Blurred lines between electoral and parliamentary representation: The use of constituency staff among European Members of Parliament

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Abstract

Political actors receive public funding to execute their mandate. Spending that money for electoral purposes, however, undermines democratic representation.

We investigate to what extent parliamentary spending increases during campaign periods and how the electoral system affects such behavior. Specifically, we model within-individual changes in constituency-staff size among 1174 Members of the European Parliament. We find that local spending increases prior to both European and national elections and more so in candidate-centered systems.

We conclude that EU citizens are represented differently depending on their nationality. Insofar as constituency staff creates an incumbency advantage, the system also generates inequalities between candidates which public funding aims to equalize. Moreover, the attempt to mend Parliament's democratic deficit by financing members' contact with citizens also implies funding national electoral campaigns.

Keywords: European Parliament, constituency staff, constituency work, re-election campaigns, electoral systems, personal votes.

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Introduction

In liberal democracies, the state – for good reasons – often provides political actors with financial support. Public funding for members of parliament (MPs) has grown over the last decade to meet the rising complexity of legislative tasks and demands for constituency work (Poguntke, Scarrow, and Webb 2016, p. 665; IPU 2012). While this money is not meant for electoral campaigning, resources are frequently spent for that purpose as well.

Such behavior is problematic because funding for representing citizens in parliaments obeys to different principles than funding for electoral representation. Parliamentary representation is when *elected* members of parliament speak, advocate and act on behalf of citizens/voters (i.e. the substantive form of representation as described by Pitkin 1967). Electoral representation, in the context of this article, are activities that present *candidates* to citizens/voters in elections (i.e. the formalistic form of representation as argued by Pitkin 1967). As a result, the funding of parliamentary and electoral representation ought to be separated. When this is not the case, fair electoral competition is threatened and voters are presented with a lopsided menu of choice. For instance, MPs that use publicly funded staff to organize campaign activities, draw advantages from resources that are unavailable to challenger candidates. This creates an inequality among competitors which public support for electoral representation usually seeks to equalize (Biezen, 2008, p. 348; Murphy, 2016, p. 117).

Parliamentary allowances are nevertheless key to effective democratic representation. They are important for the separation of powers because they endow legislators with resources to monitor and challenge the executive. They are also important for democratic accountability because they allow our representatives to connect with their citizens.

This study argues that increasing unmonitored funding of parliamentarians in a system that incentivizes personal vote-seeking broadens MPs' motivation and possibility to use parliamentary resources for elections. It has already been observed elsewhere that parliamentary resources are used for electoral purposes, and are an increasingly important source of public funding for candidates (and parties) (Gauja 2010, pp. 158–160; Bolleyer and Gauja 2015, p. 334; Nassmacher 2006, pp. 466–499). For example, office space is used for party meetings; telephone and other communication technologies are used for political advertising; travel allowances are spent for campaign travel; and personal staff is involved in campaigning activities (Nassmacher, 2006, p. 450). In such cases, parliamentary allowances become indirect subsidies for electoral campaigns.

We contribute first by reassessing this claim drawing on a different measure of public funding. We then explore the effect of the electoral system on such practices. Specifically, we investigate the variations in local staff financed over MPs' parliamentary allowance as an example of public funding. We then model the spending as a function of the electoral calendar and the incentives to cultivate a personal vote created by the electoral system in which MPs can expect to compete.

Our case is the European Parliament (EP) – the legislature of the European Union (EU). We have chosen the EP for several reasons. From a practical point of view, local staff as electoral resources are one of the least researched fields in the study of political finance. Obtaining reliable data is difficult, because politicians are reluctant to share the information (Poguntke, Scarrow, and Webb, 2016, p. 665). Data on the EP is nonetheless available due to the pressure journalists have exercised over a decade. As a result, the EP publishes the names of members' local staff on its website and this is the source of our original dataset.[1] From a theoretical point of view, European elections are held at the national level. Although all Member States apply proportional representation, variations in the ballot structures create differences in candidates' incentives to cultivate a personal vote (i.e. party- and candidate-cantered types of ballots). By studying the EP, we can consider the effect of electoral systems holding other variables constant within the same institution.

Several studies have previously used Europe's transnational parliament in a quasi-experimental design to consider behaviour induced by electoral institutions (e.g.: Høyland, Hobolt, and Hix, 2019; Daniel, Obholzer, and Hurka, 2017; Obholzer and Daniel, 2016; Wilson, Ringe, and Thomme, 2016). We also consider the multilevel governance system of the EU, where supranational and national levels of governments are interlocked (Hix, 2002). Since incentives to invest in local staff derive from the institutional context in which candidates expect to compete, it also means that – to the extent that a subset of MEPs seek election at the domestic level – varying electoral systems at the supranational (European) as well as national (Member State) level constrain members' behaviour.

The research contributes to a better understanding of the pros and cons of different electoral systems in general, and in the specific case of multilevel governance. We provide evidence showing that public funding given to members of parliament for executing their mandate is used for elections, which is detrimental for democratic representation. This behaviour exacerbates where variants of candidate-centered systems apply. It represents a challenge in multilevel systems, where public funding obtained at the higher level of government (e.g. European) is used by MPs for pur-

[1] European Parliament 2015a, Article 2(c).

suing goals at the lower level (e.g. Member State), thus, missing activities at the targeted level (e.g. European). This is particularly dire for the EU where there is a weak connection between citizens and members of the EP (MEPs), as evidenced by low electoral turnout, low media attention to European issues, and the national parties' prioritisation of national issues over European ones (Hix and Marsh, 2011; Hix, 2002; Føllesdal and Hix, 2006). If public funding is intended to ameliorate citizens' connection with MEPs and the EU, then it needs be spent for the intent of citizens' representation. However, our analysis shows that such a link is difficult to realise without also considering MPs' ambitions and electoral incentives.

In the next section, we introduce parliamentary allowances in the EP before presenting our theoretical framework. We then present our data, research design and empirical results. Last, we discuss the implications of our findings.

Parliamentary allowances

Parliamentary allowances are public money given to individual members of parliament to carry out functions deriving from elected office (e.g. public policy and representation). They are known as the "tools of the trade" in parliament since they enable MPs to pursue their work as both legislators and representatives. While every legislature has its system, parliamentary allowances generally cover travel, office and staffing cost. Among these, the employment of personal assistants is the most significant expenditure, which makes the staff allowance the worthiest of consideration.

Staff allowances permit MPs to organise an office through the recruitment of personal assistants.[2] Personal assistants are one of several staff resources MPs can rely on besides the collective services of parliament (e.g. legal services, committee staff and research services) and the staff employed by party groups. Unlike staff employed by party groups and parliament central services, personal staff are recruited directly by each MP with contracts running at the maximum until the end of the parliamentary mandate. Since their career is intrinsically connected to that of an MP, personal assistants loyally serve the needs and interests of their employers (Salisbury and Shepsle, 1981).

To carry out their duties as elected representatives, legislators divide their time

[2]The staff allowance is also used to recruit trainees and contract out services. While the EP publishes the number of trainees per MEP, it does not present their distribution per parliamentary and constituency offices. There are no available sources on the amount MEPs spend on service providers. Given the availability and quality of the data, our study does not take into account trainees and service providers. For more on trainees see Michon 2014.

between the premises of parliament and their electoral district. The organisation of MPs' offices reflect this division of work. As a result, there are two types of personal assistants: those that work in parliament (hereafter parliamentary assistants/staff) and those that work in the constituency or district (hereafter local assistants/staff).[3] Based on the literature, the constituency representation and activities of MPs are better understood when studying local staff. This is particularly true in parliaments with high staff allowances (e.g. the EP and US Congress) that are characterised by the decentralisation and specialisation of staff operations between parliament and the constituency (Schiff and Smith, 1983; Michon, 2014).

The central role of parliamentary assistants is to help MPs navigate the legislative agenda of parliament. They take care of legislative and oversight activities by following the work of decision-making bodies such as committees, the plenary and parliamentary party groups (Schiff and Smith, 1983; Russell, 2004; Jones, 2006; Busby, 2013; Michon, 2014; Pegan, 2017). Their tasks include monitoring committee work, writing background notes, researching, drafting amendments, questions and plenary speeches, attending meetings with interest group representatives, developing relationships with other MPs and parliamentary party groups.

Parliamentary assistants can also play a role in the representative function of MPs, for example in terms of responding to the written inquiries about policy from constituents and advising parliamentarians on how legislative proposals relate to their constituents' wishes. These activities concern MPs' policy responsiveness to their voters and the party while representing them on substantive issues in committees, the plenary and party meetings (Eulau and Karps, 1977; Norris, 1997). The extent to which parliamentary staff are resources for policy responsiveness is debatable, however. Studying the Washington-based personal staff of US Congressmen, Hertel-Fernandez, Mildenberger, and Stokes (2018) found that parliamentary staff are ill-informed about the preferences of constituents. While parliamentary staff can read local news and monitor public opinion, they are restricted in face-to-face meetings with constituents unless they travel to the constituency or the constituents travel to parliament (Kean, 2001). Therefore, parliamentary staff may not necessarily be the best qualified to link parliamentarians to electoral districts.

In the case of the EP, Busby (2013) found that an MEPs' office in Brussels received on average four constituency requests per month. Also writing on the EP, Michon (2014) described the organisation of electronic correspondence of an MEP and shows that constituency mail is dealt with by local staff. While neither

[3]In the EP, parliamentary staff are known as *accredited parliamentary assistants*, and those in the constituencies are officially known as *local assistants* (Article 34(1), European Parliament, 2009).

