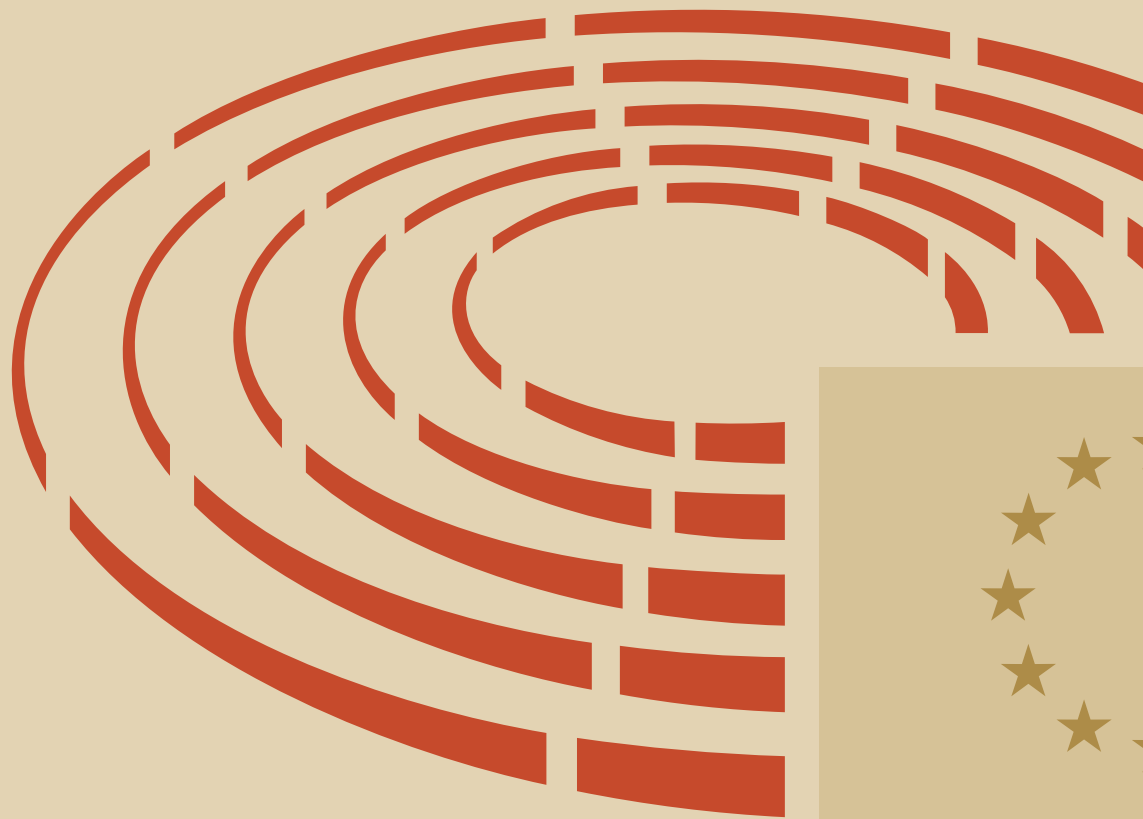


Cracks in the façade of Europe's right-wing unity

Voting patterns, tactics and divisions
among non-mainstream parties
in the 10th European Parliament

February 2025



POLITICAL CAPITAL
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Key findings

Building on our previous [research](#) on party attitudes toward authoritarian powers such as Russia and China in the 9th European Parliament (2019-2024) and the first plenary session of the 10th term (2024-2029), this publication examines the voting behavior of members of the 10th European Parliament in its first six months, between 16 July and 19 December 2024, to shed light on party and group cohesion and divergence.

- **The parties of the four mainstream groups**, the European People’s Party (EPP), the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Renew Europe (Renew) and the Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens), representing 63% of the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), **are a strong pillar and guarantor of the decision-making process in the 10th European Parliament.**
 - › **They tend to take a strong position in votes, either clearly supporting or opposing a proposal, and show a high degree of internal unity, voting mostly in agreement within their respective groups (usually more than 90% of the time).**
- **In contrast, the parties of the non-mainstream groups**, the Patriots for Europe (PfE or Patriots), the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), The Left, and the Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN), **and non-inscrit (NI) parties**, i.e. those without group affiliation, **are more likely to abstain from voting, are much more internally divided, and are much less aligned with others, even with their group mates.**
- In particular, ECR, PfE and NI parties tend to abstain the most. Parties with the most abstentions include Germany’s Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (NI), the Netherlands’ Partij voor de Vrijheid (PfE) and Czechia’s ANO 2011 (PfE).
- **Hungary’s TISZA (EPP), Ireland’s Fine Gael (EPP) and Hungary’s Fidesz (PfE) missed the most votes** in the period studied. **However, Fidesz used non-voting as a tactic most frequently and strategically, especially on resolutions condemning autocratic governments on human rights grounds**, including Belarus, Iran, China, **and a resolution on financial aid to Ukraine.**
 - › **Fidesz refrains from criticizing authoritarian regimes in the hope of economic and political gains** at the expense of democratic values and human rights, **and because it also condemns criticism from other countries** about the rule of law in Hungary.
- **Non-mainstream parties are much less aligned with others than mainstream parties.** Parties with the lowest co-voting rate include Germany’s Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW, NI), Slovakia’s SMER (NI), Hungary’s Fidesz (PfE), Czechia’s ANO (PfE) and Spain’s Se Acabó la Fiesta (ECR).

