

Foreign policy – the EU’s external relations - is not the only area in which Polish Members of the European Parliament have made their mark. They have managed to influence a number of important parliamentary decisions regarding questions such as energy or cohesion policy. This is one of the main conclusions of the report published by the Institute of Public Affairs, summarising the activities of Polish MEPs in the first half of the seventh term (July 2009 to December 2011).

The IPA experts analysed the political position, the main achievements and the methods employed by Polish MEPs. Their activities were presented against the back ground of the key debates that took place in the European Parliament. The wider context makes it possible to provide a better assessment of the position occupied by the Poles in the political landscape of the chamber, and of the extent to which the final parliamentary decisions reflected the ideas advocated by the Polish MEPs.

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NOT ONLY FOREIGN POLICY

POLISH MEMBERS OF THE SEVENTH
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT:
MIDTERM REPORT

Edited by:
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- ▶ Polish members of the European Parliament (MEPs) started the seventh term as a group with a stronger position and greater political potential than four years earlier. **Each party that won mandates had experienced, former MEPs in its ranks.** The representatives of eurosceptic parties, who in the previous term had made their names mostly by pronouncing anti-integration tirades, failed to secure re-election. **Seventy percent of Polish MEPs are members of the two largest and most influential political groups in the chamber (up from 44% during the previous term).**
- ▶ **The Polish delegation in the European People's Party Group increased significantly,** which strengthened the Polish MEPs' ability to make a difference in the position of the EP's largest political group.
- ▶ An analysis of reports written by Polish MEPs warrants some positive conclusions. Polish MEPs managed to make their mark on various policy areas: apart from relations with the Eastern neighbours, a long-time Polish forte, Poles authored important reports regarding energy policy and the EU budget. **The majority of MEPs who are serving a second term continue to work in the same committees and the reports that they generated reflect their well-established position. Some of the newly-elected MEPs also became rapporteurs** which can be seen as a sign of quick adaptation. However, **in comparison with other large member states, Poland has the lowest ratio of rapporteurs to MEPs** (for instance, while 56% of Spanish MEPs were rapporteurs, only 33% of Polish parliamentarians gained that position).
- ▶ **Decisions adopted by the European Parliament on key issues were close to the stance defended by Polish MEPs** (or the majority of them). The chamber called for a bigger budget for the 2014-20 period in which the CAP and the cohesion policy maintain priority positions, supported the quick signature of an association agreement with Ukraine, contributed to the reform of the neighbourhood policy while

emphasising the importance of the promotion of democracy, and advocated closer cooperation between member states in the realm of energy policy.

- ▶ Analysis of membership in parliamentary committees and delegations shows a **keen interest of Polish MEPs in relations with the Eastern neighbours**. Polish MEPs authored a number of reports and through tabling amendments took a very active part in the drawing up of parliamentary decisions.
- ▶ **Emphasising the importance of the cohesion policy was a very important motif that featured in many of the Polish MEPs' contributions**, not only in the debates treating the subject directly, but also in those related to the economic crisis and the new Multiannual Financial Framework.
- ▶ The energy policy also enjoyed the keen attention of Polish MEPs. The decisions taken by the chamber, especially those contained in the **Regulation on the security of gas supply, reflected the key demands of Polish MEPs and cemented the common energy policy in its internal and external dimensions**.
- ▶ **On the issue of climate policy Polish MEPs adopted a defensive strategy**, consisting of countering the calls put forward by left-wing political groups aimed at formulating more demanding targets regarding energy efficiency and the fight against global warming.
- ▶ As regards the most important issues debated by the chamber in the first half of the seventh term, Polish MEPs from all the political parties present in the chamber supported very similar views.
- ▶ Relatively few Polish MEPs were members of the parliamentary committees that dealt with the issues of the economic and financial crisis. The contribution of Polish MEPs to the debates related to these subjects was modest.
- ▶ **The political position in the chamber influences the approach to parliamentary duties**. The MEPs who are members of the largest political groups focus on participation in the legislative process. Meanwhile, members of the smaller Conservative Group, who have limited access to reports and who are often critical of the decisions shaped by the largest groups, lend an interventionist angle to their work by often speaking in plenary and formulating a large number of questions to the European Commission and the EU Council.

- ▶ **A review of key debates suggests that MEPs from the largest old member states remain the most influential players in the chamber.** They get the most important rapporteurships and hold key positions in political groups. This is hardly surprising as these MEPs represent the member states with the greatest demographic and economic potential, and can usually boast a much longer parliamentary experience than representatives of the new member states.
- ▶ **A number of Polish MEPs, most of them members of the ECR Group, remained very involved in national politics.** Two schisms in the major Polish opposition party, the Law and Justice party, were provoked by MEPs. The conflicts on the national political scene arguably limited the ability of MEPs who had won mandates as candidates of the Law and Justice to cooperate as parliamentarians.

The seventh term of the European Parliament marked the second term with Polish representation in the chamber. An early Polish success was Jerzy Buzek's election as President of the European Parliament. While his election had a symbolic significance, demonstrating that politicians from the new member states can play leading roles in the EU, it did not mean that Polish MEPs could hope for privileged treatment. Much the contrary, it could be argued that the MEPs elected in Poland in 2009 have faced a tougher challenge than their predecessors in 2004. Their task is not only to cement the position gained by the Poles in the previous term, but also to vie for influence in policy areas in which Poles had not been very active before. After the Lisbon Treaty entered into force the EP strengthened its position in the EU decision-making process, so the stakes are even higher.

