(Self-)selection and expertise among decision makers in the European Parliament

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Abstract

Rapporteurs in the European Parliament (EP) are the most influential members in terms of the legislation they handle. They are appointed by their political groups. In making these appointments, these groups need to accommodate both their collective needs and individual requests.

This article explores situations in which the collective need for information is prioritized: the codecision procedure. The data includes allocations over a 10-year period (2004-2014) in three of the most powerful EP committees, as well as key career choices among members.

EP groups emphasize policy-specific knowledge. They also pay attention to individual members' requests for exposure, but only when the expected policy drift is minimal. Harsh selection during the allocation of codecision reports creates pressure to accommodate a greater selection of legislators during other attractive report allocations. Own-initiative reports therefore impact allocation of codecision reports negatively.

Keywords: Rapporteur, European Parliament, legislative organization, parliamentary party, parliamentary committees, report allocation, codecision.

Introduction

In the face of competing demands, how do political groups accommodate both their individual members' demands for delegation and the group's collective needs during the allocation of codecision reports? I argue that groups' informational needs dominate allocations of high-impact dossiers, while another set of MEPs is favored for political tasks with less tangible consequences.

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When theorizing individual delegations – such as rapporteurships – I argue that an informational rationale has different implications from studies of committee membership. Krehbiel (1991) modelled an exchange between a floor and heterogeneous, specialized committees. The diversity of opinions in committees allows floor members to triangulate information and deduce political bias in policy proposals. This is hardly possible when only one rapporteur (or a shadow) is named by each group. As a consequence, coordinators emphasize converging political preferences. Several studies have already disclosed this tendency (Yordanova, 2011b; Yoshinaka et al., 2010). The pool of potential rapporteurs is restricted to those who wish to partake in such work. In a system of self-selection, this implies a positive interaction between dedication and political outliers (Shepsle and Weingast, 1994). I argue that when political groups organize work to extract information for their own benefit, the same interaction is negative. This is to say that coordinators take into account individual needs for exposure, but only to the extent that the group gains by it.

Over the last 30 years the European Parliament (EP) has skillfully used its internal organization to maximize its position in the EU system. The delegation of dossiers to individual legislators – through the institution of rapporteurs – has helped overcome challenges posed by limited resources and an increasing number of MEPs. Report delegation decisions are made by transnational political groups. These groups exist in order to organize legislative activities to the benefit of their members. Group coordinators need to balance two needs when choosing rapporteurs:

First, coordinators need to ensure that members will perceive the legislative output as improved by the group's decisions. Proposals improve when the author has information about potential consequences (Krehbiel, 1991). I argue, in line with Maltzman (1997), that the emphasis on the group's need for information increases with the salience of a policy, and that political groups are more willing to enforce discipline when the opportunity cost is high. Allocations of codecision reports are therefore most-likely scenarios of an informational rationale. This study isolates the effect of policy-specific expertise from general political capability. Results indicate that expertise always improves chances of delegation. The EP is no institution for "all-around politicians".

Second, coordinators also need to satisfy individual MEPs' requests for exposure and influence. Transnational groups are coalitions of national party delegations which can decide to leave at any time (McElroy and Benoit, 2010). These groups must therefore take care to distribute tasks fairly. Groups' discretion in their choice of rapporteur is thus limited by norms of

proportionality, and coordinators accordingly face pressure to accommodate a wider array of members.

I rely on cross-sectional time-series data of 10 years of report allocations. I am therefore able to explore how choices at one point in time affect future delegations. Observations are made at the level of the committee and include key career choices among members of three of the most influential committees in the European Parliament (Yordanova, 2009)[2]. I have collected attendance rates from all committee meetings in the period 2004-2014. These are used to separate the effect of individual claims for influence from criteria dictated by collective needs.

Literature review and theory

This section first reviews existing literature on report allocations before presenting different theoretical approaches to how coordinators make delegations.

Individual legislators and legislative proposals

In the last 15 years we have seen numerous empirical studies of delegation and committee work in the European Parliament (for an overview, see Hix and Høyland, 2013; Yordanova, 2011a). Most of this literature has relied on theories of legislative organization borrowed from the U.S. Congress. The same theoretical references have been used to explain both committee seat allocation and report allocation, indicating that these are generally perceived as two stages in the same process of selection.

In contrast to the bill sponsor in the U.S. system, the European rapporteur has an official role in amending and presenting draft legislation (“reports"). Single pieces of legislation are trusted to committee members who in charge of negotiating bills between party groups and institutions. As the EP’s position improves, so does the potential power of the rapporteur. The actual contents and success of legislative proposals are believed to depend in part on the qualities of the rapporteur.

The European Commission has the formal monopoly of legislative initiative, while the EP (along with the Council) has, in principle, an unlimited power of amendment. Upon the reception of a proposal, a bargaining round ensues in a

[2] Committees on Employment and Social A airs, Environment and Consumer Protection, and Transport and Tourism

committee during which political groups bid for the coordinating responsibility (Wurzel, 1999, pp. 11{13). Each group has a limited number of "points" which they can use to "buy" reports. The total number of points is allocated as a function of group size. The prize is set as a function of the number of bidders. EP groups therefore sustain an opportunity cost for each report, which increases with its salience. Once a group has secured a draft, its coordinator selects a member to draw up the actual report.

The role of the EP in the legislative process depends on the Europeanization of the policy domain. While the EP is an equal legislator to the Council during the "ordinary legislative procedure" (formerly codecision), there are other domains in which Parliament has merely a consultative role. Parliament can also draw reports on its own initiative. These reports are subject to prior authorization by the EP Bureau and often serve the purpose of monitoring the Commission's work. Although put forth as the next step of EP empowerment and used for calling on legislative initiative, such reports can at best be translated into "soft law" (Corbett et al., 2011, pp. 266-67).

Recent studies have explicitly looked at the effect of procedure on report allocations. Findings suggest that the same set of criteria is used to allocate codecision reports and legislation of lesser impact (Hurka and Kaeding, 2012; Hurka et al., 2015; Yordanova, 2011b). Notably, Yordanova (2011b) has found that allocations under the consultation procedure are positively correlated with allocations of codecision reports. Does this imply that the same set of MEPs is eligible for all types of reports?

Experience and expertise

Groups need information about both the consequences of policy proposals and their political feasibility. Committee members' past experience helps reduce uncertainty.

One strand of the literature emphasizes the importance of personal networks and political experience – especially under codecision. Kaeding (2004, pp. 365-66) stresses that experience at the European level provides connections and knowledge of the procedures. Some researchers have highlighted the role of inside information on the Council's position obtained through the (national) party channel (Høyland, 2006; Costello and Thomson, 2011, although questioned by Yordanova, 2011b). These findings are ambiguous, however. Incumbency in the EP has little impact on report allocation (Hausemer, 2006, pp. 522-524; Yoshinaka et al., 2010, Hurka and Kaeding, 2012), whereas incumbent committee

members (who are thus specialized in a policy area) are highly favored; at least under the codecision procedure (Yordanova, 2011b, pp. 113-116).