- **While the non-mainstream groups are generally much more divided internally than the mainstream groups, the most cohesive non-mainstream groups are the ESN and The Left, followed by the ECR.** While the largest parties in the ECR, Italy's Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi) and Poland's Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), vote together very often (83% of the time), the position of the smaller parties tends to differ significantly.
- **The least cohesive fringe group is the Patriots, where the largest parties, France's Rassemblement National and Hungary's Fidesz, do not function as cohesive actors. In fact, the second largest member, Fidesz, has the lowest co-voting rate and often votes together with parties from other groups than with its own.** Among the Patriots, Fidesz is most aligned with Italy's Lega and least with Spain's Vox, Czechia's ANO and the Dutch Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV).
- **The most divisive issues were mainly related to autocratic tendencies in third countries such as Azerbaijan, China, Georgia and Venezuela. While resolutions on EU aid to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia caused significant divisions within The Left, they were not among the most divisive issues for the PfE.**
 - › This confirms two findings of our [previous research](#). First, that **The Left has become more critical of the Kremlin since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine**, albeit with considerable internal divisions, **while still supporting other autocracies such as China**. And second, that **the pro-Russia stance has become a majority position in the PfE group**.
 - › **The ECR**, which proved to be the most critical of Russia and China among the non-mainstream groups in our previous research, **was mainly divided over the EU budget for 2025 in the first half year of the 10th EP**.
 - › **The ESN**, which proved to be the most supportive of Russia and China in our previous research, **was the most unified fringe group in the period now studied, showing major disagreement only on an amendment to the resolution on Venezuela's fraudulent elections**.
- **While the ESN and PfE's support for autocratic regimes, especially Russia and China, remains a major political vulnerability for the EU, posing risks of hostile foreign information manipulation and interference, the ECR's strong anti-Kremlin stance and the Left's increasing criticism of Russia over Ukraine are potentially hopeful signs of a growing awareness and unity against the imminent security threats posed by Russia.**

Introduction

The 10th European Parliament, which was officially constituted on 16 July 2024, continued the trend of the melting of the mainstream and the strengthening of the fringes, especially on the right. While the mainstream groups, i.e. the European People's Party (EPP), the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Renew Europe (Renew) and the Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens), retained their majority (63% of the seats), populist radical right and far-right groups such as the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the newly formed Patriots for Europe (PfE) and the Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN) significantly increased their share from 17% to 25% compared to the previous legislature, while the far-left The Left grew from 5% to 6%.

In our previous [study](#), published in September 2024, we examined the parties' attitudes towards Russia and China based on 73 votes related to these two countries in the 9th term of the EP (2019-2024) and the first plenary session of the 10th term (2024-2029). Our main findings include that the ECR was the most critical of Russia and China among the non-mainstream groups, while the ESN was the most supportive of the two authoritarian countries. The PfE was overwhelmingly pro-Russian, but still divided over Russia and even more so over China. While The Left remained supportive of China, it has become more critical of the Kremlin since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, albeit with considerable divisions within its ranks.

In the current study, we examine the voting patterns of the parties more broadly in the first six months of the 10th EP, between 16 July and 19 December 2024, to understand the parties' strategy, their ideological and political alignment with each other, and the internal cohesion of the political groups. We focus on the non-mainstream parties and groups to see the relationship and difference between mainstream and fringe actors, and thus the political vulnerability of the EP.

We developed a specific statistical methodological framework for this study, also drawing on the lessons of our previous research. Essentially, we made calculations based on the votes of individual MEPs using two methods: 1) In order to define party voting patterns, party positions, party tactics, voting alignment between parties and co-voting within a group, we used only the votes of MEPs belonging to a national party delegation of at least three MEPs. 2) To analyze the internal cohesion of political groups and to identify the issues that divide the groups, we also used the Agreement Index ([Hix & Noury, 2005](#)), which measures the extent to which MEPs from the same group vote unanimously based on the votes of individual MEPs, regardless of the size of their party delegation.

1. Basic characteristics of voting in the European Parliament

Between 16 July and 19 December 2024, the EP held 31 voting days, with 840 votes cast. Roll-call votes (RCVs), where the votes of individual members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are recorded in the minutes, accounted for 61%, electronic votes 4%, and hand-raising 34%. **In this analysis, we focus on the total of 516 RCVs**, as this is the only type of vote, which is suitable for in-depth research.

Most RCVs had clear outcomes. In 449 cases (87%), the difference between the 'for' and 'against' votes was at least 100 votes, and in only 12 cases was it less than 10 votes, including an amendment to the EU budget for 2025 that passed by just one vote. The strongest consensus was on the EU Solidarity Fund aid for Germany and Italy related to the 2024 floods with 660 votes in favor and only 11 against.

Votes are usually taken on the last or penultimate day of the session, by which time debates have been concluded. **For this reason, some days were particularly intense for RCVs.** There were 129 RCVs on 23 October 2024, 92 RCVs on 19 September, and 57 RCVs on 28 November, representing altogether 54% of all such votes.

Most decisions typically involve only a few RCVs. Some issues, however, trigger many amendments generating many RCVs. In the first six months of the 10th parliamentary term, there were two such issues: 117 RCVs on the EU budget for 2025 and 91 on Ukraine.

2. Voting patterns of national parties in the European Parliament

In this chapter we look at the voting behavior of national parties. We use the individual votes of each party's MEPs to determine the party's position in roll-call votes. First, we assess the voting discipline of the parties, then we determine whether they had a clear position in the votes, then we take a closer look at the votes they deliberately missed, and finally we show which parties were close and which were far apart based on their voting positions. Only national parties with at least three MEPs were included in the analysis, as fewer representatives do not provide a reliable indication of consistent voting behavior.

2.1 Voting discipline of national parties

Our approach: We have determined voting discipline by assessing the extent to which national party delegations with at least 3 MEPs had a majority position, i.e. most of their MEPs voted in the same direction. A majority position for a party was defined when one type of valid vote ("for", "against", "abstained") clearly outnumbered others within the party delegation. If there was no majority, no definitive position was assigned. If there was no valid vote at all on a particular resolution, we categorized this behavior as deliberate non-voting.

National party delegations demonstrated a high degree of party discipline during the first six months of the 10th European Parliament. Of the 76 parties with at least three MEPs, 21 had a clear majority position in all 516 roll-call votes, while 49 deviated in only up to 10 cases. **Only six parties showed significant disunity, including Poland's Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość (3 MEPs with ESN, 2 MEPs with PfiE, 49 discordant votes), Slovenia's Slovenska Demokratska Stranka (EPP, 29 discordant votes), and Slovakia's SMER (NI, 26 discordant votes).** The lack of coordination in the Polish party is due to the fact that three of the party's five MEPs belong to the ESN and two to the PfiE group.

