

Bachelor Thesis

European Political Groups on Genetically Modified Organisms: Strong statements, weak programmes?

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Abstract:

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) for food production are disputed in Europe. In this thesis, the stances of European Parliament Groups and their national member parties on GMO policy are examined. Do political parties form coherent opinions on this issue or are national electorates and interests the principals for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), as national location theory of European parliamentarianism suggest? It is found that the far-left and the greens act coherently according to their ideology, whereas there is almost no congruence in the other factions. In the ALDE and ECR, national perceptions form policy stances, as national location theory predicts, while the picture is less clear for EPP and S&D.

1. Introduction

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) are a controversial topic in Europe. Their approval or non-approval bears considerable ramifications for European agriculture and trade. They can change the ways of agriculture and are deemed a threat to farmers, nature or health by many Europeans (European Commission, 2010 a). The European scepticism towards GMOs is somewhat peculiar and differs from the more permissive attitude in the United States where they have been in use since the early 1980s. While the American public more openly embraces genetically modified crops, they enjoy a very low popularity in Europe (Guehlstorf, 2005; Lusk, et al., 2006). For this, multiple reasons and explanations have been offered, among them theories about Europeans being afraid of innovation and technology (Guehlstorf, 2005). Europeans' negative attitudes towards GMOs can be observed in politics. Only recently did the European Parliament decide that - contrary to the usual procedure in agricultural and trade policies - member states can decide which EU-approved GMO they will ban from cultivation on their own (European Parliament, 2014).

Political parties play a major role in European politics, both on the member states level and on European Union (EU) level. Since the European Parliament (EP) continuously and almost unanimously tries to expand its influence, and because GMO are such an important topic, one might expect that the factions of the European Parliament who have been engaged in fierce discussions on this issue have a clear stance on GMO in their election manifestos. The same could be expected of the election manifestos of the Pan-European parties belonging to those factions. However, that is not the case. The Greens/EFA are the only political group to have a clear programmatic stance on GMO, which is opposition. All others do not mention the topic at all or do not express a clear opinion (EPP Party, 2012; Party of European Socialists, no year; Party of European Socialists, 2014; Greens/EFA, 2014; EPP Party, 2014; ALDE Party, 2014; EGP, 2014; European Left, 2014; European Green Party, 2014, p. 24).

Why is that the case? Usually, the political groups in the European Parliament, although consisting of several European parties that themselves consist of multiple national member parties, have had a surprisingly high level of cohesion from the EP's founding (zur Hausen, 2008, pp. 139-144). They reflect national party systems. The large European political movements communism, socialism, green politics, liberalism, christian democracy and conservatism each have their own political group in the EP (Caramani, 2005; Camia & Caramani, 2012). It has been the case since the founding of the European Parliament. Even after the EU enlargement, cohesion among political groups has been high and as in national parliaments, the left-right policy space has been the main divide in the EP (Hix, 2008; Roland, 2009). However, GMOs are a non-traditional issue that may not fit into traditional policy spaces (left-right). Thus, party group coherence in GMO politics may be less likely than in

other policy fields. So, far no one has attempted to test this. The research question of this thesis is therefore: **Is there congruence of programmatic stances towards Genetically Modified Crops and Animal Feedstuff among the national member parties of each Parliamentary Group in the European Parliament?** It is possible that national interests have strong influence on MEPs decisions. Therefore, the national location theory of party interest formation is used to explain congruence or non-congruence in this thesis.

Assessing this question will help to clarify if MEPs are agents of member states, not the entire European electorate in some cases, which will be important in understanding if the EU can function as a democratic body in the same way nation states work. It can moreover set a basis for future predictions of policy related to GMOs and biotechnology in the EU.

At the beginning of this thesis, the politics of genetically modified organisms and food will be outlined, the subsequent legal situation in the EU briefly explained and the nature of EP factions elucidated. In the following section, the theoretical background of this thesis is explained. Then the analysis of programmatic stances of parties and concluding remarks follow.

2. Theoretical considerations

2.1 The politics of genetically modified food

In this chapter, it will be explained what GMOs are and how the European public views them. Genetically modified organisms are organisms whose genome has been modified not by breeding (thus selecting a phenotype), but by direct molecular engineering of the genotype. One method is recombinant DNA technology, that is creating one genome by combining traits from other genomes, another is cloning. Genetically modified food is made from organisms that have been genetically modified, either by modifying crops or animals directly or by modifying feedplants or making products that do not contain genes, such as plant oil, from GMOs (Fridovich-Keil, 2014).

Since 1995, GMOs are used for food production. The aim is to increase crop yields and to reduce pesti- and herbicide use. Mostly, this has been successful, although cases have occurred where the immunity of plants against one pest paved the way for another one. Another advantage of genetic modification is to make food healthier and to contain more nutrients. One of the best-known examples is Golden Rice, a rice that is engineered to contain more Vitamin A than normal rice (Fridovich-Keil, 2014; Griffiths, 2014). Another field GMOs are used in is medicine, such as remedy production and environmental management. In the future, it might be possible to modify crops so that they become edible vaccines. A possible application in environmental management is creating biological plastics that degrade in nature and do not pollute the environment as much as other plastics (Fridovich-Keil, 2014).

Genetically modified organisms and especially foods are a controversial topic in the EU. In a 2010 Eurobarometer study, 54 % of those asked in the EU-27 agreed with the statement "*GM foods is not good for you and your family*" (European Commission, 2010 a, p. 18). Scepticism was lowest in Malta at 37% and highest in Latvia at 80%. Of the five major EU countries, Germany was the most and the United Kingdom the least sceptical at 69% and 40% scepticism, respectively (European Commission, 2010 a, p. 21). Environmental issues were also important: 23% of EU-27 respondents agreed with the statement: "*GM food does no harm to the environment*" (European Commission, 2010 a, p. 18). Interestingly, their scepticism does not lead people to the conclusion that more research is necessary to overcome the problems that they see. In the EU-27, only 23% agree that "*The development of GM food should be encouraged*" (European Commission, 2010 a, p. 18). When asked specifically about gene

transfer from one organism to another, 43% of EU-27 respondents agreed that it is a promising idea, but only 30% agreed that eating apples made by such a technique is safe. 58% would feel uneasy (European Commission, 2010 a, pp. 76, 82). While there is overall scepticism towards genetic modification in the EU, the numbers also indicate that the level of scepticism is very different in every country. It is therefore likely that the EU member states have different interests in this field and that the aforementioned national location theory explains why the EP groups do not show clear positions on this issue.

In Europe, consumer awareness of GMOs is higher and consumer acceptance is lower than in the United States (House, Morrow, Lusk, & Moore, 2001). Arguments against GM food include the fear of disruption of the consumer's genome, new allergies and toxins, more antibiotic-resistance of bacteria, or a disruption of ecosystems by biologically more competitive GMOs (Skogstad, 2011; House, Morrow, Lusk, & Moore, 2001). Other concerns are more socio-economic. There is worry that large agricultural corporations become too powerful to be effectively regulated by politics and that small farmers will not be able to compete (Legge & Durant, 2010).

2.2 GMO regulation in the EU

In the EU, the GMO regulation regime is stricter than it is for example in the United States or the World Trade Organization (Skogstad, 2011). In contrast to the USA, decisions for the approval of GMOs in the EU are not made by scientific bodies, but by political institutions (Skogstad, 2011). While the approval of a product is not made by the parliament, it plays a part in designing the regulatory regime. The principle of the regime is the so-called precautionary principle. It means that any GMO product is deemed unsafe until even repeated and in-depth tests have not found any evidence of danger (Salter & Jones, 2002). There is, however, the possibility not to approve a product if it is apparently not dangerous, as was the case during the GMO moratorium from 1998 to 2004. During this period, no new GM products were approved for commercial use and none were imported (Lieberman & Gray, 2006). Thus, there is no approval automatism, and approval always remains a political question.

Currently, the framework for the regulation of GMOs is based upon four legal documents. The first is the "*Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms and repealing Council Directive 90/220/EEC*", passed by the European Parliament and the Council on 12th March, 2001 (European Parliament; Council of the European Union, 2001). This directive deals with deliberate release of GMOs for purposes other than commercial and gives the member states the responsibility for assessing potential risks and informing the public (European Parliament; Council of the European Union, 2001).