Busby's nor Michon's findings are based on a representative sample, they indicate that parliamentary staff in Brussels might not have that many opportunities for involvement in constituency representation and activities (either policy or service responsiveness).

In contrast to parliamentary staff, local assistants are present on the ground in an office located in the electoral constituency. Their location gives them regular and frequent access to voters, the local party and party supporters (Michon, 2014). Hence, they are well placed to advise parliamentarians on the policy wishes of their constituents as well as to assist MPs in policy responsiveness in terms of researching the constituents' policy preferences (Schiff and Smith, 1983; Kean, 2001; Russell, 2004; Tomkova, 2014). For instance, to keep abreast with the issues that are most salient to constituents, local staff participate in town hall meetings and stay in touch with local party leaders; they help organise surgeries where constituents meet their elected representatives and discuss matters of concern to them.

Moreover, local staff are involved in casework whereby an elected member takes actions to advance the interest of a constituent or a group of constituents (Kean, 2001; Tomkova, 2014). Through their engagement with casework, local assistants are a component of service responsivness (Norris, 1997; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1984; Fenno, 1978). Many of them are long-term residents and have a proven record of involvement with community organisations, which gives them a service-orientated mentality (Kean, 2001; Michon, 2014). Besides assisting parliamentarians in casework, they can also act on their behalf and are carriers of symbolic representation, for instance, when they attend events or hold surgeries in place of elected representatives (Eulau and Karps, 1977).[4].

Overall, local staff engage in reputation-building activities throughout a parliamentary mandate. Writing on the US Congress, Kean 2001 noted that district staff are resources for reputation-building activities during elections. In performing casework or other tasks for the constituency, local staff are an advantage to the incumbent candidate: Serving constituents and responding to their queries is (a desirable) part of the job of every democratically elected representative. On the other hand, the utilisation of local staff for campaigning falls into the 'grey area' of political financing, because it disproportionately favors the incumbent. Even in the United States, where restrictions on personal staff's involvement in their employer's campaign are clearly stated, compliance is challenging to ensure.

Research on parliamentarians' personal staff is limited, and especially in compar-

[4]The allocation of public resources that a member of parliament can appropriate for projects in his/her district (pork barrel) is another way to serve constituents (i.e. allocation responsiveness (Eulau and Karps, 1977))

ision to investigations into committee- and party group staff. Existing studies mainly deal with the US Congress. The focus has been to provide descriptive knowledge on staff careers and characteristics (**grosse2007**; Romzek and Utter, 1997; Herrnson, 1994; Leal and Hess, 2004; Jensen, 2011) and, to a minor extent, to build theory about parliamentary staff participation in policymaking (Montgomery and Nyhan, 2017; Crosson et al., 2018; Shepherd and You, 2019). [5]] Research on the EP is not different compared to the US Congress: Descriptive and analytical work predominantely focus on Brussels-based staff. Apart from Michon 2014, who has taken a focused look on French MEPs' staff, local staff are studied at the margins (Tomkova, 2014).

Since local staff have largely been neglected in the scholarly literature, we know little how MPs employ local staffers as a means of attentiveness towards the constituency, campaigning or for any other matter. The small amount of scholarly attention dedicated to local staff reflects the amount of attention paid to the representative activities of MEPs in the constituency (Farrell and Scully, 2010; Poyet, 2018). It has been argued that MEPs have relatively little incentives to serve a district since, for instance, voters are uninterested in European elections and due to the relatively high number of constituents MEPs represent (Hix and Høyland, 2011, see). Nevertheless, those who have studied the representation activities of MEPs demonstrated that several MEPs adopt a constituency orientation in carrying out their mandate (Farrell and Scully, 2010; Tomkova, 2014; Poyet, 2018). Farrell and Scully (2010) found that two-thirds of MEPs declare to have contacts with individual citizens. Moreover, more than 85 per cent of MEPs say that surgeries take place in permanently staffed offices in the constituency. **Tomokova2014** showed that on average MEPs dedicate half of their working time to casework and citizen relations, and that casework is usually attended to by local staff.[6] Overall, these studies speak to the importance to research the constituency activities of MEPs and within that the allocation of staff to district offices.

The allocation of staff resources in the EP

The EP's staff allowance system is similar to other parliaments and has existed in one form or another from the outset. Before the first direct election to the EP in 1979,

[5]For example, Montgomery and Nyhan 2017 showed that personal staffers who had served more than one legislator enhance the legislative effectiveness of legislators. Shepherd and You 2019 found that Congressmen employing staff who later become lobbyists exhibit higher legislative productivity.

[6]For research on the positive effect of resource allocation on the way constituents view heir representatives in other legislatures see Parker and Goodman (2009), André, Bradbury, and Depauw (2014), and Parker (2019)

the Community budget would not have enabled MEPs to hire personal assistants. Instead, it was common for members to aggregate allowances and to appropriate them to supranational party groups. This changed once MEPs became directly accountable to voters. As the EP developed into a professional legislature through direct elections and gained in legislative powers, individual allowances for MEPs steadily increased to meet the rising demands from their work. Similar developments have been reported for the US Congress and the Australian Parliament (Jones, 2006; Schiff and Smith, 1983). As a result, MEPs now run personal offices with employed staff.

Their staff allowance is furthermore high in a comparative perspective. The additional resources are often justified as an attempt to mend the purported democratic deficit that the EP suffers from. Since 2019, MEPs dispense with an individual monthly staff allowance of 24,943 euros, which is the highest in the EU (European Parliament, 2018).[7] In comparison, MPs receive 3,690 euro in Italy (Camera dei Deputati, 2019), 10,581 euros in France Assemblée nationale 2019, 12,994 pounds in the UK (IPSA, 2019) [8] and 22,201 euros in Germany (Bundestag, 2020).

Local and parliamentary assistants are financed over the same budget. As such, the allocation between the two illustrates the broader trade-offs that representatives face between constituency and parliamentary work. Unfortunately, a direct comparison is not possible, due to the different pay applicable to Brussels-based and local staffers (European Parliament, 2019). In this article, we focus on local staff – which take care of MPs' representative role in the constituency – knowing that the prioritisation of one comes at the expense of the other.

Until recently, MEPs were free to allocate spending at their discretion. The majority chose to invest most of the allowance on local staff, which conforms to practices in France and the UK, for example (Assemblée nationale, 2013, p. 518; Rogers and Walters 2006, pp. 65–67). Following an expense scandal in 2008 (WikiLeaks, 2009), the EP initiated a series of reforms. In 2009, it introduced a common legal framework whereby parliamentary staff are hired according to a single set of rules (Regulation 160/2009). New contracts provided parliamentary assistants with incentives to pursue longer careers and to acquire levels of expertise equivalent to staff in party groups and the EP's Secretariat. The greater expertise should have, in turn, encouraged MEPs to spend more of their staff allowance for accredited assistants.

[7]The EP does not disclose how this amount is determined. Controlling for inflation, the staff allowance has increased for 20 per cent between 2008 (adoption of the implementing measures for the Statute for MEPs) and 2019 (the last increase).

[8]London area MPs receive 1,000 pounds more.

Following a review in 2015, it became clear that this was not the case. Many MEPs were not recruiting more accredited than local staff. The EP called for a greater spending balance (European Parliament, 2015b, Point 17, p. 191) and required members to set aside at least a quarter of their allowance for the employment of parliamentary assistants (Article 2d, European Parliament, 2015a). By comparing the average staff size per MEP before the reform (in the autumn of 2015) with the staff of the same 697 MEPs immediately after its implementation (spring 2016), we see that the reform produced some of its intended effects. The number of local assistants decreased on average by 0.75 employees per MEP, while the number of accredited staff increased by the same amount (ATE = 0.87). By 2016, almost two-thirds of the personal staff worked in parliament.

The reform did not remove the underlying incentive structure, however. Notably, the management of local staff's contracts remained untouched. Unlike contracts for parliamentary assistants, which are managed by the EP's Secretariat, the expenses for local staff are administered by a multitude of third agents ("paying agents") hired by the MEPs themselves (Articles 35 and 36, European Parliament, 2009). The expenditures for local staff are therefore difficult to verify (e.g. Point 9, Preamble, European Parliament, 2015a.) Furthermore, EP rules do not specify which activities are related to the parliamentary mandate and which would qualify as a campaign activity.

Ultimately, these factors provide opportunities to use local staff for tasks that go beyond the exercise of MEPs' parliamentary mandate, namely electoral campaign activities. In the following, we identify MEPs' incentives to seize these opportunities. Although such activities are not allowed (Article 33(2), European Parliament, 2009; Point 12 of the Preamble, European Parliament, 2015a), the blurred lines between assistance to MEPs as representatives and candidates are such that any rational goal-oriented politician would respond to incentives in a similar fashion.

Theoretical Framework

The distinciton between constituency service and campaigning is hard to implement in legal terms but it is also hard to distinguish conceptually. The interlocked roles of legislators have long been recognized in the literature on parliamentary behavior, leading scholars like Mayhew (1974) to argue that Congress itself has been organized to serve members' vote-seeking objectives. Legislators may well pursue both power in Parliament and good public policy. However, in order for them to obtain these objectives, members have to secure (re)election.

Legislators invest in their "home style" to build the trust required to execute their mandate (Fenno, 1978). Local staff help them perform these tasks. However, despite a unified budget and regulation for EP staffing, local investment varies across legislators. It depends on which elected offices members actually seek, the rules that structure that election as well as the competition members expect.