The present article is a summary of the activities of Polish MEPs in the first half of the seventh term (i.e., from June 2009 to December 2011). It consists of two parts. The first part presents the position occupied by Polish MEPs in the political landscape of the chamber, analyses their achievements, depicts the methods that they have employed to achieve their aims, and shows the factors that thwart effective action in the chamber. The second part aims at a more in-depth presentation of the key debates that took place in the EP, and of the role played by Polish MEPs in these debates. By analysing the decision-making process, we want to show the actions undertaken by Polish representatives in the

wider context of the main political cleavages existing in EU politics. We have attempted as well to assess the Polish input into those debates and ascertain to what extent the final decisions of the EP reflected the ideas presented by the Poles. We argue that foreign policy, the EU's external relations, is not the only area in which Polish MEPs have made their mark. They have managed to influence a number of parliamentary decisions regarding questions such as energy or cohesion policy.

An exhaustive analysis of all debates that have taken place in the chamber is beyond the scope of this article. The authors have decided to focus on four policy areas: 1) external relations, 2) the financial crisis and the beginning of negotiations of the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, 3) energy and climate policy, and 4) cohesion policy. When making this selection the authors took into consideration two key criteria: we wanted the issues under analysis to be of crucial importance for the future of the EU and/or to be among the questions frequently characterised as priorities by Polish politicians. Consequently, the issues analysed largely overlap with the priorities of the Polish Presidency of the EU Council. Our selection, however, does not mean that we consider the MEPs active in these policy areas as more effective or more important. Nor do we aim at creating an exhaustive summary of all the activities undertaken by every single MEP. The focus of our analysis is on the activities aimed at influencing the legislative decisions of the chamber.

The present article was created on the basis of interviews with 12 Polish MEPs and three administrators working for the EP, data published on the website of the EP and data furnished by Vote Watch, an organisation which prepares statistical analyses of voting records in the EP.



Polish MEPS' political position in the chamber

Nineteen Polish MEPS were re-elected for a second term. This is not a very high number: the Spanish, for instance, have 26 re-elected MEPS in a delegation of the same size.¹ It should be noted, however, that as many as four Polish political parties, which had had MEPS in the sixth term, did not manage to gain mandates in this term. Even though the turnover among Polish MEPS can be described as relatively high, the majority of MEPS who had been considered by journalists and academics as being the most effective secured re-election. Among the MEPS elected for the first time in 2009 there were several politicians with considerable EU experience led by the former European Commissioner, Danuta Hübner. National MPs who had decided to swap national mandates for European ones represented a large group among the newly elected MEPS (17 in number). Two academics and several politicians with experience in local politics completed the contingent. All in all, at the outset of the term the Polish contingent, with a group of experienced former MEPS and some leading politicians from the national political scene, could be considered as a group with considerable potential to influence parliamentary decisions.

The structure of Polish MEPS' membership in political groups is noticeably different when compared to the previous term. In the sixth term of the EP Poles were scattered among many political groups with relatively few of them belonging to the two largest and most influential groups (the centre-right Group of the European People's Party-Christian Democrats – EPP, and the centre-left Group of Progressive Socialists and Democrats – S&D).² In contrast, **Polish MEPS started the current term as members of only three political groups, which made them the most**

1 At the beginning of the current term both countries had delegations of 50 MEPS. After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty the Spanish delegation grew to 54 MEPS, while Poland gained one additional seat.

2 The two largest groups account for 61% of all MEPS. The final decisions of the chamber often reflect a compromise forged between the two groups.

concentrated national contingent amongst the large states.³ Such a concentration can present both advantages and disadvantages. While it is clearly positive that there are no Polish MEPs among the non-attached MEPs who are largely deprived of any influence over parliamentary decisions, the absence of Polish representatives in the Liberal Group (ALDE) can be seen as a drawback. The Liberals are the third largest group of the chamber and in the case of a divergence of views between the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, their votes usually can tip the balance. **The most important feature as regards group membership is the significant increase of the percentage of Polish MEPs who are members of two largest groups (EPP and S&D).** Currently 70% of Polish MEPs are members of those groups, up from 44% during the last term (see Table 1 below). In this respect the Poles rank higher than the British, the French and the Germans. The Polish result becomes less impressive when the ALDE Group is included in the count, but it is still much better than the previous term.

| State | Percentage of MEPs in the EPP and S&D Groups (%) | | Percentage of MEPs in the EPP, S&D and ALDE Groups (%) | |
|----------------|--|-----------|--|-----------|
| | 2004–2009 | 2009–2014 | 2004–2009 | 2009–2014 |
| Germany | 72 | 65 | 79 | 77 |
| France | 62 | 59 | 75 | 68 |
| United Kingdom | 59 | 18 | 73 | 34 |
| Italy | 52 | 76 | 68 | 84 |
| Spain | 88 | 88 | 92 | 92 |
| Poland | 44 | 70 | 55 | 70 |
| Hungary | 91 | 81 | 100 | 81 |
| Czech Republic | 66 | 41 | 66 | 41 |

Table 1.
MEPs from selected member states in the largest political groups

Source: own calculations based upon data available on the website of the EP (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search.html>)

The reason for that change is a **significant growth of the Polish delegation in the EPP Group** (the number of Poles among the Social Democrats fell from nine to seven MEPs). This term the Polish delegation, composed of 25 Civic Platform (**Platforma Obywatelska** – PO) MEPs and four MEPs representing the agrarian Polish People’s Party (**Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe** – PSL), is the fourth largest national contingent, trailing the French by only one MEP. Obviously quantity does not necessarily mean quality, but the greater numerical strength has

3 Italian MEPs are present in four groups, German MEPs – in five, Spanish – in six, while the French and the British are present in seven groups.

