



Faculté des sciences économiques, sociales, politiques et de communication (ESPO)

To what extent do far-right MEPs, exemplified by the German AfD and Austrian FPÖ, influence the policies and dynamics of the European Parliament

Lisa Deprez

Master 120 en études européennes
LEUSL2001 Séminaire mémoire - 2024-2025

Professeur- Denis Duez

02 juin 2025

Table of content

1. Introduction	2
1.1. Context and relevance.....	2
1.2. Hypotheses.....	3
1.3. Plan.....	4
1.4. Methodology	5
2. Contextualization	6
2.1. The far-right.....	6
2.2. The European Parliament.....	9
3. Typologies of MEP behaviour and parliamentary Roles	14
3.1. The animator	15
3.2. The specialist	15
3.3. The intermediary	16
3.4. The dissenter	16
3.5. The amateur	17
4. Identification of the actors	18
4.1. The AfD: a rapid surge to the top.....	18
4.2 The FPÖ: the normalization of a controversial party	20
4.3. Comparing the AFD and the FPÖ: two paths to far-right influence	22
4.4. Biography of the MEPs	23
5. Establishing a Comparative Baseline	28
6. Work of the Actors: what do they do?	31
6.1. Parliamentary tools analysed and choice of topic	31
6.2. Analysis of Christine Anderson’s parliamentary work	33
6.3. Analysis of Maximilian Krah’s parliamentary work	44
6.4. Analysis of Harald Vilimsky’s parliamentary work	56
6.5. Analysis of Georg Mayer’s parliamentary work	66
7. Far-right influence in the European Parliament	75
7.1. Patterns of Engagement and Tool Usage	75
7.2. Limits to Influence: Institutional and Political Factors	79
7.3. Symbolic Visibility and Strategic Dissent	79
8. Conclusion	80
9. Bibliography	83
10. Declaration on the use of generative artificial intelligence	91
11. Annexe	91

1. Introduction

1.1. Context and relevance

Over the past three decades, far-right parties have known a strong reemergence in Europe. Once considered marginal actors in European politics, far-right parties have now become key players in mainstream politics (Aktas, 2024). Their rhetoric, often centred around national sovereignty, Euroscepticism and anti-immigration policies (Mudde, 2019), has resonated with an increasing share of the electorate. This shift is reflected in national elections, where far-right parties have either gained government positions or formed strong opposition forces (Green, 2024). Even in countries where they remain in the opposition, their growing electoral strength has pressured mainstream parties to shift their policies to the right to avoid losing voters (Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2020), proving how influential these parties have become everywhere.

At the European level, far-right parties have for the most part performed even better than at the national level (Hwang, 2025, p. 2). As a result, the European Parliament has never been more right leaning than it is today, a shift that is bound to have significant consequences for the EU as a whole.

Because of their sheer numbers, far-right MEPs now have the power to be heard in the European Parliament and can try to actively influence its dynamics and policymaking. But how do they exert that newly gained influence? What do far-right MEPs do on a daily basis? In what Committee are they active, what roles do they occupy in the EP? Those questions will guide this work, and will all serve to answer the following research question:

To what extent do far-right MEPs, exemplified by the German AfD and Austrian FPÖ, influence the policies and dynamics of the European Parliament?"

As is indicated in the research question, this study takes a comparative approach of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ). What makes this comparison interesting is that both parties belong to the far-right spectrum but have distinct historical trajectories linked with their countries' past, and differing levels of mainstream acceptance in their respective populations.

Indeed, while it has gained popularity, the AfD remains controversial: it was recently subjected to an investigation of the German Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) for being a "suspicious case" because of substantial evidence of unconstitutional behaviour (Pley, 2022) and the revelation of their plan for "re-migration", which would include deporting non-assimilated German citizens, gave rise to demonstrations on a scale not seen since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The FPÖ, however, has managed to integrate itself into Austria's political mainstream: they have been part of two government coalitions and are the biggest political force in the country at present, although they didn't manage to integrate a coalition after the 2025 elections (Regierungsbildung in Österreich, 2025). While the party has faced public opposition and protest - especially during coalition negotiations earlier this year - the scale of societal mobilization in Austria has not, as of now, matched the coordinated, multi-city protests seen in Germany against the AfD. (NEWS WIRES, 2025).

Despite these differences, both parties have consistently secured seats in the EP, raising questions about their role in shaping EU policy. Understanding these variations in political legitimacy, strategy, and behaviour is key to assessing how far-right MEPs operate within the EP.

1.2. Hypotheses

Building on preliminary research, this study hypothesizes that far-right MEPs have a paradoxical influence within the European Parliament - a dynamic I refer to as "influence through disruption".

They undoubtedly face challenges that limit their capacity to exert influence. A key obstacle is their limited coalition-building capacity: they are isolated by traditional parties due to the informal but widely observed rule of the "cordon sanitaire", which dictates that mainstream parties should refuse to cooperate with the far-right. (Ripoll Servent, 2019). A second problem is the lack of internal cohesion which often plagues the European far-right at the European level. This disunity is a logical consequence of their nationalist ideology, which tend to prioritize national preference and make it therefore difficult for them to share the same opinions and to work together cohesively (Wax, 2024).

Despite these limitations, the growing number of far-right MEPs make them a force that cannot be ignored. If they strategically use parliamentary tools to their advantage, they may now shape the agenda setting and force mainstream parties to engage with their narratives and policy priorities. This shift in power raises critical question about how they wield their influence, which is the key focus of this study.

A common assumption is that, rather than directly shaping legislation, far-right MEPs are expected to prioritize opposition over substantive policymaking. Their electoral success is largely built on Euroscepticism, and to maintain credibility with their voter base, they would rather attack the EU's legitimacy than propose constructive alternatives. While these tendencies have been confirmed for the 2004-2013 legislatures (Behm & Brack, 2019, p. 1076), such assumptions no longer reflect reality,

with Eurosceptic MEPs now taking active part in the works of the European Parliament (Brack & Marié, 2024).

The far-right now has the numbers to engage in more disruptive tactics, particularly through strategic coalition formation. While their ideological divisions may prevent them from acting as a unified bloc, they may coordinate to obstruct parliamentary work by voting against key proposals, forcing compromises or even leading to the withdrawals of propositions that don't align with their priorities. This could result in an indirect influence: MEPs from other parties know that the far-right is strong, and they might draft their policy proposals in a way to ensure their support and votes. This contributes to a gradual rightward shift in EP politics, since traditionally centre-right or liberal parties may adapt their behaviour to the far-right (Müller, 2024).

But beside criticism and votes, the growing presence of far-right MEPs may embolden them to more actively engage within the EP and to propose new legislations. A key factor determining their level of influence in this regard is their institutional status within the EP. MEPs well integrated to a political groups and Committees, or MEPs who hold special roles such as rapporteurs, will probably have more power than those remain non-attached.

Ultimately, the central hypothesis of this study challenges the longstanding assumption that far-right MEPs are passive actors in the EP. Instead, this research hypothesizes that they are actively reshaping European Parliamentary policies albeit in different ways depending on their level of institutional integration and political credibility. This paper will explore both the difference between the AfD, a party more likely to be disruptive and create scandals, and the FPÖ, a longstanding political party in its native Austria, more likely to behave like a traditional party, but also the differences between the individual MEPs, who all have their distinct histories that shape the way they act in the EP beyond their party affiliation alone.

1.3. Plan

In order to address the above-mentioned research question and hypotheses, this master thesis will be divided into different sections:

The first section will establish a theoretical framework by examining Navarro's typology of MEPs, which will help classify the MEPs of this study.

The second section will provide context regarding two key concepts essential to addressing the research question. The first key concept examined in that section will be the far-right: it will establish a short history of the far-right and present its definition and characteristics. Next, the dynamics of

the European parliaments will be brought to light, first establishing its composition and formal decision-making process, then exploring two major sub-groupings within it: the Committees and the political groups. While a third type of sub-grouping also exists, namely the delegations, those will not be extensively analysed as they deal with non-EU states and entities. In this capacity, the work done within delegations do not influence EU-policy making per say and therefore fall outside the scope of this thesis.

A third section will then focus on identifying the key actors involved in this study, as understanding their political backgrounds is crucial to contextualizing their parliamentary behaviour. A first part of this section will be dedicated to the two political parties investigated in the present work, namely the AfD and the FPÖ, in which the historical construction and the current ideology of both parties will be analysed and compared. Then a second section will be dedicated to the four selected MEPs and to their respective biographies.

After laying the groundworks in the three first section, the fourth section will get at the heart of the matter and be dedicated to the parliamentary work of the four chosen MEPs. This section will be dedicated to a thorough observation of their daily work, one after the other: what Committee do they belong to and what are their involvement in them? What do they say in plenary sessions? What type of work do they produce – or do not produce – in their daily work in the EP?

A last section will be dedicated to the impact of said MEPs' work on the European parliament. This will be an attempt to answer the quantitative aspect of the research question, which seeks to investigate exactly how much the work of far-right MEP influence the policy making of the EP. Is their influence substantial enough now to change the trajectory of the European parliament collectively?

Finally, the conclusion will synthesize the key findings of this study, and try to answer the research question, that is to evaluate how far-right MEPs influence decision-making in the European Parliament. It will reflect on the broader implications of their role within EU institutions and assess whether their increasing presence is reshaping parliamentary dynamics.

1.4. Methodology

This research will employ a qualitative approach, combining discourse analysis, empirical observations and a literature review to assess the influence of far-right MEPs in the European parliament. This multifaceted approach will ensure a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how these actors operate within the EP.

Beyond the theoretical framework, which will consist of a classic literature review of existing academic research on the far-right, the European parliament and the work of MEPs, a key part of this study will involve analysing the discourse of the selected MEPs. Attention will be drawn to different types of tools available to them, showing what use they make of each of them. All of these tools are direct discourse from each MEP, which allow for the identification of recurring themes, ideological strategies, and positioning.

Official records from the European Parliament will serve as the primary data source, and the websites “Parltrack” and “HowTheyVote”, which are based on official EP sources themselves, will be used to analyse the MEP’s amendments and votes respectively. Examining these sources will help assess whether the selected MEPs actively participate in the policymaking process or remain passive observers.

2. Contextualization

A thorough analysis of far-right MEPs in the European Parliament requires a strong contextual foundation to understand their behaviour, influence, and positioning within the institution. This section will outline the key theoretical aspects necessary to address the research question, focusing on three main components: the far-right, the European Parliament and the Members of the European Parliament.

2.1. The far-right

2.1.1. Historical overview

Understanding far-right movements requires first clarifying the left/right political divide. Originating during the French Revolution, this distinction initially reflected support for the monarchy (right) versus reformers (left). Over time, it evolved from a simple opposition to a broader ideological split: in the 19th and 20th centuries, right-wing politics aligned with free-market liberalism, while the left favoured state intervention. Today, the divide is largely socio-cultural, with the right emphasising nationalism and tradition, and the left promoting internationalism and progressive values (Le Bohec & Le Digol, 2012; Mudde, 2019).

Within the broader political spectrum, the far-right distinguishes itself from the mainstream right by rejecting not only leftist principles, but also key principles of liberal democracy (Mudde, 2019, p.7). Fabry and Portal (2022, pp. 51-53) consider far-right movements as nostalgic reactionaries, who want to go back to an idealized past, appealing to the people who used to belong to a privileged class but

now feel left behind, considering that their privilege was transferred to minorities. Mudde (2019, p. 6) further differentiates the far-right from the traditional right by emphasizing its anti-system stance.

The historical development of the far-right can be understood through Mudde's four-wave model, which traces its evolution from pre-World War II fascist movements to today's radical right parties.

Mudde's first wave corresponds to theories attributing the origins of far-right ideology to social Darwinism. Generally, social Darwinism is understood as the application of Darwinian principles, such as competition and natural selection, to human societies. This theory has been instrumentalized to justify hierarchical views on race, gender, and civilization (Hawkins, 1997). Such interpretations have been argued to be at the root of Nazism and other fascist ideology. While later waves of far-right aren't using social Darwinism as a justification for their beliefs it is important to understand the roots of the far-right to better contextualize it today.

The second wave of the far-right emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War. Although Mudde refers to this period as one of "neo-fascism," the ideological core remained largely unchanged, believers of the movement simply stayed hidden in response to widespread societal rejection. In the immediate post-war context, far-right ideologies were largely excluded from the political landscape. It was only after a decade that radical right parties began to re-emerge across Europe, marking the onset of the third wave of right-wing populism.

This second wave had the particularity to step away from the fascist ideologies of the past to reinvent the far-right movement into a populist one, defining themselves as opposition forces to the post-war elites that stood for the protection of the forgotten rural communities (Mudde, 2019, pp. 14-15).

It is only from the 1990s onward, 10 years into the third wave identified by Mudde, that far-right parties started to take off and started to enjoy modest electoral success. Their electoral success was still modest, but they started to become a part of the European political life, nonetheless.

The fourth wave started in the 2000s and saw the far-right become a mainstream political force, gaining spots in national parliaments and governments. The historical context behind this wave includes three major events, which helped far-right parties to gain steam: the 9/11 terrorist attack, the 2008 recession crisis and the 2015 migration crisis. The 9/11 attacks fuelled Islamophobia—a central theme for the far-right—while the economic crisis deepened public dissatisfaction with political elites. The migration crisis combined both economic and cultural anxieties, reinforcing the notion that migrants would take jobs and threaten national identities. (Mudde, 2019)

2.1.2. Definition and characteristics

The brief historical overview has shown how the political movement has evolved overtime, laying the foundation for a more precise definition. In this study, the far-right is defined a reactionary movement that challenges modern liberal structures, using populist rhetoric to portray society as divided between the ordinary people and a corrupt elite, while advocating for exclusionary nationalism and the restoration of hierarchical social norms.

Beyond its this core definition, the movement is also characterized by a set of ideological principles and recurring themes that sets it apart from other political movements. This section identifies some of these core features, focusing on leadership structures, historical narratives, nativism, securisation discourse and Euroscepticism.

Historical Mythologizing and Revisionism

Wodak (2021, 34) identifies a common characteristic in far-right parties, which she calls “historical mythologizing”: the reinterpretation of national history to construct a heroic and victimized self-image. This process consists in retelling controversial past events but framing them in a way as to put the nation in a positive light instead of the broadly accepted negative one, thus strengthening a nationalist sentiment. An interesting case of revisionism in Austria that will be explored later on in this work is for example, how the Austrian elites managed to twist history and position themselves as victims of Nazism, despite the strong presence and endorsement of the Nazi party within the country during the war (Art, 2005, p.101).

Nativism, racism and islamophobia

Mudde (2019, pp. 24-30) identifies racism and its declinations, nativism and islamophobia, as another core ideological pillar of the European far-right. While far-right parties tend to be less explicitly racist today due to evolving social norms, they have developed a new kind of racism: nativism. Nativism postulates that only natives should inhabit a state, and that foreigners are threat to the culture and values of the nation. The goal of far-right parties is to live in an ethocracy, that is a state in which ethnicity is at the basis of citizenship. This view is reflected in their strong anti-immigration stance, especially immigration from culturally (and racially, although that is only implied) different countries, in Europe this means Muslim countries. Islamophobia has become a key feature of most European populist radical right parties, and Muslims are portrayed as the main cultural threat to the nation.

Securitization and crime rhetoric

Security is another big theme for the far-right, which they often link with migration. They postulate that most crimes are committed by migrants and that they must therefore be excluded from the state. They also consider that the only solution to insecurity is in a tougher repressive policy and advocate for a heightened police presence in the streets and more severe punishments for all crimes (Mudde, 2019, p.34-35).

Euroscepticism

A last important element constituting a common feature of the European far-right is Euroscepticism. They argue that the delegation of competences to EU institutions undermines their national sovereignty (Josipovic & Reeger, 2022) and places the power in the hands of an unelected bureaucratic elite, representing the establishment, of which they are the anti-thesis (Almeida, 2010). Other factors contributing to the negative view that radical-right parties have of the EU include fear of economic redistribution that could disadvantage their own national budgets (Rathgeb, 2024), and concerns about the erasure of national cultural identities (McLaren, 2002).

While it would be fallacious to consider all far-right parties as identical, the above-mentioned characteristic can be considered a common ideological foundation for the European far-right. These features will help frame and understand how the studied MEPs behave within the EP.

2.2. The European Parliament

2.2.1. Composition of the European Parliament

The European parliament is the European Union's only directly elected institution. The parliament currently composed of 720 members of parliament which were elected in June 2024 for a five-year term (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2012, art 14). The number of seats per country is determined by the principle of degressive proportionality, meaning that larger member states have more seats overall but have fewer MEPs per capita than smaller member states (Corbett et al., 2016, p.27). In the current legislation, there are 96 German MEPs, while Austria has 20. (Home | MEPs | European Parliament, n.d.).

The size and composition of national delegations directly affect influence within the EP, as larger delegations have greater bargaining power. A 2022 study by EU Matrix CEO Frantescu (2022) highlights that the German delegation is the most influential in the EP – both because of its size and

due to the distribution of its MEPs across different political groups. This factor is particularly relevant for far-right parties like the AfD and FPÖ, whose influence depends not only on their numbers but on their ability to secure key roles within EP structures.

2.2.2. Powers of the EP and its decision-making process

The role of the EP within the EU is mostly threefold: it is the co-legislator with the Council, it has budgetary powers and supervisory powers vis-à-vis the other EU institutions (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2012, art 14). While the EP also has the possibility to be consulted on matters outside of these prerogatives, it isn't one of its direct alleys of influence and it is therefore not relevant for this work.

Co-legislator

Legislative activity forms the core of the EP's work, primarily through the ordinary legislative procedure, where the Commission proposes legislation, and the EP and Council jointly adopt it. While the formal process includes multiple readings and potential conciliation, decisions are now often reached through trilogues—informal negotiations between small delegations from each institution. Although trilogues rationalise decision-making, they reduce transparency and limit the involvement of most MEPs, who must vote on outcomes they did not shape (Delreux & Laloux, 2018; Leino-Sandberg, 2023).

Budgetary power

Though sometimes overlooked, the EP's budgetary authority allows MEPs to shape EU priorities by influencing how funds are allocated. Its most significant role lies in adopting the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which sets spending priorities for seven years. While the Commission drafts the proposal, both the EP and Council must approve it, giving the EP considerable bargaining power—no MFF can be adopted without its consent (Ripoll Servent, 2018, pp. 81–82).

Beyond the MFF, the EP reviews the annual budget and holds the power to reject it entirely, a right never used but symbolically powerful. As the institution representing EU citizens, it also monitors the Commission's implementation of the budget to ensure proper use of funds (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2024, art. 314).

Through these mechanisms, especially via the budget Committee, MEPs can exert indirect yet significant influence over EU policy direction.

Supervisory powers vis-à vis the other EU institutions

The EP monitors EU institutions through tools like parliamentary questions and hearings. These are particularly used by fringe parties—including the far-right—as accessible avenues to raise issues and connect with constituents (Ripoll Servent, 2018, pp.90-95). The EP also approves the European Commission as a bloc, allowing it to influence the appointment of Commissioners and the Commission president, occasionally pressuring Member States to revise nominations. (Ripoll Servent, 2018, pp.101-105).

These mechanisms highlight the Parliament’s ability to shape institutional dynamics within the EU, extending its influence beyond direct lawmaking. While its oversight powers remain constrained by the intergovernmental nature of the EU, they nonetheless provide MEPs with opportunities to challenge, scrutinize, and influence the work of the Union’s executive bodies.

Decision making process: the plenary

All of the above-mentioned powers of the EP are exercised in one particular, very important setting: the plenary session. It is during plenaries that all MEPs gather and vote on all of their decisions, be it to adopt a legal text or the budget, to appoint the commission and so on. It is also during these plenary sessions that MEPs get to hold the other EU institution accountable by asking them questions (Ripoll Servent, 2018, p.29).

Each month, one plenary session is organized in Strasbourg, and six additional sessions per year are held in Brussels as well. One session in Strasbourg is called a “part session” and it lasts four days, whereas sessions in Brussels only last two days. This gives the MEPs plenty of time to debate every topic before voting (Protocol No. 6 on the location of the seats of the institutions and of certain bodies, offices, agencies and departments of the European Union, 2024).

Each session is meticulously prepared by the Committees, whose functioning will be detailed in the following section. It is chaired by the president of the EP or one of the 14 vice presidents, who ensure the respect of the rules and the distribution of speaking time among MEPs. (Ripoll Servent, 2018, p.31)

After usually long debates, voting takes place, and decisions are adopted if the simple majority is attained. A quorum, that is a minimum of present MEPs required for a vote to be considered valid, is considered attained if at least 1/3 of the total number of MEPs is present (Rules of procedures of the EP, 185).

There are different modalities for voting. The general rule is voting by a show of hands, but in some contentious cases, when an electronic vote may be conducted to confirm the results of the vote. If a political group or at least 5 of all MEPs request it, a roll call vote, has to be organized. These roll call votes are then recorded and available for analysis on the “HowTheyVote” website, which processes information by the EP to make it more easily available to the public. It is also possible for 20% of MEPs to ask for secret ballot votes to be organized (Rules of procedures of the European Parliament 194, 197, 198.) The modality of the vote is of course a very important factor influencing the behaviour of MEPs, who might act differently depending on whether their vote is recorded or not.

2.2.3. Parliamentary Committees

The European Parliament is an inherently very social institution, by which is meant that MEPs have very few possibilities to individually exert influence but do so through their participation in group work. The two most important type of groups are the parliamentary committees, which will be detailed in this section, and the political groups, which will be the object of the following section.

Committees are groups composed of 25 to 90 MEPS who meet once or twice a month to discuss on a specific topic. Each committee is composed of a chair, a vice-chair and a secretariat, which constitute the bureau. They should mirror the political balance of the plenary to ensure proportional representation (Rules of Procedure of the European parliament, 216).

There are currently 22 different Committees in the EP such as foreign affairs, development, budgets, environment, human rights... and many more (Annex IV of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament).

The number of members in each Committee depends on its importance and prestige, with committees such as Foreign Affairs being assigned more members than the one on legal affairs for example. In general, MEPs are full members of one committee as well as a substitute in a second committee. MEPs tend to have personal preferences when it comes to choosing a committee to work in, but it is ultimately up to the political groups to bargain with one another to attribute membership (Corbett et al., 2016, pp. 167-170).

An important role and avenue for influence within the committee is the role of Chair. Indeed, it is them who presides over the internal meetings, meaning that they can also decide of the agenda for each session, and who represent their committee in plenary sessions as well as in meetings of committee chairs. (Corbett et al., 2016, p. 171).

Another pivotal role within committees is that of the group coordinator which are MEPs designated by their political group to coordinate and represent the group's opinions in Committee meetings (Rules of Procedure of the European parliament, 214). They occupy an important role within a committee, as they often convey in private meetings to prepare the main committee meetings and already come to an agreement on salient matters. During those private meetings, they may also select which MEPs will be the rapporteur for a specific file.

The bulk of committee work consists in two things: reviewing legislative proposals made by the Commission or the Council or drafting own-initiative reports, which as indicated in the name, consist of proposals made on an issue that wasn't first brought up by another institution. For each reviewed proposal or own initiative, the report itself is drafted by a rapporteur, who is designated by the committee and who will also present that report in plenary. The role of rapporteur is therefore also particularly influential since they have a lot of autonomy when it comes to shaping the final report that will be voted on in Parliament (Rule of procedure of the European Parliament, 51).

2.2.4. Political groups

While committees are centred around a certain theme, political groups are centred around ideologies. Their purpose is to transcend national boundaries and congregate parliamentarians within groups of likeminded parties, creating an allegiance to ideology before nationality (Ripoll Servent, 2018, p.38).

A political group can be created by a minimum of 23 MEPs from at least 7 Member States. There are currently eight different political groups in the EP (Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, 33). The three core groups that have existed since the beginnings of the EP are the Christian Democrats (EPP), the socialists (S&D) and the liberals (Renew) (Corbett et al., 2016, p.87), but other political formations have been created over time to reach today's numbers. These include the Greens, the left, the conservatives and the far-right. For the far-right in particular, there has not been a longstanding political group, and new groups bearing different names and including different members have been created in each parliamentary term.

