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

Silje Synnøve Lyder Hermansen*
Andreja Pegan†

–

Submitted 2019

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.

*University of Oslo, Norway: s.s.l.hermansen@jus.uio.no
†Northumbria University at Newcastle, United Kingdom: andreja.pegan@northumbria.ac.uk

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, 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 MPs underperform in parliament. This consequently weakens democratic representation. For instance, MPs that use publicly funded staff to organize campaign activities, draw advantages from resources that are unavailable to non-incumbent candidates. This creates an inequality among competitors which public support for electoral representation usually seek to equalize (van Biezen, 2008, 348; Murphy, 2016, 117).

This study argues that increasing unmonitored funding of parliamentarians in a system that incentives personal vote-seeking broaden 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, 158-160; Bolleyer and Gauja 2015, 334; Nassmacher 2006, 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, 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 et al., 2016, 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 some form of 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 van Thomme, 2016). We also consider the multilevel governance system of the EU, where supranational and national levels of governments are interlocked (Hix, 2002). The multilevel system allows us to observe whether and how varying electoral systems at the subnational (European) as well as national (Member State) level constrain members' behaviour. We can therefore also test to what extent multilevel governance affects how parliamentarians use public funding deriving from their parliamentary mandate.

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 pursuing 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

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

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 effectively carry out functions deriving from elected office (public policy and representation). They are known 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 three, the employment of assistants is the most significant expenditure, which makes the staff allowance the worthiest of consideration.

Staff allowances permit MPs to recruit personal assistants, which help them represent their constituents and secure their policy goals. Unlike staff employed by party groups and parliaments' secretariats, personal staff are recruited directly by an MP, and their contract ends at the latest at the end of the parliamentary mandate. Since their career is intrinsically connected to that of an MP, they loyally serve the needs and interests of their employers (Salisbury and Shepsle, 1981). MEPs have furthermore limited responsabilities to publicly account for their spending. For instance, in 2018, the European Court of Justice ruled that MEPs are not obliged to publish record supporting the expenditures for staff (CJEU, CJEU).

The staff allowance system of the EP is similar to other parliaments and has existed in one form or another from the outset. When members were national parliamentarians seating part-time at the EU level, the practice was to delegate the spending to the supranational party groups. This changed however in 1979, when members of the European Parliament (MEPs) became directly elected. Since then, MEPs make hiring decisions at their own discretion.

Personal staff work in the EP as *accredited assistants* or in constituencies as *local assistants* (Article 34(1), European Parliament, 2009). The former assist MEPs in their capacity as legislators, e.g. they attend committee meetings and draft documents. The latter help MEPs as representatives, e.g. they take care of relations

with citizens, the national party and local stakeholders.

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

The size of the personal staff budget has grown in the European Parliament, but efforts to regulate and monitor the system have remained timid. In particular, members' reluctance to redirect spending and reform the system for local staff reveals the sensitivity of the topic. Until recently, MEPs were free to allocate spending at their discretion. The majority chose to invest most of the allowance for local staff, which conforms to practices in, for example, France and the UK (Assemblée nationale, 2013, 518; Rogers and Walters 2006, 65-67). Following an expense scandal in 2008 (WikiLeaks, 2009), the EP finally initiated reforms. In 2009, it introduced a common legal framework whereby accredited staff are hired according to a single set of rules (Regulation 160/2009). Accredited assistants became *de facto* employees of the EP, which increased the prestige of their role. New contracts provided accredited 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.

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 MEPs to set aside at least a quarter of their allowance for the employment of parliamentary assistants (Article 2d, European Parliament, 2015a). In 2016, almost two-thirds of the personal staff worked in parliament. However, the management of local staff's contracts remained untouched. Unlike contracts for accredited assistants which are managed by the EP's Secretariat, the expenses for local staff are administered by a multitude of third agents ("paying agents") directly 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 to campaigning. Thus, it is not surprising that the EP's administration is unable to thoroughly screen MEPs' expenditures for

local staff and assure their legality.

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 system of local assistants in the European Parliament is particularly prone to vote-seeking strategies. First, local assistants ensure the link between representatives and their constituency. Second, this link is exceptionally weak at the European level. A substantive staff budget is therefore put in place to offset this weakness. Third, the distinction between constituency service and vote-seeking is unclear and largely unmonitored. This is also a reason why a quantitative approach to MEP behavior is adequate, since it does not require interviewees to admit to behavior that could be perceived as reprehensible.

Constituency work is an inherent part of representatives' parliamentary activity (Fenno, 1978). Each month, the European Parliament schedules a "constituency week" during which all legislative activities are set aside for MEPs to travel back to their districts. During this time, MEPs seek contact with their constituents following the same pattern as other parliamentarians. Local assistants are tasked with facilitating these encounters. Two thirds of MEPs declare to have contacts with individual voters through personal consultation sessions; while more than 85 per cent of them say they do so via permanently staffed offices in their contituency (Farrell and Scully, 2010).

