

What's Wrong with the EU ... and How to Fix It !

Simon Hix

**Professor of European and Comparative Politics
London School of Economics and Political Science**

Overview

Part 1: The Diagnosis

Lack of popular legitimacy

Democratic deficit

Policy gridlock

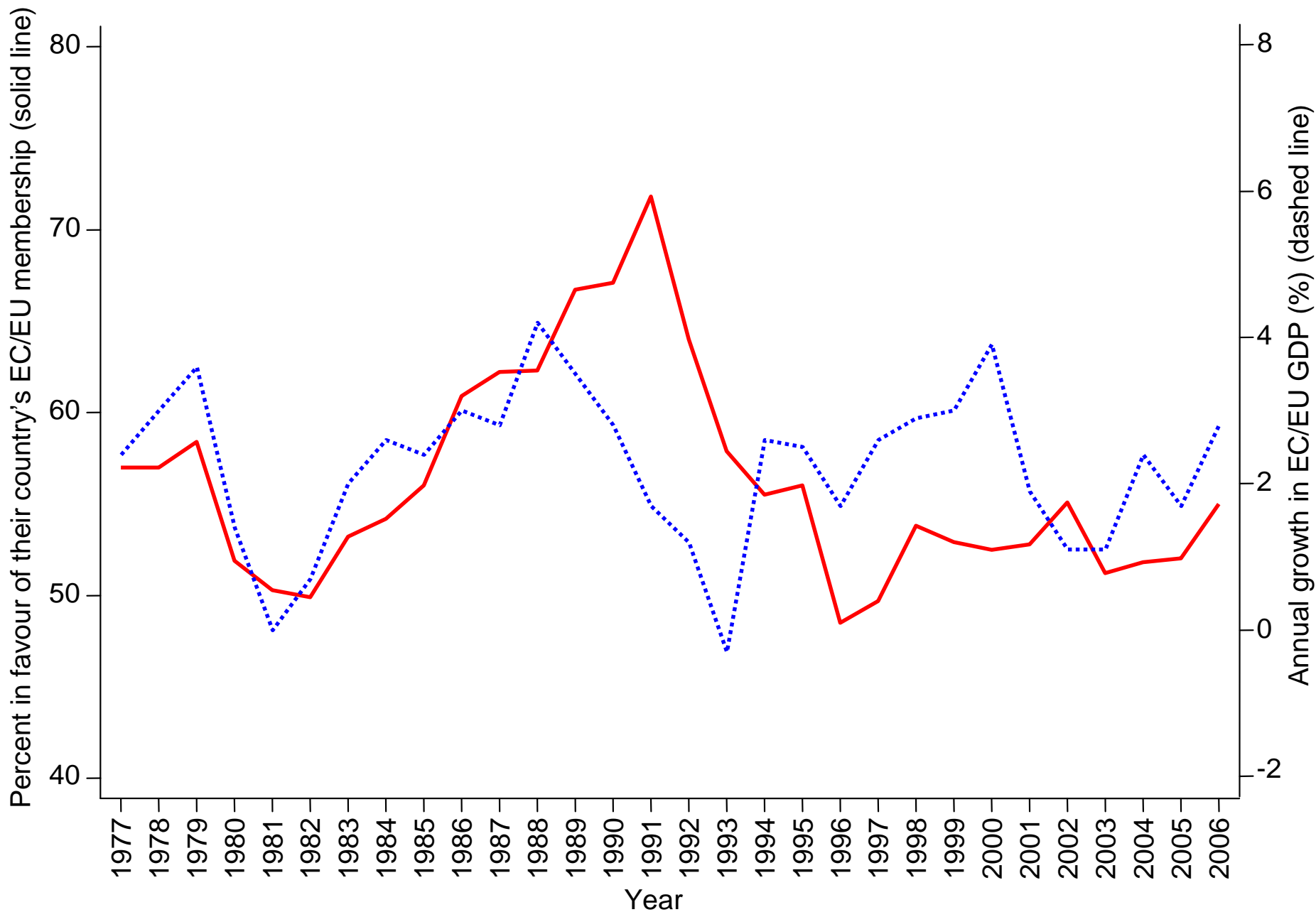
Part 2: The Cure

The Constitution is not the answer

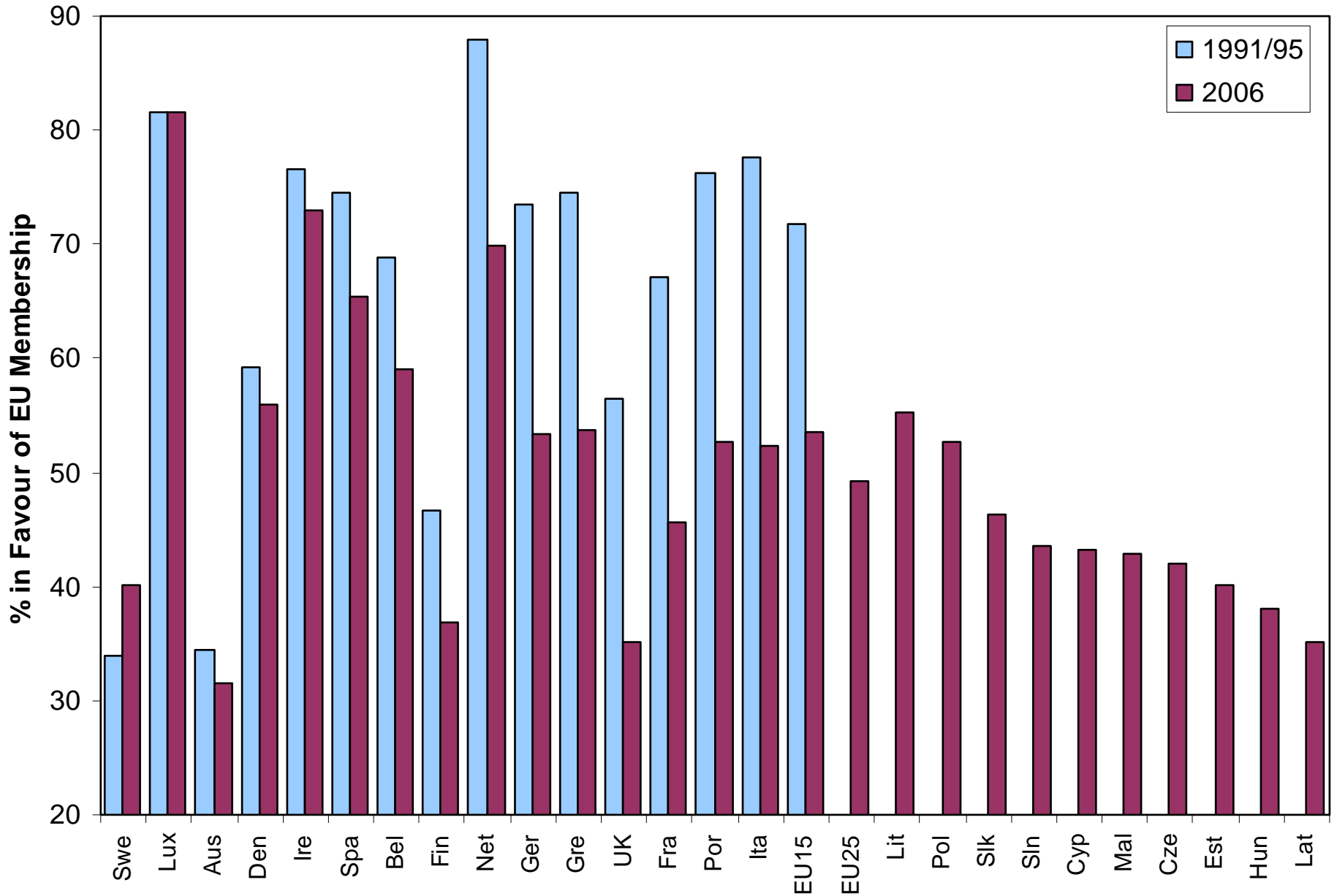
What the EU needs: *“limited democratic politics”*

