EU INSTITUTIONS & POLICIES

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament:
Ideological Identity and Cohesion

Antonis PAPAKOSTAS & Spyros BLAVOUKOS

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Antonis PAPAKOSTAS

former EU official; Research Associate, ELIAMEP

Spyros BLAVOUKOS

Professor, Athens University of Economics and Business; Senior Research Fellow and Head of the 'Ariane Condellis' European Program, ELIAMEP

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Abstract

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the outcome of the June 2024 European Parliament elections, focusing on the characteristics of national political formations that are represented in Strasbourg and the identity of the political groups in the European Parliament. This analysis is based on two axes of ideological and political nature: (1) the political spectrum (Left to Right), and (2) the disposition of the parties toward European integration. The paper makes use of data from the European Election Study 2024 (EES) exploring EP political groups' (lack of) homogeneity and the varying degree of their internal cohesion.

Introduction

The relatively smooth process of approving the new Commission by the European Parliament and the official start of President von der Leyen's second term in office brought to an end the year long political agitation at the EU level. These developments unfolded with the elections for new members of the European Parliament, in June, peaked with backstage negotiations over the formation of the new Commission over summer, and concluded with its approval in November. During this period, pessimistic forecasts predicted significant political crises, stalemates, delays, and even institutional derailments. Such forecasts gained momentum amid concerns for the role of Hungary's Council Presidency, with its "challenging" past and present relationship with the EU institutions and other member-states as well as the ongoing geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges that would not wait for the EU's lengthy internal political processes.

As we can safely say today, these dire predictions did not materialize, which testifies for the institutional stability of the EU's political system. Despite ongoing turbulence in the broader international environment—including new dimensions of global polarization following Trump's re-election in the U.S., significant changes in the Middle East, and intensified hostilities in the Ukrainian conflict—the EU completed its internal political processes without disruption. However, the same cannot be said for internal political developments in countries like France and Germany, which are intertwined with and influenced by European politics. Domestic political unrest in governing parties underscores widespread dissatisfaction with local, regional, national, and European government policies.

Against the backdrop of a changing political environment across Europe, analyzing the European election results provides an opportunity to detect shifts and perceptions of political reality in member states, identify converging dynamics, and observe divergent trends. These observations highlight European citizens' priorities, voting criteria, and assessments of the political ideological identity of the participating parties. These aspects are crucial for understanding the dynamics of shaping EU political developments and designing policies that address citizens' needs and concerns.

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of specific data emerging from the European Parliament elections, focusing on the characteristics of national political formations that reached Strasbourg and the identity of political groups in the European Parliament. This analysis is based on two axes of ideological and political nature: (1) the political spectrum from Left to Right, and (2) the disposition against European integration. The following section outlines the study's empirical basis, which relies on findings from the European Election Study 2024 (EES). Subsequently, demographic data about election participation and the new political geography of the EP are analyzed. The third section—the paper's main contribution to the analysis of the next EU political cycle—explores EP political groups' (lack of) homogeneity based on the axes mentioned above and their internal cohesion.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

Methodology and Empirical Data

This study draws upon findings from the European Election Study 2024 [European Election Study 2024 (EES),](#) a post-election survey conducted in all 27 EU member states after the European Parliament elections. It also incorporates data from the latest Eurobarometer. The EES is an international scientific research program involving leading European universities, focusing on European elections, political behavior, and public attitudes toward the EU.[1] The program collects extensive data through surveys and analyses, addressing issues like voter participation, political behavior, influencing factors, attitudes toward EU integration, and the dynamics of European parties and coalitions. Since 1979, the EES has been conducting systematic studies on EP elections, providing comparative data that highlights similarities and differences of voting behaviour among EU member states. This study relies on survey results conducted after the June 2024 European elections, involving 25,904 citizens from all EU member states. The sample comprised 1000 participants per member-state, with the exception of Malta, Luxembourg and Cyprus, in which 500 citizens were approached. The sample was stratified according to gender, age and geographical dispersion.

The survey extensively recorded voters' ideological preferences on the "Left-Right" axis and their stance on European integration. Specifically, participants were asked to identify their ideological orientation and that of their country's parties participating in the EP elections. Additionally, their stance on EU integration was recorded, with respondents indicating whether they personally supported further integration and asking them to assess their national parties' positions on the matter. This analysis maps national parties' political ideological position as well as their stance on the European integration process, offering significant insights into the parties' dispositions, at least as far as voters in each member state perceive them. Considering these parties' integration into various EP political groups, their political power and influence, and their ideological and European direction, we can form a clear and comprehensive picture of each EP political group's role and dynamics, contributing to a deeper understanding of the EP's political reality.

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[1] Academic and research institutes participating in the project comprise among others the University of Amsterdam, London School of Economics, GESIS Leibniz Institute, Newcastle University, University of Kent, and IE University.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

Turnout, Political Groups, and the Campaign

**Turnout by year**

Final results

45.47%	42.97%	42.61%	50.66%	50.74%
2004	2009	2014	2019	2024
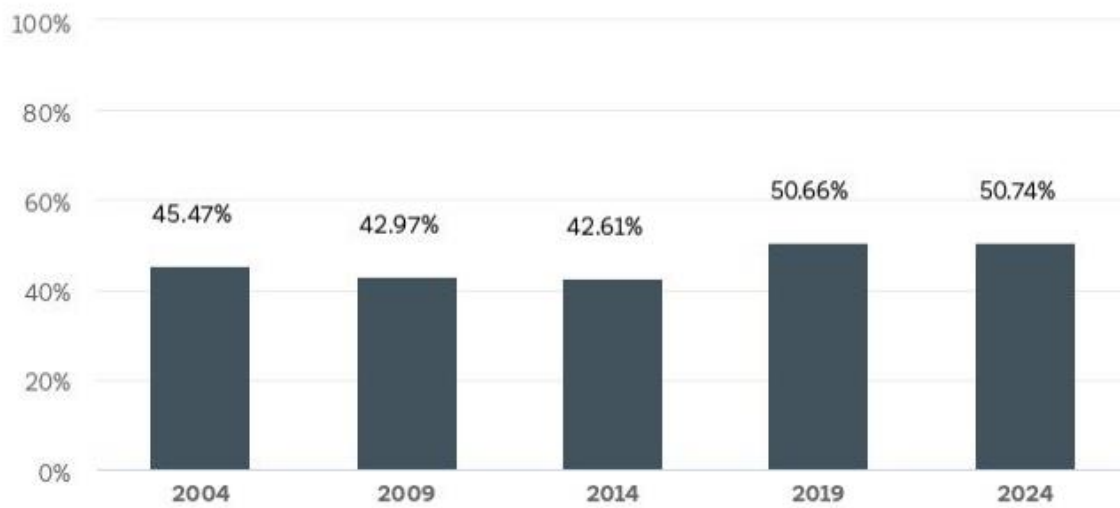
Source: Provided by Verian for the European Parliament

European Parliament

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

Acknowledgeably, there is a general decline in voter turnout across elections, regardless of the level, reflecting broader political disengagement in European society. Turnout has traditionally been lower for European elections than for national elections. In the most recent 2024 European elections, voter turnout was 50.74%, slightly higher than 2019's official 50.66%. However, this slight increase is misleading because the 2019 turnout included the United Kingdom, which was in the process of leaving the EU and recorded a very low turnout (37%), significantly affecting the average. Taking the UK out and comparing the remaining 27 member-states, an absolute drop of two percentage points is observed (from 52.74% in 2019 to 50.74% in 2024).

The June 2024 elections saw participation from a large number of political parties and independent candidates representing a broad ideological and social spectrum. Voters chose among parties advocating conservative, radical, pro-European, and Eurosceptic views, as well as transnational or localist tendencies. Additionally, candidates employing satirical or humorous approaches to the democratic process participated. The proportional representation system allowed over 200 parties to be represented in the European Parliament, promoting a diversity of opinions.