Information about policies is scarce. Committee staff is generalist, so much hinges on the resources provided by the rapporteur (personal staff, connections and past experience with similar policies). Indeed, another strand of the literature shows that policy-specific knowledge improves a member's chances of obtaining a seat on at least some committees (McElroy, 2006; Yordanova, 2009, p. 272). Expertise seems to have attracted report allocation in the 4th and 5th Parliaments (Yoshinaka et al., 2010), although in the 6th parliament this is only the case in areas in which the EP opinion is consultative (Yordanova, 2011a, pp. 111-115). These studies look at educational and professional expertise (Bowler and Farrell, 1995, p. 231; Yordanova, 2009, p. 266; Yordanova, 2011a, p. 111; Daniel, 2013) – or a mix of the two with policy-specific political mandates (McElroy, 2006, p. 17; Yoshinaka et al., 2010, p. 467).

In the following, I look at MEPs' past political mandates and distinguish between political experience and policy-specific expertise.

MEPs' own requests

Recent studies of report allocation control for plenary attendance and find a positive effect (Chiou et al., 2016; Hurka and Kaeding, 2012; Hurka et al., 2015; Yoshinaka et al., 2010). There are divergent interpretations of the meaning of attendance records. While Benedetto (2005) suggests that attendance records offer a way to identify MEPs who opt out of legislative work, there have also been claims that it is because the group leadership rewards assiduous members with reports (Hix et al., 2011).

Including an efficient control on MEP dedication is central to exploring the group coordinators' choices. It foregoes the conclusion of reverse causality by which MEPs who self-select into positions naturally become experts/experienced. Findings show that at equal levels of participation, experienced MEPs are preferred during report allocations (Hurka and Kaeding, 2012; Hurka et al., 2015; Yoshinaka et al., 2010).

Endogeneity issues have also made it difficult to explore the effect of expertise gained from prior political work. According to several accounts, legislative or executive experience at the national level impacts neither committee assignments (Bowler and Farrell, 1995; Yordanova, 2009) nor rapporteur selection (Kaeding, 2004, pp. 365-66). A common explanation is that a European Parliament seat often serves as a relaxing end to a political career or a secondary mandate (e.g.: Corbett et al., 2007, p. 67; Mamadouh and Raunio,

2003; Hix and Høyland, 2011, p. 55). The problem of endogeneity is best resolved with an efficient control on MEP dedication to their current mandate.

Attendance as a criterion for selection, on the other hand, is best understood within the partisan approach as one of several selection criteria together with group loyalty. Hausemer (2006, p. 526) found that partisan considerations were central during report allocation in the 5th parliament insofar as group coordinators tended to allow loyal rank-and- le members to earn the most salient bills. This is further corroborated by Yoshinaka et al. (2010) who found that the NOMINATE distance from the party group median substantially decreased MEPs' chances of garnering a report in the 4th and 5th parliaments (see also Chiou et al., 2016). Yordanova (2011a, p.117) even concludes from an analysis of the first half of the 6th parliament that "promoting party group cohesion and coalition-building appear to be the major mechanisms driving report allocation". Coordinators fear policy drift when they delegate reports. It is likely that the party leadership appreciates the dedication of MEPs whose loyalties lie with the party line.

There are several reasons for drawing on theories of legislative organization to explain the EP's internal organization (for an overview, see Yordanova, 2013).

The EU can be conceived of as a formal separation of powers system insofar as the executive is not dependent on a stable majority in the EP. Without the imperative of a governmental majority, party discipline is less important, and coalitions are formed on a case-by-case basis (Kreppel, 2009). Cleavages other than ideological ones (such as constituency interests, which in the EU often overlap with national interests) become important. Internal divisions limit leaders' ability to wield the whip (Maltzman, 1997, p. 23), and few sanctions are generally available. Group divisions and lack of party discipline are contrasted by strong committees (Yoshinaka et al., 2010, p. 58).

This is *a fortiori* the case in the EP: Parliamentary groups are formed by national parties that are disposed to leave if dissatisfied (Bressanelli, 2012; McElroy and Benoit, 2010). Preference divergence is sometimes large, and members pay heed to the national delegation's dictates: Reelection is controlled by national parties which decide who heads their lists, and electoral campaigns are directed nationally (Hix et al., 2011, p. 496).

Nevertheless, legislative work is organized to fit transnational political groups. This is the reason why groups exist. They play a decisive role in choosing the EP president, vice-presidents, and committee chairs. They also choose rapporteurs and organize the agenda and individual speaking time. In fact, EP groups are reported to be more cohesive during roll-call voting than their

American homologues (Hix et al., 2011, p. 501). To justify their existence, EP groups need to continuously balance between allocations which benefit the group as a whole and internal coalition building.

A contract between a group and its rapporteur

Theories of legislative organization revolve around an agency problem in which parliamentarians are hired to further the interests of a principal (Maltzman, 1997, pp. 9-13). The quality of an agent is defined by his or her expertise. This is the centerpiece of the *informational* approach. Expertise on the consequences of laws improves their quality, and thus the collective gain (Krehbiel, 1991). The focus is on the supply side of legislation, assuming all MPs seek influence in the chamber.

In contrast, the *distributive* perspective stresses the driving forces of legislators themselves (Shepsle and Weingast, 1994, pp. 149-53). Why accept the extra workload of drafting legislation if not in the hopes of setting the agenda? The distributive equilibrium relies on an exchange of influence between legislators. Each member is given a disproportionate influence over his or her most coveted policy domain. Policy expertise is strongly related to policy outliers. In fact, the effect of dedication would increase with the degree of party group disloyalty. In this article, I argue that the opposite is true in the European Parliament. I control for members' motivation and focus on the exchange of information between party members.

The *partisan* approach offers some insights in this respect. Parties serve an informational purpose between members with similar preferences. Party members take cues from specialized colleagues whose interest-driven bias is smaller. To enforce the contract, party members delegate control over nomination to electoral offices and in-house privileges to the party. The existence of parties is justified by the advantages a common party label procures during an election, as well as the disproportionate influence that the majority party can offer (Cox and McCubbins, 1993, 1994). Neither justification applies to the European context, since European groups are only responsible for in-house coordination and can procure no electoral benefits. Furthermore, there is no majority party in the EP. To ambitious MEPs, however, groups are key gatekeepers, controlling influence. The EP is consequently a good case for testing the minimal requirements for the existence of parliamentary parties. In the following, I argue that groups mainly exist to fulfill their members' need for information.

