

Do the Socialists have an affinity for foreign policy at the EU level?
An analysis of the negotiations for the HR/VP position and its
relations to party affiliation

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Abstract

The selection of individual portfolios is an understudied area in coalition studies, especially at the EU level where party political affiliation is often ignored. This paper asks why all appointed High Representatives have been affiliated with the Party of European Socialists. It examines the relative weight of different parties' preferences for the High Representative position during negotiations for appointments to top EU jobs after the European elections. Left-right orientations of the parties and the portfolios they obtain are determined based on two databases: ParlGov (Döring, Holger, Constantin Huber and Manow 2022) and Who Governs Europe (Casal Bértoa 2022).

We test two contrasting hypotheses. Our first hypothesis is that HR/VP selection is not circumstantial, but dependent on an ideological preference by the left for the position. The second is that the HR/VP, as the second most relevant position voted by the EP after the President of the Commission, is allocated to the second most significant coalition partner heuristically. Therefore, given that the S&D has been the second largest group in the EP since the creation of the position, the HR/VP has always been affiliated to the left. Our findings suggest that while both hypotheses are correct to a degree, the latter is more explicative.

Based on our combined database, we perform a quantitative analysis focused on the position of foreign ministers in national coalition governments since 1960 in the EU-15 countries in order to determine if there is a preference for the position of foreign minister (FM) in coalition negotiations among the left-leaning coalition partners. To this end, we analyze all coalition governments, as well as a subset of left-centre-right coalitions. Then, to elucidate these quantitative findings, we conduct interviews with experts in the political groups of the European Parliament, the political foundations of the parties, and the sherpas who conduct negotiations within the European Council.

Key words: High Representative, portfolio allocation, coalitions, European Union

1. Introduction

Portfolio allocation within coalition governments has been the object of considerable discussion among scholars. Various empirical studies have shown that Gamson's principle of proportional distribution of portfolios based on parliamentary seat share (1961 p. 376) is empirically validated within Western democracies (Browne and Franklin 1973; Schofield and Laver 1985; Warwick and Druckman 2006). However, the distribution of portfolios at the European Union (EU) level seems to follow other logic. Franchino (2009) has argued that even if the number of Commissioners is proportionate, the distribution of portfolios follows a logic of bargaining. Crombez, Huysmans, and Van Gestel (2017), in turn, have found that the post-Lisbon architecture of co-decision has shaped nominations. Döring (2007) has also shown that the political alignment of nominees varies based on the size of their member states of origin. Given this complexity, few studies have tried to explain nominations for EU top jobs in the post-Lisbon environment, preferring to focus on the European Commission (EC) President, especially after the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system in 2014 which seemed to have made EU political processes more like those of states (Hobolt 2014; Fotopoulos & Morganti 2020, 2021).

This focus on the EC President has its merits given they are the only figure within the European executive who is on par with the heads of intergovernmental structures (e.g., the European Council) or the critically important European Central Bank (ECB). However, this approach subsumes the allocation of the other Commissioners into the negotiations on the nomination of the President. Almost all Commission portfolios are malleable and hence provide for flexible negotiation outcomes. The one exception to this, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP), stands out as a position below the President but which also features in the Treaty on European Union (TEU) as a distinct position with its own portfolio (Article 18(4) TEU).

The HR/VP is a multi-hatted position, which represents the EU in Common Foreign and Security Policy, heads the European External Action Service (EEAS), acts as Vice President of the European Commission for external relations, chairs the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), heads other organisations like the European Defence Agency (EDA), and has supporting roles in various Union programmes. Thus, unlike an ordinary Commissionership, *the HR/VP should be subject to specific bargaining practices that have remained unstudied*. Understanding these practices is highly relevant, not only because they are understudied but also because the external action portfolio may grow in distinction and importance, given the EU's increasing aspirations to become a stronger geopolitical actor and the rapidly evolving geopolitical context.

A cursory overview of the history of the position suggests a bias towards officeholders from larger member states headed by Party of European Socialists (PES) affiliated governments. Since 1999, when the position was introduced, four High Representatives (HR) have held the position for five terms. Two were from Spain, one from the United Kingdom, and one from Italy, while all four were politicians in PES-affiliated parties and nominated by PES-affiliated heads of government. Over the same period, except for the President, Commissionships have changed hands regularly between parties and have changed considerably in terms of portfolios.

This paper aims to explain the specific dynamics that affect the HR/VP nomination. It is structured in the following manner: first, we outline the hypotheses that have guided our research, our findings, and our methodology; second, we overview the literature on portfolio selection, and thirdly, we present our analysis which allows us to draw these conclusions.

Hypothesis and findings

Our investigation into the HR/VP role began based on two contradictory hypotheses which we aim to test.

Hypothesis 1: The fact that PES-affiliated nominees have held the position so far is the result of an ideological tendency by left-wing parties to favour the external action portfolio at the European level.

Hypothesis 2: The allocation of top EU positions follows a negotiation heuristic based on party performance at the European elections. The HR/VP is considered the second most important position within the Commission after the President; thus, the second strongest party after EP elections tends to receive the HR/VP position within the Commission.

We employ a mixed method-approach to test our hypotheses, using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The quantitative research uses member state-level coalition data to determine if left-wing parties tend to obtain the external relations portfolio in coalition situations. The qualitative analysis is based on a series of interviews with officials involved in the negotiations for EU leadership positions.

Our analysis partially confirms both hypotheses. We find that at the national level, right wing parties seem to favour other portfolios higher than the foreign policy portfolio, while the left seems to obtain it proportional to their negotiation strength (based on their relative share of seats in parliament). Thus, we conclude that there is a relative left-wing bias towards the portfolio in left-right coalitions (although this does not seem to be the case when centrist parties are involved). Nevertheless, party performance seems to be a much more powerful predictor of the attribution of

the foreign policy portfolio generally. However, since left wing parties seem to be less able to translate parliamentary seat share to cabinet seat share and given that the data suggests that the foreign ministry is one of the easiest top portfolios to obtain, the relative weakness of the left best explains why they have obtained it more frequently (especially as the second or subsequent party in a coalition). At the EU level, our findings seem to confirm this view with a few caveats. While party performance, rather than ideological preference seem to explain the attribution of the HR/VP portfolio to PES, other non-ideological factors seem to be substantially more relevant at the EU level than in member states.

2. Method and limitations

Both our quantitative and qualitative approaches aim to shed light on the socialist-HR/VP relationship given the small N value of our sample at the EU level. While the empirical research underpinning this paper covers the entire history of the High Representative position since its creation in 1999, the position has changed significantly since the Lisbon Treaty. Javier Solana's two terms from 1999 to 2009 were subject to specific dynamics which set them apart from post-Lisbon political processes. Thus, the relevance of a comparison between the last three terms of the HR/VP are greater than with Javier Solana's period in office.

Our interviews are focused on three target groups: the political groups in the European Parliament (EP), the political foundations of the parties, and the sherpas who conduct negotiations within the European Council. We focus on persons affiliated with the three largest groups in the European Parliament: the European People's Party (EPP), the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), and Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), recently renamed Renew Europe. These groups and the parties affiliated with them have dominated negotiations for EU top jobs, and most of the officeholders in EU leadership positions have also been affiliated with them.

