CHAPTER 7

How Do Eurosceptics Wage Opposition in the European Parliament? Patterns of Behaviour in the 8th Legislature

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Introduction

While Euroscepticism was first considered as 'hard but hardly relevant' (Deschouwer & Van Assche, 2008, p. 75), it is clear now that it is here to stay. Euroscepticism can no longer be seen as a marginal or unusual phenomenon but rather as a persistent and mainstreamed component of European politics. Election after election since the 1990s, Eurosceptic parties have comforted their position in the European Parliament (EP) and have had some success at the national level as well. The various crises of the past decade further provided fertile ground for the galvanisation

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P. Ahrens et al. (eds.), *European Parliament's Political Groups in Turbulent Times*, Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94012-6_7

of opposition to the EU, and the 2014 EP elections saw a notable rise in the number of Eurosceptic parties represented in the European Parliament. Indeed, both the economic crisis (and its austerity measures) and the so-called migration crisis have increased the visibility of EU affairs within national political arenas and have produced a new wave of resistance, leading to the unprecedented success of Eurosceptic parties during the last EP elections (Brack et al., 2022; Hobolt, 2015).

The persistence and increasing salience of Euroscepticism has generated an extensive scholarly literature to grasp the complex and diverse nature of opposition to Europe. The bulk of these studies has treated Euroscepticism as a dependent variable, seeking to conceptualise the various positions on Europe and explain them (Vasilopoulou, 2013). More recently, research has been conducted on the (direct and indirect) impact of Eurosceptic actors on other parties, on the party system and on policy-making (a.o. Meijers, 2017; Down & Han, 2021). A burgeoning literature has also emerged on the strategies of Eurosceptics, mostly in national parliaments. But as noted by Carlotti (2021, p. 3), apart from some exceptions, studies on Euroscepticism at the supranational level are still rare.

This chapter aims at contributing to this emerging literature on the strategies of Eurosceptic actors within EU institutions by focusing on the EP. As noted by scholars, Eurosceptics are caught in a dilemma: they have to operate within an institution and a polity they oppose and if representation in the EP provides these actors with resources, it also poses awkward questions about the extent to which they should engage in parliamentary activities (Brack, 2018; Broniecki & Obholzer, 2020; Lynch et al., 2012). Therefore, this study ambitions to tackle two key questions: (1) to what extent do Eurosceptic MEPs behave differently than their non-Eurosceptic colleagues? (2) Are there significant behavioural differences among Eurosceptics and how can we explain them?

While it is often said that the EU has missed the third great milestones in the development of democratic institutions, namely political opposition (Dahl, 1966; Mair, 2007), there is little empirical studies on how opposition actors behave in the only representative institution of the EU. As noted recently by Salvati (2021), it is essential to understand if and how these parties can influence the working of the EP, adopting or not a cooperative approach, and what patterns of opposition Eurosceptics follow.

This chapter will therefore compare the parliamentary activities of opposing voices during the 8th term (2014–2019). More specifically, based on their EP group affiliation, we categorised opposition MEPs into three categories: members of the non-Eurosceptic opposition (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe [ALDE] and Greens/European Free Alliance [Greens/EFA]), soft Eurosceptic MEPs (European Conservatives and Reformists [ECR], and the Left in the European Parliament [GUE/NGL]) and hard Eurosceptic MEPs (Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy [EFDD], Europe of Nations and Freedom [ENF] as well as non-attached MEPs).[1] Parliamentary activities have also been grouped into three categories: legislative, scrutiny and publicity activities. We expect to find diverging patterns of parliamentary behaviour among the three categories of MEPs. More precisely, we expect Eurosceptics to focus less on legislative activities and to be more engaged in voicing their opposition and communicating to the outside, through scrutiny and publicity activities. Furthermore, we also expect to see a difference between soft and hard Eurosceptics: while the former are better integrated in the EP, the latter focus even more on individual activities. In other words, the combination of the effect of the *cordon sanitaire* and the belonging to a specific Eurosceptic group should impact the type and degree of involvement in the EP.

The first section provides an overview of the relevant literature on Euroscepticism and the patterns of oppositional behaviour. The second section explains the main hypotheses of the article and the third section describes the data and the method. The following fourth section is devoted to the analysis of the parliamentary behaviour: after a descriptive overview of the different patterns of parliamentary behaviour among the Eurosceptic and non-Eurosceptic opposition, we test our hypotheses with a negative binominal regression analysis. We find that Eurosceptic MEPs clearly differ from non-Eurosceptic MEPs in their parliamentary behaviour but also that there are significant differences among them. The chapter concludes by discussing our findings and their implications.

Opposition to Europe and Parliamentary Behaviour

The study of Euroscepticism has gradually become an established subdiscipline of European studies (Mudde, 2011). The majority of studies on party-based Euroscepticism seeks to understand the nature, causes

and evolution of the phenomenon. Numerous debates exist on the best way to define and classify the various forms of opposition to the EU (Hooghe & Marks, 2007; Kopecky & Mudde, 2002; Taggart, 1998). As far as the explanatory factors are concerned, some scholars tend to emphasise strategic factors while others stress the ideological nature of a party's position towards the EU (Conti & Memoli, 2012; Mudde, 2011; Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2008) whereas others yet try to go beyond that debate and examine institutional factors, national history or the interplay between parties and public opinion (De Vries & Edwards, 2009; Emanuele et al., 2016). The recent crises and the renewed success of Eurosceptic and radical actors triggered new studies, most notably on the relation between the crisis and the (nature and type of) Euroscepticism (Pirro & Taggart, 2018). But as noted by Ripoll Servent and Panning (2019, p. 760), although these discussions on the definition of Euroscepticism are crucial, they fail to explain Eurosceptics' attitudes and behaviour once elected.