Held since 1979, elections to the European Parliament (EP) are characterised as "second order" (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Marsh, 1998; Schmitt, 2005; Hix and Marsh, 2011). This broadly means that European elections revolve around national electoral cycles, which has implications for the choices made by voters, parties and individual candidates. Voters consider that the most important decision making is done at the national level. Ballots are cast as a punishment for the performance of the national government rather than as a function of the representation done on the European level (Marsh, 1998; Hix and Marsh, 2011). Parties prioritize national issues over European ones even during European election campaigns (Adam and

Maier, 2011). As a result, there is a weak electoral connection between what an MEP does in the EP and his/her chances of re-election (Hix and Høyland, 2011, p. 55). Negative and low attention on the EU in the media further exacerbates this (de Vreese, Banducci, Semetko, and Boomgaarden, 2006). Since the electorate has limited possibilities to be informed on EU issues, they pay little or no attention to MEPs' activities in Parliament. To correct for this, staff allowance in the EP is high in a comparative perspective. Since 2016, MEPs dispense with an individual monthly staff allowance of 24,164 euros, which is the highest in the EU (European Parliament, 2016a).[2] In comparison, MPs in Italy receive 3,690 euro, 9,618 euros in France, 15,000 euros in Germany and 7,000 pounds in the United Kingdom (UK) (Assemblée nationale 2017; Bundestag, 2012, 131; Rogers and Walters, 2006, 66-67). As the previous discussion has made clear, a non-negligable part of these resources is been spent locally.

Activities in the constituency – where local staff are permanently based – increase MEPs' profile, which in turn fosters name recognition during elections. This makes local assistants a valuable campaign asset. Although the link between constituency service and electoral rules is well established in the literature (Norris, 1997), few studies have investigated the relationship at the supranational level. Local assistants are often hired for substantially shorter periods of time than their Brussels-based colleagues. This allows MEPs to dynamically adjust the size of their local spending to fill temporary needs.

Hiring more staff in election than non-election years has been observed for political parties (Poguntke et al., 2016, 666). This study investigates the same logic at the individual level. Our first hypothesis therefore reads:

Hypothesis 1 *The number of local assistants increases before parliamentary elections.*

The propensity to invest in local staff is affected by the importance an MP will put on personal reputation. The electoral value of a personal profile is in turn determined by the electoral system (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).

For example, within systems of proportional representation, there are differences in the influence voters have in the choice of candidates (for an overview see Farrell and Scully, 2010, 41-46). In closed-list systems, the party determines the ballot order of candidates, and voters can only choose between different candidate lists. The

[2]The EP does not disclose how this amount is determined.

party has thus a substantial influence on who is elected. We therefore classify closed-list systems as *party-centred systems*. In contrast, open- and flexible-list systems leave voters a choice between candidates. Candidates' election chances are therefore also impacted by voters' preference vote for them. These systems are known as *candidate-centred*. It implies that candidates are more likely to invest in highly visible activities, since their success depends on the support of many, relatively uninformed voters. An example of such activities is constituency-work carried out by local staff. Therefore, we hypothesise that the number of local assistants depends on the electoral system.

The incentives produced by electoral systems do not, however, affect behaviour at election time only. To build up support, we expect individuals elected in candidate-centred systems will invest more in constituency work also throughout their mandate. The electoral system has, thus, a direct effect on parliamentarians' responsiveness to their constituents and representation in the assembly.

Hypothesis 2 *The number of local assistants is higher in candidate-centred systems than party-centred systems, and their increase before elections is equally higher than in party-centred systems.*

Several studies report on this behaviour in the EP. For example, MEPs from candidate-centred systems maintain more contacts with individual constituents and are more likely to hold a permanent local office compared to members from party-centred 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 et al., 2017). Members typically take part in various social events and party meetings. However, a study of the French case points out that that personal contacts such as casework and surgeries are more limited for the 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).

We can twist our argument around and see it from the perspective of candidates in party-centred systems. Here, candidates' personal profile is important for the within-party selection process. To improve their likelihood of being selected, 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 in legislative work. Hence, they will employ less local staff than candidates in candidate-centred systems. This meshes with findings that the legislative record

of incumbent candidates – which is built up using accredited staff – has a positive effect on re-(s)election in party-centred systems (Frech, 2016; Borghetto and Lisi, 2018). In contrast, the impact is minimal in candidate-centred systems (Wilson et al., 2016; Däubler, Christensen, and Linek, 2018).

Our expectation that electoral rules affect behavior flows from the assumption that politicians anticipate and adapt to the future institutional setting in order to acquire office. In multilevel systems, parliamentarians' career goals may be diverse (Black, 1972). They can wish to seek re-election to their current office (static ambition) or secure office elsewhere (progressive amibtion).

From previous research we know that a number of MEPs aspire to careers at the national level (Scarrow, 1997; Daniel, 2015). Survey data from the European Parliament Research Group (EPRG) indicate that 38 % of the MEPs 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, Farrell, Scully, Whitaker, and Zapryanova, 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 3 *The previous two hypotheses apply to both national and European elections.*

Extant research has already established that investment in parliamentary activities is a function of MEPs' static (European) or progressive (national) ambitions, as well as the electoral system at both levels of government (Høyland et al., 2019). Our current study explores the same dynamic more directly by leveraging data on members' investment in local activities.