The interviews are conducted in a semi-structured format with standardised questions asked to each interviewee (see annexes 1 and 2). Before explaining the scope of our research at the start of each interview, the interviewees are asked to prioritise eight abstract portfolios as if they were negotiating for them. Interviewees are then asked to explain their ranking of the portfolio positions as an icebreaker and introduction to our questions related to the place of the HR/VP in their list of priorities.

Beyond issues of possible selection biases, a critical caveat to the data obtained in the interviews is that they have been conducted against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, which may have biased interviewees to over or underestimate the position of the HR/VP. Indeed, some of our interviewees explicitly pointed out that the current geopolitical context has led them to re-evaluate

the role. Some stated that negotiation priorities may be substantially different at the next elections if the situation remains the same.

Our coalition database is based on two sources: Who Governs Europe (Casal Bértoa 2022) for the cabinet positions and political affiliations of ministers, and ParlGov (Döring, Holger, Constantin Huber and Manow 2022) for election outcomes and ideological orientation of parties. Our merged database combines them by matching their data points. We base our findings on the assumption – verified by the data and the literature – that the first party in coalitions will almost always have the head of government position (Warwick and Druckman 2001, p. 644) and that the bargaining power of the second largest party should be greater the less the difference in vote share between it and the first party. Indeed, while the relative strength of the second party may vary based on a series of other factors, namely the willingness of the largest party to call another election (an impossibility at the EU-level), the availability of alternative partnerships, and the political culture of a given country (Indridason 2011), on average and through time, relative seat share in parliament should be good a predictor of bargaining power. Hence, we argue, in a coalition where the vote share between the partners is tight, the odds of the second party obtaining important portfolio positions is greater.

To analyse the position of the FM, we compare it with other portfolios that the literature considers more important than others, namely finance, internal affairs, and the prime minister (Druckman and Warwick 2005, p. 30). We also track the defence portfolio as a point of comparison to a secondary position. We posit that if parties tend to obtain the FM position more frequently with narrower separations from their senior partners, this should indicate a negotiation dynamic that sees second parties tend to favour the FM position more often. Conversely, if the range is larger, the FM position must be easier to obtain on average and hence less valuable. Translated to the EU level, heads of state and government engaging in negotiations for EU top jobs within the European Council, based on the outcomes of the European parliamentary elections, should tend to mimic the national level with a few caveats.

One limitation of this analysis is that political systems and practices of EU countries vary considerably. An analysis of German coalitions would, for example, show a near-perfect correlation between the junior partner's party and the FM position, since the vice-chancellorship was combined with the external affairs portfolio until 2017, and the junior partners have historically obtained the vice-chancellorship since 1961. To mitigate this, we have subdivided our data points to keep them open for analysis and recombination. Various analytical groupings can be used, but our data is most reliable for EU-15 countries.¹ Secondly, it is not necessarily clear what the role of the European

¹ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Parliament is in the formation of 'governing' coalitions at the EU level since the parliamentary results seem to act more as a benchmark for negotiators who represent the member states (Crombez, Huysmans, and Van Gestel 2017), than as the source of the negotiations themselves, despite the assembly's increasing involvement in the process through time.

Given the 'second order' nature of European elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998), the outcomes of the elections in EU member states do not often provide a majority for national governments. Smaller and opposition parties tend to do substantially better in European elections (Ferrara and Weishaupt 2004), which often act as a referendum on the performance of national governments more than anything else. Hence, negotiations are often a two-chamber affair, where one chamber is composed of the heads of government in the European Council who conduct the informal negotiations for all the positions based on the outcomes of the EP elections (the other chamber), which then must approve the nominations. This means that the significance of the groups in the EP is debatable as compared to parliaments in national government formation. Indeed, the differences in political parties and groups at the EU level versus at the national level is an on-going debate (see Hix, Noury, Roland 2005, Bressanelli 2012, O'Grady and Abou-Chadi 2019), although the literature tends to agree that they resemble each other more than they differ. The analysis of national coalitions can provide a substantial contribution to our understanding of the EU level, insofar as the parties, and the heads of government who lead them, are the same at both levels. Furthermore, it gives us an updated view of party preferences for portfolios, given that most studies on the topic are somewhat dated.

The two-chambered nature of the negotiation process also creates additional complexity, given that national and international politics impacts the decision-making of heads of governments. This is especially true in countries with proportional representation, where coalition governments are the norm. Frans Timmermans' European political journey is an emblematic example. His appointment to the Juncker cabinet was based on a left-right coalition headed by the right, while his appointment to the Von Der Leyen cabinet was effectively a political requirement given that he was the *Spitzenkandidat* of the PES. Hence, even though PES is no longer represented in the Dutch government, the Dutch appointee is a PES member. Furthermore, junior partners in national coalitions may include EU positions within their coalition negotiations. Hix and Lord (1997) have found, for example, that the Commission Presidency is a substantially more important political prize than a ministry position in a member state government.

The non-political and para-political rules that govern nominations also substantially influence negotiations. The fact that each country only receives one Commissioner (since 2004) and that the President of the Commission is, in theory, the only truly nominated official, means that allocation of

portfolios is just as significant a factor as the nomination of Commissioners (Franchino 2009).² A larger member state may value the ability to flexibly obtain multiple portfolios of interest over a position bounded by the treaties like the HR/VP. However, it is difficult to attribute a quantitative measure of flexibility in portfolio selections since it could be desirable or undesirable depending on a series of factors. Furthermore, larger states can also have conjunctural preferences for certain positions over others, as was the case with Prime Minister Renzi's strong insistence on the HR/VP position in 2014 (O'Mahony 2014) Romano Prodi (Guardian 1999). Finally, heads of government can find allies outside of their state and thus engage in horse-trading or tit-for-tat-type strategies to ensure their preferences outside of their own nominees are brought to the forefront. Von der Layen's support among the French majority is an emblematic example of this.

3. Literature review on portfolio selection

Initially, academic research on portfolio allocation focused mainly on the formation of coalition governments and the share of ministries the coalescing parties get. Research on the topic has focused primarily on quantitative approaches. Gamson's law that a party receives portfolios proportionally to the seats it won in the parliamentary election (Gamson 1961) is the main verifiable finding of this strand of research. However, the question of which parties select which portfolios and, more importantly, *why* they choose those portfolios has received less attention. Indeed, some authors have concluded: "the more qualitative aspect of the 'who gets what' question has largely played the role of Gamson's 'ugly sister'" (Ecker, Meier & Müller 2015, p. 814), which we aim to remedy.

A recent study published by the European Parliamentary Research Service (Drachenberg 2022), sheds light on the dynamics of leadership role allocation in the EC and the European Council. It highlights the importance of the balance of power in the European Council in addition to the results of the European Parliament's election. Drachenberg argues that the "party political backgrounds of the selected leaders of the EU institutions, confirms that the choice of the EU's institutional leadership is also related to the candidate's affiliation to the different European political parties, with the nominations reflecting the party-political balance in the European Council and the European Parliament at the time" (2022, p. 41). Building on this, he outlines that the selection process of any EU institutional leader is based on "an agreement between the main political parties, taking their relative numerical strength into consideration" (ibid., 42). While this furthers understanding of the interplay

² Legally, the Commission President could disregard the wishes of the member states and appoint whomever they deem fit, though in the rare instances this has happened it has only affected minor positions or portfolio distribution rather than Commissioners themselves.

of the European Council and the European Parliament and the interplay of their respective majorities, the article fails to elucidate why the position of the HR/VP has gone to the PES so far.

