



Clingendael

Netherlands Institute of International Relations

Voting Behaviour in the Dutch House of Representatives and the European Parliament: Misleading Parallelism

**Judith Hoevenaars
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Executive Summary

The Dutch traditionally adopt a pragmatic approach towards European integration issues, which takes into account national interests. Recent years have been marked by a change of tone in the political debate. Several of the mainstream political parties are calling for less European Union (EU) influence and fewer EU regulatory burdens. Yet at the same time, the Dutch House of Representatives has approved an expansion of EU competences in the context of the financial crisis. Even though most political parties in the Netherlands are essentially supportive of the EU and European integration, they lack an unequivocal vision on the future course of European integration. This has been translated to an agenda for a more focused EU and a strengthened role for national parliaments. This Dutch agenda, however, seems to contrast with developments in Brussels, where the powers of the European institutions, not least the European Parliament, are expanding.

The term of the seventh European Parliament (EP) is coming to an end. The last five years have been marked by several influential policy dossiers, where the EP had an important vote. This report analyses fifteen EP votes and compares them with the Dutch national debate on the same policy issue. The outcomes of the EP votes and the votes on the motions in the Dutch Lower House indicate that the voting behaviour of the positioning of the European delegations mostly concurs with that of their national delegation. The positions of the parties on the left/right and the for/against cleavages thus seem identical in both parliaments. Important as this conclusion is, however, this parallelism is misleading.

There are obvious differences in the policy choices on the future course of European integration between European political families and the Dutch member parties, which are not demonstrated in the outcome of the votes. The voting behaviour and use of rhetoric in the Dutch House of Representatives are inspired by subsidiarity concerns, national interests and a sharp confrontation with more EU-critical parties, which are mostly absent in the European Parliament. Moreover, procedures, the timing of debates and influence in the policy-making processes differ, complicating the comparison of voting behaviour. National political debates on EU issues are not connected to the legislative activities of the European Parliament, but are focused on those moments where national interests can be defended. What remains is a picture of parallelism, but the tone of the actual debates at the national level differs from those in the European Parliament.

1. Introduction

The 2009–2014 legislative term of the European Parliament (EP) is coming to an end. As a result of the changes in the Lisbon Treaty and efforts by the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to expand their influence, these five years have been marked by the increased strength of the EP in EU decision-making processes. The number of policy dossiers where the EP managed to leave its footprint is higher than in the previous term, but for a number of legislative decisions it was still the Council that took the main lead.¹ While the EP adopted a more influential role at the Brussels stage as legislator and in exercising democratic control, several national parliaments – including the Dutch House of Representatives – have raised their voices as well. The economic and social consequences of the crisis and the perception that ever more competences are being handed over to Brussels increase the need for democratic legitimacy of EU decisions.²

The official position of the current Dutch government is that national parliaments are the backbone for the EU's democratic accountability.³ The wish for a strengthened role for national parliaments contrasts with developments in Brussels, where the European institutions argue that deepened integration should be accompanied by increased democratic control of the European Parliament. Yet the EP has difficulties in adequately representing its electorate and, as a result, lacks the credibility to guarantee the democratic legitimacy of EU decision-making. 'The EP simply does not, in practice as opposed to theory, fulfil its legitimizing mandate.'⁴ Five years ago, '[t]he paradox of an increasingly powerful European Parliament mobilizing decreasing public support was cruelly but clearly demonstrated'.⁵ Hopes are high that the new electoral rules, especially the connection between the outcomes of the elections and the appointment of a new Commission President, will lead to higher voter turnout in 2014 than five years ago. While national parliaments are looking to increase their role on the European stage, the European Parliament is searching for ways to legitimize its expanded role.

1 VoteWatch Europe (2013), 'Annual Report – 10 Votes that Shaped the 7th European Parliament: Positions of the European Groups and National Party Delegations', July 2013, p. 2.

2 For the discussion on democratic legitimacy of the EU, see A. Føllesdal and S. Hix (2006), 'Why there is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik', in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44: 533–562; C. Lord and D. Beetham (2001), 'Legitimizing the EU: Is there a "Post-Parliamentary Basis" for its Legitimation?', in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 39: 443–462; G. Majone (1998), 'Europe's "Democratic Deficit": The Question of Standards', in *European Law Journal*, 4: 5–28; A. Moravcsik (2002), 'In Defence of the "Democratic Deficit": Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union', in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40: 603–624; and V.A. Schmidt (2013), *The Democratic Deficit in Europe: Which Way Forward?* (Brussels: Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2013).

3 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'State of the European Union 2013', 33 551 No. 1, 15 February 2013; and Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'State of the European Union', 33 877 No. 1, 19 February 2014.

4 A. Menon and J. Peet (2010), 'Beyond the European Parliament: Rethinking the EU's Democratic Legitimacy', *Centre for European Reform Essays*, December 2010, p. 2.

5 Sir Julian Priestley (2009), 'European Political Parties: The Missing Link', *Notre Europe*, Policy Paper No. 41, October 2009, p. 4.

This report will analyse fifteen European Parliament votes and compare them with the national debates and – if applicable – votes on the same policy question.⁶ The selected votes emphasize how the balance of power among the political groups in the European Parliament has influenced the outcome of these decisions. It is the political and ideological composition of the EP that ultimately decides the extent and direction of the Parliament's footprint. The same applies to the Dutch House of Representatives, where the preferences of the coalition parties have a determining influence over the Dutch government's policy choices. Comparative analysis of voting behaviour in the Dutch Lower House and the European Parliament gives insight into the congruent or diverging views and ideological preferences. Do the different views on EU policy and institutional issues surface in voting behaviour, and how? Moreover, a comparison of parliamentary involvement at the national and European levels gives insight into the different roles of the Dutch House of Representatives and European Parliament in EU legislative processes and democratic accountability.

Methodology

In order to facilitate the comparison of national and European votes, the technical language of the legislative proposal, or the relevant paragraph of a report or specific amendment that is subject to a vote in European Parliament, has been simplified to make it easier to comprehend what the decisions were about. The selection of votes and detailed information about the voting behaviour were provided by VoteWatch.⁷ It is important to note that analysis of the outcome of these roll-call votes has certain limitations. They do explain how a first-reading agreement in the ordinary legislative procedure was achieved, with the negotiations between the European Parliament's political groups and the trialogue negotiations with the Commission and Council.

The simplified EP votes are compared with the national debate and – if applicable – votes on motions in the Dutch House of Representatives. Motions are a frequently used instrument to scrutinize EU policies and to shape or influence the Dutch government's position. Motions that address the same policy issue as the relevant EP vote were selected, but the focus of the text may differ between the national parliament and the European Parliament. Still, this method allows for a comparison of political preferences, divergences in voting behaviour, and differences in cleavages between the European Parliament and the Dutch Lower House.

The report begins with a discussion on parliamentary involvement in EU decision-making, followed by the political composition of the European Parliament and the Dutch House of Representatives in sections 2 and 3, with an explanation of the classical cleavages in voting behaviour discussed in section 4. Section 5 consists of the study of fifteen selected European Parliament votes, with a brief account of the related debate in the Dutch House of Representatives. Finally, the ideological preferences, cleavages and dynamics of the political debate at the national and European levels are analysed and discussed in the concluding remarks.

6 This paper is part of the project '15 European Parliament votes that shaped the EU and national politics, 2009–2014', coordinated by VoteWatch Europe and *Notre Europe*/Jacques Delors Institute. In making this selection of 15 votes out of a pool of over 5,000 votes, VoteWatch Europe applied three main criteria: that the piece of legislation being voted upon has a very high impact; that the subject matter is relatively easy to understand for the general public; and that the issue generated controversy both in the EP and in the public sphere and that, in consequence, the political groups in the European Parliament took different positions on the issue.

7 For a full explanation and understanding of the votes, see <http://www.votewatch.eu/>.

2. Ideology and Power in the European Parliament

The 751 MEPs are organized along ideological lines in political groups, which consist of member parties from the EU member states. In the majority of roll-call votes, the MEPs follow the line of their EP group, resulting in high overall cohesion rates of an average of 90 per cent.⁸ As the European Parliament has fixed coalitions along the lines of national legislatures and there is not one single group with a majority, coalition-forming takes place for each individual vote. There are three different, co-existing winning coalitions in the EP that vary by policy area, but that are relatively stable over time: 1) a pro-integration 'grand coalition' between the European People's Party (EPP) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), often together with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE); 2) a 'centre-right' coalition led by the EPP, ALDE and the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the main group to the right of the EPP; and 3) a 'centre-left' coalition led by S&D, ALDE and the two groups to the left of S&D – the Greens-European Free Alliance (EFA) and European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL).⁹ The centre-left S&D and centre-right EPP are the two biggest groups in the EP and therefore have more power to impact on EU legislation and form a coalition. The 'grand coalition' with these two groups and ALDE is the most frequent alliance, reaffirming the EP's image as a pro-integration institution.

The Netherlands has 26 seats in the European Parliament. During the 2009–2014 period, two Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV) MEPs, one People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*, VVD) MEP, and one Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partij*, SP) MEP left their European delegation and continued solo. The Dutch MEPs are divided among ten political parties and are represented in all seven political families of the European Parliament (see Table 1). This corresponds to the ideological differences of the Dutch political parties. Yet whereas in the Netherlands the political flanks have a considerable number of seats, the power of the ECR, GUE-NGL, Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) and the non-attached members is very limited in the EP.

8 It should be noted that these percentages are only based on roll-call votes. The Greens/EFA, the S&D and the EPP tend to be the most cohesive, with cohesion rates between 92 and 95%; ALDE and ECR are slightly less cohesive; GUE-NGL has a cohesion rate of 79%; while EFD cohesion reaches 49%. For more information, see Yves Bertoncini and Valentin Kreilinger (2013), 'What Political Balance of Power in the Next European Parliament?', *Notre Europe/Jacques Delors Institute*, Policy Paper No. 102, November 2013, pp. 5–8.

9 Simon Hix and Bjørn Høyland (2013), 'Empowerment of the European Parliament', *Annual Review of Political Science* No. 16, January 2013, pp. 171–189.

Table 1: Political Parties in the European Parliament

Political Party	Number of MEPs, 2009-2014	European Political Group	Number of seats in the EP, 2009-2014
Christian Democratic Appeal / <i>Christen-Democratisch Appèl</i> (CDA)	5	Group of the European People's Party (EPP)	274
Labour Party / <i>Partij van de Arbeid</i> (PvdA)	3	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	194
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy / <i>Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie</i> (VVD)	3 ¹⁰	Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	85
Democrats 66 / <i>Politieke Partij Democraten 66</i> (D66)	3	Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	85
GreenLeft / <i>GroenLinks</i>	3	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	58
ChristianUnion / <i>ChristenUnie</i> (CU)	1	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	57
Socialist Party / <i>Socialistische Partij</i> (SP)	1	Confederal Group of the European United Left–Nordic Green Left	35
Independent (formerly SP)	1	Confederal Group of the European United Left–Nordic Green Left	35
Reformed Political Party / <i>Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij</i> (SGP)	1	Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group	31
Party for Freedom / <i>Partij voor de Vrijheid</i> (PVV)	4 ¹¹	Non-attached Members	32
<i>Artikel 50</i> (formerly PVV)	1	Non-attached Members	32

The legislative powers of the EP have expanded with every treaty change. The vast majority of European legislative acts are now adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council under the ordinary legislative procedure, which gives the EP the right to accept, amend, or reject a legislative proposal. The European Commission's proposals and Council's statements are dealt with in one of the twenty standing EP committees, depending on the topic. A rapporteur guides a proposal through the various stages of the legislative procedure, advising the committee and the Parliament as a whole on the general approach and the suggested amendments. All amendments are subject to a vote in the responsible committee and later in plenary session. Finally, the European Parliament votes on the draft legislative resolution as a whole. Wim van de Camp, Dutch MEP for the EPP, remarked that national and regional interests are also of importance in the approach of MEPs, often preceding European interests and thereby weakening the European Parliament.¹² The final report, which is subject to a vote in a plenary session, is the outcome of formal negotiations among the different political groups. It represents the consensus of left/right political ideologies and sometimes also national perspectives.

