

# MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE 2009-14 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY AND DECISION-MAKING DYNAMICS



JULY 2012

## Abstract

This report analyses legislative activity in the European Union and coalition formation in the European Parliament (EP) during the first half of the 7th legislative term, 2009-14. Co-decision is now the ordinary legislative procedure, not by name only, but was deployed on 90% of new proposals in 2010 and 86% in 2011, which suggests that the EP is now more influential than ever.

There are differences in the degree of empowerment across committees, however. We draw on the legislative workload of selected committees as an indicator of change in their influence, identifying which of them won and which lost out in terms of the quantity and type of legislation they deal with.

With parliamentary powers expanded, more is at stake for party groups in the EP. Breaking down the coalitions by policy area shows that distinct dynamics hold in different areas, swinging the balance of power in different directions.

**VoteWatch Europe** is an independent organisation set up to promote better debates and greater transparency in EU decision-making, by providing easy access to, and analysis of, the votes and other activities of the European Parliament (EP) and the EU Council of Ministers (Council). VoteWatch uses the EU Institutions' own attendance, voting and activity data - available through their websites - to give a full overview of MEP and Member State activities.

Using sophisticated statistical methods developed by political scientists from the London School of Economics and New York University, the website covers the activities of Parliament and Council since 2009. (Parliament statistics dating back to 2004 are also available at [www.votewatch.eu](http://www.votewatch.eu)).

ISBN 978-94-6138-215-3

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# **Mid-term Evaluation of the 2009-14 European Parliament: Legislative activity and decision-making dynamics**

**VoteWatch Europe\***  
**CEPS Special Report / July 2012**

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## **Introduction**

A few months into the 7<sup>th</sup> legislative term of 2009-14, the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009 conferred vast new competences on the European Parliament (EP). With new areas of legislation subjected to co-decision, the EP is now more powerful than ever. In the second half of its term, the EP's political agenda is packed with tough budget negotiations and crucial legislative decision-making, such as on economic affairs. All of this is taking place with the 2014 elections looming on the horizon, requiring both the EP and individual political groups to show muscle and position themselves. It is thus high time to take a fresh look at EU decision-making to re-evaluate our understanding of its workings. To this end, this report analyses legislative activity in the European Union and coalition formation in the EP. It focuses on three items and their impact on the inter-institutional balance of power, as well as the power distribution inside the EP:

- the volume of legislative acts and use of procedures, which allows insight into legislative activity and the inter-institutional balance of power;
- the cohesion of party groups in the European Parliament;
- coalition formation in the EP, revealing the balance of power between the political groups.

Contrasting the findings with what we expected based on the 2004-9 and previous legislative terms,<sup>1</sup> it becomes evident that changes in the composition of the EP and the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty have had a marked impact on the institutions, in particular when we look beyond aggregates and break down results by policy areas.

Indeed, the decision-making environment has been subject to profound changes in recent years. In addition to the extension of the EP's legislative competences under the Lisbon Treaty, the 2004 and 2007 enlargements constituted shake-ups for the EU institutions that had to accommodate more, and more diverse, actors. Against all odds, however, decision-making has not stalled; instead studies suggest that business-as-usual prevails in decision-making. Moreover, the 2009 elections resulted in a more right-leaning European Parliament with two new groups potentially altering policy-making dynamics.

The report proceeds as follows. First, section one analyses EU legislative activity and the use of the distinct legislative procedures. Based on this, we draw conclusions on the inter-institutional balance of power. Second, we zoom in on the European Parliament and its

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\* This report was prepared by the VoteWatch Europe team including Lukas Obholzer, Doru Frantescu, Sara Hagemann, and Simon Hix.

<sup>1</sup> See Kaczyński, P.M. & De Clerck-Sachsse, J. (2009), "The European Parliament - more powerful, less legitimate? An outlook for the 7th legislature", CEPS Working Documents, May 2009.

committees, focusing on which of the committees has won and lost out in terms of the number of legislative files falling under different procedures that afford varying degrees of influence. Third, and finally, we focus on party groups in the European Parliament and their performance with regard to voting cohesion and the coalitions in which they vote. By disaggregating data on the latter aspect by policy area, we analyse the balance of power inside the EP. The Glossary at the end of this paper spells out the acronyms used to denote parties and procedures and European bodies.

## **I. Legislative activity and use of procedures: lessons for the inter-institutional balance of power**

The number of legislative proposals adopted by the European Commission is an indicator of EU legislative activity and sets the agenda for the Parliament and Council.<sup>2</sup> On average, co-legislators require about 19 months to agree on a final text under co-decision.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, the activity of the Commission foreshadows what will be on their plate in the coming months and years – in other words, the workload of the co-legislators. First, we consider the overall level of Commission activity with regard to inter-institutional legislative proposals.<sup>4</sup> Second, we analyse the choice of procedures, which is meaningful as the different procedures tip the balance of power of the institutions in favour of specific EU institutions. We therefore break down the proposals of the Commission by the procedure under which they fall.

### **a. Commission activity on legislative proposals**

The number of new proposals introduced by the Commission plummeted in recent years and hit rock bottom in 2010 with 122 new proposals, representing the lowest point of the 18-year period that we cover here (cf. Figure 1). We can offer three possible explanations for this startling development, only reversed in 2011, when the legislative machinery gathered pace again: first, a political preference for less legislation; second, a focus on closing files to avoid lengthy new negotiations on files with legislative bases shifting to co-decision under the Lisbon Treaty; or, third, the decision to refrain from adopting certain proposals until entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which would extend co-decision to new areas and thus allow the EP a more powerful role. In the following, we will first analyse the data in more depth, before turning to the three possible explanations.

Throughout the last 18 years, there are cyclical up- and downturns in the total numbers of initiatives that correspond to the terms of the Commission and the European Parliament. In line with the legislative cycle, activity peaked in the pre-election years 1998 and 2003, when circa 300 files were published, and slumped in between, as new colleges of Commissioners coming into office with new policy preferences require time to translate these into initiatives. Clearly, however, this cannot explain the drop and its extent after 2008.

