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An Index of Friendliness toward Russia:  
An Analysis of the Member States and Member  
of the European Parliament's Positions

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# **An Index of Friendliness toward Russia: An Analysis of the Member States and Member of the European Parliament's Positions**

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## 1 Introduction: Russia and the European Union, condemned to be divided?

«Russia is an integral part of Europe, of European geographic, historical, cultural, political and economic space. It is self-evident that our continent can be fully united only if Russia as the largest European state becomes an inalienable part of the European process. That is why we attach such importance to the idea of a Europe free of dividing lines, a Europe based on an equal cooperation, a Europe which is civilisationally tolerant, a Europe characterised by social solidarity, a Europe caring for its common future».<sup>2</sup>

«We will extend the intimidation, harassment and expropriation of British, American, Polish and Czech companies active in our domestic market and as energy customers, while at the same time offering further preferential treatment to those from countries that are politically friendly, especially France, Italy and Germany. Are big European companies willing to sacrifice billions of euros in lost exports or higher energy costs by indulging their politicians' desire to grandstand and moralise? We think not».<sup>3</sup>

Whether one may tend to believe to the veracity of either the first or the second these two sentences well represent the current status of the relationship between the European Union (and the West in general) and the Russian Federation. Mistrust and ambivalence dominate reciprocal perceptions and drive their relationship into an oscillating path.

Beside the issue of energy dependence, Russia imposes different kinds of challenges on the European Union (EU). Relations with Russia have been marked by high levels of disagreement over several issues. To quote but a few: divergence over the management of international global dossiers, such as disarmament and ecological threats, the issue of the enclave region of Kaliningrad, the elections in Ukraine in 2004, the brutal management of counter-terrorism in Chechnya, its staunch opposition to the NATO enlargement and the management of the so-called frozen conflicts, at the borders of the recently enlarged Europe. New and particularly critical Member States (MS) from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) also lament the enduring interference of Russia in their internal affairs, pursued by means of offensive commercial and diplomatic politics.

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<sup>2</sup> Statement by H.E. Mr. Alexander Yakovenko Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the 62nd Session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on Agenda item 6 "Building on ECE's sixty years contribution to pan-European integration: cooperation for stability and prosperity in the ECE region" [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/9677cd4414db77cfc32572c9004d585d?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/9677cd4414db77cfc32572c9004d585d?OpenDocument), Geneva, 26 April 2007, accessed on 10 September 2008.

<sup>3</sup> *What Russia will do next- A secret e-mail to Mr. Putin reaches our columnist*, published on August 28, 2008, retrieved from [www.Economist.com](http://www.Economist.com), accessed on 31 August 2008.

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Facing these challenges, the EU's philosophy itself – spreading wealth and stability through progressive economic and institutional integration – seems to be put into discussion and leaves the doors open to a decisive question mark: shall we push forward relations with Russia, in spite of its scanty democratic records or assume a more severe posture?

According to the Russian side, the EU is not able to adopt a coherent policy. Russia considers the EU as oscillating between a “containment or cooperation” strategy,<sup>4</sup> between a “friend-or-foe” principle.<sup>5</sup> Russia regrets that the EU is not offering cooperation on an equal footing, and that it is biased by a kind of *Pax Romana* syndrome, which leads it at acting as a metropolis which imposes its will on its provinces.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Russia has often been considered as representing an emblematic case that puts into questions the EU's foreign policy coherence and normative distinctiveness. The Eastern colossus is also told to play deliberately a *divide et impera* strategy with the EU. If, on the one hand, Russia considers the EU as its “chief partner in Europe, with whom the main array of Russia's European interests are associated”,<sup>7</sup> on the other, it pursues very diversified strategies with MS, in

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<sup>4</sup> Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at the Seminar on the Occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and the US at the Carnegie Moscow Center, 21 June 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Article by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov “The Present and the Future of Global Politics”, “Russia in Global Affairs”, №2, 2007, published on 21 May 2007, retrieved from [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/b55da00639381794c32572e6001f4268?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/b55da00639381794c32572e6001f4268?OpenDocument), accessed on 10 September 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Speech by deputy foreign minister V.A. Chizhov at conference ‘Enlarging Europe: The New Agenda’, Bratislava, published on 19 March 2004, retrieved from [http://www.ln.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/sps/67D6F86FA4BAF9AEC3256E5D004D0963](http://www.ln.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/sps/67D6F86FA4BAF9AEC3256E5D004D0963), accessed on 11 May 2004, quoted in Averre, 2005:178.

<sup>7</sup> This brief introduction of the Russian position towards the EU member states is summarized by A Survey of Russian Federation's Foreign Policy, retrieved from [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/89a30b3a6b65b4f2c32572d700292f74?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/89a30b3a6b65b4f2c32572d700292f74?OpenDocument), accessed on 10 September 2008.

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undermining the EU's unity.<sup>8</sup> A number of factors concur to MS' divisive temptations, as the relationship with Russia involves many challenges to the regional stability, the appeasement of the continent, the management of overlapping peripheries, and the access to natural resources and to a huge and expanding market.

The EU's MS thus oscillate between liberal institutionalist and neo-realist temptations in dealing with Russia. In so doing, the MS set above at times the ambition of integrating Russia into a larger pan-European sphere, at times concerns for their interests and security. The last two waves of enlargement imposed further problems of coherence on the EU. If the "old Europe" – to varying degrees of intensity – saw in the long Russian transition the opportunity to spread stability through economic integration, the "new Europe" maintained regional security as a priority, pressing for the EU to assume a more severe stance. These goals, which *per se* do not contradict each others, pose problems of "fungibility" of the European action, that is, the ability to coherently transfer resources and capabilities from one dimension of international relations (for instance, trade policy) to another dimension (for instance regional security), in order to gain more influence in the latter.<sup>9</sup> This climate, further exacerbated by the recent conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia, has strengthened the impression that MS' divisions are far more problematic and complex than those responding to the mere East/West divide.

This article attempts to see how MS' preferences can impact over the EU decision-making, by trying to systematically depict the way in which some structural variables intervene in shaping their positions. It aims to offer an analysis of MS' positions towards Russia, as influenced by the strength of economic flows, energy dependence,

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<sup>8</sup> Russia considers "of key significance" the relations with Germany, France, Spain and Italy. The United Kingdom is considered as an important, though "complicated" partner, due to the "avowedly messianic disposition of a considerable part of the British political elite". Relations with Northern European countries – as witnessed by a well institutionalized system of regional cooperation – are overall considered as stable, even if due to a "varying degree intensity". Among these countries, Finland is considered the one "with which an in-depth political dialogue proceeds and economic and commercial interaction is actively developed". The States of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are in general considered as a "substantial reserve", which needs a case-by-case approach due to their interest in developing a pragmatic cooperation with Russia. In reality, relations with the former Soviet satellites are overall considered as negative, due to the "attempts by a number of countries having joined the EU in 2004 to "avail themselves" of the advantages of their membership for the realization of their political tasks vis-à-vis Russia, turning the Russia-EU relationship into a "hostage" of their own narrow national interests."Russia declares to be interested in good-neighborly relations with the Baltic States, even if considers them as affected from "outbursts of occupation rhetoric" and "manifestations of neonazism". Moreover, the issue of Russian minorities and the disputes over borders make "goodneighborly" relations very much improbable.

<sup>9</sup> Definition given by Bueno de Mosquita, 2003:150, adapted to the EU by the authors.

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preferences for projects of regional security, existence of disputes and projects of energy supply. On this basis, an index of “friendliness towards Russia” was built. This index allows us to analyse MS' position and to order them into a continuum. The article attempts to develop a wider perspective on MS' long term attitudes, regardless of the changing political colour of their governments. In building the index, we tried to depict the complexity of measures of economic relations and dependence over Russian energy supplies, in hypothesising a bi-directionality of their causal effects: whereas old MS consider the strength of economic ties with Russia as a *relative* asset, new MS still consider it as an *absolute* form of dependence, which threatens their overall stability.

Furthermore, the article compares MS' positions with those of the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), as expressed in 18 roll call votes, issued from December 2004 to July 2008. It adopts the Russian case for testing the validity of a key assumption in contemporary EP studies, according to which the EP is now evolving along “national evolutionary lines”, by reflecting “ideological”, rather than national positions (Kreppel and Hix, 2003). As the Russian dossier proves to be highly delicate in many respects, it is possible to hypothesise that MEPs coming from hard-liners MS may be tempted to adhere to their national positions, by defecting from their official group-line. We, thus, hypothesise that MEPs coming from MS holding out-liners positions towards Russia (that is, very acquiescent or very critical) will tend to have higher defection rates than those that feel more comfortable with the final (and generally “mild”) outcome of the EU legislative process.

Accordingly, the next section introduces the variables adopted in the construction of the index and explains the methodology employed for the analysis of both MS and MEPs' attitudes. Section 3 and 4 will present the main results of the analysis. The final part of this work develops some general conclusions.

