

Institutions of the European Union

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Institutions and bodies

There are **seven EU institutions**, each playing a specific role:

- **European Parliament** (representing the citizens, elected by the peoples of the Member States)
- **European Council** (heads of State and Government)
- **Council of the European Union** (representing the governments of the Member States)
- **European Commission** (driving force and executive body; a politically independent body that upholds the collective European interest)
- **Court of Justice of the European Union** (ensuring compliance with the law)
- **European Central Bank** (responsible for monetary policy and managing the euro)
- **Court of Auditors** (controlling sound and lawful management of the EU budget)

Institutions and bodies

Other important bodies:

- European Economic and Social Committee (expresses the opinions of organised civil society on economic and social issues);
- Committee of the Regions (expresses the opinions of regional and local authorities);
- European Ombudsman (deals with citizens' complaints about maladministration by any EU institution or body);
- European Investment Bank (helps achieve EU objectives by financing investment projects).

A number of **agencies and other bodies** complete the system.

European Parliament



Elections

Composition, organisation

Powers and influence



(1) EP Elections

- Until 1979 MEPs were nominated by national parliaments from amongst their members
- After 1979 direct universal suffrage
- A term of five year

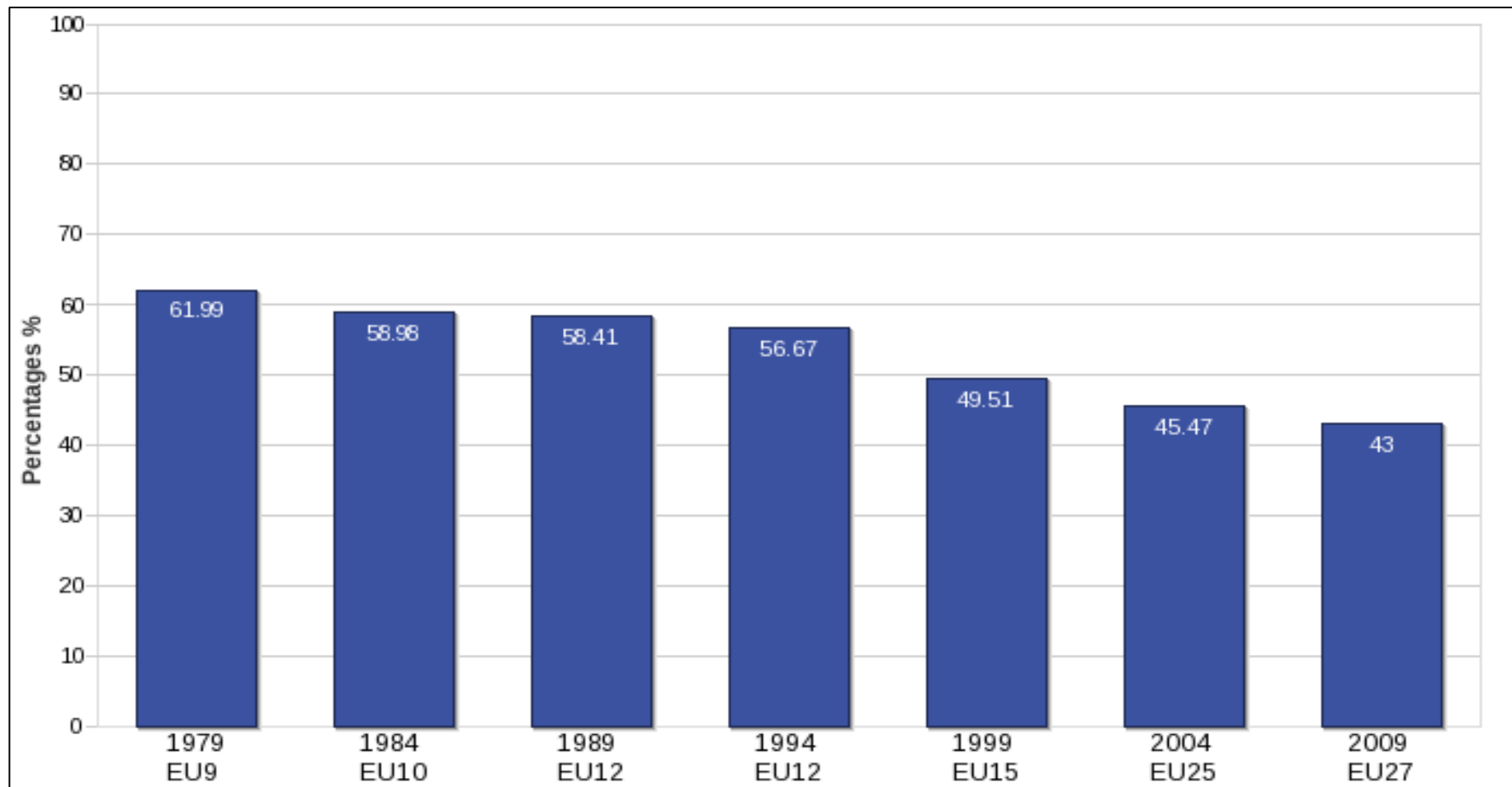
Differences between the States' EP electoral arrangements