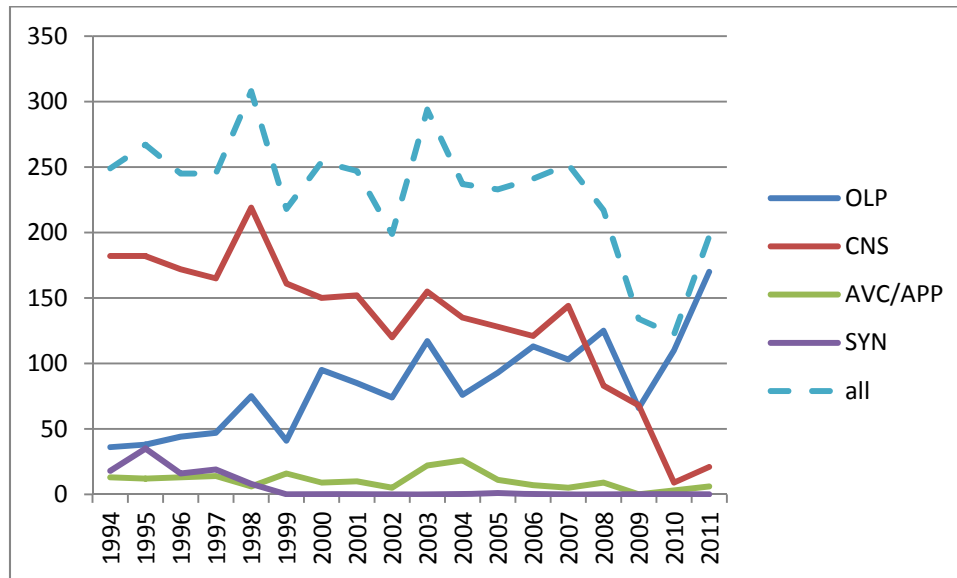
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<sup>2</sup> Data from the European Parliament Legislative Observatory ([www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/)).

<sup>3</sup> Statistics for EP7 until 14 March 2012 ([http://www.europarl.europa.eu/code/about/statistics\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/code/about/statistics_en.htm)).

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that this is not the only measurement of legislative activity. First, we do not break down the proposals according to whether they constitute entirely new initiatives, or for instance acts that amend or update existing legislation. Second, we only look at inter-institutional procedures.

Figure 1. Legislative activity, 1994-2011

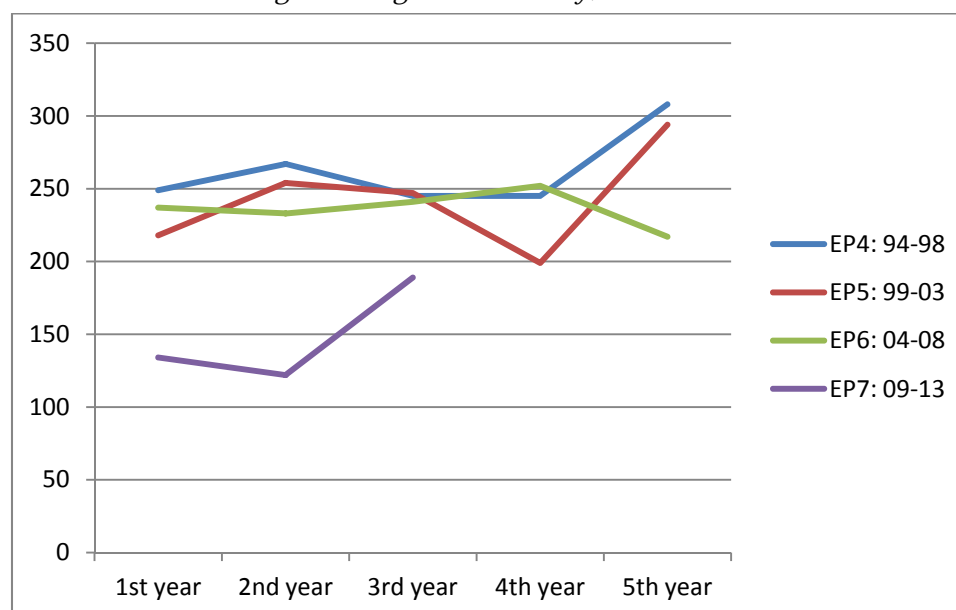


What is so special about the previous (2004-09) and current (2009-12) terms? The last term was at first characterised by a more even output overall. This changed in 2008, when, contrary to our expectations for a pre-election year, the output of proposals was more than one quarter lower than five years earlier, and more than one eighth lower than in the preceding year. This marked the starting point for an unusual, puzzling downward deviation from the regularities of the preceding years.

This decrease continued in 2009 and 2010, when the number of new proposals was less than half of the 2006 value. The trend was only reversed in 2011. In order to be able to meaningfully compare the output of proposals, we need to account for the legislative cycle. Figure 2 compares output by the year of the legislative term and points towards a downward trend in legislative proposals put forward by the Commission (data is by calendar year). Despite the 2011 increase, the downward trend holds when accounting for the phase of the legislative cycle.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Information on proposals adopted by the Commission, and their work programme, can be found at ([http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/execution\\_report\\_2012.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/execution_report_2012.pdf) and [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/forward\\_programming\\_2012.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/forward_programming_2012.pdf)).

Figure 2. Legislative activity, 1994-2011



To come to the three possible explanations for the developments:

The first explanation is in line with the Commission's call for less but better legislation, and is often linked to the name of the Secretary General, Catherine Day, who vowed to decrease the number of legislative initiatives with the backing of President Barroso. Previous studies pointed to the more assertive role of the Secretariat General of the Commission, which makes it far harder for proposals to be adopted. Rigorous policy planning and stringent impact assessments make it a 'gatekeeper' vis-à-vis the different Directorate Generals seeking "to limit the number of policy priorities and initiatives" (Kurpas, Gron & Kaczyński, 2008, p.44).<sup>6</sup>

Second, at the same time, the decrease in new initiatives might be due to a re-allocation of resources towards closing files before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Since new policy areas - including agriculture and fisheries, freedom, security and justice, as well as cohesion policy - were to shift to co-decision, this would have meant re-opening the discussions, leading to more protracted decision-making.