undeniably brought some advantages. The Poles can have at least one MEP in each of the 22 parliamentary committees and subcommittees, and thus can closely follow their work. In negotiations that take place within the political group, the bigger numbers translate into greater visibility, greater capacity to engineer coalitions with representatives of other countries and, most importantly, more votes. Larger number of MEPs also have allowed access to posts. First of all, the strong Polish delegation reinforced Jerzy Buzek's bid for the presidency of the chamber. In addition, Filip Kaczmarek in the Development Committee and Tadeusz Zwiefka in the Legal Affairs Committee took the important posts of group coordinators.⁴

MEPs who obtained their mandates as representatives of the Law and Justice party (**Prawo i Sprawiedliwość** – PiS) started the term as members of the smaller group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). The group was created as a result of the British Conservatives and the Czech Civic Democratic Party having left the EPP Group. The PiS MEPs had been trying to precipitate the creation of a conservative and moderately eurosceptic group since the beginning of the previous term, but it was only the change of strategy of the British Conservatives that made this project possible. Apart from the British, the Czechs and the Polish MEPs, the ECR Group is composed of single representatives of six other states. Although at first sight the group represents a bigger political potential than the Union for the Europe of Nations Group, to which the Law and Justice MEPs had belonged in the previous term, the change is not that significant. With 53 members the ECR is not strong enough to be able to shake the balance of power built around the 2+1 constellation (EPP, S&D + ALDE). Moreover, the relatively serious divergences between its main parties make it impossible for the group to adopt a common position on some important issues.⁵ The main benefit for Polish MEPs in ECR is the opportunity to cooperate with a number of British MEPs who have a long experience of parliamentary politics and a strong position in the chamber.

4 Group coordinators oversee the work of all MEPs from the political group in committee. They can influence such issues as the distribution of reports or the common position of the group.

5 One example of such divergences may be the report on the new Multiannual Financial Framework, rejected by the British and Czech Conservatives, but supported by Polish members of the group.

Just as had happened in the previous term, **some Polish MEPs decided to change group membership during the first half of the seventh term.** These changes were brought about by developments in national politics. MEPs Zbigniew Ziobro, Tadeusz Cymański and Jacek Kurski were the most vocal among the Law and Justice members who questioned the leadership of the party chairman, Jarosław Kaczyński, after the electoral defeat in 2011.⁶ Unable to topple the chairman, they decided to leave the party and create a new formation called **Solidarna Polska**. In December 2011 they announced their departure from the ECR Group and their intention to join the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group that unites eurosceptic MEPs. In an official statement, the MEPs claimed that the change will make it easier “to fulfil the programme of defending Polish interests in the EU,” but it can be assumed that a desire by these well known politicians to cut ties with PiS on the European arena was also an important reason for the defection.

The events described above are another example of how similarly to the previous term a number of MEPs remain very much involved in national politics. Interestingly, the MEPs Paweł Kowal and Marek Migalski were also key figures in another split that occurred within PiS in 2010. In the parliamentary election of 2011, the governing PO and the strongest opposition party PiS chose MEPs as campaign heads. **The animosities that developed on the national political scene affected the ability of the PiS MEPs to cooperate.** In January of 2012 the Polish delegation in the ECR Group (composed of MEPs from the PiS and the **Polska Jest Najważniejsza** party, created after first schism in PiS) was not able to agree upon one candidate for the post of Vicepresident of the EP. As a result the intragroup election was won by the Czech candidate.

Two approaches to the parliamentary role

The data published on the website of the EP summarises some parliamentary activities.⁷ As easily accessible and quantifiable data, it

⁶ Having been ousted from power in the 2007 election, the Law and Justice party lost to its principal rival, the Civic Platform, again in 2011. In the meantime the party chief, Jarosław Kaczyński, lost the presidential election of 2010 as well.

⁷ The following activities are listed: speeches in plenary, reports, opinions, questions, motions for resolutions and written declarations.

has been widely used in analyses assessing MEPs' performance. Yet, the debates around the articles published in Poland during the previous term clearly demonstrated that this data reflects only certain – not necessarily key – aspects of MEPs' activities and placing too much reliance on it could lead to erroneous judgements. The number of speeches in plenary, for instance, does not mirror the importance and influence of a given MEP. Reports and opinions are a better token of parliamentary clout but in this case as well some attention is in order. Some reports can be prepared relatively quickly and with minimal effort, while others demand lengthy negotiations and specialist knowledge. Although – as the abovementioned examples show – the quantitative analysis of data published on the website of the EP cannot paint a full picture of MEPs' work, it can help to formulate conclusions regarding their approach to their duties and some achievements.

Just as in the previous term, with respect to reports and opinions, members of the large political groups perform better than their colleagues from the smaller Conservative Group. Among Polish MEPs from the EPP and S&D groups 16 MEPs wrote at least one report (47% of all MEPs in these groups) and 24 MEPs at least one opinion (70%). In the ECR Group four MEPs were rapporteurs (26%) and five prepared an opinion (33%) (see Table 2 below).

| Political group | Reports (rapporteurs/all MEPs) | Opinions (authors of opinion/ all MEPs) |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| EPP | 12/27 ⁸ | 20/27 |
| S&D | 4/7 | 4/7 |
| ECR | 4/15 | 5/15 |

Table 2.
Rapporteurs and authors
of opinions among Polish
MEPs

Source: own calculations
based upon data available
on the website of the EP
(as of 5 January 2012)

A look at the names of rapporteurs shows that **the majority of MEPs serving their second term have continued to work in the same committees and have capitalised on that specialisation by gaining reports.** A number of MEPs making their European debut in the current term can also be found among Polish rapporteurs which can be considered as a sign of successful adaptation to the new political environment.