Theories of legislative organization are designed to explain committee seat allocations, not individual delegations. The informational approach predicts that committees are staffed with members with heterogeneous preferences. Players deduce interest-driven bias in policy information by triangulation. This is hardly possible when only one rapporteur is named per group. The potential for agency drift has become ever more acute as inter-institutional consensus is increasingly met behind the closed doors of early agreements (Reh, 2014; Reh et al., 2013). Therefore, when groups delegate for informational purposes, they strive to reduce incentives for drift. On the other hand, given the overall weak incentives for party group formation, coordinators pay more attention to the demand side of legislation (i.e., MEPs' own wishes). This is reflected in the strict proportionality rules applied between national delegations even within groups (Mamadouh and Raunio, 2003, p. 347). Group coordinators' objectives therefore should be expected to oscillate between informational delegations and strategic distribution of influence.

Expectations

Maltzman (1997) implies that the explanatory power of each approach depends on the legislative context. Members have greater incentives to act as agents of their group when groups are central to the legislative process (Maltzman, 1997, pp. 38-40). As we have seen, institutional rules put EP groups in charge of report allocations.

In particular, Maltzman (1997) suggests that the informational approach dominates when political salience is high, as the party leadership is more willing to incur the costs of ensuring party discipline (Maltzman, 1997, pp. 32-36). In the European context, "salience" often translates to the potential impact the EP can have on legislation, as well as the opportunity cost sustained by the group.[3] Both the opportunity cost sustained by the group and the salience perceived by members are defined by the legislative procedure under which a bill is passed. As such, the allocation of codecision reports is a most-likely scenario for an informational game taking place within EP groups. This leads to several hypotheses about how codecision rapporteurs are chosen.

Rapporteurs inform the larger legislative body about the practical implications of proposals and suggest improvements. The political sway of Parliament depends on its ability to enter into detailed debates about policies. Committee staff, however, is generalist. The rapporteur's experience from

[3] "Salience" often refers to the interest a principal takes in particular issues.

political work in a relevant policy domain is therefore essential. This background will ensure that the rapporteur has a grasp of a policy's contentious elements. Also, he or she knows who to see to obtain more information. When holding political experience constant, I therefore expect expertise to improve chances of allocation.

Hypothesis 1. *Policy-specific experience (expertise) improves chances of report allocation.*

Having limited capacity to discover and sanction policy drift, coordinators prefer loyal group members. However, groups need to trade off the collective gains from information with individual claims for exposure. As a consequence – among qualified and loyal candidates – they are expected to consistently allocate reports to those who have shown the most interest in committee work. This is to say that the effect of MEPs' self-selection increases with their loyalty to the group.

Hypothesis 2. *Dedication has the most positive effect among loyal members.*

Given the high level of selection during codecision, group coordinators are under pressure to satisfy a different set of members during other allocations. Own-initiative reports are politically charged statements and offer their authors a unique possibility to push for an agenda. These reports are attractive and limited in number – especially in committees with a crammed agenda (as was the case for the three committees under study). Committees need prior authorization to draft own-initiative reports from the Conference of Presidents before they name a rapporteur. Hurka and Kaeding (2012, p. 516) thus conclude that these reports also entail an opportunity cost. However, these reports imply no detailed legislation and no inter-institutional bargaining. The group's needs are therefore not the same as for codecision reports. I therefore expect a negative correlation between allocations during codecision and the drafting of own-initiative reports.

Hypothesis 3. *Allocations of own-initiative reports decrease chances of allocation of high-impact legislation.*

Variables

The data is based on a selection of three of the most influent committees in the EP as identified by Yordanova (2009, p. 256): The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the Committee on Environment and Consumer Protection and the Committee on Transport and Tourism. The choice of cases was strategic. As I want to test the differential impact of influent reports against own-initiative reports, I have opted for a selection of committees in which the number of codecision reports is substantial (labelled "more powerful" in Yordanova's classification). On the other hand, I wish to make a generalizable claim about report allocation in the European Parliament. This requires a representative selection. Therefore, I have selected three committees classified as "information-driven" (Transport and Tourism), "interest-driven" (Employment and Social A airs) and "mixed" (Environment).

	Min.	Mean	Max.
MP	0	0.33	1
Minister	0	0.10	1
Policy MP	0	0.13	1
Policy Minister	0	0.06	1
Loyalty	54	92.84	100
Loyalty (recoded)	0	1.52	3
Attendance	0	0.52	1
Incumbent	0	0.48	1
Committee Incumbent	0	0.36	1
Present Own-Initiative Reports	0	0.08	2
Previous Own-Initiative Reports	0	0.36	4
Present Codecision Reports	0	0.17	5

Table 1: Univariate statistics

The dependent variable is the number of Codecision reports that an MEP has drafted on behalf of his committee within each parliamentary session (one

year).[4] During codecision, Parliament act as a full-fledged co-legislator to the Council. The rapporteur is involved in interinstitutional bargaining and the outcome is translated into European law. Previous research has furthermore shown that parties put more emphasis on these kinds of reports when reappointing MEPs to office (Hermansen, 2016). According to Maltzman's (1997) argument, codecision allocations therefore constitute a most likely scenario in which transnational groups are willing to impose party discipline to pursue an informational rationale. In the analysis, I contrast these allocations with the allocation of own-initiative reports.

[4] Note that since there may be delays in the treatment of cases, I have relied on the date when a report has been presented to the plenary, and not the date when the report was voted upon, as is usually reported.