Idea: gradually open EU to more political competition

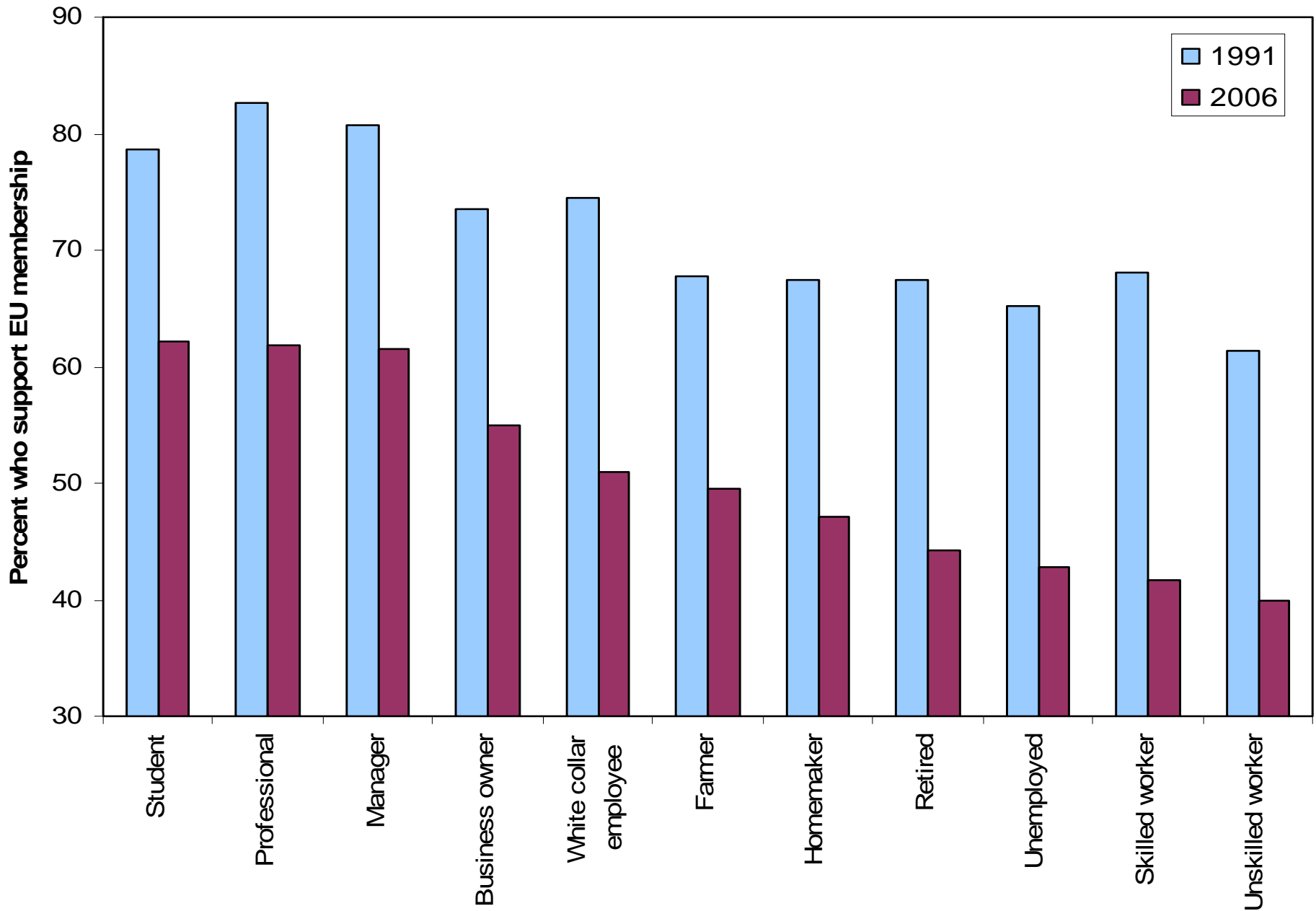
Problem 1: A Lack of Popular Legitimacy



Cross-Country Variations



Decline Support by Social Group



Problem 2: A Democratic Deficit

Four Popular Perceptions

- 1) the EU has increased the power of governments against national parliaments**
- 2) The European Parliament is too weak**
- 3) The EU adopts right-wing policies, e.g. a neo-liberal single market, a monetarist EMU etc.**
- 4) EU citizens can't influence EU policies**

Problem 2: A Democratic Deficit

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- 1) the EU has increased the power of governments against national parliaments (FALSE)**
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Problem 2: A Democratic Deficit

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- 4) EU citizens can't influence EU policies (TRUE)**

The Democratic Deficit Reality

- 1) The EU adopts policies that are hard to change because of so many checks and balances
 - 2) There is no political and public debate about the direction of the EU policy agenda -> preferences about EU policies are hard to change
 - 3) Citizens cannot identify or choose 'who governs' at the European level
 - national elections are not on EU issues
 - European elections are not about Europe
- => When people perceive that they are losing from current policies, instead of blaming the current 'government' they blame the whole EU

