP. However, despite this, the analysis based on the percentage of passed and failed proposals shows that there was a significant decrease in the pass rate. In general, while 97% of legislative proposals have passed in term 7, this number dropped to 90% in term 8.

In addition, the quarterly results show drastic changes in term 8 when compared to term 7. First, term 8 had higher fluctuations and steeper drops in the pass rate. Even though both terms start with a 100% pass rate, the decrease in the results seen in term 8 is much larger as it dropped down to 80%, as opposed to 94% in term 7. In addition, even though the following quarters show fluctuations, the difference between high and low points of the trend is much bigger in term 8. While this number is 8% in term 7, it reached almost 23% in term 8. Finally, in both terms, the trend reaches its lowest point almost at the end of the term. However, the increase in the failure rate in term 8 was much sharper than in term 7. While the lowest point of term 7 was a little above 90%, in term 8 it was below

70%. Overall, term 8 has experienced more fluctuations in the pass rate in comparison to term 7.

A substantial difference can also be observed in policy areas between term 7 and term 8. To begin with, while nine policy areas had their all proposals passed in term 7, in term 8, this only happened for Foreign and Security Policy. The highest decrease in pass rate happened in two policy areas, Constitutional and Inter-institutional Affairs and Development, where both policy areas dropped from 100% pass rate in term 7 to 75% in term 8. Budget, Regional Development, and Internal Market and Consumer Protection, which also had 100% pass rate saw a decrease between 14% and 16%. The other policy areas experienced a decrease in pass rate up to 13%. Finally, the two worse-off policy areas of term 7 have notable results. Culture and Education which was in second to the last place with 75% pass rate in term 7 dropped to the last place in term 8. In the meantime, unlike the other policy areas, Budgetary Control experienced an increase in the pass rate, going up from 66% in term 7 to 75% in term 8. All in all, in comparison to term 7, the legislative proposals in a number of policy areas have had a lower pass rate in term 8.

In comparison to term 7, the average share of "no" votes per proposal in term 8 has increased. On average, "no" votes consisted of 10% of total votes of a legislative proposal in term 7. In term 8, this number increased to 18%. The policy area with the lowest share of "no" votes per proposal in term 7 was Internal market and consumer protection with 5.13% of total votes. In term 8, on the other hand, that policy area was Legal affairs with 13.69%. Meanwhile, the policy area with the highest contestation in term 7 was Culture and education with 25.50%. In term 8, however, this policy area was Constitutional and inter-institutional affairs with 30.24%. In short, in comparison to term 7, vote contestation in term 8 has increased across all policy areas, with no exception.

4.3. Vote results by political groups

Even though the legislative proposals voted through OLPs in terms 7 and 8 show a relatively high passage rate, 97% and 90%, respectively, it is worth noting that the legislative proposals only need simple majority of the total present MEPs' to pass. As a result, even if a proposal passes, it is possible that up to one-third of the total present MEPs voted "No" or abstained from voting. Therefore, the following subchapter groups

the MEPs by the Political Group they affiliate with, calculates the average result for each political group. Each vote of each MEP is given a score. "For" votes are worth one point, "Against" votes are worth negative one points, and the others ("Abstain", "Absent") are worth zero points. These scores are summed and divided by the number of plenaries the MEP participated in or was expected to participate in. The result is the average score for individual MEP on a scale of -1 to 1. Then, the MEPs are grouped by their political group in the EP, their scores are summed, and divided by the number of MEPs in each group. The results show the average score for each group which are also on a scale from -1 to 1. The results are then visualized to show how often each political group voted "For" or "Against" throughout the term on each policy area. Scores closer to -1 indicate that the political group has more "Against" votes. Scores closer to 1 indicate the members of the group have voted "For" in the majority of cases. Lastly, scores near 0 show that the group is neutral – members either abstained from voting in the majority of cases or their "For" and "Against" votes are more or less equal.