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## 2 Differences among the MS: Data and methodology

Russia is often told to play a divisive game in order to prevent the EU to adopt unfavourable measures. Beside this consideration, MS' relationships with Russia are *per se* profoundly diversified, an element that signals that Russia has a lot of material in order to threaten the EU's cohesion!

The last two waves of enlargement of the EU opened the doors of Europe to many satellites of the former Soviet Union. Overall, this heritage marks profoundly the attitudes of new MS towards Russia. Undoubtedly, there is a seminal difference between the attitudes of the older and newer MS towards Russia, due to the heritage of the past. In this sense, the old-new MS' divide refers, although not completely, to the East-West divide.<sup>10</sup> This divide does not recall merely geopolitical considerations, but marks the nexus between geographical and historical identity and perceptions of the outside world. In order to substantiate further this two-sided dimension we decided to weight MS' geopolitical position by a dimension which by and large seems to recall their historical development and which traditionally played a rather relevant role in their identification with Russia. The dimension identified is religion. Historically the countries belonging Christian Orthodox Eastern tradition have developed a "preferential" relationship and strong cultural ties with Russia in the name of the common belonging to the Orthodox Christianity. Many recent political developments (i.e. the formal/informal pattern of alliances in the Yugoslav wars) reflect the strong appeal of this historical linkage both among the public and at elite level.

MS' different stake in relationship with Russia becomes even clearer by looking at mere figures of energy dependence and commercial shares. By analysing the figures of the Russian share in the EU's MS' trade balance some interesting data can be observed. In general, new MS tend to be much more reliant, if not almost totally dependent, on Russian trade. This seems to be the case for many EU's MS that confine with Russia, whether from the Northern or Eastern borders. Baltic MS (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) score the highest rate of commercial exchanges with Russia. Eastern (such as Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia) and Northern MS (Finland and Sweden, with the notable exception of Denmark) also score a very high rate of commercial exchanges. Therefore, in relative terms, old Member States present far lower figures. This is also the case of those MS (notably, France,

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<sup>10</sup> In our case, it fits completely to this divided as Cyprus and Malta were excluded by the analysis due to the lack of data.

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Germany, Italy and Spain) that Russia considers as “strategic partners”. Among the old Member States, Greece is the one that boasts the highest level of commercial exchanges, while, Ireland is the one that scores the lowest rate.

Same can be said about dependence over natural gas supplies. Among MS, we can distinguish between those that rely completely or nearly completely on Russian sources (such as Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia) and those that do not draw at all on them (such as, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, and Luxembourg and the UK). Belgium and the Netherlands score a comparatively low level of reliance on Russian sources (respectively 0.28% and 0.61%, while the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Austria and Slovenia draw more significantly on Russian sources (respectively, 72.24%, 72,2%, 66.5%, 62.9% and 50.9%). Germany, Poland and Italy score relatively high level of dependence, which, nonetheless, account for less than 50% of the total gas imported (respectively, 42.9%, 45.2% and 30.5%). France and Romania also have comparatively low rate of dependence (respectively, the 18.21% and the 15.2%). These contradict the commonsensical parlance according to which some big MS are those that are submitted the most to the blackmail of a possible Russian cut in supply. Rather, once again, the most heavily dependent states are the CEE states.

These figures portray a very diversified pattern of exchanges with Russia. However, they need to be complemented with further reflection, as the strength of economic relations or the reliance on Russian natural gas sources do not produce the same sets of preferences and attitudes amongst the EU's MS. It is argued here that while many new MS still perceive the *absolute* dependence on the exchanges with Russia as a form of “dominance” (further complicated by the claim that Moscow pursues a form of unilateral coercive politics), old MS perceive the possibility to entertain solid economic relations with Russia as an important *relative* economic asset. Another group of MS – mostly coming from “old Europe” – holds less extreme positions. Considering the lesser relevance of commercial flows or energy dependence, these MS might alternatively tend to either raise their voice against Russia or, considering the leverage of the “Eastern colossus”, to assume moderate positions. This might also concur to explain why the EU's final decisions on the issue tend to reflect an intrinsic median position, regardless of the gravity of the Russian challenge. Accordingly, the index was built in taking into account the intrinsic “bi-directionality” of these two measures.

Further, commercial relations with Russia are likely to be worsened by the presence of significant disputes, whether territorial, diplomatic, commercial or of other kind.



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Particularly, MS from CEE have been dramatically affected by the “systematic policy of coercive bilateralism” (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:11) pursued by Russia. Commercial disputes, for instance, emerged in case of the Poland's meat and vegetables embargo, imposition of trade sanctions on Latvia and Estonia, oil cuts to Lithuania and Czech Republic and disputes over export taxes on timber experienced by Finland and Sweden. Severe diplomatic disputes have been experienced also by some old member states, notably, in the case of UK, not to mention widespread diplomatic harassment on CEE. In this respect, the Baltic states represent an epicentre of turmoil. The ongoing crisis between Estonia, Latvia and Russia over the issue of Russian minorities or the territorial disputes affecting Lithuanian-Russian relationship over the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad represent all serious causes of concern.

Differences in economic and energy dependence tell us about the intensity of economic relations, but do not run out the range of disagreement over a series of important issues concerning how to deal with Russia over security and political issues.

In energy related matters, for instance, the EU tried to collectively elaborate alternative natural gas supply options in order to promote independence from Russian supplies. An ambitious project aimed to accomplish this objective was represented by the Nabucco natural gas pipeline. The Nabucco, which should have been accomplished in 2012, would have transported natural gas from the Caspian region and from the Middle East through Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary to Austria and then further to the West European markets. Russia immediately opposed to the Nabucco project, by launching, with the support of the Italian company Eni, the South Stream project in 2007. The Southern Stream represents a particularly meaningful example in this regard. It could be regarded as a reaction to the European project to establish the Nabucco pipeline, which would have allowed the EU to substantially differentiate natural gas supplies. The project, which has been seen as strongly rivalling Nabucco, planned to pump Russian gas to Europe, under the Black Sea, via Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia and Italy, with branches crossing Hungary and Austria. This proved to have had a tremendous divisive effect over the European support to the Nabucco project. In a short arch of time, Gazprom, on behalf of the Russian government, proved to be able to reach agreements over seals pipeline for the Southern Stream gas pipeline with Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Austria.

Another potentially divisive issue is the accession of Georgia and Ukraine in the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO). This issue reflects MS' security preferences over a proposal that met the strong opposition of Russia. Many MS, notably some of the “big” ones,

such as Italy, France and Germany and Spain, but also, the Netherlands and Belgium, proved to be particularly keen not to hurt Russia's sensitiveness on the issue. During the NATO Summit in Bucharest, held in April 2008, for instance, the accession had been delayed, in contrast to the US' will, in order to take in due respect "Russia's legitimate security concerns".<sup>11</sup>

In order to depict MS' positions an index of likelihood of "Russian friendliness" was built, on the basis of six variables. This index took into account the following elements:

**Table 1 – Variables included in the index**

**The East/West divide weighted by religion**

It is here argued that new MS will tend to have a more negative approach towards Russia compared to older MS. We also assume that common religious roots might concur to favour better relations, above all for old MS. We can assume that past Russian domination can diminish considerably, the effect of common religious roots. For this reason, we created a four scale variable, which aims at taking into account both religious and geopolitical considerations.<sup>12</sup>

**The economic strength of the relationship with Russia**

The strength of existing economic ties has been measured as the share of trade with Russia weighted by the share of overall extra-EU commercial trade. This variable takes into account that the strength of economic relations affects differently EU's MS: whereas it is positively related to a more friendly attitude in the case of old MS, it is negatively related to a positive attitude in the case of new MS. We assume that both the heritage of the past and the tendency of Russia to recur to unilateral commercial blockages fuel negative feelings and sense of dependence on behalf of new MS. In a way, new MS may suffer from a "colonisation syndrome", due to their dependence on "mother Russia".<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> German source quoted by Elitsa Vucheva, Uncertainty hanging over NATO hopefuls ahead of Summit, published on 01 April 2008, retrieved from: [www.eubserver.com/?aid=25895](http://www.eubserver.com/?aid=25895), accessed on 11 September 2008. Analogously, France assumed even a more negative stance. For instance, Mr. Fillon, the French Prime Minister, declared: "France is not green-lighting Ukraine and Georgia's accession. Paris has different opinion to that of the US on this matter". Quoted in Old and New Europe divided at NATO summit, published on 2 April 08, retrieved from [www.euractive.com/en/enlargement/old-new-europe-divided-NATO-summit/article-171288](http://www.euractive.com/en/enlargement/old-new-europe-divided-NATO-summit/article-171288), accessed on 11 September 2008.

<sup>12</sup> The East/West divide weighted by religion was operationalised through a four scale variable, which takes into consideration both religious and geopolitical considerations. This variable was developed as follows: Western orthodox (1), Western non orthodox, Eastern orthodox and Eastern non orthodox (0).