8 Jerzy Buzek was not included since performing the duties of the President of the EP made it impossible for him to carry out the standard activities of an MEP. Andrzej Bratkowski who joined the EP in December 2011 was also excluded from the count.

When the achievements of Polish MEPs in this respect are compared to the results of MEPs from other large countries it can be seen that the rapporteurs-to-all-MEPs ratio is the lowest among Polish MEPs. Poland is also at the bottom of the table when the average of reports per MEP is taken into consideration. One explanation of this outcome may be that the old member states benefit from the presence in their ranks of MEPs with parliamentary experience of several terms who – due to their knowledge, experience and reputation – can compete for reports more effectively. Polish MEPs can find consolation in the fact that, as previously stated, the number of reports authored is not always a perfect reflection of influence. The very high average for Italian MEPs, for instance, is due to the large number of reports authored by Barbara Matera (45 reports that constitute 40% of all reports written by Italian MEPs). The vast majority of these reports concern the same issue: the functioning of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in various countries.

Table 3.
Rapporteurs in selected
national delegations

Source: own calculations based upon data available on the website of Vote Watch (http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_meps_statistics.php?top_entry=2, last accessed 5 January 2012)

| Member state | Percentage of rapporteurs (%) | Average of reports per MEP |
|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Germany | 60 | 1.34 |
| France | 47 | 1.08 |
| Italy | 42 | 1.5 |
| United Kingdom | 45 | 1 |
| Spain | 56 | 1.15 |
| Poland | 33 | 1 |

As regards speeches in plenary and questions formulated by Polish MEPs the same trends that existed in the previous term are revealed: MEPs from the ECR Group took the floor more often and formulated more questions than their colleagues from the large political groups.

Table 4.
Speeches in plenary and
questions (average per
MEP)

Source: own calculations based upon data available on the website of the EP (as of 30 September 2011)

| | ECR | EPP | S&D |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Speeches in plenary | 30 | 22 | 17 |
| Questions | 24 | 12 | 10 |

In sum, the analysis of quantifiable data regarding various instruments of parliamentary expression leads to the conclusion that political position in the chamber influences MEPs' approach to parliamentary activities.

Members of the largest groups focus on participation in the legislative process, while members of the ECR Group, who have limited access to

the most important reports and who often contest the compromises engineered by the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats and the Liberals, give a more interventionist character to their parliamentary work by speaking in plenary more often and formulating parliamentary questions to the European Commission and the EU Council.

Relationships with the political groups: analysis of voting record⁹

An analysis of voting record demonstrates that **Polish MEPs are loyal members of their political groups**. Members of PO and PSL support the position of the EPP Group in 97% of all votes, and the percentage is even higher – 98% – for the Polish Social Democrats who belong to the S&D group.¹⁰ This places the Polish delegations among the most loyal in their groups, though it should be mentioned that differences between national delegations are not very significant. In the EPP, the delegation of the Greek Nea Demokratia party, which ranks at the bottom of the loyalty table, supports the group line in 92% of all votes. In the S&D group, the Labour Party and the Swedish Social Democrats vote with the majority of the group on 89% of all votes.

It is interesting to look at situations when splits occur within the major political groups. In the case of smaller splits in the EPP Group (i.e., cases when between 10 and 20% of members vote against the group line), the Polish delegation votes with the majority on 95% of the occasions. In the case of more significant splits (when over 20% of MEPs turns against the group majority), the Poles usually vote with the majority (75% of all votes). For the Polish delegation in the Social Democratic Group the indicators are 98% and 91%, respectively. This shows that **Polish MEPs are rarely among dissenters within their political groups**. This data can be interpreted in different ways. One can simply assume that Polish MEPs are ideologically close to the mainstream of their groups. Another explanation posits that whenever intragroup divergences appear, Poles are usually capable of negotiating the final compromise group position

⁹ Data quoted in this section comes from the website of the Vote Watch organisation www.votewatch.org.

¹⁰ Data regarding the ECR Group, a smaller group which does not ascribe as much importance to maintaining a common line in votes, is not discussed in this section.

that they can support in a vote. Finally, one can also suspect that it is simply the fear of going too often against the group line that is behind the Polish MEPs' loyalty to the group majority. Most probably all these factors are true, some to a greater extent than others. All in all, it can be concluded that Polish delegations are relatively comfortable in their groups and closer to their ideological core than to the fringes.

The voting record also shows a relatively high cohesion of Polish parties. PO and PSL have the highest cohesion rates¹¹ (0.972 for both parties), the Social Democrats come second with a cohesion rate of 0.955, with representatives of **Polska Jest Najważniejsza** close behind (0.949). PiS ranks last in this category with a cohesion rate of 0.932.

The distribution of Polish MEPs in EP committees

The distribution of MEPs amongst parliamentary committees may be treated as a reflection of their interests and priorities.¹² During the last term Polish MEPs were under-represented in several important committees that produced the highest number of legal acts adopted in the codecision procedure giving the EP the greatest influence over the final shape of the act (e.g., Environment, Public Health and Food Safety - ENVI; and Industry, Research and Energy - ITRE). In the meantime, the Poles clearly had a preference for the Foreign Affairs Committee which, although prestigious, still has only limited direct influence on the actions of the EU and the member states. Judging by the distribution of MEPs among the committees, **the issues related to foreign policy and defence have again provoked a keen interest of Polish MEPs in the seventh term.** Even though the over-representation in the Foreign Affairs Committee has disappeared, Poles are over-represented in two subcommittees related to that committee: the Security and Defence Subcommittee and the Human Rights Subcommittee. The increasing relevance of issues related to energy has enticed a larger number of Polish MEPs to seek

11 Cohesion measures the extent to which the members of a party vote as a block or not. The higher the score, the more cohesive a party is. Data on cohesion was provided to the Institute of Public Affairs by Vote Watch and is based on votes taken between July 2009 and September 2011.