4.3.1 Vote results of political groups in the EP in term 7

Legislative proposals in term 7 had a very high passage rate, which means simple majority of all MEPs have voted "For" for almost all legislative proposals. As a result, political groups that these MEPs belong to have a higher share of average "yes" votes. The average scores for the European People's Party (EPP), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), and Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) are above 0.7 which puts them on the right side of the spectrum (See Figure 13). This means that most of the MEPs in this group have voted positively for most of the legislative proposals. There are, however, some political groups that are towards zero on the scale. The scores for European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL) and Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) are between 0.16 and 0.19, which means the MEPs from these groups did not vote "For" for more than a quarter of proposals. Lastly, Non-Inscrits (NI), which are the MEPs who do not consider themselves as a part of any political group have a score of 0.08. This is the result of voting "against" or abstaining from voting for almost half of the legislative proposals (See Figure 13).
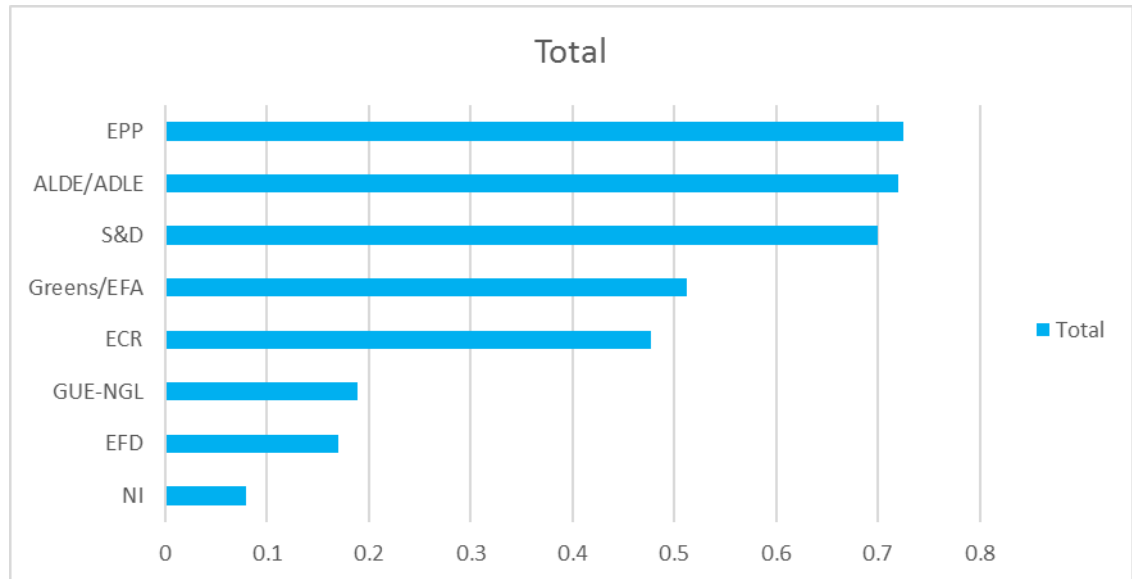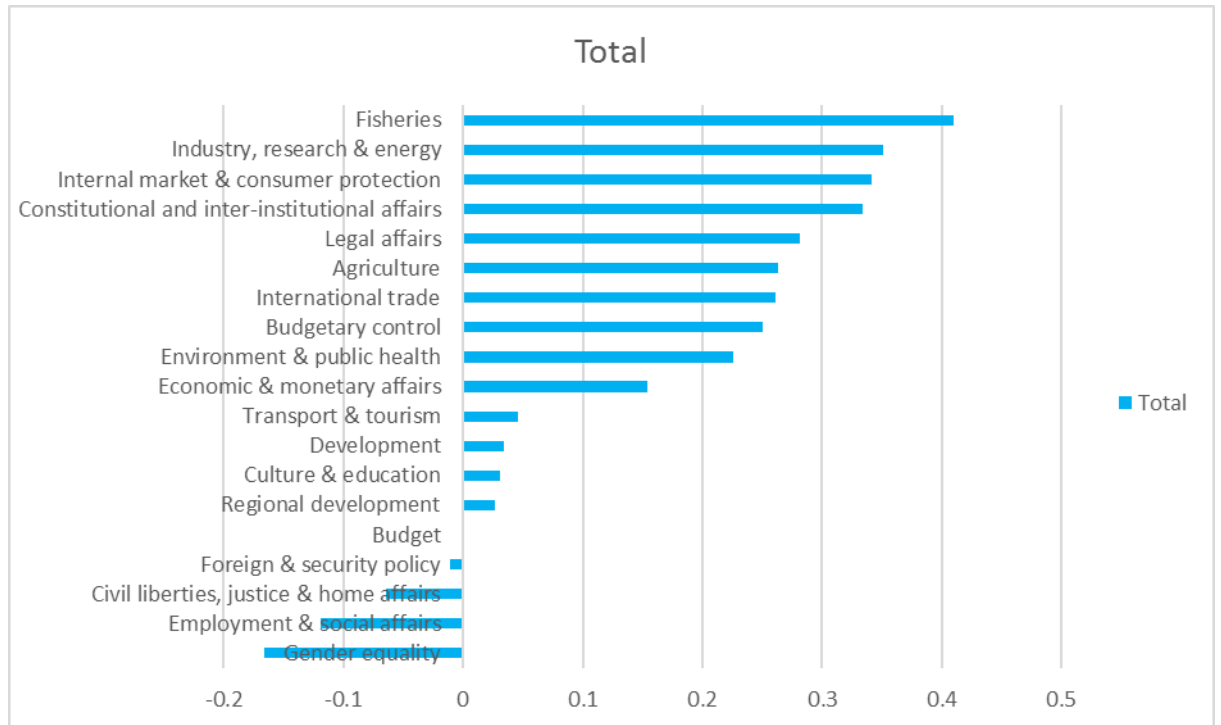
Figure 13: Vote scores of political groups in term 7
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