Another and more recent strand of literature looks at radical and Eurosceptic actors from another perspective, seeking to understand their impact on mainstream parties, on the party system or on policies. While the jury is still out on the effect of Eurosceptic actors, it led to interesting studies on the contagion to other parties (Meijers, 2017), on the tools radical and populist parties use to influence the debates and the policy-making while in government (Akkerman, 2012; De Lange, 2012) and on their impact on specific policies such as immigration or law and order (Briard et al., 2019). However, most of this research focuses on the national level.

With the growing electoral success of Eurosceptic parties, a burgeoning literature has emerged on the behaviour of these actors in parliament. At the national level, scholars have analysed which tools these challenger parties tend to use and have assessed whether Eurosceptics could be a solution to the so-called 'opposition deficit' in EU politics (Rauh & De Wilde, 2018). Senninger (2017), for instance, shows that Eurosceptic parties in Denmark tend to use parliamentary questions in a different way than mainstream parties and focus more on polity-aspects rather than on policies. Similarly, Hoerner (2017) finds that Eurosceptics tend to make more general and politicised statements but fail to impact EU politics. Persson et al. (2019) on the other hand found out that in the case of Sweden and Denmark, the presence and behaviour of hard Eurosceptic MPs account for more polity opposition but also for more alternative

proposals on EU policies. Focusing on the Dutch case, Otjes and Louwerse (2015–2018) focused on populists, rather than Eurosceptics. They compared the strategies of populist and radical parties on the one hand and mainstream opposition parties on the other hand as well as between left-wing and right-wing radicals. They show that populist actors engage continuously in an outspoken scrutiny of the government to challenge the status quo, rather than participate in legislative activities. But they also demonstrate that there is different voting behaviour between right-wing and left-wing populists, except on EU issues.

At the EU level, a few studies examined the dynamics behind transnational cooperation of Eurosceptic actors. These show how difficult it is for right-wing Eurosceptics to forge lasting alliances but also that their strategy to form a group follows different motives than it is the case for other political families (Startin, 2010; Whitaker & Lynch, 2014). A recent research illustrates that radical right parties do not act cohesively and have no common voting strategy in the EP, regardless of the issue or its salience (Cavalloro et al., 2018). This is confirmed by the study of McDonnell and Werner (2019) which examines the cooperation of radical right parties but also shows that Eurosceptic groups have different patterns in the EP, the soft Eurosceptics being more engaged, the others being more instrumental.

Other scholars concentrate on the attitudes and behaviour of Eurosceptic MEPs as well as their (lack of) impact on the EP's legislative activities (Mamadouh & Raunio, 2003). Kantola and Miller (2021) focus on inter-group and intra-group activities among radical right groups to highlight the key role of informal institutions and the potential effect of radical right groups on the EP. Carlotti (2021) analyses the attitudes of Eurosceptics towards EU policies, the EU institutions, the EU regime and the EU as a community to show the diversity among Eurosceptics. Others concentrate on specific behaviour, such as parliamentary questions. They show that anti-EU MEPs tend to ask more questions but these questions serve another purpose than those from mainstream parties: scholars have indeed highlighted that Eurosceptics are less concerned with legislating or scrutiny but rather with obstruction (Proksch & Slapin, 2010) but some are also interested in constructing a strong anti-gender equality agenda (Kantola & Lombardo, 2021). Brack (2015, 2018) also demonstrates that Eurosceptic MEPs develop different strategies and that the variation among them can be explained by institutional constraints (the

cordon sanitaire) as well as by the degree of the MEPs' Euroscepticism. A recent study on the involvement of Eurosceptics in the trilogues (Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019) also evidences that the *cordon sanitaire* in the EP works to exclude the most radical actors and that while hard Eurosceptics are outcasts, soft Eurosceptics are somewhat integrated in the parliamentary work. Our own previous research on the evolution of Eurosceptic and non-Eurosceptic behaviour in the EP confirms these findings (Behm & Brack, 2019). In an exploratory analysis of the parliamentary activities over three legislatures, we found that the strategies of Eurosceptics shifted over time, towards a form of normalisation, but that significant differences among the Eurosceptic groups remain, which require further investigation. Along the same line, Broniecki and Obholzer (2020) evidence that Eurosceptics vote differently according to the setting, and more particularly, they respond differently to the variation in media and publicity that the plenary and committee decision-making process attract.

Objectives and Hypotheses

Concentrating on the 8th legislature, we want to determine to what extent and how parliamentary behaviour of Eurosceptic MEPs differs from their non-Eurosceptic colleagues in the opposition, whether there is variation among Eurosceptic MEPs themselves and how it can be explained.

To do so, we concentrate on three categories of MEPs, based on their political affiliation: the non-Eurosceptic opposition (ALDE + Greens/EFA); the soft Eurosceptic opposition (GUE/NGL + ECR); and the hard Eurosceptic opposition (EFDD, ENF as well as non-attached MEPs). We draw on Szczerbiak and Taggart's (2008, pp. 247–248) distinction between hard and soft Euroscepticism. Hard Euroscepticism involves principled opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU while soft Euroscepticism refers not to a principled objection to the European integration project of transferring powers to a supranational body such as the EU, but opposition to the EU's current or future planned trajectory based on the further extension of competencies that the EU is planning to make. Populist and radical right MEPs generally fall within hard Euroscepticism whereas the radical left and the self-proclaimed 'Eurorealists' from the ECR are considered as soft Eurosceptics.