<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, we ordered on a continuum old MS with strong economic ties with Russia, old MS with less stronger economic ties, new MS with weaker economic ties with Russia and new MS with stronger economic ties with Russia. In order to operationalize economic ties a four scale variable was built, ranging from 0 (maximum of exchanges with Russia on behalf of a new member state) to 1 (maximum of exchanges with Russia on behalf of an old member state).

**Dependence over Russian natural gas**

The rate of dependence over Russian natural gas was measured as the share of gas imported from Russia on the overall country consumption. Analogously to what affirmed for the strength of economic ties, the East/West divide is taken into consideration, by hypothesising that those Eastern MS that are more heavily dependent on Russian gas resources will be the most unfriendly. On the side of the continuum, old MS that rely the most on Russian gas resources are here considered as the most friendly.<sup>14</sup>

**Support for energy independence from Russian supplies**

In order to see whether EU's MS promote independence from Russian supplies, support for three alternative projects has been included: support for the Nabucco Pipelines Project, for the South Stream Project and for the North Stream Project. It is here argued that support for the Nabucco Pipelines Project would bring about a major independence from Russian supplies, while the South Stream Project and for the North Stream Project would not challenge Russian hegemonic position.<sup>15</sup>

**Attitude towards NATO's enlargement**

MS' positions in this matter were represented into a three scale variable, dividing those that favoured the accession of the two candidates from those preferred to counter or postpone the accession for not to hurt Russian sensitiveness.<sup>16</sup>

**2.1 Measuring MEPs' voting rationale towards Russia**

The EU's institutional structure has been generally described as constituted by a two chamber legislature, in which the Council represents the States and the European Parliament, the citizens. The interests of those institutions may be considered as belonging respectively to territorial and functional/ideological categories (Longo, 2005). Thus, while the Council may be regarded as representing territorial powers and interests, the Parliament may be seen as embodying interests which derive from the increasing politicisation of the agenda (Hix, Noury and Roland, 2007). On this basis, it is possible to raise a question: do national delegations in the European Parliament tend to mirror national positions over sensitive issues or to vote nationally, according to their party lines?

<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, this variable is measured on a four scales basis, ranging from 0 (maximum of exchanges with Russia on behalf of a new MS) to 1 (maximum of exchanges with Russia on behalf of an old MS).

<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, this variable is divided into three modalities: those that support the Nabucco, in favoring alternative gas supplies from Russia, those that favor Russian sources and those that do show no particular preferences, as they do rely on alternative natural gas supplies. In order to take into account of support for differentiation from Russian natural gas sources, a three scale basis variable has been built. This variable ranges from 0 (support for Nabucco pipelines or opposition to the Northern Stream) to 1 (support for either the Southern Stream or the Northern Stream). A modality, ranging 0.5, was further added, in order to take into account those MS that do not rely on Russian sources, thus, do not adopt any clear positions on this regard.

<sup>16</sup> To this, a further modality was added, considered that not all EU members are also NATO members (namely, Austria, Ireland, Finland, Sweden) and, accordingly, did not express any particular position on the issue.

In general, many scholars tend to assume that the EP is evolving towards greater normalisation, thereby abandoning the temptation of following national positions (Hix, 2001; Kreppel and Hix, 2003). Even if, on the whole, there is evidence that seem to confirm this trend, it would be of great interest to test this claim in this specific context, given the high national saliency of the EU-Russia relations.

In order to test our hypothetical propositions, an assessment of 18 RCVs related to EU-Russia relations is presented in the following section<sup>17</sup>. The votes included in the analysis were held between December 2004 and July 2008<sup>18</sup>. In this study we considered only those cases characterised by opposite majorities of MEPs at national delegation and group level, that is, those votes marked by conflicting positions (and interests) between the two. In other words, this analysis specifically refers to those cases in which the modal vote of the majority of the European group differs from the modal vote of the majority of its affiliated national party delegation. This further step seems to guarantee both the 'national saliency' of the votes included (the parties *care* when the vote matters) and a clearer identification of the voting preferences of the European parliamentary group (EPG) and the affiliated national party delegation (NPD).

To test our propositions two different measures were developed. The first one used to calculate and compare the levels of nationally-conformist defections at national delegation<sup>19</sup> level is called absolute defection rate (ADR). It represents the average proportion of nationally-oriented votes for each national delegation of MEPs. The ADR has been built through a multiple-step data refinement process. *First*, the modal voting option of each EPG and of each affiliated NPD has been identified for every single RCV included in the analysis. *Second*, the share of nationally-oriented votes has been identified for each NPD. *Third*, the measure for the 25 national delegations has been

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<sup>17</sup> A study of the RCV records seems to be particularly suitable for our analysis as it allows us to detect each MEP's position over an issue. Indeed, when a RCV is called, each MEP is required to indicate his/her voting choice (Yes, No, Abstention). MEPs' votes are then recorded in the minutes, thereby providing the exact position of each legislator on a specific vote. The RCVs are usually called by the political groups. According to Hix (2002) and Carrubba (2002), the RCV procedure is typically requested by the parliamentary leadership for achieving two specific goals. On the one hand, group's leadership might be keen to exert extra pressures on its MEPs to act cohesively, by providing the more concrete risk of parliamentary sanction. On the other hand, it gives the possibility to show other groups' internal divisions.

<sup>18</sup> The minutes of the votes are available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/plenary/pv.do?language=EN>.

<sup>19</sup> In this paper, the term National party delegation (NPD) refers to a group of MEPs elected under the label of the same national party, whereas the term National delegation (ND) includes all the MEPs of a Member state, regardless of their partisan affiliation at national and EP level. The NPD operates with the framework of an intra-group dimension, while the latter cross cuts the ideological divisions.

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calculated by combining together the results of the NPDs belonging to the same member state.

In order to compare the share of nationally-conformist votes among the 25 national delegations we will use the relative defection rate (RDR). This index can be obtained by dividing the absolute defection rate of each national delegation by the EP average ratio of nationally-oriented defections. Accordingly, the RDR value will be higher than 1 if one delegation defects more than the EP average share of nationally-oriented defections and will be lower than 1 if it does not. The main advantage of using the relative rather than the absolute defection rate is to relativize the differences in the levels of defection among the delegations, thereby making them statistically comparable.

### 3 The state of the art of the relations with Russia: friendly or conflictual?

In order to systematically depict MS' attitudes towards Russia, an index of friendliness towards Russia was built based on the variables described above. The index proves to be reliable, scoring a Cronbach's Alpha of .683. From a principal components analysis, the index scores a 59.625% of variance explained. The index orders MS' attitudes from 0 to 1, whereas 0 indicates the lowest rate of friendliness towards Russia and 1 the highest (see Table 2). On this basis, we built a four-type categorisation. In order to give a snapshot of MS' attitudes toward Russia, our categories were labelled as those of "the Eastern divorced", "vigilant critics", "acquiescent partners" and the "loyal wife".

**Table 2 - An index of friendliness towards Russia**

<i>Estonia</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>The Eastern Divorced</i>
<i>Lithuania</i>	<i>0</i>	
<i>Poland</i>	<i>0.11</i>	
<i>Latvia</i>	<i>0.17</i>	
<i>Czech Rep.</i>	<i>0.19</i>	
<i>Slovakia</i>	<i>0.25</i>	
<i>Sweden</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>The Vigilant Critics</i>
<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>0.39</i>	
<i>Romania</i>	<i>0.44</i>	
<i>Slovenia</i>	<i>0.44</i>	
<i>Portugal</i>	<i>0.47</i>	
<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>0.5</i>	
<i>Hungary</i>	<i>0.53</i>	<i>The Acquiescent Partner</i>
<i>Denmark</i>	<i>0.55</i>	
<i>France</i>	<i>0.55</i>	
<i>Ireland</i>	<i>0.55</i>	
<i>The Netherlands</i>	<i>0.55</i>	
<i>Belgium</i>	<i>0.64</i>	
<i>Germany</i>	<i>0.64</i>	
<i>Luxembourg</i>	<i>0.64</i>	
<i>Spain</i>	<i>0.64</i>	
<i>Finland</i>	<i>0.69</i>	
<i>Italy</i>	<i>0.72</i>	
<i>Austria</i>	<i>0.75</i>	
<i>Greece</i>	<i>0.89</i>	<i>The Loyal Wife</i>

Our results seem to validate the hypothesis that the East-West divide concurs consistently in explaining differences in MS' behaviours. The hypothesis of a bi-directional relation of measures of commercial exchanges and energy dependence seems also to be largely validated. Hence, MS' position along the index appears to reliably portray the current state of the EU's MS-Russian relations. The index correctly

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collocates the MS that oppose or favour the Russian counterpart. As we will see, for the two median categories a more nuanced result can be highlighted.

### **3.1 The Eastern divorced**

According to our results, the least friendly MS towards Russia come from CEE. This group of countries – composed of Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Czech Republic, and Slovakia – has been labelled as “Eastern divorced”. The heritage of the past seems to play a relevant part in defining their colder attitude towards Russia. Indeed, in spite of the fact that it cannot be considered a sufficient explanatory factor to depict MS' attitudes towards Russia, the East/West divide proves to be a powerful analytical prism.