When analyzed by policy area, it is possible to depict which policy areas are most and least favored by the political groups on the left-hand side of the scale. The MEPs belonging to GUE-NGL voted positively for almost 75% of the legislative proposals on Gender equality, Fisheries, Budgetary control, and Legal Affairs. The proposals on many policy areas received scores a little above zero, which indicates that a little more than half of the proposals were voted "For". The proposals on Employment & social affairs, Economic & monetary affairs, and Culture & education have a score between -0.05 and -0.1 meaning a little less than half were voted positively. The policy area that was least favored by this group was Foreign & Security Policy. It had a score of -0.2 which meant only a little more than one-quarter of these proposals were approved by the MEPs affiliated with GUE-NGL (See Figure 14).
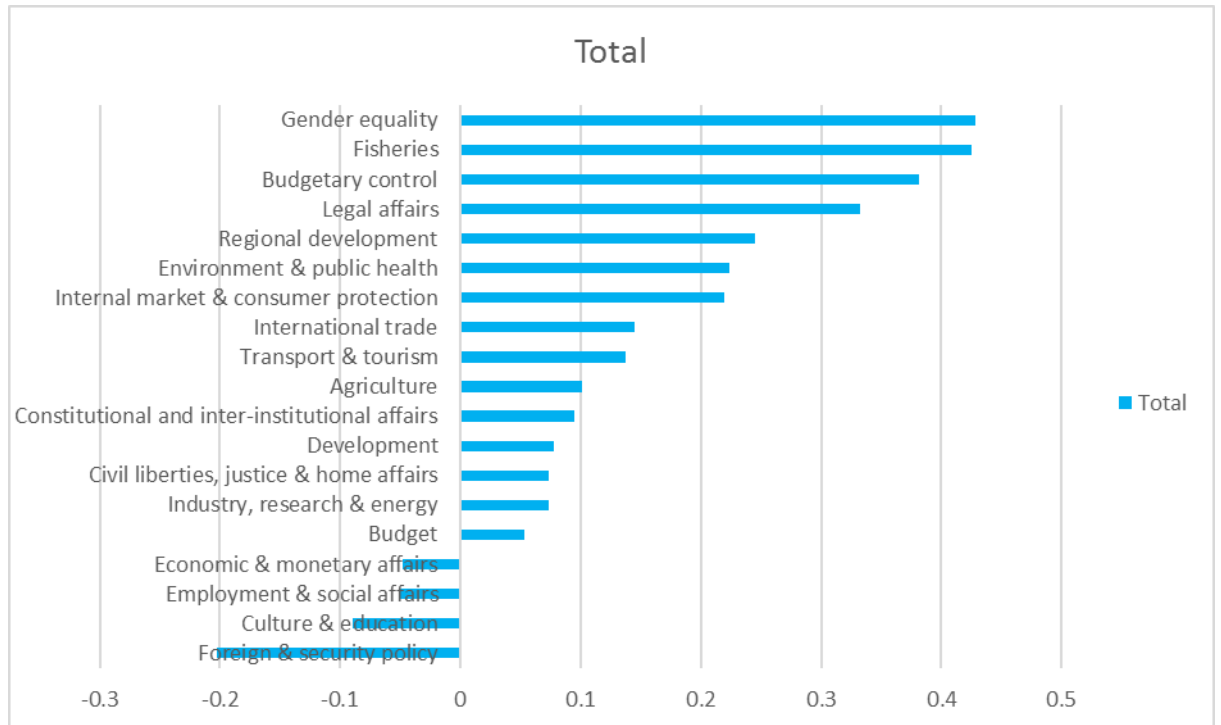
Figure 14: Vote scores of GUE-NGL in term 7 by policy area
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

The MEPs in EFD seemed to have favored proposals on Fisheries, Industry, research & energy, Internal market & consumer protection, and Constitutional and inter-institutional affairs, where almost 75% of the proposals were voted "For". Proposals on Transport & tourism, Regional development, Foreign & security policy, and Budget show neutrality as around half of the proposals on each policy area were voted "For". The policy area that received the least amount of "For" votes by this group were Employment & social affairs and Gender equality with the scores less than -0.1 (See Figure 15).
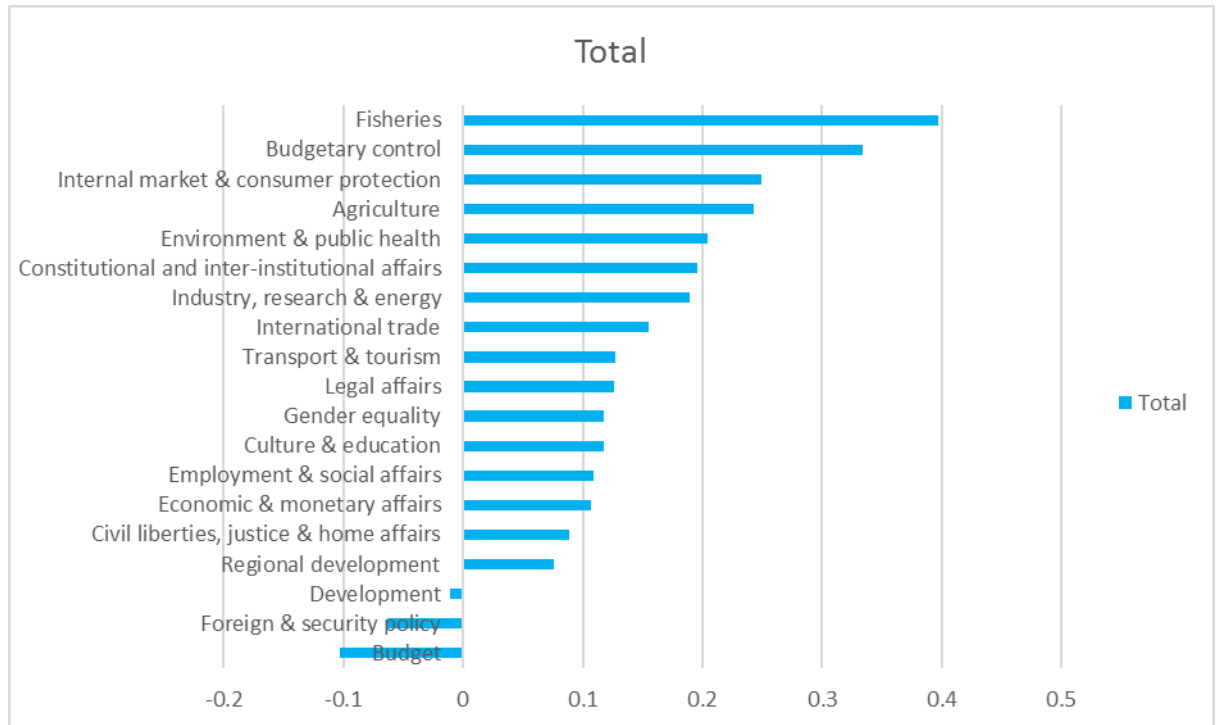
Figure 15: Vote scores of EFD in term 7 by policy area
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

The MEPs not belonging to any political group (the "non- inscrits") in the EP favored the proposals on Fisheries above everything. More than half of the proposals on Budgetary control, Internal market & consumer protection, and Agriculture were voted "For" and had a score between 0.2 and 0.35. The proposals regarding Development and Foreign & security policy showed neutrality as a little less than half were approved by the MEPs. Lastly, the policy area that was not favored by these MEPs was Budget as its score was a little less than -0.1 (See Figure 16).