Turning to the importance of individual portfolios, the literature shows that the FM position ranks very highly across various studies on portfolio importance (Laver and Schofield 1998, Druckman and Warwick 2005, p. 30, Lin et al. 2017, p. 929). Oppermann and Brummer (2018) are among the few to explore the question of who gets the FM in coalition governments and under which condition it is allocated to the junior partner. Drawing on their insight, we posit that the PES can be regarded as a junior partner in a coalition, insofar as they have obtained the second highest share of votes in the EP since the creation of the HR/VP position in 1999, and that they are represented with the EU government (i.e. the Commission). While methodologically different, our approach aims to enlighten the issue at the EU level, namely by uncovering the decisive factors in the allocation of the HR/VP position by extrapolating trends from the allocation of the FM position on the national level.

While research into portfolio allocation at the national level is diverse, theoretical and empirical work at the EU level remains underdeveloped. Initial accounts focused on the Commissioners' backgrounds both in terms of experience and party affiliation. Döring laid the empirical foundation for further research by showing that party membership has always been an important factor, but that Commissioners have increasingly held higher political offices before being appointed (2007, p. 225).

Franchino (2009) was the first to test theories that were applied to coalitions in states at the EU level. This is based on his assumption – one we will rely on in our approach – that “[...] works on the quantitative and qualitative distribution of portfolios in parliamentary systems can be extended, with due caution, to the supranational executive of the European Union (EU).” (p. 6). He tests the applicability of the proportionality norm, bargaining theory, relevance of experience as well as that of salience in the process of portfolio allocation. Depending on the context, he finds support for all of them (p. 24). Importantly for the research at hand, Franchino argues that “[l]eft/right leaning Commissioners are significantly more likely to be assigned portfolios with a left-wing/right-wing ideological profile, but this strong relationship disappears for Commissioners with above average experience in the Commission, in the relevant supranational portfolios or in national governments” (2009, p. 1). This means that the position of the HR/VP should either fit the ideological orientation of left parties or that the HR/VPs have above average experience in their domain. The former view would be in contrast with the typology developed by Budge and Keman (1990, p. 97), and tested by Bäck, Debus and Dumont (2011, p. 466), that the right values the FM position more than the left. The latter explanation however is hard to verify, as only two out of three HR/VPs since Lisbon had experience in foreign affairs before holding the office.

To conclude, despite Franchino's (2009) empirical work and Drachenberg's (2022) recent contribution, portfolio allocation at the EU level remains largely unexplored. Our contribution, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative methods, aims to shed light on the particularities of the allocation of the HR/VP position, but much research will have to be conducted in the wider process of the formation of the Commission.

4. Analysis

4.1 Quantitative data

With some caveats, our analysis of national level coalition data suggests that left leaning parties do not have a preference for the foreign policy portfolio. Centrist parties on the other hand seem to have a strong preference for the position while right wing parties seem to disfavour it compared to other positions. However, we also find that there is a tendency for the portfolio to go to second or subsequent largest parties in coalitions, which means that statistically the left seems to get the position more often, since it is generally needs a greater share of seats in parliament to obtain seats in cabinet than the right or the centre. Our demonstration is structured in three sections: an overview of the database including its limitations, an examination of FM position compared to other tracked portfolios based on cabinet and parliamentary data, and an analysis of the relevance of this data for the EU level.

4.1.1 Overview of the dataset

Our dataset covers all coalition governments in EU-15 countries from 1960 to 2020, excluding caretaker and technocratic governments, but including minority governments. We base our definition of a coalition on that of ParlGov. Thus, for example, confidence and supply type agreements are considered coalitions governments, even if coalition partners are not represented in cabinet. Furthermore, hybrid political groupings like the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union in Germany, that are in effect in a permanent coalition, are considered single parties for the purposes of the database. The ideological views of the portfolio holders are subsumed into the views of the parties they are affiliated with. This is a necessary simplification since it is impossible to realistically measure the ideological inclinations of individuals. In reality, intraparty ideological differences are a substantial factor in cabinet appointments (Bäck, Debus & Müller 2016). Parties may, for example, nominate candidates that are more acceptable for potential coalition partners, rather than candidates who best represent the party. This is especially true at the EU level, where parties tend to nominate their most Europhilic and centrist candidates and where pro-European parties dominate the negotiation process (see annex 5 table 18).

Parlgov classifies parties on four axes: left-right, state-market, liberty-authority, and anti-pro EU. Our analysis is based on the first axis, which acts as a general barometer for the orientation of the parties.³ Based on their ideological orientation, we have classified each coalition government according to the political spectrum that is represented within it. The Left-Centre-Right spectrum is determined on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is the most left and 10 is the most right (see Castles and Mair 1983, Huber and Inglehart 1995, Ray 1999, Benoit and Laver 2006, Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010). For the sake of simplicity, our analysis is based on a 'balanced centre' approach to ideological indexation. In other words, we consider that the distribution of leftness, centristness, and rightness is proportional and symmetric. For example, in our database, a Left (L) coalition government is composed of at least two parties indexed each below 4,0, Left-Centre (LC) coalitions are composed of at least one party below 4,0 and at least one between 4,0 and 6,0, Left-Centre-Right (LCR) governments are composed of at least three parties, where one is 4,0 or below, one is 4,0 to 6,0, and one is above 6,0. While the government configurations do not indicate the number of parties, each orientation is almost always represented by a single party in the data set.⁴

4.1.2 Analysis of the portfolio data in relation to political orientation, cabinet and parliamentary seat distribution

Of our sample, 144 coalition governments where the left is represented are cross ideological (LC, LCR, LR configurations). Not accounting for the size of the parties in these coalitions, 41% of coalitions were led by the left compared to 26% by the right and 28% by the centre (see Annex 3, table 5). Conversely, 41% of FM positions went to the left, compared to 21% to the right and 35% to the centre. That is the highest ratio among our tracked portfolios, except for finance (L 42%, C 21%, R 29%). This trend holds when considering portfolio holders from the second largest party in a coalition (see Annex 3, table 6). The left represents 45% of FMs in that case (R 27%, C 27%), compared to 34% of internal affairs (R 39%, C 25%), 42% of finance (R 35%, C 23%), and 29% of defence portfolios (R 45%, C 26%). The difference between the left, centre, and right are even starker when considering second and all subsequent parties together in a coalition (see Annex 3, table 7). The left represents 38% of FMs in these cases (39% excluding independents), compared to 25% for the right and 34% for

³ Parlgov uses the following sources for its data: "Castles/Mair 1983 (left/right), Huber/Inglehart 1995 (left/right), Benoit/Laver 2006 – (left/right), CHES 2010 (Irgen 1999 and 2002 and 2006) state/market — Benoit/Laver 2006 (taxes/spending), CHES 2010 (Irecon 1999 and 2002 and 2006) liberty/authority — Benoit/Laver 2006 (social), CHES 2010 (galtan 1999 and 2002 and 2006) EU anti/pro — Ray 1999 (pos96), Benoit/Laver 2006 (euauthority or eulargerstronger or eujoining), CHES 2010 (position 1999 and 2002 and 2006)" (Parlgov Codebook 2022).