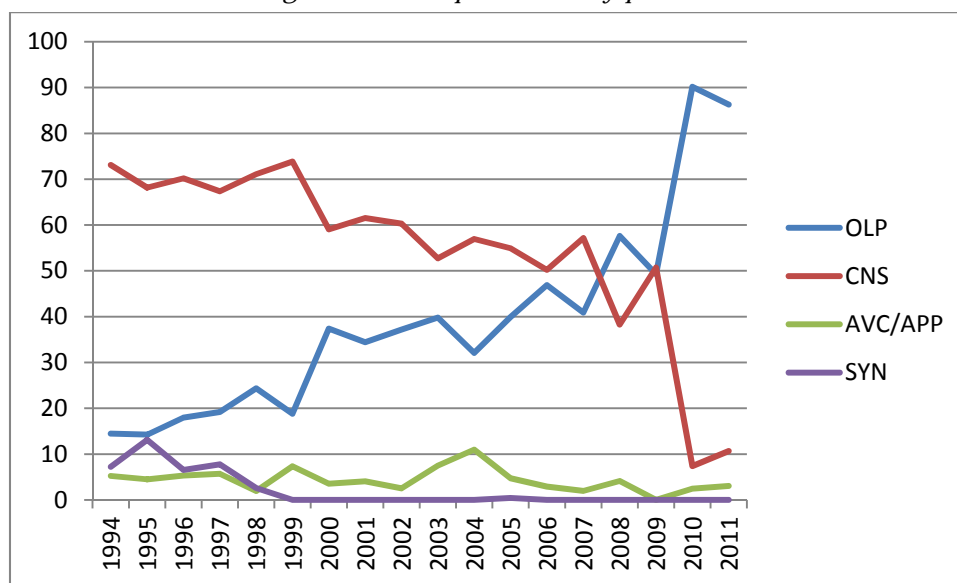
Finally, again with a view to the imminent extension of co-decision to these areas, the Commission may have delayed some initiatives until after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, seeing as a more powerful European Parliament - usually considered as its ally - might help the Commission with achieving its preferences. Administrative politics would, according to this view, reinforce a temporary decrease in new proposals in the shadow of Lisbon.

Since the different legislative procedures come with different powers for the institutions, the next section will focus on the use of different legislative procedures over time.

<sup>6</sup> S. Kurpas, C. Gron and P.M. Kaczyński (2008), "The European Commission after Enlargement: Does More Add Up to Less?", CEPS Special Report, February.

## b. Use of procedures: co-decision as the ordinary legislative procedure

Figure 3. Use of procedures by per cent



Legislative activity is dominated by consultation (CNS) and co-decision (ordinary legislative procedure, OLP), with their shares having a marked impact on the balance of power between the institutions. Comparing the use of procedures means that numbers can be put to the observation that the Lisbon Treaty shifted legislative bases to co-decision and shows just how significant a reform the Lisbon Treaty is for legislative decision-making: the EP matters more than ever.

Before the Lisbon Treaty, Parliament had already gained more powers under successive treaty changes, shifting more legislative bases to co-decision. Accordingly, the number of OLP-proposals caught up with the dropping tally of CNS-files. In 2008, for the first time there were more new files under co-decision than under the consultation procedure. After a one-off, minimal reversal of the trend in 2009, the drastic shift in use of procedures after Lisbon becomes evident. Figure 3 provides powerful evidence of the change: in 2010 and 2011, 90% and 86% respectively of the acts fell under the ordinary legislative procedure, while 7% and 11% respectively fell under consultation. Even though the absolute number of co-decision files does not reach the levels of consultation seen in the 1990s, it surpasses consultation in its degree of preponderance (Figure 3). Co-decision is indeed the *ordinary* legislative procedure: the name is the game. The spread between the two procedures is bigger now than ever in the last 15 years. The cooperation procedure (SYN) that was abolished in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam only marginally contributes to the overall picture, as does the assent/consent procedure (AVC/APP), which now applies, for instance, to anti-discrimination policy, some budgetary decisions and many international agreements.

The shift from consultation to co-decision leaves the EP as the clear winner, strengthening its hand vis-à-vis the Council. For the Commission, the picture is more ambiguous. While it has forfeited its role as the negotiating partner of the Council, which it holds in the consultation procedure, it may have lost power rather than de facto influence, as this concomitantly strengthened the EP, which is often considered as an ally of the Commission.

This increase in powers for the EP comes with an increase in workload, to which the institution needs to adapt. In the next section we look at the differential impact this has on committees in the EP, before considering its effect on legislative behaviour of party groups.

## II. Who wins, who loses? EP Committees and the increase in powers

The bulk of the legislative work in the European Parliament takes place in its 22 committees focusing on specific policy areas, according to which proposals are divided amongst them. Committees take power and prestige from various sources: highly political topics such as those dealt with by the Foreign Affairs Committee, landmark negotiations such as those on the EU budget, high-profile files such as those on ACTA, and their basic legislative duties. This section seeks to provide insight into the volume of legislation passing through nine selected committees over the last eight years. In December 2009 the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty doubled the legislative bases subject to co-decision by expanding its scope to policies such as agriculture and fisheries, services liberalisation, the common commercial policy, as well as freedom, security and justice. Here we analyse the number of co-decision and consultation files assigned to committees as an indicator of their influence over legislation.

