

How cohesive is the kingmaker of the European Parliament?

A roll call-vote study of voting cohesion in the Liberal Party
Group of the European Parliament in EP8 and EP9

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Abstract

Voting cohesion in the European Parliament is a thoroughly studied field, however a deep dive into the kingmaker of coalition building, the liberal party group, has yet to be done. This thesis attempts to illustrate how voting cohesion varies within the Alliance of Liberals & Democrats and Renew Europe respectively, and what factors can explain variation in cohesion. Specifically, how cohesion varies across policy area, how ideological heterogeneity affects cohesion and the differences in cohesion between ALDE and Renew. Two theories were used: the two principal-dilemma and the issue of salience, which hypothesizes that defection in voting will occur when differences in opinions (heterogeneity) is present, and that the influence of the European party group has decreased in favor of the national party discipline. The study was conducted using roll call-votes from 2014 to 2022 in the European Parliament, and ideological positionings from Chapel Hill expert surveys. To calculate the result a cohesion index and standard deviations were used. The results show that cohesion varies across policy areas and that there is a weak relationship between heterogeneity and low cohesion, and that the shift in policy and power that occurred with the creation of Renew has influenced cohesion. Furthermore, there is support for the two principal-dilemma that MEPs are controlled by EPG and national party discipline.

Key words: European Parliament, roll call-votes, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats, Renew Europe, ideological heterogeneity.
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Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Purpose and research question.....	2
1.3	Delimitations	2
2	Background.....	3
2.1	The European Parliament.....	3
2.2	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe/Renew Europe.....	4
3	Literature review	6
4	Theory and hypotheses	8
4.1	The two principal-dilemma.....	8
4.2	The issue of salience.....	9
5	Method and material.....	11
5.1	Material	11
5.1.1	VoteWatch-data.....	11
5.1.2	Chapel Hill expert survey	12
5.2	Method and variables.....	12
5.2.1	The dependent variable.....	12
5.2.2	The independent variables	13
5.3	Case selection	14
5.4	Test of significance.....	14
5.5	Methodological evaluation	15
6	Results and analysis	17
6.1	Policy area	17
6.2	Heterogeneity	19
6.3	Comparison of ALDE and Renew.....	23
6.4	Cohesion over time	23
7	Discussion.....	25
7.1	Explaining the result	25
7.2	Limitations	26
7.3	Future research.....	27
8	Conclusion.....	28
9	References	29
10	Attachments	32
10.1	Case selection	32
10.2	CHES-data	35
10.3	ANOVA-tables	37

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

It has been roughly 30 years since the Maastricht Treaty was signed and the foundation of the European Union (EU) formed. During these years the power of the European Parliament (EP) has been strengthened in significant ways. In the Parliament, Members of the European Parliament (MEP) work as co-legislators and direct representatives of their populations. The MEPs work together across national borders in ideologically motivated European party groups (EPG) to further their political interests in the Parliament. One of these party groups is Renew Europe, formerly Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE).

Renew is the third largest party group in the Parliament, with the European People's Party (EPP) being the largest and Socialists & Democrats (S&D) being the second largest. These party groups decide the voting direction and coalition building in the Parliament, either resulting in a grand coalition between all three EPGs or coalitions to the right or left depending on ALDE/Renew's position (Hix & Hoyland 2013, p. 178-179). This makes Renew pivotal in deciding whether a center-left or center-right coalition wins in legislative votes (Hix & Hoyland 2022, p. 11, 69-72; Hublet et al. 2023 p. 5). One could therefore call them a "kingmaker".

Simultaneously, the liberal European parties are highly diverse in their ideological background and are more ambivalent in their position compared to the other party groups (Close 2019), making it interesting to study how cohesion varies across policy areas and what factors that can explain this possible variation. The creation of Renew also changed the dynamics of the liberal party group (Crum 2020; Hublet et al. 2023), compelling me to compare cohesion between Renew and ALDE. Lastly, the power of the European Parliament has grown stronger over the years heightening the relevance of studying cohesion.

My thesis will contribute to the understanding of voting patterns of Renew in the European Parliament and whether they vary across policy areas and based on the heterogeneity/homogeneity in the EPG. The findings will be of relevance to previous research and the overall research area of voting patterns and cohesion in the European Parliament, as well as give the public an insight into MEP's work and power.

1.2 Purpose and research question

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of ALDE's and Renew's voting patterns and party group cohesion in the European Parliament, and whether the voting cohesion varies across policy areas and the degree of heterogeneity in the EPG. It will be answered through the following research questions:

How does the voting cohesion in the European Parliament vary within the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and Renew Europe political group respectively? What factors can explain the variation?

The first question will be answered using a quantitative approach to describe the patterns shown. The second question will delve deeper into the established theories on voting cohesion in the European Parliament to provide explanations to the variations in cohesion.

1.3 Delimitations

To keep the content of the thesis concise and within a reasonable timeframe some limitations have been made. Since previous research (Hix et al. 2005; Yordanova & Mühlböck 2015; McElroy & Bowler 2015) has been done on the topic my thesis will focus on the eighth and ninth parliament term.

The period will be divided into two with regards to the addition of Emmanuel Macron's national party "Renaissance" and the creation of Renew Europe in 2019. The two time periods will be 2014-2019 (EP8) and 2019-2022 (as far into EP9 that there exists data) and analyzed separately. EP8 being ALDE's period and EP9 being Renew's period.

Only certain policy areas will be included, and the choice of these policy areas will be based on previous research (Klüver & Spoon 2015; Hix & Hoyland 2013). The same policy areas used in Hix & Hoyland (2013, p. 179) will be used in this thesis.¹ More on the choice of policy areas will be discussed in the theoretical framework of the thesis in chapter 4.

¹ The policy areas are "Agriculture", "Budget", "Budgetary control", "Civil liberties, justice & home affairs", "Employment & social affairs", "Environment & public health", "Foreign & security policy", "Gender equality", "Industry research & energy", and "International trade".

2 Background

The purpose of the following chapter is to give the reader an understanding of the functions of the European Parliament: the organization of political party groups, coalition building and voting in the plenary, specifically roll call-votes. Additionally, to illustrate the ideological differences that exist in the liberal European party group and the differences between Renew and ALDE.

2.1 The European Parliament

The European Parliament consists of 705 MEPs that are elected every five years by EU citizens from every member state, together they represent themselves through transnational political party groups (European Parliament 1, no date). The Parliament, with the Council of the European Union, make up the legislative body of the EU (European Council, no date), amending and adopting EU legislation and its budget, monitoring the work of other EU institutions, and formally electing the Commission president and the commissioners (Hix & Hoyland 2022, p. 11; De Vries et al. 2021, p. 35). The legislative power of the EP has increased in intervals through the adoption of new treaties, the latest one being the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. This decision-making process is called the ordinary legislative procedure and applies to around 85 policy areas (European Council 2023).

When deciding and debating on the different policy proposals in the EU the MEPs organize themselves in political party groups to build coalitions. The EP's Rules of Procedure require at least 23 MEPs to form a party group and at least a quarter of the member states must be represented (currently seven). When deciding which party group to join a national party takes two things into account: *power*, how influential they will be in the Parliament, and *policy*, how aligned they are with the other MEPs in the group (Hix & Hoyland 2022, p. 64-72).

Seven party groups currently exist in the parliament that vary across the ideological spectrum, with the biggest ones being EPP, S&D and Renew.² The party groups base their ideology on left-right issues and their attitude towards further European integration, with some being more pro-European than others, and some being more right- or left-wing. Together they shape the coalitions in the EP (Hix & Hoyland 2022, p. 64-72), mainly forming a grand coalition using EPP, S&D and Renew. However, sometimes coalitions are formed more to the left or more to the

² The other party groups are Identity and Democracy (ID), Greens/European Free Alliance (G/EFA), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and the Left in the European Parliament (Left) (European Parliament 3).

right, with Renew being the pivotal actor (Hix & Hoyland 2013, p. 178-179; Hublet et al. 2023).

The way in which MEPs vote is decided through the Rules of Procedure and differs with every new term of office. Over the years and with the strengthening of the EP's power the Parliament now votes more and more on legislative issues.