Example: European Elections Don't Work

European elections are 'second-order national contests':

like regional or local elections

fought by national parties

about national government performance

not about European issues or direction of EU policy agenda

=> a) lower turnout in EP elections than national elections

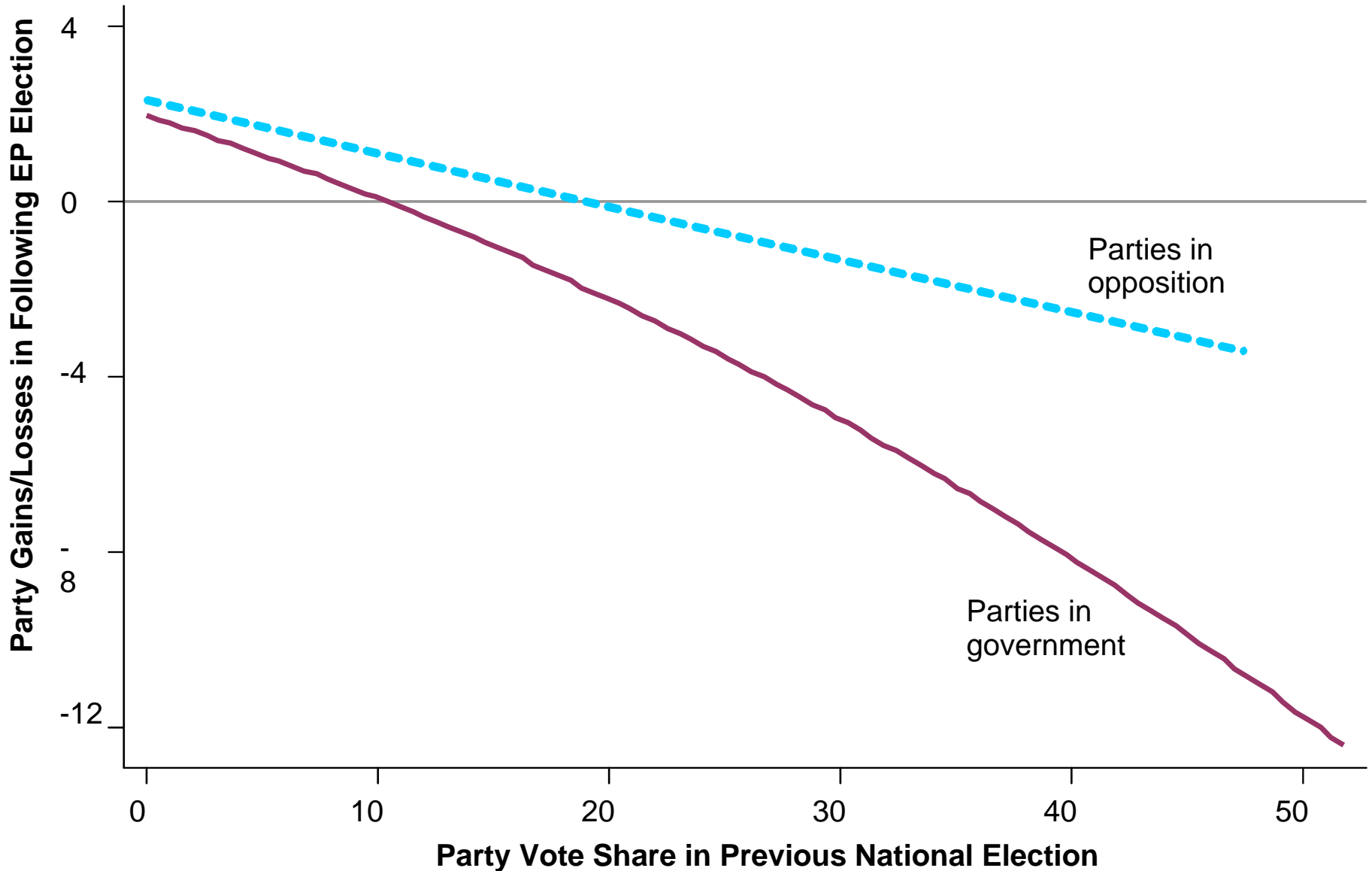
b) people vote differently in EP elections

vote to protest against the government

signal preferences on issues they care about

vote sincerely rather than strategically

Party Performance in EP Elections, 79-04



Problem 3: Policy Gridlock

An 'ultra consensus' system (many veto-players):

Unanimity to add policy to EU level (or move to QMV)

Com. majority + Council QMV + EP majority to pass it
+ judicial review by national courts and ECJ

Enlargement make it worse (more preference heterogeneity)

Poor leadership

Presidency of Council is weak

Commission President is not a 'first among equals'

No relationship between majorities in Com, Council & EP

-> Policy failure (lowest-common-denominator), e.g.

Takeover Directive

Services Directive

Lisbon Agenda

Part 2: The Cure !

The Constitution is not the answer

What the EU needs: *“limited democratic politics”*

Idea: gradually open the EU to political competition

The Constitution = minor changes, with high risk of failure

Least significant treaty in the EU's history !

no major policy change

minor tinkering with institutions, for more efficiency

e.g. Council QMV, Euro Council Pres., EU For. Min

most changes do not need treaty reforms

Likely outcome:

a “mini treaty” with key elements

which is then rejected by either Poland, Netherlands, UK,

Denmark, Estonia, Czech Republic, or Ireland

Analysis: if the Constitution is so inconsequential, why risk it!

'Limited Democratic Politics'

More politics in the EU is inevitable

'Founding period' of European integration (1950-1990s)

creation of a quasi-constitutional architecture:

- continental-scale market created & regulated at EU level
- taxing & spending at national level

consensus politics -> compensate national-based losers

+ need to isolate from 'politics' (to create neutral design)

New period (2000+)

reform of existing policy regime

=> 'conflicts' are inevitable, as there will be winners & losers, and these divisions will be on socio-economic rather than national/territorial lines, and so will be difficult to compensate via the traditional EU mechanism (the budget)

More Politics is Also Desirable

Forces competition between elites

Promotes policy innovation

Promotes 'joined-up thinking'

Overcomes institutional gridlock

Engages citizens (& encourages media coverage)

=> increases legitimacy

The Pre-requisites for 'Limited Politics' Already Exist

1) Institutional: a design that allows for

- a) Contest for political leadership and control of the policy agenda (for a limited period)
- b) An identifiable group of elites ('team') to 'govern' for a limited period

2) Behavioural: a pattern of elite behaviour where

- a) Contestation is accepted (rather than 'consensus')
- b) There is "losers' consent"

1) Institutional Structure

Treaty reforms => moved EU towards a more majoritarian model of government:

