Deciding over controversial issues: Voting behavior in the Council and the European Parliament on genetically modified organisms

Einreicher/in
- Monika Mühlböck, Jale Tosun

e-Mailkontakt
- mo.muehlboeck@univie.ac.at

Abstract (300 Wörter)
The renewal of existing authorizations for genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the approval of new products is a controversial issue among the European Union (EU) member states as well as within EU institutions such as the European Parliament (EP). We argue that decision making on GMOs is characterized by distinctive voting behavior. We test this expectation by analyzing the member states' voting behavior on a number of authorization requests brought in by the European Commission between 2004 and 2014 and on a recent vote in the EP on the authorization of GM maize Pioneer 1507. Indeed, we see signs of party politics in Council voting. However, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) display signs of country-oriented voting. Both the manifest signs of party politics in Council voting and country-oriented voting of the MEPs are in contrast to previous findings in the literature. Most interestingly, the MEPs display a voting behavior that concurs with how the ministers from their home countries vote in the Council. We interpret these findings as signs that the specificity of biotechnology as a controversial and value-loaded issue leads to the unconventional voting patterns in the Council and the EP.

Keywords
EU, voting behavior, GMOs, quantitative