In most cases the MEP's vote by show of hands. However, if the distribution is unclear the president can call for electronic voting to secure more precise results. Besides this, voting can also take place using roll call-votes (RCVs), which are documented votes of the MEPs (European Parliament 4, no date).

RCVs are always taken on final legislative issues but can also be requested by a party group or at least 38 MEPs the evening before a vote. When this happens, all individual votes cast by each MEP are recorded and published.³ The use of RCVs can often be strategic or political⁴, therefore RCVs more often occur on high-profile and contentious issues (Hix & Hoyland 2022, p. 69; Hagemann 2015, p. 146).

2.2 Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe/Renew Europe

Renew Europe is the successor of Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and was formed leading up to EP9. The party group mainly consists of centrist and liberal national parties and positions itself as pro-European and somewhat right-leaning (Hix & Hoyland 2022, p. 152-153; De Vries et al. 2021, p. 149-150). Renew has representation from 24 member states and has a total of 101 MEPs in Parliament, making it the third largest party group, as of November 2023 (European Parliament 2, no date; Hublet et al. 2023, p. 5).

There are some differences between Renew and ALDE. Renew includes the electoral list of Emmanuel Macron's "Renaissance" (Crum 2020, p. 6); an electoral change that has made it bigger in size but also created a shift in priorities and ideology (Hublet et al. 2023). Renew also gathers national parties that were not a part of ALDE but the more centrist European Democratic Party (European Democrats, no date).

The inclusion of "Renaissance" and the French non-ALDE MEPs has made Renew both more pro-integrationist and more centrist (Hublet et al. 2023, p. 11-12), and can be seen through the name change, which was mainly done to appease the new French MEPs and shy away from the term "liberal" (Euractiv 2019; Ahrens & Kantola 2022). Furthermore, collaboration between Renew and left-wing EPGs are more common than with right-wing EPGs (Hublet et al. 2023).

³ Unless secret ballot has been requested.

⁴ For example, party groups that do not agree with a legislation proposed are more likely to request roll call-voting. It can also be used strategically to track and monitor the voting behavior of MEPs, or to signal the position of a party group to interest groups or other EU institutions.

Ideological shifts within the Liberals are not uncommon and in EP6 the integration of the Italian Margherita Party and the Union for French Democracy Party (UDF), which were more on the conservative side, altered the dynamic and cohesion of the group (Hix & Noury 2009, p. 163).

In Close (2019) the liberal party family ideology is discussed further. Liberal parties are traditionally described as promoting right-wing economic policies, for example lower taxes and free markets, while at the same time being center-left or progressive on socio-cultural policies (Ibid, p. 327). However, the homogeneity of the liberal party family is up for debate. Certain studies (Ennsner 2012; Freire and Tsatsanis 2015) concluded that the liberal party family is the least homogeneous of all, whilst Camia and Caramani (2012) believe them to be less homogeneous but not less than conservatives and the radical right.

Furthermore, the liberal party group family can be divided into different subcategories. Either three, the Radical Liberals, the Conservative Liberals, or the agrarian parties (Von Beyme 1985) – or two, the Conservative Liberals (including the agrarians) and the Social Liberals (Ennsner 2012). On the other hand, Freire and Tsatsanis (2015) rather see national and regional context as more important – “region appears to often trump party families” (Ibid, p. 15). Similarly, they show that dispersion on the cultural dimension can depend on the religious context of parties.⁵

Close (2019) can confirm many of the trends of the previous research mentioned. For example, liberal parties are more heterogeneous than the left-wing bloc on all dimensions and more heterogeneous than the right-wing bloc on all cultural dimensions (Ibid, p. 335-345). This illustrates the ideological diversity that exists within Renew and makes it interesting to examine how this affects voting cohesion. How much do MEPs follow their ideological beliefs and how much are they driven by other incentives?

⁵ For example, Catholic regions produce more conservative liberal parties whilst Scandinavian countries produce more progressive liberal parties (Ennsner 2012, p. 17-18).

3 Literature review

The Liberal Party family has undergone changes since the creation of Renew and its ideological roots are scattered, but according to previous research, what affects MEP vote choice?

The following chapter will review the relevant literature related to voting and group cohesion and focus on the instruments that affect voting patterns: political preferences, the national party group, and the European party group (EPG). Furthermore, the chapter will give a brief overview whether voting cohesion has increased, or stayed the same, overtime and discuss which of the previously mentioned factors best explain voting defection in a party group.

Cohesion over time has been studied by multiple authors (Hix et al. 2005; Yordanova & Mühlböck 2015; McElroy & Bowler 2015), but they come to slightly different conclusions. Hix et al. (2005) studies roll call-votes from the five first EP-legislatures and finds that cohesion has increased over time with the Liberals (ELDR)⁶, having a cohesion score of 0.849 in EP1 and 0.909 in EP5. The cohesion is measured using an “Agreement Index”, where 0 equals no cohesion and 1 equals total cohesion (Ibid, p. 216-218).

Yordanova & Mühlböck (2015, p. 387) do a similar cohesion calculation on EP6 and EP7. They compare cohesion on amendment and final legislative votes in the first 1.5 years of the parliamentary terms. Their results show that in amendment votes, ALDE has a cohesion score of 0.855 in EP6 and 0.850 in EP7, and in final votes, ALDE has a cohesion score of 0.921 in EP6 and 0.975 in EP7.

McElroy & Bowler (2015) also study cohesion scores over time, more specifically all RCVs from September 1979 to May 2014, and using both the Rice and the Agreement Index conclude that cohesion has been consistent over time for three largest party groups: EPP, Socialists (S&D) and Liberals (ALDE/Renew). They argue that the supposed increase in cohesion is debatable. Both the Rice and Agreement Index show a cohesion score in the 0.8 to 0.9 interval for all three EPGs (Ibid, p. 1357-1358).

When it comes to *explaining* the cohesion scores of party groups Attina (1990) and Faas (2003) were one of the first studies, together with Hix et al. (2005).

The main findings of Hix et al. (2005) are that coalition-formation in the EP first and foremost occurs along the left-right dimension and that the cohesion of party groups has grown as the parliament’s power and importance of the parties has increased (Ibid, p. 210). Another conclusion the paper draws is that ideological diversity among the national member parties of the groups has little effect on cohesion, indicating that EPGs have a disciplining effect on their national parties.

⁶ The predecessor of ALDE and Renew.

Lastly, Hix et al. (2005) finds that while the cohesion of party groups has increased, the cohesion of the whole parliament has decreased (Ibid, p. 231), and that the effectiveness of transnational party groups is a key determinant of voting cohesion.

Still, EPG is not the only determining factor for the voting patterns of MEPs. Hix (2002) shows that there are three explanatory variables for MEPs voting behavior: personal preferences, national affiliation, and European party group affiliation. He concludes that the national party is the determining factor. Likewise, Faas (2003) found that in issues of high salience nationally the national party will put pressure on its MEP to vote in accordance with the national party line and not with the party group.

Another study by Klüver & Spoon (2015) explains voting defection in the EP and finds that MEPs are more likely to vote against the party group, and in line with the national party, if there is a big ideological difference on issues that the national party values highly. Similarly, Chiru & Stoain (2019) illustrate that the influence of the EPG on how MEPs vote is smaller when the national party has assigned greater issue salience on the topic debated, compared to the EPG. To summarize, if the national party finds an issue more important than the EPG, the influence of the EPG will be smaller, and the MEP is more likely to vote along party lines. Therefore, national affiliation is a very important determining factor.

In conclusion, there are multiple important factors in explaining variation in voting cohesion. They are the following: a MEP's own preferences, European party group affiliation, national affiliation, and the salience of an issue. Depending on how these factors relate to and affect each other, cohesion will vary. This makes the results of this thesis compelling: how will the degree of heterogeneity in opinions affect voting cohesion?

4 Theory and hypotheses

Both national and party group affiliation play a very important role in the voting cohesion of party groups and affect the way MEPs vote in the EP. This has led to multiple theories regarding the voting behavior of MEPs, including the two principal-dilemma and the issue of salience. The theories themselves cannot answer the research question completely, however they can be used to form hypotheses regarding the variation that could be found in ALDE and Renew. Together they can help explain potential variation in cohesion.