'Election' of the executive:

QMV in Council + SM in EP

=> Council has to take account of EP preferences

Adoption of legislation:

Com + QMV in Council + SM in EP

=> same (over-sized) political majority can elect the agenda-setter and then adopt his/her proposals

2) Competitive Elite Behaviour

Voting Behaviour in European Parliament (e.g. Hix et al)

dominated by left-right dimension of politics

highly-cohesive & competitive transnational parties

Voting Behaviour in Council

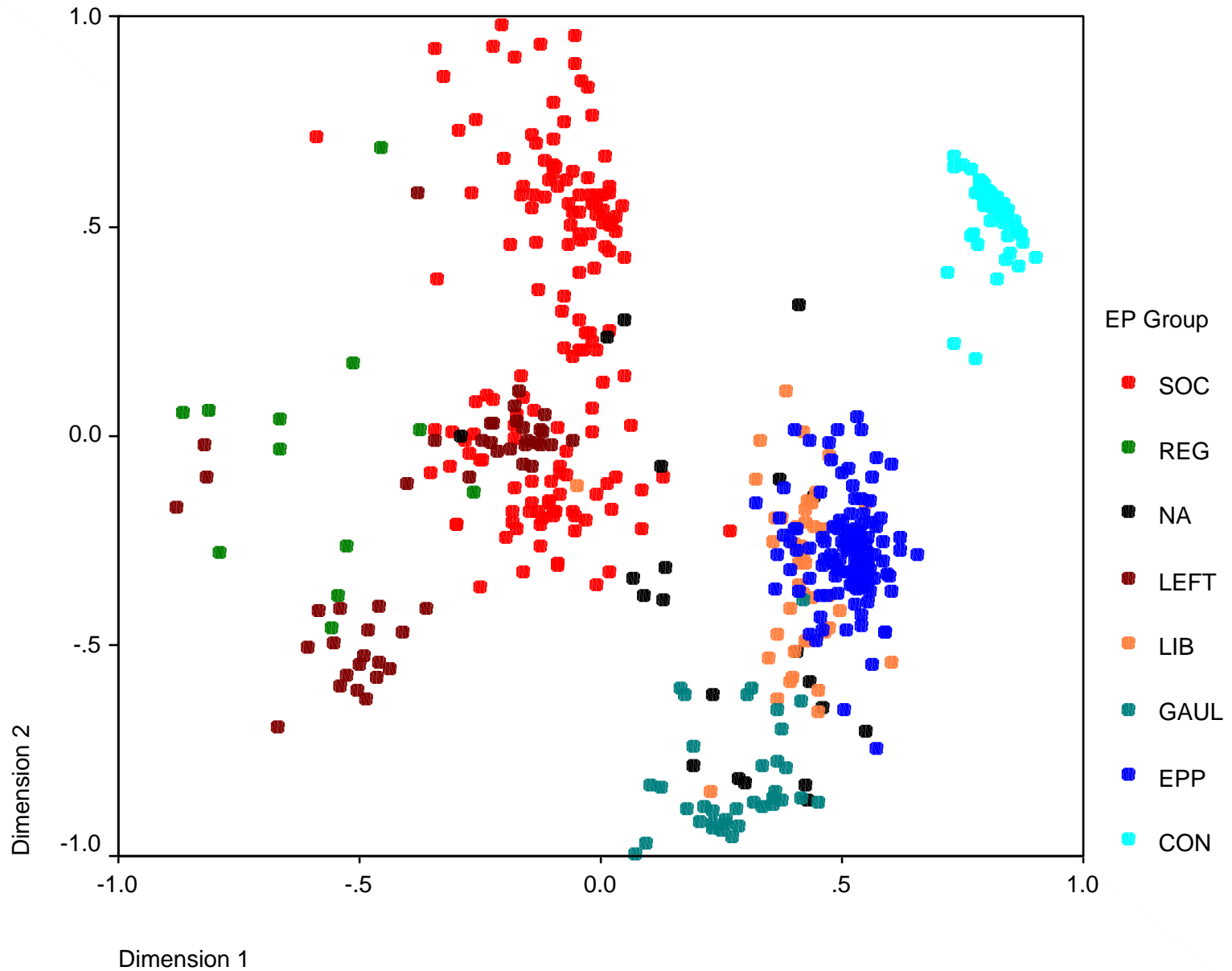
mix of national interest and left-right policy preferences of governments (e.g. Mattila, Hagemann, etc.)

More Party-Political Commission

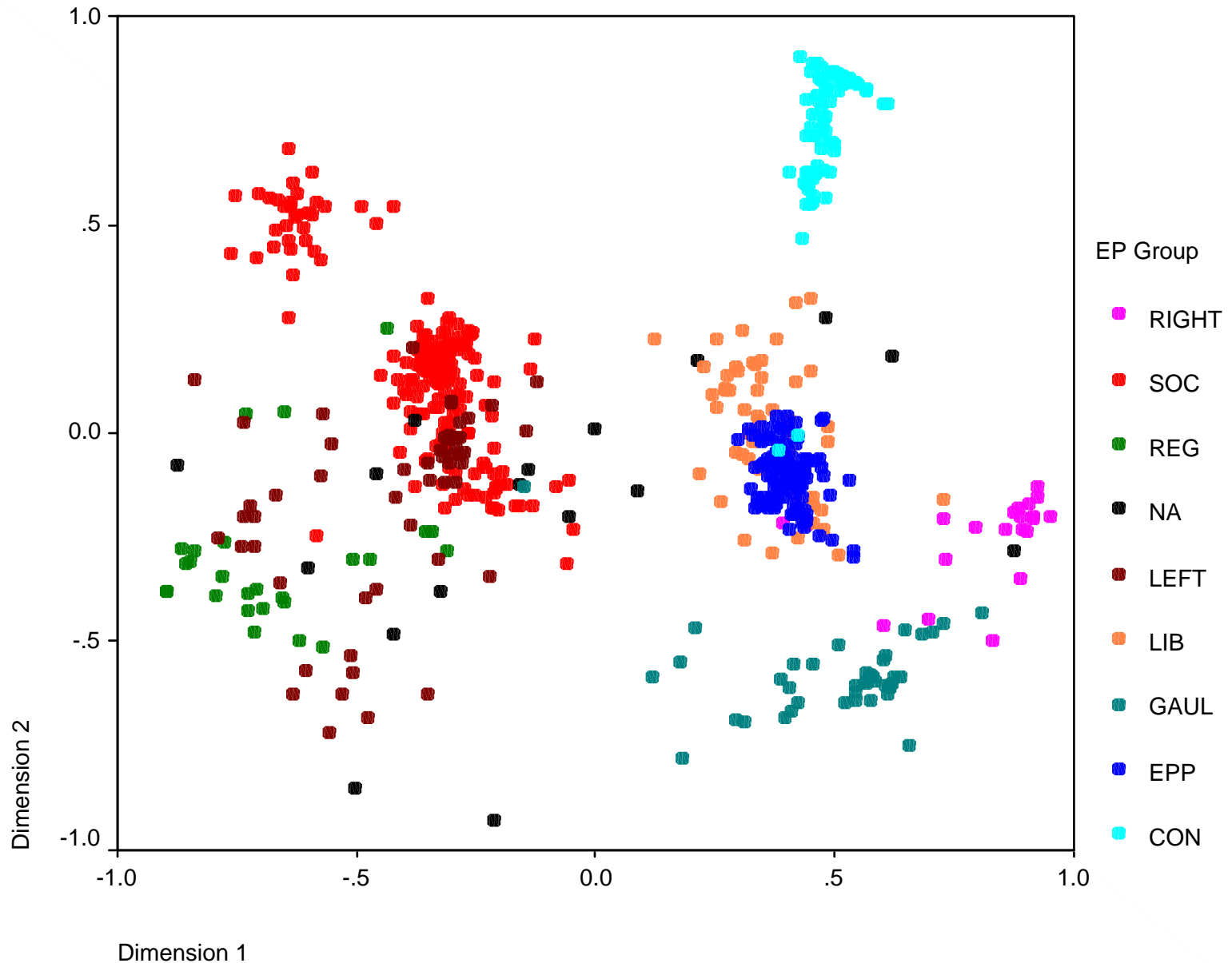
One Com. per MS -> more partisan Commission