12 It should be stressed that as not all MEPs are given membership in the committee that is their first choice; the distribution of MEPs in committees is not a precise indicator.

membership in the ITRE committee. **The ENVI committee, however, continues to attract limited interest.** Given the fact that the environment is the policy area where Poland faces probably the greatest risk of being isolated in the EU, one would expect that more Polish MEPs would work in this committee. On the other hand, the modest Polish presence in the ENVI committee reflects the still limited importance ascribed to this domain in Poland. **Agriculture and Regional Development both have strong Polish presence**, which is relatively unsurprising as the Common Agriculture Policy and the Cohesion Policy are often described by MEPs and politicians in Poland as key EU policies.

Poles were under-represented in both EP committees that dealt with the issue of the economic and financial crisis: the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee and the special Financial, Economic and Social Crisis Committee. Danuta Hübner was the main – and virtually the only – Polish MEP actively involved in these debates. A number of reasons can explain this limited interest. The conviction that Poland is still immune to the crisis perhaps played a role as well as the limited number of MEPs with strong economic background.

| Underrepresentation | Average | Overrepresentation |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (3%) | Internal Market and Consumer Protection (7.7%) | Security and Defence (13%) |
| Economic and Monetary Affairs (2%) | Development (6.6%) | Human Rights (9.6%) |
| International Trade (3.4%) | Budgets (6.8%) | Regional Development (12%) |
| Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (1.8%) | Women's Rights and Gender Equality (5.8%) | Culture and Education (9.3%) |
| Constitutional Affairs (4%) | Industry, Research and Energy (7.2%) | Legal Affairs (12%) |
| Financial, Economic and Social Crisis (2.2%) | Agriculture and Rural Development (8.8%) | Petitions (11.4%) |
| | Transport and Tourism (6.8%) | Budgetary Control (10.3%) |
| | Foreign Affairs (7.8%) | |
| | Fisheries (8.3%) | |
| | Employment and Social Affairs (6%) | |
| | Policy Challenges (8%) | |

Table 5.
Polish MEPs in EP committees

Source: own calculations based on data available on the website of the EP.

A difference of at least two percentage points between the percentage of Polish MEPs in the committee and Polish MEPs in the chamber (6.8%) is considered as over- or under-representation. The percentage of Polish members is given in brackets.

ACTIVITIES OF POLISH MEPS IN SELECTED POLICY AREAS



The objective of this part is to describe the participation of Polish MEPS in key parliamentary debates and to analyse how their ideas and aims relate to those defended by the major political forces in the chamber.

External policy

Neighbourhood policy

In the first half of the seventh term the issues related to the EU neighbourhood policy, and the Eastern neighbourhood in particular, attracted considerable attention from Polish MEPS. The composition of EP delegations for cooperation with the parliaments of countries of that region can be seen as a token of that attention. There were five Polish MEPS among sixteen members of the EP-Ukraine delegation, including the chair of the delegation. A Polish MEP took the chairmanship of the delegation for relations with the Belarus parliament as well. Two Poles were present in the delegation for relations with Moldova (out of 14 members) and in the delegation for relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (18 members).

The Arab Spring laid bare the weaknesses of the EU neighbourhood policy and prompted the European Commission to initiate its remodeling. The EP expressed its view in a report authored by Marek Siwiec, a Polish member of the S&D Group, and Mario David, a Portuguese MEP representing the EPP Group. A number of Polish MEPS also became authors of opinions for this report: Bogdan Marcinkiewicz (EPP) on behalf of the Research, Industry and Energy Committee, Lena Kolarska-Bobinska (EPP) on behalf of the Regional Development Committee, and Marek Migalski (ECR) on behalf of the Culture and Education Committee.

The actions and solutions proposed by the authors of the report were generally in line with Polish preferences and the opinions voiced by Polish MEPS in the debates on the subject. The Poles could but welcome the calls for more developed relations with the neighbouring countries and more funds for the policy. Similarly, Polish MEPS supported the move to put more emphasis on democratic reforms. On many occasions the authors of the report stressed that performance in the

process of reforms will be an important factor determining the increase (or reduction) of EU aid. Many Polish MEPs voiced worries that the Arab Spring would draw most of the funds away from the East and towards the South. The report does not mention a concrete division of funds, but stresses the need to maintain a balance between both directions. Polish MEPs were probably somewhat disappointed that the report did not mention explicitly the membership prospects of the Eastern neighbours. The authors declared that “article 49 constitutes a driving force for reform”¹³ and that “association agreements can be an important step towards further political engagement and stronger relationship with Europe.”¹⁴ Yet, considering the slow progress of political and economic reforms in the East, EU membership is a remote prospect. Trying to convince the majority to adopt more far-reaching declarations could only antagonize the opponents of further enlargement.

Polish MEPs tabled amendments to the David-Siwięc report, which gained acceptance. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski’s (EPP) amendment emphasized the importance of supplementing intergovernmental relations with twinning between various civil society bodies in the EU and the neighbouring countries. Krzysztof Lisek’s (EPP) amendment urged the Commission to present a comprehensive list of programmes from which the partner countries can benefit. All in all, it can be concluded that **the review of the neighbourhood policy provoked great interest amongst Polish MEPs and that they managed to influence the shape of the EP’s contribution.**

Another success in efforts aimed at dynamising the relationship between the EU and its Eastern neighbours was the creation of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly uniting MEPs with parliamentarians from the Eastern Partnership countries. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski was the MEP who came up with this idea. The project could not come to fruition for a long time due to protracted discussions regarding the participation of representatives from Belarus. Taking representatives of the official

13 Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union stipulates that any European state that respects the specific set values defined in the Treaty may apply to become a member of the Union. The supporters of further enlargement invoke this article to claim that Eastern neighbours may in the future become members of the EU (as opposed, for example, to the countries of Northern Africa).