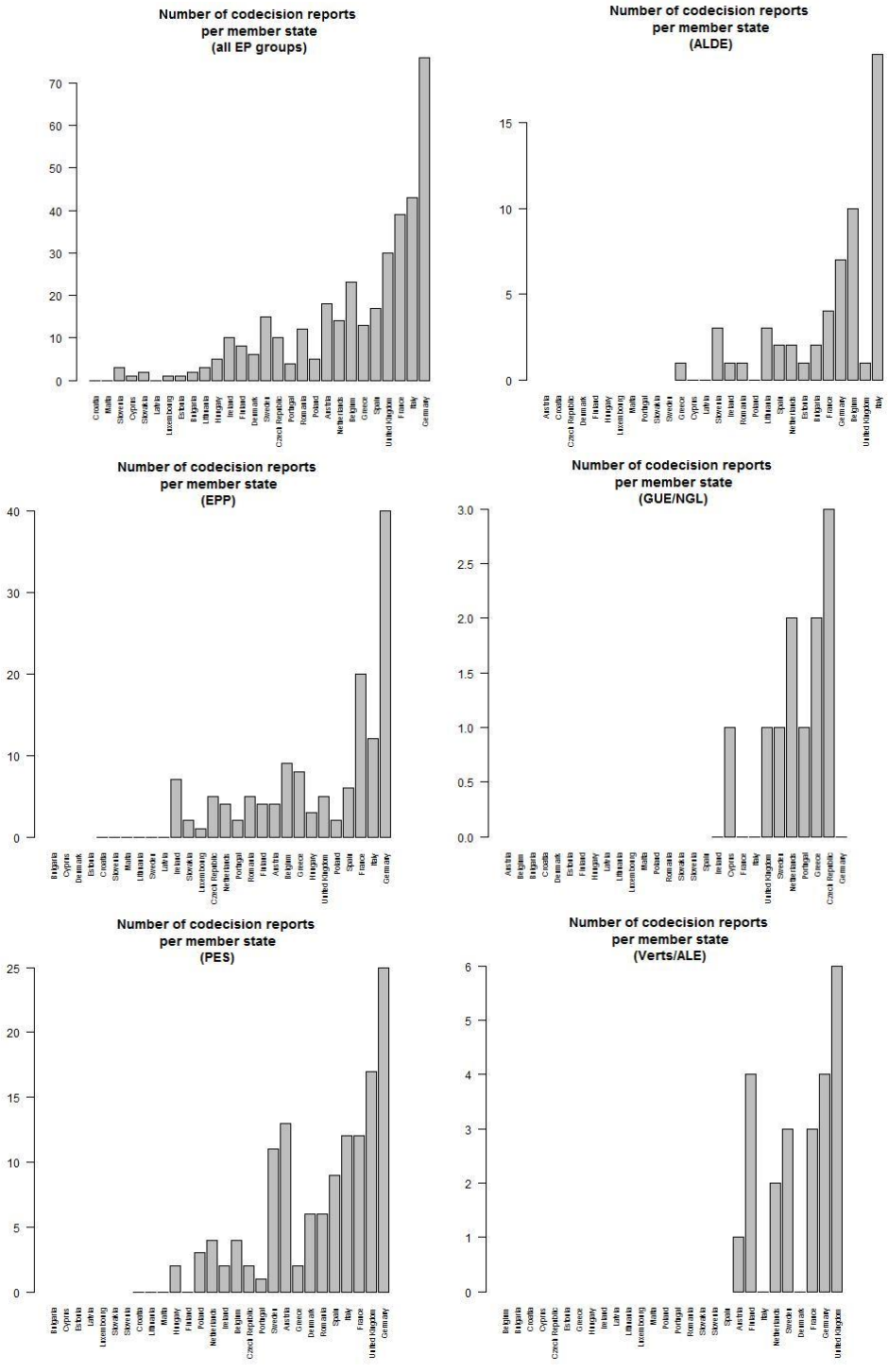

Figure 1: The distribution of codecision reports follows to some extent the number of nationals from each member state. However, some deviations from proportionality exist, especially in the

smaller EP groups. (Only full committee members are counted. Member states are sorted by the size of their seats.)

The barplots in figure 1 illustrate the distribution of codecision reports by nationality. The first barplot illustrates the overall distribution, while the following plots display the same distribution within EP groups. Each member state is sorted by the size of its national delegation (i.e.: the number of full committee members in the sample).[5] Overall, we see that the number of reports increases with the number of MEPs. However, there are deviations from proportionality. This is especially true within the smaller EP groups. In the following, I argue that these deviations are due to variations in MEPs' dedication and groups' need for information.

Satisfying the group's need for information (H_1)

Codecision allocations are a most-likely case in which coordinators seek policy information. Expertise may be acquired prior to an MEP's first election to Parliament or through in-house specialization. The hypothesis on expertise is operationalized and tested in two different manners. At all times, the relative effect of policy expertise is measured at equal levels of political experience.

The variable *Incumbent* captures whether a member has previous experience from the European Parliament. It expresses whether committee members have already sought and gained reelection at least once. Turnover is high among committee staff as well as MEPs and their assistants. Incumbent members are therefore particularly valuable for preserving institutional memory. Some 45 per cent of the MEPs in this study had been reelected at least once. This is in contrast to the 80 to 90 per cent of incumbents in the U.S. Congress (Manning and Petersen, 2013). Bivariate statistics indicate a learning period among newcomers: While 33 per cent of all committee members wrote at least one codecision report during their stay in the EP, we see that the proportion is slightly smaller among MEPs who were in their first term (24 per cent). This figure is nonetheless high in a comparative perspective. Freshmen in Congress, in contrast, continue to occupy a secondary role despite efforts to improve their position (e.g., Matthews 1960; Ainsworth and Hanson 1996).

The variable *Committee Incumbent* captures the relative policy expertise an MEP has acquired through specialization. It indicates whether incumbent members returned to the same committee after reelection. Committee

[5] The advantage of this normalization is that the added seats following the 2007 and 2013 EU enlargements are accounted for.

memberships are overall stable with 72 per cent of those who were reelected being reassigned to the same committee as before. Policy specialization in this manner is expected to impact allocations positively.[6]

I capture the effect of expertise acquired through political work on the national level (i.e.: not at the regional or federal levels). A large proportion of the MEPs are experienced statespeople: Some 32 per cent had previously served in a national legislature, whereas 11 per cent had experience from the executive branch of a national government. Given the discontinuity of the party structure between the EP and national politics, service at one level may not automatically be rewarded with positions at another level (Stolz, 2003, p. 243). The binary variables *MP* and *Minister* capture previous national offices. When controlling for dedication, these variables are assumed to capture an MEP's political skills, and not his willingness to serve as a rapporteur.

	0	1	2	>2
MP	0.19	0.13	-	-
Minister	0.17	0.21	-	-
Policy MP	0.17	0.18	-	-
Policy Minister	0.16	0.32	-	-
Incumbent	0.11	0.24	-	-
CommitteeIncumbent	0.11	0.28	-	-
Present Own-Initiative Reports	0.17	0.15	0	-
Previous Own-Initiative Reports	0.15	0.26	0.16	0.22
	0-25%	25-50%	50-75%	75-100%
Attendance	0.05	0.12	0.2	0.31
Loyalty	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.14

Table 2: Bivariate results – Mean number of codecision reports within values of the explanatory variables.

Expertise from the national level is captured through two binary indicators: *Policy MP* and *Policy Minister* designate former MPs and ministers who sat on national parliamentary committees or were in charge of portfolios in policy

[6] Note the difference in operationalization with what would have been expected from an American-style seniority system as tested by Yoshinaka et al. (2010). In a seniority system, we would expect a linear relationship between the number of terms/years in office and assignments.

domains overlapping with their present EP committee. In the initial model, these two indicators are combined into a simple, binary index. In fact, some 36 per cent of the former MPs and 53 per cent of the former members of government had previously been active in a policy domain with direct relevance to their present committee. Moreover, we see from the bivariate statistics in table 2 that former national politicians with policy expertise perform better than their non-expert homologues.