Figure 16: Vote scores of NI in term 7 by policy area
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

4.3.2 Vote results of political groups in the EP in term 8

The legislative proposals in term 8 had a slightly lower passage rate than term 7, and as a result, in general, the average score for political groups has decreased. However, the trend observed in term 7 is almost completely the same in term 8 too. S&D, EPP, and ALDE have scores of 0.62, 0.62, and 0.6, respectively, because the MEPs from these groups have mostly voted "For" for the legislative proposals. On the left-hand side of the scale there again are GUE-NGL, Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD, formerly EFD), and NI. Both GUE-NGL and NI have managed to keep their rates similar to term 7 while EFDD experienced a significant decrease, dropping from 0.17 to -0.034. This, in turn, means that the MEPs from EFDD have only voted "For" for only a little less than half of the legislative proposals (See Figure 17).
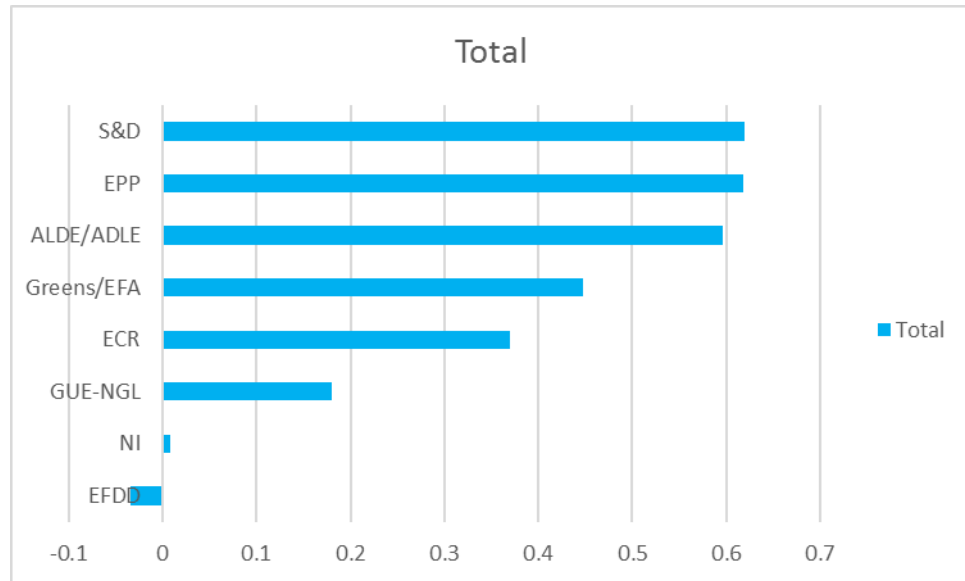
Figure 17: Vote scores of political groups in term 8
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

In term 8, the MEPs from GUE-NGL have favored Development and Employment & social affairs policy more than the others as more than 75% of the proposals were voted "For" and they have the score above 0.55. The majority of the policy areas have a score between 0.1 and 0.4 meaning more than half of the proposals were voted positively by the MEPs of this group. Proposals on Civil liberties, justice & home affairs, and Industry, research & energy were in the neutral zone as their scores were near zero which meant around half of the proposals were approved by this group. Policies areas regarding Finance – Budget and Economic & monetary affairs had a score a little below zero which meant a little more than half of the proposals were either voted "Against" or not voted. However, the policy area that was favored the least by this group was Foreign & security policy with the score of -0.36, meaning only a little more than a quarter of proposals were voted "For" by this group (See Figure 18).
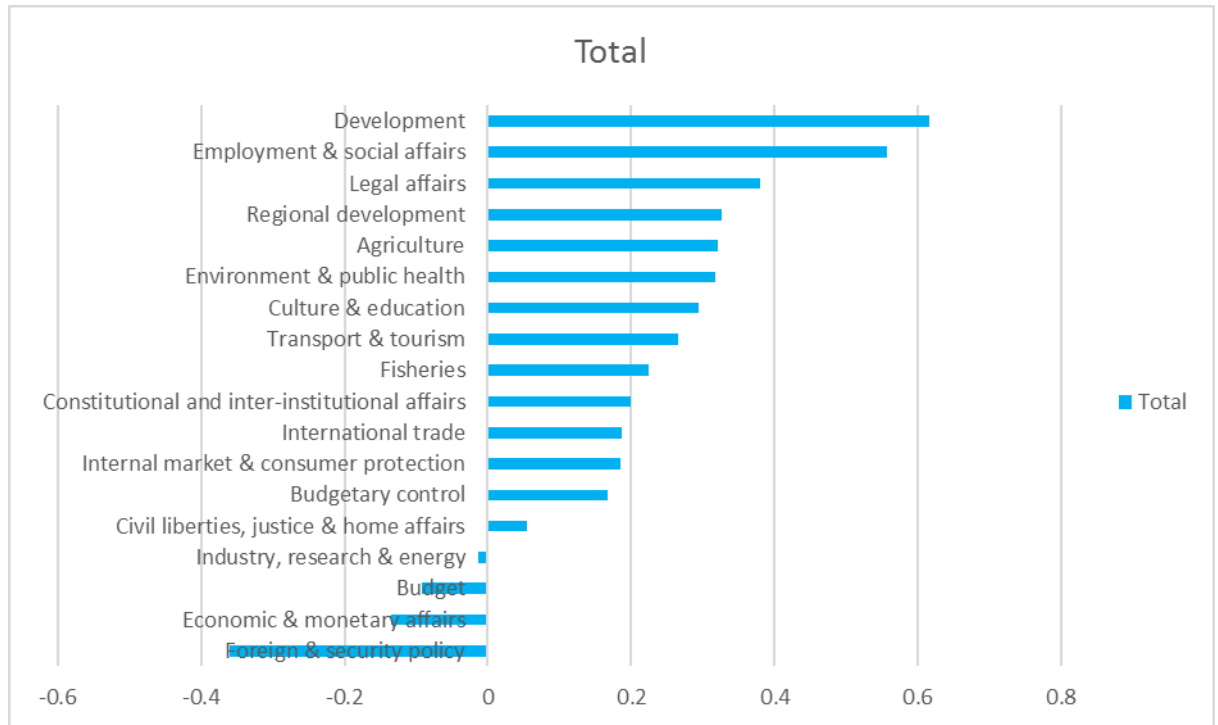
Figure 18: Vote scores of GUE-NGL in term 8 by policy area
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