The second piece of legislation is the "*Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and the Council on genetically modified food and feed*", passed by the aforementioned institutions on 22nd September, 2003 (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, 2003). It regulates genetically modified products that are either made to be sold to consumers or used as feed for animals whose products will then be sold to consumers, except for products that do not contain modified genes anymore (such as oil). In order to be approved, food and feed may not be unhealthy, less nutrient or sold by misleading the consumer. The European Food Safety Authority is responsible for risk assessment, but decisions are made by a European Commission comitology committee, the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, 2003).

The third piece of legislation limits the scope of the second. It is called "*Directive (EU) 2015/412 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2001/18/EC as regards the*

possibility for the Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of genetically modified organisms (GMO) in their territory" (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, 2015).

EU member states may prohibit the cultivation, but not the sale, of genetically modified food and feed in their territory, even if the EU has approved of the product. However, member states need to have a justification specific to the situation in the respective country. These are mostly environmental considerations.

The fourth legal document, "*Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 503/2013 on applications for authorisation of genetically modified food and feed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council and amending Commission Regulations (EC) No 641/2004 and (EC) No 1981/2006*", regulates how exactly the authorization process works (European Commission, 2013).

From the legal situation in the EU we can derive three important aspects. First, there are more possibilities to block GMOs than there are to approve. Only the EU can authorise any genetically modified product and only if its proven to be safe, but both the EU and the member states can block the cultivation. Non-approval is therefore the default position. Second, the EP participated in forming the legal framework, but it does not have a say in the approval of any particular product. In the member states that want to ban the cultivation, their parliaments may play a role. Thus, the EP did not give itself any power to regulate specific GMOs. Third, by agreeing to delegate the power to block cultivation of GM crops to the member states, the EP recognized that national interests can override European interests in this field. This increases the probability that it is indeed national interest and not so much party cohesion that dominates in the factions in GMO policy.

2.3 The peculiarities of Pan-European parties and political groups

The purpose of this chapter is to explain what characterizes pan-European parties and EP factions and what differentiates them from national parties. According to the traditional Weberian definition, parties are associations that compete for support in order to get their leaders into political power so that they can accomplish the political goals of their followers (Zotti, 2010, p. 19). In Stefan Zotti's modified definition that is aimed at including European parties, a party is a permanent organization aiming at getting into power in a political system by democratic means in order to change the political environment in the way its political programme is designed (Zotti, 2010, p. 22).

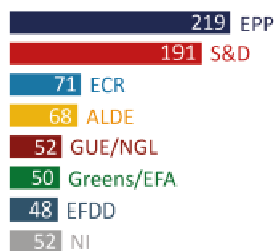
The first predecessors of European parties are European party co-operations that have begun in the 19th century. When the three great party families, the conservatives, liberals and socialists formed, it was the socialists who first started cooperating as internationalism is part of their political ideology. After the Second World War, liberals and Christian democrats followed (Zotti, 2010, pp. 26-27). Because there were no strong international organizations at that time and those that did exist were purely intergovernmental, transnational party co-operation did not include common organizations or programmes. As the European Economic Community (EEC) became parliamentarised by the founding of the European Parliamentary Assembly in 1958, there emerged a growing need for parties to form transnational organizations. Because the European parties have been founded for national parties to be able to influence politics in the European Parliament, the parliamentary groups have a dominant position within the parties (Zotti, 2010, pp. 28-36). In the 1970s, the three big party families formed their transnational organizations, albeit with different levels of integration. While the Christian democrats called themselves a party from 1976, the social democrats and the liberals finished their party structures only in 1992 and 1993. Green parties formed their pan-European party in 2004 (Zotti, 2010, pp. 28-36, 38-44).

European parties do not consist of individual members, but rather of national parties. National parties select the candidates standing for election to the European parliament. European political parties have no structure below the EU level, differing from national parties that are often organized to the local level. Therefore, all activity of European political parties is focused on the European Parliament (Zotti, 2010, pp. 44-45). Because in the European Parliament, some of the currently seven factions consist of several European parties representing common political stances, in this thesis I will concentrate on the parliamentary groups as my actors of interest, not the parties themselves.

European Parliament, 2014-2019

Size of the political groups

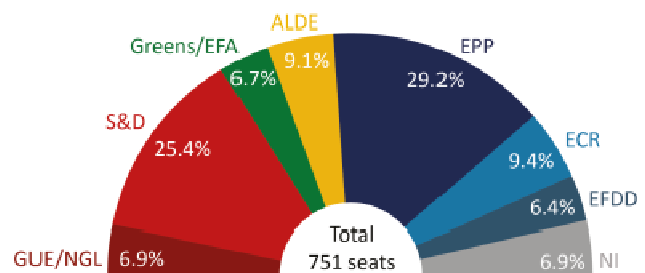
Number of MEPs in each political group as of 21 November 2014.



751
MEPs

Proportion of Members in each political group

Share of each political group in the total 751 seats in the Parliament.



source: (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2014)

The first is the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). It represents two European Parties, the Party of the European Left and the European Anticapitalistic Left. The group has 52 members from 19 parties in 14 EU member states (GUE/NGL, 2015 b). This group generally takes a left wing approach, with scepticism towards markets and an emphasis on the idea of equality and of achieving welfare by public means (GUE-NGL, 2015 a; GUE-NGL, 2014). It is anti-militaristic and aims for economic equality both in Europe and the world. It is also in favour of immigration to Europe (GUE-NGL, 2014).

The second parliamentary group is the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), representing the Party of European Socialists. This group has 190 members from 40 parties in all 28 member states (S&D, 2014). It is a pro-European group that is in favour of growth and the market economy, but with strong regulations to minimize social inequality, especially inequality of opportunity. They want to foster anti-discrimination policies and have a positive stance towards immigration (S&D, 2014).

The third parliamentary group is the The Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA). The two European Parties it represents are the European Green Party and the European Free Alliance. The group has 50 members from 26 parties in 17 countries. The European Green Party are an environmentalist party, sceptic towards market solutions and growth, but socially libertarian (Greens/EFA, 2015 a; Greens/EFA, 2015 b). The EFA represents ethnic minorities (EFA, 2014). The group is generally in favour of European integration and of immigration to Europe (Greens/EFA, 2015 b).

The fourth parliamentary group is the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), representing two parties: The first has the same name as the group, the second is the European Democratic Party. The group has 70 members from 34 parties in 21 member states (ALDE Group, 2015 a). It is a liberal group in favour of a relatively unconstrained market economy, free trade, libertarian social policies, and an individualist society with a non-intrusive state. Individual responsibility both for people and for states including a balanced budget, are important to them. They are very pro-European, especially in the field of defence and measures regarding the single market (ALDE Group, 2015 b; EDP, 2014).

The fifth and largest group is the Group of the European People's Party (EPP), representing the homonymous party. It has 218 members from 42 parties in 27 member states (EPP Group, 2015). It is a Christian Democrat and moderately conservative group. They are in favour of markets and private enterprise, though not as intensely as the ALDE. The EPP is generally a pro-European group, though not as federalist as the ALDE or S&D (EPP Party, 2012).

The sixth group is the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), representing the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists and some parties from the European Free Alliance and the European Christian Political Movement. It has 72 members from 22 parties in 15 countries (ECR, 2015 a). This conservative group is in favour of free markets and against supranationalism in the EU. Member states are supposed to retain their sovereignty and the EU is regarded as a bureaucratic institution that has to be regressed towards a common market. The ECR is critical of immigration and free movement (ECR, 2015 b).

The seventh group is Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), representing the Alliance for Direct Democracy in Europe. It is a group with 45 members from 5 parties in seven countries that rejects the very existence of the EU (EFDD, 2015 a). It is in favour of referenda on national and local level and trade between European countries, but no permanent organization and no supranationalism. The EFDD is critical of immigration and rejects free movement (EFDD, 2015 b).

The eighth group is Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENL). It represents the European parties Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom and European Alliance for Freedom. The ENL has 37 members from 7 parties in 7 countries (European Parliament, 2015 a). This group does not yet have an official programme.

To sum up, European political parties have the same purpose as national political parties, but they are different in two respects: They are not composed of individual members, but of national member parties, and they derive their influence from their parliamentary groups, which is the reason parliamentary groups will be at the focus of research.