First, investment is affected by the importance of personal votes in the allocation of seats. This is in turn determined by electoral institutions (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1984; Carey and Shugart, 1995; Farrell and McAllister, 2006; André, Depauw, and Shugart, 2014; Jennings and Wlezien, 2016; Farrell and Scully, 2010). At the European level, all electoral systems follow a principle of proportional representation with variations in the ballot structures between open and closed lists. In closed-list systems, the party determines the order of candidates, and voters can only choose between different party lists. The party has thus substantial influence on who is elected. We, therefore, classify closed-list systems as *party-centered systems*.

In contrast, open- and flexible-list systems leave voters a choice between candidates. Candidates' election chances are thus impacted by voters' preference votes. These systems are known as *candidate-centered*. Candidates in these systems are more likely to invest in visible activities, such as constituency work carried out by local staff, since their success depends on the support of many relatively uninformed voters. Therefore, we hypothesise that, compared to closed lists, individuals competing in candidate-centered system allocate more resources to local staff throughout their parliamentary mandate.

We can twist our argument around and see it from the perspective of candidates in party-centered systems. Here, candidates' personal profile is important for the within-party selection process. To improve their list placement, incumbent candidates invest in activities that are valued by the party. Assuming parties are policy-seekers and better informed about legislative activities than voters, their incumbent candidates are prone to do less constituency service and more legislative work. Hence, they will employ fewer local staff than members from candidate-centered systems. This meshes with findings that the legislative record of incumbent candidates – which is built using parliamentary staff – has a positive effect on re-(s)election in party-centered systems (Frech, 2016; Borghetto and Lisi, 2018). In contrast, the impact is minimal in candidate-centered systems (Wilson, Ringe, and Thomme, 2016; Däubler, Christensen, and Linek, 2018).

Hypothesis 1 *The number of local assistants is higher in candidate-centered systems than party-centered systems.*

Several studies report on how the ballot structure affects behaviour in the EP.

For example, MEPs from candidate-centered systems maintain more contacts with individual constituents and are more likely to hold a permanent local office compared to members from party-centered systems (Bowler and Farrell, 1993; Farrell and Scully, 2010). They display a greater presence in social media (Obholzer and Daniel, 2016) and in particular during highly visible activities (Daniel, Obholzer, and Hurka, 2017). A comparative study of French MEPs and national legislators points out that personal contacts such as casework and surgeries are more limited for MEPs – elected in a closed-list proportional list system – than for their national counterparts competing in a more candidate-centered system (Beauvallet and Michon, 2008; Poyet, 2018).

Second, local investment varies according to the electoral cycle. That is, we expect to see an electoral *mobilization* among MEPs in the form of increases in local staff size. Writing on the US Congress, Kean 2001 noted that district staff are a resource for establishing an electoral connection for the duration of a parliamentary mandate as well as a resource in campaigns coming election time. Local assistants are often hired for substantially shorter periods than their Brussels-based colleagues, which allows MEPs to dynamically adjust the size of their local staff to fill campaign needs. Many have a 'militant' background and have served on an MEP's electoral campaign (Michon, 2014), which equips them with needed campaigning experience. Hiring more staff in election than non-election years has been observed for political parties (Poguntke, Scarrow, and Webb, 2016, p. 666). We investigate the same logic at the individual level and hypothesise that MEPs hire more local staff before elections.

Hypothesis 2 *The number of local assistants increases before parliamentary elections.*

Third, we may bring these two expectations together to hypothesize that members mobilize more when they stand to win more from garnering personal votes. These incentives originate both from the the electoral rules governing the system and the intra-party competition that members expect. Evidence for the effect of electoral rules on incumbent behavior has remained mixed, and authors have argued this is because of the mediating effect of candidates' vulnerability to defeat (André, Depauw, and Martin, 2015).

The value of a candidate's personal profile derives both from inter- and intra-party competition (Carey and Shugart, 1995). A high-profile candidate can attract votes to the party. In candidate-centered systems, the value of his profile also increases with the number of same-party competitors in the district (Crisp, Jensen, and Shomer, 2007).

Fielding a candidacy entails an additional cost for these competitors. That cost is determined both by their (potential) popularity and the intra-party competition (Johnson, 2013). The decision to run, therefore, becomes a strategic calculus whereby potentially popular candidates are more likely to enter the race because they can expect to win at a lower cost. Incumbent candidates may inform that choice by looking to their past vote share to assess their future success. From the perspective of incumbent candidates' mobilisation, we may, therefore, expect two countervailing effects. Potentially popular members are more likely to mobilise since they are more likely to seek reelection. However, conditional on running, we would expect the party's least popular members to mobilise the most in order to offset their relative vulnerability (Jacobson, 1990).

Hypothesis 3 *The number of local assistants increases the most before elections among members who stand the most to win by garnering personal votes.*

Although the link between constituency service and electoral rules, and to some extent campaign activities and electoral rules, are well established in the literature (Farrell and Scully, 2010; Bowler and Farrel, 2011; Giebler and Wüst, 2011), few studies have investigated the relationship for multilevel institutions. André, Bradbury, and Depauw 2014 demonstrate that factors related to regionalisation shape service responsiveness whereby national legislators devote less time to constituency service in multilevel democracies than unitary democracies. Anecdotal evidence on the use of MEPs' parliamentary allowances by national parties at the national level for non-European issues provides further cues on the effects of a multilevel context (Lepage, 2014; Jeannin, 2017; Fansten, Bretton, and Halissat, 2017; MEPs Project, 2017).

We look at the context of multilevel governance from the point of MEPs' career ambitions. In multilevel systems, parliamentarians' career goals may be diverse (Schlesinger, 1966; Black, 1972). They can wish to seek re-election to their current office (static ambition) or secure office elsewhere (progressive ambition). Our expectation that electoral rules affect behaviour flows from the assumption that politicians anticipate and adapt to the future (governance level) institutional setting in order to acquire office. From previous research, we know that MEPs aspire to careers both at the national and European level (Scarrow, 1997; Daniel, 2015). Survey data from the European Parliament Research Group (EPRG) indicate that 38 % of the respondents in our sample saw themselves with a political career at the EU-level, while 18 % favored a position in national politics; either in parliament or in government (Hix et al., 2016). The EP is in this respect like other second-tier legislatures – such

as local- and state-level assemblies – from which national politicians often emerge (Stolz, 2003). This would imply that some MEPs use their parliamentary allowances to secure election outside of their current office and compete for a national mandate. We, therefore, expect the group of MEPs to adapt to both European and national contexts. However, since the proportion of MEPs that aspire to national mandates is lower, we expect a more moderate response to the national setting.

Hypothesis 4 *The previous two hypotheses apply to both national and European elections.*

Extant research has already established that participation in *legislative* activities is a function of MEPs' static (European) or progressive (national) ambitions, as well as the electoral system at both levels of government (Høyland, Hobolt, and Hix, 2019). Our current study explores the same dynamic with a focus on what happens *outside* of Parliament.

We could imagine that the tendency to redirect European resources is undesirable for parties and are therefore discouraged. However, members of the European Parliament operate in a multilevel political system in which the same national parties compete for representation at several levels of government. Because of the "second-order" nature of European elections, we assume many parties allow for this to happen. In the multivariate analysis, we, therefore, control for parties' ideological and economic incentives to redirect resources between governance levels.

Data and method

Our dataset includes observations of 1174 individual MEPs. While we do not have the starting date for each assistant, we know when they first appeared on the EP website. To account for the publication lag, members were therefore observed each semester (January-June; June-January) between 2012 and 2017. During this period, all member states organized at least one national election in addition to the 2014 European ballot. In total, the data includes 7143 observations with each MEP being observed up to ten times.

Variables

Dependent variable: The dependent variable reports the *Number of local assistants* that an MEP employed at the time of the observation. The information is drawn from the EP's website. In 2018, the European Court of Justice ruled that

the EP is not obliged to release details on expenditures incurred from parliamentary allowances (**ECJ2018**).[9] Hence, we approximate staff expenditures by MEPs' number of local employees. This entails some approximations which we explicitly address in our modelling strategy.

The variable ranges from zero to 43, with the median MEP employing 2 individuals. The upper map of Figure **??** displays the median local staff size per MEP in each member state as of January 2014. The range is large because local staff are paid according to national wages, while MEPs' budget is the same regardless of the country of election (European Parliament, 2019; Regulation 1023/2013, 2013). In practice, this means that MEPs' capacity to finance local staff varies: MEPs elected in Member States with lower wages can employ more local staff. We control for this in two ways. First, all models include a measure of the Member State *Labour cost* obtained from Eurostat. This variable effectively subsumes much of the variation in the number of local staff. Second, when exploring the effect of the electoral calendar, we also include a lag of the dependent variable, which further subsumes much of the between-member variations.

Where MEPs share local assistants, we divided the number of staff by the number of MEPs they work for. We cannot distinguish between part-time and full-time staff because the EP does not report this information. As an alternative to the main regressions, we therefore also model our dependent variable as if it contained rounding errors (Lunn et al., 2012, p. 195-201). That is, we assume that all local staff can be hired either in a 50 per cent contract or a full-time contract or anywhere in between. Since the results are similar, this model is presented in the Appendix.