The legislative role of committees and that of the rapporteur appointed from among the MEPs sitting on it has become increasingly prominent, as more co-decision files are closed via informal first-reading agreements.<sup>7</sup> In this term, 77% of co-decision files had been agreed before the text was tabled in plenary (cf. fn. 3), effectively sidelining MEPs from other committees. Power in the EP has thus shifted to committees, and MEPs on committees with many (co-decision) files have a better chance of influencing legislation. However, influence may be both a blessing and a curse: committees, political groups and individual MEPs need to cope with different and potentially greater workloads. This is already higher in the EP than in most European national parliaments, presenting a formidable challenge to smaller groups in particular, for which one or two MEPs on a committee need to follow all files.

When comparing the development of responsibilities for consultation and co-decision files, we will focus on nine committees that deserve particular attention, given their activities and/or changes in their competences. Classifying these trends in the following typology, we encounter three of the four ideal types, and refrain from classifying two ambiguous cases (ITRE, ECON).

*Table 1. Typology of trends in committee influence*

	<b>Less legislation</b>	<b>More legislation</b>
<b>Less co-decision</b>	ENVI, TRAN	-
<b>More co-decision</b>	PECH, AGRI, LIBE	INTA, IMCO

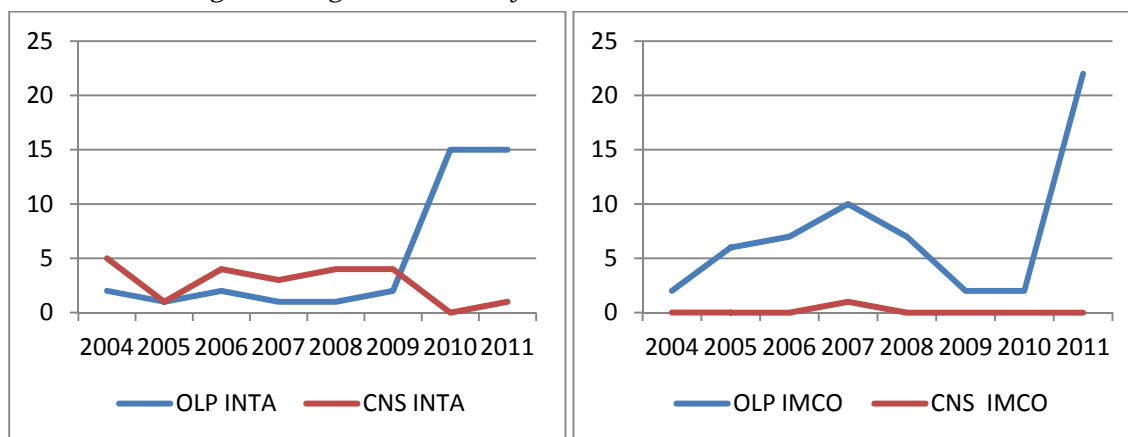
### *More quantity, more quality: INTA and IMCO as winners*

The international trade and internal market and consumer protection committees are the clear winners of the term so far with regard to the legislation referred to them. It should be noted however that this assessment is based on trends in the respective committees' activity rather than a comparison across committees.<sup>8</sup> Having not traditionally been committees with a high legislative output, the new competencies mean more pieces of legislation with substantial power for MEPs sitting on INTA and IMCO. This gives rise to the question of how the more prominent parliamentary involvement will change the content of legislation; a question that will need to be answered at a later stage.

<sup>7</sup> Obholzer, L. & Reh, C. (2012), "How to Negotiate under Co-decision in the EU: Reforming Trilogues and First-Reading Agreements", CEPS Policy Brief No. 270.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, the LIBE committee, discussed below, is involved in more co-decision files than the IMCO committee.