The MEPs outside a political group (NI) have quite different results compared to term 7. In term 8, they have favored less than half of the policy areas, and none of the ones they have favored had a score above 0.3. As a result, less than 75% of the legislative proposals in all policy areas were voted "For". Of the most favored policy areas, Budgetary control and Fisheries have the highest scores which are 0.29 and 0.25, respectively. The majority of the remaining policy areas had a score between -0.1 and 0.1, mostly on the negative side, showing that around half of the proposals were positively voted by the MEPs. Finally, the policy in the last place is Foreign & security policy with the score of -0.47, which meant almost 75% of the proposals were not voted "For" (See Figure 19).
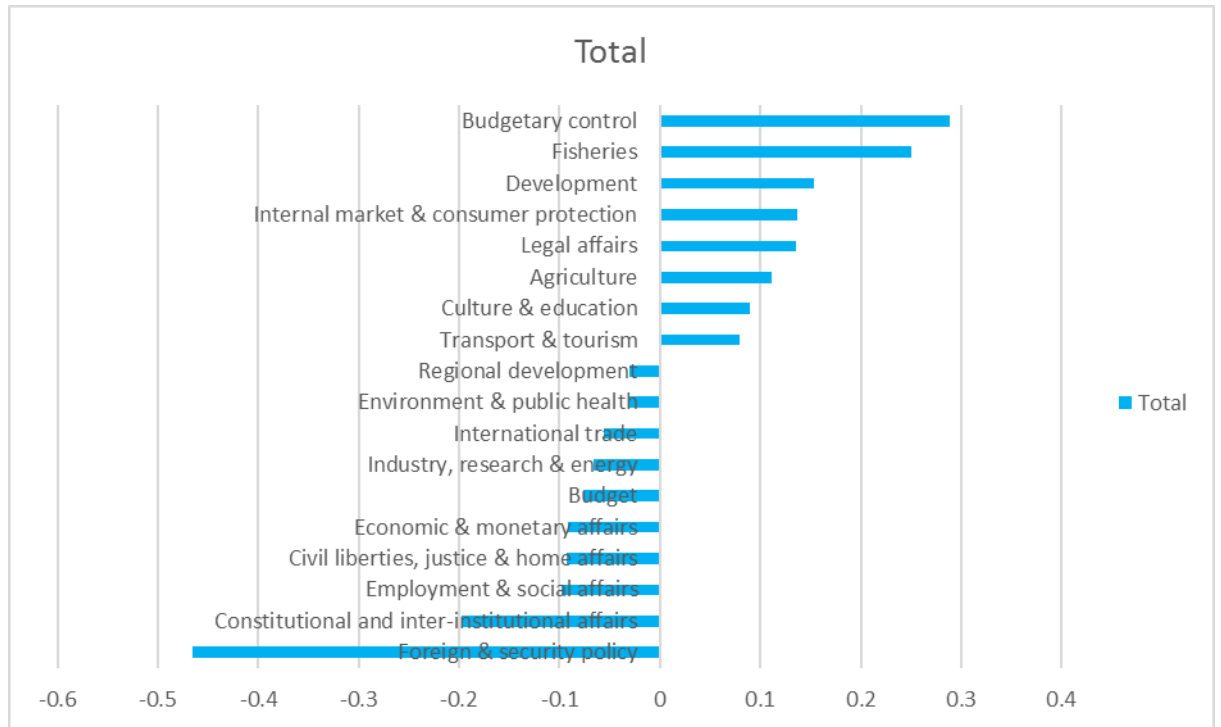
Figure 19: Vote scores of NI in term 8 by policy area
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