4.1 The two principal-dilemma

The two principal dilemma is a widely accepted theory in the research on voting behavior in the European Parliament. It is outlined and explained in Hix (2002). According to the theory MEPs are trapped between two principals when voting, the national party delegation and the European party delegation. Both greatly influence the voting behavior of the MEP and can issue voting instructions creating incentives for the MEP to follow their specific discipline (Ibid, p. 690-692).

The EPGs affect the functions and works of the Parliament, for example how and when voting takes place, and controls committee assignment and other key positions within the EP, creating career opportunities (Hix & Hoyland 2022 p. 65). MEPs are more likely to be rewarded with this if they stay loyal to their EPG (Faas 2003, p. 846-847).

At the same time the national party can effectively control how MEPs vote, due to the domestic significance of certain issues voted on. Since EP elections also often are of second order character, with emphasis on the national arena, the national party decides whether an MEP is reelected. For example, the national party determines the list of candidates and is responsible for campaigning. MEPs also frequently run under a national party name and the national party plays an important role in enabling careers outside the EP for MEPs (Hix 2002, p. 691; Faas 2003, p. 843-846).

A MEP can find itself in a position where they must choose between siding with the national party or the EPG and accepting the repercussions of the side *not* chosen. In these instances, the MEP will often choose the national party since reelection is needed to continue having a career within the Parliament. However, if the risk of the national party getting involved is low, the EPG has a greater chance of influencing the MEP and enforcing cohesion (Faas 2003, p. 846-847).

Different factors influence the dynamics between these two principles, for example the policy distance between the national party and the EPG, as well as the size and strength of the national party and EPG respectively, which affects the abilities to influence and impose sanctions on the MEP (Hix 2002, p. 691-692). To summarize, a MEP is responsive to two principals: its European party group and its national party.

4.2 The issue of salience

The two principal-dilemma is further discussed in Klüver & Spoon (2015), where the issue of salience is outlined. The main point of their theory is that national parties within the same EPG have different views and opinions on issues, which will lead them to assigning different levels of importance to said issues – the salience of an issue may differ depending on the national party.

When the national party and EPG differentiate on the saliency of an issue, the voting behavior of the MEP will be affected. In situations where a discrepancy in opinions occur, the national party delegation will be more prone to send voting instructions, and the two principal-dilemma will ensue, thus leading the MEP to more likely vote with the national party line (Klüver & Spoon 2015, p. 554-555).

With the two principal dilemma and the issue of salience in mind it is expected that voting cohesion will in some way vary in ALDE and Renew and therefore produces the paper's first hypothesis:

H1: The voting cohesion in Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe/Renew Europe will vary across policy areas.

The policy areas chosen in this thesis are “Agriculture”, “Budget”, “Budgetary control”, “Civil liberties, justice & home affairs”, “Employment & social affairs”, “Environment & public health”, “Foreign & security policy”, “Gender equality”, “Industry research & energy”, and “International trade”. They have previously been used in Hix & Hoyland (2013) and are used in this thesis to achieve possible comparison in results, and because they touch upon different parts of the EU.

It is quite expected that voting cohesion will vary across policy areas, seeing as there exists a diverse ideological background in the liberal European party family (Close 2019) and previous research shows that, despite cohesion being high, there remains variation (Hix et al. 2005; Klüver & Spoon 2015; Hix & Noury 2009). This leads up to the second hypothesis:

H2: Voting cohesion will be lower (higher) based on the degree of ideological heterogeneity (homogeneity) in the party group.

More ideological heterogeneity, for example in cultural issues, is expected to lead to lower voting cohesion and less ideological heterogeneity, for example in

monetary policy, is expected to lead to higher voting cohesion (Close 2019; Klüver & Spoon 2015).

One could say that this is also an obvious expectation for voting cohesion, however ideological beliefs and voting do not always coincide. As described in 4.1, there are different factors that influence the way in which MEPs vote: career motives in both the EPG and the national party. Policy *and* power have an effect. Therefore, it is interesting to examine how true the MEPs are to their ideological beliefs when voting, and whether other factors, such as the two principal-dilemma, have a role to play.

To build upon this a third hypothesis will be formulated regarding whether cohesion varies between ALDE and Renew. The inclusion of new French MEPs from “Renaissance” and Macron, and the shift in ideology makes it expected to see variation in cohesion between ALDE and Renew. Hix & Noury (2009) also provide support that an integration of new national parties in an EPG will alter cohesion. New conservative parties in ALDE decreased cohesion in EP6 (Ibid, p. 163).

H3: Voting cohesion will vary between ALDE and Renew, with cohesion decreasing for Renew.

Cohesion is expected to decrease seeing as integration of new parties has led to this before, and the ideological shift to the center-left can be seen as the party becoming more heterogeneous than before. In contrast to this, Hix et al. (2005) suggests that cohesion will increase overtime, the opposite of what H3 predicts.

A final hypothesis will therefore be posed to test whether cohesion increases overtime.

H4: Voting cohesion will increase overtime.

H3 and H4 contradict each other and both cannot be true at the same time, thus there is a tension between the two which can provide with an interesting discussion.

The purpose of the H4 is to compare this thesis’ research with previous research, and to test whether time is a possible explanatory variable.

5 Method and material

To test the hypotheses outlined in chapter 4 information regarding material & method, specifics of the dataset, formulation of variables, case selection and statistical analysis, must be presented. The following chapter will touch upon these topics, along with a methodological evaluation.

5.1 Material

5.1.1 VoteWatch-data

The material used for voting cohesion in the thesis is derived from the VoteWatch dataset compiled by Hix et al. (2022). The dataset is commonly used in quantitative research when studying the voting behavior of MEPs (Hix et al. 2005, Klüver & Spoon 2015, Chiru & Stoain 2019). Thus, using the already existing dataset makes it possible to compare results with past and future research. The dataset has documented RCVs of how the MEPs voted, from 2008 to 2022, which fits with the timeframe of 2014 to 2022, however RCVs after 2022 will not be analyzed due to them not existing in the dataset.

The data uses a code book to classify the way MEPs voted into values in an Excel-sheet. Said values are the numbers 0 through 6. The number 0 represents that the person in question was not a MEP at the time of the vote, 1 means that the MEP voted yes, 2 that the MEP voted no, 3 that the MEP actively abstained from voting, 4 that the MEP was absent, 5 that the MEP did not vote, and 6 that the MEP was absent motivated by a certificate. The dataset also includes other factors⁷ (Hix et al. 2022).

Through the dataset possible variation in the voting can be detected, for example if it differs across policy areas. The nature of the dataset also has many advantages, such as saving time, comparability, and a decreased risk of unsystematic and systematic errors.

⁷ For example, title of the vote, type of procedure, type of vote, name of the rapporteur, responsible committee, policy area and which political group that sponsored the proposal.

5.1.2 Chapel Hill expert survey

The material used for ideological heterogeneity in this thesis is derived from the Chapel Hill expert survey (CHES) from 2019 and 1999-2019. Previous research on heterogeneity also uses CHES-data, for example Close (2019), and its comprehensive sample size makes it fitting to use. The CHES-data provides information on 277 parties regarding ideology, European integration, and other policy areas, and includes all European Union member states, all of which can be used to measure the heterogeneity of the party group in different policy areas (Jolly et al. 2022).

5.2 Method and variables

The method used in the thesis will be described in the following section and how the dataset from Hix et al. (2022) and CHES will be used to create the dependent and independent variables.

5.2.1 The dependent variable

The dependent variable (y) in this analysis is the cohesion of the party group and is measured using RCVs from VoteWatch and Hix et al. (2022). The unit of analysis is the members of Parliament in the party group ALDE/Renew. To create the dependent variable – cohesion – an index or calculation is done. All the votes from the MEPs in ALDE and Renew are counted to perform a frequency analysis and create an index.

However, to create this index some votes must be excluded, for example the 0, 4, 5 and 6. The ramifications of dropping 0, 4, 5 and 6 are that potential cohesion or variation in cohesion will be excluded. For example, if there is an instance of all MEPs deciding to actively be absent (4). However, the likelihood of this happening is low and in previous research (Hix et al. 2005; Faas 2003; McElroy & Bowler 2015) these votes were also excluded. The cohesion index will therefore only include the voting options of yes (=1), no (=2) and abstain (=3).

