

Modeling Political Decisions for Sustainability

Actor Paper

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How is the actor relevant to the permissibility of carbon removals to count towards reaching the 2040 EU net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emission goal(s)?

The European People's Party (EPP) is a faction in the European Parliament. Its relevance to permissibility stems from two key factors:

Firstly, the EPP holds 188 of the 720 seats in Parliament, making it the largest faction. Passing a proposed 2040 emissions reduction target requires an absolute majority in Parliament, in addition to a qualified majority in the Council. The EPP's role as a central majority faction is crucial, acting as a hinge between the pro-European (left-leaning) factions and the bloc to the right of the EPP. Neither bloc can achieve a majority without the EPP, barring unrealistic compromises on their political convictions.¹

Secondly, as a center-right faction, the EPP primarily represents the interests of voter groups who prioritize economic and industry-related needs over ambitious climate protection goals.² This translates to a preference for fewer regulations and restrictions in pursuit of emission targets. Consequently, the EPP holds a defined position on the research question, fulfilling de Mesquita's criteria for a relevant actor in the forecast.³

Describe the actor's relations with other actors on the abovementioned issue.

As a faction representing industry-aligned interests, it can be assumed that the EPP maintains strong relationships with lobby groups and industry representatives due to shared position goals. In contrast NGOs that have ambitious climate protection goals, therefore share little common ground on this issue.

Considering the current rightward shift in Europe, with several social democrat-led states experiencing regime changes towards conservative governments, it can be assumed that the

EPP aligns with a position held by many states within the Council.⁴ Notably, Germany's interests are particularly well-represented, as the (relative) majority of EPP's faction seats belong to the German CDU/CSU which currently lead in polls for the upcoming elections.⁵

Within the Parliament, the EPP has already collaborated with pro-European factions to pass ambitious climate targets and remains committed to these goals.² This is underpinned by the election of the new, pro-European Commission, with Ursula von der Leyen continuing her presidency. Simultaneously, the EPP has recently shown openness towards factions on the right, who are generally hostile towards regulatory and authoritarian approaches to climate protection goals.⁶ Therefore, it can be assumed that the EPP, while avoiding radical positions, is open to collaboration with most actors in Parliament.

Where can the actor be found on the position scale? Justify.

Even after multiple inquiries to relevant departments and members of the EPP responsible, a statement was refused. Given the significant relevance of the issue and the absence of a proposal from the Commission, it is plausible the EPP has not yet reached an internal consensus on its position. Simultaneously, the reliance on previous documents and statements must be approached with caution, as the recent rightward political shift in Europe has brought notable changes in climate and environmental policy, particularly among (center-)right parties and parliamentary groups.^{4,7} As a result, the adopted approach involves the analysis of qualitative data, which is then evaluated by an expert in European climate policy. The following considerations were taken into account:

Despite minor adjustments, the EPP has opted to continue a pro-European cooperation for the Commission's election. This Commission has previously produced a position paper that proposed a maximum threshold of 400 Mt CO₂eq. During the past parliamentary term, the EPP has been the strongest political force in both the Parliament and the Commission, which suggests that this threshold should significantly reflect the EPP's stance. Furthermore, the EPP's campaign election promises emphasize the importance of new technologies as well as natural carbon removals as critical tools for achieving the net-zero emissions target for 2050.² This indicates a strong willingness to include carbon removals in meeting the 2040 targets as well.

Based on this, a position corresponding to 400 Mt CO₂eq – equating to a score of 90 on the scale – was initially proposed for consultation towards an expert on European climate policy.

The expert's assessment, informed by personal statements from EPP members, suggested that an even higher value is appropriate.⁸ Consequently, the EPP's position has been adjusted upward from 90 to 110.

Which potential influence does the actor have on these negotiations? Develop a general scale/index for all actors and score your particular actor. Justify.

As a foundational framework for assessing all actors, the Council and the Parliament were identified as the most influential groups, each assigned an influence score of 100. This is justified by their critical roles in EU decision-making.⁹ While parliamentary factions are weighted proportionally to their seat distribution, the influence of Council member states is calculated using a weighted formula that considers both individual votes and population share as a qualified majority is needed:

$$\text{Influence} = (1/27 * A + \text{Share of population} * B) * 100$$

Within a qualified majority, population share is given 18.18% more weight than vote share (65% population share / 55% vote share). This corresponds to **A** = 45.88% and **B** = 54.12%. However, due to the stronger (financial) negotiating power of well populated states, this weighting may be adjusted towards a higher **B** value to better reflect realistic power dynamics.

Based on this method, the EPP's influence is determined by its share of seats in Parliament (188/720), giving it an influence score of 26.11. For comparison, Germany, as the most populous member state, would have an influence of 11.7 if used the above weighting. Other actors, such as NGOs or even the Commission, are compared and weighted using expert evaluations against either a parliamentary seat or a Council state.

This calculation for the EPP excludes potentially significant factors such as its additional influence as the central majority faction or the varying financial capacities of factions and should be checked by a subsequent robustness check. However, efficiency and simplicity advocate for this rational-mathematically legitimized approach.

What is the actor's salience and flexibility regarding the position scale? Do they have veto status? Justify.

Formally, the EPP as a parliamentary faction does not hold a direct veto right.⁹ The only justification for considering an indirect veto status would be the practical impossibility of

achieving a parliamentary agreement without the EPP's approval due to internal deadlocks among other factions.¹ However, this situation represents more of a “losing” scenario in the Predictioneer's Game.³

Regarding the EPP's salience a value of 25 is assumed by means of exclusion. According to de Mesquita, an “important issue” is defined at a salience value above 50, indicating consistent attention and focus.³ This is not reflected in the EPP's current program or public messaging (e.g. interviews, social media), where carbon removals are mentioned in principle but with no explicit focus on achieving or setting the 2040 targets.^{2, 10} Nevertheless, the EPP remains committed to the European Climate Law, which strongly recommends the establishment of 2040 goals.¹¹ Additionally, during the first hearing of Wopke Hoekstra (Commissioner for Climate, Net-Zero, and Clean Growth), the EPP under Mr. Liese inquired about the role of carbon removals from 2040 onwards.⁸ This initiative suggests a basic interest in the issue. From this perspective, the EPP's salience within de Mesquita's scale is estimated to lie between 30 (“this is an issue I care about”) and 20 (“I rarely pay attention”), with a working value of 25 for simplicity.³

Given recent events surrounding the EU's Deforestation law, the EPP's flexibility is assessed as very low. Instead of seeking compromise with pro-European factions – who elected the new Commission together only two weeks later – the EPP pushed through its position with support from far-right factions.⁶ This move, considered a breach of norms by some experts, indicates limited flexibility toward progressive climate and environmental policies.⁶ In line with de Mesquita's description of flexibility, a value of 10 is assigned to the EPP, reflecting minimal willingness to deviate from its position and a preference for “losing” as an alternative.³ The latter aligns with the observation that the EPP exhibits low salience regarding the implementation of 2040 goals.

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