- No uniform electoral system
 - Previously: UK – first-past-the-post system
 - Proportional representation – in different forms
- Voting does not take place on the same day
 - In 2009: 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th June
- Considerable variation in the number of citizens MEPs represent
 - See allocation of seats

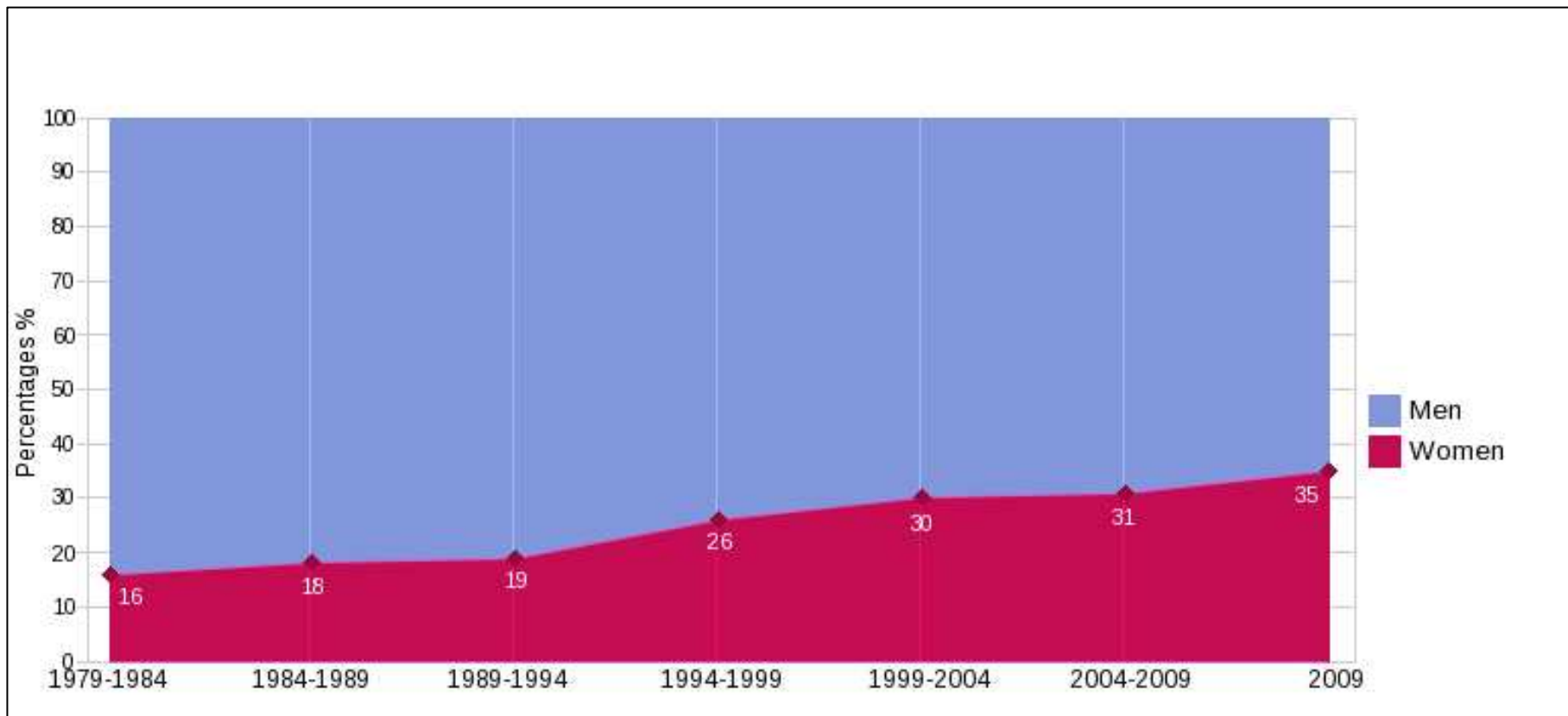
Distribution of seats – EU-27 (2009)

Number of seats	Member States	%
99	Germany	13.5
72	France, Italy, United Kingdom	9.8
50	Poland, Spain	6.8
33	Romania	4.5
25	Netherlands	3.4
22	Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal	3.0
18	Sweden	2.4
17	Austria, Bulgaria	2.3
13	Denmark, Finland, Slovakia	1.8
12	Ireland, Lithuania	1.6
8	Latvia	1.1
7	Slovenia	1.0
6	Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta	0.8
736	Total	100.0

Voter turnout



Distribution of men and women 1979-2009



(2) Composition, organisation

- Originally referred to as the Assembly; the EP adopted its present name in 1962; recognized by the SEA
- The multi-site problem
 - Strasbourg → official seat; 12 plenary sessions
 - Brussels → mini-plenary sessions, committee meetings
 - Luxembourg → Secretariat

The Parliament's hemicycle (debating chamber) in Strasbourg



The hemicycle in Brussels



**Interpreting booths
in the hemicycle
simultaneously
translate debates
between 23
languages**



- President
- Committees
 - Standing committees
 - *Ad hoc* committees

Former EP President Jerzy Buzek (EPP)