Balancing group needs with individual requests (H_2)

It may be that MEPs who have a particular interest in EU legislation are more likely to be assigned to committees that overlap with their policy interests. Therefore, I control for MEPs' propensity to self-select into (or opt out of) positions in Parliament. Previous studies have used attendance rates in plenary for this purpose. A part of the MEPs' pay is conditional on attendance at plenary sessions. This is not the case with committee meetings. MEPs who attend committee meetings therefore signal a strong interest in legislation – particularly within the policy domain in question. Each committee meets between 20 and 30 times a year, and turnout varies substantially. While the average attendee is present at 51 per cent of all meetings, only 71 members attended more than 90 per cent of meetings. *Attendance* ranges from 0 to 1 and expresses the proportion of meetings in which the MEP participated during the year prior to the report. Where I model all 5 years in a term, the variable is simulated for the first year. Bivariate statistics in Table 2 already suggest a positive correlation between attendance levels and codecision proposals.

In the initial model, I also run an alternative fit in which attendance is measured as participation in plenary meetings rather than in committees. Missing observations from the plenary are excluded. Moreover, there are no means of deducing an MEP's investment in a particular committee from his or her plenary attendance. Substitute committee members are therefore also excluded. Because the overall attendance level in plenary has become high in recent years due to the financial incentive structure,[7] I do not expect results to be as clear, nor do I expect this model to perform as well, as the main model.

A rapporteur who generally toes the party line is less likely to deviate from the group's position. Keeping track of loyalty to the group position during roll-call votes is an efficient way for coordinators to monitor their members'

[7] Mean attendance level in these data is 89 per cent.

inclination to follow decided policy. Voting offers the occasion for rank-and-file members to participate in making EU law and express their preferences. Voting records also constitute important information for voters, parties and researchers alike. *Loyalty* is a count variable derived from rollcall votes cast on proposals treated by the committee on which the MEP sits. The measure captures the proportion of times MEPs align to the position endorsed by his or her group. Both attendance and loyalty are lagged by one year in order to measure the purported causes (dedication and shared preferences) before the causes (report allocation).

Bivariate statistics are ambiguous: The least loyal MEPs garner more reports than the highest quartile.[8] Voting loyalty is nonetheless remarkably high; MEPs voted on average in line with their transnational group in 93 per cent of the votes pertaining to their policy domain. Only 15 per cent of the observations voted against their group in more than 20 per cent of the votes. The variable is highly skewed. In the final analysis, the measure is recoded into batches corresponding to its quartiles, ranging from 0 to 3: The first quartile (91.44) receives the value 0, and the last quartile (96.74) is assigned the value 3.

In a setting where coordinators endeavor to both pick a good rapporteur and to satisfy the personal ambition of members, the effect of dedication will increase with MEP loyalty. To test H_2 the model therefore includes an interaction between attendance and loyalty.

Satisfying a broader span of members (H_3)

To appease internal claims for exposure, coordinators may also choose to give own-initiative drafts to other group members than those responsible for codecision legislation. I measure this effect in two different ways:

Number of Present Own-Initiative Reports captures the number of own-initiative reports an MEP has presented to the plenary in the same year as the measure of codecision reports. I expect that MEPs who write codecision reports do not acquire own-initiative reports the same year and vice-versa.

Number of Past Own-Initiative Reports measures the number of own-initiative reports MEPs have drafted up to now. None have drafted more than 4 such reports during the last 10 years.

[8] The focus of this study is how delegation decisions are motivated by shared preferences which facilitate exchange of information within parliamentary groups. Non-affiliated MEPs and members of de facto technical groups (the EFD, the UEN and the IND/DEM) are therefore excluded from the analysis. That is, excluded MEPs are either not members of a group, or their group is not formed mainly for policy-making in the EP.

While I expect both variables to have a negative effect in the final analysis, we can see rather mixed evidence from the bivariate statistics in table 2. This may change, however, in the multivariate analysis where the effect of group selection is isolated from MEP self-selection.

Control Variables

The model also includes a control for the committee *Chair*. Whereas the American Congress is dominated by two parties, with the committee chair being a majority leader, this is not the case in the multi-party European Parliament. The chair is more of a figure of consensus. Less salient reports are referred to the chairperson as a default option or if the initially appointed rapporteur loses the confidence of the committee (Hausemer, 2006, p. 523; Corbett et al., 2007, p. 143). Committees can either keep their chair throughout the entire legislature or redistribute positions at midterm. For this reason, the data contains a total of 8 individual chairmen.

Position on the committee (except for the chairperson) is not controlled for. The data include both full committee members and their substitutes. Substitutes are allowed to draft reports and enjoy full speech rights, as well as voting rights (provided that the committee meeting is not fully set – which it rarely is). In fact, some 31 codecision reports were allocated to 23 different substitutes during the period of study. Studies of committee allotments and report allocation essentially rely on the same theories and assume the same criteria of selection. Controlling for committee position would mask the true pattern of selection; the correlation is spurious. Position is used nonetheless to impute the level of dedication a coordinator expects from his or her group members when they first join a committee.

Finally, the model also includes a lagged version of the dependent variable to control for autocorrelation. *Number of Codecision Reports (lagged)* is a count variable that captures the number of reports an MEP garnered in the committee in the previous year. For newcomers to the EP the first observation is 0, while incumbent members are assigned the number of reports from the last year of the previous session.

Data and the model

Original data on MEP background and in-house behavior

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Codecision - 2004-2009	40	33	60	62	56	251
Codecision - 2009-2014	24	21	22	45	39	151
Own-Initiative - 2004-2009	16	25	18	20	25	104
Own-Initiative - 2009-2014	12	20	15	20	13	80

Table 3: Number of Reports Drawn on Behalf of the Committee

Since the dependent variable is a count of allocations within a session (one year), the statistical model is a Poisson model with log-link. The data structure is naturally multi-level and observations are ordered as a cross-sectional time series.