We could imagine that the tendency to redirect European resources is undesirable for parties. However, members of the European Parliament operate in a multilevel political system characterised by complex relations between actors from different levels of government. Most notably, the same national parties compete for representation in both 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' incentives to redirect resources between 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 (CJEU, CJEU).[3] Hence, we approximate staff expenditures by MEPs' number of local employees. This entails some approximations which we explicitly adress in our modeling strategy.

The variable ranges from zero to 43, with the median MEP employing 2 individuals. The upper map of Figure 1 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. In practice this means that MEPs' capacity to finance local staff varies: MEPs elected in Member States where wages are lower than the European average can employ more local staff. We control for this in two ways. First, all models include a measure of the local *Labour cost* per Member State 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 also 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

[3]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).

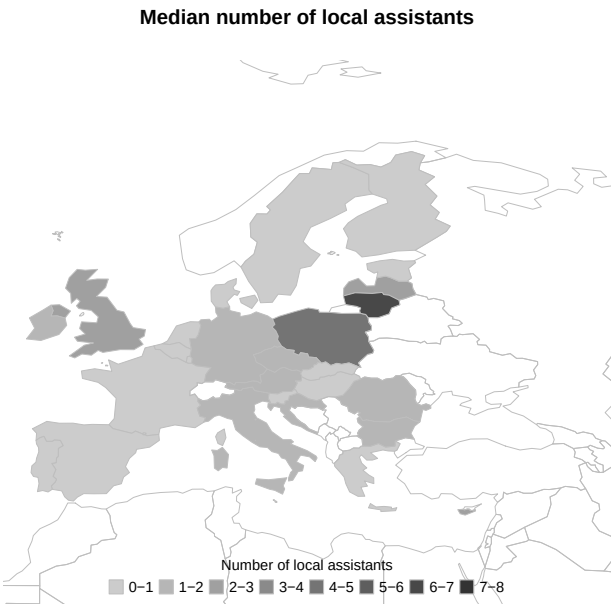

Figure 1: The number of local assistants in an MEP's employment varies between member states.

main regressions, we therefore also model our dependent variable as if it contained rounding errors (Lunn, Jackson, Best, Thomas, and Spiegelhalter, 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 observeing 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 staggerd, *Proximity to national election* is a continuous measure capturing the (negative) number of years to the next national parliamentary election. Electoral 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,

	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.

we have a robust measure which taps into the effect of incentives to personal-vote seeking on MEPs' allocation of resources. Table 7 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, flexible lists and single transferable votes – are lumped together and labeled *Candidate-centered system (EU)*. This classification is based on Däubler and Hix (2017).

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).

Control variables: Our analyses contain a set of control variables designed to isolate the effect of elections and electoral systems on hiring practices.

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.[4] 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.

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. National laws regulate the financing of national and European elections, and national parties are the main organisers of campaings 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, 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 governmental parties. Their control over the executive administration gives them access to more assistance. This would imply 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 varibale *Party in government*.

When hiring local staff, MEPs trade legislative activities for constinuency work. Parties vary in how they value legislation at the EU level. That is, parties' atti-

[4]The ceiling ranges between 2,793 euro in the least wealthy Member States and 7,990 euro in the wealthiest Member States (European Parliament, 2016b).

tudes 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 his propensity to pursue a European career. According to Bolleyer and Gauja (2015, 334), political actors with strong institutional identities are less likely to misuse staff allowances.[5] We control for these mechanisms with the variables *Party's euroenthusiasm*, which is a 7-point scale with high levels indicating pro-EU attitudes. It is 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 labor 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 constituency work (*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

[5] Using data on the British and Australian case, Bolleyer and Gauja (2015, 334) show that the use of parliamentary allowances as a source of indirect income is less frequent when institutional identities are greater than partisan identities. For example, in majoritarian democracies, such as the United Kingdom, MPs define themselves as to whether they are in government or in opposition. When this occurs, it is difficult to distinguish between state and party resources, which will increase the propensity of MPs to use their allowance for party purposes.

normally distributed latent variable which defines the observable values of y.[6]

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

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 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.

[6] 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.

Results

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 over time 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.

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	Model 1
Intercept	1.96
	(1.77,2.13)
Party-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	0.16
	(-0.02,0.35)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Party-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	1.03
	(0.85,1.18)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	2.82
	(2.63,3.01)
Reform	-0.48
	(-0.85,-0.08)
Size of member state	0.05
	(0.05,0.05)
Labor cost	-0.13
	(-0.14,-0.13)
Female	-0.52
	(-0.65,-0.39)
Incumbent	0.14
	(0.01,0.27)
Age	-0.02
	(-0.02,-0.01)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.13
	(-0.17,-0.09)
Party size in national parliament	-2.66
	(-3.07,-2.26)
Party in government	0.27
	(0.13,0.41)
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.

