RUPRECHT-KARLS-
UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG

Deciding over controversial issues:

Voting behavior in the Council and the European Parliament on genetically modified organisms

Monika Mühlböck & Jale Tosun

GMCC
AMSTERDAM
17-20 NOVEMBER 2015

Background information – Authorization process

- Directive 2001/18/EC: Company submits application for GMO authorization to authority in a member state, which passes application to the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA)
- EFSA report ➔Commission proposal
- Council (committee) may accept or reject proposal with qualified majority
- If no QM within 90 days, Commission adopts proposal
- EP not formally involved in this process (but see resolution analyzed here and the most recent vote on opt-outs)

The current situation

- No qualified majority has been reached in the (Agriculture) Council since 2004
- Growing international pressure on the EU to liberalize its GMO regime ➔ renationalization of cultivation and import

Highly controversial
and politicized issue!

Research questions

What do voting patterns on GMOs in the Council look like?

What are the characteristics of voting in the EP on this issue?

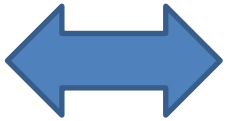
How can we explain the voting patterns observed?

Theoretical expectations

Literature on voting behavior

Specific characteristics of GMOs

Council voting:
national considerations



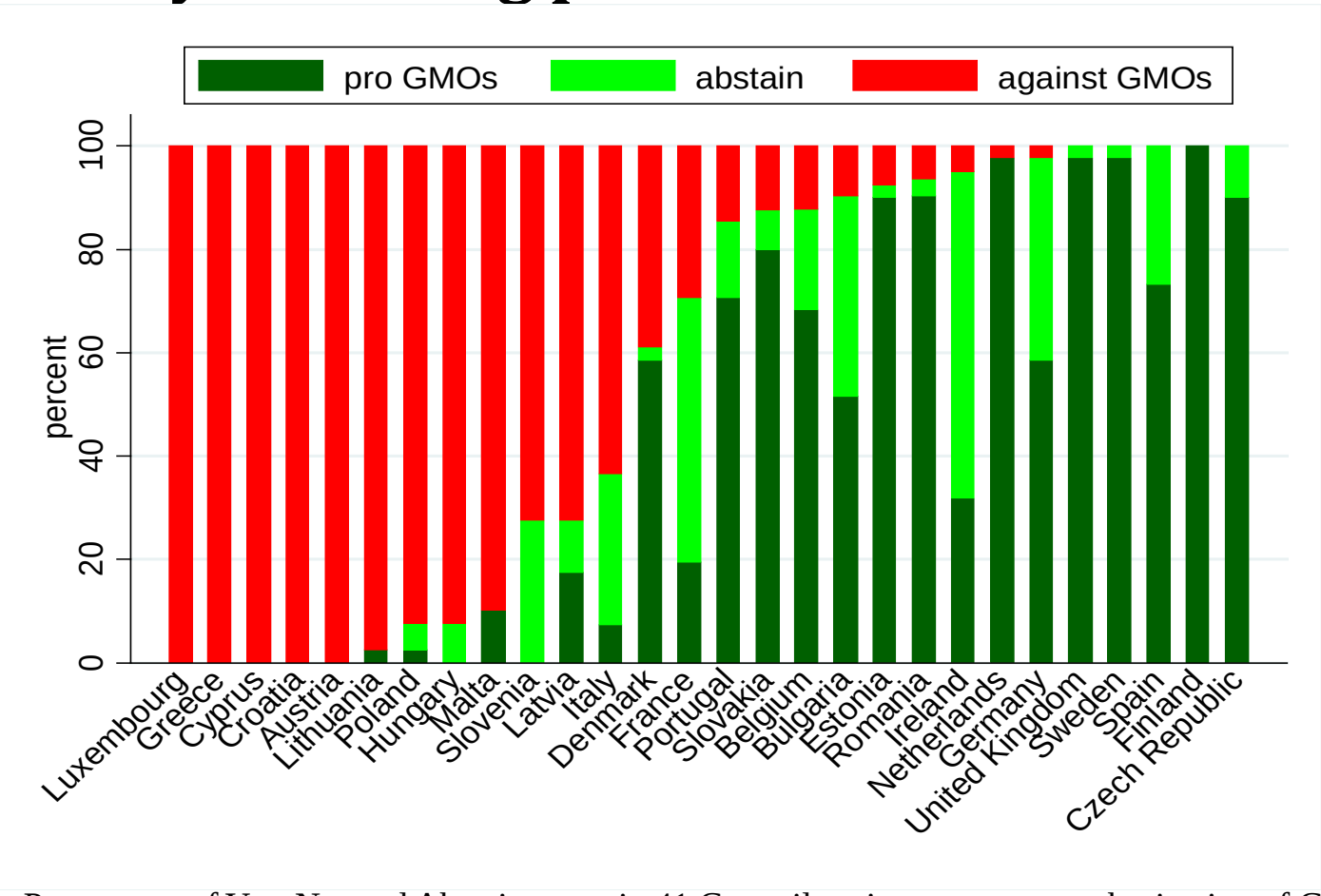
Council voting:
ideological positions

EP voting:
ideological positions

EP voting:
national considerations

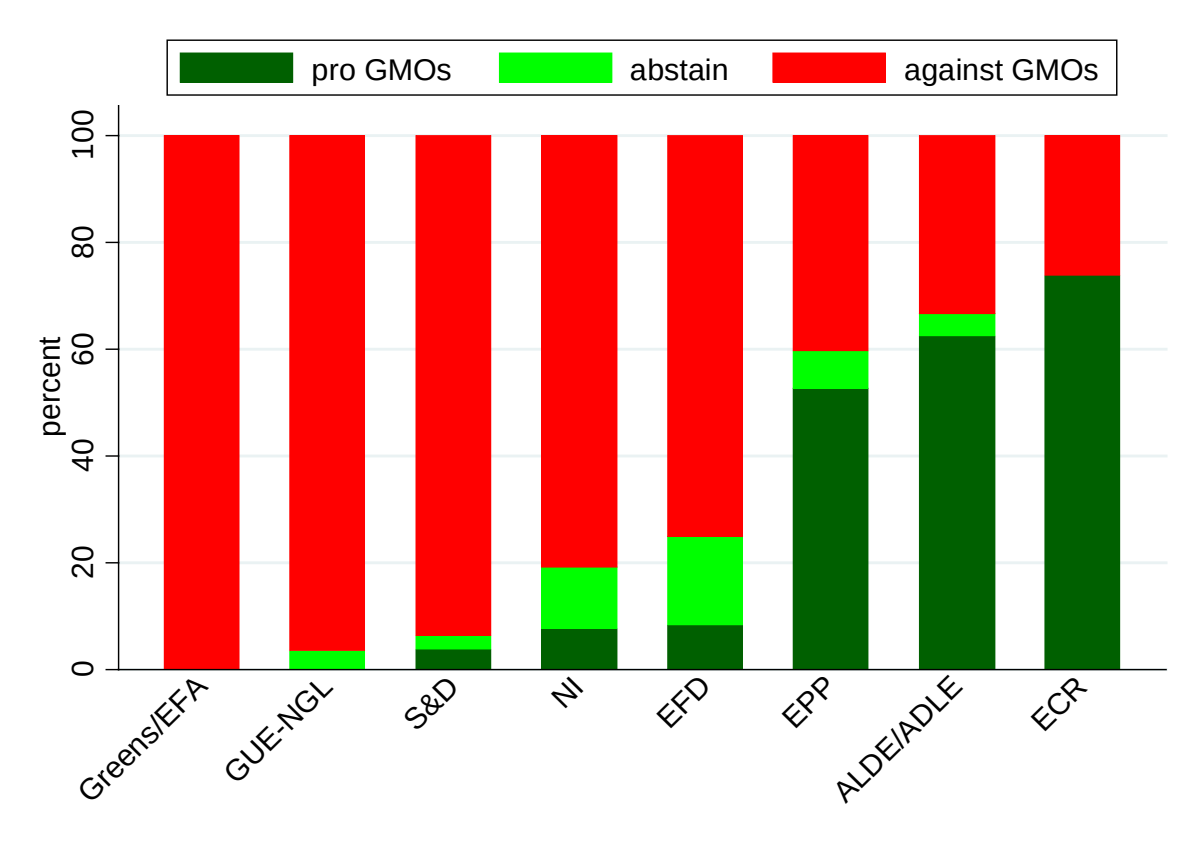
Weak link between Council and EP

Analysis: voting patterns in the Council



Percentage of Yes, No, and Abstain votes in 41 Council voting events on authorization of GMOs (2004-2014), No=against GMOs