CEE states' comparatively highest level of dependence over Russian economy and energetic sources negatively affects their attitudes towards Russia. With the possible exception of Slovakia, all the countries in the group have been hit by Moscow's unilateral coercive politics. Overall, security concerns seem to worry this group of countries, which tends to assume atlanticist positions when dealing with their security strategy. All those countries supported the project of NATO' enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia, regardless of Russian opposition.

As highly predictable, the Baltic States, namely **Estonia, Lithuania** and **Latvia** score the maximum level of coldness towards Russia. The question related to the treatment of the Russian minorities in the Baltic States, particularly in Estonia and Latvia, can be regarded as a main source of conflict between these states and Russia, exacerbated in the cases of Estonia and Lithuania by other disputes which ended up in serious diplomatic and commercial quarrels.<sup>20</sup> Compared to the other Baltic neighbours,

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<sup>20</sup> Russia laments the continuous violations of human rights perpetuated against its fellow citizens, while the Baltic MS oppose the argument that those Russian born citizens have been forcefully implanted in their territories during the Soviet era. This led to several turmoil and accidents, testifying the extremely unfriendly attitudes towards Russia on behalf of the Baltic States. In 2007, Estonia openly confronted Russia, by changing location of a war memorial to Soviet soldiers. This caused a diplomatic crisis and the adoption of “punitive” economic measures on behalf of Russia. Relations between Russia and Estonia are characterized by such “accidents”, as, for instance the cyber attacks presumably perpetuated by Russia in April 2007. Lithuania still confronts Russia with the open issue of Kaliningrad, the Russian exclave completely surrounded by the EU's territory. The issue of granting visas, in order to guaranteeing the transit to Russian citizens arose fears of invasion on the one side and feeling of being outraged on the other. The Baltic countries have massive Russian speaking minorities living in their territories: 16% in Lithuania, 32% in Estonia, and 42% in Latvia (Mihails Hazans, Olga Rastrigina and Ija Trapeznikova, 2005:1).

Latvian government recently attempted to improve its bilateral ties with Moscow.<sup>21</sup> **Poland** and **Czech Republic** can be regarded as having very similar attitudes towards Russia. Like Lithuania, Poland has actively promoted a harder line towards Moscow at the EU level, “using means like critical non-papers, diplomatic footwork and even vetoing negotiations about a new EU agreement with Russia” (Leonard and Popescu, 2007). The two countries experienced serious unilateral commercial blockages on behalf of Moscow. The antimissile shield stands at the core of the diplomatic stalemate between Moscow, Warsaw and Prague.<sup>22</sup> **Slovakia** seems to hold a comparatively softer approach towards Russia, as reflected by its borderline position in the category. Slovakia did not register any particular conflict with Russia and tend to have a more acquiescent attitude in dealing with the Russian dossier (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:38).

### 3.2 *The vigilant critics*

The group of the vigilant critics contains an interesting group of countries. On the one side, we have four CEE countries, which progressively undertook a process of “defrost” in their relationships with Russia. On the other, we have four Western European countries, characterised by low level of economic exchanges and total energy independence from Russia.

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<sup>21</sup> Latvia indeed, progressively started to see its relations with Russia as “taking the form of a constructive dialogue in the context of both bilateral and multilateral co-operation”. Quoted in Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Bilateral relations with Russia*, published on 17 October 2007, retrieved from <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/policy/bilateralrelations/4542/Russia/>, accessed on 10 September 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Moscow rejected the idea since it was proposed in 2006, in conceiving it as a threat at its closer borders. In July 2008, the US and Czech Republic signed a bilateral agreement, which implants a US radar in the Czech territory. Analogously, in the aftermath of the Georgian-Russian conflicts, the U.S. and Poland signed an agreement to deploy parts of the U.S. global missile shield in the Polish territory, in spite of the Russian staunch opposition to this project. On the same time, a change in attitudes on behalf of the Polish establishment came to verify. In 2007, the Polish Premier Tusk, who entered in office after Jaroslaw Kaczynski, declared to want to “crucially” warm up the Polish-Russian relations, in highlighting that “it is crucial in the sense that it will be very difficult.” (Quoted in Kubosova, Lucia, 'New Polish leader vows to repair EU and Russia ties', published on 24 October 2007, retrieved from <http://euobserver.com/?aid=25030>, accessed on 12 September 2008). In spite of this, relations seem not yet to have entered a more positive stage. Backing the US, the Polish foreign minister reassured Moscow by declaring that the antimissile shield was conceived as a means to protect Europe from the Iranian, not from the Russian danger. However, these declarations did not convince the Russian counterpart, which considered the settlement of the antimissile shield, “a move in the wrong direction”, with tremendous implications for regional security, to quote the Russian foreign Minister (Quoted in: U.S. missile shield plans in Europe target Russia – expert, published on 2 March 2007, retrieved from <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20070205/60242190.html>, accessed on the 2 June 2008).



The **UK** represents the more hostile among the biggest MS. Moscow diplomatically defined it as a strategic, though “problematic” partner. Its commercial exchanges rate with Moscow is one of the lowest if compared to other EU's MS. Moreover, its position of energy supplier puts it in a position of total independence from Russian natural gas resources. In this regard, London marks its “insularity” vis-à-vis the other big MS, in confirming the special character and autonomy of its foreign policy. Several diplomatic accidents and vocal criticisms marked the British position towards Moscow, such as the Zakaev extradition case in 2003 and the assassination of Litvinenko in 2006. As a fervent atlanticist MS, the UK tended to follow the US in all those issues which hurts Russian sensitivity, such as the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO. Moreover, the UK did not spare severe criticisms, in denouncing Russian violations of human rights, whether in Chechnya or elsewhere.

**Sweden** scores relatively high rate of commercial exchanges, as is the case of Bulgaria, but total independence over Russian natural gas resources, as is the case for the UK and Portugal. Stockholm's reaction to Northern Streamline Project has been definitely lukewarm and marked by concerns over the ecological feasibility of the project. Although Sweden is not a member of NATO – and, as such, did not express any particular position towards the accession of Ukraine and Georgia – the recent turmoil in Abkhazia and South Ossetia urged several cabinet members in Sweden, but also in Finland, to speed up discussions on their membership in the Alliance<sup>23</sup>. This is coupled with Swedish tendency to raise its criticisms about the evolutions of Russian politics. Within the group, **Portugal** seems to be the MS which has a lesser interest in the Russian dossier: it does not have significant commercial exchanges and does entirely draw upon different natural gas sources, namely Algeria and Nigeria. This position is coupled with its indifference over the Nabucco/Southern Streamline quarrel. Thus, its “lukewarm” position towards Russia may depend on the absence of a relevant stake. As their Eastern neighbours, **Bulgaria, Romania** are tied to Russia by a nearly total natural gas dependence and by strong commercial rates, while **Slovenia**, even if consistently dependent over Russian energy supplies proves to be far less dependent over commercial rates. These CEE states, compared to their Eastern neighbours, seem to have undertaken a more positive path in their relationship with Russia. In

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<sup>23</sup> See, Sweden Finland debate NATO as Russian relations worsen, published on 01 September 2008, retrieved from <http://www.barentsobserver.com/sweden-finland-debate-nato-as-russia-relations-worsen.4504795-58932.html>, accessed on 12 September 2008.

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particular, in the case of Bulgaria, this seems related to the strategic weight of the South Streamline Project.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.3 *Acquiescent partners*

This category represents the most heterogeneous group in our index. This may be due to different reasons. Among others, it represents the modal category of the index. Thus, this specific measure of central tendency might be more subject to internal inconsistency.

Analogously to Bulgaria, **Hungary** was also included in the Southern Streamline Project. In March 2009, the Hungarian energy company MOL and Russia's energy giant Gazprom signed an agreement to build the Hungarian section of the South Stream gas pipeline. Hungary's rate of energy dependence proves to be high, as well as rates of commercial exchanges. Since the signing of the Treaty on 6 December 1991, inter-state relations between Russia and Hungary are told to be of "a new type based on the equality of the parties, mutual interests and benefits, free of ideology".<sup>25</sup> The presence of Hungary in this cluster of states seems to be consistent with Leonard and Popescu's analysis, who see Hungarian attitude towards Russia as orientated to maintain a close relationship while pushing their "business interests above political goals" (2007:2). The most outstanding outlier in the group is represented by Denmark. **Denmark** does not have particularly strong commercial ties with Russia and score a total independence from Russian natural gas supplies. However, as Leonard and Popescu report (2007:46), Denmark can be regarded as the first MS that had experienced severe bilateral disputes since the Putin's Presidency, as it hosted the 2002 Chechen congress and refused to extradite the Chechen leader Akhmed Zakaev. States such as **Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium** and **Luxembourg** can be considered as small MS, with a weaker foreign policy agenda and with a lower stake in relation to Russia. This group of states scores very low level of commercial rates with Russia and presents a low reliance on Russian natural gas sources. With the exception of the Netherlands, they have generally not been involved in disputes with Russia,

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<sup>24</sup> In particular, Bulgaria proved its will to strengthen relations with Moscow. Bulgaria, which was initially included in the Nabucco project, did not hesitate to change its position, by assuming actively a more acquiescent position towards Russia, by signing agreements for the realization of the Southern Streamline. Notwithstanding, the increasingly good state of the relationship did not prevent Russia to use its "policy of coercive bilateralism", when in 2006, Gazprom impose Bulgaria to renegotiate its gas supplies (Leonard and Popescu, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> See, Bilateral relations between Hungary and The Russian Federation, published 13 May 2005, retrieved from [http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/en/bal/foreign\\_policy/bilateral/europe/russian/](http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kum/en/bal/foreign_policy/bilateral/europe/russian/), accessed on 12 September 2008.

