

Understanding MEPs: Four Waves of the European Parliament Research Group MEP Survey

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Abstract

This paper presents a new survey of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) conducted during 2015, which adds to a time series of MEP surveys carried out by the European Parliament Research Group. The data allow for comparison of MEPs' views with those of the EU public, European Parliament candidates, and members of national and regional parliaments in Europe. The survey includes questions on topical issues, such as intra- EU migration and the UK-EU relationship. The dataset can be used to address a range of research questions concerning MEPs' preferences and representation. This paper presents details of the 2015 MEP survey and uses the data to assess what explains MEPs' attitudes to the question of whether all EP plenary sessions should be held in Brussels.

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1. Introduction

This paper presents a new survey of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) which adds to a time series of MEP surveys carried out by the European Parliament Research Group (EPRG). The data from this new survey (available at www.mepsurvey.eu) are comparable with elements of the European Election Voter and Candidate Studies (Schmitt et al., 2015), a major survey of national and regional parliamentarians (Deschouwer and Depauw, 2014) and with large parts of previous EPRG MEP surveys. The survey also includes new questions on topical issues, such as intra-EU migration, the UK's relationship with the EU, and the *Spitzenkandidaten* process. As a result, the dataset can be used to address a range of research questions concerning MEPs' preferences and the relationship between these and citizens' and national legislators' positions. These questions are of critical importance at a time when the EU is under pressure amid economic crisis, Brexit and declining trust in EU institutions (Hobolt, 2015).

Up-to-date data on MEPs' attitudes are particularly useful given the significant changes in the European Parliament's party group system since the 2014 elections. Among other things, the soft Eurosceptic (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008) European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group pushed the Liberal group (ALDE) out of third place for the first time. In June 2015 the French Front National

and several other parties on the radical right formed a new political group, the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF). These developments – along with Brexit – open up the possibility of changing patterns of coalition formation in the Parliament. MEPs' failure to reach a majority on the European Commission's work programme in January 2015 showed how difficult it may be to maintain the 'grand coalition' that appeared to dominate the first six months of the 2014-19 term, or to form alternative majorities in the remainder of the term, especially as more contentious subjects reach the agenda. Amid growing numbers of Eurosceptic MEPs, it is more important than ever to understand what MEPs think about EU policies and the integration process. Examining the numbers of MEPs from different national parties or using roll-call vote data can only tell us so much about MEPs' views. Survey data enhance our ability to study MEPs by providing a measure of preferences at the individual level which is exogenous of parties and particular votes, unlike revealed preferences measured via roll-call votes. Indeed, measures of left-right and European integration placement have been among the most widely used of the variables from previous waves of the EPRG MEP surveys in publications citing the data.

MEPs have been surveyed in each session of the European Parliament since the first direct elections in 1979 as follows:

- The 1979-84 Parliament saw a survey conducted by a group led by

Karlheinz Reif and Rudolf Wildenman (e.g. Bardi, 1989; Westlake, 1994);

- In the 1984-89 Parliament there was a survey conducted by Rudolf Hrbek and Carl-Christoph Schweitzer (Hrbek and Schweitzer, 1989);
- In the 1989-94 Parliament, there was a survey conducted by Shaun Bowler and David Farrell (Bowler and Farrell, 1993);
- In the 1994-99 Parliament, a survey was conducted by a group led by Bernhard Wessels (e.g. Katz and Wessels, 1999; Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999);
- In the 1999-2004 Parliament a survey was conducted in 2000 by Simon Hix, for EPRG (e.g. Hix, 2002; Scully, 2005);
- In the 2004-09 Parliament, a survey was conducted in early 2006 by Simon Hix, David Farrell and Roger Scully, for EPRG (e.g. Farrell and Scully, 2007);
and
- In the 2009-14 Parliament, a survey was conducted in 2010 again by Hix, Farrell and Scully for EPRG (Hix et al., 2011).

Data from previous waves of the EPRG MEP survey have been requested by researchers and students from over 150 institutions in 29 countries and have been cited in numerous journal articles and books. This paper introduces the most recent MEP survey and its value in combination with previous waves and other survey data with which it is comparable. The paper is structured as follows. First we explain the

design of the survey, data collection methods, the nature of the sample and the extent of comparability of the data with other surveys of legislators and voters. Next, we explain the range of research questions that can be addressed using the data by themselves and in combination with other surveys. A further section shows how the data can be used to explain attitudes about whether the EP should hold all its plenary sessions in Brussels. We find that practical concerns about travel time help to explain why some MEPs favour holding plenaries only in Brussels more than others. We conclude by summarising the benefits of these new data and the research questions that can be addressed with them.

2. Survey design and implementation

Our survey builds directly on the previous three EPRG surveys, which gives us a data series for the years 2000, 2006, 2010, and 2015. This will allow researchers to examine how the behaviour and attitudes of MEPs have changed in response to changing circumstances, such as the gradual increase in institutional powers of the Parliament, the successive enlargements of the EU, the economic crisis and the increase in public and party-based Euroscepticism.

The 2015 questionnaire, as with previous waves, was translated into official languages of the EU (for details of the translation process, see Appendix 1). The survey was distributed via a web-based survey provider – Survey Monkey – to all 751 MEPs. All emails were sent out in the MEPs' native languages. The first respondent completed the survey on 25 April 2015. Email reminders were then sent out monthly from June – December 2015 to all MEPs who had not yet completed the survey.