10 MEP Toine Manders left the VVD in October 2013.

11 MEP Laurence Stassen left the PVV in March 2014.

12 Interview with Wim van de Camp, November 2013, available online at <http://www.clingendael.nl/publication/het-europees-parlement-een-zwak-parlement>.

3. Subsidiarity and Scrutiny in the Dutch National Parliament

Between 2009 and 2014, the Dutch government changed in composition twice, with elections in 2010 and 2012. The centre-left Balkenende-IV coalition was known for pro-European integration, but the Dutch ‘no’ to the constitutional treaty marked a shift in Dutch attitudes, with more emphasis on the need for democratic legitimacy. The centre-right Rutte-I minority government, which took office in September 2010, adopted a more conservative tone, arguing that the EU should focus on its core business. The minority government, which was supported by the extreme right, anti-EU PVV of Geert Wilders, had to rely more heavily on broader support within the Dutch House of Representatives for its position on European affairs.¹³ After the Rutte-I minority government fell apart, the VVD again gained the most seats in the 2012 elections. Rutte found a new partner on the left side of the political spectrum and formed a coalition with the Labour Party (PvdA) in October 2012.

Table 2: Recent Dutch Coalition Governments

Government	Coalition Parties	Orientation	Start of Term	End of Term
Balkenende-IV	CDA, PvdA, ChristenUnie	Centre-left	22 February 2007	14 October 2010
Rutte-I	VVD, CDA	Centre-right	14 October 2010	5 November 2012
Rutte-II	VVD, PvdA	Centre-right and centre-left	5 November 2012	

The Dutch traditionally adopt a pragmatic attitude towards European issues. Yet at the time of the Rutte-I administration, the perception of an anti-European and introspective attitude predominated.¹⁵ The parties towards the centre of the Dutch political landscape have traditionally been pro-EU. The PvdA has had to find a painful balance over the past few years between austerity and the distribution of social costs. The Liberal VVD advocates a more focused EU and practical policy solution instead of institutional reforms. The Greens and the Liberals D66 are also pro-EU, generally supporting further Europeanization, and even the hard-line Socialist Party is not anti-EU per se, arguing instead for a different type of EU.¹⁶ Only the Freedom Party of Geert Wilders (PVV) tries to appeal to voters with populist Euroscepticism, calling for a Dutch exit from both the EU and the euro.

The change in EU rhetoric in some political parties, calling for less EU influence or criticizing the EU’s regulatory burdens, reflects growing public criticism of the EU and a more transactional approach to Brussels from politicians. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte

13 A. Schout, J.M. Wiersma and I. Ebben (2012), ‘De EU Paradox van kabinet-Rutte: zowel voor als tegen’ [The EU Paradox of the Rutte Government: Both in Favour and Opposing], *Internationale Spectator* Vol. 66, No. 9, September 2012, pp. 416–420.

14 The minority government of VVD and CDA was supported by PVV.

15 The *Financial Times* called it arguably the ‘most obstructionist’ country in the EU; see Peter Spiegel (2011), ‘European Integration is Unravelling’, *Financial Times*, 30 May 2011.

16 A. Schout and J.M. Wiersma (2013), ‘The Dutch Paradox’, in N. Walton and J. Zielonka (eds), *The New Political Geography of Europe* (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, January 2013), pp. 35–39.

framed European integration in terms of Dutch economic interests and a desire for strict enforcement of existing budgetary rules.¹⁷ The Christen Democrats (CDA) put forward their own subsidiarity agenda in 2013, indicating policy fields where competences should remain at the national level. In March 2011, a majority of the Dutch Lower House supported a motion by the Christian Union (CU) that the Dutch government should defend national sovereignty in economic and financial matters and oppose any movement towards a political union.¹⁸ Yet at the same time, the national Dutch Parliament has approved subsequent crisis measures, expanding the competences of the European institutions. Even though most political parties in the Netherlands are essentially supportive of the EU and European integration, they lack an unequivocal vision on the course of European integration.

The Dutch public's increasing unease with Brussels and the wish to strengthen accountability at the national level has resulted in an emphasis on the subsidiarity principle. All three subsequent Dutch government coalitions have argued that decision-making and implementation should take place on the lowest possible level. The current government, Rutte-II, has translated this to a broader agenda to strengthen the role of national parliaments in EU decision-making, increasing democratic legitimacy at the national level.¹⁹ To curb the development of an increasingly powerful European Parliament, Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Frans Timmermans 'would encourage national parliaments to bring Europe back home where it belongs and strengthen their cooperation with each other and the European Parliament'.²⁰

The Dutch Parliament has regularly evaluated its own functioning in EU affairs with a goal to become more effective and influential.²¹ Scrutiny procedures have been improved in an attempt to improve control of the input and outcome of EU negotiations. The increase of political salience of European policy debates, especially in the context of the euro crisis, resulted in more elaborate parliamentary debates and a more anticipatory position of government representatives towards parliament. Yet contrary to the European Parliament, which has legislative powers in most European policy areas, national parliaments do not have formal instruments to shape EU legislation positively. The Dutch parliamentary committees frequently use non-binding motions, urging the Dutch government to take – or refrain from – certain actions, or to determine the conditions for Dutch support. It is only through their indirect influence via the Council and the scrutiny of ministers that national parliaments can try to defend their interests during the trilogue negotiations.

The so-called 'yellow card procedure', which gives national parliaments an opportunity to raise subsidiarity concerns regarding a legislative proposal, is currently the most concrete instrument for national parliaments to intervene in the EU legislative process, but the

17 Schout and Wiersma (2013), 'The Dutch Paradox'.

18 Motion by Member of Parliament Arie Slob *et al.*, 21 501-07 No. 779, 17 February 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2011Z03428&did=2011D08561>.

19 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'State of the European Union 2013', 33 551 No. 1, 15 February 2013; and Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'State of the European Union', 33 877 No. 1, 19 February 2014.

20 Frans Timmermans (2013), 'Monnet's Europe Needs Reform to Fit the 21st Century', *Financial Times*, 14 November 2013.

21 Dutch House of Representatives (2011), 'Bovenop Europa: Evaluatie van de versterkte EU-ondersteuning van de Tweede Kamer', 32 726 No. 1, 1 April 2011; and Dutch House of Representatives (2013), 'Democratic Legitimacy in the EU and the Role of National Parliaments: A Position Paper of the Dutch House of Representatives', October 2013.

procedure is still ineffective and inefficient.²² The Dutch parliamentary rapporteur on democratic legitimacy, René Leegte, presented a first report arguing for expanding the powers of national parliaments to include a 'red card' to block a Commission proposal, as well as a 'green card', giving national parliaments a joint right of initiative.²³ However, the possibilities of member states reaching agreement on additional 'cards' or other tools for national parliaments to expand their role in EU decision-making processes are slim.²⁴ The role of national parliaments will remain limited to the national legal order, distanced from Brussels.

22 S. Blockmans *et al.* (2014), 'From Subsidiarity to Better EU Governance: A Practical Reform Agenda for the EU', Clingendael/CEPS Report, February 2014.

23 Dutch House of Representatives (2013), 'Democratic Legitimacy in the EU and the Role of National Parliaments'.

24 Blockmans *et al.* (2014), 'From Subsidiarity to Better EU Governance'.

4. Cleavages in Voting Behaviour

Ideological cleavages can explain the voting behaviour of both national parliaments and the European Parliament. There are two main cleavages in the voting behaviour on European integration measures. First, coalitions can be formed with proponents or opponents of strengthening the EU's institutional powers. The EP's 'grand coalition' is labelled as pro-European, with the centrist parties EPP, S&D and ALDE voting together in favour of deepened integration. The smaller groups on the right and left flanks often find themselves in the opposition and unable to exert influence in the policy choices. Second, a cleavage based on left/right political preferences can be decisive in coalition formation, with the left-oriented parties finding a majority, for example, and thus circumventing objections from the right-wing parties. These two classical cleavages can also be applied to the voting behaviour of the Dutch House of Representatives, but generally the coalition parties secure a majority of the votes, determining the outcome *a priori*.

When policy choices are decided on by different cleavages in the European Parliament and the Dutch Lower House, it can result in a conflict of interest for Dutch MEPs, who will have to choose between their national party line and their European political group. Some of the policy dossiers analysed in this report show divergence in voting behaviour between national and European delegations. For example, the CDA/EPP MEPs voted in favour of Eurobonds, while the Dutch national party line is highly critical of Eurobonds. It is also possible that a European delegation is divided, as demonstrated by the voting behaviour of the VVD delegation on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with one vote in favour, one against, and one abstention. Discrepancy in voting behaviour can also emerge within a political group of the EP. The ALDE group has two Dutch delegations that voted differently on the Emissions Trading System, with D66 favouring the measure and VVD opposing it. Can these divergences be explained on the basis of ideological preference or the national background of the MEPs? Along which lines do the Dutch MEPs vote, and how does this relate to the debates in the Dutch House of Representatives?

5. The Fifteen Votes

5.1. Should the minimum length for maternity leave on full pay be extended?

In the Netherlands, the minimum paid maternity leave is sixteen weeks. The coalition parties of the Rutte-I administration, the CDA and VVD, supported by the PVV, opposed the proposal to extend maternity leave to twenty weeks on full pay and a more generous paternity leave. As well as financial objections, some political parties had doubts on the grounds of subsidiarity. The VVD proposed a motion in the Committee of Social Affairs, arguing that EU rules on maternity leave limit national competence to regulate employment conditions and, as such, breaches subsidiarity, but this motion did not find a majority in the Dutch Lower House, with only the SP, PvdD, VVD, SGP and independent MP Rita Verdonk in favour.²⁵

The EP passed a large number of amendments to the Commission's proposal. Specifically regarding the extension of maternity and paternity leave, the EP vote passed with a very narrow majority of 327 MEPs in favour to 320 against.²⁶ The same Dutch political parties that had opposed the proposal in the Dutch Parliament for reasons of subsidiarity also voted against the amendment in the European Parliament, arguing that the provisions would lead to significant extra costs and would cause indirect discrimination against women in the labour market.