In the 8th parliamentary term, the far-right was mostly divided between the Europe of freedom and democracy group, and the and the Europe of Nations and Freedom (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018). In the 9th parliamentary term, the far-right was relatively united under the Identity and democracy group (Members' Research Service, 2019). In the current term however, they split again over disagreements linked to the MEPs studied in this work, resulting in the creation of two main far-right groups in the EP: the patriots for Europe, to which the FPÖ belongs and the Europe of Sovereign nation group, which counts the AfD as a member (The Political Groups, 2025).

It is advantageous for MEPs to belong to a political group both because it anchors them within a political family but also because groups are allocated money, staff and facilities from the EP, a clear advantage over non-attached members (Corbett et al., 2016, p.131). It is also through the groups that important functions within the EP such as Committee chairman, rapporteur or vice-president are decided upon, which presents another advantage for MEPs belonging to groups compared to non-attached members when it comes to possibly attaining positions of influence (Ripoll Servent, 2018, p.39).

Groups, like committees, have a bureau comprising at least a chair, several vice chairs and a treasurer. The bureau is tasked with preparing the talking points in the group meetings, which generally take place monthly. The main purpose of those meeting is to decide upon a voting line and a common position on various matters, which MEPs are expected to respect.

While groups aim to rally their members behind their common ideologies, national parties still play an important role within the groups. National party delegations will therefore sometimes decide to vote differently from the group's voting line if they believe it goes against their national interest (Corbett et al., 2016, p.139).

3. Typologies of MEP behaviour and parliamentary Roles

In his work entitled « les deutes européens et leur rôle », Julien Navarro established a typology of MEP behaviour, classifying them into five different categories: the animator, the specialist, the intermediary, the dissenter and the amateur. This section will explore each category shortly, to enable the future categorisation of the studied MEPs.

These categories will be particularly helpful for the present research, as they make it possible to better understand and interpret the behaviour of each MEP. This typology offers a way to operationalize the abstract notion of influence by examining how MEPs engage with parliamentary

tools and networks. It is particularly relevant in the case of far-right actors, whose parliamentary behaviour often differs from the practices of MEPs from more traditional political affiliations.

3.1. The animator

Animators are MEPs tend to be driving forces of the parliament, whose purpose is to further European integration. They are particularly attached to debating great political issues, rather than focusing on small technicalities, which they gladly let experts deal with. They usually care only little about legislation in itself and prioritise instead group work and the exchange of ideas. They consider the EP to be a big forum, a place to debate, exchange ideas and keep the European bubble alive and connected to its citizens.

Their main activity within the parliament tends to be interventions in plenary, whereas they produce less reports than the average MEP.

The personality and role conception of animators means that they occupy leadership roles, in particular within their political groups, of which they are often member of the bureau. They are likely to be members of highly politicised, rather than legislative committees. In general, they are more loyal to their parties than to their committees, since they consider the political dimension of parliamentary work to be the most important (Navarro, 2009, pp 127-139).

3.2. The specialist

Specialists are the most represented type of MEP in parliament and are almost the exact opposite of animators in that they care more about the technical aspect of parliamentary work than the political one. While not all of them are experts in their field of work, as many of them are first and foremost politicians, they put emphasis on the legislative, operational work that comes with their function.

They focus their efforts on the concrete legislative work that their institution has to produce and attach importance to group efforts, with an effective division of labour to maximize efficiency.

Contrarily to animators, they do not care for big political debates in plenary and rather concentrate on Committee work that tackle legislative topics. They are the MEP category that produces the most reports yet speak the least in plenary sessions.

Specialists are more likely to occupy leadership positions in committees rather than in political groups. Indeed, they attach less importance to ideological differences they may have with their fellow MEPs, as long as they can work effectively together and achieve satisfactory outcomes.

They consider that occupying a less prestigious, yet pivotal role within a committee, such as being a coordinator instead of a chair, is the best way to exert influence, as it allows them to actively participate to decisive discussions.

Some specialists are more policy oriented, meaning that they are experts in their fields whose motivation to join the EP was their expertise in that particular field. Those MEPs will have an even greater tendency to occupy pivotal roles such as spokesperson or coordinator of their committee (Navarro, 2009 pp 140 – 146).

3.3. The intermediary

Intermediaries consider themselves a mediator between the EU and their constituents. This translates into a dual role: they both advocate for their electorate's wishes at an EU level and transmit information from the EU bubble to their voters, keeping them informed of the latest advancement in the EP.

Intermediaries tend to be more concerned with national or regional grievances, as it is those that their electorate usually put forward. This is particularly noticeable through their written questions, which is one of their most used policy tools, and in which, along with the dissenters, they mention their own region the most when compared with other MEPs.

Intermediaries are usually concerned with all domains of actions of the EP, they are generalist in the sense that they have to be aware of everything that is happening in order to keep their constituents informed about all aspects of parliament, even those which they are not personally concerned with. They tend to belong to control committees rather than political ones, in which they are not usually occupying pivotal roles (Navarro, 2009, pp 149 – 162).

Beyond the defence of their constituents' interests, intermediaries also occupy a pedagogical role, keeping the public informed of what is happening in the parliament, which they do through publications on their own websites, the press or their social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (Lappas et al., 2019).

3.4. The dissenter

Contrarily to the three types of MEPs presented until now, dissenters have a negative view of the institution in which they operate. That view can be translated either in a passive posture regarding their own role within the EP, or an outwardly critical attitude towards it.

Dissenters are often outsiders, who do not abide by the unspoken rules that govern traditional parliamentary work. Despite that outsider status, they do use the different tools at their disposal to get their message across, making them a part of the parliamentary landscape. Yet their influence within that landscape is exclusively negative and consist in the criticism of the decisions taken by the institutions.

These types of MEPs are therefore not compelled to be particularly active in Committee work and do not seek particular power, influence or leadership positions within the EP or their groups. Indeed, they often have a cynical view of the EP and downplay its power as an EU institution.

The reason for their presence at the European level is to further their parties' interest at the national level to denunciate what is happening in the EU to their fellow countrymen. In that sense they resemble the intermediaries and their pedagogical ambition, although in this case it is only to showcase negative aspects of the EU that they communicate with the outside.

While they are not particularly active in terms of active policy proposals, producing no reports in the sample studied by Navarro, dissidents participate in plenary sessions and speak out about their grievances.

Another common ground with the intermediaries is their attachment to the national level, as dissidents are often Eurosceptics and therefore prioritize their own countries of origin over the common interest.

Finally, dissidents are usually part of the minority in the EP, and since they do not partake in work with their colleagues from other political formations, they have very little impact on the outcome of the legislative procedure. But that isn't a problem for dissidents, as influence in the legislative process isn't their priority: the expression of success for a dissident resides in their capacity to spread their message and make their presence felt through shock statements (Navarro, 2009, pp 162-172).

3.5. The amateur

This fifth category comprises all MEPs who, do not correspond to the previously mentioned types of MEPs and who do not actively engage in parliamentary work. While this may seem like a common characteristic with the dissidents, what differentiates them is that amateurs do not have a particular defiance towards the EU institutions, they are simply indifferent towards them.

These MEPs are relatively few and are characterised by a sheer lack of participation and presence in the EP. There are multiple reasons why an MEP can become a so called "amateur", be it because they

are at the end of their political careers, were looking for a fallback position in case of unsuccessful national elections or simply arrived there “by chance”, making this category highly subjected to change.

4. Identification of the actors

Understanding the influence of far-right MEPs in the European parliament first requires a background examination of the political party they represent and their individual trajectories. Indeed, having this background will enable a better understanding of each MEP’s behaviour in the EP.

This section therefore begins by analysing the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), tracing their origins, ideological trajectories, and political positioning. A comparison between the two parties will highlight their contrasting paths to electoral success and legitimacy, offering insights into how their national experiences may translate into their strategies in the European Parliament. The focus will then shift to the individual MEPs under study, first explaining the rationale behind their selection in this research, before exploring each of their backgrounds and political positions to better understand their position within the EP.

4.1. The AfD: a rapid surge to the top

The AfD, short for *Alternative für Deutschland*, was founded in 2013 by former CDU members as a response to the financial crisis of 2010. The party’s main agenda at first was its Euroscepticism: it was greatly unsatisfied with the EU’s response to the financial crisis, particularly with the fact that German money was given to less financially responsible countries, such as Greece for example (Decker, 2022). Since then, the party has grown significantly and has more than tripled its voter base: the party started modestly, only receiving 4.7% of the votes in the 2013 federal elections. Then, it grew and received 10.3 % of the votes in 2021 and this year, doubled that score to reach the 20% mark. (Bundestagswahlergebnisse seit 1949, n.d.). They are now the first opposition force in the country, having secured 151 seats in the current German Bundestag (Sitzverteilung des 20. Deutschen Bundestages, n.d.).

Hansen and Olsen (2024) argue that the AfD is a unique case in European politics, as Germany had long resisted far-right parties. While radical right movements existed, none matched the AfD’s electoral success or made it into the Bundestag. This limited success stemmed from three factors: weak party organization, constitutional safeguards against fascist movements in the *Grundgesetz*,

and the enduring “burden of the past,” which fostered a general suspicion toward parties echoing National Socialist rhetoric (Hansen & Olsen, 2024, pp. 11–13, 20–26).

The AfD, however, overcame these barriers: since it was not founded as an explicitly far-right party, as Arzheimer (2015) explains, its 2014 European election manifesto lacked populist or radical right themes, focusing instead on soft Euroscepticism and moderate nationalism, it avoided the stigma usually attached to far-right actors, especially among political elites (Hansen & Olsen, 2024, p. 26).

Schwander and Manow (2017) contend that the AfD capitalized on the voter base of previous parties like the Nationaldemokratische Partei (NPD) but succeeded where others failed by presenting itself as more respectable and focusing on EU issues. Unlike the NPD, which was openly racist and linked to neo-Nazi groups, and was therefore banned by the Bundesverfassungsgericht, the AfD has managed to remain within legal and institutional boundaries (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, n.d.). The party also took advantage of the momentum provided by the migrant crisis, which led to a surge of right-wing votes across the whole continent (Berning, 2017).

A second key element in the AfD’s success is its party structure, which, as Heinze and Weisskircher (2021, p. 269) argue, differs significantly from that of traditional radical right parties. The AfD is marked by decentralised decision-making and does not rely on a single charismatic leader. Instead, it operates more like a mass party organisation, recruiting members from across the German states, which ensures their loyalty and strong local rootedness. The party is also formally organised, with a detailed structure of bodies at national, regional, and local levels, and incorporates internal democratic practices, including decision-making through referenda (Heinze & Weisskircher, 2021, pp. 265–271). A notable feature of the AfD’s structure is its strategic outreach to far-right social movements, forming part of its broader “party-movement” strategy. This mix of decentralised leadership, member involvement, and ties to extra-parliamentary actors has helped the AfD remain adaptable and strengthened its position in German politics, even in the face of internal divisions.

While it can be argued that the AfD wasn’t a radical right party at its beginnings, much scholarly attention has been given to its evolution and most experts agree that it has become one. Pfahl-Traughber (2020) argues that the party has known an ideological shift, transforming its Eurosceptic nature into an ethnonationalist one. Its open attacks on democratic institutions, anti-minority rhetoric and revisionist attitude toward Nazi Germany, to which one may add the affiliation of some AfD members to neo-nazi groupings, are all proofs shown by Pfahl-Traughber (2020) to illustrate his argument.

In regards of the European Parliament, the AfD has known a similar growth in success as in the national sphere, gathering more and more seats after each election. In 2014, the AfD had a lukewarm

start, winning 7 seats. In 2019 they had 9 MEPs, and now there is a total of 16 MEPs from the party. In terms of political group, the AfD has been associated with different far-right groupings, the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) for the 2014 parliament, the Identity and Democracy (ID) political group from 2019 until 2024 (Comparative Tool | 2024 European Election Results | European Parliament, n.d.), when, following a scandal linked with MEP Maximilian Krah, the party was ousted from the group in late May 2024 (Neubert, 2024). In the current legislature, AfD MEPs are associated with the Europe of Sovereign Nations Group, with the exception of Maximilian Krah, which did not belong to a group during his time in the 10th legislative term (MEPs | European Parliament | Europe of Sovereign Nations Group n.d.). The reasons behind this differentiation will be further explained in the section dedicated to Krah's biography.

The AfD's rise both at the national and European levels reflects its potential growing influence in the European Parliament. As Germany is the most populous country in the European Union, the AfD's large number of MEPs grants it substantial leverage within its political group, as their 15 members represent more than half of the whole group.

This position provides the AfD with the potential to play a key role in shaping legislative dynamics, which will be explored in subsequent sections in terms of its influence within the European Parliament.

4.2 The FPÖ: the normalization of a controversial party

The Austrian equivalent to the AfD is called the FPÖ - *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* [Austria's Freedom Party]. While they may be considered similar because of their stance on the political spectrum, the two parties have vastly different backgrounds. Austria, in contrast to Germany, has not internalised a similar sense of historical responsibility for its fascist past. When the 2nd World war was over, the narrative pushed by the Austrian elite was that the Austrian people was "Hitler's first victims" (Art, 2005, p.101). There was a wish from the country to distance itself from Nazism, framing it as Germany's responsibility, glossing over the fact that Hitler himself was originally Austrian and that the Nazi party was just as active in Austria than in Germany.

This "victim culture," as noted by Art (2005), allowed former Nazis to be readily reintegrated into society: as long as they hadn't been a so-called "big Nazi", they were often portrayed as "well-meaning, if misguided, patriots who had suffered enough for their political mistakes" and thus regarded as ordinary citizens (Art, 2005, pp. 109–110). This socio-political climate enabled the 1956 founding of the FPÖ by Anton Reinthaller, a notorious former high-ranking Nazi (Reiter, 2018, p. 539).

While Austria was less rigorous than Germany in confronting its Nazi past and lacks a strong memory culture, the creation of a nationalist party by former Waffen-SS members was widely seen as a step too far. Political elites and the public alike condemned the FPÖ as a “new Nazi party.” Nevertheless, it won 6.5% of the vote in its first general election, backed by German nationalists and former National Socialist circles (Reiter, 2018, pp. 539–547).

Despite this initial low success, the party managed to gain more credibility over time to slowly become the first political force of the country that it is today. (Österreich - Nationalratswahl 2024, n.d.). In the 60s, the party changed leadership and, while the new chairman was also a former Waffen-SS member, he tried to move the party out of its isolation by emphasizing liberalism instead of overt nationalism. This tactic of normalization continued in the 70s and culminated in 1983, when the party entered its first governmental coalition. Yet a few years later, in 1986, the leader of the party was ousted and replaced by a young populist politician, Jörg Haider, who pleaded for a return to German nationalist ideas in the party, ultimately leading to the collapse of the government coalition the FPÖ was in. This marked a return to the extremist origins of the party, but this time around that strategy proved effective, as the party consistently gained votes under Haider’s leadership. (Belafi, 2017, pp. 365-368)

The overt nationalist agenda, while it was frowned upon in the beginning of the party’s history, grew popular because the political context was different: the population was growing frustrated with mainstream politicians and saw in the FPÖ an anti-establishment force, which cared about them. Later, in the 2000s and 2010s, the party adopted an anti-migration agenda which resonated with the public and contributed to the growth of the party’s popularity. (Belafi, 2017, pp. 369-371)

In 2000, the FPÖ entered government in coalition with the ÖVP, marking a rare instance of far-right participation in power in Europe. The EU’s 14 other member states reacted with coordinated “unfriendly measures,” suspending bilateral diplomatic ties with Austria as a symbolic protest, since formal EU sanctions were not possible against a democratically elected government (De Wilde d’Estmael, 2000, pp. 7–8). While the coalition endured, this strong reaction highlights how unique the FPÖ’s success was for a European country at the time. Such a response seems almost unthinkable today, given the growing number of far-right parties in government across Europe.

In 2017, they once again joined a governing coalition (Die FPÖ in Der Regierung – Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut, n.d.) and, after being cast out in 2019, they are now the most popular party in the country, having won 28,8% of the votes in the 2024 elections, which represents a 12,7% increase compared to the previous general elections (Österreich - Nationalratswahl 2024, n.d.). While they are currently the first party in the country, they have finally been excluded from the coalition build

between the conservatives, the social democrats and the liberals and are relegated to the opposition (Bell, 2025).

Since the party has existed for much longer than their German counterpart, there have been FPÖ MEPs since the first European elections after the country's accession to the EU in 1996 (The FPÖ in the European Parliament – Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut, n.d.). In their three first legislative terms, the few FPÖ MEPs did not belong to any EU political group and remained non-attached. Since 2014, they have decided to cooperate with fellow far-right parties, joining first the ENF- Europe of Nations and Freedom Group, then in 2019 the Identity and Democracy group (Comparative Tool | 2024 European Election Results | European Parliament, n.d.). In the current legislative term, there are 6 FPÖ MEP's, which is twice more than in the previous term and the most Austrian MEP's sent by a single party, and they are part of the newly formed Patriots for Europe group (The FPÖ in the European Parliament – Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut, n.d.).

4.3. Comparing the AFD and the FPÖ: two paths to far-right influence

The exploration of both parties' histories and ideologies shows that, despite sharing an ideology, they have followed distinct trajectories.

The first major difference lies in their creation: the FPÖ was founded almost 60 years before the AfD and had direct ties to former Nazis, whereas the AfD is a much more recent party, initially formed around Eurosceptic grievances rather than nationalist ideology.

Another key difference is their position within the European Parliament. While both parties have been part of the same far-right parliamentary groups, the AfD has been a far more controversial member. Just last year, it was expelled from the Identity and Democracy group due to the behaviour of one of its members, whereas the FPÖ has remained well-integrated within its political group, avoiding similar scandals (Neubert, 2024).

These differences are important for the later analysis, as they demonstrate that not all far-right parties operate the same way. Their different paths suggest that their MEPs may also act differently within the European Parliament. Maximilian Krah, whose scandals led to the AfD's expulsion from the ID group, is unlikely to behave in the same way as Harald Vilimsky, who has led the FPÖ delegation since 2014 and represents a well-established party in Austrian politics.

4.4. Biography of the MEPs

4.4.1. Selection of the MEPs for this study

This thesis focuses on the influence of far-right MEPs from the AfD and FPÖ, but analysing all 15 AfD and 6 FPÖ MEPs would go beyond the scope of a master's project. Instead, two MEPs from each party were selected to offer a focused sample of the German and Austrian far-right in the EP.

One challenge was ensuring the selected MEPs would retain their seats after the June 2024 elections. Given both parties' electoral strength, choosing top incumbents running for re-election maximised that likelihood. This led to the selection of Maximilian Krah, AfD delegation vice-chair and frontrunner, and Christine Anderson, an MEP since 2019 and fourth on the AfD list (aschilling, 2024). For the FPÖ, Harald Vilimsky, head of delegation and frontrunner, and Georg Mayer, third on the list and MEP since 2014, were chosen (Kandidaten – Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, 2024).

All four were re-elected, confirming the approach and making them relevant figures for analysing far-right influence in the European Parliament.

Before getting into the biographies, a quick disclaimer is needed. While I tried to maintain critical distance by looking for external sources, this was often difficult, and most of the information presented in the following biographies comes from the MEPs' own accounts. This is obviously a limitation but given that some of these MEPs aren't particularly well-known, there just wasn't much media coverage to rely on. It's important to keep in mind, then, that some of the information presented here may not be fully accurate, as it couldn't always be verified through independent sources.

4.4.2. Maximilian Krah

Maximilian Krah was born in 1977 in Saxony, which was a part of the DDR at the time. In 2011, he obtained a doctorate in law from the Technische Universität Dresden and completed his education with a Master of Business administration from the American Columbia Business School. He has professional experience as a lawyer and as a business and legal advisor (Biografie', n.d.).

His interest in politics started early on, as his father worked as a consultant for the CDU after the German reunification. Krah followed in the steps of his father and became a member of the "Junge Union", which is the student organization linked with the CDU, before joining the CDU itself. As a student, he also took part in the "Ring of Christian Democratic Students (RCDS)", which, despite its name, isn't related to the CDU (Rosenauer, 2024).

In 2016, he expressed disappointment with how the CDU handled the migration crisis, claiming that the party had enabled mass migration by opening the borders. He considered that the CDU didn't represent conservatism anymore and looked for a party that would better represent his values (Maximilian Krah, n.d.).

That same year, he turned to the AfD and encouraged fellow CDU members to switch parties with him. (Rosenauer, 2024). He then knew a quick rise within the ranks of the AfD, starting of as a Deputy Chairman of the party for Saxony in 2018, before being voted in the European Parliament in 2019, and again in 2024, where he was the frontrunner for his party.

Ahead of the 2024 European elections, Maximilian Krah was involved in two political scandals that led to his party's expulsion from the Identity and Democracy group and ultimately, to his leaving the EP altogether to go back to national politics (Neubert, 2025). A brief overview of these scandals is relevant to contextualise Maximilian Krah's unique position as the only AfD MEP with non-attached status at the start of the 10th legislature and his decision to resign in March 2025.

Krah's troubles began in April 2024, when one of his parliamentary aides was arrested on suspicions of espionage for the Chinese government (Wax et al., 2024). While he denied having any knowledge of his assistant's actions, this scandal brought back to the surface other accusations against Krah himself. Indeed, while he was traveling to the US in December 2023, he was questioned by the FBI about having allegedly received payment from a pro-Russian Ukrainian politician (Gebhard et al., 2024).

These suspicions precipitated investigations by both German and Belgian police, rendering Krah a subject of controversy. He was then asked by his own party to take a lower profile in order not to damage the AfD's reputation. But instead, Krah gave an interview to the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* in which he stated that he would "never say that anyone who wore an SS uniform was automatically a criminal." (Mastrobuoni, 2024). This was one comment too many for the already controversial politician, who was then forced to step down from the campaign and was no longer recognized by his party as their top candidate (Von Pezold & Dallison, 2024). The problem was that these events took place close to the elections, and it was already too late to officially remove Krah from the list of candidates, despite the AfD wishes.

Important figures from other far-right parties from the ID group, including Marine LePen swiftly condemned Krah's conduct. They collectively agreed to distance themselves from him, and then to expel the AfD from their parliamentary group. (Von Pezold et al., 2024).

As a result of these controversies, Krah was elected but denied membership in the newly formed Europe of Sovereign Nations group, to which the rest of the AfD delegation belongs. Despite his non-attached status, Krah was a member of the Committee on International Trade, and a member of two delegations (Maximilian KRAH | MEPs | European Parliament, 2025).

In December 2024, Krah announced his candidacy for the German federal elections on the platform X (Dr. Maximilian Krah MdB [@KrahMax], 2024), despite having been advised against it by his AfD colleagues (Neubert, 2025). He was elected with 44% of the votes in his constituency. Upon learning the election results, he promptly resigned from the European Parliament to join the German Bundestag on the 24th of March 2025 (Neubert, 2025).

Despite these events, this study will still focus on Krah's activities, but the 9th legislature rather than the 10th will be looked at.

4.4.3. Christine Anderson

The second AfD MEP studied in this work is 55-year-old Christine Anderson from Hessen in western Germany. She moved to the US in 1992, where she obtained an economics degree, while working in a trading company. Upon returning to Germany six years later, she attended law school at the University of Göttingen (Christine Anderson | AfD Limburg-Weilburg, 2019). However, despite claiming during her 2019 European election campaign that she had obtained a law degree, she later admitted that she had not completed her studies due to a high-risk pregnancy (Limburg: Lebenslauf der AfD, 2019). She then dedicated the 20 following years of her life to her three daughters, as a housewife.

She joined the AfD shortly after it was founded, in 2013, getting actively involved in politics for the first time in her life. She chose to do so because she felt that she "owed it to her children to preserve a home worth loving and living in" (Christine Anderson | AfD Limburg-Weilburg, 2019). In 2016, she became Chairwoman of the AfD parliamentary group in Limburg-Weilburg district council (Newsletter-Anmeldung, n.d.). She was elected to the European Parliament in 2019, and again in 2024. (Christine ANDERSON | European Parliament, n.d.)

In the current legislature, she is a member of the bureau for the Europe of Sovereign Nation group as well as a member of the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety, the Committee on Public Health, the special Committee on the European Democracy Shield and the delegation for relations with the United States. She is also a substitute on the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (Christine ANDERSON | European Parliament, n.d.).

While Anderson aligns with the AfD's Eurosceptic and nationalist positions, she has pushed these ideas further than the party's official program. Indeed, she advocates for Germany's withdrawal from the EU, a position that cannot be found in the party's manifesto. ('Europa neu denken', 2024). She also qualifies the European parliament of "mad house" and considers both the Commission and the EP to be corrupt (Türk, 2024).