Explanatory variables: Our main explanatory variables are the proximity to European and national elections, and the electoral system employed. *Proximity to European election* is a binary variable indicating the spring term prior to the 2014 election (January until the election in May). Although a more frequent observation of MEPs' staff size would be ideal for observing mobilization in the weeks prior to the election, this would also imply more measurement errors, since we only have the publication date for their employment. In contrast, since national elections are staggered, *Proximity to national election* is a continuous measure capturing the (negative) number of years to the next national parliamentary election. Electoral

[9]The EP is one of the few legislatures in Europe that publishes the names of staff employed through parliamentary allowances. Politicians are reluctant to release detailed information on their expenses since the public is negatively disposed towards these arrangements; even when money is lawfully spent. The EP has been exposed to significant media pressure to release information since 2005 when the first media request for information on staff allowances was made (European Ombudsman, 2008).

	National party-centered	National candiate-centered
EP party-centered	Germany	France
	Spain	United Kingdom
	Portugal	Hungary
	Austria	
	Romania	
	Bulgaria	
EP candidate-centered	Italy	Luxembourg
	Netherlands	Greece
	Belgium	Ireland
	Sweden	Finland
	Czech Republic	Denmark
	Slovakia	Slovenia
	Estonia	Lithuania
	Latvia	Poland
	Croatia	Malta
		Cyprus

Table 1: Combinations of national and European electoral systems according to their incentives to cultivate a personal vote.

cycles vary between four and five years. For comparability, we censured the measure to a maximum of four years.

For clarity (and statistical power), we dichotomize our institutional variables into *candidate-* and *party-centered systems* at each level of government. This way, we have a robust measure which taps into the effect of incentives to personal-vote seeking on MEPs' allocation of resources. Table 1 reports our classification in a two-by-two table.

At the European level, all systems follow a principle of proportional representation. *Party-centered system (EU)* describes lists that are either ranked and closed or the possibility to reorder candidates is such that it rarely affects the distribution of seats. In other words, we have a restrictive definition of "party-centered". The remaining systems – open lists, single transferable votes and where the majority of lists are "strongly flexible" – are lumped together and labelled *Candidate-centered system (EU)*. This classification is based on Däubler and Hix (2017). More details are provided in the Appendix.

At the national level, we apply a slightly different cut-off: The variation in electoral systems is greater, including majoritarian and mixed systems. As a basis, we have relied on the rank-ordered index suggested by Farrell and McAllister (2006). We have applied a cut-off between mixed-member systems such as Germany ("party-centered") and single-seat districts such as in France and the UK ("candidate-centered"). The index was recently updated for 16 of the 28 EU member states by Söderlund (2016). On the ordinal scale used by the author, we use a cut-off at 4; between "Mixed-member system with plurality rule" and "Single-seat

districts, plurality with party control". For the remainder of the member states, we have relied on descriptions available on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline database.

The results of the analysis could be dependent on the thresholds in the classification. To counter this, we have taken several measures. First, while the original scale is ordinal (which multiplies the number of borderline cases), we have preferred a binary classification. Second, we have opted for a rather restrictive definition of "party-centered" systems. Third, we tested alternative classifications. The results remain largely the same (see the Appendix for further discussion and alternative models).

District magnitude (i.e. the number of legislators elected from a district) mitigates the effect that the ballot strucutre (open and close lists) has on a politician's propesity to cultivate a personal vote (Carey and Shugart, 1995). In open list systems, co-partisans on the candidate list are in competition with one another for preference votes. The number of co-partisans against whom each candidate is competing rises with district magnitude. Therefore, the incentive to cultivate the personal vote (and the allocation of local staff) should rise with district magnitude. In close list system, there is no intra-party competition for election between individual candidates. However, it is said that when district magnitude is low, candidates will cultivate a personal vote (and invest in local staff) to attract more votes for the party and to increase their chances of election. When district magnitudes are high, incentive to cultivate personal vote are low, because the effect of personal votes is said to be imperceptible.

Control variables: Elections, the structure of the electoral ballot and career ambitions are likely to determine the local staff distribution. However, they are not the sole factor explaining it. Our analyses contains a set of control variables designed to isolate their effects.

In 2015, the EP reformed its rules and required MEPs to spend at least a quarter of their allowance (6,041 euro per month in 2017) for the employment of parliamentary staff, thus limiting the amount available for local spending (Article 34(d), amended in European Parliament, 2015a). A monthly ceiling on the salary of local staff was set based on the average gross annual pay per Member State.[10] The reform aimed at regulating the use of local assistants relative to parliamentary assistants. We control for this change with the variable *Reform*, which indicates whether an observation was done before or after the reform.

[10]The ceiling ranges between 2,978 euro in the least wealthy Member States and 8,519 euro in the wealthiest Member States (European Parliament, 2019).

There are furthermore several party-specific aspects, such as size, resources and ideology, which impact the need and will among MEPs to hire local staff at times of elections (Biezen and Kopecky, 2007; Murphy, 2016; Giebler and Wüst, 2011). National laws regulate the financing of national and European elections, and national parties are the main organisers of campaigns in national as well as European elections. Since state money to parties is often allocated as a function of their size in national parliaments, parties with small or no parliamentary membership are worse off at times of election (Murphy, 2016, pp. 108–109). MEPs from smaller parties might, therefore, have to finance more local staff over their European parliamentary allowance budget. We control for this aspect with the variable *Party size in national parliament*, which measures the proportion of seats the party has in the national legislature.

A similar argument can be made for government parties (Biezen and Kopecky, 2007). Their control over the executive administration gives them access to more assistance, which implies a negative correlation between MEPs staff size and membership in government. On the other hand, parties in government also have resources to co-opt members. This is sometimes argued to increase party unity. This would imply a positive correlation between staff size and governmental position. In our analysis, we control for these aspects with the binary variable *Party in government*.

When hiring local staff, MEPs trade legislative activities for constituency work. Parties vary in how they value legislation at the EU level. That is, parties' attitudes towards European integration affect their investment in EU politics (Hobolt and Høyland, 2011). Parties with more detailed EU policy agenda are more likely to treat European elections as first order and field candidates with policy-making potential (Pemstein, Meserve, and Bernhard, 2015; Daniel, 2016). Such parties are also more likely to resource their candidates appropriately for European election and thus limiting MEPs' drive to deploy local assistants for European elections. Furthermore, attitudes towards European integration are often shared by parties and MEPs. Stronger European attitudes are likely to reflect an MEP's institutional identity as well as their propensity to pursue a European career. According to Bolleyer and Gauja (2015, p. 334), political actors with strong institutional identities use parliamentary allowances less frequently a source of indirect income, which leads as to expect they are also less likely use staff allowances for not earmarked purposes. We control for these mechanisms with the variable *Party's euroenthusiasm*, which is a 7-point scale with high levels indicating pro-EU attitudes adopted from the 2010 and 2014 rounds of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017).

In addition to the average labour cost, we also use the number of seats in Parliament to control for the *Size of Member States*. MEPs from larger member states have reasonably more need for local assistance because they need to connect with more constituents. We furthermore allow for the possibility that MEPs are at the end of their political career (*Age*), or that they have already opted for a European career, and, therefore, enjoy a certain incumbency advantage that lets them spend less on local staff (*Incumbent*; they have been reelected at least once).

Modeling choices

Our dependent variable, y, expresses the number of local assistants an MEP has in his employment. Sometimes several MEPs hire the same person. We have consequently divided each employee by the number of known employers. We end up with a continuous variable censored at 0. To account for this, we estimate a Tobit model; a linear regression with a right-censored dependent variable. The variable y_i^* is a normally distributed latent variable which defines the observable values of y.[11]

$$y_i = \begin{cases} y_i^* & if \quad y_i^* > \ 0 \\ 0 & if \quad y_i^* \leq \ 0 \end{cases}$$

The data is an unbalanced panel, and we alternate in how we leverage that variation.

First, we compare *between* electoral systems, while controlling away period-specific fluctuations in local hiring (model 1). That is, we include random intercepts for the time period in question (α_{period_i}).

$$\begin{aligned} y_i^* = & \alpha_{period_i} \\ & + \beta_k \times Controls_i \\ & + \beta_k \times Electoral\ System_i \end{aligned}$$

Second, we consider the effect of the electoral calendar in each electoral system. That is, we are interested in within-individual changes over time. The model, therefore, includes a lag of the dependent variable as well as random intercepts for individual MEPs (α_{mep_i}). We test the predictions in two variations of the model, where our interest is with the proximity of either European (model 2) or national

[11] Another source of uncertainty is that we do not know whether assistants are full-time or part-time employees. In the appendix, we treat this as a measurement error in a series of alternative interval-censored models. The results remain similar to those reported in the main text.

elections (model 3), depending on the electoral system.

$$
\begin{aligned}
y^*_{it} = & \alpha_{mep_i} \\
& + \beta_k \times Lag_{i(t-1)} \\
& + \beta_k \times Controls_i \\
& + \beta_k \times Electoral\ System_{it} \\
& + \beta_k \times Electoral\ Calendar_{it} \\
& + \beta_k \times Electoral\ System_{it} \times Electoral\ Calendar_{it}
\end{aligned}
$$

The coefficients can be interpreted as in any linear model. One unit change in the predictor causes a β increase in the number of local assistants. Our main interest lies with the effects of the electoral systems at the national and European level and their respective electoral calendars.