While the primary mode of data collection for the 2015 survey was internet-based, we also used face-to-face interviews and mailed surveys. This three-pronged strategy was designed with the goal of maximizing response rates. The growth in the European Parliament's legislative role has led to greater interest among researchers. Consequently, MEPs, like many national parliamentarians (Deschouwer et al., 2014: 9), receive a higher number of survey or interview requests. Hence, we used three data collection modes to achieve as many responses as possible. Multi-mode approaches have been employed in similar surveys of elites, such as the 2009 European Election Candidate study (Wessels, 2011), which used mailed questionnaires and a web-based survey, the PartiRep survey of national and regional parliamentarians (Deschouwer and Depauw, 2014), which employed online, mail, telephone and face-to-face interviewing, and the Religion at the

European Parliament survey (Foret, 2014), for which data were gathered by face-to-face, telephone and online modes.

We used randomized block sampling to select MEPs for the face-to-face interview requests and mailed surveys. Blocks were defined as member state delegations within political groups. We prioritized those blocks that were most under-represented from our online respondents. Random samples were drawn from MEPs within these blocks who had not yet responded to the survey. Where they were used, hard copies of the questionnaire were distributed in MEPs' native language. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in a subset of languages in which researchers affiliated to the project were fluent.¹

Since survey researchers have long stipulated that each mode of survey implementation has its own set of advantages and drawbacks, the dataset includes a clear indication of how each response was collected. Overall, online responses constitute the bulk of the data, with the mailed and face-to-face responses only comprising a small fraction. Of 227 responses, 25 have been acquired through face-to-face interviews and 5 through mailed surveys. The remaining 197 responses come from the web-based survey.

Table 1 presents comparisons between the population and samples of MEPs by member state and political group in the four surveys carried out by the EPRG. While the 2015 response rate of 30 per cent is somewhat lower than in 2010 (37

per cent), it is comparable with more recent surveys of legislators, such as the PartiRep survey of legislators from 15 European countries which had an overall response rate of 25 per cent (Deschouwer et al., 2014: 9). Furthermore, as measured by the Duncan Index (where lower values represent greater similarity between the sample and the population), the 2015 survey is as representative as the 2010 wave in the case of political groups and only fractionally less so in terms of respondents' member states. We also conducted chi-squared tests of representativeness for our member state and political group samples. In all cases, using a value of $p \leq 0.05$ we would not reject the null hypothesis that the proportions are the same in the samples as in the population. In addition, correlations between the sample and population figures are at 0.93 or above in all cases. The data therefore provide a representative sample of MEPs in the 2014-19 term.

[Table 1 about here]

3. Setting the research agenda

The 2015 survey was carefully designed to generate data comparable with previous MEP surveys as well as other surveys of parliamentarians, MEP candidates and voters, thereby opening up a wide research agenda which we set out in this section. For clarity, Table 2 sets out variables included in each of the

four waves of MEP surveys. Further attitudinal questions have been included in the most recent three waves as shown in Table 2. The 2015 survey included a total of 37 questions across four sections: background, career and elections, representation and contacts, legislative behaviour, and political attitudes. The entire 2015 questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 3.

These new data make a significant contribution by offering researchers an opportunity to examine change in MEPs' attitudes over time, as well as the determinants of these behaviours and views. After a thorough analysis of research employing the EPRG's MEP surveys, we ensured that the most frequently used questions from previous waves were preserved in the most recent questionnaire. With the 2015 survey, we now have measures at four time points – from 2000 to 2015 – of a wide range of variables, including MEPs' views of representation, the importance of various aspects of their work, frequency of contact with particular interest groups, sources of vote recommendations, reasons for committee choice, positions on left-right and European integration policy dimensions, as well as attitudes to a range of EU policies and the powers of the European Parliament. This will allow scholars to explore how major external events have shaped the evolution of the European Parliament over a 15 year period. Previous waves of the survey, for example, have generated some of the first systematic assessments of whether and how EU enlargement affected the ideological outlook, decision-

making culture and policy views of the European parliament. After the release of the new wave, researchers can do the same with respect to recent challenges to European integration such as the Eurozone crisis.

[Table 2 about here]

The 2015 MEP survey data also allow for comparisons with national parliamentarians, European Parliament candidates and citizens. On the first of these, the 2015 survey includes some of the same questions as appeared on the PartiRep survey of MPs in 15 national parliaments (Deschouwer and Depauw, 2014).² This allows for comparisons of national and European parliamentarians' positions on left-right and European integration dimensions as well as their attitudes to some policies. Differences between MEPs and members of national parliaments on European integration have received limited attention in the past. Previous studies have shown MEPs to be slightly more pro-integration than national MPs (e.g. Katz 2008: 157-9). But greater success for Eurosceptic parties in European elections may have pushed mainstream MEPs to a more EU-critical position. This proposition can now be tested. Table 3 sets out areas in which the same questions were asked on the MEP 2015 survey as on other surveys.

[Table 3 about here]

The question of how well citizens' views are represented in the European Parliament is central to the debate about the democratic deficit in EU institutions (Føllesdal and Hix, 2006; Farrell and Scully, 2007). It is also critical at a time when support for European integration is declining and Eurosceptic parties (on both the right and the left) are gaining support in many EU member states. Our 2015 MEP survey includes some questions asked on the 2014 European Election Voter Study (EEVS) (Schmitt et al., 2015). Researchers can therefore compare responses to the same questions asked of MEPs and of citizens. Vasilopoulou and Gattermann (2013) assessed voter-MEP congruence on four issues using the 2010 MEP survey and EEVS data. Our 2015 wave builds upon the needs of this growing research agenda on representation and includes a large section on policy and ideological views. For example, with the proliferation of public opinion polls on the refugee crisis, future research can compare those with MEPs' responses to our question about the desirability of a common EU policy on asylum-seekers.