Of course, in the EP, unlike at the national level, one cannot speak of government and opposition in the traditional sense. The way the EP works is characterised by a tendency to reach a compromise, requiring large coalitions across the left–right cleavage. The consensual nature of the chamber—some scholars even talk of an 'institutionalised consensus' (Benedetto, 2008)—is derived from the internal decision-making mode, especially the proportional representation according to the D'Hondt method. However, even though coalitions may vary according to the issue under consideration, the EP tended to be dominated by a Grand Coalition composed of the EPP and the S&D, both at the plenary and at the committee level (Settembri & Neuhold, 2009). This cooperation has increased over time, notably due to the higher political fragmentation of the EU (Brack et al., 2022). Therefore, we consider that the other groups, which are not part of this Grand Coalition, are in opposition and they will be at the heart of our study. However, given the specific context of the EP, the opposition status of the Liberals and the Greens is particular. Technically, before 2019,[2] the two largest groups, EPP and S&D had a majority and did not need the support of the Liberals and the Greens. On the contrary, these two groups tended to propose alternatives to the S&D/EPP-coalition and sometimes managed to break that centrist coalition. For instance, during the 8th legislature, 10% of the votes were won by an EPP/ALDE-coalition and 10% of them by an S&D/ALDE-coalition. A similar trend can be found for the Greens/EFA, but they pursue rather an issue-by-issue strategy and are even more willing to demonstrate their opposition to the Grand Coalition than the Liberals (probably also because they were not represented within the Commission [Brack et al., 2022]). Hence, we classified them as opposition actors within the specific context of the EP and the specific time frame under study.

We expect that Eurosceptic MEPs tend to focus on different parliamentary tools than non-Eurosceptics. Indeed, although the Greens/EFA and ALDE are in opposition in the EP, they can still be part of specific issue-related coalitions. On the contrary, Eurosceptics can be considered as the 'new' opposition (Mair, 2011), i.e. actors without responsibility, being usually in the opposition in the EP and having a populist rhetoric without being per se anti-system. As noted by Mair (2011), a distinction can be made between responsible and responsive politics. Whereas the traditional understanding of representative democracies assumes that

parties play both a representative role and a governing role, the two functions have gradually grown apart. Mainstream parties have downplayed (or been forced to downplay) their representative role and enhanced their governing role, new challengers—often populist parties—have claimed to fill in the representative gap that has emerged (see Mair, 2011). So, while mainstream parties, in government or in opposition tend to engage in policy-making, Eurosceptic and populists actors focus on representing the interest of their voters without taking responsibility (see also Otjes & Louwerse, 2018).

Another explanatory factor for the different patterns of behaviour between non-Eurosceptic and Eurosceptic actors refers to the cordon sanitaire in the EP. The main groups do not want or need the support of small and marginal groups and can therefore avoid any compromise with Eurosceptics. As noted a few years ago by the then leader of the EPP group, 'it is crucial this stability is safeguarded. We want to make sure that the role of radical and extremist MEPs is limited and that they cannot influence major EU decisions' (M. Weber in EU Observer, 24 November 2016). With the majority of the chamber being hostile to their presence, hard Eurosceptic MEPs tend to be excluded from parliamentary activities, especially those implying taking over responsibilities (Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019; Startin, 2010).

Because of these constraints and the way the EP works, we expect non-Eurosceptic opposition MEPs to be more engaged in the legislative process while Eurosceptics concentrate on voicing their opposition, and challenging the status quo. They will be more likely to focus less on activities that involve taking over responsibility for EU politics but more on those voicing their opposition and communicating to the outside, following the course of a sort of extra-parliamentary opposition.

H1: Eurosceptic opposition MEPs are less involved in legislative activities compared to non-Eurosceptic opposition MEPs.

H2: All opposition MEPs, Eurosceptic or not, will devote time and resources to scrutiny activities.

H3: Eurosceptic MEPs are much more involved in activities designed to voice their opposition and increase their visibility at home, namely publicity activities.

At the same time, studies have shown that because of the *cordon sanitaire* and related to the MEPs' type of Euroscepticism, Eurosceptics do

not all follow the same patterns of behaviour (Brack, 2015; Kantola & Miller, 2021; Ripoll Servent & Panning, 2019) and some of them are increasingly involved in 'normal parliamentary life' (Behm & Brack, 2019). Moreover, as noted by Settembri (2006), the mode of deliberation within the EU, combined with the lack of electoral connection at the European level tends to provide MEPs with incentives to join the camp of compromise, or at least to be involved in legislative activities rather than remain in permanent opposition. At the national level, opposition parties can be rewarded by voters for systematic opposition. In the EP, on the contrary, Eurosceptic MEPs cannot hope to replace the governing coalition formed by the main groups and do not have blackmailing power, whereas an involvement, even limited, could be synonymous of influence. As not all Eurosceptic political groups oppose the EU and its politics to the same extent (Carlotti, 2021), we assume that these differences also lead to diverging approaches towards parliamentary activities. Therefore, we expect that

H4: Soft Eurosceptics are better integrated in the EP and therefore engage more in legislative activities while hard Eurosceptics focus on scrutiny and publicity activities only.

Data and Method

There are many parliamentary activities that MEPs can engage in. Therefore, we grouped them into three categories of activities, based on the distinction between responsible and responsive politics mentioned above but also the varying degrees of engagement and integration in parliamentary life required by the different activities. Moreover, these activities reflect the different democratic functions of opposition in the EP:

1. *Legislative activities*—implying a high degree of integration in the EP, the motivation to take over responsibility for policies and the will to propose concrete alternatives to the status quo: *reports* and *opinions and shadow reports and opinions.*
2. *Scrutiny activities*—characterised by a more modest required degree of integration but still the will to cooperate with other MEPs to scrutinise EU institutions as well as to raise concerns: *oral and written questions, motions for resolution* (individual and in group).