Despite this diversity, most national political parties joined pre-existing EP political groups, as these groups enjoy particular privileges—such as budget funding, organizational support, and increased political influence through agenda-setting and parliamentary procedures. Forming a new political group requires at least 25 MEPs and representation from at least seven EU member states.
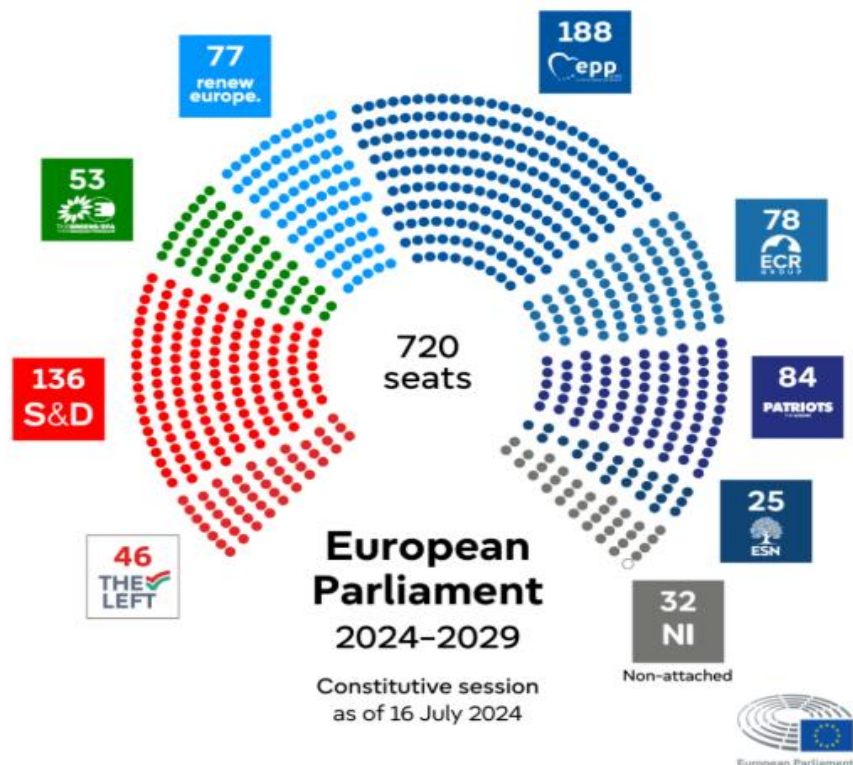
The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

While most political groups in the EP remained stable, notable changes occurred. An existing political group, "Identity and Democracy" (ID), dissolved, and two new groups emerged: "Patriots for Europe" (PfE) and "Europe of Sovereign Nations" (ESN). Both newcomers are characterized by Eurosceptic positions and anti-European rhetoric. The PfE, created from members of the dissolved ID group led by Marine Le Pen and Viktor Orbán, is now the third-largest force in the EP. The ESN, initiated by Germany's far-right AfD party, is smaller but more intensely anti-European, strongly opposing EU policies.

Although MEPs in these groups have often criticized the EU for opaque policy-making processes and a *modus operandi* lacking accountability, the formation of PfE and ESN was the outcome of behind-the-scenes negotiations raising significant transparency concerns. For example, PfE was formed immediately after the elections, eventually reaching 84 MEPs, making it the third-largest EP group. Its three founding pillars include Viktor Orbán's *FIDESZ* party (previously independent after leaving the EPP in 2021), the *ANO 2011* party from the Czech Republic (formerly part of the Renew group), and Herbert Kickl's Austrian party (formerly in ID). Notably, no participating parties pre-announced the group's creation. Despite spearheading this initiative, Marine Le Pen's RN party joined only after France's national elections to avoid undermining the more moderate profile that had built domestically.

The election campaign across member states focused almost exclusively on internal political disputes, effectively turning the European elections into informal referenda on government policies. Besides the effect on governing parties, however, opposition forces also faced challenges, like, for example, in Greece, where the political leaders of the two major opposition parties were heavily contested post-election.

In many member states, national formations (not necessarily parties) were created without a clear connection to European political groups, leaving voters unaware of which political group elected MEPs would join. For example, in the Czech Republic, the SPOLU coalition elected six MEPs, three of whom have joined the EPP and three others the ECR group—two groups with different European integration stances. In Italy, the coalition *Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra* succeeded in having 6 MEPs elected, four of whom have joined the pro-Europe Green Party, while the remaining two have become members of the more Eurosceptic political group of the Left. Similar phenomena were observed in Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and Spain. Conversely, in Sweden, Romania, Lithuania, and others, parties supporting seemingly opposing political agendas have ended up in the same political group in the EP.

In a nutshell, voters often elected parties without apparent European affiliations, exacerbating confusion about the precise dynamics of each ideological pole in the EP. This highlights the absence of substantive dialogue about Europe and the European integration process during the pre-electoral campaign. Unless political parties clarify in advance which political group will join, European elections will continue being perceived as tools of internal political contestation.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

Political Groups in the EP: Mapping Their Political and Ideological Base

The composition of EP political groups reveals a mosaic of political voices and opinions, often contradictory and conflicting. To conduct an in-depth analysis of their political and ideological base, derived from the composite parties that comprise them, this study relies on two key questions of the EES survey results. The first asked voters to place political parties and themselves on a scale from 0 (far-left) to 10 (far-right). The answers to this question are represented on the horizontal axis in subsequent diagrams. The second question addressed European integration, asking respondents to evaluate their national parties' positions and their own opinions about EU integration's trajectory, again on a scale from 0 to 10, where zero indicates "integration has already gone too far" and 10 indicates "integration should be furthered." The answers to this question are plotted on the vertical axis.

It is essential methodologically to stress that the identification process has a powerful subjective element. However, despite such subjectivity, the responses provide valuable insights into citizens' perceptions of parties' relative positions. The methodology highlights the relational use of terms like 'Left' and 'Right' in different member-states and political cultures. As we will see in the analysis of the composition of the EP political groups, it is not rare that parties identified by the participants in the survey as centrist parties or center-left ones at the national level join a 'right' or 'center-right' political group in the EP and vice versa. In other words, what is considered 'Left' and 'Right' depends on the historical and socio-political context of each national demos.

The results enable mapping the two primary dimensions of EP political groups—ideological alignment and positions on European integration. For each political group, we have created a graph summarizing the survey findings. Parties with elected MEPs that have joined different EP political groups are classified in all groups according to the number of their MEPs in each group. Finally, the mapping includes almost all parties that participated in the European elections, except for small national parties with limited influence before the elections. These parties were not included in the pre-election survey but still managed to elect representatives to the new EP. Despite its methodological shortcomings, this approach offers a clear and structured tool for analyzing the EP's new political geography.

The following Table, taken from the official webpage of the EP[2], offers a comprehensive overview of MEPs per member state and political group as the figures stand at the time of publication. Due to the existing MEPs' mobility across political groups, these numbers may change marginally without substantially affecting the core ideological and political identity of each group. The analysis of the composition of each group follows after the Table. The numbers in the following Table reflect the roster of the EP political groups on 6 September 2024, having incorporated minor shifts that occurred after July 2024. This explains the small divergence with the Figure above in the text, which depicts the situation as it was on 16 July 2024 at the constitutive session of the EP for the new five-year term. Following this comprehensive Table, we will analyse each political group separately.

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[2] For the results of the EP elections, see https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/. For the MEPs per member-state and political group, see https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search/table.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

Country	EPP	S&D	PfE	ECR	Renew	Greens/EFA	The Left	ESN	NI	Total
Belgium	3	4	3	3	5	2	2			22
Bulgaria	6	2		1	3			3	2	17
Czechia	5		9	3		1		1	2	21
Denmark	2	3	1	1	4	3	1			15
Germany	31	14			8	15	4	14	10	96
Estonia	2	2		1	2					7
Ireland	4	1			6		3			14
Greece	7	3	1	2			4		4	21
Spain	22	20	6	2	1	4	4		1	60
France	6	13	30	4	13	5	9	1		81
Croatia	6	4		1		1				12
Italy	9	21	8	24		4	10			76
Cyprus	2	1		1			1		1	6
Latvia	2	1	1	3	1	1				9
Lithuania	3	2		2	2	1		1		11
Luxembourg	2	1		1	1	1				6
Hungary	7	2	11					1		21
Malta	3	3								6
Netherlands	6	4	6	1	7	6	1			31
Austria	5	5	6		2	2				20
Poland	23	3	2	20	1			3	1	53
Portugal	7	8	2		2		2			21
Romania	10	11		6	3	1			2	33
Slovenia	5	1			2	1				9
Slovakia	1				6			2	6	15
Finland	4	2		1	3	2	3			15
Sweden	5	5		3	3	3	2			21
EU	188	136	86	80	75	53	46	26	29	719