Figure 4. Legislative activity, INTA and IMCO committees, 2004-2011

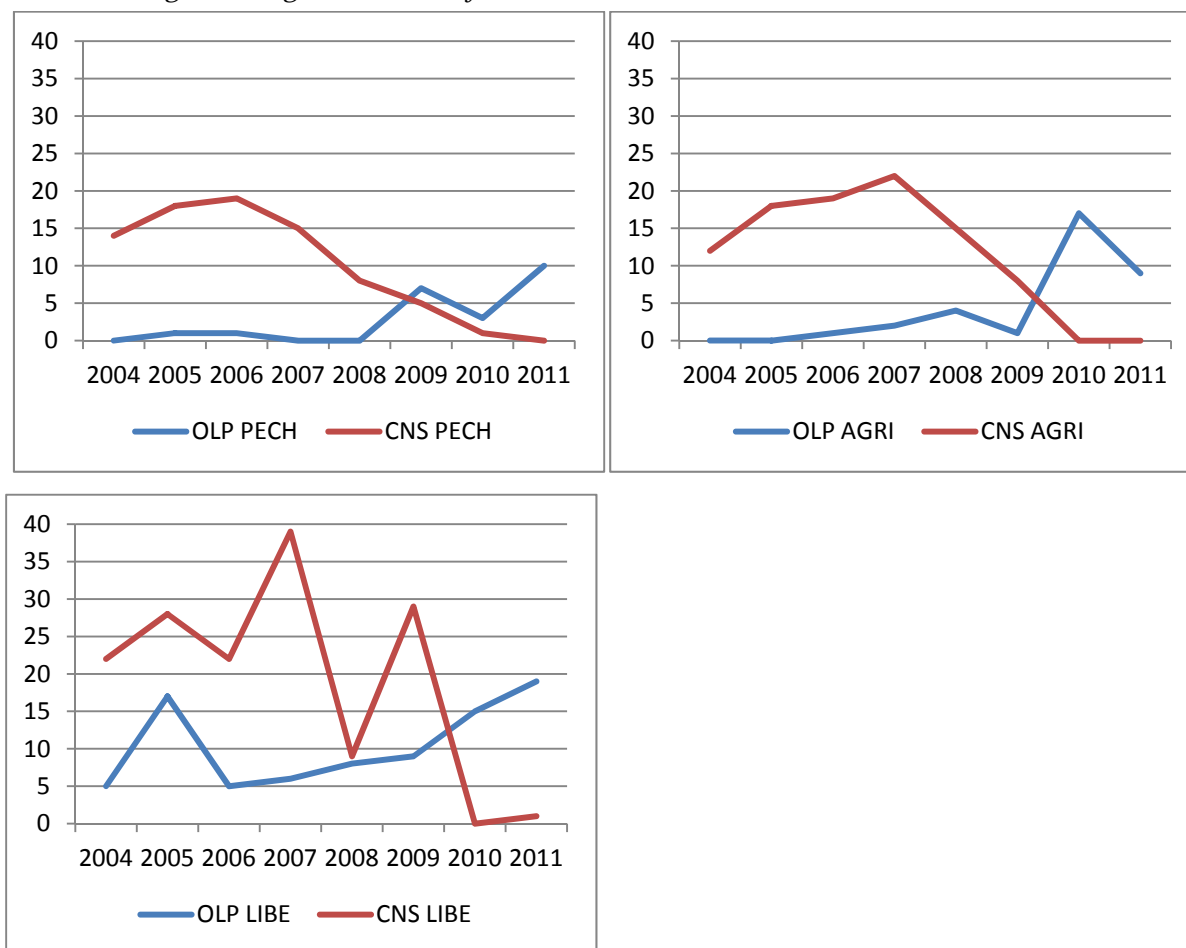


*Quality rather than quantity: less legislation, more co-decision in PECH, AGRI, and LIBE*

The second group comprises the agriculture, fisheries and civil liberties sectors. These have in common an overall decrease in the volume of legislation channelled through the committees, while the files come with more influence for the committee; in other words: less quantity, more quality.

The fisheries and agriculture committees in general exhibit modest legislative activity, with consultation phasing out steadily and being replaced by co-decision, which was barely present before. Civil liberties, by contrast, dealt with a considerable amount of legislation before, including some co-decision files. Nevertheless, the pattern holds: overall legislative activity dropped markedly, while co-decision has been on the rise in the last few years.

Figure 5. Legislative activity, PECH, AGRI, and LIBE committees, 2004-2011

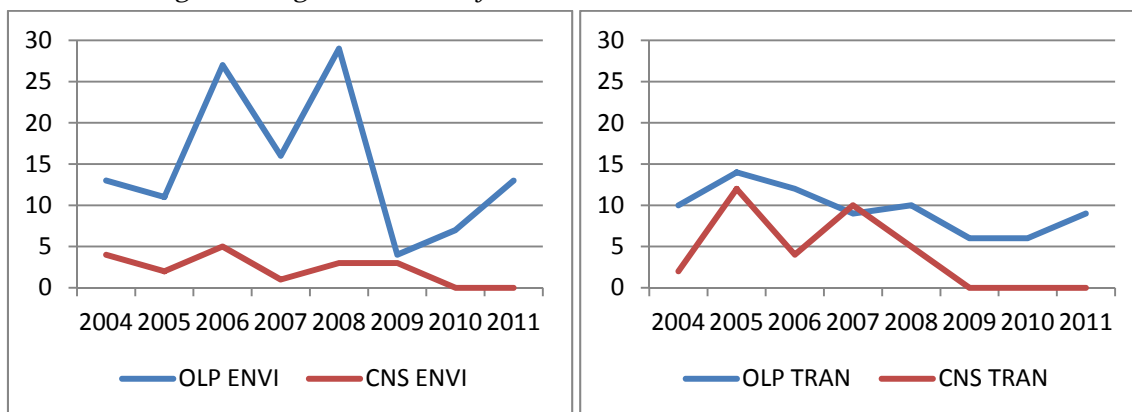




*Fading activity: ENVI and TRAN*

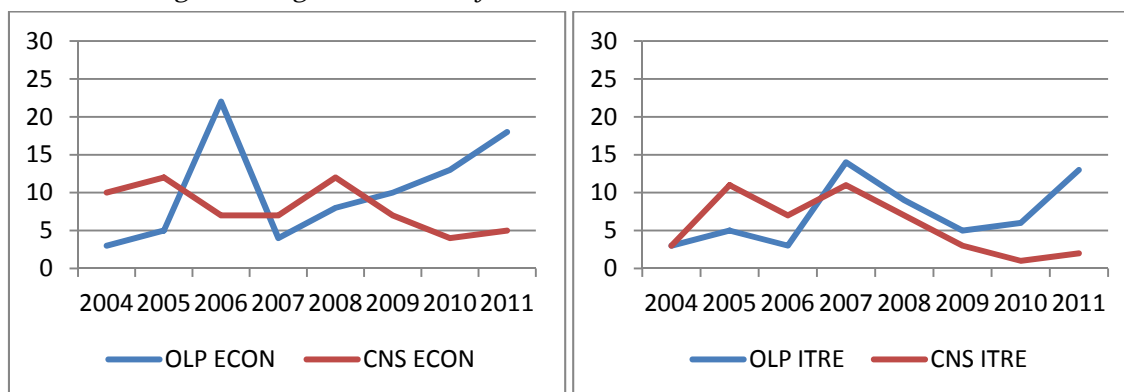
In other policy areas, legislative activity has diminished. Thus, we note an overall decline in the number of legislative files, and, unlike for the PECH, AGRI and LIBE committees presented above, there has not been a qualitative leap for the committee in the proportion of co-decision files dealt with. The environment and transport committees are cases in point.

Figure 6. Legislative activity, ENVI and TRAN committees, 2004-2011

*Jury still out: ITRE and ECON*

At the same time, the classification of ECON shows the limits of this quantitative analysis. Without doubt, the quality of legislation for MEPs extends beyond the binary co-decision and consultation question to actual content. Here, in times of crisis, ECON has of course played a central role in deciding on crucial pieces of legislation, such as the six-pack on economic governance. But when disregarding this qualification, it is important to further follow these committees before classifying them according to the typology presented above.