Figure 1: National parties with more than 10 dissenting votes

National party	Country	Political group (number of MEPs)	Number of votes with no clear position (% of all 516 RCVs)
Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość	PL	ESN (3) + PfiE (2)	47 (9.1%)
Slovenska demokratska stranka	SI	EPP (4)	29 (5.6%)
SMER-Sociálna demokracia	SK	NI (5)	26 (5.0%)
Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske	HR	S&D (4)	15 (2.9%)
Revival	BG	ESN (3)	13 (2.5%)
Hrvatska demokratska zajednica	HR	EPP (6)	11 (2.1%)

As for the main Hungarian parties, both the ruling Fidesz (Pfe) and the opposition TISZA (EPP) showed a high degree of unity. Fidesz maintained a unified position in every vote, while TISZA failed to adopt a unified position in only three cases. As a result, TISZA fell into the 64% of parties whose discipline lapsed in at least one but no more than ten votes.

2.2 Hard vs. soft positions of national parties

Our approach: We also wanted to see what positions were hidden behind the voting discipline of party delegations with at least 3 MEPs. A hard voting position is defined by clear support or opposition to a proposal, as determined by ‘for’ and ‘against’ votes. In contrast, a soft voting position is typically associated with abstentions. As abstentions are not taken into account when calculating whether a text has been adopted or rejected,³² they are usually interpreted as mild opposition but may also indicate agreement with a proposal that a party does not consider strong enough.

In general, parties from non-mainstream groups, notably the ECR and the Pfe, and parties with no group affiliation (non-inscrit, NI) tend to abstain the most, while parties from mainstream groups tend to abstain the least. This is evidenced by the fact that the 43 parties with the fewest abstentions were all from the EPP, Renew, S&D and Greens groups. The party with the strongest positions is the conservative-liberal Dutch Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD, Renew), which took a hard position in 514 out of 516 votes. The German party Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW, NI), which sits among the independents, ranks at the bottom with 117 abstentions.

Figure 2: Most abstaining parties (parties and their party families abstaining in at least 10% of the 516 roll-call votes)

National party	Country	Political group (Number of MEPs)	% of abstentions
Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht - Vernunft und Gerechtigkeit	DE	NI (6)	23%
Partij voor de Vrijheid	NL	Pfe (6)	19%
ANO 2011	CZ	Pfe (7)	19%
Se Acabó la Fiesta	ES	ECR (2) + NI (1)	16%
Lega	IT	Pfe (8)	16%
Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie	BE	ECR (3)	15%
Rassemblement national	FR	Pfe (29)	13%
Vlaams Belang	BE	Pfe (3)	13%
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	AT	Pfe (6)	13%
Fratelli d'Italia	IT	ECR (24)	11%
Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość	PL	ESN (3) + Pfe (2)	11%
Tisztelet és Szabadság Párt	HU	EPP (7)	11%
Fidesz-KDNP	HU	Pfe (11)	11%

2.3 Deliberate non-voting of national parties

Our approach: To unravel the intent behind the organized omission of votes by party delegations with at least 3 MEPs, we have distinguished three types of deliberate non-voting, i.e., when a party's entire delegation misses a particular vote: 1) **absence-based non-voting**, when all party representatives miss all roll-call votes on a given day; 2) **tactical non-voting**, when a party systematically avoids voting on all aspects of a particular resolution, including amendments and the final vote; and 3) **other deliberate non-voting**, when MEPs miss only some votes related to a resolution. While the first suggests a general disengagement rather than a targeted strategic move, and the third is difficult to attribute to a clear strategic intent, **tactical non-voting appears to be a deliberate tactic by a party to avoid taking a public position on an issue without explicitly voting for, against or abstaining**. This approach allows them to distance themselves from politically sensitive decisions while minimizing potential backlash from their voter base, allies, or internal party factions.

Hungary's TISZA (EPP), Ireland's Fine Gael (EPP) and Hungary's Fidesz (Pfe) missed the most votes in the European Parliament between 16 July and 19 December 2024. Analyzing the data of the votes they missed reinforces the distinction between the three types of deliberate non-voting, i.e. absence-based non-voting, tactical non-voting and other deliberate non-voting.

- **The Hungarian party TISZA missed the most votes**, 100 out of 516 roll-call votes (19%). However, **39 of these 100 votes** were on the same resolution on EU priorities for the 69th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women¹, voted on 19 December 2024. These missed votes therefore **qualify as tactical non-voting**. The rest fall into the categories of absence-based non-voting, as they missed all 57 RCVs on 28 November, and other non-voting (4 cases).
- **The party with the second most missed votes is the Irish Fine Gael with 57 cases of non-voting, all of which occurred on a single day, 28 November**, when the party did not participate in any roll-call votes. Therefore, all of these cases qualify as absence-based non-voting.
- **Although Hungary's ruling Fidesz party ranks third with 43 missed votes, it uses tactical non-voting most often and most strategically in the European Parliament.** This is because 36 of Fidesz's deliberate non-votes relate to 13 resolutions, while TISZA and Vox (see below) used tactical non-voting in relation to only one resolution. **Fidesz used this tool mostly in relation to resolutions that condemned autocratic governments on human rights grounds, including Belarus², Iran³, China⁴, and a resolution on financial aid to Ukraine⁵.** These cases clearly represent tactical non-voting in light of the government's critical approach to Ukraine and its foreign policy, which prioritizes interests over values, complemented by the policy of "Eastern Opening", which aims to develop economic relations with Eastern, often autocratic, countries. Thus, Fidesz refrains from criticizing authoritarian regimes in the hope of economic and political gains at the expense of democratic values and human rights, and because it also condemns criticism from other countries for the rule of law deficiencies in Hungary.

Besides Fidesz and TISZA, **Spain's VOX party (Pfe) used tactical non-voting on one occasion regarding EU support for Ukraine⁶.**

Figure 3: National parties with the most cases of deliberate non-voting, by type of deliberate non-voting

Party (country code, political group (no. of MEPs))	Tactical non-voting (number of resolutions involved)	Absence-based non-voting	Other deliberate non-voting	Total deliberate non-voting
Tisztelet és Szabadság Párt (HU, EPP (7))	39 (1)	57	4	100
Fine Gael (IE, EPP(4))	0	57	0	57
Fidesz-KDNP (HU, PFE(11))	36 (13)	0	7	43
Dvizhenie za prava i svobodi (BG, NI (2) + Renew (1))	0	21	2	23
Partit Laburista (MT, S&D(3))	0	2	20	22
VOX (ES, PFE (6))	21 (1)	0	0	21
Nea Demokratia (EL, EPP(7))	0	0	16	16

2.4. Alignment between national parties based on co-voting

Our approach: To assess alignment between national parties, we analyzed the extent to which different parties with at least 3 MEPs voted together. We created a joint voting matrix that measures the percentage of votes cast together for each pair of parties with at least three representatives, based on their positions in all 516 roll-call votes.