QMV in Council -> multiple candidates for Com. President
& contest in the formation of Com. & portfolio allocation

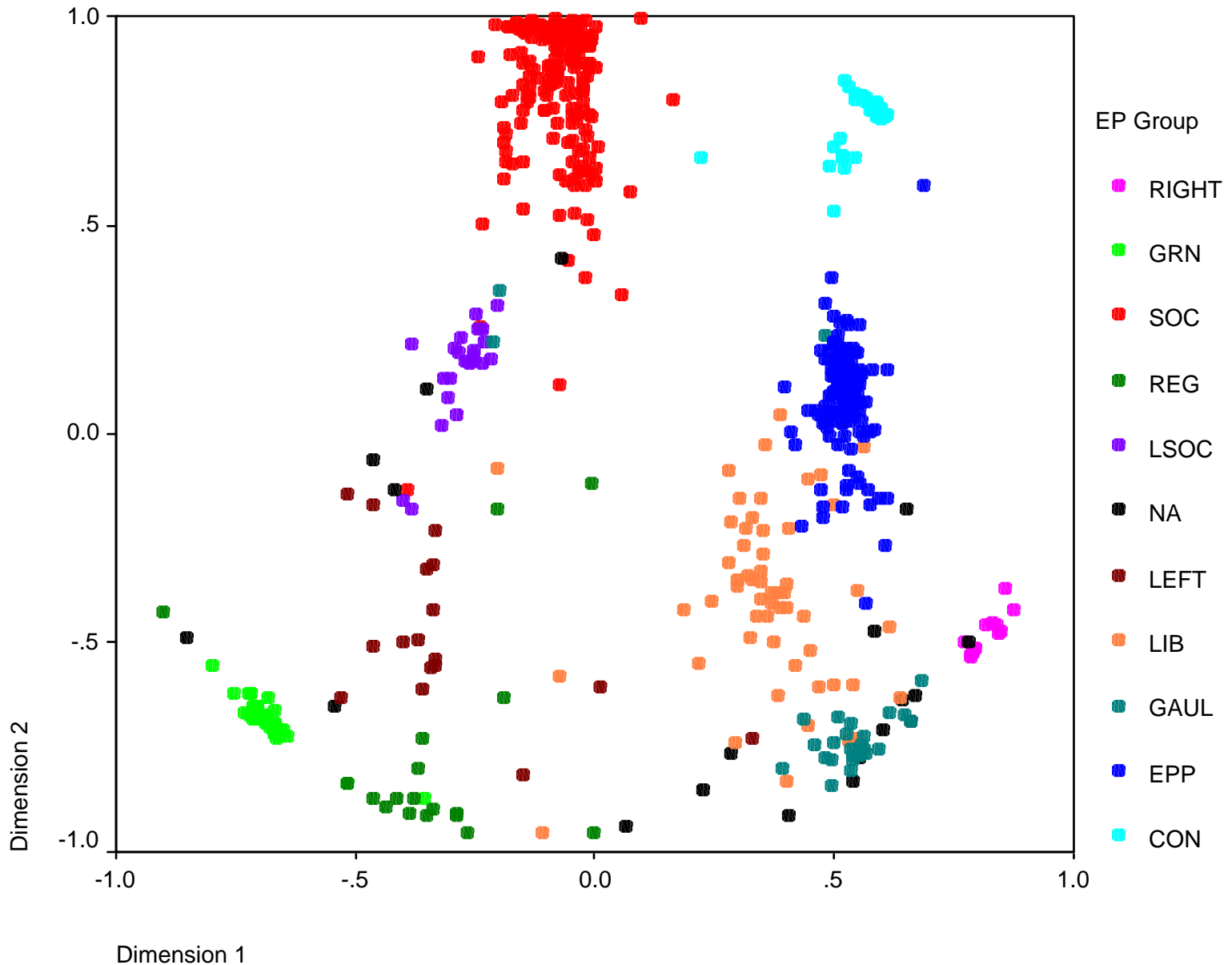
EP1 (1979-84)



