

Course: GV251

Class teacher: Kira Gartzou-Katsouyanni

Week 4: The European Parliament

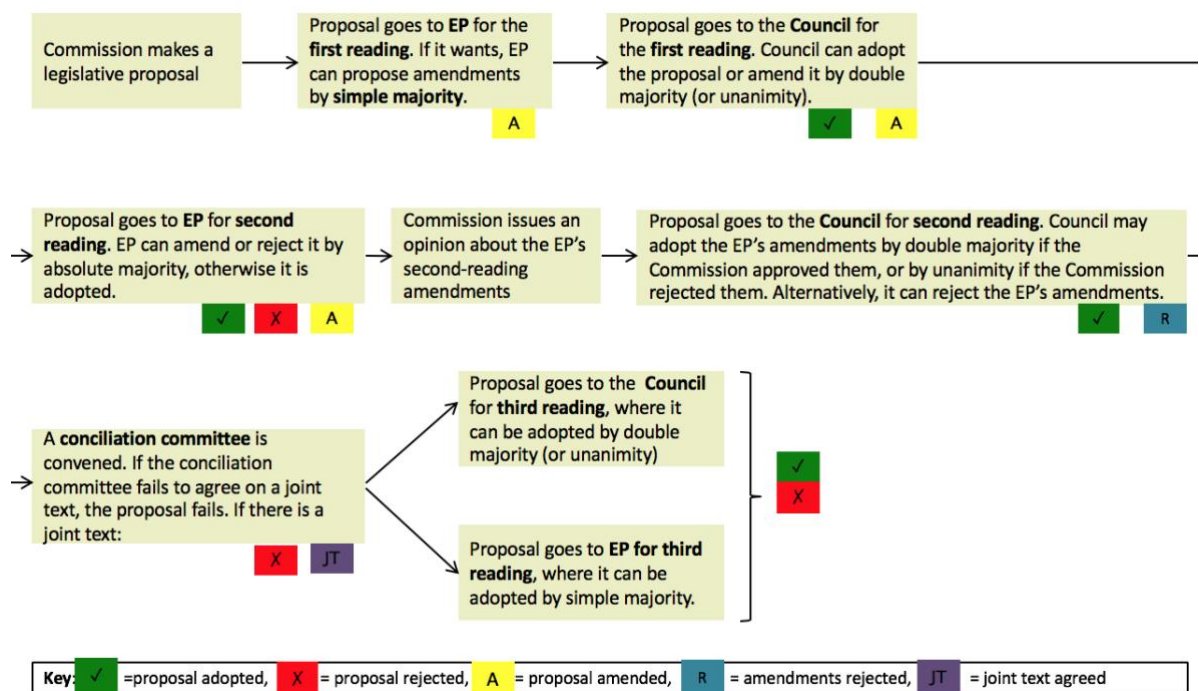
PART I) Extent of the European Parliament's power in the EU legislative process

a) *Discuss:* How much power do EU *formal rules* give to the European Parliament in comparison to the Council of Ministers?

b) *Discuss:* Can you think of any *other sources of power imbalance* between the European Parliament and the Council?

c) *Discuss:* To what extent is the *Commission* a powerful actor in the EU's legislative process?

An overview of the ordinary legislative procedure:



PART II: Voting behaviour in the European Parliament

- a) ***Discuss:*** According to the empirical work of Simon Hix and his co-authors, does voting in the European Parliament tend to happen more along transnational party lines or along national lines?

- b) ***Discuss:*** Consider the transcript on p. 5 of a short extract of the European Parliament's debate on the "humanitarian situation of refugees within the EU and neighbouring countries," which took place in October 2015. Does it seem to you that the MEPs who participated in the debate were motivated more by national or by ideological considerations? Would you expect ministers in the Council to be motivated by the same balance of national and ideological considerations as MEPs?

Transcript of an extract from a European Parliament plenary debate on the 2015 refugee crisis

Event date 06/10/2015

00:00:00 Title

00:00:05 Exterior shots of the EP, Strasbourg

00:00:11 SOUNDBITE (Greek), Elissavet VOZEMBERG (EPP, EL), "We need a European solution, but needs to be a political solution most of all. President TUSK talked about solidarity between Member States, and obviously we need that. And the protection of borders and the necessary respect of the rules of the EU. But we cannot solve this problem unless we immediately cooperate with the countries of origin of these refugees. You know that the EU is one of the causes of this refugee crisis, but we need to also sign treaties with the transit countries of these refugees. Turkey. I am referring to Turkey."