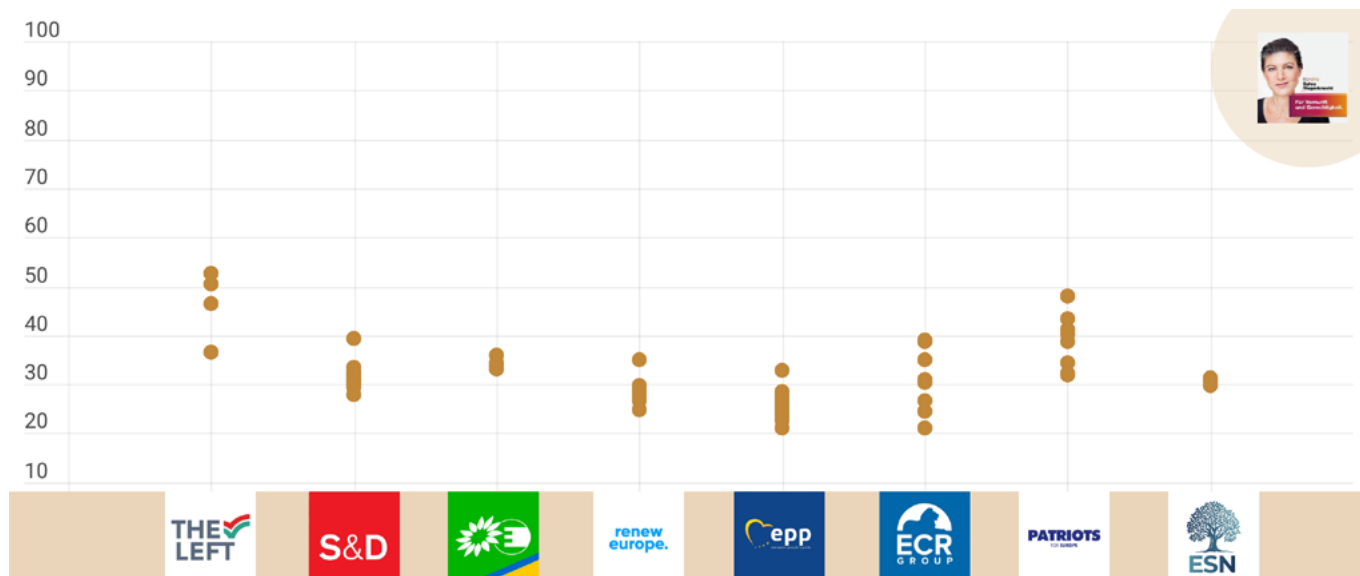
Based on co-voting patterns of national parties with at least 3 MEPs, parties with no group affiliation (NI) and parties from the non-mainstream groups are the least aligned with other parties. The list is topped by Germany's Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (NI) and Slovakia's SMER (NI), both with a highest co-voting rate below 60%, followed by Hungary's Fidesz (PFE), Czechia's ANO (PFE) and Spain's Se Acabó la Fiesta (ECR) with a highest co-voting rate in the range of 60 to 70%.

Figure 4: Parties with the highest co-voting rate below 75%

Party (Country abbreviation, Group (No of MEPs))	Highest co-voting rate with another party	Party voted with the most (Country abbreviation, Group (No of MEPs))
Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht – Vernunft und Gerechtigkeit (DE, NI (6))	55.6%	SMER-Sociálna demokracia (SK, NI(5))
SMER-Sociálna demokracia (SK, NI (5))	58.9%	Alternative für Deutschland (DE, ESN (14) + NI (1))
Fidesz-KDNP (HU, PFE (11))	65.5%	Lega (IT, PFE (8))
ANO 2011 (CZ, PFE (7))	68.4%	VOX (ES, PFE (6))
Se Acabó la Fiesta (ES, ECR (2) + NI (1))	69.2%	Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor (RO, ECR (5))
FPÖ (AT, PFE (6))	71.1%	Alternative für Deutschland (DE, ESN (14) + NI (1))
Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (BE, ECR (3))	71.3%	Občanská Demokratická Strana (CZ, ECR (3))
Partij voor de Vrijheid (NL, PFE (6))	71.3%	Identité Libertés (FR, ECR (4))
Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość (PL, ESN (3) + PFE (2))	72.1%	Alternative für Deutschland (DE, ESN (14) + NI (1))
Sverigedemokraterna (SE, ECR (3))	72.1%	Občanská Demokratická Strana (CZ, ECR (3))
Tisztelet és Szabadság Párt (HU, EPP (7))	73.3%	Fine Gael Party (IE, EPP (4))
Rassemblement national (FR, PFE (29))	73.8%	Vlaams Belang (BE, PFE (3))
Partit Laburista (MT, S&D (3))	73.8%	Partito Democratico (IT, S&D (21))
VOX (ES, PFE (6))	74.4%	Identité Libertés (FR, ECR (4))