Using a frequency analysis all the votes from the dataset will be compiled from each issue voted on. Then a cohesion score will be calculated through the following equation formula of the Agreement Index (AI) created by Hix et al. (2005):

$$AI_i = \frac{\max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\} - \frac{1}{2}[(Y_i + N_i + A_i) - \max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\}]}{(Y_i + N_i + A_i)}$$

Figure 1: Agreement Index (Hix et al. 2005, p. 215)

The index uses a max function to calculate the highest number of the three voting options (1, 2 or 3) to find how most MEPs in the political group voted and how this relates to the MEPs that defected from the party line. The variables can be interpreted as follows. Y_i shows the number of yes-votes on a given issue, N_i shows the number of no-votes and A_i the number of abstain-votes. The output, AI_i ranges from 0 to 1, where an index value of 0 implies that the votes are distributed equally across all three voting options and there is no cohesion. While the index value of 1 means that there were no defections and cohesion is total.⁸ To summarize, 1 is equal to total cohesion and 0 is equal to no cohesion, no matter what the voting option was (Ibid, p. 215).

The Agreement Index is very similar to other voting agreement indexes, for example the Rice index and the Attina index. The Rice index, however, does not include a third voting option and the Attina index can give both positive and negative results (Hix et al. 2005, p. 215-216). Therefore, the Agreement Index has a clear advantage and ensures a higher level of detail, minimizing the risk of measurement errors, for example when abstaining from voting is the party line and yes/no-votes are defection. Using an Agreement Index avoids misleading results and is easier to interpret. Yet, the similarity to other indexes creates the possibility of comparing results to other research results.

5.2.2 The independent variables

The independent and explanatory variables (x) will be policy area, ideological heterogeneity in the EPG, and the shift from ALDE to Renew.

The independent variables can to a certain extent be measured through the datasets. The variable policy area is included in the dataset from VoteWatch and can simply be observed (Hix et al. 2022).

The ideological heterogeneity in the EPG can be measured by the CHES-data (Jolly et al. 2022) and requires that the national parties' part of ALDE and Renew respectively are isolated and analyzed separately. Through that different ideological stances can be measured quantitatively, for example the position of the parties on economic issues, GAL-TAN, or specific policy dimensions such as multiculturalism, regulation, nationalism. Answers are measured in scales of either 1-7 or 0-10 depending on the question. Using the answers, standard deviations can be calculated.

Standard deviation is a measure of how dispersed the data is in relation to the mean. A low, or small, standard deviation indicates that data is clustered tightly around the mean, whilst a high, or large, standard deviation indicates data is more spread out. A higher standard deviation indicates that the opinions of the party group are more dispersed, and vice versa (Körner & Wahlgren 2015). Through this

⁸ For example, if there are 30 MEPs in the EPG and 10 vote yes, 10 vote no and 10 vote abstain. Then cohesion will be 0. Or if all 30 MEPs vote the same (yes/no/abstain). Then cohesion will be 1.

heterogeneity can be calculated in different ideological questions which then can be compared with the voting cohesion in the policy areas chosen.

5.3 Case selection

Since there will be multiple datasets used for the analysis, it is important that the cases used are harmonized and displayed. All the parties from the ALDE party group and Renew party group have been included in the calculations of voting cohesion (from VoteWatch EP8 & EP9), however not all European liberal parties have been included from the CHES-data to measure ideological heterogeneity. This is because they either are not a part of the EU or they are not part of ALDE/Renew, and since voting cohesion is the dependent variable, national parties not part of ALDE/Renew would affect the results. Unfortunately, not all the national parties that are a part of ALDE/Renew have been found in the CHES-data, however most of the parties are included, decreasing the risk of it affecting the results. The specific case selection can be seen in table 6 in attachments.

5.4 Test of significance

The results from the Agreement Index's voting cohesion score can be calculated and compared, however it is also important that potential variation and differences that are found are statistically significant. In Hix et al. (2005, p. 216) no test of significance was done due to the large number of observations, and a similar decision could be made in some of these cases. According to the Central Limit Theorem (CLT), a sample size approximates to a normal distribution the larger the sample size (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 130-133). CLT opens for the possibility of assuming a normal distribution and using parametric testing.

To strengthen the results and analysis of the thesis, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test will be conducted using the statistical analysis software SPSS. A One-Way ANOVA compares the means of two or more independent groups to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means.

It is a parametric test and requires that the variables be normally distributed. The dependent variable must be continuous and the independent variable categorical, and each group should have at least 6 subjects (Alwan 2020; Kent State University 1). The dependent variable in this study, the cohesion scores, is continuous on the interval between 0 and 1, and the independent variable, policy area, is categorical.

An ANOVA-test analyzes variation both within and between the groups in question through a so-called ANOVA-table, and a coefficient of determination

decides the proportions of the variation and how much of the variation can be explained by differences between the groups (Alwan 2020). An ANOVA-table can look the following:

Table 1: Example of ANOVA-table

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F
<i>Between Groups</i>	SSG	DFG	SSG/DFG=MSG	MSG/MSE
<i>Within Groups</i>	SSE	DFE	SSE/DFE=MSE	
<i>Total</i>	SST	DFT	SST/DFT	

The relevant values in the table are the sum of squares which show the value of variation between group and within groups, and the F-value which indicates whether the difference is statistically significant. Through the F-value a p-value can be calculated and if the result is lower than 5% the result is statistically significant (Körner & Wahlgren 2015, p. 441-453).

An ANOVA-test is useful in this essay because the independent variable policy area will have more than two groups.

5.5 Methodological evaluation

With the description of method in mind, are there any methodological pitfalls of the thesis? One of the critiques and weaknesses regarding the use of roll call-votes is that of selection bias. Voting cohesion is mainly studied through RCVs due to other votes not being documented, however RCVs only cover a certain part of the voting in the EP, which makes RCVs slightly unrepresentative (Hagemann 2015, p. 138, 141; Blomberg 2015, p. 272). The votes that are excluded in the material and analysis thus limit the potential variation of the dependent variable: cohesion (Teorell & Svensson, p. 222-225).

This is addressed in previous research (Hix & Hoyland 2013). As mentioned in section 2.1 regarding the European Parliament, there are both political and strategic incentives to invoke RCVs, which may affect the result. However, since RCVs are obligatory in final legislative issues its use has increased overtime and covers more and more voting (Hix & Hoyland 2022, p. 69; Hagemann 2015, p. 146). Another important point is that since all EPGs can issue RCVs, it is more difficult to limit RCVs in voting areas where cohesion only is high (Hix & Hoyland, p. 181-182).

RCV samples have also become more representative overtime, which can be explained by the fact that the overall legislative power of the EP has grown leading to a larger share of RCVs. Although RCVs are not unproblematic, they have evolved over time and have become a better variable to analyze (Kanoik & Mocek 2017, p. 86-88). Yet, further research could be done into using RCVs as a strategic

tool and to which extent this is done, or how distribution of RCV requests vary across political groups. Selection bias is still of importance in the analysis of RCVs but seeing as RCVs are the only possible material, the data situation has drastically improved (Hagemann 2015, p. 138).

Another pitfall is that of the CHES-data and the fact that it does not include all liberal European national parties. The dataset from Vote-Watch and CHES do not completely coincide, which makes it difficult to assert the exact ideological heterogeneity in all policy areas. Still, the number of missing values is low, and a large majority of European liberal parties are represented in the data.

Furthermore, not all policy areas may have an ideological question that fits itself exactly and some of the questions were asked in 1999/2002, which could warrant criticism. On top of this, all national parties are weighed equal when calculating the standard deviations despite varying in size and influence, meaning that if variation occurs it cannot only be attributed to heterogeneity.

Lastly, the thesis lacks critical theory, as much research on EU-politics does (Manners 2007) and exhibits a positivist approach. In certain ways it is a strength because it creates the possibility to replicate the study, increasing the reliability of tests and intersubjectivity of the method (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 56-59). But in ways one could also view the theories and methods used as reproducing existing power structures and explanations (Manners 2007, p. 90). Perhaps there are critical perspectives to voting cohesion that could offer new insight into the behavior of MEPs. However, that requires further research.

6 Results and analysis

The following chapter will test whether there is support for the hypotheses posed and analyze possible explanations for variation in cohesion: whether cohesion varies across policy areas, the relationship between cohesion and heterogeneity, a comparison of ALDE and Renew, and finally studying cohesion over time. The chapter is divided into four sections based on the four hypotheses.