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

**European People's Party – EPP**
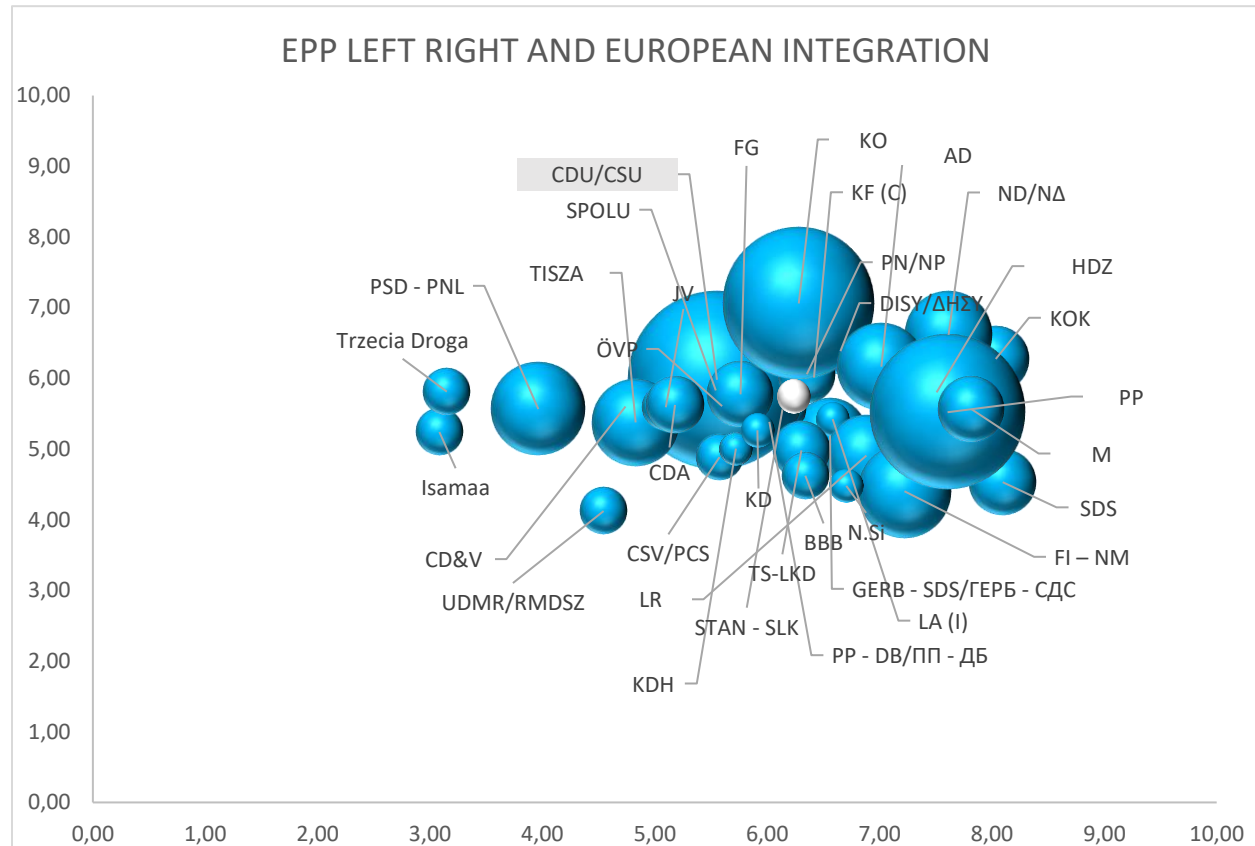
The **European People's Party (EPP)** political group comprises parties from all EU member states and has 188 MEPs, making it the most significant force in the European Parliament. The largest parties in the group are Germany's CDU/CSU, with 29 MEPs, followed by Poland's KO, with 23 MEPs, and Spain's PP, with 22 MEPs. The white sphere in the diagram indicates the center of gravity of the EPP political group.

The average score for ideological placement (Left-Right) is 6.20, positioning the EPP in the center-right space. However, there is significant internal variation. Parties like Slovenia's SDS (8.1) and Finland's KOK (8.03) take a more right-leaning stance. In contrast, Estonian voters place the Estonian party ISAMAA essentially on the left side of the political spectrum (3.08).

The average support for European integration is 5.75, which is considered relatively high. More substantial support is observed in parties such as Poland's KO (7.06) and Greece's *New Democracy* (6.61). In contrast, the lowest support is recorded by Slovenia's N.Si and SDS (4.12 and 4.48, respectively) and Romania's UDMR/RMDSZ (4.12). Nevertheless, despite differences, the distribution of support for European integration is relatively uniform. The EPP maintains a high level of support for European integration despite the national ideological divergence of its parties. Despite its ideological diversity, support for the EU remains one of the main factors of cohesion and unification within the EPP group.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats - S&D
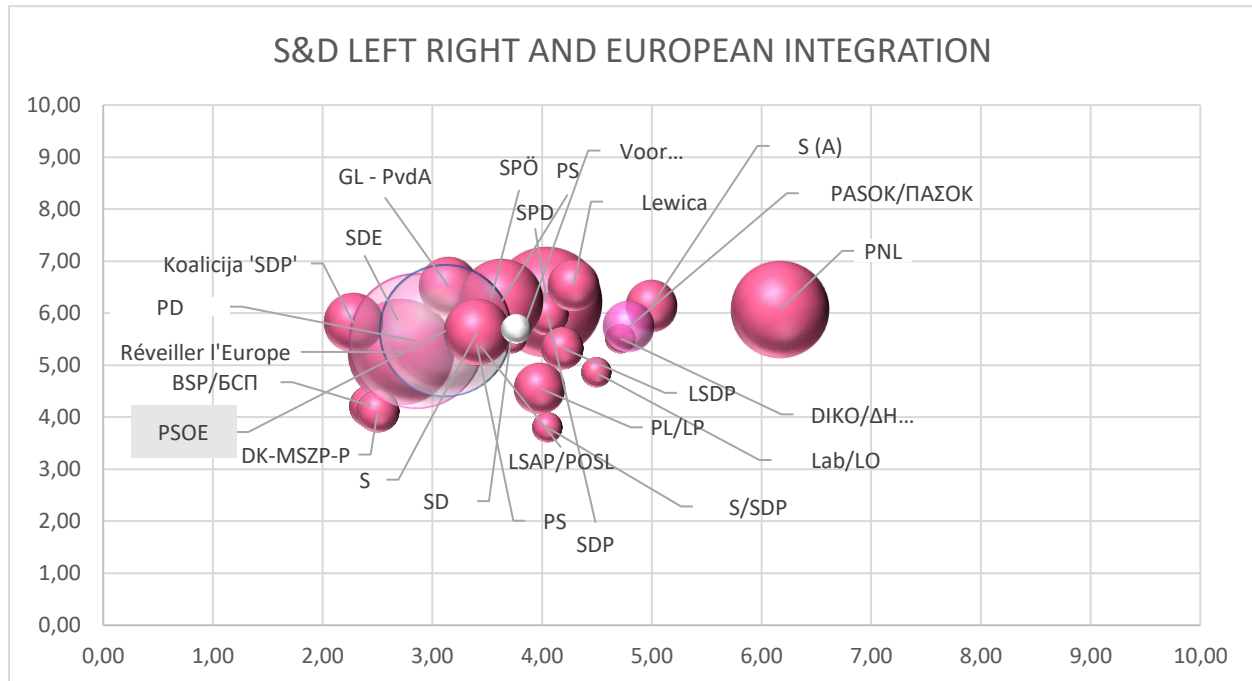
This group is the second-largest political group in the European Parliament, with 136 MEPs from 25 member states. The strongest parties in the group are the Italian PD, with 21 MEPs, and the Spanish PSOE, with 20 MEPs.

The average ideological position of the S&D parties is 3.76, placing the group clearly in the center-left space. On this axis, the parties from Bulgaria (BSP) and Croatia (*Koalicija 'SDP'*) are the most 'left-leaning' with 2.44 and 2.28, respectively. DIKO (Cyprus) and PASOK (Greece) are closer to the center with 4.71 and 4.79 respectively. The right-wing party in this group is the PNL, from Romania, with a score of 6.17, which is considered 'right-wing' in the Romanian political scene but belongs to this political group of the EP.

Regarding support for European integration, the average value is 5.70, similar to that of the EPP. The most 'pro-European' parties are *GL - PvdA* (Netherlands) (6.57) and *Lewica* (Poland) (6.52), while on the opposite side with the lowest support for the EU are BSP (Bulgaria) (4.22) and the *DK–MSZP–Dialogue Alliance* coalition (Hungary) (4.11). The parties in the group generally show a positive attitude towards the EU, with minor differences mainly stemming from national political peculiarities rather than ideological divergences.