Beyond her Euroscepticism, Anderson's platform in the past legislature was strongly based on an opposition to covid-19 measures, such as vaccine mandates, which she considered restrictive of civil liberties (Anderson Christine, 2022). She frequently employs rhetoric associated with conspiracy theories, claiming that the covid pandemic was a hoax orchestrated by Big Pharma, companies and governments (Anderson Christine, 2024).

Her controversial positions have led to conflicts within the AfD, with party leaders considering that her outspoken and extreme views would cause unrest in Brussels (Türk, 2024). Yet when a scandal with the AfD happened in Brussels, it wasn't because of her, but because of some of her colleagues. The scandal surrounding Maximilian Krah also affected the number 2 on the European election list of the AfD Petr Bystron, who was accused of receiving bribes from the Kremlin (Ngendakumana, 2024). They were both banned from appearances during the EP election campaigns, which helped Anderson's campaign as she then became the AfD's preferred candidate (Türk, 2024). In the turmoil surrounding her colleague, Anderson stepped up and tried to limit the damages, pleading the ID group to distance themselves from Krah alone instead of the whole AfD fraction (tagesschau.de, 2024). While these efforts proved fruitless, she has played a key role in the formation of their new political group along with far-right parties from other member states, such as the French "Reconquête" party for example.

4.3.4 Georg Mayer

Georg Mayer was born in 1973 in Feldbach Austria, which is part of the Styria Province. In 1998 he obtained a business administration and economics degree from the Karl-Franzens-University of Graz. He then obtained a master's in law from the same university in 2003. He completed his training by obtaining a complimentary master of European and international Business Law at the University of St Gallen in Switzerland in 2005 (Parlament Österreich, n.d.).

He started his career as assistant and staff member of various FPÖ politicians between 2003 and 2007. He began working in the European Parliament in 2007 as secretary-General of the ITS Group (Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty) of which the FPÖ was a member at the time.

In 2010, he came back to work in Austria and acted as Regional Managing Director of the FPÖ of his birth region of Styria, before working for the federal bureau of the party until 2014 (Parlament Österreich, n.d.).

He stood for election for the first time in the 2014 European elections, where he appeared 3rd on the FPÖ's list (Europawahl 2014, n.d.). He was elected that year and has been re-elected as an MEP ever since; he is therefore currently in his third parliamentary term.

His biography shows his longtime engagement to the FPÖ and the European Parliament, for which he has worked for more than 10 years now.

Along with the rest of his party, he belongs to the Patriots for Europe Group since its creation last year. He is a member of the Committee on Petitions and a substitute on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy. He is also part of two delegations (Georg MAYER | European Parliament, n.d.).

4.4.4. Harald Vilimsky

Harald Vilimsky was born in 1966 in Vienna Austria. He studied public relations at the university of Vienna between 1988 and 1990 and after a year spent working in the private sector, he joined the FPÖ's press team in 1991. He went on to occupy different positions within the party before being elected to the Federal Council in 2005. The subsequent year, he also became General Secretary of the FPÖ federal party, a position he held for 14 years (Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut, n.d.).

He became an MEP following the 2014 European election, for which he was the FPÖ's top candidate (Europawahl 2014, n.d.). He retained this position in the two following European elections, securing re-election each time (Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut, n.d.).

This overview of his career demonstrates Vilimsky's senior position within the FPÖ, having occupied important roles and being presented as top candidate for elections.

He is also a key figure in the European Parliament, having played a significant role in the negotiations that led to the creation of the "Patriots for Europe" group following the collapse of the ID faction. He was elected vice president of the newly formed group, which is now the third-largest political group in the EP, with 84 members (Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut, n.d.).

Beyond this leadership role, he is a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and a substitute for the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. He is also part of the delegation for relations with the United States.

4.4.5. Comparing the positions of the MEPs

Harald Vilimsky, Georg Mayer, Christine Anderson, and Maximilian Krah all represent far-right parties in the European Parliament, yet their influence varies significantly depending on individual trajectories, Committee membership, and political group affiliation.

Among them, Vilimsky stands out as the most prominent. As FPÖ General Secretary for over a decade and the party's lead candidate in three consecutive European elections, he has established a strong presence in the EP. His role in founding the PFE group and serving as its vice chair reflects his high standing within the far-right. His membership in the influential Committee on Foreign Affairs and the delegation for relations with the U.S. further proves his important role, as it is a very coveted Committee (Corbett et al., 2016, p.170).

In contrast, Mayer occupies a more low-profile role. Despite three terms as MEP and prior experience within the EP, his work in the Petitions and Industry, Research and Energy Committees places him outside the Parliament's core political arenas.

Christine Anderson plays a different yet increasingly important role. Though she does not hold top institutional posts, she gained visibility during the 2024 scandals by distancing herself from Krah and helping to form the Europe of Sovereign Nations group. Now a leading figure in this new group, she has used the crisis to elevate her political standing. However, ESN remains the smallest group in the EP, with only 25 members compared to the 84 of the Patriots for Europe group.

Krah, by contrast, entered the 2024 campaign as the AfD's frontrunner but was quickly sidelined by multiple scandals. These controversies led to his marginalisation: he ended up sitting as a non-attached member, before leaving the EP entirely.

These profiles illustrate varied pathways to influence within the far-right. Vilimsky and Anderson have carved out leadership roles within their delegations and groups, while Mayer remains less visible on the European stage. Krah, once a leading figure, has seen his influence collapse.

5. Establishing a Comparative Baseline

The present section will establish the profile of a "typical" MEP, creating a benchmark for comparison with the MEPs analysed in this work. Such a section will help to assess whether the parliamentary behaviour of the MEPs studied in this work correspond to the preconceived idea that far-right MEPs work less than their peers from the political mainstream. However, it is difficult to establish how

much an “average” MEP generally works. While Navaro (2009, p.129) provides information on how much MEPs from the 5 different categories he established participate in different kinds of parliamentary activities, I wanted to find updated and political group-based information.

As no ready-made average was available, I constructed my own comparative benchmark based on a sample of twelve MEPs from the six other political groups in the European Parliament to which the MEPs studied in this thesis do not belong (EPP, S&D, Renew, GUE/NGL, ECR, Greens). Two MEPs were selected from each group, based on the following criteria: they had to be German or Austrian (except in the case of the ECR group, where no MEP from these countries were represented), must not hold a committee chair or vice-chair position and must have served at least in the 9th and 10th terms in Parliament. These criteria were chosen to ensure a comparable profile to the AfD and FPÖ MEPs studied in this work, creating a generic profile that corresponds to theirs. Efforts were also made to ensure a spread across different parliamentary Committees to avoid thematic bias.

For each MEP, I gathered data directly from the EP’s official website on different aspects of parliamentary work: their Committee participation, number of plenary speeches, reports written as rapporteur or shadow rapporteur, submitted opinions, motions for resolutions, and oral and written questions. The period examined starts from the 2019 parliamentary term and goes until the 18th of April 2025, date at which the data was gathered. The findings were compiled into a table to give an overview of average parliamentary activity across the different political groups. The full table including a breakdown for each individual MEP can be found in the appendix, while the following table is only a summary indicating the results for each political groups and the EP as a whole.

Political Group	Avg. Plenary Speeches	Reports (Rapporteur / Shadow Rapporteur)	Opinions	Motions for resolution	Oral Qs	Written Qs
EPP	74	2 / 16	9	3.5	1	18
S&D	92.5	5 / 3.5	27,5	15	3,5	42.5
Renew	99,5	2 / 8	12	97,5	3	62,5
GUE/NGL	93	0,5 / 17,5	18	27,5	7	168
ECR	130,5	1 / 17	14	232	5.5	59,5
Greens	110	1 / 18,5	15,5	24,5	7.5	81
Average EP	100	2 / 13.5	16	66,5	4.5	72
Median EP	99,5	2 / 16	15,5	27,5	4,5	62,5

Table 1. Parliamentary Activity of Selected MEPs from Mainstream Political Groups

Source: Data compiled based on information from the European Parliament official website (European Parliament, n.d.).

Both the average and median values were calculated for the whole EP, in order to account for outliers and avoid distortions caused by exceptionally active MEPs. The median offers a more accurate reflection of typical behaviour, particularly given that one MEP submitted an unusually high number of motions for resolutions, which significantly skewed the average.

While this sample allows for an illustrative comparison, it is important to note that, because of the relatively small sample of MEPs selected, it does not claim to be representative of the entirety of each political group or of the European parliament. The goal here is rather to construct a general idea of how much parliamentary activity a “typical” MEP might engage in, based on a selection of comparable cases, with 12 MEPs considered enough to provide that general picture. This sample serves as a useful benchmark for identifying where the studied far-right MEPs deviate from the average levels of engagement, which is expected to impact their overall influence in the EP as well.

The same information regarding the parliamentary activity of the four MEPs under scrutiny was gathered, covering the same period of time, allowing for a direct comparison with the control sample presented above.

Name	Plenary Speeches	Reports (Rapporteur /shadow rapporteur)	Opinions	Motions for resolutions	Oral Qs	Written Qs
Christine Anderson	125	0 / 14	23	16	11	273
Maximilian Krah	88	0 / 11	8	4	3	54
Harald Vilimsky	76	0 / 8	2	20	5	161
Georg Mayer	35	0 / 1	4	5	2	166

Table 2. Parliamentary Activity of the four MEPs studied in this thesis

Source: Data compiled based on information from the European Parliament official website (European Parliament, n.d.).

These tables provide useful insights into the differences and similarities between far-right MEPs and other “mainstream” MEPs, highlighting areas in which far-right actors operate more or less than the norm. General observations include the fact that, contrary to actors from other political groups, far-right MEPs tend not to be given the role of rapporteur and that they are more likely to ask written questions than MEPs from other political families. More precise comparisons will be made for each MEP in their dedicated sections later on in this work.

Table 2 also permits a comparison with Navaro’s MEP typology. Indeed, he identifies which parliamentary activity is most exercised based on the MEPs’ roles (2019, p.129). Since some roles make more of less use of one type of activity, comparing the two could lead to a beginning of

classification of the studied MEPs. For example, Navarro notes that “dissidents” are the only category of MEP not to produce reports, which corresponds to the behaviour of the four above mentioned MEPs, providing a first clue as to which role they may occupy. While this alone is not enough to definitively classify them, it offers an initial clue as to the role they may occupy within parliamentary dynamics.

6. Work of the Actors: what do they do?

6.1. Parliamentary tools analysed and choice of topic

This section constitutes the heart of this thesis, where a systematic analysis of each MEP’s work will be operated. For the sake of comparativeness, this analysis will have a fixed structure. Five different possible avenues of influence will be considered for each issue, assessing what each MEP did or did not do with the tools available to them. These different tools are plenary speeches, Committee work - if the MEP is a member of the relevant Committee - legislative interventions, which include all acts of participation to legislative documents such as proposed amendments, reports, motions for resolutions and opinions as well as an analysis of their parliamentary questions, including both oral and written questions and finally, voting records. These different tools will be shortly explained here.

Plenary speeches

There are numerous rules governing the right for MEPs to take the floor in plenary sessions. These are detailed in Rules 178 and 179 of the Rules of Procedure of the EP. The general rule is that MEPs may only speak if they are given the word by the President and have a limited time allocated to them. MEPs must also keep their speech related to the topic at hand, or they may be called to order by the President.

Amendments

Amendments are described in Rule 187 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament in the following way: “[they] may seek to change any part of a text. It may be directed to deleting, adding or replacing words or figures.” Since the amendments tabled by MEPs are not readily available on their EP homepage, the website “Parltrack” will be used to find them. It allows for an overview of all amendments submitted, categorized by Committee.

Reports

Rule 51 of the Rules of Procedure of the EP is dedicated to the definition of reports. They are described as a formal document drafted by a rapporteur chosen by their parliamentary Committee. They represent the Committee's response to a legislative proposal, proposing amendments, a draft resolution, and any relevant explanatory or financial remarks. Rule 52 is then dedicated to the adoption procedure of those reports: they can either be adopted as they are, or, if political groups require it, amendments may be tabled and adopted before being presented to the EP.

Motion for resolutions

Motion for resolutions are defined in Rules 136, 142, 145 and 149. They are formal proposals for Parliament to adopt a resolution on a topic subject, which must be signed by a committee, a political group or at least 5% of the college of MEPs to be considered for a vote in plenary. Rule 136 also states that a joint motion for resolution (motions tabled by a coalition of multiple political groups) may be put to vote first.

Opinions

Opinions are very akin to reports, except that they do not emanate from the Committee responsible for the legislation that's being discussed, but from another Committee, under the condition that it falls to a certain extent under that Committee's scope of competences (Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, Rules 57 and 125). Unlike reports, opinions carry less legislative weight and offer limited visibility into individual shadow rapporteur contributions.

Parliamentary questions

Both oral and written questions give MEPs the opportunity to interact with the other EU institutions, but in practice, they are mostly addressed to the Commission (Corbett et al., 2016, p.370). According to Rule 142 of the EP's Rules of Procedure, oral questions have to be submitted by at least 5% of MEPs, while written questions may be tabled individually (Rule 144). This difference in method explains the high numbers of written questions asked, in comparison to oral questions. In both categories, Anderson has been particularly active, asking an astonishing 273 written questions, a figure far above the 72 EP average.

Votes

The different modalities of votes in the EP were already examined in the contextualization part of this work, they will therefore not be further explained at this stage.

The website “how they vote” will be used throughout this research for the voting records sections of the analysis, as it provides a record of every roll call vote held in plenary sessions of the EP. The entirety of each MEP’s (except Maximilian Krah) participation to roll call votes during the 10th legislative term, until the 18th of April, date of data gathering, will be scrutinized here.

Choice of topic

Analysing the whole work of the MEPs would be almost impossible, I have therefore decided to limit my analysis to one key file for each MEP. These were selected based on a quantitative review of their parliamentary contributions during the 9th and 10th legislative periods. The most frequently addressed theme by each MEP was chosen for closer scrutiny, as it is likely to represent the MEPs’ political priorities and area of influence. The variety of topics addressed by each MEP also enables an overview of key policy priorities by the far-right, which is beneficial to this research.

6.2. Analysis of Christine Anderson’s parliamentary work

6.2.1. Choice of topic

Christine Anderson is by far the most active MEP out of the four studied in this thesis. As shown in table 2, she surpasses her far-right colleagues in her involvement in all types of parliamentary activities with the exception of motions for resolutions, which are most produced by Harald Vilimsky. She is also generally more involved than her fellow parliamentarians from other political families, with a number of plenary speeches, opinions, oral and written questions that far surpass the average highlighted for the EP. While Anderson is undeniably very active in parliament, the actual impact of her activity remains to be seen.

Christine Anderson’s most frequently discussed issue is health policy, in particular, matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Her involvement with that topic had already started during the 9th legislative term but has grown significantly since the beginning of the current legislature. Indeed, she only mentioned health in two of her plenary speeches from the previous term but has already talked about health-related topics in seven of her plenary speeches from this term. This shift can be attributed to her change of committee membership, as she went from being a member of the

Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and Culture and Education (CULT) Committees in the 9th legislative period to being a member of the Committee on Public Health (SANT) and being a substitute of the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety (ENVI) and of the FEMM Committee. (Christine ANDERSON | European Parliament, n.d.).

6.2.2. Committee work

Because she has only joined the Public Health Committee (SANT) during this legislative term, this section's analysis will be focused on this term only.

One first important information concerning Anderson's position within the SANT Committee is that she is her political group's coordinator for this committee. Coordinators occupy an important role within a committee, as was explained before. Despite this fact, it must be noted that Christine Anderson is the sole full member of the ESN group within the Public Health Committee, and therefore the only possible candidate for the role anyway. This diminishes most of the advantages that come with the position, as she has no internal delegation to coordinate with and limited leverage in inter-group negotiations. Nevertheless, it does grant her the possibility of attending the coordinators meeting, in which many important decisions are made. While there are no recordings of those meetings, it is safe to assume that Anderson may find support with other right-leaning coordinators, such as the ones from the ECR and PFE groups, and can therefore have some form of influence within the Committee through that channel.

There have been thirteen Public Health Committee meetings since the beginning of the current legislative period. Christine Anderson has attended seven of them and was absent from the remaining six. In those seven meetings she did attend, she took the floor twice, once on the 9th of September 2024 meeting, and once during the 17th of October 2024 meeting. A full transcript of her interventions in both meetings can be found in the annex.

In her first intervention, she refers to the COVID-19 pandemic and the way it was handled by the European institutions. She criticizes Ursula Von der Leyen and the European Commission for supplying European citizens with "dangerous vaccines" and for having taken measures that were akin to forcing vaccinations on citizens, effectively losing their trust. She proposes to look at scientific data without instrumentalizing it for political purposes, which she believes to have been the case throughout the pandemic:

"Now the scientific discussion was simply silenced, scientists who have distinguished career and titles were told to keep quiet. And it wasn't disinformation coming from the internet, but it was principally coming from the European Commission and the national governments. And it was never about breaking

epidemic waves back then but about breaking the people and making sure that they follow their political will, and to force them to do so.” (Anderson, *author’s translation from the original German*)

Finally she draws the audience’s attention to the correlation between the lower birthrate in certain member states and the vaccination levels of said member states, asking the Committee to lead an enquiry to find out whether COVID-19 vaccinations are indeed behind those drops in birthrate.

Her second intervention takes place within a discussion regarding a Commission proposal on smoke and aerosol-free environments, which recommends banning smoking from some outdoor public spaces. She starts by reminding the audience of the lack of jurisdiction the EU has when it comes to regulating on Public Health matters, which she considers should remain a Member State competence. She goes on to say that she thinks the proposal is an ineffective way to solve the public health issue at hand - tobacco addiction - and that those who are indeed smokers should receive help to combat their addiction rather than be stigmatized by the EU. She finishes her argument by emphasising that such a measure would represent a loss of tax revenues collected by the state from tobacco sales.

Those two speeches show different facets of Anderson. In the first speech, she uses typical far-right rhetoric: she heavily criticizes the EU and draws on conspiracy theories, linking low birth rate with covid vaccination (Van Prooijen et al., 2015). In the second speech, while there are elements usually attributed to the far-right, such as the emphasis on state sovereignty, she also refers back to some of her colleagues from other parties, agreeing with them although they do not belong to the same political formation. She proposes alternative solutions to the one offered by the Commission and uses a sound economic argument, linked to the loss of tax revenue associated with the Commission’s proposal, which have also been used by other MEPs, albeit from the right but not the far-right.

In terms of voting behaviour within the committee, only three roll call votes are recorded on the committee’s website: two on the 19th of March, the first concerning the adoption of the 2026 budget, the second on a draft report on revamping the long term budget of the EU, and the third on the 9th of April, on a Council Decision proposing amendments to the International Health Regulations (European Parliament, 2025).

In the first vote, Anderson was in favour of the proposal, along with the majority of her colleagues, participating in its’ adoption. In the other two, she found herself belonging to the minority, voting both times against the proposition.

What is interesting about these results is that, in the case in which Anderson voted in favour of the resolution, she did so along MEPs from “traditional” political groups such as the EPP or S&D, and even some MEPs from the left group, whereas one of her colleagues from the far-right PFE group

voted against the resolution. This means that far-right actors such as Anderson sometimes vote differently from their peers, choosing instead to align with the majority. In that particular vote, twenty were in favour and fourteen against, a sufficiently close result that could have gone either way, showing the importance of every vote, even that of far-right actors.

In the other two votes however, right-wing and far-right actors from the ECR, PFE and ESN collectively opposed the propositions. While they are now more numerous than ever in the EP, as previously established in this work, their numbers in the SANT Committee aren't sufficient to significantly alter a vote, both propositions having been accepted by a landslide despite their opposition.

Overall, Christine Anderson's role within her committee is somewhat dual: she occupies an important position as a coordinator, and sometimes takes part in decision making, but is overall not very vocal during meetings, if she attends at all.

6.2.3. Plenary speeches

As mentioned before, Anderson has been particularly vocal about health policy since the beginning of the current legislative period. She has addressed health-related topics in seven of the twenty-five speeches she has delivered in plenary sessions during the current term but has only brought up that topic twice in the previous period.

Within those nine interventions, three categories can be identified: Health sovereignty advocacy, mistrust in institutions and criticism of COVID-19 measures.

Health sovereignty advocacy

In three of her interventions, Anderson criticizes the EU's interference in health policy, which she considers to be a member state matter. In her speeches, she uses very negative language, using words such as "despotism" and "totalitarian" to qualify the EU's action in health policy. In a plenary session examining a Commission proposal to forbid smoking in public for public health protection reasons for example, she states:

"But the EU's regulatory mania simply knows no bounds. Your paternalistic approach is a disenfranchisement of the citizens and shows once again what image you have of the citizen."
(Anderson, 3 April 2025, European Parliament, *author's translation from the original German*).

Such a view of the EU as a regulatory and controlling institution is typical of the far-right, for which the deepening of EU competences is inherently bad and warrants opposition (Almeida, 2010).

Mistrust in institutions

In these speeches, Anderson expresses her distrust in institutions, both European and International. Those include speeches regarding the EU strategy on mental health and the EU Global Health Strategy, she accuses international institutions such as the EU and the WHO not to care about the citizens. This implies that her and her party do care about EU citizens and, contrarily to the Commission, do not stigmatize them. She goes as far as proposing to abolish the EU Parliament in an intervention on the 9th of October 2024:

“[in this parliament] there are basically decisions that are the opposite of good, right and sensible. Ceterum censeo - this place should be abolished!” (*author’s translation from the original German*).

Criticism of COVID-19 measures

While she doesn’t talk about that topic much in plenary, later analysis of other types of work will show that the COVID-19 pandemic is particularly important to Anderson. In a first intervention on the 08th of June 2021, at the heart of the pandemic, she was critical of the EU’s vaccine policy, in particular the so called “digital green certificate”.

“We therefore say no to this digital green certificate. There must be no compulsory vaccination through the back door. The introduction of a digital vaccination certificate is the gateway to a society in which citizens, if they are good, can earn basic rights like a treat.” (*author’s translation from the original German*)

In a more recent speech she addresses the Commission President directly and uses once again strong language to condemn the EU’s vaccine policy and Von der Layen’s involvement in it:

“You negotiated a multibillion-dollar contract with your Pfizer partner for a product that ended up useless at best, harmful at worst, even deadly in not so few cases. Again, you should be ashamed!” (Anderson, 18 July 2024, European Parliament, *author’s translation from the original German*)

Summary

The analysis of the multiple speeches shows that Anderson is positioning herself generally against the EU’s involvement in health policy, using typical far-right arguments such as sovereignty of the member states and a mistrust of institutions. She uses strongly negative language and has a tendency to criticize more than to propose alternatives. She does mention her belief that member states would handle health policy more effectively (Anderson, 3 April 2025, European Parliament) but there is no other mention of actions she or her group proposes to undertake to replace the criticized action of the Commission.

6.2.4. Legislative interventions

This section will examine some of Anderson's proposed amendments, reports, motions for resolutions and opinions. This is particularly useful as, contrarily to plenary speeches, where MEPs promote themselves and their ideas to the press and their voters, but do not have much impact on decision making, as it is unlikely that any speech will change the outcome of a vote, since MEPs tend to vote in line with a pre-determined position by their political group (Ringe, 2022, p.71). Their legislative interventions therefore represent the core of their impact on the EP, along with participation in committee work (Corbett et al., 2016).

Proposed amendments

Despite Anderson's vocal engagement with health policy through plenary speeches and committee-level interventions, she has not submitted any amendments tagged under the SANT Committee. Out of her 505 total amendments across both the 9th and 10th legislatures however, 423 are linked to the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM).

This contrast suggests that, while Anderson is publicly active on health issues, she engages less in the more technical or legislative dimension of policymaking in this area. Several interpretations can be drawn from this: she may be broadly aligned with the proposals emerging from SANT, especially given her status as group coordinator, which could allow her to influence the Committee's internal discussions before amendments are even tabled.

Her active legislative engagement within FEMM may reflect stronger ideological opposition to the Committee's left-leaning agenda. Indeed, a study by Politico revealed that, in the past legislature, the ID group, to which Anderson belonged, had the most leading roles in the fields of employment and health policies, with respectively fourteen and thirteen MEPs from their group having leading roles in that field. For the FEMM committee however, not a single member of the ID group had a leading role, and instead a majority of them landed in the hands of members of the S&D group (Cokelaere, 2024). While only 14 members in leading roles for health-related issues is still relatively low when compared to other political groups, it still gave ID politicians the opportunity to influence decision making on the topic of health, which was not possible in the field of women's rights. This might explain why Anderson felt more inclined to table amendments within that field in particular.