6.1 Policy area

The following section will address the first hypothesis, whether voting cohesion varies based on policy area. First, descriptive statistics will be presented which includes the number of votes per policy area in EP8 and EP9, see table 2. Second, cohesion scores across policy areas for EP8 and EP9, see table 3.

H1: The voting cohesion in Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe/Renew Europe will vary across policy areas.

Table 2: Number of votes per policy area in EP8 and EP9

Policy area	Number of votes EP8	Number of votes EP9
<i>Agriculture</i>	295	894
<i>Budget</i>	1,207	839
<i>Budgetary control</i>	542	927
<i>Civil liberties, justice & home affairs</i>	762	1,534
<i>Economic & monetary affairs</i>	872	768
<i>Employment & social affairs</i>	479	53
<i>Environment & public health</i>	877	1,888
<i>Foreign & security policy</i>	1,357	2,529
<i>Gender equality</i>	404	653
<i>Industry, research & energy</i>	614	20
<i>International trade</i>	493	146
Total	7,902	10,251

Table 2 showcases the number of votes for all the policy areas and the total number of votes for EP8 and EP9, which were 7,902 and 10,251 respectively.

Table 3: Cohesion across policy areas for EP8 and EP9

Policy area	Parliament cohesion EP8	ALDE Cohesion EP8	Parliament Cohesion EP9	Renew Cohesion EP9
<i>Agriculture</i>	0.57	0.85*	0.59	0.86*
<i>Budget</i>	0.62	0.90*	0.65	0.92*
<i>Budgetary control</i>	0.63	0.94*	0.61	0.89*
<i>Civil liberties, justice & home affairs</i>	0.58	0.88*	0.60	0.92*
<i>Economic & monetary affairs</i>	0.57	0.91*	0.59	0.88*
<i>Employment & social affairs</i>	0.56	0.81*	0.58	0.79*
<i>Environment & public health</i>	0.55	0.83*	0.57	0.85*
<i>Foreign & security policy</i>	0.58	0.91*	0.65	0.93*
<i>Gender equality</i>	0.50	0.86*	0.6	0.92*
<i>Industry, research & energy</i>	0.54	0.87*	0.62	0.90*
<i>International trade</i>	0.58	0.92*	0.68	0.92*
<i>All policy area</i>	0.58	0.88	0.61	0.89

* = An ANOVA-test was conducted with the cohesion scores from all policy areas. It shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the policy areas, through a p-value of <.001. The results can be found in table 6 and 7 in attachments.

Table 3 illustrates the cohesion scores in EP8 and EP9 for ALDE and Renew, along with the parliament's cohesion, based on the policy areas chosen. The cohesion scores were statistically different from each other after an ANOVA-test was conducted, which means that the differences between policy areas are *not* occurring because of chance.

The highest cohesion scores for ALDE (EP8) were in “Budgetary control”, “Foreign & security policy”, “Budget”, “Economic & monetary affairs” and “International trade”, all of which had a score of 0.9 or higher.

The lowest scores for ALDE (EP8), 0.85 or lower, were found in “Agriculture” and “Employment & social affairs”, “Environment and public health”. “Employment & social affairs” had the lowest score with 0.81 in cohesion. The policy areas that had a score higher than 0.85 but lower than 0.9 were “Civil liberties, justice & home affairs”, “Gender equality” and “Industry, research & energy”.

For Renew (EP9) the policy areas with a cohesion score of 0.9 or higher were “Budget”, “Civil liberties, justice & home affairs”, “Foreign & security policy”,

“Gender equality”, “Industry, research & energy” and “International trade” – a bit different compared to EP8. The policy areas that had a cohesion score of 0.85 or lower were “Employment & social affairs” and “Environment & public health”. The policy areas higher than 0.85 but lower than 0.90 were “Agriculture”, “Budgetary control” and “Economic & monetary affairs”.

Cohesion increased from ALDE to Renew in: “Agriculture”, “Budget”, “Civil liberties, justice & home affairs”, “Environment & public health”, “Foreign & security policy”, “Gender equality” and “Industry, research and energy”. Cohesion decreased in: “Budgetary control”, “Economic & monetary affairs” and “Employment & social affairs”. Cohesion stayed the same in “International trade”.

Table 3 clearly shows that voting cohesion does vary across policy areas, in support of H1. Moreover, Table 3 also shows that which policy areas have high versus low cohesion depends on the group studied, ALDE versus Renew. A possible explanation for this is that EP9 has not been completed and there are some issues that have not yet been addressed.

Another factor is that Macron’s party “Renaissance” joined Renew, which altered the dynamics of the EPG (Crum 2020, p. 11-12). Other instances of new additions, like in EP6, also caused an effect on voting cohesion (Hix & Noury 2009, p. 163). Therefore, it is highly likely that the way in which voting cohesion varies across policy areas can be explained by the national parties that compose ALDE/Renew and their ideological nature.

As Klüver & Spoon (2015) theorize, voting defection will occur in policy areas where there is a high degree of opinion difference – heterogeneity – and since the national parties that make up the EPG can alter the degree of heterogeneity a change in cohesion is likely.

This brings the thesis to H2, is there a relationship between cohesion and heterogeneity, and what does that relationship look like?

6.2 Heterogeneity

The following section discusses the second hypothesis and whether cohesion varies based on ideological heterogeneity in the party group.

H2: Voting cohesion will be lower (higher) based on the degree of ideological heterogeneity (homogeneity) in the party group.

Table 4: Cohesion scores for ALDE/Renew compared with heterogeneity in EPG

Policy area	Heterogeneity in ALDE ⁹	ALDE Cohesion EP8	Heterogeneity in Renew ¹⁰	Renew Cohesion EP9
<i>Agriculture (1)</i>	Urbal_rural: 2.00	0.85	Urban_rural: 2.0	0.86
<i>Budget (2)</i>	EU_budgets: 0.87	0.90	EU_budgets: 0.89	0.92
<i>Budgetary control (3)</i>	EU_budgets: 0.87	0.94	EU_budgets: 0.89	0.89
<i>Civil liberties, justice & home affairs (4)</i>	Civlib_laworder: 1.44	0.88	Civlib_laworder: 1.64	0.92
<i>Economic & monetary affairs (5)</i>	Lrecon: 1.31	0.91	Lrecon: 1.34	0.88
<i>Employment & social affairs (6)</i>	EU_empl: 0.83	0.81	Undetermined	0.79
<i>Environment & public health (7)</i>	Environment: 1.31	0.83	Environment: 1.54	0.85
<i>Foreign & security policy (8)</i>	EU_foreign: 0.94	0.91	EU_foreign: 0.95	0.93
<i>Gender equality (9)</i>	Sociallifestyle: 1.76	0.86	Sociallifestyle: 1.6	0.92
<i>Industry, research & energy (10)¹¹</i>	Undetermined	0.87	Underdetermined	0.90
<i>International trade (11)</i>	Protectionism: 1.76	0.92	Protectionism: 1.35	0.92
All policy area	Average: 1.31	0.88	Average: 1.36	0.89

Table 4 showcases the heterogeneity, based on policy area, within ALDE and Renew respectively along with the cohesion scores of the same policy areas. It depicts the relationship between heterogeneity and cohesion. The heterogeneity was calculated using standard deviations through the CHES-data. The variable names and their definitions can be found in tables 8, 9 and 10 in attachments, along with the range of the variables. The higher the standard deviation value the bigger the dispersion and heterogeneity within the party group.

The policy areas with the lowest heterogeneity in ALDE are “Employment & social affairs” with 0.83 and “Budget” and “Budgetary control” with 0.87. “Agriculture” had the highest heterogeneity with 2.0 and “International trade” with 1.76.

⁹ For the 1999-2019 CHES-data certain questions were only asked specific years, see table 8.

¹⁰ All questions were asked in 2019.

¹¹ Removed in analysis due to data limitations.

The policy areas with the lowest heterogeneity for Renew are “Budget” and “Budgetary control”, with the score 0.89, and then “Economic & monetary affairs” and “International trade”, with a score of 1.31 and 1.35 respectively. “Agriculture” has the highest heterogeneity of 2.0 along with “Gender equality” and “Civil liberties, justice & home affairs” with the scores 1.6 and 1.64 respectively.