Similar results can be observed in the results of EFDD as well. Quite a significant number of policy areas experienced a drop in the scores, though, in this case, a little more than half of them are on the positive side of the scale. The policy area favored most by EFDD was Development, but its score was only 0.25. The remaining policy areas except for 3 had a score between -0.1 and 0.1 which explains that about 50% of the proposals were voted "For" by the MEPs. Finally, the three policy areas that had even lower score are Economic & monetary affairs, Constitutional and inter-institutional affairs, and Foreign & security policy with the score of -0.29, -0.3, and -0.34, respectively (See Figure 20).
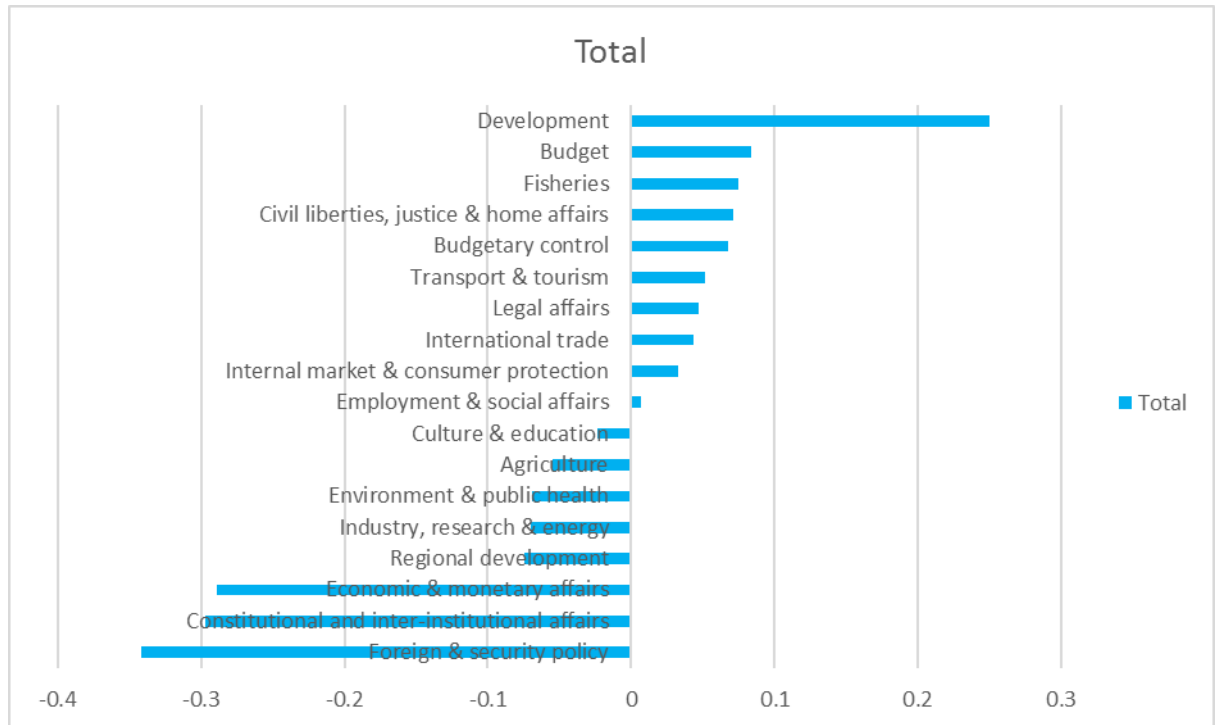
Figure 20: Vote scores of EFDD in term 8 by policy area
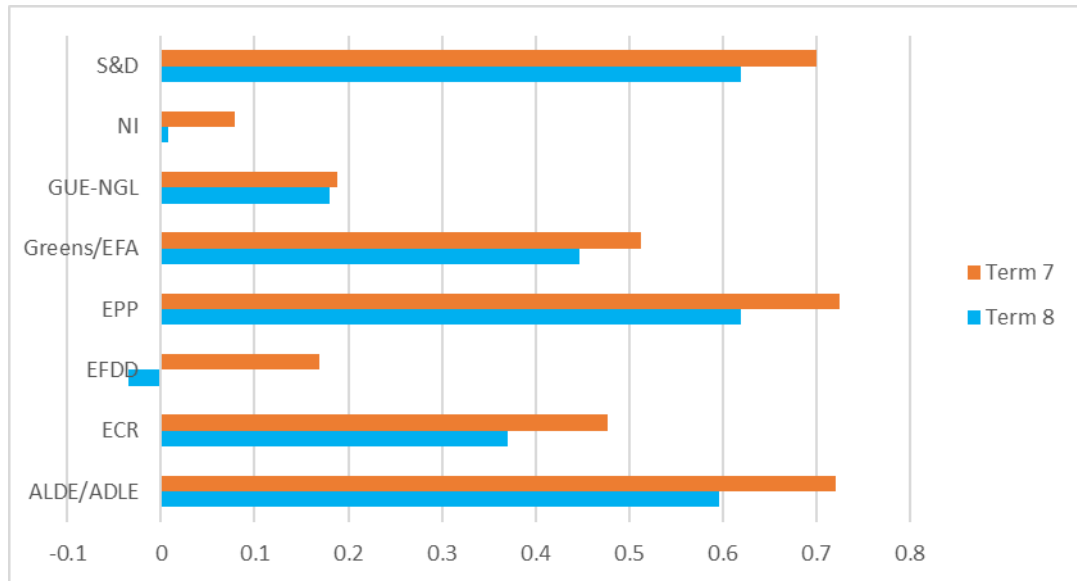(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

4.3.3 Comparison term 7 & 8: vote results of political groups

The results of the analysis show that when compared to term 7, term 8 shows a lower average score for the political parties in terms of the number of legislative proposals voted "For" (See Figure 21). There is not much difference between terms 7 and 8 regarding the scores of the political groups, however, the figures change when the policy areas are taken into account. During term 7, the most favored policy areas were Fisheries, Budgetary control, Internal market & consumer protection and the least favored were Budget and Foreign & security policy. In term 8, the general support for Fisheries dropped, Development proposals were favored more and the proposals regarding Foreign & security policy were voted negatively even more. Despite all this, it can also be observed that none of the political groups followed a certain agenda. As the results show us, different policy areas were favored differently by the political groups, despite a few of them showing a trend.