Comparisons between MEPs and the wider pool of candidates for the 2014 European elections can also be made due to a series of questions from the European Election Candidate Study (EECS) that we asked in the 2015 MEP survey. As Table 3 shows, these overlapping questions include not only attitudes to EU

policies and the European Parliament's powers, but also campaign techniques and aims. This will allow for comparisons of successful and unsuccessful candidates in the 2014 European elections on a range of variables for those countries covered by the EECS. Researchers will be able to build predictive models as to what determines candidate success in EP elections – are institutional, party-level or individual-level factors most important? While institutional and party-level data can be acquired through pre-existing sources, the MEP Survey, in combination with the EECS, supplies a vital element in the form of candidate-level data.

The current wave of the survey also contains a series of new questions to account for topical political issues. For example, MEPs were asked for their views on policies towards intra-EU migrants, the Fiscal Compact and the prospective Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership treaty (between the EU and the United States). In the light of what was – at the time the surveys went out – a proposed referendum on UK membership of the EU, we asked MEPs for their views on the UK's future in the EU. We also asked about the process of European political groups nominating candidates for the Commission Presidency in future EU elections (the *Spitzenkandidaten* process). These questions can be used to compare how MEP's views on topical issues match their subsequent voting behaviour in parliament. Do MEPs vote in line with their preferences or – where there are tensions – in response to party or voter positions? Additionally, in cases where

public opinion data are available, research can examine the variation in MEP-citizen policy congruence. Of course, in addition to congruence with individual MEPs, the data allow for creating aggregate position scores where one could examine congruence between citizens and party groups in the EP, or between citizens and member-state delegations in the EP. These can be used to answer the question of how nationality, party loyalty and personal ideology reinforce or contradict each other in shaping the relationship between citizens and their elected representatives in the European Parliament.

Having set out some of the research questions that can be addressed with the MEP 2015 Survey data in combination with others, the next section provides an example analysis – combining all four waves of the survey – assessing MEPs' preferences on where the EP should hold its plenary meetings.

4. Using the MEP Survey data: explaining MEPs' preferences for Brussels compared with Strasbourg

Whether the EP should be allowed to hold all its plenary sessions in Brussels is a divisive issue. For some, the location of the EP in Strasbourg has symbolic importance and should be maintained. For others the cost of transporting legislators and their staff to Strasbourg for 12 plenary sessions each year is wasteful and contributes to a poor public image of the EP (e.g. Mendick 2014).

According to this latter approach, holding all the plenary sessions in Brussels, where party group and committee meetings are normally held, would be far more efficient. In order to assess attitudes to what is often called the 'single seat' issue, we use a question included in all four waves of the survey in which MEPs were asked to respond on a five-point scale (running from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree) to the statement 'The European Parliament should be allowed to hold all its plenary sessions in Brussels'.

[Table 4 about here]

Drawing on the simple idea that MEPs have scarce resources in terms of time, we test whether the ratio of travel time to Strasbourg compared with Brussels affects MEPs' preferences on this issue. We measure this using flight times from an MEP's capital city to Brussels and Strasbourg. We then calculate the ratio of Strasbourg travel time to Brussels. For example, in the case of Denmark, it takes 90 minutes to fly from Copenhagen to Brussels and 205 minutes to fly to Strasbourg. Our ratio measure is simply $205/90=2.28$. Table 4 shows the values of these travel times and ratios for each member state.

We control for other factors that might affect attitudes to the single seat issue. On the basis that those who have been in the EP longer may tire more of the

travel to Strasbourg, we include a variable measuring date of first election to the EP. We control for MEPs' placement of themselves on left-right and European integration scales on the basis that ideological position may affect attitudes to this issue.³ In what follows, we pool all four waves of the survey and include dummy variables for each wave in our model (with wave four as the reference category). We use ordinary least squares regressions but we have also run these models as logistic regressions with a binary dependent variable coded as 1 for those agreeing or strongly agreeing that all plenaries should be held in Brussels and 0 for others. The results are substantially very similar. Table 5 presents descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis.

[Table 5 about here]

We first run a model without our measure of travel time to assess how being an MEP from France or Germany affects our dependent variable. We expect French and German members to be less supportive of holding all plenary sessions in Brussels on the basis that these MEPs are either closest to Strasbourg or are most likely to favour the location on the basis of its symbolic importance as a city next to the Franco-German border and as representative of peace between the two

countries. Results for this and a model testing our measure of travel times are in Table 6.

[Table 6 about here]

Model 1 shows that, as expected, French MEPs are much less likely to support a shift away from holding plenaries in Strasbourg. The effect is in the same direction and statistically significant but much smaller for German MEPs. We also find a small effect for being further to the left of the left-right spectrum in this model, indicating that more left-wing positions are associated with lower support for holding all plenaries in Brussels. Model 2 shows that our main independent variable has the expected effect. The higher is the ratio of travel time to Strasbourg compared with Brussels, the higher is support for holding all plenary sessions in the Belgian capital. MEPs' attitudes to this issue are consistent with a calculation of costs in terms of time. Figure 1 shows this positive relationship graphically and indicates the substantive significance of relative travel time for attitudes. These findings are consistent with a major report on the single seat issue (van Hulten 2011) based on interviews with MEPs, assistants and EP secretariat staff, which found that monthly travel to Strasbourg induces stress especially when it involves high time costs.

Our dummy variables for survey waves in both models indicate no statistically significant differences in attitudes on different waves of the survey meaning we cannot infer any changes over time. Our control for date elected also shows no effect in either model so – contrary to our expectations – being an MEP for longer periods does not seem to be associated with higher levels of support for holding all plenaries in Brussels. Rather, attitudes to this issue are explained by national affiliation and a simple measure of the extra time costs incurred in travelling to Strasbourg rather than Brussels. More broadly, these results indicate how the MEP Survey data in combination with other information can be used to address topical questions in the study of the European Union.