The total heterogeneity for ALDE was 1.31 and for Renew 1.36, indicating that heterogeneity is slightly larger for Renew.

To easier view the relationship between cohesion and heterogeneity scatter plots were created. Since no appropriate measure of heterogeneity existed for “Industry, research and energy” (10) that policy area is not represented in any of the scatter plots, and neither did a measurement for “Employment & social affairs” (6) exist for Renew.

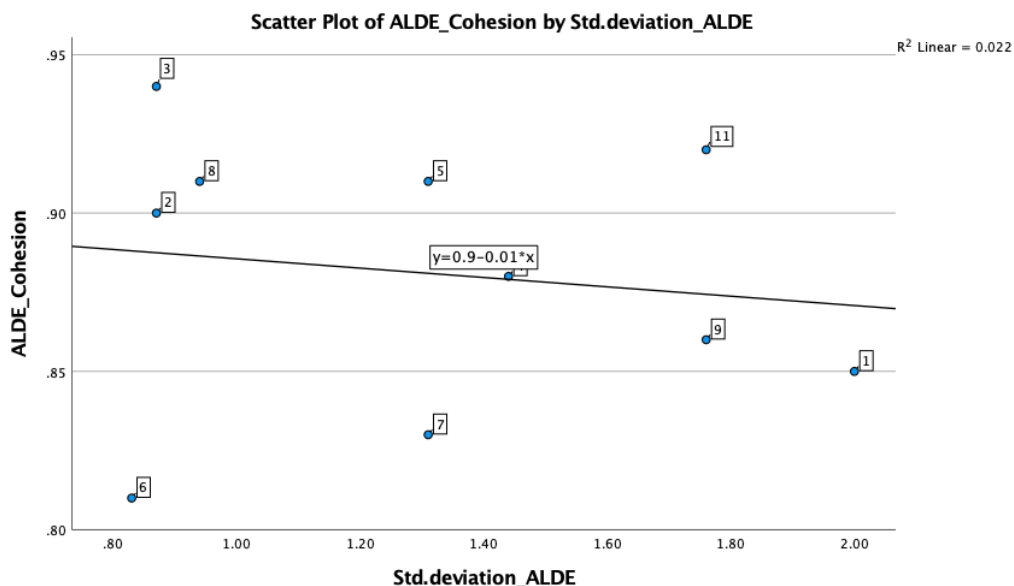


Figure 2: Scatter plot of cohesion scores and heterogeneity in ALDE

Figure 2 translates the contents from Table 4 to visualize the relationship between cohesion and the degree of ideological heterogeneity for ALDE (EP8). There is a weak relationship between the degree of heterogeneity and cohesion, mainly due to two significant outliers: “Employment & social affairs” (6) and “International trade” (11). According to H2 the lower the cohesion the higher the heterogeneity. However, “Employment & social affairs” (6) shows low cohesion and low heterogeneity, and “International trade” (11) shows high cohesion and high heterogeneity.

In conclusion, for certain policy areas heterogeneity will coincide with low cohesion and homogeneity with high cohesion, as Klüver & Spoon (2015) predict. However, for some policy areas that is not the case, as the outliers show. The same scatter plot is made for Renew.

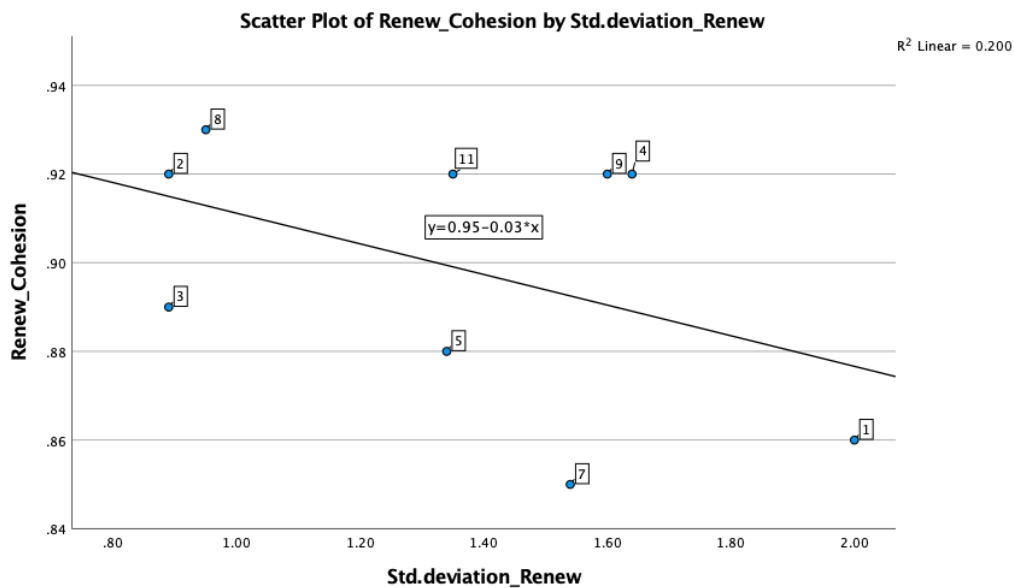


Figure 3: Scatter plot of cohesion scores and heterogeneity in Renew

Figure 3 also translates the contents from Table 3 to visualize the relationship between cohesion and the degree of ideological heterogeneity for Renew (EP9). The relationship between cohesion and heterogeneity is a bit stronger compared to Figure 2, with all but two policy areas unavailable for analysis. However, there are also some outliers for this figure as well. “Gender equality” (9) and “Civil liberties, justice & home affairs” (4) have high cohesion while at the same time having high heterogeneity.

Figure 3 offers qualified support for H2, there is a slight relationship between heterogeneity and cohesion. Still, like Figure 2 there are certain policy areas that do not fit the trend as well.

The figures support the findings from Close (2019) and Hix et al. (2005) to a certain extent, that cohesion varies based on ideology. The result can also be connected to Klüver & Spoon’s (2015) finding that when there are differences in opinions in the EPG are present, defection will occur.

According to the two principal-dilemma, defection and lower cohesion is occurring because heterogeneity weakens the EPG discipline, strengthening the national party’s ability to control the MEPs voting patterns. However, the outliers from Figures 2 and 4 also show that cohesion can be low despite low heterogeneity and vice versa, suggesting that there could be another explanation for variation in cohesion in those cases.

Low cohesion despite having low heterogeneity could be a result of national issue salience, and once again illustrates the functions of the two principal-dilemma. High cohesion despite high heterogeneity on the other hand illustrates the ability of the EPG to discipline the MEPs into voting in accordance with EPG lines.

The results show some support for H2, that voting cohesion will be lower (higher) based on ideological heterogeneity (homogeneity) in the party group. However, H2 alone cannot explain the variation in cohesion and thus the two principal-dilemma complements H2 with its theoretical background. The differences between ALDE and Renew require further comparison.

6.3 Comparison of ALDE and Renew

The following section displays the average cohesion score and heterogeneity for ALDE and Renew, and their cohesion calculations for Renew, and discusses the third hypothesis of the thesis, whether cohesion varies between ALDE and Renew.

H3: Voting cohesion will vary between ALDE and Renew, with cohesion decreasing for Renew.

Table 5: Average cohesion and heterogeneity for EP8 and EP9

Term of office	Average cohesion	Heterogeneity
ALDE: EP8 (2014 to 2019)	0.88	1.31
Renew: EP9 (2019 to 2022)	0.89	1.36

According to the data from Hix et al. (2022) cohesion has increased for Renew very slightly, merely with 0.01. The heterogeneity score for ALDE is 1.31 and 1.36 for Renew, a slight increase. Comparing the cohesion scores with the heterogeneity indicates that despite heterogeneity increasing, cohesion is similar for ALDE and Renew. Overall, this shows that cohesion does not vary between ALDE and Renew and that there is no support for H3. What explains this?

Diving into the comparison between ALDE and Renew, one of the noticeable differences is that of policy and power. ALDE is more right-leaning and less pro-integrationist compared to Renew (Crum 2020) and Renew is controlled by the French MEPs and Emmanuel Macron’s “Renaissance”, seeing as they make up the bigger percentage of the EPG (Hublet et al. 2023). Perhaps, Renew has been able to maintain a strong EPG discipline despite opinions differing more than previously.