The use of the codecision procedure depends on the policy domain, so that the model allows for differing levels of allocation across committees. We furthermore see from Table 3 that more reports were drawn in the 6th legislature (2004-2009) than in the 7th (2009-2014) and that allocations were cyclical, with more reports allocated in the last half of each legislature. Because of these variations, the model includes varying intercepts for the legislature (EP 6 and EP 7), the committee, and the parliamentary session (ranging from 1 to 5), as well as individual intercepts for each MEP, thus accounting for individual variation which is not explained by the model.[9]

All studies to date have relied on pooled data which makes it impossible to distinguish causes from consequences. Here, explanatory variables are lagged to increase the probability that correlations have a causal origin. The lag in the data structure implies that some information is unknown at the beginning of each cycle, yet allocation decisions are also made in the first year following elections. This information is unknown both to me as a researcher and to the decision-makers themselves. It is therefore modelled as such. I furthermore allow the dependent variable to be autocorrelated: The past number of codecision reports might influence present allocation decisions. This is dealt with by adding a lagged value of y as a control in the model.

$$Report_i \sim Poisson(\mu_i)$$

[9] Replication data and the complete code used to estimate the model in OpenBUGs can be found in the online appendix.

$$
\begin{aligned}
\log(\mu_i) = {} & \alpha_i + \alpha_{EP,i} + \alpha_{Committee,i} + \alpha_{Session,i} + \alpha_{MEP,i} \\
& + \beta_1 \times NationalPolitics_i \\
& + \beta_2 \times PolicyNationalPolitics_i \\
& + \beta_3 \times Incumbency_i \\
& + \beta_4 \times CommitteeIncumbency_i \\
& + \beta_5 \times Loyalty_i \\
& + \beta_6 \times Loyalty_i \times Attendance_i \\
& + \beta_7 \times Attendance_i \\
& + \beta_8 \times Past\ Own - InitiativeReports_i \\
& + \beta_9 \times Present\ Own - InitiativeReports_i \\
& + \beta_{10} \times LaggedCodecisionReports_i \\
& + \beta_{11} \times Chair_i
\end{aligned}
$$

Bayesian modelling of missing and unobserved data

I have fitted two Bayesian versions of the model with vague, though slightly conservative priors for the regression coefficients [10]. All models are run with 50 000 iterations, a 20 000 iteration burn-in, and only every 10th iteration is stored in order to address potential autocorrelation in the simulation. None of the models showed any signs of non-convergence.[11]

The Bayesian approach explicitly models both known and unknown quantities (Gill, 2009, p. 43). There are two types of unknown data in this model: One is due to missing observations, and the other is due to things the coordinators themselves do not know. Missing observations are few and are simulated through Bayesian priors informed by the empirical distribution of the variable.[12]

The data also include observations for which the coordinators lack information at the time of the allocation. I assume that coordinators rely on information on attendance rates and voting behavior to assess the dedication and loyalty of their group members. Following elections, this information is not available on newcomers, yet coordinators allocate reports in the first year of the term. In a first fit of the model I deal with this using listwise exclusion. The model is thus estimated on 1,992 observations of 485 individual MEPs in the periods 2005-2009 and 2010-2014.

[10] $\beta_i \sim N(\mu, \Sigma)$; $\alpha_j \sim N(0,1)$; $\tau_j \sim IG(0,10)$

[11] Convergence statistics are provided in the online appendix.

[12] More detail on imputations are provided in the online appendix.

In a second fit of the model I impute values for the unobserved data. I assume that coordinators believe new members are on average similar to old members, and that their loyalty therefore is roughly the same. Unknown values of loyalty are thus simulated through the same distribution as missing observations. Unknown values of attendance, however, are imputed using a normal regression which is estimated in parallel to the main model. Predictors are drawn from the MEP 's position on the committee. Although the main model assumes that MEPs can choose their level of dedication independently of their position on the committee, I also assume that coordinators use the group members' positions to form expectations about their future level of attendance. Attendance among committee chairs is used as a reference level, while the relative effects of vice-chairs, full members and substitutes are estimated. Results are reported in the appendix.

$$
\begin{aligned}
Attendance_i &\sim N(\mu_i, \tau) \\
\mu_i &= \alpha \\
&\quad + \beta_1 \times ViceChair_i \\
&\quad + \beta_2 \times Member_i \\
&\quad + \beta_3 \times Substitute_i
\end{aligned}
$$

Imputations are done for all newcomers. I use data from the last year of the 6th term to model incumbent members of the 7th term. The second fit includes 2,488 observations of 503 MEPs in the period 2004-2014. All other variables are observed when reports are allocated.

In simulating data, I obtain less reliable estimates of dedication and loyalty, while obtaining a more precise estimate of the effect of all other variables. Moreover, the second fit gains in realism insofar as it does not ignore the uncertainty faced by players.

Results

A clear advantage for policy experts (H_1)

Results from a first, tentative model are reported in Figure 2. They lend support to Hypothesis 1 on expertise. Policy-specific work among former MPs almost doubles their chances of garnering a report. Similarly, a relevant ministerial portfolio increases chances of allocation among former members of government by 65 per cent. The overall impression is nonetheless that political careers in the EP are separate from careers in national politics, and that the transition from one level to another is far from automatic. While the total effect for former members

of parliament with policy-expertise is positive, this is not the case for either former MPs without expertise or for former ministers (with or without expertise).

This pattern is also clear in the general model displayed in Figure 3: MEPs with a prior political career at the national level (either in the executive or the legislative branch) who have not been able to secure a seat (at least as a substitute) on a relevant committee are 48 per cent less likely to obtain codecision reports than their colleagues with no national experience. Switching to a committee in a relevant policy domain would, on the other hand, multiply their chances by 2.1.