As is clear from the results reported in Table 4 and illustrated in Figure 2, 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

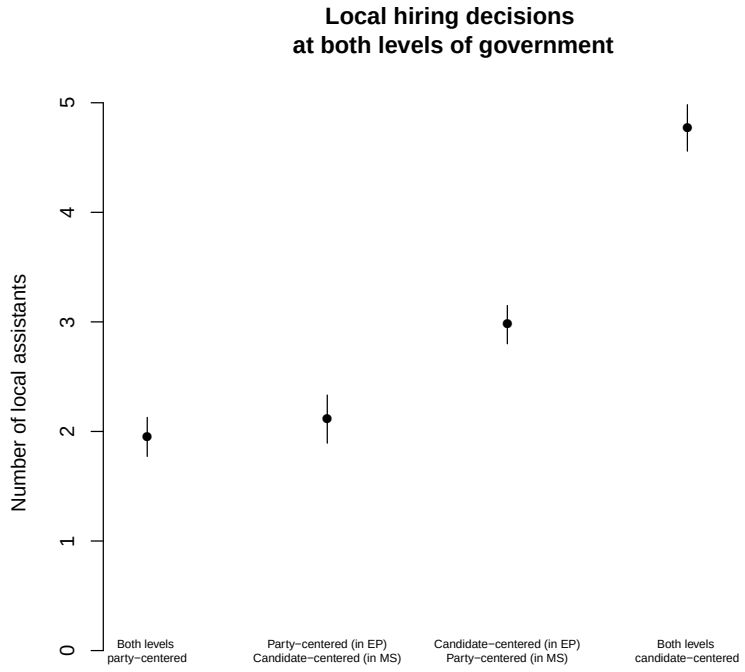

Figure 2: The size of local staff increases as the share of MEPs who need to cultivate a personal vote increases.

around 2 local assistants on his pay-roll.[7] 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 dual responsiveness 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

[7]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.

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	European (2a)	European (2b)	National (3a)	National (3b)
Intercept	1.23	1.66	1.32	1.87
	(1.07,1.37)	(1.49,1.82)	(1.17,1.46)	(1.65,2.04)
Lag(y)	0.58	0.58	0.59	0.59
	(0.56,0.6)	(0.56,0.6)	(0.57,0.61)	(0.58,0.61)
Reform	-0.71	-0.71	-0.73	-0.72
	(-0.79,-0.63)	(-0.79,-0.62)	(-0.82,-0.65)	(-0.8,-0.64)
Size of member state	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02
	(0.02,0.02)	(0.02,0.03)	(0.02,0.02)	(0.02,0.02)
Labor cost	-0.06	-0.07	-0.06	-0.06
	(-0.07,-0.06)	(-0.08,-0.06)	(-0.07,-0.06)	(-0.07,-0.05)
Female	-0.33	-0.29	-0.32	-0.33
	(-0.5,-0.17)	(-0.44,-0.15)	(-0.48,-0.17)	(-0.49,-0.17)
Incumbent	0.19	0.23	0.14	0.14
	(0.09,0.3)	(0.13,0.34)	(0.04,0.24)	(0.03,0.24)
Age	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02
	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,0)	(-0.02,-0.01)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07	-0.03
	(-0.11,-0.02)	(-0.11,-0.03)	(-0.11,-0.02)	(-0.08,0.01)
Party size in national parliament	-1.3	-1.25	-1.21	-1.4
	(-1.75,-0.85)	(-1.7,-0.83)	(-1.65,-0.81)	(-1.85,-0.96)
Party in government	0.1	0.07	0.1	0.08
	(-0.02,0.21)	(-0.04,0.19)	(0,0.22)	(-0.03,0.2)
Prox. of election (H_1)	0.39	0.54	0.03	0.13
	(0.29,0.5)	(0.39,0.68)	(0,0.05)	(0.09,0.18)
Party-centered syst. (H_2)		-0.89		-0.83
		(-1.06,-0.72)		(-1.02,-0.63)
Prox. of election * Party-centered syst. (H_2)		-0.26		-0.17
		(-0.47,-0.06)		(-0.22,-0.11)
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 5 and illustrated in Figures 3 and 4. They show – in line with Hypotheses 1 and 3 – that local hires increase before elections regardless of the level of government. However – as predicted by Hypothesis 2 – the degree of mobilization is mediated by the electoral system.