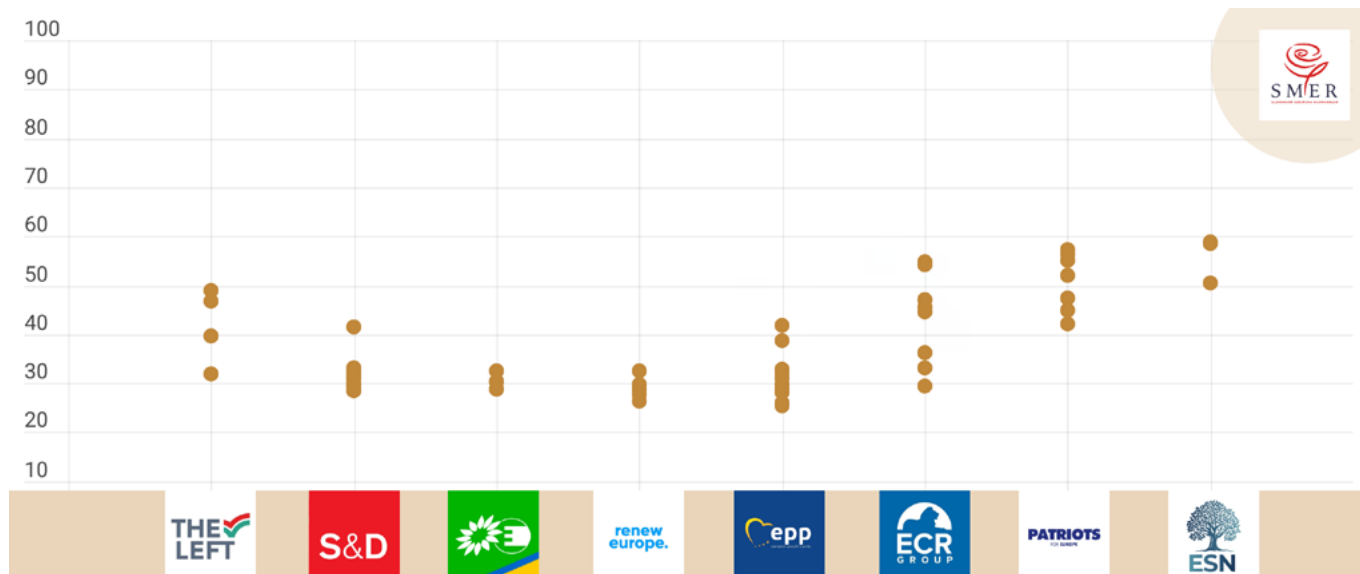
Germany’s left-wing conservative **Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW, NI)** has the lowest rate of joint voting with other parties, coming closest (in 56% of all RCVs) to its fellow non-iscrit party, Slovakia’s SMER. Nevertheless, in line with its ideology, BSW mostly votes together with The Left and Patriots groups and is most distant from the parties of the EPP, ECR and Renew groups, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 5: Co-voting of BSW (DE, NI) with other parties, by political groups
(each dot represents one party, the value is the percentage of agreement)



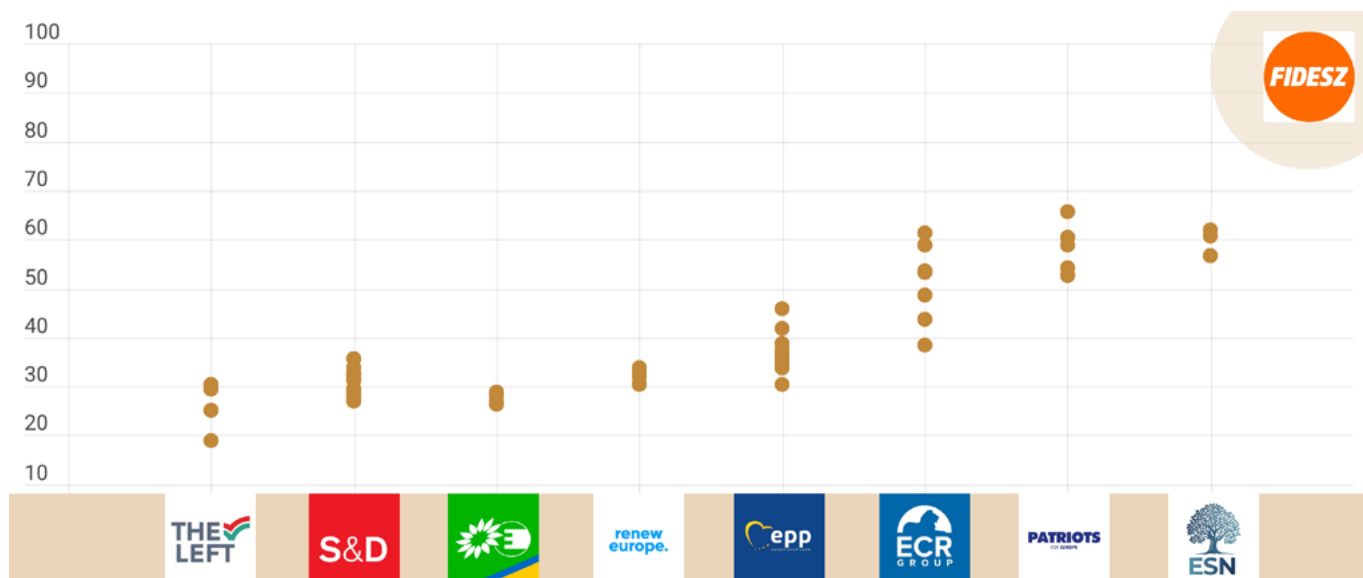
The second least aligned party is Slovakia's governing **SMER** (NI), interestingly with a co-voting rate of 58.9% with Germany's far-right Alternative für Deutschland (ESN). Although traditionally a left-wing party and until recently a member of the S&D group, SMER most often votes with parties from the Patriots, ESN and ECR groups.

Figure 6: Co-voting of SMER (SK, NI) with other parties, by political groups
(each dot represents one party, the value is the percentage of agreement)