Overall, the Socialist Group, despite its political heterogeneity, shows cohesion in its support for European integration and remains ideologically center-left.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

Patriots for Europe - PfE


PfE LEFT RIGHT AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
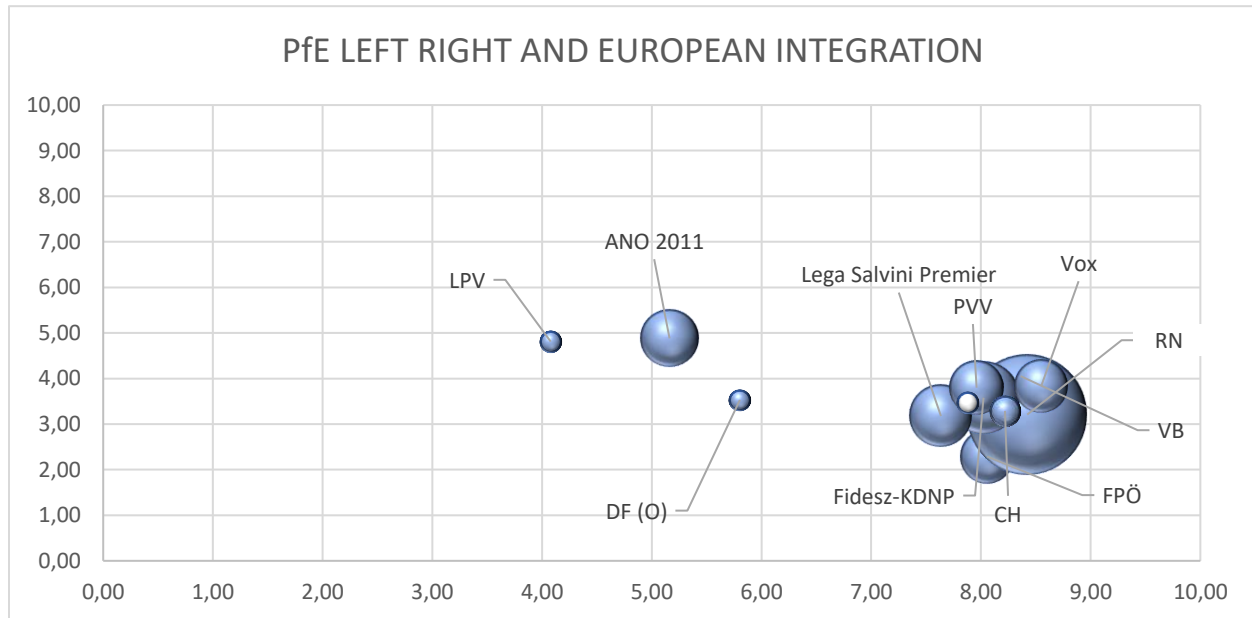
The "Patriots for Europe" (PfE) group includes parties distinguished by their right-wing and far-right ideological positions, with Eurosceptic or anti-European views. It is the third largest political group in the European Parliament, with 86 MEPs, although its geographical origin is limited, as it includes parties from only 13 member states.

The average ideological position of the group is 7.87, placing it clearly in the Right/far-right space. The most extreme positions are recorded in parties such as Vox (Spain) with 8.55, Le Pen's RN (France) with 8.42, and CH (Portugal) with 8.22. In contrast, more centrist positions are held by ANO 2011 (Czech Republic) with 5.16 and LPV (Latvia) with 4.08. Notably, as mentioned before, ANO 2011 was a member of the liberal group in the previous term of the European Parliament.

The group's stance towards European integration is generally negative, with an average support of only 3.18. The parties FPÖ (Austria) with 2.29 and RN (France) with 3.21 share the most negative positions. On the other hand, LPV (Latvia), with 4.81, and ANO 2011 (Czech Republic), with 4.88, stand out for their comparatively more positive stance.

The group's geographical and ideological diversity is much smaller compared to the two largest political groups. Le Pen's party, with 30 MEPs, and Orbán's party exert strong influence, controlling the absolute majority of members. Orbán's presence as the Prime Minister of Hungary ensures the group's influence in the European Council, making it a significant factor in shaping policies at the EU level.

European Conservatives and Reformists – ECR
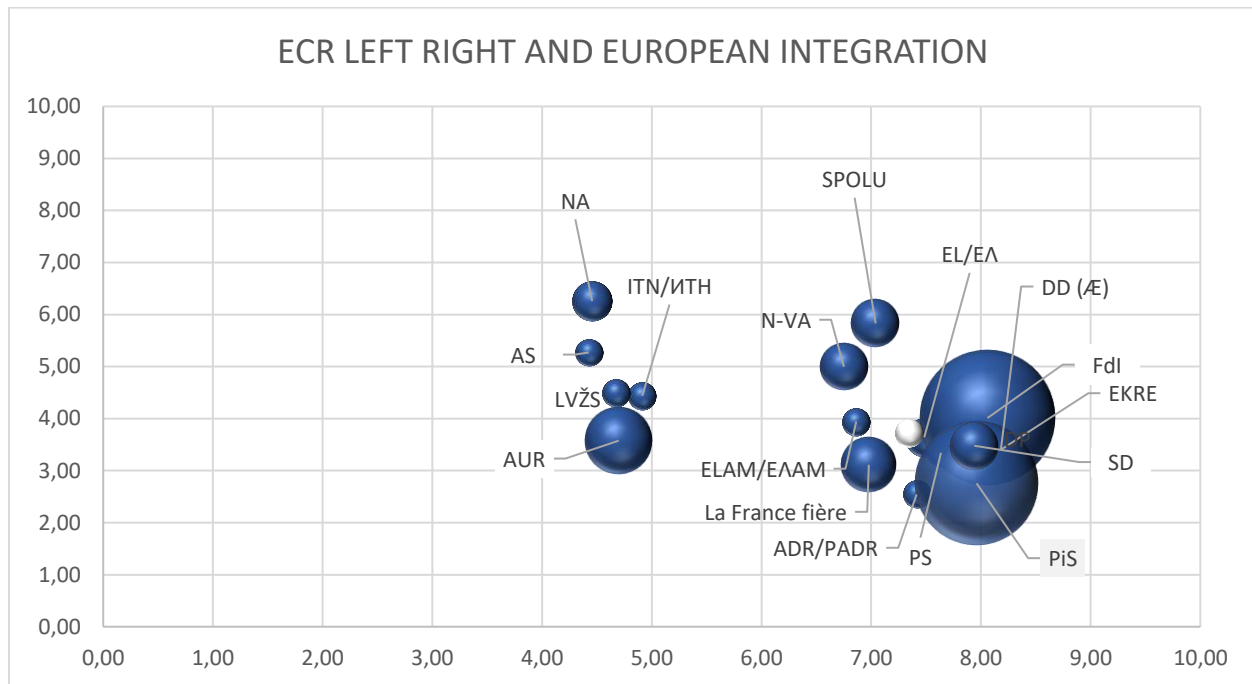
The "European Conservatives and Reformists" (ECR) group mainly consists of parties that adopt conservative positions and express reservations and concerns about further European integration and strengthening central power in Brussels. The group features representatives from 18 member states and has a significant presence in the Commission through the Italian Vice-President of the Commission, Raffaele Fitto, who comes from the party *Fratelli d'Italia* (FdI) of the Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni. This party is the most significant force in this political group, with 24 MEPs.

The average ideological position of this group is 7.35, placing it also in the right-wing space. Parties with more extreme right-wing positions include EKRE (Estonia), with a score of 8.18, DP (Croatia), with 8.33, and FdI (Italy), with 8.06. On the other hand, more center-right positions are held by five parties, namely AS (Latvia), LVŽS (Lithuania), NA (Lithuania), AUR (Rumania), and ITN/ИТН (Bulgaria).

The average support for European integration is 3.72, indicative of the parties' reservations regarding further integration. The parties with the lowest support for the EU are EKRE (Estonia) with 3.40, the coalition *La France fière* (France) with 3.11 and ADR/PADR (Luxembourg) with 2.54. In contrast, the NA (Latvia) party shows the greatest support for European integration, with a score of 6.26.

Although the ECR group is the fourth largest, it has more significant political influence than the PfE, as it includes political forces from more member states and has a presence in member state governments and the Commission. However, its ideological cohesion is more diverse, including centrist parties, and on issues of European integration, it shows significant heterogeneity, although the dominant trend is not in favor of further integration.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