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

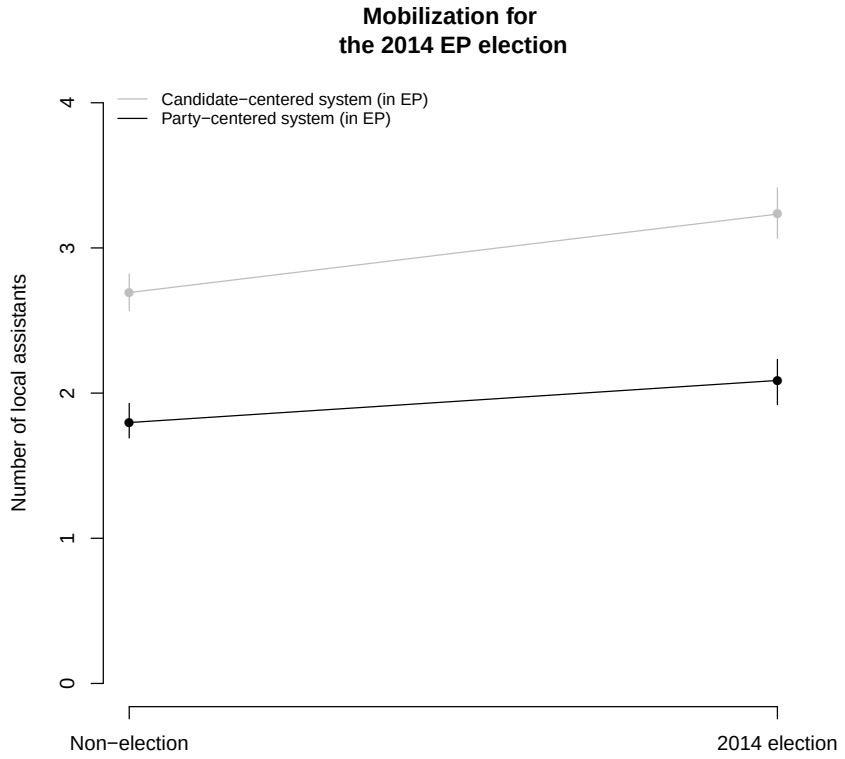

Figure 3: Local hires increased before the 2014 European election. The effect is the greatest among members who may gain from a personal vote.

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* proceed to 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.

There are three takeaways from these findings: First – while MEPs' personal

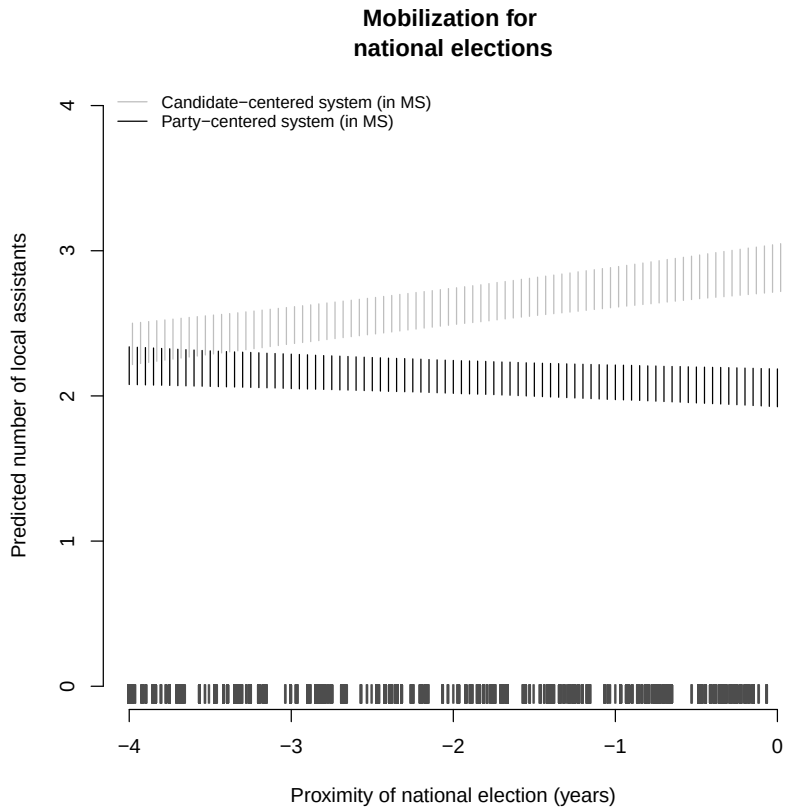

Figure 4: Local hires also increases as national elections approach, but only among members who may gain from a personal vote.

allowance could potentially contribute to bridging the gap between representatives and voters – local staff is also frequently used for contesting elections (Hypothesis 1). 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 2). Last, although we study members of the European Parliament, their behavior is also conditioned on electoral incentives stemming from the national level (Hypothesis 3). 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.

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 de 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 differ-

ent 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).

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.

References

Adam, S. and M. Maier (2011). National parties as politicizers of eu integration? party campaign communication in the run-up to the 2009 european parliament election. *European Union Politics 12*(3), 431–453.

André, A., S. Depauw, and M. S. Shugart (2014). The effect of electoral institutions on legislative behavior. In S. Martin, T. Saalfeld, and K. Strøm (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ashworth, S. and E. B. de Mesquita (2006). Delivering the goods: Legislative particularism in different electoral and institutional settings. *The Journal of Politics 68*(1), 168–179.

Assemblée nationale (2013). The National Assembly in the French Institutions. Retrieved January 10, 2014, from `http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/connaissance/fiches_synthese/septembre2012/national-assembly.pdf`.