Results

```
## Error in round(R2, digits):  non-numeric argument to mathematical function
```

```
## Error in round(R2, digits):  non-numeric argument to mathematical function
```

We begin by verifying whether the use of local assistants is conditioned by the electoral rules. The first model therefore controls away fluctuations in staff size to investigate the time-invariant elements of local spending. It is well established that parliamentarians in candidate-centered systems spend more time in their constituency. However, in multilevel systems where a non-negligable proportion of MPs seek election elsewhere, we may expect their prioritization follows from their ambition. We therefore anticipate that the group of MEPs is responsive to both the national and European-level electoral rules. The model consequently includes combinations of electoral systems at both levels as dummies. The reference group is MEPs from member states applying a party-centered ballot at both levels.

As is clear from the results reported in Table 8 and illustrated in Figure 1, local staff size is significantly larger in candidate-centered systems. In member states where all election seekers can count on a party-centered ballot in future contests (be it on the national or European level) the typical member is predicted to keep

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	Model 1
Intercept	1.96
	(1.74,2.16)
Party-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	0.16
	(-0.05,0.38)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Party-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	1.03
	(0.83,1.21)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	2.82
	(2.58,3.03)
Reform	-0.48
	(-0.96,0.04)
Size of member state	0.05
	(0.05,0.05)
Labor cost	-0.13
	(-0.14,-0.12)
Female	-0.52
	(-0.67,-0.36)
Incumbent	0.14
	(-0.01,0.29)
Age	-0.02
	(-0.03,-0.01)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.13
	(-0.18,-0.09)
Party size in national parliament	-2.66
	(-3.14,-2.18)
Party in government	0.27
	(0.11,0.44)
Number of observations	7143
r^2	0.22

Median effects with 95% symmetric posterior density interval in parenthesis.

Table 2: The use of local assistants is conditioned by the electoral calendar and the electoral system. Results from a left-censored (Tobit) regression with varying intercepts for time periods.

around 2 local assistants on his pay-roll.[12] This figure increases to a staff of almost 5 when all venues are candidate-centred. We futhermore see the most substantial difference staff size between systems at the European-level. This makes sense, as a larger proportion of MEPs pursue a European career than a national one.

MEP's responsiveness to incentives from both levels of government is in line with the argument that constituency service is motivated by electoral ambition. In the next series of models, we explore this argument further by investigating whether local hires increase prior to election. To contextualize our findings on mobilization, we compare the results with reelection rates and/or the proportion of MEPs who claim to pursue either a European or a national political career (The information is drawn from the respondents to the EPRG Survey, see Hix et al., 2016).

Our focus is on the time-varying component in MEPs' hiring decisions. Thus, the models estimate the "quasi-change" in staff size as a function of the electoral

[12]Most of the numeric variables are mean-centered: A "typical" MEP is here a member observed prior to the 2015 reform, from an average-sized member state, with average labor cost. The member is a male in his first term of average age. His party has an average score on euroenthusiam, has an average size in the national parliament and is not part of the government.

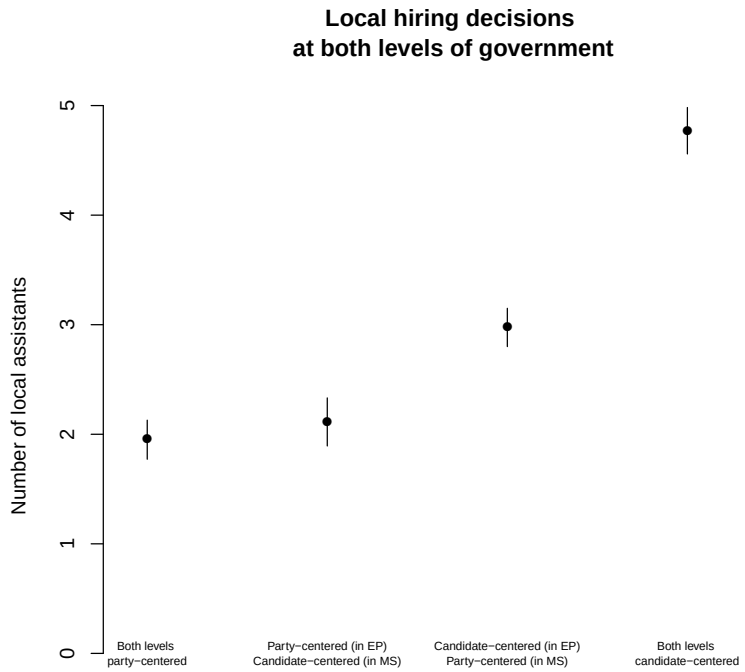

Figure 1: The size of local staff increases as the share of MEPs who need to cultivate a personal vote increases.

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	European (2a)	European (2b)	National (3a)	National (3b)
Intercept	1.23	1.66	1.33	1.87
	(1.05,1.41)	(1.45,1.86)	(1.16,1.5)	(1.61,2.07)
Lag(y)	0.58	0.58	0.59	0.59
	(0.56,0.61)	(0.56,0.61)	(0.56,0.61)	(0.57,0.62)
Reform	-0.71	-0.71	-0.74	-0.72
	(-0.81,-0.62)	(-0.81,-0.61)	(-0.84,-0.65)	(-0.81,-0.62)
Size of member state	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02
	(0.02,0.02)	(0.02,0.03)	(0.01,0.02)	(0.02,0.02)
Labor cost	-0.06	-0.07	-0.06	-0.06
	(-0.08,-0.05)	(-0.08,-0.06)	(-0.07,-0.05)	(-0.07,-0.05)
Female	-0.33	-0.29	-0.34	-0.33
	(-0.53,-0.13)	(-0.46,-0.11)	(-0.52,-0.16)	(-0.52,-0.15)
Incumbent	0.19	0.23	0.14	0.14
	(0.07,0.32)	(0.11,0.36)	(0.03,0.24)	(0.02,0.26)
Age	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02
	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,-0.01)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.07	-0.07	-0.08	-0.03
	(-0.12,-0.01)	(-0.12,-0.02)	(-0.13,-0.03)	(-0.09,0.02)
Party size in national parliament	-1.3	-1.25	-1.28	-1.4
	(-1.84,-0.77)	(-1.78,-0.77)	(-1.81,-0.76)	(-1.93,-0.88)
Party in government	0.1	0.07	0.13	0.08
	(-0.03,0.24)	(-0.06,0.21)	(0,0.26)	(-0.06,0.22)
Prox. of election (H_1)	0.39	0.54	0.03	0.13
	(0.27,0.53)	(0.37,0.71)	(0,0.06)	(0.08,0.18)
Party-centered syst. (H_2)		-0.89		-0.83
		(-1.1,-0.71)		(-1.06,-0.59)
Prox. of election * Party-centered syst. (H_2)		-0.26		-0.17
		(-0.49,-0.02)		(-0.24,-0.1)
Number of observations	7047	7047	7047	7047
r^2	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8

Median effects with 95% symmetric posterior density interval in parenthesis.

Table 3: The use of local assistants is conditioned by the electoral calendar and the electoral system. Results from a left-censored (Tobit) regression with varying intercepts for MEPs.

calendar. The results are reported in Table 10 and illustrated in Figures **??** and **??**. They show – in line with Hypotheses 2 and 4 – that local hires increase before elections regardless of the level of government. However – as predicted by Hypothesis 3 – the degree of mobilization is mediated by the electoral system. That is, MEPs hailing from systems in which personal votes contribute to the allocation of seats are more likely to proceed to additional hires before the election.

MEPs from *candidate-centered* systems tend to proceed to more additional hires during elections. The European campaign period in the spring of 2014 implied a median increase of 0.54 assistants per MEP. That is, one in two members was likely to hire an additional pair of hands in the months preceeding the European election. This finding is similar to the reelection rate in 2014, where 52% of the MEPs returned to office. The same rationale holds for national elections. When the national electoral system is candidate-centered, the predicted number of local assistants is 0.53 higher immediately before a national contest compared to immediately afterwards. The effect can be compared to the 21 % of MEPs from these countries who

reported to strive for a national career (Hix et al., 2016). If we are to believe this comparison, it means that those who pursue a national career proceed to two to three additional hires before the national election. One reason for this high figure might be that MEPs enter the national race as challengers and therefore compensate by investing more resources.

Mobilization in *party-centered* systems is significantly lower, with a median increase of 0.28 assistants per member before the European election. A possible interpretation is that slightly fewer than one in three MEPs recruited an additional employee for the campaign period. This is lower than the 38 % share (from European party-centered systems) who wanted to keep working at the European level (Hix et al., 2016). In contrast, a national election is not predicted to impact hires at all. One reason might be that only 14 % of the respondents from these countries intend to switch to the national level. Overall, many MEPs in party-centered systems *do not* hire additional assistants during electoral campaigns. This is in line with the argument that candidates in these systems are elected on the party label and, therefore, have less need for local assistants to build a personal reputation with voters.

Our 3^rd hypothesis stipulates that electoral mobilization will be the most pronounced among MEPs who stand to gain from garnering personal votes.

There are three takeaways from these findings: First – while MEPs' personal allowance could potentially contribute to bridging the gap between representatives and voters – local staff is also frequently used for contesting elections (Hypothesis 2). We can interpret the increase in staff prior to elections as the size of Parliament's direct support for campaigning activities. Second, the size of the contribution varies accross member states. The single system of allowance produces very different effects depending on the electoral system in use (Hypothesis 1). Last, although we study members of the European Parliament, their behavior is also conditioned on electoral incentives stemming from the national level (Hypothesis 4). From this perspective, the level of government matters less than personal ambition. It means that the European Parliament incidentally finances political careers both inside and outside of the EU sphere.

Table 4: Local investment among candidates to the 2014 election (2011-2014).