5. Conclusion

In short, our 2015 MEP survey continues a time-series of surveys of MEPs which now covers four (of the eight) directly elected terms of the European Parliament. This includes periods before and after several major institutional and political developments in the EU, such as the Eastern enlargements in 2004 and 2007, the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the Eurozone debt crisis in 2009-13, and the rise of Eurosceptic parties in the European Parliament elections in 2014. With this time

series of data, a wide range of questions can be addressed. And, because we have matched questions in our survey with other datasets, MEPs' responses on a range of issues can now be compared to the views of the EU public (in the 2014 European Election Voter Study), European Parliament candidates (in the 2014 European Election Candidate Study), and even members of national and regional parliaments in Europe (in the PartiRep survey). This will allow scholars to answer questions about representation, MEPs' preferences and differences between candidates, members of national parliaments and MEPs on a range of issues.

¹ Face-to-face interviews were conducted in English, French, German, Italian, Romanian and Bulgarian.

² The PartiRep survey also included members of regional parliaments in nine of these 15 countries.

³ The relevant question wording can be found in Appendix 2.

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Table 1 EPRG survey samples compared

	2000 Survey				2006 Survey				2010 Survey				2015 Survey			
	Number		%		Number		%		Number		%		Number		%	
	MEPs	Survey	MEPs	Survey	MEPs	Survey	MEPs	Survey	MEPs	Survey	MEPs	Survey	MEPs	Survey	MEPs	Survey
Member States																
Austria	21	2	3.4	1.0	18	7	2.5	2.6	17	5	2.3	1.9	18	6	2.4	2.6
Belgium	25	6	4.0	3.1	24	13	3.3	4.8	22	9	3.0	3.3	21	7	2.8	3.1
Bulgaria									17	7	2.3	2.6	17	8	2.3	3.5
Croatia													11	5	1.5	2.2
Cyprus					6	5	0.8	1.8	6	4	0.8	1.5	6	2	0.8	0.9
Czech Rep.					24	11	3.3	4.0	22	9	3.0	3.3	21	10	2.8	4.4
Denmark	16	7	2.6	3.6	14	6	1.9	2.2	13	8	1.8	3.0	13	6	1.7	2.6
Estonia					6	3	0.8	1.1	6	2	0.8	0.7	6	3	0.8	1.3
Finland	16	7	2.6	3.6	14	5	1.9	1.8	13	7	1.8	2.6	13	4	1.7	1.8
France	87	22	13.9	11.3	78	23	10.7	8.5	72	24	9.8	8.9	74	15	9.9	6.6
Germany	99	27	15.8	13.8	99	34	13.5	12.5	99	33	13.5	12.2	96	23	12.8	10.1
Greece	25	8	4.0	4.1	24	2	3.3	0.7	22	6	3.0	2.2	21	7	2.8	3.1
Hungary					24	8	3.3	2.9	22	4	3.0	1.5	21	1	2.8	0.4
Ireland	15	4	2.4	2.1	13	7	1.8	2.6	12	8	1.6	3.0	11	5	1.5	2.2
Italy	87	23	13.9	11.8	78	29	10.7	10.7	72	32	9.8	11.9	73	19	9.7	8.4
Latvia					9	4	1.2	1.5	8	3	1.1	1.1	8	4	1.1	1.8
Lithuania					13	6	1.8	2.2	12	3	1.6	1.1	11	3	1.5	1.3
Luxembourg	6	5	1.0	2.6	6	3	0.8	1.1	6	3	0.8	1.1	6	1	0.8	0.4
Malta					5	1	0.7	0.4	5	3	0.7	1.1	6	4	0.8	1.8
Netherlands	31	15	5.0	7.7	27	9	3.7	3.3	25	7	3.4	2.6	26	9	3.5	4.0
Poland					54	22	7.4	8.1	50	23	6.8	8.5	51	10	6.8	4.4
Portugal	25	11	4.0	5.6	24	9	3.3	3.3	22	6	3.0	2.2	21	8	2.8	3.5
Romania									33	14	4.5	5.2	32	13	4.3	5.7
Slovakia					14	3	1.9	1.1	13	6	1.8	2.2	13	8	1.7	3.5
Slovenia					7	5	1.0	1.8	7	6	1.0	2.2	8	3	1.1	1.3
Spain	64	17	10.2	8.7	54	11	7.4	4.0	50	14	6.8	5.2	54	14	7.2	6.2
Sweden	22	10	3.5	5.1	19	9	2.6	3.3	18	9	2.4	3.3	20	6	2.7	2.6
UK	87	31	13.9	15.9	78	37	10.7	13.6	72	15	9.8	5.6	73	23	9.7	10.1
Correlation				0.94				0.94				0.93				0.93
Duncan index of dissimilarity				0.12				0.11				0.13				0.14
Chi-squared test				p=0.15				p=0.38				p=0.35				p=0.41
Political Groups																
EPP	232	72	37.1	36.9	263	95	35.9	34.9	265	100	36.0	37.0	217	72	28.9	31.7
S&D (PES)	180	61	28.8	31.3	201	73	27.5	26.8	184	64	25.0	23.7	190	54	25.3	23.8
ECR									54	12	7.3	4.4	74	26	9.9	11.5
ALDE (ELDR)	52	20	8.3	10.3	89	44	12.2	16.2	85	43	11.5	15.9	70	22	9.3	9.7
EUL/NGL	42	14	6.7	7.2	41	15	5.6	5.5	35	10	4.8	3.7	52	14	6.9	6.2
G/EFA	48	13	7.7	6.7	42	18	5.7	6.6	55	23	7.5	8.5	50	14	6.7	6.2
EFDD (EDD / IND-DEM)	16	5	2.6	2.6	29	8	4.0	2.9	30	10	4.1	3.7	45	13	6.0	5.7
ENF													39	6	5.2	2.6
na	26	5	4.2	2.6	37	8	5.1	2.9	28	8	3.8	3.0	14	6	1.9	2.6
UEN	30	5	4.8	2.6	30	11	4.1	4.0								
Correlation				0.99				0.99				0.98				0.99
Duncan index of dissimilarity				0.04				0.04				0.06				0.06
Chi-squared test				p=0.68				p=0.41				p=0.22				p=0.73
Totals	626	195			732	272			736	270			751	227		
Response rate (%)		31.15				37.16				36.68				30.23		

Notes: These data are available at www.mepsurvey.eu.