3. *Publicity activities*—which MEPs can carry out alone and at low institutional costs, often associated with responsiveness purposes and designed to voice opposition through communication towards outside the EP: *speeches* in plenary, *explanations of vote*.

These three categories of activity are not mutually exclusive. A MEP can be authoring an opinion and at the same time scrutinise the Commission and send a message to her voters via an explanation of vote, all on the same issue. However, we hypothesise that Eurosceptics in general are less involved in legislative work and focus stronger on other forms of activities (H1 & H2 & H3). Indeed, participating in the decision-making process with mainstream parties would legitimise the establishment and the current state and policies of the EU which is precisely what Eurosceptic parties usually object to. Yet, we expect to find differences between soft and hard Eurosceptic MEPs with the former being better integrated and therefore more active in legislative and scrutiny activities whereas hard Eurosceptics focus stronger on publicity activities (H4).

As our dependent variables, the engagement in different forms of activities (*legislative activities, scrutiny activities, publicity activities*), are count variables which are highly over-dispersed, we perform a negative binominal regression analysis in order to test our hypotheses. We calculate two models for each activity category—one including all opposition actors to test H1, H2 and H3, one comparing only soft and hard Eurosceptic MEPs (H4). Besides our main independent variable, the MEPs' affiliation to one of our actor categories, our models contain several control variables. The data used for these control variables is based on Daniel and Obholzer (2020) and has been completed by data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2014[3] (Polk et al., 2017) as well as our own data collection.

- First of all, the *MEPs' position in the European Parliament* might influence their behaviour. We therefore include variables for *Committee* and *EP leadership*—dummy variables stating whether a MEP has held a Chair or Vice-Chair position in a Committee or any internal EP Leadership position (e.g. President, Vice-President, Quaestor) during the 8th legislature—as well as *seniority*, calculated as the number of terms a MEP has already served in the EP.

- The *ideological position of the national party* represents another set of control variables in our analysis. This concerns the MEPs' national party's position on the *left–right* and *GAL–TAN*[4] scale or rather their 'extremeness' in this regard. Indeed, a party's actual left- or right-orientation is not really meaningful in the context of our analysis. Its distance from what would be a neutral position, however, can tell us more about their approach to work in the EP. This is why we rely on Obholzer and Daniel's measurement of party extremeness, based on the data of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey data (Obholzer & Daniel, 2016, p. 398): 'Each variable measures the national party's squared distance from the midpoint of the scales, with higher values signifying more extreme party positions on the relevant aforementioned category'.[5]
- *Electoral system and governmental participation* can also have an impact on how MEPs see their mandate and their work in the EP. We therefore include dummy variables stating whether the MEPs' national party has been part of the national *government* during the 8th legislature and whether the MEP has been elected in a system of *preferential vote*.
- Finally, we control for the MEPs' *age* (centred around the mean), *gender* and *nationality*.

Our dataset includes all opposition MEPs who have seated at one moment or another in the EP in the 8th legislature. MEPs who have held their mandate for less than one entire year were excluded from the analysis. Beyond that, the length of the MEPs' mandate in months has been integrated in the analysis as an exposure variable. Finally, due to missing data on the ideological positions of the national party, 14 MEPs had to be excluded from the analysis which leaves a dataset of 376 MEPs from all opposition groups (Models 1) and 244 (soft and hard) Eurosceptic MEPs (Models 2).

Analysing the Difference Between Opposition Actors Within the EP

In order to test whether MEPs from the Eurosceptic and non-Eurosceptic opposition behave differently in the EP and whether there are significant differences among Eurosceptics, we analyse their behaviour in the

8th legislature, first through descriptive statistics then through regression models.

Descriptive Results

Table 7.1 shows a first overview on the activity categories. It becomes obvious that the different categories of activities have very different patterns of use—while the median number of reports, opinions and shadow reports and opinions authored by MEPs in the 8th legislature is 26, it is 162 for publicity activities. Scrutiny activities are situated in between the two other categories. As such, this is not surprising and corresponds to our assumptions about the use of the different activities in parliament. Reports and opinions, but also their shadow counterparts, are rather rare but cost-intensive activities, used by MEPs able and willing to take over important responsibility tasks, and integrated enough in their group to be given this opportunity by their group coordinators. Publicity activities are the exact opposite: they can be carried out by everyone at a rather low cost and mostly have the objective to send a message home (Behm & Brack, 2019). Scrutiny activities, then, are a typical 'opposition tool' aiming to raise awareness for problems or obtain information of the executive. As publicity activities, some of them have only few institutional constraints (especially written parliamentary questions), but others, such as oral questions and motions for resolution, require some more engagement and the cooperation of several MEPs.

Beyond these general differences in the patterns of activities, this chapter hypothesises that there are systematic differences in the way different groups of opposition actors use these activities in parliament.

Table 7.1 Overview of activity categories

Dependent variables	*Mean*	*SD*	*Median*	*Min*	*Max*	*Total (activities)*	*N (MEPs)*
Legislative activities	35.16	38.01	26	0	298	13,222	376
Scrutiny activities	160.66	176.70	91	1	1183	60,409	376
Publicity activities	457.11	606.57	162	0	2942	171,873	376

This seems to be confirmed by the descriptive analysis (Fig. 7.1): there are indeed different patterns of activity engagement among the three groups of MEPs. Regarding legislative activities, we can see that the number of hard Eurosceptic MEPs who never authored a (shadow) report or opinion during the 8th term is very high. This is certainly partly due to the *cordon sanitaire* preventing hard Eurosceptics from taking over responsibility positions in the parliamentary work, even if this does not hinder the MEPs to author shadow reports and opinions within their group. Soft Eurosceptic MEPs and MEPs from the non-Eurosceptic opposition have rather similar curves, but the latter seem still more active in legislative activities. For scrutiny activities, the observation is different: non-Eurosceptic and soft Eurosceptic MEPs once again have similar curves but it seems that there are many of them who engage