⁴ It is important to note that the distribution of governing parties between left, right, and centre would change substantially with a different approach to classification. For example, if the definition of left was restricted to parties below 3,5, the left would almost never be represented in Germany, given that the Social Democratic Party of Germany's has a left/right score of 3,65. Table 18 (Annex 5) shows our total sample subdivided into the ideological orientations of the largest parties (by seat share in parliament) within each coalition government in EU-15 countries from 1960 to 2020, based on the balanced centre approach.

the centre (26% and 35% respectively excluding independents). Conversely, internal affairs, finance, and defence all go to the right at 39%, 31%, 47% respectively compared to 29%, 28%, and 19% for the left and 28%, 37%, and 35% for the centre.

Party size/rank	Left	Centre	Right
Irrespective of rank	1,00	0,80	1,24
First party	1,05	0,73	1,63
Second party	0,31	1,07	2,11
Second and subsequent parties	0,21	1,06	1,28

Table 1 - Ratio of PMs to FMs by party size and ideological orientation in EU-15 countries from 1960 to 2020 – lower numbers mean the FM position is obtained more frequently than the PM position

Party size/rank	Left	Centre	Right
Irrespective of rank	1,02	0,60	1,38
First party	1,22	0,41	1,87
Second party	0,93	0,85	1,30
Second and subsequent parties	0,74	0,79	1,24

Table 2 - Ratio of finance ministers to FMs by party size and ideological orientation in EU-15 countries from 1960 to 2020 – lower numbers mean the FM position is obtained more frequently than the finance portfolio

While the above indicates that the left holds the FM position more often than the centre or the right in absolute terms in L, LCR and LR configurations, relatively speaking the FM position seems to go much more frequently to centrist parties. Tables 1 and 2 show the relative ratio of portfolios obtained by the ideological orientation of parties. While the left does obtain the FM position more frequently than the right on average, centrist parties tend to get it much more so when a centrist party is the first party. Centrist and right parties also tend to get the PM position much more frequently than the left, when they are the second largest party or smaller, although the sample size in these cases is very small (19 total cases over 6 countries). The difference is also noticeable when compared to the finance portfolio. Left wing parties tend to obtain it just as much overall, but favour finance when the left is the largest party, whereas centrists obtain the foreign policy portfolio more frequently than finance in all situations. The right, in turn, seems to have a strong inclination towards the finance portfolio compared to the FM position, even when they are the second or subsequent party, whereas the left obtains the FM position substantially more frequently when it is the second, third, or fourth party.

These datapoints also seem to be corroborated when looking at the general coalition data in all coalition configurations. Centrist parties are the only orientation that get the FM position more frequently than the PM position (78 FMs versus 68 PMs), while the left and the right have gotten 62 and 81 FMs, compared to 63 and 98 PMs respectively from 1960 to 2020 in EU-15 countries. This suggests that political orientation changes the relative importance of the top portfolios described by Warwick and Druckman (2005). This broader approach may also substantiate our second hypothesis,

that second ranked parties get the FM position more frequently, insofar as centrists are the smallest proportion of parliamentary seats on average at 24%, compared to 32% for the left and 27% for the right.

Indeed, portfolio allocation among the tracked portfolios is clearly correlated to the size of each party's share in parliament. Irrespective of ideology, the average parliamentary majority of the first party for the FM position is 132,28 seats among EU-15 countries, compared to 111,03 for the PM, 116,03 for finance, 129,43 for defence, and 132,86 internal affairs, only the latter of which is slightly larger (Annex 4, table 9).⁵ When a party is in second place, these numbers are the following: 39,87 for the FM, 41,12 for internal affairs, 46,45 for defence, 47,58 for the PM, and 50,84 for finance (Annex 4, table 10). The difference between these two sets of numbers seems to suggest that the FM position is the least valuable portfolio, given that it is secured on average by the largest majorities when it goes to the first party and can be secured by the smallest share of seats as the second party. In fact, among tracked portfolios, the share of cabinet seats attributed to the FM's party is the least correlated with parliamentary seat share (Annex 5, table 17). Thus, we can posit that the largest parties tend to negotiate less forcefully for the FM position, insofar as they have on average larger majorities to obtain it (table 3). As a point of comparison, the financial portfolio is on average obtained by the lowest number of seats for the first party (after the PM) and the lowest ratio between the first and second parties for the second party. Hence, the relative strength required to obtain the financial portfolio as a second party is substantially greater than for the FM position (2,28 versus 3,32).

Country	Defence	Finance	Foreign M.	I. Affairs	PM
Austria	1,50	1,48	1,28	1,22	
Belgium	1,31	1,09	1,49	1,57	1,04
Denmark	1,96	2,37	3,68	2,82	
Finland	1,34	1,35	1,20	1,18	1,07
France	1,63	2,33	1,18	3,69	
Germany			2,57	6,73	
Greece	11,68		4,15	4,93	
Ireland	4,52	2,10	2,00	8,32	
Italy	3,78	3,27	2,71	2,59	3,10
Luxembourg	1,40		1,17	1,51	1,60
Netherlands	1,66	1,47	1,18	1,65	

⁵ These values exclude the UK and Spain. No coalitions were recorded in Spain over the 1960-2020 period, while only one coalition was recorded in the UK, which skews the results heavily because of the high number of UK members of parliament.

Portugal	2,71	3,17	2,68		
Sweden	1,65	2,37	2,56		1,44
Overall	2,79	2,28	3,32	3,23	2,34

Table 3 - Average ratio between the first and second parties' seat share in parliament based on portfolio allocation and irrespective of ideological orientation in EU-15 countries from 1960 to 2020. Higher means greater difference

Even accounting for ideological orientation in the parliamentary data, the above relationship seems to remain stable. While the right obtains all positions with relatively fewer members of parliament than the centre or the left, owing to the greater number of governments led by the right, the average relationship between the vote shares necessary for the FM compared to other tracked portfolios indicates party orientations (Annex 5, tables 15 and 16). On average, the right obtains the FM position with 27% more seats in parliament than it obtains the PM position as the first party (see Annex 5, table 15). This ratio is 6% for internal affairs and 8% for defence and 4% for finance. Conversely, the left obtains the FM position with only 14% more seats than it does the PM as the first party. Only the defence portfolio requires more (29%), while finance and internal affairs require 10% and 6% respectively. Here too, centrist parties seem to have the strongest relationship with the FM position, which on average requires 11% more votes for a centrist party than for a PM as the largest party, as compared to 8% for finance, 19% for defence, and 71% for internal affairs. Statistical analysis seems to substantiate this view. As stated previously, the FM's party is the least correlated factor when comparing the distribution of parliamentary seats of coalition partners and the distribution of cabinet seats. While correlation between the two is 80% for the FM's party, it is 87% for the PM's party, 86% for the finance ministers, and 91% for both the interior and defence ministers (Annex 5, table 19). The FM's party's parliamentary seat share in a coalition also seems to be the least predictive portfolio of cabinet seat share, with a coefficient of determination $r^2 = 0,5494$, compared to 0,6601 for the finance minister, 0,6496 for the PM, 0,8321 for the defence minister, and 0,8226 for the interior minister, irrespective of party orientation or party rank.