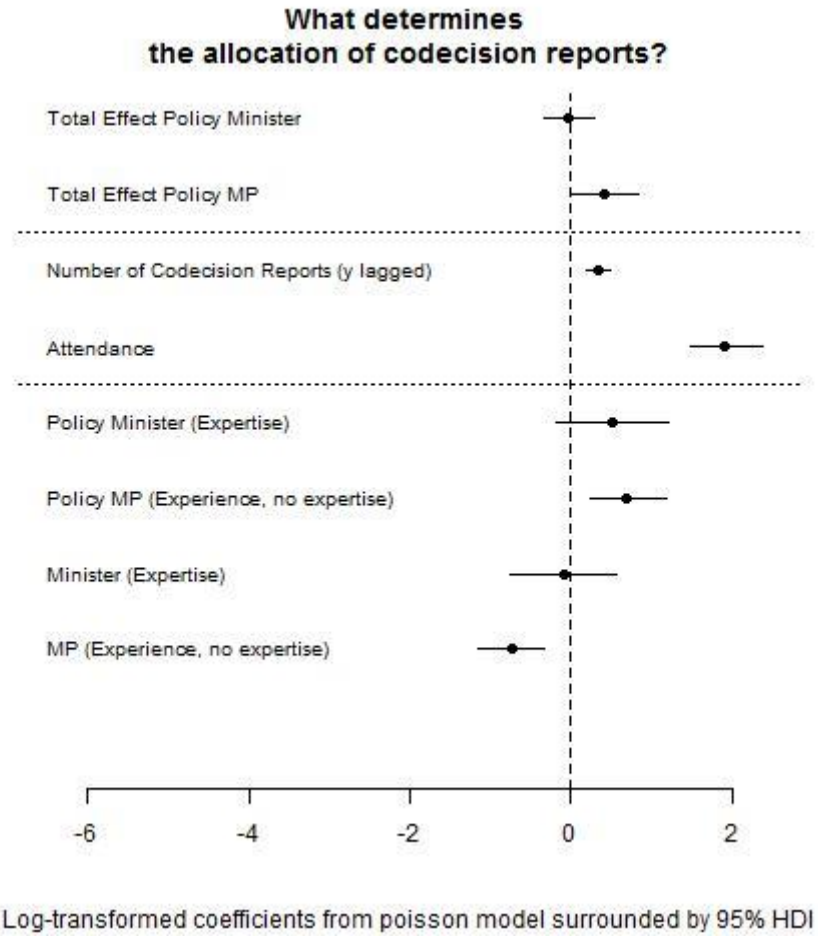

Figure 2: Results from the three alternative models of codecision report allocations. Group coordinators value expertise and dedication, but they also pay attention to group cohesion: Own-initiative reports do not improve access to codecision allocations, and the effect of dedication is conditioned by loyalty.

The effect of specialization is similar within the European Parliament. MEPs who have been reelected and reassigned to the same committee are 2.5 times more likely to earn a report, while the effect of reelection when switching committees between elections is – for all practical purposes – none. Incumbent MEPs are just as likely as freshmen to earn reports unless their European experience was directly related to the committee's jurisdiction.

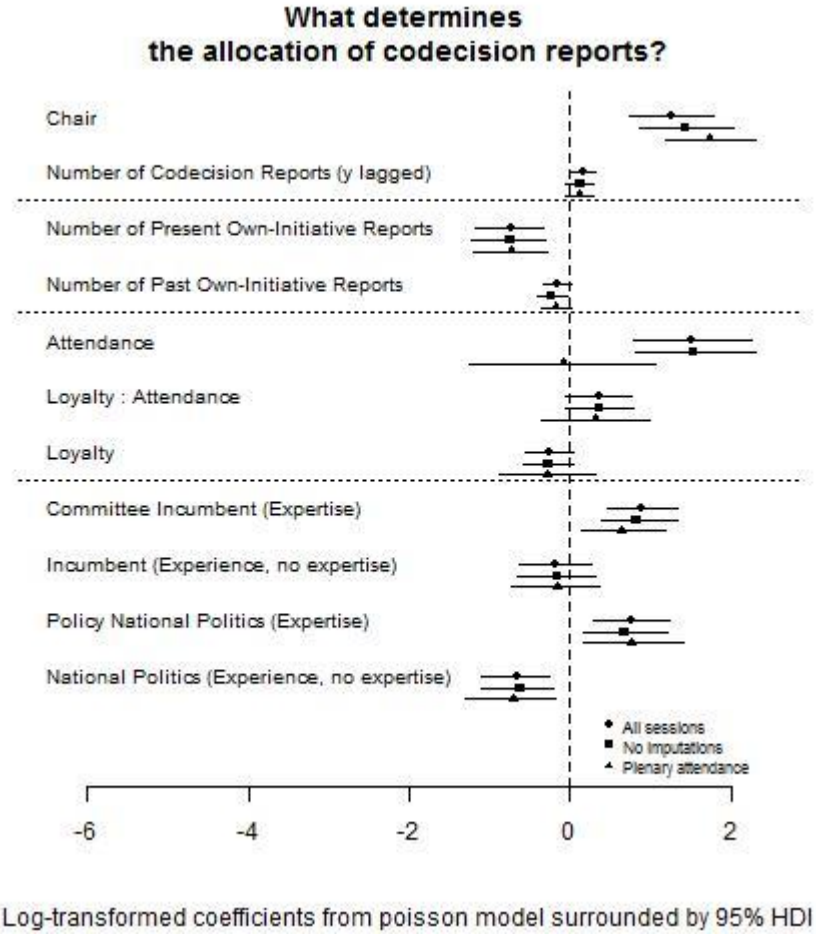

Figure 3: Results from the three alternative models of codecision report allocations. Group coordinators value expertise and dedication, but they also pay attention to group cohesion: Own-initiative reports do not improve access to codecision allocations, and the effect of dedication is conditioned by loyalty.

We clearly see that coordinators consistently appreciate policy-specific knowledge. It is an additional advantage when this expertise was obtained at the European level: MEPs with policy expertise from national politics are 14 per cent more likely to garner reports than EP freshmen without such experience. The corresponding figure for committee incumbent members is 106 per cent.

Individual requests satisfied only when policy drift is limited (H_2)

The decision of MEPs to attend committee meetings is a prerequisite for all report allocations. The measure of attendance taps directly into the degree to which MEPs are able to self-select in the EP. The model displays how the total effect of self-selection is moderated by the negative baseline effect of group loyalty. (The negative effect of loyalty disappears when attendance reaches 71 per cent.)

Full committee members attended on average 64 per cent of all meetings. A further increase in attendance by ten percent would improve chances of a report allocation in the next year by 16 per cent among the least loyal members. This effect increases drastically when considering loyalty. The most loyal members would – with the same increase in attendance – be 29 per cent more likely to receive a codecision report the following year.

Coordinators are selective about their choice of rapporteur: Although they take into account the wishes of their group members when they delegate the most important legislation, the effect increases substantially when coordinators believe the risk of policy drift is minimal.

Competetive claims appeased (H_3)

The effect of past allocations depends on the procedure under which they were done.

MEPs who are allowed to initiate reports are 52 per cent less likely to receive any drafts for codecision in the same year. While this could be because legislative initiative is time-consuming, we see that the effect of own-initiative reports on future allocations is also negative. MEPs who have initiated legislation once, are 14 per cent less likely to receive a codecision report for the rest of the legislature.

These results are in stark contrast to the immediate effect of codecision allocations. Group members who handle codecision legislation on behalf of the group will be 1.2 times more likely to receive another report the following year. This effect is quite substantial considering that we already control for the committee chair, who is oftentimes the default option. EP coordinators rely on

the same group members to supervise legislation. Yet – as the attendance variable indicates – there are other candidates who are willing to draft reports.