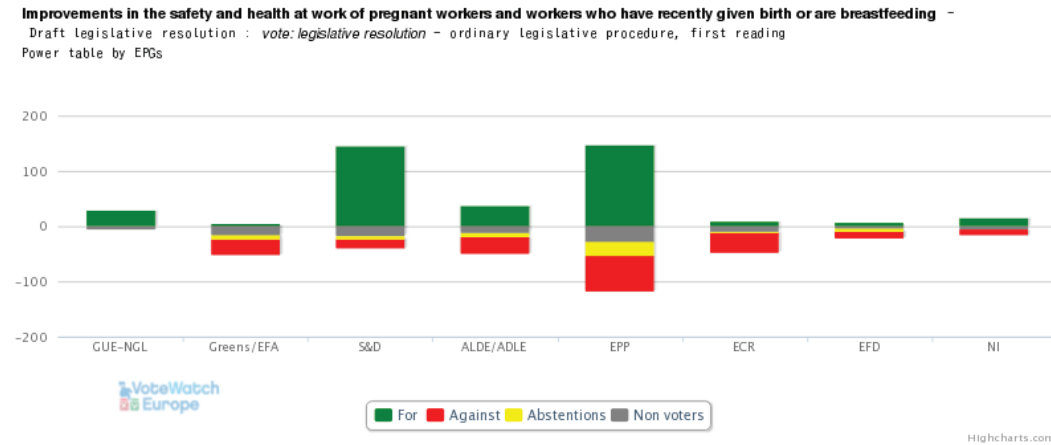
The largest opposition party, the PvdA, supported the measure both in the EP as well as in the Dutch Lower House. In June 2013, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Rutte-II administration published the conclusions of a subsidiarity exercise, listing items that should not be dealt with (any longer) at the European level. Maternity leave was included in the list, so it is safe to assume that the PvdA switched its position and now also opposes European regulation on maternity leave. Since the EP's resolution, the EP-Council negotiations have been in a deadlock, and the general view in the Council is that detailed measures should be left to member states.²⁷

25 Motion by Member of Parliament Meeuwis, 32 024 No. 5, 13 October 2009, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2009Z18822&did=2009D49625>.

26 Vote of the European Parliament on the improvement in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, 20 October 2010, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/improvements-in-the-safety-and-health-at-work-of-pregnant-workers-and-workers-who-have-recently-give-12.html>.

27 'End of Council's Radio Silence on Maternity Leave?', *Bulletin Quotidien Europe*, 27 October 2011.

Table 3 Voting Behaviour of Dutch MEP's on improvement in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
CDA	EPP	-	0	4	0	1
ChristenUnie	ECR	No votes	0	0	0	1
D66	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	3	0	0
GroenLinks	Greens-EFA	+	3	0	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	3	0	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	4	0	0
SP	GUE-NGL	No votes	0	0	0	2
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	3	0	0

5.2. Should nuclear energy be phased out in the EU?

In November 2011, a majority of MEPs adopted the proposal for a Council decision on the Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) for nuclear research and training activities.²⁸ One noticeable vote in the EP report was on amendment 36, which was drafted by the Greens-EFA group and which aimed to commit the EU to renouncing nuclear energy.

In the Dutch House of Representatives, there was no majority supporting this idea. After the disaster in Fukushima, Japan, following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, there was a fierce political debate in May 2011 about the construction of new nuclear plants and safety conditions for the use of nuclear energy. The Party for the Animals (*Partij voor de Dieren*, PvdD) initiated a motion that the Dutch government should close the one remaining nuclear power plant in Borssele, thus phasing out the use of nuclear energy in the Netherlands.²⁹

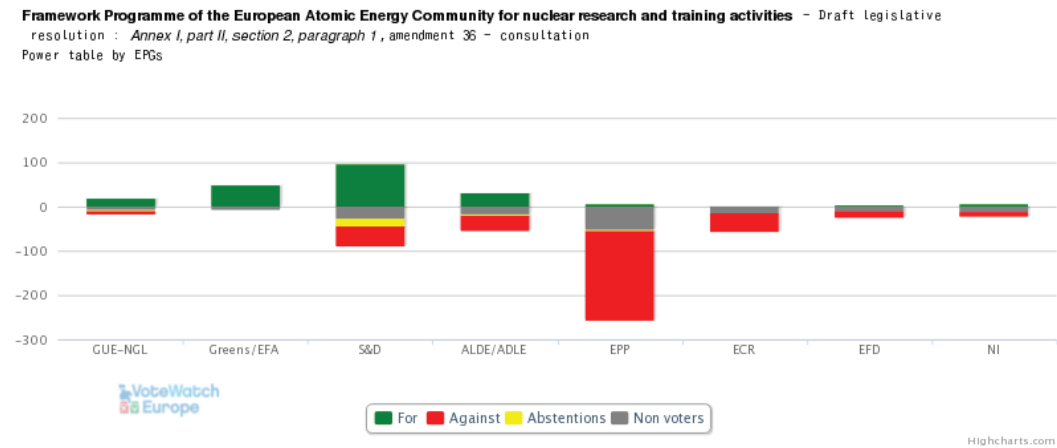
28 European Parliament legislative resolution of 17 November 2011 on the proposal for a Council Decision concerning the Framework Programme of the European Atomic Community for nuclear research and training activities (2012-2013).

29 Motion by Member of Parliament Esther Ouwehand, 32 645 No. 18, 1 June 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2011Z11618&did=2011D28813>.

A left-oriented opposition minority – consisting of the SP, PvdA, *GroenLinks* and PvdD – supported the vote, which was not enough, however, to alter the official government position of continuing to use nuclear energy as a transition towards more sustainable energy sources.³⁰ The nuclear facility in Borssele will remain open until 2033, based on a Dutch government decision taken in 2005. This decision is not challenged in the current Rutte-II administration, which does not mention nuclear energy at all in the coalition agreement.

The vote in the Dutch House of Representatives reflects the voting behaviour in the European Parliament. The amendment was supported by GUE-NGL and Greens/EFA MEPs, as well as by two-thirds of the S&D members, including the PvdA members, and almost half of the ALDE MEPs. However, similar to the outcome in Dutch parliament, this left-wing coalition failed to reach a majority. Amendment 36 fell by 210 votes in favour to 356 against.³¹

Table 4: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for nuclear research and training activities – vote on the phasing out of nuclear energy



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
CDA	EPP	-	0	4	0	1
ChristenUnie	ECR	-	0	1	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	3	0	0
GroenLinks	Greens-EFA	+	3	0	0	0
Independent	GUE-NGL	+	1	0	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	3	0	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	2	0	2
SP	GUE-NGL	+	1	0	0	0
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	1	0	2

30 Report of a parliamentary debate on nuclear energy, ‘Nuclear Energy’, 32 645 No. 24, 17 May 2011.

31 Vote of the European Parliament on the Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for nuclear research and training activities, 17 November 2011, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/framework-programme-of-the-european-atomic-energy-community-for-nuclear-research-and-training-activi-10.html>.

5.3. Should the eurozone member states pool their public debts by creating Eurobonds?

Eurobonds, the collective bonds for the pooling 'of sovereign debt issuance among EU Member States and the sharing of associated revenue flows and debt-servicing costs', are not popular in the Netherlands.³² Seven months before the presentation of the European Commission's Green Paper on the feasibility of introducing Eurobonds, the Eurosceptic PVV tabled a motion that the Dutch government should not move towards any form of European financing of public debts or direct income for the EU. Several EU-critical parties supported the motion, but a large majority of the VVD, PvdA, CDA, D66, and *GroenLinks* voted against the text, thus keeping the options on Eurobonds open.³³

To be able to have a better informed debate, the Dutch Parliament asked the Dutch government for a thorough analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of Eurobonds.³⁴ The government concluded that strict enforcement of rules on budgetary discipline and European financial control are preconditions for the introduction of Eurobonds in the long term.³⁵ Consequently, all of the political parties agreed that Eurobonds should not be implemented as a crisis measure. Whereas the PvdA, D66 and *GroenLinks* were relatively favourable about Eurobonds in the long term, the VVD and CDA turned against the idea.³⁶ With support from a majority in the Dutch Lower House, the Dutch government sent its reaction to the European Commission, with its allies Germany, Finland and Austria, emphasizing strict conditions for the introduction of Eurobonds and a proven track record of economic governance and budgetary discipline.³⁷

In May 2012, the PVV again proposed a motion that the Dutch government should decisively distance itself from the introduction of Eurobonds.³⁸ This time the motion was adopted by a narrow majority of 79 votes from the VVD, PVV, SP, CU, PvdD, SGP and Dutch MP Hero Brinkman. Unlike with the motion of March 2011, this time the VVD joined the opponents of Eurobonds, which reflects its contribution to the parliamentary debates. By now, also the CDA had ruled out the introduction of Eurobonds in its election manifesto.³⁹

The non-binding resolution in the European Parliament of February 2012 indicated that a majority was supportive of the initiative, arguing that Eurobonds are needed as part of the solution to the eurozone's current financial problems.⁴⁰ The S&D and Greens-EFA groups, as well as the majority of MEPs from the EPP and ALDE groups, voted in favour of the

32 European Commission (2011), *Green Paper on the Feasibility of Introducing Stability Bonds*, COM(2011) 818 final, 23 November 2011, p. 2.

33 Motion by Member of Parliament Tony van Dijck, 21 501-20 No. 520, 23 March 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2011Z06054&did=2011D14947>.

34 Report of a parliamentary debate, 'Council on Economic and Financial Affairs', 21 501-07 No. 833, 16 August 2011.

35 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Finance, 21 501-07 No. 844, 5 October 2011.

36 Report of a parliamentary debate, 'Eurogroup/ ECOFIN Council', 21 501-07 No. 862, 3 November 2011.

37 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Finance, 21 501-07 No. 881, 8 February 2012.

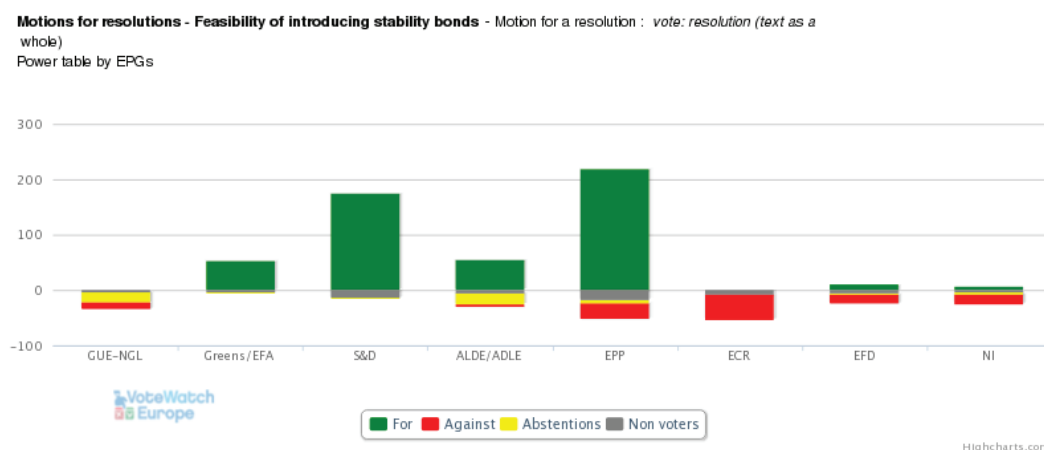
38 Motion by Member of Parliament Tony van Dijck, 21 501-20 No. 634, 23 May 2012, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2012Z10383&did=2012D21919>.

39 Christendemocratisch Appel (2014), 'Naar een slagvaardiger Europa: Conceptverkiezingsprogramma Europees Parlement 2014'.

40 European Parliament resolution of 15 February 2012 on the feasibility of introducing stability bonds.

resolution.⁴¹ The CDA MEPs voted with the majority of the EPP in favour of the resolution, in contradiction of their current election manifesto. Notably, one of the VVD/ALDE MEPs supported Eurobonds, also diverging from the national line.

Table 5: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the feasibility of introducing stability bonds



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstention	Non-voters
CDA	EPP	+	5	0	0	0
ChristenUnie	ECR	-	0	1	0	0
D66	ALDE	+	3	0	0	0
GroenLinks	Greens	+	3	0	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	3	0	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	4	0	0
SP	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE	0	1	0	2	0

5.4. Should there be a new tax on all financial transactions in the EU?

The European Commission proposed a financial transaction tax (FTT), to be levied by EU member states, as part of the multi-annual financial framework 2014–2020. According to the Commission, the FTT’s objectives are to avoid fragmentation in the internal market for financial services, to ensure that financial institutions make a fair contribution to covering the costs of the recent crisis, to create own resources for the EU, and to discourage to a certain extent risky market behaviours.⁴²

41 Vote of the European Parliament on motions for resolutions – the feasibility of introducing stability bonds, 15 February 2012, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/motions-for-resolutions-feasibility-of-introducing-stability-bonds-motion-for-a-resolution-vote-reso.html>.