Although Christine Anderson did not submit amendments via the SANT Committee, several of her amendments in the FEMM Committee touch on health-related topics, even if addressed from a

different policy angle. This suggests that health does remain a consistent area of interest in her legislative work, even when it was not part of her official committee responsibilities.

In multiple proposals, Anderson submitted amendments aiming to remove the term “women”, considering that all people, regardless of gender, are affected by health issues equally. Here are some concrete examples of this phenomenon:

~~“Cyber violence also disproportionately~~ It can also affect women and girls in educational settings, such as schools and universities [...] (Anderson, C. (2023). Amendment #364 to 2022/0066(COD))

~~“[...] whereas the pandemic is related~~ measures are having a serious impact on ~~women and girls~~ large parts of the population, particularly in terms of access to education and healthcare.” (Anderson, C. (2022). Amendment #95 to 2021/2003(INI))

In the second amendment, we can also see her point of view on the COVID-19 pandemic: while the proposal mentions how the pandemic itself affects women in particular, Anderson considers that the measures taken are the problem, a view that has been revealed in other aspects of her work in the Public Health Committee as well.

These two examples are only a small sample of her proposed amendments but are illustrative of Anderson’s opinions and what she strives to achieve in the European Parliament.

Despite her efforts, these two amendments did not make it to the final texts. While it would be interesting to track how many of her amendments were or were not adopted, there is no other way of knowing than to compare the final documents to her amendments to see if they were included in, which would be difficult to do systematically.

Reports

As seen in Table 2, Christine Anderson has participated in 14 reports as shadow rapporteur, all of which in the 9th term, making her the most active of the four MEP in this study in that regard. She has, however, never written a report as a rapporteur in her two terms of parliament, although that post is reported by many scholars to be one of the most influential on a file (Corbett et al., 2016; Ripoll Servent, 2018). Notably, none of her shadow reports concerned Public Health, and she has not authored any reports so far in the current term.

The reports she was assigned to were generally linked to matters linked to the Committees to which she belonged in the 9th term: women’s rights and culture.

Several factors may explain this phenomenon. First, she has only recently joined the SANT Committee and report assignments typically take time—her first report in the previous term was not published until July 2020, over a year into the mandate.

But there could also be some other, more political reason behind this change: indeed, the Rules of Procedures state that every political group is allowed a shadow rapporteur where there is a rapporteur (Rule 215), but they do not have to make use of that opportunity. As the sole ESN member on SANT, Anderson would likely have been assigned the shadow role if her group had claimed it. The fact that no such claim has been made suggests either that ESN deprioritizes public health policy or that Anderson herself chose not to engage with this file.

This is of course only speculation, but those elements might provide clues as to why Anderson has not yet been appointed the role of shadow rapporteur.

Motions for resolution

Christine Anderson has co-signed 16 motions for resolutions during her two parliamentary services, which, despite being a rather high amount when compared to her far-right colleagues, is under the EP's median of 27 motions for resolutions per MEP. The median was preferred to the average because one MEP from the ECR group notably wrote more than 400 motions, heavily inflating the overall average.

Within those motions she co-signed, two are connected to health policy, one for each legislative term: the first one is concerns the abortion rights of women in the context US Supreme Court decision to overturn abortion rights in the United States (B9-0366/2022) and once again blends women's right with health policies, which was also the case in Anderson's proposed amendments. The second, more recent one is about the Medical Devices Regulation (B10-0122/2024), which is more aligned with Anderson's current involvement in the SANT Committee, where she focuses less on women's health and more on general health matters.

The first motion was reacting to a proposition of the European Parliament aiming to safeguard abortion rights in the EU, proposing to add it to Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in a response to the overturn of Roe v. Wade in the US. Anderson, along with two ID colleagues, proposed a motion for resolution going against the proposition, reminding once again that health related policies should be in the hands of the member states only, who should be able to define their own abortion policy in conformity with their values.

Additionally, they stress that the EU should not comment on a decision by the US supreme court, as the USA is a sovereign state where the rule of law is respected and may therefore do as they wish without external interference.

The second motion, on the revision of the Medical Devices Regulation (MDR) was not co-authored, but Anderson's own work endorsed by her political group. In her proposal, she says that the previous MDR revisions already created “burdensome bureaucracy” and therefore urges the European authorities not to add more regulation, as it would be an additional burden both for health practitioners and for patients. She asks the Commission to speed up its revision process of the MDR, to ensure that the abovementioned regulatory overload may be reduced as soon as possible.

Both motions for resolution reaffirm already discovered aspects of Anderson’s ideology: the idea that member states should be sovereign in their health policy and that the EU is a hindrance to citizens because of its bureaucratic nature.

In the end, however, they both lapsed, meaning that they didn’t even come to a vote because another joint motion for resolution, proposed in both cases by a grouping of political groups, was adopted.

Out of the total 16 motions proposed by Anderson, 15 of them lapsed, and only one came to a vote, and was rejected. This statistic shows that, despite the efforts made by the far-right to make their ideas heard, they are systematically rejected or not even considered by the rest of the European parliament. Of course these were the dynamics at play during the previous legislature, and while the current evidence suggests a continuation of this trend, the evolving political balance in the Parliament could potentially alter this dynamic in the future.

Opinions

Although Christine Anderson authored 23 opinions over her two terms, none of them addressed health policy, but were instead once again related to her CULT and FEMM Committee memberships.

This form of parliamentary activity will not be further analysed in this section.

6.2.5. Parliamentary questions

None of the oral questions asked by Christine Anderson regarded health policy, but a few of her written questions did, in particular questions surrounding the handling of the COVID-19 crisis. Indeed, she asked 32 questions related to health policy, and 30 of them were specifically about this

pandemic. Within that broader theme, she has a very specific style of questions: she often asks questions related to the COVID-19 vaccines, how and by whom they are produced, and she questions their reliability, calling the Commission to take action against vaccines manufactures, if proofs of her claims were undeniably confirmed.

One may also note that many of these questions, while related to the COVID-19 pandemic, were asked recently, meaning well after the peak of COVID-19 cases and the regulatory measures taken by the EU. The delay in asking COVID-19 related questions raises questions about their objectives. What is Christine Anderson trying to achieve in asking them? Is her intention to obtain compensation for people affected by COVID-19 or having suffered side effects from its vaccination? Or does she seek to destabilize the Commission by exposing its supposed mishandling of the crisis and asking questions in the hopes they will be forced to admit their mistakes?

While this is only speculation, the tone of questions asked by Anderson, as well as her previously demonstrated habit of criticize the Commission, do seem to indicate that the latter supposition corresponds to her intentions. This feeds into the previously mentioned idea that the far-right operates an “influence through disruption” strategy, which seeks to undermine the institutions more than to better them (Behm & Brack, 2019).

6.2.6. Voting record

How an MEP votes is the best way to see what MEPs truly stand for, because actions are more representative of their true beliefs than words. Checking for votes is also a good way to measure a political group’s influence, as it allows to see how often they find themselves in the winning majority or not. Before diving into Anderson’s personal voting record, I found it relevant to add the results of a study by the media Politico, which found that the AfD was the party most often on the losing side of votes (Cokelaere, 2024), which already provides an insight into what will probably be found in the following analysis.

Since the beginning of this term, there have been 118 roll call votes in plenary sessions, and Anderson has participated in 112 of them, with the following results: in 55 cases she voted for the losing side, 32 of her votes were however in the winning side, and she abstained from voting 25 times.

Analysing her votes more closely allows for patterns to emerge. One first clear observation is that she most often votes against the proposition and is also very often part of a very small minority of MEPs doing so. But in some cases, she has been part of a more substantial opposition, where just a few

votes made the difference. This was the case for the election of the Commission, which succeeded with only 45% of the votes. This shows that protest votes against the Commission, such as Anderson's, are not so isolated after all.

Most of her abstentions were on matters related to foreign policy, reaffirming her belief in non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign countries.

There are some rare cases in which Anderson's "no" vote turned out to be part of the majority, effectively blocking a proposition: this happened in the vote on the annual Budget for 2025, in the vote on a motion for resolution about the fishing of dolphins, and in the vote on a recommendation on smoke- and aerosol-free environments. This last case is particularly relevant because as seen in the committee work section, Anderson had been particularly vocal against that recommendation in her committee involvement and in the end, her view matched the majority's as well, which is a rare occurrence.

The vote on a motion for resolution on the annual budget was also particular, because it showcased a certain division in the far-right: Anderson and the majority of her ESN colleagues voted against the budget, along with MEPs from major political groups such as the EPP and renew, but the P/E and ECR groups, which are usually more aligned with the ESN, voted in favour of that motion.

Despite these particularities, in 49% of cases, Anderson voted with the minority, illustrating her limited influence on final outcomes, confirming the Politico study presented earlier. Her voting record thus corroborates the broader trend of far-right actors struggling to exert decisive influence in plenary sessions, despite isolated instances of success.

6.2.7. Conclusion on Anderson's parliamentary work

This section has allowed great insight into Christine Anderson's behaviour within the EP, the "leading lady" of the AfD in European politics. Anderson defies the idea that far-right politicians are inactive and is, on the contrary very involved in her work, using all the tools available to her to promote her ideas and to try to influence legislative outcomes.

A first observation is that she uses some tools more than others, in particular plenary speeches and written questions, but those are less relevant tools when it comes to actually shaping the legislative outcomes of the EP. The use of these tools is very common in dissenter MEPs, and this along with her tendency towards protecting the national interest, are reasons to qualify her as such. She also makes use of those tools principally to criticize the establishment, in particular the European Commission.

Her work in Public Health demonstrates more disengagement, being absent from almost half the meetings and speaking only rarely when she does attend. While there is no way to know what is said during the coordinator's meeting, the gathered evidence suggests that she may also not be very involved. This paired with the fact that she proposed no amendments on the matter of health policy show that, despite the prominence of health policy in her discourse, her direct legislative engagement in this field remains limited.

Regarding her motion for resolution, we can see that she did propose a few, although never accepted by the other political groups, proving that the far-right is still relatively pushed aside if not completely disregarded by the political mainstream.

Finally, her voting record shows that she is most often in the minority and mostly votes against what is being proposed.

All of these elements tend to support the "influence through disruption" theory, as she displays more opposition than constructive engagement in legislative processes to shape outcomes in her favour, and when she does attempt to do so, she generally fails.

6.3. Analysis of Maximilian Krah's parliamentary work

6.3.1. Choice of topic

Maximilian Krah's situation is unmistakably more complex than that of his fellow far-right colleagues in this study because of the multiple scandals he was involved in that were explained earlier. These scandals have to be taken into consideration if one seeks to understand Krah's involvement in the EP, particularly at the end of the previous term and the beginning of the current one.

Over his last term and the beginning of this one, Krah wasn't particularly active, showing scores below the EP's average in all types of parliamentary activities. Despite this, he still had his policy field of privilege, which was commerce and matters linked with trade. Indeed, Krah was a member of the Committee on International Trade over both of his mandates and has spoken up many times about the topic in plenary sessions, as well as participated in several reports and opinions as a shadow rapporteur on the topic. He was almost equally as active on matters of foreign policy, but as he wasn't a member of the relevant committee, his involvement on trade policy has been preferred for this analysis (Maximilian Krah | European Parliament, n.d.).

This section will now successively analyse each avenue of influence established earlier, in the same order as for Christine Anderson, regarding Maximilian Krah's involvement in trade policy.

6.3.2. Committee work

Because the 9th parliamentary term is obviously longer than the current one, only one year of Krah's involvement in the INTA Committee will be analysed, so that the length more or less mirrors Anderson's. I had intended to choose the year 2023 because it's at the relative end of the parliamentary term and is therefore less likely to be characterized by the relative slowness of work that there may be in the beginning of a term, but is not yet an election year, which may alter involvement as well. Yet, after looking at the minutes of every Committee meeting for the year 2023, which I did through the webpage "wayback machine", which gives access to snapshots of webpages that have changed since, it transpired that Krah had been absent from all of the 23 meetings that year. Further exploration of Krah's participation in INTA meetings during the 9th term reveals a notable change in attendance. Although he participated regularly in 2020 and 2021, he stopped attending after April 2022, with no further recorded presence until the end of the term, for reasons that remain unclear. (Internet Archive, n.d.). The year 2021 was therefore selected for the present analysis and efforts will be made to discover why Krah stopped attending Committee meetings so abruptly.

In 2021, Maximilian Krah attended 17 out of the 25 INTA Committee meetings and spoke a total of six times at four of those meetings. This section will globally analyse those six speeches, without going into a one-by-one analysis. The transcript of those interventions can be found in the annex.

One interesting thing to note before starting the analysis, is that Krah predominantly spoke English, which is uncharacteristic of far-right actors, who tend to favour their mother tongue. Indeed, language is an important tool used by nationalist actors to assert sovereignty, cultural identity and political unity (Ringe, 2022, pp.27-30). The use of English on the other hand, is often a determining factor in the granting of influential positions, meaning that actors who wish to occupy such positions may be tempted to make more use of English (Ringe, 2022, pp. 192-193). While this may not be verified with certainty, Krah's use of English may therefore be an effort on his part to establish himself as a more "traditional" MEP who wishes to be taken seriously by his colleagues from other political affiliations, rather than by his own political group and voter base.

A review of Maximilian Krah's interventions in the INTA Committee reveals a profile quite different from his AfD colleague, Christine Anderson. A first observation is that Krah tends to focus more on technical issues, addressing matters such as the EBA and GSP trade regimes with least-developed countries, the CBERN and its actual impact on carbon emissions, screening mechanisms in matters of foreign direct investment etc. He asks the commission precise questions which require background knowledge and research, showcasing his involvement in his work. Besides those questions, Krah also

makes propositions of what he believes are the best way to handle the issues at hand, there is therefore more than just criticism to his speeches but also a driving force for innovation:

“The problem we have is that if you have least-developed countries, which are now under EBA, and they are now going upgrade to GSP, then they sometimes have a problem that because of the requirements they have for GSP, they don't come in. What we could foresee is a period of time that even after they have developed out of least-developed countries, that they can still stay in EBA for more than the three years we have foreseen now. The WTO now proposes seven years, which is by far too much. But if you could look for a compromise that they, let's say, four or five years, could stay in EBA until they have to step into GSP [...]” (Krah, 9 November 2021)

While sometimes critical of the EU, with for example a mention of its burdensome bureaucracy or its high standards, such criticisms are formulated much more carefully, contrarily to the sometimes-aggressive language used by Anderson.

The point is we are always talking about our high standards, and high standards have pros and cons, and the cons is that it's a cost driver. So, if we continue to increase our standards, both technically and legally, then that makes our products even more expensive on the market, which could turn into a disadvantage. And on the other hand, it could create our own trade barriers. (Maximilian Krah 9 November 2021)

This may once again be due to Krah's wish to establish himself as a “serious” actor, who is balanced enough in his opinions to be considered seriously by his peers, instead of being dismissed for being overtly Eurosceptic.

These characteristics might place him more in the “specialist” MEP type described by Navarro, given his focus on technical issue and his careful choice of words.

Finally, Krah professes himself as a supporter of trade and globalisation, advocating for closer economic ties with China and an open dialogue with Russia (keeping in mind that those statements were made in 2021, when the geopolitical situation with both countries were far different than that of today). He questions the EU's attitude towards Chinese direct investments, which he believes to be more impacted than investments from other countries, as he would like to see investment going into European companies to provide more employment for European, and in particular German, workers:

“when I prepared, I looked in some articles and for instance, I found one in the Center for Strategic and International Studies and there our new measures were hailed as a political instrument in getting of more distance to Chinese foreign direct investment. Whilst I understand it as a completely neutral mechanism, so from the numbers and the experiences, do we have countries which we screen especially and where we have, where we resist especially, or do we, don't we have it? Is it equal?” (Krah, 30 November 2021)

This approach reflects a more traditional far-right strategy for two reasons: first, the questions are largely rhetorical, as Krah appears already convinced that China is being unfairly treated, the intent seems less about gathering information and more about publicly challenging the Commission and

putting it under pressure. His emphasis on protecting German workers further aligns with nationalist economic discourse.

Overall Krah's behaviour in Committee meetings is more compatible with that of a "traditional" politician than that of Anderson, and his focus on asking pertinent questions and making suggestions to the Commission provide him with more potential influence, as his discourse is more likely to be well received than that of his more contentious far-right colleagues. This would place Krah in a different category of far-right actor, more business-oriented and compatible with economic globalization. This categorization can also be understood through Krah's biography, since he is well educated, holds a PhD and has worked as a business advisor before, giving him adequate qualifications to have an expert's opinion on trade matters.

However, his abrupt disengagement from Committee work in 2022 raises questions about the sustainability of this strategy and attention will be drawn to his involvement in other parliamentary activities after 2022 to see if such a shift operated in other areas as well.

6.3.3. Plenary speeches

During his two terms, Maximilian Krah's made 88 plenary speeches, which is somewhat under the EP's average, but this may have been different had he not stopped giving speeches after December 2023. Indeed, he was quite active before that and would have probably been over the average if he had continued to participate this actively, but just like in his committee, although at a different moment, he abruptly stopped making speeches in 2023. This time, the date coincides more with the beginning of this involvement in the already mentioned scandals, which may be the reason for his withdrawal from parliamentary life. He did however come back to make a handful of speeches in the 10th term.

Once again, analysing all speeches tackling trade individually would be too lengthy, so the 12 speeches that mention this theme will be grouped into three categories, which are: pragmatic trade engagement, competitiveness and regulations.

Pragmatic trade engagement

Half of Krah's speeches on matters of trade are a reflection of his view that trade is the most important aspect of international relations, and that it should never be jeopardized by ideological differences. This view particularly applies to the EU's relations to China, of which Krah has said the following:

“China is Chinese. Do we like that? No. Can we change it? No. Do we benefit from going into conflict, going into sanctions, going into economic warfare? Not at all. We have to accept the world as it is, even if we don't like it [...]” (Krah, 12 December 2023, *author's translation from the original German*)

This reflects Krah's view of sanctions, which he considers to harm trade and not be the EU's prerogative, as they should not meddle in other countries internal affairs.

Some of his other speeches demonstrate that same idea, and Krah goes even further by openly criticizing the left for having an idealistic world view which is not benefiting European citizens, whose welfare need to be prioritized over ideology:

I know that this is not a message that the majority in this House, especially on the left, likes to hear. After all, the Pippi Longstocking (*Fifi Brindacier*) mentality dominates: we make the world as we like it. But the world is not as you like, ladies and gentlemen, but follows the laws of economics (Krah, 4 October 2023, *author's translation from the original German*)

A last element related to this pragmatism in trade relations is that Krah regularly warns about the EU's relationship with the US, which should not be at the cost of other trading partners. This stance mirrors Krah's position in plenary, demonstrating a certain continuity in his work:

The essential industrial and commercial goods of the 21st century are technology and energy. What we are currently experiencing is that the United States - in violation of international law through sanctions against third countries - is putting pressure on European countries and the EU to decide where we get our energy from - from them, through liquefied natural gas - and that they decide where we get our technology from - not from China.

We don't want that, we can't accept that. Even if we reject Nordstream 2, and even if we have reservations about Huawei, the decision must be made by us and not by the US Congress” (Krah, 26 November 2020, *author's translation from the original German*).

Competitiveness

Krah's second point of concern regarding trade is the EU's ability to remain competitive in the global economy. He stresses the importance of fair competition on the global market, which he claims cannot be achieved through state interventions, because they would create an imbalance according to him. He also insists on the importance of having the same rules as other trading blocks, and on the interconnectedness of those blocks in the world we live in:

“The purpose of competition law is to create prosperity through fair conditions for everyone. And the belief that prosperity can be created by softening the rigid rules of competition law and through more state intervention is a fallacy. Socialism always sounds good, but it usually works badly, so we can't see anything good in this report either. Perhaps it is just as well that the rapporteur was unable to present it. [...] And that is why we reject the report, because it goes in the wrong direction in every respect. The opposite of good is well-intentioned. We need competition. Competition creates innovation and jobs. And we don't need any exceptions to fair competition” (Krah, 7 June 2021, *author's translation from the original German*).

These points about competitiveness were already part of his discourse at the Committee level, yet his tone in plenary is more critical, in particular of the left.

Regulations

The last type of speeches he gave in plenary were speeches regarding EU imposed regulations, and in particular, criticizing them. These are very linked to the idea of competitiveness, as he believes that the more regulation the EU puts in place, the less competitive EU companies will be. This is very clear in his 10th of February 2021 speech, where he said:

“MiFID has always been a regulatory monster that has not caused as much trouble for big banks and corporations as it has for SMEs. A quarter of all companies have stated that they were unable to find the right form to fulfil the requirements. [...] The economy in the eurozone needs less left-green over-regulation and more trust and more freedom, and that creates prosperity.” (*author’s translation from the original German*)

He once again criticised the left, as in several of his previous speeches, revealing a recurring pattern in his discourse. He also claims that the bureaucracy imposed by EU regulation make it harder for SMEs to innovate and only benefits big corporations.

Summary

Overall, there is a clear contrast between Krah’s plenary speeches and his earlier interventions in committee. In committee, he appeared more measured, resembling a “traditional” MEP and often speaking in English. By contrast, his plenary speeches are much closer in tone to Anderson’s—delivered in German, abrasive toward political opponents, and sharply critical of the EU. This shift likely reflects the differing nature of committee work versus plenary sessions: in committees, the focus is on advancing legislative texts through detailed discussion and compromise among political groups. In plenary, however, MEPs primarily address their voters and constituents rather than their colleagues. This explains why Krah is more inclined to speak German in plenary: his behaviour shifts depending on the intended audience. In committee, he seeks credibility among fellow MEPs; in plenary, he speaks to AfD voters. These audiences have vastly different expectations, and Krah adapts accordingly.

6.3.4. Legislative interventions

Proposed amendments

Krah proposed a total of 464 amendments in his time as MEP (Parltrack, n.d.), and 199 of them were linked to files assigned to the INTA Committee, as indicated by the committee tag on Parltrack. Here too, we observe a sudden end to his amendment proposals, this time in October 2022, a different point in time than the cessation of his committee work and plenary speeches, further deepening the uncertainty surrounding his gradual withdrawal from parliamentary activity.

While it is once more impossible to analyse them all, some trends may be observed in his proposals, especially if compared with Anderson's amendments.

First, we can see that many of his amendments are added paragraphs, instead of proposed changes of terminology, which were very common in Anderson's case. These additions are often of a technical nature, for example amendment #139 on motion for resolution 2022/2040:

"9 b. Calls on the Member States to work towards a back stock of materials and increase transparency of supply chains by spending data, N-tier mapping, or both, as many of today's most pressing supply shortages such as semiconductors occur in supplier sub-tiers [...]"

This amendment uses technical jargon that can only be the result of research in the subject matter.

Second, a few themes which were already areas of focus for Krah in his plenary or Committee speeches also find themselves part of his amendments, showing his dedication on certain topics, which he spends more energy and time legislating about. This was the case for the proposal for a regulation 2021/0297, for which Krah, along with some colleagues, proposed 47 amendments, most of which were about matters close to his political priorities. These include topics such as reciprocity in trade rules (Amendment #110), GSP and EBA beneficiary countries (Amendments #115, #120, #162) and safeguard mechanism to ensure the competitiveness of European products (Amendment 171). Unfortunately, although this file dates back to 2021, no final text has been adopted yet, so it isn't possible to determine whether the amendments were taken on.

Overall, his amendments on the topic of trade do tend to confirm the profile of specialist as his activity was substantive and targeted.

Reports

Just like his colleagues from the AfD and FPÖ, Maximilian Krah has not been appointed rapporteur during his time in the EP, but he has occupied the role of shadow rapporteur 11 times, which is close to the EP average. Six of his reports as shadow were in the INTA Committee, showing once again his commitment to that committee.

The last four of his reports concern trade liberalisation measures with Moldova and Ukraine, they will therefore be analysed together. The fifth and sixth one will also be analysed together, as they are both about the EU's trade relations with China.