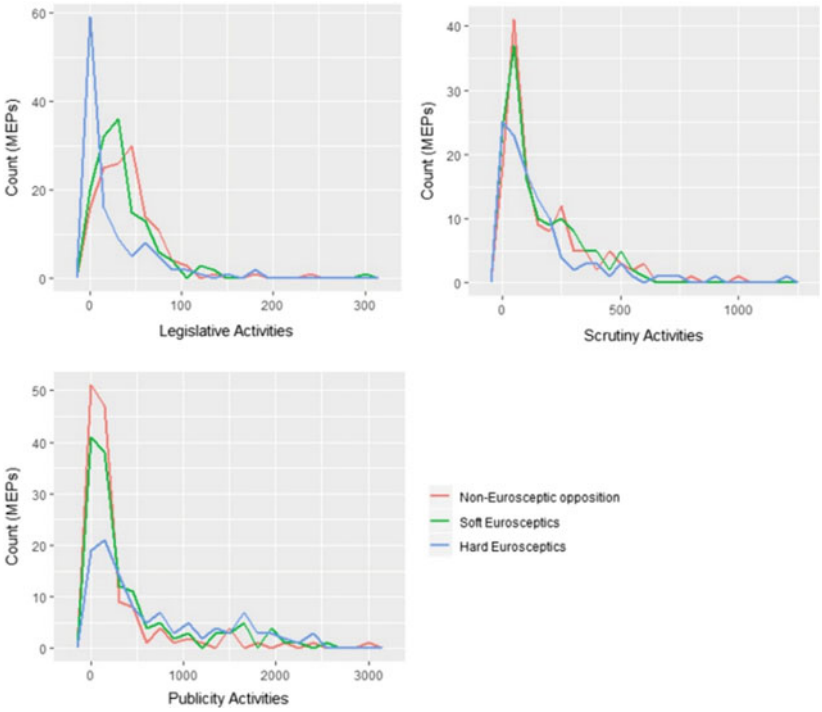

Fig. 7.1 Distribution of activity level by actor category

only in few scrutiny activities and then again others who submit many questions and motions. Most hard Eurosceptic MEPs are situated in the middle, between 50 and 250 activities per MEP. For publicity activities, a clear difference can be observed between all three groups of actors: hard Eurosceptics clearly favour these kinds of activities and engage much more in them than the other MEPs. Then follow soft Eurosceptics and finally MEPs from the non-Eurosceptic opposition who are least active in speeches and explanations of vote—even if the MEP with the maximum number of publicity activities ($N = 2942$) is from the ALDE group. Generally, there are many MEPs from all groups highly engaged in the 'low-cost' publicity activities while for scrutiny and particularly legislative activities, most of them can be found at lower activity levels with some outliers at the higher end.

In order to test whether these observed patterns of activities are also statistically significant, we carry out negative binominal regression analyses for each of the three dependent variables (*legislative activities, scrutiny activities, publicity activities*). For each variable, we calculate two models: the first one including all opposition actors and the second one focusing only on Eurosceptic MEPs in order to determine their different opposition strategies in the EP.

Regression Results

Starting with the interpretation of the results for legislative activities (Table 7.2), we see that there is no significant difference between MEPs from the non-Eurosceptic opposition and the soft Eurosceptic groups. Hard Eurosceptics, on the other hand, author much less (shadow) reports and opinions than MEPs from the non-Eurosceptic opposition and this effect is significant and rather big: MEPs from hard Eurosceptic groups have a 71% lower chance to engage in legislative activities than those from ALDE and Greens/EFA. These observations confirm our expectation that hard Eurosceptics engage less in activities requiring to take over responsibilities—either because they are prevented to do so by 'mainstream' MEPs through the *cordon sanitaire* or because they do not want to. The same can however not be said for soft Eurosceptics: their engagement in legislative activities is comparable to the non-Eurosceptic opposition, an indicator that they are much better integrated than hard Eurosceptics and participate also in tasks requiring taking responsibility. It could indicate their willingness to provide a 'constructive opposition'