The (Duncan) Index of dissimilarity measures the relationship between the sample of MEPs who responded to the surveys and the population of MEPs at the time of the surveys. Lower values on this measure indicate a greater similarity between the sample and the population (Duncan and Duncan 1955). The Duncan Index (DI)

is calculated as follows: $DI = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^n |p_i - s_i|)}{2}$

where p_i = the proportion of all seats in the EP allocated to member state or party group i and s_i = the proportion of respondents in the sample from member state or party group i .

Table 2. Topics covered in EPRG MEP surveys

Included in all four waves of the MEP surveys

Previous political positions held in EP and outside it
Where respondent would like to be 10 years from now
Importance of aspects of work as an MEP
Importance of representing particular groups in work as MEP
Frequency of contact with groups, individuals, organisations
Frequency of contact with interest groups
Recommendations on how to vote from particular sources
Reasons for committee choice
Left-right position
Attitude to inequality of income
Attitude to prison sentences (slightly different in 2015)
Attitude to government intervention in economy (slightly different in 2015)
European integration position
Attitude to level of EU regulation in specific policy areas
Attitude to governments running deficits of more than 3% of GDP
Attitude to EU arrest warrant
Attitude to powers of the European Parliament

Included in 2006, 2010 and 2015 waves

Attitude to government policy on immigration (opposite way around in 2006 and 2010 compared with 2015)
Attitude to common EU policy on economic migrants from third countries
Attitude to EU foreign policy as a counterweight to the USA
Attitude to EU ties with Russia

Included in 2010 and 2015 waves

Primary aim of campaign (attention for party or candidate)
Norms of behaviour in political groups

New questions in 2015 survey

Intention to stand in next EP election
Frequency of travel to constituency
Attitudes to MEPs defending national position, looking for common policies and logrolling.
Effect of positive and negative reactions on MEPs' decision-making
Committee desired after 2014 elections and actual committee assignments

Attitudes to enhanced cooperation, Fiscal Compact, free movement and rights of EU migrants

How would vote on regulations governing firearms

Views of TTIP

Attitudes to European Party Groups nominating candidates for Commission Presidency

Attitudes to UK attempts at renegotiating its relationship with the EU

Table 3 Comparability of 2015 MEP survey questions with other data sources

Questions in PartiRep survey

Do you intend to stand in the next [European] Parliamentary elections

Left-right position

Attitude to prison sentences

Attitude to government intervention in the economy

European integration position

Questions included in 2014 European Election Voter Study

Left-right position

Attitude to same-sex marriage

Attitude to immigration policy (some comparisons with Eurobarometer also possible)

European integration position

Opinion on responsibility for economic situation in member state

Questions also included in 2014 European Election Candidate Study

Election campaign techniques

Primary aim of campaign (attention for party or candidate)

Left-right position

Attitude to same-sex marriage

Attitude to prison sentences

Attitude to government intervention in economy

European integration position

Opinion on responsibility for economic situation in member state

Attitude to powers of the European Parliament

Table 4 Flight times from capital cities to Brussels and Strasbourg (in minutes) and ratios of Strasbourg to Brussels times

Member state	Flight time to Brussels	Flight time to Strasbourg	Ratio of Strasbourg to Brussels times
Belgium	0	60	3.00
Bulgaria	155	295	1.90
Czech Republic	85	95	1.12
Denmark	90	205	2.28
Germany	80	185	2.31
Estonia	165	330	2.00
Ireland	95	200	2.11
Greece	195	320	1.64
Spain	135	130	0.96
France	82	139	1.70
Italy	125	185	1.48
Cyprus	260	480	1.85
Latvia	155	320	2.06
Lithuania	145	350	2.41
Luxembourg	185	137	0.74
Hungary	120	230	1.92
Malta	175	265	1.51
Netherlands	45	65	1.44
Austria	100	210	2.10
Poland	115	200	1.74
Portugal	155	285	1.84
Romania	170	280	1.65
Slovenia	105	190	1.81
Slovakia	105	210	2.00
Finland	155	260	1.68
Sweden	130	245	1.88
United Kingdom	65	170	2.62
Croatia	105	245	2.33

Source: www.google.co.uk/flights

Note that times from Luxembourg and Paris to Brussels and Strasbourg are for journeys by train.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics

Variable	<i>n</i>	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation
Attitude to holding all plenary sessions in Brussels	719	1	5	4.0	1.3
Ratio of Strasbourg to Brussels travel time	719	0.7	3	1.9	0.5
Left-right self-placement	703	1	11	5.3	2.3
European integration self-placement	709	1	11	6.8	2.6
Date elected	714	1957	2015	2002.4	7.9
France	719	0	1	0.1	0.3
Germany	719	0	1	0.1	0.3
Wave 1	719	0	1	0.3	0.4
Wave 2	719	0	1	0.3	0.4
Wave 3	719	0	1	0.2	0.4
Wave 4	719	0	1	0.2	0.4