42 European Commission (2011), ‘Proposal for a Council Directive on a Common System of Financial Transaction Tax and Amending Directive 2008/7/EC’, 28 September 2011, COM(2011) 594 final.

The Dutch government was hesitant about the FTT from the beginning, suggesting that only a world-wide introduction of the FTT would be beneficial.⁴³ After the European Commission's proposal, the VVD initiated a motion opposing the FTT as a means of own resources for the EU.⁴⁴ A large majority of the SP, PvdD, PvdA, VVD, SGP, CU, CDA and PVV shared this view.⁴⁵ Yet the PvdA was not opposed to the FTT as such, and together with *GroenLinks* proposed a motion in support of the introduction of the FTT.⁴⁶ A large majority rejected the motion, again opposing the FTT, but the left-oriented SP and PvdD voted in favour.

In a follow-up debate, the Dutch Parliament requested a study from the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) on the consequences of the FTT. In the early months of 2012, the CPB, the Dutch National Bank (DNB) and the Netherlands Authority for the Financial Markets (AFM) all argued that the introduction of the FTT would not be favourable for the Dutch financial sector.⁴⁷ The analysis concluded that the FTT would not contribute to a stabilized financial sector, nor would it efficiently ensure a contribution by the financial sector to the public means. Consequently, the Dutch government took the position of opposing the FTT in the Council negotiations, also out of concerns for its impact on the Dutch national pension system and the risk of the financial sector relocating away from the Netherlands.⁴⁸

A large majority of MEPs supported a tax on financial transactions with 487 votes, but they disagreed on where the money should go.⁴⁹ Examining the votes of the Dutch MEPs, it is notable that the CDA MEPs demonstrate different voting behaviour from their national line. In the European Parliament, the four CDA MEPs supported the FTT, in line with the majority of the EPP.

43 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Finance, 21 501-07 No. 841, 23 September 2011.

44 Motion by Members of Parliament Klaas Dijkhoff and H.J. Ormel, 21 501-20 No. 546, 22 June 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2011Z13608&did=2011D33539>.

45 Motion by Members of Parliament Klaas Dijkhoff and H.J. Ormel, 21 501-20 No. 546, 22 June 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2011Z13608&did=2011D33539>.

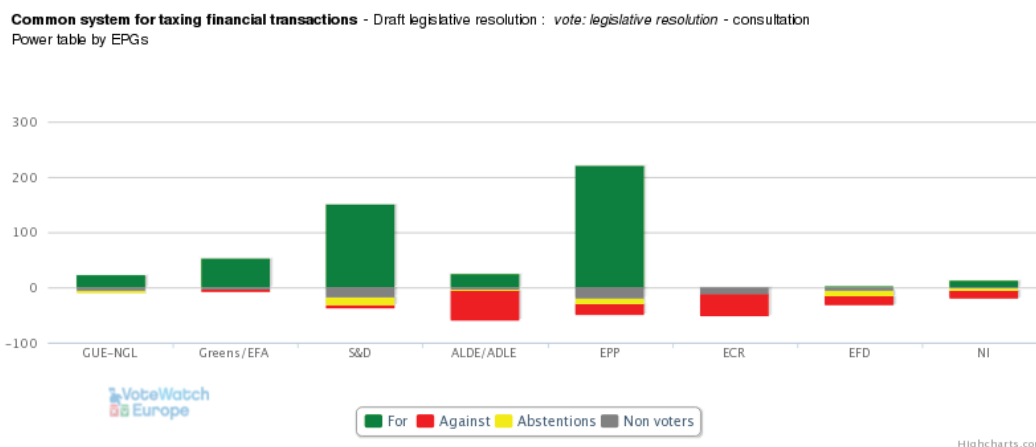
46 Motion by Members of Parliament R.H.A. Plasterk and B.A.M. Braakhuis, 33 000 No. 38, 6 October 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2011Z19598&did=2011D48617>.

47 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Finance, 32 013 No. 23, 20 March 2012.

48 For an extensive overview of economic and political arguments, see C. d'Oultremont and A. Mijs (2013), 'Reforming the System of Financing the EU Budget', Working Paper (Brussels: The Egmont Institute, February 2013).

49 Vote of the European Parliament on the legislative resolution on the common system for taxing financial transactions, 23 May 2012, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/common-system-for-taxing-financial-transactions-draft-legislative-resolution-vote-legislative-resolu.html>.

Table 6: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the common system for taxing financial transactions



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
CDA	EPP	+	4	0	0	1
ChristenUnie	ECR	-	0	1	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	3	0	0
GroenLinks	Greens-EFA	+	3	0	0	0
Independent	GUE-NGL	*	1	1	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	3	0	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	4	0	0
SP	GUE-NGL	+	1	0	0	0
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	3	0	0

Following this vote, the EU member states failed to reach agreement on the FTT, which – as a tax-related issue – requires unanimity in the Council. Eleven EU member states (Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia) wanted to go ahead with the FTT and initiated the enhanced cooperation procedure. All 28 EU member states can take part in the discussion, but only states that join have the right to vote. In June 2012, the Dutch opposition parties that had supported the FTT again initiated a motion that the Dutch government should join the enhanced cooperation.⁵⁰ This time, the proponents – SP, PvdA, PvdD and *GroenLinks* – were joined by D66, but their 71 votes were still insufficient to gain a majority in favour of the FTT.

With the PvdA's influence, the Rutte-II administration is not in principal opposed to the FTT and would consider joining the enhanced cooperation, on the strict condition that the FTT will not become a source of autonomous income for the EU budget and if Dutch pension funds are excluded from the FTT. It is unlikely, however, that these conditions will be met.

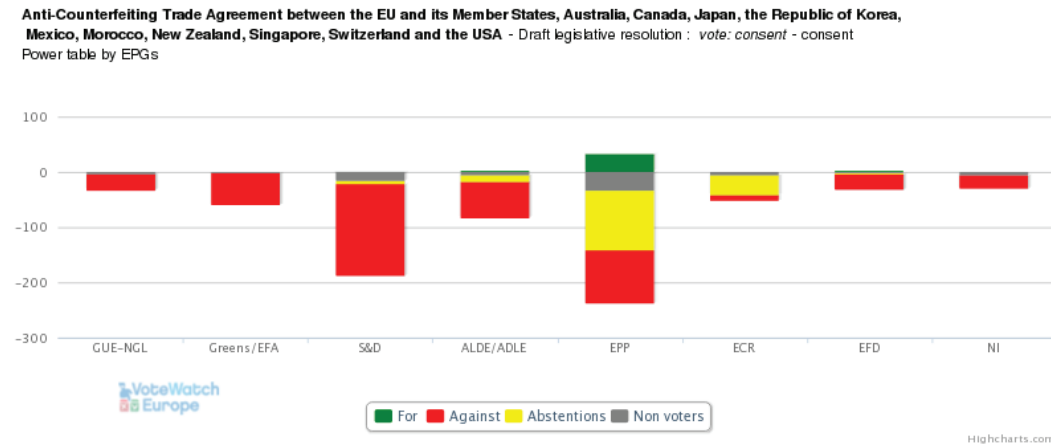
50 Motion by Member of Parliament Emile Roemer *et al.*, 21 501-20 No. 644, 27 June 2012, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2012Z13117&did=2012D27835>.

5.5. Should the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement be adopted?

The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), a multinational treaty with the aim of establishing international standards for intellectual property rights' enforcement, was rejected by a majority in the Dutch House of Representatives and later also in the EP. Worries over the compatibility of ACTA with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Charter for Human Rights dominated the Dutch debate. In February 2012, a majority of the Dutch Parliament requested that the Dutch government not sign the ACTA if it was in conflict with fundamental rights.⁵¹ The VVD, CDA and SGP opposed this motion. A few months later, the Dutch political parties unanimously opposed ACTA, because of privacy risks and concerns about internet freedom.⁵²

In July 2012, the EP also opposed ACTA with 39 votes in favour, 478 against and 165 abstentions.⁵³ Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EP is required to approve or reject trade agreements, but it cannot amend them. As a result of this vote, neither the EU nor any individual EU member state can join ACTA. MEPs raised concerns related to data protection, fundamental freedoms, openness, and the transparency of the negotiations. A majority of ECR and EPP MEPs abstained, while all five Dutch CDA/EPP members voted against.

Table 7: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement



51 Motion by Member of Parliament Arjan El Fassed *et al.*, 33 001 No. 21, 14 February 2012, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2012Z02522&did=2012D05585>.

52 Motion by Members of Parliament Kees Verhoeven and A.H.M. Schaart, 21 501-30 No. 287, 29 May 2012, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2012Z10679&did=2012D22505>.

53 Vote of the European Parliament on consent on the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement between the EU and its member states, Australia, Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland and the USA, 4 July 2012, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/anti-counterfeiting-trade-agreement-between-the-eu-and-its-member-states-australia-canada-japan-the--2.html>.

		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
CDA	EPP	-	0	5	0	0
ChristenUnie	ECR	0	0	0	1	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	3	0	0
GroenLinks	Greens-EFA	-	0	3	0	0
Independent	GUE-NGL	-	0	2	0	0
PvdA	S&D	-	0	3	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	3	0	1
SP	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	*	0	1	1	1

5.6. Should the EU budget be increased and be made more flexible?

In November 2013, the EP approved the 2014–2020 Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), followed by approval by the Council one month later. Its consent followed the finalization of lengthy and tough negotiations with the EU member states. The MFF will shrink in absolute value compared to the previous period from 2007–2013, and will amount to € 960 billion in commitments and € 908 billion in payments.

In line with the wishes of the Lower House,⁵⁴ the Dutch government tried to limit an increase of the EU budget, taking the economic situation and need for harsh national austerity measures into consideration. An increase in the expenses of the EU would be difficult to explain to the wider Dutch public. The more EU-critical parties in the Dutch House of Representatives proposed a motion that the Dutch government should negotiate a reduction of 10 per cent in the EU budget for 2014–2020, but this was considered too excessive for the majority.⁵⁵ Finally, the Dutch government in the Council agreed to the nominal increase of the MFF for the next seven-year period.

The European Parliament succeeded in obtaining a number of important concessions from the EU member states: flexibility between budget years and budget lines; the promise of the creation of a high-level group on EU own resources; and a revision clause stating that the Commission will have to bring forward a review of the MFF in 2016. The text as a whole was supported by a comfortable majority in the EP (the EPP, S&D, ALDE and ECR), with opposition coming mainly from the Greens–EFA, GUE–NGL and EFD groups.⁵⁶ Dutch MEPs from the ECR and EFD supported the vote in the European Parliament, while their national party delegations supported the Dutch Parliamentary motion for a saving of 10 per cent.