14 Report on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (2011/21579INI), point 37.

parliament on board was unacceptable for the majority of MEPs, but the idea of inviting representatives of the opposition did not receive unanimous support either (the parliaments of the partner countries were especially sceptical about it). Finally, Euronest was inaugurated without the representatives of Belarus. Although the first ordinary session was a disappointment as the participants could not agree on any resolutions, the Euronest Assembly can be considered a potentially important forum that will facilitate contacts between parliamentarians and help to maintain the subject of the Eastern Neighbourhood on the EU agenda.

Association agreement with Ukraine

The signature of the association agreement with Ukraine was not dependent on the EP's approval, but the chamber expressed its opinion on it in a report written by the Polish MEP Ryszard Legutko (ECR). The trial and imprisonment of Yulia Tymoshenko, former Ukrainian prime minister and leader of the opposition, provoked a wave of criticism directed at president Victor Yanukovich. Some MEPs, especially the Christian Democrats, the Liberals and the Greens, suggested that given the circumstances the agreement should not be signed. **Polish MEPs were among those who insisted that despite the worrying developments in Ukrainian politics, the agreement should be initialed and signed for the sake of Ukrainian society.** Paweł Zalewski (EPP) carried out an opinion poll among the major Ukrainian NGOs and think tanks which showed overwhelming support for the agreement. Eventually, a majority behind the Legutko report was secured. The report recommended that the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service make efforts to initial the agreement before the end of 2011, so that it could be signed by the Council in the first half of 2012. The MEPs also expressed concern regarding the treatment of Yulia Tymoshenko and demanded that she be permitted to participate in the political life of the country.

Creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS)

The debate regarding the creation of the EEAS revolved around contention between institutions – the EP, the EU Council and the High

Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – rather than between political groups in the chamber. The EP tried to gain influence over the service in negotiations regarding the documents shaping it. It was agreed that any future changes of the rules regarding financing and the staff would demand the adoption of a regulation, thus guaranteeing that the chamber would have a say. The EP failed in its attempts to establish open hearings of candidates for the posts of EU ambassadors, which would make nominations dependent upon MEPs' approval. The High Representative, Catherine Ashton, determinedly opposed such a proposal and eventually it was agreed that hearings will be organised with ambassadors only after their formal nomination.

Polish MEPs focused on the issue of recruitment of personnel for the service. Some of them, mostly members of the EPP and ECR groups, argued that a balance between nationals of the member states was necessary, so that the service can enjoy the strong backing of the societies of all member states. Virtually all MEPs from the new member states spoke in the same vein during parliamentary debates devoted to the creation of the EEAS. Some suggested that special provisions should be introduced, such as national quotas, which would facilitate the achievement of such a balance. Their apprehension was provoked by an awareness of a serious underrepresentation of officials from the new member states in the European Commission's directorate general responsible for external relations (DG RELEX). An analysis prepared by the office of Jacek Saryusz-Wolski on the basis of data regarding employment in EU institutions showed that in 2010 the nationals of new member states constituted only 7% of DG RELEX employees and 3% of staff of the Commission delegations abroad. Meanwhile, according to the Kinnock index, the nationals of those states should constitute 26.4% of the DG RELEX team.¹⁵ Some Polish MEPs clearly feared that a similar underrepresentation could be replicated within the EEAS. The amendments included in the opinion written by Jacek Saryusz-Wolski on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Committee stipulated that should an underrepresentation (with the Kinnock index as reference) of nationals of one or more states be revealed, the High Representative would have the right to start a recruitment procedure solely for citizens

¹⁵ The Kinnock index was adopted before the enlargement of 2004. It defined a target percentage for employment in EU institutions of nationals of each of the new member states

of those states. Even though Saryusz-Wolski managed to find support for his proposals in committee, they were not adopted by the plenary. **Finally, the regulation amended by the EP contained a softer formulation than the Polish MEPs would have liked, stating that “the staff of the EEAS shall comprise an appropriate and meaningful presence of nationals from all the Member States.”**¹⁶ The MEPs who opposed quotas argued that this solution went against the Community spirit – so often evoked by Polish MEPs – according to which the nationality of officials should be a secondary matter. Yet, the underrepresentation of new member states in DG RELEX was indeed acute, and the actions of the Polish MEPs drew attention to that problem. Even though Polish MEPs did not achieve their goals, they managed to obtain a declaration that a fair balance between various nationalities is important. That declaration may be an important reference in 2012 when the performance of the EEAS is reviewed.

The economic and financial crisis

In October 2009, a few months after the beginning of the term, a special Financial, Economic and Social Crisis Committee (CRIS) was created to carry out an in-depth analysis of the causes and possible ways out of the crisis. The final report of the committee, written by French Socialist MEP Pervenche Berès, was adopted in July 2011. The content of the report clearly shows that in the view of a majority of the committee members closer integration is the best way to dynamise the European economy and protect it against crises in the future. The report called upon member states to coordinate their economic, fiscal and social policies more closely. It also suggested that the EU be given new competences in policy areas with transnational character, such as energy or transport. The strengthened Union would need a bigger budget, and the author of the report suggested that it could grow considerably from the current level of 1% of the EU's Gross National Income to between 2.5 and 10% of GNI. In addition, the report supported the issue of Eurobonds and proposed

¹⁶ Report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities and the Conditions of Employment of other Servants of those Communities (COM(2010)0309 – C7-0146/2010 – 2010/0171(COD)), article 3, paragraph 2 b.

the creation of the post of a Supercommissioner who would oversee the closer economic cooperation between member states. The final report of the CRIS committee was supported by a large majority consisting of the two largest political groups, the Liberals and the Greens. The British and Czech MEPs from the ECR Group contested it for promoting closer integration and a larger European budget.