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even if they often raised their criticisms towards it. Like the other big MS in this group, these MS favoured the postponement of the accession of Georgia and Ukraine to the NATO. Traditionally, these states tend to assume a rigid stance in human rights matters, nonetheless, the leverage of the Eastern giant may bring them about assuming an acquiescent behaviour, if not a properly friendly one.<sup>26</sup>

Within the group, France, Spain and Germany can be regarded as important foreign policy players with precise strategy vis-à-vis Moscow. **Spain** stands in a slightly different position from France and Germany. It is completely independent from Russian natural gas supplies and does not regard Russia as a relevant asset for its international trade balance. Even if Spain did not take part to the Nabucco/Southern Streamline quarrel, it often voiced the claim for a major EU's energetic independence (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:36). We can suppose that the need to maintain good relations with the Russia brings it about being more acquiescent.<sup>27</sup> Like Germany, Spain advocated the postponement of the accession of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO, in order not to irritate Moscow.

The recent activism of the EU French Presidency in the Russian-Georgian crisis proves the importance that France has historically attached to its relations with Moscow. **France** does not enjoy comparatively relevant commercial exchanges with Russia and its rate of dependence on Russian natural gas sources (18.2%) is generically lower than the European average. In spite of this, France took a pro-South Streamline position in the European pipelines "disputes" and often boasted its preferential channels of communication with Moscow. The reciprocal relevance of the relation is more political than economic and is grounded on the partners' will to increase their leverage in the international system. Recently, in many international conflicts, Russia and France assumed similar positions, such as in the case of Iraq. France voiced clearly and firmly not to favour Georgia and Ukraine's Atlantic ambitions, in overtly highlighting its differences with the US' approach.

Among the big member states, **Germany** is the one that scores the highest rates of commercial exchanges and natural gas dependence. Indeed, Germany is the Western

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<sup>26</sup> According to Leonard and Popescu, the Benelux and Ireland do not assume the same stance towards Russia. The Netherlands and Ireland are told to assume a colder posture, while Luxembourg and Belgium a more friendly one, due to criticisms and occasional disputes in the case of the former, and of higher economic stake in the case of the latter (Leonard and Popescu, 2007: 36-43).

<sup>27</sup> Leonard and Popescu account for several episodes during which Spain acted by defending Russian interests and entreaties.

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MS with the strongest economic ties with Russia. Its *Ostpolitik* tradition has brought it about having a balanced and often acquiescent position towards Russia. Angela Merkel adopted a colder posture than her predecessor towards Putin, in, nonetheless, recognising the importance of the dialogue with Russia in all issues. Germany proved to be sensible in many occasions not to hurt Russia. As was noted above, Germany suggested to postpone the NATO accession of Georgia and Ukraine, thereby acknowledging Russian concerns. Angela Merkel, for instance, defined the partnership with Russia as one of a special kind, in stating the importance “to talk to rather than against” each other, also in delicate questions, such as the antimissile shield and the enlargement of NATO.<sup>28</sup>

**Italy** scores a relatively high rate of economic exchanges, and relies consistently on Russian natural gas supplies if compared to the other Western countries. Indeed, even if with different emphasis, all Italian governments, regardless of their political colour, tended to stress the importance of economic ties with Russia. Italy proved to be particularly active in contrasting the Nabucco Pipelines Project, in so witnessing the precise will to keep a special relation with Moscow. In several occasions, Berlusconi emphasised the friendly character of his relationship with Putin and defended Russia's positions vis-à-vis the other European partners. Italy proved in several occasions to be a loyal ally for Russia, even if its loyalty, in certain cases, resulted obscured by its solid atlanticist commitment. This was, for instance the case for the antimissile shield issue, when, even if in an evidently embarrassed and unclear way, Italy support the US' position. In this regard, its loyalty towards Russia maybe suffers from a structural bias, due to the medium foreign policy leverage, which characterizes Italian foreign policy (Santoro:1991).

**Austria** scores comparatively low rate of economic exchanges with Russia, but a consistent energy dependence on the Eastern giant. As mentioned above, it signed agreements in order to be included in the Southern Streamline Pipelines. It is not involved in any direct dispute with Russia and tends to maintain overall good relations with Moscow. Even if with a low leverage, Austria proved in several occasions its keenness to defend Russian interests within the EU (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:37).

The last MS in our group, **Finland**, proves to be remarkably careful to keep good relations with Moscow. It enjoys a comparatively high rate of commercial exchanges

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<sup>28</sup> Speech of Angela Merkel at the 43th Munich Conference on Security Policy, published on 2 October 2007, retrieved from <http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?id=178&sprache=en&>, accessed on the 10 September 2008.

and a total dependence on Russian energy supplies. The leverage of Finn-Russian relations improved to the extent of approximating the replacement of Germany as Russia's biggest trading partner, also on the basis of the fact that "a quarter of all Russian imports transit through Finland" (Leonard and Popescu, 2007:37). Historically, Finland has tried to have good-neighbourly relations with Russia, and to be able to pursue its own soft security agenda, in order to maintain a peaceful path in its relations with Russia.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.4 *The loyal wife*

The last ideal-type – here epitomised as the one of the loyal wife – embodies only a state, Greece, which scores 0.89 on the scale. The case of **Greece** coincides with Leonard and Popescu's categorisation of MS, which depicted Greece as a Russian "Trojan horse" within the EU (Leonard and Popescu, 2007). As mentioned, Greece boasts solid cultural, historical and even religious ties with Russia. Its rate of energy dependence proves to be high, even if rates of commercial exchanges are not among the highest if compared to other MS. Greece concluded agreements on energy supply with Russia and proved to be a staunch opponent of the Nabucco Pipeline Project and an active supporter of the Southern Streamline. Thanks to its loyalty, Greece has never faced diplomatic or commercial harassment by Russia, and has been rewarded by being included in the Southern Streamline trajectory. The low leverage of Greece vis-à-vis other EU's MS presumably dimensions its ability to threaten the EU's cohesion. Notwithstanding, Greece proved to be a solid ally for Russia, which tried to push forward its cause at any occasion.<sup>30</sup>

From this insight in the index, we might draw the first preliminary conclusions. The more new MS are dependent on Russia, the more they adopt a critical attitude. The MS from CEE that boast a major independence or are undertaking agreements with Russia in order to gain advantages out of future pipelines, tend to have a slightly milder position, even if keeping a quite critical stance. Those old MS that hold a comparatively low dependence over Russian energetic supplies and commercial exchanges tend to assume a colder posture. Whether this posture is translated into open criticisms

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<sup>29</sup> Finland launched the Northern Dimension Initiative (NDI) in 1997, which later has been included on the agenda of the Luxembourg Summit and became an official EU policy. In this regard, in spite of its small dimension, Finland proved its ability to pursuing actively its goals, in order to influence the EU's agenda, even if the ability to influence further implementation of its goals is far beyond its scope of action (Arter, 2000:695).

<sup>30</sup> On the specificity of Greece's foreign policy in this regard, see Pace, 2004:227-38.

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presumably depends also on the leverage of their foreign policy and on the stake of their relation with Russia. Proceeding along our continuum, we progressively find those old MS that have a comparatively high dependence over Russian supplies and strong economic ties, which, thus, assume the most friendly attitude towards Russia.

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#### **4 An analysis of the RCV concerning Russia: national or ideological orientations?**

We can assume that, “for the sake of national interest”, the MS (embodied in this case by the leaderships of the NPDs or by the domestic governments) urge their MEPs to defect if they feel uncomfortable with the position sponsored by the EPG to whom their parliamentarians are affiliated. More in particular, if the position is perceived as too Russian friendly or too hostile towards Russia or, more in general, not in line with their national concerns, NPDs may urge their MEPs to defect. Keeping aside ideological reasons, their opposition can also stem from more practical reasons. We can assume, for instance, that national governments or national parties (both in government and in opposition) exert pressures on their Euro-parliamentarians in order to avoid a parliamentary rejection of a position agreed at intergovernmental level within the Council or, more in general, in line with their political concerns.

In our analysis, we did not look at the (anti-/pro-Russia) polarisation of the specific votes under scrutiny, we just hypothesised that the most fervent supporters or opponents of Russia are more likely to feel uncomfortable with the final outcome of the vote, given the generally assumed *median* nature of the parliamentary compromise (Kreppel and Hix, 2003).