As the parties and parliamentary groups do not have to support a government as in a classical parliamentary democracy, they do not have to form coalitions and show voting discipline in the same way as in other parliaments. They nevertheless show a considerable degree of coherence and form two coalitions, depending on the topic. On economic issues, there is often a centre-right majority from EPP and ALDE, while ALDE, Greens/EFA and S&D tend to form a centre-left majority on civil rights and socio-cultural issues (zur Hausen, 2008). In the case of GMOs, it would have been logical to expect that ALDE and EPP would be in favour of regulating GMOs at the European level so that the member states would not be able to restrict economic freedom for GM firms and farmers. As we already know, that has not happened and these parties did not position themselves on this issue. Thus, an explanation is necessary.

2.4 Theoretical Approach

In general, cohesion within EP groups is as high as among groups in national parliaments. In the field of GM crops, the EP has decided to give the competence of banning them to the member states instead of forming positions in the groups and then forming coalitions and then legislating by itself (European Parliament, 2015 b; European Parliament, 2014).

As the current legal framework was only established in March 2015, there is hardly any research on this new situation yet. But even before, the role of European parliamentary groups in GMO politics has been neglected in research. Instead, there is a lot of research on the role of the council, the commission or the EP in its entirety in GMO politics (Skogstad, 2011; Rosso Grossmann & Endres, 2000; Lieberman & Gray, 2006; Skogstad, 2003; Levidov, Carr, & Wield, 2000). Moreover, there is comprehensive research on the functioning of EP factions, including theories on the decision-making process within European parties and factions (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Marks, Wilson, & Ray, 2002; Faas, 2003; Bowler & McElroy, 2015; Thorlakson, 2005; Hix & Noury, 2009). There is therefore at the same time a need for research of the role EP groups play in GMO policy and a sufficient theoretical basis for such an undertaking. Some of the theories will now be presented before selecting one for this research.

The simplest, policy preferences theory, is the theory that parties have a certain ideology they want to form into policy. These ideologies can be ordered along dimensions like the polarity between more or less European integration or between left and right. Hix, Noury and Roland (2005) argue that the left-right dimension becomes more and more salient in EU politics the more competences for traditionally national policies the EU receives. Another theory, the cleavage theory, was brought forth by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan in 1967. It suggests that parties stances reflect great social conflicts (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). According to the cleavage theory, parties take an ideological stance according to major cleavages between antagonistic group interests within society (Marks, Wilson, & Ray, 2002). In case of European parties, this would mean that they take stances according to the ideological position of their core electorate. In contrast to this, the national location theory suggests that parties will act according to differences between nationalities, not so much ideologies or social groups (Marks, Wilson, & Ray, 2002). According to the median supporter theory, parties adjust to the median preference in the population (Marks, Wilson, & Ray, 2002). This would predict that all parties try to find this position and then to represent it. Strategic competition theory states that large parties will take moderate positions similar to the median preference, while niche parties will try to set themselves apart by taking extreme stances, thereby attempting to change public preferences altogether (Marks, Wilson, & Ray, 2002).

It is questionable if the policy preferences theory can be sensibly applied here as GMOs do not fit into any of the dimensions mentioned above. They are not really a question of giving competences to the EU but a question of a practical policy, regardless of the actor that decides on it. It is no clear left-right question, either. Economically right parties might be in favour of any farmer deciding what to cultivate or to ban genetic modification as unnatural, left parties might favour banning GMOs in order to make sure that large multinationals do not become too powerful, or to introduce GMOs to foster progress. As any meaningful research based on policy preferences would mean to decide where a party exactly fits into the political spectrum, utilizing this theory would exceed the boundaries of this thesis.

The cleavage theory is difficult to apply in this context for several reasons. First, there might be cleavages that are not common to all EU member states. Second, as voters vote on a national level, cleavages spanning the entire EU might not be relevant for single policies. Third, GMOs do not fit into any traditional cleavage.

The strategic competition theory can hardly be applied to the research question, too. In order to classify parties as established parties or niche parties, an in-depth analysis of their history, size and voter profile would be necessary.

The median supporter theory is difficult to apply to the European parties as it is almost impossible to find a median supporter in Europe. Election campaigns are mainly held nationally because there is no common European public with European media, thus making it very difficult for any party to distil the median preference from 28 countries. Moreover, it is questionable why parties should care for the median voter preference in the EU if they are only dependent on votes from their country.

The most suitable theory in order to examine the lacking political stance of EP groups is the national location theory. The theory is based upon the nation state centred paradigm in European integration theories. Both Liberal Institutionalism and Realism perceive the state as the crucial actor in European politics. The difference is that according to Realism states attempt to maximise their own power, while according to Liberal Institutionalism states cooperate in institutions in order to maximise their welfare (Marks, Wilson, & Ray, 2002). Applying this logic to GMOs, they are neither a means of coercion nor a matter of national security. Instead, they are an issue of the citizens' health and wellbeing and of the environment. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that if GMO policy can be explained by national interests, it will be liberal interests in welfare rather than realist interests in power.

In the EP, national location theory would predict that it is cleavages between nation-states, not between political or social groups, that form European politics. Simon Hix (2001) offers an explanation for when it should hold: As party groups in the EP control both the agenda and the allocation of offices to their members, normally there will be cohesion among party members, which means policy preference divisions will be salient. However, as national parties decide who gets into the parliament in the first place, national issues can become more important when any particular national interest is touched by a decision (Hix, 2001).

Hix, Noury and Roland (2005) employ the principal-agent theory to explain when MEPs act according to their national and when to their partisan identity. The authors classify both national parties and European party group leadership as principals. They remark that the fact that no-one can dissolve the European Parliament as it would be possible in a nation state with parliamentary democracy takes away an incentive to organize in parliamentary groups. Their explanation for the unexpected existence of party groups that are organized along cleavages or policy dimensions is that forming such groups reduces transaction costs for national parties that otherwise would have to find partners for ad-hoc coalitions for every decision (Hix, Noury, & Roland, 2005).

Monika Mühlböck (2012) views national parties as principals and MEPs as agents acting on their behalf. As control mechanism she sees the selection of candidates, instructions prior to parliamentary votes and reporting obligations for MEPs. As control comes, however, with some cost, parties will only bother to control their MEPs if they have either the benefit of influencing EU policy according to their will or to signal their stance towards their voters. Mühlböck argues that the strength of national parties' influence differs according to the structure of different national parties. Cohesion and control are strongest in centralized, hierarchical parties of unitary states, while they are weakest in decentralized parties like in Germany or Italy where regional party sections select candidates (Mühlböck, 2012).

Because most policies of the EU are technical and are brought into debate neither by national parties nor by national media, MEPs are mostly free to vote without running the risk of upsetting their party by causing punishment from the national electorate (Mühlböck, 2012). She finds that national location

theory only rarely holds, that is, if an issue is absolutely crucial for a national party. Genetically modified organisms might be a technical topic, but as we have seen, they spark worries among people and might thus be such an issue where not the group, but the voters through the national parties have the greatest influence on MEPs.

Applying the national location theory to the decision making process in the EP in general and to the parliamentary factions in particular, the following hypothesis can be derived: **The member states' national preferences rather than ideological cohesion determine national parties' stances on GMOs resulting in dissent within the European political groups.**

This does not necessarily mean that there is consensus among parties in the individual countries as it is possible that there is no specific national position, but a certain national debate that makes similar parties in different countries choose different stances on GM food. Among the theories introduced here, national location theory is therefore the one delivering the most clear-cut prediction on congruence or dissent in European political groups and is thus the theory most suitable for this research.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Indicators

In order to test the hypothesis, the election manifestos of the member parties of the ALDE, S&D, Greens/EFA, EPP, GUE/NGL and ECR in five EU member states for the last European election will be analysed.

According to Leonard Ray, election and party manifestoes can have three purposes (Ray, 2007). The first is that of a contract between voters and party that enshrines what the voters are entitled to expect from the party. This would mean that manifestoes are accurate about the party's real position as they would be penalized if they did not stick to it (Ray, 2007). The second potential purpose is that they are merely advertisement, not very accurate, but giving voters an idea about the party's preferences (Ray, 2007). The third possible purpose is that manifestoes state the party's basic political and philosophical convictions, thus serving as an important tool for the party itself to define its role (Ray, 2007).