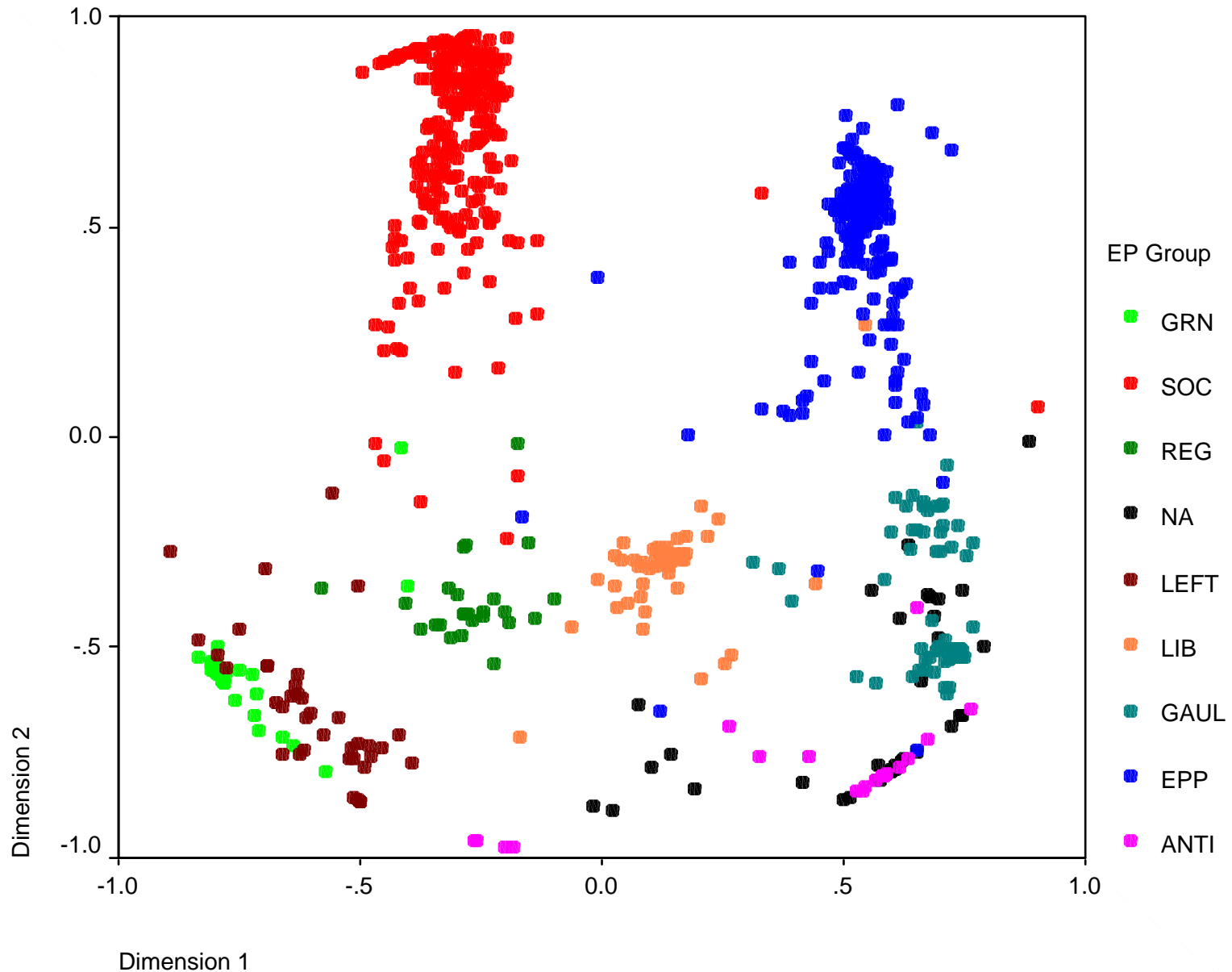
EP2 (1984-89)



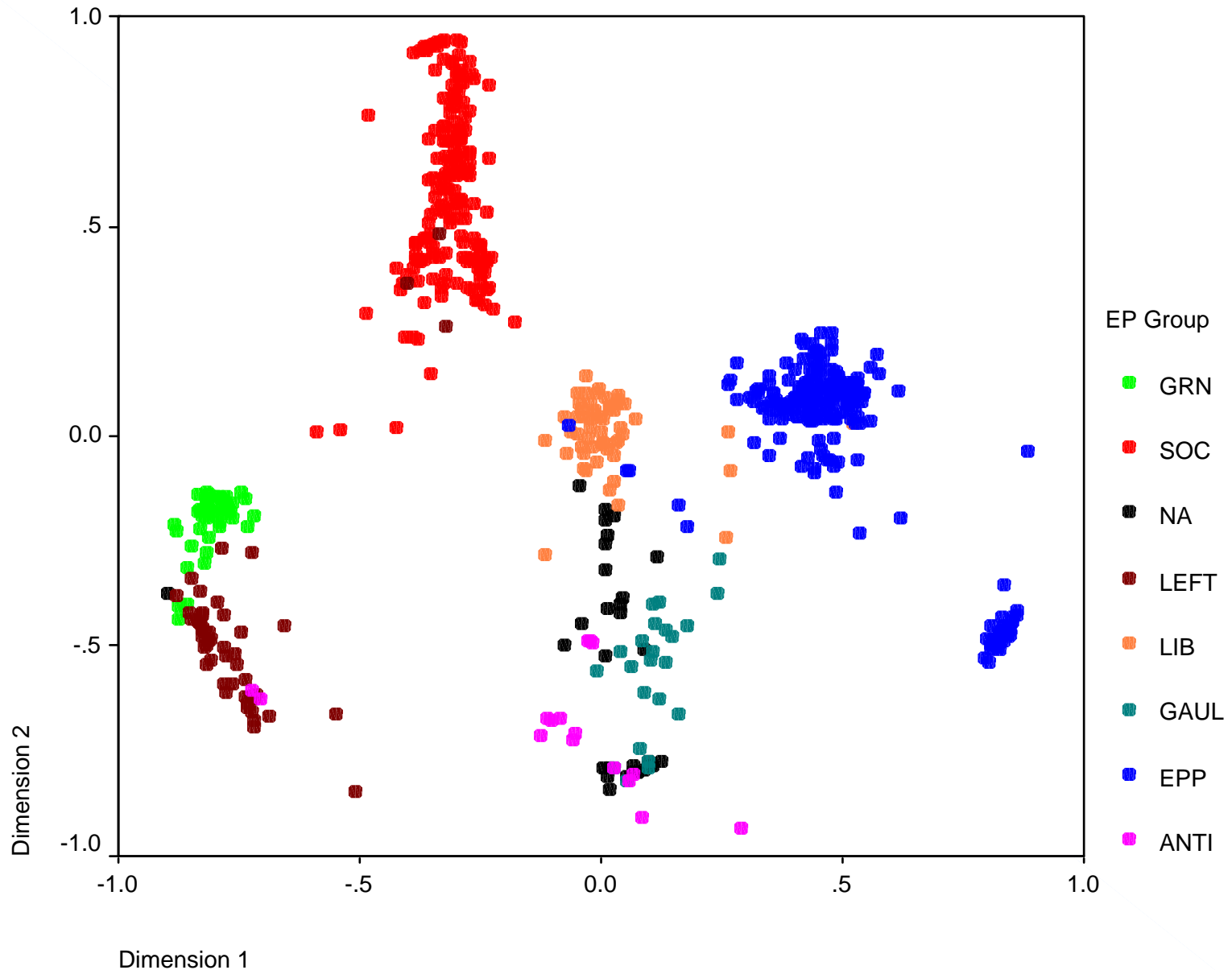
EP3 (1989-94)