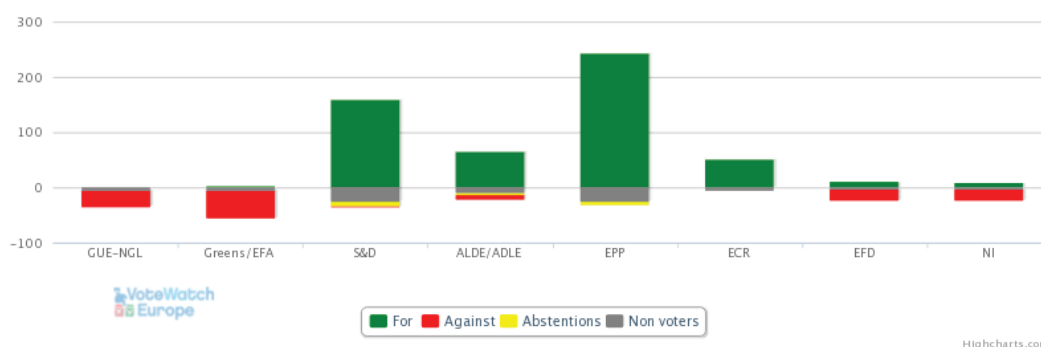
54 Motion by Members of Parliament R.H.A. Plasterk and Joël Voordewind, 32 502 No. 6, 26 May 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail.jsp?id=2011Z11425&did=2011D28375>.

55 Motion by Member of Parliament Joël Voordewind, 33 001 No. 18, 9 February 2012, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2012Z02525&did=2012D05588>.

56 Vote of the European Parliament on consent on the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014–2020, 19 November 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/multiannual-financial-framework-2014-2020-draft-legislative-resolution-vote-consent-consent.html>.

Table 8: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the multiannual financial framework 2014–2020

Multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 - Draft legislative resolution : vote: consent - consent
Power table by EPGs



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
<i>Artikel 50</i>	NI	No votes	0	0	0	1
<i>CDA</i>	EPP	+	5	0	0	0
<i>ChristenUnie</i>	ECR	+	1	0	0	0
<i>D66</i>	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	3	0	0
<i>GroenLinks</i>	Greens-EFA	-	0	2	0	1
<i>Independent</i>	GUE-NGL	No votes	0	0	0	1
<i>PvdA</i>	S&D	+	2	0	0	1
<i>PVV</i>	NI	-	0	3	0	1
<i>SP</i>	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
<i>SGP</i>	EFD	+	1	0	0	0
<i>VVD</i>	ALDE/ADLE	+	2	0	1	0

5.7. Should agricultural subsidies remain a budgetary priority for the EU?

The Netherlands is an export country for agricultural products and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been vital for the development of the Dutch agricultural food industry.⁵⁷ Most political parties, however, are in favour of reforming the CAP to make it more efficient, innovative and transparent. Moreover, reform of the CAP is linked to lowering and reforming the EU budget. An ambitious motion on reducing the annual CAP budget to € 18 billion in the long term was only supported by the PvdA, D66 and PvdD.⁵⁸ A more modest motion on shifting budget priorities and reducing cohesion-, agricultural- and structural funds in favour of research and innovation funds did find a majority with the VVD, PvdA, *GroenLinks* and D66 in favour.⁵⁹

57 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch State Secretary of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, 26 November 2010, 28 625 No. 108.

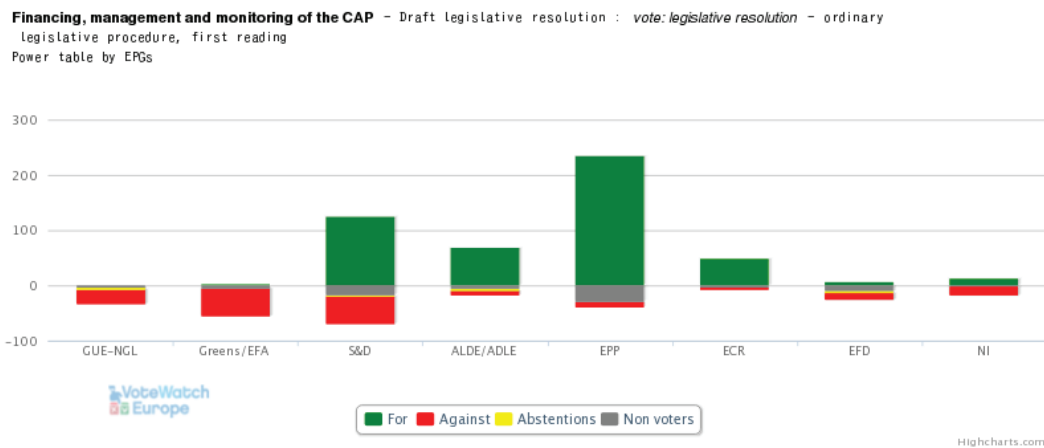
58 Motion by Member of Parliament Stientje van Veldhoven, 21 501-32 No. 451, 16 March 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2011Z05292&did=2011D13145>.

59 Motion by Member of Parliament Alexander Pechtold *et al.*, 21 501-20 No. 643, 27 June 2012, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2012Z13116&did=2012D27834>.

During the Rutte-I administration, more attention was given to maintaining agricultural subsidies because of the presence of the CDA in the government, as the CDA traditionally has a large following in the agricultural sector. The Rutte-II administration is more favourable to reducing the budget and shifting priorities.

With the reforms of 2013, the CAP will put more emphasis on enhanced environmental protection and fair and more transparent distribution of EU subsidies among the EU member states and farmers. The EP report on financing, management and monitoring of the CAP was adopted by 500 votes to 177, with 10 abstentions, and with support mainly from the EPP, S&D, ALDE and ECR groups.⁶⁰ The Dutch MEPs from the ALDE and S&D did not follow the political line of their EP group, with the VVD vote being split. Both *GroenLinks* and the PvdA were disappointed that the report was watered down and consequently opposed the vote.

Table 9: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on financing, management and monitoring of the CAP



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
<i>Artikel 50</i>	NI	No votes	0	0	0	1
<i>CDA</i>	EPP	+	5	0	0	0
<i>ChristenUnie</i>	ECR	+	1	0	0	0
<i>D66</i>	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	3	0	0
<i>GroenLinks</i>	Greens-EFA	-	0	2	0	1
<i>Independent</i>	GUE-NGL	No votes	0	0	0	1
<i>PvdA</i>	S&D	-	0	2	0	1
<i>PVV</i>	NI	-	0	4	0	0
<i>SP</i>	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
<i>SGP</i>	EFD	+	1	0	0	0
<i>VVD</i>	ALDE/ADLE	*	1	1	1	0

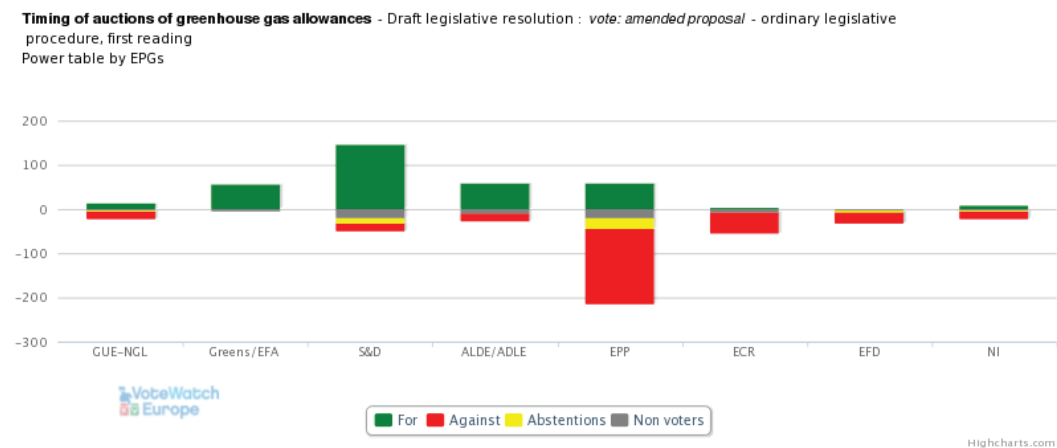
60 Vote of the European Parliament on the legislative resolution on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP, 20 November 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/financing-management-and-monitoring-of-the-cap-draft-legislative-resolution-vote-legislative-resolut.html###vote-tabs-list-4>.

5.8. Should there be increased costs on economic activities that pollute?

In July 2013, MEPs adopted a softer version of the European Commission’s proposal on the timing of auctions of greenhouse gas emissions, aimed at boosting the EU Emissions Trading System by preventing the auctioning of some certificates and their release onto the market. The proposal, also known as backloading, was previously rejected in the April 2013 plenary session by the centre-right groups.⁶¹ The new version, however, is more restrictive when it comes to allowing the Commission to delay the auctioning of CO2 certificates. It was pushed through the plenary session with 344 votes in favour (mainly from the S&D, ALDE, Greens-EFA and a minority of EPP members) to 311 against (most of the EPP, as well as ECR and EFD members).⁶² The Dutch ALDE parties were divided, with D66 supporting the resolution and the VVD opposing it.

The auctions of greenhouse gas allowances and the EU Emissions Trading System were not political priorities in the Netherlands. The Dutch House of Representatives noted that there was an oversupply of carbon emission allowances as a consequence of the economic crisis. With a motion in June 2011, a majority of the PvdA, SP, CDA, D66, CU, *GroenLinks*, SGP, 50Plus and PvdD called for a structural improvement of the EU Emissions Trading System to stimulate sustainable energy use.⁶³ The VVD argued that the market mechanism would not function and opposed the vote. Later, the same political parties asked the Dutch government not to block the proposals on auctions of greenhouse gas emissions.⁶⁴

Table 10: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the timing of auctions of greenhouse gas allowances



61 Vote of the European Parliament on the proposal to vote on legislative resolution and conclude the procedures on clarifying provisions on the timing of auctions of greenhouse gas allowances, 16 April 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/clarifying-provisions-on-the-timing-of-auctions-of-greenhouse-gas-allowances-draft-legislative-resol-2.html>.

62 Vote of the European Parliament on the amended proposal on the timing of auctions of greenhouse gas allowances, 3 July 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/timing-of-auctions-of-greenhouse-gas-allowances-draft-legislative-resolution-vote-amended-proposal-o.html>.

63 Motion by Members of Parliament Liesbeth van Tongeren and Stientje van Veldhoven, 21 239 No. 123, 30 June 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail.jsp?id=2011Z14651&did=2011D36036>.

64 Motion by Member of Parliament Stientje van Veldhoven *et al.*, 21 501-08 No. 438, 24 October 2012, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2012Z17966&did=2012D39277>.

		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
<i>Artikel 50</i>	NI	-	0	1	0	0
CDA	EPP	+	4	0	0	1
<i>ChristenUnie</i>	ECR	+	1	0	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0
<i>GroenLinks</i>	Greens/EFA	+	3	0	0	0
Independent	GUE-NGL	+	1	0	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	3	0	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	4	0	0
SP	GUE-NGL	+	1	0	0	0
SGP	EFD	+	1	0	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	-	0	3	0	0

5.9. Should the European Commission strengthen the supervision of budgets and economic policies of the eurozone member states?

Budgetary discipline and reforming the stability and growth pact have been frequent topics of debate in the Dutch Lower House during the last five years. In developing and strengthening the economic and monetary union, a majority of the Dutch Parliament has constantly argued for better enforcement of the budgetary rules and economic reforms in EU member states with a weaker track record. With regard to economic and budgetary surveillance, the motion by members Frans Weekers (VVD) and Frans de Nerée tot Babberich (CDA) that there should be independent oversight of budgetary and fiscal discipline, and automatic sanctions,⁶⁵ shaped the official position of the Dutch government in the negotiations on the so-called 'six-pack' and 'two-pack'.⁶⁶

When the Netherlands later did not comply with the 3 per cent rule and the Dutch Lower House realized that the national budgetary powers were limited by the new EU rules, the tone of the debates and motions changed. The motion by CU member Arie Slob is important in this regard. Considering the developments in European Monetary Union (EMU), the European Semester and the framework of economic governance, several political parties asked the Dutch government to oppose any movement towards a political union.⁶⁷ The resolution was supported by the smaller, more critical or conservative parties, but unexpectedly the PvdA also voted in favour.