Table 7.2 Results of negative of binominal regression analysis

	Models with all opposition actors			*Models soft vs. hard Eurosceptics*		
	Legislative_1	*Scrutiny_1*	*Publicity_1*	*Legislative_2*	*Scrutiny_2*	*Publicity_2*
Soft Eurosceptics	1.11 (0.17)	0.76 (0.14)*	1.39 (0.15)*			
Hard Eurosceptics	0.29 (0.25)***	0.61 (0.19)**	2.62 (0.22)***	0.31 (0.24)***	0.93 (0.17)	1.57 (0.19)*
Committee lead_yes	0.9 (0.15)	1.01 (0.12)	0.82 (0.13)	0.76 (0.23)	1.21 (0.16)	1.03 (0.18)
Ep lead_yes	0.96 (0.24)	1.6 (0.19)*	1.8 (0.21)**	1.34 (0.37)	1.56 (0.26)	1.18 (0.29)
Seniority	0.96 (0.07)	1.01 (0.06)	0.85 (0.06)**	0.89 (0.1)	0.96 (0.07)	0.81 (0.08)**
LRGEN_extreme	1.01 (0.02)	1.03 (0.02)*	1.01 (0.02)	1.01 (0.02)	1.03 (0.02)*	0.98 (0.02)
GAL-TAN_extreme	0.99 (0.02)	1.01 (0.01)	1.03 (0.02)*	0.95 (0.02)***	1 (0.02)	1.06 (0.02)***
Government_yes	1.42 (0.15)*	1.34 (0.12)*	1.24 (0.13)	3.15 (0.25)***	1.9 (0.17)***	0.82 (0.19)
Preferential vote_yes	0.74 (0.78)	3.94 (0.58)*	5.91 (0.66)**	1.69 (0.88)	5.68 (0.57)**	5.34 (0.64)**
Age_centered	1 (0.01)	0.99 (0.01)**	1 (0.01)	1 (0.01)	1 (0.01)	1 (0.01)
Sex_female	1.17 (0.12)	1.21 (0.09)*	0.99 (0.11)	1.26 (0.17)	1.14 (0.12)	1 (0.13)
Nationality_Austria	2.19 (0.88)	0.2 (0.66)*	0.34 (0.75)	0.56 (1.14)	0.12 (0.77)**	1.07 (0.86)
Nationality_Belgium	1.3 (0.85)	0.48 (0.64)	0.8 (0.72)	0.64 (1.04)	0.21 (0.7)*	0.3 (0.78)
Nationality_Bulgaria	2.26 (0.9)	0.44 (0.68)	0.29 (0.78)	0.43 (1.27)	0.12 (0.87)*	0.26 (0.97)
Nationality_Croatia	1.47 (0.94)	1.46 (0.72)	1.8 (0.81)	0.86 (1.42)	0.78 (0.98)	1.81 (1.1)
Nationality_Cyprus	0.62 (0.99)	0.65 (0.75)	0.63 (0.85)	0.19 (1.11)	0.44 (0.75)	0.78 (0.84)
Nationality_Czechia	1.15 (0.86)	0.33 (0.64)	0.61 (0.73)	0.35 (1.01)	0.12 (0.68)**	0.52 (0.76)
Nationality_Denmark	0.92 (0.86)	0.17 (0.65)**	0.08 (0.74)***	0.58 (1.05)	0.16 (0.71)**	0.05 (0.79)***
Nationality_Estonia	0.96 (0.99)	0.48 (0.76)	1.1 (0.86)			
Nationality_Finland	1.5 (0.86)	0.32 (0.65)	0.18 (0.74)*	0.33 (1.13)	0.32 (0.76)	0.07 (0.86)**
Nationality_France	1.31 (0.24)	1.59 (0.19)*	2.71 (0.22)***	1.28 (0.35)	1.68 (0.25)*	3.83 (0.28)***
Nationality_Greece	0.69 (0.86)	0.9 (0.64)	0.42 (0.73)	0.24 (0.99)	0.52 (0.65)	0.56 (0.73)
Nationality_Hungary	1.37 (0.92)	0.18 (0.7)*	0.15 (0.79)*	0.02 (1.52)**	0.05 (0.77)***	0.2 (0.86)
Nationality_Ireland	1.33 (0.94)	0.58 (0.72)	1.28 (0.82)	0.33 (1.07)	0.41 (0.72)	1.52 (0.81)

(continued)

Table 7.2 (continued)

	Models with all opposition actors			*Models soft vs. hard Eurosceptics*		
	Legislative_1	*Scrutiny_1*	*Publicity_1*	*Legislative_2*	*Scrutiny_2*	*Publicity_2*
Nationality_Italy	3.13 (0.84)	0.8 (0.63)	0.22 (0.72)*	0.62 (1)	0.4 (0.66)	0.31 (0.74)
Nationality_Latvia	0.81 (0.96)	0.04 (0.74)***	0.07 (0.83)***	0.2 (1.46)	0.04 (1.02)**	0.09 (1.14)*
Nationality_Lithuania	1.1 (0.91)	0.67 (0.69)	0.69 (0.78)	0.58 (1.26)	0.34 (0.85)	0.37 (0.96)
Nationality_Luxembourg	0.84 (1.02)	0.14 (0.78)**	0.1 (0.88)**			
Nationality_Netherlands	1.06 (0.84)	0.26 (0.63)*	0.12 (0.71)**	0.35 (0.99)	0.15 (0.66)**	0.13 (0.74)**
Nationality_Poland	0.56 (0.84)	0.2 (0.63)**	0.13 (0.72)**	0.15 (0.99)*	0.1 (0.65)***	0.17 (0.73)*
Nationality_Portugal	1 (0.47)	2.49 (0.37)*	9.64 (0.42)***	0.77 (0.6)	2.57 (0.43)*	15.03 (0.48)***
Nationality_Romania	0.71 (0.5)	1.75 (0.39)	2.78 (0.45)*	0.81 (0.73)	2.23 (0.51)	1.91 (0.58)
Nationality_Slovakia	0.63 (0.99)	0.61 (0.76)	0.91 (0.86)	0.22 (1.12)	0.4 (0.76)	0.84 (0.85)
Nationality_Slovenia	0.28 (1.32)	1.07 (1.01)	2.39 (1.15)			
Nationality_Spain	0.73 (0.26)	4.57 (0.21)***	5.12 (0.24)***	0.57 (0.46)	4.83 (0.32)***	5.89 (0.36)****
Nationality_Sweden	0.88 (0.86)	0.27 (0.64)*	0.19 (0.73)*	0.23 (1.12)	0.16 (0.76)*	0.16 (0.85)*
Nationality_United Kingdom	0.32 (0.25)***	0.57 (0.19)**	1.12 (0.22)	0.11 (0.36)***	0.41 (0.25)***	1.25 (0.28)
Intercept	0.99 (0.24)	1.48 (0.19)*	2.15 (0.21)***	1.89 (0.36)	1.24 (0.26)	3.65 (0.29)***
N	376	376	376	244	244	244
2 × Log likelihood	−3241.2010	−4288.813	−4984.3270	−1959.1460	−2739.339	−3337.176
AIC	3319.2	4366.8	5062.3	2029.1	2809.3	3407.2

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

within the EP, i.e. providing a concrete alternative to the S&D/EPP-coalition and trying to shape EU legislation. H1 can therefore only be confirmed for hard Eurosceptics. Regarding our control variables, only participation in government of the national political party shows a significant effect: those MEPs author more (shadow) reports and opinions than their colleagues from national parties in the opposition. For all activity categories, we can observe some statistically significant effects of the MEPs' nationality, which can probably be led back to what is generally called the 'national political culture'. Differences in detail are however not relevant for our analysis here.