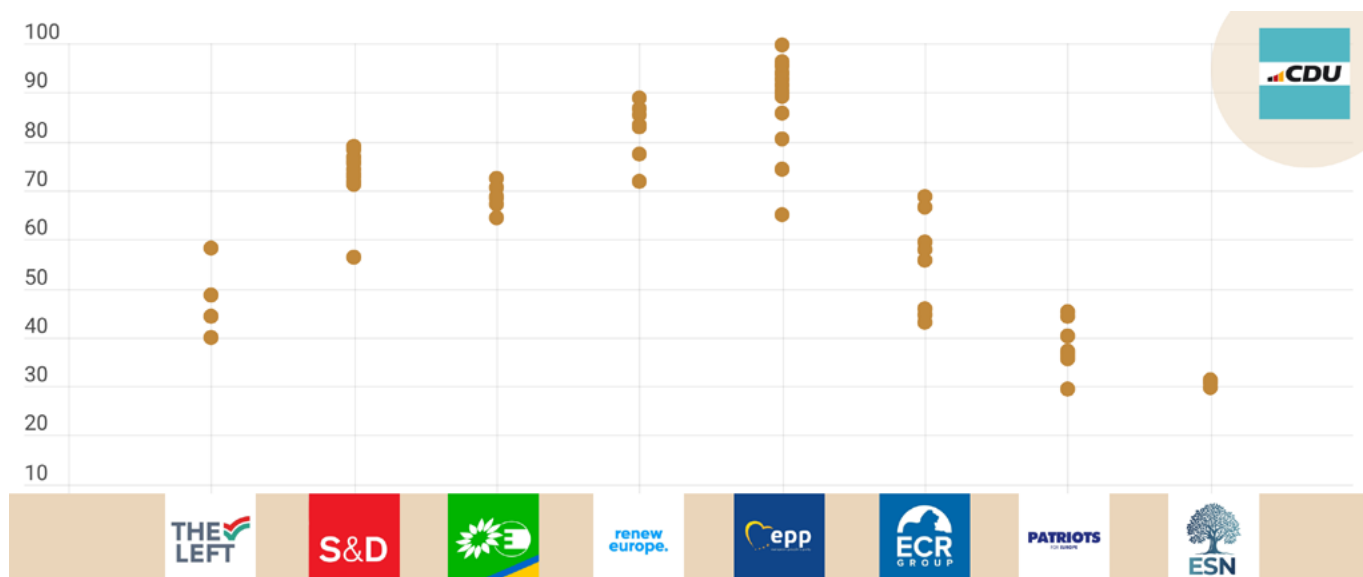
The third least aligned party is Hungary's **Fidesz** (PfE), which is closest to Italy's Lega (PfE) with 66% joint voting. The Hungarian governing party **often votes differently not only with parties from other groups, but also with members of its own Patriots group**. Fidesz votes almost as often with most parties from the ESN and ECR groups as it does with its fellow PfE parties, but its agreement rate hardly exceeds 60% in most relationships.

Figure 7: Co-voting of Fidesz (HU, PfiE) with other parties, by political groups
 (each dot represents one party, the value is the percentage of agreement)



In contrast, the EPP's largest party, Germany's **CDU** (EPP), is a strong trendsetter. Its positions are mostly in line with those of its fellow EPP parties, and its positions very often (70-90%) also coincide with those of the Renew and S&D parties. At the same time, the CDU's position is very far from the far-right groups, but is closest to the ECR among the non-mainstream groups.

Figure 8: Co-voting of CDU (DE, EPP) with other parties, by political groups
 (each dot represents one party, the value is the percentage of agreement)



3. Cohesion of political groups

In this chapter, we examine the cohesion of political groups using two methods. One is based on the positions of parties with at least three members, as used in the previous chapter. This is useful for comparing the similarities and differences in the positions of the main parties in each group. However, it does not take into account the positions of parties with 1-2 MEPs, so it does not give a perfect picture of the cohesion of the group as a whole. The other method is based on the voting records of all MEPs and is therefore suitable for characterizing the group as a whole. However, it does not take into account party affiliation and is therefore not suitable for describing internal power relations. By using both methods, we are able to simultaneously assess the cohesion of the groups as a whole and between the major parties in each group.


3.1 Cohesion of political groups based on co-voting of their member parties

Our approach: To get a picture of the cohesion and fragmentation of political groups, we looked at the extent to which parties with at least 3 MEPs voted together in the same group. We used the same method presented in Chapter 2.4, namely a joint voting matrix that measures the percentage of votes cast together for each pair of parties with at least three representatives in a group, based on their positions in all 516 roll-call votes.

In the four mainstream political groups, parties exhibit a high degree of alignment, with most party pairs voting together on more than 90% of the votes, and the co-voting rate rarely dropping below 80%. Within the Greens, for example, 13 out of 15 party pairs voted together on more than 90% of the votes, and the remaining 2 did so on “only” 89% and 88% of the votes.

Figure 9: Co-voting rates of parties in the Greens group

(The numbers indicate the percentage of votes in which the two parties in a given row and column voted together, i.e. their positions coincided. The column 'Average' indicates the general co-voting rate of the respective party.)


	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (DE, 12)	Socialistisk Folkeparti (DK, 3)	Volt (DE, 3)	Miljöpartiet de gröna (SE, 3)	GroenLinks (NL, 4)	Les Écologistes (FR, 5)	AVERAGE
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (DE, 12)		99 %	95 %	95 %	93 %	93 %	95 %
Socialistisk Folkeparti (DK, 3)	99 %		95 %	95 %	93 %	92 %	95 %
Volt (DE, 3)	95 %	95 %		93 %	96 %	90 %	94 %
Miljöpartiet de gröna (SE, 3)	95 %	95 %	93 %		91 %	89 %	93 %
GroenLinks (NL, 4)	93 %	93 %	96 %	91 %		88 %	92 %
Les Écologistes (FR, 5)	93 %	92 %	90 %	89 %	88 %		91 %

The non-mainstream groups show a significantly lower degree of internal cohesion.

The most cohesive fringe group is The Left, with the most co-voting rates close to and above 80%, especially compared to the number of member parties with at least 3 MEPs, and with the highest average co-voting rates of its parties.


Figure 10: Co-voting rates of parties in the Left group

(The numbers indicate the percentage of votes in which the two parties in a given row and column voted together, i.e. their positions coincided. The column 'Average' indicates the general co-voting rate of the respective party.)

	La France Insoumise (FR, 9)	Coalition of the Radical Left (EL, 4)	Movimento 5 Stelle (IT, 8)	Vasemmistoliitto (FI, 3)	AVERAGE
La France Insoumise (FR, 9)		84 %	79 %	78 %	80 %
Coalition of the Radical Left (EL, 4)	84 %		83 %	73 %	80 %
Movimento 5 Stelle (IT, 8)	79 %	83 %		69 %	77 %
Vasemmistoliitto (FI, 3)	78 %	73 %	69 %		73 %

The second most cohesive of the non-mainstream groups is the ECR. While its two largest parties, Italy's Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi) and Poland's Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), voted together in 83% of roll-call votes, and its third largest party, Romania's AUR, voted jointly with PiS in 80% of the RCVs, the position of smaller parties often differ significantly. PiS, Fdi and Czechia's ODS have the highest average co-voting rate of 72% and 68% respectively, while France's Identité Libertés, led by Marion Maréchal, Jean-Marie Le Pen's granddaughter, Spain's Se Acabó la Fiesta and Belgium's Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie have the lowest average rates of 61% and 60% respectively.