In this thesis, election manifestos and, if they are not available, other official documents are used to determine a party's stance on GMOs because the major alternative, voting behaviour, may be constrained by coalition deals or other agreements with other parties, for example voting together with another party in order to get them vote with oneself on another issue. Therefore, election manifestos are better fit to measure party positions than voting behaviour. The advantage of the primary source of this research - the parties' manifestos for the European election 2014 - is that they have been written to explain the parties' central European goals to the electorate. Furthermore, one can suggest that they were created around the same point in time, and are thus based upon a similar level of information which makes them comparable. On the other hand, manifestos are not standardised, meaning that they contain very different information and have considerably different length which limits their comparability. Still, manifestos contain the most useful information for this research as their availability is quite high and the comparability is better than of other documents.

Nevertheless, other official documents will be used to complement the information whenever European election manifestos for 2014 are not available. Priority is given to earlier European election

manifestos and national election manifestos as they are most similar to the preferred source of information. To avoid lacking information, the political stance of some parties has to be filtered from other sources as well, such as party websites or official papers. This procedure bears great risks as the comparability of websites is low and they tend to change very quickly. Still, this cannot be avoided as too much information about the parties' view on GMOs might be missing otherwise. In order to enhance the scientific quality of this study, detailed information about the source and date of retrieval are included. Nonetheless, it has to be emphasised that this study is only a snap-shot of the current situation.

3.2 Sampling

Two political groups, the EFDD and the ENL, will be excluded from this research. There is not enough information about the ENL yet. It does not have a website and there is no members' list on the EP website (European Parliament, 2015 a). For the EFDD none of the aforementioned theories can apply as they probably do not have a real interest in participating in the EU legislation process. They have called the EP a "talking shop" (EFDD, 2015 b) and want to dismantle the EU (EFDD, 2015 b). Profound information - such as election manifestos or position papers - about the political view of the EFDD are generally not available. Hence information about their opinion about GMOs are missing as well.

For each of the remaining factions, the five member states with the highest number of MEP will be selected. They are able to form a parliamentary group's stance because they control the majority of votes. I have chosen not to look at the five same states for all groups as the political landscape of the EU is so heterogeneous that for example in ALDE, Dutch and Belgian politicians are strong and Germans are not, so it does not make sense to concentrate on a large member state of the EU, which is a small member of a parliamentary group. If we were interested in national party systems, examining parties from the same states in every faction would be better, but as we mostly care for the faction, this model seems to be best. Six national groups would be even better, as then even in ALDE we could observe an absolute majority. That would, however, lead to problems with the selection of national parties as in some factions there are several countries having the same number of representatives.

3.3 Sampling obstacles

Belgium and Spain could cause problems in the sampling process. As Spain is a rather populous country, it is represented in five of the six national groups. The S&D group is the only one wherein Spain is represented by only one party. It has two parties in GUE-NGL, two parties in the EPP and four parties in ALDE and Greens/EFA, each (ALDE Group, 2015 c; EPP Group, 2015; GUE/NGL, 2015 b; Greens/EFA, 2015 a). Of the thirteen Spanish parties represented in the European Parliament, only six are organized on a national level, the rest are regional parties. Strictly speaking, there are even more Spanish parties represented in the EP, but there are two election alliances that had own election manifestos and are therefore treated as parties in this thesis.

Spain is a special case because its party system is highly regionalized. About half of the Spanish regions are dominated by the big state-wide parties, the other half has deviating party systems, dominated by regional parties. This is most prevalent in Catalonia and the Basque country, but also exists in other parts of Spain (Wilson, 2009). There are party sections of national parties that are more autonomous in some provinces than in others. In most regions, it is a regional party governing in a coalition with one of the two larger parties so that there still is some congruence between national and regional level party systems, but not too much.

Another special case is Belgium which has a system with nine effective parties. The reason is that Belgium is divided into two major linguistic units, each with a complete European party system, plus regional nationalist parties for each unit (Thorlakson, 2005). The Belgian party system differs from the Spanish one in its congruence between levels: Spain has a national party system and regional parties that sometimes find their way into the national system, Belgium effectively has one party system in each linguistic unit and a double party system for the entire country made up of the same parties on the national as on the regional level.

The peculiarities of Belgium and Spain could be problematic because national location theory assumes national circumstances leading to a special national debate. In highly regionalized political systems, however, there might be no real national debate, but multiple regional ones. While it somewhat inhibits this research, it is on the other hand interesting because regionalized political systems would mirror the European political system if national location theory is accurate, albeit on a lower level.

Another problem is that, although the parties chosen represent the majority of European voters, EU decisions might still be entirely different from the stances found here if small member states not represented here form groups in the Council of the EU and block everything the larger countries want. Moreover, it could be possible that parties from particularly sceptical or non-sceptical member states accidentally are the largest members of a particular faction, giving the impression of cohesion where there is none.

3.4 Operationalisation

In order to answer the research question if there is cohesion among the EP groups regarding GMO policy, it will be examined whether and why parties are in favour or against GMO applications. In order to systematise the arguments used by the examined parties in their manifestos, the following coding was created. First, missing information (M) are included in the coding as some parties might not publish any position at all. Second, the code "Neutral" (N) is used if parties that for example advocate more research about genetic modification, but do not explicitly reject or favour the introduction of such products.

In the section about the politics of GMOs the different motives for people being for or against GMOs were already outlined. Starting with environmental arguments, those in favour claim that genetically modified crops can reduce pesticide and herbicide use. Those against fear a disruption of ecosystems and the destruction of the landscape with monocultures. On the health side, those in favour hope for more nutritious and possibly health-improving food. Those against fear that there might be unknown risks to human physical and genetic health. The third aspect concerns economics. Proponents of GMOs hope for better income for farmers, cheaper food and more economic growth, helping especially third-world countries. Opponents fear that large multinationals may outcompete small farmers, and make food unaffordable. Therefore, these three categories will be included in the coding. A fourth category will be unspecified as there might be reasons for or against GMOs not included in the first three categories. This might include religious or philosophical arguments, but also the electoral consideration that the population is against GMOs.

Code	Position	Reason
M	Missing information	Nothing found at all
N	Neutral	
F1	In Favour	environment
F2	In Favour	health
F3	In Favour	economy
F4	In Favour	other, not stated

A1	Against	environment
A2	Against	health
A3	Against	economy
A4	Against	other, not stated

The coding provides an overview of the arguments used in favour or against GMOs within the EP factions. A consent or dissent between the different national parties within the parliamentary groups of the EP can therefore easier be identified. If there is no congruence among parties in a political group, that would be an indicator that national location theory is accurate and national preferences rather than ideological cohesion determines a European party's position. If parties from one country share similar reasons for why they are for or against GMOs, that would hint to specific national debates and be even stronger evidence for national location theory. If no information can be found about a party's position concerning GMOs, this could be an indicator GMOs are not a salient topic to them. On the other hand, this could also indicate that the topic is sensitive and rather unpopular which makes it unattractive for parties to position themselves. As European citizens view GMOs quite sceptical (European Commission, 2010 a) this could be especially true for parties in favour of genetic modification. Congruence between party positions and possible national positions will be checked by comparing party statements with figures from the Eurobarometer regarding the biotechnology. This is a rather imprecise measure, but the only proxy for national positions that is easily available as it is not possible to include in-depth case study research on national debates and past GMO policies in the respective member states.

4. Analysis

In the following chapter, the parties and their manifestoes will be analyzed. The aforementioned coding will be written in brackets behind the description of each party's position. A table included in the Annex provides a general overview about all the parties' positions. First, the party positions will be outlined and afterwards all the positions will be put together and before evaluating if the distribution confirms national location theory. To check for congruence between national position and party position, a comparison to Eurobarometer poll figures will be made in case of dissent in the parliamentary group.

4.1 GUE/NGL

The first analyzed political group was the GUE/NGL. Its largest national delegation is the Spanish one with four parties. The Izquierda Plural (IP) consists of several parties but is here treated as one party in the coding because it appears as a single entity in the group (GUE/NGL, 2015 b). In the manifesto of its largest party, the Izquierda Unida (IU), a ban of GMO and biological patents is demanded in order to protect biodiversity and farmers' businesses (A1, A3) (IU, 2014). The other party in the IP that has an MEP is the Galician Anova-Nationalist Brotherhood (ANOVA). They call for a GMO ban, but without giving reasons, in their 2014 election manifesto (A4) (ANOVA, 2014). In the manifesto of Podemos, GMOs are not mentioned (N) (Podemos, 2014 a). There is, however, a press release by Podemos wherein they call for absolute compliance with the precautionary principle (A4) (Podemos, 2014 b).