Figure 21: Comparison of vote scores of political groups in terms 7 and 8
(Source: Own graph, based on data from the VoteWatch)

4.4. Discussion

The analysis of the independent and dependent variables enables the study to find the correlation between them. The independent variable, the share of Eurosceptics in the EP, experienced a significant increase. While the share of Eurosceptic MEPs in term 7 was 18.71% with 140 MEPs, it increased by almost 10 percentage points to 28.49% with 214 MEPs in term 8. The dependent variable, vote contestation in the EP, occurred more frequently in term 8 compared to term 7. First, the share of passed legislative proposals voted under OLP dropped from 97% in term 7 to 90% in term 8. Second, based on quarterly results the share of passed legislative proposals in each quarter decreased significantly as term 8 progressed further. Third, this decrease was also observed throughout all policy areas in term 8. Third, the analysis also showed that the average share of "no" votes per proposal increased by 8% and reached 18% of the total votes in term 8. When the average share of "no" votes analyzed in terms of policy areas, the results show that in term 8 all policy areas have experienced vote contestation. Lastly, the analysis on the political group level shows that in comparison to term 7, all the political groups in term 8 voted against more proposals. In addition, among the groups, EFDD, which was a right-wing political group in the EP consisting of Eurosceptic MEPs, showed the largest decrease by voting against more than half of the legislative proposals in term 8. Thus, the results indicate that there is a strong positive correlation between the

independent and dependent variables. When the share of Eurosceptic MEPs increase, it causes higher vote contestation and a lower passage rate for legislative proposals.

Some unexpected changes have also been observed in terms of the number of Eurosceptic in the transition from term 7 to term 8. The general trend has shown an increase in Eurosceptic MEP numbers in term 8 in comparison to term 7. However, in the case of Hungary, the number of Eurosceptic MEPs has decreased from 17 to 15 in term 8. In addition to this, Romania has also been a puzzling case since it lost all its Eurosceptic MEPs in term 8. Thus, not all countries have experienced an increase in the number of Eurosceptics in term 8 of the EP.

Another unanticipated result has been related to Eurosceptics MEPs' against votes on some policy areas. The research predicted that Eurosceptics would vote against legislative proposals related to migration rather than external affairs. However, a comparison of the terms shows that legislative proposals for the policy area Civil liberties, justice & home affairs had a pass rate of 98.28% in term 7. Although this number dropped by almost 10 percentage points in term 8, the policy area still had about 90% pass rate. In addition, one policy – Budgetary Control -- was an exceptional case as the legislative proposals of this area had a higher pass rate in term 8 in comparison to term 7. All in all, some policy areas did not have a low pass rate as expected and one of them even experienced an increase.

One limitation of this study is related to explaining the reason for contestation in some policy areas. Although the study shows that the rise of Eurosceptics has increased the contestation in some policy areas, it cannot explain why some policy areas experience more contestation in comparison to others. The research assumed that the legislative proposals for the policy area Civil liberties, justice and home affairs would experience more contestation mainly because of the migration factor. The results of the analysis confirmed this as the pass rate of legislative proposals in this area dropped by almost 8%. However, making the same assumptions for other policy areas was beyond the capabilities of this research.

Some recommendations can also be given for future research. In order to determine the changes in the relationship between the share of Eurosceptics and vote contestation, other compositions of the EP can also be included in the research. The more terms are included in the study, the more accurate the inferences that can be drawn from such analysis. In

addition, to be able to identify the reason for the high contestation in some policy areas, the attitudes of individual MEPs regarding those areas can also be analyzed.

Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to examine the consequences of Euroscepticism for the European Parliament. More specifically, the thesis analyzed the relationship between the rise of Eurosceptics and the extent of vote contestation over the votes on legislative proposals in the EP. The theory of politicization was used as the main theoretical approach in this research. The research tested the hypothesis that the higher the share of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament, the more contested are legislative votes in the EP. Moreover, this research also identified how the relationship between the rise of Euroscepticism and vote contestation in the EP varies depending on the policy area.

The first chapter examined the concept of Euroscepticism. It described the definitions and typologies of Euroscepticism based on the existing literature and distinguished the popular Euroscepticism from the party-based Euroscepticism. The chapter introduced the theory of politicization as a new approach explaining developments in European integration and compared it to other major theories of European integration. The chapter also briefly explained the role of national politics in the politicization of EU institutions, especially the EP. Lastly, the consequences of politicization for the EU institutions were also examined, showing that this area has been understudied by the researchers.

The second chapter provided an overview of the EP as one of the main legislative bodies of the EU. The structure and composition of the EP were explained which included the main functions and the political groups of the EP. The chapter also summarized the EP's role in implementing the OLP by focusing on the readings of the procedure and functions of trilogue settings. The last section of the chapter discussed the voting behavior of MEPs, especially the Eurosceptics MEPs, and examined the concept of vote contestation. The overview of all these factors was important for this thesis because it showed that the EP has a significant position for future European integration and the increasing number of Eurosceptics in the EP can challenge future integration through increased political contestation in the EP.

The third chapter introduced the methodology, which included research design, data sources, and the operationalization of the variables. The share of Eurosceptics was measured by dividing the number of Eurosceptic MEPs by total number of MEPs. The data to determine the Eurosceptic parties was acquired from the PopuList (Rooduijn et

al., 2019) and the research relied on ParlGov (Döring & Manow, 2019) database to obtain data on national and European Parliament election results. The vote contestation was measured by looking at the individual legislative proposals voted under OLP and their vote results. The data on the votes for legislative proposals was collected from VoteWatch Europe (2018). The timeframe for the analysis is chosen as 2009-2014 (term 7) and 2014-2019 (term 8) compositions of the European Parliament because in comparison to term 7 in term 8 the number of Eurosceptic MEPs has increased.