Finally, how does this result affect H4 and what can be said about cohesion over time?

6.4 Cohesion over time

The research from Hix et al. (2005) supports the assumption that cohesion has increased over time, whilst McElroy & Bowler (2015) believe it to be overstated. To test H4 the results from previous studies will be compared to the cohesion scores of all RCVs from EP8 (2014-2019) and EP9 (2019-2022).

H4: Cohesion will increase over time.

Table 6: Cohesion over time

Term of office ¹²	Absolute Cohesion (AI) of ELDR/ALDE/Renew
EP1	0.85
EP2	0.85
EP3	0.85
EP4	0.86
EP5	0.91
EP6	0.93
EP7	0.85 in amendment votes and 0.97 in final votes.
EP8	0.88
EP9	0.89

Table 6 quite clearly shows that there is a very little increase in cohesion when comparing EP1 and EP9. Cohesion has increased with 0.04, but still varies in the 0.8 and 0.9 interval. Therefore, there is little support that cohesion will increase over time, which makes the finding from McElroy & Bowler (2015) more supported in this thesis and the idea of time as an explanatory variable for increased cohesion is relatively unfounded.

Cohesion will not merely increase over time, but depends more on external factors, such as the dynamic of the EPG and its size, which national parties dominate and the ideological priorities that exist.

¹² EP1 to EP5 are from Hix et al. (2005, p. 218), EP6 from Hix & Noury (2009, p. 163) and EP7 from Yordanova & Mühlböck (2015, p. 387). EP8 and EP9 is my own data.

7 Discussion

The following chapter dives deeper into explaining the results together with the theoretical framework, discusses potential limitations with the thesis and future research.

7.1 Explaining the results and analysis

Voting cohesion in the European Parliament varies in multiple ways within ALDE and Renew respectively, and policy area and heterogeneity can explain this variation to a certain extent. Voting cohesion varies across policy areas, with some policy areas having significantly higher cohesion and some significantly lower cohesion. Cohesion scores also had a slightly weak, but still existent, relationship with the ideological heterogeneity within the policy area.

Higher heterogeneity correlated with a lower cohesion score to a certain extent, which previous research (Hix 2002; Hix et al. 2005; Faas 2003; Klüver & Spoon 2015) had predicted and provided an explanation to. Lower cohesion could be ensuing in policy areas of heterogeneity because EPG discipline has been weakened and national party discipline strengthened, making defection easier to occur (Klüver & Spoon 2015; Faas 2003; Hix 2002). Yet, this requires diving deeper into the two principal-dilemma.

The relationship between heterogeneity and low cohesion also slightly supports what Hix (2002) and Klüver & Spoon (2015) theorize: that the policy difference of the national party and the EPG will have an effect deciding whether an MEP follows the national party discipline or the EPG discipline. Still, if a similar relationship is true for all EPGs further research is required and the data is not definite.

Furthermore, the issue of national salience has not been fully addressed and it is possible that variation in cohesion could be explained by the national salience certain issues have. Defection could be ensuing because of a difference in opinions but also because an issue of national salience to a specific MEP. To know the extent of the variation in voting cohesion caused by heterogeneity and national salience respectively, further research is required.

The relationship between cohesion and heterogeneity also differs between ALDE and Renew, with ALDE having outliers and showcasing low cohesion and low heterogeneity, as well as high cohesion and high heterogeneity, in certain policy areas. Renew only had outliers of the latter kind. Low cohesion despite low heterogeneity can be interpreted as national issue salience prevailing despite opinion differences being weak, and high cohesion despite high heterogeneity can

be interpreted as the EPG being able to discipline MEPs into cohesiveness. This illustrates the functions of the two principal-dilemma.

The specific policy areas also differed in cohesion between ALDE and Renew, for example “Gender equality” had a higher cohesion score for Renew compared to ALDE and “Economic & monetary affairs” had a higher cohesion score for ALDE compared to Renew. Possible explanations for these differences can be found in the ideological shift and electoral change that occurred with the creation of Renew.

Ideologically Renew is more pro-integrationist and less right-leaning, and the inclusion of new French MEPs also changed the dynamics of the EPG. This in turn affected the heterogeneity of the party group.

Renew is more heterogeneous than ALDE, despite this cohesion is slightly higher for Renew, which could be a result of stronger EPG discipline. Another explanation could be that Macron’s “Renaissance” and the other French MEPs have a large influence on the EPG. The size and influence of the national parties in an EPG can affect voting cohesion, according to Hix (2002), and seeing as they make up a big percentage of Renew it is not unlikely that they influence voting behavior more than other national parties. For example, it was the French MEPs that led ALDE to its name change and dropping the word “liberal” (Euractiv 2019).

Still, results also showed that cohesion overtime has remained on roughly the same level, around 0.8 to 0.9, as McElroy & Bowler (2015) found in their study.

Finally, what the results from the thesis show is that despite the ideological differences that exist within the liberal parties of Europe, ALDE/Renew still manages to discipline their MEPs into voting cohesively. While the two principal-dilemma provides an important explanation to when defection occurs there is still support for that ALDE and Renew effectively can discipline their MEPs. Perhaps the liberal parties of Europe might not be that different from each other when it comes down to voting in the European Parliament.

Still, the developments of Renew becoming more pro-integrationist and centrist (Hublet et al. 2023; Crum 2020) will shape the future of EP coalition building. How will coalitions be formed in the EP when Renew is at an ideological crossroads, with certain parties opening leaning more towards the right and some more towards the left? How will this affect the cohesiveness of Renew in legislative votes?

7.2 Limitations

The following section discusses potential limitations of the thesis and other factors that could have affected voting cohesion that were not touched upon fully.

As mentioned in 7.1 the issue of national salience is a potential explanatory factor to variation in voting cohesion but the effect of it cannot be assessed in this thesis due to salience being specific for each national party.

Another important factor is the size of the national parties and the size of the EPG. These were not weighed into the analysis but could also influence voting cohesion. For example, the national parties’ power might differ based on the

number of their MEPs in the EPG. A national party with one MEP could be presumed to have less power than a national party with nine MEPs.

Dynamics of the EPG were to a certain extent discussed, in relation to the inclusion of new French MEPs. However, the effect of Brexit could be addressed further seeing as all MEPs from the Liberal Democrats left ALDE/Renew.

Furthermore, there were multiple limitations in the data that could have affected the result. Not all national parties' part of ALDE/Renew were included in the calculations of heterogeneity, see section 5.3. Neither were all policy areas included. To grasp the whole voting cohesion of ALDE/Renew and to study the relationship between cohesion and heterogeneity further, more policy areas would need to be included.

Finally, there could be potential explanations to variation that this thesis or previous research has not yet explored. For example, more critical perspectives on EU-politics that Manners (2007) describes.

The limitations discussed accentuate the need for future research on the area of voting cohesion and will be addressed in the next section.

7.3 Future research

There are multiple areas that require further research: the issue of national salience, the effect of national party and EPG size, Brexit, and generalizability of the findings.

The significance of issue salience and the role it plays for the national parties when defecting is highly relevant. Its effect is expected to be different for each national party but diving deeper into certain national parties could provide with interesting insights, such as to which extent variation in voting cohesion could be caused by issue salience.

Weighing the national parties would be one way of strengthening future analysis to control for the influence of each national party, for example when calculating heterogeneity. As well as studying if certain national parties are over-/underrepresented in defection. Accounting for Brexit is yet another way of enhancing the analysis.

Finally, to be able to generalize and extend the findings of this thesis on all MEPs of the EP, other EPGs would need to be studied. Otherwise, the findings of this thesis are mainly ALDE/Renew-specific. Another reason for this is to be able to compare ALDE/Renew's cohesion scores with other EPGs.

8 Conclusion

The purpose of my thesis was to examine how voting cohesion in the EP varies within ALDE and Renew, and what factors that can explain this variation. The results indicate that voting cohesion varies across policy area for both ALDE and Renew, as predicted by H1. There is a weak relationship between cohesion and heterogeneity, showing some support for H2. For some cases high cohesion and homogeneity will correlate, and low cohesion and heterogeneity correlate. However, there are also outliers that contradict H2, and these can to a certain extent be explained by the two principal-dilemma. For example, low cohesion and high heterogeneity can be explained by an issue being of national salience, and high cohesion and heterogeneity can be explained by a strong EPG discipline. Cohesion has not decreased for Renew compared to ALDE and cohesion has not increased significantly over time, making both H3 and H4 unsupported.