The work of shadow rapporteur is difficult to measure, as they do not produce a report themselves, but are merely there to follow progresses made by the rapporteur and to engage with them, in order to influence their report (European Parliament Rules of Procedure, Rule 215). There are, however,

signs which are telling regarding shadows' involvement: whether or not they proposed amendments for that file and if they were accepted, how they voted and, if they were consulted by the rapporteur, this is indicated in the annexes of the legislative act.

Regarding files 2024/0029(COD), 2024/0028(COD), 2023/0144(COD) and 2022/0138(COD) which are the four files on trade relations with Ukraine and Moldova, there are no traces of involvement by Maximilian Krah. He has not proposed any amendments, which can be verified by crosschecking on the Parltrack website, has not voted in the final roll call vote that took place in the INTA Committee and doesn't appear in the transparency register of meetings with interest representatives. Based on this evidence, although limited as it doesn't include potential informal meetings, it can be inferred that Krah didn't engage actively with these files, despite his appointed role of shadow rapporteur.

Concerning the files 2020/0089(NLE) and 2020/0089M(NLE), which are respectively a proposal for a draft Council decision and motion for a non-legislative resolution on that draft proposal, Krah did show some involvement. Indeed, while he did not propose amendments or met with any representatives, he did partake in the roll call votes in his committee. Interestingly, he voted in favour of the draft council proposal, like the majority of his colleagues, but against the subsequent motion for resolution, a vote for which he was isolated.

Taken together, these six cases reveal a consistent pattern of minimal engagement from Krah in his capacity as shadow rapporteur. His legislative footprint is confined to two votes, with no amendments, no committee interventions, and no consultative presence. This reflects a broader pattern of selective disengagement by certain far-right MEPs, especially on files where the policy content, such as support for Ukraine, are opposed to their ideology or strategic priorities (Liboreiro, 2024).

Motion for resolutions

Over his two terms, Krah has only drafted 6 motions for resolution, which is significantly lower than the EP's median of 27,5, thus showing disengagement in that type of parliamentary work. However, one of these motions was about international trade. They were instead focused on foreign affairs matters, which isn't so surprising since that subject was identified as Krah's second most active field. Nevertheless, they will not be further analysed in this section.

Opinions

Krah was appointed shadow rapporteur on eight opinions during his 9th parliamentary term, under which five related to international trade. This number of opinions is about half of what the average MEP did over the same period, once again a sign that Krah is less involved in his work than most of his colleagues.

Three categories may be highlighted within those six opinions: two concern the EU's relations with China, three are about the relation with neighbouring countries (Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova) and one is about SMEs in the EU.

Across all six files where data was available, Krah submitted no amendments. He participated in some votes, but only once supported the opinion text. This limited engagement suggests that, as with reports, his shadow rapporteur role was largely nominal.

6.3.5. Parliamentary questions

Since none of the three oral questions asked by Maximilian Krah concerned matters of international trade, only his written questions will be analysed here. He asked a total of 54 written questions, which is significantly lower than his far-right colleagues, but much closer to the EP's average. This again underscores his relatively atypical profile within the far-right, occasionally resembling a more conventional parliamentary actor.

It is also interesting to note that, contrarily to his other forms of parliamentary work, which have all stopped before 2024, Krah kept asking parliamentary questions until March 2024, which is after the revelation of his scandal.

Eight of these questions are related to international trade and are composed of: a series of four questions with the same title, namely "Online traders from non-EU countries", three questions about European - Chinese trade relations and one question about reciprocity measures in the context of American protectionist measures. These questions touch upon topics often addressed by the politician, particularly reciprocity, competitiveness and relations with China.

The four questions on online traders from the 20th of March 2024 are also linked to China, in particular because Krah refers to the ability of Chinese online platforms such as Temu to evade EU regulations, such as custom duties and postage, which he considers confers them an unfair advantage over European products, whose competitiveness is thereby negatively affected. In his first question on the matter, he also tackles the problem of reciprocity, saying that products coming from

outside of the EU sometimes do not comply to EU regulations, as they should, which lead him to ask the Commission the following question among others:

“What is the Commission’s estimate of the damage that has so far been caused by the fact that manufacturers from non-EU countries are manufacturing products to completely different standards and that EU manufacturers are being severely disadvantaged?” (Krah, 20 March 2024).

The four questions really show Krah’s engagement on matters of reciprocity and competitiveness of EU products, which align with his beliefs as a far-right politician, as it is not surprising that they put their own interest above those of foreign firms.

The same types of concerns appear clear in his other written questions, such as the one relating to the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), in which he asks the commission about the openness of EU public markets being open to Chinese firms, while the reverse isn’t true, which raises the question of whether this lack in reciprocity would be corrected by the new agreement. The same goes for the questions on the US protectionist measures of the “Buy American” Act, where Krah expresses concern for European firms in the US, claiming a lack of reciprocity given the fact that an act such as the American one doesn’t exist in the EU.

These questions indicate that while Krah’s overall participation in trade policy is limited, he engages more actively when the issue involves themes central to far-right economic nationalism, namely the defence of European producers against perceived external threats and unfair competition (Rathgeb, 2024).

6.3.6. Voting record

Following the same approach used in analysing Krah’s committee work, this section will focus only on the year 2021, but it must be noted that, similarly to Krah’s involvement in parliamentary questions until later in the term, he also continued voting in plenary until April 2024, meaning that voting was the last type of parliamentary work he remained involved in.

Maximilian Krah participated in 353 out of 356 recorded roll call votes that year, indicating a high rate of attendance. However, his voting behaviour diverges significantly from the parliamentary mainstream. He voted with the majority only 58 times, or 16.5% of the time, suggesting rare moments of alignment with the broader consensus. By contrast, he opposed the majority position in 231 votes (65.5%), and in nearly all such cases, he voted “no”. His abstention rate stood at 18% (64 votes), which is higher than his majority votes, and may reflect a strategic decision to avoid clear positioning on sensitive or ideologically ambiguous issues. Taken together, these figures illustrate a

voting pattern marked by recurrent disagreements, consistent with his identity as a far-right MEP whose positions often fall outside mainstream parliamentary alignments (Conti, 2011).

Different observations about his voting patterns can be made, with several specific cases that warrant a closer look:

Only two of Krah's "yes" votes placed him in the minority, both on motions for resolutions tabled by the ID and ECR groups on 5 October 2021. His support for these resolutions is consistent with group loyalty, though they were rejected by the parliamentary majority, a typical outcome for proposals from the far-right, which often diverge from the general consensus.

Conversely, two of Krah's "no" votes turned out to be part of the majority. These occurred on the 18th of May, on a Commission proposal dealing with the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations in developing countries, and on the 5th of October, on a resolution tabled by the Greens.

In both cases, a coalition of parties, including most of the EPP, ECR, and ID groups, as well as part of Renew and S&D in the second case, came together to reject initiatives associated with Green or progressive agendas. This happened only rarely in the time sample chosen, but the presence of more far-right actors in the current legislature suggests that this type of scenario may become more frequent (Verger, 2024).

6.3.7. Conclusion on Krah's parliamentary work

Overall, Krah's behaviour in his time in parliament has been quite paradoxical for multiple reasons.

Firstly, his involvement in parliamentary work has dwindled over the years, going from an active participation in committee work and a use of different legislative tools to a gradual stop of all types of involvements at different points in time. While the theory that his implication in scandals led to his change of behaviour is solid, it doesn't explain why he stopped participating in committee meetings as early as 2022, given the fact that the scandals in question only came to light later on.

Secondly, his profile seems to vary between the traditional far-right cliché for some aspects of his work, and the more traditional MEP profile for others. Indeed, his commitment to international trade files and his active participation on the INTA Committee in technical matters, as well as his scarce use of parliamentary questions point towards his classification within the "specialist" group coined by Navarro (2009). But his lack of involvement in the reports and opinions he was tasked to participate in within the same Committee, as well as his numerous protest-votes in plenary suggest otherwise and point more towards the traditional far-right actor and the role of dissenter in Navarro's typology.

I would therefore consider him to be a sort of hybrid MEP, whose profile corresponds to characteristics of both MEP types.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that, as we know, Krah has been accused of receiving financial support from pro-Russian actors and of employing a parliamentary aide involved in espionage for the Chinese government. When viewed in light of Krah's parliamentary record, which includes repeated expressions of support for both China and Russia, those allegations can be considered noteworthy. Indeed, he has criticised EU sanctions against Russia and calls for closer cooperation with China, positions that align closely with the interests of these foreign actors. While direct links cannot be confirmed, the overlap between his political activity and these external interests raises questions about potential influence on his legislative behaviour.

These findings have to be put in perspective however, as only one file was studied, namely international trade, which does not reflect the full scope of Krah's activity or political positioning. This is a limitation inherent to this kind of case study work: it cannot claim to offer an exhaustive picture, neither of the individual MEPs studied nor of the far-right in the European Parliament as a whole. Many more traditionally far-right positions, such as rejection of Immigration, Euroscepticism, or anti-LGBTQ+ discourse, are clearly visible in Krah's plenary speeches and written questions and have not been subject to more in depth analysis. International trade was chosen for this analysis because it offered more material for a detailed investigation, but it is arguably less prone to overtly ideological or extremist discourse, which do not allow for these more extremist ideologies to be analysed. However, those should be mentioned in order to understand who Maximilian Krah is and what he stands for as a politician. His more conventional behaviour seems therefore to have more to do with the technical and less politicised nature of the topic than with any real moderation in his political views.

Krah's behaviour within the INTA Committee suggests a greater potential for influence than that of Anderson, as he initially seemed more inclined to work within the institutional framework and act like a conventional MEP, engaging seriously with Committee work. This more traditional mode of participation coexists with his far-right positioning, and the gradual decline in his activity over time raises doubts about the durability of that initial engagement.

6.4. Analysis of Harald Vilimsky's parliamentary work

6.4.1. Choice of topic

Harald Vilimsky is the most senior and active MEP from the FPÖ and his position as vice-chair of the PfE group suggests a higher level of potential influence than the other MEPs studied in this thesis. Examining his concrete work in the European Parliament will therefore help determine whether this seniority is reflected in his actual parliamentary behaviour.

A review of Vilimsky's activity reveals distinct thematic preferences depending on the parliamentary tool: migration for plenary speeches and written questions, foreign relations for motions for resolutions and enlargement for reports. To combine these different topics within one single framework, the broader theme of foreign policy has been selected. This focus is also supported by Vilimsky's membership in the Foreign Affairs (AFET) Committee over three consecutive terms. The analysis will focus primarily on the current parliamentary term, as it is the most directly relevant to current institutional dynamics. However, where activity is limited, data from the previous term may be used to complete the analysis.

6.4.2. Committee work

In the current legislative term, Harald Vilimsky has attended three out of the seventeen AFET Committee meetings. By comparing this with data from an EU Watch study on the participation of MEPs in the AFET Committee in the 9th parliamentary term, we can see that this low committee engagement is a continued trend, as Vilimsky attended only 17 of 117 AFET meetings during that period. Although the AFET Committee has a generally low average attendance rate of 42%, Vilimsky was still ranked 74th out of 79 AFET members in terms of attendance for the previous term (Grinberg, 2024).

It is tempting to link Vilimsky's low attendance to his political affiliation, especially since some studies have shown that far-right MEPs tend to be less involved in parliamentary work (Behm & Brack, 2019). This idea is also supported to some extent by the EU Watch report, which shows that ID MEPs rank relatively low in terms of activity. However, both Anderson and Krahe were significantly more active in their respective committees, suggesting that political affiliation alone does not fully account for his behaviour.

One possible explanation lies in his role as vice-chair of the ID group, which may represent a more pressing responsibility for him, overshadowing his involvement in committee work. Another

possibility is that he chose to focus more his attention on visible parliamentary activities like plenary speeches and parliamentary question, where he's clearly much more active.

In the three meetings he did attend, Vilimsky did not speak once, but he did participate in votes, which is what will be analysed here, for want of other data.

He took part in eight votes within two meetings and the results are simple: he voted against every single proposition, along with his political group, and his vote was always in the minority. This indicates a low impact of himself and his group in committee work, which takes place largely without their involvement and in spite of their disapproval.

6.4.3 Plenary speeches

When it comes to plenary speeches, there is much more material to analyse, since this is a medium clearly prioritized by Vilimsky. Across both terms and all subjects related to foreign policy, he totalled 35 speeches in plenary, meaning that this topic represents 46% of all of his interventions in plenary within that time frame. As before, three subcategories will be studied here: migration, geopolitics and enlargement.

Migration

Migration is by far the most mentioned topic by Vilimsky in plenary, totalling 20 mentions over the two terms. His discourse concerning migration is in line with traditional far-right ideas, namely very negative (Mudde, 2019). He uses shocking phrases to describe the migration crisis, for example:

“Migration since 2015 - the sheer catastrophe without any solution, in which you want to slowly change the continent in the direction of a second Marrakesh or Botswana.” (Vilimsky, 1 April 2024, author's translation from the original German).

He gave multiple such speeches in plenary, in which he implies that Europe is becoming more like Africa. This type of discourse is linked to the “great replacement” conspiracy theory, which postulates that native European populations will be replaced overtime by migrants, erasing European cultures and religions in the process (Igounet & Reichstadt, 2018).

Another aspect of migration which he mentions multiple times is the EU's action in sea-rescue operations, which he considers necessary, but he deplores the fact that migrants are taken to the EU instead of being brought back to the African coast:

“as a representative of a group that is so demonised by you for being critical of migration, allow me to state one thing very clearly and unambiguously: Everyone has the right to be rescued if they are in distress at sea, and we have a duty to rescue them. That is not a question at all. It's just that the political discussion we're having is different. Should a person who is rescued or sometimes allows themselves to

be rescued be taken the few kilometres back to the Arab-African coast or should they be taken 500 kilometres away to Europe, to Italy, Malta or wherever?" (Vilimsky, 12 July 2023, *author's translation from the original German*).

He also insists multiple times on the fact that most migrants come as asylum seekers but do not meet the requirements to be protected under the Geneva conventions and therefore benefit from European aid which they are in fact not entitled to.

"This means that a major discussion has arisen here about the fact that those who pay taxes, who contribute to the general welfare, are on the other hand financing people who have come to us under the title of being worthy of protection and two thirds of whom - and all statistics show this - are not worthy of protection, do not receive Geneva Convention status, do not enjoy subsidiary or humanitarian protection status." (Vilimsky, 23 October 2024, *author's translation from the original German*)

Faced with what he qualifies a "catastrophe", he proposes multiple solutions: he wants to increase border control and put Schengen on hold until the crisis is resolved and to implement pushbacks at the borders.

"I welcome the fact that twelve countries in the European Union have launched a call for help to secure the borders with Community funds. That would be a smart thing to do, to protect Europe's borders in a joint action and to finally realise the other, pushbacks, and not to reject them. Since 2014, there has been a European Union regulation that makes it possible to carry out appropriate pushbacks. If you continue to do nothing, if you continue to stand by and watch the problem get worse and worse, then you are leading Europe into an ever-greater crisis. (Vilimsky, 20 October 2021, *author's translation from the original German*)

He also proposes to help the people in their regions of origin instead of bringing them to Europe (Vilimsky, 12 July 2023).

His whole discourse is very representative of the far-right's stance on migration (Ünal Eriş & Öner, 2021), but we can note some particularly extreme propositions such as pushbacks and the suspension of Schengen. Despite these very restrictive ideas, Vilimsky shows himself willing to help, positioning himself in favour of SAR missions and humanitarian help in the countries of origins, which seem to be more liberal views.

Geopolitics

While this section is entitled "geopolitics", it could almost have been called "Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine" given the fact that this particular conflict receives Vilimsky's attention the most. On that topic, he also follows typical far-right discourse: he advocates for peace and a diplomatic solution to the conflict and opposes the EU's action of sending money and military aid to Ukraine. He proposes tripolar negotiations, excluding the US from the table (Vilimsky, 16 February 2022).

He is also very vocal against the sanctions taken against Russia, which he considers harmful to Europeans because of the inflation they cause, and because they are ineffective against Russia:

“We have imposed eleven waves of sanctions on the Russians, and the situation in our country has deteriorated again and again. Today we have a gigantic development in the area of inflation. We have an associated gigantic development in the area of poverty in Europe.

Others are doing the business. The Americans are doing the business from where we now obtain our energy, the Russians are doing the business via detours, via India, via China. We buy Russian energy anyway. The overall situation could not be more absurd.” (Vilimsky, 17 October 2023, *author’s translation from the original German*).

Besides the conflict in Ukraine, Vilimsky also talked about the situation in Palestine, using once again a deliberately provocative rhetoric:

“Especially to the Greens and the Left, Hamas and Palestinian supporters here in this House: do you really believe that it is the right signal to triple the payments to Palestine now, which will then of course also go to Hamas circles whose rocket stores will be full?” (Vilimsky, 18 October 2023).

In this conflict however, he does not mention his proposed solution, contrarily to what he did in the case of the Ukrainian war.

Enlargement

Although he mentioned that topic less than the two preceding ones, Harald Vilimsky has spoken about enlargement five times in plenary, to express his disapproval on this perspective. In the case of the discussion surrounding a possible enlargement to Ukraine, he says:

“Bringing Ukraine into the European Union in an express process is also the wrong way to go. How many of the European criteria do you still want to throw overboard? You have thrown Dublin overboard, you have thrown Schengen overboard, you have thrown Maastricht overboard and now Copenhagen with the Copenhagen criteria. Does none of this European set of rules count here anymore?” (Vilimsky, 9 March 2023, *author’s own translation from the original German*).

He also mentions Turkey twice, a country he doesn’t approve of as a candidate for EU accession because he believes that “Turkey is not part of Europe and never will be!” (Vilimsky, 18 May 2021).

This negative view of enlargement is, once again, a classic far-right talking point (Bélanger & Wunsch, 2022), further establishing Vilimsky as a typical far-right politician.

Summary

Overall, Vilimsky’s behaviour in plenary seems similar to that of his AfD colleagues Anderson and Krah, despite their different thematic focuses. In all three cases, they utilise strongly negative language and ridicule their political opponents, in particularly left-leaning parties. One difference in the case of Vilimsky in particular, is that he frequently redirects his speech to talk about migration, even if that wasn’t at the agenda.

As noted earlier, plenary speeches are not among the most effective tools for shaping legislative outcomes, which suggests that Vilimsky’s primary audience is principally his domestic electorate. His

use of the plenary platform thus appears to be once again aimed less at influencing policy and more at reinforcing partisan narratives and maintaining visibility at home.

6.4.4. Legislative interventions

Proposed Amendments

Over the course of the two studied legislative terms, Harald Vilimsky has tabled 951 amendments. While this technically covers two legislative terms, in practice, all amendments were proposed during the 9th term, as no amendments have been recorded since 2023. This phenomenon is reminiscent of Maximilian Krah's behaviour, although in this case it is harder to explain why, since Vilimsky's situation is very different than that of his AfD colleague, and there are no apparent scandals or other events which may be at the root of his change in activity. This shift may also simply be the result of a change in political strategy, in which amendments are no longer prioritized, as they are unlikely to be accepted anyway. Indeed, Steinecke (2022) shows that amendments from the far-right are almost systematically rejected by their fellow MEPs, which may be reason enough to convince Vilimsky not to propose new ones anymore.

Within the 951 amendments he did propose during his 9th term, 575 of them were tagged as being tabled in the context of the AFET Committee, demonstrating once again the thematic importance of foreign policy for Vilimsky.

Similarly to what was done with Krah, amendments proposed to one file close to Vilimsky's identified interests, namely enlargement, were analysed. The file in question is a motion for resolution written by the AFET Committee on the 2022 Commission Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina (2022/2200(INI)). Vilimsky, who was a shadow rapporteur on this file, tabled 19 amendments to this motion, along with of his fellow then ID colleague Bernhard Zimniok.

The amendments primarily sought to reframe wording to express opposition to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU accession, and in some cases aimed to remove entire sentences. Examples include:

~~"1. Welcome~~ Condemns the European Council's decision to grant candidate status to BiH; reiterates its clear support no for BiH's EU integration, ~~grounded in unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity;"~~

(Amendment 65 # 2022/2200(INI))

"4. Calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service to ~~continue ease~~ supporting BiH's EU integration ~~based on strict conditionality;"~~ (Amendment 87 # 2022/2200(INI))

One amendment also includes Vilimsky's dislike of sanctions:

"9. Reiterates its call for ~~targeted a~~ stop to all forms of sanctions against ~~destabilising actors~~ in BiH;" (Amendment 133 # 2022/2200(INI))

The final report agreed upon within the Committee shows that none of Vilimsky's proposed amendments were adopted, and the positive tone regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession remained (RANGEL, 2023), confirming the idea that amendments proposed by the far-right are usually rejected.

Reports

Harald Vilimsky wrote eight reports as shadow rapporteur during his 9th parliamentary term, all of them for the AFET Committee. The majority of them concern the EU's enlargement, and in particular scrutiny of the Commission's reports on some states who are candidates to EU accession. The previous section already established that Vilimsky proposed multiple amendments to the AFET's official report on the 2022 Commission report on Bosnia and Herzegovina. This section will aim to find out whether he did so in the other reports he was assigned to, and whether his involvement went beyond amendment proposals. In particular whether he voted in the final Committee decision and whether he participated in meetings with external stakeholders, which is visible in the transparency record of the procedure.

For all of the reports he was tasked to work on as a shadow rapporteur, Vilimsky has shown a similar type of engagement: he proposed between three and fifty amendments, depending on the file, for all of them. Consistent with the findings of Steinecke (2022), and following manual checks of a subset of amendments, it appears that the vast majority of Vilimsky's proposals were not adopted.

Regarding his involvement in the final roll call vote on the report tabled by the rapporteur of the file, his participation varied: he did not participate on two occasions, and he abstained once. In the five other cases, he voted against the report, but this was without effect as the vast majority of the Committee had voted in favour each time.

He did not participate in any official meetings with any stakeholders in his function of shadow rapporteur.

In sum, Vilimsky's work as shadow rapporteur reflects a consistent pattern: he actively tabled amendments and participated in votes but failed to achieve meaningful changes to the reports. His repeated rejection votes, occasional abstentions, and absence of engagement with stakeholders suggest that he only performed the procedural steps expected of him without significant engagement beyond symbolic opposition. This reinforces a broader observation seen in this study: while far-right MEPs like Vilimsky utilize available parliamentary tools, their substantive influence on final legislative outcomes remains inconsequential.

Motion for resolutions

When it comes to motions for resolution, Harald Vilimsky has been the most prolific of the far-right actors in this study, having participated in a total of 20 motions, with just one in the current term.

In this case as well, we can see a higher level of engagement at the beginning of the term, followed by an abrupt stop at the end of 2022. He did not participate in another motion before the 10th parliamentary term. This suggests that, beyond the hypothesis of the scandal evoked for Krah, there seems to be a recurrence in the fact that far-right MEPs are more active at the beginning of their terms than at the end.

Within this particular legislative tool, Vilimsky prioritizes mostly geopolitical issues, specifically human rights concerns in foreign countries, which recurred nine times in total.

While these motions tackle different situations, they often have a similar structure: the MEPs tabling it express their concern for a difficult situation abroad and express their support to the victims, in particular persecuted Christian populations or activists. Then they sometimes criticize the EU's response to that situation and always call on the European institution to condemn the foreign government responsible for the violation of human rights and to stop all fundings or financial aids to that government. When Turkey is concerned, which has been the case four times, they also demand that its accession process be halted, as, according to them, the country's behaviour does not qualify it as a potential EU member state and because it is not a part of Europe.

Whatever the content of the motion is however, one consistent pattern appears at the voting stage: they all lapsed, meaning that another motion for resolution was agreed on before the ID one was discussed, and therefore didn't even get to the voting stage. In every single case the proposition that was adopted by the EP was a joint motion for resolution. These joint motions for resolution were always tabled by a coalition of at least the EPP, RENEW, S&D and the greens, and in some the ECR and the Left joined the group as well. The ID group has not participated in any of these joint motions in the files studied, indicating either a deliberate choice to maintain a separate voice or exclusion by the mainstream parties. Whatever the reason may be, it is clear that once again, the far-right's influence is very low, since their texts are systemically ignored in favour of the consensus found within the EP, that is reached without their input.