Renew Europe - RE
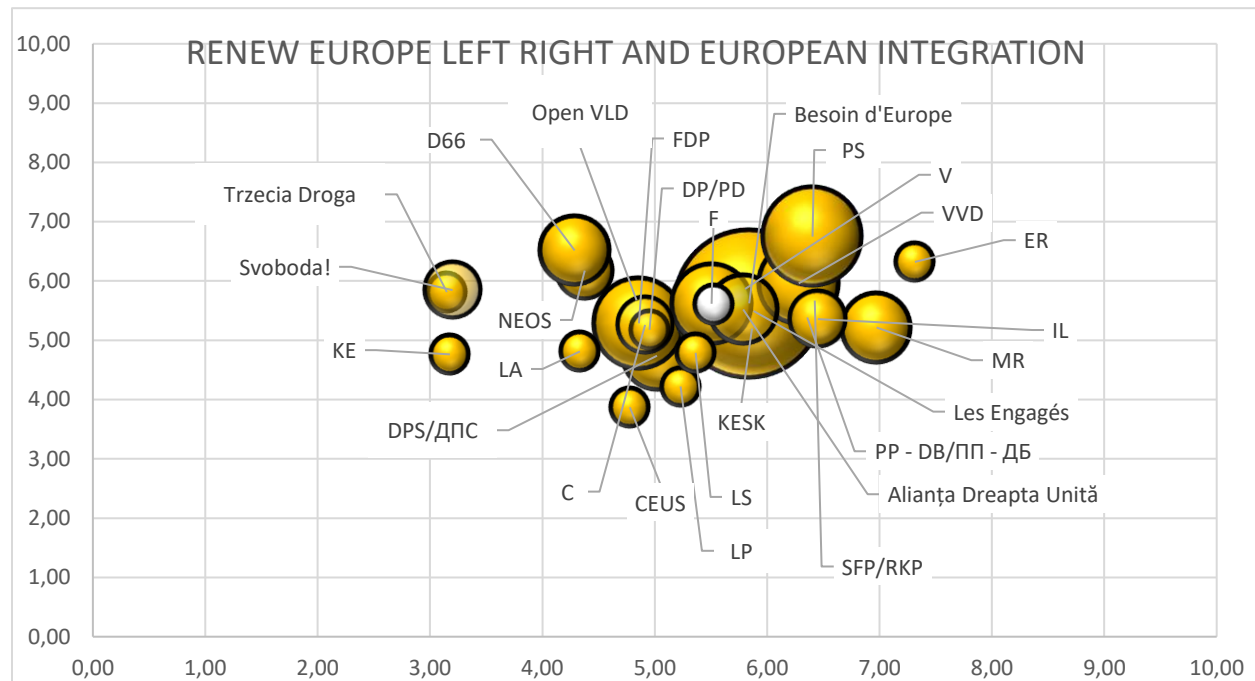
The "Renew Europe" group has a presence in 20 member states, participating in governments and the Commission. Notably, it consists of many relatively small parties, with the largest being the French party of President Macron, which has -as a coalition of parties- 13 MEPs out of the group's total of 75 and plays a leading role. The group's influence has significantly decreased compared to the previous session of the European Parliament.

The group's ideological average is 5.53, making it centrist. Its score for European integration is 5.61, classifying it as a pro-European force. The ideological composition of the group is very diverse. It includes parties from the Left, such as *Trzecia Droga* from Poland (3.15), but also two parties from Estonia with a significant ideological distance between them, *Eesti Keskerakond* (3.18) and ER (7.31). Support for European integration is high. With the exception of the Spanish CEUS (3.87), the other participating parties have a clear pro-European stance. The group has much more significant influence than the number of its MEPs suggests, as it engages in various governments and the Commission.

Renew Europe remains a group that promotes liberal ideology and supports European integration, particularly emphasizing cooperation and strengthening institutions. The range of ideological positions reflects the diversity of its members.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion
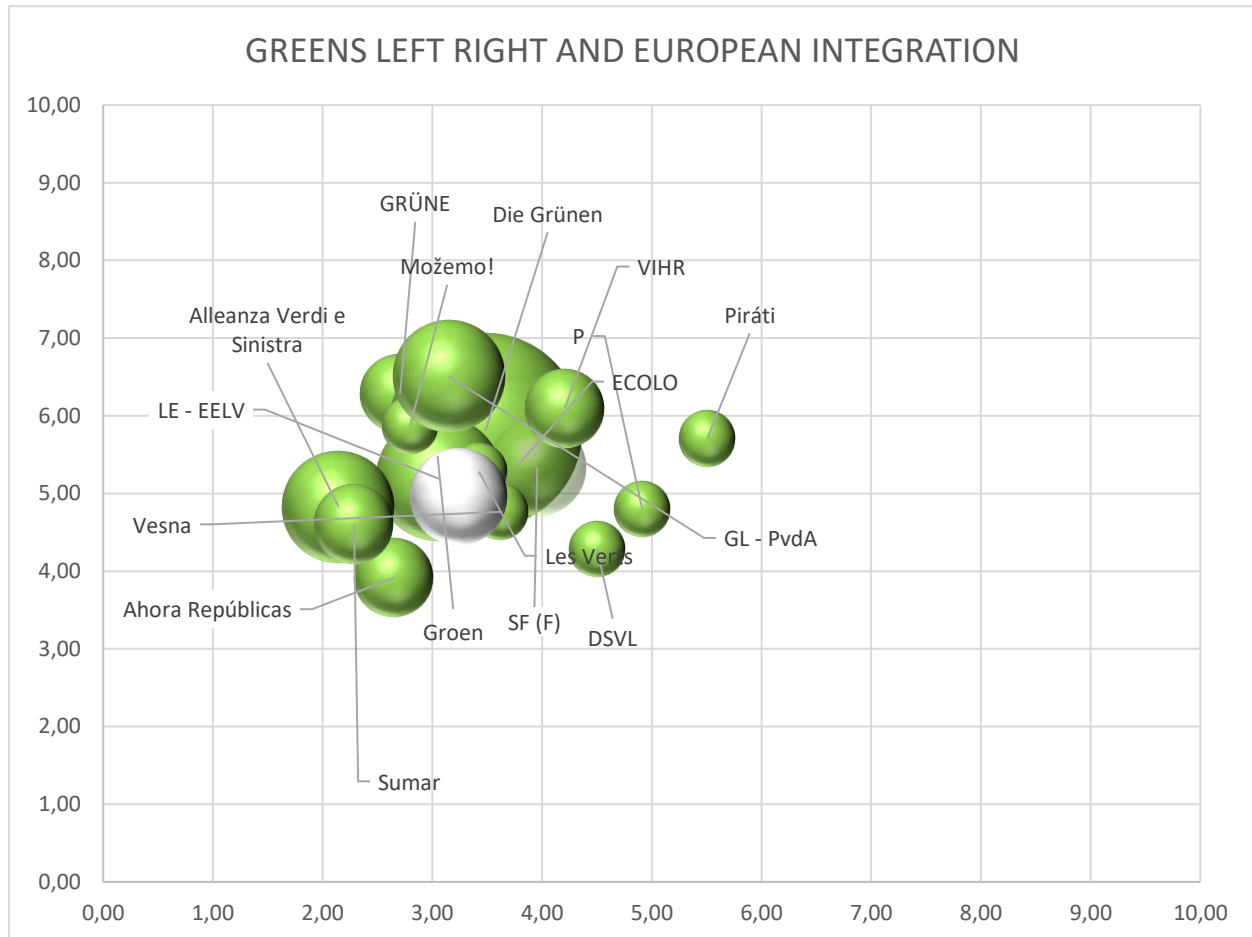
Greens/EFA

The "Greens/European Free Alliance" (Greens/EFA) group includes parties with a strong environmental, social, and progressive agenda. They often support social justice, human rights, and European integration, positioning themselves mainly on the left-wing of the political spectrum. Its 53 members come from 17 countries, with the strongest participation coming from the German Green Party, with 15 MEPs.

Apart from the Czech party *Piráti*, which Czech voters characterize as a center-right party (5.51), all other parties in the group have a clear left-wing ideology. This is also reflected in the average ideological scale of 3.30, placing the Greens in the broader left-wing space.

In the field of European integration, the Greens maintain a clear European orientation with an average of 5.43. The most pro-European party is the Dutch coalition *GL – PvdA* (6.51).

The Greens group is strongly progressive, emphasizing climate policies and social justice. Their support for European integration is generally high, with some exceptions in specific countries. Despite the differences, the parties in the group remain focused on environmental and social reforms.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