Analysis: voting patterns in the EP



Percentage of Yes, No, and Abstain votes on the resolution on Pioneer 1507

Voting patterns: assessment

Unusual:

- No culture of consensus in the Council
- No grand coalition in the EP
- Low cohesion in some EP groups (especially EPP)

Regression analysis: indicators

- Public concern (measured by Eurobarometer survey)
- Pro-GMO interest group EuropaBio
- Share of of small holdings
- Does a country grow GMOs?
- Agriculture GDP

Regression analysis: Indicators

Ideological positions:

party family/group affiliation of minister/MEP

Regression analysis: Indicators

Link between Council and EP?

Position of minister

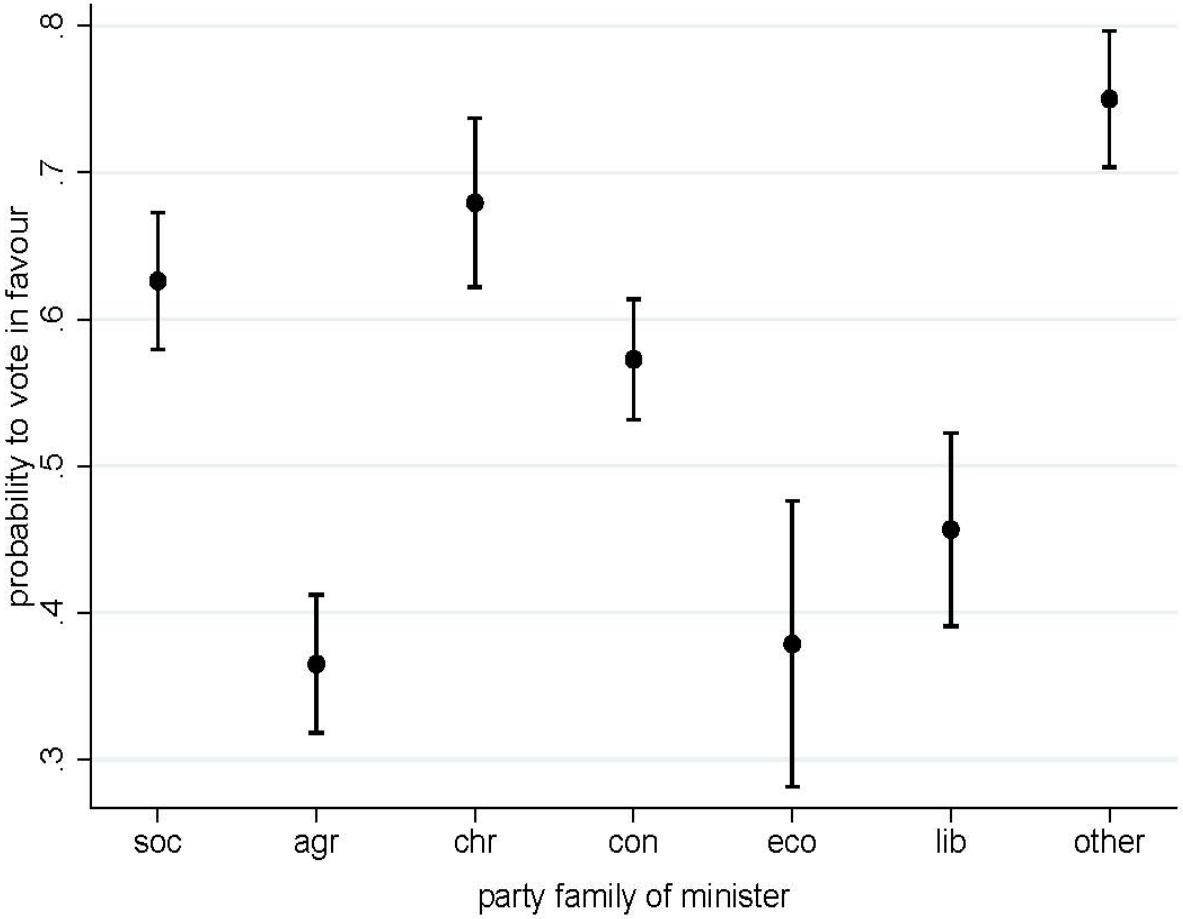
Position of MEP
(of the same country/national party)