Opinions

Vilimsky has only written two opinions over the course of the 9th and 10th parliamentary terms, once again solely as shadow rapporteur, which is the lowest number of opinions both within the four studied MEPs and compared to the EP's average. Only one of his opinions was done within the AFET Committee, and it relates to a topic outside of Vilimsky's usual thematic focus: the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU strategy for international cultural relations (2022/2047(INI)). This is due to the nature of opinions, which, as mentioned before, are made by a committee to propose ideas and work with another Committee, and the topical relation between the two may be relatively flexible (Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, rules 57 and 125).

Once more, it is difficult to assess his involvement in the drafting process of the opinion, as a lot of it happens behind the scenes. However, amendments and votes can be measured. In this case, Vilimsky has not proposed any amendment, which is noteworthy as he has proposed some for all of the reports he was shadow rapporteur on. During the vote in Committee, he was present but abstained.

This comparatively low level of involvement is probably due to the topic of the opinion, which is far from Vilimsky's habitual interests.

6.4.5. Parliamentary questions

Harald Vilimsky has participated in five oral questions during the 9th term and none – for now - in the current term. Since none of those questions were related to foreign policy, but tackled various issues such as COVID-19 vaccines, energy policy and the financing of private channels of information, this section will only examine his written questions.

Over the two terms studied, Vilimsky has asked 161 written questions, which is almost double the amount of such questions asked by the “average” MEP established in this study. This is characteristic of the ‘dissident’ MEP type identified by Navarro (2009), as these MEPs tend to make extensive use of written questions. While Vilimsky has already asked 14 written questions in this term, only two of them concern foreign policy, this section will therefore once again have to focus more on the 9th parliamentary term than the 10th. The same sub-topics will be examined here as for Vilimsky's plenary speeches, namely migration, geopolitics and enlargement.

In total, Vilimsky has asked 40 questions related to the topic of foreign policy, with a clear focus on migration, as 25 of those questions were related to that specific subject. Enlargement comes second with 10 questions addressing it, and there are only seven questions tackling matters related to geopolitical questions (Written Questions | Harald VILIMSKY | European Parliament, n.d.).

Overall, the questions reflect already formulated concerns: he deplores the migration crisis and calls on the Commission to do more to stop migrants from coming into the EU, regretting its current action in that domain (Vilimsky, 30 November 2021).

On the enlargement question, he once again mostly criticizes Turkey because of its “aggressive behaviour” (Vilimsky, 30 November 2021) towards EU countries and its handling of the migration crisis (Vilimsky, 11 September 2020).

Finally, on geopolitical questions, his focus is on the war in Ukraine, where he advocates for less sanctions on Russia because of their ineffectiveness and their high cost for EU citizens (Vilimsky, 3 April 2023) and questions the Commission on whether or not they actively tried to negotiate peace agreements, which he considers a priority (21 March 2024).

Harald Vilimsky has been discussed here individually, but one may note that, from April 2021 onwards, a vast majority of his written questions were tabled with his colleague Georg Mayer, who is coincidentally the last MEP whose work will be analysed in this study. This suggests close cooperation and ideological alignment between the two FPÖ colleagues. This may also mean that they share their workload, which is efficient when one asks as many written questions as they both do.

As noted in previous sections, written questions have limited impact on the legislative process. They serve mainly as a formal channel to hold the Commission accountable and to keep certain issues visible on the parliamentary agenda. Vilimsky’s frequent use of this tool seems more about reinforcing his political message than actually pushing for real legislative change.

6.4.6. Voting record

Each roll call vote cast by Vilimsky this term was categorized similarly to those of Anderson and Krah, and divided between: majority, minority, and abstention. Of the 108 votes he participated in, Vilimsky was in the majority 38% of the time and in the minority 44.5%. The remaining 17.5% were abstentions.

These figures differ notably from those of his colleagues. Vilimsky found himself in the majority far more often than both Anderson and Krah. This difference is especially striking when compared with Krah, who was in the majority only 16% of the times. Even between Vilimsky and Anderson, where the same time period was studied, a significant difference emerges Anderson was in the majority just 28% of the time, which is 10% less than Vilimsky. This comparison highlights important variations within the far-right, demonstrating that, contrary to what one may assume, it is not a unified bloc in the EP. While both MEPs belong to far-right groups, those are not the same: the PfiE appears to align

with the majority more frequently than the ESN, suggesting either different political strategies or distinct levels of marginalization. Although this comparison involves only two MEPs, the evidence here points toward a pattern where ESN is more consistently excluded from the majority than the PfE.

Despite the different time frames, the comparison between Krah and Vilimsky is revealing: Krah found himself in the minority much more often than Vilimsky or Anderson, suggesting that the far-right may now be more integrated into majority votes than in the previous legislative term.

This trend aligns with expectations following the 2024 European elections, which saw a notable rise in far-right representation: from 76 MEPs in the ID group last term (Members' Research Service, 2019) to 109 in the combined PofE and ESN groups (The Political Groups, 2025). This does not even include the ECR group.

6.4.7. Conclusion on Vilimsky's parliamentary work

In sum, the analysis of Harald Vilimsky's parliamentary work confirms his alignment with the "dissenter" profile described in Navarro's typology. He made frequent use of parliamentary tools typical of this type, particularly written questions and plenary speeches, but showed disengagement from tools that require deeper legislative commitments, such as committee work, reports and opinions.

A notable feature of Vilimsky's profile is the contrast between his high formal participation in symbolic tools and his limited substantive influence. While he actively proposed amendments and motions early in the term, his engagement declined after 2022, reflecting a pattern of initial ambition followed by disengagement.

His voting record offers a more nuanced picture: Vilimsky aligned with the parliamentary majority more frequently than his far-right peers Anderson and Krah, suggesting a better integration of the PofE group within majority coalitions.

Finally, Vilimsky's frequent co-signing of written questions with fellow FPÖ MEP Georg Mayer highlights a collaborative dimension within his party, pointing to a strong internal cohesion.

6.5. Analysis of Georg Mayer's parliamentary work

6.5.1. Choice of topic

Georg Mayer is undoubtedly the least active MEP from this study, scoring under his colleagues in all categories but written questions, which already hint towards a possible classification as a “dissenter” in Navarro's typology (2009).

Within this relatively low activity, he seems to have some specific concerns, in particular climate change and energy, which will be analysed together due to their thematic overlap. After all, energy policy plays a central role in climate change regulations, and the two are often addressed as interconnected issues in the EP. It will also permit to have slightly more material to work on, which would have otherwise been difficult given Mayer's low activity levels.

Since Mayer has been part of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) for the past two legislative terms, in the previous term as full member and in the current term as substitute, this choice also allows for the analysis of the related committee work. One may note that, despite his apparent interest in climate change regulation, Mayer has never been part of the relevant Environment, Climate and Food Safety Committee, which would have allowed him to have more weight in those matters. This may however not be up to Mayer entirely, as committee memberships are bargained at the political group level and MEPs are not always assigned in their committee of choice.

Interestingly, each MEP from this study has had different political priorities and areas of interest, which have allowed for an overview of how the far-right positions itself on health matters, international trade and foreign affairs. Mayer's interest for climate and energy allows for a new angle to be observed as well, as these topics often provoke criticism from far-right parties regarding the economic impact of climate policies, national sovereignty over energy resources, and scepticism toward EU climate objectives (Forchtner & Lubarda, 2023). This diversity of opinions also showcases the diversity within far-right actors, who all have personal preferences despite their common ideological backgrounds.

6.5.2. Committee work

Georg Mayer's attendance to all ITRE meetings since the beginning of the 9th term, based on the minutes of the meetings available on the way back machine website, have allowed to identify some key patterns.

Firstly, he has not attended a single meeting in the current legislature, probably due to his change of status within the Committee, going from full member to simple substitute. There will therefore be no possible analysis of his work in the 10th legislative term for this Committee, apart from noting that his role of substitute seems not to interest him.

Secondly, he attended only 38 % of meetings in the 9th term, and has not spoken in any of them, he was simply present and voting. His influence within the ITR Committee can therefore be evaluated as low, given his sparse attendance and participation in the work sessions.

Since his work in the current term was put aside, the year 2021 has been chosen for closer inspection, to mirror the year analysed for both Krah and Vilimsky. It may also be noted that, in contrast to his colleagues Krah and Vilimsky, who both showed declining participation over time, Mayer stayed consistent in his attendance throughout the 9th parliamentary term.

Contrarily to what has been seen in the previous three cases, where the far-right MEPs tended to vote in the minority much more than in the majority in committee, the opposite is true of Mayer. Out of the 21 votes he took part in, Mayer expressed his objection only four times. He voted with the majority nine times and preferred to abstain 8 times, indicating a higher level of agreement with committee decisions than any of his colleagues.

This could be due to different factors: either the direction taken in the ITRE Committee is more right-leaning than usual in the EP, or Mayer is more accepting of more traditional proposals than some of his colleagues. The ID group has been rather divided on those votes, which leads me to believe the proposals must not have been overtly right-wing, else all ID MEPs would have voted in favour of them. There are also no patterns to be found in terms of contents that Mayer supported or not, with some topics obtaining positive votes although they are not typical far-right talking points. For example Mayer voted in favour of the Committee's draft opinion on the European Data Act, which was tabled by a EPP rapporteur, and which was also massively supported by the other political groups, and it is unlikely that left leaning groups would support of proposal that stood too close to far-right themes.

Based on this evidence, I would therefore argue that it is rather Mayer who seems to endorse some more traditional opinions, assessing each file on a case-by-case basis instead of voting systematically in line with his ID colleagues in the Committee.

These findings suggest that while Mayer was relatively absent, he did not position himself as an outright opponent of the Committee's work. This sets him apart from the typical dissenter role, which is usually marked by a critical stance towards EU decisions. Instead, Mayer's behaviour points

to a more pragmatic approach, where low engagement is coupled with a willingness to endorse politically neutral or widely accepted files.

6.5.3. Plenary Speeches

Georg Mayer has given 35 plenary speeches in the period studied, which is substantially lower than any MEP from this work, control group and far-right actors combined. The topics of energy and climate change make up about half of those speeches, with respectively eleven interventions dedicated to the topic of energy, and six specifically to climate change.

Energy

Georg Mayer's discourse on energy follows the same general Eurosceptic line as his far-right colleagues but with a few particularities worth noting. A key aspect of his argument is his repeated criticism of the EU sanctions on Russia, which he believes to be responsible for the rise in energy prices across Europe. Like Vilimsky, Mayer calls for these sanctions to be lifted, arguing that they harm European citizens and worsen the energy crisis unnecessarily:

"Let's not pretend that these high energy prices have fallen from the sky by chance. Everything in this world has its effects through cause and effect. 14 packages of sanctions were intended to bring Russia to its knees and force it into peace. In the meantime, pipelines have also been blown up. And what do we have to do? We have to compete on the world market for expensive US LNG gas. Prices in Europe have therefore exploded." (Mayer, 27 November 2024, *author's translation from the original German*)

Mayer is also particularly aggressive in his criticism of left-leaning political groups, especially the Greens and the S&D group, and his tone often appears even sharper than that of his colleagues. He regularly blames these groups for what he sees as disastrous energy policies and uses provocative language to drive his point home. For example, he once declared:

"The only thing that is still heating up this house are the S&D Group's highly dangerous contacts with Qatar, which are also illegal." (Mayer, 13 December 2023, *author's translation from the original German*).

Another key part of Mayer's stance is his position on nuclear power. Unlike many far-right actors across Europe, who generally support nuclear energy as a tool to ensure national energy independence, Mayer and his party oppose it, arguing that nuclear plants are dangerous and should be phased out (Praet, 2023). He has criticised the Green Deal for keeping nuclear plants as part of the EU's energy strategy despite the danger it represents for the population:

"Here, nuclear energy is being given a green label - a ribbon - and that means the de facto revival of nuclear energy in 2022, a nuclear power with which we have only had negative experiences in the course of our history, and I don't need to list all the examples here." (Mayer, 5 July 2024, *author's translation from the original German*)

In addition to his opposition to nuclear power, Mayer is highly critical of renewable energy, which he portrays as ineffective and a waste of public funds:

“The alternative is now supposed to be heavily subsidised alternative energies – which are heavily subsidised because they are completely uneconomical. And these renewable energies will never be able to replace the old energies.” (Mayer, 18 April 2023, *author’s translation from the original German*).

Mayer consistently calls for energy policy to be returned to the national level. He argues that member states would manage energy issues more effectively than the EU and regularly demands that Brussels step back from this area. This argument is very much in line with Christine Anderson’s broader push for a return of national sovereignty.

His idea of an effective energy policy is that things should stay as they have been before, without bothering with red tape and without looking at who the EU is buying the energy from, as long as a low price can be ensured. He also calls the EU to “suspend CO2 pricing immediately, reduce taxes on gas and fuel immediately.” (Mayer, 8 March, *author’s translation from the original German*).

Climate Change

Mayer’s position on climate change fits into a broader trend observed among far-right actors in the European Parliament. Like many of his political peers, he is sceptical of the scientific consensus on climate change, downplaying both its causes and the role of human activity. This kind of discourse is not unique to Mayer: recent research shows that far-right MEPs tend to reject or relativise anthropogenic climate change, often framing it instead as a natural phenomenon or using it to critique EU overreach (Forchtner & Lubarda, 2023, pp.48-49). In Mayer’s case, this scepticism is clearly expressed in his speeches, where he often argues that extreme weather events are part of natural cycles and that the EU’s climate narrative is exaggerated. For example, speaking about flooding in Venice, he stated:

“But of course it is particularly dramatic in the area of Venice, because a world heritage site is also affected here, which of course has to be saved and is threatened by these constant floods. But it’s not just climate change that is causing the problem there, it’s also mankind, which, through years of widening the canals to allow even larger ships to enter the city, is of course now ensuring that more water can enter the city.” (Mayer, 26 November 2019, *author’s translation from the original German*)

This quote illustrates his tendency to shift the blame away from the human impact on climate change, suggesting instead other potential reasons, such as local mismanagement.

Unsurprisingly, Mayer is strongly opposed to the European Green Deal, which he sees as a misguided and ultimately ineffective attempt to “save the planet.” His speeches portray the Green Deal not only as unrealistic but also as harmful, particularly for European businesses. Rather than pursuing ambitious ecological targets, which he considers economically damaging, Mayer argues that the EU should focus on helping its industries grow and become more competitive on the global stage:

“These completely unrealistic climate targets that we have now imposed on ourselves and thus imposed on our companies will also have negative side effects for the development of companies in Europe. Industry is therefore facing serious challenges - and we have put these obstacles in our own way.” (Mayer, 18 May 2021, *author’s translation from the original German*)

This position once again aligns with the general far-right consensus in the EP, who, as noted by (Forchtner & Lubarda, 2023, p.57) often opposes climate policies by emphasizing national economic interests and portraying environmental regulations as threats to national sovereignty and economic growth.

Summary

Overall the analysis of Mayer’s speeches revealed a more traditional far-right stance than his involvement in committee work, where he was willing to accept the status quo and was quite passive in the ITRE Committee. However, he is more vocal in plenary and uses a rhetoric that brings him back closer to the dissenter type. His criticism of both the EU institution and left-leaning groups, his sceptical stance towards climate change and nuclear power, his advocacy to remove the sanctions on Russia to ease the economic burden on European citizens, are all typical far-right positions. These findings suggest that Mayer, like other far-right MEPs studied in this thesis, tends to use the more visible and symbolic tools such as plenary speeches to express ideological opposition, while being less involved in the more technical work happening at the committee level.

6.5.4. Legislative interventions

Proposed amendments

One first interesting thing to note is that Mayer seems to have been most active in the years 2021 and 2022, a time period in which he tabled a majority of his amendments (352). Indeed, he hasn’t proposed a single amendment this year, and a mere 40 last year. This behaviour is reminiscent of the trend already observed in Krah and Vilimsky’s parliamentary involvement and therefore seems to confirm a pattern of far-right actors abruptly stopping their involvement at some point during their mandate.

Secondly, while Mayer’s plenary speeches focus heavily on energy and climate issues, this thematic priority is far less visible in his amendment work: only 38 out of 405 amendments were tabled under the ITRE Committee, and even less refer to these two issues.

That said, the few amendments that do address energy or climate-related topics are very much in line with Mayer’s general discourse. They often express scepticism about EU-level planning and call for more flexibility for member states. In one amendment, for example, Mayer replaces the original

wording on recharging infrastructure with a warning against the “politically enforced acceptance” of electric vehicles and argues that such policies violate the subsidiarity principle (Amendment 207, 2021/0223(COD)). Another amendment calls for more support for biofuels and synthetic fuels, claiming that these alternatives are easier to implement because they rely on existing refuelling stations and require fewer changes (Amendment 206, 2021/0223(COD)). These proposals reflect Mayer’s usual arguments: that EU climate policies are unrealistic, too expensive, and that national governments should be free to make their own decisions on energy matters.

Taken together, these examples illustrate a clear pattern: Mayer does not reject the idea of energy policy altogether, but he consistently portrays EU initiatives as ideologically driven, inefficient, and disconnected from what he sees as the practical needs of member states. In both his amendments and public speeches, he argues that the EU’s climate ambitions place an unnecessary burden on national governments and European industries.

Reports

Mayer has only taken part in one report over the period studied, and only in the quality of shadow rapporteur. Because the topic of the report, gigabit electronic communications networks, isn’t specifically linked to the topics chosen for Mayer, it will not be further analysed in this section.

Motion for resolutions

Mayer has only taken part in five motions for resolutions over the two last term, and again, none were linked to his involvement on the topic of energy or climate change, but on varied topics such as the preservation of jobs, agriculture and the US-Mexico border, there is therefore nothing to analyse for this section.

Opinions

Despite his already mentioned relatively low engagement, Mayer has been appointed the role of rapporteur. While this role was only given to him in order to draft an opinion, which doesn’t have the same importance as reports given their consultative roles, this signifies that the ITRE group trusted Mayer enough to assign him to that position.

Apart from that opinion as rapporteur, Mayer was also appointed shadow rapporteur for three further opinions. However, there are only limited traces of his involvement in those opinions: no amendments or votes prove his participation in the drafting of those.

His rapporteur role was on an opinion in his capacity as a member of the transport Committee on a ITRE Committee strategic initiative for a European Strategy for Hydrogen (2020/2242(INI)).

The opinion proposes ideas that are directly opposed to the rest of Mayer's discourse on the topics of energy and climate change. Indeed, where he was very critical of the Green Deal in his speeches, in the 5th point of his opinion he writes:

"[...] in line with the 'energy efficiency first' principle and the Green Deal, a higher level of ambition in renewable energy and energy efficiency is needed in order to ensure the green transition." (Mayer, 25 February 2021)

Besides this contradiction, there are however proposals which seem more in line with his usual concerns, such as the support to European companies in point 30:

"[...] calls on the Commission to facilitate access to research and finance and to monitor the progress of SMEs by using a suitable set of key performance indicators in order to contribute to evidence-based policy making".

These contradictory points may be the result of compromises between Mayer and the other shadow rapporteurs appointed to work with him on the opinion, with Mayer agreeing to include more eco-friendly measures whilst keeping some of his priorities in the text too.

The impact of Mayer's opinion on the final motion for a resolution adopted by the lead Committee (ITRE) is measurable but not unequivocal. A comparison between the opinion and the final motion reveals numerous thematic and even literal overlaps, for example, points 6, 15, and 21 are found word-for-word in the final resolution. However, causal attribution is difficult. The presence of identical or similar formulations does not prove that Mayer's opinion shaped the ITRE resolution; it is equally plausible that the ITRE rapporteur independently shared those priorities, or that both texts drew from the same Commission communication or stakeholder inputs.

Still, the many similarities between the two texts suggest that Mayer's opinion may have played some role in shaping the final resolution. The fact that some more climate friendly proposals appear in his proposal also shows how institutional dynamics and negotiation processes can influence the content of parliamentary work.

6.5.5. Parliamentary questions

The written questions will be the only ones analysed in this section, as the two oral questions Mayer has participated in were not linked to the focus themes of this section, but to fundamental rights.

Contrarily to his involvement in other forms of parliamentary work, Mayer is very prolific when it comes to written questions, totalling 166 questions over the two terms studied. As could be observed in Harald Vilimsky's section, Mayer co-wrote a majority of his question with his FPÖ colleague from 2021 onwards. A lot of his written questions before that were co-authored with Roman Heider, another FPÖ MEP, which shows that Mayer has always prioritized teamwork in his written questions.

Regarding the content of his questions, eight are linked to energy matters and 19 are more directly linked to climate change, although there are sometimes overlaps. Some of the questions relate to matters already mentioned by Mayer: his distrust of nuclear energy and his concerns over its greenwashing, his blaming of the energy crisis over the sanctions put over Russia and his criticisms of the too ambitious emission reductions targets set by the EU, which harm the economy. But some of his questions deal with new topics, those will therefore receive closer attention.

Two of his questions (13 April 2023, 30 November 2021) deal with the use of private planes by senior Commission officials for their business trips, questioning the sustainability of the practice. This sort of questions is clearly meant to put the Commission on the spot by highlighting what Mayer certainly considers to be a double standard, since the Commission promotes a sustainable way of life without following it itself.

Some of his questions also deal with the external dimension of the Green Deal, questioning whether the Commission tries to convince foreign partners to follow the targets set by the EU, and if so, how that translates into action by those partners. This is the case for a question relating to power plants powered by coal in India (16 December 19), China's CO₂ emissions (20 April 2019) and the financial support from the EU for developing countries aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions (16 October 2019).

Other questions deal with the link between environmental issues and agriculture. Here again, Mayer expresses his concern for farmers, as he considers that the strict rules put in place by the Commission puts their livelihoods at risk and asks of the Commission what it intends to do to avoid that.

Overall, Mayer's written questions align with his general dissenter profile as outlined by Navarro. He uses this low-cost, low-impact tool to consistently raise ideological objections and draw attention to

inconsistencies in the EU's environmental policies. While his engagement is more visible here than in other areas, it remains focused on symbolic opposition rather than constructive participation.

6.5.6. Voting record

The same time period as for Vilimsky and Anderson was studied for Georg Mayer, revealing the following statistics: Mayer has been the MEP to miss the most votes out of the four from this study, missing 24 out of the 118 roll call votes of the period. In the times he did vote, Mayer ended being part of the majority 37% of the times, in the minority 48% of the time, and in the rest 15% of cases he abstained from voting.

Those statistics fall in line with those of his colleagues, in particular with Harald Vilimsky. The cause for this phenomenon is rather simple: in all cases but three, the two colleagues voted identically. There are, however, more cases where their common view differed to that of Christine Anderson, reinforcing the earlier explained phenomenon of an heterogeneous far-right, where the ESN and PFE groups don't always align, despite having been previously allied parties under the ID group.

Here again, there is a pattern in Mayer's (and by extension, Vilimsky's) behaviour: he tends to choose abstention in cases where foreign affairs and human rights are concerned, like Anderson did. The two FPÖ MEPs, however, tend to vote more positively than their German colleague, in particular when it comes to allowing funds for struggling member states after a natural disaster or in case of economic hardships. In two cases related to the mobilization of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in order to help Belgium (17 December 2024 and 22 October 2024), both Vilimsky and Mayer supported the idea, when Anderson did not.

These findings reinforce the broader pattern already observed across this thesis: while Mayer and Vilimsky vote more pragmatically than Anderson on some issues, they remain mostly outside the parliamentary mainstream. Their frequent abstentions and minority positions suggest that, like their German colleague, they are more often expressing ideological dissent than actively shaping legislation.

6.5.7. Conclusion on Mayer parliamentary work

Georg Mayer's parliamentary activity has been limited overall: He intervenes little in committee, rarely proposes amendments, and has not been particularly prolific in his participation in opinions, reports or motions for resolution either. He rather focuses much of his work on co-authored written questions.

In plenary, his discourse is sharper and more visible, particularly in his opposition to EU climate and energy policy, the Green Deal, and what he sees as institutional hypocrisy. This places him, like the other MEPs studied here, within the logic of symbolic opposition: parliamentary tools are used not so much to shape legislation as to express dissent and reaffirm ideological positions.

Yet Mayer's one appointment as rapporteur reveals a more flexible, pragmatic dimension. While he criticised climate policy in plenary, the opinion he drafted included several moderate, climate-oriented proposals and largely followed the tone expected of such a document. The final text suggests that Mayer is capable of compromise and engagement when taking on a more institutionalised role. This contrast shows that he does not systematically reject the system but rather chooses when and how to engage, reserving deeper involvement for situations where the format requires cooperation.