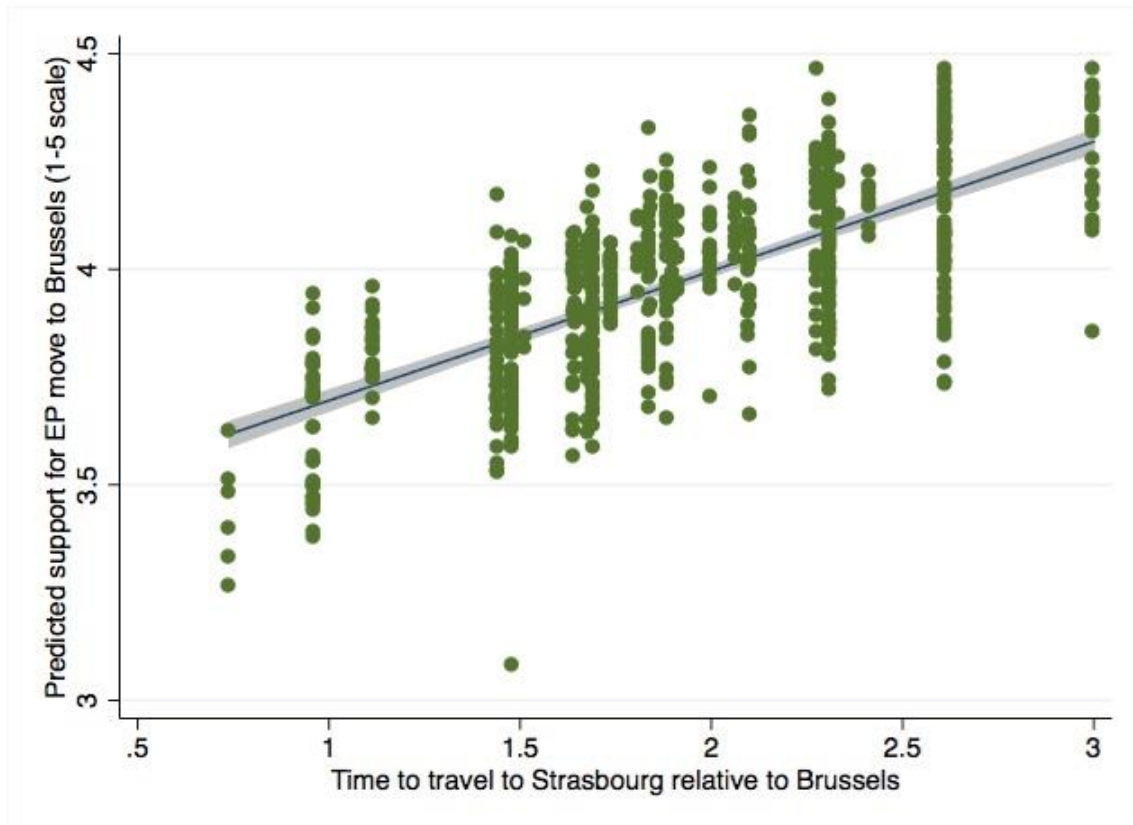
Table 6 Explaining support for the EP holding all plenary sessions in Brussels
(ordinary least squares regressions)

Variable	Coefficient			
	(standard error in parentheses)			
	Model 1		Model 2	
Ratio of Strasbourg to Brussels travel time			0.32***	(0.11)
Left-right self-placement	-0.05**	(0.02)	-0.03	(0.02)
European integration self-placement	-0.01	(0.02)	-0.02	(0.02)
Date elected	0.00	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)
France	-2.21***	(0.17)		
Germany	-0.77***	(0.14)		
Wave 1	-0.07	(0.18)	-0.10	(0.20)
Wave 2	0.13	(0.15)	0.07	(0.17)
Wave 3	0.05	(0.14)	0.06	(0.15)
Constant	-2.39	(16.39)	-20.19	(18.72)
<i>n</i>	691		691	
Adjusted r ²	0.22		0.02	

Notes: dependent variable: support for holding all EP plenary sessions in Brussels (question wording 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the powers of the European Parliament? The European Parliament should be allowed to hold all its plenary sessions in Brussels: 1=disagree strongly, 5=agree strongly)

** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Figure 1 Linear prediction of support for the EP holding all its plenary sessions in Brussels by Strasbourg travel time relative to Brussels (based on model 2)



Note: Grey shading depicts 95% confidence intervals around the linear prediction. The scatter plot shows predicted values of support for holding all plenary sessions in Brussels at different levels of time travel to Strasbourg relative to Brussels.

Appendix 1: Survey translation

The 2015 MEP survey questionnaire was translated into official languages of the EU, as were previous waves, to facilitate MEP participation. The languages offered were Bulgarian, Catalan, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Slovak, Slovene and Swedish. The only official language not included was Irish. Catalan was offered for the first time in 2015. Each translation was made from English by at least two native speakers who were also familiar with the project objectives and possessed substantive knowledge of European politics. Employing translators with a background in political science or European studies was preferable to professional translation companies in this case since measurement reliability in cross-national surveys is, in part, a function of linguistic equivalence (e.g. Anderson, 1967). Following initial translation, all language versions were proofread by at least one other native speaker with a political science/European studies background.

Appendix 2: Question wording for MEP 2015 survey variables used in analysis of support for holding all plenary sessions in Brussels:

Dependent variable

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the powers of the European Parliament? The European Parliament should be allowed to hold all its plenary sessions in Brussels: 1=disagree strongly, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5=agree strongly.

Left-right self-placement

In political matters, people talk of the 'left' and the 'right'. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 1 to 11, where 1 means 'left' and 11 means 'right'?

Note that for waves 1 and 2 of the survey this was a 1-10 scale. We converted this to a 1-11 scale to ensure comparability.