In summary, the findings of the study show how even slight electoral changes and ideological shifts in an EPG, more specifically the Liberal Party Group, can affect voting cohesion in multiple policy areas. Furthermore, the relationship between voting cohesion and heterogeneity has been explored, which shows the need for further research on the area: to test whether a similar relationship can be found for all EPGs. Lastly, the thesis has contributed to understanding the pivotal role Renew Europe plays in coalition building in the European Parliament and how ideological priorities and cohesion shapes that role.

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10 Attachments

The attachments are of the following: case selection, definitions of ideological questions paired with different policy areas and ANOVA-tables that display the statistically significant difference between policy areas.

10.1 Case selection

Table 7: Case selection for EP8 (ALDE)

Country	Party name	Party_ID for CHES-data 1999-2019	Party_ID for CHES-data 2019	VoteWatch-data * = only in EP9 ** = only in EP8	CHES-data
Austria	NEOS – Das Neue Österreich	1306	1306	Yes	Yes
Belgium	VLD/PVV – Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten	107	107	Yes	Yes
	PRL/MR – Mouvement Réformateur	106	106	Yes	Yes
Bulgaria	DPS – Movements for Rights and Freedom	2004	2004	Yes	Yes
Croatia	IDS – Istarski demokratski sabor	3106	3106	Yes	Yes
Czech Republic	ANO2011	2111	2111	Yes	Yes
Denmark	V – Venstre	211	211	Yes	Yes
	RV – Det Radikale Venstre	202	202	Yes	Yes

Estonia	EK – Eesti Keskerakond	2202	2202	Yes	Yes
	ER – Eesti Reformierakond	2203	2203	Yes	Yes
Finland	KESK – Suomen Keskusta	1403	1403	Yes	Yes
	SFP – Svenska folkpartiet	1406	1406	Yes	Yes
France	LREM – La République en marche		626	Yes*	Yes
	Liste Renaissance			Yes*	No
	MoDem – Mouvement Démocrate	613	613	Yes	Yes
	Agir – La Droite constructive			Yes*	No
	EELV – Europe Écologie		605	Yes*	Yes
	Union des Démocrates est Indépendants			Yes**	No
	Génération Citoyens			Yes**	No
Germany	FDP – Freie Demokratische Partei	303	303	Yes	Yes
	Freie Wähler			Yes	No
Greece	Independent			Yes*	Yes
Hungary	MM – Momentum Mozgalom		2314	Yes*	Yes
Ireland	FF – Fianna Fáil Party		701	Yes*	Yes
Italy	Azione			Yes*	No
	Independent			Yes*	Yes
	Italia Viva			Yes*	No

Latvia	AP! – Attīstībai/Par!		2417	Yes*	Yes
	ZZS – ZaĶo un Zemnieku savienība	2405		Yes**	Yes
Lithuania	LRLS – Lietuvos Respublikos liberalų sąjūdis	2518	2518	Yes	Yes
	DP – Darbo partija	2516		Yes**	Yes
	Independent			Yes**	No
Luxembourg	Parti démocratique			Yes	No
	Indépendent			Yes*	No
Netherlands	VVD – Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	1003		Yes	Yes
	D66 – Democraten 66	1004		Yes	Yes
Poland	No party name			Yes*	No
Portugal	Partido Democrático Republicano			Yes**	No
Romania	USR – Uniunea Salvați România	2713		Yes	Yes
	USR-PLUS			Yes*	No
	ALDE Romania			Yes**	No
	Independent			Yes**	No
Slovakia	Independent			Yes*	No
	PS – Progresívne Slovensko		2819	Yes*	Yes
Slovenia	LMS – Lista Marjana Šarča	2915		Yes**	Yes

	DeSUS – Demokratična stranka upokojenцев Slovenije	2906		Yes**	Yes
Spain	Cs – Ciudadanos – Partido de la Ciudadanía	526	526	Yes	Yes
	PNV – Partido Nacionalista Vasco	506	506	Yes	Yes
	Delegación Ciudadanos Europeos			Yes*	No
	Independiente			Yes	No
	UPyD – Unión Progreso y Democracia	523 (only 2014)		Yes**	Yes
	PDeCat – Partit Demócrata Europeu i Catalá	550		Yes**	Yes
Sweden	C – Centerpartiet	1603	1603	Yes	Yes
	L – Liberalerna	1604	1604	Yes	Yes
United Kingdom	LibDem – Liberal Democrats	1104	1104	Yes	Yes
	Alliance Party of Northern Ireland			Yes*	No

10.2 CHES-data

Table 8: Definition of variables

Variable	Policy dimension	Measurement
<i>Lrecon</i>	Position of the party in 2019 in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues.	0 = extreme left 5 = center 10 = extreme right
<i>Galtan</i>	Position of the party in 2019 in terms of their views on social and cultural values	0 = Libertarian/Postmaterialist 5 = center

		10 = Traditional/Authoritarian
<i>Environment</i>	Position towards environmental sustainability in 2019.	0 = Strongly supports environmental protection even at the cost of economic growth 10 = Strongly supports economic growth even at the cost of environmental protection
<i>Civlib_laworder</i>	Position on civil liberties vs. law and order	0 = Strongly favors civil liberties 10 = Strongly favors tough measures to fight crime
<i>Sociallifestyle</i>	Position on social lifestyle (e.g. rights for homosexuals, gender equality).	0 = Strongly supports liberal policies 10 = Strongly opposes liberal policies
<i>Urban_rural</i>	Position on urban/rural interests	0 = Strongly supports urban interests 10 = Strongly supports rural interests
<i>Protectionism</i>	Position toward trade liberalization/protectionism	0 = Strongly favors trade liberalization 10 = Strongly favors protection of domestic producers
<i>EU_foreign</i>	Position of the party leadership in 2019 on EU foreign and security policy	1 = Strongly opposes 7 = Strongly favors
<i>EU_budget</i>	Position of the party leadership in 2019 on EU authority over economic and budgetary policy	1 = Strongly opposes 7 = Strongly favors
<i>EU_employ</i>	Position of the party leadership in YEAR on a common employment policy. (Only asked in 1999 and 2002)	1 = Strongly opposes 7 = Strongly favors
<i>EU_agri</i>	Position of the party leadership in YEAR on EU's agricultural spending (Only asked in 2002).	1 = Strongly opposes 7 = Strongly favors
<i>EU_environ</i>	Position of the party leadership in YEAR on a common policy on the environment (Only asked in 1999 and 2002)	1 = Strongly opposes 7 = Strongly favors

Table 9: Standard deviations for ALDE

CHES-data	N (number of cases)	Standard deviation for ALDE
<i>EU_budgets</i>	31	0.87
<i>EU_foreign</i>	31	0.94
<i>Lrecon</i>	31	1.31
<i>Galtan</i>	31	1.76
<i>Civ_laworder</i>	31	1.44
<i>Sociallifestyle</i>	31	1.76
<i>Urban_rural</i>	31	2.00
<i>Environment</i>	31	1.31

<i>Protectionism</i>	30	1.76
<i>EU_empl</i>	17	0.83

Table 10: Standard deviations for Renew

CHES-data	N (number of cases)	Standard deviation for Renew
<i>EU_budgets</i>	26	0.89
<i>EU_foreign</i>	26	0.94
<i>Lrecon</i>	26	1.34
<i>Civ_laworder</i>	26	1.64
<i>Sociallifestyle</i>	26	1.60
<i>Urban_rural</i>	26	2.00
<i>Environment</i>	26	1.56
<i>Protectionism</i>	26	1.35

10.3 ANOVA-tables

ANOVA

Agreement Index

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.313	10	1.031	48.255	<.001
Within Groups	168.645	7891	.021		
Total	178.958	7901			

Figure 6: ANOVA-table for ALDE (EP8) comparing average cohesion scores across policy area

ANOVA

Agreement Index

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.409	10	1.141	52.575	<.001
Within Groups	222.205	10240	.022		
Total	233.614	10250			

Figure 7: ANOVA-table for Renew (EP9) comparing average cohesion scores across policy area