**Current EP President
Martin Schulz (S&D)**



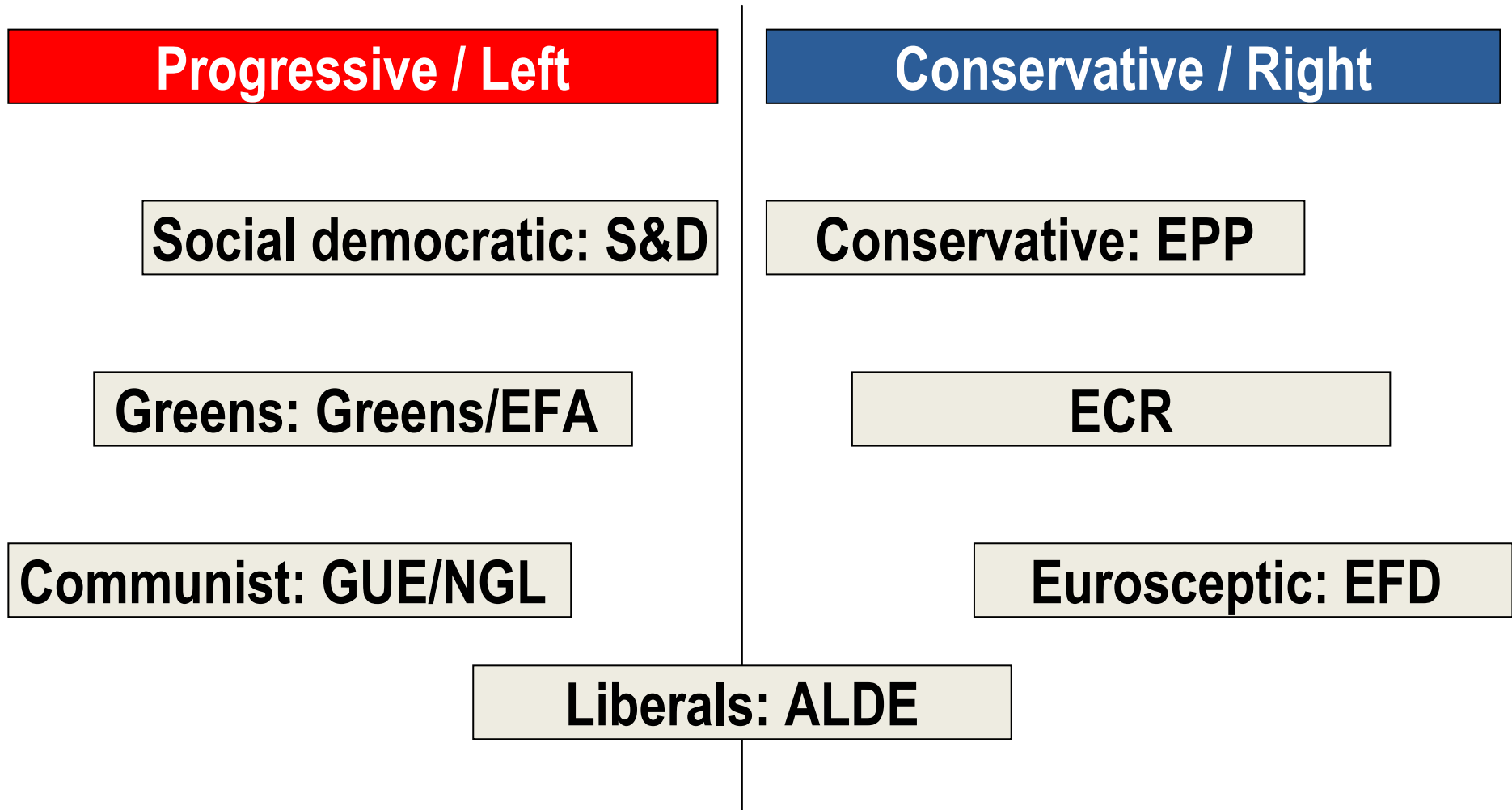
A Committee room in the Parliament



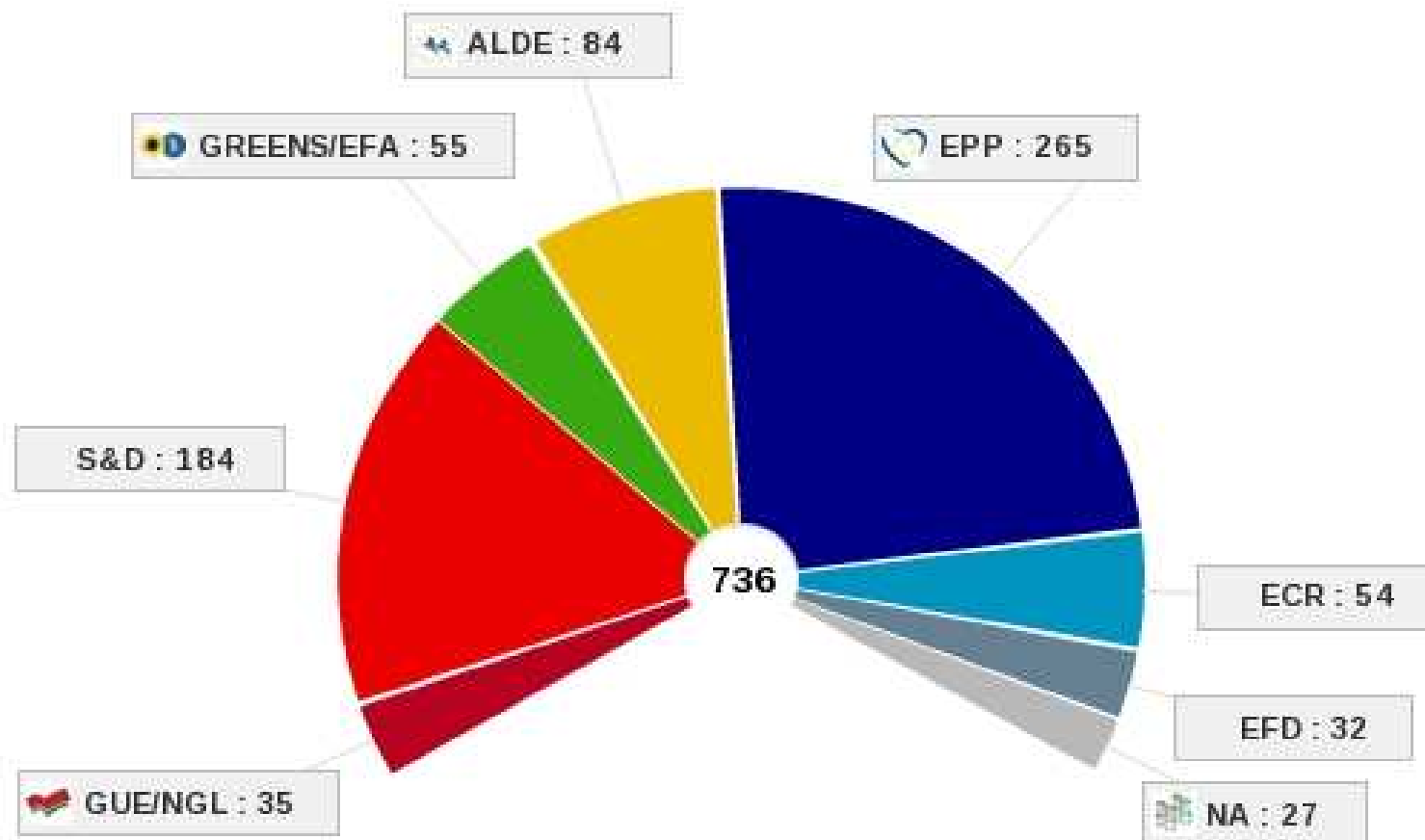
Political groups

- **EPP**: Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
- **S&D**: Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
- **ALDE**: Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
- **GREENS/ EFA**: Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
- **ECR**: European Conservatives and Reformists Group
- **GUE/ NGL**: Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left
- **EFD**: Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group
- **NA**: Non-attached