The second largest national delegation in the GUE/NGL is the German one, consisting mainly of the party Die Linke (GUE/NGL, 2015 b). In its European election manifesto, the party calls for labels on GM food and feed and later the abolition of both. The reason given is that GMOs give too much power to multinational agrotechnology corporations (A3) (Linke, 2014).

The third national delegation is the Greek one with the Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás (SYRIZA) party (GUE/NGL, 2015 b). While there was no manifesto for the election found, there is a general party manifesto. In it, they present a GMO ban as one way among many to ensure healthy food, a good environment and profits for small farmers (A1, A2, A3) (SYRIZA, 2013).

The fourth national delegation is the French one, consisting of the Front de Gauche (FG) and the Union pour les Autre-Mer. While there is no information about the latter one, there is a briefing paper on agricultural policy by the former. They lament that the introduction of GMOs would give corporations too much power vis-a-vis states, thus enabling them to circumvent any legislation (A3, A4). They are therefore for a GMO ban (FG, 2014).

The fifth delegation is the Czech one, represented by the Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy (KSČM). While this party has a European election manifesto, it does not mention GMOs (KSČM, 2014). However, there is a report on the party's website about a seminar held by the party. This seminar was directed against GM food because of economic risks for small farmers, health risks and environmental hazards (A1, A2, A3) (KSČM, 2015).

Party	Member State	European Party	Position	Remarks
IU	Spain	PEL	A1, A3	
ANOVA	Spain		A4	
Podemos	Spain		A4	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
Linke	Germany	PEL	A3	
SYRIZA	Greece	PEL	A1, A2, A3	2014 European elections manifesto missing
FG	France	PEL	A3, A4	2014 European elections manifesto missing
PCR	France		M	2014 European elections manifesto missing
KSČM	Czech Republic	PEL	A1, A2, A3	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto

Key: M=no information; N=neutral; F1=in favour, environmental reasons; F2=in favour, health reasons; F3=in favour, economic reasons; F4= in favour, other or no reasons; A1=against, environmental reasons; A2=against, health reasons; A3=against, economic reasons; A4=against, other or no reasons

While in only three of the eight examined cases, the parties positioned themselves in their European election manifestoes, only in one case no position at all could be found. The seven other parties were clearly against GMOs. The fear from exploitative corporations was the objection given most often, being prevalent in Spain, Germany, Greece and Czech Republic. Environmental worries were uttered in Spain, Greece and Czech Republic. Health was only an issue in Greece and Czech Republic. Despite this strong cohesion which would suggest that national location theory does not explain party positions, the positions also seem to fit public perceptions of GMOs found in the 2010 Eurobarometer on Biotechnology. In Greece, 70 % of respondents said that GMOs were bad for their country's economy. In Spain, the figure is at 52 %, in France and Germany at 57 %. In Czech Republic, it is at 55 %. These figures are all rather high, but lose their explanatory power when one considers that they are more than 50 % in 19 of 27 member states (European Commission, 2010 a, p. 19). Thus, the countries mentioned here do not have particularly sceptical populations when it comes to the economic effects of GM crops. That the parties examined in the GUE/NGL are so strongly against GMOs seems

to be a result of their group affiliation, not their nationality. Thus, the hypothesis is not supported for the GUE/NGL.

4.2 S&D

The second analyzed political group was the S&D. Its largest national delegation is the Italian one. Most of the Italian MEPs belong to the Partito Democratico (PD). While there was no mention of GMOs in their election manifesto, there is a report on their website about the Expo Milan. In this report, innovation in genetics is described favourably and Minister Maurizio Martina, member of the PD, is quoted hailing genetic research as a way to maintain Italy's strong position in high-quality food-production (F3) (PD, 2015; PD, 2014). For the second party, Possibile, there was no European election manifesto either, but a party manifesto, which, however, does not mention any GMOs (M) (Possibile, no year). There is no other mention of GMOs in their publications (Possibile, 2015).

The second delegation is the German one, belonging to the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) (S&D, 2015). While the SPD's European election manifesto does not mention GM food and feed (SPD, 2014 a), their party programme says that consumers are entitled to GM-free food (SPD, 2007). They do not explicitly give reasons, but their demand is embedded in a paragraph with the message that food should be healthy, environmentally friendly and profitable for small farmers so that it is likely that they see these values threatened by genetic modification (A1, A2, A3) (SPD, 2007). Moreover, there is a decision of the SPD wherein the party calls for opposing the introduction of a certain GM maize on the ground that there is growing market for GM-free food (A3) (SPD, 2014 b).

The third delegation in the S&D is British, representing the Labour Party (Labour). Their European election manifesto makes no mention of GMOs. However, their policy document "Feeding the Nations" shows a stance on GMOs. The importance of following scientific knowledge is emphasized and a middle ground position is taken, stating that GM crops can improve British food production, including making it less environmentally damaging, but that public concerns have to be heard and that only with wide societal acceptance should GM crops be introduced. (N) (Labour, 2014; Labour, no year).

The fourth delegation is from Romania, representing the Partidul Social Democrat (PSD) (S&D, 2015). Their election manifesto was not available, the party manifesto is rather brief and does not mention GMOs (PSD, 2015 a; PSD, 2015 b). There was no other document found that mentions them, either (M).

The same is the case for the fifth national delegation, the Spanish one, representing the PSOE (S&D, 2015). Genetically modified crops are no topic in their election manifesto and there is no mention of GMOs on their website (M) (PSOE, 2015; PSOE, 2014).

Party	Member State	European Party	Position	Remarks
PD	Italy	PES	F3	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
Possibile	Italy		M	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
SPD	Germany	PES	A1, A2, A3	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
Labour	United Kingdom	PES	N	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
PSD	Romania	PES	M	2014 European elections manifesto missing

PSOE	Spain	PES	M	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
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Key: M=no information; N=neutral; F1=in favour, environmental reasons; F2=in favour, health reasons; F3=in favour, economic reasons; F4= in favour, other or no reasons; A1=against, environmental reasons; A2=against, health reasons; A3=against, economic reasons; A4=against, other or no reasons

Among the largest parties of the S&D faction, there is no coherent position regarding GMOs. For three of the six parties, no position could be found at all, the PD from Italy showed approval for economic reasons, the SPD from Germany showed opposition for all reasons included in the coding and Labour from Britain took a neutral stance. This suggests no cohesion among the majority of faction members. For Germany, the result is not surprising as in the aforementioned Eurobarometer the figures for worry of bad economic (57 %), health (74%) and environmental (64%) consequences of the genetically modified food are rather high (European Commission, 2010 a, pp. 19, 29-30). In the UK, home to the more neutral Labour party, figures are far lower with just 36 % worried of economic, 39 % of health and 45 % of environmental problems (European Commission, 2010 a, pp. 19, 29-30). Italy takes a middle position with 55 %, 63 % and 54 % while having a GMO-positive member party in the S&D. Thus, there is no cohesion within the group visible here, but the tendency for parties to have positions similar to the population of their country is also only very roughly to be seen when comparing Germany and the UK. The fact that so much data is missing makes interpretation very difficult.

4.3 Greens/EFA

The third group in the European Parliament is the Greens/EFA group. Its largest delegation is the German one with 13 MEPs from three parties (Greens/EFA, 2015 a). The largest are Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Grüne). In their European election manifesto, they condemn GMOs repeatedly, offering organic farming as an alternative. In their opinion, GMOs, are potentially unhealthy, endanger biodiversity, are disadvantageous for small farmers and make all farmers dependent on the corporations producing GM seeds (A1, A2, A3, A4) (Grüne, 2014 a, pp. 34-40, 100, 105) The green-conservative ÖDP calls for a GMO-ban in the EU, but does not give reasons in its election manifesto (A4) (ÖDP, 2014). The pirate party is also against GMOs. In their election manifesto, they warn that big corporations might become too powerful and that plants that are immune against certain vermins - even if not genetically modified - are in general able to disrupt ecosystems (A1, A3) (Piraten, 2014).