Assemblée nationale (2017). Les collaborateurs de députés. Retrieved July 1, 2017, from `http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/decouvrir-l-assemblee/role-et-pouvoirs-de-l-assemblee-nationale/les-autres-structures-de-soutien-a-l-activite-parlementaire/les-collaborateurs-de-deputes#node_3582`.

Bakker, R., C. de Vries, E. Edwards, L. Hooghe, S. Jolly, G. Marks, J. Polk, J. Rovny, M. Steenbergen, and M. A. Vachudova (2015, January). Measuring party positions in Europe , Measuring party positions in Europe: The Chapel Hill expert survey trend file, 1999–2010 , The Chapel Hill expert survey trend file, 1999–2010. *Party Politics 21*(1), 143–152.

Basinger, S. J. (2013). Scandals and congressional elections in the post-Watergate era. *Political Research Quarterly 66*(2), 385–398.

Beauvallet, W. and S. Michon (2008). Eurodéputés et représentation des territoires. *Les Cahiers du CRESS*, 129–134.

Black, G. S. (1972). A theory of political ambition: Career choices and the role of structural incentives. *American Political Science Review 66*(1), 144–159.

Bolleyer, N. and A. Gauja (2015). The limits of regulation: Indirect party access to state resources in Australia and the United Kingdom. *Governance 28*(3), 321–340.

Borghetto, E. and M. Lisi (2018). Productivity and reselection in a party-based environment: Evidence from the Portuguese case. *Parliamentary Affairs*, gsx051.

Bowler, S. and D. M. Farrell (1993). Legislator shirking and voter monitoring: Impacts of European Parliament electoral systems upon legislator-voter relationships. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies 31*(1), 45–70.

Brack, N. and O. Costa (2018). Democracy in parliament vs. democracy through parliament? Defining the rules of the game in the European Parliament. *The Journal of Legislative Studies 0*(0), 1–21.

Bundestag (2012). Die Verwaltung des Deutschen Bundestages. Retrieved May 5, 2012 from `http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/verwaltung/index.html`.

Cain, B. E., J. A. Ferejohn, and M. P. Fiorina (1984). The Constituency Service Basis of the Personal Vote for U.S. Representatives and British Members of Parliament. *American Political Science Review 78*, 110–125.

Carey, J. M. and M. S. Shugart (1995). Incentives to cultivate a personal vote: A rank ordering of electoral formulas. *Electoral Studies 14*(4), 417 – 439.

CJEU. Retrieved January 10, 2018, from `https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2018-09/cp180138en.pdf`, Title = Press release no. 138/2018, Year = 2018.

Daniel, W. T. (2015). *Career Behaviour and the European Parliament: All Roads Through Brussels*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Daniel, W. T. (2016). First-order contests for second-order parties? Differentiated candidate nomination strategies in European Parliament elections. *Journal of European Integration 38*(7), 807–822.

Daniel, W. T., L. Obholzer, and S. Hurka (2017). Static and dynamic incentives for twitter usage in the European Parliament. *Party Politics 0*(0), 1354068817747755.

Däubler, T., L. Christensen, and L. Linek (2018). Parliamentary activity, re-selection and the personal vote. Evidence from flexible-list systems. *Parliamentary Affairs*, gsx048.

Däubler, T. and S. Hix (2017). Ballot structure, list flexibility and policy representation. *Journal of European Public Policy*, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1361465.

de Vreese, C. H., S. A. Banducci, H. A. Semetko, and H. G. Boomgaarden (2006). The news coverage of the 2004 european parliamentary election campaign in 25 countries. *European Union Politics 7*(4), 477–504.

Dimock, M. A. and G. C. Jacobson (1995). Checks and choices: The House bank scandal's impact on voters in 1992. *The Journal of Politics 57*(4), 1143–1159.

Eggers, A. C. (2014). Partisanship and Electoral Accountability: Evidence from the UK Expenses Scandal. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science 9*, 441–472.

European Ombudsman (2008). Press release no. 12/2008: MEPs' allowances. Retrieved November 8, 2017, from `https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/press-release/en/247`.

European Parliament (2009). Decision of the Bureau of 19 May and 9 July 2008 concerning implementing measures for the Statute for the Members of the European Parliament. *Official Journal of the EU C 159*, C 159.

European Parliament (2015a). Decision of the Bureau of the European Parliament of 26 October 2015 amending Implementing Measures for the Statute for Members of the European Parliament. *Official Journal of the EU*, C 397.

European Parliament (2015b). European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2015 on Parliament's estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2016 (2015/2012(BUD)). Official Journal of the EU C 346, 21 September 2016, 188-193.

European Parliament (2016a). Decision of the Bureau of the European Parliament of 12 December 2016 amending the Implementing Measures for the Statute for Members of the European Parliament. *Official Journal of the EU*, C 484.

European Parliament (2016b). Staffing arrangements. Retrieved December 6, 2016, from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/meps/Staffing_arrangements_EN.pdf;lastupdateonSeptember2016).

Farrell, D. M. and I. McAllister (2006). Voter satisfaction and electoral systems: Does preferential voting in candidate-centred systems make a difference? *European Journal of Political Research 45*(5), 723–749.