As a consequence, we can expect stronger nationally-oriented pressures on the MEPs originating from the least mainstream national contexts, characterised by above-the-average levels of opposition or support towards Russia (i.e. Eastern divorced or loyal wives), which are more likely to be dissatisfied with the agreed position. In this section we will test this hypothesis by comparing Member states’ defection rates in the 18 votes with their stance towards Russia (Member states’ index score).

In the first part of this section we will therefore look at the ADR values displayed by the 25 national delegations analysed, while in the second we will comparatively assess the existence of a relationship between Member states’ degree of friendliness towards Russia and the voting behaviour of their MEPs.

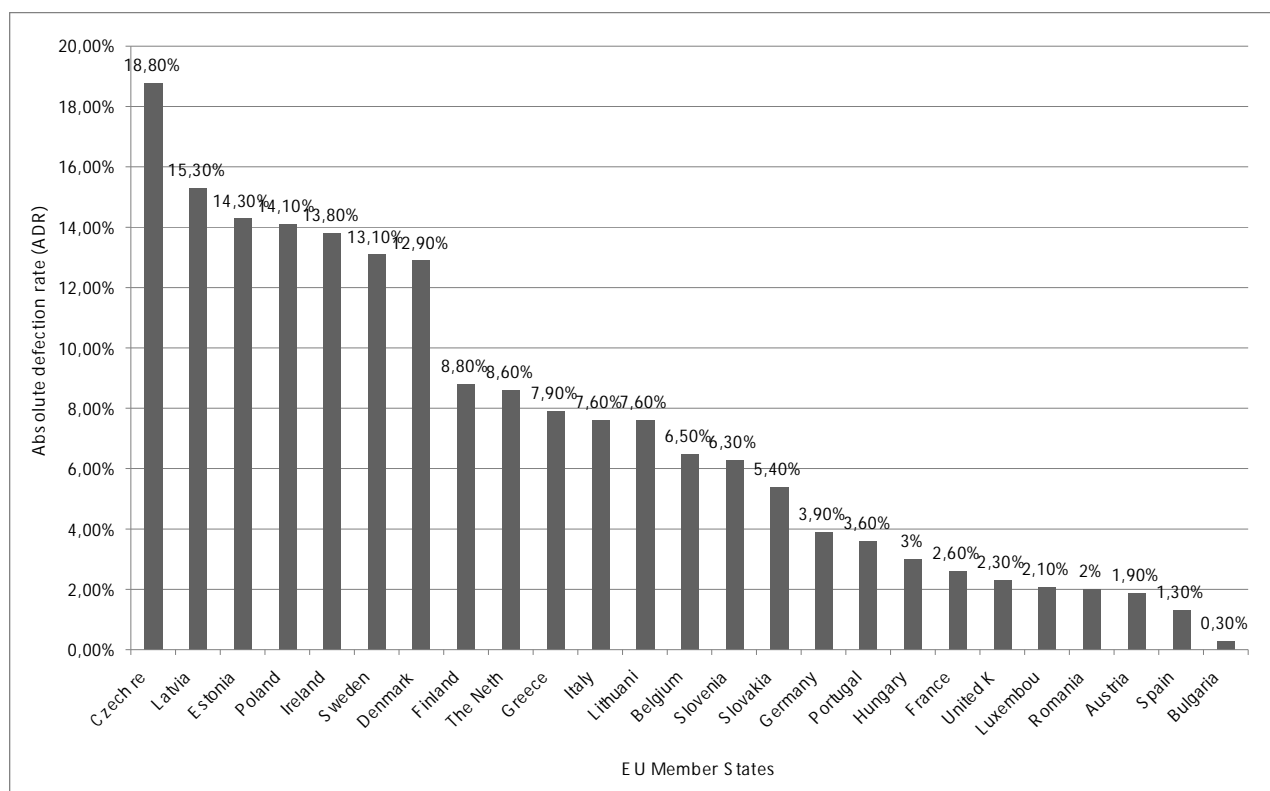
**Chart 1. – National delegations' average defection rate**

Chart 1 summarises the results of our first analytical step. If we look at Member states' ADR values a high level of variance among the 25 can be appreciated. The average level of defections at EP level equals 6.04%. By far, the Czech MEPs represent those who tend defect more often from their respective parliamentary group (18.80%), followed by the Latvians (15.30%), by the Estonians (14.30%), and by the Polish MEPs (14.10%). On the other hand, the Bulgarian MEPs emerge as the most conformist as they defect only 0.3% of the times. Similarly two other delegations present an ADR value below 2%, namely the Austrian and the Spanish ones. What we notice, in line with our initial suppositions, is that four delegations from CEE emerge as the least conformist.

If one looks at the defection rates of national delegations by issue area, one can see that national party delegations have certain issue domains where their defection rates are much higher<sup>31</sup>. Interestingly enough, these issue domains vary considerably by country and party. We can therefore conclude that national delegations tend to defect more in the policy-areas considered as matters of primary national concern; a

<sup>31</sup> According to many scholars, the party cohesion at EP level does not seem to have suffered considerably from the Eastern enlargements. However, given the particular significance of the Russian dossier for the new member states from CEE, we can expect significant exceptions in the cases of votes directly related to the issue.



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dimension which varies according to the national context and the ideological characterisation of the delegation. Moreover, it has been widely demonstrated that the MEPs from several of the new MS are more cohesive along national lines than those from Western Europe, that is, they appear – holding everything constant - keener to defect from their respective EPG.

A second group of national delegations which appear keener to defect is represented by the Scandinavian countries. Sweden, Finland, and Denmark's ADR score relatively higher than those of other Western member states. We can assume, that, given their geopolitical position, relations with Russia are perceived by these delegations as a matter of greater national concern. Beyond the four CEE delegations and the Scandinavian group, the defection rate of most of the national delegations (18 out of 25) tends to score lower than 10%. It is noteworthy to notice that all the EU heavy-weights fall in the low-defecting side. Whether this is due to their ability to affect the pre-legislative policy-shaping processes at EPG level or to less evident and straightforward reasons is an open matter which deserved to be more closely investigated in future works.

In the most conformist national delegations the MEPs do not seem to disagree frequently from their respective group; the extreme cases in this respect are represented by Austria, Spain, and Bulgaria. It is worth noting that we cannot automatically rule out that simply the national leaderships *do not care* (that is that they do not issue any voting instruction), but given the relevance of the Russian dossier we can confidently assume that they *do care* enough. Consistently, Faas (2003: 847) maintains that «*if national parties become involved in the process of voting in the EP [...] MEPs from national delegations are likely to defect in cases of conflict. In these cases, the [European] party group leadership cannot do anything but accept it*». Given the relevance of the Russian dossier we might well hypothesise a direct involvement of the national political elites in this respect.

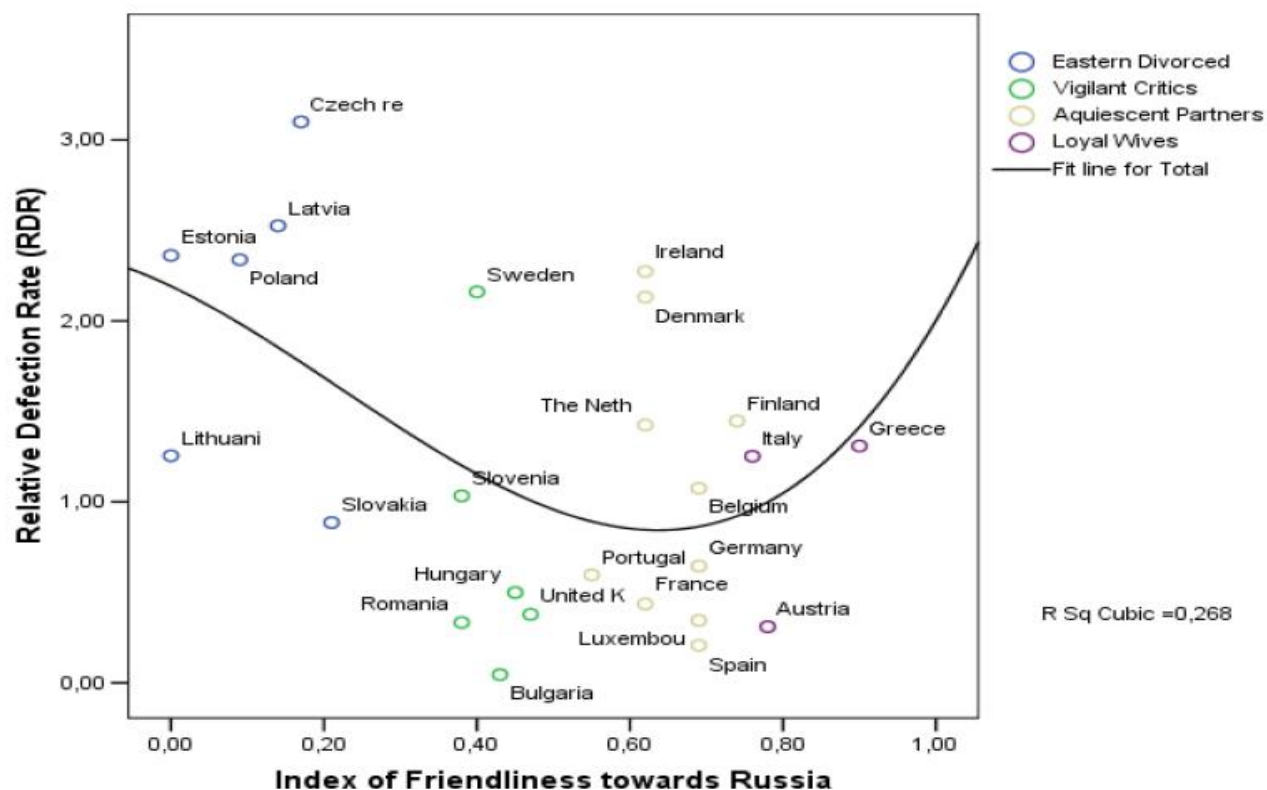
**Chart 2. – Relationship between MEPs' Relative Defection Rate and MS' Index Score**

