

SNAPSHOT

European Parliament Committees: Winners and Losers

9 July 2014

Following the European elections in late May, the European Parliament political groups finalised the structure of the new legislature on 7 July by electing the Chairs of the 20 standing committees, where most of the legislative work takes place. The Parliament has already demonstrated its increased status by successfully imposing on the Member States its choice for European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker. However, pro-European MEPs fear that disruptive eurosceptic elements may undermine efforts to sustain the Parliament's strengthened role. The main pro-European political groups have therefore striven to limit the influence of anti-European MEPs. As a result, while the eurosceptics have increased in number, the allocation of leading roles in the committees shows that the pro-Europeans have consolidated their power in the Parliament at the expense of the other groups.

Why the committees matter

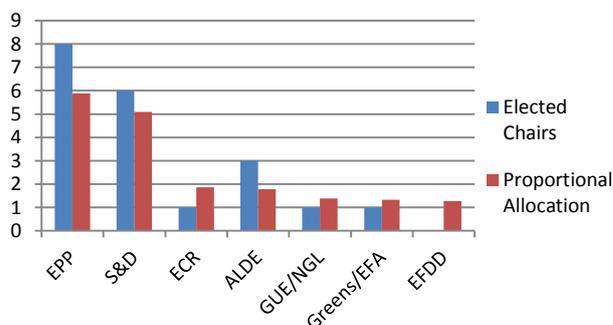
The committees are the Parliament's legislative and policy engine rooms. In the preparatory work for Plenary sessions, the 20 committees draw up reports to amend legislative proposals and non-legislative ('own-initiative') reports on important issues. Their *de jure* and *de facto* powers have increased with the surge in EU legislation adopted under co-decision procedure. In the last parliamentary term, 78% of the amendments were tabled by the committees and 52% of them were adopted. Each committee elects a Chair for a 2.5-year term: the Chairs play an important role in finding consensus within their committees. They are also part of legislative dialogue with the Commission and Council. Allocation of the Chairs is therefore an important measure of a political group's influence.

Backroom deal favours pro-EU groups

Membership in the committees and the distribution of Chairs by political groups is supposed to reflect roughly the composition of the Plenary. Instead, the allocation for the new Parliament reflects a deal between the three main pro-EU political groups, the European People's Party (EPP), the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). Through this, ALDE has secured three committee Chairs, 15% of the total, with just under 9% of the total number of MEPs; whereas the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group has only one Chair, even though it has three more MEPs overall. The hardcore eurosceptic Europe of Freedom & Direct Democracy (EFDD) group with 6.4% of MEPs was even blocked from taking the Chair of the Petitions Committee, the least influential of all the Parliament's committees.

Committee	Chair	Country	Group	Size
AFET	Elmar Brok	Germany	EPP	71
ENVI	Giovanni La Via	Italy	EPP	69
ITRE	Jerzy Buzek	Poland	EPP	67
ECON	Roberto Gualtieri	Italy	S&D	61
LIBE	Claude Moraes	UK	S&D	60
EMPL	Thomas Handel	Germany	GUE/NGL	55
AGRI	Czeslaw Siekierski	Poland	EPP	45
REGI	Iskra Mihaylova	Bulgaria	ALDE	43
BUDG	Jean Arthuis	France	ALDE	41
CULT	Silvia Costa	Italy	S&D	31
CONT	Ingeborg Grassle	Germany	EPP	30
DEVE	Linda McAvan	UK	S&D	28
AFCO	Danuta Hubner	Poland	EPP	25
TRAN	Michael Cramer	Germany	Greens/EFA	49
INTA	Bernd Lange	Germany	S&D	41
IMCO	Vicky Ford	UK	ECR	40
PETI	Cecilia Wikström	Sweden	ALDE	35
FEMM	Iratxe García Pérez	Spain	S&D	35
PECH	Alain Cadec	France	EPP	25
JURI	Pavel Svoboda	Czech R.	EPP	25

Number of Committee Chairs by Political Group



Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee (ENVI)

With 69 members, ENVI constitutes the second largest committee in the Parliament. It will be chaired by Italian agronomist Giovanni La Via (EPP). As in the previous Parliament, MEPs sitting in this committee are likely to specialise in one of its three overarching competences (environment, public health and food safety). Approximately half (34) of the MEPs sat in ENVI in the previous parliamentary term and the committee is again slightly left-leaning and pro-climate action. Many of the healthcare champions from the previous mandate have returned. The EPP committee co-ordinator Peter Liese and former ENVI Chair and S&D group co-ordinator Matthias Groote, have good working relations, which may facilitate reaching deals.