We can conclude from these datapoints that centrists may have some degree of preference for the FM position, which they seem to obtain at disproportionately high rates compared to other portfolios. While the left seems to obtain it at rates slightly more than concurrent to other parties, this can be better explained by its apparent inability to transform parliamentary seat share into cabinet positions for all portfolios compared to the right, rather than any genuine preference, insofar as its share of FMs is nearly identical to its share of PMs as the first party. Finally, the FM position seems -if anything- to be less preferred by the right, whose preferences are clearly geared towards other portfolios (such as finance or the interior ministry). These findings seem to contradict previous literature which argued that the portfolio leans right generally (Budge and Keman 1990, p. 97; Bäck, Debus and Dumont 2011, p. 466).

4.1.3 Relevance to the EU level

How these results would translate to the EU level is an open question. An average of the ideological orientations of the political groups at the EP would suggest that there is no centrist group currently represented in the parliament following our definition. On the left-right scale, weighted by their relative share of MEPs, the S&D score 3,50 compared to 6,28 for Renew Europe and 6,73 for the EPP (Annex 5, table 18). A comparison of EU-15 coalitions and the EU level would suggest a link between the frequency of left affiliated HR/VPs and the national level. The left obtains the FM portfolio substantially more frequently in LC, LCR, and LR configurations (Annex 3, tables 6 and 7) as the second party (L 25, C 15, R 15) or as the second or subsequent party (L 33, C 30, R20). This is also true in just the LR configuration as the second party (L 18, R 11) and as the second or subsequent parties (L 18, R 13).⁶ At the European level, the S&D has been the second largest group, and in an effective coalition with the right since 1999. In that time, the left has had the Commission Presidency only once (1999-2004). Nevertheless, as shown above, the FM position is also relatively more attributed to the second party in LC, LCR, and LR configurations (table 8 and 9) and in all coalition configurations.⁷ Thus, based on the national data, it could be argued that the attribution of the HR/VP position is influenced by both phenomena: *the tendency of the foreign policy portfolio to go to secondary parties, and the relatively stronger preference of the left compared to the right for the portfolio*. However, of the two, we argue that there is a stronger tendency to associate the position with second ranked parties, given in particular the relative equivalency between the FM position and the PM when the left is the first party, compared for example to the centre, which shows a clear preference.

Nevertheless, coalition building within the EU is subject to substantively different formal and informal methods that distinguish it from the national level. Formal restrictions such as the single Commissioner per country rule, informal rules like the spitzenkandidaten system, the high number of negotiators, and the multi-level nature of negotiations for EU top jobs, makes portfolio allocation a substantially more complex process than coalition negotiations at the national level. Indeed, well established truisms in the coalition building literature do not seem to apply to the EU. For example, while heads of government generally come from the leading party at the national level (Warwick & Druckman 2006, p. 460) with a few exceptions (Annex 3 table 7), even this headstrong principle does not hold true for the EU. The President of the Commission has only been from the largest party in the EP for 29 of the 43 years since the direct election of the European parliament in 1979. Indeed, there

⁶ Irrespective of party rank, in LR configurations, the FM position is attributed L 30 vs R 21 compared to L 18 vs R 35 for the PM, L 11 R 36 for defence, L 20 vs R 29 for finance, and L 21 vs R 32 for internal affairs.

⁷ In all coalition configurations the number of positions in EU-15 countries from 1960 to 2020 is as follows. As first party: 105 defence, 120 finance, 107 FM, 117 internal affairs, 199 PM; as second party: 78 defence, finance 72, FM 82, internal affairs 80, PM 23; as second and subsequent party: defence 117, finance 95, FM 111, internal affairs 107, PM 30.

does not seem to be any stable relationship between the parliamentary majority and the President, even after the treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam made the EP into a genuine co-legislator, even though the majority in the EP and the EC President has been concurrent since 2005. In fact, a crude side-by-side comparison of the Commission President versus the HR/VP would seem to support our hypothesis that a ‘second party gets the HR/VP’ heuristic exists. However, the unsettled nature of the EU electoral institutions and the size of the sample mean that this view cannot be substantiated yet. Thus qualitative analysis of the negotiation processes that lead to the appointment of the HR/VP position is necessary.

4.2 Analysis of qualitative data

Despite some methodological limitations, our qualitative data shows that there is a strong preference for the foreign and security policy portfolio among decision makers in the aftermath of the EP elections. However, our findings also emphasise the importance of intergovernmental decision making within the European Council, which bundles a whole series of EU and non-EU top jobs into one single package. In this context, candidates with strong backing from their political group and little opposition are most likely to become the next HR/VP. However, our findings show that this is one of many requirements, which also include a set of informal criteria that are context specific. Thus, we argue that ideological preference is only a minor factor in the selection process and that the unbroken succession of PES affiliated HR/VPs is more circumstantial than indicative of a trend.

4.2.1 Results of the questionnaire

As stated in the methodology section, interviewees were asked to rank a series of EU level portfolios. Figure 1 shows that the foreign and security policy portfolio is the main priority for our interviewees. This contrasts with our findings at the national level, even though the portfolios do not all overlap. This discrepancy could be explained by a few factors, namely the unique nature of the HR/VP as a “Vice President plus” type position (interview I), the geopolitical backdrop of the interviews, namely the war in Ukraine, or that interviewees believe the external action portfolio is more valuable at the EU level than their affiliated parties seem to consider at the national level.

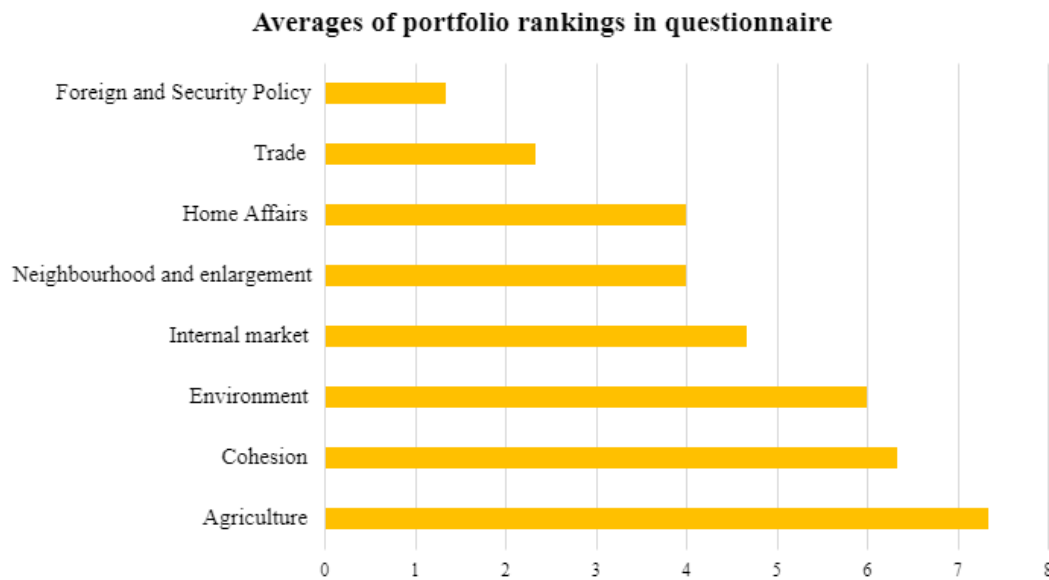


Figure 1 - Preliminary results of the questionnaire. Lower scores indicate that a portfolio is valued higher.

