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Who really won the elections to the European Parliament? An evaluation of the voting power of Polish deputies and political groups in the European Parliament, as measured by the Banzhaf index

Polish deputies to the European Parliament have been already the subject of research on many occasions in respect of their effectiveness, primarily on the basis of fragmentary quantitative criteria or even subjective assessment by observers and journalists. The article presents a quantitative method for calculating the deputies’ effectiveness, using the John Banzhaf power index, which enjoys popularity in mathematics and economics. It makes possible the dynamic rendering of the voting power of particular groups, depending on the majority threshold, the number of actors and their relative size, as well as facilitating the calculation of the probability with which particular groups may become a necessary part of a winning coalition. The Banzhaf index is widely applied to assess the voting power of particular states in the EU Council. With certain reservations, it may also be employed to assess the effectiveness of political groups in the European Parliament and to calculate the voting power enjoyed by national delegations within these groups. It then transpires that the commonly-held opinion that the key significance for forming the winning alliance enjoyed by the European Liberals and Democrats group was fully justified in the 6th term of the European Parliament, but had already lost its justification by no later than the 7th. In that term, the influence of Polish deputies upon the European groups they had joined increased quite considerably. The calculation of the voting power of Polish deputies also proves that the British Conservatives’ forming of their own political group was advantageous both to them and to several other groups which joined it, but was not beneficial to the Polish parties which also associated themselves with the Tories. Calculation of the voting power of Polish deputies also demonstrates that the present system, in which Polish deputies are dispersed among several groups, ensures them of more influence on the issues settled in the European Parliament than the forming of a ‘Polish faction’, assembling all the Poles.