His trajectory still follows the broader pattern observed in this study: a phase of early-term activity followed by disengagement, and a preference for tools that offer visibility over those that demand negotiation. But his case also illustrates that even within the dissenter profile, there is room for tactical moderation, especially when occupying a position that carries formal responsibility.

7. Far-right influence in the European Parliament

This section brings together the results of the previous chapters to assess the extent to which far-right MEPs can influence the work of the European Parliament. The four studied MEPs will be used as reference points for this analysis, even though they obviously do not represent the full diversity of the far-right in the EP. The goal here is not to generalise beyond them, but to identify common patterns, differences, and structural limits based on their parliamentary behaviour.

7.1. Patterns of Engagement and Tool Usage

7.1.1. Tool 1: Plenary speeches

Plenary speeches are widely used by the far-right MEPs in this study, with the exception of Maximilian Krah, who intervened far less than his colleagues. This tool is principally symbolic rather than actively shaping legislative outcomes. We can see the symbolic dimension of this tool through

the social media platforms of the MEPs: all four regularly post their speeches on social media¹, sometimes even adding some cinematic music or their own comments about the excerpts. While the audience is often national, it can also be transnational: Christine Anderson, for example, sometimes speaks in English and receive comments in English as well, showing that MEPs can also reach a broader ideological base. This supports the idea that far-right MEPs use visible parliamentary tools not to shape outcomes, but to reinforce their political messaging and public image. This use of social media to address a mostly national audience is this time more related to the “intermediary” type, which is relatively unsurprising given their national preference.

7.1.2. Committee work

The analysis of the MEPs’ participation in Committee work demonstrated little sign of real influence. Of the four, only the two German representatives participated actively in meetings: Krah by speaking regularly, and Anderson through occasional interventions and her role as coordinator. Yet even their involvement did not affect the outcome of any vote: their “no” positions never counterbalanced the large majorities in favour of the final texts. These outcomes, generally much more liberal than the positions defended by these MEPs, illustrate that even when present, far-right members remain structurally marginal within their committees, due both to limited attendance and to the weight of broader voting coalitions.

7.1.3. Legislative interventions

When it comes to reports and opinions, the far-right MEPs in this study were rarely assigned influential roles. None of them acted as rapporteur for a report, and only Mayer was given the role for an opinion. Even then, his influence on the final text remains limited. Overall, this confirms the far-right’s marginal position in one of the most impactful tools of parliamentary work.

The same applies to motion for resolutions: In almost every case examined, motions tabled by far-right MEPs lapsed because a joint motion was adopted beforehand. These joint motions are the result of agreements between other political groups able to form majorities, of which the far-right is evidently excluded.

¹ See, for example, the Facebook pages of Christine Anderson, Harald Vilimsky, Georg Mayer, and Maximilian Krah, where plenary speeches are frequently shared with commentary or subtitles.

Taken together, these examples show that while far-right MEPs occasionally take part in the legislative process, their efforts in this domain rarely lead to concrete results and remain largely without impact.

7.1.4. Amendments

The amendments proposed by the far-right MEPs in this study were generally ideologically charged, often reflecting familiar themes from their plenary speeches. Although tracing amendment adoption can be complex, sample comparisons between proposals and final texts suggest that most of the far-right amendments did not make it into the adopted version.

As with other tools, this confirms their lack of impact on final outcomes and the broader marginalisation of far-right actors in the legislative process.

7.1.5. Parliamentary questions

Oral questions are rarely used by the far-right MEPs in this study, but this is consistent with general patterns in the European Parliament and not specific to their political orientation. Written questions, by contrast, are used frequently, except by Krah, whose use of the tool is under the EP's average.

This tool has limited impact, as it does not feed directly into the legislative process, a high use of it therefore does not demonstrate a higher influence, rather the contrary. Indeed, its use reflects the dissenter profile described by Navarro (2009), where MEPs prioritise visibility and confrontation over policy shaping.

Far-right MEPs typically use written questions to challenge the European Commission, drawing attention to what they present as contradictions or double standards. These interventions are less about seeking answers and more about reinforcing a critical stance toward the EU institutions. As with other tools, their main function appears to be rhetorical rather than legislative.

7.1.6. Votes

Voting data confirms the overall pattern already observed across other tools: far-right MEPs may be increasingly present and active, but they remain mostly powerless when it comes to shaping legislative outcomes. In most cases, they end up in the minority, and their votes have no impact on the final result. Abstentions are frequent, especially on files dealing with foreign policy or human rights, and “no” votes are rarely part of any effective blocking strategy. Even though some, like

Vilimsky and Mayer, aligned with the majority more often than others, they were still more often in the minority and their majority votes were on low-salience subject which almost all MEPs, regardless of political affiliation, could agree on, such as disaster relief measures for example.

A comparison between the 9th and 10th terms was done to further explore those dynamics. This time the focus wasn't on the votes by the individual MEPs, but on comparing the dynamics at play in the whole EP between the two terms. Attention was drawn to cases where votes passed with more than 90% of support and those with an opposition of more than 30% of the votes, through a similar time sample for each term.

This analysis permitted to highlight a difference: between July 2021 and April 2022, 73 roll-call votes passed with over 90% support, indicating high levels of consensus. Over the same period in the current term (July 2024 to April 2025), this number dropped to just 24. This suggests that the Parliament has become somewhat less consensual, which is probably to be due to the increased number of far-right actors. However, this greater fragmentation has not translated into stronger opposition: in both periods, the number of votes where more than 30% of MEPs were in the opposition remains nearly identical: 13 and 14, respectively. In other words, dissent has grown numerically, but not strategically. There are more dissenting voices, but they are visibly not organized enough to disturb the longstanding dynamics at play in the EP. This was for example observed in the votes of Anderson versus those of Vilimsky and Mayer, who belong to different groups which do not always cast the same votes.

This is also visible when looking at the composition of the Parliament as a whole. If one includes the ECR group, which, while more established, contains parties such as Fratelli d'Italia and PiS, which are often classified as far-right in academic literature (Donà, 2022; Ślarzyński, 2024), approximately 25% of the current Parliament belongs to a broad radical right coalition. This is a significant increase from the 18% observed in the previous term. Combined with the 26% held by the EPP, this theoretically opens the door to a new right-wing majority. Such an alliance would not have been mathematically possible in the previous term (where both groups combined held only 44%), but they now make up 51% of seats. Yet in practice, such a coalition remains rare. The EPP continues to align more consistently with the centre and has so far avoided sustained collaboration with far-right actors. As a result, the "traditional" coalition composed of the EPP, Renew, S&D and very often the Greens continues to dominate most votes and to prevent dissent from translating into policy change.

Taken together, these voting patterns illustrate a familiar dynamic: greater far-right presence has led to more visible opposition, but not to greater influence. Their growing numbers may disrupt consensus, but they remain isolated and divided enough to have little effect on final outcomes.

7.2. Limits to Influence: Institutional and Political Factors

The previous section has established that, overall, despite their growing numbers in the EP, the far-right does not yield a lot of influence in the final decision-making process of the institution, both in the previous and current term. This section's aim is to explain these observations and to understand why there isn't more far-right influence in the EP.

Despite some variation in how they use parliamentary tools, far-right MEPs face clear structural and political obstacles that limit their influence in the European Parliament. The *cordon sanitaire* remains a central factor: they are excluded from most compromise-building processes, particularly visible in the way their motions for resolutions are systematically replaced by joint texts negotiated among mainstream groups. In Committees, far-right MEPs are rarely given key roles such as chair or rapporteur, which further prevents them from shaping the legislative agenda.

Internal divisions also contribute to their marginalisation. While the PFE and ESN groups both belong to the far-right camp, their voting patterns frequently diverge, and even potential allies like the ECR group do not consistently align with them. This fragmentation weakens the far-right's ability to act as a unified bloc. Meanwhile, mainstream coalitions, particularly EPP, Renew, S&D, and the Greens, remain cohesive enough to block far-right proposals and maintain control over most votes.

Even though far-right representation has grown significantly in the 10th term, the structural capacity to influence outcomes has not grown proportionally. This is not only due to external barriers but also to the far-right MEPs' own behaviour. They tend to participate less than average in legislative work and rarely engage in coalition-building or negotiations. Their limited influence despite a stronger parliamentary presence can therefore be explained by a mix of institutional exclusion and their own selective participation.

7.3. Symbolic Visibility and Strategic Dissent

While far-right MEPs have limited impact on legislative outcomes, this does not mean they are inactive or irrelevant. Their presence in the Parliament is often more symbolic than procedural, but this symbolic role can still carry political weight. Through plenary speeches, written questions, and highly visible positions on polarising issues, far-right MEPs use the European Parliament as a platform to speak to audiences outside of it. These performances, often shared and amplified on social media, allow them to attack EU policies, reaffirm national sovereignty, and reinforce their party's ideological identity. In this context, the European Parliament becomes not just a legislative body, but a stage for political signalling.

This use of symbolic tools is not accidental. It reflects a strategic choice: far-right MEPs tend to focus on highly visible, low-effort instruments rather than those requiring long-term negotiation or coalition-building. Their preference for written questions and plenary speeches—rather than reports, Committee amendments, or procedural interventions—aligns with the dissenter profile described by Navarro. When they do participate more formally, such as Mayer’s role as rapporteur for an opinion, the content produced tends to be more moderate, suggesting that these pragmatic episodes aren’t so much a change in ideology, but the result of institutional pressures.

Beyond symbolic expression, the increased presence of far-right MEPs may also be starting to influence the Parliament’s agenda. Although their proposals are rarely adopted, the fact that they now represent a larger share of seats, especially when including ideologically adjacent groups like the ECR, means that the issues they prioritise are more frequently discussed in Committee debates and plenary agendas. Topics such as migration, security, or opposition to the Green Deal are now more often debated in the EP—not because far-right actors control the agenda, but because others feel compelled to respond. As van Rij et al. (2024) noted, even when radical right MEPs are excluded from decision-making coalitions, they may still exert agenda-setting influence by forcing mainstream actors to react to their positions or adjust their own.

This form of indirect influence is a core component of what this study defines as “influence through disruption.” While far-right MEPs are largely excluded from formal coalition-building and legislative authorship, their growing visibility, rhetorical pressure, and numerical presence enable them to shape debates, unsettle consensus, and indirectly affect how mainstream parties frame or prioritise issues. Even without legislative success, the far-right’s ability to force engagement with their narratives reveals how disruption itself can become a political strategy.

8. Conclusion

This thesis began by an observation: the far-right has become one of the first political forces throughout Europe, with more and more far-right parties in power or as a great force of opposition. The EU parliament hasn’t escaped that trend, and the 2024 European elections resulted in the most right-wing EP ever.

This observation naturally led to a question: how much does that shift impact the far-right’s ability to influence decision making within the European parliament?

To answer that question, this thesis analysed the work of four far-right MEPs from Germany and Austria: Christine Anderson, Maximilian Krah, Harald Vilimsky, and Georg Mayer. They served as case studies to understand broader patterns of behaviour, strategy, and influence. Drawing on institutional theory, Navarro's typology of MEP behaviour, and recent research on Eurosceptic engagement, this thesis sought to move beyond assumptions and observe what far-right MEPs actually do within the EP today.

The results suggest that influence among far-right MEPs is uneven and multifaceted. Some, like Krah and Mayer, occasionally adopt more traditional modes of participation, engaging in Committee work or acting as rapporteurs. Others, such as Anderson or Vilimsky, lean more clearly into the "dissenter" profile, using the EP as a platform for national and transnational symbolic signalling.

Despite this diversity, one common trend is clear: direct influence on legislative outcomes remains rare. Structural barriers such as the cordon sanitaire, group fragmentation, and coalition dynamics continue to marginalise the far-right from the formal centres of power. Moreover, their own strategic choices often favour high-visibility, low-impact tools over those requiring negotiation and compromise.

Yet influence in the European Parliament cannot be reduced to legislative wins. As argued in this thesis, far-right MEPs are actively shaping the agenda, pushing their views on polarising topics such as migration, sovereignty, or energy onto the table. Their growing presence contributes to a shift in parliamentary discourse and a more fragmented, less consensual EP, as confirmed by the comparative analysis of roll call votes between the 9th and 10th parliamentary terms.

This tension between exclusion from formal influence and indirect power through disruption and agenda-setting is at the heart of the paradoxical role played by far-right MEPs today. The concept of "influence through disruption," introduced here, captures this dynamic: while they rarely shape outcomes, they increasingly shape the conversation. Their success lies not in legislative transformation, but in their ability to attract mainstream attention and discredit institutional legitimacy.

There are, of course, limits to this study. Analysing four MEPs cannot be representative of the diversity of the European far-right as a whole. Indeed, the far-right is by no means homogenous, and many divergences can be seen based on national preferences. Moreover, the findings remain constrained by the availability of public records and the absence of traces of behind-the-scenes negotiations. Future research could extend this analysis by including MEPs from the ECR group, by comparing other legislative terms, or by looking at alliances and voting dynamics in more detail. This study is also constrained by the date at which it has been produced, as it can only analyse the very

beginnings of the 10th legislative period. New dynamics and trends may emerge as the term continues, and far-right actors may decide to organize themselves differently and work more or less together.

In sum, the evidence presented here affirms the initial hypothesis: far-right MEPs are best understood not through the lens of formal legislative success, but through the disruptive impact they have on parliamentary dynamics. Their influence may be paradoxical, but it is far from negligible: their growing visibility has not fundamentally shifted institutional dynamics, but it has altered the space in which debates take place, and that paradigm change is what gives the far-right its power.

9. Bibliography

[ParlTrack]. (n.d.). Retrieved 24 April 2025, from <https://parltrack.org/activities/197475/type/amendments>

10th parliamentary term | Maximilian KRAH | MEPs | European Parliament. (2025). https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/197481/MAXIMILIAN_KRAH/history/10

Abou-Chadi, T., & Krause, W. (2020). The Causal Effect of Radical Right Success on Mainstream Parties' Policy Positions: A Regression Discontinuity Approach. *British Journal of Political Science*, 50(3), 829–847. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000029>

Advanced search | Search | MEPs | European Parliament | Europe of Sovereign Nations Group | Germany. (n.d.). Retrieved 11 February 2025, from <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search/advanced?euPoliticalGroupBodyRefNum=7151&countryCode=DE>

Aktas, M. (2024). The rise of populist radical right parties in Europe. *International Sociology*, 39(6), 591–605. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02685809241297547>

Almeida, D. (2010). Europeanized Eurosceptics? Radical Right Parties and European Integration. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 11(3), 237–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15705854.2010.503031>

Alternative für Deutschland—Germany. (n.d.). Identity and Democracy Group - English. Retrieved 23 May 2024, from https://www.idgroup.eu/alternative_fur_deutschland

Anderson Christine. (2022, June 24). Facebook. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=3228554077414710&set=a.616593736957033>

Anderson Christine. (2024, September 3). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=887078733241864&set=pb.100058192353063.-2207520000&type=3>

Anderson Christine. (n.d.). Facebook—Christine Anderson. Retrieved 29 May 2024, from <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=842917030991368&set=a.616593736957033>

Anderson Christine | AfD Limburg-Weilburg. (2019, May 28). <https://web.archive.org/web/20190528200443/https://lm.afd-hessen.org/btw-2017/direktkandidatin/>

Anderson, C. (2024, October 16). MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the urgent need to revise the Medical Devices Regulation | B10-0122/2024 | European Parliament. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-10-2024-0122_EN.html

Art, D. (2005). *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511616143>

Arzheimer, K. (2015). The AfD: Finally a Successful Right-Wing Populist Eurosceptic Party for Germany? *West European Politics*, 38(3), 535–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2015.1004230>

aschilling. (n.d.). Listenplätze Europawahl. Alternative für Deutschland. Retrieved 23 May 2024, from <https://www.afd.de/listenplaetze-europawahl/>

Behm, A.-S., & Brack, N. (2019). Sheep in wolf's clothing? Comparing eurosceptic and non-eurosceptic MEPs' parliamentary behaviour. *Journal of European Integration*, 41(8), 1069–1088. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2019.1645845>

Belafi, M. (2017). Der Erfolg der FPÖ: Österreichs Parteien- und Regierungssystem unter Druck. *Zeitschrift Für Politik*, 64(3), 364–383.

Bélanger, M., & Wunsch, N. (2022). From Cohesion to Contagion? Populist Radical Right Contestation of EU Enlargement. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 60(3), 653–672. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13280>

Berning, C. C. (2017). Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) – Germany's New Radical Right-wing Populist Party. *Ifo DICE Report*, 15(04), 16–19.

Bieber, I., Roßteutscher, S., & Scherer, P. (2018). Die Metamorphosen der AfD-Wählerschaft: Von einer euroskeptischen Protestpartei zu einer (r)echten Alternative? *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 59(3), 433–461. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11615-018-0103-y>

Bildung, B. für politische. (2022, December 2). Etappen der Parteigeschichte der AfD | Parteien in Deutschland. [bpb.de. https://www.bpb.de/themen/parteien/parteien-in-deutschland/afd/273130/etappen-der-partiegeschichte-der-afd/](https://www.bpb.de/themen/parteien/parteien-in-deutschland/afd/273130/etappen-der-partiegeschichte-der-afd/)

Biografie. (n.d.). Maximilian Krah. Retrieved 24 February 2025, from <https://maximilian-krah.eu/ueber-mich/>

Brack, N., & Marié, A. (2024). From fringe to front? Assessing the voting influence of the radical right in the European Parliament. *European Union Politics*, 25(4), 748–771. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165241268127>

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. (n.d.). Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD). [bpb.de. Retrieved 8 April 2025, from https://www.bpb.de/themen/rechtsextremismus/dossier-rechtsextremismus/500796/nationaldemokratische-partei-deutschlands-npd/](https://www.bpb.de/themen/rechtsextremismus/dossier-rechtsextremismus/500796/nationaldemokratische-partei-deutschlands-npd/)

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT (GPT-4o, May 2024 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

Comparative tool | 2024 European election results | European Parliament. (n.d.). <https://Results.Election.Europa.Eu/>; <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>. Retrieved 19 February 2025, from <https://results.election.europa.eu/en/tools/comparative-tool/>

Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2012). http://data.europa.eu/eli/treaty/tfeu_2016/2024-09-01/eng

Conti, N. (2011). The radical right in Europe, between slogans and voting behavior. *Análise Social*, 46(201), 633–652.

Contributions to plenary debates | Georg MAYER | MEPs | European Parliament. (n.d.). Retrieved 24 March 2025, from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/38511/GEORG_MAYER/main-activities/plenary-speeches

Corbett, R., Jacobs, F. B., & Neville, D. (2016). *The European parliament* (9th edition). John Harper publishing.

De Wilde d'Estmael, T. (2000). Les sanctions contre l'Autriche: Motifs, objectifs, issues. *Critique internationale*, 8(1), 6–12. <https://doi.org/10.3406/criti.2000.1433>

Decker, F. (2022, December 2). Etappen der Partei-geschichte der AFD. <https://www.bpb.de/themen/parteien/parteien-in-deutschland/afd/273130/etappen-der-parteigeschichte-der-afd/>

Delreux, T., & Laloux, T. (2018). Concluding Early Agreements in the EU: A Double Principal-Agent Analysis of Trilogue Negotiations. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56(2), 300–317. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12633>

Deutscher Bundestag—Bundestagswahlergebnisse seit 1949 – Zweitstimmen. (n.d.). Deutscher Bundestag. Retrieved 19 May 2025, from https://www.bundestag.de/parlament/wahlen/ergebnisse_seit1949-244692

Deutscher Bundestag—Sitzverteilung des 20. Deutschen Bundestages. (n.d.). Deutscher Bundestag. Retrieved 23 May 2024, from https://www.bundestag.de/parlament/plenum/sitzverteilung_20wp

Deutscher Bundestag—Sitzverteilung des 21. Deutschen Bundestages. (n.d.). Deutscher Bundestag. Retrieved 19 May 2025, from <https://www.bundestag.de/sitzverteilung>

Die FPÖ in der Regierung – Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut. (n.d.). Retrieved 23 May 2024, from <https://www.fbi-politikschule.at/blausoesterreich/organisationen/die-fpoe-in-der-regierung/>

Donà, A. (2022). The rise of the Radical Right in Italy: The case of Fratelli d'Italia. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 27(5), 775–794. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2022.2113216>

Dr. Maximilian Krahe MdB [@KraheMax]. (2024, December 12). [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://x.com/KraheMax/status/1867116593676947492>

Dr. Maximilian Krahe MdEP [@KraheMax]. (2024, May 22). [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://x.com/KraheMax/status/1793189906769907741>

Europa neu denken. (n.d.). Alternative für Deutschland. Retrieved 29 May 2024, from <https://www.afd.de/europa-neu-denken/>

Europawahl 2014. (n.d.). Retrieved 24 March 2025, from https://www.bmi.gv.at/412/Europawahlen/Europawahl_2014/start.aspx

European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS), & Miklin, E. (2024). The Populist Radical-right Freedom Party in the Austrian 2024 EU elections. *European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS)*. <https://doi.org/10.55271/rp0061>

European Parliament (n.d.). Budgetary Powers. Retrieved 18 March 2025, from <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/powers-and-procedures/budgetary-powers>

European Parliament. (2024). Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament July 2024. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2021-09-13-RULE-214_EN.html

European Parliamentary Research Service. (2018, April 16). EP Size and proportion of political groups. Epthinktank. <https://epthinktank.eu/2024/06/04/european-parliament-facts-and-figures/1-ep-size-and-proportion-of-political-groups-3/>

Fabry, P., & Portal, L. (2022). Clivage gauche-droite: Une théorie universelle: *Le Philosophoire*, n° 58(2), 49–65. <https://doi.org/10.3917/phoir.058.0049>

Forchtner, B., & Lubarda, B. (2023). Scepticisms and beyond? A comprehensive portrait of climate change communication by the far right in the European Parliament. *Environmental Politics*, 32(1), 43–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2022.2048556>

Frantescu, D. P. (2022, October 18). MEP Influence Index 2022: Top 100 most politically influential MEPs. <https://eumatrix.eu/en/blog/meps-influence-index-2022-top-100-most-politically-influential-meps>

Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs—Austria. (n.d.). Identity and Democracy Group - English. Retrieved 23 May 2024, from https://www.idgroup.eu/freiheitliche_partei_osterreichs

Hansen, M. A., & Olsen, J. (2024). Far-right Failure: Parties of the Far-right in Germany, 1945–2023. In M. A. Hansen & J. Olsen (Eds.), *Political Entrepreneurship in the Age of Dealignment: The Populist Far-right Alternative for Germany* (pp. 11–31). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50890-5_2

Harald Vilimsky (@haraldvilimsky) • Photos et vidéos Instagram. (n.d.). Retrieved 27 May 2024, from <https://www.instagram.com/haraldvilimsky/>

Häusler, A. (Ed.). (2016). *Die Alternative für Deutschland*. Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-10638-6>

Hawkins, M. (1997). *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860–1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511558481>

Heinze, A.-S., & Weisskircher, M. (2021). No Strong Leaders Needed? AfD Party Organisation Between Collective Leadership, Internal Democracy, and “Movement-Party” Strategy. *Politics and Governance*, 9(4), 263–274. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i4.4530>

Home | MEPs | European Parliament. (n.d.). Retrieved 18 March 2025, from <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/home>

How They Vote. How They Vote – EU Political Transparency Platform. Accessed May 31, 2025. <https://howtheyvote.eu/>.