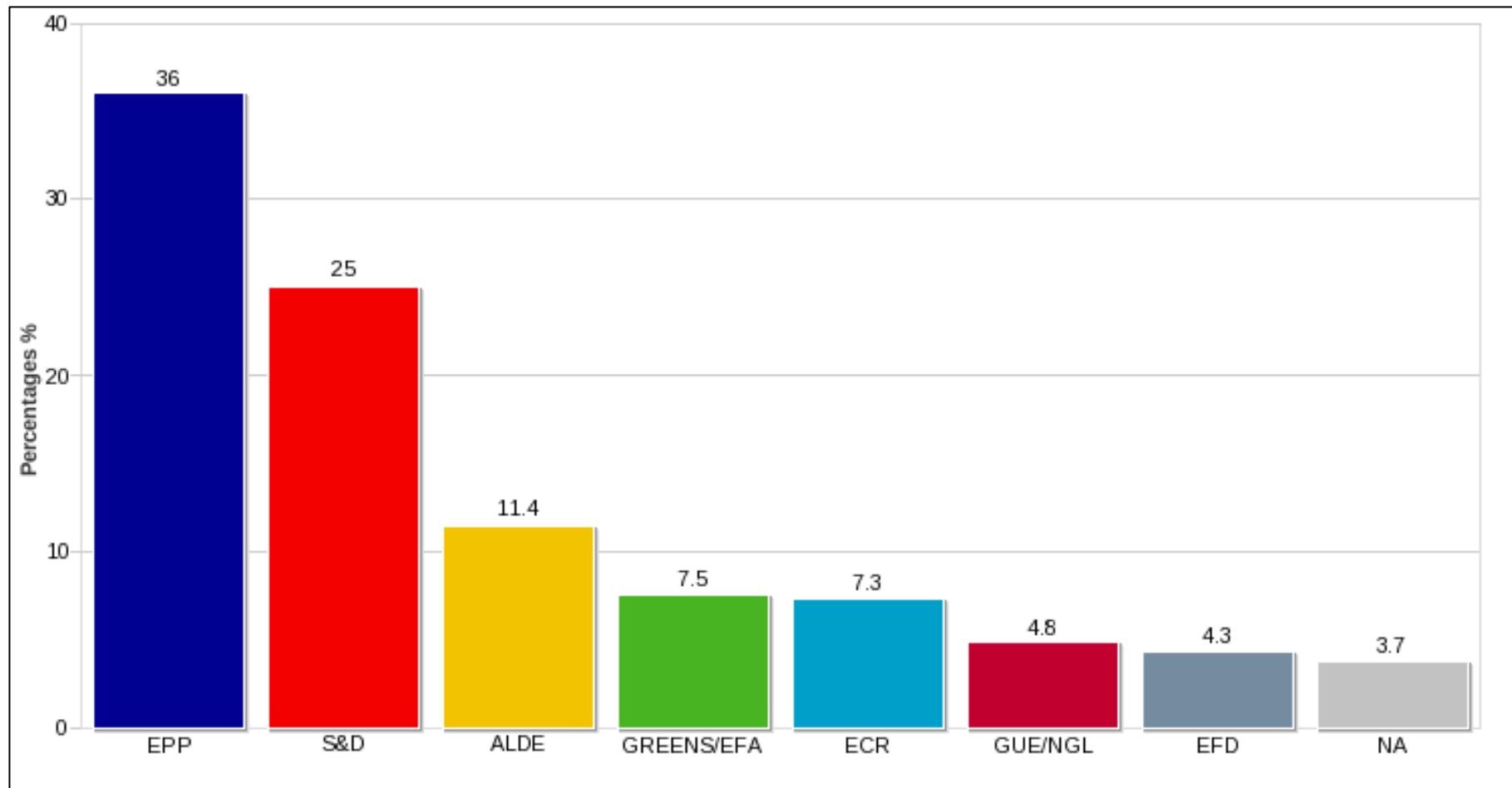
Political groups: ideologies



Political parties in the EP (2009)