Chart 2 summarises the results of our second analytical step. National delegations' defection rates are measured by using RDR, thereby allowing statistically consistent inter-delegation comparisons. In the horizontal dimension of the chart member states' position along the anti-/pro-Russia continuum, as defined by our index, are located. The vertical dimension represents national delegations' voting behaviour (RDR score). The point of convergence of the two measures defines Member states' position on the bi-dimensional plane.

Several national clusters clearly emerge from the observation of the plot, which seem consistent with the categorisation presented in the previous section and patterned after the index of Russian friendliness. On the left upper side of the bi-dimensional space we can identify a group of four CEE countries (Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, and Estonia) characterised by both the lowest levels of warmth towards Russia and the highest level of defections in the EP. The high RDR scores yielded by these countries indicate national leaderships' uneasiness with the voting positions adopted by the respective EPGs, supposedly perceived as too moderate. This cluster includes most of the "Eastern divorced".

Being categorised as “Eastern divorced”, Lithuania and Slovakia do not seem to completely fit the hypothesised pattern. Even if the two countries emerge as integral part of the anti-Russian front, their dramatically low score in the index (0) is rather matched with a relatively low level of defection at EP level (respectively, 7.6%, 2%, 6.3%, and 5.4%).

In the specific case of Lithuania this seems to be primarily determined by specific inter-parliamentary factors and by the political distribution of the Lithuanian MEPs: the majority of the Lithuanian parliamentarians (7 out of 13) belong to the Labour party (Lithuanian: *Darbo Partija*) affiliated to the ALDE group, whose leader is the Russian-born millionaire Viktor Uspaskich. In the mid-1990s, Mr. Uspaskich quickly gained tremendous success in his business empire that now includes – among others – the importation of natural gas from Gazprom, in addition to flourishing enterprises in the food production and animal fodder industries<sup>32</sup>. These factors seem to explain Uspaskich’s party more moderate stance towards Russia and appear consistent with the exceptional voting behaviour of the Lithuanian cohorts. This state of things is likely to change following the debacle of the Labour party in the 2009 EP elections and the victory of the centre-right Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats more critic towards the Russian neighbour<sup>33</sup>.

On the other hand, the more moderate behaviour of the Slovak delegation might well be explained by its borderline position within the anti-Russian group. Slovakia presents the highest score in the index among the hardliners (0.21). Moreover, it is relevant to mention Slovakia (unlike all the other members of the group) did not experience any relevant diplomatic or commercial conflict with Russia.

In the central-lower section of the chart we can identify a cluster of countries characterised by the lowest degree of defection and a more balanced and median position in the anti-/pro-Russia continuum. This cluster embraces by large the countries belonging to the two median groups defined by our index: the “vigilant critics” and the “acquiescent partners”. The MS in this cluster are generally characterised by a low RDR score. Ireland, Sweden, and Denmark represent relevant exceptions as their defections on the Russian dossier appear to be more frequent than the average of the

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<sup>32</sup> See, Founder of Lithuanian Labor Party Viktor Uspaskich released from custody, published on 28 September 2007, retrieved from <http://www.regnum.ru/english/623519.html>, accessed on 15 September 2008.

<sup>33</sup> See Vaida, Petras, 'Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats won EP elections in Lithuania', published on 08 June 2009, retrieved from [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic\\_states/?doc=14594](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic_states/?doc=14594), accessed on 9 July 2009.

group. Significantly, we discovered that both Denmark and Sweden (the latter included among the “vigilant critics”) are marked by a more critical approach towards Moscow, especially in those votes related to human rights.

It is noteworthy to mention that four of the delegations representing the EU's heavyweights fall in this second cluster, that is, their MEPs appear somehow closer to the pro-Russia front. Three of them Spain, France, and Germany perfectly fit the hypothesised pattern (milder stance towards Russia and low RDR). In contrast, the United Kingdom seems to emerge as an exception as its relations with Russia are generally marked by a more conflictual stance (UK scores 0.48 in the index) even if the RDR of the British MEPs (0.38) appears in line with the average of the cluster. This result seems therefore to show an imperfect match between British elites' concerns and MEPs' voting behaviour.

In general the presence of all the major EU Member States in the least defecting group seems to confirm the possibility of significant policy-shaping power in the pre-legislative phase of the intragroup bargaining. Among the most conformist cases we can also include several CEE countries whose foreign policy seems to be characterised by a more cautious approach towards Russia such as Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria and the small Benelux states, characterised by weaker foreign policy agenda and lower stake in relation to Russia.

A final cluster can be identified in the left side of the chart including the “Loyal wife”, namely Greece, along with Finland and Italy (the only Russia's strategic partner in the group). According to our index, these countries emerge as Russia's best friends and appear therefore characterised by an evident pro-Russia stance at EU level. The levels of nationally-oriented defections appear higher than that displayed by the median group (second cluster including “vigilant critics” and the “acquiescent partners”), but lower than that of the anti- Russia hawks (first cluster including the “Eastern divorced”). The RDR score of the three delegations equals respectively 1.31, 1.45, and 1.25, moderately above the average level of defection. This is possibly due to the fact that the agreed compromise appears to the elites of the three MS more acceptable than to the anti-Russia hawks, although not totally appropriate or, in other words, not “Russian friendly” enough. For this reason they appear on average more likely to defect in comparison to the second cluster.

The cubic fit line in the plot tells the same story described above. If we move from opposition to friendliness towards Russia in the horizontal dimension of our bi-dimensional chart, we assess a gradual decrease in the national delegations' defection

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rate whose lowest level is touched by the states sponsoring a median position towards Russia. We can confidently assume that those national delegations feel sufficiently comfortable with the stance of their respective EPG and this reduces their need to defect. When we approach the pro-Russia pole of the horizontal continuum we register a new (even if more moderate) increase in national delegations' defection rate, signalling growing concern with the agreed policy position at EP level<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> The trajectory of the change is plotted as a cubic fit line with 95% individual confidence intervals.

## 5 Conclusions: condemned to be divided?

This article intended to provide a conceptual and methodological contribution to the analysis of MS' attitudes towards the sensitive Russian dossier.

Dependence from Russian natural gas resources and intensity of commercial exchanges prove to be highly significant factors in determining the MS' attitudes towards Russia. In building our index, we tried to depict the complexity of these measures, by hypothesising a bi-directionality of their causal effects: whereas old MS consider the strength of economic ties with Russia as a *relative* asset, new MS still consider it as an *absolute* form of dependence, which threatens their overall stability. Our results seem to shed a new light on the analysis of MS' attitudes towards Russia and prove to be consistent with the results found by other analysts elsewhere, who did not adopt similar conceptual starting points (for instance, Leonard and Popescu).

Indeed, the intensification of commercial exchanges seems to mean different things for the old and new MS and to affect their behaviours in a different way. Same can be said for dependence over Russian natural gas supplies. Old MS try to “keep the tap opened” by assuming more flexible and diplomatic postures towards Russia, while deeply dependent new MS do not hesitate to react more vigorously towards Russia, despite their relative higher dependence over Russian supplies. This is probably linked not only to the burden of the past, but also to the direct exposure to the effects of a “systematic policy of coercive bilateralism” pursued by Russia. In sum, intense exchanges with Russia means *in practice* different things for old and new MS.

This is consistently confirmed by the MS' different attitudes towards others important variables, such as preferences over projects of regional stability. In general, whereas new MS tend to adopt a more rigid stance when dealing with regional security, as in the case for the NATO enlargement, old MS tend to be more cautious. This does not prevent also old MS to assume a more intransigent posture towards these issues. But, not surprisingly (and independently from foreign policy traditions), these positions seem to be assumed by those MS that have lesser prominent commercial exchanges and levels of energy dependence (such as the UK).

By saying this, we do not by any means cede the temptation of treating the old and new MS as homogeneous blocks. On the contrary, our results show a more nuanced picture.