	Dependent variable:			
	Local staff size		Mobilization	
	Party-cent.	Cand.-cent.	Party-cent.	Cand.-cent.
Candidate	0.240**	0.440***		
	(0.110)	(0.150)		
European election			0.100	0.560***
			(0.078)	(0.180)
Candidate * European election			0.290***	0.008
			(0.094)	(0.220)
Constant	2.000***	1.200***	−0.079	−0.110
	(0.270)	(0.310)	(0.340)	(0.700)
Member state dummies	yes	yes	no	no
Period dummies	yes	yes	no	no
Individual dummies	no	no	yes	yes
Observations	1,906	1,630	1,889	1,595
R^2	0.150	0.470	0.140	0.170
Residual Std. Error	2.100 (df = 1892)	2.700 (df = 1606)	0.760 (df = 1506)	1.600 (df = 1260)
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5: Local investment among members elected from candidate-centered systems prior the 2014 election (spring 2014).

	Dependent variable:		
	Candidature	Mobilization	
Personal vote share	0.260**	1.900**	3.700***
	(0.130)	(0.750)	(0.910)
Candidate		0.610	1.600**
		(0.560)	(0.650)
Candidate * Personal vote share		−1.500*	−3.300***
		(0.890)	(1.100)
Constant	0.740*	1.000	−1.700**
	(0.440)	(1.200)	(0.830)
National party dummies	yes	yes	yes
Observations	156	156	103
R^2	0.410	0.300	0.330
Residual Std. Error	0.420 (df = 105)	1.100 (df = 103)	1.200 (df = 77)
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Discussion

Representatives face a trade-off between constituency-oriented work and legislation. The pros and cons are often set by the institutional context (Ashworth and Mesquita, 2006). We have demonstrated that MPs' local hiring decisions follow different rationales depending on the electoral system and the electoral calendar. Our findings shed light on the practical and normative implications of the European Parliament's staff financing and how this might be reformed in the future.

Practical and normative implications

First, we have shown that MEPs competing in candidate-centered systems hire on average more local staff, since they can increase their chances of (re)election by cultivating a personal vote. Policy-seekers who also want (re)election face the dilemma on how to distribute their allowance between parliamentary and local staff. A solution is a dynamic approach to recruitment, where local staff is mobilized before elections and demobilized afterwards. This frees up resources for parliamentary work in-between campaign periods. Thus, hiring practices tend to follow the electoral cycle. Similarly, we have demonstrated that hiring decisions in party-centered systems are somewhat less responsive to the electoral calendar. We have argued that this is because candidates run on a party label and can, therefore, spend less on local staff during the campaign period.

Second, EU citizens are represented differently in the same institution depending on where they hail from. Our first finding was that MEPs from candidate-centered systems keep more local assistants on their payroll than those in party-centered systems. Local staff is argued to connect citizens and representatives. They help ascertain the needs and wants of citizens. The EU is known for its "democratic-deficit" and for being "too distant" (Føllesdal and Hix, 2006). Providing MEPs with local assistants is a step towards improving the democratic representation. However, in the absence of a common electoral system – and in spite of a single system of staff allowances – there is variation in local staff presence. At best, this implies an improvement of the democratic representation in half of EU's member states. Furthermore, parliamentary and local assistants are financed over the same budget, so that an increase in one leads to a decrease in the other. Increased local spending, therefore, implies fewer resources for parliamentary assistance, and this varies systematically across member states. This means that EU citizens are represented differently depending on their member state.

Third, the financial arrangement for personal staff produces differences in opportunities between candidates even *within* member states. The system of personal

parliamentary resources combined with a candidate-centered ballot likely provides MEPs with an incumbency advantage in European elections. Furthermore, they can help members parachute into national politics (when the national system is candidate-centered). This runs counter to the principle of fairness of the electoral process that has guided most European solutions for state financing of parties (Nassmacher, 2006).

Furthermore, the extent to which voters can hold MEPs accountable depends both on the electoral system and the degree of party competition. We know that in single-member districts, parties whose candidate has been implicated in scandals tend to do worse at the ballot (Basinger, 2013). However, voters are in a double bind (Dimock and Jacobson, 1995; Vivyan, Wagner, and Tarlov, 2012). As observed in the United Kingdom's 2009 expence scandal, the more voters care about which party wins, the less they can commit to sanction misbehavior. Accountablity is somewhat higher in open-list systems where voters can decouple parties from candidates (Rudolph and Däubler, 2016). In spite of that, the closer the race, the more likely MPs are to misuse staff allowances in the first place (Eggers, 2014). In the context of the EU, where ballot structures and the degree of competition vary, it means that MEPs are electorally accountable in different ways depending on where they are elected.

Overall, our findings indicate that local staff is used to forward MEPs' careers. These activities are not foreseen in the rules governing staff allowances. When making their spending decisions, MEPs, thus, walk a fine line between the intended and prohibited purposes of staff allowances. State support to campagin activities and parliamentary activities are common and legitimate. Yet, they obey to different principles and ought to be separated. The current system, in contrast, often incentivizes the blending of the two.

The way forth

The EP can attempt to reform its staff allowance in two ways to avoid this situation: by increasing the control or changing the incentives.

One option would be to uphold the prohibitions for local staff to work on campaigns. This could be achieved by establishing additional controlling and auditing mechanisms executed by an independent body. This was done in the United Kingdom after the 2009 expense scandal. However, it creates administrative burdens for members and limits their prerogative of independence, which is a basis of representative democracy. Reforms of parliamentary allowances are, in principle, associated with improved citizens' trust and electoral accountability. Yet, from the

UK experience, it is unclear whether the changes improved the trust of citizens (see Heerde-Hudson, 2014).

The solution would involve controlling expenditures, investigating misappropriations, taking remedy and being transparent with information (see Heerde-Hudson, 2014). Media might alleviate some of the financial burden from Parliament, since access to information and the free press lowers the cost of control. However, the EP has proven particularly reluctant to disclose information in the past. Moreover – even conditioned on a change in EU transparency practices – a more rigid monitoring system might uncover and prevent misuses or outright fraud, but it will not address the incentives that career-oriented MEPs are subject to.

Another option would be to reduce the money MEPs have at their disposal. This can be done by redirecting resources to support services within Parliament or reducing the overall staffing budget. Redirecting staff resources either to more civil servants or to the transnational parliamentary groups would effectively remove the possibility to finance personal careers, while Parliament would retain the resources for legislative activities. Monitoring systems are already in place for these services, and their incentives to spend money outside Parliament are minimal. This would be in keeping with the principle that a well-staffed parliament is important for the separation of powers. However, while this might increase "democracy through parliament" it would come at the expense of "democracy in parliament", as more hierarchical power is given to the party groups (Brack and Costa, 2018).

Table 6: Effect of the 2016 reform requiring MEP to spend at least 25% of their allowance on accredited assistants.

	Staff size	
	Local staff	Accredited staff
Reform in 2016	−1.100***	1.800***
	(0.230)	(0.200)
Reform in 2016 * Party-centered syst. (in EP)	0.130	−0.660***
	(0.240)	(0.210)
Reform in 2016 * Party-centered syst. (in MS)	0.460*	−0.910***
	(0.240)	(0.210)
Constant	1.800***	2.800***
	(0.380)	(0.340)
Member state dummies	yes	yes
Observations	1,394	1,394
R^2	0.320	0.200
Residual Std. Error (df = 1363)	2.200	2.000
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Reforms at the EU-level have already changed the hiring practices among several MEPs. The requirement that at least one-quarter of members' allowance be spent in Brussels touched MEPs differently. Table 6 displays results from another regression discontinuity analysis. Among those elected from member states where both European and national elections are candidate-centered, the average local staff decreased by more than one staffer per member (1.1), while the size of the accredited staff increased by almost 2. In contrast, only one in two MEPs proceeded to the same reduction when both systems are party-centered (0.5). Their average staff size in Parliament increased by even less (0.19). Specifically, the reform seems to have produced the most clear effects on spending among MEPs who are resonsive to national incentives. This indicates that they were indeed the MEPs who spent the most locally prior to the change in the allowed 25% threshold.

Reducing the budget for individual staff is clearly up to debate among MEPs. Limiting the amount of money in politics is advocated as a solution to political misconduct in general, since money attracts people whose primary interests are personal enrichment rather than the public good. It is unclear how the amount of staff resources has been decided in the EP, and little research exists on whether the current solution improves the connection with citizens. Prior to the 2015 reform, the Secretary General of the EP presented a note on the best practices in national parliaments (PE 402.198/BUR and annexes). However, we were denied access based on the Secretary General's right to confidentiality. Parliament will reform its staffing system also in the future. Whatever the solution it opts for, the quality of the debate and the public acceptance would improve if the EP was more transparent in how the sums are set.

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Appendix

Detailed analysis of the 2016 reform

A reform implemented in 2016 required all MEPs to spend at least 25% of their allowance on accredited staff. Table 7 compares the average staff size per member before the reform (in the autumn of 2015) with the staff of the same 697 MEPs immediately after its implementation (spring 2016). This amounts to running an OLS with individual dummies in a regression discontinuity design.

$$y_i \sim N(\mu_i, \sigma)$$
$$\mu_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \times Reform_i + \beta_{2...k} \times MEP_i + \epsilon_i$$

We see that the number of local assistants decreased on average by 0.75 employees per MEP after the reform. The number of accredited staff increased by approximately the same amount (ATE = 0.87). We may therefore say that the reform did induce a re-balancing of MEPs' local and Brussels-based spending.