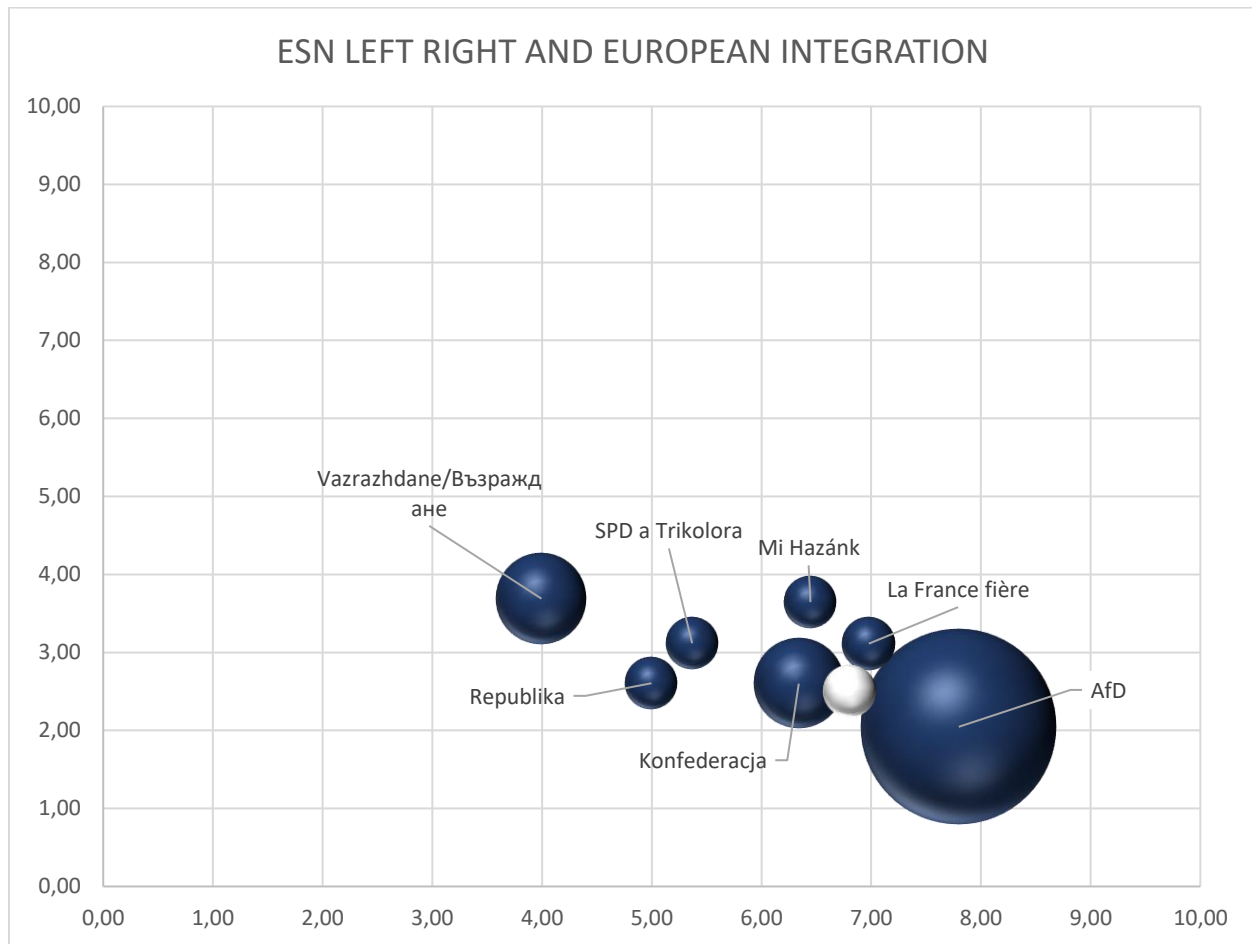**The Left in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL**
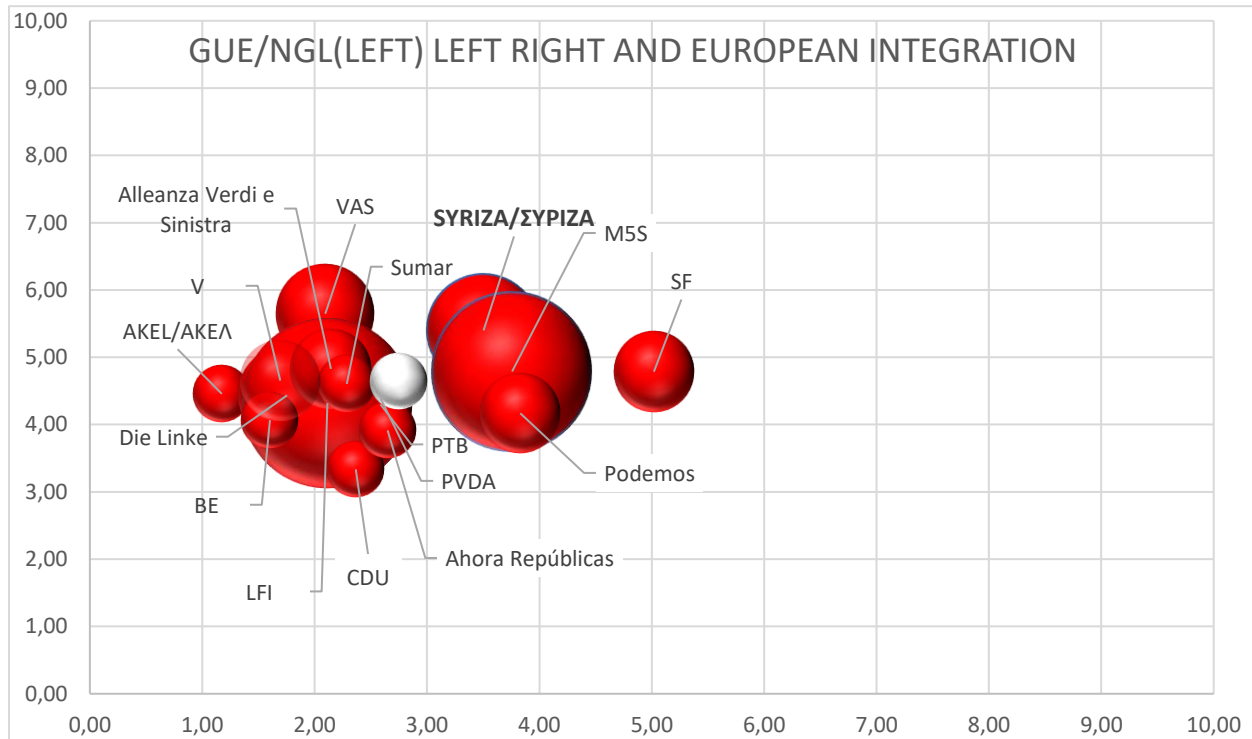
The Left group in the European Parliament includes parties from various EU countries with standard references to social justice and opposition to neoliberalism. Despite its strong political identity, its influence is limited, with presence in only 12 of the 27 member states and minimal government participation (except for Spain).

The average of this group on the ideological scale is 2.74, thus having a clear left-wing disposition, while on issues of European integration, it tilts rather towards Euroscepticism (4.64). The largest parties in the group are the French LFI, with 10 MEPs, followed by the German *Die Linke*, the Spanish *Podemos* and the Greek *SYRIZA*, with four MEPs each. Italy is represented by two parties, with ten MEPs together.

Actually, the two Italian parties (M5S, 4.83 and *Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra*, 4.79) and SYRIZA (5.40) are the most positively inclined parties in this group regarding European integration. In contrast, the parties from Germany (*Die Linke*, 4.43) and Spanish (PODEMOS, 4.17), are considered by the respondents in their respective countries as the most leftist ones, behind only the Portuguese party *CDU*.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

**European Sovereignty Network - ESN**

The ESN is a political group that expresses Eurosceptic and nationalist positions, with the dominant party being the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) from Germany, which has 14 of the group's 26 MEPs. It is a group with a high degree of heterogeneity. Its ideological position has an average of 6.8 (right-wing). However, the AfD is positioned much further to the right than this average.

Overall, the political group is very negatively disposed towards further European integration, showing a particularly low support for it (2.50) and stressing instead the importance of sovereign rights of each member-state.

However, the group has a fragile existence, as it gathers the minimum necessary support of 26 MEPs from 8 countries, including one MEP from the French coalition of *La France fière*, who opted for joining ESN instead of the ECR unlike the other MEPs of his party. In any case, this political group is very vulnerable to member losses.

Non-Inscrits – NI

NI LEFT RIGHT AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
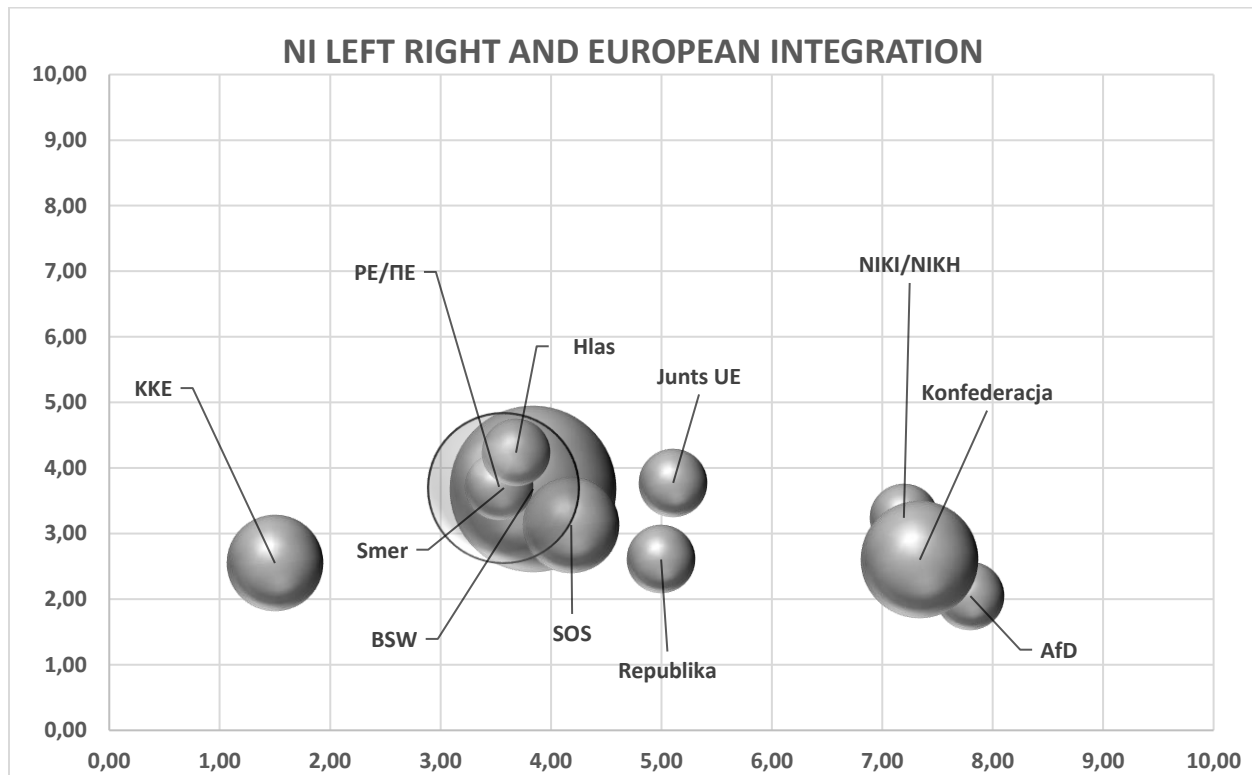
Finally, a group of 29 independent MEPs form a distinct cluster (but not a political group). In essence, they share an anti-European disposition but have entirely different ideological orientations. Independent MEPs have limited influence in the works of the European Parliament, since their interventions are limited to the submission of questions and voting. Among the Non Inscrits, there are two Greek MEPs from the Communist Party (KKE) and another two, one each from *Niki* and *Plefsi Eleftherias (PE)*. Additionally, one MEP from the German AfD has not followed so far his colleagues into the ESN. Generally, the isolation of these MEPs from the mainstream EP political processes reduces their influence and effectiveness in promoting political or legislative changes.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