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For instance, the level of energy dependence over natural resources – which still sees the new MS as relatively more dependent over Russian supplies – does not straightforwardly bring them about having the same preferences about projects of energy supplies. Analogously, having lower economic stake with Russia does not bring old MS to straightforwardly assume a rigid stance, above all if the leverage of their foreign policy imposes them caution.

By combining indicators of strength of economic flows, energy dependence, preferences for projects of regional security, existence of disputes and projects of energy supply, we found four ideal-typical reactions to the Russian neighbour: the “Eastern divorced”, the “vigilant critics”, the “acquiescent partners”, and the “loyal wives”.

The two extreme ideal-types are those characterised by either major opposition or major proneness towards Russia. These MS will generally tend to be the most discontent of the final outcome of the EU decisional process and to propose more hard-core positions. The two median ideal-types comprise a more diversified group of MS, that still seem to be correctly collocated by the index here implied. These groups seem more heterogeneous and driven by consistently different kinds of rationale.

Among the critics, two major approaches can be depicted. To the one side, there are MS, mostly coming from the old MS that are less tied (economically or energetically) to Russia. These MS may be more inclined to assume a rigid stance. On the other, there are MS, mostly coming from the “new Europe”, that undertake a softer approach compared to the neighbours, due, for instance, to the strategic importance of projects of energy supply. Analogously, among the acquiescent partners, there are those MS that have a major interest in keeping good relations with Russia. They will be inclined to pursue friendly policies at the EU levels, even if this does not necessarily prevent them to raise their voice, above all if considered the leverage of these countries. On the other, we have MS that do not have a major commercial or energetic stakes in relation to Russia. These, mostly small, MS may tend to follow the median outcome of the EU's policy making towards Russia, probably because irritating the Eastern giant is a high stake for their foreign policy leverage.

Yet, there are many margins of improvement for our preliminary work. An indicator to depict MS' attitudes towards human rights violations on behalf of Russia (for instance, given by the reaction of MS to the Russian intervention in Chechnya), to our advice, might help us to refine these results even further, by expanding the scope of the overall analysis.

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Our analysis of MEPs' voting behaviour seems to confirm two relevant elements. On the one hand, national leaderships *care* of the parliamentary conduct of their representatives openly trying to affect their decisions when they disagree with the position sponsored by the EPGs. On the other hand, when the MEPs find themselves in such kinds of situations they generally tend to vote following the instructions issued by their national leaderships.

Consistently with what we said above, several national delegations emerge as more likely to defect than others. We showed that this seems due to their stance towards Russia (as defined in the index) and to their relative "distance" from the position sponsored by MEPs' respective EPG at parliamentary level. National delegations' RDR seem to vary according to each Member states' position in our index of friendliness towards Russia: in the case of the national delegations belonging to the two antipodal categories ("Eastern divorced" and "The Loyal wife"), MEPs are more likely to vote "nationally", that is, to defect from their respective EPG as the parliamentary position agreed appear farther from their optimal preferences.

These differences have emerged in the process of crossing national delegations' respective RDR and MS' index score in the bi-dimensional scatter plot. The analysis of the results revealed the existence of three clusters marked by distinctive behavioural styles. The first cluster, mainly consisting of the so-called "Eastern divorced", is characterised by low levels of warmth towards Russia and by high levels of defections at EP level. The delegations belonging to second cluster (comprising the two median categories of the index, "Vigilant critics" and "Acquiescent partners") seem rather characterised by a milder and more moderate stance towards Russia and by the lowest levels of parliamentary defections. Interestingly, the third cluster, consisting of Russia's best friends, is marked by a relevant increase in the RDR score, nonetheless lower than that displayed by the first group.

These results bring us to an interesting consideration. Assuming that national delegations' RDR increase if they feel uncomfortable with their respective EPGs' position, it seems that EP median position leans towards the pro-Russia pole, given the higher level of discontent among the anti-Russian cohorts.

In conclusion, is the EU condemned to be divided over the Russian dossier? Many factors might concur to give an answer to this initial question, which goes far beyond the scope of this paper. The ability of the MS to fix them together into a coherent policy framework still seems to be the recipe to get rid of this fate. For the time being, our results seem to confirm that the level of division that dealing with Russia imposes to the



Union, touches upon profound cleavages, which are reflected both at the level of MS' politics and at the level of their polities' perceptions.

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**Appendix 1 – Russian share in the extra EU overall trade balance**

Country	Total extra-EU export	Total extra-EU import	Export towards Russia	Import from Russia	Total Impo/Expo	Russian Share	Country
Belgium	74651	87744	3268	4872	162395	8140	0,0501247
Bulgaria	5308	9081	328	2707	14389	3035	0,210925
Czech rep.	13185	16919	2081	3835	30104	5916	0,1965187
Denmark	22545	19370	1361	863	41915	2224	0,0530598
Germany	340307	267707	28089	27587	608014	55676	0,0915703
Estonia	2391	2439	710	1147	4830	1857	0,384472
Greece	6204	23441	438	3130	29645	3568	0,1203576
Spain	52865	105329	2050	7698	158194	9748	0,0616205
France	141115	137995	5602	10437	279110	16039	0,0574648
Ireland	32350	18299	310	74	50649	384	0,0075816
Italy	143230	158423	9579	14354	301653	23933	0,0793395
Cyprus	287	1955	19	37	2242	56	0,0249777
Latvia	1668	2522	782	973	4190	1755	0,4188544
Lithuania	4409	5634	1875	3206	10043	5081	0,5059245
Luxembourg	1872	5317	148	175	7189	323	0,0449298
Hungary	14705	21276	2231	4786	35981	7017	0,1950196
Malta	1074	855	2	1	1929	3	0,0015552
The Netherlands	88260	178618	6898	17989	266878	24887	0,0932523
Austria	32742	24608	2904	1660	57350	4564	0,0795815
Poland	21610	32292	4727	10449	53902	15176	0,281548
Portugal	8725	13999	143	559	22724	702	0,0308924
Romania	8260	14722	427	3235	22982	3662	0,1593421
Slovenia	6740	6050	965	491	12790	1456	0,1138389
Slovakia	5630	11329	959	4016	16959	4975	0,2933546
Finland	28356	21430	6724	8308	49786	15032	0,3019323
Sweden	47754	32214	7451	3386	79968	10837	0,1355167
UK	133934	205964	4077	7584	339898	11661	0,0343074

Source: Eurostat, *External and Intra-European Union trade*, Monthly Statistics, Issue N. 8/2008.

**Appendix 2 – Dependence on Russian natural gas supplies**

Country	Natural gas consumption	Gas trade movements with Russia by pipeline	Total gas trade movements by pipeline	Ratio
Belgium <sup>*35</sup>	17,33	0,5	19,34	0,028852
Bulgaria	3,1	3,1	3,1	1
Czech republic <sup>*36</sup>	8,9	6,43	8,63	0,722472
Denmark	4,6	0	0	0
Germany <sup>37</sup>	82,7	35,55	83,72	0,429867
Estonia <sup>*38</sup>	1,5	1,5	1,5	1
Greece	4	2,89	2,89	0,7225
Spain	35,1	0	10,95	0
France	41,9	7,63	33,76	0,1821
Ireland	4,8	0	4,15	0
Italy	77,8	23,8	70,45	0,305913
Cyprus				
Latvia <sup>*39</sup>	1,89	1,6	1,6	0,846561
Lithuania	3,8	3,4	3,4	0,894737
Luxembourg <sup>*40</sup>	1,41	0	1,5	0
Hungary	11,8	7,85	10,48	0,665254
Malta				
The Netherlands	37,2	2,3	18,86	0,061828
Austria	8,9	5,6	7,48	0,629213
Poland	13,7	6,2	9,3	0,452555
Portugal	4,3	0	1,39	0
Romania	16,4	2,5	4,8	0,152439

<sup>35</sup> Source: [http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country\\_energy\\_data.cfm?fips=BE](http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=BE), accessed on 18 August 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Source: [www.iea.org/journalists/docs/GasData2005.pdf](http://www.iea.org/journalists/docs/GasData2005.pdf), accessed on 18 August 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Source: [www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/BALTIC/full.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/BALTIC/full.html), accessed on 18 August 2008

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Country	Natural gas consumption	Gas trade movements with Russia by pipeline	Total gas trade movements by pipeline	Ratio
Slovenia <sup>*41</sup>	1,1	0,56	1,1	0,509091
Slovakia	5,9	5,8	5,8	0,983051
Finland	4,1	4,3	4,3	1,04878
Sweden	1	0	1,11	0
United Kindgom	45,6	0	28	0

NOTE: The figures are expressed in billion cubic meters; if not explicitly stated otherwise data refer to 2008; asterisk (\*) denotes countries whose data refer to 2005. SOURCE: British Petroleum Company, *BP Statistical Review of World Energy*, London, June 2008.

<sup>41</sup> Source: [http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country\\_energy\\_data.cfm?fips=SI](http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=SI), accessed on 18 August 2008.

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