Table 7: Effect of the 2016 reform requiring MEPs to spend at least 25% of their allowance on accredited assistants.

	Staff size	
	Local staff	Accredited staff
Reform in 2016 (ATE)	−0.750***	0.870***
	(0.074)	(0.110)
Constant	1.900*	3.100**
	(0.970)	(1.400)
Individual dummies	yes	yes
Observations	1,394	1,394
R^2	0.870	0.580
Residual Std. Error (df = 696)	1.400	2.000
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Result tables for the main models

In this section we report the results tables for the models reported in the article's main text. We also display a set of mirroring models where we show how our predictors for the use of local assistants also impact hiring practices for MEPs' Brussels-based accredited assistants. Since local and accredited assistants are financed over the same budget, we would expect opposite effects of electoral systems and the electoral calendar. They are all from left-censored Tobit models:

$$y_i = \begin{cases} y_i^* & if \quad y_i^* > \ 0 \\ 0 & if \quad y_i^* \leq \ 0 \end{cases}$$

The models are fitted by Bayesian estimation using MCMC simulation. Prior distributions on regression coefficients are multivariate normal with an expected value of 0 and a standard deviation of 10. The choice is rather unrestrictive, and predictors are allowed to effectively control for each other. Simulations are run 10000 times with two chains and a 5000 iterations' burn-in. To reduce autocorrelation in the results, we let the model run through an adaptive phase before we sample every 10^{th} iteration, while discarding the rest. The chains show no signs of non-convergence.

In model 1 (reported in Table 8) we compare hiring decisions between electoral systems while controlling away time-varying effects with period-specific random intercepts. The model is defined as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} y_i^* = & \alpha_{period_i} \\ & + \beta_k \times Controls_i \\ & + \beta_k \times Electoral\ System_i \end{aligned}$$

In models 2 and 3 (Table 10) we compare individuals over time. The models include a lagged version of the dependent variable and random intercepts for individual MEPs. Model 2 investigates the effect of the European electoral calendar, while model 3 investigates the effect of the national calendars conditional on the electoral system in use.

$$\begin{aligned} y_{it}^* = & \alpha_{mep_i} \\ & + \beta_k \times Lag_{i(t-1)} \\ & + \beta_k \times Controls_i \\ & + \beta_k \times Electoral\ System_{it} \\ & + \beta_k \times Electoral\ Calendar_{it} \\ & + \beta_k \times Electoral\ System_{it} \times Electoral\ Calendar_{it} \end{aligned}$$

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	Model 1
Intercept	1.96
	(1.74,2.16)
Party-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	0.16
	(-0.05,0.38)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Party-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	1.03
	(0.83,1.21)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	2.82
	(2.58,3.03)
Reform	-0.48
	(-0.96,0.04)
Size of member state	0.05
	(0.05,0.05)
Labor cost	-0.13
	(-0.14,-0.12)
Female	-0.52
	(-0.67,-0.36)
Incumbent	0.14
	(-0.01,0.29)
Age	-0.02
	(-0.03,-0.01)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.13
	(-0.18,-0.09)
Party size in national parliament	-2.66
	(-3.14,-2.18)
Party in government	0.27
	(0.11,0.44)
Number of observations	7143
r^2	0.22

Median effects with 95% symmetric posterior density interval in parenthesis.

Table 8: The use of local assistants is conditioned by the electoral calendar and the electoral system. Results from a left-censored (Tobit) regression with varying intercepts for time periods.

Robustness checks/alternative models

In this section we test the robustness of the findings. In particular, we want to make sure that the results are not driven by our choices of operationalizations. We consider two potential sources of error. First, our measure of the dependent variable may be inexact. In the first subsection, we treat this as a measurement error.

Second, we consider the dichotomization of the electoral systems. The choice of threshold between party- and candidate-centered systems may have a bearing on the results we report. In the the second subsection, we report results from alternative categorizations.

Alternative measurement of the dependent variable

Our dependent variable, y, expresses the number of local assistants an MEP has in his employment. While we know the number of employees registered to each MEP, we do not know whether their contract is full-time or part-time.

As a robustness check, we estimatet an alternative model which treats the prob-

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	European (2a)	European (2b)	National (3a)	National (3b)
Intercept	1.23	1.66	1.33	1.87
	(1.05,1.41)	(1.45,1.86)	(1.16,1.5)	(1.61,2.07)
Lag(y)	0.58	0.58	0.59	0.59
	(0.56,0.61)	(0.56,0.61)	(0.56,0.61)	(0.57,0.62)
Reform	-0.71	-0.71	-0.74	-0.72
	(-0.81,-0.62)	(-0.81,-0.61)	(-0.84,-0.65)	(-0.81,-0.62)
Size of member state	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02
	(0.02,0.02)	(0.02,0.03)	(0.01,0.02)	(0.02,0.02)
Labor cost	-0.06	-0.07	-0.06	-0.06
	(-0.08,-0.05)	(-0.08,-0.06)	(-0.07,-0.05)	(-0.07,-0.05)
Female	-0.33	-0.29	-0.34	-0.33
	(-0.53,-0.13)	(-0.46,-0.11)	(-0.52,-0.16)	(-0.52,-0.15)
Incumbent	0.19	0.23	0.14	0.14
	(0.07,0.32)	(0.11,0.36)	(0.03,0.24)	(0.02,0.26)
Age	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02
	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,-0.01)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.07	-0.07	-0.08	-0.03
	(-0.12,-0.01)	(-0.12,-0.02)	(-0.13,-0.03)	(-0.09,0.02)
Party size in national parliament	-1.3	-1.25	-1.28	-1.4
	(-1.84,-0.77)	(-1.78,-0.77)	(-1.81,-0.76)	(-1.93,-0.88)
Party in government	0.1	0.07	0.13	0.08
	(-0.03,0.24)	(-0.06,0.21)	(0,0.26)	(-0.06,0.22)
Prox. of election (H_1)	0.39	0.54	0.03	0.13
	(0.27,0.53)	(0.37,0.71)	(0,0.06)	(0.08,0.18)
Party-centered syst. (H_2)		-0.89		-0.83
		(-1.1,-0.71)		(-1.06,-0.59)
Prox. of election * Party-centered syst. (H_2)		-0.26		-0.17
		(-0.49,-0.02)		(-0.24,-0.1)
Number of observations	7047	7047	7047	7047
r^2	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8

Median effects with 95% symmetric posterior density interval in parenthesis.

Table 9: The use of local assistants is conditioned by the electoral calendar and the electoral system. Results from a left-censored (Tobit) regression with varying intercepts for MEPs.

lem as a measurement error. Each observation of the dependent variable (and its lag) is defined as an interval-censored normal distribution ranging between the observed number of local assistants and half of that count. In other words, we assume that all assistants can be hired either in a 50% contract or a full-time contract, or anywhere in-between.

Just as with the Tobit model, our alternative observed variable, y, is also defined as a function of the latent variable, y^*. Its distribution is censored, so that $y_i \in (\frac{a_i}{2}, a_i)$.

$$y_i = \begin{cases} 0 & if \quad y_i^* = 0 \\ a_i & if \quad y_i^* > 0 \end{cases}$$

Note that the size of the interval changes for each observation. At lower values of y, the interval is narrow, while it increases as y becomes larger. It reflects our assumption that assistants are more likely to be part-timers when MEPs hire more people. The choice implies that higher counts on the observed variable tend to

Dependent variable: 'Number of assistants'	Local (European 2a)	Local (European 2b)	Accredited (European 2a)	Accredited
Intercept	1.66	0.65	1.87	
	(1.45,1.86)	(0.56,0.74)	(1.61,2.07)	(0.4
Lag(y)	0.58	0.82	0.59	
	(0.56,0.61)	(0.79,0.84)	(0.57,0.62)	(0.
Reform	-0.71	0.52	-0.72	
	(-0.81,-0.61)	(0.45,0.59)	(-0.81,-0.62)	(0.
Size of member state	0.03	0	0.02	
	(0.02,0.03)	(0,0)	(0.02,0.02)	
Labor cost	-0.07	-0.01	-0.06	
	(-0.08,-0.06)	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.07,-0.05)	(-0.0
Female	-0.29	-0.04	-0.33	
	(-0.46,-0.11)	(-0.1,0.02)	(-0.52,-0.15)	(-0.
Incumbent	0.23	0	0.14	
	(0.11,0.36)	(-0.06,0.07)	(0.02,0.26)	(-0.
Age	-0.02	0	-0.02	
	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.01,0)	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.07	0	-0.03	
	(-0.12,-0.02)	(-0.02,0.02)	(-0.09,0.02)	(-0.
Party size in national parliament	-1.25	-0.16	-1.4	
	(-1.78,-0.77)	(-0.38,0.07)	(-1.93,-0.88)	(-0.4
Party in government	0.07	0.02	0.08	
	(-0.06,0.21)	(-0.05,0.09)	(-0.06,0.22)	(-0
Prox. of election (H_1)	0.54	-0.13	-0.83	
	(0.37,0.71)	(-0.27,0)	(-1.06,-0.59)	(-0.
Party-centered syst. (H_2)	-0.89	-0.12	0.13	
	(-1.1,-0.71)	(-0.2,-0.05)	(0.08,0.18)	(-0.0
Prox. of election * Party-centered syst. (H_2)	-0.26	0.04	-0.17	
	(-0.49,-0.02)	(-0.14,0.23)	(-0.24,-0.1)	(-0.
Number of observations	7047	7047	7047	

Median effects with 95% symmetric posterior density interval in parenthesis.