Farrell, D. M. and R. Scully (2010). The European Parliament: one parliament, several modes of political representation on the ground? *Journal of European Public Policy 17*(1), 36–54.

Fenno, R. F. (1978). *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co.

Føllesdal, A. and S. Hix (2006). Why there is a democratic deficit in the EU: A response to Majone and Moravcsik. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies 44*(3), 533–562.

Frech, E. (2016). Re-electing MEPs: The factors determining re-election probabilities. *European Union Politics 17*(1), 69–90.

Gauja, A. (2010). *Political Parties and Elections. Legislating for Representative Democracy*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.

Heerde-Hudson, J. V. (2014). *Freedom of Information and the MPs Expenses Crisis*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hix, S. (2002). The transnational party federations. In J. Gaffney (Ed.), *Political Parties and the European Union*, pp. 308–330. London: Routledge.

Hix, S., D. Farrell, R. Scully, R. Whitaker, and G. Zapryanova (2016). EPRG MEP Survey Dataset: Combined Data 2016 Release. Retrieved April, 2016, from https://mepsurvey.eu/data-objects/data/.

Hix, S. and B. Høyland (2011, March). *The Political System of the European Union* (3 ed.). London: MacMillan Education UK.

Hix, S. and M. Marsh (2011). Second-order effects plus pan-European political swings: An analysis of European Parliament elections across time. *Electoral Studies 30*(1), 4–15.

Hobolt, S. B. and B. Høyland (2011). Selection and sanctioning in European parliamentary elections. *British Journal of Political Science 41*(3), 477–498.

Høyland, B., S. B. Hobolt, and S. Hix (2019). Career Ambitions and Legislative Participation: The Moderating Effect of Electoral Institutions. *British Journal of Political Science 49*(2), 491–512.

IPU (2012). The changing nature of parliamentary representation. Global Parliamentary Report. Geneva and New York: IPU and UNDP.

Jennings, W. and C. Wlezien (2016). The timeline of elections: A comparative perspective. *American Journal of Political Science 60*(1), 219–233.

Lunn, D., C. Jackson, N. Best, A. Thomas, and D. Spiegelhalter (2012). *The BUGS Book: A Practical Introduction to Bayesian Analysis*. Boca Raton: Chapman and Hall/CRC.

Marsh, M. (1998). Testing the Second-Order Election Model after Four European Elections. *British Journal of Political Science 4*(28), 591–607.

Murphy, Y. (2016). Who gets what, when and how: The politics of resource allocation to parliamentary parties. In A. Gauja and M. Sawer (Eds.), *Party Rules? Dilemmas of political party regulation in Australia*, pp. 201–121. ANU Press.

Nassmacher, K.-H. (2006). Regulation of party financing. In R. S. Katz and W. Crotty (Eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE.

Norris, P. (1997). The puzzle of constituency service. *The Journal of Legislative Studies 3*(2).

Obholzer, L. and W. T. Daniel (2016). An online electoral connection? How electoral systems condition representatives' social media use. *European Union Politics 17*(3), 387–407.

Pemstein, D., S. A. Meserve, and W. T. Bernhard (2015). Brussels Bound. Policy Experience and Candidate Selection in European Elections. *Comparative Political Studies 48*(11), 1421–1453.

Pitkin, H. (1967). *The concept of representation*. Los Angeles: University of Press.

Poguntke, T., S. E. Scarrow, and P. D. Webb (2016). Party rules, party resources and the politics of parliamentary democracies: How parties organize in the 21st century. *Party Politics 22*(6), 661–678.

Polk, J., J. Rovny, R. Bakker, E. Edwards, L. Hooghe, S. Jolly, J. Koedam, F. Kostelka, G. Marks, G. Schumacher, M. Steenbergen, M. Vachudova, and M. Zilovic (2017). Explaining the salience of anti-elitism and reducing political corruption for political parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data. *Research & Politics 4*(1).

Poyet, C. (2018). Working at home: French meps' day-to-day practice of political representation in their district. *The Journal of Legislative Studies 0*(0), 1–18.

Regulation 160/2009 (2009). Council Regulation (EC) No 160/2009 of 23 February 2009 amending the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities. *Official Journal of the EU*, L 55.

Reif, K. and H. Schmitt (1980). Nine second-order national elections–a conceptual framework for the analysis of European Election results. *European Journal of Political Research 8*(1), 3–44.

Rogers, R. and R. Walters (2006). *How Parliament Works*. Essex, UK: Pearsons Education Limited.

Rudolph, L. and T. Däubler (2016). Holding individual representatives accountable: The role of electoral systems. *The Journal of Politics 78*(3), 746–762.

Salisbury, R. H. and K. A. Shepsle (1981). US Congressman as enterprise. *Legislative Studies Quarterly 6*(4), 559–576.

Scarrow, S. E. (1997). Political Career Paths and the European Parliament. *Legislative Studies Quarterly 22*(2), 253–63.

Schmitt, H. (2005). The European Parliament elections of June 2004: still second-order? *West European Politics 28*(3), 650–679.