European integration self-placement

Some say European integration should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. Where would you place yourself on the question of European integration? Scale: 1= European integration has already gone too far, 11=European integration should be pushed further. Note that for waves 1 and 2 of the survey this was a 1-10 scale with the lower end labelled 'European integration has gone much too far' and the upper end 'The EU should become a federal state immediately'.

Appendix 3: The MEP 2015 Survey Questionnaire

In which language would you like to complete the survey? <> In welcher Sprache möchten Sie den Fragebogen auszufüllen? <> Dans quelle langue voulez-vous répondre au sondage?
{list of all languages}

Thank you for helping us with this research. It is completely confidential and solely for academic purposes. It is about your work as an MEP, your election campaign, and your views on various aspects of the EU. Our research aims to increase academic and public understanding of how the European Parliament works. The questionnaire contains the following sections:

- Section 1: Background, Career and Elections
- Section 2: Representation and Contacts
- Section 3: Legislative Behaviour
- Section 4: Political Attitudes

SECTION 1 – Background, Career and Elections

- 1.1. In which member state were you elected?
- 1.2. What is your Political Group in the European Parliament?
- 1.3. When did you first become an MEP?
- 1.4. Have you previously held any of these positions?
Choose all that apply.
 - Member of national parliament
 - Member of national government
 - European Commissioner
 - Observer to the European Parliament
 - European party or political group official
 - Assistant to an MEP
 - Official (fonctionnaire) in the European Parliament
 - Official in the Commission
 - Official in the Council
 - A 'lobbyist' in Brussels

None of the above

1.5 Have you ever previously held, or do you currently hold, any of these positions?
Choose all that apply.

Options: Previously held, but not now; Currently hold

Regional or local elected office

President of the European Parliament

President of a European political group

Leader of a national delegation in the European Parliament

Chair or Vice-Chair of a European Parliament committee

Group Coordinator in a European Parliament committee

Vice-President or Quaestor of the European Parliament

Domestic party official

Official in a women's organisation

Official in an interest group, trade union or professional association.

1.6. What would you like to be doing 10 years from now?

Choose as many responses as you wish.

Member of the European Parliament

Chair of a European Parliament committee

Chair of a European political group

Member of a national parliament

Member of a national government

European Commissioner

Retired from public life

Something else, please specify below:

1.7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In European Parliament elections, citizens should be able to vote for individual candidates rather than just for political parties (for example in an 'open' or 'semi-open' list form of proportional representation, as opposed to a 'closed' list form of PR)?

Options: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Disagree strongly

1.8. Were any of the following activities part of your 2014 campaign? If yes, how important were they?

Options: not used, of little importance, somewhat important, very important, most important

Choose one response per line.

- Door-knocking, canvassing
- Distributing party campaign material
- Calling up voters on the phone
- Visiting businesses and social organisations
- Meetings with party elites/members and/or party groups
- Media activities (interviews, press releases)
- Public speeches and rallies
- Personal campaign posters
- Direct mailing
- Personal newspaper ads
- Personal spots in radio, TV, movie houses
- Personal flyers or other campaign material (give-aways)
- Personal website
- Mailing list to inform supporters and voters about my campaign
- Own blog
- SMS messages
- Facebook or Twitter
- Other
- If 'other', please specify below:

1.9. What was the primary aim of your campaign? Where would you place yourself on this scale?

- 0 = to attract as much attention as possible for me as a candidate, 1, 2, 3, 4,
- 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 = to attract as much attention as possible for my party

1.10 Do you intend to stand in the next European election?

Yes

No

Not decided yet

{If no, then follow-up question}

1.11 Why do you not intend to stand?

- I do not think I will be re-elected
- I have decided to pursue a career in national politics
- I have decided to pursue a career outside politics

- Other [please specify]

SECTION 2 – Representation and Contacts

2.1. When thinking about your work as an MEP, how important are the following aspects of your work?

Options: 1 (Of little importance) / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 (Of great importance)

Choose one response per line.

- Working on legislation
- Parliamentary oversight
- Articulation of important societal needs and interests
- Developing common strategies for EU policies
- Mediation between different interests in society
- Representation of individual interests of individual citizens

2.2. How important is it for you to represent the following groups of people in the European Parliament?

Options: 1 (Of little importance) / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 (Of great importance)

Choose one response per line.

- All people in Europe
- All people in my member state
- All the people who voted for my party
- All the people in my constituency/region
- My national party
- My European political group
- Women

2.3. How frequently are you in contact with the following groups, people or institutions?

Options: At least once a week / At least once a month / At least every three months / At least once a year / Less often / No contact

Choose one response per line.

- Ordinary citizens
- Organised groups
- Lobbyists
- Journalists
- Leaders of my European political group
- MEPs of other parties from my member state

Officials in the Commission
European Commissioners
Members of my national political party
Members of my national party executive
MPs from my national parliament
Ministers from my national government
Public officials from my national government
Officials in the Council of the European Union

2.4 How frequently are you in contact with the following interest groups?

*Options: At least once a week / At least once a month / At least every three months /
At least once a year / Less often / No contact*

Choose one response per line.

Consumer associations
Environmental organisations
Women's organisations
Trade unions
Professional associations
Agriculture/fisheries organisations
Industry organisations
Transport associations
Trade and commerce associations
Banking and insurance associations
Human rights organisations
Other
If 'other', please specify:

2.5. How often do you travel to your constituency? (a) Never, (b) every 2 months, (c) once a month, (d) once a week, (e) more than once a week.

SECTION 3 – Legislative Behaviour

3.1. How often do you receive recommendations on which way to vote from the following parties or groups?

Options: 1 (Never) / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 (On almost every vote)

Choose one response per line.