Figure 7. Legislative activity, ECON and ITRE committees, 2004-2011



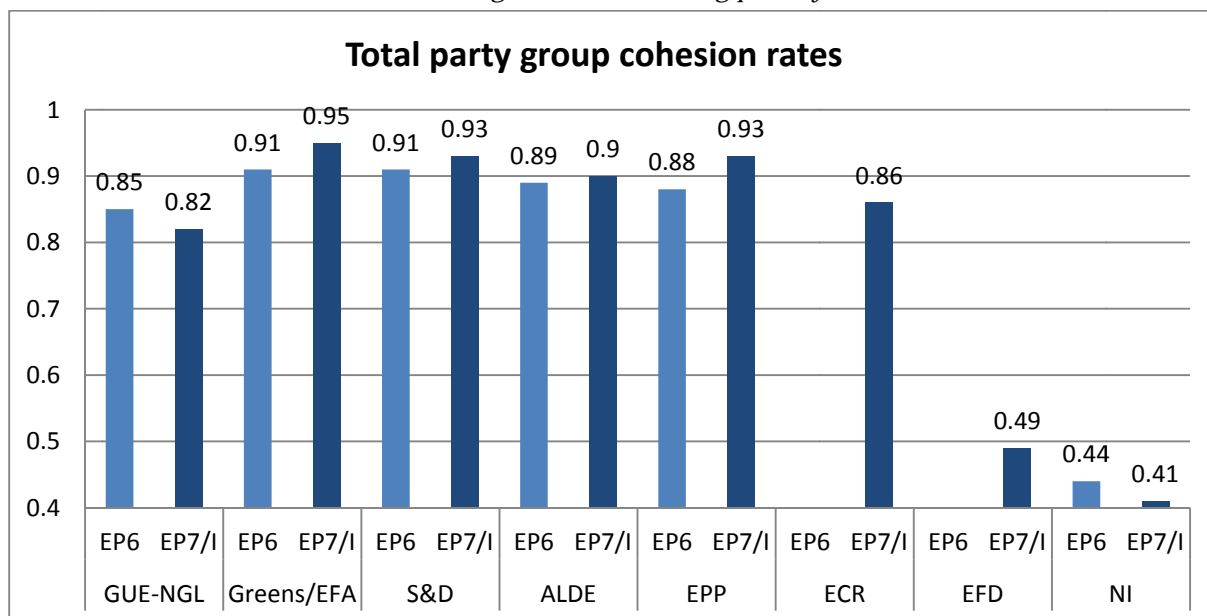
### III. Parties and the increase in powers: coalitions

With parliamentary powers so clearly expanded, more is at stake for party groups in the European Parliament. Most groups have reacted to this by voting more cohesively than during last legislative term, as Figure 8 reveals.<sup>9</sup> However, it should be stressed that the

<sup>9</sup> Party group cohesion measures the extent to which the MEPs of a European Party Group vote as a block. The higher the score, the more cohesive the group. The formula and further explanations on the determination of a group position and voting blocks can be found online in the VoteWatch Guide (<http://www.votewatch.eu/en/votewatch-guide.html>).

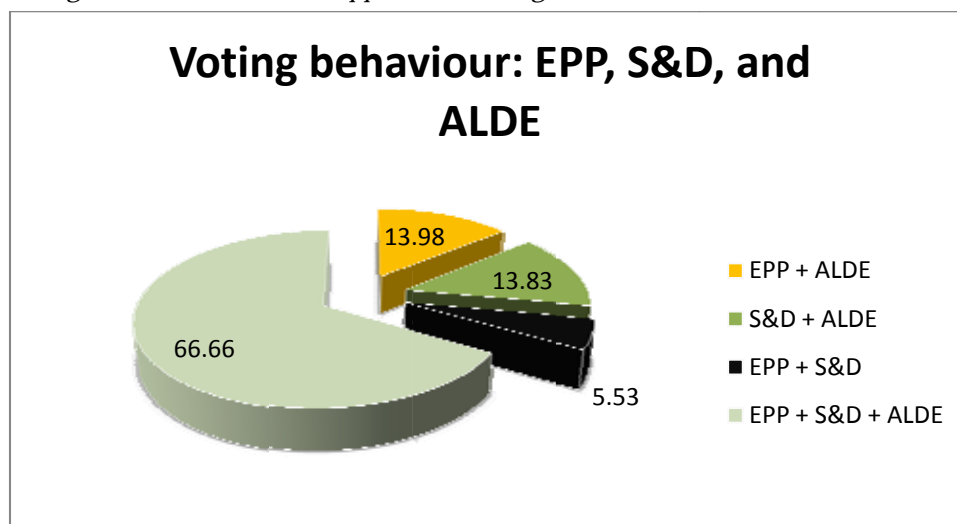
spike in co-decision files is not yet fully reflected here – usually these will not be voted on in plenary until later. The Greens/EFA achieve the highest level of cohesion at a value of 0.95, 0.04 points up from last term. Whilst likewise increasing their scores, the S&D and EPP now reach 0.93. The two largest groups thus display a higher cohesion than ALDE at 0.9 and GUE-NGL at 0.82, the latter of which is the only established group characterised by a loss of ‘grip’ on MEPs by the party leadership. Interestingly, EPP cohesion jumps by 0.05 points, arguably supported by the split-off of the ECR group at the outset of the term. The cohesion of ECR themselves is lower than that of the EPP in EP6 or EP7/I.

Figure 8. Cohesion rates of European party groups, EP6 and EP7 (including March Strasbourg plenary)



How do these findings bear on coalition formation in the European parliament, and hence the balance of power in the EP? A good indicator of this is how often parties vote together, as shown in Figure 9. The three central groups, S&D, ALDE, and EPP (grand coalition), voted together on two thirds of all roll-call votes. This is five percentage points up from the value for EP6. In line with this, each of the possible splits, be it centre-right, centre-left or a non-adjacent coalition of EPP and S&D, occurs slightly less often than during the last term.

Figure 9. Coalitions and opposition among EPP, S&D, and ALDE in EP7/I



When breaking this down by policy area, two dynamics are worth studying in depth. Firstly, we can again compare EP6 and EP7 to identify trends over time. Secondly, we ask which of the policy areas is more/less polarising than average. This requires a comparison across policy areas in EP7.