Indeed, as with all coalition negotiations, portfolio allocation does not occur in a vacuum and there is not sufficient statistical data at the EU level to examine long term trends for the external action portfolio. This is doubly true given the changing nature of the position post-Lisbon, and the fact that the requirements placed on the HR have changed considerably through time. While Catherine Ashton in effect had to create and organise a foreign ministry (the EEAS) from the group up, Josep Borrell has had to focus much more on the geopolitical climate.

Furthermore, negotiations dynamics are substantially more complex. While EPP, S&D, and Renew Europe affiliated individuals and parties dominate negotiations, European Conservatives and Reformists and the Greens also indirectly involved. EP groups are composed of dozens of national parties, and negotiations are conducted by 27/28 heads of state and government (some of whom lead coalitions at the national level). Thus, European coalition building brings together many more groups and individuals than national coalitions.

4.2.2 Results of the interviews

Our interviews confirmed that EU-top jobs are negotiated simultaneously and are in effect a ‘package deal’. This also apparently includes high-level positions in other international organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), if there is an informal understanding that a national from an EU member state will hold that position. Thus, political equilibrium in EU negotiations is dependent not only on EU positions but also on the timetable of other international top jobs. For instance, in 2019, the European Council discussed Christine Lagarde as a possible nominee for the presidency of the European Central Bank, even though

the mandate of the ECB presidents mandate last eight years and does not correspond with the cycle of other European institutions. Bulgaria initially opposed her candidacy but withdrew its opposition once it became clear that Kristalina Georgieva, a Bulgarian economist and politician, would be included in the broader agreement (Euractiv 2019, interview III). In September 2019, she was selected as managing director of the IMF.

Our interview data tends to indicate that intergovernmental negotiation of EU top jobs still dominates the political process of portfolio selection. It is considered to be “the most important bastion of intergovernmentalism in the European institutions” (interview II). In particular, interviewees point to the importance of having a head of state or government with significant political power who represents one of the main political affiliations. Examples include Emmanuel Macron for the appointment of Charles Michel, Pedro Sánchez for Josep Borrell, Matteo Renzi for Federica Mogherini, and Gordon Brown and José Luis Zapatero for Catherine Ashton (interview III). Nevertheless, European political parties play a significant role in the process. Through their coordination role, they contribute to identify suitable candidates for the main EU ‘top jobs’ (Drachenberg 2022, p. 48).

In comparison to the other high-level EU positions, the interviewees point to the fact that the strength of the HR/VP nominee depends substantially more on their character, or ‘what they will make of the position’, which is also echoed in the literature (Knoops and Tercovich 2020). They further point to a developing informal ranking of the positions amongst one another. By their measure, the President of the European Commission ranks higher than the President of the European Council and the HR/VP. This would suggest that a relationship between the majorities in the EP and the positions held by each political group is forming. In particular, one interviewee suggested that the *Spitzenkandidaten* system facilitates this informal ranking, as a single public figure represents each orientation, especially by participating in democratic practices like the televised *Eurovision* debate (interview I). Thus, the *Spitzenkandidaten* system produces an expectation that the winner of the election should be rewarded with the top job, hence implying a ranking of the posts.

Interviewees have also downplayed the fact that the HR/VP has come from the larger member states, stating that it was more a coincidence than anything. However, they point to other criteria in the selection process, namely, party affiliation, previous experience in political and institutional posts, respect for geographical balance in the positions, and gender. The latter point was an important consideration in the selection of Lady Ashton for example (interview III), and has gained importance over the years (interview II, interview III). Although the size of the Member State of origin does not seem to matter, it seems that larger countries tend to have more negotiation power and, hence have a more substantial influence on the HR/VP in the selection process.

5. Conclusions

Like the EU itself, the position of the HR/VP is characterised by the complexities of competing intergovernmental and supranational dynamics. More than anything, the adage that ‘it depends’ seems to hold for the nomination process of the HR/VP. Using a mixed-method approach, we have sought to shed light on the opaque selection process of the HR/VP. Building on the assumption that it is possible – notwithstanding obvious caveats – to extrapolate trends from the national to the EU level, the quantitative part of this paper highlights two interconnected trends. First, in EU-15 coalition governments since 1960, often, junior partners are able to secure the FM position. This is interesting since previous studies have underlined the importance of the position. However, our data suggest it ranks below other portfolios such as finance and internal affairs. Secondly, left parties seem to have a relative preference for the FM position compared to the right both as the first and second party in government. Combining these trends and extrapolating them to the EU level, we posit that they explain why the left has always obtained the HR/VP position. The left has come second in elections for the EP since the position’s creation and, as a junior partner and given its relative preference for the portfolio compared to the right, the S&D was more likely to obtain it. Thus, our findings partially confirm both hypotheses. Ideological preferences (H1) and considerations relating to the order of importance of the position (H2) can be found on the national level and to some degree at the EU level, although we argue that the second hypothesis holds truer given the preponderance of the data.

However, as outlined in our analysis, merely transferring national insights to the EU level would overlook significant institutional and political differences. Therefore, a more nuanced analysis based on expert interviews was conducted to better understand the appointment process. These suggest that party affiliation is only one of many factors in the selection of nominees. The HR/VP position is part of a larger package of negotiations within the European Council after the EP elections, which are intergovernmental and concern a variety of EU and non-EU ‘top jobs’ to be filled at a given moment in time.

One notable result is that the interviewees consistently ranked the HR/VP position above other Commissioner level portfolios, showing its relative importance. We interpret this as the HR/VP position ranking as the second most important position after the Commission President, especially given that there is no financial portfolio at the EU level. Regarding the process of appointing Commissioners, it remains largely an intergovernmental practice, although somewhat constrained by the Spitzenkandidaten system. This makes the process of portfolio selection more complex, according to our findings, since positions in other organisations are also taken into consideration depending on the timing of the elections. Furthermore, besides political affiliation, geographic allocation and criteria such as gender balance also play a role.

Ultimately, the HR/VP appointment process and the portfolio allocation for Commissioners in general requires more research. More thorough quantitative and qualitative analysis will be possible as more HR/VPs are appointed, and we predict that the current geopolitical situation is likely to accentuate the significance of the HR/VP, which makes further research all the more necessary. With our contribution, we hope to have made a first step in this largely under-researched field.

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Annex 1. Questionnaire

If you had to negotiate for the following portfolios, how would you prioritise them? Please rank them from 1 to 8, where 1 is the most important portfolio in your view and 8 the least important.

- Agriculture
- Cohesion
- Home Affairs
- Trade
- Foreign and Security Policy
- Environment
- Neighbourhood and enlargement
- Internal market

Annex 2. Interview questions

General questions

1. Do you think that the first placed political group should get the position of President of the European Commission?
 - a. Why?
2. Should the HR/VP position always go to one of the bigger Member States?
 - a. Why?
3. If you were to pick the next HR/VP, what would be the selection criteria?
 - a. Why?
4. Since Javier Solana, we had a Brit, Italian and Spanish as a HR/VP. Do you have an explanation for this?
5. Do you think that the HR/VP position is the second most important position in the European Commission, after the Presidency?