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Industry, Research and Energy Committee (ITRE)

Jerzy Buzek (EPP) has become the new Chair of ITRE. Buzek, former Polish Prime Minister and President of the Parliament, has a pro-industry stance on energy issues including shale gas and coal. ITRE has 17 returning MEPs and two former Commissioners – Janusz Lewandowski (Poland, EPP) and Antonio Tajani (Italy, EPP). Tajani became Vice-President of the Parliament, while there are rumours that Lewandowski will chair ITRE in the second half of this Parliament's term. Spanish MEP Pilar del Castillo Vera (EPP) is expected to play a significant role in ICT, as she did during the last legislature.

Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON)

Whilst heavyweights of the previous ECON committee remain, including Sven Giegold (Greens/EFA) and Kay Swinburne (ECR), 39 out of 61 members are new. This may significantly influence the dynamics. The new chair, Italian socialist Roberto Gualtieri, was part of the Parliament team responsible for the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union. His role is likely to shift the focus from repairing financial regulation, including Banking Union, to a wider debate on generating economic growth. First Vice-Chair is the veteran Markus Ferber (EPP), lead Rapporteur for MiFID II, whilst anti-euro German MEP Bernd Lucke (ECR) was denied a Vice-Chair post but is expected to give it another try on 14 July.

Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE)

LIBE is one of the busiest legislative committees, whose area of focus includes strengthening privacy and data protection. Its Chair, Claude Moraes, a British Labour MEP was Rapporteur on the electronic mass surveillance inquiry following the Snowden revelations. He will lead his committee in implementing a Digital Bill of Rights to safeguard citizens' right to privacy.

Transport and Tourism Committee (TRAN)

With 22 new MEPs, TRAN is chaired by Michael Cramer, a German enthusiast of green and energy-efficient transport. His first Vice-Chair, Dominique Riquet (ALDE), has praised EU's work in terms of improving car safety and reducing emissions, while the second, Dieter-Lebrecht Koch (EPP), chairs the Transport & Tourism Working Group.

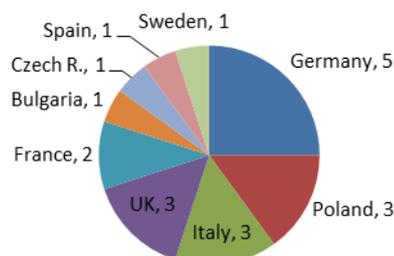
International Trade Committee (INTA)

INTA is chaired by German MEP Bernd Lange (S&D), a free trade critic. Among the familiar faces are former Commissioners Olli Rehn and Viviane Reding, and several eurosceptics, including Marine Le Pen. Most notably, INTA will play a lead role when the Parliament votes on whether to accept the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). It is unclear whether INTA will support TTIP: the S&D and Greens have set out red lines and most eurosceptic MEPs will oppose outright; while the EPP, ECR, and ALDE MEPs are more likely to support it, but collectively they are one short of a majority.

Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO)

The ECR has reclaimed the IMCO chairmanship with British MEP Vicky Ford, a proponent of science and R&D. This is an important victory for the British Conservatives, whose interest in the EU is mainly based on the single market. One of the committee's first big dossiers will be the negotiation of the consumer protection package with the Council.

Committee Chairs by Country



Winners and losers

Not surprisingly, the two main groups, EPP and S&D, have won the greatest number of committee Chairs, but notably they have even more Chairs than their proportional representation in the Parliament. Another clear winner is the pro-EU ALDE, which is significantly overrepresented. The left-wing United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) and the Greens/EFA have both received one Chair each, which roughly corresponds to their Parliamentary representation. It is therefore the two eurosceptic groups on the right, the conservative ECR and the strongly anti-EU EFDD, which have lost out.

Committee representations also reveal interesting national trends. As one of the most influential Member States, it comes as no surprise that Germany secured a quarter of the Chairs. Notably, France only obtained two, which can be attributed its large number of unaffiliated eurosceptic MEPs. At the same time, three Italian MEPs were given Chairs, including in the powerful ENVI and ECON Committees.

While the most influential Committee members are generally the group co-ordinators and the Chairs, the presence of former Commissioners and heads of government may change the dynamics and further raise the profile of key issues. The committee and chairmanship distribution is indicative of the pro-EU 'Grand Coalition' of the EPP, S&D and ALDE groups, who will collaborate to obtain majorities on legislative dossiers, effectively minimising the influence of MEPs from smaller or eurosceptic groups. The more radical of these often did not participate in committee meetings in the last Parliament. It is therefore yet to be seen whether all the eurosceptics will engage in the new Parliament and, if they do, how they will impact the debate and outcome. However, it should also be in the interest of the EPP, S&D and ALDE to ensure that critical views are not excluded from the debate and to include the representation of minority views.



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