Cell entries are Incidence Rate Ratios with Standard Errors in parentheses; reference category are MEPs from the Non-Eurosceptic opposition in Models 1 and soft Eurosceptic MEPs in Models 2.

Regarding scrutiny activities, Eurosceptic MEPs, both hard and soft, are less active than their non-Eurosceptic counterparts. More concretely, soft Eurosceptics have a 24% and hard Eurosceptics a 39% lower chance to author parliamentary questions and motions for resolution than MEPs from the non-Eurosceptic opposition. Our second hypothesis can therefore not be confirmed entirely. While all opposition actors engage in scrutiny activities to some extent, the non-Eurosceptic opposition clearly uses this traditional opposition tool to scrutinise the Commission the most. Doing so is less popular among Eurosceptic MEPs, both hard and soft. A possible reason for this might be that, even if in the opposition, MEPs from ALDE and the Greens/EFA aim to participate actively in policy-making, which is confirmed by their higher engagement in legislative activities. In order to do so, they further try to obtain concrete information from the Commission and to raise awareness to particular policy problems to lift them on the agenda.

Some of our control variables have significant influence on the submission of parliamentary questions and motions for resolution as well: As already observed for legislative activities, MEPs from government parties in their home country are more active in scrutinising the Commission than those from national opposition parties. These MEPs might be strongly engaged in such activities for similar reasons as MEPs from the non-Eurosceptic opposition: they aim to obtain concrete results rather than simply voice their opposition—even if in this case, they might try to influence the agenda on behalf of their national government party. Apart from that, MEPs with internal EP leadership positions also engage more in scrutiny activities and women focus more on them than men. The

strongest effect can however be observed for MEPs elected in preferential voting systems (201 MEPs in our dataset): their probability to submit questions and motions is three times higher than for MEPs elected on closed lists. While the MEPs' age and our measure for the party's extremeness on the left–right scale also show significant results, the effect size is very small. Both variables therefore do not influence the MEPs' behaviour regarding scrutiny activities to an important degree.

Looking at the last activity category, publicity activities, we clearly see our hypothesis confirmed that Eurosceptic MEPs, once again hard and soft, put more efforts into these activities than non-Eurosceptic MEPs (H3). Soft Eurosceptic MEPs author 40% more speeches and explanations of vote, hard Eurosceptic MEPs even 260% more than MEPs of the non-Eurosceptic opposition. Voicing their opposition publicly and making statements about their own opinion is therefore clearly an important aspect of the Eurosceptic MEPs' approach to their mandate. Once again, we further see the very strong effect of MEPs being elected in a preferential voting system, even stronger than for scrutiny activities: they engage much more in publicity activities than other MEPs, which correspond to similar findings in the literature on the influence of electoral systems on legislators' behaviour. Indeed, in order to develop a personal connection with voters and increase their chances of being re-elected, they need to be visible. Publicity activities, and to a lesser extent scrutiny activities, are their main opportunities to send a message home and show to voters that they act as their representatives in Brussels. Apart from that, we can note that MEPs with internal leadership positions engage more in publicity activities, which is certainly due to the fact that they hold many speeches in their official positions. Being part of the EP for a long time already reduces the engagement in publicity activities. It can be assumed that these MEPs experience less incentives to send messages home as they can build on their already existing reputation and experience for the upcoming elections. Finally, the extremeness on the GAL–TAN scale has a significant effect as well, but as for the LRGEN-scale in scrutiny activities, the effect size is minimal. The national political party's ideological position in terms of distance to a neutral point does not seem to influence the parliamentary behaviour very much.

Finally, comparing only MEPs from the soft and hard Eurosceptic political groups (Models 2), we see our expectation H4 confirmed as well: hard Eurosceptics engage much less in legislative but much more in publicity activities than their soft Eurosceptic counterparts. There is

no significant effect for scrutiny activities and the effects of the control variables remain stable throughout the three activity categories. It can therefore be stated that soft Eurosceptics indeed aim to or are already better integrated in the EP's parliamentary work. This is reflected in their high engagement in 'pure' legislative activities such as authoring reports and opinions. Hard Eurosceptic MEPs, on the contrary, continue to focus on less constructive activities in terms of policy-making but are highly active in voicing their opposition. Scrutiny activities remain a tool stronger used by MEPs of the non-Eurosceptic opposition.

All in all, we can say that our hypotheses have been partially confirmed: hard Eurosceptic MEPs engage less in legislative activities than non-Eurosceptic MEPs (H1) and all Eurosceptic MEPs have a stronger focus on activities with a potential publicity effect (H3). However, non-Eurosceptic opposition actors are more involved in scrutiny activities than their Eurosceptic colleagues, contrary to what we expected (H2). Further, there are clearly different patterns of behaviour between soft and hard Eurosceptic MEPs (H4) with the former being more integrated and more willing to take over responsibility tasks while the latter concentrate on activities that can be carried out individually and are less cost-intensive. The analysis has further underlined the important effect of the voting system under which MEPs are elected: those being elected in a preferential voting system are much more active in scrutiny and publicity activities than their counterparts from closed systems. They clearly aim to raise the awareness of the voters at home. This is even more confirmed as no such effect can be observed for the less visible legislative activities and once again raises the discussion whether a uniform electoral system for MEPs in all EU Member States should be introduced.