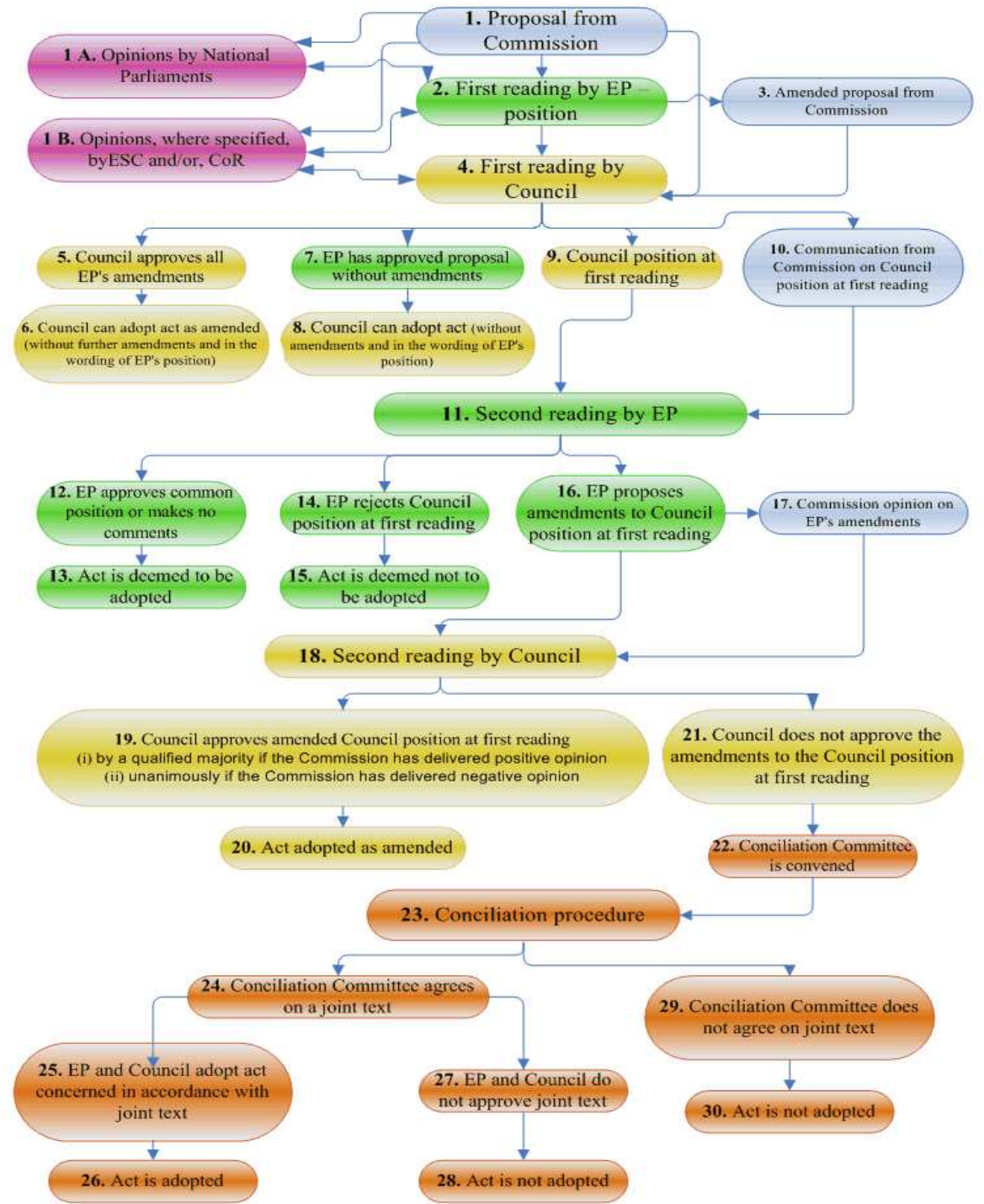
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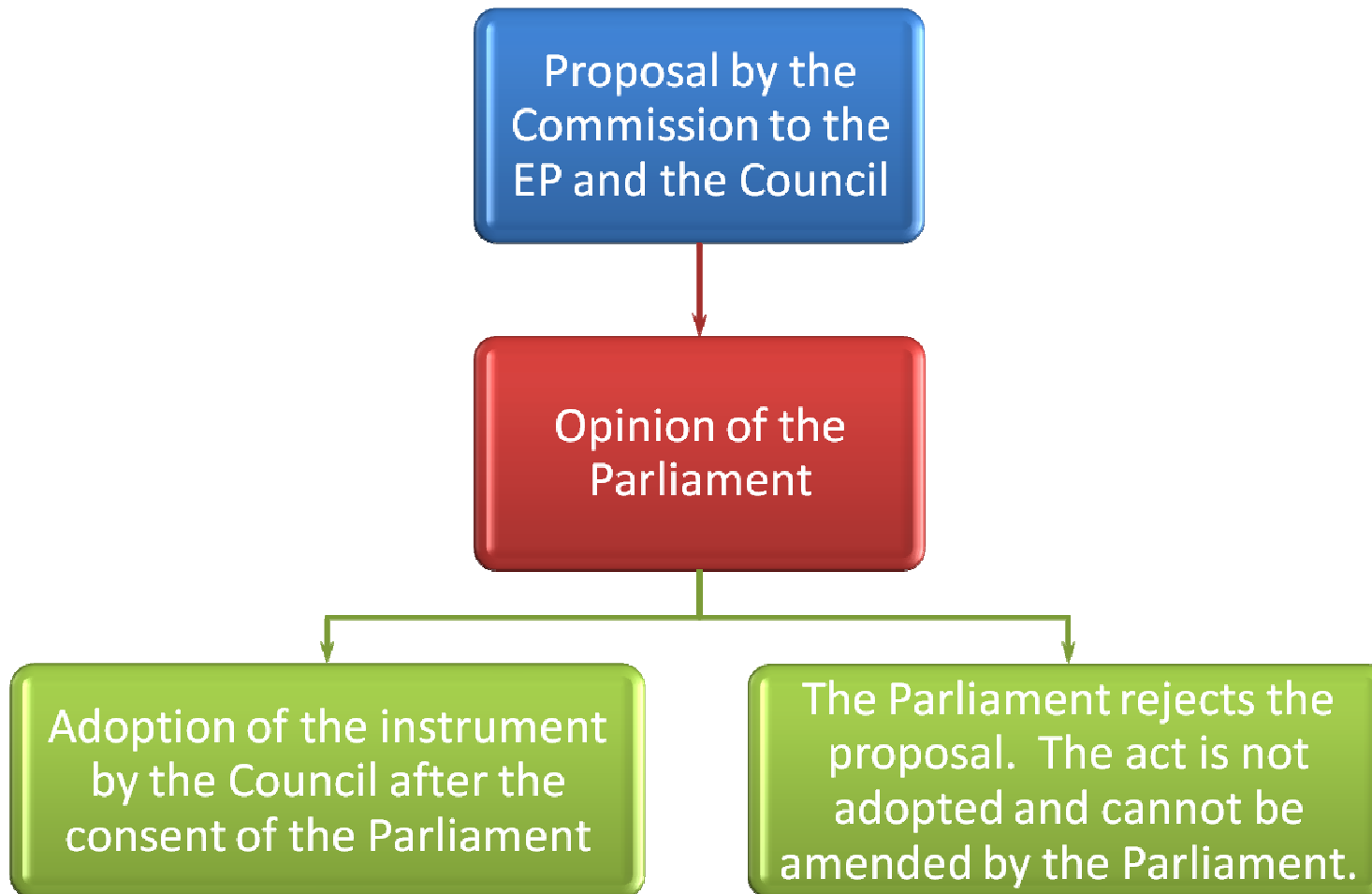
(3) Powers and influence

- Participation in the legislative powers
 - Ordinary legislative procedure
 - Special legislative powers: consultation procedure, consent procedure (e.g. justice and home affairs, budget, taxation)
- Budgetary powers (the power of the purse)
- Control and supervision of the executive (e.g. motion of censure in relation to the Commission)