The European Parliament adopted two reports as part of the 'two-pack', which aimed at complementing the EU legislation in the area of economic supervision. The first report laid down tougher rules concerning the economic and budgetary surveillance of member states in the eurozone that were experiencing or threatened with serious difficulties with respect to

65 Motion by Members of Parliament Weekers and De Nerée tot Babberich, 21 501-07 No. 713, 7 May 2010, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2010Z07869&did=2010D21514>.

66 A large majority of PvdA, GroenLinks, D66, VVD, ChristenUnie, CDA, SGP, PVV and Verdonk supported the motion. See online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2010Z07869&did=2010D21514>.

67 Motion by Member of Parliament Arie Slob *et al.*, 21 501-07 No. 779, 17 February 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2011Z03428&did=2011D08561>.

their financial stability.⁶⁸ The second document focused on establishing common provisions for monitoring and assessing draft budgetary plans.⁶⁹ Both reports were supported by a centrist coalition of the EPP, S&D, ALDE and Greens-EFA. The votes of the Dutch MEPs do not show any abnormalities. The SGP and PVV supported the Dutch motion on independent oversight and automatic sanctions, but voted against the EP resolution, probably because they opposed more competence for the European institutions. The SP was opposed both to stricter rules on budgetary and economic oversight and extending EU competences.⁷⁰

Lack of economic growth, high unemployment rates and growing public discontent over the crisis measures encouraged the parties on the political left to focus more on the social dimension in the framework for economic governance. The 'two-pack' puts greater emphasis on the role of growth and employment indicators when monitoring the economic performance of member states than the 'six-pack'. This would also explain why left-of-centre parties in the EP largely opposed the 'six-pack' regulations, while with the 'two-pack' the S&D and Greens-EFA voted in favour.⁷¹ In the Netherlands, the PvdA, *GroenLinks* and D66 proposed a resolution that asked the Dutch government to come up with plans to strengthen the social dimension of EMU,⁷² which was supported by 127 out of 150 parliamentarians.⁷³ The Dutch government stated that it welcomed a strengthened social dimension, but that this would require more national action instead of European harmonization of social policies.⁷⁴ The current Dutch coalition government is split over the level of ambition for the social dimension of EMU.

68 Vote of the European Parliament on economic and budgetary surveillance of member states with serious difficulties with respect to their financial stability in the euro area, 12 March 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/economic-and-budgetary-surveillance-of-member-states-with-serious-difficulties-with-respect-to-their-2.html>.

69 Vote of the European Parliament on the legislative resolution on the monitoring and assessing of draft budgetary plans and ensuring the correction of excessive deficits of the member states in the euro area, 12 March 2013, available online at http://www.votewatch.eu/translate_path.php?path=en/monitoring-and-assessing-draft-budgetary-plans-and-ensuring-the-correction-of-excessive-deficit-of-t-2.html.

70 Report of a parliamentary debate, 'Council on Economic and Financial Affairs', 21 501-07 No. 879, 19 January 2012.

71 For more details on how the MEPs voted in 2011, see the September 2011 VoteWatch Newsletter.

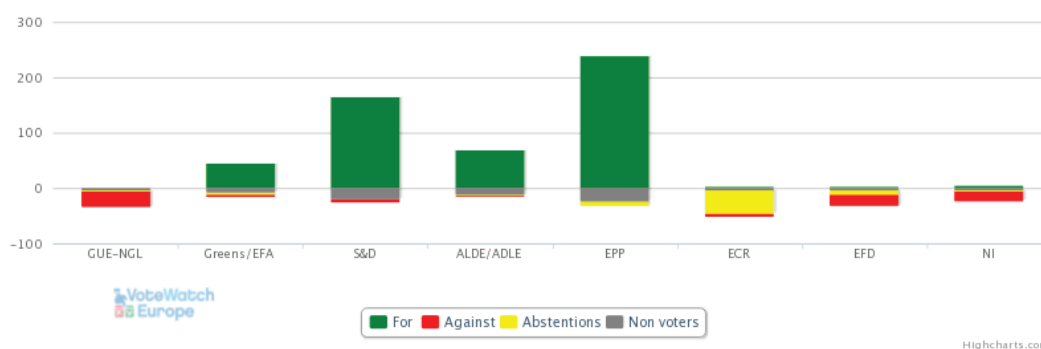
72 Motion by Member of Parliament Michiel Servaes *et al.*, 33 551 No. 3, 7 March 2013, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2013Z04589&did=2013D09589>.

73 VVD, PvdA, SP, CDA, D66, GroenLinks, PvdD, 50Plus voted in favour of the motion. See online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2013Z04589&did=2013D09589>.

74 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, 21 501-31 No. 311, 24 May 2013.

Table 11: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on monitoring and assessing draft budgetary plans and ensuring the correction of excessive deficits of the Member States in the euro area

Monitoring and assessing draft budgetary plans and ensuring the correction of excessive deficit of the Member States in the area - Draft legislative resolution : vote: legislative resolution - ordinary legislative procedure, first reading
Power table by EPGs



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
CDA	EPP	+	5	0	0	0
ChristenUnie	ECR	-	0	1	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0
GroenLinks	Greens-EFA	+	3	0	0	0
Independent	GUE-NGL	-	0	2	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	3	0	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	3	0	1
SP	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	+	1	0	0	2

5.10. Should the EU create a banking union?

The two EP reports on the creation of a banking union, which were adopted in September 2013, confirmed a deal between the EP and the European Central Bank (ECB) about oversight and consultation with regard to the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM). The final texts were supported by an overwhelming majority of MEPs from the EPP, S&D, ALDE, the Greens-EFA and ECR.⁷⁵

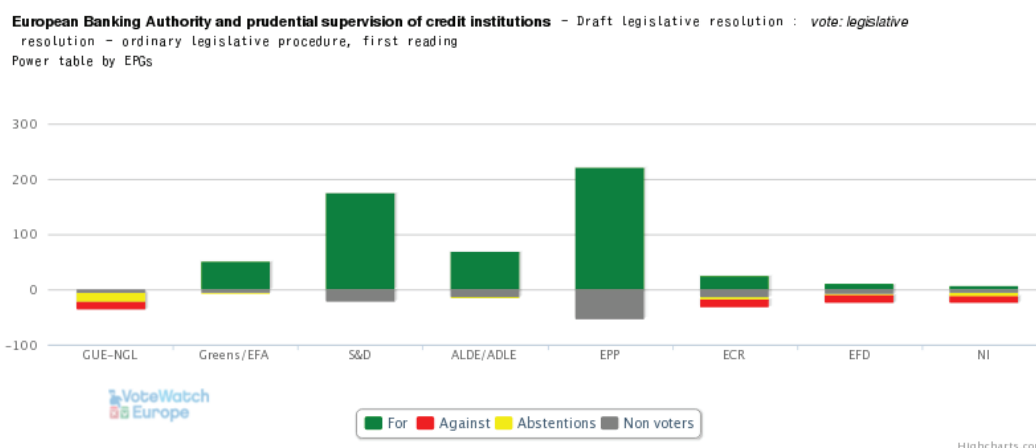
There has been much debate in the Netherlands about the conditions for establishing a banking union. A motion about a strong central European banking supervision mechanism, which was submitted in June 2012, was rejected by the more EU-critical parties, including

⁷⁵ Vote of the European Parliament on the legislative resolution on the specific tasks for the European Central Bank concerning policies relating to the prudential supervision of credit institutions, 12 September 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/specific-tasks-for-the-european-central-bank-concerning-policies-relating-to-the-prudential-supervis.html>.

the VVD.⁷⁶ However, in December 2012 a motion was adopted by the VVD, PvdA, CDA, D66, GroenLinks and 50Plus, which ‘calls upon the government, to plead in a European context, for a banking union in which all European banks take part, since the banking union is only completed when all banks operate under the same regime, with the ECB as the central regulator’.⁷⁷ During a plenary debate in early 2013, there was wide support for establishing a single supervisory mechanism as the first step in the process and as a precondition for the second step of creating a resolution instrument to assist banks in crisis.⁷⁸

What is noteworthy about these votes is the shift of the VVD at the national level. This can be explained by the change of government in the Netherlands, as the new coalition partner (the PvdA) is a more enthusiastic EU integration proponent than the previous coalition partners in the Rutte-I administration.

Table 12: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on a European Banking Authority and prudential supervision of credit institutions



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
Artikel 50	NI	-	0	1	0	0
CDA	EPP	+	3	0	0	2
ChristenUnie	ECR	-	0	1	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0
GroenLinks	Greens-EFA	+	2	0	0	1
Independent	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	3	0	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	4	0	0
SP	GUE-NGL	0	0	0	1	0
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	+	2	0	0	1

76 Motion by Member of Parliament Diederik Samsom *et al.*, 21 501-20 No. 648, 27 June 2012, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2012Z13121&did=2012D27839>.

77 Motion by Member of Parliament Alexander Pechtold *et al.*, 21 501-20 No. 175, 12 December 2012, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2012Z21778&did=2012D47074>.

78 Report of a parliamentary debate, ‘Council Economic and Financial Affairs’, 21 501-07 No. 1010, 24 January 2013.

5.11. Should the EU strengthen and extend its internal market for services?

The Rutte-I administration was a vocal proponent of further liberalization of the internal market for services, aiming to boost growth and competitiveness. In 2011, British Prime Minister David Cameron and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte expressed the wish to reinvigorate the Services Directive, which had been watered down because of disagreement among member states and implementation problems. The majority of the Dutch House of Representatives encouraged the Dutch government to enhance the services market and explore improvements in the current regulation.⁷⁹ On a critical note, some political parties expressed their concern that further liberalization would result in the arrival of low-cost workers from other EU member states and put pressure on the Dutch welfare state.

The European Parliament deplored the poor enforcement of the 2006 Services Directive and called for more efforts to promote free movement of services in a non-binding report. Among other things, the report called for the European Commission to identify and remove unjustified restrictions, such as discriminatory practices and double regulatory burdens aimed at protecting domestic markets. At the vote, the centre-left groups voted against, as most of their amendments stating that more consideration needs to be given to social and ecological conditions were rejected.⁸⁰ Two of the PvdA/S&D MEPs, however, supported the vote, thus disagreeing with the dominant party line.

Table 13: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the internal market for services



79 Motion by Members of Parliament B. van der Ham and Jan Jacob van Dijk, 31 579 No. 12, 11 February 2009, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2009Z02392&did=2009D06014>.

80 Vote of the European Parliament on the resolution on the internal market for services, 11 September 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/internal-market-for-services-motion-for-resolution-vote-resolution-as-a-whole.html>.