With six MEPs, France has the second largest Greens/EFA delegation (Greens/EFA, 2015 a). These MEPs belong to the Europe Écologie – Les Verts (EELV). In its election manifesto, the EELV speaks out against GMOs, giving the reason that the majority of Europeans refuses them (A4) (EELV, 2014).

The third national delegation is the British one, consisting of one Green party, the Green Party of England and Wales (GPEW), and two regionalist parties, the SNP and Plaid. In its European election manifesto, it positions itself against genetically modified food out of worry for biodiversity and against genetically modified animals hoping that that will help protect animals (A4) (GPEW, 2014 a, pp. 16, 19-20). In the SNP's European election manifesto, GMOs are not mentioned, likewise there is nothing in its national election manifesto (M) (SNP, 2014; SNP, 2015). There is, however, a 2004 entry on their website wherein they say that GMOs are dangerous to the environment and to the reputation of Scottish food (A1, A4) (SNP, 2014). The third party, Plaid, does not mention GMOs in their election manifesto, (M) but speaks out against GMOs on their website, stating that it would be undemocratic to introduce them (A4) (Plaid, 2014 a; Plaid, 2014 b).

The fourth delegation is the Spanish delegation with two parties, the Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds (ICV) and the Bloc Nacionalista Valencià (BNV), and one political group, the Esquerra Republicana

de Catalunya/ L'Esquerra pel Dret a Decidir (ERC/EDD), that campaigns together and is thus treated as a party for the sake of this thesis (Greens/EFA, 2015 a). While only the ICV is a green party, all of these parties are regionalist. The ERC/EDD is not against GMOs according to their election manifesto, but they campaign for labelling GM food as such (N) (ERC/EDD, 2014). Lacking a 2014 election manifesto, the green ICV is in favour of banning GMOs in their 2012 national election manifesto, giving the reason that scientists are not independent, but funded by seed corporations (A4) (ICV, 2012). The BNV is in favour of banning GMOs in their election manifesto without giving reasons (A4) (BNV, 2014, p. 6).

The fifth delegation is from Sweden and all its members belong to the Miljöpartiet de Gröna (MP), a green party. Its European election manifesto does mention neither agriculture nor GM food (MP, 2014). In its party manifesto, GMOs are described as associated with risks without stating what these risks are (A4) (MP, no year, p. 16).

Party	Member State	European Party	Position	Remarks
Grüne	Germany	EGP	A1, A2, A3, A4	
ÖDP	Germany		A4	
Piraten	Germany	PPEU	A1, A3	
EELV	France	EGP	A4	
GPEW	United Kingdom	EGP	A1, A2, A3, A4	
SNP	United Kingdom	EFA	A1, A4	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
Plaid	United Kingdom	EFA	A4	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
BNV	Spain	EFA	A4	
ICV	Spain	EGP	A4	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
ERC/EDD	Spain	EFA	N	
MP	Sweden	EGP	A4	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto

Key: M=no information; N=neutral; F1=in favour, environmental reasons; F2=in favour, health reasons; F3=in favour, economic reasons; F4= in favour, other or no reasons; A1=against, environmental reasons; A2=against, health reasons; A3=against, economic reasons; A4=against, other or no reasons

The position of the Greens/EFA group towards genetically modified food is very clear disapproval. Only the ERC/EDD from Spain takes a neutral position. There is a marked difference between the regionalist EFA parties and the green parties concerning saliency. Half of the EFA parties do not have the topic in their manifesto, but four of five green parties do. Specific objections to GMOs are brought forward by some, but not all parties from Germany and the UK, while parties from Spain, France and Sweden just stated their general opposition. Interestingly, it is not only green parties, but also a regionalist and a pirate party that express specific worries over genetic modification. It is not necessary to check poll figures from the biotechnology Eurobarometer in this faction as GMO disapproval does obviously not depend on nationality here. Green parties are more pronounced in their opposition than regionalists, but overall this group has high cohesion, refuting the hypothesis.

4.4 ALDE

The fourth group in the European Parliament, the ALDE, has the Spanish one, representing four parties, as its largest delegation (ALDE Group, 2015 c). The first party is the Unión Progreso y

Democracia (UPyD) that mentions GMOs in its European election manifesto. The UPyD calls for more research in the field of GMOs and debate based upon scientific evidence (N) (UPyD, 2014, pp. 37-38). The second party is called Ciudadanos - Partido de la Ciudadanía and mentions GMOs neither in their electoral manifesto nor on their website (M) (Ciudadanos, 2014; Ciudadanos, 2015). The Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea (EAJ) is a Basque nationalist party and the third Spanish party in the ALDE. They demand the prohibition of GMOs in their election manifesto, but do not give reasons for their stance (A4). On their website, GMOs play no role (EAJ, 2014; EAJ, 2015). The Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (CDC) is the fourth Spanish party. There is no election programme available from them and their website does not mention GMOs, either (M) (CDC, 2015).

The French delegation is the second largest in the ALDE and it represents two parties. The first is the Mouvement Démocratique (MoDem), the other party is called Union des Démocrates et Indépendants (UDI). For the European elections, they have utilized a manifesto together. While they do not state that they are against GMOs, they demand the right for every EU member state to ban them. The parties do not give a reason for that in their manifesto (A4) (UDI; MoDem, 2014, p. 11). On their websites and their joint campaign website, there are no further arguments, either (MoDem, 2015 ; MoDem, 2014; UDI, 2015; UDI; MoDem, 2015).

Of equal size to the French delegation is the Dutch one, made up of two parties. The first party, the Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD), does not mention GM products in their election manifesto (VVD, 2014). There is, however, a communiqué on the party's website that embraces the introduction of GMOs. They say that banning them is hostile to innovation and will harm the economy (F3, F4) (VVD, 2015). The other party, Democraten 66 (D66), takes the opposite stance. While they do not mention GM food or feed in their election manifesto (D66, 2014), a post on their website says that TTIP must not lead to the introduction of GMOs into the EU, without giving reasons (A4) (D66, 2015).

The fourth largest delegation is the Belgian one. The first Belgian ALDE-party is the Mouvement Réformateur (MR). In their election manifesto, they do not mention GMOs (MR, 2014 a). On their website, they welcome the regulation that allows individual states to ban GMOs without explaining their own point of view (A4) (MR, 2014 b; MR, 2015). The second party are the Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (Open VLD) who do not mention GMOs in their manifesto *or* on their website, either (M) (Open VLD, 2014; Open VLD, 2015).

The fifth delegation is from Czech Republic, representing the Akce Nespokojených Občanů 2011 (ANO 2011). In their election manifesto and on their website, GMOs do not play a role (M) (ANO 2011, 2014; ANO 2011, 2015).

Party	Member State	European Party	Position	Remarks
UPyD	Spain		N	
Ciudadanos	Spain		M	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
EAJ-PNV	Spain	EDP	A4	
CDC	Spain	ALDE	M	2014 European elections manifesto missing
MoDem/UDI	France	EDP	A4	
VVD	Netherlands	ALDE	F3, F4	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
D66	Netherlands	ALDE	A4	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto

MR	Belgium	ALDE	A4	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
Open VLD	Belgium	ALDE	M	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
ANO 2011	Czech Republic	ALDE	M	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto

Key: *M=no information; N=neutral; F1=in favour, environmental reasons; F2=in favour, health reasons; F3=in favour, economic reasons; F4= in favour, other or no reasons; A1=against, environmental reasons; A2=against, health reasons; A3=against, economic reasons; A4=against, other or no reasons*

The ALDE group shows a heterogenous picture. What stands out is the fact that six out of ten parties examined here did not include anything about GMOs in their manifestoes and that in four cases no information at all could be found. It seems that genetic modification is not a salient topic to many liberal parties. Four out of the six parties that stated their opinions are against the agricultural use of GMOs without giving any reasons, while the fifth, the VVD from the Netherlands, is in favour for economic reasons, and the sixth, the Spanish UPyD, is neutral. There is no clear national trend. One Spanish party is neutral, one is against. One Dutch party is in favour, one is against. One Belgian party is against, for one there is no information available. Among the non-positioning, neutrality and weak opposition, the Dutch VVD stands out in its elaborated support for GMOs. The figures for worries of negative consequences of GM crops for the economy, health and environment in the Netherlands are 44 %, 37 % and 63 % (European Commission, 2010 a, pp. 19, 29-30). In Spain they are 29 %, 47 % and 33 %, so largely lower than in the Netherlands, and yet, there was no Spanish ALDE party being in favour of GMOs. Overall, the ALDE group shows neither strong salience on the issue nor strong cohesion, but there are also no clear national trends.