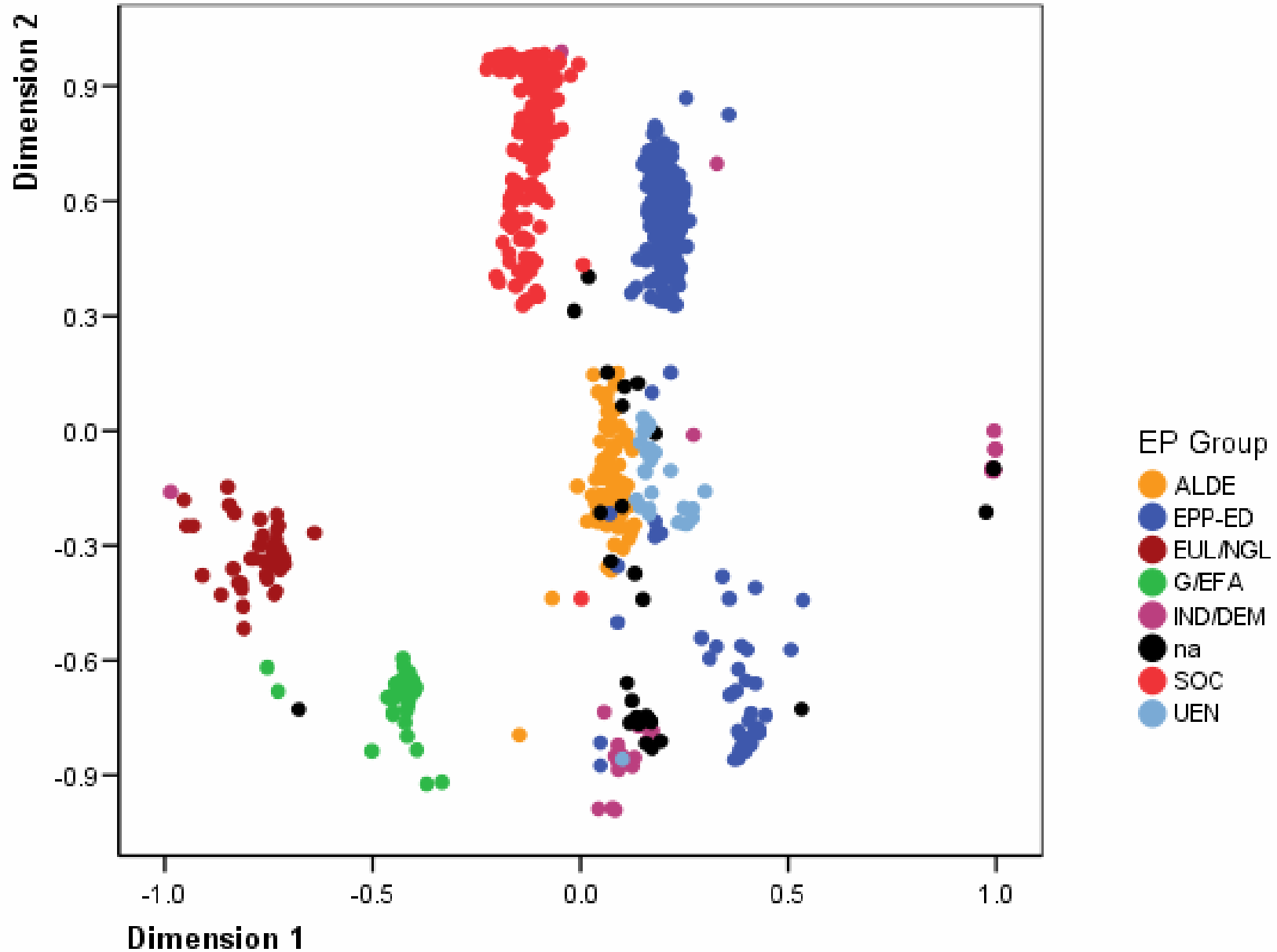
EP4 (1994-99)



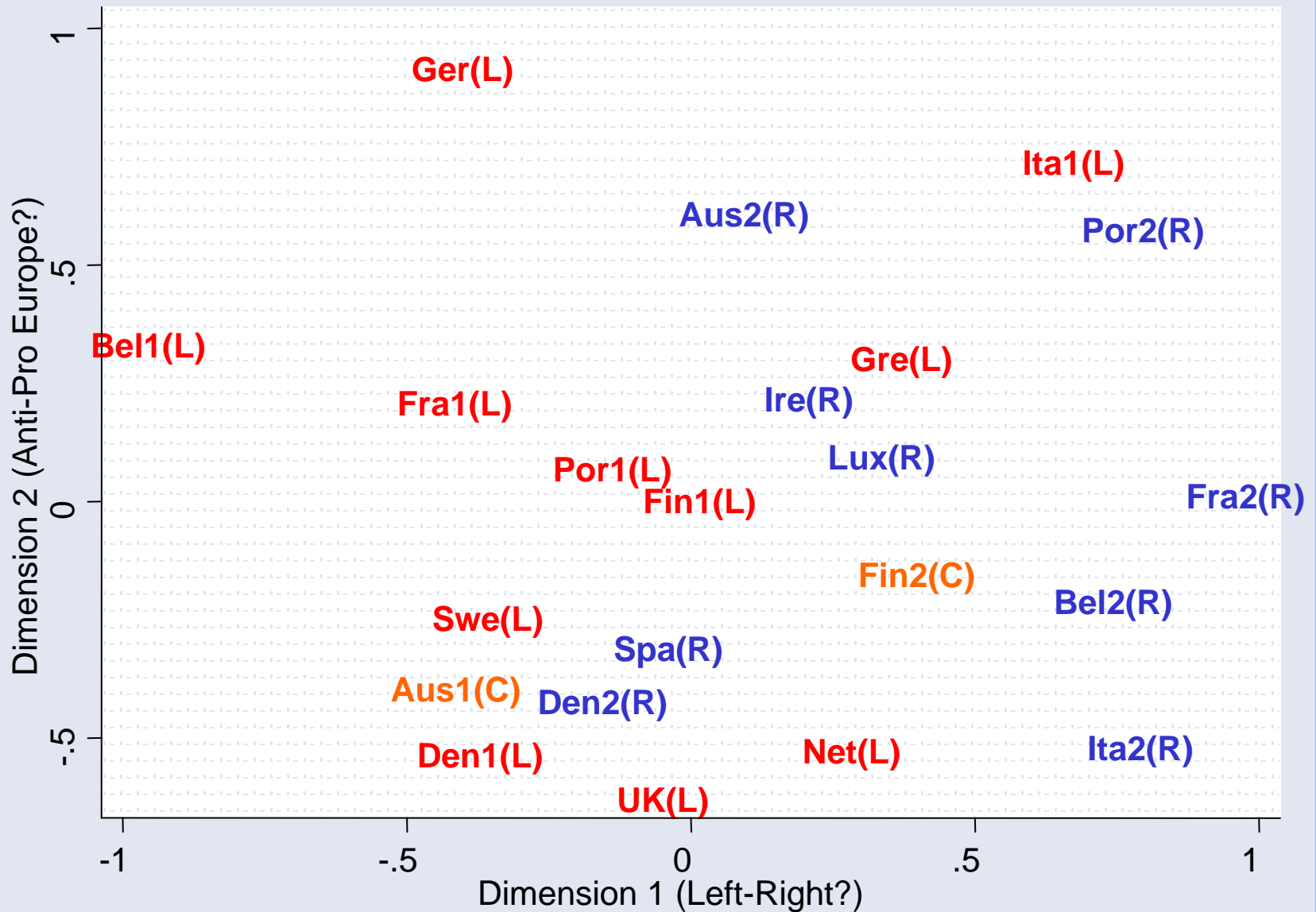
EP5 (1999-2004)