		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
<i>Artikel 50</i>	NI	-	0	1	0	0
CDA	EPP	+	3	0	0	2
<i>ChristenUnie</i>	ECR	+	1	0	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0
<i>GroenLinks</i>	Greens-EFA	-	0	3	0	0
Independent	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	2	1	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	4	0	0
SP	GUE-NGL	0	0	0	1	0
SGP	EFD	+	1	0	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0

5.12. Should the EU have its own diplomatic service?

The European External Action Service (EEAS) was established by the Lisbon Treaty and serves as a diplomatic service for the EU. It was officially launched on 1 December 2010. The EP resolution regarding the EEAS was passed by 549 votes in favour to 78 against, with only the radical left – the GUE–NGL – and the anti-European EFD group opposing it.⁸¹

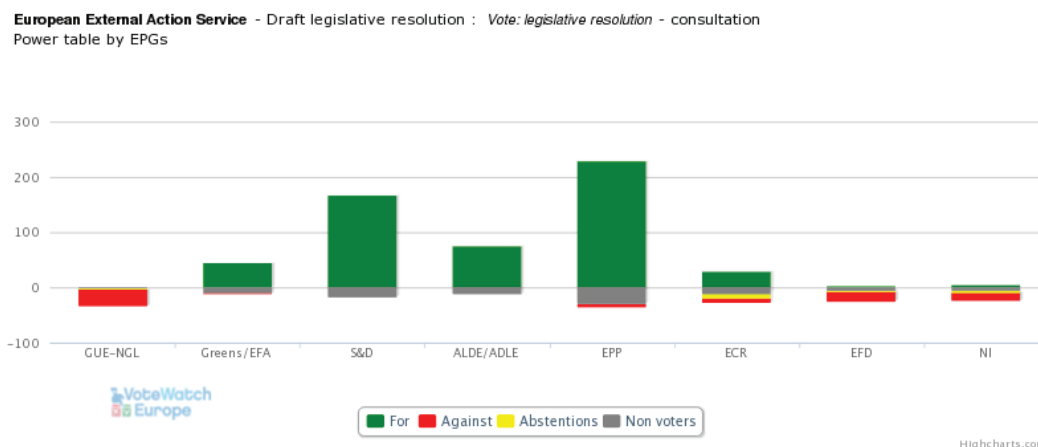
The creation of a joint European diplomatic service did not lead to political conflict in the Netherlands. Successive Dutch governments have spoken out in favour of the EEAS and a majority of the Dutch Lower House supported the government's position.⁸² In May 2011, a large majority supported a motion that asked for more efficient European cooperation in external affairs. Only the radical right PVV opposed the vote.⁸³ The voting patterns in the EP and the Dutch House of Representatives are very similar. However, while all of the parties except for the PVV favoured better external cooperation, the SP, SGP and CU, together with the PVV, opposed the establishment of the EEAS. Part of the explanation for the deviating voting behaviour is the different focus of the vote, with the vote in the Dutch Lower House being defined more broadly.

81 Vote of the European Parliament on the legislative resolution on the European External Action Service, 8 July 2010, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/european-external-action-service-draft-legislative-resolution-vote-legislative-resolution-consultati.html>.

82 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister and State Secretary of Foreign Affairs, 16 September 2008, 31 702 No. 1; and letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 21 501-02 No. 962, 19 April 2010.

83 Motion by Member of Parliament H.J. Ormel *et al.*, 32 502 No. 8, 26 May 2011, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail.jsp?id=2011Z11193&did=2011D27752>.

Table 14: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the European External Action Service



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
CDA	EPP	+	4	0	0	1
ChristenUnie	ECR	-	0	1	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0
GroenLinks	Greens-EFA	+	3	0	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	3	0	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	4	0	0
SP	GUE-NGL	-	0	2	0	0
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0

5.13. Should the EU have a genuine system of own resources for its budget?

In March 2013, the EP adopted a legislative resolution on the general guidelines for the preparation of the 2014 budget. A large majority of MEPs from the EPP, S&D, ALDE, the Greens–EFA and GUE–NGL groups voted in favour of an increase of the EU’s own resources.⁸⁴ According to the EP, the EU’s dependence on national contributions contradicts the Lisbon Treaty and can be especially detrimental in time of economic crisis. The EP supports the European Commission’s proposal to reform the system of financing the budget, with the introduction of new and genuine own resources, such as the FTT and a new EU VAT levy.

The Dutch government reacted to the proposals in the context of the MFF 2014–2020, stating that the Netherlands does not support the introduction of new autonomous income revenues for the EU.⁸⁵ The debate in the Dutch Lower House focused on the FTT (see section 5.4), as

⁸⁴ Vote of the European Parliament on the guidelines for the 2014 budget: Section III, 13 March 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/guidelines-for-the-2014-budget-section-iii-motion-for-a-resolution-paragraph-15.html#/>.

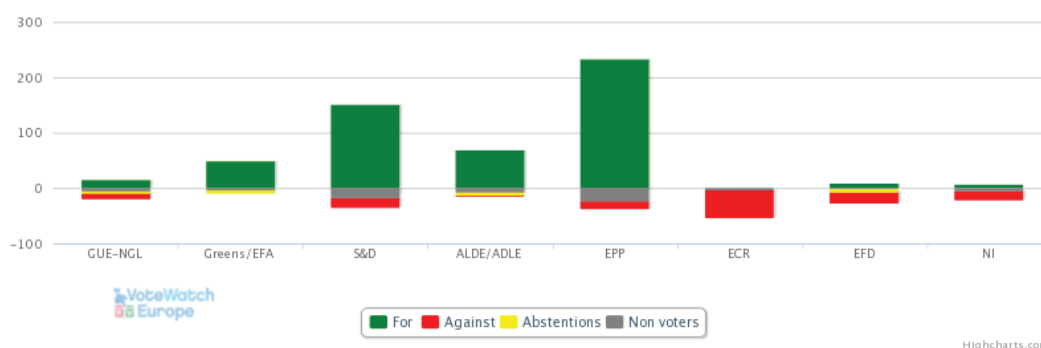
⁸⁵ Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 21 501-20 No. 553, 2 September 2011.

there is no concrete proposal for an EU VAT levy. In 2013, the Dutch government promised the House of Representatives to research possibilities for a system of own resources for the EU and the consequences for the Netherlands and the EU budget.⁸⁶ The results are not yet known.

Whereas at the European level the Dutch MEPs join the majority in favour of EU own resources, the debate at the national level is more reserved.

Table 15: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the guidelines for the 2014 budget

Guidelines for the 2014 budget - Section III - Motion for a resolution : Paragraph 15
Power table by EPGs



		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
CDA	EPP	+	5	0	0	0
ChristenUnie	ECR	-	0	1	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0
GroenLinks	Greens-EFA	+	3	0	0	0
Independent	GUE-NGL	-	0	2	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	2	0	0	1
PVV	NI	-	0	3	0	1
SP	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	+	2	0	0	1

5.14. Should the EU create a single market with the United States?

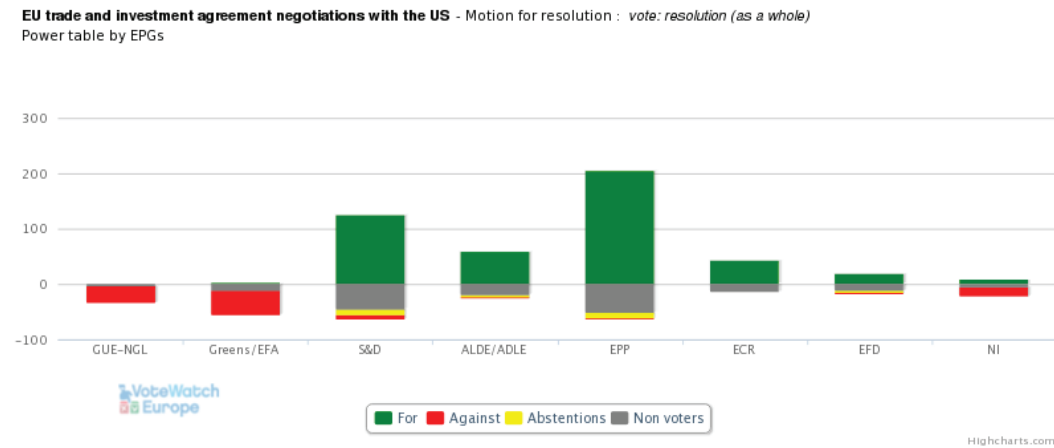
Negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the US started during summer 2013 and discussions are still young. In May 2013, a large majority of the MEPs backed the proposed EP position on the TTIP. Only the GUE-NGL,

86 Motion by Members of Parliament Alexander Pechtold and Henk Krol, 21 501-20 No. 742, 6 February 2014, available online at <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-21501-20-742.html>.

Greens–EFA and most non-attached members opposed the resolution.⁸⁷ Dutch delegations from the PvdA and *GroenLinks* were divided on the topic. This is striking because splits in the PvdA and *GroenLinks*’ European delegations are rare, despite internal disagreements.

The Rutte-II administration is in favour of a trade agreement between the EU and the US.⁸⁸ Concerns about the protection of the audio-visual sector were flagged, but the Dutch government decided that *a priori* exclusion of economic sectors was not desirable.⁸⁹ The Dutch Lower House adopted a motion that the Dutch government consults the Dutch Parliament on approval of the TTIP, even though this is not strictly required for a treaty between the EU and the US.⁹⁰ To ensure the democratic legitimacy of EU decision-making and because of the potential impact of TTIP, the national parliament wants to be closely involved. Only the VVD and MP Louis Bontes, a former member of the PVV, opposed the motion.

Table 16: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the EU trade and investment agreement negotiations with the United States



87 Vote of the European Parliament on resolution on the EU Trade and Investment Agreement negotiations with the US, 23 May 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/eu-trade-and-investment-agreement-negotiations-with-the-us-motion-for-resolution-vote-resolution-as-.html>.

88 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, 21 501-02 No. 1250, 26 April 2013.

89 Letter to the Dutch Parliament from the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science, 21 501-34 No. 207, 8 May 2013.

90 Motion by Members of Parliament Jesse Klaver and Jasper van Dijk, 21 501-02 No. 1338, 20 February 2014, available online at <http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail.jsp?id=2014Z03362&did=2014D06610>.

		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
<i>Artikel 50</i>	NI	+	1	0	0	0
CDA	EPP	+	4	0	0	1
<i>ChristenUnie</i>	ECR	+	1	0	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0
<i>GroenLinks</i>	Greens-EFA	-	1	2	0	0
Independent	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
PvdA	S&D	*	1	1	0	1
PVV	NI	-	0	4	0	0
SP	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
SGP	EFD	+	1	0	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	+	2	0	0	1

5.15. Should the EU allow temporary reintroduction of border controls at internal borders?

Frustrations over Schengen and the quality of border controls made it to the top of the political agenda when an increasing number of asylum seekers came to the shores of Italy and the borders of Greece. In response to the alleged misuse of the Schengen mechanism in some countries, several EU member states expressed their desire for the possibility of a temporary reintroduction of border checks. The European Commission presented its proposals to strengthen Schengen governance by reforming the Schengen borders' code – including rules on the temporary reintroduction of border control at internal borders – and the Schengen evaluation mechanism.

Overall, the Dutch government and a majority of the House of Representatives favoured reform of Schengen governance. There were strong doubts, however, about the proposed increased competences for the European institutions in the evaluation mechanism and compliance with the subsidiarity principle.⁹¹ The Lower House consequently decided on a so-called parliamentary reserve for the Schengen governance package, which means that the Dutch government cannot take any irreversible decisions in the Brussels negotiations until after a debate between the minister and the relevant committee. The coalition parties VVD and CDA, supported by the PVV and SP, stated clearly that border control is first and foremost a responsibility of the EU member states. The PvdA seemed to agree.⁹² Only D66 and *GroenLinks* expressed active support for strengthening the role of the European Commission within Schengen governance.⁹³

Much to the dismay of the European Parliament but in line with Dutch preferences, the Council chose the intergovernmental option instead of the supranational alternative. Consequently, the EP blocked progress on seven related policy dossiers in the area of justice and home affairs for several months. Only when the Council agreed to consult the EP on the issue did negotiations continue at the end of 2012.⁹⁴

91 D66 and GroenLinks did not support it because of subsidiarity objections.

92 Report of the parliamentary debate, 'New Commission Initiatives and Initiatives of the Member States of the European Union', 22 112 No. 1283, 9 November 2011.