HR/VP negotiations and links to other institutions

6. Who was the first person to suggest a nomination for the HR/VP position for the past 3 positions?
7. Do the European Parliament elections influence the nomination of the European Council for the HR/VP position?
 - a. How? Who does the Council consult?
8. How is the composition of national governments influencing the nomination of the HR/VP?
9. How is the nomination of the President of the European Commission influencing the nomination of the HR/VP?
10. Do you think it is a coincidence that all HR/VPs so far have been from PES?

Annex 3. Portfolio distribution by ideological orientation in LC, LCR, and LR coalition configurations in EU-15 countries from 1960 to 2020

EU-15 Country	Unclassified	Centre	Independent	Left	Right	Total
Austria				11	7	18
Belgium		18		2	6	26
Denmark		1		7	8	16
Finland		13		15	5	33
France	2		2	8	13	25
Germany				7	13	20
Greece				2	3	5
Ireland					14	14
Italy	4	19		9	4	36
Luxembourg					13	13
Netherlands		12		2	3	17
Portugal		2			7	9
Sweden		3		2	3	8
United Kingdom					1	1
Total	6	68	2	65	100	241

Table 4 - Political Orientation of leading parties in coalitions of EU-15 governments from 1960 to 2020

*No coalitions recorded in Spain over the period

Portfolio	Centre	Independent	Left	Right	Unknown	Total
Prime minister	40	6	58	37	0	141
Internal affairs	38	3	55	44	1	141
Foreign affairs	49	3	57	30	1	140
Finance	29	9	59	41	1	139
Defence	38	0	40	52	5	135
Portfolio	Centre ratio	Ind. ratio	Left ratio	Right ratio	Unknown ratio	Total %
Prime minister	0,28	0,04	0,41	0,26	0,00	1,00
Internal affairs	0,27	0,02	0,39	0,31	0,01	1,00
Foreign affairs	0,35	0,02	0,41	0,21	0,01	1,00
Finance	0,21	0,06	0,42	0,29	0,01	1,00
Defence	0,28	0,00	0,30	0,39	0,04	1,00

Table 5 - Distribution of portfolios irrespective of portfolio holders party size

Portfolio	Centre	Independent	Left	Right	Unknown	Total
Prime minister	4	0	2	8	0	14
Internal affairs	11	0	15	17	0	43
Foreign affairs	15	0	25	15	0	55
Finance	10	0	18	15	0	43
Defence	11	0	12	19	0	42
Portfolio	Centre ratio	Ind. ratio	Left ratio	Right ratio	Unknown ratio	Total %
Prime minister	0,29	0,00	0,14	0,57	0,00	1,00
Internal affairs	0,26	0,00	0,35	0,40	0,00	1,00
Foreign affairs	0,27	0,00	0,45	0,27	0,00	1,00
Finance	0,23	0,00	0,42	0,35	0,00	1,00
Defence	0,26	0,00	0,29	0,45	0,00	1,00

Table 6 - Distribution of portfolios for the second largest party

Portfolio	Centre	Independent	Left	Right	Unknown	Total
Prime minister	9	6	2	8	0	25
Internal affairs	20	3	21	28	0	72
Foreign affairs	30	3	33	22	0	88
Finance	18	9	19	21	0	67
Defence	26	0	14	35	0	75
Portfolio	Centre ratio	Ind. ratio	Left ratio	Right ratio	Unknown ratio	Total %
Prime minister	0,36	0,24	0,08	0,32	0,00	1,00
Internal affairs	0,28	0,04	0,29	0,39	0,00	1,00
Foreign affairs	0,34	0,03	0,38	0,25	0,00	1,00
Finance	0,27	0,13	0,28	0,31	0,00	1,00
Defence	0,35	0,00	0,19	0,47	0,00	1,00

Table 7 - Distribution of portfolios for second and subsequent largest parties

Portfolio	Centre	Independent	Left	Right	Unknown	Total
Prime minister	31	0	56	29	0	116
Internal affairs	18	0	34	16	0	68
Foreign affairs	19	0	24	8	1	52
Finance	11	0	40	20	0	71
Defence	12	0	26	17	0	55
Portfolio	Centre ratio	Ind. ratio	Left ratio	Right ratio	Unknown ratio	Total %
Prime minister	0,27	0,00	0,48	0,25	0,00	1,00
Internal affairs	0,26	0,00	0,50	0,24	0,00	1,00
Foreign affairs	0,37	0,00	0,46	0,15	0,02	1,00
Finance	0,15	0,00	0,56	0,28	0,00	1,00
Defence	0,22	0,00	0,47	0,31	0,00	1,00

Table 8 - Distribution of portfolios among cabinet members from the largest party

Annex 4. Portfolio distribution by seat share in parliament in EU-15 countries from 1960 to 2020

*No coalitions recorded in Spain over the period

**UK excluded due to low volume of coalitions (1) and high number of members of parliament

EU-15 Country	Defence	Finance	Foreign	Internal	Prime Minister
			Affairs	Affairs	
Austria	69,78	77,90	78,00	75,33	71,61
Belgium	39,33	44,50	49,33	48,00	45,00
Denmark	50,07	49,86	70,00	56,33	48,60
Finland	54,00	54,86	53,18	53,23	50,76
France	235,89	263,00	254,53	252,20	249,38
Germany	237,86	185,25	112,20	274,50	237,86
Greece	134,33	146,33	137,00	138,00	139,40
Ireland	67,77	69,31	68,82	66,54	67,57
Italy	256,77	230,00	254,57	243,04	255,42
Luxembourg	21,00	21,09	17,50	21,20	21,55
Netherlands	47,00	46,20	43,50	49,50	44,19
Portugal	107,50	95,20	104,00	96,89	96,89
Sweden	90,57	104,25	97,17	106,50	92,43
Overall	129,43	116,03	132,28	132,86	111,31

Table 9 - Average seat share of largest parties in coalitions by portfolio holder irrespective of ideological orientations

EU-15 Country	Defence	Finance	Foreign Affairs	Internal	
				Affairs	Prime Minister
Austria	46,67	52,60	61,17	61,50	
Belgium	30,00	40,80	33,17	30,56	43,25
Denmark	25,50	21,00	19,00	20,00	
Finland	40,25	40,77	44,21	45,22	47,33
France	145,00	112,86	215,00	68,29	
Germany			43,71	40,80	
Greece	11,50		33,00	28,00	
Ireland	15,00	33,00	34,33	8,00	
Italy	68,00	70,38	94,00	94,00	82,50
Luxembourg	15,00		15,00	14,00	13,50
Netherlands	28,38	31,40	37,00	29,92	
Portugal	39,67	30,00	38,75		
Sweden	55,00	44,00	38,00		64,00
Overall	46,45	50,84	39,87	41,12	47,58

Table 10 - Average seat share of second largest parties in coalitions by portfolio holder irrespective of ideological orientations

EU-15 Country	Defence	Finance	Foreign	Internal	Prime Minister
			Affairs	Affairs	
Austria	23,11	25,30	16,83	13,83	71,61
Belgium	9,33	3,70	16,17	17,44	1,75
Denmark	24,57	28,86	51,00	36,33	48,60
Finland	13,75	14,08	8,97	8,01	3,43
France	90,89	150,14	39,53	183,91	249,38
Germany	237,86	185,25	68,49	233,70	237,86
Greece	122,83	146,33	104,00	110,00	139,40
Ireland	52,77	36,31	34,48	58,54	67,57
Italy	188,77	159,63	160,57	149,04	172,92
Luxembourg	6,00	21,09	2,50	7,20	8,05
Netherlands	18,63	14,80	6,50	19,58	44,19
Portugal	67,83	65,20	65,25	96,89	96,89
Sweden	35,57	60,25	59,17	106,50	28,43
Overall	68,61	70,07	48,73	80,08	90,01