Hwang, I. (2025). Is the European Parliament a Key to Success for (All) Right-Wing Populist Parties? Two Different Pathways to Engaging with the EP. *Government and Opposition*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2024.34>

Igounet, V., & Reichstadt, R. (2018, September 24). Le ‘grand remplacement’ est-il un concept complotiste ? Fondation Jean-Jaurès. <https://www.jean-jaures.org/publication/le-grand-remplacement-est-il-un-concept-complotiste/>

Internet Archive. (n.d.). Wayback Machine. Retrieved May 31, 2025, from <https://web.archive.org/>

Josipovic, I., & Reeger, U. (2022). Two Sides of the Same Coin. In J. Foley, U. Korkut, M. B. Jørgensen, G. Hoare, T. Basbugoglu, D. Gyollai, J. Szałańska, M. Nicolson, E. Papatzani, E. Petracou, O. Ozduzen, B. Ianoşev, I. Josipovic, U. Reeger, & M. Smieszek, *Contesting Cosmopolitan Europe*. Amsterdam University Press. https://doi.org/10.5117/9789463727259_ch09

Kandidaten – Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs. (n.d.). Retrieved 23 May 2024, from <https://www.fpoe.at/eu-wahl-2024/kandidaten/>

Karner, S. (2020). Margit Reiter, Die Ehemaligen. *Der Nationalsozialismus und die Anfänge der FPÖ*. Göttingen, Wallstein 2019. *Historische Zeitschrift*, 311(2), 558–559. <https://doi.org/10.1515/hzhz-2020-1420>

KRAH, M. (n.d.). Parliamentary question | Online traders from non-EU countries – Question 1 of 4 | E-000863/2024 | European Parliament. Retrieved 2 May 2025, from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2024-000863_EN.html

Lappas, G., Triantafillidou, A., & Yannas, P. (2019). Members of European Parliament (MEPs) on Social Media: Understanding the Underlying Mechanisms of Social Media Adoption and Popularity. *The Review of Socionetwork Strategies*, 13(1), 55–77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12626-019-00033-5>

Le Bohec, J., & Le Digol, C. (with Groupe d'analyse politique). (2012). *Gauche-droite: Genèse d'un clivage politique*. Presses universitaires de France.

Leino-Sandberg, P. (2023). Transparency and Trilogues: Real Legislative Work for Grown-Ups? *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, 14(2), 271–291. <https://doi.org/10.1017/err.2022.40>

Mastrobuoni, S. (2024, May 17). La versione di Krah: “Non prendo soldi dai russi. Le SS criminali? Sbagliato generalizzare”. *la Repubblica*. https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2024/05/17/news/candidato_elezioni_europee_afd_maximilian_krah_estrema_destra-423009349/

Maurer, M., Jost, P., Schaaf, M., Sülflow, M., & Kruschinski, S. (2023). How Right-Wing Populists Instrumentalize News Media: Deliberate Provocations, Scandalizing Media Coverage, and Public Awareness for the Alternative for Germany (Afd). *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 28(4), 747–769. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612211072692>

Mayer Georg, Mag. Dr., MBL-HSG | Parlament Österreich. (n.d.). Retrieved 24 March 2025, from <https://www.parlament.gv.at/person/84053?selectedtab=BIO>

Mayer, G. (2024, May 27). Georg Mayer (@georgmayermep) • Photos et vidéos Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/georgmayermep/>

Members' Research Service. (2019, July 9). Size of Political Groups in the EP (2019-2024). Epthinktank. <https://epthinktank.eu/2019/07/09/size-of-political-groups-in-the-ep-2019-2024/>

Minutes | Meetings | INTA | Committees | European Parliament. (2024, May 19). <https://web.archive.org/web/20240519123758/https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/inta/meetings/minutes>

Minutes—Results of votes—Wednesday, 23 October 2024. (n.d.). Retrieved 24 April 2025, from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PV-10-2024-10-23-VOT_EN.html

Motions for resolutions—9th parliamentary term | Harald VILIMSKY | MEPs | European Parliament. (n.d.). Retrieved 7 May 2025, from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/125001/HARALD_VILIMSKY/all-activities/motions-instit/9

Mudde, C. (2019). *The Far-right Today*. Polity Press.

Müller, M. (with Ulkopoliittinen Instituutti). (2024). *The rise of the far right in the Europe Union: Gaining power not through sweeping victory, but through creeping normalisation*. FIIA - Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

Nai, A. (2021). Fear and Loathing in Populist Campaigns? Comparing the Communication Style of Populists and Non-populists in Elections Worldwide. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 20(2), 219–250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2018.1491439>

Navarro, J. (2009). *Les députés européens et leur rôle: Sociologie interprétative des pratiques parlementaires*. Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles.

Neubert, K. (2024, May 23). German far-right AfD kicked out of ID-group. *Www.Euractiv.Com*. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/german-far-right-afd-kicked-out-of-id-group/>

Newsletter-Anmeldung. (n.d.). Retrieved 1 March 2025, from <https://mailcluster.wegewerk.com/37/1253/71da8f1d42/subscribe/form.html>

Oparaugo, B. (2021). *Media and Politics: Political Communication in the Digital Age* (SSRN Scholarly Paper 3780554). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3780554>

Österreich—Nationalratswahl 2024. (n.d.). Retrieved 18 February 2025, from <https://www.bundeswahlen.gv.at/2024/nr/>

Pappers Politique. (n.d.-a). M. Georg MAYER | Député européen | Europe—Patriotes pour l'Europe: Biographie, actualités et contact. Retrieved 24 March 2025, from https://politique.pappers.fr/acteurs/europe-georg-mayer?themes%5B%5D=Changement%20climatique&acteur_tab=news

Pappers Politique. (n.d.-b). M. Harald VILIMSKY | Député européen | Europe—Patriotes pour l'Europe: Biographie, actualités et contact. Retrieved 8 April 2025, from https://politique.pappers.fr/acteurs/europe-harald-vilimsky?themes%5B%5D=Changement%20climatique&acteur_tab=news

Pfahl-Traughber, A. (2020). Die AfD ist (mittlerweile) eine rechtsextremistische Partei: Eine Einschätzung aus demokratietheoretischer Sicht. *Sozial Extra*, 44(2), 87–91. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12054-020-00264-9>

Pirro, A. L., & Taggart, P. (2023). Populists in power and conspiracy theories. *Party Politics*, 29(3), 413–423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688221077071>

Pley, A. (2022). Presse. Bundesamt fuer Verfassungsschutz. http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/service/presse/presse_node.html

Powers and procedures. (n.d.). Powers and Procedures. Retrieved 18 March 2025, from <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/powers-and-procedures>

Praet. (2023, January). The European radical-Right and the Energy Crisis: A Window of Opportunity [Page]. Universiteit Gent. https://www.ugent.be/ps/politiekewetenschappen/gies/en/research/publications/gies_papers/2023-global-energy-crisis/the-european-radical-right-and-the-energy-crisis-a-window-of-opportunity

RANGEL, P. (2023, July 3). REPORT on the 2022 Commission Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina | A9-0229/2023 | European Parliament. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0229_EN.html

Rapporteur—EU monitor. (n.d.). Retrieved 23 March 2025, from <https://www.eumonitor.eu/9353000/1/j9vvik7m1c3gyxp/vhcmdex0ovsn>

Rathgeb, P. (2024). United in Diversity: The Economic Policy Platforms of the EU's Far right. 2024(2), 66–69.

Rech, D. & dpa. (2024, May 22). AfD-Bundestagsabgeordneter: Auch Petr Bystron verzichtet auf Auftritte im EU-Wahlkampf. Die Zeit. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2024-05/petr-bystron-afd-wahlkampf-europawahl>

Reiter, M. (2018). Anton Reinhaller und die Anfänge der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs: Der politische Werdegang eines Nationalsozialisten und die „Ehemaligen“ in der Zweiten Republik. Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 66(4), 539–576. <https://doi.org/10.1515/vfzg-2018-0033>

Reports—As shadow rapporteur—9th parliamentary term | Harald VILIMSKY | MEPs | European Parliament. (n.d.). Retrieved 7 May 2025, from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/125001/HARALD_VILIMSKY/all-activities/reports-shadow/9

Ringe, N. (2022). The Language(s) of Politics: Multilingual Policy-Making in the European Union. University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12080141>

Ripoll Servent, A. (2018). The European parliament. Palgrave Macmillan.

Ripoll Servent, A. (2019). The European Parliament after the 2019 Elections: Testing the Boundaries of the 'Cordon Sanitaire'. Journal of Contemporary European Research, 15(4), 331–342. <https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v15i4.1121>

Rosenauer, L. (2024, June 9). Maximilian Kraus (AfD): Politik, Privates, Skandale – Infos im Überblick. <https://www.morgenpost.de/politik/article242214960/Maximilian-Kraus-AfD-Familie-Kinder-Privates-die-Infos.html>

Rovny, J. (2013). Where do radical right parties stand? Position blurring in multidimensional competition. European Political Science Review, 5(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773911000282>

Schwander, H., & Manow, P. (2017). It's not the economy, stupid! Explaining the electoral success of the German right-wing populist AfD. CIS Working Paper, 94, Article 94. <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-143147>

- Ślarzyński, M. (2024). The Emergence of Right-Wing Partisanship in Poland, 1993–2018: Reconciling Demand-Side Explanations of the Success of Illiberalism. *Perspectives on Politics*, 22(3), 692–716. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S153759272300275X>
- SORA. (2019). National election results Austria 1919–2017 (OA edition) [Dataset]. AUSSDA. <https://doi.org/10.11587/EQUDAL>
- Steinecke, D. (2022). Shadows as leaders? The amendment success of shadow rapporteurs in the European Parliament. *European Union Politics*, 23(4), 700–720. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165221121739>
- Szczerbiak, A., & Taggart, P. (2024). Euroscepticism and anti-establishment parties in Europe. *Journal of European Integration*, 46(8), 1171–1191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2024.2329634>
- The European Parliament: Electoral procedures | Fact Sheets on the European Union | European Parliament. (2024, June 30). <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/21/the-european-parliament-electoral-procedures>
- The FPÖ in the European Parliament – Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut. (n.d.). Retrieved 19 February 2025, from https://www.fbi-politikschule.at/en/austria-in-blue/organisations/the-fpoe-in-the-european-parliament/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Van Kessel, S., & Albertazzi, D. (2021). Right-Wing Populist Party Organisation Across Europe: The Survival of the Mass-Party? Conclusion to the Thematic Issue. *Politics and Governance*, 9(4), 365–370. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i4.5003>
- Van Prooijen, J.-W., Krouwel, A. P. M., & Pollet, T. V. (2015). Political Extremism Predicts Belief in Conspiracy Theories. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 6(5), 570–578. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550614567356>
- Vasilopoulou, S. (2011). European Integration and the Radical Right: Three Patterns of Opposition. *Government and Opposition*, 46(2), 223–244. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2010.01337.x>
- Vilimsky Harald – Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut. (n.d.). Retrieved 25 March 2025, from <https://www.fbi-politikschule.at/blausoesterreich/personen/personen/vilimsky-harald/>
- Vilimsky, H. (2025a, March 18). Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DHTC3JUNxnz/>
- Vilimsky, H. (2025b, March 19). Harald Vilimsky (@haraldvilimsky) • Photos et vidéos Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/haraldvilimsky/>
- Von Pezold, P., & Dallison, P. (2024, May 22). German far-right's problems deepen after SS remarks. POLITICO. <https://www.politico.eu/article/german-far-right-maximilian-krah-stop-campaign-eu-parliament-election/>
- Vorwort – Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs. (n.d.). Retrieved 30 May 2024, from <https://www.fpoe.at/eu-wahl-2024/wahlprogramm/vorwort/>
- What are European elections and how do they work? (n.d.). European Elections 2024: All You Need to Know. Retrieved 18 March 2025, from <https://elections.europa.eu/en/how-elections-work/>

Wodak, R. (2021). The politics of fear: The shameless normalization of far-right discourse (2nd edition). SAGE.

Written questions—9th parliamentary term | Harald VILIMSKY | MEPs | European Parliament. (n.d.). Retrieved 8 May 2025, from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/125001/HARALD_VILIMSKY/all-activities/written-questions/9

Www.fpoe.eu. (n.d.). Retrieved 30 May 2024, from <https://www.fpoe.eu>

10. Declaration on the use of generative artificial intelligence

I declare that I have used generative artificial intelligence to write this thesis, but that this use of generative artificial intelligence corresponds to the practices of academic and scientific integrity.

I used Chat GPT in my work as a tool to provide feedback on structure, clarity and coherence of my work or to correct grammar and spelling errors. I also asked it to find relevant academic resources for me, which helped me to find papers that I hadn't found on other databases. All the intellectual work remains my own.

11. Annexe

1. Full control group table

Name + Party	Committee membership	Plenary Speeches	Reports as rapporteur / shadow rapporteur	Opinions	Motions for resolutions	Oral Questions	Written questions
Angelika WINZIG (EPP) (AU)	ITRE + ECO, EMPL	77	2/21	11	2	1	15
Lena DÜPONT (EPP) (DE)	LIBE, EUDS + AGRI	71	2/11	11	5	1	21
Average EPP		74	2/16	11	3,5	1	18
Tiemo WÖLKEN (S&D) (DE)	ENVI, SANT + sub JURI	99	9/6	31	11	4	35
Hannes HEIDE (S&D) (AU)	CULT + REGI	86	1/1	24	19	3	50
Average S&D		92,5	5/3,5	27,5	15	3,5	42,5
Jan-Christoph OETJEN (Renew) (DE)	TRAN + LIBE, DROI	177	4/15	20	185	5	101
Andreas GLÜCK (Renew) (DE)	ENVI + SANT, ITRE	22	0/1	4	11	1	24

Average Renew		99,5	2/8	12	97,5	3	62,5
Özlem DEMIREL (GUE/NGL) (DE)	AFET, SEDE + EMPL LIBE	104	1/13	26	31	11	255
Martin SCHIRDEWAN (GUE/NGL) (DE)	ECON + INTA	82	0/22	10	24	3	81
Average GUE/NGL		93	0,5/17,5	18	27,5	7	168
Assita KANKO (ECR) (BE)	LIBE, FEMM + AFET	143	2/25	26	413	4	75
Jaak MADISON (ECR) (EST)	AEFT, INTA	118	0/9	2	52	7	44
Average ECR		130,5	1/17	14	232	5,5	59,5
Thomas WAITZ (Greens) (AU)	AGRI + AFET	105	2/9	4	17	10	81
Rasmus ANDRESEN (DE) (Greens)	BUDG, ECON, FISC + REGI	115	0/28	29	32	5	81
Average Greens		110	1/18,5	15,5	24,5	7,5	81
Average EP		100	2/13,5	16	66,5	4,5	72
Median EP		99,5	2 / 16	15,5	27,5	4,5	62,5

2. Full speeches in committee meetings

2.1. Christine Anderson: SANT Committee

09/09/2024 (translated from the original German)

The problem as I see it is that if as a committee we want to promote public health, we need to win back the trust that we lost, because when you're talking about public health, it can only be about public health, it can't be about paying billions and billions to the pharma industry and pushing that money their way and that's precisely what we've done over the past 4 years, we've had to take note of that development.

Now the scientific discussion was simply silenced, scientists who have distinguished career and titles were told to keep quiet. And it wasn't disinformation coming from the internet, but it was principally coming from the European Commission and the national governments. And it was never about breaking epidemic waves back then but about breaking the people and making sure that they follow their political will, and to force them to do so.

We can't procure straightforward medicinal products such as cough syrup to children, but 4,6 billion doses of vaccines were ordered by Ursula Von der Leyen, that was possible. And as we know it wasn't safe, it wasn't particularly effective, and in the best-case scenarios it was harmless and didn't really bring much and in the worst cases it was deadly and was indeed harmful.

But that all needs to be clarified now in the covid committee there was an opportunity, but that opportunity wasn't taken to clarify matters, on the contrary, it wasn't taken in spite of all of the lies that were uncovered. The final report didn't really mention them and again we lost the trust of our

citizens, and we need to go back to scientific knowledge and base ourselves on science, we can't misuse the scientific community to push through one's political will.

And that's why I would suggest, that we take a critical look at the Robert-Koch institute protocols, which are now public, and I think there is a great deal of information there and it will point in the direction of one pushing through their political will. I'm not going to point the finger at anyone specific but the pharma industry were definitely behind some of it because they benefited from it. But the scientific basis provided by the Robert Koch instituted was instrumentalized for political gain.

And that's without even mentioning the very undemocratic way in which restrictions of fundamental were put in place, with stigmatizing even exclusionary measures that have been taken, all of which have had no effect at the end of the day, on the contrary, it was actually about marginalising people, threatening them with the loss of their jobs, all just to be able to ram an mRNA injection into their arms, which, as I said, neither prevented a transition nor that they might fall ill with it, on the contrary, there are now some very interesting studies that show that the more, the more often you have been boosted, the more susceptible you are to Covid.

And we should also definitely take into account at least the decline in births in the member states. I understand that there is a correlation between the vaccination status in these countries and the decline in birth rates, but it is our job to get to the bottom of this and find out whether it might not even be the mRNA that caused this decline in births. In this respect, these are issues that we should definitely tackle here, otherwise we will not be able to credibly convey that we are actually committed to public health in the sense of health.

17/10/2024 (translated from the original German)

It has already been mentioned here that I would like to come back to what the colleague [unclear] said and also the colleague just now.

On the one hand, it is the case that the EU is once again taking laws under its wing for which it is not responsible, and it seems to me to be proceeding in the same salami tactic manner. We first set a framework in which the member states then have to implement it in some form and the next step would be to come up with concrete specifications from here. So it seems to me to be an extended appropriation of competences in areas where the competence does not even exist and, moreover, it seems to me to go too far in some places, which is a disproportionate encroachment on the rights of citizens.

But to come back to this point, and my colleague was absolutely right that this goal, which is possibly being pursued here with the best of intentions, cannot be achieved by excluding smokers, stigmatising them or even harassing them.

And the third and other point is actually that smoking is an addiction. So far, not a single government in the world has found the courage to say so. Why not? Because it would mean that programmes would have to be set up to give people the opportunity to kick the habit. And besides, let's be honest, the governments or governments of the member states would lose billions and billions in taxes and you simply can't risk that. So you apply the lever where you practically stigmatise and defame addicts.

And in that respect, I think that's the wrong approach. And I would also have liked to have had appropriate guarantees if we were to set a framework here, so that it actually remains within this framework and does not involve accidental encroachments on citizens' civil liberties. Thank you.

2.2. Maximilian Krah: INTA Committee

25/05/2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with your positive melody in general, but please allow me to put some water in your very tasty wine.

The first thing is, you mentioned that now trade becomes a mean of geostrategic ambitions of the United States, but what you mentioned is not everything. I mean, we also have geostrategic ambitions which goes to a competition with both China and Russia, and we know from the polls in Germany that 75% to 78% of the people do not want to become part of this geostrategic competition with both China and Russia. They urge us to finish Nord Stream 2 and to maintain our trade relationship with our greatest trade partner in the East, so China.

So we have to be careful if we stick too strong together with the United States because it could bring us becoming a party in their geostrategic competition. So I always say that serenity is a question of alternatives, what means we need to have the opportunity to change suppliers in our crucial sectors to reasonable costs and reasonable time, and that means especially in energy and technology. And here we see that the United States tried to push us on their side by third-party sanctions, and so I just want to add that. Thank you

13/07/2021 (translated from the original German)

Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. Mr Minister, first of all, I am delighted to hear you here. Your introductions were exactly what the Prime Minister said in plenary. They were factual, sober and not characterised by a certain moral hubris that I have often criticised. And I hope that this will also characterise your presidency. Two questions. The first topic, as with my colleagues, is China. Slovenia is part of the Eastern European Partnership 16 plus 1 with China. You obviously want to normalise trade relations with our largest trading partner here too. You have heard that I believe there is a majority in Parliament that is sceptical or even opposed to this. How do you assess the situation in the Council? The investment protection agreement was concluded at least under the German Council Presidency. Is there still a predominantly positive attitude in the Council towards trade with China and the investment protection agreement? And do you believe that, with the help of the Council, you will also be able to reach an agreement with Parliament to perhaps reconsider the negative stance?

The second question is in relation to Russia. We have imposed massive sanctions against Russia. Do you see any possibility of engaging in dialogue with Russia so that we can disarm somewhat here and calm trade again? Where do you think the obstacles are and will Slovenia, will the Slovenian Council Presidency take initiatives in this regard?

And thirdly, in general, you said that you assume that the conflicts between the USA and China in the global economy will continue. If I have understood you correctly, you favour a European position that represents a certain neutrality, i.e. that says we will not allow ourselves to be drawn into these trade

conflicts. Is that correct or would you say that you want to take sides in this trade conflict? Thank you very much.

9/11/2021

Thank you, Chairman. First of all, I was very pleased when I saw the report because it goes on trade. So, we increase trade. That is always good news. We are here because we like to trade and we think that it makes the world a better place. The point is we are always talking about our high standards, and high standards have pros and cons, and the cons is that it's a cost driver. So, if we continue to increase our standards, both technically and legally, then that makes our products even more expensive on the market, which could turn into a disadvantage.

And on the other hand, it could create our own trade barriers. So, what I want to emphasize on the first hand, I see that through transparency, through screening methods, and through the way to go on trade barriers, you can increase trade. But I want to look at your view on the risk that when we continue to increase standards more and more, that could be counterproductive. And I think we should look on standards unilaterally and not try to make the highest standard that we would like to see worldwide into a standard only for our relationships. So, maybe you can have that in mind for the future. Thank you.

9/11/2021

Thank you very much. The problem we have is that if you have least-developed countries, which are now under EBA, and they are now going upgrade to GSP, then they sometimes have a problem that because of the requirements they have for GSP, they don't come in. What we could foresee is a period of time that even after they have developed out of least-developed countries, that they can still stay in EBA for more than the three years we have foreseen now. The WTO now proposes seven years, which is by far too much. But if you could look for a compromise that they, let's say, four or five years, could stay in EBA until they have to step into GSP, they would have enough time, and it wouldn't be a punishment to be successful enough to leave the status of least-developed countries. So please have a focus on that step out of EBA into GSP. We need, I guess, we need one or two more years for them until they apply for GSP.

29/11/2021 (translated from the original German)

Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. The first problem we have with CBERN is that, according to the current concept, it will have virtually no impact on CO2 emissions. The second is that we see considerable problems in that it is not WTO-compliant. However, we want to organise trade on the basis of the WTO and in this respect an agreement must be reached in the next round of WTO negotiations. And the third is that we see a difficult problem in the practical implementation, because there are also products that are manufactured in the countries of origin from different industrial sectors and we must be able to determine the exact footprint and the extent of the CO2. And here, too, what I'm reading is that there will be massive bureaucratic obstacles.

All in all, we fear that this CBERN, as it is now being proposed, will not bring the desired climate policy success, but that the costs and the bureaucratic hurdles, especially for the domestic economy,

will lead to a competitive disadvantage, so that we cannot approve it in its current form. Thank you very much.

30/11/2021

Europe has a long tradition of being very open to foreign direct investment and what we see is quite recent development. Is there a tendency that the number of cases is increasing or decreasing? The second question would be, the one thing is to screen it and to have it on the screen, but the other is to intervene it and to say, no, we don't accept that foreign direct investment and do we have numbers how often that happens? Is there a tendency and if so, which countries are subjected of such restrictions, and can we also see a tendency? I ask this also because when I prepared, I looked in some articles and for instance, I found one in the Center for Strategic and International Studies and there our new measures were hailed as a political instrument in getting of more distance to Chinese foreign direct investment. Whilst I understand it as a completely neutral mechanism, so from the numbers and the experiences, do we have countries which we screen especially and where we have, where we resist especially, or do we, don't we have it? Is it equal?

And what this mechanism does and maybe what the trial does is that it looks to special sectors which we claim to be strategic. The first thing is sometimes I'm not sure whether this is the right selection. For instance, in the German legislation, we have autonomous driving as one of the strategic sectors, but I think that autonomous driving in a world where the car industry acts globally usually needs foreign direct investment that we can move forward. So here also, do you have some assessment made whether we have negative economic impact? So I would always be in favour of having foreign direct investment in more autonomous driving research, which under German legislation now gets screened and that it gets screened could avoid investors to invest in our own car industry which is very hardly hit at least by the Green Deal and by the COVID-19. That is one of the points. Are you sure that we are really going on those issues which are really in danger or are we too broad? And do you have mechanism to look at this? I don't think that there is only one direction, a direction to closer regulation. So I'm not with my, with the speaker Reinhard Bütikofer who said we are too slowly. Usually I think the European Union is too quickly and too broad when it comes on regulation. I would prefer to have it more precisely and maybe think double on it.

And then there is an issue which I want to give you with you which maybe is a little bit outside what you are doing now and that is the point that European assets especially on the stock market are usually too cheap and that some type of foreign direct investment is just made because it is a chance to buy good assets for cheap money because we don't have a stock market culture like the United States has. We have it with the investment let's say of BlackRock and almost all German majors publicly listed companies. And the question is do we need maybe a mechanism to prevent that shares and assets get sold out too cheap because of our own economic system. So that is another track but that would be very helpful because now I see the problem that we have low wages but we have quite high revenues but they go abroad and this is a problem that I don't see from a strategic point but socially it's not very nice that I see such an outflow of money from Germany especially from German workers to equity funds abroad.