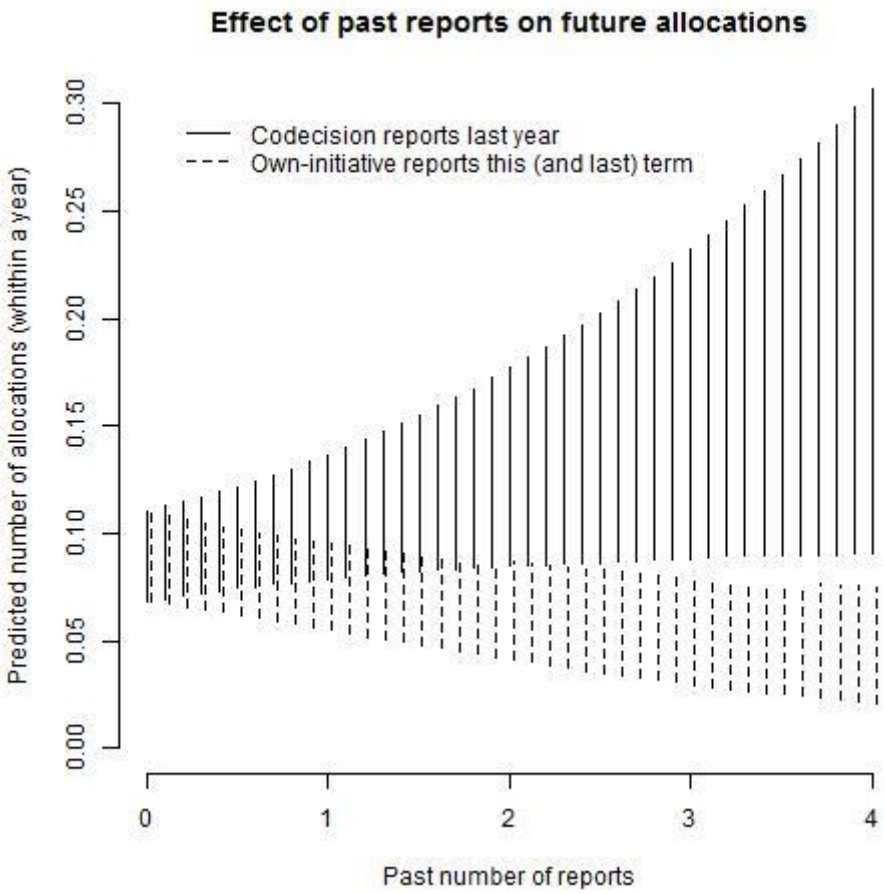

Figure 4: While having drafted a codecision report in the preceding year increases chances of another allocation, the e effect of having written an own-initiative report during the current or previous legislative term has negative repercussions. (Estimated effect among the most loyal rank-and- le MEPs with mean attendance (as estimated among full committee members) and no prior experience/expertise.)

The overall results support the idea that coordinators are under pressure to provide their groups with high-quality policy proposals, while at the same time giving exposure to a broad range of members. On the one hand, it means that MEPs who handle codecision reports acquire expertise that will be valuable for groups during the next allocation. This leads to an increasingly narrow set of codecision rapporteurs. On the other hand, groups should satisfy the other members' need to build a political profile. This is attended to in part through allocation of own-initiative reports.

	All sessions	No imputation	Plenary attendance
Correctly predicted (positive counts)	0.115	0.109	0.094
Correctly predicted (zero counts)	0.979	0.980	0.962
95% HDI overlaps true value (positive counts)	0.432	0.473	0.571
95% HDI overlaps true value (zero counts)	0.997	0.997	0.996

Table 4: Proportion of correct in-sample predictions

Model performance

At first glance, the model performs extremely well: In-sample simulation of predicted values shows that rounding off to the predicted count of reports matches the actual number of allocations in 86 per cent of all cases when missing values are imputed. 92 per cent of all observations overlap with the predicted 95 per cent highest density interval (HDI). This is, however, to some extent, an artifact of the high number of non-rapporteurs in the sample.

Table 4 shows that predictions are particularly precise for zero counts (98 per cent), while only 11 per cent of the rapporteurs were predicted with a correct number of reports. The HDI nonetheless overlaps with the true number of reports in 43 per cent of all cases.[13] We also see that the model in which attendance and loyalty have been imputed for the first year in office performs somewhat better than the model in which the first year of each term is excluded.

The first model – with no imputed lag – is also run with an alternative operationalization of attendance in plenary rather than committee meetings. We see that the predictive performance of this model is weaker. More interestingly, we also see from Figure 3 that Hypotheses 2 and 3 are not supported in this alternative fit of the model. Assuming MEPs are under less pressure to attend committee meetings than in plenary sessions, this alternative run illustrates the importance of controlling for individual wishes when modelling coordinator choice in order to avoid endogeneity problems.

[13] Predictions for all rapporteurs are reported in the online appendix.

Conclusion

Cox and McCubbins (1993) argue that parties in Congress maintain the support of their members mainly because of the opportunities they procure for politicians during elections and because of their majority status. EP groups cannot provide any of these benefits. They have, however, been given procedural advantages (Hix et al., 2011). When allocating positions, EP groups can be expected to seek common gains for their members. They do so by providing information through careful rapporteur selection. Because of their weak position, however, groups are expected to pay close attention to MEPs' wishes.

This paper has explored Maltzman's (1997) claims that committee assignments follow an informational rationale when salience is high. Salience is operationalized as policies in which the EP has the greatest say, and for which groups have sustained an increased opportunity cost. The higher investment of the political group incites coordinators to be more selective in their choice of rapporteurs. I found that codecision reports were trusted to MEPs who tended to be more loyal, and who had previous experience with political work in a relevant policy domain – either from national politics or at the European level. This was also the case for incumbent members of the EP. Thus, switching committees between periods comes with penalties. The allocation of one codecision report furthermore influences the next allocation, such that some MEPs become repeat rapporteurs. Generally speaking, this analysis conveys the idea that political and procedural skills need to be coupled with policy expertise. The European Parliament is not place for the "all-around" politician.

An MEP's dedication to committee work is an important predictor for allocations, yet the effect is the greatest when coordinators feel certain that the named rapporteur will not drift far from the group's official policy. This is all the more important for individual assignments – such as rapporteurships – for which the group has limited means of triangulating information.

In the model, we see that not all reports increase their author' s chances of being a codecision rapporteur. There is a path-dependency in which being a codecision rapporteur increases one's chances of acquiring codecision reports in the future, while writing own-initiative reports decreases one's chances. This may be the result of a distributive pressure by which coordinators need to satisfy a wide range of MEPs' wishes for political exposure. Does this jeopardize Parliament's ambition for legislative-executive supervision? Own-initiative reports are often put forth as one of Parliament's main tools for political signaling to the Commission. These initiatives are part of the political debate and indications to the Commission of the general mood in Parliament. Own-initiative

reports also require a majority in the plenary to be adopted. Nevertheless, they imply no formal inter-institutional compromises and have no legal effect. They may serve as a first step in policy change, but they are often vaguer and more extreme than what a final consensus looks like once the Commission has put forth a formal proposal.

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