While the principal political groups managed to find common ground regarding the general guidelines for fighting the crisis, they were unable to form a grand coalition in the case of concrete legislative acts. The core of the anti-crisis measures proposed by the European Commission was a legislative package usually referred to as the 'six-pack'. The package caused controversy in the chamber. The left-wing political groups (Social Democrats, Greens and Communists) criticised it as too one-sided. In their view, the new rules aimed at pushing the member states to reduce debt and balance their budgets should have been supplemented with growth-stimulating measures. Consequently, the Social Democrats supported only one out of the six acts, and abstained in one case.

Poland has often been mentioned among the countries least affected by the crisis and perhaps a certain feeling of security explains the relatively limited involvement of Polish MEPs in the work of the CRIS committee. Among 45 committee members Danuta Hübner (EPP) was the only Polish MEP. She was also one of the eight MEPs responsible for writing the thematic papers that were supposed to constitute an important point of reference for the rapporteur. Hübner's paper was entitled "The Contribution of Cohesion Policy to the Economic Recovery."

Drawing attention to the growth-stimulating effects of the cohesion policy can be described as the key element in most Polish contributions to the debates devoted to the crisis.

Despite their limited contribution to the debate, Poles were alert to projects that could potentially limit their right to fully participate in it. When Pervenche Berès, in a draft report devoted to the European semester, suggested the creation of a special committee in which only MEPs representing the eurozone member countries would have the right to vote, Polish MEPs were among the first to denounce that idea. In the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee Danuta Hübner put forward an amendment that opposed the proposal. It was depicted as incompatible with the Treaty on the European Union and the Rules of

Procedure of the European Parliament in an opinion written by Rafał Trzaskowski (EPP) on behalf of the Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Multiannual financial framework 2014-2020

The EP's position regarding the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period between 2014 and 2020 was prepared by a special Policy Challenges Committee (SURE) created in spring 2010. The committee presented its final report written by Salvador Garriga Polledo, a Spanish member of the EPP Group, in June 2011. Unsurprisingly, the size of the budget was the issue that provoked a heated debate in the committee. Some MEPs argued that in a time of budgetary austerity in most of the member states the EU budget should be cut as well – members of the eurosceptic group and British Conservatives were the most vocal advocates of such views. The vast majority, however, supported the idea of a 5% increase (in relation to the previous framework), put forward by the rapporteur.

A divergence of views occurred in relation to the structure of the budget, with some MEPs arguing that money invested in such areas as research and innovation will bring higher returns than funds spent on the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) or the cohesion policy that currently account for the majority of the EU's spendings. Consequently, the proponents of this view advocated making changes in the allocation of funds in order to support the new priorities. Such views were defended by many MEPs from the Liberal Group, the British Conservatives and some members of the two largest groups (mainly from Northern European countries). A generous cohesion policy was defended chiefly by the MEPs from the states that are its biggest beneficiaries – Eastern and Southern Europe. **The Polledo report can be considered a success of those who defended the traditional structure of the budget.** Even though the report stated that research, innovation, transport and energy need greater funds, it also contained a declaration that funding for the CAP and the cohesion policy should remain at least at the level of the previous financial framework.

Polish MEPs had a strong representation in the SURE committee: Konrad Szymański (ECR) and Jan Olbrycht (EPP) were vice-chairmen of the committee and two other Poles were members. **Poles from all political**

groups presented a very similar view in relation to the MFF and ranked among the most dogged defenders of a generous budget in which the CAP and the cohesion policy remain prioritised. The final shape of the Polledo report was in line with the key Polish demands and Polish MEPs unanimously supported that report.

Energy and climate policy

Creating an effective EU energy policy is very often mentioned by Polish politicians as one of the top priorities for united Europe. In the first half of the seventh term the EP considered a number of legal acts and documents important for that policy.

A regulation concerning measures to safeguard security of gas supply was provoked by cuts in the supply of gas to some member states that occurred as a result of a squabble between Russia and Ukraine at the end of 2008. The aim of the act was to create a framework that would protect member states in the event of such problems in the future. The regulation calls upon the member states to create better connections between gas networks to facilitate mutual assistance in the case of sudden gas shortages. It also stipulated that pipelines should be fitted with technologies that enable transfer of gas in both directions. The introduction of rules that would limit free trade in gas was blocked. Two Polish MEPs wrote opinions for the regulation: Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (EPP) from the Foreign Affairs Committee and Bogusław Sonik (EPP) from the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee. The amendments included in Saryusz-Wolski's text, in particular, reflected ideas that had often been promoted by Polish MEPs and politicians. The European Commission was asked to monitor whether companies from third countries operating in the EU act in accordance with the rules of the Single Market. When negotiating agreements with third countries – gas suppliers or transit countries – the Commission should include a special gas security clause that would contain a set of rules to be applied in the event of a crisis. Another amendment posited that in such situations the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy would represent the member states in relations with third countries. All Polish

MEPs supported the regulation in the vote and they stressed that the act was a step in the right direction.¹⁷

Debates on energy-related issues often overlapped with questions related to climate and environment protection. The interlinks were manifest on the occasion of the adoption of the report on a new Energy Strategy for Europe 2011-20, written by Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, a Polish MEP from the EPP Group. The report suggested changes to the European energy market, calling *inter alia* for more investments in energy infrastructure and for greater diversification of energy supplies. But the left-wing political groups insisted on including some declarations regarding climate policy as well. One of the issues in question was energy efficiency. The rapporteur managed to muster agreement that the EP will not make the declaration to achieve 20% energy savings through energy efficiency legally binding.¹⁸ However, the parliamentary Left pushed through two other amendments, one of which called upon the Commission to consider increasing the target for CO₂ emission cuts by 2020 from 20 to 30%, and the other suggested that the EU reduce CO₂ emissions by between 80 to 95% by 2050.