Figure II: Co-voting rates of parties in the ECR group (The numbers indicate the percentage of votes in which the two parties in a given row and column voted together, i.e. their positions coincided. The column 'Average' indicates the general co-voting rate of the respective party.)

	PiS (PL, 19)	Fdi (IT, 24)	ODS (CZ, 3)	AUR (RO, 5)	SD (SE, 3)	IL (FR, 4)	SAIF (ES, 2 + 1 NI)	N-VA (BE, 3)	AVERAGE
Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PL, 19)		83 %	77 %	80 %	68 %	69 %	65 %	64 %	72 %
Fratelli d'Italia (IT, 24)	83 %		70 %	71 %	60 %	67 %	65 %	61 %	68 %
Občanská demokratická strana (CZ, 3)	77 %	70 %		66 %	72 %	59 %	60 %	71 %	68 %
Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor (RO, 5)	80 %	71 %	66 %		55 %	67 %	69 %	54 %	66 %
Sverigedemokraterna (SE, 3)	68 %	60 %	72 %	55 %		60 %	56 %	68 %	63 %
Identité Libertés (FR, 4)	69 %	67 %	59 %	67 %	60 %		60 %	47 %	61 %
Se Acabó la Fiesta (ES, 2 + 1 NI)	65 %	65 %	60 %	69 %	56 %	60 %		52 %	61 %
Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (BE, 3)	64 %	61 %	71 %	54 %	68 %	47 %	52 %		60 %

The least cohesive fringe group is the Patriots, with the highest co-voting rate of only 74%, between France's Rassemblement National (RN) and Belgium's Vlaams Belang (VB). Unlike in the ECR, the largest parties in the group do not function as cohesive actors, with the RN (29 MEPs) having only the third highest average co-voting rate and Hungary's ruling Fidesz (11 MEPs) the lowest, at 58%. VB has the highest average rate with 69% and Italy's Lega the second with 68%. Czechia's ANO and Austria's FPÖ have the second and third lowest average rates, both at 63%. Fidesz, which presents itself as a leading and exemplary actor of the European (and international) populist radical and far-right movement, has the highest co-voting rate with Italy's Lega (66%), which is just above the group average (63.5). Its second and third "closest partners", in terms of joint voting are RN and FPÖ (both with an average rate of 60%) and VB (59%). Vox (54%) and ANO and the Dutch PVV (both 53%) seem to be the least aligned, although they are presented by Fidesz as close allies much more often than VB and RN. Moreover, as shown in chapter 2.4, Fidesz, despite being a founder and the second largest member of the Patriots, often votes together with parties from other groups than with members of its own group.

Figure 12: Co-voting rates of parties in the PfiE group

(The numbers indicate the percentage of votes in which the two parties in a given row and column voted together, i.e. their positions coincided. The column 'Average' indicates the general co-voting rate of the respective party.)

 PATRIOTS	VB (BE, 3)	Lega (IT, 8)	RN (FR, 29)	VOX (ES, 6)	PvV (NL, 6)	FPÖ (AT, 6)	ANO 2011 (CZ, 7)	Fidesz-KDNP (HU, 11)	AVERAGE
Vlaams Belang (BE, 3)		73 %	74 %	69 %	71 %	69 %	65 %	59 %	69 %
Lega (IT, 8)	73 %		70 %	68 %	67 %	70 %	64 %	66 %	68 %
Rassemblement national (FR, 29)	74 %	70 %		66 %	66 %	67 %	66 %	60 %	67 %
VOX (ES, 6)	69 %	68 %	66 %		70 %	62 %	68 %	54 %	65 %
Partij voor de Vrijheid (NL, 6)	71 %	67 %	66 %	70 %		59 %	67 %	53 %	65 %
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (AT, 6)	69 %	70 %	67 %	62 %	59 %		56 %	60 %	63 %
ANO 2011 (CZ, 7)	65 %	64 %	66 %	68 %	67 %	56 %		53 %	63 %
Fidesz-KDNP (HU, 11)	59 %	66 %	60 %	54 %	53 %	60 %	53 %		58 %

We could not include the ESN group in this analysis because it has only two member parties with at least 3 MEPs. However, these two parties, Germany's AfD, which makes up 54% of the group's MEPs, and Bulgaria's Vazrazhdane party, voted together 93% of the time. Nevertheless, chapter 3.2 provides further insights into the internal cohesion of the ESN group, based on a different methodology.

3.2 Issues dividing non-mainstream groups based on individual MEP votes

Our approach: We also analyzed the internal cohesion of political groups using a different method, based on the votes of individual MEPs, in order to assess which issues divide non-mainstream groups the most. We used the Agreement Index ([Hix & Noury, 2005](#)), which measures the extent to which MEPs from the same group vote unanimously. The Agreement Index (AI), which takes into account only valid votes, ranges from 0% to 100%, where it is 100% if all MEPs of a political group vote in the same way (e.g. all support or reject the proposal or abstain) and 0% if one third of them support the proposal, one third reject it and one third abstain. For each of the 516 roll-call votes, we calculated the AI of the political groups and then ranked them according to the average of the 516 index values. To identify the divisive issues, we looked at the votes where the Agreement Index of the non-mainstream groups was less than 20%.

In terms of group cohesion, this method has reinforced the findings based on the voting behavior of parties with at least 3 MEPs presented in chapter 3.1.