Table 10: Comparison between the use of local and accredited assistants. The latter is also conditioned by the electoral calendar and the electoral system. Results from a left-censored (Tobit) regression with varying intercepts for MEPs.

produce lower effect on the estimated regression coefficients while the precision decreases. The model thereby produces a highly conservative estimation of the effect of covariates.

The results are reported in Table 11. The original Tobit model (left-censored regression) is reported in the first column, while the output from the twin interval-censored model is reported in the subsequent column. As the tables make clear, the results are robust. While the effects are overall smaller (i.e.: we assume that the real count of local staffers is probably lower than the observed list of employees), the direction and precision remain similar to the main model.

Alternative categorization of electoral systems

The results may be sensitive to the way in which electoral systems are operationalized. In the main text, we classified national and European systems sligthly differently.

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	European (orig.)	European (alt.)	National (orig.)	National (alt.)
Intercept	1.66	1.36	1.87	1.44
	(1.49,1.82)	(1.27,1.44)	(1.65,2.04)	(1.35,1.54)
Lag(y)	0.58	0.35	0.59	0.35
	(0.56,0.6)	(0.34,0.36)	(0.58,0.61)	(0.34,0.37)
Reform	-0.71	-0.43	-0.72	-0.44
	(-0.79,-0.62)	(-0.47,-0.39)	(-0.8,-0.64)	(-0.49,-0.4)
Size of member state	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.01
	(0.02,0.03)	(0.01,0.01)	(0.02,0.02)	(0.01,0.01)
Labor cost	-0.07	-0.04	-0.06	-0.03
	(-0.08,-0.06)	(-0.04,-0.03)	(-0.07,-0.05)	(-0.04,-0.03)
Female	-0.29	-0.15	-0.33	-0.17
	(-0.44,-0.15)	(-0.23,-0.07)	(-0.49,-0.17)	(-0.25,-0.09)
Incumbent	0.23	0.14	0.14	0.09
	(0.13,0.34)	(0.08,0.18)	(0.03,0.24)	(0.03,0.14)
Age	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01
	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.01,0)	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.01,0)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.07	-0.04	-0.03	-0.02
	(-0.11,-0.03)	(-0.06,-0.02)	(-0.08,0.01)	(-0.04,0)
Party size in national parliament	-1.25	-0.57	-1.4	-0.71
	(-1.7,-0.83)	(-0.79,-0.36)	(-1.85,-0.96)	(-0.92,-0.48)
Party in government	0.07	0.03	0.08	0.04
	(-0.04,0.19)	(-0.03,0.08)	(-0.03,0.2)	(-0.02,0.09)
Prox. of election (H_1)	0.54	0.26	0.13	0.06
	(0.39,0.68)	(0.18,0.34)	(0.09,0.18)	(0.04,0.09)
Party-centered syst. (H_2)	-0.89	-0.5	-0.83	-0.41
	(-1.06,-0.72)	(-0.59,-0.41)	(-1.02,-0.63)	(-0.51,-0.31)
Prox. of election * Party-centered syst. (H_2)	-0.26	-0.12	-0.17	-0.08
	(-0.47,-0.06)	(-0.23,-0.02)	(-0.22,-0.11)	(-0.11,-0.05)
Number of observations	7047	7047	7047	7047
r^2	0.8	0.96	0.8	0.96

Median effects with 95% symmetric posterior density interval in parenthesis.

Table 11: The use of local assistants is conditioned by the electoral calendar and the electoral system. Results from a ALERNATIVE LEFT- and RIGHT-CENSORED (Tobit) regression with varying intercepts for MEPs.

At the European level all systems follow a principle of proportional representation. We can broadly distinguish between four different ballot structures in use. A number of member states have reformed their electoral rules over time. When categorizing systems, we have relied on the rules relevant for the 2014 election.

Closed lists rely on ballots where candidates are pre-ordered by the party and voters cannot alter that ordering. These are the archetypical "party-centered systems" as no intra-party competition remains after parties' selection is complete. (France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, and Spain)

At the other end of the scale are the fully *open lists* where seats are allocated purely on the basis of preference votes for individual candidates. At election time, candidates therefore regularly face competitors from their own party and are entirely reliant on garnering personal votes to win a seat. These are classified as "candidate-centered systems". (Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Poland)

Single transferable votes are also used (Irealand, Malta, Northern Ireland)

	National party-centered	National candiate-centered
EP party-centered	Spain	France
	Portugal	Germany
	Austria	United Kingdom
	Romania	Hungary
	Bulgaria	
EP candidate-centered	Italy	Luxembourg
	Netherlands	Greece
	Belgium	Ireland
	Sweden	Finland
	Czech Republic	Denmark
	Slovakia	Slovenia
	Estonia	Lithuania
	Latvia	Poland
	Croatia	Malta
		Cyprus

Table 12: ALTERNATIVE OPERATIONALIZATION: Combinations of national and European electoral systems according to their incentives to cultivate a personal vote.

At the national level, we apply a slightly different cut-off: The variation in electoral systems is greater, including majoritarian and mixed systems. As a basis, we have relied on the rank-ordered index suggested by Farrell and McAllister (2006). We have applied a cut-off between mixed-member systems such as Germany ("party-centered") and single-seat districts such as in France and the UK ("candidate-centered"). The index was recently updated for 16 of the 28 EU member states by Söderlund (2016).On the ordinal scale used by the author, we use a cut-off at 4; between "Mixed-member system with plurality rule" and "Single-seat districts, plurality with party control". For the remainder of the member states, we have relied on descriptions available on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline database. The classification can be represented in a two-by-two table, as reported in Table **??**.

In the following tables we report the results from alternative operationalizations of national systems. In particular, we apply a more restrictive understanding of "party-centered" similar to the one used for European elections: On the rank order suggested by Söderlund (2016) we classify only systems with a lower rank than 3 (Ordered list PR and Closed list PR) as party-centered. Given that the category of "candidate-centered" systems now include more individuals with moderate to low incentives to cultivate a personal vote, we expect the estimated effect of electoral systems to be more modest. The results are displayed in tables 13 and 14.

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	Original threshold	Alternative threshold
Intercept	1.96	2.17
	(1.77,2.13)	(1.97,2.38)
Reform	-0.48	-0.5
	(-0.85,-0.08)	(-0.92,-0.1)
Size of member state	0.05	0.05
	(0.05,0.05)	(0.05,0.06)
Labor cost	-0.13	-0.13
	(-0.14,-0.13)	(-0.14,-0.12)
Female	-0.52	-0.51
	(-0.65,-0.39)	(-0.64,-0.39)
Incumbent	0.14	0.14
	(0.01,0.27)	(0.01,0.26)
Age	-0.02	-0.02
	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,-0.01)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.13	-0.16
	(-0.17,-0.09)	(-0.19,-0.12)
Party size in national parliament	-2.66	-2.63
	(-3.07,-2.26)	(-3.04,-2.2)
Party in government	0.27	0.3
	(0.13,0.41)	(0.15,0.44)
Party-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS)	0.16	-0.3
	(-0.02,0.35)	(-0.52,-0.07)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Party-centered syst. (in MS)	1.03	0.81
	(0.85,1.18)	(0.62,1)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS)	2.82	2.66
	(2.63,3.01)	(2.45,2.85)
Number of observations	7143	7143
r^2	0.22	0.23

Median effects with 95% symmetric posterior density interval in parenthesis.

Table 13: The use of local assistants is conditioned by the electoral calendar and the electoral system. Results from an ALTERNATIVE OPERATIONALIZATION of ELECTORAL SYSTEM in a left-censored (Tobit) regression with varying intercepts for MEPs.

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	Original threshold (Nat.)	Alternative threshold (Nat.)
Intercept	1.87	1.31
	(1.65,2.04)	(1.22,1.4)
Lag(y)	0.59	0.35
	(0.58,0.61)	(0.34,0.37)
Reform	-0.72	-0.45
	(-0.8,-0.64)	(-0.49,-0.41)
Size of member state	0.02	0.01
	(0.02,0.02)	(0.01,0.01)
Labor cost	-0.06	-0.03
	(-0.07,-0.05)	(-0.04,-0.03)
Female	-0.33	-0.17
	(-0.49,-0.17)	(-0.25,-0.09)
Incumbent	0.14	0.09
	(0.03,0.24)	(0.04,0.14)
Age	-0.02	-0.01
	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.01,0)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.03	-0.03
	(-0.08,0.01)	(-0.05,-0.01)
Party size in national parliament	-1.4	-0.61
	(-1.85,-0.96)	(-0.82,-0.38)
Party in government	0.08	0.03
	(-0.03,0.2)	(-0.03,0.09)
Party-centered syst. (H_2)	-0.83	-0.29
	(-1.02,-0.63)	(-0.39,-0.19)
Prox. of election (H_1)	0.13	0.04
	(0.09,0.18)	(0.02,0.06)
Prox. of election * Party-centered syst. (H_2)	-0.17	-0.05
	(-0.22,-0.11)	(-0.08,-0.03)
Number of observations	7047	7047
r^2	0.8	0.96

Median effects with 95% symmetric posterior density interval in parenthesis.

Table 14: The use of local assistants is conditioned by the electoral calendar and the electoral system. Results from an ALTERNATIVE OPERATIONALIZATION of ELECTORAL SYSTEM at the national level in a left-censored (Tobit) regression with varying intercepts for MEPs.