While Polish MEPs were very active in calling for closer cooperation on energy issues – just as in the case of the budgetary negotiations displaying a very unified stance in this respect – they were vehemently against any declarations calling for a more ambitious climate policy.

They stressed that the economies of the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe were already very heavily burdened with the necessity to adapt to existing rules. When a report authored by Green MEP Bas Eickhout called for increasing the CO₂ emission reduction target from 20 to 30% by 2020, Polish MEPs were among the most fervent critics of the idea. One day before the vote in plenary, Bogusław Sonik (EPP) and Konrad Szymański (ECR) organised a conference aiming to stress the negative economic consequences of increasing the reduction targets. They argued that adopting overly ambitious targets could be counterproductive

17 Konrad Szymański, for instance, the most active Polish MEP in the ECR Group on energy-related issues, claimed that the regulation was “a step towards energy security.”

18 The pledge regarding energy efficiency is one of the so-called 20-20-20 targets. They include cutting CO₂ emissions by 20% by 2020, producing 20% of energy from renewable sources and reducing the use of energy by 20% through energy efficiency.

as it would encourage European companies to move to countries that have less stringent rules on CO₂ emissions. Amendments introduced to the report by parliamentarians from EPP, ECR and some Liberals affected its content to such an extent that the Greens and the Social Democrats decided to vote against it. The amendments proposed by the parliamentary Right were supported also by the Polish MEPs from the Social Democratic Group, which shows that in this case the Polish MEPs again defended very similar opinions. Eventually the report – considered crippled by the Left and unnecessary by a large part of the Right – was rejected in the final vote.

The prospect of the extraction of shale gas in Poland and several other European countries, as well as the far-reaching economic and political consequences of that fact have recently featured prominently in Polish political debates. In the first half of the seventh term the EP did not consider any legal acts directly linked to that issue, though in March 2011 a debate took place on the possibility of using gas from alternative sources. During the debate Polish MEPs emphasised that in the future shale gas may be an important energy source for the EU, and encouraged the European Commission to support research concerning methods of its extraction. Five out of eighteen speakers in the debate were Poles, which demonstrates the importance ascribed to this issue. The debate showed that a sizeable group of MEPs is much more sceptical about shale gas than the Polish parliamentarians. The MEPs who took the floor in the name of the Liberal Group and the Greens, evoking the American experience, stressed that the extraction of shale gas may have hazardous consequences, including poisoning of ground water, the emission of large amounts of highly dangerous methane, and even provoking earthquakes.

The future of the cohesion policy

The issue of the cohesion policy featured in many key parliamentary debates such as those devoted to the financial crisis and to the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-20. The most important document that related directly to cohesion was the European Commission's fifth Report on economic, social and territorial cohesion that was to define the main guidelines for the post-2013 cohesion policy. As already mentioned,

the effectiveness of the cohesion policy has been questioned by some MEPs (members of the Liberal Group and some MEPs coming from the most developed Western European countries) who argued that it was no longer the best response to the challenges faced by the EU. These views, however, represented the position of a parliamentary minority. **The EP's report concerning the Commission's fifth Cohesion Report, written by the German MEP Markus Pieper, emphasised that cohesion policy is still relevant** and that its principal aim remains to enhance the development of disadvantaged regions. It posited that the main aims of the Europe 2020 strategy – the new overarching EU development strategy – can be effectively achieved through cohesion policy. Similarly to the report on the MFF, it contained a declaration that in the period between 2014 and 2020 funds devoted to the policy should be at least the same as in the previous multi-year budget.

Apart from the funds, the structure of the policy was also the subject of a heated debate. The European Commission considered making serious changes to the policy by giving a more autonomous character to several funds devoted to such matters as employment, transport and environmental protection. Commissioners responsible for those policy areas were said to support the transformation as it would give them more resources and clout. The majority in the EP, however, decidedly supported the integrated formula. The Pieper report stated that the cohesion policy "cannot become a vehicle or instrument serving sectoral issues such as policies on research and development, industrial innovation and the fight against climate change, as this would mean diluting its primary objective and placing constraints on its use to promote regions' development potential."¹⁹

The high level of activity of Polish MEPs in the debates on cohesion policy clearly demonstrates that this issue provoked a considerable amount of attention. In the first half of the seventh term the Regional Development Committee had six full members (i.e., 12% of all members) from Poland, which gave it the second place in the ranking of committees with the highest overrepresentation of Polish MEPs. When taking the floor in parliamentary debates **Polish MEPs defended the record of the cohesion policy**. They stressed that the policy benefits not only the

¹⁹ Report on the Commission's fifth Cohesion Report and the strategy for post-2013 cohesion policy (2011/2035 (INI)), point 18.

countries that receive most of the funds, but also the more developed member states from Western Europe. The reforms that the recipients of the funds can carry out contribute to increased demand for imports and improve the conditions for foreign investments. Poland could boast two particularly influential MEPs in this realm: the former Commissioner for Regional Development, Danuta Hübner, chairwoman of the parliamentary Regional Development Committee in the seventh term, and Jan Olbrycht, chairman of that committee in the previous term.

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