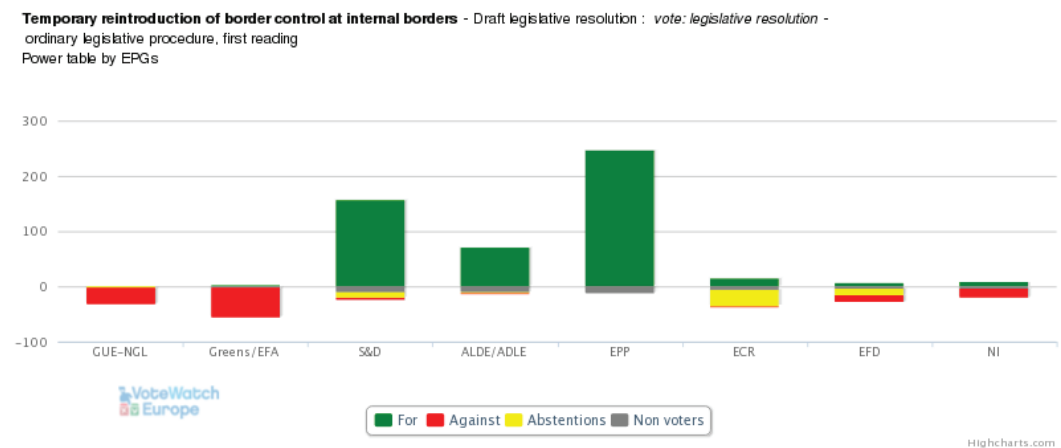
93 Report of the parliamentary debate, 22 112 No. 1283, 9 November 2011.

94 Report of the parliamentary debate, 'Council Justice and Home Affairs', 32 317 No. 142, 24 October 2012.

In June 2013, the European Parliament passed a legislative resolution on the provision for common rules on the temporary reintroduction of border controls at internal borders. The EP called for increased protection of the EU citizens’ right to move freely within Schengen borders and for a better evaluation of compliance with Schengen’s rules. The resolution passed with 506 votes in favour to 121 against. The winning majority was formed by a centre coalition of the EPP, S&D and ALDE.⁹⁵ The Greens and the GUE–NGL groups mainly voted against, as they remained dissatisfied with the result of the inter-institutional negotiations. Most EFD members also voted against, but they were explicitly asking for the reintroduction of border checks and better national control on immigration.

Comparing the EP vote to the Dutch debates, it is notable that *GroenLinks* and D66 expressed similar views in the national debates regarding an increased role for the European institutions, whereas at the European level they voted differently. In the end, D66 followed the ALDE line in favour of the vote. The MEP from the SP also supported the EP resolution, against the GUE–NGL line.

Table 17: Voting Behaviour of the Dutch MEPs on the temporary reintroduction of border controls at internal borders



95 Vote of the European Parliament on the legislative resolution on the temporary reintroduction of border controls at internal borders, 12 June 2013, available online at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/temporary-reintroduction-of-border-control-at-internal-borders-draft-legislative-resolution-vote-leg.html###vote-tabs-list-2>.

		Political Line	For	Against	Abstentions	Non-voters
<i>Artikel 50</i>	NI	-	0	1	0	0
CDA	EPP	+	5	0	0	0
<i>ChristenUnie</i>	ECR	-	0	1	0	0
D66	ALDE/ADLE	+	2	0	0	1
<i>GroenLinks</i>	Greens-EFA	-	0	3	0	0
Independent	GUE-NGL	-	0	1	0	0
PvdA	S&D	+	3	0	0	0
PVV	NI	-	0	4	0	0
SP	GUE-NGL	+	1	0	0	0
SGP	EFD	-	0	1	0	0
VVD	ALDE/ADLE	+	3	0	0	0

6. Analysis and Concluding Remarks

This comparison of the fifteen European Parliament votes to the debates in the national Dutch Parliament demonstrates mostly parallel voting behaviour. Divergences are relatively rare in the final roll-call votes, indicating that the position and ideological ideas of the national political parties mostly concur with the lines of their political group in the European Parliament. The positioning of the parties on the left/right and the for/against cleavages is hence identical in both parliaments.

Important as this conclusion is, however, this parallelism is misleading. The debates, votes and working processes of the Dutch House of Representatives are vitally different from the European Parliament, making any comparison flawed. First, the conclusion that national and European political parties share the same views would be quite remarkable, considering the differences in party programmes and rhetoric between, for example, VVD Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and ALDE leader Guy Verhofstadt. Verhofstadt is a proponent of a federal Europe, while Rutte promotes his national agenda for a more focused EU, denouncing federal dreams. Similarly, the levels of ambition for a social Europe differ between the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the Dutch PvdA. While PES presidential candidate Martin Schulz promotes his vision for a social Europe with a fair redistribution of wealth and opportunities across Europe, the PvdA is less ambitious in advocating social indicators only. Apparently, these different views between the Dutch national delegations and their political families on the course of European integration, or the goals in the next five years, do not surface in the votes on final policy decisions.

Second, applying the classical cleavages – for/against strengthening the EU institutions and left/right political choices – to the voting behaviour in the Dutch Lower House can be misleading. A coalition very often combines more than one argument or interest. Opposition to an EU measure can be inspired by an anti-EU position, subsidiarity concerns, national interests, or support for the government coalition. The PVV is a clear opponent of European integration, opposing all fifteen votes in the European Parliament and supporting only those motions of the Dutch House of Representatives in which the Dutch government was asked to oppose further European integration. Yet Dutch opposition to EU regulation on maternity leave, or the increase of EU own resources, relates to concerns about subsidiarity. National interests determined the reserved positions on the FTT and Eurobonds, where Dutch national parliamentarians requested strict conditions, or decided to oppose the measure in order to protect the national financial market. Similarly, unconditional support for EU measures is rare in the Dutch House of Representatives. A pro-EU position is often accompanied by a multitude of conditions and checks to defend specific interests.

In any case, some patterns can be distinguished in the voting behaviour of the Dutch national political parties. The centre-left and centre-right of the Dutch political spectrum are more supportive of European integration than the flanks. A number of votes demonstrate unity between the PvdA, *GroenLinks*, CDA and D66, sometimes also joined by the VVD. For example, these five parties supported the motion in the Dutch House of Representatives on the conditions for a banking union. Also in opposition to more EU-critical votes, for example

the vote on categorically ruling out Eurobonds, these five parties voted together. The same voting behaviour was demonstrated in the European Parliament, where the five parties favoured both measures in line with the position of their political group. Curiously, in the same two policy dossiers, the VVD has joined the more EU-critical parties – the SP, PVV, CU, SGP and PvdD – in a different vote. During the right-wing Rutte-I administration, the VVD's tone was much more critical in order to safeguard the PVV's support. In the current Dutch government coalition of the PvdA and VVD, however, the Dutch government can be expected to formulate a centrist position more often.

There is a sharp and direct confrontation between supporters and opponents of deepened integration in the Dutch House of Representatives. The more EU-critical parties, which are not anti-EU per se, are spread across the left-right political spectrum. As the coalition parties generally aim at broad support for policy choices, these smaller opposition parties have the power to influence the tone of the debate in the Dutch Lower House. As a result, the political parties at the centre are sometimes reserved and tend to adopt more conservative rhetoric on EU affairs. This direct confrontation is not visible in the European Parliament, where the pro-European centrist groups have a comfortable majority, further limiting the potential influence of the smaller political groups at their flanks.

The left/right cleavage is not very prominent in the voting behaviour on EU matters in the Dutch House of Representatives. The national vote on nuclear energy serves as an example, where the PvdA, SP, PvdD, and *GroenLinks* supported the closure of the single Dutch nuclear plant. These same parties on the left side of the political spectrum also voted in favour of the FTT, favouring a larger contribution from the financial sector. Within this left coalition, views on EU integration differ substantially. Whereas the SP and PvdD are more EU-critical (opposing Eurobonds, the MFF and EU own resources), *GroenLinks* supports a European federation. In the votes that have been analysed in this report, we do not see a right-wing coalition, which would theoretically consist of the VVD, PVV, SGP, CU and perhaps the CDA or D66. The first four do sometimes vote together, but in those cases are often joined by the left-wing SP, in opposing deepened integration. Again, these coalitions often represent a mixture of interests.

Applying the classical for/against strengthening of EU institutions and left/right cleavages to the voting behaviour in the national Dutch Parliament could make the ideological and political differences more comprehensible, but often it would be an oversimplification of the considerations and positioning of the political parties.

Third, generalization in the European Parliament about cleavages is also questionable, as the votes represent the outcome of negotiations among the political families and with the Council and European Commission (with a sharp increase of EU legislation decided in the first reading). In the European Parliament's votes on crisis measures, the four largest political groups – the EPP, S&D, ALDE and Greens-EFA – act quite cohesively, defending their political groups' compromises and the outcome of negotiations.⁹⁶ The ideological differences, which are clearly stated in their election manifestos, are smoothed out and hardly visible in the roll-call votes. The left/right cleavages are probably more relevant in an earlier phase of committee negotiations, such as between the EPP and S&D, but this is

96 S. Otjes (2014), 'How the Economic Crisis Changed the Lines of Political Conflict in the EU', in *Intereconomics*, 2014: 1, pp. 19–24.

not shown in the outcome of votes. Because of the high number of seats held by these two groups, a grand coalition that is close to the centre is often the most viable option, thus increasing the likeliness that the EP will add some pro-European integration flavour to the proposal. This division of power limits the influence of the political forces at the flanks, where the EFD and GUE–NGL often find themselves in opposition. Political discussions along the classical cleavages of left/right and for/against strengthening the EU institutions mostly take place behind closed doors in the European Parliament, and are hard to distil from the voting behaviour.

Finally, the dynamics of political debate in the European Parliament and the Dutch Lower House are different, further complicating any comparison of voting behaviour. The European Parliament's procedures following Commission proposals are formal discussions with extensive reports and detailed legislative amendments, led by the rapporteurs. Plenary votes mark the end of the legislative role of the EP. Conversely, *ex-ante* scrutiny of the Dutch House of Representatives takes place in direct, more informal discussions with the (prime) minister. Motions are often used to shape government positions in the Council, urging the minister to demand certain conditions for their support. Besides these differences in roles and procedures, the timing of the debates at the national and European levels does not coincide. Discussions in the Dutch Lower House deal with Commission proposals or Council agendas, but a connection with the European Parliament's actions is very rare. Yet all of the policy issues subject to the fifteen EP votes were debated in the Dutch House of Representatives, although with different accents and with some holding higher political relevance than others.

In conclusion, the Dutch House of Representatives and the European Parliament have different roles, instruments, goals, procedures, timing and influence in the EU decision-making processes, making a comparison of voting behaviour flawed. In both parliaments, voting behaviour is determined by political ideology, group pressure, coalition or opposition roles, and also national reflexes. Whereas these cleavages are at the forefront of the Dutch national debate, the result of the European Parliament's negotiations, as presented in the voting outcome, do not show these influences. The impact of European policy issues on politics in the Dutch Lower House is determined by national considerations and moments for national influence in the Brussels debate. As national discussions, votes and democratic control are disconnected from the democratic debate and legislative function of the European Parliament. What remains is a picture of parallelism, but the tones of the actual debates at the national level differ from those in the European Parliament.