00:00:48 SOUNDBITE (German), Knut FLECKENSTEIN (S&D, DE), "Where would we be today if Member States would actually live up to the undertakings which have been promised for so long? What about 0,7 percent of GDP for development aid for example? We now have to step up our efforts, we now have to move up a gear, we have to start paying up and acting quickly."

00:01:12 SOUNDBITE (Dutch), Helga STEVENS (ECR, BE), "The refugees now need specific support. Those helping the refugees, need medical and paramedical support, specific aid of this type is lacking in the camps. So children for example can't go to normal school classes. Deaf and blind children need specific support, Braille classes and so on. Moreover, the specific circumstances mean that we have to provide aid tailored to those with special needs."

00:01:42 SOUNDBITE (English), Cecilia WIKSTRÖM (ALDE, SE), "Now, in certain Member States, and I point it out, Hungary. The refugees are being met by barbed wire, a fence. They are being shot at, they are being shot at with tear gas which has been used, and furthermore, the national legislation today acknowledges and makes sure that Hungarian citizens who show solidarity and humanitarian care, sheltering refugees in their homes, run the risk of being put in prison for 3 years. And their neighbours are now, willing to inform of those Hungarian citizens who take their humanitarian responsibility seriously. Is this the Europe we want to see Mr. President?"

00:02:36 SOUNDBITE (Dutch), Judith SARGENTINI (Greens/EFA, NL), "It is indignant to see countries rolling out barbed wire and tear gas for crowd control. They believe they can feed people simply by throwing bread rolls over the barbed wire. That for me is inhumane treatment of refugees. If we allow that to happen without condemning it, I think we in effect will be sharing the blame."

00:02:54 SOUNDBITE (Italian), Laura FERRARA (EFDD, IT), "It is right to talk about reception but we need also to look at the deep causes, which are armed conflict and lack of resources. Which is why we are proposing a stop on arms sales, but the arms industry has a very strong interest, which is why a majority of this house spoke out against such a ban"

00:03:17 SOUNDBITE (Italian), Laura FERRARA (EFDD, IT), "We proposed a change to the Dublin Convention so that these people can be dealt with ex-ante rather than ex-post."

00:03:26 End

Source: https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/humanitarian-situation-of-refugees-in-eu-debate_1109605-V_v

European party abbreviations: EPP (European People's Party, centre-right); S&D (Progressive Alliance of Socialist & Democrats, centre-left); ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists, right-wing); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, liberal); Greens/EFA (European Greens/European Free Alliance, greens); EFDD (Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy, Eurosceptic)

Country abbreviations: EL (Greece), DE (Germany), BE (Belgium), NL (Netherlands), SE (Sweden), IT (Italy)

Appendix: Approaching articles that use statistical analysis

The guiding questions below aim to help you approach and start evaluating the key arguments made in texts that make use of statistical methods. As quantitative methods become more and more prevalent in political science, it is important that we all engage with the findings of articles that use such methods. Fortunately, as the questions below demonstrate, one does not need to be able to run a regression in order to converse with authors who use it¹.

1. Understanding the main message of the article:

- a) What is the main question that the author is asking?

- b) What are the outcome (dependent) and explanatory (independent) variables of the study?

- c) What is the author's answer to her main question?

2. Some questions to consider as you start to evaluate the article:

- d) How does the author measure the outcome (dependent) variable and the explanatory (independent) variable(s)? Are these measures appropriate? In other words, is the author really measuring the thing she says she is measuring?

- e) What cases has the author chosen in order to examine the hypotheses? Are these cases representative, or is the sample biased? Would the author find the same results if she had chosen different cases?

- f) What are the implications of the author's findings? Are the findings relevant? Do they help advance our understanding of a particular issue that is pertinent in political science?

¹ In addition to questions d-f, students who have taken coursework in statistics or econometrics can also evaluate whether the regression analysis is suffering from either omitted variable bias or reverse causality. But this sheet intends to demonstrate that one can evaluate political science articles that use regression analysis even without referring to this terminology.