Regression analysis: Council votes

	Model 1		Model 2	
Public fear of GMOs	-17.64	(1.50)***	-21.79	(2.44)***
Small Holdings	-3.92	(0.39)***	-6.76	(0.75)***
Pro GMO Lobbying	1.33	(0.15)***	1.84	(0.25)***
GMO cultivation	1.69	(0.12)***	1.80	(0.16)***
Agriculture GDP	0.59	(0.09)***	0.76	(0.12)***
New Member State	-0.50	(0.15)**	0.60	(0.25)*
Social Democrat			reference	
Agrarian			-2.17	(0.36)***
Christian Democrat			0.53	(0.41)
Conservative			-0.49	(0.34)
Ecological			-2.07	(0.51)***
Liberal			-1.46	(0.40)***
other Party Family			1.34	(0.33)***
Constant	3.97	(0.38)***	5.55	(0.60)***
N	1077		1077	
AIC	913.54		825.66	

* = p < 0.1; ** = p < 0.05; *** = p < 0.01.

Regression analysis: predicted probability



RUPRECHT-KARLS-
UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG

Regression analysis: EP vote on Pioneer 1507 (1= in favor of GMOs)

	Model 1		Model 2	
Social Democrat	ref		ref	
Agrarian	2.28	(0.72)**	2.08	(0.74)**
Christian Democrat	2.51	(0.34)***	2.63	(0.35)***
Conservative	1.88	(0.25)***	1.81	(0.25)***
Ecological	-0.71	(0.48)	-0.62	(0.49)
Liberal	2.43	(0.33)***	2.44	(0.34)***
other Party Family	0.85	(0.25)***	0.88	(0.27)***
Public fear of GMOs	2.32	(1.57)	1.48	(1.59)
Small Holdings	2.22	(0.54)***	2.27	(0.54)***
Pro GMO Lobbying	1.38	(0.32)***	1.28	(0.32)***
GMO cultivation	0.96	(0.26)***	0.53	(0.32)
Agriculture GDP	-0.50	(0.12)***	-0.35	(0.14)*
New Member State	0.81	(0.36)*	0.78	(0.37)*
Ministervote: Yes			0.33	(0.26)
Party of minister			-0.21	(0.29)
Min.vote: Yes × Party of min.			0.79	(0.42)
Constant	-2.98	(0.57)***	-3.18	(0.61)***
N	754		754	
AIC	874.14		871.81	

Summary: Council

- Public concern appears to be an important driver behind the behaviour of ministers in the Council
- Other national factors relating to sectoral interests and structural conditions also display significant effects
- We find significant differences in voting behaviour between ministers from different party families

Summary: EP

- Both national and ideological considerations influence voting behaviour in the EP
- Public concern is not significant!
- Pro-GMO lobby in the countries affects the voting behaviour of the MEPs
- Important insights for the future involvement of the EP in GMO authorization

Summary: Overall

- The voting patterns are unusual
- The explanations are unusual, too, since both national and ideological factors were found to matter
- The voting results analyzed here could be representative for voting on highly controversial issues

The road ahead…

- Complete the database and refine models
- Examine whether or not the TTIP negotiations have an impact on decision making regarding GMOs
- Check findings with the most recent vote of the EP on allowing opt-outs for the cultivation/import of GMOs

Thank you for your attention!

Jale.tosun@ipw.uni-heidelberg.de

GMCC
AMSTERDAM
17-20 NOVEMBER 2015