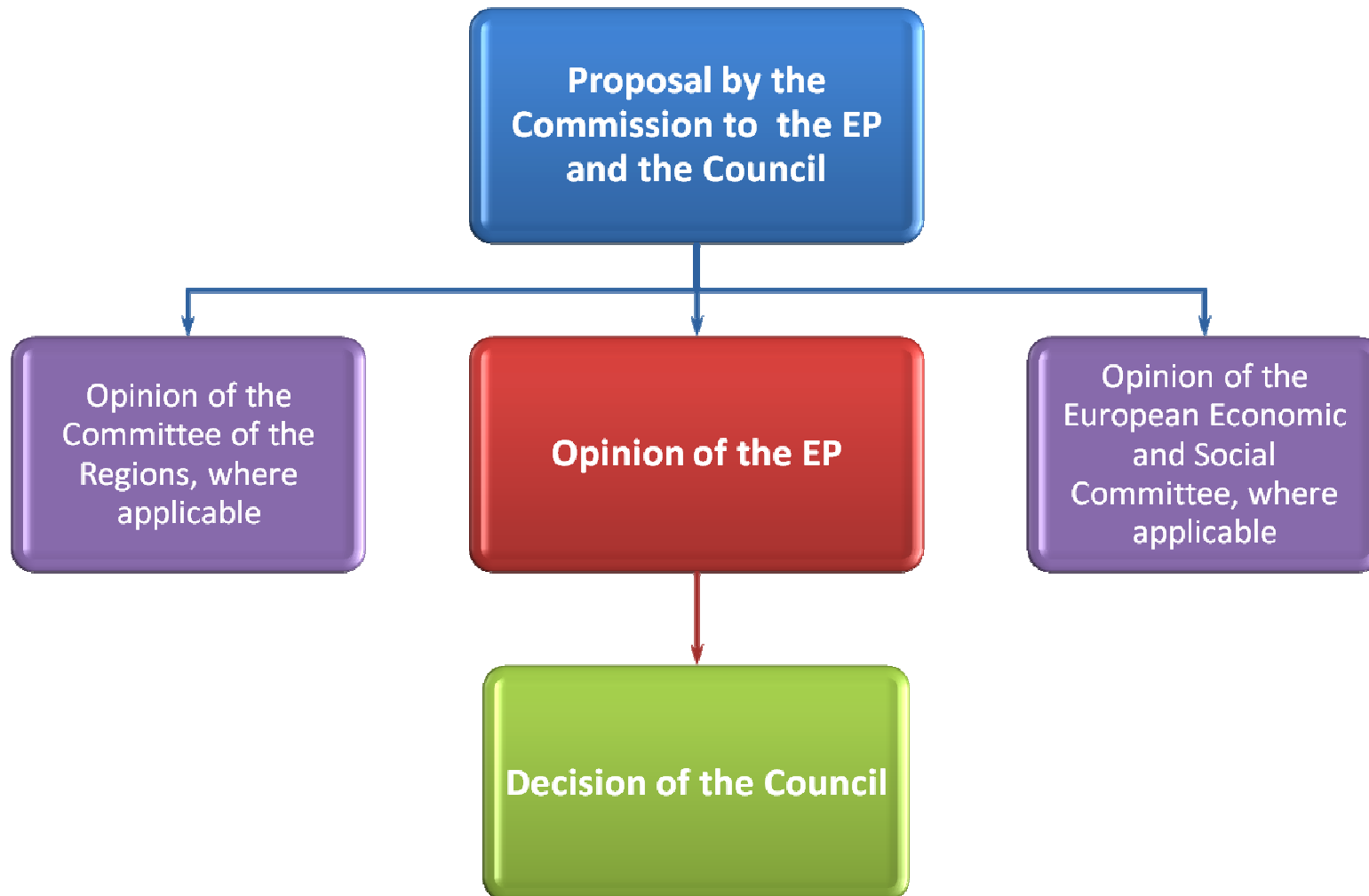
Flowchart of the ordinary legislative procedure