EP6 (2004-2006)



Council Voting, 1999-2004



Santer Commission (1994-99)

LEFT	LR	RIGHT	LR
Commissioner (ms, party)	position	Commissioner (ms, party)	position
Wulf-Mathies (Ger, SPD)	.31	Bangemann (Ger, FDP)	.51
Marin (Spa, PSOE)	.33	Flynn (Ire, FF)	.53
Cresson (Fra, PS)	.34	Santer (Lux, PCS)	.56
Gradin (Swe, SAP)	.34	van den Broek (Net, CDA)	.59
Van Miert (Bel, SP)	.36	Deus Pinhiero (Por, PSD)	.60
Bjerregaard (Den, SD)	.36	Fischler (Aus, ÖVP)	.61
Liikanen (Fin, SDP)	.38	Monti (Ita, FI)	.68
Kinnock (UK, Lab)	.38	Oreja (Spa, PP)	.72
Papoutsis (Gre, PASOK)	.40	Brittan (UK, Con)	.74
Bonino (Ita, Rad)	.46	de Silguy (Fra, RPR)	.77

Prodi Commission (1999-2004)

LEFT	LR	RIGHT	LR
Commissioner (ms, party)	position	Commissioner (ms, party)	position
Schreyer (Ger, G)	.30	Reding (Lux, PCS)	.61
Busquin (Bel, PS)	.31	Fischler (Aus, OVP)	.62
Lamy (Fra, PS)	.34	Byrne (Ire, FF)	.65
Liikanen (Fin, SDP)	.34	de Palacio (Spa, PP)	.66
Wallström (Swe, SAP)	.34	Monti (Ita, FI)	.68
Vitorino (Por, PS)	.36	Bolkestein (Net, VVD)	.69
Nielson (Den, SD)	.37	Patten (UK, Con)	.69
Verheugen (Ger, SPD)	.40	Barnier (Fra, RPR)	.72
Solbes Mira (Spa, PSOE)	.41		
Prodi (Ita, Dem)	.43		
Kinnock (UK, Lab)	.47		
Diamantopoulou (Gre, PASOK)	.50		

Barroso Commission (2004-09)

LEFT	LR	RIGHT	LR
Commissioner (ms, party)	position	Commissioner (ms, party)	position
Piebalgs (Lat, LC)	.31	Kyprianou (Cyp, DIKO)	.51
Kovács (Hun, MSzP)	.32	Mandelson (UK, Lab)	.52
Spidla (Cze, CSSD)	.34	Borg (Mal, PN)	.57
Almunia (Spa, PSOE)	.38	Grybauskaite (Lit, ind/centre)	.57
Wallström (Swe, SAP)	.38	Rehn (Fin, KESK)	.58
Verheugen (Ger, SPD)	.39	Michel (Bel, MR)	.62
Hübner (Pol, ind/Left)	.40	Reding (Lux, PCS)	.64
		McCreevy (Ire, FF)	.65
		Potocnik (Slv, ind/centre)	.65
		Barroso (Por, PSD)	.68
		Ferrero-Waldner (Aus, ÖVP)	.70
		Barrot (Fra, UMP)	.70
		Fischer Boel (Den, V)	.74
		Dimas (Gre, ND)	.77
		Frattini (Ita, FI)	.77
		Kroes-Smit (Net, VVD)	.81
		Figel (Slk, KDH)	.85
		Kallas (Est, Ref)	.96

Proposals: (1) European Parliament

Increase the 'stakes' in EP Elections:

Make assignment of *rappoteurships* more majoritarian
e.g. allow largest group to choose first 5 committees

Elect EP President for a 5-year term rather than 2.5 years
would get rid of 'horse-trading' over this post
would encourage majority coalitions

Proposals: (2) Council

Make it a proper 'legislature':

Genuine transparency of decision-making

Fully-open legislative deliberations
e.g. open publication of amendments

Public access to deliberations of the Council when it is
deciding on legislation ('in plenary')

Recording of all voting decisions

All legislative votes should be recorded
(currently votes that fail are not recorded)

Proposals: (3) Commission

Accept that it is a 'political' executive:

More open battle for the Commission President

rival candidates before EP elections

programmes from each candidate ('manifesto')

public debates (e.g. before EP and media)

declared support for a candidate by PMs & EP leaders

(i.e. no need for a direct-election!)

Once invested, the Commission should set out a multi-annual work programme

derived primarily from President's pre-election promises & from 'coalition deal' in new Commission

the programme should be submitted for approval to an EP majority and Council QMV

Summary

**EU is facing three inter-related problems:
legitimacy, democratic deficit, policy gridlock**

‘Do nothing’ is not an option

**Tinkering with the institutions is not acceptable and will
not produce the necessary outcomes**

**Focusing on policy reform is difficult, because of
institutional stasis, poor leadership,
and lack of legitimacy amongst likely losers**

‘Limited democratic politics’ is the best option

it is low risk

it does not require Treaty reform

**there are high potential benefits, both in terms of
reform and gradual legitimation**