**a. Coalitions and conflict over time: comparing EP6 and EP7/I**

Figure 10. Coalitions and opposition among EPP, S&D, and ALDE by policy area in EP7/I

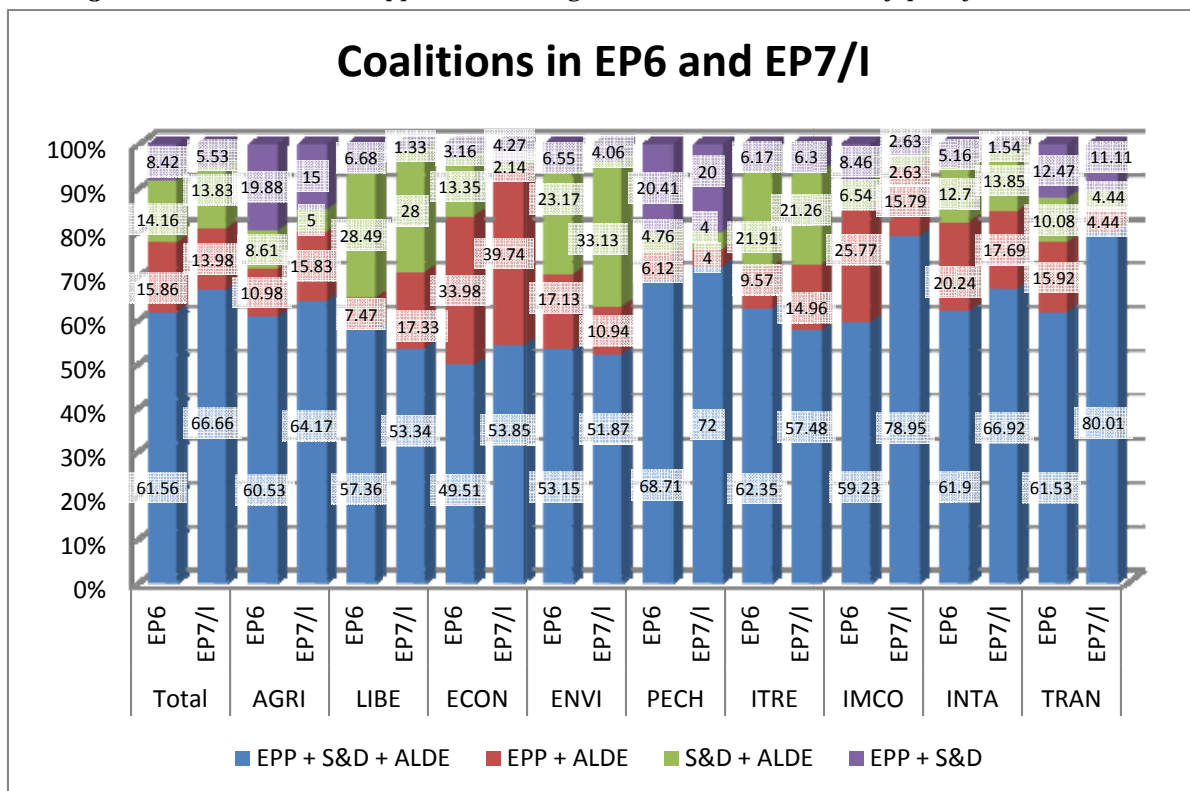


Figure 10 gives information about the nine policy areas under study here. Considering this information, we can note the following on the individual policy areas:

- **Agriculture:** Overall, decisions are taken more often by a grand coalition than during last term (up by 3.64 points to 64.17%). Majorities shift to the centre-right, with ALDE and EPP outvoting S&D in 15.83% of cases - representing a 4.85 point increase, which is almost a third.
- **Civil liberties, Justice and Home Affairs:** Consensus between the three groups declined, leading to a four-point decrease in grand coalitions. Whereas the centre-left continues to vote together in about 28% of cases, and thus dominates, the role of S&D has been undermined, now being defeated by the centre right in 17.33% of cases, a 9.86-point increase.
- **Economic and Monetary Policy:** The proportion of grand coalitions increased by 4.34 points, but this does not hide the marginalisation of S&D, which is being outvoted on almost 40% of issues, a 5.76 point increase when compared to EP6. Clearly, the centre-right is running the show: the EPP finds itself opposing S&D and ALDE only in 2.14% of votes (down by 11.21 points), whereas ALDE is faced with a coalition of the two biggest groups in a mere 4.27% of votes (up by 1.11 points).

- **Environment:** We observe a reverse trend in environment, where the EPP, S&D and ALDE vote together even less often than before, down by 1.28 points to 51.87%. Here it is the centre-left that now runs the show: the centre-left coalition wins three times as often as the centre-right coalition. This is due to a 9.96-point increase in the former, now forming on one third of the votes, while the latter occurs on 10.94% of votes, implying a 6.19-point decrease when compared to EP6.
- **Fisheries:** Consensus between the three groups in this sector increased by 3.21 points, so that the groups vote together on nearly three quarters of votes (72%). Remarkably, ALDE is outvoted by the two biggest party groups on one fifth of votes, whilst these are individually outvoted on 4% of votes only.
- **Industry, Research and Technology:** Votes have become less consensual, with a grand coalition forming 4.87 points less often, in 57.48% of votes. This is in particular due to S&D being on the losing side 50% more often than last term (a 5.39 point increase to 14.96%), while the established pattern from EP6 holds for the EPP and ALDE, being outvoted on about 21% and 6%, respectively.
- **Internal Market and Consumer Protection:** Whilst it should be interpreted with caution, as only 38 roll-calls have been recorded so far, evidence so far points to a much higher share of grand coalitions, which now form on almost 79% of votes (up from 59.23%). This benefits S&D, now outvoted on 15.79% of votes instead of about one quarter of votes. EPP and ALDE are outvoted on 2.63% of votes each, down from 6.54% and 8.46%, respectively.
- **International Trade:** Grand coalitions form on slightly more than two thirds of votes, representing a 5-point increase from EP6. This includes a minimal shift towards the centre-left, with S&D outvoted slightly less often (on 17.69% of votes), and the EPP being outvoted slightly more often (on 13.85% of votes) than last term. In particular, however, ALDE is more often part of the winning coalition, as it opposes EPP and S&D on only 1.54% of votes.
- **Transport:** With only 45 roll-call votes in the policy area to date under EP7, the significance of any shifts should not be overstated. That being said, voting behaviour was more consensual between the three groups, leading to grand coalitions on 80% of votes; an 18.48-point increase. This development benefits the two biggest groups, now outvoted on 4.44% of votes each, which implies an 11.48-point decrease for S&D and a 5.64-point decrease for the EPP.