The fourth chapter was the empirical section. The first section examined the share of Eurosceptics by looking at the total share of Eurosceptic MEPs and the political parties from member states that have contributed the highest number of Eurosceptic MEPs. These analyses were done both for term 7 (2009-2014) and term 8 (2014-2019) and the terms were compared. The results showed that in comparison to term 7, there has been a significant increase in the share of Eurosceptics in the EP in term 8. The most significant increase in terms of the number of Eurosceptic MEPs was experienced by France, Italy, and Spain. The Eurosceptic parties that won a significant number of seats in the EP were National Front (FN), the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), and Five Star Movement (M5S). The second section analyzed the results of the votes on legislative proposals in the EP and compared the results for terms 7 and 8 to see the change in vote contestation. The results demonstrated that in comparison to term 7, term 8 experienced a significant decrease in the pass rate of legislative proposals. The results based on the average share of "no" votes also shows that vote contestation in term 7 has increased in term 8. In addition, legislative proposals in the majority of the policy areas had a lower pass rate in term 8 in comparison to term 7. The third section examined the average vote results for each political group in terms 7 and 8. The vote results of political groups were also analyzed based on each policy area. EFDD, which was a right-wing political group in the EP consisting of Eurosceptic MEPs, showed the largest decrease by voting against more than half of the legislative proposals in term 8. The policy areas were favored differently by political groups in terms 7 and 8, only a few of them showing a trend for both terms.

The final section of the empirical part was discussion. The section tested the hypothesis and found a positive correlation between the share of Eurosceptics and the extent of vote contestation in the EP. The research found that the share of Eurosceptic MEPs has

significantly increased in term 8 in comparison to term 7. It also found that in comparison to term 7, vote contestation over legislative proposals in the EP occurred more frequently in term 8. The research also found some exceptional cases such as a decrease in the number of Eurosceptic MEPs for Hungary and Romania in the transition from term 7 to 8. As the research anticipated, in comparison to term 7, in term 8 the pass rate of the legislative proposals for the policy area Civil liberties, justice & home affairs decreased.

The research found that the rise of Eurosceptics leads to more vote contestation in the EP. This can have various implications for the law and policy-making process in the European Union. More vote contestation over legislation in the EP can lead to frictions between the European Commission, which sets legislative agenda of the EU, and the EP. These frictions between two institutions of the EU – the European Commission and the EP – can slow down the law-making process as well as European integration. On the other hand, as contestation is a common aspect of politics, it could not result in major shifts in policy-making and integration processes of the EU.

This research features one key limitation. The limitation is about explaining the reasons behind vote contestation in some policy areas in the EP. The research found that when the share of Eurosceptics in the EP increased, vote contestation occurred over legislative proposals in some policy areas. However, the research cannot define the reason why some policy areas experience more contestation in comparison to other areas.

The results of this research offer useful insights for future research. This research included only two compositions of the EP – term 7 (2009-2014) and term 8 (2014-2019). However, other compositions of the EP such as term 6 (2004-2009) as well as term 9 (2019-2024) can be examined in order to acquire more accurate results from the analysis. Moreover, for future research, the reasons for high contestation in some policy areas can also be examined. To do so the attitudes of MEPs about those areas can be analyzed. This way, the analysis will not only show how the rise of Eurosceptics leads to vote contestation in some policy areas but also identify why proposals in some policy areas experience more contestation compare to others.

All the indicators show that the rise of Euroscepticism and politicization of European integration will remain. This factor can lead to various consequences for the future development of European integration. In this thesis, the consequences of the rise of

Euroscepticism on the vote contestation over legislative proposals have been explored, offering insights for future research on the effects of contestation for various policy areas in the EU. Considering that Eurosceptics are still a strong force in the current EP, further politicization of the EP and vote contestation over legislative proposals will persist.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Political groups in the European Parliament (2009-2014)

Name	Acronym	Ideology	Number of Members
The European People's Party	EPP	Christian democracy Liberal conservatism Conservatism Pro-Europeanism	265
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	S&D	Social democracy Pro-Europeanism	184
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group	ALDE	Liberalism Conservative liberalism Social liberalism	84
Greens-European Free Alliance	Greens-EFA	Green politics Regionalism Minority politics Pro-Europeanism	55
European Conservatives and Reformists	ECR	Conservatism Euroscepticism National conservatism Anti-eurofederalism	54
European United Left-Nordic Green Left	GUE-NGL	Left-wing populism Soft Euroscepticism	35
Europe of Freedom and Democracy	EFD	Euroscepticism National conservatism Right-wing populism	32

(Source: Own table, based on data from the European Parliament website)

Appendix 2. Political groups in the European Parliament (2014-2019)

Name	Acronym	Ideology	Number of Members
The European People's Party	EPP	Christian democracy Liberal conservatism Conservatism Pro-Europeanism	216
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	S&D	Social democracy Pro-Europeanism	185
European Conservatives and Reformists	ECR	Conservatism Euroscepticism National conservatism Anti-eurofederalism	77
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group	ALDE	Liberalism Conservative liberalism Social liberalism	69
European United Left-Nordic Green Left	GUE-NGL	Left-wing populism Soft Euroscepticism	52
Greens-European Free Alliance	Greens-EFA	Green politics Regionalism Minority politics Pro-Europeanism	52
Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy	EFDD	Euroscepticism Right-wing populism Direct democracy	42
Europe of Nations and Freedom	ENF	Anti-immigration Euroscepticism Nationalism Right-wing populism	36

(Source: Own table, based on data from the European Parliament website)