Special legislative procedure: Consent procedure

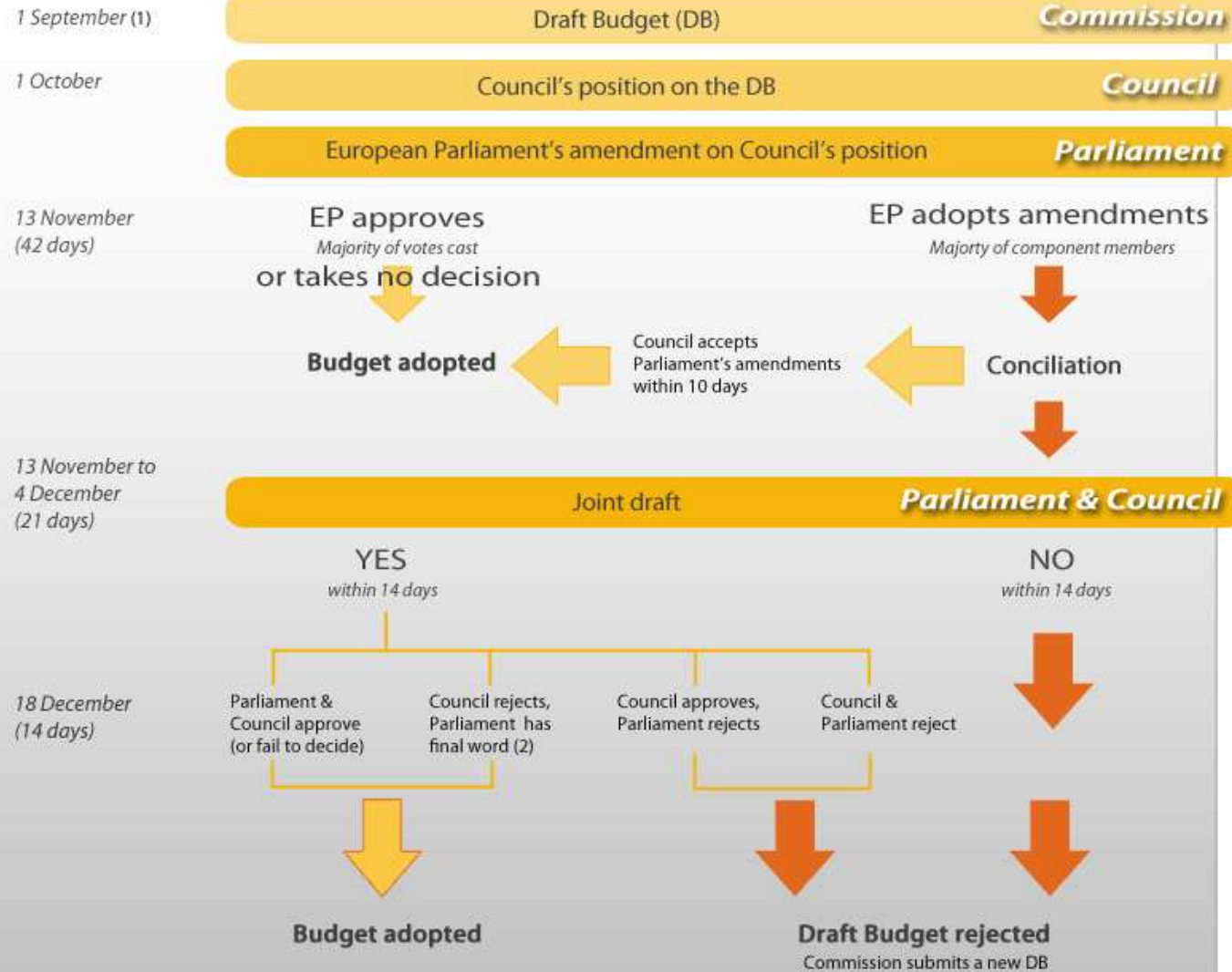


Special legislative procedure: Consultation procedure



The budgetary procedure

Treaty timetable



(1) In practice, the Commission endeavours to present the draft budget before the end of April/beginning of May.

(2) i.e. European Parliament approves the joint text and then, within 14 days of Council's rejection, decides (by a majority of its component members & 3/5 of the votes cast) to confirm all or some of its amendments

Control and supervision:

Appointment of the Commission 2004

Rocco Buttiglione [Italy]	Justice, Freedom and Security	Candidature withdrawn
Ingrida Udre [Latvia]	Taxation and Customs Union	Candidature withdrawn
László Kovács [Hungary]	Energy	Change of portfolio: Taxation and Customs Union

Appointment of the Commission 2004 - Schedule

- **27 September-8 October** → Hearings in parliamentary committees
- **25-28 October** → Vote of approval of the college in European Parliament (postponed)
- **1 November** → Date of entry into office of the new Commission according to the Accession Treaties
- **4 November** → President Designate Mr Barroso presents his revised team at the European Council
- **15-16 November** → New hearings with three Commissioners designate
- **18 November** → Vote of approval of the Commission at the European Parliament in Strasbourg
- **22-26 November** → New Commission takes up office

Control and supervision:

Resignation of the Santer- Commission (1999)

Dissatisfaction amongst MEPs with the Santer College. The factors:

- A Court of Auditors report revealed evidence of 'missing' EU funds and was strongly critical of aspects of Commission management practices.
- Some Commissioners (Edith Cresson, the Commissioner responsible for Research) were favouring relatives and friends for appointments and the awarding of contracts.
- Allegations:
 - Youth training mismanaged
 - Humanitarian aid missing
 - Mediterranean aid abused
 - Nepotism
 - Cover-up
- A rather dismissive response by Jacques Santer to the criticism that were being made about himself and some of his colleagues.

- A motion of censure was supported by 232 MEPs, with 293 voting against.
- Finally Santer agreed to the creation of a special committee of independent experts to investigate the allegations of fraud, nepotism and mismanagement.
- The report of this committee was issued two months later, in March 1999 and was highly critical of aspects of the College's work and behaviour. ("It is becomingly difficult to find anyone who has even the slightest sense of responsibility.")
- Santer and Cresson refused to resign
- Thus the Santer Commission collectively resigned before another motion of censure could be carried, which would presumably have been successful

Conclusions

Is the EP becoming a proper parliament?

- The EP is a special sort of advisory body rather than a proper parliament
- It does not have full legislative powers
- Its budgetary powers are limited
- It cannot overthrow a government