4.5 EPP

The largest national delegation in the EPP group is the German one. It consists of MEPs from two parties. The first is the Christlich-Demokratische Union (CDU). In their European election manifesto, they position themselves in favour of GMO research for agricultural applications as that might help to improve health, environment and nutrition and will keep breeders competitive (F1, F2, F3). They are in favour of EU member states having the right to ban or allow GM crops (CDU, 2014, p. 46). The second party, the regionalist Christlich-Soziale Union (CSU), takes the opposite stance: In their election manifesto, they say that they want the right for states and regions to ban GMOs so that they can do so in Bavaria (CSU, 2014 a, p. 11). While they do not give reasons there, they do so on their website in official press releases and statements from their general secretary, saying that people are against it and that their voices have to be heard and that there might be risks, which are not explained (A4) (CSU, 2014 b; CSU, 2014 c).

The Polish national delegation is the second largest in the EPP. Its MEPs come from the larger Platforma Obywatelska (PO) and the smaller Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL). For the PO, there is no European manifesto available, but in their 2011 national election manifesto they state that they are in favour of GMO-free zones to ensure that GM seeds do not spread uncontrollably (A1) (PO, 2011). The PSL's manifesto is very brief and does not include anything about GMOs, either (PSL, 2014). Neither does their website (M) (PSL, 2015).

The third largest delegation is from France. Aside from one independent member, all MEPs belong to Les Républicains (RP/UMP). Due to the change of the name from UMP to RP, all older websites have

been deleted, including the campaigning website for the 2014 elections, so that there is no manifesto available anymore. Their website does not state anything, either (M) (LR, 2015).

The Spanish delegation is the fourth one, containing MEPs from the Partido Popular (PP) and the regionalist Unió Democràtica de Catalunya (UDC). The PP's election manifesto does not mention GMO policy, and there are no other documents available that do so, either (M) (PP, 2011; PP, 2014 b; PP, 2014 a). For the UDC, the manifesto and information about GMO policy are not available (M).

The fifth is the Italian delegation. The largest party is Forza Italia for which no manifesto was been found and that has almost no political content on its website (M) (Forza Italia, 2015 a; Forza Italia, 2015 b). The second party and the third party, Nuovo Centrodestra (NCD) and Unione di Centro (UdC) campaigned for the elections together, but their manifesto says nothing about GM food or crops (NCD-UdC, 2014). On the NCD website, there is press release welcoming the new possibility of member states to decide whether to ban GMOs (A4) (NCD, 2014). The smallest party is the regionalist Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP). They did not have their own election manifesto and their website says nothing about GMO policy (M) (SVP, 2014; SVP, 2015).

Party	Member State	European Party	Position	Remarks
CDU	Germany	EPP	F1, F2, F3	
CSU	Germany	EPP	A4	
PO	Poland	EPP	A1	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
PSL	Poland	EPP	M	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
LR/UMP	France	EPP	M	2014 European elections manifesto missing
PP	Spain	EPP	M	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
UDC	Spain	EPP	M	2014 European elections manifesto missing
Forza Italia	Italy	EPP	M	2014 European elections manifesto missing
NCD-UdC	Italy	EPP	A4	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
SVP	Italy	EPP	M	2014 European elections manifesto missing

Key: M=no information; N=neutral; F1=in favour, environmental reasons; F2=in favour, health reasons; F3=in favour, economic reasons; F4= in favour, other or no reasons; A1=against, environmental reasons; A2=against, health reasons; A3=against, economic reasons; A4=against, other or no reasons

In the EPP group, only the parties from Germany mentioned GMOs in their European election manifestoes. Among the examined parties, only for four out of ten, a position could be found. The Polish PO warns that GMOs might have negative consequences for the economy, a view that 57 % of Poles asked in the Eurobarometer shared (European Commission, 2010 a, p. 19). The two other parties being against GMOs did not give reasons. In their clear and substantiated support for GM food, the German CDU is an outlier because - as was already mentioned - Germans are generally rather sceptic about the introduction of genetically modified crops, because it is the only supportive party found

among those examined in this faction and because it seems to place a higher emphasis on the topic than other parties by mentioning it in their manifesto and giving reasons for their disapproval. Due to the lack of information, it is very difficult to say anything about cohesion and congruence on GMO policy in the EPP group. It is only clear that for the parties examined here GMOs are generally not a salient topic.

4.6 ECR

The ECR is the sixth group analyzed here. Its largest delegation is from the UK and mainly consist of members of the Conservative Party (Conservatives). In their European election manifesto, they praise themselves for having fought for GMOs so that British agriculture be more competitive, products cheaper and British biotechnology fostered (F3, F4) (Conservatives, 2014, pp. 56-58). The British party represented in the ECR is the regionalist Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). In their manifesto and on their website, they make no mention of GMOs (M) (UUP, 2014; UUP, 2015).

The second largest delegation is the Polish one. The larger of two parties is Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS). They not only have a European election manifesto, but also a specialized agriculture manifesto. In their European manifesto, they claim that the application of genetic modification in agriculture might lead to a bad reputation of Polish products (A3) (PiS, 2014 a, pp. 104-105). In their agriculture manifesto they warn that Poland's asset of high biodiversity may be endangered by genetic modification. They want to ban GM crops in the entire EU. People should be informed about the risks of GM crops to health, environment and economy, although PiS does not clearly state what these risks are (A1, A2, A3) (PiS, 2014 b, pp. 35, 38, 43, 65).

The third delegation, the German one, consists of MEPs from two parties, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and the Familienpartei Deutschlands (Familie). The AfD has been split in July 2015 (Die Zeit, 2015), but that does not inhibit this research as the decision about GMOs and the last election happened before. In their manifesto for the European election and on their website, the AfD states that they do not want GM crops introduced (A4) (AfD, 2014, p. 21; AfD, 2015). The Familie is against GMOs because they fear that biodiversity might be threatened, as they say in their election manifesto (A1) (Familie, 2014, pp. 9-10).

The only party in the fourth, the Danish delegation, is the Dansk Folkeparti (DF). A European election programme manifesto was not available, but in their party manifesto they say that GMOs are not yet controllable and are therefore in favour of allowing member states to ban them (A4) (DF, 2009, pp. 84, 97, 126).

The fifth delegation is the Belgian one with the Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA). In their manifesto for the European elections, they say that genetic modification can help to increase agricultural productivity and that freedom of choice should be given under safety conditionality (F3, F4) (NV-A, 2014, p. 21).

Party	Member State	European Party	Position	Remarks
Conservatives	United Kingdom	AECR	F3, F4	
UUP	United Kingdom	AECR	M	Nothing in 2014 European elections manifesto
PiS	Poland	AECR	A1, A2, A3	
AfD	Germany		A4	
Familie	Germany	ECP	A1	
DF	Denmark		A4	

Key: M=no information; N=neutral; F1=in favour, environmental reasons; F2=in favour, health reasons; F3=in favour, economic reasons; F4= in favour, other or no reasons; A1=against, environmental reasons; A2=against, health reasons; A3=against, economic reasons; A4=against, other or no reasons

In the ECR group, GMOs are an issue. All but one party examined here have stated an opinion about GMOs in their European election manifestoes. Two parties are in favour of genetically modified food, four are against. Those in favour do this mainly for economic reasons, emphasizing the importance of being competitive both in agriculture in particular and in technologically advanced sectors in general. In the UK, 36 % fear negative economic consequences of GMOs while 42 % hope for positive ones. Also, worries for health are not too high at 39 % versus 33 % thinking that GMOs are safe. Environmental concerns are higher at 45 % to 25 % (European Commission, 2010 a, pp. 19, 29-30). In Belgium, figures are just slightly lower with 34 % expecting positive economic consequences, 31 % expecting health safety and 28 % expecting no negative consequences for the environment (European Commission, 2010 a, pp. 19, 29-30). In Poland, were the party PiS expects economic, health-related and environmental dangers from GMOs, the approval figures are 20 % for the economy, 22 % for health and 25 % for the environment, while the disapproval figures are 57 %, 60 % and 48 % (European Commission, 2010 a, pp. 19, 29-30). The two German parties are, as expected in such a sceptical country, against GMOs. Denmark, home to the GMO-opposed DF is an interesting case as the expectation of economic benefits of GMO introduction is the highest in the EU at 48 %, in the case of the perception of health and environmental consequences, the country is close to the EU-27 average (European Commission, 2010 a, pp. 19, 29-30). To sum up, the ECR places some salience on the issue of genetic modification as highlighted by the fact that all but one took a stance in their European election manifestoes, but there is no congruence. While the strong scepticism in Germany and Poland is reflected by the position of their parties in the ECR and the lower scepticism by pro-GMO parties in the UK and Belgium. The DF from Denmark is an outlier as a sceptical party in a not so sceptical country. Thus, in the ECR the predictions of national location theory are partly realised.