- **The mainstream groups showed a high degree of internal cohesion.** The Renew, S&D and Greens groups recorded an average Agreement Index of 91%, while the EPP followed closely with 88%. Major divisions within these groups, where the Agreement Index fell below 20% (i.e. the first two columns of Figure 13), occurred in the following cases: the EPP split on two Ukraine funding votes, Renew on two budget votes and the S&D on a procedural matter.
- **Based on the average AI scores, the ESN and The Left are the most cohesive of the non-mainstream groups, both at 82%, followed by the ECR and the PfE at 77% and 71%, respectively. However, if we scratch the surface and look at the votes where the Agreement Index is less than 20%, we get a different order. Then we see the most divisions in The Left group, followed by the PfE, the ECR and the ESN.**

Figure 13: Agreement index in each political group (distribution of the agreement index of the 516 roll-call votes in deciles of the 0%-100% scale and average of the index)

	0-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	50-60%	60-70%	70-80%	80-90%	90-100%	AVERAGE
Renew	2	0	8	5	1	8	16	24	75	377	91%
S&D	0	1	3	2	10	13	19	23	62	383	91%
Greens	0	0	2	2	14	25	15	50	31	377	91%
EPP	0	4	5	6	26	6	14	32	89	334	88%
ESN	0	1	3	5	18	27	65	77	97	223	82%
The Left	4	12	13	18	10	25	47	61	47	279	82%
ECR	1	8	23	32	15	12	38	94	103	190	77%
PfE	1	11	40	41	32	44	42	53	93	159	71%

- The division within **The Left** in the 10th parliamentary term can be explained by the fact that it **has become more critical of the Kremlin since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, while still supporting other autocracies such as China**, as highlighted in our earlier analysis⁷. Disagreements mainly surfaced on issues such as continued EU aid to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia (8 out of 16 votes where the Agreement Index was below 20%),⁸ Georgia’s democratic backsliding (4 votes),⁹ and China’s actions against Taiwan and Hong Kong peace activists (2 votes).¹⁰
- **The PFE group** was most divided on two foreign policy issues: Venezuela’s fraudulent elections (2 out of 12 votes where the Agreement Index was below 20%) and the political situation in Azerbaijan (2 votes). The group showed equal support and opposition to two amendments to the resolution on the situation in Venezuela,¹¹ while a relative majority condemned the ethnic cleansing of Armenians and the repression of civil society in Azerbaijan¹². **Notably, the resolutions on support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia¹³ were not among the most divisive issues for the PFE**, with the absolute majority opposing them and the minority abstaining or not voting. **This confirms that the pro-Russian stance has become a majority position within the group.**

- The **ECR's** political divisions were mainly related to EU budgetary issues¹⁴ (4 out of 9 votes where the Agreement Index was below 20%). While the majority rejected a resolution on Azerbaijan¹⁵ (1 vote), it voted in the final vote for resolutions on support for Ukraine, confirming the ECR's generally strong anti-Russia stance.
- The **ESN** was the most disciplined of the fringe groups. It fell below the 20 percent Agreement Index only on an amendment to the resolution on Venezuela's fraudulent elections.

4. Conclusions

- The 10th European Parliament reveals a complex dynamic in which mainstream groups wield considerable influence through high discipline, internal cohesion, inter-group and even largely intra-group alignment, while the increased presence of non-mainstream, radical and often far-right and far-left parties adds new layers of polarization for the foreseeable future.
- Voting data suggest that mainstream parties remain the main drivers of legislative outcomes, but fringe groups pose a challenge to overall decision-making power on key issues related to the EU's external relations.
- The supportive stance of some fringe parties and groups in the EP, notably the ESN and PfiE, towards authoritarian powers, especially Russia and China, remains a major political vulnerability for the EU, posing risks of hostile foreign information manipulation and interference. Nevertheless, the ECR's strong anti-Kremlin stance and the Left's increasing criticism of Russia over Ukraine are potentially hopeful signs of a growing awareness and unity against the imminent security threats posed by Russia.

Endnotes

- 1 European Parliament recommendation of 19 December 2024 to the Council concerning the EU priorities for the 69th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2024/2057(INI)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0075_EN.html
- 2 European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2024 on the severe situation of political prisoners in Belarus (2024/2804(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0009_EN.html
- 3 European Parliament resolution of 28 November 2024 on the increasing and systematic repression of women in Iran (2024/2951(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0052_EN.html
- 4 European Parliament resolution of 10 October 2024 on the cases of unjustly imprisoned Uyghurs in China, notably Ilham Tohti and Gulshan Abbas (2024/2857(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0019_EN.html
- 5 European Parliament legislative resolution of 22 October 2024 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Ukraine Loan Cooperation Mechanism and providing exceptional macro-financial assistance to Ukraine (COM(2024)0426 – C10-0106/2024 – 2024/0234(COD)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0021_EN.html
- 6 European Parliament resolution of 17 July 2024 on the need for the EU's continuous support for Ukraine (2024/2721(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0003_EN.html
- 7 Political Capital: Growing influence of Russia and China in the new European Parliament?, https://politicalcapital.hu/library.php?article_read=1&article_id=3420
- 8 European Parliament resolution of 17 July 2024 on the need for the EU's continuous support for Ukraine (2024/2721(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0003_EN.html; European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2024 on continued financial and military support to Ukraine by EU Member States (2024/2799(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0012_EN.html; European Parliament resolution of 14 November 2024 on EU actions against the Russian shadow fleets and ensuring a full enforcement of sanctions against Russia (2024/2885(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0036_EN.html
- 9 European Parliament resolution on the democratic backsliding and threats to political pluralism in Georgia (2024/2822(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-10-2024-0070_EN.html
- 10 European Parliament resolution of 24 October 2024 on the misinterpretation of UN resolution 2758 by the People's Republic of China and its continuous military provocations around Taiwan (2024/2891(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0030_EN.html; European Parliament resolution on Hong Kong, notably the cases of Jimmy Lai and the 45 activists recently convicted under the national security law (2024/2950(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-10-2024-0208_EN.html
- 11 European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2024 on the situation in Venezuela (2024/2810(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0013_EN.html
- 12 European Parliament resolution of 24 October 2024 on the situation in Azerbaijan, violation of human rights and international law and relations with Armenia (2024/2890(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0029_EN.html
- 13 MEPwatch.eu, <https://mepwatch.eu/10/vote.html?v=169362&eugroup=Patriots>; <https://mepwatch.eu/10/vote.html?v=169676&eugroup=Patriots>; <https://mepwatch.eu/10/vote.html?v=170917&eugroup=Patriots>
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- 16 Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, 10th parliamentary term – July 2024, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-10-2024-07-16-RULE-194_EN.html
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