Conclusion

Since Eurosceptic MEPs are here to stay, it is crucial to understand how they act in Parliament (Treib, 2021). This contribution aimed therefore at determining not only how much but also what kind of oppositional behaviour they engage in and explain the variation among them. More precisely, its aim was to investigate first to what extent Eurosceptic MEPs actually still behave differently from their non-Eurosceptic counterparts and then, whether there are differences among Eurosceptics and how they can be explained. The analysis of parliamentary behaviour of opposing voices in the 8th legislature confirms most of our expectations.

Eurosceptic MEPs in general engage less often in legislative activities and scrutiny activities than non-Eurosceptic MEPs. At the same time, they show much more interest in publicity activities than non-Eurosceptic MEPs. And finally, and maybe most importantly, there are significant differences in the behaviour of MEPs belonging to the soft and the hard Eurosceptic opposition: the former is clearly more integrated and author at least some reports and opinions while the latter really focuses on publicity activities alone. At the same time, other variables often put forward in the literature such as (radical) ideology and governmental participation vs. opposition do not seem to play a significant role when looking at the patterns of behaviour of these actors.

While previous research demonstrated a shift in the 8th term with an increasing involvement of Eurosceptic MEPs, our analysis further shows that we cannot speak of 'Eurosceptics' indistinctively. These MEPs are scattered across various political groups and this has a tremendous impact on their behaviour. Indeed, although we decided not to use the Euroscepticism variable in the analysis as it measures the same element as our actor categories, we also tested separately the impact of 'Euroscepticism' (the position of MEPs on the EU based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey—results upon request) and surprisingly it had no statistically significant effect on the behaviour of MEPs, which seems to indicate that it is not the degree of Euroscepticism of national parties that matters but rather how the EP group situates itself within the EP. In other words, ideology does not help explaining Eurosceptic MEPs' patterns of behaviour once elected and one has to consider the group they belong to and the strategic considerations of Eurosceptic parties to understand how they operate in parliament. Indeed, research shows that although ideology and policy congruence are the main drivers for joining EP groups, these elements are less important for Eurosceptic parties. Eurosceptics are more concerned by the resources offered by group membership as well as national calculations (McDonnell & Werner, 2018; Whitaker & Lynch, 2014). And once in Parliament, it is likely that the group is acting as a socialising platform for Eurosceptic MEPs in terms of behaviour and expectations.

Overall, what our results indicate is that although the EP has always been governed by a 'cartel' of mainstream parties, this does not per se lead to the elimination of opposition or to a structural deficit of opposition. The 'non-governing' actors are not deprived of the possibility to exercise opposition and this chapter shows that there is a variation in the

way they do so. More precisely, if we distinguish between a 'loyal' opposition (the non-Eurosceptics), a critical opposition (the soft Eurosceptics) and an anti-system opposition (the hard Eurosceptics), each type seems to favour one function of opposition in democracy. While non-Eurosceptic actors aim first and foremost at providing an alternative to the Grand Coalition, at shaping European policies and seem rather 'policy-oriented', soft Eurosceptics tend to focus on scrutiny and act as a sort of watchdogs of EU institutions. Hard Eurosceptics then seem rather vote-seeking through their behaviour and act as the channel between intra- and extra-parliamentary opposition. By doing this, even this anti-system opposition could improve the function of political representation as they channel the claims of dissatisfied citizens within the EP and the EU. Whereas the large groups in the EP have tended to focus on responsibility and on inter-institutional dynamics, opposition actors (both Eurosceptic and non-Eurosceptic) put more focus on responsiveness.

There has been a long-standing trade-off between legislative efficiency on the one hand and the representative function of the EP on the other hand (Brack & Costa, 2018). With the long domination of the Grand Coalition, the EP decision-making has the tendency of being highly consensual in order to appear united in the inter-institutional relations in the EU. This need and this focus on inter-institutional struggles have been strengthened over the last decade as the various crises have put in discussion the role of the EP in a more intergovernmental union (Fabbrini & Puetter, 2016). As a result, any potential conflict in the EP is curbed (Marié, 2019) and the representative function of the EP is reduced. Opposition actors play a key role here to channel conflicts within parliament, either through opposition to specific policies, or to EU institutions, or even to the whole system. In a nutshell, a better understanding of oppositions in the EP allows for a more nuanced view of their input and function for the institution and the EU as a whole.

Notes

1. Based on the literature finding important behavioural differences between majority and opposition MPs in different parliamentary contexts, we excluded MEPs from the Grand Coalition (European People's Party [EPP] and Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats [S&D]) from our analysis.

2. Since the 2019 elections, these two groups lost their majority for the first time in the history of the EP, and need therefore more than before to rely on the support of smaller pro-EU groups such as Renew (successor of ALDE) and the Greens/EFA. See Brack et al. (2022).
3. We decided to rely on the CHES wave of 2014 for our analyses as the focus of our chapter is the 8th EP legislature, starting in 2014. In cases of missing data, though, it has been verified whether the national party was included in the Chapel Hill Expert FLASH survey of 2017 or the Chapel Hill Expert Survey of 2019 (Bakker et al., 2020). This was the case for 21 MEPs, for whom more recent data has then be used.
4. Green-Alternative-Libertarian/Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist. Typically, the Greens are on the GAL end of this scale whereas radical right parties are located on the TAN side.
5. We decided not to use the measure of the party's position towards European integration in our analysis as this interferes with our categorisation of non-Eurosceptic, soft and hard Eurosceptic MEPs.

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