Söderlund, P. (2016). Candidate-centred electoral systems and change in incumbent vote share: A cross-national and longitudinal analysis. *European Journal of Political Research 55*(2), 321–339.

Stolz, K. (2003). Moving up, moving down: Political careers across territorial levels. *European Journal of Political Research 42*(2), 223–248.

van Biezen, I. (2008). State Intervention in Party Politics: The Public Funding and Regulation of Political Parties. *European Review 16*(3), 337–353.

Vivyan, N., M. Wagner, and J. Tarlov (2012). Representative misconduct, voter perceptions and accountability: Evidence from the 2009 House of Commons expenses scandal. *Electoral Studies 31*(4), 750 – 763.

WikiLeaks (2009). The Galvin Report: Audit of 160 EU Parliament Members 2008. Retrieved November 8, 2017, from `https://wikileaks.org/wiki/The_Galvin_Report:_Audit_of_160_EU_Parliament_members,_2008`.

Wilson, S. L., N. Ringe, and J. van Thomme (2016). Policy leadership and reelection in the European Parliament. *Journal of European Public Policy 23*(8), 1158–1179.

Appendix

Result tables for the main models

In this section we report the results tables for the models reported in the article's main text. 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 4) 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 5) 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
	(1.77,2.13)
Party-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	0.16
	(-0.02,0.35)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Party-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	1.03
	(0.85,1.18)
Candidate-centered syst. (in EP) - Candidate-centered syst. (in MS) (H_2 and H_3)	2.82
	(2.63,3.01)
Reform	-0.48
	(-0.85,-0.08)
Size of member state	0.05
	(0.05,0.05)
Labor cost	-0.13
	(-0.14,-0.13)
Female	-0.52
	(-0.65,-0.39)
Incumbent	0.14
	(0.01,0.27)
Age	-0.02
	(-0.02,-0.01)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.13
	(-0.17,-0.09)
Party size in national parliament	-2.66
	(-3.07,-2.26)
Party in government	0.27
	(0.13,0.41)
Number of observations	7143
r^2	0.22

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

Table 4: 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.

Dependent variable: 'Number of local assistants'	European (2a)	European (2b)	National (3a)	National (3b)
Intercept	1.23	1.66	1.32	1.87
	(1.07,1.37)	(1.49,1.82)	(1.17,1.46)	(1.65,2.04)
Lag(y)	0.58	0.58	0.59	0.59
	(0.56,0.6)	(0.56,0.6)	(0.57,0.61)	(0.58,0.61)
Reform	-0.71	-0.71	-0.73	-0.72
	(-0.79,-0.63)	(-0.79,-0.62)	(-0.82,-0.65)	(-0.8,-0.64)
Size of member state	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02
	(0.02,0.02)	(0.02,0.03)	(0.02,0.02)	(0.02,0.02)
Labor cost	-0.06	-0.07	-0.06	-0.06
	(-0.07,-0.06)	(-0.08,-0.06)	(-0.07,-0.06)	(-0.07,-0.05)
Female	-0.33	-0.29	-0.32	-0.33
	(-0.5,-0.17)	(-0.44,-0.15)	(-0.48,-0.17)	(-0.49,-0.17)
Incumbent	0.19	0.23	0.14	0.14
	(0.09,0.3)	(0.13,0.34)	(0.04,0.24)	(0.03,0.24)
Age	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02
	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,-0.01)	(-0.02,0)	(-0.02,-0.01)
Party's euroenthusiasm	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07	-0.03
	(-0.11,-0.02)	(-0.11,-0.03)	(-0.11,-0.02)	(-0.08,0.01)
Party size in national parliament	-1.3	-1.25	-1.21	-1.4
	(-1.75,-0.85)	(-1.7,-0.83)	(-1.65,-0.81)	(-1.85,-0.96)
Party in government	0.1	0.07	0.1	0.08
	(-0.02,0.21)	(-0.04,0.19)	(0,0.22)	(-0.03,0.2)
Prox. of election (H_1)	0.39	0.54	0.03	0.13
	(0.29,0.5)	(0.39,0.68)	(0,0.05)	(0.09,0.18)
Party-centered syst. (H_2)		-0.89		-0.83
		(-1.06,-0.72)		(-1.02,-0.63)
Prox. of election * Party-centered syst. (H_2)		-0.26		-0.17
		(-0.47,-0.06)		(-0.22,-0.11)
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 5: 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.

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 problem 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 $y_i \in (\frac{a_i}{2}, a_i)$.

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

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 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 6. 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.

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 6: 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.

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.

At the European level, all systems follow a principle of proportional representation. Party-centered systems at the European level are coded as such when lists are ranked and closed or when the possibility for voters to reorder candidates are such that it rarely affects the distribution of seats. These are labeled *Party-centered system (EU)*. That is, we had a restrictive definition of "party centered". The remaining systems – open lists, flexible lists and single transferable votes – are lumped together and labeled *Candidate-centered system (EU)*. This classification is based

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

on Däubler and Hix (2017).

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 7.

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 8 and 9.

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 8: 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 9: 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.