Cohesion of Political Groups
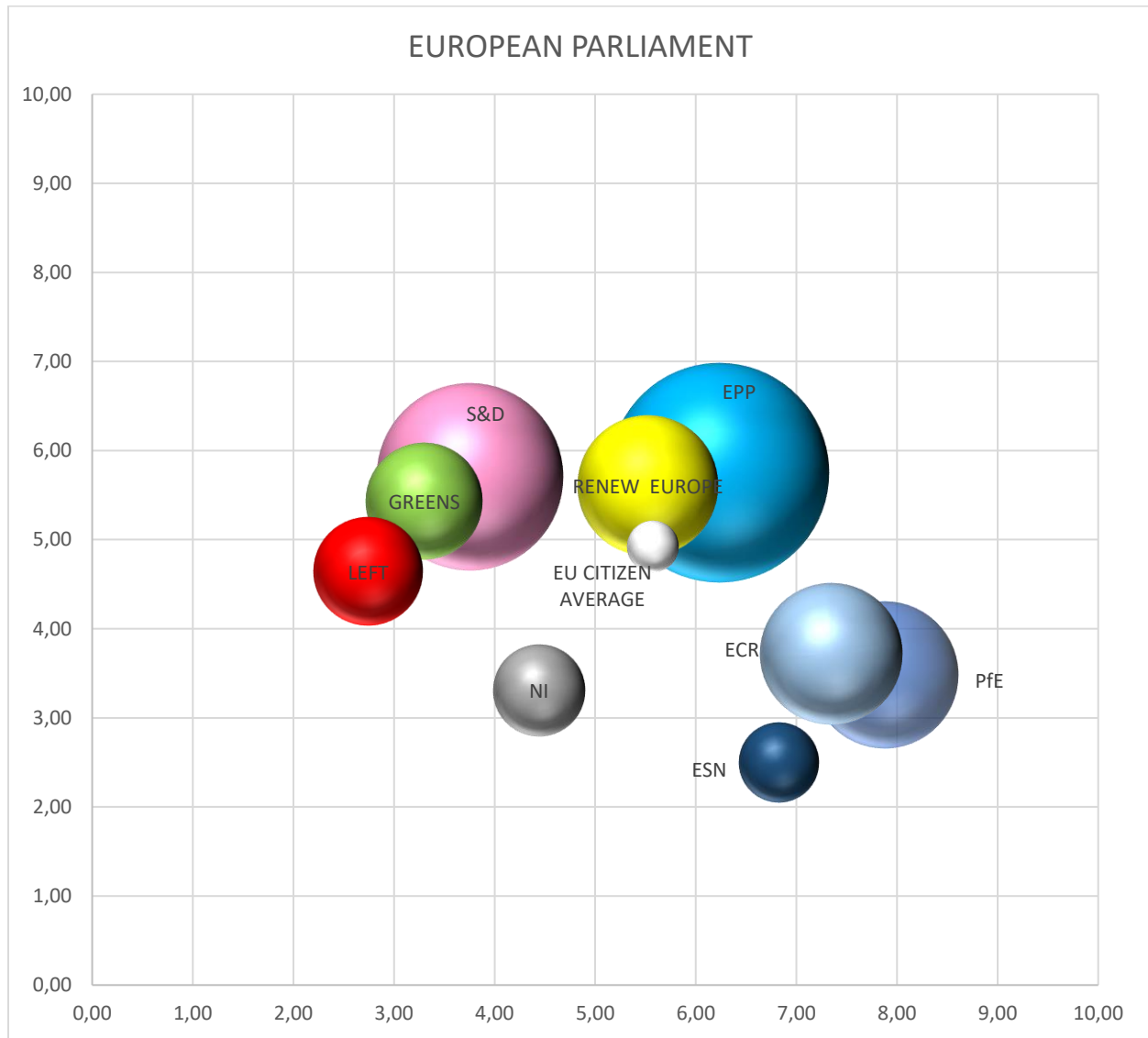
The above chart provides an overall picture of the political groups in the European Parliament. The ESN group is positioned less to the right than the PfE, mainly including small anti-system parties without a clear ideological identity, which affect the 'mean' of the group without reflecting accurately the rhetoric and the political ideology of the group. However, as a small group, each member strongly influences this mean.

Political groups feature a more significant differentiation along the Left and Right ideological axis but a greater relative convergence as far as European integration is concerned. The parties EPP, RENEW, S&D, and GREENS are considered to share the same level of support towards the EU. They have not only

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

approved the new European Commission but actively participate in many member-states' governments. This increases the chances of political convergence in the next five-year political cycle of the EU, especially on critical issues.

However, the political groups in the EP show significant deviation in terms of their cohesion. The assessment of cohesion includes the following methodological steps: first, calculation of the weighted average for each political group; second, calculation of the weighted dispersion (smaller dispersion (σ2) means greater cohesion); and third, final calculation of cohesion based on the above indicators [C=1 - (σ/max range)]. According to the common assumption applied to the grading of Cronbach's Alpha (α), a statistical index used to measure the internal cohesion or reliability of a set of items (e.g., questions in a questionnaire), it is accepted that: if C>0.75 then high cohesion is observed; if 0.65>C>0.75 medium cohesion is detected, and if C<0.65, low cohesion is observed. The Table below presents the cohesion of each political group for the two axes of analysis:

Political Group	Ideological Position	European Integration
EPP	0.77	0.76
S&D	0.75	0.81
PfE	0.77	0.77
ECR	0.70	0.76
RENEW	0.78	0.79
GREEN (Green /EFA	0.80	0.75
LEFT (GUE/NGL)	0.72	0.76
ESN	0.65	0.62
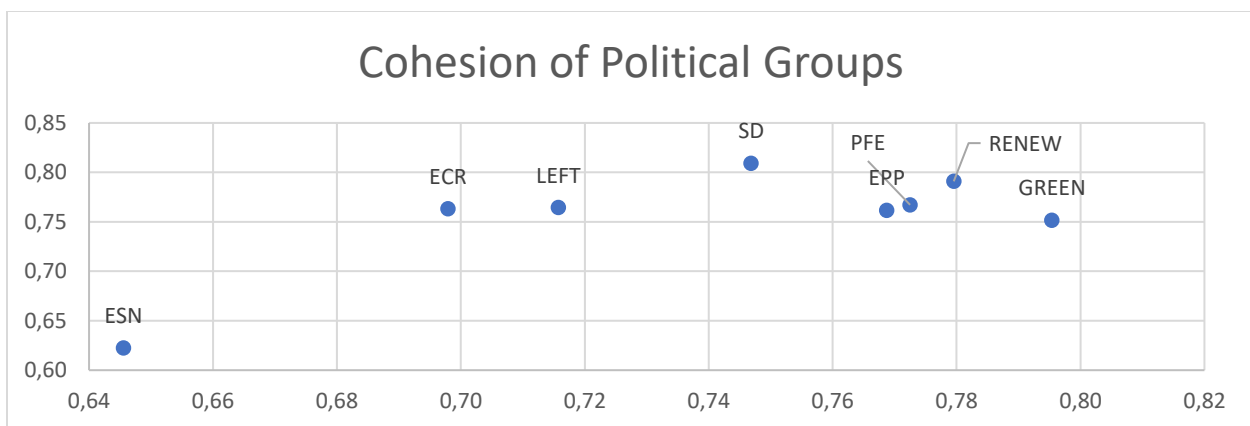
As shown in the above chart, in terms of ideological homogeneity:

- The political groups GREEN, RENEW, PFE, and EPP show significant ideological cohesion.