This clearly reveals that the explanatory power of the aggregate values is only of limited value. Disaggregating the data by policy area clearly reveals the variation and marked differences in the balance of power. The next section focuses on this in more depth.

## b. Coalitions and conflict across policy areas in EP7/I

Clashes among the three central party groups influence whether the balance of power swings to the centre-left or centre-right. To what extent does this differ by policy area? Who wins, who loses?

First, we consider the degree of consensus between the three central groups. Taking the overall total as baseline, we can contrast the more and less consensual policy areas. With two thirds of votes in total being carried by grand coalitions, we find a higher level of consensus in international trade (67%), fisheries (72% of 75 votes), internal market and consumer protection (79% of 38 votes) as well as transport policy (80% of 45 votes). However, this broad consensus is harder to find in the six other policy areas that we analyse: agriculture

(64%), economic and monetary policy (54%), civil liberties (53%), and environmental policy (52%).

Second, we look at the question of which policy areas are prone to centre-right as opposed to centre-left voting blocks. As the biggest group in the EP, one might expect the EPP to be opposed less often than either S&D or ALDE. Indeed, we find a higher share of centre-right voting blocks as opposed to centre-left voting blocks in agriculture (EPP and ALDE opposing S&D in 16% of votes), internal market and consumer protection (16%), international trade (18%), and – more than anywhere else – in economic and monetary policy (40%). On the contrary, we find predominant centre-left majorities in industry, research and energy (S&D and ALDE opposing EPP in 22% of votes), civil liberties, justice, and home affairs (28%), and environment (33%). In fisheries policy, as well as in transport policy, centre-right and centre-left each only command 4% of votes. This is partly due to high levels of consensus between the groups, and because the two largest groups form coalitions sidelining ALDE in 20% of cases in fisheries policy and in 11% of votes in transport (as well as in 15% of agricultural policy votes).

In practice, the balance of power thus swings both ways, and the direction depends heavily on the policy area.

### **Outlook: what to watch, and how**

This report has assessed EU legislative activity at mid-term of the 7<sup>th</sup> legislative term. This section draws together some of the insights and highlights the issues we should keep a close eye on.

We started off by presenting data on the legislative activity of the Commission, showing that after a decline in the adoption of new proposals in recent years, 2011 witnessed resurgence in activity. In particular, the steep increase in co-decision, which is now deployed for about 90% of the legislative proposals, shows the impact of the Lisbon Treaty in extending the influence of the EP. But how will these figures look for 2012 and beyond? The Commission provides information on its legislative agenda, which allows for a tracking of the adopted proposals and plans (cf. fn.5). This allows us to monitor whether 2011 was a one-off exception or the beginning of a trend towards a more active Commission in the second half of its term. In due course, it will likewise be possible to make more informed assessments of the reasons for and the extent of the preponderance of co-decision over consultation as a decision-making procedure. This will shed light on the question of whether the current figures are only temporarily inflated.

These two issues are also at the heart of the second section, which broke down the type and number of acts by parliamentary committee. This identified distinct developments in the influence of committees: there are clear winners and losers in terms of the quantity of legislation and quality of legislation dealt with. It remains to be seen whether the trends and thus the classifications of the committees hold in the long run. This can be tackled by analysing data available online from the EP's legislative observatory. Importantly, this is also possible for any other policy area/committee beyond those presented here. A question implicit in the analysis is to what extent the shift towards co-decision denotes a qualitative turn in the substance of legislation: what difference does EP involvement make? This is more of a challenge and would require in-depth sectoral studies.

When finally looking at party group cohesion and voting blocks in the EP, we revealed that parties vote on average more cohesively in EP7/I than in EP6, and that grand coalitions of the three central groups – EPP, S&D, and ALDE – have occurred more regularly than during the last term. EPP and S&D were outvoted on about 14% of votes, whilst ALDE was

outvoted on only about 5.5% of votes. We then disaggregated these total values by policy areas and showed their distinct decision-making dynamics over time. Finally, we compared voting alignments across policy areas, thus analysing in which direction the balance of power swings. The proportion of grand coalitions ranged from 52% in environmental policy, to 79% in internal market and consumer protection, while other policy areas are clearly dominated by the centre right (e.g. economic and monetary affairs) or centre-left (e.g. environment). Interested readers can follow as to whether these trends hold, as well as how these compare to the other policy areas left aside here, by tracking voting behaviour on [VoteWatch.eu](http://VoteWatch.eu).

## Glossary

ACTA	Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement
AGRI	Agriculture and Rural Development
ALDE	Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
ECON	Economic and Monetary Affairs
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists Group
EFD	Europe of freedom and democracy Group
ENVI	Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
EP	European Parliament
EPP	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
EU	European Union
Greens/EFA	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
GUE/NGL	Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left
IMCO	Internal Market and Consumer Protection
INTA	International Trade
ITRE	Industry, Research and Energy
LIBE	Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NI	Non-attached Members
PECH	Fisheries
S&D	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament
TRAN	Transport and Tourism
OLP	Ordinary Legislative Procedure
CNS	Consultation procedure
AVC	Assent procedure
APP	Consent procedure
SYN	Cooperation procedure