4.7 Result

The result is mixed. There are two groups with congruence: The GUE/NGL is opposed to GMOs in one accord, mostly for fear of too strong corporations. The second group is the Greens/EFA group which shows the interesting phenomenon of strong, congruent and well-founded opposition in its Green half and weaker and less well-argued opposition among the regionalist EFA parties examined here. This congruence is opposed to the hypothesis that the member states' positions, as approximated here by poll figures, determine the positions of parties. There is something that unites stances in contradiction to the various opinions shown in the Eurobarometer polls. The picture looks different for the other groups. They show no congruence and varying interest in the topic. It should be noticed that all but one party in Germany were, often rather strongly, opposed to GMOs, aligning with the high scepticism found in the polls (European Commission, 2010 a). The ECR also shows opposition towards and a rather high salience of GMOs. The exception there are the pro-GMO conservatives. For the ALDE, low salience of the issue and a lot of dissent are the defining features. The hypothesis is somewhat supported by the fact that parties from the less sceptical countries Spain and Netherlands were also less sceptical about GMOs in the ALDE group, but the low level of salience and the contradictions between the two Dutch parties are problematic. The most problematic cases are the two largest factions. Both suffer from a lack of data that shows a low salience of the issue. In neither of

them, congruence exists, and there is a trend that German parties tend to be sceptic towards GMOs, as the German public is.

In the UK and the Netherlands, both having low levels of scepticism, levels of opposition to genetic modification were low, no matter in what EP group. In Germany with its high level of scepticism, opposition was high. This corroborates the hypothesis. In Italy, Spain and France, the issue seems less important, albeit still viewed with suspicion. In general, there seems to be a climate more or less hostile to GM food. Among the parties examined here, opponents outnumbered proponents by far, even the neutral ones were in favour of the national right to decide and many of the opponents did not even state reasons for their opposition in their election manifestoes, as if it was the default position to be against GMOs. To sum up: National location theory can partly explain party positions in the case of Germany, Britain and the Netherlands. Of the groups examined here, ALDE and ECR showed no congruence and position patterns largely followed nationality. That trend was weaker in S&D and EPP, while GUE-NGL and Greens/EFA showed strong cohesion.

5. Conclusion

In this thesis, the attitude of European parliamentary groups and their national member parties towards GMOs was examined. The question was if there is congruence of programmatic stances towards GMOs among member parties of the groups in the EP. National location theory suggests that such congruence should not exist as MEPs have to answer to a national rather than a European electorate and should therefore represent the peculiarities of their country rather than the ideology of their EP faction. Thus, the hypothesis was that the political groups will show dissent and that party positions follow national positions. In order to test the hypothesis, the member parties in the five largest national delegations from six parliamentary groups were examined on the basis of their 2014 European election manifestoes or, if these were not available or did not mention the issue, other party documents. When there was dissent, a comparison was drawn between party statements and poll figures from the Eurobarometer as a proxy for member states' positions. National location theory is not very strong in its prediction power. It largely predicts correctly the positions of German, Dutch and British parties, but less so of others. The GUE/NGL and even more Greens/EFA group behaved exactly opposite to the prediction made in the hypothesis and had high levels of cohesion and congruence. ALDE and ECR were more in line with the hypothesis. A major weakness of the analysis was the lack of data for the EPP group and the S&D. Generally, these groups did not have high levels of cohesion, but national location theory was not a good predictor, either. Had there been more data, the result would have been much clearer.

In the future, additional research is necessary. First, the number of cases was quite limited. Although the majority of MEPs in all but one faction was covered, the rest are still from so many countries that their governments could, if united, block any undesired policy on GMO regulation. Moreover, the inclusion of all member parties of the groups would also make it possible to truly show if all parties from a specific EU member state had a trend to a common position. Thus, the hypothesis could be tested far more accurately. Second, the polls were only a very rough proxy for national positions. National discourses, legislation and past decisions not only in the EP, but also in other European institutions have to be researched in order to truly understand national positions. Third, the causes for the cohesion in the GUE/NGL and the Greens/EFA group have to be further explained. It is not yet clear what mechanism separates these parties from ALDE and ECR. Fourth, voting behaviour of the members of the European Parliament has to be examined to see what positions MEPs took while the current legal situation came about.

To sum up, this thesis was only a first step into the research of party and EP group cohesion regarding GMO policy and has to be complemented by more research, but it found a first trend that national location theory predicts the behaviour of German, Dutch and British parties in this case and in the ALDE and ECR in particular, but less in other groups.

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7. List of Abbreviations

AfD	Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany)
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
ANO 2011	Akce nespokojených občanů 2011 (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens 2011)
BNV	Bloc Nacionalista Valencià (Valencian Nationalist Bloc)
CDC	Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (Democratic Convergence of Catalonia)
Ciudadanos	Ciudadanos – Partido de la Ciudadanía (Citizens - Party of the Citizenry)
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (Christian Social Union in Bavaria)
D66	Democraten 66 (Democrats 66)
DF	Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party)
EAJ	Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea (Basque Nationalist Party)
ECC	European Economic Community
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EDD	L'Esquerra pel Dret a Decidir (The Left for the Right to Decide)

EELV	Europe Écologie – Les Verts (Europe Ecology – The Greens)
EFA	European Free Alliance
EFDD	Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy
EGP	European Green Party
ENL	Europe of Nations and Freedom
EPP	European People's Party
ERC	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia)
Familie	Familien-Partei Deutschlands (Family Party of Germany)
FG	Front de Gauche (Left Front)
GAL-TAN	Green, Alternative, Libertarian - Traditional, Authoritarian, Nationalist
GM	Genetically modified
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
GPEW	Green Party of England and Wales
Greens/EFA	The Greens - European Free Alliance
Grüne	Bündnis 90 - Die Grünen (Alliance 90 - The Greens)
GUE/NGL	Groupe Confédéral de la Gauche Unitaire Européenne - Nordic Green Left (Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left)
ICV	Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds (Initiative for Catalonia Greens)
Ind.	Independent
IP	La Izquierda Plural (The Plural Left)
IU	Izquierda Unida (United Left)
KSČM	Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia)
Labour	Labour Party
Linke	Die Linke (The Left)
LR	Les Républicains (The Republicans)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MoDem	Mouvement démocratique (Democratic Movement)
MP	Miljöpartiet de Gröna (Environment Party - The Greens)
MR	Mouvement Réformateur (Reformist Movement)
NCD-UdC	Nuovocentrodestra-Unione di Centro (New Centre Right-Union of the Centre)
N-VA	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (New Flemish Alliance)
ÖDP	Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei (Ecological Democratic Party)
PCR	Parti Communiste Réunionnais (Communist Party of Réunion)
PD	Partido Democratico (Democratic Party)
PES	Party of European Socialists
Piraten	Piratenpartei Deutschland (Pirate Party Germany)
PiS	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice)
Plaid	Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales
PO	Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform)

PP	Partido Popular (People's Party)
PR	Prawica Rzeczypospolitej (Right Wing of the Republic)
PSD	Partidul Social Democrat (Social Democratic Party)
PSL	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People's Party)
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)
S&D	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
SNP	Scottish National Party
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SVP	Südtiroler Volkspartei (South Tyrolean People's Party)
SYRIZA	Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás (Coalition of the Radical Left)
Tories	Conservative and Unionist Party
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UDC	Unió Democràtica de Catalunya (Democratic Union of Catalonia)
UDI	Union des démocrates et indépendants (Union of Democrats and Independents)
UMP	Union pour un mouvement populaire
UPyD	Unión Progreso y Democracia (Union, Progress and Democracy)
US	United States
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
VLD	Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats)
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)
WTO	World Trade Organization