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

- In contrast, the ESN group shows the lowest ideological cohesion, indicating strong internal differentiations. In reality, this political group is a conglomeration of small anti-system and anti-European parties without a clear ideological identity.

Regarding their position on European integration:

- The RENEW and SD groups show the highest levels of cohesion.

- Conversely, the ESN group again records the lowest performance.

Overall, the political groups PFE, RENEW, GREEN, and EPP show high cohesion on both axes, demonstrating relative homogeneity and a distinct political identity. The LEFT and SD groups have satisfactory but slightly lower cohesion. The ECR group shows satisfactory cohesion on the European integration index, with a mainly anti-European agenda but weaker cohesion in terms of the ideological positioning of its members. Finally, the ESN group shows low cohesion on both axes, reflecting internal contradictions. This is not surprising, as the group was opportunistically created to meet the minimum membership requirement for obtaining the privileges of a political group in the European Parliament.

The analysis shows that the cohesion of political groups varies significantly, reflecting each group's peculiarities and goals. Groups with high cohesion may be more effective in decision-making and policy formation, while groups with low cohesion, such as the ESN, face challenges in internal cohesion and achieving common goals.

Finally, the white sphere in the Overall Chart presents the average of the own positions held by European citizens who participated in the survey (and not their opinion on national parties or political groups in the EP). In response to the question of whether they believe the integration process has gone too far or should be further strengthened, one-quarter of respondents are negatively disposed towards the achieved degree of deepening of the integration process, one-third are satisfied with the current situation, and finally, 35% favor further deepening. More specifically:

1. 25% believe integration has gone too far, expressing mainly anti-European positions (responses 0-3).

2. 34% express neutrality, stating that neither more nor less Europe is needed (4-6).

3. 35% believe integration should be further strengthened (responses 7-10).
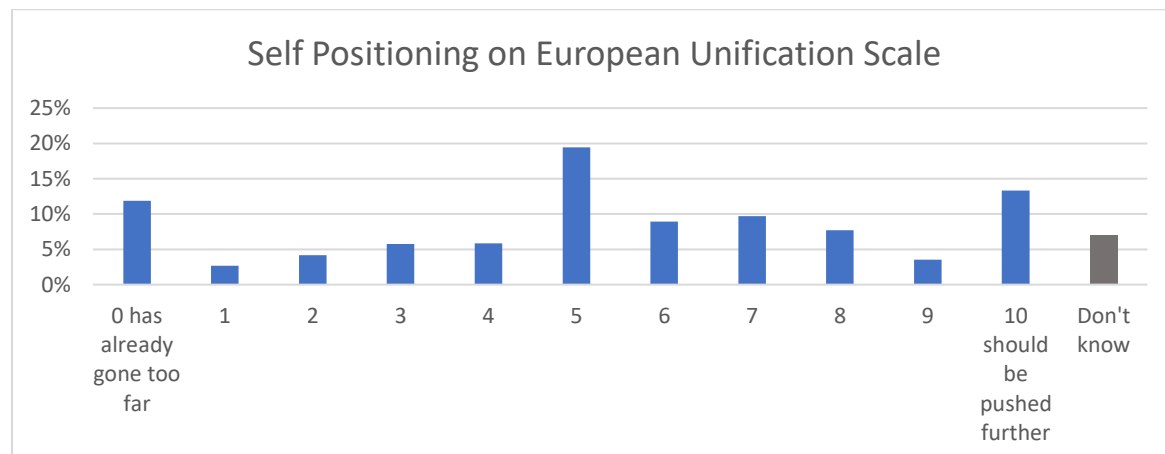
Self Positioning on European Unification Scale

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

These numbers vary from country to country, but these deviations are rather insignificant. Indicatively, presenting the detailed data for four countries (Greece, France, Germany, and Italy), citizens move, in general, to the same direction, although the case of France cannot go unnoticed. In France, a significantly smaller percentage of citizens are positive towards the prospect of further integration, and a correspondingly substantially higher percentage believe that integration has already gone too far.
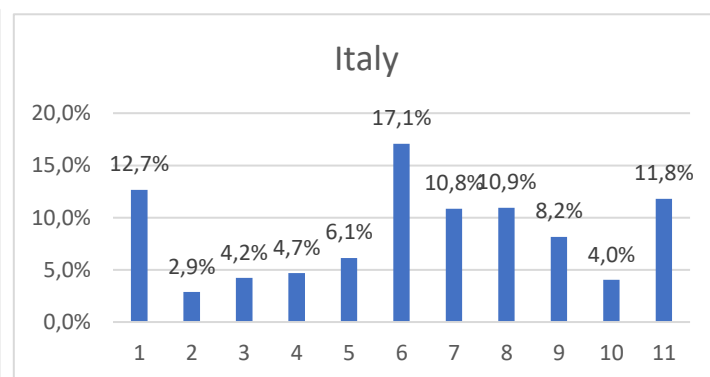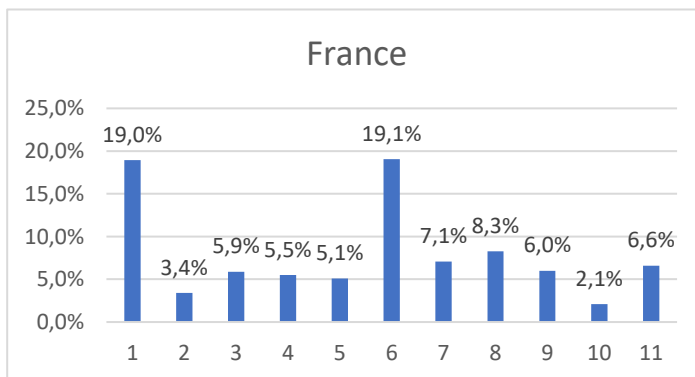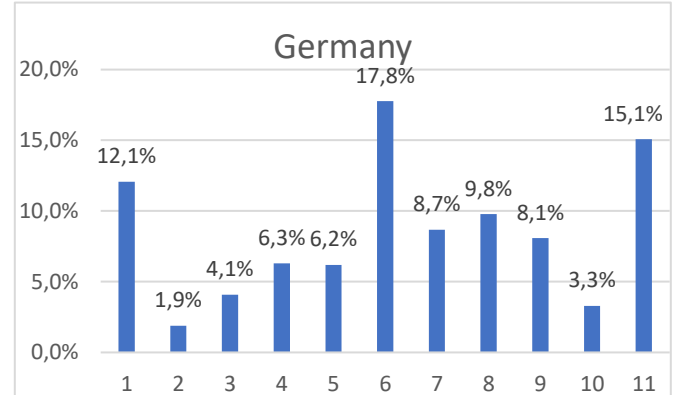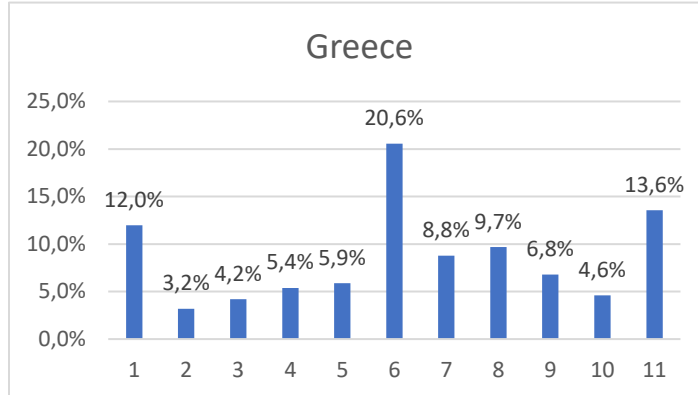
Conclusions

The new five-year political cycle of the EU began with the European elections of June 2024, creating a new political landscape with several similarities to the previous period but also some significant differences. Although the main poles of influence in the EP remain the two prominent political groups of the European People's Party (EPP) and the Social Democrats (S&D), the strengthening of political forces that react to the prospect of further European integration is bound to have an impact on the content and intensity of political contestation. The two main axes of differentiation, namely political ideology and stance towards the EU, and the placement of EP's political groups along them, at least as perceived subjectively by their national voters, create 'natural' potential partners and allies. Although the political reality is undoubtedly

The New Political Groups in the European Parliament: Ideological Identity and Cohesion

much more complex, this study highlights specific characteristics of these political groups related to their ideological and political identity and degree of cohesion. Higher cohesion is shown by the traditional political forces of the EP and the newly formed group of "Patriots for Europe." In any case, the goal is to prevent political paralysis that would render the EU unable to respond to the coming years' significant geoeconomic and geopolitical challenges.