Your national party leadership
Your European political group leadership

Your national party delegation of MEPs
Your European Parliament committee leadership
The European Commission
Your national government
Interest groups
Voters in your constituency

3.2. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Options: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Disagree strongly

Choose one response per line.

Members of a European political group should not speak openly about discussions within the European political group

If the opinions of the European political group appear in conflict with one's own opinions, it is correct to vote with the European political group

If a member of parliament is under pressure from constituents, it is correct that s/he votes against the expressed will of the European political group

No political initiatives should be taken without the authorisation of the European political group

For our European political group it is very important to appear united

The leader of a European political group should, as far as possible, ensure the unity of that European political group. In doing so the use of far reaching means, such as the denial of particular parliamentary posts (e.g. seats on committees), is legitimate.

3.3 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Choose one box per line.

When making decisions on legislation, MEPs should:

Options: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Disagree strongly

Choose one response per line.

defend their national position

look for a common policy in collaboration with MEPs from other member states and party groups

agree compromises on a legislative proposal in return for other MEPs' support on other legislative proposals

3.4 When making decisions in the European Parliament, are MEPs affected by any of the following? [please tick any that apply]

- Praise
- Acceptance
- Recognition
- Isolation
- Loss of support
- Criticism

3.5. After the 2014 European election, which committee did you most want to sit on?

3.6 Which committee(s) do you currently sit on as a full member?

3.7. Here is a list of reasons why MEPs choose which European Parliament committee to join. How important were each of these reasons for you in deciding which committee to join after the 2014 European elections?

Options: 1 (Not at all Important) / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 (Extremely Important)

Choose one response per line.

- The committee concerns my personal interests
- The committee is important to my voters
- The committee tackles topics in which I have professional expertise
- The committee covers important issues
- I was asked to serve on the committee by my European political group
- I was asked to serve on the committee by my national party
- I was a member of this committee in the last European Parliament

SECTION 4 –Political Attitudes

4.1. In political matters, people talk of the 'left' and the 'right'. Where would you place each of the following on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'left' and 10 means 'right'? *Choose one response per line.*

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Yourself | (LEFT) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (RIGHT) |
| Your national political party | (LEFT) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (RIGHT) |
| Your party's voters | (LEFT) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (RIGHT) |
| Your European political group | (LEFT) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (RIGHT) |

4.2. People hold different views on political issues. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following general political statements?

Options: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Disagree strongly

Choose one response per line.

- Greater effort should be made to reduce inequality of income
- Same sex marriage should be legalized
- People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences
- Governments should abstain from intervening in the economy
- Governments should adopt a restrictive policy on immigration

4.3 Some say European integration should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. Where would you place each of the following on the question of European integration?

0 = European integration has already gone too far, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 = European integration should be pushed further

Choose one response per line

- Yourself
- Your national political party
- Your party's voters
- Your European political group

4.4 The Treaty on European Union allows groups of member states to establish enhanced cooperation between themselves without the involvement of all 28 member states. Do you think that there should be more or less use of enhanced cooperation?

1 = Less use of enhanced cooperation, 2, 3, 4, 5 = More use of enhanced cooperation

4.5 How much responsibility do you think these different institutions have in the current economic situation in your country?

Choose one response per line

Responses on a scale of 0-10 where 0 = no responsibility, 10 = full responsibility

- The national government
- The European Union
- The IMF
- The banks
- Foreign investors/speculators

The European currency - EURO
The people/everybody in the country

4.6. Do you think there should be more or less EU-wide regulation in the following areas?

Options: A lot more / A little more / About the same / A little less / A lot less

Choose one response per line

Labour rights (e.g. working time rules)

Discrimination (on the grounds of gender, race, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation)

Environmental protection standards

Financial services

4.7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Economic and Monetary Union and EU monetary policies?

Options: Agree strongly / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Disagree strongly

Choose one response per line

Governments should be allowed to run deficits of more than 3% of GDP

The Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance is sufficient for ensuring budgetary discipline in the member states

4.8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about EU Justice and Home Affairs policies?

Options: Agree strongly / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Disagree strongly

Choose one response per line

There should be a common EU policy on economic migrants from third countries

Individual member states should be allowed to place restrictions on the free movement of people into their country.

EU migrants should be granted the same rights and access to public services as citizens of the recipient member state.

For serious crimes, the police in each member state should be able to issue arrest warrants which apply throughout the EU

4.10 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about EU external policies?

Options: Agree strongly / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Disagree strongly

Choose one response per line

EU foreign policy should develop as a counterweight to the United States
The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) will be
beneficial for my country.

The TTIP should exclude healthcare.

The TTIP should exclude food safety regulation.

The EU should develop closer political ties with Russia despite concerns
about democracy and human rights in that country.

4.11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about
the powers of the European Parliament?

Options: Agree strongly / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Disagree strongly

Choose one response per line

The European Parliament should have the right to initiate legislation

The European Parliament should have equal power with the Council in all
areas of EU legislation

The European Parliament should be able to remove individual
Commissioners from office

The European Parliament should be allowed to hold all its plenary sessions
in Brussels

European political groups should nominate candidates for the Commission
Presidency in future European elections.

4.12 The government of the United Kingdom (UK) has expressed an interest in re-
negotiating the UK's relationship with the European Union and then holding a
referendum on whether the UK should remain in the EU. Are you in favour of
continued UK membership in the EU? (Please choose one option from the list)

1. Yes, the UK should remain in the EU but without renegotiation

2. Yes the UK should remain in the EU but with a broad renegotiation of the
treaties. on a range of issues including the UK's concerns

3. Yes the UK should remain in the EU but there should be a UK-specific
renegotiation of the treaties.

4. No, the UK should leave the EU