Table 11 - Average difference between the seat share of the first and second largest parties in coalition by portfolio holder irrespective of ideological orientations

EU-15 Country	Defence	Finance	Foreign Affairs	Internal	
				Affairs	Prime Minister
Austria	57,25	79,33	90,00	78,14	70,55
Belgium			62,00	60,67	43,50
Denmark	59,43	59,43	70,00	64,33	59,43
Finland		54,86	54,71	54,63	52,21
France	239,50	239,50	239,50	237,71	239,50
Germany	237,86	226,67	192,50	274,50	237,86
Greece		147,00		147,00	147,00
Italy	297,00	171,00	297,00	234,00	255,00
Luxembourg	13,00	17,00	13,00	15,00	
Netherlands				45,00	41,00
Sweden	106,50	106,50	106,50	106,50	106,50
Overall	162,77	139,31	144,59	118,51	126,39

Table 12 - Average seat share of largest parties in coalitions where the portfolio holder is from the left with a balance centre indexation of parties

EU-15 Country	Defence	Finance	Foreign		Prime Minister
			Affairs	Internal Affairs	
Belgium	51,00	55,40	47,50		49,08
Finland	54,00		50,50	51,00	51,36
Germany		61,00	58,67		
Italy	258,11	250,88	252,56	251,82	257,83
Netherlands	48,50	46,20	45,80	54,00	47,27
Portugal		107,00	101,00	104,00	104,00
Sweden	64,00		86,00		75,00
Overall	140,48	127,50	131,09	201,90	117,93

Table 13 - Average seat share of largest parties in coalitions where the portfolio holder is from the centre with a balance centre indexation of parties

EU-15 Country	Defence	Finance	Foreign Affairs	Internal Affairs	Prime Minister
Austria	79,80	75,75	70,00	65,50	73,29
Belgium	27,67	26,33	48,50	29,00	35,00
Denmark	40,71	40,29		48,33	39,13
Finland					44,00
France	233,00	294,33	271,71	264,88	255,46
Greece	134,33	145,00	137,00	129,00	134,33
Ireland	67,77	69,31	68,82	66,54	67,57
Italy	194,00	235,00	276,00	155,50	235,00
Luxembourg	25,00	21,50	22,00	22,75	21,55
Netherlands	41,00		32,00		35,00
Portugal	107,50	92,25	107,00	94,86	94,86
Sweden	89,25	102,00	94,67		94,67
Overall	102,71	91,04	121,00	100,70	95,09

Table 14 - Average seat share of largest parties in coalitions where the portfolio holder is from the right with a balance centre indexation of parties

Annex 5. Election results and parliamentary data in relation to portfolio allocation

	Orientation	Defence	Finance	FM	I. Affairs	PM
Average seat share by political affiliation	Right	102,71	91,04	121,00	100,70	95,09
	Centre	140,48	127,50	131,09	201,90	117,93
	Left	162,77	139,31	144,59	118,51	126,39
Portfolio to Right PM ratio	Right PM	1,08	0,96	1,27	1,06	1,00
	Centre PM	0,87	0,77	1,03	0,85	0,81
	Left PM	0,81	0,72	0,96	0,80	0,75
Portfolio to Centre PM ratio	Right PM	1,48	1,34	1,38	2,12	1,24
	Centre PM	1,19	1,08	1,11	1,71	1,00
	Left PM	1,11	1,01	1,04	1,60	0,93
Portfolio to Left PM ratio	Right PM	1,71	1,47	1,52	1,25	1,33
	Centre PM	1,38	1,18	1,23	1,00	1,07
	Left PM	1,29	1,10	1,14	0,94	1,00

Table 15 - Average seat share for the largest party by political orientation, including their relative ratio of majorities by portfolio to left, centre, and right affiliated PMs' average seat share

	Orientation	Defence	Finance	FM	I. Affairs	PM
Average seat share by political affiliation	Right	48,50	53,06	40,29	45,82	95,09
	Centre	34,18	36,00	34,53	30,11	117,93
	Left	57,67	56,56	42,70	43,67	126,39
Right portfolio to PM ratio	Right PM	0,51	0,56	0,42	0,48	1,00
	Centre PM	0,41	0,45	0,34	0,39	0,81
	Left PM	0,38	0,42	0,32	0,36	0,75
Centrist Portfolio to PM ratio	Right PM	0,36	0,38	0,36	0,32	1,24
	Centre PM	0,29	0,31	0,29	0,26	1,00
	Left PM	0,27	0,28	0,27	0,24	0,93
Left portfolio to PM ratio	Right PM	0,61	0,59	0,45	0,46	1,33
	Centre PM	0,49	0,48	0,36	0,37	1,07
	Left PM	0,46	0,45	0,34	0,35	1,00

Table 16 - Average seat share for the second largest party by political orientation, including their relative ratio of portfolio to left, centre, and right affiliated PMs' average seat share as first party

	PM's party cabinet seats	PM's party Parliament seats	FM's party cabinet seats	FM's party Parliament seats	Finance minister's party cabinet seats	Finance minister's party Parliament seats	Defence minister's party cabinet seats	Defence minister's party Parliament seats	Interior minister's party cabinet seats	Interior minister's party Parliament seats
PM's seats	1,00									
PM's parl. seats	0,87	1,00								
FM's cabinet seats	0,43	0,38	1,00							
FM's parl. seats	0,28	0,37	0,80	1,00						
Finance party cabinet seats	0,20	0,22	0,15	0,06	1,00					
Finance party parl. seats	0,12	0,15	0,12	0,08	0,86	1,00				
Defence party cabinet seats	0,10	0,05	0,18	0,13	0,23	0,17	1,00			
Defence parl. seats	0,12	0,07	0,23	0,17	0,19	0,14	0,91	1,00		
Interior cabinet seats	0,15	0,05	0,00	-0,07	0,22	0,24	0,24	0,23	1,00	
Interior parl. seats	0,11	0,03	0,06	-0,03	0,18	0,21	0,22	0,24	0,91	1,00

Table 17 - Correlation between share of Parliamentary seats and distribution of cabinet seats for tracked portfolios

Political Group in EP	Average	Left/Right	State/Market	Liberty/Authority	EU Anti/Pro
S&D Group	Non-weighted average	3.53	3.63	3.31	8.25
	Weighted average	3.50	3.69	3.26	8.26
Renew Europe	Non-weighted average	6.22	6.59	4.41	7.94
	Weighted average	6.28	6.82	4.24	7.81
EPP Group	Non-weighted average	6.67	6.53	6.94	7.59
	Weighted average	6.73	6.69	7.05	7.54

Table 18 - Averages of Left/Right, State/Market, Liberty/Authority, and EU Anti/Pro orientations based on ParlGov data for the S&D Group, Renew Europe, and the EPP Group in EU-15 countries in the European Parliament's current composition*

*Excluding parties with no data, independents, and parties from the United Kingdom